



# We Have Built Cities for You

ON THE CONTRADICTIONS  
OF YUGOSLAV SOCIALISM

Part of the project *Pertej/Beyond/Preko* 20 years



*For our comrade Ivan Radenković*

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# Introduction





Borovo workers' protest in Belgrade, TANJUG 1988,  
Source: Archives of Yugoslavia, AJ-112-L-11703-148

VIDA KNEŽEVIĆ AND MARKO MILETIĆ

# We Have Built Cities for You

## On the Contradictions of Yugoslav Socialism

When, in the mid-1960's, speaking of the position of workers, the then Chairman of the Association of the Trade Unions of Yugoslavia stated that "If our workers' situation is not good, let them go on strike!", he had no inkling of the fact that, soon enough, that would become the reality of Yugoslavia. During the 1980's, strikes became a regular occurrence in cities throughout the country. From "Trepča" to "TAM", from "Labin" to "Zmaj" – working men and women went on strike demanding better working and living conditions, protesting against the austerity measures and the neoliberal restructuring of Yugoslavia, which was primarily supported and pushed forward by the political and economic leadership.

That is precisely what the exhibition and the publication entitled "We Have Built Cities for You" are about. They are about the contradictions of Yugoslav socialism, which were particularly manifest during the course of the 1980's, and which led to the restoration of the capitalist system. However, the above-mentioned social processes did not unfold in a linear fashion or without resistance. Complex class-related forms of logic were involved, which collided and were engaged in conflicts, thus producing contradictory political-economic phenomena that it is necessary to investigate and overview anew.

The question that arises is, why is this exhibition held today? Why is it essential today to reflect once again the problem of socialist Yugoslavia? And can this knowledge be of operative value for us when it comes to consider the contemporary socio-political situation?

Today, all the states established after the destruction of Yugoslavia are nationalist-capitalist in character, and neoliberal “transition” agendas carried out by the local regimes favour solely the logic of capital. The results of a decades-long process of transformation are most evident and measurable in the sphere of work – a total destruction of the labour structures and institutions of democratic management of the economy, masses of unemployed or poorly paid working men and women who fret over their existence on the periphery of the global capitalist system. From the Vardar River to Mt Triglav, a connection still exists, but it has been transformed into the trajectory of trading in misguided investments and a cheap labour force. In such a socio-political constellation, few actors represent the interests of workers, and the discourse on there being no alternatives to the system in which we live precludes the pondering of different social relations, outside of those that are connected with the capitalist manner of production.

When, from a perspective delineated in this way, we return to the horizon of socialist Yugoslavia, a much more energetic and wave-making social dynamics emerges, simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal, requiring of us a more engaged thinking of the situation compared to the one offered to us in the existing history textbooks or the dominant world-views. Within that dynamics, the working class had a separate place of its own, with its complex logic, politics and aesthetics, whose horizon and projection were enabled by the antifascist struggle and socialist revolution, led by the Communist Party. Such an emancipatory undertaking, which, in the years that followed, spread through the ideas of self-management, a structurally democratic positioning when it came to participating in the political life, social ownership of the means of production, and through stimulating educational, scientific and cultural activities, proved to be a dynamics that encompassed all the segments of society.

The development that socialism made possible for Yugoslav society is seen more clearly when one takes into consideration the political and economic situation that preceded the world war. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was an undeveloped predominantly agricultural country, with over 76% of the population made up of peasants owning small plots of land, insufficient for creating production surpluses. Its industry was undeveloped, with a very low level of productivity, concentrated in the northern parts of the country. In addition to this, the telecommunications and energy infrastructure was lacking, and the undeveloped economy could not ensure the development of health care, education and culture. All of the above resulted in great inequalities when it came to the level of development of some parts of the country and the opportunities that presented themselves to the population.

Inequalities, first of all the class-related ones, were inscribed into the political system of monarchist Yugoslavia. The rule of the Serbian dynasty and bourgeoisie was based on the preservation and broadening of the privileges enjoyed by a narrow social circle, through the imposition of centralism in a multinational state, which constantly produced and intensified national and religious differences and conflicts in the country. For the majority of the population of the monarchy, burdened by poverty, participation in the political life of the country was exceptionally limited or downright non-existent. It will suffice to mention that every second inhabitant above 10 years of age was illiterate, whereas women did not have the right to vote.

Just one example, from among many that matter, is the one testifying to pondering the policy of overcoming the problem of social inequality, which deeply affected Yugoslav society after World War Two. Yugoslav peoples did unite, not just because of linguistic and ethnic similarities, but for the purpose of overcoming economic underdevelopment and political dependence, not just on the international level but also within their own country. As the sociologist Marko Kržan points out in his analysis of Yugoslav self-management, it was precisely during the post-war period that Yugoslavia, for the first time in its history, ensured real independence in relation to the global dynamics of the political-economic power centres, while within the country's borders the less developed parts began to develop faster than the already developed ones.<sup>1</sup>

Within the framework of the exhibition "We Have Built Cities for You", we return to the period of socialism and its contradictions, and through a number of researches we raise issues that are inter-related in a complex manner: from the economy, politics and workers' self-management to leisure-time pursuits, the media, culture and art.

### **Thinking through contradictions**

One of the main consequences of the disappearance of socialist states is the loss of the political perspective of working women and men as actors within the framework of social relations. The disintegration of the infrastructure of the former workers' movement, the lack of educational and socio-political activities aimed directly at workers, and the lack of their political representation, those are just some of the reasons why the workers of the Balkans have become the cheap labour force that they are today, whose perspective is reduced to packing up their suitcases and leaving for the West. This position of theirs on the capitalist periphery,

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<sup>1</sup> For more details on this, see: <http://www.delavske-studije.si/marko-krzan-ocrt-historije-samoupravnog-socijalizma/>.

as well as the necessity of maintaining and actualising the perspective of the working class, are the subject of the text “From Core to Periphery: On the Aesthetic Form of the Workers” by **Artan Sadiku**, with which we open up the discussions on the contemporary relations between labour and capital.

The above-mentioned social processes are the topic of the video work entitled “They Are as Strong as We Are Weak” by **Srđan Kovačević**, which, within the framework of this exhibition, makes up a kind of interpretive textbook for beginners, from which one could work out the exhibition in its entirety. In this documentary film, lasting half an hour, we can see and hear direct testimonies of people who, looking for a job, found themselves in Slovenia, a country which, during the era of socialism, had the reputation of being the economically most developed republic, and which promised many people from the undeveloped south a job and a better life. Through his observational method, the author introduces to us the work of “Delavska svetovalnica [Workers’ Counselling Service]”, an organisation which takes upon itself the task of protecting the labour rights of migrant workers and resolves the problems with which traditional trade unions cannot cope. We are present at meetings held in offices and halls, in the course of which workers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia and Bulgaria, cheated and robbed by their employers from a *prosperous* EU country, are asking for guidelines and assistance. They are advised by a former construction worker who had himself travelled the path from leaving his home in Bosnia, through working on scaffolds in Slovenia, to ending up with his spine ruined and being unable to work anymore.

In contrast to the preceding video work, the action of which unfolds in a country that is a wished-for destination, or else a transit country, the video work entitled “Abandoned Nests” presents working men and women who set off from Zrenjanin and its environs for EU countries looking for employment. Zrenjanin, once a prosperous industrial city, is of importance today merely as a paradigm of many similar places of the former Yugoslavia whose inhabitants are leaving their homes *en masse*. While some go abroad using the services of very shady agencies offering employment abroad, others do so on account of their origin, or solely on the basis of their parents’ birthplace, on the basis of which they are issued personal documents by EU countries in need of cheap labour force. Members of the **Workers’ Video Club** who worked on this film are all too familiar with the problems that working men and women are faced with; they themselves were formerly employed with the Zrenjanin “Jugoremedija” factory and were engaged in an organised struggle against its privatisation, and then they went on to participate in the political organ-



isation of workers, an integral part of which are various activities of their video club.

The thus delineated perspective of contemporary social relations and the policies of workers is the position from which we think both the exhibition “We Have Built Cities for You” and the eponymous publication that is before you. It is indispensable if we are to understand the state of affairs as it is today, and also to position a new horizon of understanding the period of socialist Yugoslavia, which we examine through its contradictions. That is why this entire publication, containing a number of analytical texts, is to be read as a discursive framework of sorts for the purpose of understanding the exhibition layout. Thus the publication contains a succession of texts dealing with often conflicting positions within socialist society, whose interaction led to the development of the country, but also created a multitude of crises and divergent events and processes.

Relying on the concept of “contested reproduction”, provided by the economist Michael Lebowitz, which he brings into connection with the research conducted by Susan L. Woodward, **Domagoj Mihaljević**, in his text entitled “In Search of a Lost Future”, offers a framework for a more systematic understanding of the political and economic structure of Yugoslav socialism. He singles out three specific logics of social relations in the sphere of production – the logic of the vanguard, the logic of the working class and the logic of capital – which are continually interlinked in an antagonising fashion. Thus the “logic of the vanguard” was represented by the Communist Party, which guided the economic and political development of society, whose activities did not necessarily coincide with the interests of the “logic of the working class”, in whose name it acted, and the dissatisfaction of working women and men showed the conflictual nature of these positions. Managers and economic *experts* represented the “logic of capital”, which, due to the influence of the vanguard and the changed ownership relations, could not be manifested in the same way as in capitalist societies, but became increasingly prominent on account of the strengthening of the laws of the market in the system. For a fuller understanding of the contradictions that arose within the framework of Yugoslav socialism, it is important to analyse the conflicts within the Party itself, as well as the international dimension that exerted its influence upon them. Through the development of the economic system between the planned economy and the market economy, Yugoslavia, as opposed to other socialist countries, was increasingly exposed to international market-related influences and crises, without which it is difficult to understand the intensifying of the contradictions within the system.

The concept of self-management is one of the key elements for

understanding Yugoslav socialism. Regardless of the internal and external reasons for its introduction, the model of workers' self-management did enable a fast and comprehensive development of the country and improved the living conditions of the majority of the population, which was particularly in evidence during the 1950's. Those who were direct producers gradually acquired more and more control over the means of production, investments and distribution of income. Work surpluses were not only invested in the development of production, but also in the living standard, through the building of flats, holiday resorts, the infrastructure, the fulfilment of cultural needs, etc. However, as observed by **Tanja Vukša** and **Vladimir Simović** in their text entitled "The Contradictory Reproduction of Socialist Yugoslavia", giving up on the planned economy gradually opened up space for increased influence of the market forces, which could not fail to produce economic and political consequences. The authors conclude that, despite the fact that Yugoslav socialism managed to overcome the dominance of private ownership of the means of production by introducing social ownership, it did not manage to develop the latter into an organic system, for what was lacking was production mediated by social needs.

All those events were studiously followed by the media, and despite the established view of "censorship", often enough there were texts that were critically disposed towards the activities of the authorities. This is evidenced by texts that can be found on the pages of the Sarajevo daily "Oslobođenje", which were researched by **Irena Pejić**. In the final decade of the existence of Yugoslavia, many media outlets became channels for disseminating nationalist ideas that were encouraged by the local political elites, whereas "Oslobođenje" strove to remain a Yugoslav paper, which shifted the focus of interest of the public onto the economic and social issues that affected increasingly larger parts of the population, while it maintained a critical approach to the issue of nationalism. Still, after the wars waged in the 1990's, despite resistance, the invisible hand of the market managed to get hold of this medium as well.

On the pages of this daily from the 1980's, we can also see that, burdened by the increasingly difficult position caused by the policy of "stabilisation", that is, the austerity measures and the restructuring of the economy imposed by the Federal Government under the pressure of foreign creditors, Yugoslav working women and men organised an exceptionally large number of strikes. However, there was no one left to represent their interests. As the Party vanguard increasingly relied on the international factors at the height of the economic crisis, trade unions, whose basic and only function was to protect and enhance workers' rights, paradoxically enough, had long before lost the role of a political

factor that could significantly contribute to this struggle. As observed by **Mario Reljanović** in his text entitled “The Position of Trade Unions in the SFRY in the Second Half of the 1980’s” and the accompanying research presented within the framework of this exhibition, the Association of Trade Unions of Yugoslavia was an organisation which manifested perhaps the greatest discrepancies between its normative potential and the actual realisation of its authority.

Still, the political powerlessness of trade unions does not mean that the restoration of capitalism during those years did not meet any organised resistance from workers. Analysing a number of strikes organised during and towards the end of the 1980’s and in the early 1990’s, **the Borovo group** (Sven Cvek, Snježana Ivčić, Jasna Račić), within the framework of its research project “Work, Class, Nation: Workers’ Strikes in Croatia in the Year 1990”, shows that the resistance of workers to the austerity measures, dismissals from work and bankruptcies of companies was very much in evidence, while at the same time it presupposed evading the traps of the nationalist policies imposed from above. However, the already established national political parties, joined by their anti-communist stance and defence of their privileges, and fearing the emerging class conflict, turned “workers into warriors”, whom they would lead into ethno-national conflicts.

The harsh austerity measures, restrictions and economic liberalisation mostly affected young people, who accounted for more than a half of the officially unemployed people in the 1980’s. Thus the crisis influenced youth political organisations as well, which lost their established connections within the decentralised federation and became increasingly oriented towards the narrowly defined interests of the republics that they came from. **Lidija K. Radojević** and **Ana Podvršič**, in their text and research project entitled “The Slovenian Youth and the Neoliberalisation of Yugoslavia: From Alternative Movements to the Liberal Third Bloc”, analyse the position and transformation of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia during the course of the 1980’s – an organisation which, by accepting and implementing the influences coming from the civil sector, became an advocate of the concept of human rights and liberal values, and ran in the first multiparty elections as the Liberal Party, advocating parliamentary democracy and a liberal market economy.

One of the basic dilemmas of the Yugoslav leadership after World War Two was how to transform a country devastated by war, with more than 80% of agrarian population, into an industrialised socialist society. Agrarian policies that were implemented immediately after the war – collectivisation, expropriation of land and distributing it among peasants, colonisation, the establishment of cooperatives and the writing off of

peasants' debts – led to the first instances of resistance to the said social transformation. The parallel process of industrialisation attracted many peasants, who sought employment in cities. And yet, as we can see in the text “From Arable Land through Socialist Industrialisation to the Dinner Table and Social Life”, written by **Maja Solar** and **Ivan Radenković**, the socialist model of cooperation between the social sector and individual producers later turned out to be a solution for the agricultural production of the country, and the paradigmatic form of this model were agricultural-industrial combines. These economic giants in Yugoslavia invested their own funds into enhancement of production and infrastructure, thus investing into education, culture and health care locally, as well as into improving the quality of leisure time and ensuring housing units for working men and women. It is precisely the housing policy of socialist Yugoslavia that, to many people, represented a real improvement of their living conditions, and to society itself – emancipation and progress.

The development and achievements of combines in Yugoslavia are presented within the framework of this exhibition through the research conducted by **Milica Lupšor**, dealing with the Zrenjanin combine “Servo Mihalj” – the greatest food manufacturer in the SFRY. This concrete example shows the spatial as well as economic achievements that a combine could have, while the production surplus spilled over into education, culture and the development of local communities.

**Bojan Mrđenović's** art work presents the relationship between another enterprise and the development of the local community. This visual archive presents the connection between the town of Kutina and “Petrokemija”, which can be viewed as another paradigm of the industrial development of a town which reached its peak through the development of industry after World War Two. Just as many other strategically important industries, this one also went through a long process of deterioration and waiting in line for privatisation. Still, this is a rare example of – so far successful – trade union struggle against the “inevitability” of what follows from that process – a worsening of the position of the population, the once proud working women and men.

The 1950's and the introduction of self-management also led to democratisation and more extensive housing construction work, which is dealt with in **Iskra Krstić's** text and research project entitled “The Housing Policies in Yugoslavia”. Still, despite the exceptional efforts aimed at providing housing for the population, the socialist policy in this area manifested a lot of inconsistencies in practice, which became increasingly pronounced as time went by. Managerial staff members found it easier to get flats than workers, for those with higher education it was easier to get flats than for those with lower education, whereas under the guise of

“democratisation”, as well as due to the pressure of people whose housing problem had not been resolved, individual housing construction gradually started being supported, as did taking over and adapting common rooms on the premises of collective housing objects. In the 1980’s, the issue of resolving the housing problem became one of the main sources of discontent in Yugoslav society, first of all among the young, whose working career unfolded in an economy which was already undermined to a large degree by the neoliberal reforms, which no longer promised “flats for everyone”. In the early 1990’s, all Yugoslav republics entered the process of the privatisation of the housing fund, which resulted in a reconstruction of the real estate market, and which would later lead to the privatisation of land, public spaces and the current wave of evictions.

The effects of the privatisation of Yugoslav economic “giants” are increasingly less known to the public. The number of people who were living witnesses of a time when working women and men, with their (socially-owned) factories and combines, quite literally built cities is steadily diminishing. The erasure of archive material and documents, which are the key elements of history as a scientific discipline, are processes that have been tendentiously carried out for years, as in the case of the Nikšić ironworks “Boris Kidrič”, whose entire archive, in the words of **Milivoje Krivokapić**, has been destroyed by the current owners.

However, researchers still persevere in their work. One such researcher is the painter **Vigan Nimani**, who has been researching and rediscovering long-forgotten picture postcards, tourist catalogues, geographic-political publications, photographs and other materials which still preserve the socialist *images* of Yugoslavia, meticulously transposing them into oils on canvas. Such a visual transgression often tells us more about artistic research as a form of thinking, and also about artistic practice as a possibility of putting up resistance to the dominant cultural-artistic models.

Many workers’ holiday resorts, once an important element of the socialist emancipation of workers, which was developed from 1946 by means of introducing the category of paid leave, have suffered a similar fate. These holiday resorts, concentrated on the Adriatic coast, were built by many enterprises, institutions and organisations such as trade unions. Ines Tanović and Boriša Mraović (**Crvena**), within the framework of the text and eponymous research project – “The Contradictions of the Break-up. The Working People, Organised Holidays and Indivisible Remains” – featured in the exhibition, follow the examples of the development and slow disappearance of these trade union holiday resorts to be found in the Municipality of Gradac, Croatia. The rise of workers’ holiday resorts, experienced in the first decades of socialism, was slowly overshadowed in

the 1960's by commercial tourism, which became an important source of foreign currency for the state. The more the market penetrated the country, the less important workers' holiday resorts became. Due to different pressures, many of these resorts were closed down during the 1980's, whereas in the 1990's they provided shelter for refugees from the parts of Yugoslavia affected by war. Today, many organisations are engaged in a legal battle with a view to recovering their holiday resorts, and workers are left with the option of going on holiday under commercial conditions, that is, if they can afford to do so at all.

The demands for industrial development and economic growth, youth work actions, the socialist development of society, a change of ownership structures, social transformation and many other efforts aimed at emancipation could not abolish, neither all at once nor structurally, many beliefs, traditions, historical heritages, habits, cultural models that had been established for centuries, of which perhaps the most complex one was the problem of patriarchy. If there is an example providing a clear and unequivocal view of the gap between socialist ideals and social reality, it is the issue of the social position of women; that is what the video work "Drugarice [Friends]", produced by the art duo Doplgenger, is all about – within the framework of the factory complex, caught inside family constrictions, torn apart by (unpaid) household work, child care, being caregivers, nurses, breadwinners, housekeepers. Torn identities, broken and scattered everywhere, both were and were not the subject of public discussions, issues that led to debates and conflicts. Equality before the law and at least a nominal projection of equal opportunities still left certain spheres of the economy and politics, as well as cultural production, as exclusively male privileges. **Isidora Ilić** and **Boško Prostran**, members of the above-mentioned duo Doplgenger, in their text entitled "Yugoslav Socialism on Film: Yugoslav Self-management and Women", write about one of the key representational and symbolic spaces of social imagination, the film-making practice. Through an analysis of the film content in the period between 1947 and 1974, and also by gaining insight into the structural logic of film production, where women were absolutely underrepresented as film directors, they posit the thesis about the failure of (socialist) film to deal structurally with the problem of women's emancipation, their life, everyday existence and all those repetitive actions hidden in the space of their *privacy*.

The issue of society's dealing with the problem of women's emancipation within the framework of Yugoslav socialism is even more valid when one takes into consideration how many women, textile workers, participated in the overall industrial production. In the places where textile industry was developed, as was the case with the fashion industry

“Astibo” in Štip, dealt with by **Ivana Vaseva** in her text “Red Is Our Flag That Proudly Flutters in the Wind: The Cultural Emancipation of Workers and the Culture of Work in the Fashion Industry ‘Astibo’ in Štip in the 1970’s and 1980’s”; this issue was undoubtedly debated, which is testified to by the development of an entire infrastructure for educational and cultural-artistic production. Literary and debating events, theatrical performances, exhibitions, concerts of rock, popular and folk music, professional and amateur production, a paper published by the factory, and the like, testify to the fact that, despite frequent divergences “between theory and practice”, the issue of the “culture of work”, “workers’ culture”, “amateur cultural production” was very much in the focus of interest (of the working people). It was in this sense that the artistic intervention “Textile and Sorrow: A List of Working People as a (Political) Space for Collective Action” by **Filip Jovanovski** was pondered; in cooperation with Ivana Vaseva, he realised it through the medium of a (workers’) paper, whose editors were the workers currently employed with the diminished privatised parts of the former socially-owned companies “Makedonka” and “Astibo” from Štip, as well as activists of the initiative “Loud Textile Worker”. By stressing the production process and the need for developing a common space for discussing issues that are essential to them, related to work and everyday life, and also by raising issues connected with organising textile workers in Štip and its environs, this project, for a start, created a space for thinking within the (capitalist) way of production.

It would appear that this was done to a much greater degree and in a more articulated manner than in the sphere of “elite” culture, as evidenced by the practice of the NIN Award. The text of **Boris Postnikov** speaks about the period of the turbulent 1980’s as a “chronicle of disintegration in ten NIN awards”. That literary production evidently had its own logics of existence, inherent to postmodernist literary canons and events, and no less importantly, to market-(proto)capitalist logics of production; there was almost no mention of the heated socio-political events, the increasingly intense class antagonisms, increasingly frequent workers’ strikes, events directly witnessed by the authors who were the recipients of the award (only one of whom was female!). If they did speak out about something specific, theirs were narratives that, as Postnikov points out, ranged from an ethno-cultural reinterpretation of class events, through insistence on irreconcilable national differences, to totalitarian presentations of Yugoslav socialism.

However, there are different examples to be found. They show that the utilitarian character of the artistic production within socialist society was of importance, and also that in this way art became an integrative part of the “modernity” of society and the general image of progress.

Under what conditions was art production realised, who initiated it and who implemented it, in what way and for whom? Those are the questions raised by the art work of **Majlinda Hoxha** entitled “Grand Hotel”. Proceeding from the history of the hotel itself as a symbol of the socialist development of Priština, and also of the process of its deterioration and privatisation during the 1990’s and after 2000, her research concentrates on the fate of the hotel’s art collection, which adorned the walls of its many rooms and halls, made up of works commissioned from local artists for years.

That there existed a different way of thinking politics, the economy and culture is testified to by the example of **The Non-Aligned Countries’ Art Gallery “Josip Broz Tito”** in Podgorica and its rich art collection, which still preserves and documents many artefacts originating from “non-aligned” countries. The opening of this gallery in the mid-1980’s, when the economy was losing its momentum, may be viewed as an attempt of socialist Yugoslavia to maintain its foreign relations role through the sphere of culture.

That is why the key issue of the relationship between the socialist system and cultural-artistic production is the question raised by **Rade Pantić** in his text entitled “From Culture in ‘Socialism’ towards Socialist Culture” – is every cultural production coming into being in socialism necessarily – socialist? Insisting on analysing the class conflicts in society and raising the question of the role of cultural workers in these struggles, he points out that the dilemma of autonomous art, as opposed to politically inclined art (around which the entire discursive framework related to the “conflict on the Left” was structured) was actually a false one – in the final analysis, it served essentially to block the development of a truly democratic socialist culture. Only by bypassing the thus polarised dynamics is it possible to answer the above question about socialist culture, to go back and see which cultural-artistic production (the educational one must be included here!) participated in the production of socialism, and which one in the reproduction of the domination of the capitalist logic.

### A collective act

The development of the very concept of the exhibition, the production of the works and research projects presented, as well as this publication and the final realisation of the entire project, mostly represent the collective work of a group that was formed during the first (research) phase of the project. The group is made up of artists and researchers who, in their work so far, have already dealt with the topics initiated by this project or wished to initiate new research and activities related to the said



issues. The group thus formed, together with curators and project organisers, participated in a number of discursive programmes (workshops, seminars, lectures, open-air programmes and presentations) that unfolded over a period of one year, within the framework of which the basic topics of the project were further considered, joint views were formed and various possibilities of communicating them through the accompanying exhibition and publication were explored.

The overall complexity of a social system certainly cannot be presented within the framework of an exhibition and/or a publication, especially taking into consideration the production limitations of the project framework. Thus the results of this project represent merely a part of the possible topics and approaches that we can use for the purpose of understanding the contradictions of Yugoslav socialism. It is important to point out that, although individual investigations have their analytical basis in specific “case studies” related to various spheres of social activities, after all, they all converge in certain joint hypotheses that frame the entire project, the exhibition and the accompanying publication. They reflect the overall complexity of the approach to dealing with the problem of Yugoslavia, not fearing potentially opposed and conflictual positions, within a broad spectrum of contemporary research on the Left. In other words, this exhibition and publication constitute an invitation to a discussion on socialist Yugoslavia from the perspective of the Left, including a discussion within the sphere of culture, which is still the hegemonic space of liberal ideology coupled with nationalist policies.

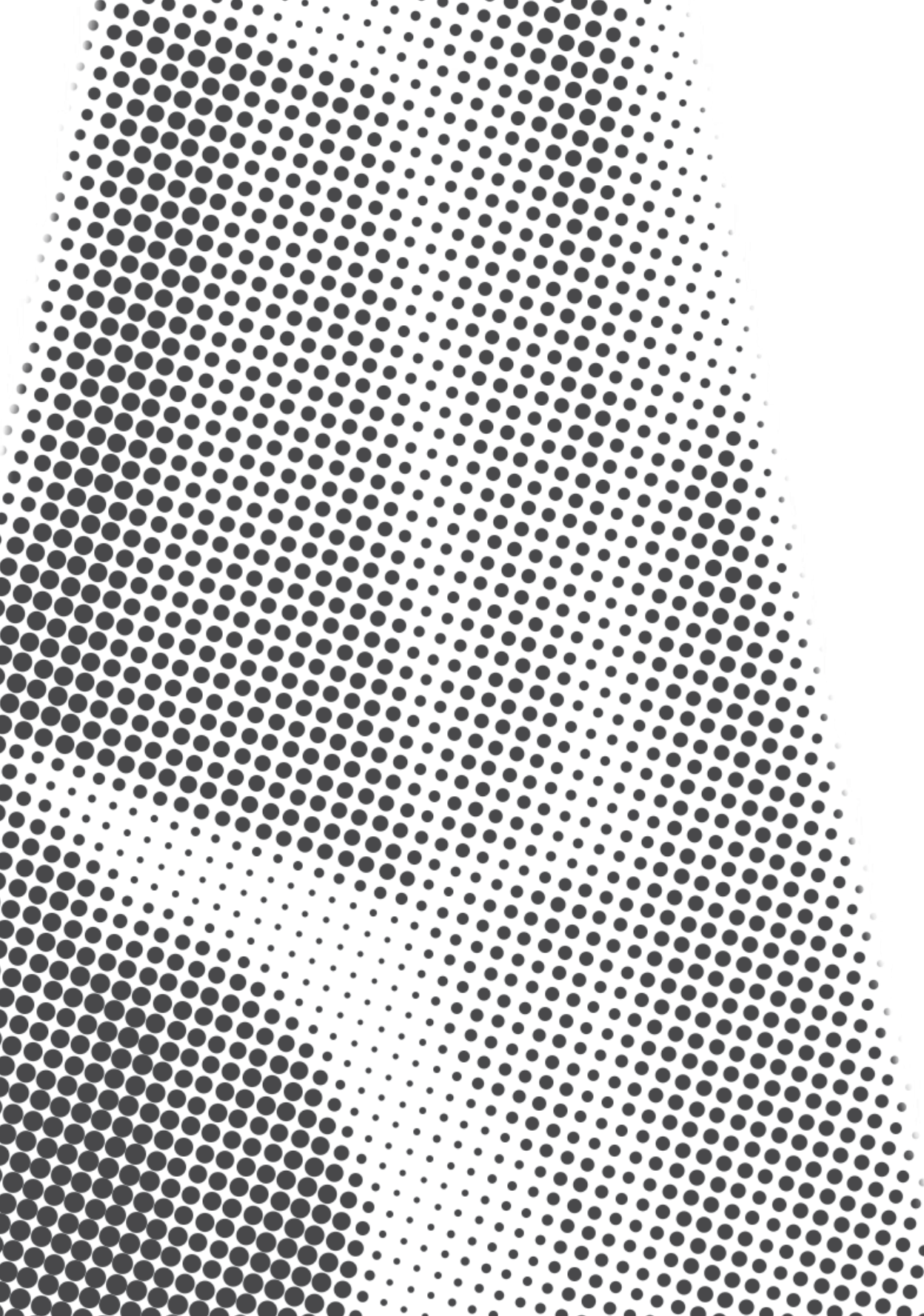
The project methodology is based on our experience of many years in similar work formats, which aims to include various actors interested in a particular research area and collective work. We believe that involving people with different experiences, knowledge, professional orientation and interests is of key importance for creating the possibility of a collective thinking of issues related to different (regional) cultural, economic and political relations.

We present the results of the work on the project in two equally important representational formats: that of an exhibition and that of an accompanying publication, which are directly related, but are simultaneously conceived for independent *reading*.

The publication in front of you aims to provide a discursive framework for the eponymous exhibition, to deepen and critically analyse the issues that we raise throughout the project, to position a (new) theoretical framework and to offer new readings of the complex socio-political events dealt with. What should be clear to the readers is that, through this exhibition and the accompanying publication, we do not wish to and cannot make anything in the way of a rounded-off conclusion, but offer

solely unfinished hypotheses, the initial assumptions for future investigations that will approach the topic of socialist Yugoslavia from a critical, materialist and class perspective.

But there are also political intentions behind our work on this project. Even though Yugoslav socialism and its emancipatory achievements cannot be transposed to the present time merely by using the *copy/paste* function, we can still learn certain political lessons – at least one of them has to do with the necessity of struggle as an organised collective act aimed towards creating a new society of freedom, equality and solidarity.





# Analyses





Marko Miletić, House of Revolution Nikšić, 2017

DOMAGOJ MIHALJEVIĆ

# In search for the lost future

“Arrogance is, in a way, a natural flaw of all those who come after and do not have to stand, face to face, with the chaos and contingency of the historical reality, but rather look over their shoulder to its posthumous order, those who without any personal merit obtain the privilege to be its judges. A specific kind of that arrogance in our post-communist times, reflects in an omnipresent conviction that the protagonists of our communist past saw the world through ideological glasses, so – twisted, while we see today that same world as it really is. Under that presumption, the difference between us and them, between our present and their past, becomes the difference between truth and delusion. We are, of course, those who allegedly know the truth. As opposed to them who are delusional in their ideological illusions.”

Boris Buden

Every revolution opens the whole historical continuum.<sup>1</sup> Its creative forces get inspiration from the future and set the basis for a new society but at the same time, they change the past. Nothing remains intact in this process and nothing is lost. In every revolutionary step forward, the past gets a chance for redemption. All the betrayed hopes of the past generations in the revolutionary act get a possibility of another life but in a new form. All that once was promised and foreseen can all of a sudden be revived in a more progressive appearance. Revolutionary armies in their

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**1** Broader version of the analysis from this text can be found in: „Zbogom avangardo: na razvalinama jugoslavenske socijalističke modernizacije.“ Belgrade: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Southeast Europe.

march against outdated institutions and oppressive social relations not only vanquish the hated enemy but also build a bridge above the seemingly unbridgeable abyss of the past and the future.

In the region of Yugoslavia, the door of the future had already opened once. And the past had been redeemed. The revolutionary victory won in the World War II set the basis for an overall transformation of the society and gave a new life to the idea of Yugoslavism. In the period of the centralised monarchy system of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) the idea of Yugoslavism served as a cover for the rule of Serbian bourgeoisie, with an ancillary support of those from Croatia and Slovenia. After the partisans' victory under the leadership of the Communist Party, that idea got an opportunity for a new life.

That road was not by any means univocal nor harmonious, however it led to big modernising leaps. It is not only about whether the dominant agricultural structure of economy quickly gave way to industrial plants, but the transformation encompassed all the spheres of social life. Whole generations learned how to read and write, not under the candle flame but under the light of a bulb. Electricity and water arrived in numerous households, the roads were built, as well as the railways, bridges, settlements, kindergartens, schools, hospitals, house of culture, theatres, cinemas...

Describing his impressions from an excursion to the youth [youth labour actions of constructing, translator's note] railway line Brčko-Banovići, Krleža, inspired, wrote about "digging a tunnel through the darkest medieval age of our past". He wrote that "in the grave of one cursed past, children have appeared with torches in their hands and like a real relay race of the centuries, they carry the light through our darkness and they will pass on this light to the future generations". The youth that "liberated itself from supernatural presuppositions and realised that the world hadn't been created by the image of supernatural notions but that it had been the other way around (Krleža, 1979: 109)." All that modernising verve was started with the aim of development and progress. In the meanwhile many factories, houses of culture and cinemas were destroyed, closed or repurposed in the process of "adaptation to the market" and public institutions such as hospitals and universities were commercialised. It is impossible to relive a better past, nevertheless the past is a good selection of lessons about what can still be useful nowadays. Those are the elements of the future in the past and maybe they will help us on our way to the future.



### **Creation of Yugoslavia as an emancipatory state**

The People's Liberation Struggle represented not only the victory against fascist occupation and domestic enemies but also a revolutionary act of class victory of the people's front and disempowerment of bourgeoisie. A federal system of people's equality was established, as a socialist answer to unitarian organisation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This was initiated in the middle of the war, at the end of November 1943 during the Second Session of Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia.

Boris Buden has very well noticed that "people and peoples of ex-Yugoslavia did not unite because of any ethnic closeness, or tradition and perspective of Yugoslavism, but solely on the basis of a common struggle against fascism. That struggle, and not some common or close, ethnic identity, is the reason why they make one Yugoslav people. Second, communist Yugoslavia is purely emancipatory – and not identitarian – community. And one more thing, that the Yugoslav people did not build its political institutions from the logic of sovereignty (by inheriting it from the monarchs, or from the Yugoslav nationalism of the first Yugoslavia), but actually through radical negation of that concept, namely, from a revolutionary-democratic idea of council. The second Yugoslavia is not established as a national state, but as a republic of councils (Buden, 2003: 54)."

The socialist and national principle of state organisation was satisfied by that: Yugoslav territory was divided into republics (nations), but that territory was governed directly (by electing municipality representatives in the whole country and by vertical hierarchy of assembly). Therefore, we can freely say that the Yugoslav federal state was created as an "emancipatory" state, an emancipatory frame that granted rights and freedoms to all the peoples and nationalities living in its republics and autonomous provinces. Yugoslavia did not have its people, there is not a Yugoslav nation which would be sovereign on its territory. Its people are a heterogeneous subject composed of different social layers (workers, peasants, intelligentsia, public servants, entrepreneurs) which existed in its republics (nations). Yugoslav nation is, in Krleža's words, "fleets of nations and classes" that decides on their own destiny through an assembly model. At least that was how it had been imagined in theory because the actual realisation was far below democratic proclamations.

At the moment when Yugoslavia entered the final phase of its destruction between 1990 and 1992, the process of forming national (identitarian) states through parliamentary elections started. That is the moment of forming the nation from the "logic of sovereignty", of the nation

that had its own sovereign political representatives. Yugoslav executive government (whose carrier at that moment in 1990 was Ante Marković) could not respond to that because it was not sovereign, it could not refer to anyone, it did not have its own people because it had been formed from a completely different logic – emancipatory logic of revolutionary people’s councils, formed during the antifascist struggle. Those who still believed in Yugoslavia (as many as they were) could only watch the brutal political fight over control of economic resources between newly formed national sovereigns.

Yugoslav peoples lived in republics that represented founding nations by which Lenin’s principle (the right of a people to constitute itself politically and to govern its territory) was used in order to solve heavily burdened national question. Namely, the nation in the leninist tradition is a historical and economical space (with culturally defined collective consciousness and people’s sense of unity) that has the right to its own administration. Yet, Yugoslav republics were not nationally homogenous. Slovenia was the only exception, with the national structure close to a full national homogeneity. Elsewhere, the national structure was much more heterogenous, which was then recognised in the republics’ constitutions as well. All that national difference could create conditions for an escalation of a national conflict (which is what happened at the end) but as long as there was a stable federal frame that (at the least) grants and provides the social and economic rights to the majority of the citizens of Yugoslavia, the state and party leadership can compensate these conflicts. As much as that system could achieve economic stability and redistribution from richer regions towards the poorer ones, to that extent it builds the foundations for peace and prosperity.

### **Contested reproduction in Yugoslav system**

A whole library of works has been written about the political and economic processes in Yugoslavia, nonetheless many questions still remain without answers. Connecting research and approach of Michael Lebowitz and Susan Woodward, is probably a good step in clarifying many unclear points. Their studies are mutually complementary to a great extent so it makes sense to connect them in order to understand more clearly and systematically the Yugoslav political and economic system, and through that system, to understand socialist systems in general.

In the book *The Contradictions of Real Socialism* Michael Lebowitz suggests that we analyse “real socialist” systems as systems of contested reproduction. Such a system is defined by three logics of (social) relations of production which are mutually intertwined, conflicted and

“interpenetrate” each other and which are deformed in that process: the logic of vanguard, the logic of working class and the logic of capital.

“The logic of vanguard” is in the centre: the Communist Party that politically organises the economic interests of working class, chooses strategies that reflect its organisational resources, defeats the opponents, cancels the capitalist (social) relations of production, shapes the strategy for creating a socialist system and finally it creates and leads the socialist system. Taking into consideration that the Communist Party is inseparable from broader working tiers, they establish between them a social contract by which the working class accepts the lead of the party and the party grants the security of work and salaries.

Workers’ discontent and opposing the vanguard show that there is a “logic of the working class”. This logic is defined by a sense for justice, a co-called moral economy of the working class. However, this sense for justice cannot find its political expression, so the logic of the working class is pushed aside and is being deformed under the influence of the party (the alienation of the workers from political system grows) and the logic of capital (workers internalise market subordination to the principle of efficacy).

Another inevitable logic is the “logic of capital” whose carriers are managers and economists (as experts of the system). With the strengthening of market elements within the system and the growth of the influence of managers and economists, this logic becomes more and more noticeable. Nevertheless, under the influence of the vanguard of the party, this logic as well is deformed and does not reflect the logic of capital that is present in western capitalist societies.

As opposed to the Lebowitz’s abstract frame, in her book *Socialist Unemployment*, Susan Woodward offers a more concrete analytical approach, based on historical study of Yugoslav political economy. We consider that this approach can successfully complete Lebowitz’s frame. The book *Socialist Unemployment* is a major work not only for understanding Yugoslav political and economic system, but also for thinking about socialist systems in general. Woodward emphasises the “hybridity” of Yugoslav system (it’s neither market system nor planned one) in which different elements are present, but she does not tackle the conceptualisation of the system on an abstract level as Lebowitz does. However, her analysis greatly confirms Lebowitz’s abstract frame.

Woodward also starts from the political project of the vanguard of the party that organises workers, resources, confronts the enemies of the people and shapes the socialist project for structural change (for abolishing capitalism, and building socialist society). The central place of her analysis are the conflicts within the vanguard of the party about adequate

strategy for growth, these conflicts being under influence of constantly changing international relations. As these circumstances change, so change the themes of the debates, conflicts and changes in the strategy of accumulation.

The key contribution of Susan Woodward is the influence of the internationalisation of market (and global system of the accumulation of the capital) to political adopting of the strategy of growth (accumulation). Lebowitz's analysis neglects the influence of the international market on internal dynamics within socialist system and this is why it makes sense to broaden his abstract scheme. The dynamics of contested logics cannot be understood without the influence of the international level. Since the openness towards the international market was more central and more important for functioning of Yugoslav economy, therefore the consequences in the international arena had a much bigger influence on the Yugoslav system than it was the case in other communist countries.

### **The logic of the vanguard**

In socialist systems political competition does not follow the market logic that exists in western capitalist democracies. There, the political competition takes place between social-democrat (liberal) and conservative (nationalistic) parties which should represent the interests of their political body (workers, middle class or capital). Political conflict in a socialist system does not function in that way. Not only because it is one-party system but also because its structure is conceived in a completely different manner. As we have said, the vanguard party realises a socialist project in which there is no more conflict of the labour and the capital (neither the conflict of their political representatives as in capitalist system) because the capitalist class loses power. Given the fact that the principles of the socialist project are expressed through social development and national independence, the conflicts of the party occur around the politics for economic growth, around the redistribution of the products, money (foreign currency) and loans, as well as around the role of the army and request of defence in economy.

Such political dynamics were ongoing in Yugoslavia. Debates about economic policies took part in state bodies in charge of economy (e.g. Economic Council of Yugoslav government), the Federal institute for economic planning, chambers of commerce, unions and local government bodies. The party's fractions were fighting for the control over the direction of investments but not only in order to make their rule more secure. Even though the motivation of political sustainability was always present, they wanted, above all, to conduct a certain economic strategy, a

particular set of policies best adapted to the international conditions and with the biggest number of positive economic effects.

The party's vanguard adapted to the conditions of the international market and cold war policy with two basic strategies: reform strategy ("liberal") and defence strategy ("developmental"). After the period of forming the state was finished and after it became clear that the international arena was a basic frame for development of Yugoslav economy, reformists (liberals) always had an advantage. Their strategy was based on export sector, development of retail market, incentive of the light industry, agricultural economies and consumer goods. Nevertheless, the challenges of the security in cold war positioning meant also a constant orientation towards major goods, primary industry, military equipment, production of strategic food items and other primary products.

Those strategies were in the middle of conflicts within the party because the loans that were offered at the international market were not sufficient to satisfy the advocates of both sides. It was always possible to make a compromise between them as long as there was enough financial manoeuvre space. By taking loans abroad, the space for compromise was secured as well as the space for a consequent development of certain regions (even though not at the same pace and intensity). At the moment when debts should be payed, the reform strategy actually became openly liberal and the basic way to respond to the requests of international creditors for restructuring economy. The party's vanguard abandoned more and more the last elements of socialist programme and fully accepted and conducted the logic of capital under the influence of the International Monetary Fund.

However, while the party vanguard watched the new shiny world from the perspective of capital, the military and the poor regions in which heavy industry was concentrated (with small chances on the global market) saw the world with different eyes. The military saw loss of privileges and the inhabitants of the poor regions saw loss of basic existential conditions. Since the economic distribution between the regions had strong national characteristics, such a situation in the struggle for political control over resources gave a huge space for mobilising and manipulation. And while the political leadership of Slovenia, then Croatia as well, strived to escape as quickly as possible from the torn Yugoslav state, for other, poorer republics, it was not so easy to leave the community. On any of the sides, the struggle for political future did not have the characteristics of a progressive programme. That struggle is based on a fatal nationalistic historicism and pervaded with a commemorative inspiration by defeated forces from the World War II. The logic of capital had to lean on the most regressive nationalism, in order to establish a full power over society and

economy. Finally, the economic crisis opened up a space for the structural economic problems to be translated into nationalistic terms, which only escalated from the beginning of the 1980s.

The change of politics does not only presuppose the organisational and regulatory change in economy (e.g. extending banks' authorisation to decide upon investments from the middle of 1990's or regulating import and export through price indexes) but also a change of state institutions. Therefore, the state institutions in Yugoslavia never stabilised because the politics and economy continuously depended on the conditions in the international arena (financing, external commerce, security threats) and on the unavoidable dilemmas of adapting. Cold War balancing between three camps (knowing that Yugoslav politics led the camps of the non-aligned) caused numerous conflicts about often contradictory economic and security principles. The size of Yugoslavia was simply too small for it to internalise all the external shocks in the process of the internationalisation of the market and securing a peaceful co-existence. Its promethean international character was more of a relative weakness from which enormous vulnerability to international circumstances and strengthening of inner conflict resulted.

### **The Logic of the Working Class**

The Yugoslav system resulted from the antifascist struggle and it promised emancipation to the workers through the socialist project of development and independence. This was not only visible from the establishing self-management but emancipation was also promised (at least nominally) by broad democratic system of participation organised through assembly bodies and different political forums. However, the dominant position of vanguard did not allow for an independent position of the workers nor did it incite their political participation. That became clear soon after the formative period of the state when organisations of the people's front were abolished or passivised. The economy did not have to rely on the mobilising incentive of labour any more, so the need for massive participation disappeared.

Still, the consequences of passivisation went further than the economic sphere, because when the people's fronts were abolished, the much broader emancipation incentives also ceased. Work of the *Anti-fašistički front žena* (AFŽ, Women's Antifascist Front) had not only mobilised women to work in industry and agriculture, it had also been of key importance for health protection and cultural and educational work on literacy of women and upbringing of children, and especially care for the war orphans. Existence of such an organisation gave women a polit-

ical role in the society development, nonetheless, AFŽ was abolished in 1953. The League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia survived, but it lost its political basis and with time it became the mechanism for realisation of career ambitions.

The representative state system was primarily directed towards confirming the decisions made at the top of the party bodies. That only brought to alienation of workers from production and broader political process. The reason for such a subordinated position of workers lay in the fact that the power of the party vanguard did not depend on the (dis)content of workers and their protests but above all on the political and economic conditions in the international arena. As long as the political leadership could secure resources for economic growth and investments in social standard, the question of the position of workers and their attitudes about politics and society were not important.

Workers were reduced to their productive role, to how much they can contribute through their labour in the enterprise, while the widest development of human capacities was not in the focus of the vanguard. In this way, the logic of the vanguard deformed the working layers of the society because it excluded them from the political process, deprived them of the power of participating in the political questions, destroyed the feeling of creating the society, disabled their contribution and self-development, pushed them into apathy and condemned the social community to political impotency. These consequences are felt even today.

It was not only the logic of vanguard that deformed workers, their position was also under a strong pressure of the logic of capital. Dušan Bilandžić mentioned that the workers' self-mangement never succeeded in realising its normative aims, those of workers' initiative in self-management process, neither did the party and union organisation incite such activism, nor did they become a support for social action of workers. Strengthening self-management was never in the interest of political and economic structures, only the dosing of workers' initiative and participation depending on what was the development strategy. Therefore, it was not unusual that workers entered tactical cooperation with the managers. "In the 1960s, the analysis showed that work organisations are managed by management structures and self-mangement organs are more of participating in that process. The researchers emphasised that they are *less political organs of the class and more part of the business-managing mechanism of the company* (Bilandžić, 1985: 399)."

Nonetheless, regardless of their alienated political and economic position, workers unambiguously showed with their behaviour that they care about having a better life, about the ideas that the system itself promised. Michael Lebowitz underlines that in the very behaviour of the

workers, there was an ever-present specific moral economy. Those are moral stances about what is good, right and fair. “The right of everyone to subsistence and growing living standards, the importance of stable prices and full employment, the orientation toward egalitarianism (and thus low income differentials) – all these were part of the norms that formed the moral economy of the working class in Real Socialism. This popular consensus of justice and fairness was regularly reproduced and thus strengthened as the result of feedback when deviations from an apparent equilibrium occurred (Lebowitz, 2012: 147).” In such behaviour of the working layers, according to Lebowitz, the beginnings of the socialist alternative are visible.

On the contrary to working class’ orientation towards moral economy as the starting point of the socialist alternative, the Yugoslav vanguard relied on the international conditions and that meant the global logic of capital. Stability of the system, and with that the dominant position of the party’s vanguard, depended above all on the external situation. In the moment when the situation of the international market became highly unfavourable at the beginning of the 1980’s, which then reflected Yugoslav economic and social instability. The party’s vanguard started to lose the solid ground under their feet which pushed the whole system towards the uncertainty. It could not ensure loans, finance social development and improve life standard anymore. It could not even reach a consensus within itself.

The federal emancipatory frame within the conditions of the economic crisis was becoming more and more unstable because it could not provide the minimum of emancipation. There was less and less of what was keeping Yugoslavia together. Those were the conditions in which political authority moved on to the lower level, to the level of republic and finally to the representatives of the dominant nation in the republic. In the end, those were the consequences of the fact that the federal system did not develop an internal democratic support (and democratic integration) but only relied on the external economic strategies of the party’s vanguard. When they started to have negative effects and to destabilise the system, all of the cumulated social discontent and national divides and tensions – became the resources in the political fight for power and economic control.

During the 1980’s, the party’s technocrats in the Yugoslav government relied completely on the reform “liberal” strategy, but at that moment these reforms were explicitly market reforms and openly directed against the interests of all the working layers. However, the stabilising program of austerity and debt pay off did not stabilise the economy but rather worked to completely abolish the self-management system and fi-



nally made privatisation possible. Instead of the redistribution in favour of the poor and spreading solidarity between the regions, latent conflicts between socialist communities turned into open tensions suitable for political exploitation.

Urban middle tiers were facing an economic stagnation, feeling disdain towards those whom they perceived as an obstacle to their expectations and success. At the first place, those were the rural migrants who were coming in search of a job and better life. Industrial workers were exposed to increasing threats of unemployment and mutual competition. The rural population in agricultural areas was facing poverty and lack of investments. They were treated as second-grade citizens which contributed to their feelings of inferiority and discontent. All of these lines of tension had strong national and territorial dimensions, which pushed nationalistic solutions of the fight for power and economic control during the 1980's crisis to the forefront of the party conflicts.

Workers were politically disarmed in this fight. The question of who will organise the unemployed, dissatisfied, frustrated and angry was opened wide during the 1980's. Political problems asked for their ideological articulation. And the answer was brought by the political forces that formulated the discontent in nationalistic terms and under that seducing veil prepared transformation into a full-blooded capitalist society. Social marginalised and organisationally weakened, workers found themselves in the middle of the political conflict on which they had no influence but in which they will be mercilessly dragged. "The moral economy of the working class itself was assaulted as the political economy of capital advanced. (Lebowitz, 2012: 139)."

### **The logic of capital**

The party's vanguard has the role of an orchestra conductor in socialist societies, explains Lebowitz. It is the only one that has an overview of the whole ensemble, sees their relations and hears the harmony of their music. The party's vanguard has universal character and is the only one that can make sure there is a well-functioning cooperation of all the parts of a society. The logic of capital is partial and embodied by managers. They focus only on the production unit they manage, seeking to maximise the business result. The dominant strategy of the party, one of adapting to the international conditions, opened the way to their power, particularly during the 1960's when the Yugoslav government asked for acceptance into GATT (Yugoslavia was accepted in 1966).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Flaherty, 1988 – an excellent work of about political and economic dynamics between 1950 and 1980.

At that time, the party that was at its strong phase, relied on reformist “liberal” instruments that were supposed to increase productivity, speed up technological progress, provide foreign currency and strengthen social development. The export sector was primarily in focus and there were attempts to make it more competitive on the world market by removing the coefficients and premiums. This application of the reform strategy of growth grew stronger from the middle of 1950s: after the security situation in Europe stabilised and after the process of forming the Yugoslav state was finished, the party orientation towards the external commerce was more and more prevailing (which actually had always been the primary strategy).

This was aimed to incite the investments in the export light industry, to increase the scope of the production, accumulate the foreign currency and to establish the contact for transfer of the advanced technology. This was particularly visible in the licence production of consumers goods (e.g. home appliances or television sets), automobiles, trains, planes and tanks. The reform strategy had its biggest support in the regions where there were strong bases of manufacturing and capital industry oriented towards export.

It is usually considered that the reform strategy was mostly advocated by Croatian and Slovenian politicians but the reformists from Serbia and Macedonia gave their support as well. Croatia and Slovenia were eventually in a better position because of inherited communication and transport connections with western Europe, but the reform strategy was favourable for industrial centres in other republics as well. In the poor regions where raw material production and heavy industry prevailed, there was resistance to this opening, however, through redistribution mechanisms, political compromises were reached. Yet, those mechanisms were objects of reforms in 1960s when the federation withdrew from federal investments to a certain extent and left them to the banks.

The liberal reformists considered that placing the economy under the discipline of the world market gave an incentive to modernisation and the sectors that were the most successful on the world market would expand their growth on the whole economy. Successful export sectors would also provide the foreign currency for import of the scarce goods. They also emphasised that the pressure of international competition would result with faster development of the richer regions and it would also be beneficial for the poorer regions, since the redistributive role of the plan was too bureaucratic. Without commerce protections, industrial development under the influence of the foreign market was supposed to result with higher productivity. But it was also supposed to bring political stability: market reforms and broader decentralisation would alleviate

political tensions and ensure the continuity of the one-party system.

The cited set of arguments in favour of market adaptation was no less than political theology. However, the faith did not respond back: the state was the whole time facing commerce deficits and external debt. Instead of stable international participation, the economy reproduced business cycles in the global accumulation of capital. Instead of the growth of the social welfare, the inequalities increased: between workers and managers, between companies, between sectors, between industrial branches and between regions. Instead of building solidarity social communities, the social divides escalated.

During 1960s the logic of capital started penetrating socio-economic relations and that could no longer be stopped. Dušan Bilandžić emphasises that “the fetish of ‘techno-economic structure’ was born and it was declared the main carrier of the social development. More and more often the slogan: ‘Give us free hands and we will achieve business efficacy, we will ensure fast economic development and high standard’ could be heard. In relation to that, it was required that the organisation of the League of Communist of Yugoslavia and the unions did not intervene in the process of managing companies (Bilandžić, 1985: 401).” By the end of 1960s, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia became “a craft union of managers and politicians (Woodward, 1995: 325).” Workers and farmers lost the majority in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Striving to adapt to the international circumstances, the party vanguard depended more and more on those who had an authority in the economy. Politics had to rely on managers as carriers of the influence on the level of company, municipality and region. The logic of capital deformed the logic of the vanguard and strengthened the political position of managers.

At the end of 1960s, the accumulated social contradictions surfaced at full strength. The state and party leadership lost control for a short time in that process and felt it could lose its position. The fear of a possible loss of power caused a repressive reaction. At the beginning of 1970s, the party vanguard confirmed its power by an offensive against students, workers, republic leadership, but also managers. It does not mean that the party’s vanguard was not influenced by the logic of capital but only that this logic still had not established full control. It would happen a decade later, during 1980s under escalated international circumstances, the logic of capital would fully take over the political decisions of the vanguard.

Yet, Lebowitz warns that the managers are not capitalists. They “do contain within them the *logic of capital* – just as merchant and moneylending capitalists did before capital was successful in seizing possession of production. Whereas the existing constraints upon the managers

do not permit us to classify them as capitalists, the drive, impulse, the logic of these managers is a different matter. If these income-maximizing managers struggle to remove the constraints placed upon them—for example, specific output targets, designated suppliers and customers, the appropriation of enterprise profits, the inability to discipline or fire workers, or to introduce freely new methods of production, what is this drive if not the logic of capital? Expressing that logic is the mantra – *Free capital!* (Lebowitz, 2012: 90-91).”

### **On the threshold of the future?**

In the summer issue of *The National Interest* in 1989, Francis Fukuyama, an American conservative political scientist, set an ambitious thesis about the end of history. At that time, the thesis was still formulated as a question. Three years later, in 1992, when his book *The End of History and the Last Man* was published, the question mark was gone – history had ended. The Berlin Wall fell, the Soviet bloc dissolved, the Cold War ended and western liberalism triumphed. Human ideological development had driven to its last stop: liberal democracy as the last form of human state and globalised capitalist economy.

For Fukuyama it did not mean that there would be no more political conflicts and brutal wars, as there were back then and as there still are around the world, but it meant that their outcomes at best would not be able to surpass the ideal of liberal democracy and full-blooded capitalism. On the contrary, many societies will stay below this standard and will orient themselves towards it as a normative ideal. After the end of history, great ideological struggles from the past which mobilised masses to fight and die for social ideals now were ended. The ideology of Marxism-Leninism was defeated and buried. All that remains are “economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands. In the post-historical period, there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history (Fukuyama, 2003).”

For Fukuyama, as a political and economic conservative, the end of history meant the victorious and non-changing march of capitalism. After his thesis, many reactions from the left followed, trying to demonstrate that the history had not ended and that the fight against capitalism still remained open. However, the left had to face the seemingly invincible power of capital, only from the socialist perspective it unambiguously represented a nightmare. The opponents from the socialist side have always known and still know that the domination of capital has never had anything to do with democracy, not even with the liberal one (because it

dissolves it inexorably) but the destructiveness of capital does not by itself open automatically a way to socialist alternative.

To think outside of what defines capital and to organise ant-capitalist struggle have become an unreachable horizon. In his famous article, the marxist theoretician Frederic Jameson stated that it is “easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism (Jameson, 2003: 76).” And for him, the omnipresent global power of capitalism has become identical to the end of history as subject of action and transformation: the creative power of history to produce a world different from the capitalist one, seems to be exhausted, history as the creator of the new world is no longer able to open the door of the future but stays blocked in what surrounds it.

Jameson could not do anything else but state: “History, we cannot imagine except as an ending, and whose future seems to be nothing but a monotonous repetition of what is already here. The problem is then how to locate radical difference; how to jumpstart the sense of history so that it begins again to transmit feeble signals of time, of otherness, of change, of Utopia. The problem to be solved is that of breaking out of the windless present of the postmodern back into real historical time, and a history made by human beings (ibid: 81).” Jameson proposes to do so but in a way that we as human beings “writing yourself into it [history], but without turning back (ibid: 82).”

So, we do not have a choice but to use all our human engagement in order to force Benjamin’s angel of history to turn his face towards the future.<sup>3</sup> For only the future can redeem accumulated hills of dust and ashes, only the future can retroactively put back the ruins to quietly dwell in the past. Marx’s call from *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* still echoes with the strong sound of fanfares: leave the dead to the dead, the song of revolution comes from the future. Only in this way we can knock on the door of the alternative to the capitalist everyday life, but we have less and less time because inconceivable catastrophes await around the corner.

The beginning of the global financial crisis in 2007/2008, whose consequences had to be repaired by those who had not caused it, for the moment seemed to open a window to the future of the possible. The breaking up of the system and more and more heavy attack of capital to society brought up to gathering of the revolted masses on the squares of the European cities, within American movement *Occupy*, and within the Arab spring. It was requested that the offensive of the capital stops, as well as state repression, and that the dictators fall. The North African dictators have actually fallen but just for the repression system to remain or escalate, while the offensive of capital has year after year become stronger.

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 3 See Benjamin, 1974: 79-91.

Political centre of conservative (nationalistic) and social democrat (liberal) options that conduct the fatal austerity measures, labor intensifications and forced payments of unpayable debts, today is rushing towards a complete breakdown. Even though the political situation is not equalised, the most profit from the European political space obtain those forces that draw their inspiration from the past: from the unbridled xenophobia, conservative fanaticism and nationalistic mythomania. Against them, liberal democracy genuinely looks like a normative ideal and a desirable end of history, but by that we would neglect the conclusion that these regressive forces actually are the child of that suffocating liberal democracy and capitalism – both of which have stripped human beings down to the bones. The impossibility to go beyond the normative of the liberal capitalism, unavoidably opens the way to go below. To fall into the deepest barbarianism. Blocking the alternative of a more just and equal future with more solidarity, the future without class exploitation, with a social production that the society itself would benefit from, finally opens the door to the political collapse and the way to the worst oppression.

It pays off to fight for the socialist alternative, but all that we know about political strategies and tactics from the revolutionary past of the 20th century, today is of a little use. Political and economic conditions of the struggle have fundamentally changed and nothing less than broad democratising structures, based on openness and trust, will be enough for a political success. The time of vanguard Marxism and vanguard socialism is irreversibly behind us. The days have passed when the educated party's vanguard organised the masses and created the future (history), when it was an unquestionable carrier of the strategy of change and creation of the socialist project. That vanguard in the end deformed itself into its complete opposite, into the capitalist vanguard, and it brought the socialist projects of the 20th century to a failure. The school of 20th century socialism had irreversibly ended but not the school of capitalism, now technologically omnipotent and seemingly invincible. Such capitalism that (like never in its history) crushes physical and psychological capacities of the human and destroys the basic ecological conditions of life on Earth.

Discontent escalates, frustration, anger, violence, riot spread, yet the question of resistance remains open just like in 1989: who will organise all those angry, unsatisfied rebels who capital mistreats day after day? On which ideological basis will it be done? Will the class conflict within capitalism again be displaced by increasingly grotesque racists, nationalist and religious obstacles? Or will the progressive anti-capitalist forces succeed in organising the struggle for a socialist future? Where there is injustice, and today it is almost prevailing, there is the basis for the struggle for the justice: understand those who suffer injustice, include them in the struggle, together articulate political interest, forget vanguard impos-

ing of the solution and open the line of conflict with those who defend the interest of capital.

It is possible that the wheel of history cannot be moved as long as the necessary conditions are not fulfilled, but we do not know when those conditions start, therefore there is no wrong moment for the struggle. There is no calendar of optimistic days and vain celebration. On the door of the future, there are no opening hours, society is always invited to break hard locks, and sign in the history as the subject of action, which would make its creative forces resurrect. However, the hope is still a mystery. Facing the past, with our backs turned to the future, we are paralysed as the black void is threatening to swallow us as an insatiable Moloch. Neither noble intentions, nor personal generosity, nor individual ethics will help there. Facing the future will be a collective act or it will not happen. That has to be a collective fight with the end of the history, with the capitalist system as such, an irrefutable proof that the history is still alive and can create a more progressive, free and humane society. The one that the communists had promised long ago.

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From Bojan Mrdenović's work, *We Create Our Path Walking*



ARTAN SADIKU

# From the Core to the Periphery: On the Aesthetic Form of Workers

The ideological separation in Europe that came as a result of the rupture that emerged in the “Eastern part”, which enabled a break with the continuity of bourgeois politics, culture and social organization, represented a proper political terrain for a multitude of various contestations. The most significant difference between these two blocs, which is also a conceptual reference, was present in the aesthetic form that determined the social/political domain. Western liberal capitalist societies continued to “progress” within the political frames set up by bourgeois movements a few centuries ago. It was the concept of the citizen and parliamentary representative democracy, around which the political life oscillated without any contestation of the pertinent mode of production and modes of ownership. In the Eastern bloc, we experienced the most genuine attempt at substituting the inherited political model with a new social reorganization of politics, which would address that which determines it in the last instance – the mode of production. Because it is always the work of the labor that produces – the economy is a necessary manifestation of the labor-time relation, these new political formations appearing in the East structured the politics around the working class as its immediate social reference. Thus, the aesthetic form of the social/political in the Eastern countries made an attempt at being determined by the plane of consistency, which belonged to workers.

The appearance of workers on the historical stage as the dominant visible part of what we call the social represents the first major attempt in the history of humankind at structuring its collectives in the form of a model that constantly evades the terrain of capitalist production – a socialist model. Being absolutely aware of the setbacks that the socialist models experienced in the previous century – mostly relating to the fact that they lapsed and remained within the framework of the state capitalist model, the aesthetic of the social/political was, however, one that was a beneficial setting for moving beyond the capitalist mode. When we use the concept of *aesthetics* to describe the differences between the social/political of the former East and West, we do so in the way in which Rancière describes the presence of aesthetics at the core of politics. Namely, he describes it as a “delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience” (Rancière, 2013: 8). Therefore, the place and the stakes of politics in the socialist countries took the form of the workers’ experience, their visibility and speech. In the countries of the Western bloc, politics was continually shaping itself in the form that excluded the workers’ experience, their visibility and speech.

The transition process in the “East” was aimed at structurally transforming society through a dismantling of the structures that resembled the aesthetics of the social/political of the socialist period. This process was carried out under the guise of a universal promise of freedom, a freedom that was allegedly repressed by the socialist state apparatuses, and which was about to be realized primarily through the implementation of the free market principle, which, as the main societal drive of development, would generate and disseminate freedom throughout society. This promise of freedom performed the substantial ideological exercise of interpellation for individuals who found themselves not only embracing a new ideology, but also representing the apparatuses of its reproduction. The trouble with the use of the term ideology, which the Balkan societies were quite overwhelmed with, was solved through the employment of the already invented vision of the post-ideological societies and world, which, on the other hand, represents the most sublime ideological claim (Žižek 1989: 27-31). The main political ideal in the undertaking of the transition in the “East” fully embarked on the Fukuyaman claim of the end of history, thus providing itself with a universal legitimacy as a result of the prevailing neoliberal ideology across the globe. Thus, a tension was inscribed in the midst of the inherited aesthetic form of the social/political, a tension that aims to remove workers from the social/political domain as a historical plane. This was the main aesthetic performance of

the ideology of the end – the end of workers' visibility and speech.

The ideology of “the end” established itself as a form of obstacle to collective social progress in two ways. Firstly, it introduced the model of individuated subjectivity through the reinstalling of the concept of the citizen – the bearer of the kitsch politics, a politics of variations within simulated interests without a delimited space for any collective. Secondly, it killed every space for imagining and rethinking politics further from the domain of capitalist subjugation – the short-lived experiment reverted back to the old model. One is undoubtedly troubled by the fact of an almost unanimous acceptance in the “East” of the new neoliberal ideology against the previous socialist idea, a fact that immediately signals two subjective possibilities. Firstly, that a proper subject in Althusserian terms had occurred as a result of the socialist ideology, but the political subject was restricted from expressing its free political will at the moment of the collapse of the socialist regime. The second possibility is that the communist ideology had failed to produce the socialist ideological subject, and therefore the system had to rely heavily on repression in order to ensure its proper functioning. This would mean that the socialist subject was already interpellated through the neoliberal ideology, and it is precisely as a result of its ideological reproduction through the subjects that it resulted in the failure of the system. The Althusserian concept of interpellation, which I use to describe the subject as a product of ideology, describes the process through which ideology addresses the abstract pre-ideological subject by what it effectively produces as a subject proper.

### **From “economic necessity” to workers’ invisibility**

Several surveys carried out in Macedonia between 2010 and 2015 showed that 64% of the interviewed citizens did prefer living in the previous system over the current one. The outcome of this survey indicates that the post-socialist subject is also not a (new) subject proper of the neoliberal ideology, since it does not embrace the new society of the free market and it still keeps alive its social sensibility inherited from the previous system, but it has lost its aesthetic form within the social/political. The failure of the previous socialist systems can be located in the aesthetic tension that existed between the workers' plane determining the social/political and the increasing divergence from this setting of the nomenclature that started to resemble the Western capitalist political elites. Thus, the system was dislocating itself from the very aesthetics of the form that brought it into being. The workers who were politically subjectivized through the socialist/communist ideology were still the main plane of the social/political, but the system was increasingly oriented against it. It is

precisely because of this tension that the workers in the “East” requested a political change in the late 1980s. It was the elite of the socialist nomenclature that fabricated this political move through conflicts and crises in order to destroy the existing aesthetics of the form of the workers’ plane in the social/political, the one which had now become their enemy, and restore capitalism at its base.

Once the “East” was successfully reintegrated in the European chains of capitalist production, the kitsch aesthetics came to dominate the social/political domain. The labor is confined to its invisibility, it has no speech and it does not delimitate any place or stake in the politics of the neoliberal regime. But at the core of the economic system, the labor-time relation remains the kernel of its production processes within the social (Postone, 1993:25). So, as long as the workers’ experience which embodies this relation in their physical and psychological existence does not take the aesthetic form determinant of the social/political, the overall system is bound to experience a perpetual crisis. These crises are the inevitable manifestation of the tension that arises from the lack of an aesthetic form in the social/political for the process that takes place at its core – the economic production process. The continued repression of this form – the aesthetics of the workers’ plane in the social/political can never destroy the basic relation of labor-time, but it can intensify the crises that are currently being manifested throughout Europe as genuine crises of the democratic model, liberal values and even the enlightenment heritage. So much are the current European elites intertwined with the interests of capital, that they would rather destroy the mechanism on which they exist than allow workers to re-appear as the collective plane within the social/political.

Under the dominant regime of the capitalist market in Europe, workers are being equally repressed in all the corners of the continent. After the economic crisis of 2008, the “economic necessity” suppressed all other political content, becoming the main conceptual reference of almost all political action, thus affecting the whole of the social/political objectivity. The main gesture of politics, under an act of economic repression, is reduced to merely serving to the capital. Badiou defines the necessity of today’s politics as being tied to a universally dominant denominator – the economy (Badiou: 2001, 30). The most blatant example of the draining of even formal democratic mechanisms under the pressure of the spectacle of the economy took place during the first year of the economic crisis of 2008. In Greece and Italy, the European Troika, as the most prominent agent of the interests of capital in Europe, appointed technical governments in these two countries, in disregard of the popular will.

## **Workers in the Exploitation Union**

The analysis of the dynamics of capital in Europe inevitably reveals a core-periphery relation of economic exploitation. But in the realm of workers all around Europe, this relation plays no role at all. It is so because the whole economic relation between the core and the periphery is established in a domain where the aesthetic form of the plane of workers is lacking in the social/political domain. Thus, workers remain the continual resource for equal exploitation regardless of their country, upon which other unequal relations among countries are built. Being the core country of capital, Germany is always rightfully treated as the main troublemaker in the countries of the European periphery, due to its exporting crises and instability. But in order to do so, the German state had previously secured the competitiveness of its industry by the year 2003 with the adoption of the “Agenda 2010 Reforms”, which included a wage freeze for workers, a reduction of pensions, slashing of medical benefits and a range of other labor market flexibilization measures. It was precisely the German worker that felt the first serious repression in the European continent at a time when the economic crisis was six years ahead. A whole decade after the year 2000, the wages of German workers increased more slowly than the European average. It is exactly because of the wage repression and reduction in labor costs, that the German economy became more competitive and its trade surplus grew to become the world champion relative to the size of its economy. On the other hand, wage growth in the countries of the European south (termed as the periphery in capitalist terms of their relation to the core) put their economies in a tremendously disadvantageous situation compared to the German one. The predatory power of German capital in Europe was made possible only due to the wage repression imposed on the German worker. In an economic space which is not determined by the aesthetic form of the plane of workers, it is due to their centrality in the economic production process, contained in the labor-time relation, that they rotate in the position of the repressed, never in that of the privileged. The relation of the core and the periphery always remains one of capital, not of workers.

The higher level of labor organization and the heritage of labor struggles in the countries of the European south had secured a better wage growth and a better living standard for the workers of this region. But when their economies faced the rising deficits due to the increased presence of German capital, which relied on the spending in these countries (while the spending inside Germany was weaker due to the wage repression), it was the turn of the southern workers to pay the price the German ones had paid earlier. Thus, there ensued austerity measures,

wage cuts and reduction of benefits and pensions throughout Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. Here, the importance of the aesthetic form of the plane of workers in the midst of the social/political becomes the crucial conceptual tool for developing a sustained critique of the trade unionist, social-democratic, legal and regulatory policies aimed at protecting a decent living standard for workers. Under the operations of capital, we never have a workers' paradigm pushing for improvement, but on the contrary, we will always see a reversion towards lower standards, we will see the disciplining of the southern worker according to the model of the German worker. If the economy is organized in a domain which is not of a form that is molded on its basic kernel, that of the labor-time relation, the workers who embody this relation will never be able to avoid the degrading of their life precisely because of the lack of their aesthetic plane, which is their one and only line of simultaneous action and defense. When we lack the aesthetic form of the plane of workers in the social/political, the concept of the citizen, around which the current politics is organized, becomes the totalizing and dictatorial operative word through which the capitalist economic necessity is played out as the political proper. Citizens, in their individuated political role, are the instance through which various models of core-periphery relations are played out, but it is on the backbone of workers that these relations are universally made possible.

### **The (re)invention of the cheap Balkan worker**

One particular problem in the core-periphery relation, which is quite evident in the Balkans, is the exploitation of cheap labor force by foreign investment factories in these countries. And here we should ask the crucial question of what cheap labor actually is. Namely, it represents a localized effect of the repression of the workers' aesthetic plane towards invisibility: the stronger the repression, the cheaper the labor. A legal research conducted in 2010 by the Movement for Social Justice Lenka in Macedonia shows that, of all the revisions of the labor legislation made over a period of two decades, not a single one was towards improving the status of workers (Saveski, Apasiev, Kovachevski i Vasilev, 2010). All that the new neoliberal-transitional state did was to erode the position of workers in relation to the needs and interests of capital. If the neoliberal state is doing the same thing throughout Europe, why it is that in the Balkan countries we have a cheaper labor force than elsewhere? Given the socialist past of these countries, where their societies were defined by the aesthetic form of the workers' plane, the attack on the workers' structures was much more intense than in other European countries, where these continued their struggles and never faced a total assault from the

political forces organized around the neoliberal state. This is the reason why this year in Germany the IG Metall union managed to secure a 28-hour working week, a success that workers in the Balkans cannot even dream of. The intensity of the instruments that had to carry out the ideological waterboarding of the workers in the post-socialist countries was much harsher and cruder, simply because it had to erase any remnant of the aesthetic form of the workers' presence within their plane of visibility. The resulting effect of the increased intensity of this repression is the decreased value of the labor. The less visible it is, the less valued it gets. So, even when Balkan countries attract foreign investors, such as the infamous Draxelmeier<sup>1</sup> in Serbia and Macedonia, the gains of these investments never end up in the workers' pockets due to their underprivileged social/political position. The income that the workers receive in these factories still keeps them below the poverty line. Due to these operations of capital in Europe, Balkan countries have become waste dumps of bad investments, which exploit not only the workers but also the environment and the infrastructure, receiving tax releases and even state subsidies. In the cases where the production lines are dependent on a particular location (eg. the infrastructure, railways, supply and output of materials), capital uses the mechanisms of the European Union to import cheap labor from the Balkans into the locations where their work is required. Thus, the dislocation of labor from one country to another contributes to the tearing apart of the very material for the building of the aesthetic form of the workers' plane. In the countries where this labor is "imported", the "native" workers see the ones from the Balkan countries as a toxic presence threatening their wage standards. In the year 2017 alone, companies from Slovenia, using the A1 forms (work permits) issued by the state of Slovenia, were able to import 46,000 workers from Balkan countries into the European Union. These companies, and in the final analysis the Slovene state, both profited largely on the basis of them being the biggest exporter of foreign workers to the West. The profit of construction companies in Germany from these "imported" workers is between 30 and 50 percent. The ones who were settled as cheap labor in Slovenia were not considered to be workers for the purpose of integrating them into the processes of building the workers' plane, but were dehumanized instead through their victimhood.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Draxelmeier is a German company operating in both Macedonia (2012) and Serbia (2008) through factories that produce wiring systems for the automotive industry intended to supply manufacturers such as Audi, BMW, Cadillac, Jaguar, Land Rover, Maserati, Mercedes-Benz, Porsche and Volkswagen. Several strikes of workers have been repressed by the company, which has also been sued for the bad working conditions of its workers. For further reading: Stojadinovic i Guleva, 2016; Jovanović, Radenković, 2016.

2 For more on the process of constructing the Balkan worker as a helpless victim instead

Perversely, the core-periphery relation is not one of the core states against the periphery ones, it is rather a relation of corporations from the core states with the countries of the periphery. The exploiting of labor is what capital does, but it prefers cheaper labor, and this is where the governments of Balkan countries come to the service of these corporations. If they did not devalue their labor, they would face an increasing unemployment rate, which is always worse than low wages. By the transfer of “German” jobs to the periphery and the Balkans, capital gains terrain in its “host” country (Germany, taken as a signifier of “Western” capital) to discipline its labor to accept lower standards. Thus, we see that, in the relations between the core and the periphery, the only crisis that is experienced is the crisis in the domain of labor. And without the resolution of the tension between the basic relation and the lack of its manifested form – the aesthetic form of the workers’ plane in the social/political, the crisis will remain a perpetual process. It will only oscillate in its manifestations from the housing market to the lack of demand, failing interest rates, lack of capital mobility, loss of gains and the general instability of the economic indicators. As long as this tension is not resolved, the economy will remain more unpredictable than the weather.

### **From the form of the state towards the form of workers**

The persistence of the crisis calls for a simultaneous action of labor throughout Europe. In the periphery, we need more thinking and experimenting with organizing production through the benefits of the technological access and shared knowledge in order to counter the predatory operations of the corporations form the core of capital in the continent. In the core countries, we need an increased demand on the part of the workers, so that the labor base of these corporations increases the domestic costs and thus decreases their international competitiveness. It is only through organized action on the part of labor that capital can be disciplined, in the first phase to a lower level of profit, and not vice versa. But the action of labor without resolving the tension of the basic relation of labor-time and the current social/political form cannot achieve anything significant in the long run. It is only through the resolution of this tension and the appearance of the workers’ plane in the social/political that the basic relation can be transformed towards the devaluing of time. Time, in the capitalist model of production and reproduction, increases its value exponentially, thus putting more and more pressure on labor. In a process of constant devaluing of time, a process that can be pursued only in a social/political model which is determined by the aesthetic form

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of the key element in the productive process, refer to: Vezovnik, 2015.



of the workers' plane, labor is constantly being released from the time pressure, thus increasing its freedom from exploitation. In the early Marx we find everywhere his analysis of the determining role of the mode of production in all that is social, its consciousness and its structure. In order to move to a different mode of production, we need to go through the establishing of the workers' plane, which simultaneously revolutionises the mode of production. In such a process, these two correlate and provide new solutions, which avoid the double risk of falling into political dogmatism or economic speculation.

Looking back at the experiments with socialism of the previous century, we inevitably come to the problem of the state. Namely, the question is whether the state is compatible with the aesthetic form of the workers' plane determining the social/political. The state capitalist models that existed created their own nomenclature, which performed the gesture of the current politically connected capitalist businessmen. If capital is state-owned, the representative of the state is the representative of that capital, even though in a worker-driven political discourse and ideology. The competition for social reproduction between the workers' plane and the state nomenclature pushes the state towards repression of the labor in order to secure its material base of existence. If such a model were to reappear in the whole European continent, we would see the same relations of the core-periphery being manifested among nation states, in the absence of private corporations. The aesthetic form of the workers' plane gives birth to its own politics, which is not the politics of the form of the state, if not essentially a politics against the state. This politics is one of the workers and not for the workers. It cannot be considered a politics of a fairer taxation and redistribution model. Every radical political movement that attempted to serve the workers, such as Syriza in Greece, failed when it took the form of the state. Its failure is inscribed into the very aim of the state to repress the aesthetic form of the workers' plane, a form which cannot be represented. It can only present itself as a form, a form which is in contradiction to every other aesthetical form in the domain of the social/political. The workers' aesthetic presence in their own plane, is an immanence on its own, therefore it reorganizes the whole of the social/political in which it is embedded. It is the way to avoid any utopian dogmatism of the state-planned economy and put the workers' plane in the center of the social/political, where, as an effect of this aesthetic movement, a new mode of thinking is made possible – a collective process that is also indifferent to individual proposals that stem from the current capitalist predicament. The aesthetic presence of the workers' plane as a determining form of the social/political evades any lapsing into reactionary models of nationalism, religion and, ultimately, fascism. The

effect of the workers' aesthetics is one of unity and uniformity, and not solidarity. Solidarity refers to the identifying of "another's" struggles as common to one's own. While the workers of Europe remain within the confines of the capitalist relations of the core and the periphery, they will always remain in the domain of having to solidarize with some "other's" struggle. And as long as there is an "other", any sense of a *union* is essentially compromised. The European Union of the perpetual crisis, which produces the exploitation of workers everywhere and, through a series of political perversions, the rise of authoritarian political movements and a nationalist repression of its perceived liberal democratic values, can only survive if it resolved the basic tension that overrides its social/political form. The resolution of this tension resides in the establishing of the workers' aesthetic form. The European Union is only possible as a union of workers through their form, determining the social/political of the whole continent.

### **For the development of the workers' plane**

No wonder that the process of establishing this aesthetic form of the worker's plane in the social/political comes from the very means existing at hand in the given situation. All the workers' structures, groups, projects, attempts and efforts can be reoriented to seek their effectuation outside the confines of the present economic-political model enforced by the state. In this undertaking, it is of crucial importance to understand that our collective efforts must be concentrated on making visible and struggling to maintain the workers' plane. Understanding the various different causes that are in immediate need of action, such as feminist and environmental struggles, we must also understand that whatever victories we might achieve in these fields of contestation, if they remain within the confines of the present social/political model, they will be unsustainable. That is so due to the fact that there will always be the next crisis, which, via its repression of politics, will always take revenge on these victories. In 2017, for example, in the course of the debate in the British parliament, the Labour Party urged for an immediate revision of the austerity measures according to a gender-sensitive model, since it was women that were bearing 86% of the austerity burden. The crisis in the US brought Trump into power, who then withdrew from the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change mitigation. The maintaining in power of the current capitalist mode of production through the social/political model of the state will always nullify whatever gains we make in the social fields which are not aesthetically determined by the form of the workers' plane.

The establishing of the aesthetic form of the workers' plane in

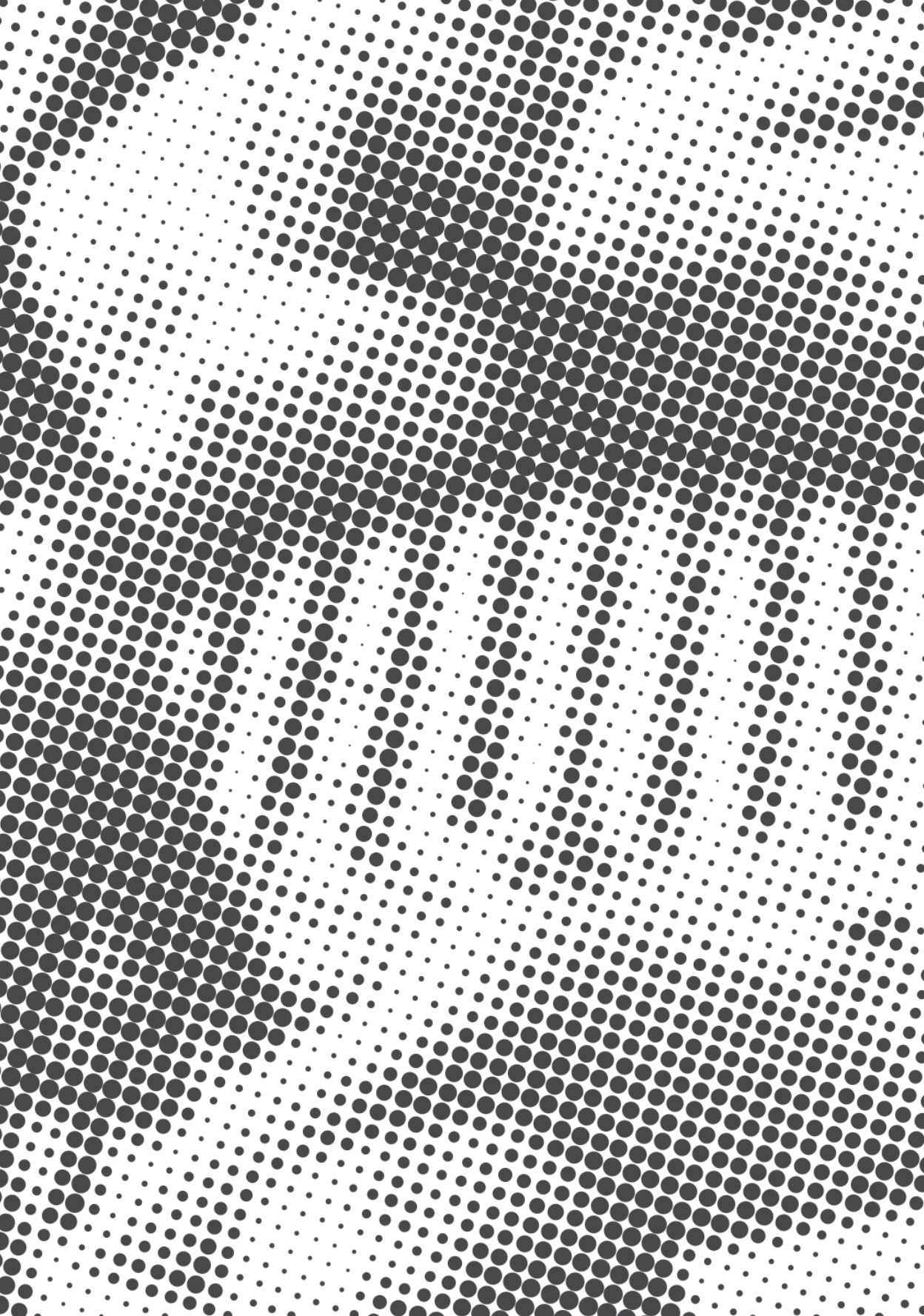
the social/political domain requires the actions and movements that are present in the process of delivering any other aesthetic change. That is, the piece-by-piece setting up of the infrastructure of the workers' plane, molding their pieces together through a social and political practice that allows them to hold on together and pile up more elements. In doing so, we must fight for the perseverance of every individual element, until the general aesthetics starts to take its autonomous form of presence. The practice of the workers from the Dita factory in Bosnia and Herzegovina is one that deviates from the neoliberal mode of ownership and production, and it is one that needs to be replicated and multiplied towards form's shaping as the main form of the factory. In Albania, the population has managed to create a significant space for its own economy – termed the gray economy under neoliberal conditions only because it evades control and unequal redistribution. This part, separated from the neoliberal state in Albania, constitutes around 60 percent of the total economy of the country. Thus, the evasion of the formal sector of a significant part of the economic activity of the Albanian population is a practice that restricts the state when it comes to accessing more funds – through taxation, funds which would, in the last instance, end up in the hands of the big capital in the country. At this point, it is relevant to ask a crucial question, that of the relation of the market and the state under the dominant neoliberal dogma. The Albanian case, with its 60 percent of the gray economy, shows that the economy which evades the state runs against the interests of the business and political elites. The free market, in terms of neoliberalism, can only exist under the auspices of the state, which redistributes the wealth from the lower to the higher social classes. Having a “bigger state” under the dominant relations of power in late capitalism does not result in redistribution favoring the poorer parts of society. Thus, the reversal of power relations must go hand in hand with the withdrawal from the domain of the formal economy into everyday life and with the mobilization for taking over as much as possible of the state power by democratic workers' forces. This process has to be expanded and has to rely on the increasing visibility of the workers' plane, which with the weakening of the state, due to the withdrawal effect, will lose its repressive power on the social/political.

Through the replication, dissemination and sustainment of these practices of workers that evade the market-dominated models of capitalist production, on the one hand, and organization of the exchange in such a way as to restrict the state's power to control the wealth of the workers, we can see the first lines of the workers' plane taking shape as an aesthetic form within the social/political. Thus, politically, we shall experience a radical change in the mode of manifesting of the people within

the social/political. In maintaining Rancière's claim that people manifest themselves in different modes through various instances in history, we can claim that in the move from the current model of the social/political to the one determined by the workers' plane we shall see the move from the manifesting of people as citizens to their manifesting as workers. This is the final and decisive move towards the resolution of the tension between the basic relation of labor-time and the concrete manifestation of this relation in the social/political through the aesthetic form of the workers' plane.

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Borovo workers' protest in Belgrade, TANJUG 1988,  
Source: Archives of Yugoslavia, AJ-112-L-11703-135

MARIO RELJANOVIĆ

# The normative position of trade unions and the ideals of self-management

There have been few serious and comprehensive analyses of the position of trade unions in society during self-management, and even fewer which have been critical towards the system of that time. Generally, by using theoretical constructions and the paraphrasing of certain dogmatic beliefs, they have tried to convey a contemporary image of the trade union as a very important factor during self-management, but with no ideas on how to implement many of its formal functions. Therefore, such analyses are generally viewed as political tracts today, as proclamations lacking real content. However, they are far from useless for understanding the actual position of the trade union. On the contrary, through the various apologetic approaches taken to the dysfunctional concept of the trade union, processes may be clearly noted which ultimately led to a complete shift in trade union politics at the end of the 1980s. While in the 1985 and 1986 analyses, hardline attitudes can still be seen on self-managing socialism as a model with no alternative, the debates from as early as 1989 focus on new trade union perspectives under the conditions of an open market economy. The trade union, in an organizational but also a political sense, followed the fate of the state in which it existed. The split in the League of Communists led to the creation of alternative views on the future of the trade union and society, in which certain functions which the trade union did not perform at that time, were returned to it. In the same processes, the transformation “from workers to nation” was

visible, which soon led to war on the territory of the former common state (Musić, 2013).<sup>1</sup>

In the second half of the 1980s and significant turmoil in the existing socio-political system, as well as with the break-up of the SFR Yugoslavia, the trade union's fate was mostly bound by the normative framework of the 1974 SFRY Constitution and the 1976 Law on Associated Labour. The specific position is reflected, among others, in the fact that besides the abundant rules, trade unions in fact worked within a narrow circle of certain assumed competences. The biggest drawback was surely reflected in the fact that the trade union was viewed, in the Constitution and laws, as a subject carrying out state policies, not one offering support to workers' rights and the autonomous organization of workers themselves. Such institutionalization of the trade unions, and their participation in the socio-political council of the SFRY Assembly, did not lead to stronger political trade union activities on an independent basis. On the contrary, by the end of the 1980s, many authors criticized the trade unions' moving closer to the state. This was established to such an extent that it wasn't possible to distinguish where state politics and interests ended, and where the trade union built up its specific platforms of action.

The 1974 SFRY Constitution gave its own kind of definition and established a basic framework for trade union activities, truth be told, in an indirect way: "Workers voluntarily organized in a union as the most widespread organization of the working class, fight for: the implementation of socialist self-managing relations and a decisive role for workers in managing social reproduction; implementing the interests of self-managing and other workers' rights in all fields of work and life, ensuring the equality of workers in work associations and of equality in resources, earning and distributing income, and determining common measures for distribution in line with the results of work for the self-managing binding and integrating of various fields of socially useful work, for developing the productive forces of society and raising work productivity, for the self-governing harmonizing of individual, common and general social interests, for raising the educational level of workers and enabling workers to carry out self-managing and other social functions, for the democratic suggestion and determination of candidates as delegates in the self-managing institutions, associated labour and communities, and candidates for delegations in those organizations and communities, and as delegates in the assembly of the socio-political community, for the widest participation of workers in carrying out the functions of government and

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 1 For more on the transformation from workers into nation, or from a "workers' state" into a national state see: Musić, 2013, and in this publication: Cvek, Ivčić, Račić, *The Continuity of Social Conflicts in the 1988-1991 Period: the Borovo Combine*.



managing other social tasks, for implementing the interests of the working class in personnel policies, for protecting the rights of workers, for providing social security and developing workers' standard of living, and for strengthening solidarity and raising the class consciousness and the responsibility of self-managing persons (SFRY Constitution, 1974)."

The stated duties were further elaborated in other parts of the Constitution, as well as in the Law on Associated Labor (Zakon o udruženom radu, hereon: ZUR). Thus, the trade union had a range of powers related to the position of workers, directly or indirectly, regarding the implementation, scope and quality of their labour rights. According to Article 36 ZUR: "In exercising its constitutionally established rights and obligations, the trade union has launched an initiative for taking measures, and is taking measures to ensure that workers exercise their socio-economic and other self-managing rights, and that they decide on other issues concerning their socio-economic position. The trade union has the right to launch an initiative and give a suggestion for the concluding of self-managing agreements, if it considers that the self-managing rights of workers and socio-economic relations, as established by the constitution, are violated. The trade union participates in the procedure of concluding a self-managing agreement as regulated by the mutual relations of workers at work or establishes a basis and measures for the distribution of income and of funds for personal income, signing this agreement. If the Organisation of Associated Labour decides on questions which relate to the self-managing rights of workers, to the material position and interests of workers and to the Organisation of Associated Labour, and if, in the decision-making process, it has to harmonize the interests and views of one section of workers with the interests of the majority of workers in the Associated Labour Organisation, then the organisation's decision making institutions are obliged to permit the participation of the trade union in considering these questions and each of their requests, to take a position on the request, and if the request is rejected, to inform them of the reasons for its rejection. If a dispute arises in an Organisation of Associated Labour between workers of certain sections of the organization, i.e. between workers and the organization's institutions and the institutions of the socio-political community, which cannot be resolved in the regular fashion, the trade union has the right, on the request of the worker or on its own initiative, to initiate a procedure for resolving the dispute." Besides these competences, the trade union also had a range of other competences according to ZUR, the Law on the Basis of the System of Social Planning, the Law on the Basis of the Price System and Social Price Control etc. (Senko, 1985: 10-11). All these competencies were directed at the role of the trade union in implementing the self-management process.

There were rare provisions in which the trade unions had direct authorization to defend the rights of individual workers, as was, for example, the case with the trade union's role in disciplinary proceedings against an employee (ZUR: art. 202-204) or in the case where the employee filed a request for the protection of their rights before the self-managing bodies (ZUR: art. 223).

In a normative sense, the trade union was a comprehensive institution which aimed to reconcile the concept of trade union struggle for workers' rights and the fact that the socialist self-managing society had to represent an ideal in which workers enjoyed all rights freely – that is, an apparently completely contradictory theoretical postulate. Hence the range of theoretical considerations on the trade union in this historical period begins with discussions over whether the trade union was needed at all, or whether it had become an obsolete instrument following the introduction of self-management, to different conceptualizations which placed an emphasis on the necessity of maintaining the trade union, but which had completely different views on what functions it could carry out in a conflict-free socialist society.

### **The real position of the trade unions in relation to workers**

Although at first glance, according to the presented legal framework, it might be assumed that the trade union played a significant role in life and the work process, most often this was not the case. No social organisation likely existed with such an obvious disparity between its normative potential and actual exercising of competencies, as was the case with the trade union. This discrepancy between given and exercised powers was most often due to the complete absence of trade union autonomy. D.B. Senko states that trade unions have to be a mechanism for the establishing of “greater worker motivation and responsibility”, i.e. that workers indirectly – through the delegate-based assembly system which trade union representatives entered for the first time, in line with the 1974 Constitution – make decisions on important questions, such as product prices and services, investments and wider social reproduction, and also on changes to the system and to economic policies of that time (Senko, 1985: 12). However, nothing in this vein ever occurred. As an organization, the trade union was divided into federal and republic/regional level unions. The territorial division was undertaken consistently at the level of local self-managing organisations, while the grouping of trade unions was also possible along the lines of industries, i.e. the fields of the economy in which they were organized. Trade unions existed, without exception, at the level of each enterprise, i.e. employer. However, the gulf between their

potential and actualization was unassailable, above all because the trade union was considered an organization which, for the complete period in which self-management existed, it was not able to find an adequate niche for itself in terms of theoretical conception, nor at the level of everyday activities. The trade union was simply conceived as a link between the state and the implementing of state policies, and it lost its primary purpose of protecting workers' rights. Thus, B. Pribičević lists the four main roles of trade unions in socialist countries: helping the Party implement their leading and ruling roles; taking on certain (substantially reduced) protective functions directed at the bureaucratized managing bodies in the enterprises or state, but also towards the state when a group of workers make "irreproachable" demands; helping the state in leading and implementing economic policies; taking on (more recently) an important role in the field of social insurance, partly in healthcare, the organization of holidays and recreational activities, but sometimes also with food and the provision of certain food items. This model was taken from the USSR, where the trade union is, as the author claims, "a transmitter of decisions, directives and initiatives from the Party leadership and, in part, the party apparatus (Pribičević, 1987: 6-7)." D.B. Senko goes a step further, stating that "the union based its programmatic orientation and socio-political activity on the programme and programme documents of the Yugoslav League of Communists (Senko, 1986: 98)." He also claims that there is "a widespread misunderstanding of the social role and function of the trade union in socialist self-managing society, and this is a very important reason why the League of Communists has not succeeded in attaining a stronger influence among the working class through the Federation of Trade Unions (Senko, 1986: 98)."

The Federation of Trade Unions had its representatives in the Assembly system. Trade union representatives were considered able to crystallize the political opinion of their worker base, and as such, to play a significant role in the work of legislative bodies. This approach was somewhat logical, but it completely ignored the lack of autonomy of the trade unions, which – as later turned out to be the case – were a decisive factor in truly getting close to workers' political decision making. A trade union which was not independent, and whose leadership was filled with members of the League of Communists, who once again considered their role to – in the name of the trade union – unconditionally support the party, did not make a significant breakthrough in the life of the Assembly. Furthermore, it did not contribute to workers' issues finding their way on to the daily agenda of the highest-level state organs, as was observed and argued by workers themselves.

The Trade Union was therefore connected to the Commu-

nist Party, not only ideologically, but also practically – on the level of the implementation of state policies. As one moved upwards in the union structures, the portion of Party members grew. While trade union membership consisted of 10-15% of League of Communist members, among the highest level trade union officials the level was 92-98%.<sup>2</sup> Such a trade union position was considered to be completely normal within the self-managing system of production relations, while the so-called “classical conception” of the trade union was largely analyzed in a critical fashion, as an obsolete mechanism for union action which was no longer necessary. The Party thus devised state policies, including economic policies, employment policies, prices, conditions of work etc. It then used the trade unions to placate and bring such policies closer to workers. It is unsurprising that workers’ subjective sense was such that they didn’t perceive the trade union as “theirs”, but rather as a foreign body which was able to serve some of their individual or particular goals, yet from which they were not able to expect support on those issues for which official state policies and strategies were explicitly opposed to the level and quality of workers’ rights attained.

There are two factors which potentially influenced the further developmental path of the trade union. On the one hand, the trade union was not prepared for the turbulent events which occurred during the second half of the 1980s; on the other hand, those events were not used as a motive for the elementary reform of the trade union system within the framework of the existing self-managing mechanisms. On the contrary, during periods of established workers’ protests and strikes, the majority of authors continued to emphasize taking an apologetic approach to the Soviet model of trade union actions. This certainly did not contribute to trade union popularity among the workers, who bore the burden of the reforms and who were not able to accept the (useless for workers’ struggle) mediating position of the trade union. The fate of the trade union shared the fate of the labour force in Serbia. The transformation from “workers” into “Serbs”<sup>3</sup> which marked the character of workers’ protests at the end of the 1980s, was also reflected in the trade unions. In the eternal shadow of the Party and in a situation whereby the Yugoslav League of Communists fragmented into republic level blocks amidst glimpses of an end to the one-party system, trade unions searched for a new identity. In such an atmosphere, the trade unions turned towards a returning of

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 2 Interview by the author with Zoran Stojiljković, president of *Ujedinjeni granski sindikati Nezavisnost* trade union, 17 January 2018.

3 This characterized the protest by the workers of Rakovica in 1988 beautifully, when Slobodan Milošević was waiting for them in the Federal Assembly. He put the brakes on their protest by using nationalist rhetoric, and sent them back off to Rakovica with the famous sentence “And now everyone start your work assignments!”. On the consequences

their traditional functions. However, what was striking was their attempt to reconcile these functions with a confusing political scene which was beginning to slide towards a multi-party system.

Thus, it happened that in as early as 1989, the rhetoric at trade union gatherings was significantly different from that previously seen. This rhetoric did not only refer to a critique of the existing system, but also openly spoke of a new system of production relations. Thus, T. Milenković, who was president of the Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Serbia at that time, emphasized that union reform should respond to workers' dissatisfaction with the work and position of the trade union, while also monitoring the socio-political changes occurring in the country. He further states that the trade union must redefine its position in conditions wherein different kinds of ownership and property, and the free competition of goods, capital and services exist on the Yugoslav market (Milenković, 1989: 9-10). D. Marinković discusses the market economy, emphasizing that it implies "the independent and equal economic competition of economic entities, and a different role for the state in economic life, restricted to the regulation of general conditions (Marinković, 1989: 112)."

The new concepts, therefore, did not encounter resistance from the trade unions, but were on the contrary expected as a formula through which the trade unions were able to change their dependent position in relation to the state and party and reaffirm themselves as political actors. The amount of resistance present to the position of the trade unions at that time was perhaps best illustrated by A. Đurđev, who in a very sharp tone stated that the "Federation of Trade Unions is politically handicapped and too dependent on the League of Communists", and that from such a "vassal relation, the Federation of Trade Unions endures enormous political damage" and that the "formula for the greater engagement of the membership of the League of Communists in the Federation of Trade Unions has lost its power and does not represent support nor an incentive for implementing real changes (Đurđev, 1989: 95)." It is therefore clear that the trade unionists' message was that the weakening of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (and of Serbia) provided a motive for the trade unions to "become independent", i.e. to gain greater autonomy in decision making, which they lacked at that moment. This potential, however, would not be actualized – the trade unions would not come to exercise their own specific political role, not even after the demise of the Yugoslav League of Communists and the Federal State.

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of the wave of changes to the Rakovica industry which began at that time: Rakovički divovi trunu u rdi i zaboravu, 2016. On the acceptance of national ideas among the workers of that time see: Musić, 2013.

### Research on the trade union

Analyses which have critically covered the weak popularity of the trade union have not been frequent – authors have mostly relied on rare, high-quality and in-depth investigations, completed on average over the course of a decade. The results of these researches are valuable because they reveal workers' relationship with the errors and inconsistencies in the system, in relation to the position and functioning of the trade unions.

In his research, V. Pavlović presented the relationship workers had with the trade unions during the 1970s (Pavlović, 1974). What is remarkable is that his findings from that time do not differ greatly from the later results of similar research conducted in the 1980s. Pavlović, however, asks several deeper questions in his analysis, which may illuminate extremely well why trade unions were then considered marginal and unimportant organizations for workers. Thus, in presenting the results of the trade union's participation in the most important company decisions, it is stated that trade unions participated in discussions on carrying out the systematization of work places with just 48.8%. Of that percentage, 84.2% submitted a proposal, of which only 43.3% of those proposals were accepted – therefore, the influence on personnel policy was minimal. The situation was different as regards the adoption of final accounts and proposing the distribution of profit, but with practically the same outcome – 71.8% of the union participated, 75% of that number submitted proposals, but only 23.9% of those proposals were accepted. This data also illustrates the trade union's small amount of influence on resolving important questions (from the workers' perspective, the distribution of profits was one of the most important enterprise issues) even when the trade union organizations showed an interest. The data was similar with the other two exceptionally important questions – a high percentage of union participation was recorded in the adoption of rules on the distribution of personal income (92.5%), but their suggestions were adopted in only 28.8% of cases. In the allocation of housing stock to employees, the trade union practically left the decision to the workers' councils – it participated in only 51.3% of cases, in 70% of those it made proposals, of which 64.2% were accepted (Pavlović, 1974: 81).<sup>4</sup>

This union passivity, as well as the apparent lack of authority and actual power to fight for their proposals in those areas where it was reasonably active, put the union in an unenviable position as concerns its popularity among workers. Thus, in research conducted in 1970, on av-

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<sup>4</sup> Pavlović quotes data from the Institute for Market Research in Zagreb, from the year 1967.

erage less than half of the workers expressed themselves as being for the union “as it was” in that moment. As a rule, the lowest skilled workers declared themselves in favour of retaining the existing trade union system. Although, on the one hand, they were the most threatened by the changes being implemented, on the other hand the union had given them most of all – in the sense of the easier satisfying of some of their most basic existential needs. Among the more highly qualified workers, only 35% of them spoke positively of the union (Pavlović, 1974: 147).<sup>5</sup>

The trade union, from inside, focused too much on itself and its organization – this was probably a consequence of frustrations with its impotent position as concerns classical trade union functions. Thus, it is stated that only 20% of the items of the Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Yugoslavia meetings were dedicated to their organization and to other issues of that time. At the same time, only one item on the agenda was devoted to discussions about the political system. Within the Council, the SSJ was dominated by the category of “socio-political workers” (31.6%), while only 17.1% were workers (Pavlović, 1974: 155-156). At its highest level, the union did not therefore have the strength to deal with the disadvantages of the existing political system, because the political system was deeply incorporated into it. This is another piece of the puzzle of workers’ dissatisfaction, which was expressed during the second half of the 1980s not only through protests due to the difficult situation in certain enterprises and the economy generally, but rather as an expression of revolt against the system. They were not able to channel this in another way, as the trade unions were obviously not ready for such a role.

S. Martinović cites data from a worker survey in 1972 on the position and role of the trade union. To the question “why is the opinion present that the organization of trade unions is unnecessary?”, as many as 45.34% of those asked answered that it is because the trade union has become separated from its membership and does not protect their interests. A not insignificant 38.61% replied that the trade union does not have its own specific scope of work, but rather repeats what other bodies decide. In third place was the opinion stating that the union was unnecessary, vague and malicious (Martinović, 1987: 40).<sup>6</sup> These data clearly show that workers were bothered by the non-traditional role of the trade union, and that in such a splitting of roles in the system, they were not really sure what the trade union did, and whether it did anything in connection with protecting workers’ interests. In accordance with this, the inactivity of union workers is unsurprising – only 29.1% of those asked replied that they actively participate in all union activities, while 25.9%

5 The data are listed in the Bulletin of Public Opinion, IDN, Beograd, 1970: 8.

6 The listed data are from 1972, source: Osnovna organizacija sindikata Zrenjanin.

participated on occasion. (Martinović, 1987: 48).<sup>7</sup> As the main reasons for trade union passivity, workers stated that they did not have time and that the union dealt too little with concrete problems, and that it boiled down to “having meetings” and was not efficient (Martinović, 1987: 50).<sup>8</sup> To the question “Is the reputation of the trade union in decline?”, in 1986 as many as 63.23% replied affirmatively. The main reasons they gave were the inefficiency of the work of the unions, general economic difficulties, the rare work actions, and the incompetence and lack of independence of the trade unions (Martinović 1987: 53 -55).<sup>9</sup> On the micro-level, workers were not satisfied with the union in the fight for their protection of basic workers’ rights and interests – 41.29% were somewhat satisfied, while 35.05% were dissatisfied; only 9.9% were satisfied (Martinović, 1987: 62).<sup>10</sup>

### The trade union in protests and work stoppage

In the previous section, it can be clearly seen that the union organization in the SFRY stood on very shaky foundations. The unions were completely crushed during the 1980s, especially in the second half of that decade, which was marked by numerous and increasingly large protests and workers’ strikes. The trade union then followed the fate of the common state, fragmenting and turning to a new rhetoric which presupposed a fundamental change to the political and economic system.

The extent to which the existing system was unprepared for the implementation of “stabilizing measures” can be seen from the terminology used in strikes, as well as from the relationship of certain authors towards the strikes and workers’ protests. This implementation entailed far more pronounced savings and the limiting of employees’ rights, which would undoubtedly lead to a further collapse in the already falling standard of living. Namely, in the legislation, but not in everyday speech, the term “strike” (*štrajk*) is not used, but rather the phrase “work stoppage” (*obustava rada*, which was considered colloquial, although it was used in the expert literature). In the ZUR, the even less meaningful linguistic construction “disputes which cannot be resolved in the regular way” was presented. Although this is essentially the same thing, they insisted on this difference, above all because of the ideological-dogmatic assumption that in a self-managing socialist system there is no place for worker dis-

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7 The data are from 1986, source: Samoupravno udruženje radnici i ostvarivanje uloge Saveza sindikata, Beograd.

8 The data are from 1977 and 1981, source: Zavod za samoupravljanje SR Slovenije.

9 The data are from 1986, source: SŠH Josip Cazi.

10 The data are from 1972, research by The Basic Organization of the Zrenjanin Trade Union.



satisfaction – they were concerned with the highest level of rights and were formally owners of the means of production. They were in possession of multiple mechanisms for protecting their rights, ranging from the workers’ councils and social attorney of self-management, through to the trade union, and the courts of associated labour. In such a system, there was no place for extra-institutional dissatisfaction and this was a theoretical assumption which officials kept to practically up to the collapse of the system, labelling strikes as “wild”, while certain authors even had very critical models of how and why strikes occurred, neglecting the basic motivation of workers and apologetically trying to suggest that they come down to isolated phenomena which do not go against the system<sup>11</sup>, although there were also contrary examples<sup>12</sup>.

The number of strikes<sup>13</sup> in the SFRY rose rapidly in the mid-1980s. Over the course of 1980, a total of 235 strikes were organized in which 13,504 workers participated. These figures rose to 1685 strikes during 1987 and 1348 strikes involving 314,060 workers over the period from January to October 1988 (Stojiljković & Pavlović, 1988: 42). During the year 1989, an estimated 470,000 workers went on strike in 1886 strikes (Štrajkovi, 2013).<sup>14</sup> The largest number of strikes were organized in Serbia (including the autonomous regions) and in Croatia. As a rule, strikes were organized at the level of the entire enterprise, and the number of strikes with 100 and more participants grew. In every fifth strike, there were more than 200, and even several thousand workers.<sup>15</sup> Although they were still short-lived, their average length grew to 10.5 work hours, which was significantly more than the average for strikes from the 1960s and 1970s. V. Pavlović & Z. Stojiljković analyzed the qualitative dimension of strikes, concluding that some regularities and trends were present: that

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 11 For example, D. B. Senko states that “work stoppage (result in) a great loss of confidence, but not in self-management, but rather in concrete people in concrete positions in the political system” (D. B. Senko, 1986: 151). While further on in the text he in fact disagrees with his own view, it was not uncommon that during suspensions of work, people searched for a reason to critique individual solutions and personalities, and not the entire system. However, workers’ protests in the late 1980s were precisely directed towards finding new systemic solutions and at demonstrating that the system of that time was simply unsustainable.

12 S. Martinović points to the fact that during 1985 in most countries, strikes were falling, except for rare exceptions (Spain, Denmark). In the SFRY however, there was a significant increase – which meant that the causes of the strikes had to be found on home ground, and not in disturbances to global markets and global economic trends (Martinović, 1987: 16).

13 In the text the terms “strike” and “work stoppage” will be used as synonyms.

14 According to the source: *Koliko je bilo štrajkova*. (1990). *Borovo*, 3116, 8.

15 According to Stojiljković & Pavlović’s (1988: 42) data, i.e. according to the data of the Committee of the Federation of Trade Unions of Serbia from 1988, the number of strikes with more than 200 participants in the Republic of Serbia (without the autonomous regions) in 1987 had a rate of 21.4%, of which 2.5% were strikes with over 1000 participants.

the strikes from the productive areas expanded to education and health care and other state services, and that worker consciousness about the necessity of change had expanded beyond the confines of their enterprise. Strikes were thus transformed into an attempt to point out the difficult situation in the entire economy, and to influence the macro-conditions of economic life, i.e. by influencing various state policies (Stojiljković & Pavlović, 1988: 9-11).<sup>16</sup>

This positioning of workers in strikes and protests was a logical consequence of the changes they faced over a long period of time, and which culminated with the announced reforms. The profile of workers on strike was such that it could easily be concluded that people concerned for their future were in question. As many as 62.8% of those on strike were employees under the age of 35, with practically the same percentage being of working class origin (57.1%). Those with secondary school level education constituted 76.6% of those on strike, while support among those employed with a university level education was lacking. The social dimension of the strikes was obvious – as many as 75% of those on strike considered their material position to be below average, and 90% considered themselves to be paid less than the value of the work they put in. The strikers' relationship to the unions is also interesting – 45.6% of participants in work stoppage declared themselves to be members of a union, while 49.6% rejected any connection with a union (Stojiljković & Pavlović, 1988: 13-14). Bearing in mind the high level of union membership at that time, it seems that striking served as a reason for some workers to give up on any kind of political expectations relating to the unions.

How did the trade unions respond to such circumstances? One of the most significant strikes of the second half of the 1980s was organized in the "Raša" mine in Labin, Croatia, in April and May 1987. This strike was famous for being the longest at that time, lasting for a total of 34 days, and because public attention was always focused on miners' strikes, whose role in production and the economy was generally highly valued.<sup>17</sup> It was also characteristic in terms of clearly reflecting the relationship

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**16** According to the data of the Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Serbia, from February 1988, 4.6% of strikes were organized in the fields of "education, science and culture", "health and social protection" and "social organizations and state authorities". Although this is not a significant percentage, it is of the utmost importance that the public services and state administration recognized the drop in living standards and decline in their rights.

**17** Perhaps the visibility of this strike contributed to the symbolic significance of that mine in the history of workers' struggles. In 1921, the miners rebelled against the fascist regime and the maltreatment of the miners' trade union representatives by the fascist army of Italy. The initial strike grew into the first antifascist rebellion, and the miners established the workers' "Republic of Labin". The rebellion was suppressed in a military action by the Italian army, after just over a month of existence.

workers had with the union – some of the strikers' demands included dissolving the trade union, changing the executive committee leadership and the trade union president, and the trade union officials often received threats. The dissatisfaction of workers with the trade union was obvious, and the reason for this was presented very simply. They considered the trade unions in their fight for basic rights – rights that they believed had been threatened by the implemented and announced reforms – to have taken the side of the enterprise leadership (Musić, 2017). Such a situation was not uncommon; at many protests and during many strikes, similar charges directed at the trade unions could be heard. Only in rare cases, most often in those collectives where the union structures were still closely connected with workers, did the union engage in organizing the work stoppage, or at least offer some form of tacit or explicit support. In the majority of cases, the trade union remained silent, or openly opposed the workers' rebellion. M. Mikašinović-Komšo stated, analyzing the miners' strike in Labin: "Although the Federation of Trade Unions blamed the strikes on the socio-economic situation in the state, they nevertheless expressed a criticism directed at workers that, instead of returning to work, they continued to strike – which meant that the workers were indirectly to blame for the loss of profit."

The survey showed that the issues which had led to the strike were discussed by the union before the beginning of the strike in 37% of cases, but that no solution was found. In as many as 70.1% of responses, the immediate motive for the strike was related to personal income and other employee benefits (Stojiljković & Pavlović, 1988: 43). A high percentage (46.1%) of the total number of surveyed workers, and 53.2% of those striking considered that the trade union had not even tried to resolve the existing controversial issues which ultimately caused the strikes (Stojiljković & Pavlović, 1988: 29). After the strikes began, a third (33,4%) of the strikers stated that the trade union had not become especially engaged during the strike, while 27.1% stated that the trade union had supported the workers' demands, but had concluded that a strike wasn't the right way to achieve them, while in 12.1% of the strikes, the trade union condemned the workers and called for the termination of the work stoppage. In 19.1% of cases, the strikers' opinions on the trade unions' efforts to resolve their issues during the strike was positive – it seems that this is an exceptionally small percentage of situations in which the trade unions explicitly or implicitly stood on the same side as the striking workers. Z. Stojiljković & V. Pavlović conclude that in the largest number of cases, the trade union ignored the existence of the strike and withdrew completely; in the least number of cases they actively spoke out against the strikers. In the remaining work stoppage cases, the trade union either supported

the strikers' demands but distanced themselves from the strike, or actively helped and organized the strike (Stojiljković & Pavlović, 1988: 30-31).

Besides the general negative attitude towards the trade union, it is very indicative that workers did not give up on trade union organizing as a way of fighting for their rights. On the contrary, during the protests and strikes, what was clearly visible was their urge to include – among the demands to change the enterprise leadership and change certain policies at the micro- or macro-levels – demands to reform the trade union and to make use of the existing unions' potential. These demands aimed to create a new organization that would be autonomous, non-bureaucratized and which would not be directly connected with the party, nor with politicians – both in terms of rules, and in reality. This tendency can be seen from the results of the research, in which a high percentage of strike participants think that the trade union ought to support the strike (35.1%), or to lead the strike (29.6%) (Stojiljković & Pavlović: 33). Hence, almost two thirds of strikers see the trade union as being an important element of the workers' struggle and of strikes. What was however at that moment the reality – a weak and bureaucratized trade union which did not have its own political will – in fact represents the basis of workers' negative attitude towards trade unions during the current cycles of strikes.

### Conclusion

V. Pavlović reduces the trade union problem to the question: can the trade union still impact on major structural changes in existing society if it is integrated into the system and impacts on its change from within, or should it remain free and independent, unintegrated into the system, in order to more actively attack it and change it? In other words, does the self-managing system need a trade union based on conflict, or on participation (Pavlović, 1974: 73).

The self-managing bodies often wasted their energy, time and potential on marginal questions (Pavlović, 1974: 78-79). Such was the situation with the trade union as well, which did not make use of this systemic error to fill in the void and represent important workers' questions during the development of self-management. The enormous potential which the trade union had in terms of material resources and human resources, simply could not be actualized in the subordinated, peripheral role which it had in fact been assigned. Perhaps the most illustrative example of the enterprise management and state political leadership's experience of the trade union was described in the television serial "Better Life" (*Bolji život*). Here, at a meeting of everyday workers in the enterprise, a member of the political class coming from "above", when deciding on a referen-

dum vote of no confidence in the director, addresses the president of the trade union: “People chose you to secure them a better life, to acquire for them tomatoes, peppers and onions for making their winter supplies [condiments/pickled vegetables, translators note] on time”. The workers accept this diversion from the topic and the discussion switches over to the acquisition of winter supplies. This characteristic experience of the trade union, which later stabilized and to this day represents a symbol of the inability of trade union organizations to get to grips with workers’ most important issues and problems, speaks of how some of the technical functions of the trade union became dominant. Above all, this was because their implementation did not presuppose politically sensitive engagement, conflict with the enterprise leadership, nor a deviation from the ideological positions of the League of Communists.

V. Pavlović stated in 1988 that one of the basic tasks of the union reforms ought to be a reduction in presence of the Federation of Trade Unions in political structures, and an increase in the influence of unions on those structures (Pavlović, 1988: 38). And indeed, the question of autonomy is one of the basic questions that can be asked when it comes to the functioning of trade union representatives not only at the level of individual enterprises, but also at higher levels and in political bodies. The League of Communists and the trade union could often be perceived as “partner” organizations in which there was no conflict, with interaction rather being reduced to peaceful coexistence and the implementation of official policies, regardless of the opinions and attitudes of their membership. Pavlović named this conjunction “a protective smokescreen and democratic form for manipulation by the enterprise management (Pavlović, 1974: 109).” Although this is most certainly an overly strict assessment, at least in the majority of cases, it very clearly reveals the nature of workers’ dissatisfaction with the trade unions. It is an undeniable fact that the real power and position of the trade union in social and political life in fact demonstrated its impotence – instead of serving the actualization of practical workers’ actions, the trade union represented a highly dependent and bureaucratized institution, without its own ideas and platforms for their implementation (Stojiljković & Pavlović, 1988: 27; Pavlović, 1988:40).

The trade union was expected, during the period of building self-managing socialism, to be a supervisory body and to create the pre-conditions for the implementation of official state policies. This led to a perception of the trade union as being an unnecessary subject above all, and later as also being directly opposed to workers’ demands. The 1980s are an excellent example of such a conflict, given that reforms that were not in the best interests of workers were underway (so-called “stabiliza-

tion”). These required of the trade unions that their membership prepare for work plans which systematically entailed a reduction in their rights and a drop in their standard of living, and for whose investment in and success the trade unions simply had no authority or credibility. According to Z. Stojiljković & V. Pavlović, “In the existing solutions so far, the role of the trade union has been incorrectly conceived. They appear as a mediator in a dispute between two parties. (...) However, workers expect of the trade union that it will neither be a mediator, nor that it will remain on the side, and they expect even less that it will stand “on that other side”, i.e. on the side of those against whom workers are striking (which has most often been the case in practice so far). In these kinds of disputes, the trade union should represent workers, to be *ex officio* on the side of workers – even in some situations, where they do not completely agree with their demands. (...) Only at that price will the trade union be able to regain trust among the workers (Stojiljković & Pavlović, 1988: 34).” This, however, did not happen, nor was it able to happen in the trade union structures which had been exceptionally burdened by their relationship with the state and party structures, and ultimately with the ideological burden which was not always able to fit in with the reality of workers’ life and standards, nor with the problems that appeared on the road to developing a system of self-management. The union, as a rule, turned a blind eye to such problems. It sometimes openly positioned itself on the side of the bureaucracy, the enterprise managers, and all those subjects who the workers perceived as being a problem, and not as a potential force which would provide solutions to the problems. The trade union at that time, because of everything mentioned above, could be characterized as a structure which remained in the vacuum of the political and social system. In the last ten years of self-management’s existence it was used, above all, to soften the introduction of unpopular economic policy measures, that is, as an extension of the state authorities.

When the League of Communists and Yugoslavia began to fall apart, the trade union lost all its support and was not able to act as it should. From 1988 and 1989 onwards, the dissolution of the trade union began, followed by a party political split.<sup>18</sup> The League of Communists had obviously never really had the basic support of each trade union, the workers (i.e. the active worker base). It could be said that the trade union base had become passive and that it ultimately only served a political role as leadership in “negotiations” in which it stood on the side of the upcoming reforms. The base’s lack of trust in the leadership and in their political and fighting potential, was not unfounded. The trade union leadership at the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties turned

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 18 Interview by the author with Zoran Stojiljković.

towards the liberalization of markets and the economy, participating in the burial of the self-managing socialist system. Of the informal divisions resulting from the legacy of the former common state, certain new-old unions wholeheartedly accepted nationalist and chauvinist rhetoric and ceased dealing with social and workers' rights which were completely destroyed over a short period of time, as was employees' standard of living. Although the 1980s strikes primarily bore a social message, and the ethnic belonging of the strikers did not come to the fore,<sup>19</sup> the turnaround in official policies and rhetoric, particularly after 1989, created nationalist forces out of the workers' movements. These nationalist forces were later abused many times over as a trump card for bringing into being plans which pushed the SFRY into the civil war of the 1990s.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the trade unions never had the strength to grow into an alternative political option. To this day they have practically failed to develop their own political platforms with which to influence their membership, or with which they might emerge independently in political life.

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**19** Mikašinović-Komšo (2016) states that many of the strikers had support from the whole of Yugoslavia, irrespective of the nationality of the striker, i.e. in which republic or region the strike occurred.

**20** An excellent example of such misuse was the so-called "Kosovo meetings", at which worker dissatisfaction was channeled through the national question.

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Photograph from *Vukovarske novine*, 1988.

BOROVO GROUP  
(SVEN CVEK, SNJEŽANA IVČIĆ, JASNA RAČIĆ)

# Labour, Class, Nation: Workers' Strikes in Croatia in the Year 1990

This text is the result of the research project *Kontinuitet društvenih sukoba 1988.–1991.: Kombinat Borovo* [The Continuity of Social Conflicts in the 1988-1991 period: the Borovo Combine], carried out since 2014 under the auspices of the *Centar za mirovne studije* [Centre for Peace Studies] and the *Baza za radničku inicijativu i demokratizaciju* [Organization for Workers' Initiative and Democratization] from Zagreb. The aim of the research was to describe the (dis)continuities between the workers' strikes dating from the end of the 1980's and the violent conflicts of the 1990's, which unfolded and are interpreted primarily in the ethno-national key. The once great Vukovar combine Borovo, often referred to as "Little Yugoslavia", provides an opportunity for gaining insight, through a case study, at the micro-level of social-historical analysis, relevant to the broader issue of the continuity of conflicts in the post-Yugoslav space, and also into the mechanisms and dynamics of their transformation. Our approach to this issue is determined by the thesis that the Yugoslav conflicts occurred at the time of the establishment of the capitalist social relations, so that this simultaneity was not accidental but constituted a case of interlinked processes. In our research, we proceed from the position of workers and the experience of labour. That means that in our analysis of this period, marked by social insecurity, bankruptcies and dismissals from work, we take into consideration the tools that workers had at their disposal when it came to understanding their position and

articulating their interest, as well as the available strategies for resisting the general decrease on the living standard, impoverishment and the precarisation of labour.

Towards the end of the 1980's, the workers of Borovo as well, witnessed the final abandonment of the Yugoslav socialist project and the collapse of labour – as the foundation of sociality – in its economic, social and ideological aspects. Their response were increasingly frequent strikes. In the course of the most dramatic one, which occurred in 1988, they went to Belgrade and broke into the National Assembly. In the summer of that year, the workers of Bosnia's Đurđevik and Belgrade's Rakovića also went on strike in front of the National Assembly. Naturally, the workers of Borovo were not alone in their actions: during the course of 1989, over 500,000 Yugoslav workers went on strike. We understand the conflicts that shook the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) at the time, whose integral part were the increasingly numerous strikes in industry (as well as outside industry) primarily as class-motivated ones. This, however, does not mean that those were the only conflicts unfolding at the time. Other conflicts that shook Yugoslavia at the same time included those between the republican leaderships, those related to the division of the increasingly scarce resources in the Federation, the break-up of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), the conflicts pertaining to the changes of the Constitution of the Socialist Republic (SR) of Serbia and the status of the autonomous provinces in it, the conflict between a part of Croatian Serbs and the newly elected republican authorities. These strikes unfolded within the political sphere torn apart by conflicts. When we say that the class conflict of the late 1980's was transformed into an ethno-national one (which, in its turn, culminated in a war), then we speak of complex overlappings and interferences between the class conflict of many years and the conflicts that unfolded in a more narrowly understood political sphere. This simple enough formulation hides a complex image of an all-encompassing social change, within the framework of which Yugoslav workers, subjected to the pressure of the market imperative, progressively lost the material, institutional and political support they had had until then. Even though in our research we primarily deal with one factory and one city, that is, with a situation in one republic, we are of the opinion that the essential aspects of this research are relevant to the dynamics of the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation as a whole. The main lesson to be learned from this research would, therefore, be that similar investigations – which will analyse the experience of the crisis and the workers' rebellion within the framework of the global capital flows and the local political upheavals – are necessary if we are to provide additional details and change the reductive image of this period,

which, being its result, to a large degree determines our post-Yugoslav and post-socialist present.

Let us begin with the following claim: the period under consideration (1988-1991 in provisional terms) is determined by an all-encompassing transformation of social relations. It involves, first and foremost, the processes of creating a free labour force (unemployment) and changing the ownership relations (abolishing social ownership). While the unfolding and the form of the change of ownership relations remained firmly within the sphere of political decisions and out of the reach of workers, the strikes that we follow, which were organised in order to fight against bankruptcies and for the preservation of jobs, represented precisely a struggle for labour. If the struggle of the weakened labour force turned out to be unsuccessful, its failure is inseparable from the success of nationalism and the parallel establishment of capitalism. In order to sketch out the processes involved in this transformation “from class to nation”, that is, the transformation of “the workforce into the warforce”, in this text we offer a brief description of the concrete relations in Croatia a short while before and after the elections of 1990.

In early 1991, in the weekly paper published by the *Borovo* holding company, among articles dealing with illiquidity, strikes, price increases and surplus workers, there appeared satirical texts about the life of the Crisis family. They tell a story of the problems faced by Hungryman, the head of the family, in his efforts to support his wife Inflation, his son Bankruptman and his daughter Reform. The names of the Crisis family members, as well as the titles of the articles – “Nova godina na bonove” [New Year on Coupons] (1991: 10), “Kad nema plaće” [When There Is No Salary] (1991: 6) – represent, in that particular order, the key words and the burning issues of this period. Namely, the main topics throughout Yugoslavia at the time were bankruptcies and dismissals of industrial workers, an integral part of the reforms that were supposed to help society overcome the crisis of many years. The reforms carried out by the federal Government during 1990, acting in accordance with the requests of foreign creditors, which definitively took society towards capitalism, involved austerity measures and a “restructuring” of industry. Therefore, industrial firms were hit particularly hard by them: due to a drastically reduced availability of loans<sup>1</sup>, industry lacked raw materials, then work, and eventually its illiquidity resulted in a wave of programmed bankruptcies and dismissals of workers. To workers, this was a time of furlough,

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<sup>1</sup> In this text we do not review the tectonic shifts on the world market: the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the appearance of fresh cheap labour force in Asia in labour intensive industries such as the shoe-making or textile industry.

receiving their salaries, minimal as they were, belatedly<sup>2</sup>, and being faced with the increasing threat of losing their jobs (cf. Račić, Ivčić, Cvek, 2017).

During 1990 and 1991, bankruptcies were a mass, everyday phenomenon. According to the data supplied by district commercial courts in early 1991, in the year 1989 there were 118 cases of bankruptcy in Croatia, whereas in 1990 there were as many as 490. Although the available data are incomplete, from the newspapers of that period we can gain a clear insight into the seriousness of the situation, especially in predominantly industrial areas. Thus, in 1990 in Slavonski Brod, out of a total of 36 bankruptcies, 18 of them occurred in the Đuro Đaković company alone, and 6,596 workers lost their jobs. At the same time, in Karlovac 3,720 workers, mostly from the Jugoturbina company and the cotton industry in Duga Resa, were left jobless. In Osijek, we can read, 109 firms went bankrupt, and “only” 2,940 workers were dismissed “for now”. In Zagreb, 17 companies went into liquidation in 1990, on account of which 9,000 people lost their jobs. That same year, 30 bankruptcy proceedings were initiated in Split, and 14,331 workers were dismissed (D. Ogurlić, 1991: 4).<sup>3</sup> In Borovo, where the labour force surplus was estimated at 5,600, three companies initiated the bankruptcy proceedings in the spring of 1991. This automatically meant job losses for 4,900 people (Tri poduzeća u stečaj, 1991: 1).

The purpose of the cataclysmic measures that, at the time, shook Yugoslav society to the core, as well as the meaning of the continuity between the old “Communists” (who were Communists in name only by the end of the 1980’s) and the new “democrats” become clearer if we turn to the documents of the institutions whose directives constituted the guidelines for the implementation of the said measures. As we find out from a World Bank report on the “industrial restructuring” of Yugoslavia dating from 1991, its essential elements were the ownership reform, that is, the privatisation of socially-owned companies and the abolition of workers’ self-management. The said Bank report explicitly states that the success of the restructuring depends on resolving the issue of ownership of capital and the role of labour in self-managing socially-owned companies (cf. Konovalov, 1991: 71). Even though the reform measures led to a great decrease of industrial production and drove both insolvent and profitable companies into bankruptcy, the support of the state and banks was not

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<sup>2</sup> In the first half of 1990, as part of the shock therapy measures, salaries were frozen, so that in February 1990 the average salary in Croatia was at the level of the minimum pension only, that is, only 5% higher. (D. Kojić, 1990: 5).

<sup>3</sup> The situation was no better in the other republics, and the worst hit was the province of Kosovo and Metohija. While the Federal Executive Council estimated that 150,000 people would lose their jobs in 1990, others were talking about a million job losses (Bauk stečaja kruži Jugoslavijom, 1990: 4).

desirable, for this would endanger the “reform of the financial sector”. Therefore, the key problem in the process of restoring capitalism in socialist Yugoslavia was precisely the existing position of labour. In view of the character of social ownership, it was inseparable from the issue of ownership relations, which were to be changed completely now. Resolving the problem of the surplus of labour force, estimated to amount to one-fifth of the overall number of workers employed in the industrial sector, thus, represented an important step when it came to resolving the “problem” of social ownership (cf. World Bank, 1991: xi).

In early 1990, *Sindikalna javnost* [The Trade Union Public] periodical wrote that the public debates on the fate of social ownership, whose outcome was uncertain, were conducted “in the circumstances when very harsh wage labour conditions are a distinct threat, and when it is still anyone’s guess how our socially-owned companies are to be managed in ownership terms and disposed of” (Jusup, 1990: 7). Soon after the elections, the new authorities rejected the proposal to distribute the socially-owned property among the workers by means of shares, so that the state, making its first step towards privatisation, opted for its nationalisation. In autumn that same year, we could read about the “ownership putsch” in the republic: “the Croatian Democratic Union (CDU) revolution in the sphere of the economy kept waving the rights of employees and the flying dollars of the Croatian Diaspora in the manner of a bull-fighter’s red cloth, knowing full well all the while that whatever was truly available was right there, right under their noses, on the territory of Croatia, and thus accessible through the existing legal regulations” (Marković, 1990 3). The state apparatus, therefore, was the key instrument in the process of transforming the ownership relations and the redistribution of the social wealth.

However, these processes unfolded in a situation characterised by a resurgence of nationalist policies and the beginning of the rebellion of a part of Croatian Serbs. Under such circumstances, inevitable moves such as compiling lists of surplus workers brought along the potential risk of creating additional tensions and divisions in the sphere of labour. The pressing issues of labour and ownership were thus caught in the grip of nationalist policies, which represented the dominant tendency in the sphere of narrowly defined politics. Even the reformed Communists, in their pre-election campaign of 1990, insisted “on national, even liberal (in economic terms) slogans. Their leaders outdid themselves dwelling on the dangers posed to Croatia by Serbia, even attempting to outdo the CDU” (Puhovski, 1990: 3).<sup>4</sup> Such a party policy framework (which, un-

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4 At this point in time, the League of Communists quite explicitly renounced the industrial working class. In the documents of the 11th Congress of the League of Communists

der the newly established conditions of parliamentarism, represents the only institutional path leading to the levers of power) necessarily imposed limitations upon the possible outcomes of contemporary social struggles. Although the dominant rhetoric of the political parties of that time was solely based on “the market”, “the state” and “the nation”, the satirical texts from Borovo referred to above illustrate in a condensed manner what was revealed at the time by public opinion polls (cf. Jović, 1990: 26–27) and a cursory glance at the titles of newspaper articles alike – that everyday life was marked primarily by the experience of the crisis, and was therefore irreducible to the dominant political parameters.

The year of the first multiparty elections was marked by a wave of strikes, which represented a response to the years of decreasing living standard, whose culmination was marked by existential insecurity caused by bankruptcies and dismissals of workers. The lack of raw materials and production stoppages, as well as the attendant late payment of salaries, dissatisfaction with non-functional self-management and the increase of economic inequality – all of the above were the reasons for mass manifestations of workers’ discontent in the preceding years of the crisis, too. These were not specific solely of Yugoslavia at the time. The increase in the number of strikes in the 1980’s was a part of “the unprecedented wave of international protests” against the austerity measures that the countries affected by the debt crisis implemented under the pressure of the International Monetary Fund (Walton and Ragin, 1990: 876). As elsewhere in the world, what went on in Yugoslavia was a “defensive struggle”, that is, resistance to the processes “undermining the established ways of life and the existing social contracts” (Silver, 2003: 163–64).

In view of the fact that these processes continued, and even intensified after the change of power in 1990, the intensity of the strikes did not diminish either. Although we still have no systematised data on the number of strikes held in 1990 and 1991, merely by leafing through the press of the period we can clearly see that the scope of the mobilisation of workers was exceptional. By August 1990, the number of strikes had risen to 148, with almost 43,000 workers participating (Pregled štrajkova u Republici Hrvatskoj, 1990: 8). A review of the archive material leaves one with the impression that at the time there was virtually no company whose workers did not go on strike.<sup>5</sup> Not only the industrial sector was

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of Croatia, is it stated that in the coming new era the League of Communists will be oriented towards “post-industrial society”, that its “judgements concerning ownership relations... will be based on economic efficiency”, and that it advocates “a transformation in the being of the working class from the industrial worker towards the innovative worker” (11. kongres SKH, 1989: 44–45).

<sup>5</sup> A complete picture of workers’ actions in this period can only be obtained when the work on the Archive of Workers’ Struggles, carried out by the research section of the



affected, there were also strikes in the educational and health care sectors (I dalje štrajk nastavnika, 1990: 5; Prvi poslijeratni štrajk prosvjetnih radnika Vukovara, 1990: 7). Although this mobilisation was, depending on the circumstances, more or less organised, so that it often did not reach beyond the level of the company in question, its intensity testifies to the seriousness and breadth of the resistance to the processes that were turning social relations in Croatia from socialist to capitalist ones.

In is interesting to note that workers' rebellions continued at the level of Yugoslavia as a whole, even at the moment when the common state was virtually falling apart, despite the fact that the nationalist options had won the elections in all the Yugoslav republics (this was undoubtedly due to the fact that they had successfully presented themselves as the anti-systemic alternatives to the current state of affairs). This kind of continuity is testified to by the metalworkers' general strike held in Croatia on 5.12.1990, as well as the strike held in support of textile industry workers held one day later. The mobilisation of Yugoslav metalworkers against the measures passed by the federal Government began in spring 1990 on account of the threat of closing down eight of the twelve ironworks in the country and the planned dismissal of 60,000 workers. Due to the fact that, even after two warning strikes held in all the ironworks in Yugoslavia (in which more than 100,000 workers took part), the federal Government did not react, the metalworkers, faced with the threat of bankruptcy, announced a general strike (Pantelić, 1990: 3; Djuric, 1990; Jerčić, 1990: 6).<sup>6</sup> In Croatia, the general strike of metalworkers represented the peak of organised class struggle at the time when capitalist social relations were being introduced, an opportunity for a clash of the old and the new trade union organisations, and also for a political discrediting and prevention of workers' organisation. The accusations and attacks coming from the state structures were supported by a new middle-of-the-road trade union, close to the authorities (the Croatian Union of Trade Unions), established precisely at the time of the metalworkers' strike.

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 Basis for Workers' Initiative and Democratisation, is brought to a close. On the basis of reviewing a part of the trade union and local newspapers of that period, we know of workers' actions in the following companies: Borovo (Vukovar), Vunateks, Josip Kraš, Velebit, Jugoturbina, Karlovački tjednik (Karlovac), Pamučna predionica [Cotton Mill], Prehrana (Glina), TVIK (Knin), Jugoplastika, Brodosplit (Split), SAS, Bagat (Zadar), TLM (Šibenik), Luka, Mesokombinat, Čistoća, Brodokomerc, 3. maj, MGK (Rijeka), Česma (Bjelovar), TVIN (Virovitica), Kapela, Prevoz (Ogulin), Tupljak (Labin), MOL (Lički Osik), Oteks (Otočac), Sloga (Gospić), Kamensko, Šimečki (Gračac), Pulapromet, Grupex, Astra, subcontractors of Uljanik (Pula). The above list does not include industrially significant cities such as Zagreb, Osijek, Slavonski Brod or Sisak, and we should certainly add to it the strikes of traffic wardens and engine drivers in the railway company held during this period.

<sup>6</sup> There are no other examples of workers' activities at the level of Yugoslavia as a whole at the time in the relevant literature, cf. Musić, 2009: 164.

Even though the strikers were accused of aiming for “a destabilisation of the situation in the Republic of Croatia and toppling the legally elected authorities” (Ne štrajku metalaca, 1990: 5), this was a clearly socially motivated strike. The reasons for a strike of the branch of economy that constituted “almost a third of the economy of Croatia” point to the fact that, at that moment in time, metalworkers shared the fate of Yugoslav workers in general – “miserable incomes, bankruptcies accompanied by mercilessly handed out dismissal notices, amassed losses, an entirely uncertain tomorrow” (Hrvatska pred stečajem, 1990: 7; Petković, 1990: 14). All the same, workers were exposed to accusations and pressures, not just coming from the central state and the trade unions close to it, but also from municipal authorities. The strike at the Đuro Đaković company, one of the centres of the metal industry, “was characterised by the Croatian authorities, as well as the municipal authorities of Slavonski Brod, as an action directed against the new Croatian leadership” (Barać, 2010: 442), and the municipal authorities in Karlovac were actively engaged in suppressing a metalworkers’ strike: “the CDU held meetings of its members and supporters outside and inside the factory halls, openly agitating for calling off the strike, putting up posters with a false announcement saying that the strike would not be held”, and the manager of a company “demanded that all those who were in favour of going on strike sign their names”, as a result of which the strike did not happen there (Metalci (ni) su štrajkali, 1990: 5). Apart from pointing to the continuity and the scope of workers’ struggle, the general strike of metalworkers testifies to the general logic of the interference of the policies conducted in the name of the national cause with workers’ demands. As we can see, this attempt at developing workers’ solidarity was brought into question on account of the activities of the state and the political and trade union structures allied to it, guided by the logic of the “national interest”.

A closer look at the dynamics of social conflicts at the municipal level indicates the complexity of the conditions under which workers’ resistance occurred. Namely, soon after the elections, in the entire republic the old company managements were replaced by new ones, close to the new authorities. This “ownership putsch”, as *Sindikalna javnost* wrote, was carried out by resorting to “the methods of ‘the antibureaucratic revolution’” (Marković, 1990: 3). It was such a widespread phenomenon at the time that newspaper articles routinely referred to it as “the slaughter of managers” (usp. Općinska vlada rastjeruje ‘opću maglu’, 1990: 4--5; Markulin lagao, varao i pljačkao radnike, 1990: 2; Srbi ili Hrvati, 1990: 2; Lučka jogurt revolucija, 1990: 2; Tko koga melje u “Francku”?, 1990: 16). At the same time, in the areas where it failed to win the elections (in around forty of a total of 114 municipalities (Grdešić et al., 1991:

202–216), the CDU subsequently attempted to take over the levers of power in various ways, or at least to exert as much influence on them as possible.<sup>7</sup> In the municipalities whose survival and development entirely depended on their companies, what was at work at this point was a crisis of social reproduction, accompanied by workers' rebellions.<sup>8</sup> The situation was additionally complicated by the rebellion of a part of Croatian Serbs, which started in the municipality of Knin, the organisation of which was actively supported by the municipal trade union structures, in cooperation with the trade union organisation of the Socialist Republic of Serbia (see the chapter "Srpski režimski sindikati i njihovo djelovanje u Hrvatskoj: Zlorabljeni poslušnici režima ili izviđački odred za promjenu granica" in Petrović, 1997: 55-67).

The mention of "the antibureaucratic revolution" as a method of taking control of companies may lead one to think that workers' discontent was quite simply instrumentalised for the sake of political interests.<sup>9</sup> However, archive materials point to a much more complex picture of this historical moment. Workers, whose more or less organised statements of discontent preceded both the multiparty elections and the ethno-nationalist conflicts, were not a mere "instrument" in the political party offensive aimed at companies and municipalities, but actors in a complex social conflict at the moment of the restoration of capitalism. The multiple conflicts unfolding in Yugoslavia at the time often interfered or overlapped. Workers in companies may be in conflict with the manager, with the central state or municipal authorities, or they may be divided internally. Furthermore, in the period following the change of power in Croatia, we witness a conflict between the old and the new representa-

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7 That this was actually the strategy of the central powers can be concluded on the basis of a meeting held in July 1990, when representatives of the Government and the Parliament met with municipal representatives. The main guidelines of the policy towards the municipalities that were presented on this occasion – that the municipalities had to be subordinated to the central powers, had to follow the Government's economic policy guidelines concerning privatisation (or nationalisation) and "entrepreneurship", that it was necessary to replace the existing local media by new ones – suggest that at this point the aim of the authorities was to take over the state apparatus in its entirety and to gain as much control as possible over all the social resources. (Cf. Bogdanić, 1990: 7) Reactions to such efforts on the part of the central powers in local surroundings differed depending on the specific balance of political powers in the given municipality, and they could be organised to a greater or lesser extent by political parties. A more detailed elaboration of the interparty and internal party dynamics of the CDU and the Serbian Democratic Party (SDP) can be found in Gagnon's study *The Myth of Ethnic War* (2004). In view of the fact that we cannot deal with these issues here, we refer the readers to Chapter Five of this book, which provides an overview of "the strategies of demobilisation", through which the radical segments of these parties created ethnic divisions in society by means of violent methods.

8 For the consequences of the collapse of a big company (Borovo) for the entire municipality (Vukovar), see Cvek, Račić and Ivčić, 2016: 121–122.

9 For a revision of the usual interpretations of "the antibureaucratic revolution" in Serbia, see Vladislavljević, 2008.

tives of the political class, or between a number of managers within the same company, who were trying to position themselves as favourably as possible, often enough by forming coalitions with local politicians, with a view to participating in the forthcoming redistribution of ownership. Workers were, thus, often forced to act tactically within relations established in this way. In order to present the complexity of workers' position and the limited nature of their manoeuvring space, we shall offer a few illustrative examples.

What a conflict between workers and a manager may have looked like at the time before the post-electoral turbulence is evidenced by the situation that occurred in the spring of 1990 in the Zadar company SAS. Its manager outsourced 450 workers and employed them part-time within a contractual organisation and two companies that were in the process of being established (in 1990, these companies had been "being established" for four years already). These workers still manned SAS machines, doing the same work as SAS workers, but the salaries they received were "twice or three times lower" (Jusup, 1990:2). These workers went on a strike, during the course of which they threatened to hang the manager and smash the machines, in an attempt to fight for their rights, but to no avail. Moreover, the companies that were separated were closed down, and out of what used to be socially-owned property there emerged new entrepreneurial initiatives of SAS's managers, the outcome of which was that the workers ended up as cheap labour force for hire. When, at the time of "slaughter", the municipal authorities (CDU) demanded of workers to hold a referendum for the purpose of a vote of confidence to managers, the manager of SAS did not get the workers' support (Tko dobije, svaka mu čast, 1990: 7; Antić je morao pasti, 1991: 1). The relations between the manager and the workers described above show that a vote of no confidence was not at all unexpected, and that it could not be explained as a result of the workers' opting for the policy of the ruling party. That was a moment in the years-long class conflict that escalated during the political upheavals in the municipality.

The attempt at a "slaughter of managers" in Vukovar's Borovo company in the summer of 1990 also represented a moment of interference of workers' demands and nationalist politics. Although the strike on Borovo's Leather Footwear Factory broke out due to the increase of the salary coefficient for expert employees, the reasons for the workers' discontent certainly went deeper than that. As was stated in a report submitted by the local trade union, at the time of the strike, there were "rumours about a labour force surplus of 25 to 30 per cent, which only made the atmosphere more heated" (Zanemarena upozorenja sindikata, 1990: 3). After the failed negotiations between the strikers' committee

and the factory management, the leadership of the strike was taken over *ad hoc* by a group of Borovo workers known to be local CDU activists, who added the dismissal of the manager to the original list of the strikers' demands. The emphatic party affiliation of the prominent new members of the strikers' committee, which was made up of both Croats and Serbs, was undoubtedly the reason why the company workers' council concluded that the aim of the strike was "to infiltrate staff members in the Borovo company who were supported by the political party in power in the Republic" (Prihvaćena procjena povoda i posljedica štrajka, 1990: 7).<sup>10</sup> However, the trade union rejected the accusations to the effect that the strike, which at one point encompassed 9,000 participants, was politically motivated. Still, the workers were not united when it came to supporting the strikers' demands: some wanted to work, but the workshops were locked, the factory paper noted threats of physical conflicts among the workers, a "Work Committee" was established, which supported the strikers' demands, but also advocated returning to work, there were rumours "that the Serbs wanted to work but the Croats did not" and the like (Brozović, 1990: 14; Dio ljudi želi raditi, 1990: 4). The situation as it was at the moment was accurately described by a statement heard in the course of a workers' council meeting – that the division among the workers "was caused by the political situation in the country (Sjednica sa političkim prizvukom, 1990: 4)." What certainly turned out to be true was that the intervention of party activists in the sphere of labour led to divisions that had not existed before. In a situation where the strikers' demands coincided with those of a party whose politics was essentially ethno-national in character, and no less importantly, anti-Communist and anti-Yugoslav, the Borovo workers, for the first time, were divided along ethnic lines as well. But the mixed ethnic composition of the strikers' committee, led by CDU members, as well as the mass character of the strike itself, clearly point to the fact that the workers did not go on strike guided by "the national idea" or the nationalist politics. Their position and activities were aimed at improving their financial position, even through cooperation with nationalist political forces.<sup>11</sup>

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**10** The same conclusion was reached by a *Glas Slavonije* commentator who wrote that the CDU was behind the strike: "some of the local CDU leaders threatened that 'Borovo would be destroyed' just because the municipal leadership was differently inclined politically (Borovo, 1990: 2)".

**11** What should be mentioned in this context is that the CDU, in its anti-system activities, very much resorted to the rhetoric of class and class exploitation, with special emphasis on the conflict between the "people" and the "elite". For example, this line of division runs through the attack of the Petrinja branch of the CDU against the general manager of the Gavrilović company: "Mikelić and his lackeys must understand that the people of Petrinja demand of them to submit a detailed report on their activities in Petrinja, to explain to us how and why forests, gardens, orchards and arable land were

One could provide more examples of this kind. In the industrial city of Karlovac, the time of a “slaughter of managers” was also the time of a mass workers’ rebellion when, for the first time, the workers’ ethnicity started to play a role in the political struggle. The pre-election attacks of the local CDU branch aimed at the manager of the “Velebit” company boiled down to the claim that he, as well as other Serbs employed there, were guilty of having created a bad situation in the company (which was in a bad situation for the same reasons as all the other companies in Croatia at the time). Such ethnicisation of workers’ problems, through which the class experience of the crisis was individualised (“many people spoke about the problems they’d had under the previous system and blamed the manager for them”) and interpreted through the prism of ethno-national affiliation, led to divisions among textile workers, “who, crowded in the mess hall as they were, resembled one another very much (Mrkalj, 1991:8)“.

Here, too, the intervention of party politics in the sphere of labour was of crucial importance for creating divisions among workers. Even though these divisions were nowhere near definitive or total, during an open workers’ council session a female worker warned: “Are we really going to believe these lies and misinformation, which our greatest layabouts use to divide us, when we shall be equally hungry tomorrow: Croats, as well as Serbs and Muslims!” These divisions contributed to weakening the efforts aimed at broadening the scope of the fragmented workers’ rebellion at this difficult moment in time. When the textile workers of *Velebit* were supposed to support metalworkers by going on strike, “the Croats said that they would not participate in the work stoppage because they had no wish to topple the Croatian Government, while the Serbs demanded that they should support metalworkers, for that was in the best interests of textile workers as well, and that this in no way undermined the position of the Government”, as a result of which the strike never happened (Mrkalj, 1991: 8).

The escalation of the conflict between the rebel municipalities,

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 taken away from them so that luxury villas could be built on the side of Mt Zrinska. Does Mikelić still wish to preserve his status of a power man, to keep the privileges and the position that he has, or does he wish to prove that he worked ‘in the interests’ of Petrinja and its people and for their ‘benefit’? ... How can he speak of his ‘contribution’ to the development of Gavrilović when its workers receive miserable salaries and when he pursued his career at the expense of the workers and their misery?” (Ž.M., 1990: 2)  
 A more systematic analysis of examples of this kind would help develop the assumption that, in a situation where the former “avant-garde of the working class” officially gave up on industrial workers, the political options that based their position primarily on opposing everything that was “Communist” could attract the votes of protest in the elections regardless of the fact that, prior to the elections, their excesses were more folklore than political in character. This, naturally, does not refer to the CDU only, but also to its Serb anti-Communist counterpart, the SDP. Processes similar to the ones described above could also be observed in the places where the SDP won the majority in the elections.

where the Serbian Democratic Party had won the elections, and the central republican authorities – that is, the conflict between two nationalist policies – inevitably additionally contributed to the divisions among Croatian workers. In the summer of 1990, *Sindikalna javnost* reported that “the dress rehearsal for a civil war is being moved from city squares, streets, roads and forests into... companies”. The workers’ assembly in Šibenik’s TEF company demanded that disciplinary proceedings be initiated against Serb workers who were not coming to work on account of the armed rebellion in Knin, a number of Zadar companies relieved their Serb workers of guard duty, and the Croats who did not go to work in Obrovac because of barricades were also threatened with dismissal.<sup>12</sup> In spring that same year, at the time when the Law on Transforming Socially-owned Companies was passed, in many of those socially-owned firms few people had the time to think about the burning issues of transformation and privatisations, as these were overshadowed by concerns for bare life. In May 1991, armed civilians controlled Vukovar, “both CDU and Serb extremists”, and the entrance to the Borovo combine was blocked by people who would shoot in the air if anyone approached (Petković, 1991: 3). At the same time, in Glina, a municipality that had recently joined the Serb Autonomous Region of Krajina, around seventy people, “mostly SDP members”, broke into the “Prehrana” company, where now “bread is being made and baked ‘under the protection’ of armed civilians”, and workers “work under inhumane conditions and in a semi-military atmosphere” (prior to that, the municipal authorities had transformed “Prehrana” into a public company, that is, nationalised it). An anonymous woman from Glina commented thus: “Misery piling upon misery. Does a Croat or a Serb have to remain jobless just for being a Serb or a Croat? (Novak, 1991: 17).”

The cases described above show that our transition to capitalism involved the organised resistance of workers, this in spite workers’ dissatisfaction with the existing system and despite there being no alternative to the economic reforms that were transforming Yugoslav society at the moment. In their essential aspect, these reforms constituted a process of weakening labour and further fragmenting of the labour class. In this process, an important role was played by ethnic divisions among workers, which came as a result of the organised political strategies of parties (united in their anti-Communism and tendency towards capitalism), the anti-working-class engagement of various levels of government and, fi-

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 12 It is interesting to note that the reporter shows understanding for all the workers affected by sanctions: “In any case, many of the workers were really unable to come to work. Be it because of blocked streets or for another reason. Some were even forced to stand guard... (Jusup, 1990: 1).”

nally, as a result of open physical violence. It follows from the above that the armed conflict in Croatia not only got under way when the class conflict was already in full swing, but that it also prevented the broadening of the latter's scope. In a situation where there was, in fact, no supranational or non-national political option and in the situation of the universalisation of capitalism the world over, space was created for establishing a different foundation for building the post-socialist societies of the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

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# glazbeni stolica o plakatu a



LIDIJA K. RADOJEVIĆ AND ANA PODVRŠIČ

# The Slovenian Youth and the Neoliberalisation of Yugoslavia: From Alternative Movements to the Liberal Third Bloc

This research discusses the role of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia (LSYS) in the formation of a powerful pro-Slovenian and anti-socialist coalition, united on national(ist) grounds, which emerged in Slovenia during the 1980s debt crisis in Yugoslavia. As in many other parts of Yugoslavia, in the 1980s Slovenia's political landscape was shaped and restructured by the burgeoning "new social movements" (NSMs)<sup>1</sup>. Until 1986, the League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia (LSYY) called for their full integration and institutionalisation under its banner, and the Slovenian Youth organisation followed this move (Spaskovska, 2017: 125). Within the Slovenian debates, the discussions on the role of the LSYS during the 1980s focused mostly on their activities aiming for the pluralisation of the political, mono-party system and pressures on the League of Communists of Slovenia (LCS). The LSYS is therefore seen as a key and progressive actor in the democratisation of Slovenia.

Confirming the importance of the Slovenian institutionalised youth for furthering the abolishment of the mono-party system *within* Slovenia, this article takes as its starting point Centrih's (2014: 33) observation that "despite its radical leftist agenda, the League did not attempt to mobilize the workers against the Party, even though it was the only Slo-

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1 These movements were considered new because of their issue-oriented activism that was based on the single issue-oriented political campaigns common in the context of Western European movements.

vene organization potentially capable of starting such a project. Instead, it played the role of a constructive opposition". What is more, "[i]n the early 1990s, the former youth organization, now stripped of its radical leftist past, became the political and ideological core of the dominant Slovene political party, [the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, LDS], which would go on to lead efforts for the integration of Slovenia into Euro-Atlantic organizations" (Centrih, 2014: 33). The institutional seeds of the emerging LDS Party were sown in 1989, when, in the struggle for political power in view of the forthcoming multi-party elections, the LSYS formulated the concept of a liberal "third block" to demarcate itself from the two dominant political groups, i.e. the nationalist coalition joined under Demos and the reformed Communists, now called the Party of Democratic Revival.

To explore the factors that shaped the transformation of the LSYS from the mantle of legitimacy of alternative social movements into the liberal political third bloc, we contextualise the LSYS's activism within the framework of the neoliberalisation of Yugoslavia under the Washington Consensus agenda (WCA). The dominant reform agenda, combining economic liberalisation with the reinforcement of federal state powers, offered the possibility to a new generation of liberally-oriented and urban youngsters to improve their political and economic power positions. Depending on the pursuit of economic neoliberal reforms, the LSYS became a channel for the formation of individual social actors that entered into pragmatic coalitions with the local Communists and, if necessary, the right-wing forces.

We first provide the main characteristics of the unfolding of the neoliberalisation of Yugoslavia during the 1980s debt crisis. Then, the main three periods in the institutional and political transformation of the LSYS during that decade are explored.

### **The restructuring of Yugoslavia under the Washington Consensus agenda**

The outbreak of the debt crisis in the 1980s revealed the unsustainable character of the Yugoslav development since the mid-1970s. A combination of internal economic and political decentralization and liberalisation of international financial markets encouraged the Yugoslav leaders to overcome constant balance of payments problems by relying on foreign finances, predominantly from private creditors (Samary, 1988: 235–265). The crisis was triggered in the late 1970s, following the oil shocks, and transformed into a foreign debt crisis after an interest rate hike in the early 1980s; by the end of the decade, the crisis evolved into a severe stagflation (Yarashevich and Karneyeva, 2013). Neither the crisis

nor its form were specific to Yugoslavia, but “mirrored the crises that a number of countries were going through in both the capitalist and the socialist world” (Gligorov, 2004: 22). To understand why the crisis led to the disintegration of the state, the abolishment of the social property regime and the systemic change in favour of capitalism, the dominant economic policy should also be considered.

The “anti-crisis” solution for Yugoslavia was based on the WCA (Prinčič and Borak, 2006), most strongly defended within the federal government and the IMF. It implied a considerable transformation of the existing economic and political structures, the patterns of accumulation and the development priorities. Harsh austerity measures, financial restrictions, economic liberalisation and subsidies for exports to capitalist states were supposed to improve the country’s capacity to repay the foreign debt. At the same time, to reinforce the control of finance, regulations, particularly those related to debt management and finances, i.e. the public finances and the Bank of Yugoslavia, were to be brought back under the federal state authority (Woodward, 1995: 280–282, 347–252). Briefly, the WCA sought to transfer the main costs of the crisis onto the working classes, favoured external markets over the domestic ones and privileged (technologically more advanced) manufacturers exporting to European capitalist economies.

Given the uneven development of Yugoslav regions, such a one-size-fits-all policy not only prolonged the crisis but also intensified its uneven manifestations. With the outbreak of the energy crisis in the early 1980s and the imposition of import restrictions, the southernmost regions already faced substantial shortages of reproductive materials and consumption goods (Pirjevec, 1995: 36). In a couple of years, the production in those regions approached a state of complete collapse, and by 1988 Kosovo and Metohija, Macedonia and Montenegro already announced their bankruptcy. In that same year, Bosnia and Herzegovina found itself in a similar position after the collapse of its main agro-industrial complex, Agrokomerc. Slovenia was among the better-off regions, and the crisis did not directly impact this republic until the late 1980s. Whereas poorer regions needed massive public investments to address the problems of underutilised machinery, inadequate infrastructure and escalating unemployment, Slovenian producers, for instance, were pre-occupied with “technological modernisation” in order to improve their export capacities (Magaš, 1993).

Representing over half of the registered job seekers, the youth was hit the most by the crisis. Between 1979 and 1985, the number of job-seeking youngsters increased at an unprecedented pace by 210,000 people, and continued to grow from 640,000 in 1986 to over 680,000 in

1989 (Woodward, 1995: 386–387). Less developed regions were affected most, especially Macedonia, where in the mid-1980s already over three out of five youngsters were officially jobless. In contrast, in Slovenia, the regional outlier with almost full employment during the whole post-war period, the rate of youth unemployment did not exceed 4% for most of the 1980s.

By exacerbating the disproportion between the social needs and the available funding, the dominant reform agenda exacerbated the political tensions as well. With the 1974 Constitution, the policies affecting employment conditions were transferred to republics and provinces, while the Army gained the status of the “ninth republic”, having a voting role in the federal party presidency equivalent to that of the republics. Both public finances and foreign currency acquired the status of scarce, yet urgently needed, resources that one should struggle for in order to protect/maintain one’s republic/province and enterprise revenues and, thus, one’s income and living standard. Hence, the (IMF) demands to reinforce the federal state authority over finances and monetary issues faced considerable opposition from regional leaders, as well as local population.

Political decentralisation also implied that regional centres, acting as intermediaries between the federal state and the population, were the prime locus of party power (Centrih, 2014: 16; Jović, 2009: 67; Stanojević, 2003: 296). Thus, the conflicts over and decisions on the exact pace and scope of the neoliberalisation of the country were channelled through regional structures. The pressures against the system and their main representatives, the LC and the federal state, came not only from a rising strike wave, led mainly by industrial workers, but also from the younger generation. Despite the very uneven crisis experience across the regions (and social groups), since the early 1980s the Yugoslav institutionalised youth shared a common perception of rising insecurity and criticism of the system’s competition, myth, corruption, clientelism, connections, which all weighed heavily on one’s job prospects (Spaskovska, 2017: 48; Woodward, 1995: 320). Faced with pressures from bellow, regional authorities often circumvented or only partially implemented the measures agreed on the federal level to diminish the domestic social discontent and hardships – after all, the sources of privileges and political legitimacy of the regional centres of power lay within “their” domestic economies (Centrih, 2014; cf. Jović, 2009: 144). Crucially, by giving in to popular demands, the authorities on the level of the republics appeared to be protecting the local population against the measures that were more and more perceived as coming from the outside (Lowinger, 2009).

A multi-scalar state system with shared responsibilities between the party organs on the federal and lower level(s) of the administration

also acted as an important barrier to the formation of cross-regional alliances among the broader population. In Slovenia, the youth organisation became an important site for channelling the growing rebellion of the youth. The real extent and depth of the crisis (echoing the existing “levels” of development) did not overlap with one’s perception of social insecurity. According to the Yugoslav-wide research *JUPIO – Jugoslovenski program za istraživanje omladine* [the Yugoslav Programme for Researching the Youth], launched in 1983 by the LSYY, the Slovenian youth, used to rising living standard and secure employment, was the most pessimistic about its future (Spaskovska, 2017: 17–24).

Concerning the concrete demands of the youth, as articulated by the official view of the LSYS, a generational change should be taken into account. Many youngsters born in the 1950s and the 1960s did not identify themselves with the existing system and the Yugoslav “third way” position, but instead viewed themselves through the prism of Europeanism. The socio-economic background changed as well. The leading positions in the youth organisation were more and more held by educated, urban youngsters following their careers in the administration, business and local politics (Spaskovska, 2017: 127; Vurnik, 2005: 36). This, without doubt, contributed to the fact that, the more the crisis deepened the more the form of the dissatisfaction of the youth and their demands departed from the initial, cultural-based activism to a more systemic one. Crucially, the progressive transfer of competencies concerning education, research and development planning, as well as effective budgetary control on the level of republics and provinces helped to “reduce” the perception of the crisis and the proposed solutions to the vantage point of one’s local employment conditions (Woodward, 1995: 337).

### **Departing from the Party’s transmission belt (1982–1985)**

The youth, institutionalised in the LSYY, with its branches in republics, provinces and the Army, had a special place within the Yugoslav delegate system. Considered to be the “transmission belt” or the “hatchery for the Communist Party”, the LSYY had a key systemic position and the role of the guarantor of the future system preservation. The outbreak of the crisis, Tito’s death, the protests in Kosovo and Metohija provoking violent repression and the developments in Poland led young activists to position themselves at the forefront of trying to rethink the Yugoslav project (Spaskovska, 2017: 7, 23). In Slovenia, the so-called Punk Affair signalled not only the rising criticism among the younger generation but also the fact that their institutional representative decided to strengthen its political engagement.

After the late 1970s, the punk culture was the predominant form through which Slovenian youngsters criticised the system's norms and values. Initially, punkers were indifferent towards the LSYS, which occasionally tried to bring their activities under control. However, in 1981, with the so-called "Nazi-punk affair"<sup>2</sup>, when a group of youngsters was illegally arrested and many of them harassed, the LSYS shifted its stance. The affair provoked a widespread public debate about the political character of the punk culture and led to a sudden politicisation of youngsters, who defended punkers and were active in the emerging "new social movements" (NSMs). The LSYS, too, sided with the youth media, especially with *Radio Študent*, and decided to offer material and financial resources for further development of the punk movement. In doing so, the LSYS opposed the official view of the LCS, which considered the punk movement to be "imported forces hostile to socialism". By protecting and legitimising punk, the LSYS sent a clear sign that it sought to broaden its popular basis, to reorganise itself and to take a more independent stance towards the other socio-political organisations (Vurnik, 2005: 27–28).

Far from representing a homogenous group, the institutionalised youth was internally very divided. During the preparation of the Congress in the early 1980s, one can observe clear internal differences. Discussing the Congress documents, prepared in advance, members reproached the LSYS leadership for intellectualist discourse, insufficient consideration of Tito's and Kardelj's role, as well as for their insufficient engagement in the promotion of pan-Yugoslav brotherhood and unity (Vurnik, 2005: 22–23). These tensions between the leadership and the membership base of the LSYS persisted throughout the 1980s; however, due to the organisational structure of the organisation, they seemed not to have a greater influence on the political and organisational transformation of the LSYS into a site for the proliferation of pro-market social actors that joined local communists in their fierce defence of the autonomy of republics.

By questioning the prevailing narrative on the revolutionary past, the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress, taking place in 1982, broke with the LSYS's "transmission belt" position on the declarative level. The existing delegate system was seen as "a false example of classic parliamentary relations", and harsh criticisms were addressed to the organisation itself. Using the established discourse of "the pluralism of interests", the LSYS integrated the burgeoning NSMs on the basis of working groups. In close collaboration with those movements, problematizing especially ecological questions, gender relations and the militarization of society, the LSYS raised issues that could potentially provoke a conflict with other socio-political organ-

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2 They were charged with having established a national-socialist party. For an in-depth account, see *Punk pod Slovenci* (1985).



isations. Although critical towards the leaders of the organisation, the youth media, such as *Tribuna*, *Mladina*, *Katedra* and *Radio Študent*, offered space to the organisation to bring these debates into the public eye (Vurnik, 2005: 33–39).

The official criticism of the LSYS remained, nevertheless, within the limits of the politically acceptable. For instance, the statement that “the state and the society are in a crisis” clearly broke up with the existing rules by putting forward a view not yet articulated by the party members. However, by linking the crisis to the overwhelming “state intervention”, the LSYS’s observation remained rather blurred and general (Vurnik, 2005: 26). This vagueness is all the more striking when one considers that, in the year when the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress took place, Milka Planinc took the position of the federal Prime Minister. Many consider M. Planinc a socialist “Iron Lady”, whose neoliberal reformist persuasion could be compared to that of her English counterpart M. Thatcher (Djokić, 2015; cf. Samary, 1988)<sup>3</sup>.

During the first half of the 1980s, the LSYS’s move to a more front-line position was perceived with ambiguity by other organisations. From the point of view of the existing system of institutions, the LSYS started to introduce competition within the political system (in Slovenia) and questioned especially the role of the Alliance of the Working People (AWP). The latter was already supposed to link various organisations in order to ensure the recognition of their interests (Vurnik, 2005: 27). However, the relations between the LSYS and other organisations of the (Slovenian) delegate system started to change rapidly after the mid-1980s, when the LSYS formalised its “pluralism of interests” as the demarcation line separating them from other socio-political organisations. Yet, it was exactly by strategically deciding to move towards a more attractive and active stance that the LSYS contributed to the reinforcement of the neoliberal agenda.

### **Towards a more active and attractive LSYS (1986–87)**

Several years of harsh austerity measures, the collapse of wages, “crude monetarism” (Magaš, 1993) and the reinforcement of the market criteria for the operation and viability of enterprises brought all the contradictions and antagonisms which supported Yugoslavia’s social edifice, to the surface. After the mid-1980s, an unprecedented strike wave started to emerge, with industrial workers moving from “their” factories to start marches, street demonstrations and gatherings in front of govern-

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 3 At the same time, the issues that could directly bring into question the institutions of the existing system were not much exposed. By removing the candidature of Janez Janša, one of the leading figures who brought into question the Yugoslav Army and the organiser of the 1983 conference on the “socialisation of defence and security”, for presidency of the organisation, the LSYS made an unprecedented move (Vurnik, 2005: 67–68).

ment buildings. With the growing rift between the Communist leaders and the working classes, which the former were supposed to represent/defend, the inter-Party relations started to rapidly transform as well: the long-standing factional divisions of the Yugoslav party, irrespective of the formal borders of republics and provinces, began to be replaced by national-based coalitions (Jović, 2009: 323). At least in Slovenia, another generational change in the leadership of the LCS and the LSYS contributed much to the formation of an oppositional, yet mutually supporting pro-Slovenian coalition of non-Communists and Communists, which never brought into question the pursuit of market reforms.

One should not think that the integration of the NSMs in the LSYS contributed to the emergence of a kind of common “popular front”. In fact, there existed significant tensions and differences, both in terms of organisation and political aspirations, between the LSYS and the NSMs, as well as concerning power relations. The NSMs activists were integrated into the LSYS’s structures on the basis of working groups, and they could not participate in the decision-making procedures of the organisation. The LSYS also framed the demands and discourses, and launched only those initiatives that were politically acceptable. Not only did the NSMs get legitimacy and gain visibility, they also contributed to the socio-political reinforcement of the LSYS’s institutional position, as well as to their public recognition. Mainly composed of young people and younger intellectuals from the middle class (Mastnak, 1993: 97), the NSMs enjoyed considerable popularity despite being rather a minority in quantitative terms. In 1986, 75% of participants in a public opinion poll supported their activities, and almost half of them were ready to join those movements (Repe, 2002: 101). Such a popularity was without doubt one of the most important reasons behind the decisions of the LSYS to fully institutionalize the NSMs within itself.

Whereas the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress signified the “breakthrough from a transmission to a sovereign socio-political organisation” (Vurnik, 2005: 82–83), the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress, taking place in 1986, transformed the LSYS into an actual political participant. To make the organisation more “active and attractive”, as spelled out by the documents of the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress, the NSMs were integrated into the policy-making organs of the LSYS and recruited among its staff.

Although the issues discussed at the Congress were very diverse, the actual number and subjects of the chosen initiatives publicly launched reflected the LSYS’s intention to work as an “opposition from within”. Ecological issues, put forward by the Greens of Slovenia movement, were predominant because they “did not question any state apparatus, as, for instance, the peace movement did” (Vurnik, 2005: 80). At

the same time, the LSYS delegates made a very significant proposal to change the existing decision-making system by calling for a referendum on the building of a new nuclear power plant (Vurnik, 2005: 81, 92). Similar patterns can be observed concerning the initiative on the legalisation of strikes, by then considered to be a “temporary interruption of work”. The proposal was not considered as an alternative method of resolving the (escalating) conflicts over (the control of) wages, but rather as “one of the forms of collective conflicts” (Vurnik, 2005: 87), where the statute of strike announcement would hold a dominant place. Due to the growing discontent of workers and pressures from below, this initiative, in contrast to many others, also gained the support of the Slovenian party organisation and of the official trade unions, on the Slovenian level as well as on the federal one (cf. Vurnik, 2005: 88; Warner, 1990).

In fact, a closer look at the proposed solutions to the growing socio-economic problems reveals that there existed a considerable overlapping of the LSYS’s agenda with that promoted by the new generation of Communists and their leader M. Kučan (Spaskovska, 2017: 161–162). The LCY now “accepted the need for a radical economic liberalization, and with it a bourgeois belief that the invisible hand of the market can solve all the country’s economic problems by closing down unsuccessful enterprises and allowing competitive new ones to emerge” (Kovac, 1988: 117–118). Criticizing social ownership and the interference of private initiative, the LSYS regularly called for the liberalization of the economy and encouraged the formation of a new economic ethic, where “being rich [...] would not be a shame anymore, but an honour [...] a permanent post given to an individual was criticized as an unjustified privilege [while] social policy [...] should be a mere corrective of market economy, and not its motive” (Vurnik, 2005: 118).

The growing “embeddedness” of the LSYS within the political dynamics at the republican level and the alignment of their agenda with the main pillars of the political programme of the LCY went hand in hand with a growing “disembeddedness” of the LSYS from the federal youth organisation. The existence and legitimacy of the LSYY were more and more challenged, especially in the second half of the 1980s, due to a generational change and the arrival of new activists who shared social liberal ideas (Spaskovska, 2017: 160). Although the idea of political democratisation was relatively widespread and the need for a change acknowledged, there were important differences concerning the method and pace of change among the institutionalised youth. For Spaskovska (2017: 164), “under the aegis of reform and change, 1986 saw the beginning of what would become an irreversible process of fragmentation of the LSYS”; on the basis of the increasing rifts along republican lines and the growing

convergence on a national basis (Spaskovska, 2017: 167).

The conflict over Article 133 of the Yugoslav Penal Code, which defined the “verbal delict”, was revealing. The initiative to abolish this article was first launched in Belgrade in the 1970s, and was also brought forward by the League of Writers of Yugoslavia in 1985. It was not until 1986 that the LSYS also adopted the initiative for the abolishment of this Article (Kovac, 1988: 117; Repe, 2002: 41–42). Nonetheless, when the delegates from Slovenia proposed to the federal youth organisation and Assembly to abolish the “verbal delict”, they were rejected and “attacked not because of the intrinsic content of their ideas but as *Slovenes*, as people offering unacceptable *Slovene* ideas [...] Hence, we have the paradox of Serb dogmatists agreeing with those Slovenes who consider a desire for democracy to be part of the Slovene national identity” (Kovac, 1988: 117, emphasis in the original; cf. Jović, 2009: 368).

Thus, after the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress, the double role of the LSYS got a clearer shape: on the internal level, it sought to reinforce itself vis-à-vis the Slovenian Party; on the “external” level, it reinforced the position of the Slovenian leadership at the federal level. Through this double positioning, the LSYS helped to legitimize and reinforce the bargaining power of those social actors that defended the pursuit of the reforms which sought to reshuffle the class-power relations and structures in favour of capital within Yugoslavia and all its regions.

### **Forming a liberal “third bloc” for multi-party elections (1988–89)**

In mid-1987, miners from Labin organized a strike where workers for the first time called for a political change and the creation of mechanisms that would directly link workers with the state. “[T]he system was challenged at all levels” (Magaš, 1993: 105; cf. Kuzmanič, 1994: 162) and its legitimacy evaporated all the more as the pressures of workers increased proportionately to the galloping inflation and collapsing real incomes. With the crisis reaching a systemic character and starting to hit the most prosperous Yugoslav region, the neoliberalisation of the country entered a new and – from the point of view of the federation – final phase. Declaring “its inability to deal with the country’s economic problems ... within the existing system” (Mencinger, 2004: 69), the federal government of Branko Mikulić launched the reforms that brought capitalism back to Yugoslavia.

Yet, the abolition of the social property regime, where economic and political rights were constitutionally bound together, demanded the reorganisation of political structures as well (cf. Woodward 1995: 166–

167; 361–364). The protests of the Kosovo Serbs, the resignation of the Montenegrin leadership, the dismissal of the Kosovan-Albanian leadership, the ‘yoghurt revolution’ in Vojvodina, the ‘trial of the four’ in Ljubljana – these events should all be pondered against the background of the escalation of class antagonisms, the unprecedented attack on post-war social gains and workers’ rights *within* all Yugoslav regions and the quest for a power position in the emerging capitalist national system(s). Radical and left oriented member groups of the LSYS might be, the organisation legitimized the re-interpretation of the exploited-exploiter dichotomy in nationalist terms in Slovenia and contributed to the channelling of the (justified) popular anger and the mobilisation capacities of the masses against the fabricated *external* danger (cf. Musić, 2011), concretised as “Belgrade” or the “federation”. Hence, the autonomy of Slovenia was protected and the real social gains of Yugoslav socialism undermined.

The first major event took place in mid-1988, during the “trial of the four”, when three *Mladina* journalists and one military official were charged with allegedly leaking secret military documents. The illegal decision of the Army to hold a trial in Serbian in a court in Slovenia provoked a wave of public demonstrations. The latter were coordinated by the newly established Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), which all the Party organisations, including the LSYS, supported (Pirjevec, 1995: 390). In June 1988, the CDHR held a popular gathering that “in its scope and importance, [was] without precedent in post-war Yugoslavia” (Magaš, 1993: 143). Joined by about 30,000 people (Pirjevec, 1995: 390), the protest resembled a “virtually complete national mobilisation” (Magaš, 1993: 145). Slovenia was the only Yugoslav region with an onion-shaped social hierarchy structure, with more than half of the population belonging to middle class (Hafner-Fink, 1997: 260). With the imposition of the austerity measures, “[d]eclining prospects, lower relative incomes, and increased competition for employment commensurate with educational achievement and status expectation all led to open and growing resentment within the established managerial, professional, and urban white-collar stratum against the system’s policies of redistribution,” (Woodward, 1995: 368) and especially against the proposed agenda to bring the control over the finances back to the federal level.

The protests against the austerity measures and the threat of losing control over employment increasingly took the form of a defence of the republic-level autonomy over economic resources and policies. For Zajc (2015: 59), by attacking strongly the Army and the federal institutions in a context where the issues of democratisation and Slovenian exclusivism became blurred, the *Mladina* intellectuals further sparked the national(ist) fever. Although the journal tried to mute the calls for the

primacy of ethnicity, the published articles insisted that Slovenia should claim its place in the “West” and avoid the ills of East Europe and the “Balkans” (Patterson, 2000).

Yet, it was not just the “trial of the four” that shook the Slovenian political landscape in the summer of 1988. Workers from the industrial giant TAM, which barely managed the crisis, held the most impressive strike in the post-war history of the Slovenian region. For Kuzmanič (1994: 164), “[a] wild strike in Maribor [...] put the whole town under the command of a few thousand workers for more than a day. The railway station was blocked. Perhaps at this point Slovenia [...] was closer to a state of emergency than at any other time in the previous ten years.” The TAM workers’ strike was just one among many radical actions that angry workers in various parts of the country held against the implementation of the strict anti-inflationary stabilisation measures, which provoked another wave of bankruptcies and collapsing real income. Thus, the Slovenian leadership opposed “Belgrade” only partially and rather used the Yugoslav multi-scalar state system of divided responsibilities between the authorities on the federal and republican level to transform class antagonisms, internal to the region, into a cultural divide, where the “enemy” of the alleged national unity was located outside of the region.

The CDHR, supported by the LSYS, was crucial here – the CDHR “politely and firmly declined” (Magaš, 1993: 145) an earlier offer by metalworkers to take the trial of the four as an occasion for organising a general strike. What is more, “[t]he trial of the four allowed all questions on the public agenda before 1989 to be subsumed under the national question. All questions that did not fit well enough into this scheme became unimportant” (Jalušič, 1994: 148). Various movements within the “opposition” homogenised their respective political agendas on a nationalist basis (Mastnak, 1993: 57), similarly to the local factions of the LCY (Pirjevec, 1995: 390). In fact, in the following months, “in Slovenia the disagreements between those in power and the opposition were overcome and [...] a common form [was] emerging” (Pirjevec, 1995: 397) that firmly stood behind the “autonomous capitalisation” of the region: in September 1989, *all* politically influenced actors and social groups participated in a round table to confirm the constitutional changes that gave Slovenia the right of self-determination, but also to abolish the social property regime (Pirjevec, 1995: 398).

The confirmation of constitutional changes overlapped with an open struggle for power after the LCS announced multi-party elections. In late 1989, a year before regular elections were scheduled, the LSYS organized the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress, succinctly described by Vurnik (2005: 161) as “a gigantic, yet short-term pre-election campaign and somehow too

far away from the real elections". This meeting was not only approved but also joined by the leaders of the two most powerful organisations, the LCS and the AWP. Introduced by the path-breaking speech of Jože Školč, the organisation's President, stating that "[t]here existe[d] a real chance to win the elections next year" (Vurnik, 2005: 158), the organisational, ideological and programmatic changes launched at this Congress definitely separated the LSYS from its Yugoslav and socialist past.

Parliamentary democracy, liberalized market economy based on private property, as well as ecological concerns and the promotion of the European integration project. The attributes and characteristics such as the status of "alternative" and the term "youth", which could lead potential voters to associate the LSYS with its self-management past, were abandoned. Nevertheless, the leading members still preferred to maintain the old acronym, which during the previous year proved to be very beneficial in terms of increasing their public importance and popularity. Filled with a new class-political content, LSYS now stood for *Za svobodo mislečega sveta* [For the Freedom of the Thinking World], and the organisation presented itself as the "third block". (Vurnik, 2005: 161–164) The concept was most clearly formulated by Slavoj Žižek, and sought to differentiate LSYS from the rather nationalist Demos and the reformed Communists (Vurnik, 2005: 195). United within the Party of Democratic Revival, the latter titled their new program "for the European quality of life [...] tailor-made for managers, entrepreneurs, intelligentsia, technocrats and especially middle and upper classes" (Ferfila, 1989). Therefore, what might be considered criticism within the Slovenian institutionalised youth from the early 1980s in terms of "alternative" was formally buried at the 13<sup>th</sup> congress of the LSYS.

Transformed into a party organisation, the LSYS also formally separated from its institutional linkages with the federal organisation by changing its statute. It called for the transformation of the LSYY into a mere body for cooperation and coordination between republics and provinces, if not for its complete dissolution. Although by the end of the decade most of the representatives of the Yugoslav institutionalized youth replaced the discourse of 'pluralism of self-managing interests' [with] a new discourse of human rights and liberal values which foreshadowed the 'exit from socialism'" (Spaskovska, 2017: 29), the conflicts and divergences over the concrete method of pursuing the neoliberalisation of the Yugoslav regions loomed large, and the working class paradigm was now clearly replaced by the nationalist discourse (Vurnik, 2005: 214–216).

## Conclusion

The institutionalised youth had a key role not only in the reproduction of the Yugoslav socialism, but also in its demise. With the outbreak of the debt crisis, Yugoslavia entered a new phase characterised by several-years-long attempts to reform the existing system through the Washington consensus agenda. The formal recognition of the new class-development strategy, articulated in the Long-term Programme of Stabilisation that the Planinc government used for its first negotiations with the IMF, more or less coincided with the decision of the LSYY to depart from its transmission belt position. Far from representing any real opposition being able to articulate an alternative agenda to the predominant neoliberal reforms, the institutionalised youth, at least in Slovenia, was crucial for their (partial) realisation.

The neoliberal solution for resolving the crisis in Yugoslavia was found in a combination of economic liberalisation, further economic and political integration into the European structures, as well as in the re-creation of federal-state apparatuses that would be able to impose fiscal austerity and a tight monetary policy against the popular pressures for increasing social expenditures. By turning strategically in favour of a higher, more active and attractive “pluralism of interests” within the Slovenian institutions, the LSYS contributed to the weakening of political pluralism at the federal level and of any meaningful opposition to the socio-economic neoliberalisation of the Yugoslav regions. Instead, the (Presidency of the) LSYS used the deepening of the crisis in Yugoslavia as an opportunity to reinforce its political-power position within the republic.

Until the middle of the decade, this strategy was still based on some coordinated cooperation with the federal youth organisation. After 1986, however, it became clear that despite their liberal orientation, the leaders of the institutionalised Yugoslav youth were incapable of any cross-regional alliance. This led the LSYS to act as a “constructive opposition” solely on the national level. In doing so, it not only helped to reinforce the position of the Slovenian Communist Party as the intermediary between the (Slovenian) population and the federal bodies, but also further fuelled the centralisation of the powers of the republic at the expense of the federal state. In other words, by remaining focused on the crisis experience of the Slovenian region, the LSYS took part in the strategy of the Communist leaders, which used the multi-scalar state system as an instrument for preventing a direct integration of the working masses into a federal decision-making force, oriented towards the formation of a pan-Yugoslav class-based and pro-labour social movement.

The main effect that the neoliberal restructuring of Yugoslavia



during the 1980s had on the institutionalised youth in Slovenia was the LSYS transformation from a site of radical left criticism to a channel for the formation of “third bloc” liberals whose politico-territorial strategy was based on the shift from “Belgrade” to “Brussels/Frankfurt”. At the same time, the LSYS’s politico-institutional remodelling during the 1980s had important “feedback” effects on the neoliberal restructuring of Yugoslavia and the fact that the defence of republican control over jurisdiction predominated over the protection of the socio-economic gains of Yugoslav self-management.

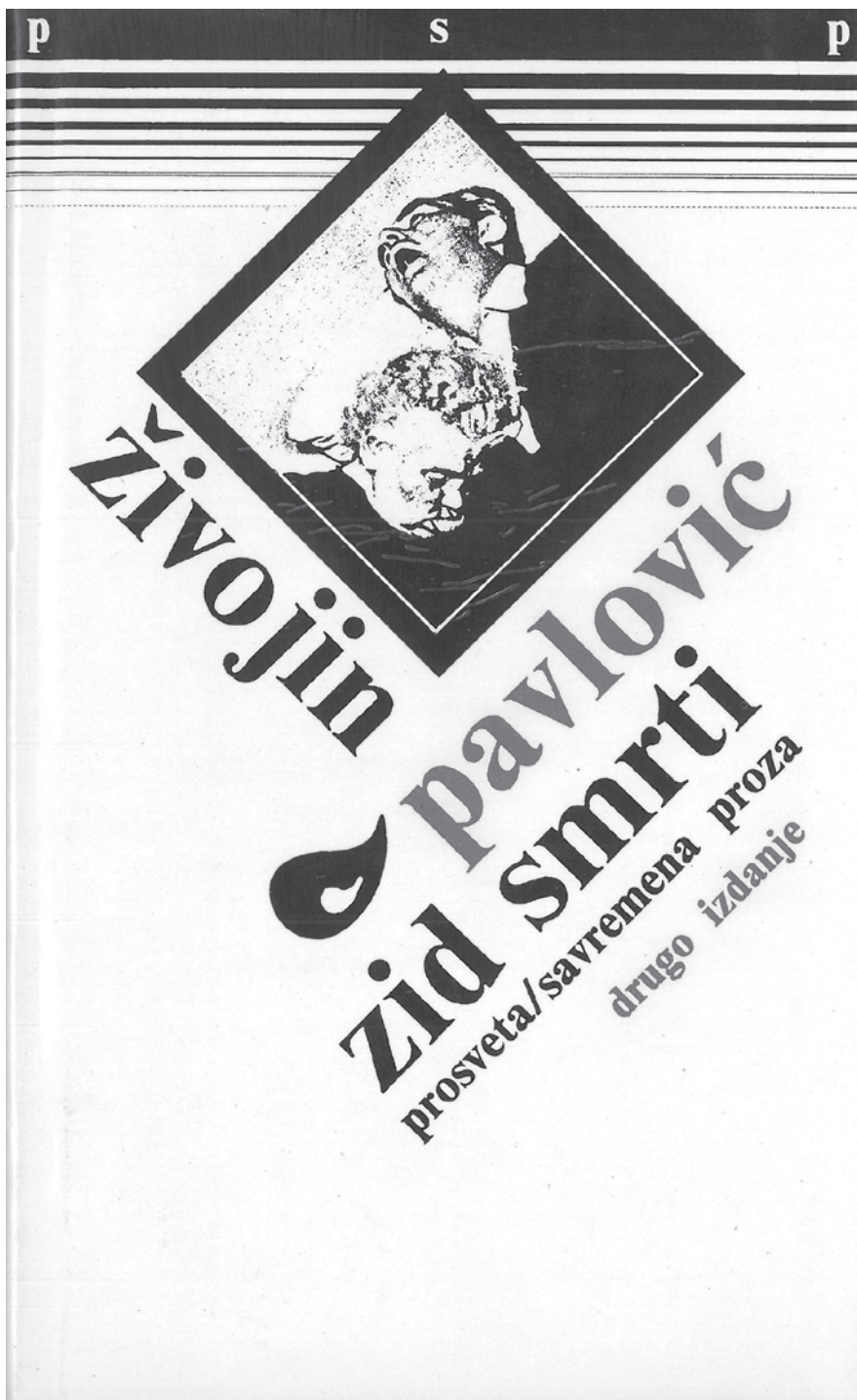
Indicative of the fact that neoliberalism needs the support of a strong state, the most spectacular undermining of the labour class took place in the period of the early formation of the successor states. By 1990, the leaders of the emerging post-Yugoslav capitalist states not only formally restored capitalism but also implemented the radical macroeconomic stabilisation programme known as (Marković’s) shock therapy. By the summer of 1991, more than one quarter of the population lived below the poverty line. As late as 1989, Yugoslavia belonged to the countries considered to be achieving a medium level of development; in a couple of years, the Yugoslav region dropped to the level of some of the poorest African countries like Zambia, Zaire and Uganda (Berend, 1996: 348–349).

Without doubt, the Slovenian youth lived through the post-Yugoslav transition much better than its counterparts in other countries of the former Yugoslavia. However, it has not and could not escape the predominant trends – with the neoliberalisation of the Slovenian system of social protection and labour markets, partially also under the leadership of the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, the successor of the LSYS, most of the youth not only became market dependent, but also found themselves in a precarious situation and with limited future prospects.

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Cover page, Živojin Pavlović, *The Wall of Death*, Prosveta, 1986

BORIS POSTNIKOV

# “The Financial Aspect Is Truly Unimportant”

A chronicle of the break-up of Yugoslavia  
viewed through ten NIN Awards

## Introduction: Contradictions and controversies

“It’s better that we talk about ourselves”, is how Vuk Babić, a hero of the national liberation war, explained things to the actor Stevan Arsenijević, who was to play none other than himself, a legendary Partisan commander, in the great movie spectacle *We Are Young Partisans of the Timok Region*. Arsenijević, however, was undecided: he had fought in the war himself – true, just as a young courier under Babić’s direct command – but he still remembered enough to realise that the script of “Timok Partisans” was just another addition to a series of romanticised ideological mystifications, carefully cleansed of all those real events and historical facts that did not fit in with the dominant image of a just, unsullied liberation movement. Therefore, Babić tried to convince him, “It’s better that we talk about ourselves [...] Others will talk about us in a way different from what we want to hear; it won’t be pleasant for us to see ourselves the way they see us” (Pavlović, 1985: 65).

Arsenijević and Babić are characters in Živojin Pavlović’s novel *The Wall of Death*, the winner of the NIN Award for 1986:<sup>1</sup> half-way through, that is, of the final decade of the existence of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and Pavlović still had no way of knowing how

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<sup>1</sup> This award is regularly given in January for the best novel published in the preceding year.

prophetic the words of his fictional veteran of the Partisan struggle actually were. In just a few years, new wars would start: political power – and along with it, the right to the institutional control of collective memory – would be taken over by Babić's "others," those who saw history differently and spoke about it differently. A time of nationally coded truths would come, a time of the destruction of the socialist heritage and renewed narratives of Yugoslavia as "a prison house of peoples", a monolithic structure that, through its totalitarian reflex, stifled the right to a different opinion, harshly punishing any criticism of the ruling regime. Contrary to those newly established truths, what we wish to do here is liberate a space for memories. This is partly due to the fact that the history of the break-up of Yugoslavia is more complicated by far than the perverse subsequent nationalist simplifications; partly this is because it is – quite simply – "not pleasant for us" to see how the dominant national narratives view that history today.

But for whom are we actually liberating that space? And what kind of voices should be heard there? If we intend to undermine the current revisionist reinterpretations, which read the history of Yugoslavia as a monologue-type discourse of the ideology of that time, then it seems to be methodologically most honest to offer them a target that they themselves like best shooting at: a privileged point of the legitimacy of the elite Yugoslav culture, a place where "the regime" promoted the best of the best that its cultural workers managed to produce. In that sense, Pavlović's novel is doubly useful: on the one hand, it reminds us that it was precisely literature in Yugoslavia that constituted a sphere of markedly dynamic circulation of "cultural capital"; on the other, it was precisely the NIN Award that accumulated that capital more successfully than any other literary accolade. The story about the end of Yugoslavia, therefore, can be told leafing through the pages of the novels written by the NIN Award winners during the last decade of the existence of the former Yugoslavia. Naturally, that does not mean that the list of novels written by nine male winners and one female winner of the NIN Award in the 1980's constitutes the Yugoslav literary canon of that period: it was to a large degree created by dubious decisions of the jury, the occasional wrong judgements and "extraliterary", mainly political influences, as a result of which numerous literary works were unjustly neglected, and some of those that won the prize have been forgotten in the meantime. It is precisely because it was occasionally "in the wrong", however, that this list is perfectly precise: it reflects, despite the inevitable contingencies – or perhaps precisely because of them – the system of values on the basis of which the Yugoslav literature of the 1980's was assessed. The NIN Award, in other words, was "one of the best means of following the changes of the

literary policy and cultural taste in Yugoslavia” (Wachtel, 1998: 269). Or, to put it in yet another way – using the words of Pavlović’s hero Vuk Babić again – to Yugoslav authors, critics, editors and all the other actors of the literary sphere of that time, it meant, quite simply, the way in which “we talk about ourselves”.

It is, therefore, of interest from today’s perspective in many respects. Owing to the (relatively) dependable archives of NIN,<sup>2</sup> for example, we can follow the basic dynamics of the Yugoslav novelistic production: from the very first giving of the award, in 1954, until the end of the 1970’s, for the most part there were 20-30 novels published annually, whereas in the 1980’s their number increased considerably, so that in 1985 there were seventy of them published, in 1986 “around sixty”, in 1987 “close to fifty”, in 1989 exactly 57, in 1990 “almost sixty”... Parallel with the production increase, the reputation of this literary award increased as well. If the first-ever winner of the award, a high-ranking official of the Communist Party at the time and a political favourite, Dobrica Ćosić (receiving the award in 1954 based on a unanimous jury decision for his novel *The Roots*), could still afford to be “not surprised or excited” after the award-giving ceremony (cf. Ilić, 2010), next year, in 1955, Mirko Božić, receiving the award for *The Uncried*, stated that the award “has already acquired a reputation and authority”, while three years later Branko Ćopić (*Do Not Grieve, Bronze Guards*) spoke of “an award that, over the past few years, has become highly respected in our literary world”. By the mid-1970’s, the NIN Award had already acquired the power to shape and determine its recipients’ careers: “To me, this award, I can openly say this, is a turning point”, as Miodrag Bulatović said (*People with Four Fingers*, 1975): “The NIN Award is ‘our Goncourt Prize’, there is no doubt about that, so that it is of no importance what it is worth in financial terms...” The predominance of the symbolic aspect of the award over the financial one was confirmed five years later by Slobodan Selenić (*Friends*): “The NIN Award is truly reputable: quite simply, one finds oneself in very good company there. Naturally, I highly value this award for practical reasons as well. What is most important, in fact, is that a book should be read, and it is unlikely that anyone who is relevant will not read a book that has won the NIN Award. The financial aspect is truly unimportant. None of us makes a living out of literature.” Finally, a short while before the break-up of Yugoslavia, we find out from the acceptance speech given by Dubravka Ugrešić (*Fording the Stream of Consciousness*, 1988) to what extent the symbolic aspect of the award had become influential: “However, most im-

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 2 All the information about the award that follows – unless otherwise specified – is available at the Internet site of NIN (abbreviation for “Nedeljne informativne novine [Weekly Informational Magazine]”: <http://www.nin.co.rs/index.php>).

portant of all is the fact that every year NIN turns one novel [...] into a media celebrity. Therefore, owing to NIN, once a year a book becomes front-page news. No literary periodical or any other institution has that power.”

From Ćosić’s unperturbed acceptance of the award to Ugrešić’s testimony of the most influential public accolade by far in the literary life of Yugoslavia – as well as later on, after the break-up of the SFRY – the NIN Award, naturally enough, produced numerous controversies. For example, in 1959 the jury decided not to give the award to Miodrag Bula-tović for his novel *Red Rooster Flies towards the Sky*, its intention being “to provide a stimulus to literary quality”; two of the recipients subsequently returned the award,<sup>3</sup> and several authors withdrew their works from the competition even before the jury had had its say.<sup>4</sup> Among the latter, the one who was probably the harshest critic of NIN was Saša Ilić, for whom this literary prize was nothing but “an old servant of daily politics”: “If the entire list of recipients of literary awards over that past sixty years or so was carefully reviewed, one could conclude that only 20 per cent of the novels receiving these accolades were any good. That leaves 80 per cent of them outside this circle. Is it the percentage of failures or something else? One could rather say that this is the main line of award-winning literary works and that the 20 per cent referred to above actually represent cases of derailment from NIN’s tracks, a series of incidents...” (Ilić: 2010). One of the most important contemporary post-Yugoslav critics, Vladimir Arsenić, is even more direct: “The tradition [...] of the winners of the NIN Award cannot boast of any degree of coherence, except for a set of fortunate circumstances marked by interests” (Arsenić, 2011). He goes on to add: “It [the award, author’s note] is considered to be important, but what does it actually bring apart from a relatively large sum of money? The writer and the novel in question get a few minutes of glory, but if they fail to exploit them the way they should, everything is forgotten very soon” (ibid.). At the moment when Arsenić demystified the influence of the NIN Award, incidentally, two years had passed from the privatisation of this weekly magazine: in the year 2009, it was sold to the powerful Swiss media group *Ringier Axel Springer*. It is interesting, therefore, to note the turnaround which this transaction brought: if, in the 1980’s, “the financial aspect” of the award may have been “unimportant” to the award-winning

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 3 Danilo Kiš, having received the award in 1972 for *Hourglass*, following a great scandal surrounding his reputed plagiarism in the collection of stories *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*, returned the award in 1976, as did Milisav Savić, having received the award in 1992 for *Bread and Fear*, after the magazine had published a nationalist pamphlet directed against him, written by Momčilo Spremić, whose novel was also shortlisted for the prize.

4 Radomir Konstantinović withdrew his novel *The Death of Descartes* in 1996, Sreten Ugrčić (*To the Unknown Hero*) and Saša Ilić (*The Fall of Columbia*) withdrew theirs in 2010, and Miloš Živanović withdrew *Smashing* in 2011.



authors – as opposed to the status of a star, being widely read and large print runs that the award ensured as a rule – now the amount of the award paid on a one-off basis was the only thing that counted, and the attendant promotion was just an opportunity which the author, depending on his/her resourcefulness, may but need not make use of. Along with the galloping privatisation and commercialisation, there ensued, quite simply, an era of literary hyperproduction, which entailed fierce competition: in the final analysis, it is enough to know that during the last year for which the award was given, 2017, the jury made its selection from among as many as 179 novels submitted from Serbia alone, and then it becomes clear – compared to what used to be 20-30, or later “around sixty” novels from the whole of Yugoslavia – to what extent the competition on the literary market has become harsher. From the most influential literary institution to a convenient marketing tool, from a situation where, in Sečenić’s words, “it is unlikely that anyone who is relevant will not read a book that has won the NIN Award”, to, as Arsenić puts it, being “forgotten very soon”: that, in a nutshell, is the path the NIN Award followed as socialism turned into capitalism. Inversely proportional to the number of works submitted and the importance of the sum received with the award, this path, in a condensed form – but no less precisely – delineates the broader social devaluation of literature under the changed economic conditions after the break-up of the SFRY.<sup>5</sup>

In order to finally see what the NIN Award can teach us about its disintegration, we first need to see what it can tell us about Yugoslavia itself. And it does, in fact, tell us quite a lot. It is by no means accidental that Josip Broz Tito pointed out precisely this award – along with the Pula Film Festival, the joint radio-television production and several other examples from the cultural life of the country – when, in 1961, he praised “our people, who are building socialism [...] and have a great need for mutual cultural rapprochement”, stressing their “feeling, strengthened by the great achievements of brotherhood and unity, which are the foundation of Yugoslav patriotism” (cf. Wachtel, 1998: 133-134). In any case, even in the first year when it was awarded, the jury Chairman Milan Bogdanović pointed out “the flowering of the Yugoslav novel” (cf. Ilić, 2010), whereas in 1955 Mirko Božić expressed the opinion that this award “can strongly contribute to creating a unified Yugoslav culture”. However, Božić’s hopes in the centripetal potential of this accolade – which was expected to symbolically link various national literary traditions into a complex of

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 5 The broader economic and political context of the decline of the reputation of literature in post-Communist societies is rather precisely described by the American Slavic studies scholar Andrew Baruch Wachtel in his study *Remaining Relevant After Communism: The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe* (cf. Wachtel, 2006: 57-92)

a unified Yugoslav culture – were dispelled only three years later by the official announcement: “The standing jury that awards the NIN Award in the sphere of literary criticism, with the agreement of the editorial staff of the magazine, has decided to limit, as of this year, the NIN Award in the sphere of literary criticism to the Serbo-Croatian language area, in view of the fact that it has concluded that it is not possible for the jury to effectively deal with Slovenian and Macedonian literature, or with the literature written in the languages of our national minorities.” The language barriers were not the only obstacle to the wished-for establishment of the common Yugoslav literary space through this award; this is how, for example, the Croatian writer Slobodan Novak explained why he was very much surprised when, in 1968, his novel *Smells, Gold, Incense* was pronounced the winner: “Well, that was so because, as I understand it, the NIN Award is a somewhat bizarre institution [...]. It is, then, neither a national nor a state award. True, it is an award given by a newspaper publishing house whose readers are its state, and is thus a multi-ethnic or inter-ethnic award, wherein the funds and patronage and all the arbiters belong to a single nationality. Of such an institution, one should not expect to show equal understanding of all the national literatures, irrespective of the professional qualities, objectivity, goodwill and breadth of view of its founders and critics.” However, it would be erroneous to conclude that giving up on the inaugural pro-Yugoslav cultural ideals was a process unfolding in a straight line, for in 1988 – only three years before the break-up of the common state – Dubravka Ugrešić finished her acceptance speech during the award-giving ceremony in the following way: “I consider the NIN Award to constitute a continual affirmation of the contemporary Yugoslav novel, written in the Croatian or the Serbian language. And this is the most essential part of all this.” It is quite certain that it was just as essential that, from the early 1970’s, Bosnian-Herzegovinian, Montenegrin and Croatian professors and critics participated in the work of the jury: the NIN Award, after all, almost until the break-up of Yugoslavia, did presuppose, more or less, a notion of a common culture, and if it undoubtedly did favour Serbian authors<sup>6</sup>, this can be explained, instead of resorting to the vague notion of the mononational reflex, on the one hand, by the concentration of “funds” and the logic of “patronage” that Novak spoke about, and on the other, by the specific role that literature had in the continual conflict of the centripetal and the centrifugal forces within the Yugoslav cultural field, wherein literature structurally tended towards the latter. What was, in other words, inscribed into liter-

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6 It is impossible to unequivocally determine the national affiliation of all the recipients of the award, but it can roughly be established that, during the existence of the SFRY, it was given to Serbian authors in more than two-thirds of the cases.

ature itself, was a closeness to the position of “nationalism”, as opposed to the position of Yugoslav “unitarism”, for – as concisely explained from the contemporary perspective by the theorist Svyetlan Lacko Vidulić – “[in] the daily-political tottering between the Scylla of ‘nationalism’ and the Charybdis of ‘unitarism’, it seems that it was precisely literature that had a special role. The anchorage of literary corpuses in autonomous traditions; the language of literature as the traditional medium of the politics of national identity; the subversive potential of national themes and engagement – all of the above brought literature ‘the aura of dissidentism’, making it, on the other hand, in the eyes of integralists [...] mostly an obstacle to the achievement of Yugoslav cultural unity” (Lacko Vidulić, 2017: 32).

To sum up: as one of the more privileged institutions of literary legitimacy in the SFRY, the NIN Award reproduced the contradictions inscribed both into the state itself and into the literature being created in it. On the one hand, there was the initial idea of establishing a common Yugoslav culture, which, in any case, was favoured by a number of the laureates until the very end; on the other, there was the discrimination of works that were not written in the Serbo-Croatian language, and among those that were, the ones written by authors from Serbia were favoured. However, the structural asymmetries of the NIN Award were not incidental: rather, they reflect the inherent asymmetry of power within the Yugoslav literary sphere. This, approximately, was the outlook of the scene onto which stepped the winners of the most important literary accolade in the 1980’s. What follows are reviews of their award-winning novels: reduced, on account of limitations of space, to brief critical sketches, but sufficient – we hope – to draw the contours of the basic poetic and political tendencies of literature in the years preceding the end of the SFRY. What follows – in other words – is something like *a chronicle of disintegration viewed through ten awards*.

### **1981: Slobodan Selenić, *Friends***

Selenić’s novel is a fine example of the kind of success that the NIN Award winners could count on in the 1980’s (cf. Ilić, 2011: 149), and its success was helped by the current political situation at least as much as by the award. Namely, only a few months after this novel won the award, great demonstrations were initiated in Priština, coming out with the demand to recognise the status of Kosovo as a republic: Selenić’s narrative about the strange relationship between Vladan Hadžislavković, the last offspring of an old Serbian bourgeois family, and young Istref Dull, whose family in Kosovo was killed on account of a blood feud, was mostly read at

the time as a confirmation of the thesis that interethnic conflicts could be overcome and avoided, after all (cf.: *ibid.*). Such readings seem erroneous today: the relationship between Vladan and Istref, from the very start, is marked by a radical inequality, for a highly educated Serb, formerly an Oxford student, takes a poor abandoned Albanian boy to his home immediately after the end of World War Two in order to teach, cultivate and gradually “civilise” him. Apart from the basic national and cultural opposition that determines the relationship between the protagonists, the action of the novel is based upon the contrast between the “old” bourgeois world and the new socialist age of modernisation and urbanisation. The articulation of that contrast, as Dejan Ilić points out, is unequivocally passatist: “The conflict, according to that view of the world, will be won not by the more advanced, humane, cultured civilisation, but by the stronger one” (*ibid.*: 180). It is particularly important to note that “Selenić visibly suppresses the class elements and transfers them onto the less important characters in the novel, which is interesting in view of the fact that the narrower context of the story is decisively determined by the milieu of the socialist revolution” (*ibid.*: 156). The internal contradictions of the Yugoslav socialist project, in a nutshell, are already interpreted in Selenić’s novel almost exclusively in terms of ethnic and cultural categories: that tendency, as we shall see, is a characteristic feature of most subsequent winners of the NIN Award.

### 1982: Pavao Pavličić, *Evening Nude*

Along with Pavličić’s novel, what also entered the list of the 1980’s winners of the NIN Award were the literary methods that would decisively determine the character of this literary prize during that period: in terms of poetics, it was a decade of the domination of postmodernism. The novel’s protagonist, a Zagreb student of fine arts called Mihovil, possesses an extraordinary talent: he is capable of copying and falsifying any document or work of art. At the beginning of the novel, in the local grocery store he pays for the food he buys with a five-hundred-dinar banknote that he painted himself the night before without any problems; later on, he copies historical documents and well-known oil paintings on canvas, then entire segments of reality, creating alternative worlds; eventually, he “falsifies” himself. However, he does not manage to keep his talent entirely secret: the police are on his trail, the news reaches the media, and against his will, Mihovil becomes a guru of sorts, followed by the masses. *Evening Nude*, therefore, contains “elements of the social novel” (Novak, 2004: 87), but the presence of those elements – as was customary for Pavličić – is actually rather modest. This, for example, is

what Mihovil says to a mass of people gathered at a Zagreb stadium who wish to hear a prophetic message from him: “You believe that this world isn’t good. [...] You believe that it should be rearranged. [...] Still, I can’t do it on my own. Together, we can create a new reality. [...] What it takes is just wanting it. You should wish to change the world, and then it can be done” (Pavličić, 1981: 225-226). After this, he tries to talk the people gathered there into starting to do what he does: imitating, copying, falsifying. In a scene that started as an image of mass mobilisation, then, soon enough we get a mere postmodern proliferation of fiction, initiated by the message that it is enough “just [to] want[...] it” and guided by the abstract idea of “chang[ing] the world”. If – even contrary to the “intention” of the text – we wished to articulate the politicalness of its context, then it is worth dealing with the overall political implications of the postmodernist matrix in which it is created. Only three years after the publication of this novel, Fredric Jameson would describe it as “the cultural logic of late capitalism” (Jameson, 1984): non-binding postmodern circulation of meanings and the attendant relativisation of all values – two philosophical premises which are not difficult to detect in the background of Pavličić’s narrative – according to Jameson, they represent a cultural articulation of the new phase of the global expansion of capital, which the advocates of postmodernism tend to overlook. Or, to put it quite simply: while they praise a free play of signs, irrevocably “unstuck” from any “authenticity” of the original or a common metanarrative framework, what they fail to see is how that play in fact only reproduces the equally free and non-binding circulation of capital. They overlook this approximately in the manner in which the initial motif of the counterfeit banknote, which sets the narrative of *Evening Nude* in motion, soon becomes suppressed by new examples of Mihovil’s copying and falsifying art works, historical documents and reality itself: the economic dimension, as in Selenić’s case, soon gets pushed onto the margins of the story.

### 1983: Antonije Isaković, *Moment 2*

If *Friends* questioned the ruling system through the prism of bourgeois revisionism, while *Evening Nude* dwelt on the abstract hint of “changing the world”, Antonije Isaković’s *Moment 2* was rather more aggressive: it told the monstrous story of everyday life in the prison camp on *Goli otok* through descriptions of methods of systematic psychic and physical maltreatment, well known today, such as pointless hard labour in a quarry, suicides... No matter how impressive those descriptions were, the most subversive aspect of *Moment 2* actually consisted in the novel’s gradual linking of the beastly methods of torture used in the camp with

the basic principles of socialism, communism and the national liberation struggle. *Goli otok* is no mere incident here, but a logical and consistent outcome of the entire Communist project. That is why, for example, the text of the novel incorporates transcripts of the session of the 10th Congress of the Communist Party of Russia, in the course of which Party fractions were banned, and why, soon afterwards, there follows a confession of a former *Goli otok* guard: "I remember. We were instructed to prepare collective statements of reformed camp inmates. Deep down, I was resolutely against this. Those collective statements of the reformed ones were the same to me as those 99.99% election votes" (Isaković, 1983: 238). That is why the everyday obligatory Partisan criticism and self-criticism sessions during the national liberation war are described at length, and why those wartime scenes are immediately followed by a camp inmate's retelling of the *Goli otok* practice of criticism and self-criticism, with the additional element of group beatings. It is precisely why such narrative seams, historical parallelism and juxtapositions – to a much greater degree than the disturbing descriptions of everyday life in the camp – deconstructed the Communist ideology and the socialist social order as inherently and irreparably pernicious concepts. That is precisely why *Moment 2* is a good example of the contradictions of the Yugoslav Communism and socialism of the 1980's: due to its harsh criticism of the state ideology, this novel had to wait for four years before it was published, only to receive the most important literary accolade in the country immediately afterwards.

#### **1984: Dragoslav Mihailović, *Booted Men***

The award-winning novel by Dragoslav Mihailović was no less critical towards the Communist ideology. The life story of the protagonist, Žika Stanimirović Kurjak [Wolf], reveals to us how a poor young man from a provincial part of Serbia could ensure for himself any kind of financial perspective in the years before the Second World War only by joining the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Kurjak undergoes the basic training in Belgrade, is then transferred to Skopje, where the everyday life of a soldier, apart from the barracks routine, presupposes bingeing in bars, visiting brothels and all-night drinking bouts. Things go on like that until the young sergeant overdoes it on one occasion: he ends up in jail, and then falls foul of a powerful General, who wants to take revenge on him for personal reasons. The denouement is brought by an unexpected narrative ellipsis: in the final pages of the book, we find Kurjak, last seen in a prison cell in Skopje at the beginning of the Second World War, in the lunatic asylum of Belgrade's District Prison towards the end of the 1970's. It turns out that his arrest decisively determined his life, turning him into

an incorrigible recidivist. And it would appear that Communists were to blame for this the most: “During the war, the Germans, as I told you, almost never bothered me, I was rather more afraid of the Chetniks, and I was never jailed. And then, a year or two after the liberation, when they got going there was no stopping them. They arrested me for every word I said” (ibid.: 309). There is also a reference to the persecution of Inform-bureau supporters on *Goli otok*: a friend of Kurjak’s is mentioned, whom Kurjak kept company with “until he foolishly came to grief in ’48” (ibid.: 308). Narrated using the likeable “folk” register of a witty provincial man from the margins of society, the story of *Booted Men* confirms, relying on humorous narrative devices, seemingly unpretentiously, Isaković’s lesson from the previous novel about the dark side of the Communist regime. That regime, as we see, could cause an ordinary man like Kurjak a lot more harm than the pre-war one, or even the Nazi reign of terror.

### 1985: Milorad Pavić, *Dictionary of the Khazars*

The most successful and widely read book by far, not only among the winners of the NIN Award, but also in the overall Yugoslav literary production of the 1980’s. The central part of the text is made up of three dictionaries – Christian, Islamic and Hebrew versions of the history of the ancient, mysteriously disappeared tribe of the Khazars – which, naturally enough, offer three different narratives about what really happened to the Khazars. The structure of the novel is additionally complicated by the introductory notes, as a result of which a dependable support for a “true” story of the Khazars remains hopelessly elusive: at first glance, this postmodernist *tour de force* appears to be a paradigmatic example of Eco’s “open work”. In view of the fact that it is the only novel in this list to have achieved a significant international reception, it is still useful to verify how its demystification in the eyes of foreign readers unfolded. Andrew Baruch Wachtel, for example, notes that “[in] the Yugoslav context, such a radically relativised vision of the historical truth was obviously problematic, for it implied that among different peoples a mutual agreement and understanding could not be achieved” (Wachtel, 1998: 213). Moreover, he proclaimed it “an anti-Yugoslav novel” (ibid.: 216). The world literature theorist David Damrosch’s criticism is even harsher: according to him, the novel is “nationalist propaganda falsely presented as international postmodernism” (Damrosch, 2003: 275). The key supporting element for such a reading of the novel is the entry on the Khazars in the “Islamic” section of Pavić’s novel, which contains an easily recognisable allegory of the Yugoslav federation: “The Khazars are the most numerous in the empire, the others all constituting very small groups. But the empire’s

administrative organization is designed not to show this. [...] In the north, for instance, an entirely new nation was invented, which gave up the Khazar name, even the Khazar language, and it has a different name for its district" (Pavić, 2001: 127). And so forth: the text contains a long succession of examples of institutional discrimination of the majority people in favour of minorities. A critique of Damrosch's reading, which, on the basis of the above allegory draws the conclusion about hidden "nationalist propaganda", however, will probably point to the fact that the "Islamic" version is just one of the different versions of the history of the Khazars presented in the novel, by no means the "true" one. That, in the final analysis, is the basic premise of the postmodernist understanding of a text: the authentic truth is nowhere to be found anyway. Through the conflict of the Yugoslav nationalist narratives in the 1980's and the brutal break-up of the state in the 1990's, we learned, after all, that a coexistence of different "truths" need not necessarily end in an animated play of meanings characteristic of the non-binding postmodernist relativisation: quite the contrary, it can lead to an ever more intense absolutisation and fundamentalisation of the antagonised narratives. Hence, if Pavličić's *Evening Nude* showed that the postmodernist poetics swept away the traces of the accelerated global circulation of capital, the *Dictionary of the Khazars* contains a lesson on how it hid the rise of nationalist narratives: if, in the preceding years, the NIN Award was won by the anti-Communist novels *Moment 2* and *Booted Men*, then in 1984 it was won – quite in keeping with Wachtel's claim – by an eminently anti-Yugoslav novel.

### 1986: Živojin Pavlović, *The Wall of Death*

It is time to return to the aged commander Vuk Babić and Stevan Arsenijević, an actor from a provincial Serbian town who, all of a sudden, gets the opportunity to play the main role in a great Partisan movie spectacle. This novel by Živojin Pavlović – an author who was unquestionably more influential as a movie director and was one of the main representatives of the subversive "Black Wave" in the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960's and the early 1970's – spills the Black Wave poetics onto the 1980's. The action of *The Wall of Death* unfolds in a dull provincial town, in dirty big city streets and in cheap roadside taverns: it moves from the small Serbian town of Vranovac, through Belgrade, all the way to Smokvica on the isle of Korčula. The broken backbone of the narrative is primarily related to Babić, Arsenijević and *Timok Partisans*: a film in which "everything is false and – boring" (Pavlović, 1985: 123). The final illusions of Arsenijević, who is disappointed anyhow, are only shattered in the course of a horrifying turnabout, when he finds out that the direc-



tor of *Timok Partisans*, Vidoje Bojičić Uča [Teacher], is actually a former inmate of the *Goli otok* prison camp, who was arrested and interrogated by none other than Vuk Babić: the helpless man, then, is now involved in the making of a movie spectacle that glorifies his former torturer. The introduction of the *Goli otok* motif places *The Wall of Death* alongside the novels by Antonije Isaković and Dragoslav Mihailović, reminding us that these two, just like Pavlović, were prominent representatives of the literary “Black Wave” of the 1960’s and 1970’s. In addition to them, Slobodan Selenić is usually classified among the literary opponents of the regime at the time, fiercely criticised and often censored, as is the next winner of the NIN Award, Vidosav Stevanović, who won it in 1987. In a nutshell, half of our list is made up of former “Black Wave” members: one of the basic tendencies manifested by the NIN Award-related evaluation of the Yugoslav literature of the 1980’s, as Pavlović’s novel warns us together with the above-mentioned ones, consisted in rehabilitating former anti-regime literary figures.

### 1987: Vidosav Stevanović, *Testament*

The mononational viewpoint of Stevanović’s “novel in 52 wakes” dissipates, in genre terms, somewhere in-between magic realism the Balkan way, an exalted historical mystification and a parable interspersed with fantastic motifs. A story about the centuries-long bloody history of a small place named Kao relies on a clearly visible metonymy: Kao is, Serbia, sort of.<sup>7</sup> As the narrative approaches the present era, clearly visible historical references to a certain degree suppress the mythmaking layer of the novel; they do not, however, abolish the fundamental national perspective of a subsequent reconstruction of the past. That is why, for example, the episode dealing with World War Two is retold through a polemic between an “orthodox” Partisan and a fighter from the old Kalan<sup>8</sup> line of the Lazarevićs, who did join the national liberation struggle, but remained very sceptical concerning its methods: “I am a simple man and I know simple things. What is freedom to a country without a people? Freedom exists because of the people, not the other way round. How can we build that better society of peace and justice if we kill one another, if we are divided, if our conscience isn’t clear? Hatred breeds only hatred” (Stevanović, 2011: 181). Those last words, which sound prophetic today, do not mean that Stevanović wrote an openly nationalist novel: on the

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7 Derived from a pun in Serbian: a) *kao* = as if; b) *kao* as the root form that evolved into *kal* (mud, mire), translator’s note.

8 “Kalans” are, naturally enough, the inhabitants of the imaginary place Kao. [The word exploits the associations derived from mud/mire, translator’s note.]

contrary, some of the narrative voices articulate an eminently liberal critique of the collectivist spirit of the Kalan tribal community. The limits of this critique are modest, after all: from its first page to the last, *Testament* demonstrates how national narratives, entirely devoid of any material dimension of understanding history, remain imprisoned by the narrow framework of autoexoticising mythologisation, and the award given to it – in the advanced 1980's by now – constitutes an official recognition of a literature which, even from its uttermost margins, wipes away the last traces of the class dynamics and the economic context of social processes, sacrificing them in favour of a mystified presentation of the trans-historical “spirit of the people”.

### 1988: Voja Čolanović, *Dismantlable Anxiety*

The protagonist of Voja Čolanović's novel is the 78-year-old Nebojša Tutuš, a retired slaughterhouse veterinary doctor from Belgrade and a crazed leader of the bizarre terrorist group the Third-Age Tiger (TAT), which, apart from himself, comprises several other semi-senile old men: they are planning to hijack a plane with passengers flying to Dubrovnik, and then to demand from the Yugoslav authorities greater rights for their peers, grandfathers and grandmothers. *Dismantlable Anxiety* is an unhinged postmodernist narrative toy that, within the context of the NIN Award winners from the 1980's, functions as an antipode to *Evening Nude*: if Pavličić wrapped up “difficult” theoretical issues in a “light” narrative wrapping paper in genre terms, Čolanović proceeds from the crazy idea of a terrorist cell made up of demented old-age pensioners, then embellishes the story with sophisticated intellectual allusions, erudite digressions and a dense network of cultural references. Both novels indirectly introduce the social rebellion motif: while in Pavličić's novel, as we have seen, it appears on the side and, for the most part, is not elaborated upon, Čolanović transposes it, through the axis of a generationally coded conflict to a humorous register. As opposed to *Evening Nude*, in the unhinged plot of *Dismantlable Anxiety* there is still room for warnings such as the following ones: “[t]hat the prices will continue to grow and the pension funds will continue to stagnate” (Čolanović, 1987: 47), as well as for a mention of “dizzying price increases” (ibid.: 77): the context of the increasingly sharp Yugoslav socio-economic crisis of the late 1980's penetrates the text of the novel, if only through marginal signals, and the hilarious story about terrorist oldsters turns into a welcome, amusing incident within our list of award-winning novels, which rearticulated this crisis mainly through nationally framed narratives, anti-Yugoslav parables and anti-Communist tracts.

### 1989: Dubravka Ugrešić, *Fording the Stream of Consciousness*

The fact that *Fording the Stream of Consciousness* won the NIN Award is the greatest incident by far in the context of this list: for the first time since the inception of the award, after the uninterrupted procession of great male authorial figures lasting 34 years, in 1989 this accolade was given to a woman.<sup>9</sup> Dubravka Ugrešić's novel stands out from the list of texts awarded in the 1980's primarily through its self-aware opening of a broad global perspective: a story about an international gathering of writers organised in Zagreb to discuss "the place and role of literature in contemporary world events" seems to presage the soon-to-arrive epoch of the so-called globalisation – the 1990's official academic euphemism for the episode depicting the defeat of socialism and the final triumph of capitalism worldwide – and if professional literary scholars were to react to the globalisation processes by an increased interest in the problems of world literature,<sup>10</sup> then *Fording the Stream of Consciousness*, viewed from today's perspective, looks like a kind of fictionalised contemporary theory of world literature *avant la lettre*, wittily outlining "the power arrangement" on the world literary scene and the specific configuration of the Yugoslav literary field within that scene. In the course of a fictional Zagreb symposium involving the participation of authors from numerous states, perspectives are mixed, professional experiences are compared, writers go on organised excursions such a visit to a nearby factory (cf. Ugrešić, 2001: 118-121): in the key of an unpretentious, entertaining parody that plays with various genre models, the novel develops a detailed panorama of the material and ideological positions of authors/authoresses, the relations between high literature and somewhat higher politics, the factory base and the cultural superstructure. It is Yugoslavia, no less, that turns out to be a privileged place of the meetings and overlappings of various literary fields: while eight of the NIN Award winners from the 1980's explicitly dealt with Yugoslavia "from the inside", rummaging

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<sup>9</sup> This information may appear scandalous from today's perspective, but still, it is not much more scandalous than the fact that the situation has only marginally improved in this respect: after Dubravka Ugrešić won the NIN Award, this accolade was awarded 29 more times, and female authors won it on four occasions only. The gender disbalance, while we are on the subject, is by no means solely the problem of NIN. Research into and comments on literary awards have long indicated the existence of a trend of radical underrepresentation of women, moreover, in global terms as well, so that, for example, the award that is closest today to taking over NIN's former function – "Meša Selimović" of Tuzla, awarded to novels written in any (sub)variant of the so-called BHSC [Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian-Montenegrin] language – has been given to only two female authors so far in its 16-year-long history.

<sup>10</sup> Towards the end of the 20th and in the early 21st century, literary studies focused on the issues of translation, the domination of the English language, the power relations on the global market, the construction of the world canon, etc.

through its taboo topics and neglected historical episodes, and Milorad Pavić took a swipe at it through the allegory about the discrimination of the majority people and the dysfunctionality of the state system, Dubravka Ugrešić positioned it inside a world perspective and thus – without any fawning over it or prettifying it – with a lot of cheerful joking at its expense – wrote one of the “most Yugoslav” novels created in the final years of the SFRY.

### **1990: Vojislav Lubarda, *Ascension***

After five former members of “the Black Wave”, Vojislav Lubarda is the sixth anti-regime writer who was symbolically pardoned and reaffirmed through the NIN Award: in 1972, he was banned from pursuing his professional career because he “violated the current and permanent interests of the nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia” (cf. Lubarda, 1989), but after moving from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Belgrade, he continued writing and publishing, and his novel *Ascension* marked the lowest poetic and political level reached within the framework of our list of the NIN Award winners. Unfolding in the fictitious Bosnian place named Čaršija [bazaar], the plot of *Ascension*, through its rather complex narrative structure, changes of narrative voices and parallel elaborate lines of events, mostly speaks about the maltreatment of the local Serbs at the hands of Muslims during the First and on the eve of the Second World War. The formal side of the novel, then, is complicated, but then, as precisely summed up by Andrew Wachtel, its “general ideological point [...] is clear enough: it strives to show that Bosnian Muslims have always hated Serbs and that they massacred them whenever they had the chance, whereas Serbs are good people, always prepared to forgive and forget, to their own detriment” (Wachtel, 1998: 225). However simplified Wachtel’s view may be, it is hard to add anything to it: just a year or two before the break-up of the common state, a decennial cross-section of the functioning of its most important literary award ends – quite fittingly – with an ultranationalist text that perfidiously exploits perfunctory and dangerous ethnic stereotypes, thus presaging the horrors of the near future.

### **In lieu of a conclusion: from a literary marginalisation of the economy to an economic marginalisation of literature**

What, in the final analysis, has the NIN *chronicle of disintegration viewed through ten awards* revealed to us? The sequence of novels that received this accolade in the 1980’s, seemingly, constitutes an arbitrarily isolated literary sequence, but it actually tells a lot about the last social,

economic and political phase of the SFRY. To begin with, all these awarded novels deal with Yugoslavia in one way or another: the plots of nine of them, in any case, are explicitly located inside the borders of the former state, whereas *Dictionary of the Khazars*, as we have seen, approaches it allegorically. Furthermore, the events described, in some of the texts, meander between various parts of the country, its provinces and republics, drawing an eminently Yugoslav literary geography, whereas as many as eight of the novels are entirely located in the contemporary era or speak about the past from a contemporary perspective. Among those that deal with the past, a great part of the action of no less than four novels revolves around the Second World War, which contributes to a noticeable tendency of problematising the very source of the legitimacy of the Communist order within the framework of the liberation movement of the Yugoslav peoples. Indeed – as we have noted already – the greater part of our list of award winners is made up of novels that are consistently anti-system oriented, anti-Communist and anti-Yugoslav, or at least markedly critical towards the ruling regime. Moreover, even those award-winning novels that did not directly criticise the ruling system spoke of some kind of social antagonisation, rebellion and repression, be it cautiously and unpretentiously, as in *Evening Nude*, or through an unhinged transposition of the conflict onto the generational axis, as in *Dismantlable Anxiety*, or by cheerfully mocking the official ideological control of culture, as in *Fording the Stream of Consciousness*. For the most part, though, they followed the ethno-national line: the narrative of Selenić's *Friends* revolves around the unbridgeable differences between Serbs and Albanians, the fundamental impossibility of inter-confessional and inter-cultural understanding is the narrative postulate of Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars*, Stevanović fixes his narrative by means of a firm monocultural perspective, Lubarda brings it to the point of paroxysm...

A large part of the common characteristics of the award-winning novels of the 1980's, naturally enough, is nothing new: the NIN Award only continued the practice of the affirmation of subversive literature, which began as far back as the end of the 1960's and continued through the 1970's.<sup>11</sup> What was different, however, was the socio-economic context of the prize. The 1980's were marked by a harsh economic crisis, Yugoslavia's inability to fulfil the demands of foreign creditors and the introduction of a number of austerity measures, demanded by the International Monetary Fund in exchange for new loans. Those measures,

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 11 Among the markedly critical of society or satirical novels that won the award during that period are Slobodan Novak's *Smells, Gold and Incense* (1968), Bora Ćosić's *The Role of My Family in the World Revolution* (1969) and Miodrag Bulatović's *People with Four Fingers* (1975), etc.

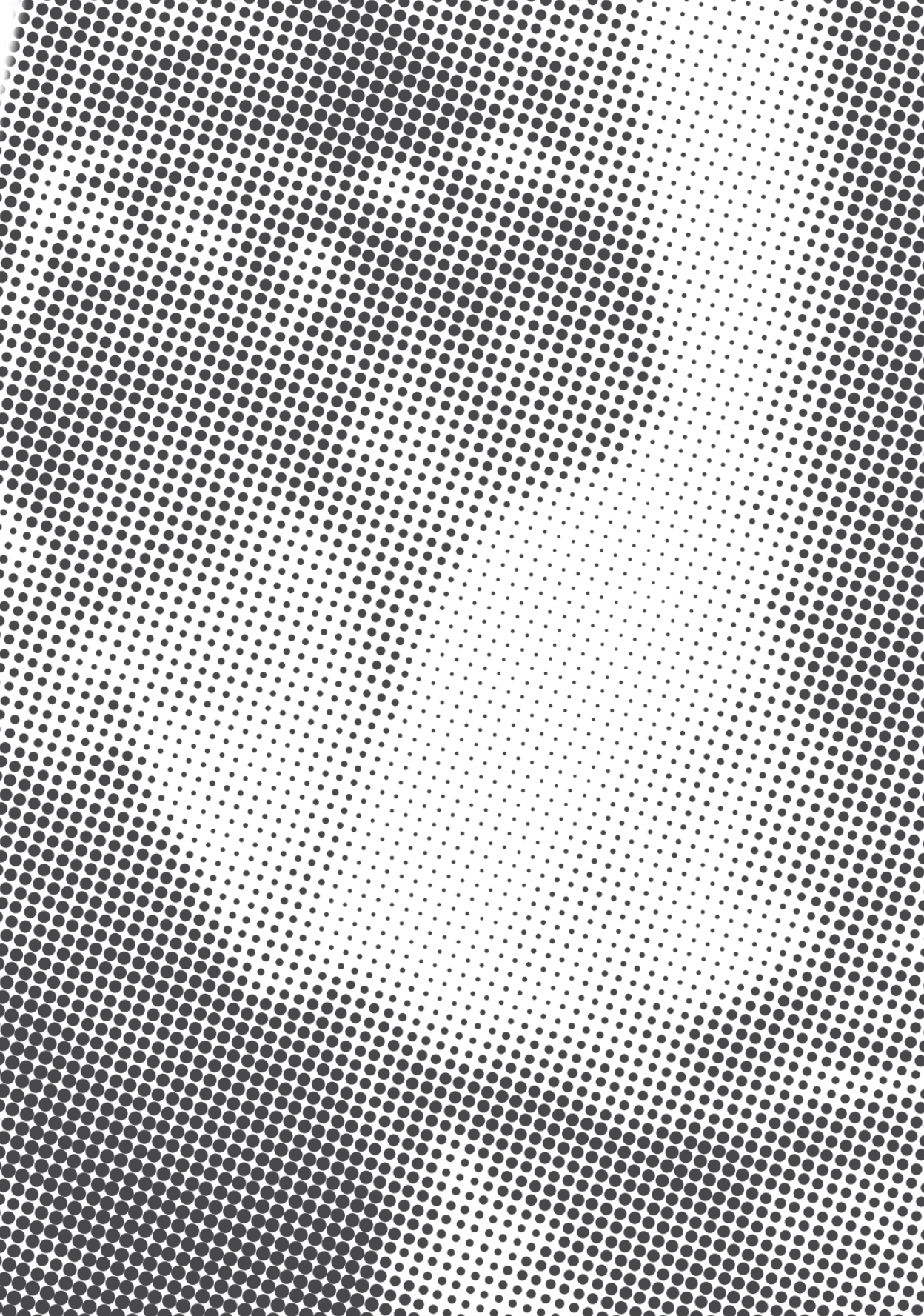
as summed up by Jake Lowinger in his dissertation “Economic Reform and the ‘Double Movement’ in Yugoslavia: An Analysis of Labour Unrest and Ethno-Nationalism in the 1980’s”, “aimed at reducing salaries, closing down unprofitable firms, reorganising the social relations in the workplace and other ways of controlling inflation” (Lowinger, 2009: ii) or, in a nutshell, at “reorganising the Yugoslav economy in keeping with the neo-liberal recommendations” (ibid.: 2). The strong resistance put up by Yugoslav workers, which soon turned Yugoslavia into a state with the greatest number of strikes and strikers in the history of Communism, did not, as the author shows convincingly, turn into nationalist mobilisation until the very end of the decade: “Identification with the federation, rather than ethnic identification, increased during the history of the second Yugoslav republic until the internationally promoted economic reforms turned the workers’ movements against the government policy. Even then, the workers expressed their dissatisfaction with the government measures through nostalgia for Tito and his policy, rather than by expressing loyalty to a particular region or ethnicity. Until 1989, the idea of federalism was not what social movements reacted against, what they were against was the fact that the idea was co-opted by separate experts who kidnapped the federal economic policy and turned it against the state ideals” (ibid.: 128). However, this line of conflict – between the “Titostalgic”, pro-Yugoslav-oriented workers on one side and the alienated republican technomanagers on the other – could not be found in the elite literature of the 1980’s. Even though it obsessively dealt with social antagonisms and focused on its own contemporaneity, we discover in it solely national divisions and a systemic critique of Yugoslavia. Moreover – as we saw in several examples such as Selenić’s and Pavličić’s novels – the entire economic dimension of social reproduction was either suppressed in narrative terms or pushed to the margins until it disappeared altogether towards the end of the decade. The leading writers actually only “approached” the working class during that brief parodic scene depicting a visit to a factory in the novel of Dubravka Ugrešić, the only author who did not entirely neglect the material conditions of literary production. Finally, even the repeated insistence of the award winners that the financial aspect of the award was of no importance to them whatsoever – as opposed to its symbolic dimension – viewed from this perspective, seems like a reflex of a systematic literary escape from the economy. Highly emancipated, poetically preoccupied with the postmodern re-examination of autonomous literary laws and a complex narrative orchestration of the literary work, such a literature functioned primarily as a cultural signal of a clear class distinction. The articulation of mass-scale, pro-Yugoslav, anti-nationalist sentiments remained reserved for the field of popular culture

(cf. *ibid.*: 133-134): if the conflict between the rebellious workers and the privileged technomanagers towards the end of the decade came to a tragic conclusion in the form of an eruption of ethno-nationalist narratives, the elite literature prepared those narratives in advance. Quite contrary to today's simplified revisionist interpretations, the list of the NIN Award winners in the 1980's already contains all the key topoi of the hardest revisionism that ensued: from ethno-cultural reinterpretation of class conflicts, through insistence on a vision of eternal and irreconcilable national difference, to a presentation of the totalitarian character of the Yugoslav socialist project. In the meantime, the systemically legitimised literary criticism of the system, as we have seen, travelled the path from front-page news, a high reputation and a broad influence to a devastating devaluation at a time of market hyperproduction. And this final ironic turnaround, in the final analysis, seems to be more appropriate than any conclusion: a literature that spoke about its society through a systematic marginalisation of the economic context certainly deserves to systematically struggle for survival on the social margins in the new economic circumstances of today.

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Construction of the first blocks in New Belgrade, Milan Pavlović,  
Source: Historical Archives of Belgrade, Ur\_11979

ISKRA KRSTIĆ

# The Housing Policies in Yugoslavia

## Introduction

“Posing the housing question today means uncovering the connections between societal power and the residential experience” (Madden and Marcuse, 2016: 3).

Did the “housing issue” play a part in the destruction of Yugoslavia? To put it in the language of theory, may the (lack of) success of the socialist institutions of production and distribution of housing space exerted an influence on the development of the crisis that, towards the end of the 1980’s, resulted in wars fought over the heritage of Yugoslavia and a structural transformation of the Yugoslav region?

What may have been the role of housing in all that?

From the point of view of urban sociology and critical urban studies, the city is “a synecdoche of modern development—the *part* that illuminates the great forces of the *whole* of modern society in an intensive form” (Bodnar, 2001: 5). In its development, socio-political actors, constituted as “political, social, economic organisations, as well as socio-economic movements”, participate commensurately with their power (Vujović 2004: 54). Playing the role of urban actors (politicians, financiers, experts and inhabitants) they pursue formal and informal practices

of city-building, struggling for the institutionalisation of practices that are in accordance with their interests, and also with the values and the ideological positions that they advocate. In return, the spatial practices that are operationalised within a framework thus determined, influence the formation and reproduction of a certain social structure.

One's survival and success in life, even one's views, thus, depends on having a roof above one's head. Specifically, if the housing policy was an important part of the socialist project, its (lack of) success may have contributed, at the ideological level, to the (de-)legitimation of the socialist ideology. Therefore, in order to shed light on the influence of housing on the conditions in socialist Yugoslavia, it is necessary to conduct a review of the housing policies and their results, which illustrate precisely the changes in ideology, the official policy and the dynamics of power of its socio-political actors.

Why is such an analysis of topical interest? The serious housing crisis, which we witness both in the region and globally, requires a re-examination of *different* housing policies and alternative socio-economic systems, including historical ones. According to EUROSTAT data, the Republic of Serbia is the second most unfavourable place for living in Europe, having as much as 71% of households for which housing expenditures represent a great burden. More than half its population lives in overcrowded households, while 17% of the population are exposed to severe housing deprivation (EUROSTAT). As much as 70% of the households, according to the EU criteria, would be entitled to claim help from the state for the purpose of resolving their housing problem, for the ratio of their annual income to the price of a flat is far below the tolerable 1:5 (being around 1:13 instead). However, such help, for the most part, is nowhere to be found, or is ineffective. A public housing fund is virtually non-existent, whereas “[t]he existent model of social housing in the Republic of Serbia is dramatically at odds with the housing needs of the population” (Vuksanović-Macura and Čolić Damjanović, 2016: 7). The realisation of alternative models of social housing is made impossible in practice by the legal regulations, which is also partly true of the non-profit cooperative model of housing. In Serbia, legal regulations are increasingly adjusted to the interests of big capital and the not very numerous financial elite – for example, over the past few years, this has been most conspicuously done through the amendments to the Law on Housing and Maintenance of Buildings (2016) and the Law on Enforcement and Security (2015), which favour the carrying out of evictions, and also by means of adjusting the planning documentation so that it favours the building of luxury housing settlements such as Belgrade Waterfront. The experiences of the other former Yugoslav republics in the sphere of housing vary in

keeping with the living standards of their citizens, but do not differ much essentially (EUROSTAT).

In order to be able to conclude “what is to be done”, we must recall the historical examples of non-capitalist policies in this region: their strengths, weaknesses, the conditions of their coming into being and disappearing. Due to all of the above, the focus of the selected research methodology is on a qualitative, “implicitly comparative” (Bodnar, 2001) approach, which recognises the need for the triple contextualisation of urban policies proposed by Lefebvre: within the framework of the global (economic, political and cultural) trends, in a mixed context (viewing the city level as a mediating environment between society, the state, power, know-how and the everyday life of its inhabitants), and at the private level (which presupposes the everyday life of the citizens) (Vujović and Petrović, 2005: 37).

### **The housing policies in Yugoslavia**

As early as around ten years before the break-up of the state, the Yugoslav media reported on the fact that half a million Yugoslavs were “homeless”, relying on the data about adult citizens who mainly lived with their relatives, as subtenants and in temporary accommodation. The lack of available housing units was at its highest in urban centres such as Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb. The most detailed information and thoroughly conducted research are available for the federal capital<sup>1</sup>, which constantly lacked around 50,000 flats, although the public housing fund increased by 7-12,000 units annually. Another 20,000 were in such a condition that they were ripe for being replaced by new ones, and just as many lacked access to the infrastructure. Around one-third of employed persons in Belgrade lived as subtenants in 1986, 10% of them shared joint accommodation with another family, and around 12% lived in various types of accommodation (for the most part with parents) (Archer, 2016: 21).

The housing crisis affected those employed in different sectors in different ways. In many cities, managerial staff members found it easier to obtain apartments than “ordinary” workers, and in doing so, they tended to gather in better built, more attractive settlements. “The lucky winners” of the *right* to housing paid around 5% of their monthly earnings for the rent, which was between 5 and 12 times lower than the expenditures of subtenants. In the 1980’s, along with a decline of investments, the number of newly built socially-owned housing units decreased as well, while there was a drastic increase in the number of apartments brought

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of data comparability, the illustrative example used in the research was primarily Belgrade.

out upon the market, “informally” built houses and privatised communal premises turned into housing space.

In such a situation, there had to be a lot of discontent. The reporting of the public and factory media, the frequency of lawsuits motivated by unjustly awarded housing space and the presence of this theme in movies and works of literature testify to how widespread this problem was. Still, the data presented do not provide a simple answer to the question of if and why the feeling of discontent due to the housing crisis prevailed over trust in the social system.

For after all, in the period between 1945 and 1992, the housing shortage was considerably decreased, the quality of the housing fund was improved and family life was modernised. Quality city apartments were rare in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Most of the economy and the population were rural in character, and in urbanised surroundings, most people lived with “scant” resources, even “miserably” and in unhygienic conditions, exposed to epidemics of typhus and tuberculosis (Vuksanović-Macura 2012; Blagojević 2003). The devastation suffered in the course of World War Two only additionally aggravated this situation. Thus in Belgrade, where in the 1930’s 70-80% of the population lived in ramshackle buildings, shacks and hovels, during the 14 bombings that the city suffered and the military wartime operations on its territory, half the buildings, one-fifth of the city plumbing and sewage, the entire railway network and a part of the streetcar network became unusable (Le Normand, 2014: xi). After the war, a large number of hygienic, solidly built flats with modern conveniences were made. In terms of technical equipment, towards the end of the 1980’s the local households were close to the European standard. The socialist housing policies favoured the modernisation of family life, as one of the most important goals of the overall project of social modernisation: “Towards the end of the 1980’s, Serbian families presented an image of a well-defined transformation following a path leading to the modern values and way of life, both in terms of the size, form and structure of the family unit and in terms of some essential internal relations” (Milić, 2004: 319). Despite all the objections directed against “the red bourgeoisie” and officers of the Yugoslav People’s Army, who did occupy the most prestigious locations (in Belgrade, Zagreb, Split), Yugoslav cities, like other cities in the era of real socialism, were places characterised by a considerably more homogeneous socio-spatial structure than any “capitalist” ones in the same period – and on top of that they were greener, more compact, equipped with better-quality public transportation and much safer to live in.

In order to understand whether, and to what extent, towards the end of the 1980’s housing was perceived, first of all, as a topos of social

discontent, and whether it was channelled into general discontent with the overall socialist project, we must recall what socialism promised in the sphere of housing.

### **The 1950's: the founding of formal institutions**

After the Second World War, social equality, as the basic value, was supposed to be implemented through an equitable distribution of material resources and a universal fulfilment of the (basic) life needs of the population. For the sake of establishing an egalitarian society, appropriate political, economic and cultural institutions (laws, organisations) were formulated. The fulfilment of existential needs was translated into rights, economic mechanisms for their realisation were defined, and they were popularised as such through the official culture.

The need for “solving one’s housing issue” became recognised as one of the existential needs.

What followed was the defining of the appropriate formal institutions: the general population and housing policy, the legal regulations in the sphere of urban planning, construction work and housing, forming urban and architectural organisations, introducing financial mechanisms, adopting programmatic guidelines in the domain of planning and architecture, the development of technology for the materialisation and maintenance of the planned complexes and objects.

The new laws were fundamentally different from the preceding ones and somewhat unprecedented, in view of the fact that the pre-war legislation was not aimed at a universal fulfilment of the housing needs of the population, and that the problems of those most vulnerable and poorest were very poorly regulated. The pre-war mechanisms of financing, which stimulated speculative, profit-oriented building and the domination of the interests of private capital (especially after 1930), were replaced by economic institutions formulated as their polar opposite. For that purpose, a partial nationalisation of the existing housing fund was carried out in the cities (1958), the increase of the housing rent was blocked, the real estate city development land markets were abolished, and the state, combining within itself political will, the (newly formed) expert institutions and the role of the financier (through a budget redistribution) in the first phase of the existence of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY), became the dominant, central actor of urban development. The interests of the populations, in an ideal-type case, were protected by a legislation wherein the formulation of the “right to housing” accented the non-commercial, that is, the utilitarian value of apartments.

The adoption of a specific programmatic, aesthetic and techni-

cal-technological strategy in the domain of housing was crucially influenced by international relations. While an unfinished debate is still conducted on the reception of socialist realism in Yugoslav architecture, as an indicator of the cultural influence of the USSR, in the first years after the war, it can be claimed with certainty that after 1950 the rapprochement between Yugoslavia and the West had repercussions on the official culture, as the domain of the representation of ideology and the legitimisation of the system, through the adoption of tendencies that were present in the developed countries. In this respect, architecture, as the conspicuous domain of expression of the political and economic power of the newly formed state, as well as the medium of directing the population policy and the policy of social modernisation, was of great importance. The FPRY adopted as its official urban planning, technical-technological and aesthetic strategy in the sphere of architecture and urban planning the principles of modernist architecture, most clearly formulated in the Athens Charter of the CIAM (*les Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne*). As an indicator of such a trend, what is singled out most often is the Congress of the Architects' Association of Yugoslavia held in 1950 in Dubrovnik, where the exposes of the most prominent authors were quite in keeping with the Athens Charter – and where, interestingly enough, several architects who had participated in its preparation took part in the proceedings.<sup>2</sup>

The adoption of the Athens Charter did not mean an unequivocal adoption of the model of “capitalist urban development”. First of all, what is built into the Athens Charter, as a matter of principle and concerning the conduct of specific political actors, are the values of egalitarianism and social justice. It represented one of the theoretical models for the planning and building of adequate housing for the (industrial) working class, developed from the beginning of the 19th century. On the other hand, the then social and economic policies of “capitalist” countries were formulated under the conditions of a high (exchange and cultural) value of human labour power, fear of militant trade unions, the functioning of the “contract between labour and capital”, Keynesian economics and Fordism, and the influence of the USSR on the international scene.

Concluding that “(t)he right to housing effectively meant that society as a whole was responsible for providing housing for all citizens”, Sekulić mentions several laws that established housing as a right in the FPRY:

“It was prescribed in the Regulation on the Management of Residential Buildings, published in the Official Bulletin of the Federative Peo-

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 2 Interestingly, the official version of the Athens Charter would only be published in 1957, but it was preceded by an unofficial version, published in 1942, with which most of those architects present were familiar.



ple's Republic of Yugoslavia Nr. 52/1953, as 'a principle providing the permanent right to use an apartment, following the regulations of the order in residential buildings'"(Sekulić, 2012: 20–22). "The right to housing is a basic legal institution, providing one of the most important means of life to the working classes." (Conclusion of the First Yugoslav Forum on Housing and Construction, 1956) (Sekulić, 2012: 18).

These laws were in accordance with the principles of socialist self-management, established in June 1950, and its concretisations, realised three years later. The specific decisions of investing in fulfilling collective and individual needs were passed within the framework of the basic organisations of associated labour (BOAL). The employees had the right and obligation to have a say on the investment priorities of their company. The building of socially owned flats was financed in two ways: partly from the annual income of a BOAL, and partly by means of the legally prescribed contribution from the employees' earnings. Namely, from 1956 onwards, 4% of each salary was paid into the communal housing fund.

While in theory and the law everything was carefully, up-to-date-ly and democratically defined, what was manifested in practice soon enough was a rift between that which was planned and that which was realised. Even in representative settlements that were a state priority, such as New Belgrade, building quite simply could not meet the rapidly increasing housing needs. In some cases, the inhabitants were dissatisfied with the tempo of building apartment buildings; in other cases, the reason for dissatisfaction was a lack of attendant commercial and public facilities, which kept missing and were the object of economising, or which, during the process of building, were "converted" into housing space "under the table". The residents of the Tošin bunar district in Belgrade, for example, even four years after moving into their flats kept complaining that, due to a lack of proper sidewalks, they were forced to walk on traffic lanes or through mud, and that they had stopped hoping for the greenery that had been promised to them. Construction workers felt frustrated, for they were forced to live in barracks near the construction sites, even though they built new apartments with their own hands. The residents of unhygienic settlements where construction work was being carried out and those who were given housing rights in the newly built apartment buildings were in a constant conflict of interest. They all had good arguments to prove that they had the priority right to move in.

In the mid-1950's, it was quite clear that it was necessary to increase production and to better adjust the realisation with the users' needs.

The possibility for increasing production appeared after the Institute for Exploring Materials of the People's Republic (PR) of Serbia, under the management of the director Branko Žeželj, developed an authentic

system for prefabricated construction work in 1957. From the perspective of today, when the development of domestic technology seems like fantasy, it is almost incredible to find out that Žeželj's IMS system, which was followed by others, was characterised by a better technical performance than that of the systems used at the time in the East and the West alike. Starting with the experimental blocks 1 and 2 in New Belgrade, there followed a period of mass production of housing complexes and high-rise apartment blocks.

As regards the adjustment referred to above, the development of socialist self-management institutions presupposed a permanent reform process. Just as the above-mentioned Institute was established by combining several existing research organisations into a financially independent self-management organisation in 1953, that same year, in a similar way, the "excessively centralised" (architectural) project institutes (of Belgrade, PR Serbia and the federation), established almost a decade earlier, were dissolved, thus enabling smaller studios and bureaus to operate. Making organisations independent and the decentralisation of management were supposed to contribute to balancing the needs, planning and the possibility of realisation. From the architectural perspective, flexibilisation did indeed make possible greater authorial freedoms, rejecting the constrictions of bureaucratism, a greater sensitivity to the individual needs of beneficiaries, as well as the realisation of well thought-out architectural structures (such as the Odeon cinema building on the corner of Kneza Miloša Street, designed by the architect Bogojević, or Macura's building in Sedmog jula Street, Veselinović's in Ruzveltova Street in Belgrade, and also a number of other representative projects). Owing to decentralisation, even the actual surroundings were conceived more humanely and carefully than in the state socialism countries, where planning on a large scale and the attendant measures aimed at economising often led to a situation wherein the human dimension perspective got lost – both literally and figuratively.

In the 1950's, Yugoslav economy was on the rise, allowing a change of the official orientation of the economic policy from austerity and stabilisation towards raising the standard of living. Greater care for the comfort of residents fit in with this orientation, and it favoured the international promotion of Yugoslavia as a country in which "the advantages and amenities of socialism and capitalism are combined". However, comfort was still more often achieved on catalogue pages (such as the well-known promotional catalogue "A Dwelling for Our Conditions", prepared for the exhibition of the Standing Conference of the Cities of Yugoslavia, held in Ljubljana in 1957, which advertised domestically produced furniture and household appliances), and also in buildings intended for deserving

citizens, the Party “cadre” and artists, than in standard-production flats. Although both architects and the official policy were against it as a matter of principle, the attendant facilities were still often lacking in new housing settlements. This is no wonder if we take into consideration that in 1953 the Standing Conference of Yugoslav Cities established that, with the 3 million housing units that existed at the time, the country needed half as many in order to attain the European standard of one flat per four inhabitants (Le Normand, 2014: 85). As many as 18,000 new residents moved to and settled down in Belgrade annually in the period between 1961 and 1971 on account of the rapid rural-urban migration.

The decentralisation of financing made it possible for construction firms, and later on for the newly founded housing cooperatives, to focus on the building of badly needed flats – enabling them at the same time to build them without lawns, sidewalks, shops, day care centres, kindergartens, schools, the financing of which was a less clearly defined obligation: “Research into this phenomenon in 1965 on the territory of the municipality of Čukarica in Belgrade produced the following results: in the 350 buildings surveyed, according to the approved projects there was supposed to be a total of 660 flats, 602 cellars and 392 garages. [...] [I]n the field, a total of 862 housing units were found, of which 286 were located in the basements and 81 in garages” (Bobić and Vujović, 1985: 24). New flats were built at the expense of what were supposed to be the residents’ common premises, as a result of adapted projects or by means of subsequent adaptations. The attendant facilities, despite all the goodwill, were neglected in practice, both in spatial and organisational terms, in view of the fact that the functioning of local communities, which were introduced by law in 1959 and conceived as an instrument of the emancipation of women, the politicisation and socialisation of the population, the fulfilment of the cultural needs and the adjustment of the economic needs of the residents of a modern city, was not entirely clearly defined.

In the mid-1960’s, the three basic components of the housing policy – the political, economic and architectural ones – became the object of expert criticism, and as a consequence of this, the object of reforms, locally as well as internationally. The CIAM models of building apartment blocks for collective housing, located amidst “a sea of greenery” and separated from other urban facilities, did not achieve the desired effect elsewhere either, not even when they were realised in keeping with architects’ concepts. Towards the end of the 1950’s already, both architects (Team 10) and urban sociologists (Jane Jacobs) criticised the materialised complexes as settlements with a sterile atmosphere, rigid aesthetics an inflexible monofunctionality, as settlements repulsive to the residents and inappropriate for establishing a local community. In addition to this,

at the local level in Yugoslavia, it also became clear that a part of the citizens, to the chagrin of architects, quite simply rejected the officially promoted modernist models and wished they were living in the traditional single-family houses.

Faced with the fact that it neither managed to provide a sufficient number of flats for all nor did it manage to fulfil the wishes of all the residents and tenants, the state, on the basis of the principle of democratisation, and within the framework of economic reforms after 1965, additionally decentralised urban development in the sphere of housing.

The market-oriented reforms did not directly influence the amendments to the basic laws regulating housing (the Law on the Financing of Housing Construction and the Law on Housing Relations), which were in force until the end of the 1980's. However, the focus of responsibility for the distribution of flats was shifted from the state onto organisations of associated labour, while the state stimulated citizens to invest their personal savings in housing and to get loans from banks for the purpose of buying flats. In addition to this, from the 1960's onward, construction firms were allowed to determine the price of the flats that they were building. Momčilo Marković, one of the most influential Yugoslav political leaders, who was holding the post of the federal Minister of Health at that time, even stated, as early as 1962, that “[a]n apartment is a consumer good – a possible object of personal ownership, and it's helpful to aid every person who has the means to build or buy an apartment” (Le Normand, 2014: 138). That statement, given by such a highly positioned official of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), is a symptom of a deep contradiction of the Yugoslav self-management practice – especially if, for example, it is compared with the justification given for a decision on a public contest called for a housing settlement project in Novi Sad, which, an entire quarter of a century later – in 1987 – gave “the domination of the utilitarian value over the exchange one” and the concept of a community as “the totality of life's values and needs” as the key characteristics of socialist self-management urbanity (Supek, 1987: 7).

In keeping with the official view that the competitiveness of work organisations on the domestic market was stimulating for their productivity, adopted in 1962, towards the end of the 1960's luxury and single-family housing entered urban development plans. Urban planners opposed the building of individual houses because of the increase of the costs of building infrastructure and the costs of traffic and using up construction land, but they were forced to agree to them because of the official principle of the democratic character of self-management, the right of self-managing entities to select the conditions of housing and the influence on the development of cities. When it came to luxury housing, it

was a somewhat different story. For example, it was precisely the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade that invited the architect Uroš Martinović to provide the project design for a luxury housing complex in one of the central blocks in New Belgrade. It was evident to the public that the flats being planned are intended for the leadership elite. The project was officially adopted towards the end of March 1968 – only a month and a half before the breaking out of student demonstrations, in the course of which demands were put forward for a stricter adherence to the authentic principles of socialism and prevention of a further stratification of society. In an atmosphere of criticism of the aberrations of self-management, the project for block 30 was presented in the press as scandalous, which resulted in its being rejected.

### **The 1970's and the 1980's – the limitations of the economic-political context and socialist self-management**

The market component of Yugoslav self-management was increasingly emphasised in the sphere of housing, in view of the fact that “(o)ne’s housing status was deeply connected to both the position of the enterprise on the Yugoslav market (i.e. its profitability and scale), the economic sector in question and one’s particular occupation and position within the enterprise”, the level of education being the decisive factor (Archer, 2016: 11). Similarly to the state socialism countries, flats were a “currency” in a system intended to attract experts and to reward loyal bureaucrats (Andrusz et al, 1996: 13; Pikvens, 2000; Archer, 2016). While the production of socially-owned flats declined due to the economic crisis and the austerity measures, the rapid tertiarisation of the economy, as a reflection of the global economic tendencies, turned the administrative and catering urban centres into magnets for migrations and places where the housing crisis was increasingly acutely felt. In all of this, the less educated workers in the low-accumulation sectors were burdened in a number of ways – they were excluded from the system of rewards, as referred to above, and from the end of the 1970’s they were also disproportionately burdened by austerity (stabilisation) measures. On top of that, the deficit of democracy in self-management and the conflict of interest between the production and consumption economic model (and the corresponding urban model), that is, workers in the role of producers and workers in the role of consumers, became increasingly manifest. In practice, it led to the depoliticisation of self-managing workers: “Allocation was primarily organised by the enterprise management and nominally approved by the workers’ council.” (Archer 2016: 12).

The lack of available homes in urban centres and the chronic ina-

bility of the official institutions to deal with it made the population opt for various alternative accommodation strategies: surviving in multi-family households, renting flats and informal building.

The number of informally built housing facilities markedly increased after the market-oriented reforms of 1965 and the state's refusal to assume responsibility for providing housing. Surveys conducted towards the end of the 1960's testify to the fact that, at first, the informal builders were primarily workers (around 80% in Belgrade) who were forced to resort to this method of resolving the housing problem: "Being deprived of proper housing, not having access to a different option, way or possibility of resolving the housing problem turns out to be the decisive reason for engaging in unlawful building of housing facilities in 43.0% of unlawful builders. Having to pay a high rent as a lodger to private landlords motivated 16.7% of them, expensive apartments and expensive building based on a project did so in the case of 10.4% unlawful builders" (Bobić and Vujović, 1985: 27).

Over time, the state became increasingly lenient towards this phenomenon, and as it became less risky, informal building became more attractive. One of the first surveys conducted by Saveljić in 1986 in Kaluđerica, near Belgrade, which was, even back then, the greatest informal settlement in the Balkans (40,000 inhabitants), showed that the inhabitants of Kaluđerica no longer belonged to the socio-economically vulnerable categories of the population, but included members of the higher middle class who wanted to live in a single-family house in a suburb or even built houses they were planning to let (Sekulić, 2012: 42). Relying on the compassionate attitude and the inefficiency of the state, *gastarbeitsers* also opted for informal building increasingly often, as they had no legal right to socially-owned flats.

In the 1980's, the legal regulations were adjusted to the informal building practices, instead of providing a legal framework for the formal ones: they enabled the privatisation of several types of commonly-owned and public spaces. In 1984, the Law on the Extension of Buildings and the Conversion of Common Spaces into Apartments was passed, which enabled superstructure building and turning common rooms in apartment buildings into housing space, and three years later (in 1987), the newly passed legal regulations enabled turning artistic studios into flats (Sekulić, 2012: 52). Along with the weakening of the legal framework, other institutions weakened as well – the influence of central urban planning slowly declined. In the 1980's, the City of Belgrade "ceased to invest in Detailed Urban Plans for those areas that had no interested investors," (Sekulić, 2012: 108). The processes at work here were evidently the opposite of those from the 1950's: while at that time the institutional framework for

non-profit-oriented urban development was formulated and perfected, in the 1980's the institutions were flexibilised, and the replacement of the utilitarian value of space by its commercial value was gradually accepted.

The dismantling of socialist housing policies was crowned by the passing of new laws on housing in the former republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in the early 1990's, at the height of the war. While a part of the houses and flats of the inhabitants of Yugoslavia were being devoured by flames, many tacitly agreed to the sale of almost the entire public housing fund, the petrification of the existing social injustices and, in effect, the closure of the socialist housing policies.

### Conclusion

Could the results of the housing policies and the specific characteristics of their implementation have contributed to the disintegration of Yugoslavia? The housing (and generally spatial) policies were one of the most important elements of self-management socialism. They were formulated in contrast to the capitalist spatial and housing policies, the intention being to establish and enable an egalitarian social reproduction through an egalitarian distribution of housing and other types of utilitarian space (emphasising their use value). Their failure could be interpreted as a symptom of the failure of the socialist system, and could serve the purpose of its delegitimation. Moreover, the unequal distribution of housing space could have served the purpose of establishing and reproduction of new class relations in the SFRY.

The research presented above points to the conclusion that the housing (and other spatial) policies in the FPRY and SFRY were partially successful. The housing policies in Yugoslavia managed to decrease the lack of housing space in urban areas and to significantly improve the quality of housing in relation to the pre-war period, but they did not manage to annul the housing crisis. Even worse, the economic crises, the hierarchy of investment priorities and the growing influence of the market component of the system of workers' self-management led to an unequal distribution of the socially-owned housing fund. The contradictions of the Yugoslav workers' self-management manifested themselves conspicuously in the sphere of housing. Starting from the end of the 1950's, from the lesser and better known public statements of politicians (Đilas, 1957), through the student demonstrations of 1968 and warnings issued by intellectuals (*Praxis*), to articles published in factory periodicals and the mainstream media, the topic of the unequal distribution of all forms of socially-owned property was an increasingly frequent and conspicuous phenomenon in the public sphere. It is precisely the unequal distri-

bution of flats from the public housing funds that increasingly drew the attention of critics and the public threatened by the housing crisis. In a nutshell, the failure of the housing policy in Yugoslavia to resolve the housing problem universally and in an egalitarian manner contributed to the delegitimisation of the very principles of universality and egalitarianism. The lack of flats and their unjust distribution decreased the trust of citizens in the socialist strategies, policies, institutions and values. They also contributed to the normalisation of the hierarchical social order and the normalisation of market relations, which could influence the political mobilisation of especially the youngest able-bodied (and for the most part unemployed) generation of Yugoslavs at the moment of the deepening of the economic crisis and the crisis of the legitimacy of the political system in the 1980's. It was a political generation for whom their own inability to resolve the housing problem was close in experiential terms and more important for political motivation than any rational knowledge of the comparative successes of the Yugoslav housing policies in relation to the period between the great wars.

Apart from the role that the failure of the spatial policies had in the increase of internal tensions, we still need to review the interests and the influence of the international factors.

It turns out that the spatial policies were the medium through which the external forces interested in the disintegration of Yugoslavia could exert their influence, under the assumption that Yugoslavia was "torn apart through a combined disintegrating influence of *the internal contradictions of the so-called self-management socialism* and *the external intervention of the great powers* in keeping with their interests of domination in this geostrategically significant region" (Vratuša Žunjić, 2004: 76).

Critical geography and critical urban studies point to a parallel between rejecting modernist, universalist housing policies and the financial interests of specific international interest groups. Harvey, Jameson and other theorists describe the abandonment of the values of universal, homogeneous, long-term planning (as a characteristic of the modernist approach) in favour of particularistic, non-homogeneous, short-term planning (as a characteristic of the postmodern approach) as the cultural logic of late capitalism. Giving up on state investments in public housing, which became conspicuous in the developed countries from the mid-1970's onwards, was criticised as a specific strategy within the framework of those interest policies. In the early 1980's, also beginning in Britain and the USA, apart from a decrease in investments, what was also stimulated was the privatisation of the public housing fund. Harvey interprets this strategy as a type of "accumulation by dispossession". Accumulation by dispossession represents a process of appropriation of assets created



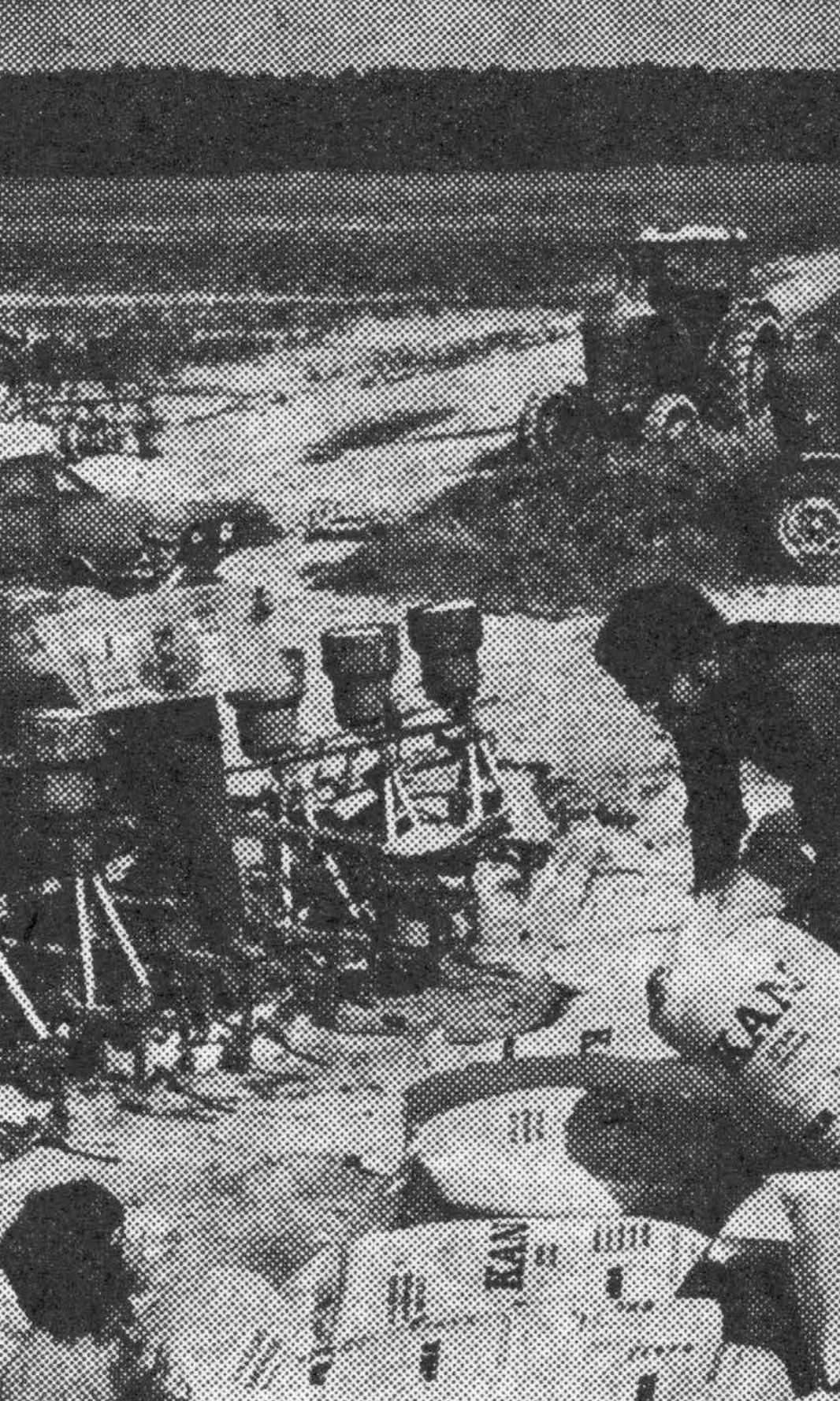
outside the capitalist market by the dominant economic-political actors.

The imposition of spatial policies that enable possessors of capital to make commercial investments in space was entrusted to international financial institutions (the IMF and the World Bank), to whose influence the SFRY was susceptible from the end of the 1970's onwards. The privatisation of housing in all real-socialist countries was carried out according to the imposed matrices, whose implementation was insisted on by none other than the IMF and the World Bank, despite the opposition of experts and the existence of alternative models. The result, everywhere, was a reconstruction of the real estate market, the consequent privatisation of industrial land, pressures aimed at privatising the public space, and eventually – a wave of evictions – whereby accumulation by dispossession, or “cannibalistic accumulation” entered a new cycle. At this moment in time, thousands of people on the territory of the former SFRY are faced with the threat of being evicted from the only homes they have, and the vast majority of them will never be able to acquire a roof over their heads. Such trends, which lead people into a vicious circle of financial and social ruin, would have been unthinkable to the majority of the population in the period between 1945 and 1992. Therefore, at a time when the hegemonic culture presents society in the key of social Darwinism, normalising monstrosity, we must remind ourselves that another kind of normality was not the result of neutral civilisational processes but of specific socialist policies in a clearly determined historical context.

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From Bojan Mrdenović's work, *We Create Our Path Walking*

IVAN RADENKOVIĆ AND MAJA SOLAR

# From Arable Land through Socialist Industrialisation to the Dinner Table and Social Life

## Agriculture as a challenge

In a socialist society, agriculture requires a transformation in the direction of socialisation. But the agricultural sector and its bearers – peasant women and men – represented a nexus of tension, challenges and efforts, by no means easy, aimed at finding solutions within the framework of twentieth-century socialist experimentation. Socialist programmes found it easier to address industrial workers, the paradigmatic oppressed figures of capitalist exploitation, whose liberation constituted the sinews of the new society. Peasant women and men, on the other hand, represented a traditional, pre-capitalist element, which was not easy to win over politically to support a society that aimed for an increasing degree of socialisation. The socialist question was how to transform the sphere of agriculture towards a more democratic socialisation?

The first socialist revolution in Russia already showed that it would not be easy. The problem was due to the fact that socialism was being developed in underdeveloped countries with a low level of industrialisation and the majority of the agricultural population residing in rural areas, living off basic natural production fulfilling their own needs. Lenin manifested a great degree of flexibility and real-political wisdom when, even before October, in his *April Theses*, he took over the Socialist Revolutionary Party's programme to deal with the peasants; instead

of advocating a fast collectivisation of the rural areas, he came out with the slogan *Land to peasants*, accordingly advocating a fair distribution of land to those who worked it. Naturally, this was not the final purpose of the socialist transformation of villages, for instead of socialisation, what was supported in this way was strengthening private ownership of rural households. But in the given historical situation, that was the best solution for a huge number of peasants hungry for land, and the plan was to *gradually* socialise the agricultural sector in the process of developing socialism. The civil war in Soviet Russia forced the Bolsheviks to requisition food from peasants in order to fulfil the needs of the rest of the population, first of all the Army. After a wave of peasants' rebellions, the Bolshevik government was forced to return capitalist elements into agriculture through the New Economic Policy (NEP). Stalin was the one who, through the centralised state apparatus, carried out the coercive and rapid collectivisation of villages, and peasant women and men paid no small price for this. Those were also the basic models which the young Yugoslav socialist state had to rely on.

The question of how to transform a very backward, war-torn country whose population was 80% peasants towards socialism also pertained, therefore, to the issue of transforming *agriculture*. Post-World-War-Two agriculture was made up of small-scale scattered households of peasant women and men who produced raw materials for their own reproduction. While men and women making up the industrial workforce were those who produced for the entire social reproduction, not just for themselves, agricultural working men and women were traditionally those who primarily produced for themselves, sporadically producing surpluses. In order to connect this work to a greater extent with the entire social reproduction, that is to say, to enable agricultural producers to produce surpluses that would feed and supply the entire population, without basing this on capitalist-type relations, it was necessary to increase the productive strength of agricultural work, that is, to initiate the industrialisation of agriculture on the basis of socialist-type relations. Instead of *scattered* individual agricultural units, which were unable to produce any significant surpluses, it was necessary to create a *concentrated* agricultural industry, organised according to a plan; in other words, instead of *small-scale* plots of land, it was necessary to concentrate on turning them into *large-scale* ones, to reorient agriculture turning it from a *natural* into a *commodity*.

Turning small-scale into large-scale production and guiding peasants towards industry was first tried by copying the Stalinist model of collectivisation. The programme of the agrarian policy of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY), dating from 1945, consisted of

the process of giving land to peasants (by taking it away from big land-owners, war enemies, collaborators with the occupying forces and partly from church institutions), colonisation (mass population movements for the purpose of settling down in regions with fertile land), the collectivisation of production and the establishment of cooperatives, and writing off peasants' debts inherited from pre-war Yugoslavia. However, enforced collectivisation under state control proved unsuccessful. Peasants still found various ways of avoiding cooperatives and strove to produce only as much as was needed to fulfil their own needs. It was considered that a faster and higher-quality industrialisation required the accumulation of capital. "The accelerated process of the 'socialisation' of villages requires a huge accumulation of capital and such an obvious advantage in the way of life, the living standards, which can attract peasants to the social sector *without applying force* [our italics]." (Bilandžić, 1985: 128).

This gives rise to the questions of how the so-called socialist accumulation differed from capitalist accumulation and where the funds required for this to happen came from, that is to say, what constituted the primitive socialist accumulation. According to Kidrič, the fundamental difference between socialist and capitalist accumulation lies in the fact that the former, in terms of its character and goal, is *social*. While capitalist accumulation creates surplus value that stays in the hands of capitalists, the purpose of socialist accumulation are not private but social goals, "socially useful investments and increasing the general living standard of the working people" (Kidrič, 1950: 8). Kidrič observes that the above certainly constitutes a contradiction, for while in terms of form the method of accumulation is capitalist (surplus value is created as capital), in terms of *content* it is a matter of socio-economic purposes (the goal being to distribute the surplus among the working people). The contradiction decreases if *plans* are developed at all the levels of the economy, if prices and finances are planned, and if surplus is not created by means of wholesale trade and profitability at any cost. Still, profitability remained the engine of the stimulation of producers, but the intention was to try to provide it with a social framework and state control.

Where, then, do the funds for *primitive* accumulation come from? Did it happen as capitalist original accumulation, by forcibly dispossessing the population coerced to sell its labour power as a commodity in order to survive? Certainly not. It was a case of expropriation of expropriators (big capitalists and landowners, domestic traitors...). Also, it was a matter of a huge number of free working hours, which the population of the liberated country enthusiastically invested in the building of a new country. In addition to this, as early as the 1950's, "Tito managed to find, along with the surplus of domestic labour, another source of funding, ow-

ing to which he managed to avoid enforced collectivisation of land and being subjugated to Moscow: foreign loans” (Suvin, 2014: 187). It should be borne in mind that these original loans (from the USA to begin with, then from Britain and France) did not place the country in the position of debt slavery at all: they were very favourable, providing the space and time for rebuilding the country and developing the socialist experiment (Ibid.: 136–137, 187, 228).

Following the failure of the collectivisation of agriculture, the second agrarian reform of 1953 additionally limited the maximum size of a plot of land owned to 10 hectares, and the intention was to connect individual farms with the social agricultural sector within the framework of the self-management system. The development of self-management from the 1950's onwards represented a decrease of the state-administrative influence on the economy. It was a compromise model of sorts, in-between, on the one hand, independent enterprises that operate on the market and independently distribute a part of their income, and the state, which had the key role as regards the investment, on the other. Socially-owned agricultural enterprises developed, but the private sector of peasants' households continued to exist. The state decided not to suppress it forcibly, taking the risk of bringing the economy to a grinding halt and being virtually unable to feed the population, its aim being a *gradual* socialisation of the economy. The intention was to link the private sector with the social one, along with a freer operation of the market and a voluntary participation of producers, “in order to avoid the anger of peasants caused by the enforced buying of their products in the early post-war years, which is why the principle of voluntary cooperation of small land owners with the newly established social sector was the option selected” (Srećković 2014: 529). When the maximum size of a plot that could be owned, measured in hectares, was reduced, the remainder of the land was given to socially-owned agricultural enterprises and farms, which became the basic agricultural-industrial subject for producing large quantities of agricultural commodities within the self-management system.

With the later constitutional changes from 1974, the establishment of Basic and Compound Organisations of Associated Labour, and the passing of the Law on Associated Labour in 1976, the integration and mutual complementing of the social and the individual sector of agriculture were developed further. The *social* agricultural sector (combines, co-operatives...) developed through cooperation with the *individual* sector (private peasants' households), through joint use of capacities and association of resources and labour. But it was also supposed to exert influence on the latter – not just in technical-technological terms but also in social terms. What was supposed to happen in the course of this association



was that the self-management relations of the social sector, based on large-scale production, should somehow spill over into the private sector. To what extent that development tended towards socialism, and to what extent it was increasingly susceptible to the conditions of capital, market and competitive pressures, and to what extent the division of labour was democratised at all, are entirely different issues. What remains as a fact, without magnifying the scope of successes and taking into consideration the contradictions, is that the socialist industrialisation of agriculture in the Yugoslav way did stimulate growth, which the majority of the population benefited from.

### The dynamics of Yugoslav agriculture

Until the economic reform of 1964, Yugoslavia was a predominantly agricultural country. Even though after the Second World War there ensued a great transfer of employment from agriculture to industry, it took almost two decades of socialist development to profoundly change the inherited models of the social division of labour. The percentage of agricultural population in the overall population of Yugoslavia in the 1948–1981 period changed according to the following dynamics:

Republic / Province	Year				
	1948	1953	1961	1971	1981
<b>B&amp;H</b>	71.8	62.2	50.2	40	17.3
<b>Macedonia</b>	70.6	62.7	51.3	39.9	21.7
<b>Slovenia</b>	44.1	41.3	31.1	20.4	9.4
<b>Croatia</b>	62.4	56.4	43.9	32.3	15.2
<b>Montenegro</b>	71.6	61.5	47	35	13.5
<b>Serbia</b>	72.3	66.7	56.1	44	25.4
<b>Central Serbia</b>	72.4	67.2	56.2	44.1	27.6
<b>Vojvodina</b>	68.1	62.9	51.8	39.9	19.9
<b>Kosovo</b>	80.9	72.4	64.2	51.5	24.6
<b>Yugoslavia</b>	67.2	60.9	49.6	38.2	19.9

*Source:* The Statistical Yearbook of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, The Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), 1991, p. 445.

The processes of migration from villages to cities, stimulated by the post-war industrialisation of the country, were manifested in two elementary forms: 1) leaving village households for the sake of working in other social sectors of the economy; 2) getting employed in other social sectors of the economy, while staying in village households (the so-called

daily, weekly or monthly migrations). Those in the latter category earned their income in those sectors of the economy where they got employed, and also on the basis of their agricultural work, as a specific complement to their primary income. Mass migrations led to the dissolution of the traditional autarchy of peasant households, and the phenomenon of the increasing number of peasant-workers led to the problem of underutilisation of agricultural production capacities. As peasant-workers created their incomes outside the sector of agriculture, the land owned by them was to a large extent neglected due to the fact that working in non-agricultural sectors took the time required for agricultural field work away from them. According to some estimates, one-fifth of the overall arable land was owned by peasant-workers (Simon, 2014). Concerning the scope of the above migrations, it is advisable to bear in mind the crucial years that were marked by the great disparities between the scope of migration and the natural growth rate. Although the process of leaving village households was very intensive after 1945, the natural growth rate of the rural population was still positive. However, after 1955, the natural growth rate became negative in all the republics except for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and Metohija, and this tendency was more or less in evidence all the time until the break-up of socialist Yugoslavia (Marković, 1982: 10).

With the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the decrease of the growth rate of the rural population led to a great degree to the increase of the number of elderly male and female peasants in the agricultural sector. Many young people left their villages, which resulted in increasing the number of elderly rural households. Due to the broken generational chain of reproduction of the rural workforce, the remaining elderly households were often forced to rent out or sell their land. The increasing need of the food industry for products from the primary agricultural production, as well as the growing need of the population for food and agricultural products in general were accompanied by a drastic decrease in the share of the agricultural population in the overall number of inhabitants. The steady outflow of the agricultural population did not favour the rhythm of the industrial development of Yugoslavia, for it narrowed the field of employability in non-agricultural sectors. What this led to was a progressive saturation of non-agricultural sectors' demand for living labour, which, in its turn, led to the increase of unemployment. Although socialism strove to abolish unemployment, the agricultural sector, as the main source of the extensive type of accumulation, that is, as the main source of the greatest supply of workforce for industry, became a sector that started to limit the process of accumulation.

In this context, it should be noted that the achieved increase in

the productivity of work in agriculture was, apart from the gradual mechanisation of villages and a higher degree of technical equipment used in agricultural work, essentially a reflection of the workforce drain from the rural areas. The national product of agriculture in 1984 was 2.4 times higher than in 1948, that is, in relation to the 1948–1984 period, marked by the annual dynamics of the growth rate of the agricultural national product of 2.5% (Marsenić, 1990: 270). Also, regarding the dynamics of the physical scope of agricultural production, its growth was undeniable.

Republic / Province	1951-1955	1956-1960	1961-1965	1966-1970	1971-1975	1976-1980	1981-1985	1986-1990	1951-1990
<b>B&amp;H</b>	7.1	3.7	-1.2	5.7	3	1.6	3.2	0.4	2.9
<b>Macedonia</b>	10	2.1	3.5	5.3	4.5	1.4	-0.5	-0.5	3.2
<b>Slovenia</b>	1.9	4.4	-0.3	3.2	1.8	4	1.1	1.8	2.2
<b>Croatia</b>	9.3	3.7	-0.7	4.3	1.1	3.5	1.3	0.2	2.8
<b>Montenegro</b>	-0.4	15.7	5.5	2.9	4.3	0.2	4.9	-0.8	3.9
<b>Serbia</b>	8.7	5.1	3	2.8	4.8	2.5	-0.2	-0.5	3.2
<b>Central Serbia</b>	9	3.4	2.7	3.3	4.1	2.6	-0.6	-0.4	3
<b>Vojvodina</b>	0.2	7	2.8	2	5.5	2.7	0.4	-4.3	2
<b>Kosovo</b>	6.8	8.9	3.9	3.4	6.1	0.9	0.5	3.1	4.2
<b>Yugoslavia</b>	9.7	4.6	1.3	3	2.8	2.1	0.1	0.1	2.9

*Source: The Federal Office of Statistics (1989) and The Statistical Yearbook of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, the Federal Office of Statistics, 1991: 102, 420.*

Concerning the average annual rates of the changes of the physical scope of agricultural production in various branches of the industry, in the 1956–1990 period Yugoslavia notched up an average annual growth rate of 2.1%. During this period, raising cattle<sup>1</sup> and growing vegetables were the most successful branches (with an average annual growth rate of 2.8% and 1.7% respectively), fruit growing had a positive but modest average annual growth rate of 1.1%, while grape growing had a negative average annual growth rate of -0.3% (Simon, 2014).

Bearing in mind that the average annual growth rate of the population of Yugoslavia in the 1948–1991 period amounted to 0.8%, then the national product of agriculture in the post-war period increased by 1.5% per year *per capita*, and the physical scope of production increased by 2.1%

<sup>1</sup> The 1947–1984 period is characterised by a fivefold increase in meat production.

However, after the 1980's, the pace of cattle raising production entered a phase of relative stagnation because of the existing disparities between the meat production growth (at an average annual rate of 3.2%) and the decrease of financially backed demand. Also, the increase of protectionism on the world market of agricultural products had a negative influence on the production of cattle raising products.

*per capita*. In spite of the occasional periods of stagnation in some republics and provinces, agricultural production manifested a long-term growth which, compared to the average global growth rate, was twice as high.

Until the mid-1950's, agriculture served as a source of the extensive type of socialist accumulation, and from the point of view of the economic policy of the time, any significant investment support to agriculture was lacking. To a great degree, the stagnating rates of investment in the agricultural sector were influenced by the policy of obligatory establishment of peasants' cooperatives in the first years after the liberation of the country. After the state had given up on the programme of compulsory collectivisation, there occurred a mass dissolution of cooperatives, and from the mid-1950's onwards, investments in agriculture increased, which made possible the association of the private and the social agricultural sectors on a voluntary basis.

The accelerated development of agricultural production was aimed at ensuring a balanced growth of agriculture and other branches of the economy. This was planned through an increase of investments in agriculture, better technical equipment and changes in the conditions of conducting economic activities. The growth of yield per hectare was an indicator of a change of course in the agricultural policy. For example, the yield of wheat per hectare amounted to only 0.92 tons in 1947 (when the share of wheat in the overall structure of the arable land sown with grain was 81.1%), and in 1955 it increased to 1.28 tons (while its share in the structure of land sown with grain fell to 79.8%). Thirty years later, the yield tripled, reaching 3.61 tons per hectare (the share in the structure of land sown with grain amounted to 66.4% in 1985).<sup>2</sup> A similar growth dynamics characterised the yield of maize and sugar beet. A somewhat slower growth dynamics characterised the yield of potato and grapes, whereas in the case of plums the yield varied periodically.

The yield growth was made possible through the increased use of mechanisation and agrotechnical measures in the context of a new organisation of labour. Whereas until 1955 cattle-drawn ploughs predominated in the tilling of land (90% of the overall drawing power engaged in the field of agriculture), in 1985 this practice was almost entirely replaced by mechanical drawing power (the share of cattle-drawn ploughs in the overall drawing power of the country amounted to only 15% in 1985). Only one tractor was engaged per 1,000 hectares of arable land in 1955, whereas in 1985 the number of tractors used to plough the same area of

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<sup>2</sup> The changes of land sown with grain correlated in a significant degree to the pricing policies. The increase of the share of non-grain cultures (industrial, vegetable plants and fodder) is the result of the producers' reorientation towards growing more intensive cultures that bring a greater profit.

land amounted to 82 (FOS, 1986: 95). In 1952, only 789 tractors were produced, whereas in 1978 the number of tractors produced was 50,076. The production of agricultural machines started its upward trend only after 1955, and by 1978 it had multiplied 13 times (Papić, 1982: 131).

As regards the implementation of agrotechnical measures, Yugoslavia had a slower growth rate in this respect, marked by great regional differences. Although the use of mineral fertilisers increased from just 1.4 kg per hectare in 1948 to 259 kg per hectare in 1985, Yugoslavia was in the next-to-last place in Europe measured by this indicator (Simon, 2014). When it comes to systems of land improvement and their decisive influence on the scope of agricultural production, Yugoslavia, with the exception of Macedonia, whose level was equal to that of Europe, was in the last place in Europe. In 1955, only 97,000 hectares of land were irrigated, and by 1984 this had increased to 161,000 hectares. Bearing in mind that the overall surface of arable land in the 1955–1984 period amounted to over 7 million hectares, the share of irrigated land is truly negligible, which to a great extent explains the periodic need for increased import of food and agricultural products.<sup>3</sup>

Investments were for the most part aimed at the social agricultural sector, which, when it came to negotiating and associating with the individual sector, was the main lever of agricultural development. By 1984, the social sector numbered 2,580 organisations of associated labour and 756 farming cooperatives, whose share was 17% of the overall arable land. In 1955, the social agricultural sector employed 149,000 people, and by 1984 that number had increased to 226,500. In the same period, the average plot of arable land per worker was increased from 5.5 to 7.5 hectares. Until the economic reform of the 1960's, investments in the basic production means of the social agricultural sector predominated, their share of the overall agrarian investments being 70-75% (Marsenić, 1990: 275). After 1965, the share of fixed investments in the individual agricultural sector started to increase, and in the 1980's it approached the level of investments in the social sector. But even though there was an increase in the sphere of the technical equipment for work in the social sector, it was not accompanied by an increase in productivity, which was the result of the underutilisation of the basic means of production. Still, when the situation concerning the productivity of work is reviewed in comparative terms, following the economic reform, the social agricultural sector

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 3 When it came to utilising land, Yugoslavia continually manifested undercapacity utilisation. This is testified to by the fact that in the 1980's the overall surface of fallow and untilled land amounted to around 600,000 hectares, that is, around 10% of the overall arable land. Apart from narrowing down the possibilities of increasing production, the above land could have been utilised to employ the cattle raising sector, which would also have exerted a positive influence on the production of mineral fertilisers.

developed twice as fast compared to the social sector of the entire Yugoslav economy. To put it more precisely, the growth of productivity in the social agricultural sector amounted to 4.9% in the 1966-1983 period, whereas the growth rate of the social sector of the economy as a whole was 2.1%.

This growth was for the most part made possible by the changes in the agrarian policy that occurred following the second agrarian reform of 1953. The content of the new course drawn by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was formulated in a resolution passed by the National Assembly in 1957 entitled "On the State of Agriculture, the System of Production Cooperatives and the Perspectives of Their Development". After the passing of the resolution, cooperation programmes were initiated, as was concluding contracts between the social and the private sector in the sphere of agriculture. Contracts were concluded to determine the ways of joint production, exchange of factors, as well as supplying fertilisers, tilling land and collecting the harvest of the social sector for the private sector (Simon, 2014). At first, only the larger rural private households concluded contracts with the social sector, while small farms entered cooperation to a lesser degree. As the private agricultural sector was increasingly stimulated by the state through subsidies and favourable loans, cooperation with the social sector offered to it the possibility to modernise additionally by using the advantages of the economy of scale, which was created by the social sector.

What was realistically achieved through cooperation in the sphere of foreign trade was considerably relieving the balance of payments of pressure through decreasing food imports, in view of the fact that the frequent droughts of the 1950's were among the fundamental causes of balance of payments problems and increased food imports (Tempo, 1964: 193). Through cooperation and establishment of great agricultural combines, the tradition of a negative foreign exchange balance of payments in the sphere of foodstuffs from the 1950's and 1960's was reversed (Đorović, 1982: 57). As regards the share of cooperative production in the overall production of major agricultural cultures, starting from 1957 it constantly increased. For example, the share of the cooperative production of wheat in the overall production of this culture amounted to only 9.5% in the 1957-1970 period, while in the 1981-1985 period it increased to 30.8%. The same trend was manifested in the case of other strategically important cultures such as maize and sugar beet.

The dynamics of Yugoslav agriculture, thus, was to a great extent based on the socialist model of cooperation between the individual and the social sector, and it was most strongly manifested in the great socially-owned agricultural giants or combines.

### Notes on socially-owned agricultural combines

Cooperation is the basic form of increasing the productive power of work, that is, production on a larger scale, and as such, it has existed since the beginning of the history of men and their work. It has always been clear that the association and simultaneous employment of a mass of producers create a much more intensive production force than the work of isolated and independent producers. However, cooperation assumes various guises depending on the historical systems of production. Thus, the form of cooperation of pyramid builders in the era of slavery differs from industrial cooperation in the era of capitalism, the purpose of which is the self-multiplication of capital, whereas both forms differ from industrial cooperation in the era of socialism, whose purpose is the social division of value. It is precisely because of this that talk about the alternatives of *large-scale* or *small-scale agricultural production* does not tell us much if we do not take into consideration how, and under what production conditions, it is organised.

A paradigmatic form of socialist cooperation in the Yugoslav process of the industrialisation of agriculture are the socially-owned giants referred to as combines. In view of the broad scope of these companies' activities, combining primary agricultural production with processing and other activities, those were enormous networks of association of the social, cooperative and individual agricultural sector. Agricultural combines represented work organisations that combined production, processing, transportation, the sale of final products, as well as procurement and investments. Combines, as integrated systems of business operations, strove to realise production following the slogan *From arable land to the dining table* or *From the field to the table*, but they also expanded their activities to encompass the broader field of the social standard of workers, on account of which they represented the orbits of the entire social life of the majority of the population.

Industrial-agricultural combines, apart from the large plots of agricultural land owned by them (arable land, orchards, olive groves, vineyards, greenhouses...), a multitude of factories and facilities for production, processing and preservation (factories producing meat, cattle fodder, oil, sugar, flour, dairy products, as well as silos, slaughterhouses, cold-storage facilities, mills, wineries, breweries...), and also work organisations for transportation and goods trade, encompassed organisations dealing with social standards, which were in charge of socially-owned restaurants and provided warm meals on a daily basis, affordable holiday arrangements in summer and winter resorts that they had built or rented; they provided housing for their workers, spa facilities if their health

worsened, participated in procuring textbooks for the education of workers' children, had sports facilities, swimming pools and other recreational facilities built, organised sports events... Many combines encompassed scientific-research institutions and published newspapers that informed their workers of agricultural-industrial matters. Some combines even had their own banks (*IPK Servo Mihalj* from Zrenjanin, *PIK Belje* from Baranja and *Agrokosovo* from Priština). In a nutshell, combines not only employed tens of thousands of workers but also constituted the centre of their education, leisure time pursuits and social life in general.

Combines, therefore, represented the essential form of the link between the primary agricultural production and industry, and also with work organisations from other spheres and creating joint services. They did not link with the agriculture of their municipality only, but also with that of their region, the state as a whole and with international agriculture. For example, one of the greatest Yugoslav industrial-agricultural combines (IAC), *Servo Mihalj* from Zrenjanin, apart from the integrative linking of five municipalities (Zrenjanin, Sečanj, Žitište, Nova Crnja and Novi Bečej) comprising 56 inhabited settlements, was also associated with the Montenegrin municipality of Kotor through the agricultural farm *Boka* from Radanovići. The food industry was the basic activity of this combine (comprising twelve factories – producing sugar, oil, milk and dairy products, meat and meat products, pastry and cakes, beer and alcohol), and with other industries (for processing seeds, the medical, cosmetics and tobacco industry). The combine had many production units and new facilities built: from silos, new industrial plants, rendering plants, slaughterhouses, fish ponds, warehouses, drying sheds, to a hotel in Kranjska Gora and summer resorts in Poreč and Vrnjačka Banja. The rounded-off production process was complemented by other work organisations: the Technological-Agricultural Institute, the Thermal Power Plant-Heating Plant, Traffic and Transport, the Centre for Education and Culture, the Electronic-Computing Centre, the printing shop, catering facilities etc., on account of which *Servo Mihalj* constituted the lifeblood not only of the working life of Zrenjanin and the associated municipalities, but also of their cultural, scientific, educational, sporting and recreational life.

Therefore, the socialist idea of cooperation in the agricultural industry essentially differs from the capitalist forms of cooperation. What remains as the blind spot of Yugoslav socialism is the question of whether the transformation of agriculture, in the final analysis, was more in the direction of socialism or perhaps it tended towards capitalism more, following the market and competition imperatives. Still, after the break-up of Yugoslavia, capitalism clearly sealed the fate of the post-Yugoslav states, pointing them in a specific direction: by the late 1980's, the process



of the disintegration of agricultural combines had already got under way, and only intensified with time: the new capitalist states sold them to private new owners at ridiculous prices, and some of those socially-owned companies were closed down entirely and destroyed. New capitalist barons came onto the scene, and the state gave them land and subsidies, and the former workers of these combines were left jobless, deprived of health care and the possibility of educating their children, and as for summer and winter holidays, sporting activities, recreation, workers' education and similar social activities, they can only dream about such things. Instead of the socialist agricultural path – from arable land to the dining table – the capitalist path leaves only crumbs on the tables of the majority of the population, and as regards the social life of villages and cities, for most people it no longer exists.

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From Filip Jovanovski work *Textile and sorrow*

IVANA VASEVA

# “Red is our flag that proudly flutters in the wind”

The Cultural Emancipation of Workers  
and the Labour Culture in “Astibo” Fashion  
Industry in Štip in the 1960s until the 1980s

*Red is the blood that boils in our bodies,  
Red is the bolt that shreds through the clouds  
Red is the sky when it laughs at dawn,  
Red is our flag that proudly flutters in the wind*

(Astibo, 1974)<sup>1</sup>.

*The socialism brings forth a historical twist, a real cultural revolution, because it radically changes the character and conditions for development of all human activities, i.e. the self-preservation of society... Culture does not “help” this historical transformation; it continues it; it does not serve some of its goals, it does not participate in their fulfilment, but it rather participates in the fulfilment of the goals of the socialism. It is a process of the society becoming aware about the alienation, a process of creation of the new man, and it is part of the general movement for labour liberation, which in itself is also a deep cultural transformation of the society.<sup>2</sup>*

(Mito Hadživasiljev)

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1 A 1894 poem entitled “Red” by Kosta Abrašević (Ohrid, 1879-Šabac, 1898). This poem was on the cover of “Astibo” newspaper in April 1974.

2 Ivan Jakopović, *Kulturna emancipacija radnicke klase u socijaizmu* [Cultural emancipation of the workers’ class in the socialism], *Kulturni radnik*, 1973. On this occasion, we would like to thank Ana Kovačić and the rest of the team in “Miroslav Kraljević” gallery in Zagreb (Lea Vene and Sanja Sekelj), who introduced us to “Kulturni radnik” [Cultural Worker] magazine, which is frequently quoted in this paper.

Can workers, i.e. people who are part of the production process, regardless of any other activities they might undertake (in principle within their private lives) create culture? “Is their historical function determined by the necessity for gradual breakdown of culture as an independent ‘sector’ of human activity” (Pulig, 2016) or does culture, in the sense of cultural emancipation, occupy an important place in the historical struggle for self-liberation of the working class, as a constitutive but also vital and crucial part of the new society?

What was the attitude of the Yugoslav politics towards workers’ culture, especially if one takes into consideration that culture, as a way of living is also an artistic activity?

These are some of the questions that I will attempt to address in this paper; the latter will briefly review the self-management culture,<sup>3</sup> as culture that belongs to all (in other words, not only to those producing culture, but rather to all workers). In that sense, this paper will also attempt to show the important role of culture, which does not aspire to educate the workers in an elitist manner, but rather to turn the working class into creators of culture and cultural policies.

The focus of this paper, i.e. the grounds for analysing these issues is “Astibo” newspaper, which was actually a newsletter of the workers in the factory under the same name. It was first issued in 1973 and it reported about all major events within the factory, including the cultural and artistic activities of the workers, but also those of their visitors.

I will analyse the newsletter since its first issue until the end of 1982, as this was the period of increased interest in the development of the cultural emancipation of the workers.<sup>4</sup> Within this research, I will not focus on the main social, political and economic events and development, but indirectly, I will allow the cultural events and their intensity to indicate the circumstances in which they took place; in this, I will also make use of the literature from that period.

“Makedonka” and “Astibo” were two industrial giants, through which Macedonian economy had transformed itself from being primarily crafts-based to industry, employing many people and selling their products throughout Yugoslavia. They were the centres where the lives of the workers took place.

“Makedonka” cotton industry was quite known for its cultur-

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<sup>3</sup> The Yugoslav self-management socialism is against a distinct workers’ culture, and the workers themselves also question the very expression *workers’ culture* as a culture that would be particular for them, and separated from the rest of the society (Jakopović, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> This research takes into consideration all issues of the newsletter until October 1982. Due to technical problems, the remaining issues will be considered at another occasion. However, as an addition to this analysis, there is part of an interview with Stojan Troicki in “Textile Worker” newspaper, which adds to the qualitative side of this research.

al and artistic activity, especially for its Cultural and Artistic Ensemble “Makedonka” created in 1952. The latter outgrew the boundaries of the local factory and “was soon considered a city ensemble in the most noble sense of the word, because in addition to the ‘factory music talents,’ it also included members of the elementary music school, and later the secondary music school in Štip, as well as already established musicians that selflessly wanted to help the ensemble” (Самоников, 2008: 7). This ensemble was very active and participated in many competitions, until the end of its work in 1991.

Nevertheless, this research focuses on the workers’ collective of “Astibo” for a number of reasons.<sup>5</sup> First, while much less has been written about it, it appears that the cultural life of these workers was more organized considering information sharing about factory issues; thus, there were more regular reports about it. Moreover, there was the factory newspaper,<sup>6</sup> and one of the key people that stimulated the cultural and artistic activities in the factory, Stojan Troicki, who used to work in the information and propaganda department, was available for an interview. The intention of the above newspaper was to register events and tasks, as well as to analyse the situations and propose solutions via collective participation, as a means for internal information in the factory, as “one of the conditions for a more qualitative, more comprehensive and more efficient self-management activity” (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, март 1973).

The newspaper played an important role as an informative newsletter that provided data on the factory, its work and organization, development and plans, then data on the political party organization, and in general about the self-management organization of the factory, as well as records on various conferences and debates on ideological, legal and historical topics. In addition, it covered events in the field of culture, as editorials or journalistic commentaries on artistic events and special debates that took place on this topic (part of those statements will be presented

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5 The cultural emancipation of the workers, as a topic of this research, builds on two major researching, collaborative and engaging processes conducted in Štip, together with Filip Jovanovski and several collaborators. In general, they were very much contextually, socially and politically connected, and referred to the artificially created knowledge about history which has gradually suppressed the critical spirit in the country under the coercion of the strong nationalist rhetoric. The other one refers to or starts specifically from Štip, although this issue is more or less present in all post-socialist societies in the Balkans as a result of the general privatization in the so-called transition phase, and specifically refers to textile industry.

One of them is the project “Living Libraries: Archives of Civil Disobedience” <https://zivi-biblioteki.wordpress.com/about/> and the other one is KUC Tekstil [Cultural Art Centre Textile] <https://bit.ly/2kMHlsf>.

6 Despite several attempts, “Makedonka” newspapers, which are stored at the National Institution – University Library “Goce Delčev” in Štip could not be located.

further). Moreover, there are reports about the sport activities of the factory and there was also a humoristic section, entitled “Kata Manufacture”. As a fashion industry, however, special attention was always paid to fashion, designs, seasonal collections, fairs and fashion shows, thereby also developing the fashion of the season. Nevertheless, there were important cultural events within this factory as well.

However, in order to achieve this goal, this paper will revisit its beginning: “Astibo” fashion industry, the newspaper itself and the importance of culture and art in the self-management system of the 1960s and 1970s. The second part of this paper – the interview with Stojan Troicki, can be found in “Textile Worker” newspaper, which is part of Filip Jovanovski’s art project, conducted in collaboration with “Loud Textile Worker” organization from Štip, in the framework of an exhibition with the same title as this publication.

This paper does not attempt to romanticize some periods, nor to present them as already undefeatable fortifications, but rather to better understand today’s social reality. The opening of the topic of cultural emancipation of the worker is rare in the country as topic of discussion or subject of processing and analysis. The idea is therefore to look back to the past and give a reflection of the cultural life of workers within the self-management system, which can further be used as a critical engagement within the current situation.

### **The Cultural Emancipation of Workers in Socialism**

*“Culture is always social. Socialism is unimaginable without revolutionizing of the cultural reality. Since culture is the ability to be human. A possibility to be human, to develop critical thought, to enrich the knowledge, to gain new knowledge and stimulate reflections. Culture is a vital human need, a form without which our human nature could not be accomplished. A man isolated from cultural contacts cannot be accomplished as a human, he or she remains dehumanized. Culture becomes a constant expression and conception of the human being and of what surrounds him, his contents, and an inalienable part of everyday activities, seeking and fulfilment”*

*(Martinić, 1971: 28).*

Without culture and cultural uplifting of the workers – as critical and creative awareness, humanization of man, self-management person in action – they would not be able to master and shape the self-management. This is one of the main road signs indicating the great importance of culture (and hence of science and education) as one of the important factors for liberation of the working class, within Yugoslavia. Ivan Jakopović writes that it is generally known that the poorly educated workers, the workers who do not have access to cultural goods and are alienated

from them, become subject to crude manipulation and exploitation by the privileged social groups.

In that respect, the cultural emancipation of the working class is necessary because of its [emancipation's] class-liberating effect within the historical role of the proletariat. In the socialism, the working class must morally and ideologically govern the society led by the proletarian (socialist) morality, ideology and culture. Otherwise, the workers would not be able to effectively decide (in terms of self-management) about any important issues in the society (Jakopović, 1973: 61-62).

The self-management culture is seen as the culture of the new reform undertaking of the society, aspiring towards "further democratization of culture", "creativity" and "participation". Within its framework, workers set the goals of cultural policy, the trajectories that lead to the implementation of these goals; they ensure the necessary material resources (means, conditions and production) and also channel the current and future cultural development.

Within this ideological frame, the workers in various self-management companies were not only stimulated to be "subjects that create new culture", aspiring towards establishing some cultural supremacy in society (quite contrary to passive consuming the alienating products of mass culture), but were also introduced to the achievements in the field of culture and art because in the previous social system they had been deprived of cultural events that were intended only for the small circle of the ruling class and its apparatus. In that sense, both culture and art were seen in the broader social context, as a sphere of human activity that has its social function and consequences, as well as its socially conditioned material basis.

Within Yugoslavia, when it comes to cultural and artistic activity, it used to be mostly on amateur basis<sup>7</sup> (cultural and artistic associations and various clubs and sections), but there were also aspirations to overcome amateurism in order to satisfy the needs of (modern) working man. In that sense, it was important to include workers in cultural activities, in a culture that empowers the worker. Such efforts would result not only in quality time spent in creative active production, but also in better and

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 7 Boris Koroman writes: "As a favoured practice of self-management cultural policy, amateurism has its own historical argument, i.e. it originates from the cultural practice of the national liberation struggle, as an expression of the collective spirit of "the nameless cultural creation of the people" (Shuvar, 1980: 101). This historical image, reflected in the notion of "the partisan who carried a book along his rifle" (Shuvar, 1980: 95) opens the argument of the ideological: the self-management cultural policy of amateurism is "a direct continuation of the fundamental clash of the struggle for national liberation" (Shuvar, 1980: 101). Amateurism is thus a "cultural act and transformation" (Shuvar, 1980: 95), which has "the basic liberating function" (Jakopović, 1976: 68), i.e. self-liberating function when it comes to class (Koroman, 2016: 625).

more quality work in self-management socialism; as such, they would contribute to the development and progress of the society.

However, such theoretical and ideological considerations rarely found their reflection in practice because it was not clear how to develop the cultural emancipation of the working class. The Chapter on Culture of the Programme of the Yugoslav League of Communists is insufficient, having no clear formulation of the cultural supremacy of the workers in the socialist society (Jakopović, 1973: 66). In that regard, there is a noticeable discrepancy between how the self-management culture is imagined and how it is implemented, as it will be seen later in several statements from the texts published in “Astibo” newspaper.

### Astibo Factory

“Astibo” fashion industry was established in 1962 by ZPT (Здружение за производство на текстил / Association for Textile Production) “Makedonka – Štip” in order to complete the technical and technological production process starting from spinning, weaving, refining, and ending up with clothing production. This factory was part of ZPT “Makedonka – Štip” as a factory unit with independent income and its own professional services.<sup>8</sup> The constitutive session of the Workers’ Council was held on 23 June 1964 (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе, октомври 1977*).

The personnel were recruited in such a way that the graduated textile technicians and workers were sent to be trained in famous Yugoslav textile industries. Upon returning to the factory, they trained the newly-employed workers about production (*40 години МК Астибо*, 2005: 3).

This factory became an autonomous socialist organization, a so-called ООЗТ (Основна организација на здружен труд/ Basic Organization of Association Labour/Self-Management Company) in 1967 and its Statute states: “As a result of the development policy based on the rapid and successful adoption of the initial manufacturing technology, great potential and growth, the need for the general Yugoslav growth to further expand the material basis for the well-being of this region, on 18 December 1967, the Central Workers’ Council of ZPT “Makedonka” adopted the decision no.77-90/CRS-67 by which “Makedonka” - Štip factory becomes an independent company”.

This factory for fashion apparel “Makedonka” - Štip, unlike the cotton industry “Makedonka” which manufactured fabrics and cloth, “in 1970 changed its name to “Astibo” - Štip fashion industry, a name that will long

8 Part of the 1968 Statute, a document obtained from the City Archive of Štip.



be a synonym for quality, a phenomenon that would be the subject of many journalistic articles, sociological and cultural research, a fashion house that dictated the fashion in the next fifteen years in this area and beyond it. It was certainly one of the biggest factories for fashion apparel in the Balkans". The production plant was located in the partially empty premises of Monopoly tobacco warehouse in Štip and the machines were combined with a number of sewing machines and hand-made devices for cutting, ironing, adjusting and packaging" (*40 години МК Астибо*, 2005: 3-4).

Initially, the factory had 119 employees, in 1967 there were 320 employees, in 1972 there were about 2,000 employees, and in 1975 there were 3,200 employees. In the early 1980s Astibo had over 3,700 workers.

As late as 1978, with the organizational reorganization of OOOZT "Men's Programme – Mladost [Youth]", "Solidarnost [Solidarity]", "Women's Programme", "Exotic", "Children's Programme – Pinky", "Galaxy", "Social Nutrition" and "Astibo Komerc", "Astibo" became an independent company, "Working Unit Fashion Industry" Astibo. The main activity of "Astibo" was design, production and distribution of men's, women's and children's ready-made garments.

Following the recommendations to open branches in the underdeveloped regions of the country in order to target a large number of unemployed people, Astibo established production units in several towns, mainly in the eastern part of Macedonia, such as "Brodčanka" in Makedonski Brod, "Proteks" in Probištip, "Astibo" - Sveti Nikole in Sveti Nikole, "Palančanka" in Kriva Palanka, "Radovišanka" in Radoviš, "Vin-ičanka" in Vinica, "Kratovčanka" in Kratovo and "Vera Jocić" in Makedonska Kamenica. Many of these units opened in the eastern regions of Macedonia, such as "Vera Jocić", were founded as a result of the communist leadership decision to employ the wives of men who worked in the mines in Eastern Macedonia despite the lack of interest in this venture by "Astibo" factory itself.

A decade after its establishment, the conglomerate grew into one of the largest manufacturers of lightweight apparel in Yugoslavia and in general one of the top five manufacturers of apparel with 60 custom stores across the country. At that time, "Astibo" factory started to export its production by concluding agreements with foreign buyers, "production of pieces pre-ordered and paid by foreign partners" (*Историјата на македонската текстилна индустрија со фокус на Штип*, 2005).

"Astibo" grew so much that it had its own medical office, a restaurant (for the workers), a kindergarten for the children of the employees; they also constructed low-cost apartments for the employees. The good organization of the factory at that time can be seen from the fact that the medical office had a gynaecological unit that provided, among other

things, counselling on the use of contraceptives, a laboratory, a paediatrician and a dental unit.

Overall, the entire complex of “Astibo” buildings was 35,000 square metres. The company also had “B” category hotel - “Garni” (6 rooms, 3 double and 3 single rooms) in the centre of Štip, built in 1978. In the 1970s “Astibo” factory provided one million Yugoslav dinars for scholarships and loans for financing the education of the children of employees (*Историјата на македонската текстилна индустрија со фокус на Штип*, 2005).

The dislocation of the production activities from the premises of the Monopoly in 1990 is a new phase of “Astibo”, which has two features: consolidation and reorganization, with the implementation of measures that were in line with the business development policy. In that period, in terms of organizational set-up, the factory was transformed from a Self-Management Organization to an enterprise, whereby the ownership structure was also transformed. In February 1991, the plants dislocated from the parent company were decentralized and six independent companies were created. It is further transformed into a shareholding company and there its transformation stopped.

At the time when privatization in the society was gaining momentum, “Astibo” was increasingly losing its markets; it happened quite often that already concluded contracts were cancelled; the factory was more and more left by people to whom Astibo had provided good contacts with foreign partners, as they opened their own private manufactures; there was growing dissatisfaction with the salaries and the overall situation in the factory. Due to the increased financial difficulties, “Astibo” inevitably had problems with its solvency towards a number of clients and bankruptcy and liquidation of the company were unavoidable. It happened in June 2002, at the time when it was supposed to celebrate 40 years of its existence. A brand that had been establishing itself for 40 years remained part of history (*40 години МК Астибо*, 2005: 26).

After the liquidation of TK “Makedonka” and MK “Astibo”, the development and affirmation of the textile industry was taken over by more than 70 textile companies from the private sector, which were organized by the professional staff of these two magnates. They became the new employers and new business partners to foreign clients. For most of them, the main activity has been wage labour, i.e. sale only of labour, without greater value added to textile products.

## Factory Press and Labour Culture Astibo Newspaper of the Working People in MK “Astibo” - Štip (1973 – 1993)

*The labour culture contributes not only to increasing the productivity of labour, but, above all, it allows the participants in the working process to become accomplished and develop into persons who feel their activity in the working environment as a creative activity, and by that they will feel fully accomplished as human beings.<sup>9</sup>*

Factory press is one of the important informative media that existed in Yugoslavia. The idea of this press was to follow self-management development, to inform the workers of issues significant for their lives and work and to inspire them to participate responsibly in all self-management decisions. In 1947, there were about twenty factory newspapers; in 1977, 1,500 newspapers with a circulation of about 3 million copies and in 1979 about 3,000 newspapers of the self-management organizations with a circulation of over 4 million copies per month. In these newspapers there were about 2 thousand journalists and several hundred workers who were used as informants (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, јуни 1979).

“In the workers’ newspapers the workers’ spirit must be felt even more. More than before, workers have to write about their own views. If they go along that path, the workers will help those newsletters to be open for criticism, which will contribute to the construction of the new and destruction of the remains of the old one,” says Mika Špiljak, the President of the Federation of Trade Unions of Yugoslavia, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the self-management organizations’ press in Yugoslavia (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, ноември-декември 1977).

The Astibo newspaper of the working people in MK “Astibo” - Štip started to be issued in March 1973 by the Department of Information and Propaganda within the Development Service (later upgraded into an Information and Culture Centre).

The dynamic life of the “Astibo” collective, the creative work, the problems, the successes and difficulties, the abundant self-management practice and the social and political movements, were the main program units that were supposed to be commented and discussed by the workers on the pages of the “Astibo” newspaper and newsletter. It had been created, as it was said on its pages, at a significant moment due to the broad scope of tasks that the factory had to deal with.

“The fulfilment of the same basic issues presupposes that the accumulated values of the last year (new capacities, many newly employed

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<sup>9</sup> Statement by Vasil Šumanski, associate at the Information and Propaganda Centre of Astibo (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, октомври 1978).

workers, etc.) should be maximally effectuated, the newly established internal organization should be implemented to the fullest, the tasks in the development of production, personnel and sales methods should be completely fulfilled, the savings and quality should be our everyday preoccupation, the obligations in the sphere of the social standards should be fully accomplished. At the same time, by implementing the new self-management organization, through the strengthening, activity, role and influence of the organization of the League of Communists and other social and political organizations in the collective, in fact through an active attitude towards the management of the internal social and economic relations, we will best respond to the key tasks of our versatile development. There is no doubt if there were a more convenient moment for “Astibo” newspaper to engage in the largest ever action of the ‘members of Astibo’ in the accomplishment of their better future” (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, март 1973).

As usual, cultural amateurism<sup>10</sup> that could take place in the factory or in the local community was also encouraged here. Therefore, one month after the newspaper establishment, an idea to create a “Club of the Creative People” was launched as an effort for organized work of talented workers who would use it to present their leisure activities: literary works, caricatures, embroidery, their unexpressed love for Macedonian folk and pop music, reciting and organizational skills, and there were also ideas to establish a folklore ensemble Astibo. A literary club of the working people under the name of “Astibiana” was also created. Its task was to focus on more extensive development and expression of literary skills and efforts through this cultural and artistic activity. In February 1981, a folk band and choir were established by Panče Musev, the music manager in the collective, and there was also a drama section led by Vasil Šumanski.

Angel Kostadinov, professor at “Goce Delčev” Pedagogical Academy in Štip, describes the role of the working people in the further development and socializing of education and culture in Štip in the November-December 1973 issue, saying that “assessing the current situation in these areas, our main goal was to encourage the working person, in addition to providing him with information about the situation, to become the main carrier and implementer of cultural policies at all levels. Without this element, it is impossible to genuinely liberate these policies and obtain a new creative policy in the municipality, which would in the interest of the working man. It should not be forgotten that education and culture are not just educational and cultural issues in this community, but

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<sup>10</sup> In the indicated issues of the newspaper, the workers who were engaged in art were not called amateurs. The term amateur-artists was used for those who had been educated in something else but they began to become actively engaged in art.

also essential class issues. These two spheres have been the source for the occurrence and existence of social differences, especially in the education of children from working families, who are in most cases educated to become workers”.<sup>11</sup>

Under the title “The Ice Is Broken” the female workers showed their reciting talents for the first time on 8 March (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, февруари 1977). Then there were traditional exhibitions of knitted clothes, there was interest in reading, and various books were purchased; “Kultura” publishing house from Skopje also donated books for Astibo library.

The first exhibition by a worker, the young Vasil Petrov, was held in March 1979, in “Bezisten” Art Gallery and later there was a joint exhibition of the designers in the development service Kole Patrakliski and Marin Kocalev in “Bezisten” art gallery, and another one of the sales officer in the women’s apparel department at “Astibo” Vinko Lisec, in “Bezisten”, which was further transferred to the restaurant for the workers. Almost traditionally, there were exhibitions of tapestries of women workers in Astibo (as an integral part of 8 March celebrations). Also, the play “The Old Seesaw” was staged on the “Small Scene” in the Štip Theatre by the factory worker, Kiril Petrov.

What is specific is that it is not known for how long the clubs worked, i.e. the newspaper does not present the results of their activities.

Also, at the same time there were guest performances of artists in different disciplines in front of the workers, primarily in the factory itself and then in the restaurant; the latter was a significant place dedicated to the “cultural and artistic uplifting”.<sup>12</sup> A special programme was always been organized for 8 March, as well as for the day when the best workers of the month and the year were declared, a competition that was

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**11** This is part of the statement on the thematic conference held on 20 November 1973 in Štip, organized by the Municipal Conference of the Association of Trade Unions and the Cultural and Educational Community in Štip (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, ноември-декември 1973).

**12** These are some of the guests who visited Astibo workers or performed in front of them or for them:

**In the field of literature:**

Visits by women poets from Skopje:

- Evgenija Šuplinovska, Radmila Trifunovska, Svetlana Hristova-Jocić and Olga Arbuljevska, and from Štip: Marija Kukubjanska (who is also a part of the “Astibo” collective), Marija Delova-Durgutova, Nada Nakova, and Elena Kožuharova;
- a group of poets from the Soviet Union led by Robert Rozhdstvensky, “Golden Wreath” laureate at the Struga Poetry Evenings;
- the poets Yiannis Goudelis from Greece, Joseph Noneshvili from the USSR, Peter Everwine from the USA, Ruj de Carvalho from Angola, Ioana Diaconescu from Romania, Aba Rezeki from Algeria, Che Lan Vien from Vietnam, Ljerka Car Matutinović from Zagreb, Kiril Vujukliev from Skopje, as poets participants at the annual Struga Poetry Evenings;
- a Week of the Book was organized with the performance of Kole Čašule, Božin Pav-

especially valued by all workers, given that it was especially financially stimulating, but also gave the status of a respected worker.

However, the most interesting and motivating for the workers themselves were the competitions in the area of production. Within the framework of the labour culture, Astibo held various competitions in several disciplines and areas. In July-August 1976, the first competition of textile workers in Macedonia took place “in order to contribute to the affirmation of the best workers in this branch, to familiarize the producers with the latest scientific developments and technical solutions in the textile industry, to develop the creative work among the working class which is especially stimulated by the development of self-governance and self-management socialist relations; to affirm science as a direct produc-

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lovski, Taško Georgievski, Mihajlo Rendžov, Jovan Kotevski and Jordan Plevneš.

In the field of entertainment and visits there were the following guests:

- Petre Prličko, Milena Dravić, Ilija Džuvalekovski, Slavko Štimac for the manifestation “Best Worker” (of the month or of the year).

**In the field of music:**

- concert of Esma and “Teodosievski” Ensemble, a guest appearance of the CAS “Mirče Acev” from Tutunski Kombinat (Tobacco Factory) Prilep, performances were held in the displaced plants of “Astibo” with the best performers of “Astibo 77” interplant quiz. The anniversaries were celebrated in a solemn manner, and on the occasion of the 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary “Rokeri s Moravu” the rock band performed. There was also a performance and a concert by the amateur folklore society “Miorita” from Romania.

**In the field of theatre:**

- “The Green Goose” play by the Aesthetics Laboratory of the Faculty of Philosophy of Skopje was presented in the restaurant.

- “Nova scena [New scene]” theatre from Bratislava (ČSSR) visited the factory, and in the evening performed the play “The Paradox of Diogenes” by Tome Arsovski.

- On the occasion of the Year of the Labour, there was a performance by the National Theatre from Štip in the dislocated plants, and the text “An Extra Ticket” speaks about the interest of the workers in theatre plays after having followed several of them in the Štip theatre.

**In the field of information:**

- there was a live broadcast of the information and documentary show “Aktuelno” from TV Skopje in the factory hall OOZT “Solidarnost” which discussed the issues in the textile industry.

- Also in the restaurant there were various discussions about culture and cultural policy at the moment.

**In the field of fine arts:**

- There were also many guest exhibitions, such as the exhibition of the painter-amateur Trajko Nikov, judge in the Skopje District Court, the exhibition “Sixty Years of SKJ-KPJ [League of Communists of Yugoslavia – Communist Party of Yugoslavia]”, the exhibition “Tito in the Artistic Photographs”, there was an artistic-musical matinee with Ljubica Donska and Ribarski duo, an exhibition of Kiril Efremov, an exhibition of Boris Tkalčev, an exhibition about the life and revolutionary path of Tito, on the occasion of the anniversary of his death, as well as a poetry and music recital “After Tito – Tito” in which participated the artists of the Macedonian drama Vukan Dinevski, Majda Tušhar, Liljana Veljanova, Dimitar Kostov and Mite Grozdanov, with the choir of the CAS Vančo Prke from Štip conducted by Ljuben Mitrev, an exhibition on the topic of Two Decades of the Belgrade gathering of the Non-Aligned Countries, an exhibition of the painter-amateur Aleksandar Brašnarov, an exhibition by Ljubomir Donski, an exhibition “Development of the Military Forces of Yugoslavia”, an exhibition by Mirko Dončevski, etc.

tion force and to integrate science and production; to achieve the direct meeting and cohesion of workers; and to affirm the textile industry that has a significant place in the current and future economic development” (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, јули-август 1976).

In April 1977 there was also an open Call for Amateur Designers, the traditional interplant quiz was also started the same year.

Education was an important issue and therefore the workers visited the School for Self-Managers at “Vančo Prke” Workers’ University in Štip, and they also traditionally visited the Political School of the League of Communists in Macedonia in Štip.

A special segment in the factory newspaper was dedicated to the holiday of 8 March; it was always followed by a programme, but there were regular debates about the position of woman in the production relations. A text entitled “The Female Worker – Driving Force of the Production” says: “The involvement of the woman in the associated labour means an economic independence for her and an opportunity to understand her own position, prospects for a more independent life, increase of her knowledge, and taking creative part in direct decision-making on all important issues of her life and work. From this aspect, the woman is not only a mother and a housewife, but she also influences the area of labour, she becomes the subject of self-managing production relations and the creator of a new family and new family socialist relations. Hence, also the possibility of gaining a more favourable material position and holding public self-management functions in the society (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, октомври 1977).

The creative skill in designing and witty headlines of a number of issues of the newspaper also shows the level of the newspaper, which indicates the special treatment that the editorial team had towards it.

However, this newspaper also contains criticism that had been directed to it. A special example is the text titled “Double Standards” related to the alleged negative assessment of the article “Competition” involving the General Manager of Astibo fashion industry (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, февруари 1981). This article is upsetting for the workers and it is related to the replacement of the General Manager. The article “Competition” tackles the issues of the independence of these newsletters, the insufficient influence of self-management bodies when it comes to editorial policies, and it says that “they are a prolonged hand of the management structures in the factory; without the approval of the latter, the newspaper cannot be printed” (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, мај 1981). This is further discussed as a criticism by people who “kidnap the newspaper and channel the information according to their own wishes and interests”.

### Almost a Conclusion

Since the focus of this research is the way in which the cultural emancipation of workers in the socialist society took place, through the example of “Astibo” fashion industry in Štip, and specifically through its informative newsletter, it shows that at the beginning of its operation, the attempts to encourage or demonstrate the cultural activity of the workers are modest. Although there were some sporadic attempts at the beginning, as the 1970s approached, the intent of increasing investments and encouraging the labour culture were intensified. Within “Astibo”, 1980 was the year of labour culture, and a special commission for the preparation and implementation of the program was established.

“It is agreed - all services, factory units, basic organizations of the associated labour should develop their own programmes, and on the basis of these programmes, the overall activity at the level of the factory will be programmed, both for this and the following years” (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, јануари 1980).

However, according to what this newspaper writes, the artistic achievements of the workers in the area of culture are modest, and the newspaper itself mentions that there is a lack of action. There is also a belief that the labour culture was not a minor interest and activity of the “Astibo” collective; however, it was also not considered an extraordinary or special category.<sup>13</sup> It seems that the information system (as an inseparable part of the self-management process) was the one that was most significant in this factory. Therefore, the first to be issued was an Information Bulletin, which informed the workers of the factory about the more important events of its everyday life, and since 1973 it was done through the “Astibo” factory newspaper. The latter was published for twenty years, and as of October 1976 it was transformed into Bulletin of the Social and Political Organizations in “Astibo”. Information within the factory circle of employees was done via several bulletin boards and an internal radio station system; at the beginning of January 1978 the broadcast of “Astibo” Radio began, and in 1980 “Exotic” Radio started to broadcast in the plants of OOT “Exotic”<sup>14</sup>.

In that sense, although sporadic and weak, in intensity and quality - and here one cannot speak of some experimental artistic achievements

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<sup>13</sup> This is a statement by Mihail Netkov, the General Manager of “Astibo” on the occasion of the regional conference of self-management units of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia regarding Labour Culture in 1980.

<sup>14</sup> In October 1981 the “Studio A-Stibo” program was broadcast on Radio Štip in order to provide more regular and comprehensive information to the employees in the factory and beyond (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, октомври 1981).



in the spirit of self-governance<sup>15</sup>, the labour culture is interesting because of the way in which it was constructed, how much was invested in thinking, how the workers were encouraged despite the challenging social, economic and political circumstances. The labour culture was understood as a task of the entire working collective, and not as a privilege of a small circle of people (*Астибо весник на работните луѓе*, октомври 1981).

However, in general, all notifications of events and discussions are the voice and interpretation of the party, often phrased rhetorically. The way in which cultural policy was planned and written about and the way in which it was implemented and fulfilled, visibly shows, or at least seriously questions the divergence in theory and practice.

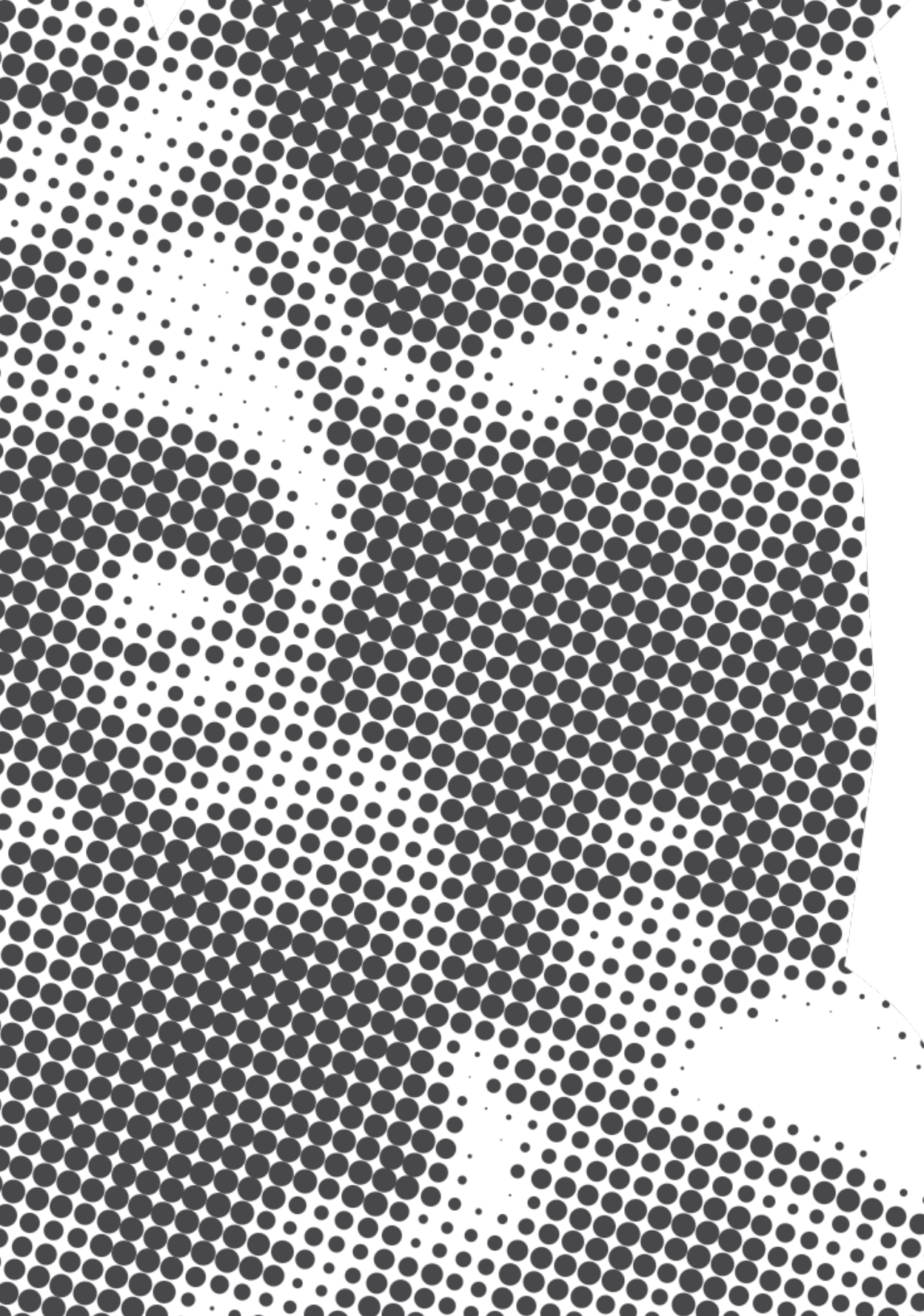
Nevertheless, what this collective shows is that in all of its efforts they created an infrastructure for cultural production; however, after the privatization of this factory, any idea of cultural life of the workers has disappeared.

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<sup>15</sup> Bojana Piškur at: [https://schizocurating.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/self\\_management.pdf](https://schizocurating.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/self_management.pdf).

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Doplgenger, *Friends*, video (found-footage), 4:3, loop, 2018

ISIDORA ILIĆ AND BOŠKO PROSTRAN  
(DOPLGENDER)

# Yugoslav Socialism on Film: Yugoslav self- management and women

## Self-management in Yugoslav cinema

“Film is the most important art for us”, stated Lenin in 1922 and that became the code for Yugoslav cinema. A clause in the Article 1 of the Basic Law on the film from 1956 underlines what the Yugoslav society expected from film: “This law defines relations in the field of production, sales and screening of films as a commercial activity, which has a special cultural and educational importance.” As an ideological apparatus of every society, film had an important place in Yugoslav socialism that manifested its support to the seventh art in many different ways – from implementing policies of kinofication and increasing the number of traveling cinemas in the 40s and 50s, through education, to development of Yugoslav film industry. Whether film is an art or industry was for a long time a key question for local theory and critique and also for the film authors. However, the systemic decisions and organisation of Yugoslav society would lead to its quickly abandoning cultural and educational tasks and to start perceiving cinema as a professional and commercial activity.

The beginnings of Yugoslav cinema are marked by the themes from the Peoples Liberation Struggle and adaptations of literary works. The communist ideology presupposed the request of focus on the contemporaneity to the organisation of the society. This would turn out to be a method by which the film would detect the degree as well as the

state of the development of the society, questioning at the same time the causes of certain socio-historical processes and offering possible insights for overcoming that state. Self-management as a general context of a contemporary society was expressed on film mainly in thematic orientation towards the working class and working collectives, problems of villages and problems of youth. Even though some early movies tried to articulate contemporary problems (*Jezero* (Lake, 1950)), it took ten years after the first Yugoslav film (*Slavica*, 1947) for films with contemporary themes to appear – *Zenica* (1957) and *Vlak bez voznog reda* (Train Without a Timetable, 1959). The interest in contemporary themes in Yugoslav film was directly stimulated by the development of self-managing social relations.

The self-managing system<sup>1</sup>, as socio-historical and political im-  
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1 Self-management was introduced in Yugoslavia in 1951, after the break up with the politics of the USSR. Sociologist Rastko Močnik differentiates four phases of self-management of the Yugoslav society. The characteristics of the first phase (1950-1965) were the combination of self-management in enterprises, state planning and investments. According to the growth of domestic product, this one was the most successful. However, reducing self-management to enterprises only, and not including the society as a whole, iterated an antagonism between the workers and the state administration, which still controlled the redistribution of the extra value on a higher level, the level of state economy. To that structural crisis, Yugoslav communists responded with two interventions: the Constitution from 1963, which by the legislation enabled the economic reform in 1965. The Constitution itself was supposed to mean “withdrawal of the state”, while in practice it brought to the new bureaucratisation of the system. Nevertheless, constitutional changes brought two important points: introducing self-management in public services (education, health, culture, social security) and territorial spreading of self-management. That period (1965-1974) is the second phase of self-management. Economic reform introduced the market which made possible the increase of personal incomes and mass consumption, creating several side effects: the enterprises started doing business according to the principle of competition, workers’ councils were acting as assemblies of the stakeholders, the role of management (technocrats) grew and public services were received as an excessive expenditure. Economic reform separated production from public services, which resisted market principles, and in which self-management was efficient, even though hypertrophied law regulation limited self-management practices, while inciting the process of new bureaucratisation. At the same time, the production degenerated in a variation of a capitalist economy. Market mechanisms created new power positions, deepened class differences, and augmented structural differences between enterprises, sectors and regions. Finally, market mechanisms had political consequences as well. All of those who advocated for national autonomies were expelled from the Communist Party, as well as those who, under the imperative of modernisation, advocated for the corporative business model and for introducing Yugoslavia in western-capitalist system. During the third phase (1974-1980), marked by the 1974 Constitution and the Law on associated labour, “free associations of labour and the means of labour” were formed and were supposed to liberate **self-managing** work organisations blocked by the market. That Constitution was an effort to regulate production and exchange within unified system of social reproduction, but it never came to full power due to global crisis of the capitalist system and debt crisis into which the Yugoslav economy was drawn at the end of the seventies by the managerial elite. Under the pressure of workers strikes and alternative social movements from underneath and of the global capitalism from above, republic national elites renewed capitalism. Močnik states that the last phase of self-management (1980-1989), or the restoration of capitalism, was marked by comprador bourgeoisie – local national bourgeoisie – which brought **self-managing** socialism in Yugoslavia to its end.

perative of the Yugoslav society, influenced the cinematic creation not only through a direct thematic connection but also through production relations. The changes that the society was undergoing reflected on both the organisation and development of cinema, and the latter can be divided in three periods according to Dejan Kosanović (1995: 184).

The period of centralised administrative management of cinema (1944-1951) is marked by work on educating film cadres through founding the *Visoka filmska škola* (High School for Film) and *Filmski tehnikum* (Film Technicum). The government took care of financing the production and distribution of films through budgetary subventions. It is necessary to stress that the development of Yugoslav cinema starts in the context of a country destroyed by war with a non-existent pre-war system of film production and distribution, and that it is related to the pioneering work of a small number of film workers with a financial help of the community. Work of the Film Committee of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) and republic committees was mainly focused on the creation of a material and technical base for a continuous film production and education of film cadres. In the first years after the war each of the federal republics obtained one leading film studio: *Avala film* in Belgrade (1946), *Jadran film* in Zagreb (1946), *Triglav film* in Ljubljana (1946), *Bosna film* in Sarajevo (1947), *Vardar film* in Skopje (1947), *Lovćen film* in Budva (1948).

The period of reorganisation and creation of new relations in cinema (1951-1962) matched the introduction of self-management in Yugoslav society as a whole. The period of decentralisation and denationalisation commenced. During that time the Film Committee of the Government of FPRY, republic committees and film commissions were cancelled and production houses became the main carriers of the programme planning and production. Workers' self-management was introduced in the enterprises thus making the workers theoretically the decisive actors in questions of production, theme and content of film. Budgetary financing ceased in 1957 when a new system was introduced: the so called self-financing of the local cinema by contributions from film sales. The producers were expected to work in a more profitable manner so the enterprises were partially financed by the ticket sales. The state still covered a negative difference in production expenditures and remained the main source of financing through contributions. Money was allocated through republic film funds, responsible for financing every film proposed by film enterprises. The Artistic Council of the film enterprise, elected by Workers' Council, proposed an adequate theme that the enterprise should work on that year. First the Workers' Council, then the Artistic Council as well, verified the scenarios that were received in an open call and chose those to be proposed to the Republic Film Board for

financing. Film artists and collaborators were no longer the employees of the enterprise but were tied by a contract to the realisation of a film. About a thousand cineastes changed the status to the one of a freelance artist and they organised in the form of Federation of the Film Workers of Yugoslavia. The number of production enterprises increased and competition rose. New production houses were created: UFUS (1953), *Zagreb film* (1954), *Dunav film* (1955) and *Viba film* (1956). Film making cooperations with partners from abroad were an important source of extra income.

The period of complete decentralisation and creation of republic cinemas in formally common frame (1962-1991) started with cancelation of the State Film Fund, which was replaced by republic funds. Republic borders were not a problem for film artists and collaborators, and the cooperation in the field of film production continued. Uneven distribution of equipment was a consequence of decentralisation and creation of six republic film centres. Some of the film technical bases didn't have complete equipment while the others had extra capacities. The legal regulations in the 1960s broadened the autonomy of film enterprises. The independent film groups, organised around production of a specific film, were granted the right to enter the call for financing, which resulted in tripling the number of independent enterprises. Since the price of the ticket grew, film studios were less and less relying on the funds allocated but rather more and more on the marketing promotion of their films. However, republic film funds were still controlling distribution of films – thus controlling the state of Yugoslav film industry. In 1966, film enterprises were granted the right to directly cooperate with foreign countries, which opened the space for freer coproductions and direct sales of films to foreign distributors. Older enterprises, such as *Avala* and *Jadran* were then just providing infrastructure to independent and foreign filmmakers. The number of cinemagoers constantly decreased since the 1960s and was at just 50% in the 80s. Because of the increasing development of television and less interest of the state in film, the financial position of the producers became more and more difficult. The funds were provided in different ways – from cooperation with enterprises from other republics or abroad, through sponsorships, to cooperation with television at the end of the 70s.

### **Women in socialism**

The post-war period in SFRY (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) marked the beginning of mass and important social, political and economic changes. As antifascism and the partisan movement won, the



changes comprised establishing self-management as a workers system, the urbanisation of rural areas, industrialisation, building socialist society and country that was devastated by war. The changes after World War II influenced the position and the rights of women in the newly organised socialist state. Their participation in the peoples liberation struggle was significant –woman partisans, soldiers, nurses, messengers and resistance fighters<sup>2</sup> contributed to a great extent to the victory over fascism. Data about overall participation of women in the peoples liberation struggle are neither exhaustive nor precise, but estimations are that about 100 000 women took part in peoples liberation army and that from 1 700 000 Yugoslavs who died during World War II, about 620 000 were women. In concentration camps only, there were more than 282 000 woman killed (Ždralović, 2014: 76).

Women won equality with men during the war. In the period of brotherhood and unity, the Article 24 of the first Constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) granted this equality to woman from 1946, when woman formally obtained the right to vote. Even before that constitution, the document "Tasks and organisation of peoples liberation committees" confirmed the active and passive voting rights for women, which they used already in 1941 during the elections for peoples liberation committees. According to the aforementioned article of the FPRY Constitution, several laws important for women were adopted. The position of women and men in marriage had been equalised by the Marriage Law (1946) while rights of the children born in and outside of the marriage were equalised by the stipulations of the Family Law (1947). In the Law on Social Security, the insurance against all risks was introduced, thus regulating paid maternity leave and retirement under the same conditions for both woman and man, even though woman retired at earlier age than men. The right to have an abortion was granted by the 1951 law and the 1974 Constitution granted the full right to give birth freely. Abortion without any limitations up to 10 weeks of the pregnancy was allowed in 1977 (Đokanović, Dračo i Delić, 2014:109). All the international conventions regarding the position of women were woven in the Yugoslav legislation of that time. The system of laws set the basis for all the rights of women on personal, family and political level and granted them more participation in social, political and economic life of the country.

The Women's Antifascist Front (WAF, 1945-1953) was a cultural and educational organisation for improving women's position in the society. As an exclusively female organisation, it was founded on the principle that women are equal with men in all the fields of life and work, WAF

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2 *Ilegalka* in serbo-croatian – A person engaged in illegal political activity, especially as a member or activist of an illegal organization, translator's note.

worked under the governance of the Communist party of Yugoslavia. The first congress of WAF was held in June 1945 in Belgrade and it articulated the main aims of the organisation: mobilising women for humanitarian action and rebuilding of the infrastructure, and literacy and education of the female population. In the period after the war, WAF had an important emancipatory role – from active inclusion of women in social and political life, through supporting women to step out of the formerly established constraints of the patriarchal society, to advocating construction of kindergartens so that they would have a chance to get a job and become financially independent. Former partisans were role models for the emancipation of other women, especially those from rural areas, so they occupied most of the important positions in WAF. The Women Antifascist Front was dissolved after the Forth Congress, held in 1953. The Federation of Women Associations is created thus replacing WAF, while emphasising that the equality of women represents a common social question of the general struggle of all the forces of socialist education of the masses and that women do not need to act in separate political organisations. Under the pressures, the Federation grows into the Conference for Women Social Action from 1959 to 1961. Those actions made political organising impossible for a large number of women.

Statistical data about the participation of socialist woman in politics and social life show a contradiction between theory and practice. Equality of women, which was part of socialist ideology and was advocated through inciting women-workers to partake in governing the enterprises and the state, in practice collided with the resistance of traditional prejudices and patriarchal relations. The new socialist order nominally equalised the salaries of men workers with those of women workers, however it still supported the division of professions to so-called male and female. Two problems of the working practice of a socialist woman were recognised: women were concentrated around certain professions and very few were at the governing positions. They were the majority workers in social services, medicine, hotels, tourism, garment industry and primary education, while they were present in very small number among journalists, professors and judges.

Statistical data are proof of the dominant influence of the gender prejudices that were reproduced in the domain of culture, art and science in the same way as in other professions. Socialist strategy of emancipatory and educational politics was reflected in the fact that both woman and men were allowed to study what they were interested in, but in representations and structural context, women were ideologically as well as in numbers excluded from the world of film directors, screenplay writers, producers because these jobs were considered male. Establishing the *Vi-*

*soka filmska škola* (Film college) in Belgrade (1946-1950) as a beginning of institutional higher education of film cadres in the newly formed socialist state, was going to be marked by four generations of students of acting (total of 63 students of which 33 were women) and film directing (total of 58 students of which only 3 were women). As the professions of teachers, medical nurses and doctors are considered more humane and caring, and therefore more suitable for a woman, so the professions of film editor is understood as adequate for a women, by analogy with sewing and sedentary (passive) activities which "by nature" are not suitable for a men. Soja Jovanović would be the first and the most famous, if not even the only female film director in after-war Yugoslavia who mostly did film adaptations of literature. The systems of quotas, which were used as a presumption of a starting inequality in other socialist countries would result in film education and an important production of female film directors such as Márta Mészáros (Hungary), Věra Chytilová (Czechoslovakia), Larisa Shepitko and Kira Muratova (USSR), Agnieszka Holland (Poland) and many of those less famous who formed the documentary film expressions of those national cinemas by their educational films and films made for certain purposes, contributing at the same time to articulation and representation of socialist societies, their every-day life but also position of women-workers.

In SFRY, women unambiguously reached a level of emancipation and equality higher than ever before. By their struggle, devotion and self-sacrifice they won socialism and the rights that the law granted them after the World War II. Their struggle and socialist postulates led to public and political advocacy for equality of women and men, but at the same time, that pushed aside the problems that the practice pointed out as well as the efforts of a consistent application of the socialist theory. The science was staying behind life.

Marxist theory about classless society did not consider the battle of the sexes as a class question, nor did the gender question, as a particular one, could have replaced general class struggle. Female question as the question of the non-equality of women was reduced to the general class question: general emancipation of the working class means the emancipation of an individual – human, men and women. Reducing the female question to the class question in the everyday experience of women with their real non-equality was disabling them in becoming aware of their own being. The experience showed that the patriarchal (authoritarian) family with patriarchal moral and division of labour to private - public was the presumption of the overall production of life and socialist society, and that the emancipation of women was below the level of the class to which the woman belongs. The difference between men and women was

solved normatively, by the law that grants equality of women in political sphere and by economic equality, which grants woman equal salary and possibilities of employment. The care of the working class for its own reproduction, articulated as a care of the workingwoman and mother for the family, actually demonstrates the traditional patriarchal labour division in the family – to private and public life. Being an employed woman, a worker in public life, a woman does the same work as men, but in the private sphere she remains woman, biological creature and mother, with the chores and tasks that are adequate to “woman’s nature”.

### **Female question and position of women in Yugoslav film**

The analysis of the representation of woman and female question in Yugoslav films that treated contemporaneity in the first two phases of the self-managing socialism<sup>3</sup>, would presuppose a feminist aesthetics as a default methodological starting point of such an endeavour. Film was the most represented symbolic form of the production of social imaginary in the XX century and was characterised by specificity of representation, which is where the reasons for an all-encompassing interest of feminism in film reside. Feminist scholarship on film developed from an analysis of positive and negative image of women on film, through the analysis of women’s film practice, to thinking of film as a social symbolic practice that

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<sup>3</sup> This essay is written as a modified and edited text of the research conducted during work on the project “Yugoslav socialism on film” realised during 2017 in the organisation of Transimage Platform for Politics of Moving Images, Yugoslav Film Archive and Rosa Luxembourg Foundation. The research and educational project “Yugoslav socialism on film” was dedicated to a new viewing of Yugoslav movies that, by their approach to social reality of the first two phases of Yugoslav self-managing socialism, appear as a method of a new observation of that diversified reality. By observing film as one of the ideological systems and social-symbolic practices that are based on governing ideology and produces it, the project research was limited to the first two phases of self-managing socialism, or the period between 1947 and 1974. The reason for this narrowing down is in the fact that Yugoslav, as well as the global social processes, after 1974 made social context additionally more complex and this conditioned and structured works of art. Also, relations of production in cinema had become more complex. Due to all of these circumstances, the ideology of self-managing socialism, which this project tried to detect and articulate through analysis of the history of Yugoslav film, was fragmented after first two phases and became hard to spot. See more: Jugoslovenski socijalizam na filmu, 2017.

is based on sex/gender difference but also produces it. Feminist theory of film is interested in the question of the female character on the film as well as women in the audience. Semiological, psychoanalytical, and ideological thinking and analysis have influenced ways of considering artistic works including film. In the scope of the notions of presentation, identification, desire and story, the feminist theory is trying to constitute itself and to find the basic mechanisms of how the patriarchal system in the field of film art functions. Feminist film aesthetics is elaborated in a most vocal way in Lora Malvi's theory about representation of woman as a visual spectacle<sup>4</sup>, or of a woman as an image and man as a carrier of the gaze.

Political articulation of a particular female interest in different forms of feminism negated the female question as a class one and by that it went out of the possibility of theoretical basis within Marxism. The undeveloped material basis of Yugoslav cinema, a beginner's conquest of the film profession as well as the socialist ideology, does not allow for an easy application of feminist aesthetics to the analysis of the female question and position that women had in Yugoslav film. On the other hand, the analysis of the production relations, technical data, and content of the films actually unveils the dominance of the male authorship and absence of representation of a woman as subject of the narrative or the one who produces the discourse.

Constructed by male authors, and reduced to traditional dichotomy virgin/saint, moral/immoral, prude/seductress, female characters in Yugoslav films were most often placed at the position of an object of love or hate (Đokanović, Dračo i Delić, 2014: 155). Women on the screens of Yugoslav cinema are always subordinated to someone or something and have the status of a lower being. Numerous films are critical towards heritage of patriarchal model in the socialist society, showing that woman is still private property of men – fathers and brothers (*Jezero* (Lake, 1950), *Zenica* (Zenica, 1957), *Vlak bez voznog reda* (Train Without a Timetable, 1959)), which they exchange freely like a currency (*Buđenje pacova* (The Rats Woke Up, 1967), *Vreme ljubavi/Put* (The Time of Love/Trip, 1966), *Naivko* (Naive guy, 1975)). When they speak about woman, Yugoslav film authors are eager to point out that the evil hides underneath her beautiful, often innocent look (Krelja, 1979: 410). The dichotomy of representation of women in Yugoslav cinema is based on limited spectre of female types – they are mothers, wives, sisters or prostitutes, bar singers, and “free” girls. While the presentation of the former is usually tied to the

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 4 Lora Malvi (1997:44-56) denounced modus of cinematic perception as a conventional regime that produced specifically male politics of desire. Malvi thinks that film, foremost Hollywood film, in its narrative structure produces the desire of the viewer and visual pleasure in watching an image of a woman. In that way, woman's body was objectified (scopophilia) and in that way the patriarchal order was reproduced.

private sphere in which she is housewife-mother<sup>5</sup>, the presentation of the latter is followed by sadistic voyeurism, fetishization and the degradation of sexualised female bodies. The body of such a woman is humiliated<sup>6</sup>, beaten<sup>7</sup>, dead<sup>8</sup>, and rape is one of the most frequent motives in Yugoslav film at the end of the sixties<sup>9</sup>. Rare and, on the level of film structure, minimal intervention in this construction of the ideological status of woman in Yugoslav cinema certainly represents resistance and confrontation, which often is conducted in the form of a slap or common women's solidarity by female characters as a sort of symbolic revenge and satisfying dramatic justice<sup>10</sup>.

Most of the female characters in Yugoslav films do not talk about the everyday experiences of women in public or private space, nor do the films project realistic images of women. A rare example is the film *Živa istina* (Whole Truth, *Filmski Autorski Studio* (FAS), 1972) by Tomislav Radić, in which we follow the everyday life of an actress who is looking for a job without success. A positive example of the representation of a woman in her responsible social function certainly is *Službeni položaj* (Official Position), by Fadil Hadžić (*Avala film*, 1964), in which Marija (Olivera Marković), as a member of the managing board is the first to notice irregularities in the way in which the enterprise conducts business. The image of worker-shock worker<sup>11</sup>-miner is impersonated in the char-

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 5 *Zenica, Vreme ljubavi/Kavez* (The Time of Love/Cage, 1959), *Tri Ane* (Three Girls Named Anna, 1959), *Službeni položaj* (Official Position, 1964), *Druga strana medalje* (Back of the Medal, 1965), *Tople godine* (Hot Years, 1966), *Palma među palmama* (Palm Amongst Palms, 1967), *Kad budem mrtav i beo* (When I am Dead and Gone, 1967).

6 *Tajna dvorca I.B.* (Secret of IB Castle, 1951), *Kako su se voleli Romeo i Julija* (How Romeo and Juliet Loved Each Other, 1966), *Skupljači perja* (I Even Met Happy Gypsies, 1967), *Opklada* (The Bet, 1971), *I bog stvorio kafansku pevačicu* (And God created a pub singer, 1972).

7 *Vlak bez voznog reda* (Train Without a Timetable), *Kad budem mrtav i beo*, (When I am Dead and Gone), *Žuta* (Yellow One, 1973), *Košava* (The Wind, 1974).

8 *Štićenik* (The Climber, 1966), *Skupljači perja* (I Even Met Happy Gypsies), *Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice PTT* (Love Affair, or The Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator, 1967), *Rani radovi* (Early Works, 1969), *W.R. Misterije organizma* (W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism, 1971), *Tragovi crne devojke* (Traces of a Black Haired Girl, 1972), *Slike iz života udarnika* (Life of a Shock Force Worker, 1972), *Let mrtve ptice* (The Flight of Dead Bird, 1973).

9 *Ubistvo na svirep i podmukao način iz niskih pobuda* (Murder Committed in a Sly and Cruel Manner and from Low Motives, 1969), *Horoskop* (Horoscope, 1969), *Rani radovi* (Early Works, 1969), *Siroma sam al sam besan* (I'm Poor But Angry, 1970), *Tragovi crne devojke* (Traces of a Black Haired Girl, 1972), *Let mrtve ptice* (The Flight of Dead Bird, 1973).

10 *Uzavreli grad* (Boom Town, 1961), *Čudna devojka* (Strange Girl, 1962), *Drug predsednik centarfor* (Comrade President Center-Forward, 1960), *Biće skoro propast sveta* (It Rains in My Village, 1968), *Sirota Marija* (Poor Maria, 1968), *Opklada* (The Bet), *Moja luda glava* (My Crazy Head, 1971), *W.R. Misterije organizma* (W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism), *Žuta* (Yellow One), *Košava* (The Wind).

11 Highly productive worker, term used in communist countries, translator's note.

acter of Stevka (*Slike iz života udarnika* (Life of a Shock Force Worker, 1972)), who is doing the same job men do, and deconstructs the thesis that “woman’s nature” as biological being and mother, disables woman’s self-actualization in public life.

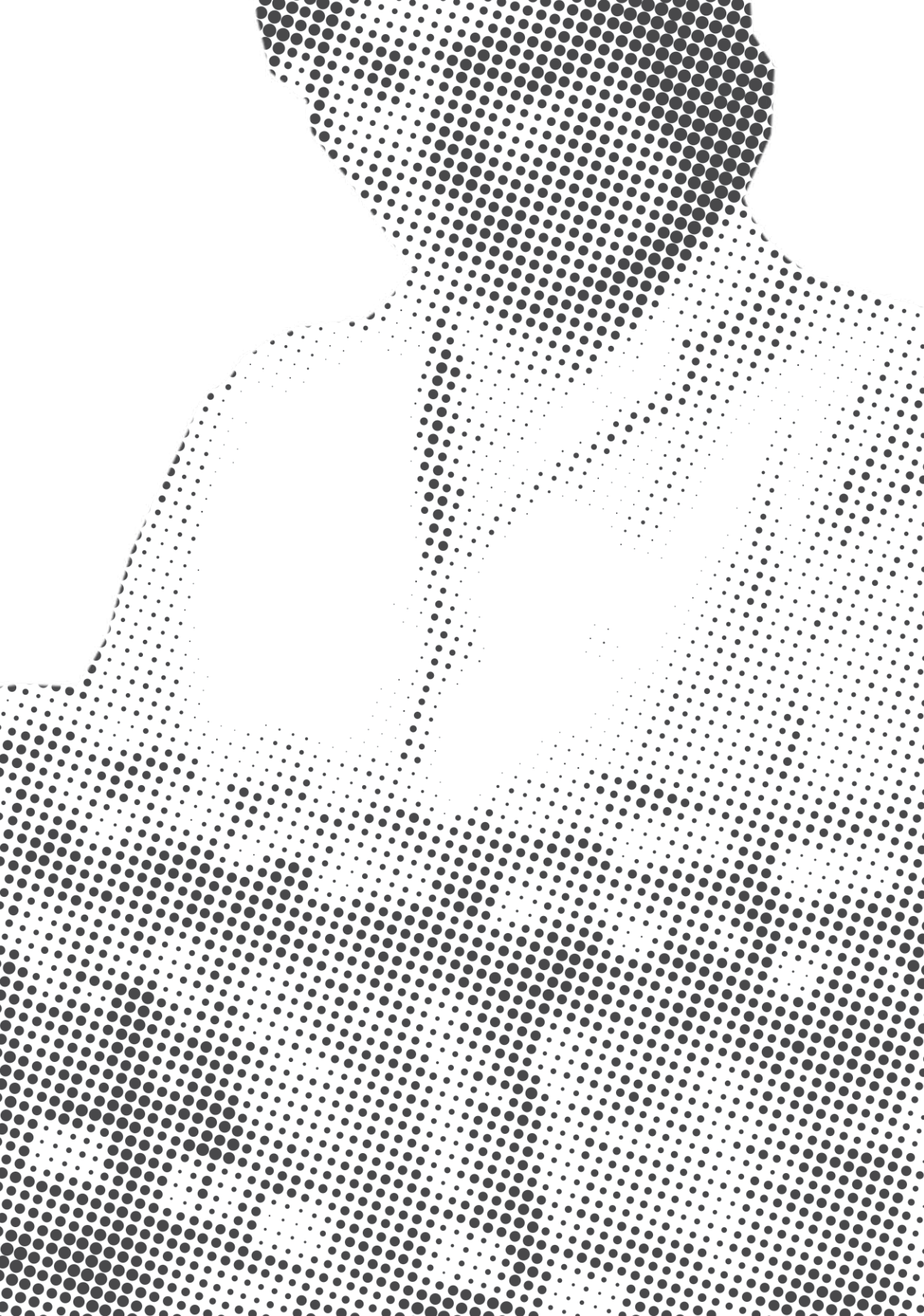
Several Yugoslav films have as their theme the development of the main female character, which is at the same time the protagonist and has an empowering and emancipatory role. In *Zemljaci* (Countrymen, *Avala film*, 1963) by Zdravko Randić, a young girl, Jana, comes to Banat with a group of peasants, seasonal workers from Bosnia. The change of the cultural milieu will influence her transformation – she falls in love with Nikola and by rejecting the tradition and customs of the region she is coming from, she leaves her fiancée. Representation of the beginnings of women’s emancipation, which was reflected in rejecting traditional prejudices and customs, as well as in active participation in the construction of the new society, would be projected in the character of Malena (*Prekobrajna* (The Overnumbered One, 1962)) and the character of peasant Mara (*Jezero* (Lake, 1950)). Both characters also emancipate through education, which the new socialist society provided to women so that they could as soon as possible obtain economic independence. The symbolic act of taking off the headscarf and veil will be those visual presentations of those women’s break up with the traditional patriarchal system (*Prekobrajna* (The Overnumbered One), *Zemljaci* (Countrymen), *Slike iz života udarnika* (Life of a Shock Force Worker)). In Jovan Živanović’s film *Čudna devojka* (Strange girl, *Avala film*, 1962) Minja’s newly achieved independence resides on that economic presumption, thanks to which the woman takes over the traditionally male role of the one who feeds and starts to provide, for the man she loves. That narrative seems to be repeated and further developed in Krešimir Golik’s film *Živjeti od ljubavi* (To Live on Love, *Croatia Film*, 1973), in which the main female protagonist leaves for a village looking for a job so that she can enable her husband to finish his studies.

Love is the motor of the transformation of female character in all three films, in which the traditional model of a woman who sacrifices everything for love is repeated. The narrative scheme represents the path of the female characters that takes them to transformation and rejection of traditional prejudices. The key moment of change, the beginning of emancipation is also the end of each of those three films. Active emancipation of female characters, supported by social system and socialist ideology, partially transforms other characters. Films that would show life, day and character of these women and in this way emancipated woman we have never gotten.

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From Miloš Zvicer's photography collection

RADE PANTIĆ

# From Culture during “Socialism” to Socialist Culture

Debates over the culture and art of the Socialist Yugoslavia mostly take place within a problematic which opposes “politically directed” art to free artistic “creativity”. Such debate is condemned to cognitive failure in advance, given that it doesn’t examine the questions on which it rests, thus remaining in the embrace of an ideology – unaware of it – and which overdetermines it by ensuring the conditions of its own reproduction. Namely, the domination of an ideology is based on its monopoly over the questions which it asks, not over the answers which it provides. Having established this monopoly over the problematic, ideology gives the actors a certain freedom in taking positions (and in changing them), but the number of positions remains limited by the ideological problematic itself, while possibilities for resolving the debate also remain limited. Successful ideology catches actors within a certain contradiction produced by the imposition of questions, from which actors try to find a way out. But, caught in the grips of a contradiction, they can only move around within the imposed parameters.<sup>1</sup>

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**1** According to Rastko Močnik, contradictory institutional demands imposed on individuals paradoxically generate social cohesion as an effect: “that which seems like ‘short-circuiting’ in a certain institution, and which is manifest as a contradictory institutional demand from the individual’s point of view - is actually a mechanism through which the institution binds together individuals who ‘belong’ to it”. The ultimate effect of this ideological contradiction is the “free” yielding of arbitration to a third party, to an authority whose ability is reflected in the power to “abolish the effects of institutional contradictions, without removing their structural causes”, in which the condition of rule

The theoretical analysis takes into account what is “external” to a given problematic, what overdetermines it and what dictates the conditions of the debate itself. We can say that a debate confined within the problematic of political art versus autonomous creativity is theoretically unproductive, given that this remained an unresolved question in Yugoslavia from the famous pre-war “conflict on the left” onwards. However, the duration of this theoretically sterile debate itself points to its “productiveness” somewhere else, outside of that problematic and what the actors in the debate perceives as common sense. The answer to this question, the question of questions,<sup>2</sup> may be searched for in the function which this debate has in the reproduction of social formations and social relations within them. We make the assumption that a theoretically unproductive debate of long duration illustrates its “productiveness” on the level of the reproduction of certain social relations, and therefore in certain relations of domination. In Marxist terms, we will look for the necessity of existence of this problematic as an “objective form of thought.”<sup>3</sup>

In our analysis, we will begin with the question of what a socialist mode of production is, and what kind of specific development it underwent in Yugoslavia during the fifties and sixties of the previous century. We will then describe the basic course of class struggle in this period and attempt to determine the ways in which the cultural elite participated in these struggles. By determining this “external” of the political art versus autonomous art debate, we hope to generate an answer as regards the function of this problematic in the reproduction of certain class relations, on which the cultural sphere was based in Yugoslavia.

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is precisely reflected. (Močnik, 2003: 147-150). In order to analyze the way in which the ideological alternatives of “freedom or security” reproduce the dominance of modern liberal ideology, see: Močnik, 2016: 62-81.

2 If the meaning of an ideology’s answers is to be understood at this internal level it must first be asked *the question of its questions*. But this problematic is itself an answer, no longer to its own internal questions – problems – but to *the objective problems posed for ideology by its time*”, argues Louis Althusser (1969).

3 The formulation of ideology as an “objective form of thought” stems from Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism and converted forms. According to Marx, asking the question of what the content of fetishized commodity relations is, does not suffice. It is also necessary to ask why it is a requirement that the content takes on that social form: “Political economy has indeed analysed value and its magnitude, [...], and has uncovered the content concealed within these forms. But it has never once asked the question why this content has assumed that particular form, that is to say, why labour is expressed in value, and why the measurement of labour by its duration is expressed in the magnitude of the value of the product” (Marx, 1992: 173-174).

## Class Struggles in the “Post-capitalist” Yugoslavia

Most debates over socialist culture in Yugoslavia did not theorize the specifics of the socialist mode of production, assuming that socialism already existed, and that the basic question was rather what kind of culture would be adequate for this mode of production. We will discuss the problem of the socialist mode of production following Catherine Samary’s (Samary, 1988) approach. First, she calls into question the socialism of societies named as “real existing socialism”. What Lenin, Trotsky, Preobraženski and other Soviet Marxist theorists of the 1920s evidently saw was that the Soviet Union was not yet a socialist country and that socialism had to be built by passing through a transition phase.<sup>4</sup> Building socialism therefore remains an open question in all these societies, a process whose flow and organization are not fixed in advanced, and whose outcome is uncertain. This is why Samary dismisses the socialist attribute of these societies and names them “post-capitalist” societies, i.e. societies which are neither capitalist nor socialist, but rather hybrid formations requiring their own separate analysis.

Samary further dismisses the dominant paradigm in the analysis of socialist modes of production which arises from the creation of an opposition between central planning and the market. According to this ideological problematic, it is the existence of the market which determines the capitalist mode of production, while the presence of a central plan is interpreted as a specificity of a socialist mode of production. In his elaboration of Samary’s ideas, Marko Kržan emphasizes that this problematic is false (Kržan, 2017: 213–242). Namely, central planning also existed in those societies with a so-called Asian mode of production – monarchies with a developed administrative apparatus, as in Ancient Egypt, Mycenaean Greece, India and China. Here the “state sector” determined the social division of labour in a planned fashion, and accordingly redistributed the surplus of products produced by the peasant class. The existence of the central planning of the economy in these societies does not in any way point to their being socialist societies, given that the effect of planning here was the reproduction of the class domination of the unproductive state-religious apparatus over the productive class of peasants – farmers and craftsmen. Likewise, the existence of a market does not automatically indicate a capitalist mode of production. Markets existed before the emergence of capitalism in the majority of historical social formations, in the form of petty commodity production, but this mode of production was not dominant in any given social formation. The

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<sup>4</sup> Only in the late 1930s did Stalin officially declare the Soviet Union to be a country in which socialism had been built.

dominant mode of production is the one that succeeds in subordinating other modes of production to the logic which suits its reproduction, i.e. the dominant mode of production determines the general conditions of production in the entire social formation, and therefore, for all modes of production which exist within the given social formation. It does so by determining the allocation and the use of factors of production, in such a way as to suit its own logic of functioning.<sup>5</sup>

The condition for the emergence of capitalist commodity production is the existence of a market in factors of production (land – sources of natural assets, labour and capital), besides markets of goods. Only when factors of production become “fictitious commodities” is a market relationship between production units and factors of production founded, and the market becomes the general regulator of the entire economy (cf. Polanyi, 2001: 71–80). The condition for the emergence of a capitalist mode of production, generalized commodity production, is the conversion of feudal lords into rentier property owners, and serfs into a hired working class, a class deprived of access to the means of production and the means of subsistence. The emergence of a class of producing capitalists who were able to launch the production process by renting land and by buying labour power on the markets is also crucial. The conditions for the accumulation of capital and for the systematic investment of money in capitalist commodity production (the conversion of money into capital) were therein fulfilled, and the capital market was also created. Factors of production in the capitalist mode of production gain a class character, yet the exploitation of the working class remains hidden behind an ideology of “natural” returns from ownership of the factor of production.

Therefore, the debate over “markets or planned economies” argues over a false problem. The existence of a market in goods, and of production units that compete on the market, does not automatically mean that we are dealing with the capitalist mode of production here. Only with the market means of connecting production units and factors of production, do we get the conditions for the emergence of the capitalist mode of production, in which human work is treated like a factor of production, i.e. as a production cost, and investment policy is subordinated to the capital market, i.e. it searches for the greatest profitability possible. On the other hand, a planned economy can be used for socialist purposes,

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5 E.g. commodity production also existed in the feudal social formation, a formation dominated by the feudal mode of production. But within this formation it was a subordinated mode of production, given that the feudal lords had control over the land and the labour power connected with it. The feudal mode of production, through its own organisations’ use of factors of production, determined the conditions of reproduction of the entire social formation that maintained the dominance of the feudal mode of production and the feudal class, and subordinated the remaining classes and production modes.

but it can also serve to reproduce class domination and to block the development of socialist social relations. Therefore, Samary concludes that “post-capitalist” societies can develop in a socialist direction – but that this development can be blocked by bureaucratization, and a regression to capitalism can also occur.

These three outcomes correspond to the typology of post-capitalist societies that Samary takes from the Polish economist Włodzimierz Brus (Brus, 1975):

1. Bureaucratic-centralized planning
2. The use of market mechanisms by the plan
3. “Market Socialism”

What characterizes the Yugoslav “post-capitalist” society is that during the period from 1945 to 1972, all three models were present. The first model of bureaucratic central planning was introduced in Yugoslavia after the end of the Second World War, on the Soviet model. It destroyed the capitalist law of value and competition by introducing the planned regulation of the economy. The central plan regulated both the relations between production units and the relations between the production units and factors of production. The planned regulation of the economy should have created a rational system of production which would have abolished the irrationality of the capitalist economy and the exploitation of work, but it produced its own specific irrationality and alienated the management of the economy from the working class. Namely, the main problem with this model stemmed from the impossibility of Soviet planners to prescribe a just system of proportions of the economy, since the company directors hid precise information so that the norms would not be increased, and so the problem of “bottlenecks” and delays in the production of certain goods was permanent. The planned production norms resulted in a neglect of product quality, and an incredible amount of non-functional goods and waste was produced. The working class was satisfied with the compromise of secure employment, the ability to change jobs, reduced exploitation and reduced demands for increased productivity. They retreated in resignation and left the managing to the bureaucracy.<sup>6</sup> The exclusive actor responsible for planning became the bureaucracy, and the purpose of this system was the reproduction of the bureaucracy as a privileged social group.<sup>7</sup>

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 6 On the contradictions of the Soviet planned economy, see: H.H. Ticktin, 1973: 20-41.

7 These privileges are primarily reflected in the availability of consumer privileges such as the regular supply of quality and rare goods, the use of official vehicles and holiday homes, travel, etc. According to Ernest Mandel, the bureaucracy in this system does not represent the standard ruling class, given that the mode of its reproduction (the private

A model combining a market economy and central planning, but with planning dominating, was introduced in Yugoslavia in 1951 in the form of workers' self-management, following the political break with the Soviet Union. Workers' self-management had the goal of replacing the bureaucracy as the agent responsible for planning, through the gradual transfer of regulatory powers over the economy to workers' collectives. The main designer of this programme, Boris Kidrič, conceived this model as being a combination of the direct management of enterprises by workers' collectives, and central state planning. Market relations thus developed in the sphere of the production of goods, and enterprises were encouraged to decide for themselves what and how they will produce. The central plan looked after the functioning of the economy as a whole, including the satisfying of general social needs, harmonized proportions, investment policy, the even development of regions etc. In this way, the market economy was controlled and coordinated by the state plan, which protected the whole economy from the anarchy of the free market. The introduction of a market in goods and competition remedied the deficiencies of the Soviet system of bureaucratized central planning: self-management encouraged workers to raise their labour productivity, and the market performance of the enterprises gave information (planning indications) to the planners on the ways in which they might coordinate production on the level of the economy generally.

Kidrič's model thus introduces a market in goods, but the organization and way in which factors of production are used remains regulated by planning, and so this system, according to Catherine Samary's criteria, cannot be called capitalist. In addition, the motivation for producing here is not to gain profit as in capitalism, but to gain income (Lipovec, 1979: 265-279). Kidrič's system is rather based on the so-called rate of accumulation and social funds. The entire national product (D), the newly produced value, was divided into a portion retained in production units (the consumer fund) (P), whose distribution was decided upon by the workers' collectives, and a portion which went into the Federal Investment Fund (the accumulation fund and social funds) (Af), for investment needs and collective consumption:  $D = P + Af$ . The rate of accumulation and social funds is determined as follows:  $x = Af / P$ , and the plan sets this rate separately for each enterprise. Kidrič based this rate on Marx's rate of surplus value, which is valid for the capitalist mode of production, and which is obtained when the surplus value is divided by the value of vari-

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 interest of the bureaucracy) does not suit the immanent logic of the planned mode of production (Mandel, 1974: 5-21). When we use the phrase "ruling class" below in the context of "post-capitalist" societies, Mandel's remark should be taken into account.



able capital, the value with which workers' wages are paid (Kidrič, 1979: 166-197). The key difference between the rate of accumulation, funds, and the rate of surplus value is that with the first, the rate of that portion which goes to the state and to a fund (the workers' cost) is fixed, while with the second, the sum of the workers' income is fixed (the capitalist's cost). When a capitalist strives to increase the productivity of his or her capital and therein, his or her competitiveness, (s)he reduces the share of variable capital in relation to constant capital, to bring about the relative surplus value. The increase in labour productivity here is to the detriment of the workers themselves, since the capitalist treats the labour power as a production cost that (s)he strives to reduce. In Kidrič's economic model, many things function differently. Since the rate of that part of the value which has been alienated from the worker is fixed, increasing the labour productivity has the consequence of increasing the worker's income. The selfishness of the income-based motivation, and the tendency of workers to increase their own income to the detriment of investments, however, is channelled by the existence of a central plan and its investment funds, which prevent a reduction in the rate of accumulation, and the over-indebtedness of the company, and they take care of overall social well-being. The catastrophic consequences of the non-existence of central planning were best seen after the abolition of the Federal Investment Fund in 1963, i.e. after the introduction of market reforms two years later, when a new model emerged – market socialism.

Replacing the combined model ought not to have been demanded on the grounds of its economic inefficiency – since it was extremely successful in this field – but rather in the consequences of the class struggles it generated. Namely, market relations strengthened the technocratic class, a grouping made up of non-productive workers, such as directors, managers, work supervisors, the marketing sector etc. In this period, this class became relatively independent and particularly strong in the enterprises of the western Yugoslav republics, which had export potential. Furthermore, this class entered coalitions with the middle layers of the party bureaucracy, with their regional jurisdictions. The technocratic class looked at the problems of the Yugoslav economy through the narrow lens of the interests of their own enterprise and advocated for the abolition of the portion of value which went to the central planning authorities, for a generalization of market relations and for the political decentralization of the state. The response by a section of the political bureaucratic class to the rise of the technocratic class was a strengthening of state centralization, and of administrative institutions. The working class failed to make use of this conflict between two fractions of the ruling class to further strengthen their power. They stood on the side of the technocratic class,

viewing the planning regulations as a parasite eating its way through a portion of their income (Kržan, 2017: 239–240).

The consequences of this choice were catastrophic for the further development of the socialist project. The abolition of investment funds led to the renewal of a decentralized and autonomous banking system and a capital market. Banks were then motivated by profit when granting loans to enterprises. Financial capital became independent, yielding the highest rates of profit in this period, and so a large part of the enterprises' income was spent on paying off the interest on their loans. Decisions on accumulation and investments were now made on the credit capital market, which took on the role of coordinating the entire economy. The focus on export-related economic policies led to the deregulation of product prices to adapt them to global prices, the devaluation of the dinar and the import of foreign technology. Establishing the capital market and entering the arena of global competition and the global division of labour, however, was not followed by the introduction of a labour market. Without this, it was not possible to raise the competitiveness of enterprises on the world stage. Namely, increasing the technical capacity of the enterprise while guaranteeing a level of employment makes it impossible to reduce production costs and increase competitiveness. The development of capitalist relations of production was hampered by the logic of self-management, which did not view labour as a production cost. The workers moved from being in a "strong" position during the fifties, to being in a defensive position. However, self-management continued to offer powerful protection against mass layoffs, excessive exploitation and the closing of enterprises which were market failures. Without a labour market, the system was both economically and politically on the verge of collapse. A stop was put to the capitalist counterrevolution of the technocratic class, through political actions in the early seventies.

The introduction of the market regulation of relations between production units and factors of production in this period led to the undoing of all positive effects which the previous model had achieved: the rate of growth of social products was reduced, inflation grew – as did the external debt, social and regional inequalities increased, class stratification was ever increasing, a growth in unemployment and a fall in the participation of the working class in party and self-management institutions occurred, where the leading of enterprises was delegated to the technocratic class.

Samary concludes that the alternative plan or the market is a false alternative. Through the example of Yugoslavia, we can see what opportunities were missed in the development of socialist social relations. The working class was able to use this historical moment to seek the expan-

sion of self-management “upwards”, from the self-management of production units to the overseeing of central planning and the gradual taking over of planning from the hands of the bureaucracy. The problem therefore, is not a question of market or plan, but of the democratization of society through which the working class acquires the competence and power to decide on the regulation of production in its entirety, and on the reproduction of society. Instead of an alternative to a plan-market, Samary suggests the problematics of economic democracy, and an expansion of self-management to all social spheres.

The problematics of the plan-market, however, should not be viewed as a simple epistemological error in investigating “post-capitalist” modes of production. The goal of establishing the domination of this problematics, of this way of viewing the problem, was precisely to exclude a third option – political and economic democratization in the service of building socialist social relations. The polemic over planning versus the market took place between the party bureaucracy and the technocratic class. As fractions of the ruling class, the polemic was over in whose name they could supposedly better represent the accomplishments of workers’ self-management. During the early sixties, the technocratic class and economists advocating market reforms argued that only the market could save self-management, and through their advocating for the depoliticization of the economy and the decentralization of the federation, they achieved ideological hegemony. The Party bureaucracy succeeded in reining in the technocratic class at the beginning of the 1970s, but its strength had not been broken, and a compromise model was created that oscillated between alternately anti-bureaucratic and anti-technocratic (“anti-anarcholiberal”) public attacks. This shifting of weight between the plan and the market, and between centralization and decentralization, in fact kept an uncomfortable coalition between two fractions of the ruling class in power. The third option, that of socialist democratization in the interest of the working class, was in this way curbed, since it implied the abolition of the class hegemony of the ruling coalition and its privileges.

### **The Cultural Sphere in “Post-capitalist” Yugoslavia**

We have outlined above the contours of class struggles in the “post-capitalist” Yugoslavia. The question we will now ask is that of the role of the cultural sphere and its actors in these processes. As we mentioned in the introduction, the debate connected with socialist culture was based on the pre-war “conflict on the literary left.” At the centre of the debate lay a conflict between the ideas of the autonomy of culture and art, and those who advocated politically tendentious art. The advocates

of social art and, later, socialist realism critiqued the “art for art’s sake” postulate of the bourgeois autonomy of art, and its alleged “disinterest” in questions of ideology and politics, demanding the unreserved participation of artists in the class struggle led by the communist party. The response of a subsection of intellectuals with leftist inclinations, with Miroslav Krleža at their head, was a certain “middle-ground” position – neither aestheticism nor direct political art, but rather the overcoming and a synthesis of these two positions in what Krleža calls authentic aesthetic socialist engagement – political engagement through the autonomous artistic sphere.

The front of socialist realism briefly triumphed after the Second World War and the Revolution, but after the break with Stalin, it was heavily criticized and replaced with Krleža’s contradictory formulation of the unity of the autonomy of art and political engagement. Krleža’s speech at the Third Congress of the Yugoslav Writers’ Association in Ljubljana in 1952 is usually interpreted as a turning point in the cultural politics of Yugoslavia, as a signal of a definite break with socialist realism, and (signal) of introducing processes of autonomisation of art from politics. It therefore deserves to be studied in detail. Krleža’s speech, via a debate with the apologetic attitudes of Louis Aragon, attacked socialist realism as a product of Stalinist ideology. He cast it in the standard repertoire of that time, with accusations of dogmatism, dictatorship, suppressing the freedom of individual artistic expression etc., yet also adding the accusation that this artistic direction has been historically overcome, and that its affirmation is “anti-dialectic”. As far as *l’art pour l’art* is concerned, Krleža’s position is ambivalent. On the one hand, at the beginning of the speech, he criticizes it for being “removed from reality”, and a “decadent” neutral position in relation to political and economic problems, closed in its focus on aesthetic-formal problems. On the other hand, later in the speech, he distinguishes what characterizes its emancipatory character. Namely, *l’art pour l’art* – according to Krleža – breaks with academic art, which in his opinion directly served the interests of the Church, the capitalist class and imperialism, and by closing itself off in its focus on the problem of artistic autonomy, it becomes resistant to the demands of propaganda. Its alleged “lack of ideas” was a characteristic attributed to it by the reactionary class, since it was unable to be used for capitalist propaganda, and the apologists of socialist realism took on board this characterization from them. Since, according to Krleža, socialist realism has links with reactionary academic art, aestheticism is a historically more progressive artistic movement than socialist realism. Aestheticism introduces an atheistic and pacifist dimension into art, and frees the palette, light and art forms from serving a bourgeois civic ideology. Krleža thus

legitimizes aestheticism, arguing that it is sharply against the bourgeoisie and against Stalinism.

Krleža's vaguely defined formula for socialist art remains based on artistic (and the artist's) autonomy, and the social "content," must be filtered through the specific and creative individuality of the artistic producer. The criterion of socialist art must therefore remain the aesthetic quality of the artwork, and the "real engagement" must find the appropriate, original artistic expression. Krleža thus retained aesthetic autonomy, with an emphasis on the artistic as a reflection of the authentic experience of specially talented individuals, on to which he grafted a vaguely defined demand for social engagement, without which artistic works with a high aesthetic value supposedly cannot be created.

This social engagement, however, in Krleža (1952: 238–239) loses its class character.<sup>8</sup> Instead of the imperative of class issues, Krleža places a primary emphasis on assertions of the national Yugoslav character of art, and the problem of the recognition of authentic Yugoslav culture by Europe, and therein the cultural legitimization of the Yugoslav "third way". The problem of the emancipation of the working class and the building of socialist culture is replaced with the problem of the original cultural contribution the Yugoslav peoples can make to the development of a universal European culture. This Yugoslav sphere of culture gets into the post-war Euro-American modernization narrative and politics of recognition.

"Our socialist literature has to defend the Yugoslav socialist status quo, because in so doing it defends our socialist, and logically, in the same way, our national and cultural survival as well. Our socialist literature should, as artistic propaganda before foreign publics (which have no notion of our literature and of our art), show through a series of works, that we have always, for as long as we have existed, fought for the freedom of artistic creation, for the simultaneity of styles, and for the principle of the free expression of opinions, along the lines of our independent moral and political convictions."

Stanko Lasić (1970: 56), a chronicler of the conflict on the left, concludes that Krleža's "synthesis of art and revolution remains undefined, abstract, and subjective, thus allowing a wide space for manoeuvre within a synthesis." However, according to Lasić (1970: 282), this manoeuvring is determined by the following contradiction that cannot be erased: "art must serve the revolution because the revolution is its ulti-

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<sup>8</sup> The assumption of Krleža's programme is that society and art develop in parallel. Since Yugoslavia carried out a socialist revolution and did away with Stalinist dogmatism, the progress made in the socio-economic order had to find its adequate artistic expression in the realm of cultural creativity. Art does not have to directly serve the class struggle, but build a new national consciousness on the basis of what is finest, within its cultural tradition. Krleža later continued this project by editing the *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*.

mate goal – art does not dare serve anyone, because it is a goal in itself.”

This contradiction can be reformulated as a contradiction between the ideology of artistic autonomy, based on the negation of the socio-historical conditions of its own foundation, and socialist art, which aims to build socialist social relations, and which must permanently raise the question of its social preconditioning. Namely, the problematics of artistic autonomy is shaped around the ideological category of the abstract free individual, isolated from other social relations, and above all from capitalist class relations of inequality. Identified as individualized and isolated subjects, individuals become involved in the legal and political sphere of the bourgeois state via the ideology of the social contract. The lost collectivity in this ideology's domain gains a substitute and supplement in the common national cultural sphere via aesthetic ideology, where isolated subjects of free consciousness and free will reach their fulfillment in the figure of *homo aestheticus*, a person who through their “disinterested” aesthetic judgments, participates in a cultural community. The idea of the autonomy of culture and art does not take into account the impossibility of their existence without the economic sphere previously becoming autonomous (the emergence of free market ideology), the legal sphere (the ideology of legal fetishism – as ideology of economic sphere – which alongside commodity fetishism and converted forms, establishes a fetish of “natural returns”, of legal ownership over the factors of production) and the political sphere (the withdrawal of withdrawal of political instances from direct regulation of the economy, where the function of the social division of labour is left to the free market). Making culture autonomous is therefore a process which is correlated with making individuals autonomous, as well as other social spheres and social institutions, in the service of building capitalist social relations. The autonomy of artistic creation, the cult of a creative aesthetic individual and the creation of a cultural community, a community of sensibility, i.e. bourgeois civil society, is thus overdetermined by a liberal ideology. This ideology's precise function is the relative autonomization of social spheres with the goal of reproducing the “hidden” exploitation of the working class which occurs under the guise of the objective rules of functioning of the free market. The autonomy of culture is established in the form of aesthetic disinterested affection and belonging to the sphere of national culture, seemingly irrespective of the particularities of class and ideological positions. The bourgeois sphere of culture therefore has a very specific social function – the production of social cohesion and class reconciliation in capitalist social formations, which gain the form of national societies. Social ineffectiveness of art, and its alleged autonomy from the economy, politics and ideology, as an effect generates a culturalization of politics,

producing capitalist societies as communities of culture.

The contradiction detected by Lasić in Krleža's position is therefore a false problem since there is no art without political tendency: the so-called "art for art's sake" is a kind of ideology with its own social effectiveness. This problem ought to be re-articulated as a conflict between the liberal position of the autonomy of art and the socialist position of the abolishing of this autonomy via the democratizing of culture to achieve the goal of the class struggle of the working class: establishing socialist social relations through the expansion of self-management. Politically tendentious art versus autonomous artistic creativity is only a contradiction from the position of liberal ideology and its parameters of discussion.<sup>9</sup> The effect of both these models of artistic production, both socialist realism and aestheticism, is the survival of the bourgeois institutions of culture and the emergence of a cultural bureaucracy with an ideological status of being outside of class divisions, allegedly representing the interests of society in its entirety. Whether the culture is relatively autonomous inside the framework of liberal aestheticism, or it directly follows Party's guidelines, its function is, in both cases, political. The question of the autonomy of art versus tendentious art ought to be replaced with the question of what kind of politics of cultural production we should strive for, i.e. whose interests art represents in the class struggle.

Let us therefore return to the analysis of class struggles in "post-capitalist" Yugoslavia and ask the question of what kind of role cultural producers had in these struggles. We saw that, after the break with Stalin, the cultural sphere formed through a polemic which began with a conflict on the left. Krleža's synthesis won out, but this synthesis carried within it a contradiction which was impossible to solve in the terms in which the problem had been formulated.<sup>10</sup> Why did these contradictions prove to be "productive" for the reproduction of certain social relations?

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<sup>9</sup> Rastko Močnik writes that the alternative of "freedom or security" is only a dilemma for those who have already been ideologically recognized as free individuals, i.e. for those who have already become a subject of liberal ideology (Močnik, 2016: 62-82). Original artistic creativity as an expression of free individual personality is therefore only a derivative and supplement to this ideology, established by capitalist relations of exploitation, and which cannot be compatible with socialist ideology.

<sup>10</sup> The foreign policy aspect of this programme was also contradictory. On the one hand, artistic production had to follow Western art trends in order to prove that Yugoslav culture followed a modern path of artistic development (the demand for progressiveness according to the liberal model of modernizing development). On the other hand, it had to prove that it was not an imitation of foreign styles, but rather the result of "organic" local development (the demand for a particular Yugoslav third way). The contradiction of the autonomy of art vs. socialist engagement was followed by this contradiction of catching up with the West vs. organic development. Compliments praising the timely reception of a certain modern artistic direction could be followed by condemnation of "foreign influences". Krleža gave an example once again by criticizing existentialism, modern theatre and abstract art at the Plenum of the Association of Yugoslav Writers in Belgrade in 1954.

As in capitalist social formations, the autonomous cultural sphere here played the role of culturalizing social conflicts. In one-party systems, this role becomes even more prominent. While in multi-party systems the public playing out of political conflict is part of standard parliamentary folklore, hiding a deeper consensus regarding capitalist relations of production, in “post-capitalist” societies, political struggles are largely kept out of public view, and resurface in cultural issues. The great social standing and the public promotion of artists in this period stems from here. However, it is also the source of their lack of political power, given that these questions were camouflaged in a specific cultural jargon in which they were impossible to solve. This inability arises precisely from the contradictions of its foundation, as was discussed. Since the cultural bureaucracy was existentially dependent on the political bureaucracy, its impotence was channelled and compensated for by its alleged aesthetic superiority. It increasingly retreated into the ideology of aestheticism, while poetically describing its social position in terms of intellectual phrases such as “the poetics of resignation”, “anthropological pessimism”, “internal emigration” etc. This oscillation towards the aesthetic pole then resulted in criticism over the neglect of contemporary problems, social ineffectiveness, “hovering above the socialist reality”<sup>11</sup> etc. However, the turn towards “social engagement” also provoked criticism for the subordination of art to politics, its instrumentalization, and for the return of direct control over art (*Ždanovism*) and of inauthentic artistic creativity. In this way, art oscillated between these two poles, which were impossible to reconcile. This placed cultural producers in a contradictory position and imposed on them ways of having to justify their cultural product by using “roundabout” formulations overly filled with intellectual expressions and arbitrarily used philosophical phrases. These helped them attempt to demonstrate that their art was simultaneously of a high aesthetic quality and socially engaged, both in line with modern global trends, and being a product developed in a specific national context.

At the same time, these contradictions served to delegitimize political opponents and artists who were engaged in clientelist relations with them [political opponents, translator’s note], during periods of class conflict between fractions of the ruling class. The diverse political fractions thus used these contradictions in the cultural sphere to impose their

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 11 There is, of course, truth in this accusation and it should not be interpreted simply as an expression of the rigidity and narrow-mindedness of party officials. Through workers’ self-management, a new and progressive mode of production was created with enormous emancipatory potential, whilst in the field of culture, the nineteenth-century idea of the autonomy of art was restored. Not only that the culture was lagging behind this system, it was also actively blocking the system. Yet the “post-socialist” nostalgia for Yugoslavia is focused on the cultural sphere, almost completely neglecting the phenomenon of worker self-management.



hegemony, just as various groups of artists and cultural workers used them to denounce colleagues and to build their own careers.<sup>12</sup> These cultural struggles through which political conflicts were refracted thus gave the illusion of the existence of a struggle for opinion and of a plurality of individual styles. This allegedly pointed to the democratization of culture in Yugoslavia, but at the level of a narrow bourgeois understanding of democracy, rather than a socialist sense. The cultural translation of social struggles pacified these conflicts and limited them to the cultural sphere. This prevented them from spilling over into other social spheres, yet without this spilling over, the process of true democratization was impossible.<sup>13</sup> The contradictory problematics in the cultural sphere proved to be convenient for establishing limits to political conflicts in their “autonomous culture” converted forms. It was also convenient for creating a mechanism which produced a certain differentiation between artists and artistic movements, simultaneously binding them to the ruling class and their conflict, thereby preventing an alliance between cultural workers and the working class.

We can conclude that the existence of an autonomous cultural sphere and its contradictions created a cultural bureaucratic class, whose reproduction depended on the political bureaucracy, and which sought its place under the sun in the struggles between the ruling class's factions. Over time, the cultural bureaucracy would come to grow with the republics' political bureaucracies, and it offered them a nationalist cultural program. The Yugoslav autonomous cultural sphere would thereby lose its very label – “socialist”, and the political-economic struggles would come

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**12** For an analysis of the ways in which directors and promoters of the “Yugoslav New Film” during the sixties articulated their practices and critical discourse within the ideology of the liberal fractions of the party, using it to make their “anti-bureaucratic” critique of their older colleagues, see: Pantić, 2017.

**13** As Balibar and Macherey (1996: 275-295) point out, the aesthetic ideology “does not seem a mechanical imposition, forced, revealed like a religious dogma, on individuals who must repeat it faithfully. Instead it appears as if offered for interpretations, a free choice, for the subjective private use of individuals. It is the privileged agent of ideological subjection, in the democratic and ‘critical’ form of ‘freedom of thought.’” The democracy which the aesthetic sphere foresees is a democracy of “free consciousness”, a tolerance of different opinions and tastes which can be “freely” debated. Its true lack of democracy stems precisely from its reduction of the idea of democracy to a bourgeois abstract subject of law (*homo legalis*) to which is added a person of aesthetic judgments (*homo aestheticus*) - a complete generic man who gains his or her existential fulfillment through art. The Marxist theory of socialist culture cannot be based on this subject of free consciousness. It must proceed from Marx's epistemological break which views every consciousness and every opinion as determined by an ideology, and every ideology as determined by class struggle. The free tolerance of different opinions and individual forms of expression within the autonomous aesthetic sphere is an ideology limiting democracy to that of bourgeois civil society, where the ruling production relations remain out of its reach. Thus, a socialist democratic culture cannot be attained without the spread of democracy in the spheres of politics and production relations.

to take the form of a conflict of national cultures.

The ultimate function of the autonomous sphere in “post-capitalist” Yugoslavia, and its dilemmas over the autonomy of art/political art, was to block of the development of a truly democratic socialist culture. Since, following Samary, we have seen that socialism is just one of the tendencies towards which “post-capitalist” societies can develop, we can conclude that not all cultural production in this period is worthy of the attribute “socialist”. Socialist culture is that which stands alongside the working class in the class struggle, destroying the bourgeois institutions of autonomous culture and the monopoly of the cultural bureaucracy over cultural production. Socialist culture has the task of re-articulating the position of cultural production to build new socialist social relations, and to perpetually examine its own political-economic over-determination and its position within the class struggle. It is a culture that educates the working class in order to take over the function of regulating social production and social reproduction from the bureaucracy and technocracy. Cultural production in the former Yugoslavia ought to be analysed in relation to this class perspective, determining what cultural production possessed the potential to achieve the goal of building socialism, and what led to the reproduction of the domination of the ruling class.<sup>14</sup> Instead of the canonization of “top” artists, and the evaluation of artistic movements according to their international recognition or alleged “socialist content”, those initiatives which had as their goal the production of new democratic institutions of culture and new ways of involving the working class in cultural production through the establishment of socialist social relations ought to be singled out.

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 14 The guidelines for such research were drawn up by Rastko Močnik, through reference to the spread of self-management in the institutions of culture as envisaged by the 1974 SFRY Constitution in the form of a delegate based decision-making system. See: Močnik, 2017.

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Trade Workers' Resort – Traders, Zlatan Filipović, 2017

INES TANOVIĆ AND BORIŠA MRAOVIĆ  
(CRVENA)

# The Contradictions of the Break-up. The Working People, Organised Holidays and Indivisible Remains

## Introduction

The leisure time of the working people became the object of interest of the broader public as far back as the 19th century, whereas in the early 20th century, in some parts of Europe, it became the object of intervention of the social state. Still, it was only in the 1930's that a series of further steps in this direction were taken throughout Europe, including the efforts of Nazi Germany to develop tourism as a mass-scale practice (cf. Walton, 2005). The topic of paid holidays was forcefully imposed in the course of political debates and began to supplement the conflicts between labour and capital that had been going on until then, aimed primarily at the issue of the duration of the working day and the weekend. In 1936, the International Labour Organisation passed the Holidays with Pay Convention, which recommended the introduction of obligatory annual holidays with pay lasting a minimum of six days (ILO, 1936). In June that same year, the Popular Front, then in power in France, passed a law institutionalising holidays with pay. The said law introduced a fifteen-day holiday with pay, that is, a minimum of 12 working days for all workers, irrespective of their sex, age and nationality, on the condition that they have been continuously employed for a year. That law also prescribed the obligation to synchronise the days of a holiday with the days of school vacations, but it also forbade workers to perform any paid work during their

holidays. Tourism thereby became a political right in France and stopped being a class privilege (Furlough, 1998).

What is sometimes referred to as the democratisation of tourism was in full swing after the Second World War. Tourism and its development became an important part of the Marshall Plan, during the realisation of which there occurred a significant development of transatlantic air traffic connections, which gradually laid the foundations of what would become known as “globalisation”, whose practical realisation would be significantly contributed to by tourism (McKenzie, 2003: 36). It should be emphasised that the gradual introduction of a paid annual leave is no simple product of leisure time extension, which was allegedly caused by the advance of industrialisation, but precisely the opposite – the outcome of a complex constellation of “political choices and concerns, social “problems” defined and debated, economic transformations, and culturally perceived anxieties and pleasures” (Furlough, 1998: 249). In the 1960’s, there was a turning point, and the annual leave was understood among the working masses as a political right, whereby it became “an element of a new social contract” (Duda, 2013: 57).

### **Organising holidays in socialist Yugoslavia**

Social tourism in Yugoslavia after the Second World War, similarly as elsewhere in Europe, depended first of all on the direct support and organisational work of the state. A paid annual leave was introduced in Yugoslavia immediately after World War Two, as early as July 1946, through the Decree on Workers’, Employees’ and Clerks’ Paid Annual Leave. A year later, the right to a holiday was made accessible to all employed persons, and it was acquired after 11 months of continual work. Shock workers and those who worked under particularly difficult conditions were granted a leave of as many as 30 days, and benefits were introduced for trade union members in the form of reduced prices of transportation and accommodation (Duda and Stanić, 2011: 102). Even though the proposed standard was, as we have seen, only eight days, the Federal Government of Yugoslavia introduced a paid leave lasting two weeks. This established the foundations of social tourism in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). In the Law on Labour Relations dating from 1958, the duration of a holiday was determined on the basis of a worker’s age and the duration of his/her working experience, on the basis of which its scope was defined as lasting between 12 and 30 paid days. Seven years later, in 1965, new amendments to the Law stipulated that a paid leave must not be shorter than 14 days, whereas in 1973 this limit was increased to 18 days (Duda, 2013). The annual leave

was entirely institutionalised, so that it did not leave any choice to either workers or companies – one just had to take a holiday.

From the mid-1960's onwards, trade unions were primarily responsible for managing the system of social tourism. Union delegations toured and selected locations, and the final decisions were made by the central union bodies (Duda and Stanić, 2011: 102). Apart from trade unions, a number of other socio-political organisations, from the Army, through the police to various federal bodies, had their own holiday resorts, built new or transformed already existing ones to suit their own purposes. Benefits were introduced such as reduced accommodation prices and holiday subsidies, and accommodation capacities such as workers' resorts or rest homes were expanded (Duda, 2013: 58). The focus was on summer holiday resorts, for the building costs were incomparably lower, and relatively affordable accommodation was available in private houses or camps. Thus it was that, during this period, along the Adriatic coast a great network of workers' resorts was developed as the basic institutions that were supposed to enable the practical realisation of "an annual leave for everyone", first of all for "the working people".

Yet, in the 1960's in Yugoslavia, as in other parts of Europe, commercial and profit-oriented tourism came to the forefront. Commercial tourism became an important focus of the economic interest of the Federal Government as a source of foreign exchange needed for foreign trade payments. Indeed, in 1966 the number of guests from abroad for the first time exceeded the number of domestic guests (Duda, 2010). During the 1970's and the 1980's, the income from foreign tourists significantly increased, and in this respect Yugoslavia was much more successful than other real existing socialism countries, and in terms of its overall earnings from this source, it caught up with Greece and Turkey (Buckley and Witt, 1990: 11).

The rapid development of tourism at various levels influenced social relations. Among the Yugoslav population, there spread the culture of "consumer leisure time", while investments in tourism brought along a modernisation of the infrastructure, and consequently, foreign exchange earnings as well, which contributed to a gradual change of the habits and the everyday life of the population of tourist areas (Duda, 2010: 293). This was a period when, in the words of Igor Duda, "crowded railway stations and beaches, cars and tourist beds" became "a sign of participation in contemporary forms of life" (Duda, 2010: 292). The capacities of commercial tourism increased much faster than those of social tourism, so that the share of workers' resorts in the overall resources available continually decreased; in the 1950's, it amounted to around 30 per cent, in the early 1970's it was only 10 per cent, while in 1987 the share of such resorts

at the level of Yugoslavia as a whole was only around 8 per cent (Duda, 2013; Pepeonik, 1988).

Despite the increase of the commercial tourist sector, the network of resorts did not stop developing until the end of the 1980's, and was marked by an increase of the overall capacities. The major part of the development was concentrated in Croatia, specifically, along the Adriatic coast, where around two-thirds of the resources intended for tourism in general were located, but also to cater for workers on holiday (Pepeonik, 1988). At the very beginning of this development, in 1949, on the territory of Croatia there existed 79 resorts, which jointly had only around 6,000 beds at their disposal, and there was a certain number of beds in other federal republics as well at the disposal of trade unions (Duda and Stanić, 2011: 102). In 1987, Yugoslavia had over 1.3 million beds in various types of accommodation capacities, mostly in private rooms, then in camps, hotels and other commercial facilities, and also in workers' resorts, which alone had a little over 100,000 beds at their disposal (Pepeonik, 1988). Around two-thirds of the capacities were located in Croatia, where in 1988 the overall accommodation capacities in workers' resorts amounted to over 80,000 beds. More than 46 per cent of the overall capacities were located in the municipalities of Makarska, Biograd na moru, Crikvenica, Poreč and Buje, although they were also built in many other places throughout the coastal region, and their majority owners were organisations from Serbia, Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The tragic outcome of "the Yugoslav question" would forever change both the workers and the idea of leisure time.

The fate of workers' resorts after the 1990's followed the fate of their builders. In the new post-Yugoslav reality, everything that constituted the foundations of the former state – socialism, socially-owned property and workers' self-management disappeared, and was replaced by capitalism, private ownership and market distribution. At the time of the violent break-up of the former state, few people managed to ponder or foresee the long-term consequences of these transformations for the former republican trade unions, their property left in the other republic of the SFRY, or generally for the concept of the paid annual leave and workers' resorts. Even though everything pointed to the fact that in the new system the greatest burden would be borne by none other than workers, and therefore by trade unions as well, it was difficult to assume the actual seriousness of the consequences.



## The property of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian (B&H) trade union organisations

The organisational structure of trade unions in post-Dayton B&H is a reflection of the fragmented and divided organisation of the state itself. Thus, in B&H today there exist three umbrella trade union organisations (the Association of the Independent Trade Unions of B&H, the Association of the Trade Unions of the Republic of Srpska and the Association of the Trade Unions of the Brčko District), as well as a body called the Confederation of Trade Unions, which has a coordinating role at the level of the state.<sup>1</sup> Within each of the umbrella trade union organisations, there operate numerous branch trade unions, but what often happens is that within a particular branch, due to mutual conflicts, there exist several trade unions (for example, that is the case in the spheres of education, trade, the police, etc.), which tends to make the already difficult situation additionally complicated. Apart from the increasingly difficult conditions of work and the decreasing number of workers organised within trade unions, the B&H trade unions are faced with a number of problems when it comes to their status, which is directly reflected on the issue of trade unions' property.

The example of the former Republican Trade Union of Workers in the Spheres of Trade and Service Activities, today's Trade Union of Trade and Service Workers in B&H (TUTSB&H), may serve as an excellent illustration of this problem. This trade union had its own resort in the Municipality of Gradac in the Republic of Croatia, as well as the "Villa Bosanka" building, which housed the employees of the Community for the Rest and Recreation of B&H Workers.<sup>2</sup> Until the break-up of Yugoslavia and the beginning of the war in 1992, this small municipality of the

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**1** The Association of the Independent Trade Unions of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AITUB&H) represents the continuity of the trade union movement of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was founded in 1905, and is thus the legal successor of the Association of the Trade Unions of B&H, which changed its name to AITUB&H in 1990. The AITUB&H operates only on the territory of the entity of the Federation of B&H, whereas in the Republic of Srpska (RS) the Association of the Trade Unions of the RS was founded in 1992, as the umbrella trade union institution on the territory of this entity.

**2** The Community for the Rest and Recreation of B&H Workers was formed based on a self-management agreement concluded by Bosnian-Herzegovinian firms in 1959. The Community was entrusted with the task of managing the property of companies and trade unions, and of taking care of the accommodation of workers who came to spend their holidays in trade union or workers' resorts. That was the situation until 1992, when, based on the Decree on Banning the Managing and Taking Over of Assets of Certain Legal Entities on the Territory of the Republic of Croatia, the facilities that had been managed by it were taken away from the Community. Even though its former Manager Ramo Atajić claims that the Community maintained its legal continuity after 1992, the Agency for Privatisation of the Federation of B&H states that the Community renewed its registration only in 2016.

Makarska riviera had no less than 18 resorts owned by Serbian and B&H companies. In the 1970's the Community of the Trade Union Resorts of Gradac had eight rest homes and a total of 511 beds at its disposal.<sup>3</sup> Those were the Construction Workers' Resort – "Builders", the Traffic Workers' Resort – "Traffic Workers", the Mining Workers' Resort – "Miners", the Famos Company, Sarajevo, Resort, the Resort of the Work Organisation "Valter Perić", Sarajevo, the Resort of the "Duhan" Company, Sarajevo, the Rest Home "Đuro Salaj" and the above-mentioned Trade Workers' Resort – "Traders".

This resort operated until 1991, when the Republic of Croatia (RC) first passed the Decree on Taking Over the Possession and Use of Resorts, Hotels and Other Hotel-tourist Facilities and Movable Property Which Legal and Physical Persons Whose Seat Is outside the Territory of the RC Have the Right to Manage or Possess, and a year later it passed the Decree on Banning the Managing and Taking Over of Assets of Certain Legal Entities on the Territory of the Republic of Croatia, whereby the said property was taken away from its owners and given to the Ministry of Labour, Social Care and the Family of the RC for the purpose of ensuring conditions for the accommodation of exiles and refugees.<sup>4</sup> Thus, until the end of the war, as well as for years afterwards, the Resort of the Trade Workers of B&H and "Villa Bosanka", instead of accommodating workers and trade union members, became the home of numerous refugees from both states.

During that period of time, the Republican Trade Union of Workers in the Area of Trade and Service Activities of B&H ceased to exist, and its reactivation, under a slightly different name, occurred in 1996. Under the deeply changed social and political circumstances, their legal status of such entities was changed – the former socio-political organisations became citizens' associations. This would remain one of the key problems of this and other trade unions when it came to proving legal succession and repossessing their property. Namely, the Ministry of Justice of B&H has not yet regulated the status of the successor of the Republican Trade Union of Workers in the Area of Trade and Service Activities, so that today the TUTSB&H, despite the ownership documents and Land Registry sheets, cannot legally prove that there is a continuity in the operation of

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 3 In the *Holiday Guide* dating from 1964, the purpose of which was to present to B&H workers all the benefits of trade union holidays, it is stated that the Community of Resorts has a number of facilities at its disposal in the immediate vicinity of the resorts, such as bars and restaurants, intended for making the holidays of workers and their families as pleasant as possible.

4 According to the UNHCR data from 1995, organised accommodation (hotels, workers' resorts, schools, sports halls, etc.) then housed 53,462 exiles and 24,383 refugees. Out of a total of 78,000 listed exiles and refugees, around 54,000 were accommodated in hotels and resorts.

the current and the former trade union. But even if this problem did not exist, this trade union, as well as other trade unions claiming property in Croatia, could hardly hope to take possession of its former resort. The causes of this state of affairs are to be found in both B&H and Croatia, and also in the general problems connected with the issue of the succession of the property of the former SFRY, which has not been resolved until the present day.

The TUTSB&H found out about its property in the RC, according to its current Chairperson Mersiha Beširović, in 2005, when the first attempts to establish precisely what sort of property it was and how to get it back were initiated.<sup>5</sup> Even though it seems incredible at first that, more than 10 years after the end of the war this trade union never attempted to recover its property, Beširović points out that the TUTSB&H for a long time lacked the capacities, financial as well as human, to deal with this issue. Apart from proving legal succession, this trade union must also prove how it came into the possession of the said property – whether by purchasing it, receiving it as a gift, expropriation and the like. They have turned to the Association of the Independent Trade Unions of B&H for assistance in the gathering of the necessary documentation, but without success. According to the statements of the top officials of the Association, a large part of the trade union documentation perished in flames during the war, but numerous trade union members are questioning that view. Although few people are prepared to talk at all about this topic, in the trade union circles it is often assumed that the said documentation was the object of trade within the unions, in the belief that one day it would be of great importance to everyone. These claims are confirmed by Ramo Atajić, the former Manager and employee of the Community for the Rest and Recreation of B&H Workers, and later on a lawyer of numerous branch trade unions, who has been dealing with the issue of trade unions' property in Croatia for years.<sup>6</sup> Atajić maintains that the trade union documentation has been sold, and that, over the years, whatever documentation he has been able to gather he has had to pay for, most often to lawyers in Croatia. Such accusations levelled at the Association of the Independent Trade Unions of B&H and its leadership are not rare, and are not levelled at the umbrella trade union organisation in B&H only, but also at numerous branch trade unions. The image of the trade union leadership as the extended hand of politics and employers has been in evidence among the B&H public for years, so that claims such as those made

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<sup>5</sup> Authors' interview with Mersiha Beširović, Chairperson of the TUTSB&H, 1st November 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Authors' interview with Ramo Atajić, Manager and employee of the Community for the Rest and Recreation of B&H Workers, 20th November 2017.

by Atajić or other actors that we have interviewed are hardly any news.<sup>7</sup>

And while trade unions are torn apart by conflicts and each individual trade union attempts to resolve the property issue on its own, the state of B&H has decided to do almost nothing, even concerning the property that belongs to it. At the level of the state, there is no unified attitude nor institution to deal with this issue, so that, as a matter of principle, that responsibility rests upon entity institutions, namely the Privatisation Agency of the Federation of B&H (PAFB&H) and the Investment-development Bank of the Republic of Srpska (IDBRS), as well as the Cantonal privatisation agencies within the Federation of B&H. Within the PAFB&H, it is the Sector for Liability Sub-balance Sheet that deals with the issue of the property of companies and banks from the Federation of B&H.<sup>8</sup> In an interview with Senad Rahimić, Assistant Manager of the PAFB&H in charge of the liability sub-balance sheet, we found out that this Agency claims nine resorts, most of which are located in the Municipality of Gradac.<sup>9</sup> Even though it has been trying to sell the former Rest Home / the “Đuro Salaj” Hotel and the “Valter Perić” resort for years, the Agency has not yet done it by the time of writing this text.<sup>10</sup> As was the case with trade union property, due to the Decree from 1992 and the Law from 1994, and also to the non-observance of Annex G of the Agreement on Succession, the resorts owned by B&H companies became the object of litigation, conducted by the Agency against the RC before the authorised courts in Croatia and Europe.<sup>11</sup>

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7 The TUTSB&H, on account of conflicts with the Association leadership, was excluded from membership in the Association in 2016.

8 According to the Law on the Initial Balance Sheet of Companies and Banks of the Federation of B&H from 1998, the liability sub-balance sheet comprises “the value of objects and rights, with the attendant capital and rights that are not in the possession or under the control of the subjects”.

9 Authors’ interview with Senad Rahimić, Assistant Manager of the PAFB&H in charge of the liability sub-balance sheet, 2nd November 2017.

10 The Privatisation Agency of the Federation of B&H has been unsuccessfully trying to sell the “Đuro Salaj” Hotel and the Resort of the Work Organisation “Valter Perić” for years. The legal successors of the “Đuro Salaj” Hotel – the Composite Organisation of Associated Labour “Titovi rudnici uglja [Tito’s Coal Mines]” in Tuzla and “Aluminij” d.d. Mostar, as the unregistered co-owners of this immovable property, have authorised the manager of the Privatisation Agency of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to sign a contract of sale pertaining to the object of sale, as has the Public Company Elektroprivreda B&H, which is the unregistered owner of the “Valter Perić” resort. In early 2018, the Minister of State Property of the RC publicly stated for the Croatian Radio-Television TV Chronicle that he was appealing to “potential buyers not to respond to this call, for no buyer would be able to get registered as the owner or to take possession of immovable property”, in view of the fact that this property was regulated by the 1994 Law prohibiting the managing of such property.

11 Even though it is impossible to find out the exact number of all the litigation proceedings in connection with property that are being conducted between subjects from B&H and the RC before Croatian and international courts, there are certainly dozens

### **Conflict over succession**

While in B&H it was not possible to deal with this issue, or there was not enough interest in doing so, soon after the Decree from 1992, Croatia passed the Law on Banning the Managing and Taking Over of Assets of Certain Legal Entities on the Territory of the Republic of Croatia, which additionally confirmed the said Decree. After the exiles and refugees had left, in the years that followed those resorts were abandoned to the ravages of time and vandalism of certain individuals, awaiting the final outcome of succession, that is the allocation of the entire property of the newly established states.

It is precisely the issue of succession that constitutes one of the most important unresolved problems among the former federal republics after the break-up of the SFRY. The negotiations among the successor states conducted under the aegis of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, and subsequently of the Council for the Implementation of Peace, were long and detailed. In the initial phase of the negotiations, the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) saw itself as the only legal successor of the SFRY, denying this right to the other states. After the fall of the regime of Slobodan Milošević, the talks were intensified, and the final agreement was reached after the negotiations held in Vienna from 14th to 25th May 2001. The agreement on succession was signed a month later, on 29th June that same year. Through it, the former Yugoslav republics expressed a wish to resolve the issue of succession in a peaceful and responsible manner, and they also expressed a mutual readiness for tolerance and respect. The agreement contains seven annexes and three additions, and it regulates, among other things, the issues of the movable and immovable state property, the diplomatic and consular property, financial claims and debts, archive materials, pensions, etc.

A particularly important part of the Agreement, in the context of repossession of trade union property, is Annex G, which deals with private property and acquired rights. This Annex prescribes that “the rights to movable and immovable property located in a successor state, to which citizens and other legal persons had the right on 31st December 1990, shall be recognised, protected and given back by the said state, in keeping with the established standards and norms of international law, and irrespective of the nationality, citizenship, place of residence or domicile of

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of them that are ongoing. Most of the cases conducted before the authorised courts in Croatia have concluded with decisions against subjects from B&H, with the justification that it is not possible to grant such property claims before a bilateral agreement between the two states is signed.

those persons".<sup>12</sup> The conclusion of that Agreement, then, completed the first phase, and the second phase envisaged the implementation of that which was agreed, along with a simultaneous ratification of the Agreement in the parliaments of the signatory countries, but that process did not unfold in the envisaged manner.

Although that second phase was supposed to be shorter and simpler, for all the countries established joint committees for the division of various objects encompassed by succession, unexpected problems arose, on account of which almost three full years passed between the signing of the Agreement and its coming in to effect. The greatest problem arose when it was established that, of the foreign exchange deposit in the amount of US \$650 million, which the National Bank of Yugoslavia had at its disposal towards the end of 1990, only about US \$50 million remained in the account of the central bank of the FRY and those of the mixed banks that had the status of successors. On account of that, Croatia refused to ratify the agreement until June 2004, as the last state of the former SFRY to formally recognise it, which gave rise to beliefs that the years-long process of allocation of the property of the SFRY would soon be drawn to its close.

However, that did not happen, at least in the case of the property from Croatia being claimed by subjects from B&H from Croatia. Even though the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia prescribes that international agreements, such as the Agreement on Succession, which were concluded and ratified in keeping with the Constitution and are in effect, constitute a part of the internal order of the RC, and are above other laws in terms of their legal power, in this particular case this provision was not implemented. In practice, this was supposed to mean that the Decree from 1992 and the Law from 1994 ceased to have effect after the signing of the Agreement on Succession, and that the RC was obliged to honour its provisions and annexes, and therefore Annex G, which stipulates that all the property of subjects from B&H in existence on 31st December 1990 has to be returned to its rightful owners. Fourteen years after the signing of the Agreement, more than 90% of the property of B&H owners located in Croatia is still the object of legal disputes between the two states. By way of justifying its non-observance of the Agreement, Croatia claims that it is necessary to sign a bilateral agreement on property-legal

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12 In Annex G of the Agreement on Succession, it is also stated that this decision also refers to *persons who, after 31st December 1990, gained the citizenship of or established a place of residence or domicile in another state, which is not a successor state. Persons who are unable to exercise such rights shall have the right to receive compensation, in keeping with the norms of international law.*

relations with B&H in order to start the implementation of the acquired right to register ownership. The Croatian authorities are referring to the recommendation of the Standing Committee of High Representatives of the Successor States, which proposed to the governments of the successor states to conclude bilateral agreements, thus enabling a more efficient implementation of Annex G. Croatia had signed such agreements with Macedonia (1998) and Slovenia (1999) even before the Agreement on Succession was concluded, but it has not yet signed such agreements with B&H, Serbia and Montenegro.

The B&H authorities consider the Croatian request for signing a bilateral agreement on property-legal relations legally groundless, even though they point out that they are not against signing it. On a number of occasions, the B&H Council of Ministers has confirmed the view that such an agreement between B&H and Croatia can only be signed in order to make the implementation of Annex G of the Agreement on Succession more efficient, and not at all to replace it. The two states have attempted on several occasions to reach an agreement through negotiations, but their different interpretations of some provisions of the agreement repeatedly proved to be a bone of contention. Namely, the representatives of the entity of the Republic of Srpska consider that the issue of tenancy rights should also be a part of this agreement, as it is a part of Annex G, which the representatives of the RC resolutely refuse to accept. The hope that this issue would be resolved before the entry of the RC in the European Union in 2013 proved to be unrealistic, and the issue of property, along with the issue of the borderline, has become one of the most important problems between the two states. All of the above, naturally, only additionally aggravated the position of B&H trade unions, which have been waiting for a solution to the problem for decades without a realistic possibility of participating in finding it on an equal footing.

### **So, what is to be done now?**

In the meantime, the B&H workers' resorts in the Municipality of Gradac, and also in other municipalities all along the Adriatic coast, are undergoing a process of deterioration, and it is only a matter of time before they turn into ruins. But whether this is going to happen by letting nature take its course or having them pulled down is a question to which we do not have an answer yet. In November 2017, within the framework of this research, we visited the Municipality of Gradac in order to verify for ourselves the state these resorts were in. Only a few days before that, we had found out from Matko Burić, the head of the municipal administration, that the Municipality had submitted four requests to the author-

ised Ministry to have these facilities pulled down because of the poor condition they were in and the threat that they posed to the population.<sup>13</sup> If the Ministry grants this request submitted by the Municipality of Gradac and these resorts get pulled down, the plot of land that they are located on is the property of the RC, and all this property would thereby be forever lost for B&H workers. Even though the subjects from B&H would be entitled to a compensation, that option is rarely mentioned, even though it is amply clear that all the property being claimed, such as, for example, the share of B&H subjects in the ports of Šibenik and Ploče, can hardly be returned to them.

Apart from the possibility of their being pulled down, the former resorts are also threatened by the possibility of a new Law on Managing State Property being passed, announced in early January 2018 in the Croatian Parliament by the Minister of the State Property of the RC Goran Marić.<sup>14</sup> The proposed Law is aimed at protecting and activating the state property managed by the Ministry, with a view to stimulating economic activities and increasing employment, and also to making unused property and real estate burdened by unresolved property-legal relations functional. Namely, Article 70 of this Law authorises the Ministry to lease out such property for a number of years or enable some other form of managing real estate whose registered owner is the Republic of Croatia, to which the ban stipulated by the Decree on Banning the Managing and Taking Over of Assets of Certain Legal Entities on the Territory of the Republic of Croatia applies, for up to 30 years, until a proper international agreement is concluded. Thus the new Law is directly relevant for the property being claimed by B&H subjects in the Republic of Croatia.

It is almost impossible to foresee what direction further negotiations between B&H and Croatia concerning the said property will take. While the RC does not observe the international Agreement it signed itself and passes new laws and regulations directly violating it, at the level of the state in B&H, except declaratively, nothing is being done with a view to at least resolving the legal situation within the state. As a consensus of the state authorities in B&H cannot reasonably be expected in the near future, B&H trade unions are consequently losing their battle with time. And while Minister Marić assured the B&H public that a decision on granting a concession does not constitute a violation of ownership rights and that leasing out these facilities, even though the property-legal relations have not been resolved, will have no influence on the current and future owners, members of the TUTSB&H rightly fear that such a

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<sup>13</sup> Authors' interview with Matko Burić, the head of the administration of the Municipality of Gradac, 1st November 2017.

<sup>14</sup> By the time this text was finished, the new Law had not yet been adopted.



decision will forever seal the fate of their workers' resort, as well as that of other resorts all along the Adriatic coast, which stand today only as material evidence of an unfinished disintegration.

Even though we do not know who will eventually profit financially from the former workers' resorts, it is certain that the workers who built them will not. Social tourism, which made it possible for thousands of people to have a holiday at the seaside, whose central element were precisely these resorts, is a matter of a distant past. The working class itself, as a subject capable of collective action and representation, has mainly been decimated both numerically and organisationally, and in symbolic terms, it has been replaced by "employees" scattered in the pathless labyrinths of the labour market in the service industry, or exposed to super-exploitative conditions in the sphere of production. The annual leave is still an officially recognised right in the labour legislation of all the successor states of the SFRY, but only those who can actually afford to do so at the market price do go on holiday. Subsidies are received by few workers, and average workers' salaries are barely sufficient to cover the monthly costs of life, so that a holiday, in practical terms, has become a privilege again.

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From the book *Novi Beograd: novi grad*, Kovačević, M., Đorđević, A. et al, Direkcija za izgradnju Novog Beograda, Belgrade, 1961

TANJA VUKŠA AND VLADIMIR SIMOVIĆ

# Contested Reproduction of Socialist Yugoslavia<sup>1</sup>

Debate about the past is always current. This is not a battlefield only for historians who confront their arguments, documents and interpretations. The issues surpass the frame of an academic debate. History is an important legitimising frame of existing political practices. Everything that happened is condensed in today and paves the road for what is to happen. The past is not a mere weapon, Todor Kuljić constantly reminds us. It always has a function of serving certain interests and as a basis for affirmation or defamation of political positions. And the 20<sup>th</sup> century is certainly the largest battlefield of ideological struggles over the interpretation of history. Abounding with turbulent events, wars and revolutions, it is an intersection of most important contemporary ideological conflicts.

In our context, it is necessary to specify further and claim that today's ideological struggle is for a great part defined as well with the ideological struggle over Yugoslavia. For the issue to be more complex, there was not only one Yugoslavia – under that name three communities with importantly different characters had been constituted<sup>2</sup>. The dominant narrative in Serbia mostly refers to the first Yugoslavia, even though most often its name is not specified. The romanticised vision of the period be-

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<sup>1</sup> Broader version of the analysis from this text can be found in: Vukša and Simović, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> The Knigdom of Yugoslavia, Socialist Yugoslavia and transitional Yugoslavia that consisted only of Serbia and Montenegro.

tween wars is put in its place, interpreted with nationally reduced image. Luxurious life styles of members of higher classes miraculously appear as a normative reference of one historical period to which an idealised perception of the Serbian peasant is added.

The function of such reinterpretation is creation of a nostalgic sentiment towards the past, not so remote, but just distant enough and isolated from the immediate experiences of today's generations. A specific purification which then occurs is contrasted during the period of the second Yugoslavia. There are attempts to forcefully find continuity and to show socialism as a moment of divergence from the evolutionary line of development of a society. To a certain extent, this does not have to be a major issue. The socialist Yugoslavia is a divergence in the capitalist continuum. Only, this continuum is not romantic at all. It is marked more with a sharp economic polarisation of the society that created a narrow circle of the rich and large tiers of poor and disenfranchised.

Therefore, it is not a surprise that, in the memory of the population, the image of this historical development looks a bit different. A great number of researches show that the nostalgia of "common people" is placed exactly in the period that the hegemonic forms of memory try to discredit. Socialist modernisation brought accelerated progress, social security and until then unknown mobility along the social stratification scale. In one word, socialism gave people opportunities.

### **Socialist modernisation**

Forming the system based on principled valuing of the working class, brought to the forefront the building of infrastructure that would satisfy the needs of the broadest social tiers. However, the starting point was not favourable at all. The bases for economic and social development were almost non-existent, due to the fact that the country had just come out of a war.

But even regardless of the war, the development capacities on which the second Yugoslavia could rely, were very scarce, regarding the fact that the first Yugoslavia was a highly underdeveloped country with strong social differences. To give an example, at the end of 1930s almost every second person over the age of 10 was illiterate. Only with intensive development of education did socialist modernisation lower this number to a little above 9% at the beginning of the 1980s, while in the younger population illiteracy was practically eliminated (Latifić, 1997:100). It is important to add that free education and development of institutional networks outside of the administrative centres was made possible for the poor tiers to access education as well as to have a more intense social

mobility. In the mid 1980s Yugoslavia was at the top of European countries according to the number of students per 10,000 inhabitants (Latifić, 1996:163).

The educational policies specifically reflected the position of women. Namely, the proclaimed equality of sexes in Yugoslavia enabled women to enter the public sphere, especially through the sphere of education as well as labour, within which they were more represented than the women in developed western European countries. This phenomenon was followed by exceptionally progressive social principles, such as equal wage for an equal work, the right to vote, full equality in marriage, divorce by a mutual agreement and the right to abortion. Even though a progressive project that aims to solve the female question requires a much bigger transformation of all the aspects of social life, this emancipatory move significantly contributed to improving social-economic position in the overall female population.

In the outreach of strategic assumptions of development policy, an important place was occupied by big state investments in hospital construction, education of medical staff, modernisation of infrastructure of healthcare institutions and application of efficient scientific achievements in curing and suppressing illnesses. An all-encompassing access to good quality, free healthcare was provided, thus contributing to the eradication of endemic diseases, improving quality of life and generally extending lifespan of the population.

A strong social state was supported as well by fast industrialisation followed by big investments. Strategy aiming to satisfy an array of important needs of the society, in the shortest possible amount of time, conditioned a mass mobilisation of people, labour and means. An electric energy network was developed as well as railways, shipbuilding, mechanical engineering, steel plants, chemical plants. Building the country on such a level implied increased labour productivity and modernisation of production processes. "Yugoslavia set bases for 'industry that builds industry' during that period". (Petranović, 1988: 418). A high employment rate was followed by regulation of labour and social rights such as open-ended contracts, right to holiday leave, meals, transportation, professional education, etc. To this we should add that all the economic structural solutions pervaded many aspects of social life, reflecting in particular the position of workers in the system of material and especially extended reproduction.

Such social progress lead to a huge increase in life standard of broader tiers of population, which was reflected in the quality of nutrition and clothing, in the infrastructure providing a comfortable life – heating, electricity, water, sanitation, better home appliances and furniture etc.

Here we should mention the housing strategy of the state, which by intense investments in the housing fund enabled a great number of people to exercise their right to housing through social ownership.

### Critiques

Of course, with an exclusively descriptive approach we stay on the surface that is favourable to the conflict of two types of discourse – one that sees Yugoslav socialist experience in exclusively positive light and the other that gives unconditionally negative mark to this period of our history. On one side, the bad aspects are deleted from sight and a more systematic approach to the analysis of the given society with its ups and downs is disabled; it makes it harder to understand how that society developed and why it dissolved at the end. On the other side, all the positive aspects of socialism in this region are quickly deleted and they mostly stay covered by reduced interpretations. Both approaches have their political implications and are based on different interests, because to one social group socialism had provided benefits that capitalism took away from them. And vice versa, by destruction of socialism a barrier for a narrow tier of people to get rich has been removed. Most certainly, it is not possible to explain the aforementioned discourses along the line of class divisions, even more so because socialism in Yugoslavia was pervaded by contradictions.

Somewhere between these two points, what lacks the most is a more complex critical perspective that can point out the novelties which the second Yugoslavia brought as well as the contradictions which historically developed in the frame of self-managing socialism. Such critical analysis can help us with the research of this period – not in order to determine whose memories of the past are “more correct” but in order to understand what actually happened with our society in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Let's leave aside the discourse that approaches the socialism in Yugoslavia with an uncritical perspective; such discourse can be relatively easily refuted. If in Yugoslavia everything was ideal, why did it dissolve at the end? A frequent answer that follows this is that the cause of dissolution is an external factor. Without wanting to dismiss the claim that there were external factors that help Yugoslavia dissolve, the thesis that it would be a sufficient condition is hard to sustain. What should be the objects of research though are the inner contradictions of the system, which made the system fragile enough. Among the approaches that criticise socialism in Yugoslavia, the one that interprets it as a totalitarian creation is prevailing.



The function of discourse about totalitarianism was to summarise in an “analytical porridge” both the experiences of realistically existing socialisms and those of fascistic formations as opposed to the liberal democracy. These two regimes were equalised through an elastic concept deprived of concrete historical analysis that should encompass the irreconcilable natures of two diametrically opposite systems. The main argument being the presence of one-party authoritarian regimes, while the contents of the policies are left aside. For the discourse about totalitarianism, the form is in the focus while the question remains ephemeral whether we speak about economic equality and social classes or we advocate the dominance of one race and nation and exterminate others. The aim is to completely disqualify socialist society as well as the left in general, by which the alternative to the *status quo* is delegitimised. Nevertheless, it is possible not only to notice differences from country to country inside the socialist block but also to follow the dynamics of phases that brought different political characters. Even a superficial analysis of historical development of socialist Yugoslavia shows that putting simplified entries is completely displaced, this we will further develop in the text.

### **Contested reproduction**

One of the characteristics of reduced approaches is that they see the societies they address as a closed whole, completed system. Here, we have to make a remark. The socialist system in Yugoslavia developed from a war conflict but it did not rise from the ashes of the previous system. Actually, none of the new systems developed by surgically separating itself from the previous one. The new society “in any regard, economic, moral, spiritual, bears on itself the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it comes out” (Marx, 1959:16).

So, what actually was socialism?

We can talk about socialism on different levels of abstraction. At the highest level of abstraction, at which there is a certain generalisation of complex phenomena, we can set several defining entries. If we observe socialism as an organic system – a system that reproduces the conditions of its own reproduction – then we first need to determine which constitutive elements it is created of, or which combination of production, distribution and consumption makes socialism a specific, self-sustainable system of social reproduction. Ideal-typically, the logic of capitalist way of social reproduction is based on profit – all the commodities and services produced in this system are primarily intended for exchange on the

market – while the socialist logic of social reproduction would be based on the production for satisfying human needs. So, while in the capitalist way of production there is an imperative of exchange value, in socialism the imperative of use value is present. Canadian economist, Michael Lebowitz, further develops this thesis leaning on the concept of the socialist triangle, insisting on the inseparability of the elements of this triptych. The condition and the categorical imperative of socialism are:

1. Social ownership of the means of production
2. Social production organised by the workers
3. Satisfying common needs and intentions.

This brief schematic approach gives us the coordinates for understanding concrete historical forms of a phenomenon, an ideal type against which we can measure the object of our interest and try to define it in its realistically existing form. In the social reality of Yugoslavia, it is impossible to locate the implementation of all the three sides of the triangle. This can be the consequence of the fact that, when we speak about real existing socialism, we actually speak about the system in creation, a system that is not finished up to the certain level so that we could talk about reproduction of an organic regime of social production of socialist type. The first phase of creation was the socialisation of the means of production with the assumption that this would be the base for establishing a type of social reproduction different than the capitalist type. However, the existence of one aspect is not sufficient. The very nature of the Communist Party at the time, built on vanguard basis, conditioned that the monopoly on the organising social production stays in the hands of higher instances of government. The problem with such an approach is in the disbalance between what the government considered to be the interests of the working class and what that interest actually was. The separation of the working place from the place where the decision were made, enabled that in political reality the interpretation of the interests of the working class in the end remains monopoly of the political structure or of the vanguard. With all the good will and assumption of the best intentions, the structural positions of the decision-makers at the least influenced bending of the perspective. This is partially changed by introducing self-management, whereby the space is opened for a more direct participation of the workers in the decision making about what will be produced and in which way. Nonetheless, the more intensive democratisation of the decision-making process did not occur, while the regulation of the social needs remained floating on the axis central plan – market.

Taking this in consideration, for an analysis of real existing socialism, the concept of “contested reproduction”, introduced by Michael Lebowitz, turns out to be fruitful and suggests that during socialism many different logics acted and functioned in mutual contradiction. Main social groups that we can separate as the key subjects in the system of social reproduction are the vanguard, the managers of enterprises and the workers. Vanguard was impersonated in the dominance of one party that appeared as the only instance to know the way for development of the society and dictated its reproduction from above. Against it, the formation of managers was constituted which were in charge of managing single enterprises and which had a more narrow perspective and focused on the particular aims of the units of which they are in charge as opposed to the vanguard that approached the economic activities in their totality. Such atomisation of economic subjects, with the introduction of market regulation, encouraged competitive relations and protection of particular interests and by that also the deterioration of solidarity principles. The success of management was identified as the success of the enterprise, so the specific hierarchical structure conditioned the tendency that the managers act as *de facto* economic owners even though formally and legally they were not. The third group consisted of workers. Because of the specific labour division and responsibilities, the working class still did not succeed in exiting from the subordinate position. However, the position of workers was different than in capitalism. Self-managing bodies in its rudimentary form and social ownership enabled workers to participate in the production management though in a very restricted format, while at the same time a relative social equality, employment, rising income, high level of workers’ rights and social benefits were granted to them. Briefly, in socialist Yugoslavia, we can locate the intersection of specific interests and logics of the vanguard, the working class and capital. These three logics were in the relation of interaction, they interpenetrated and deformed each other. “Precisely because there is contested reproduction between differing sets of productive relations, the interaction of the systems can generate crises, inefficiencies, and irrationality that wouldn’t be found in either system in its purity.” (Lebowitz, 2010: 98).

### **What is it actually about?**

The end of the World War II on the territories of Yugoslavia marked the beginning of creation of a specific type of social reproduction on the socialist bases. The idea of building a new socio-economic system was not imported from the sphere of Soviet influence, but it was locally developed by a decisive contribution of the National Liberation Move-

ment to the fall of fascism. It was precisely the revolutionary experience of Yugoslav nations that ensured a certain legitimacy of a separate socialist development, particularly after the break up with the USSR in 1948.

At the very beginning, the system in Yugoslavia – as well as in other countries of the Eastern Block – was constituted on the bases of vanguard relations of production. This means that social development is based on the mechanism of centralised planning, more or less similar to the Soviet model. Centralised bureaucracy, as a dominant regulator of the organisation of economic life, was conditioned by the fear of contra revolution immediately after the war had ended. Actually, the prevalence of central planning was a certain weapon in the struggle against all those contradictions that are inherent to the system that was being created, when the capitalist elements, still present in the social reality, threaten to endanger the production logic of newly established transformative project.

So, the initial development paradigm of the system was based on planned production that had the aim to regulate from above and develop production of material life of the society. Nevertheless, after the conflict with USSR, there was a change and the principle of self-management became a new normative political aim of socialist mode of production. Given the fact that to a great extent it depended on eastern markets, there were attempts to solve the difficult situation in which Yugoslavia was in that moment by increasing intensity of productive activities. The starting point was the standpoint that the high rate of accumulation was limited by bureaucratic regulations and that it should be left to self-initiatives of direct producers. Applying the self-management model brought series of innovative organisational solutions that represented a specificity compared to how the coordination of economic life was realised in the countries of Eastern Block.

Self-management was supposed to represent a good frame and form in which the control over the production process is conducted by the workers and not by a directive of the higher bodies of the state hierarchy. So, ideal-typically, the self-managing principle of regulation represents such an organisation of social labour that enables egalitarian participation of all the employees in the decision-making process. The idea of handing over the enterprise to the management consisting of direct producers provided conditions for the creation of workers' councils as basic bodies inside of which the regime of democratised production is operationalised. Also, the condition for the transformation in a new type of relations of productions implied social ownership of the means for production, by which the state was disempowered and the management of the property was formally handed over to the democratic association of producers.

Even though the role of the workers was nominally favoured as one that should ensure the implementation of democratic potentials, the practice shows that the egalitarian approach at a different level of action was disturbed by the distribution of power between two fractions – representatives of the political apparatus and managers of enterprises. The interests of bureaucratic and technocratic structures, to a different extent and under different circumstances, disturbed the process of establishing and maintaining social production organised by the workers.

On one side, the political arbiter, as a hegemon of the society as a whole, often neglected the role of workers' bodies as social intermediaries between the community and the individual. This meant that the political level of the society, inside of which the party leadership interpreted the general interest and translated it to a concrete language of material circumstances, remained, to a different extent, non-responsive to the initiative and participation of the working class.

On the other side, on the enterprise level, it often happened that the hierarchy of the positions in the production process correlated with the degree of participation in the decision-making process. Generally speaking, deformations, weaknesses and difficulties in the process of constituting effective fragmentation of the decision-making resulted from asymmetric distribution of power in favour of managers that were the ones deciding on the conditions and character of production. Besides, the managers, lead by the laws of commodity production, served to satisfy the particular interests of the enterprise, while the initiative of the workers, to a different degree, stays inhibited inside the walls of technocracy. With time, the very entrance to the work process and its result were more and more intermediated by valorisation of economic efficacy and less by workers' control.

However, if we reduce the problematics of the self-management exclusively to the question of egalitarianism of the participative process, without taking in consideration the macroeconomic level that conditioned and defined such type of practice, the analysis remains insufficient. And because of a better understanding of the Yugoslav model of socialism, it is necessary to start from the question which integrator of the economy and economic life was dominant. Was the realisation of the self-management ensured through planned projections of federal government or were market economic mechanisms also present (Zovak, 2017).

“Centralist planning with administrative determining of a big number of concrete aims and tasks gradually grew in a flexible type of planning in which the focus is on determining only key, global proportions of economic development” (Bilandžić, 1985:310). As planned functions gradually died out, more and more space opened for the influence of

market forces, which created direct economic and political consequences.

Lebowitz's methodological assumption about contested reproduction represents a good weapon for the analysis of the deformities of the Yugoslav economic system, that was constructed by the process of coexistence of different regulatory principles, and it further leads us to the question whether self-management can at all survive in the conditions of commodity production. Because when the market becomes the main intermediate between social needs and interests, to what extent can we talk about the concept of organic building of socialist social relations?

On the market, certain laws are active thus forcing the producers to a specific behaviour – when the producers produce for the market, which becomes the main regulator for the allocation of material resources, accumulation becomes the aim, and that seriously endangers the request for a radical transformation of the mode of work.

Tendency towards self-management is supported by the politics of decentralisation that started already at the beginning of 1950s when the integrator factor of the material reproduction of the society moved from the highest, federal, to the republic and province levels. This did not mean a full dying out of the federal instances whose role formally still included administration of the economy but the central plan mechanism as a dominant determinant of the society, slowly disappeared. Conceptualisation of decentralisation, which implied redistribution of power from federation towards republics, opened the space for fragmented action of enterprises.

Even though the greater autonomy of enterprises was justified by augmentation of labour productivity, in practice this meant more and more intense market oriented economic life. Operationalisation of the goals of enterprises was intermediated by the request of accumulation that becomes a disciplinary corrective and mechanism of the organisation of labour at the same time. Further development of such business model reflected above all in the disintegration of the power of workers, whereby the purpose of employment is equalised with the aim of business success of particular working collectives. That is when we notice the tendency for the placement to be more important than the producers themselves.

So, already with the first phase of decentralisation, the market logic developed asking for more and more concessions and which only a few years later grows to such extents that it functioned without major difficulties in this hybrid production frame. "System oscillated between market and political control over economy." (Musić, 2014: 13).

The economic reform from 1965 also contributed to a freer action of competition and economic laws, at the first place the law of value. This was a reform that further broadened the role of market and limited the mechanisms that disturbed the autonomous action of the enterprise.

The aim was to instigate the development and to spread labour-intensive economy. This meant that the enterprises that had more success in profit making were receiving investments through credits. Besides, the enterprises were given the autonomy to use their profit, which made it possible for the income based on work to be replaced with the criteria of income based on the profit that the enterprise made on the market.

Regarding the fact that the state set prices for almost all the products, the aim was to ensure low prices of raw materials for development of manufacturing industry. Since accumulation represented the reference for the production, the low price of raw materials compared with the price of final products led to very low productivity of the primary industry and the industry of capital goods necessary for expansion of the capacities of the industrial production. The incentive for income increase based on profit consequently led to the growth of the manufacturing capacities at the expense of development of the primary sector. This conditioned “very visible differences in capacities of some branches to perform extended reproduction whether based on their own accumulation or based on their credit capacity” (Bilandžić, 1985: 307–308). The agriculture seemed as the most neglected branch of production, which reflected in a stronger need for the import because the local food production was not able to encompass the consumption. This would become particularly noticeable later when Yugoslavia decided to establish itself as an actor on the world market and when the deficit in the production of raw materials influenced significantly the dependant character of Yugoslav society in the conjuncture of the world’s productivity.

Besides, the federal state bodies withdrew from the domain of investment, transforming thus the funds accumulated for investments. The capital was invested in the self-managing banks to which it was left to make decisions about strategic investments. Banks that followed the logic of profit, favoured investments in the capital-intensive production, whereby the problem of the insufficient investment in the primary sector was ignored. Of course, this reflected on the disproportion in the development of the regions based on the production orientation. So, instead of the investment policy on the macro level, that would consolidate a balanced economic development of the country, financial sector became dominant actor that filtered and directed the investments according to the profit rate and payback period of the investment of the particular production sector (Zovak, 2017). By abolition of taxes on the high productivity, competitive relation were more intensified on the micro level, between enterprises, as well as on the broader level, between regions and republics. This conditioned increasing inequalities between production units as well as between same or different industry branches and regions,

thus particularly reflecting on the income of atomised workers.

This period was marked by a stronger turn towards the world market. The efforts for Yugoslav economy to fit in the international labour division implied a specific environment in which the conditions of business enabled economic actors for competitive relations on the local and international market. There were hopes that an economy oriented towards the export would raise the level of productivity to a great extent. Taken in consideration the scarcity of raw material production, the solution was sought for in the import of cheap machines, energy products, and other capital goods from the western countries instead in the local production of capital goods in order to lower the production expenses in the short term. There were hopes that this policy would result with enabling the local capacities for production of scarce raw materials and products in the long term, by which the need to import these commodities would decrease with time. (Zovak, 2017).

Also, it is necessary to mention that this turn towards external stabilisation occurred at the moment when the oil crisis hit the world economy in the mid-1970s. "At the moment when Yugoslavia opened the most of its borders to the competition of foreign production, other countries closed their markets more strongly, especially the countries of the European Economic Community. Yugoslavia did not introduce any contra measures. The state refrained from many necessary actions of directing and organising economy and the self-managing organisation was not still built so that it could replace some of the state functions" (Bilandžić, 1985: 317). The energy crisis that hit the world economy drastically lowered the potential of product placement on the international market as well as the possibility of cheaper loans, while the fluctuations of the prices on the market of imported goods, energy products and raw materials additionally hit local economy. Here we should point out that the imported capital goods came from the western countries with a strong currency.

"The government's ability to perform this task of macroeconomic management – of keeping control over the quantity of money in circulation and therefore over the value and clarity of wage and income incentives to production – was seriously weakened by foreign borrowing, the contractual obligations of bilateral trade, and imported prices" (Woodward, 1995: 227). Strategy oriented towards liberalisation of the external trade implied the devaluation of the dinar, the increase of import prices as well as the increase of prices in order to equalise them with the prices on the foreign market.

Orientation towards liberal reform from 1965 resulted with numerous consequences – from stronger deregulation of the economy on the macro level, which particularly reflected on the stagnation of indus-



trial and agricultural production, to increase of the costs of life and unemployment on the micro level. Unemployment appeared as a burning issue and a consequence of the restructuring of Yugoslav economy. The solution to this structural deformation, in the short term, was sought in encouraging workers' migrations abroad as well as in stopping the population from moving from the villages to urban areas.

Nevertheless, this strategy turned out to be non-functional in the context of world economic crisis, because of which many workers decided to return to the country. The crisis in the 1970s was marked by a decrease of the quality of life and standard of the population and with the stronger growth of inequalities between developed and non-developed regions. In almost all the aspects of the production of material life, more and more distinct tendency of further strengthening of economic crisis became visible, and the control of unwanted effects of the market already seemed to be harder.

At the end of 1970s it became obvious that the chosen priorities of the macroeconomic policy conditioned big problems in the economy. The dependence on imported raw materials without which production together with export of final products were not possible, made worse all the criteria of good quality business and functioning of the economy in a balanced way. The steps that were undertaken in order for the country to overcome the crisis implied a change of the working standards, by which the proclaimed criteria of the development of self-managing relations were further jeopardized. A general mark of the negative effects of Yugoslav productivity from the behalf of the establishment was that the causes of the deviations were dominantly tied to the administrative measures which limit market activity. The ideas of stopping the despotism of the market and making a turn regarding the dominant economic and development policy were condemned to fail. The solutions were sought to a big extent in the foreign debt, which in the end subordinated all the economic systemic solutions and measures of the economic policy to the market regulation.

From the end of the 1970s till the end of the 1980s, Yugoslavia completely determined the direction of the further movement towards general economic and social crisis by signing 6 *stand-by* agreements with IMF. The consequences of these measures were reflected in the strong decrease of the production growth rate as well as in the increase of debt, inflation and, more importantly, the increase of costs of living and of unemployment. Big debt and imperative to pay off the foreign currency debts in a short period of time comprised the devaluation of dinar conditioned by adaptation of the price of dollar according to dinar. Such a situation was made even harder by the problems of foreign currency liquidity in

relation to foreign actors. The inflation movements led to price increases and all that by a chain reaction led to new and bigger deviations, which particularly reflected upon material and social reproduction of the workers. A drastic decrease of salaries and life standard, lay offs of the workers were justified by the monetary policy, lowering the commerce deficit and paying off the foreign debt. The workers did not remain immune to such aggressive economic measures and that caused waves of workers strikes. The number of strikes grew year after year and in 1985 it even reached 696 (Lowinger, 2009: 57-58). Liberal economic measures installed by the IMF made the market the official strategy of exit from the crisis. With every new reform option, the influx of the private capital in the institutional frame of the system was made more and more legitimate. In 1989, the last battle was won for the benefit of the capitalist regulation. In that year, new “Law on enterprises that for the first time after the World War II, before law, equalised social, state and private property” (Musić, 2012:66). The law that legitimised the process of privatisation of the self-managing enterprises followed immediately. Liberalisation of the actions of private subjects was supported by the legal regulation that, logically, followed the process of privatisation. The argument that the enterprises could overcome inefficiency and lack of financial business discipline by their transformation to private property became the official standpoint of the establishment. Privatisation was presented as a universal cure, and so in the frame of such a change of legal regulation, for the first time, incentives for the direct foreign investments were legitimised.

In the period from 1989 to 1990 the government additionally liberalised the trade, lowered expenditures and introduced the fixed rate. Struggle against inflation movements gave results in the short term while the non-favourable effects of these measures came to unimaginable extent when the weight of almost all the negative economic consequences of the market fell on the shoulders of the workers. In 1989 the socialist order of the future was definitely abandoned while a new form was sought in the capitalist restoration of the social relations.

In the conditions when the disbalance of the economic structure and the uneven development of the region overlapped with the administrative borders of the republics, the problem of redistribution of the surplus labour of the working class was easily reformulated as a national question. In the moment when the workers lost their class subjectivity, the nation is offered as a mediator of the common interest and Yugoslavia wrote its last page of history in a bloody war.

As we pointed out at the beginning of the text, following Lebowitz’s conceptual frame, the analysis of the problem that relates to the structural causes of the crisis of realistically existing socialisms, cannot

be thorough if it does not start from the question whether a specific types of social relations were realised as an organic system. Regarding the problems we have detected in the organisation of specific mode of production of economic life that existed in Yugoslavia, we can conclude that socialism was never built as an organic system in which a satisfying level of integration of its basic elements was established.

„If socialism is to develop into an organic system, social ownership of the means of production must supplant private ownership; worker management must replace despotism in the workplace; and productive activity based upon solidarity and community must subordinate individual self-interest. And, of course, the old state must be transcended, replaced by the new organs which foster the simultaneous changing of circumstances and self-change..” (Lebovic, 2014b: 11–12). So, for a socialist system to be subjected to a logical organisation of organic type, it is necessary that it consists of social ownership and production intermediated by social needs. Constituting of socialism that existed in Yugoslavia questioned these basic assumptions. Firstly, the very abolishing of the private ownership of the means of production is a necessary but not the sufficient condition. It is naïve to suppose that in order for a socialist mode of production to be established, it is sufficient to change formal property relations without a change of existing schemes inside of which the production of the society takes place. The mere fact that the production generated through the dynamics of accumulation and competition, and not for truly social needs, is an argument enough to contest the organic character of socialist relations. Also, the existing perception of workers as commodity producers whose behaviour and action is predominantly conditioned by economic constraints is one more reason why a consistent social production was not established.

The institutional frame of self-management in Yugoslavia developed in a hybrid model in which planned and market components in the mechanism of functioning of the economic system existed in parallel. Material reproduction of the society was based on non-coherent and contradictory assumptions of different logics of the social reproduction of which every fought for prevalence.

Each one of those production regimes has a different internal logic, which means that it is determined by the movement laws and that it is expressed in discrepantly different social consequences: „ Rather than the combination permitting the best of both worlds, the effect can be the worst of the two worlds.” (Lebovic, 2014b: 23). Competitive relations, money-goods economy and law of value were the elements that gradually led towards capitalist restoration.

The horizon of real interests of the working class remained on the

margins of nominally proclaimed workers' state, because the social intermediary that would conduct consistent social production was devastated in the conflict of antagonising regimes of production. Therefore, the idea of socialism in Yugoslavia remained non-translated to a concrete language of the interests, needs and expectations of the majority of people.

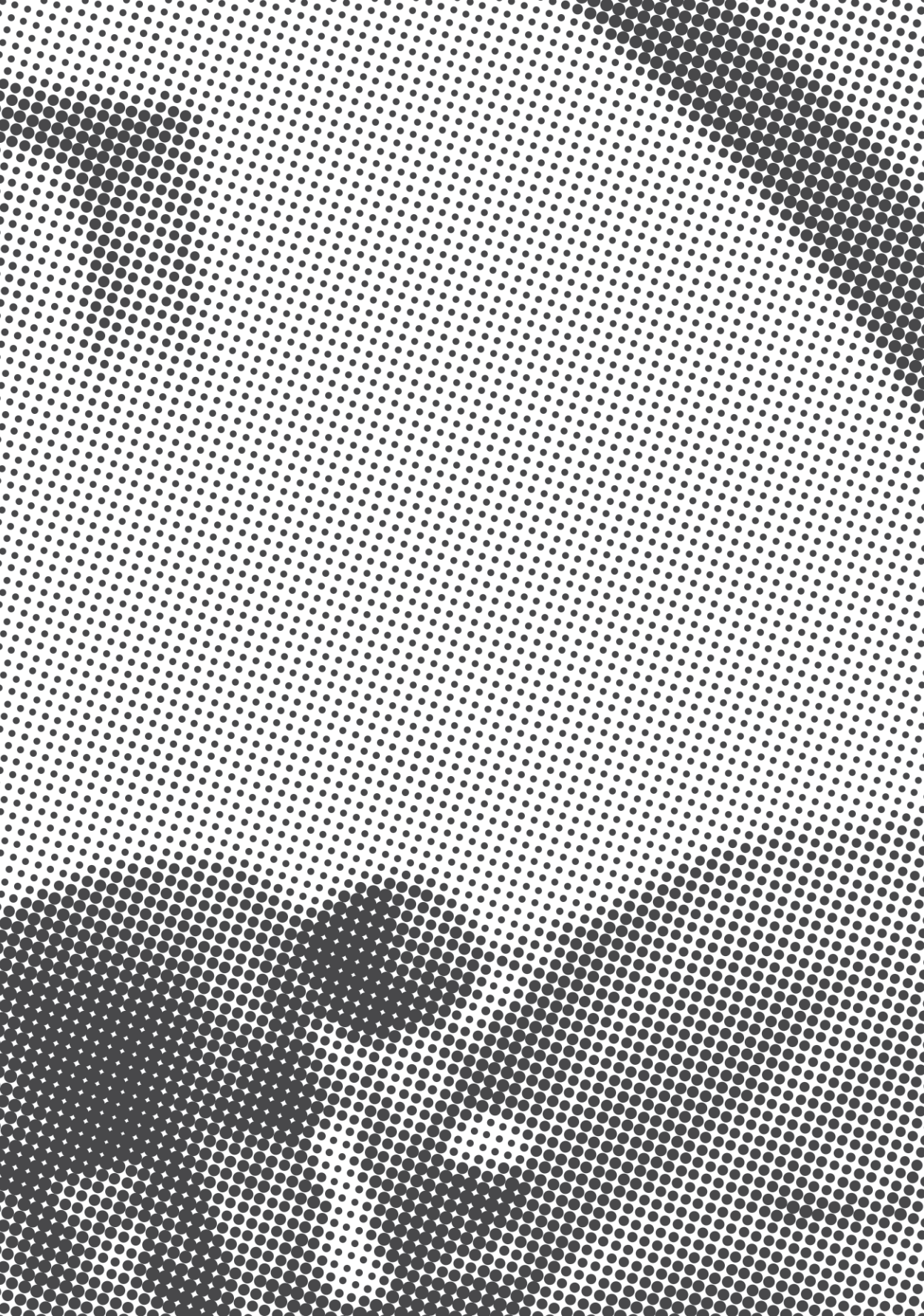
Critical observation of the dynamic of Yugoslav society, which the biggest part of this text is dedicated to, is justified by a task to show the historical process as they really were with the aim to penetrate their essence and explain why these processes were exactly like that. This does not mean the devaluation of an important experience of the attempt to build a different world that would be founded on valuing the sphere of work and working class.

From today's perspective, the way in which Yugoslav society based its vision of socialism with all its flaws and contradictions seems far and even unreal. Today, we face phenomena that were unimaginable in Yugoslav society and that, in this comparison, suggest crucial changes in life and work.

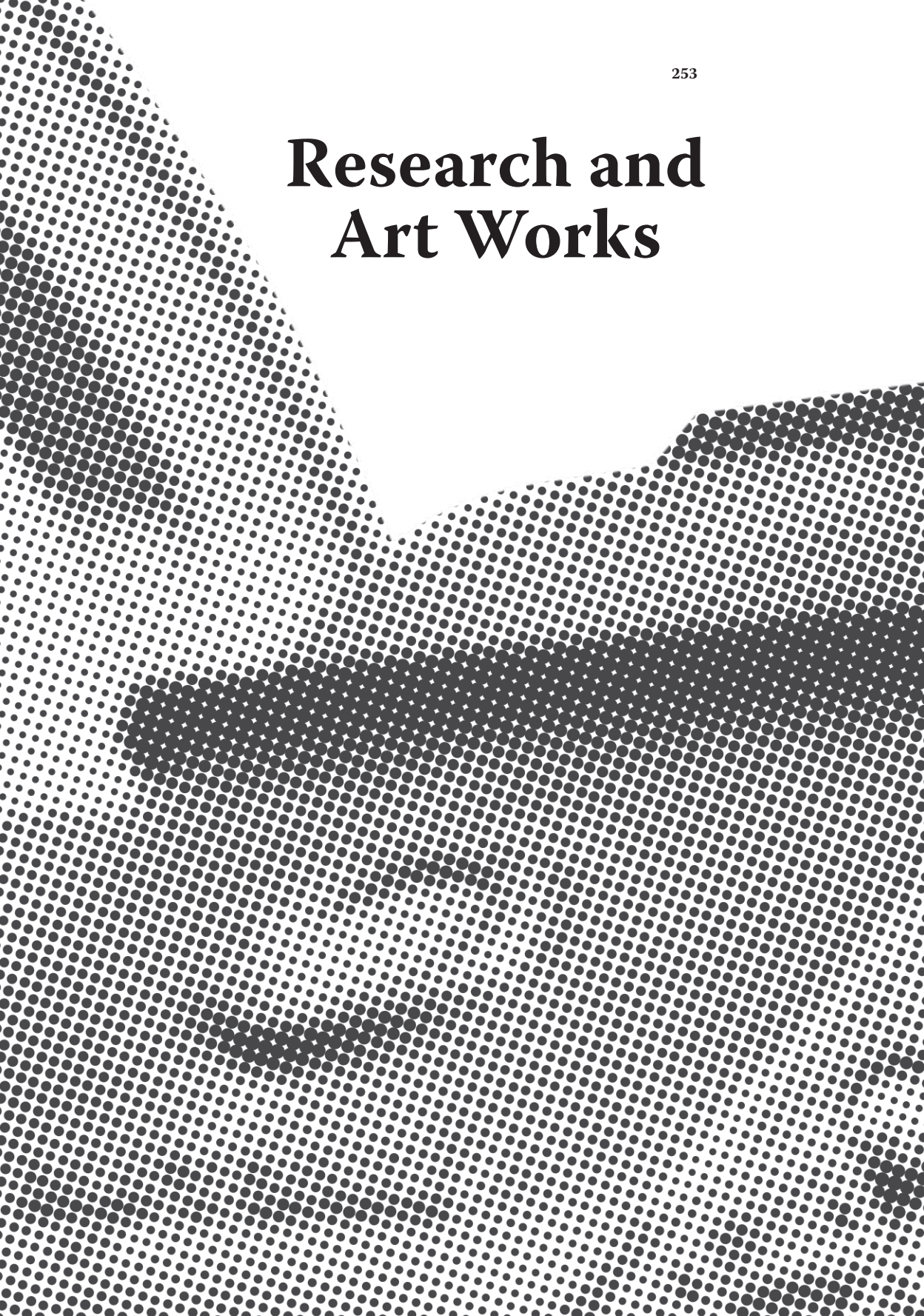
The idea of a utopian project started collective impulses and needs and became a historical reality. Socialist ideas came to reality in the attempt to build a different world. However, as we saw in the text, the capitalist logic gradually corroded the emancipatory project, thus producing a big number of dysfunctions and consequences that were bad for the system. Even though these ideals were never reached, Yugoslav society, with all its concrete manifestations, indisputably represents an important historical contribution that needs to be viewed in a new light. The mistakes made have a crucial role in the process of learning how to reorganize after a defeat. The struggle for a society tailored to people implies an open horizon of possibilities whose part a renovated vision of socialist future is, thanks to the valuable experience of socialist past.

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# Research and Art Works





A photograph from *Vukovarske novine*, 1988



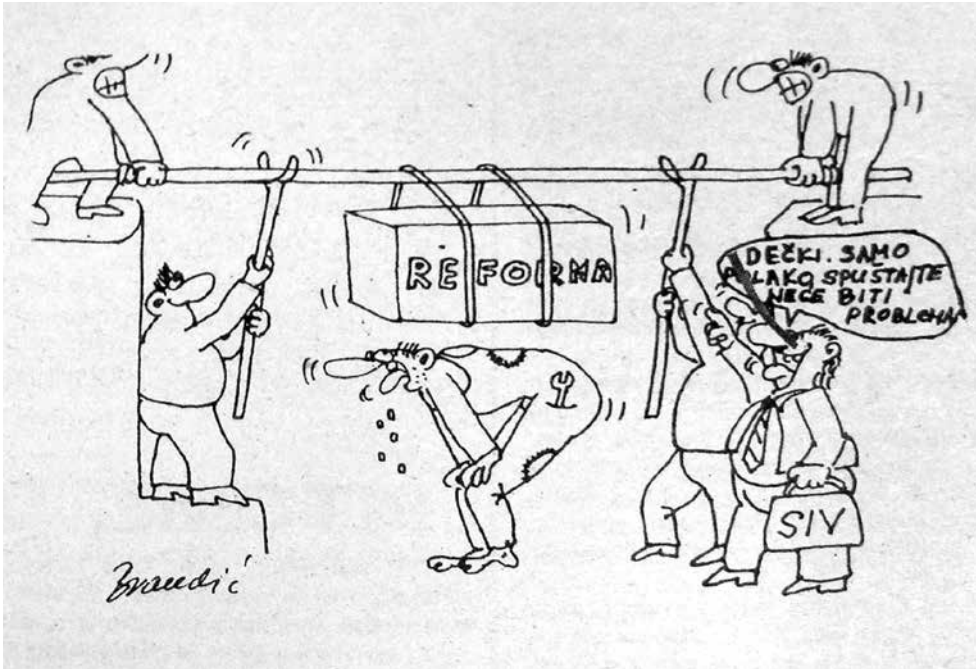
BOROVO GROUP

# The Continuity of Social Conflicts in the 1988- 1991 Period: the *Borovo* Combine

[2013 —]



Of the dominant narrative on Vukovar, the part of its history that concerns workers' organisations and its industrial development has been entirely neglected. Dealing with *Borovo* provides an opportunity for re-actualising these topics. *Borovo* is one of the places where the modern Yugoslav working class was formed. Before World War Two, the trade union Communist Youth member Josip Cazi organised the first generation of industrial workers in *Borovo* under the aegis of a trade union, gathering peasants from Slavonija and Vojvodina, who participated in the modernisation processes in this area under the watchful eye of the Czech capitalist Bata. After World War Two, the factories gathered to form the Yugoslav Rubber and Footwear Combine *Borovo* developed and expanded their production, until they had over 22,000 employees in the mid-1980's. Workers from the entire region gravitated towards the Combine, and even today they proudly point out the fact that there were members of



*Glas Slavonije*, No. 13832, June 6th 1990, page 5. (Author Perica Brandić)

23 nationalities among them. The *Borovo* Combine, whose contributions accounted for 70% of the budget of the Municipality of Vukovar in the 1980's, raised it to the level of the most developed municipalities in Yugoslavia. This part of our history is invisible today, for it does not fit in with the position of Vukovar as the key means of legitimising the wartime events and the post-war policies. The silence surrounding this part of the history of Vukovar, thus, points to what has been left unsaid about the history of the disintegration of Yugoslavia: the class experience and the class perspective.

Vukovar's *Borovo*, often referred to as "a small-scale model of Yugoslavia", thus offers a chance to gain insight, through a case study at the level of a socio-historical analysis, which is relevant for the broader problematics of the continuity of social conflicts in the post-Yugoslav space, into the mechanisms and dynamics of their

transformation. Our approach to this problematics is determined by the thesis that the Yugoslav conflicts occurred at the time of the establishment of capitalist social relations, and that this simultaneity is not accidental, but that these processes are interconnected. In our research, we proceed from the position of the working class and the experience of labour. In our analysis of this period, marked by social insecurity, bankruptcies and dismissals of workers, we take into consideration the tools that workers had at their disposal when it came to understanding their position and the articulation of their interests, as well as the available strategies of resistance to the general decline of the living standard, impoverishment and precarisation of labour. Towards the end of the 1980's, the workers of *Borovo* witnessed the final abandonment of the Yugoslav socialist project and the collapse of labour – as the foundation of sociability – in its



*Vjesnik* (1988), Dragutin Olvitz, June 10th 1988, page 5

economic, social and ideological aspects. Their response was manifested in the form of frequent strikes. During the most dramatic strike of all, in 1988, they headed for Belgrade and broke into the National Assembly. During the summer of that year, the workers of Bosnia's *Đurđevik* and Belgrade's *Rakovica* also protested in front of the Assembly building. During the course of 1989, over 500,000 Yugoslav workers went on strike.

According to the usual leftist views, the class conflict of the end of the 1980's was redirected and turned into an ethno-national one, which culminated in a war. Our research reveals that this formulation hides a complex picture of a comprehensive social change, in the course of which Yugoslav workers, under the pressure of the market imperative, progressively lost the material, institutional and political support they had enjoyed until then.

We have been carrying out our research since 2014, with the support of the Basis for Workers' Initiative and Democratisation and the Centre for Peace Studies in Zagreb. The research is mostly based on analyses of the factory weekly periodical *Borovo* and on the interviews conducted with former workers of the Combine. For more details on the research, as well as all of the accompanying material, see <http://borovo1988.radnickaprava.org>.

Photos from a Borovo workers' protest in Belgrade. TANJUG, 1988  
Retrieved from the Archives of Yugoslavia. AJ-112-L-11703-135



MARIO RELJANOVIĆ

# The Position Of Trade Unions In The SFRY During The Second Half Of The 1980s

[2017 – 2018]



The research is focused on the role of trade unions in the turbulent 1980s, directly before the beginning of the breakup of the SFRY. These years were marked by labour strikes and protests, as an expression of rising dissatisfaction with the implemented and announced reforms that particularly hit the poorest sections of society. The initial hypothesis of the research was that trade unions in that period were mostly linked with the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and that such a real-existing dependent position significantly influenced their positioning towards workers' dissatisfaction. The research has largely confirmed this hypothesis. The trade union was expected, during the period of building self-managing socialism, to be a supervisory body and to create the preconditions for the implementation of official state policies. This led to a perception of the trade union as being an unnecessary subject above all, and later as also being directly opposed to workers' demands. The 1980s are an excel-



AJ-112-L-11703-79



AJ-112-L-11703-116

lent example of such a conflict, given that reforms that were not in the best interests of workers were underway (so-called *stabilization*). These required of the trade unions that their membership prepare for work plans which essentially entailed a reduction in their rights and a drop in their standard of living, and for whose investment in and success the trade unions simply had no authority or credibility.

The trade unions also served as channels of communication between the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ) and the workers, and it is often stated that their primary role was to present the reformist moves of politicians to workers, that is, to prepare them for various austerity measures. This situation was completely opposed to the essence of trade union organizing, leading to a low level of worker confidence in the trade

unions' activities, while the workers were satisfied with solving some of their basic existential questions through the union, rather than seeing them as protectors of their labour rights. Over the course of the strikes and protests, the trade unions had a different relationship with the workers, but their support of workers' demands was absent as a rule. Even when the trade unions agreed with the featured demands, there existed a need to emphasize that work stoppage and protests were the wrong instrument for achieving the legitimate goals. In many cases, various authors noted a complete absence of support or a simple failure to respond to the events that shook the workers' collectives on strike.

When the League of Communists and Yugoslavia began to fall apart, the trade union lost all of its support and was not



AJ-112-L-11703-123

able to respond as it should have. From 1988 and 1989 onwards, the dissolution of the trade union began, followed by a party political split. The League of Communists had obviously never really had the basic support of each trade union, the workers (i.e. the active worker base). It could be said that the trade union base had become passive and that it ultimately only served a political role as leadership in *negotiations* in which it stood on the side of the upcoming reforms. The base's lack of trust in the leadership and in their political and fighting potential, were therefore not unfound-

ed. The trade union leadership at the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties turned towards the liberalization of the market and the economy, participating in the burial of the self-managing socialist system. Of the informal divisions resulting from the legacy of the former common state, certain new-old unions wholeheartedly accepted the nationalist and chauvinist rhetoric, and stopped dealing with social and workers' rights which were completely destroyed over a short period of time, as was employees' standard of living.

Srdan Kovačević, video stills from *They are as strong as we are weak, 40'*, 2018.





SRĐAN KOVAČEVIĆ

# They are as strong as we are weak

[2018]



**T**en years after the unanimous advocacy of the newly invented word “flexicurity”, which was used on the eve of the crisis to mask the rising wave of the collapse of workers’ rights, optimism has vanished: in early 2018, Croatian media bitterly published the statistical data indicating that Croatia was the leading country in Europe measured by the presence of precarious types of work. In 2017, more than 8% of workers were employed in the domain of the so-called precarious jobs, and if we add to them all those who were employed on the basis of fixed-term contracts, that category of employees made up almost a quarter of the workforce. For years, around 90% of the newly employed workers, as a rule, have been getting employed in atypical (or precarious) forms of work, on the basis of fixed-term contracts, agency work, student part-time work, seasonal work. The great majority of domestic trade unions, which, in any case, have repeatedly let down even workers employed on the basis of stable work contracts, are



entirely maladjusted to, even uninterested in working with the increasing number of workers engaged in atypical work. As a freelance cameraman and photographer, I myself belong to this category of workers, along with other cultural workers: no steady income, no pension insurance, no qualifying years of employment, no sick leave.

The “Delavska svetovalnica [Workers’ Counselling Service]” society, which has been active in Ljubljana, in neighbouring Slovenia, since 2016, is a unique example in the area of the former Yugoslavia, as well as Europe, of an attempt to organise trade union work in a different way. Three employees work in the field with workers employed under precarious working conditions: migrant workers, agency workers, part-time workers, whose number has been steadily increasing in Slovenia as well, year after year. This tendency is a consequence of capitalist production relations, typical of countries from the economic periphery, but the situation in Slovenia is

also specific on account of its position in the economy of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). As a prosperous republic with a high growth rate, from the 1960’s onwards Slovenia already represented a desirable destination and workplace for many workers from the poorer Yugoslav republics. The migration of workers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo, which was inter-republican in character before the 1990’s and was fuelled by unequal development and the intensification of the market mechanisms in what was then a socialist economy, received a new impetus by the introduction of capitalism.

“Delavska svetovalnica” is engaged in pioneering work in the struggle against a broad spectrum of exploitative practices, illegal activities which serve to blackmail workers, be it by means of conditioning the issuance of a work permit or by threatening them with dismissal, into working in undeclared jobs, not registered in the system of social services, working over-



time, being underpaid, even into returning money to the employer, etc. Their work consists in confronting workers with the fact that there exists an alternative to the slavery-like working relationship that they agree to, and then jointly entering the legal battle. An aspect that is an integral part of this are interventions into the system by means of amending the laws and administrative regulations of the Republic of Slovenia, as well as bilateral agreements that legalise exploitative relations between rich and poor countries.



THE WORKERS' VIDEO CLUB  
ZRENJANIN

# Abandoned Nests

[2016]



Zrenjanin is a city in Vojvodina with around 70,000 inhabitants, and the entire area of the city, along with the 20 surrounding villages, has around 120,000 inhabitants. The population is markedly heterogeneous in ethnic, religious and linguistic terms: the majority of the population are Serbs, but apart from them, Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Roma, Bulgarians and members of other minority communities also live in this region.

In the socialist period, Zrenjanin was one of the most powerful industrial centres in Yugoslavia, with a very numerous working-class population. During the period of transition, most industrial companies were closed down, and the number of the unemployed increased continually.

The processes of the restoration of capitalism in Serbia began in the early 1990's, and were accelerated in 2000, after the fall of the regime of Slobodan Milošević, when political parties of a neoliberal orientation came to power. The social position of the majority of the inhabitants is catastroph-



ic, and there is no chance of its being improved with the current policy being what it is. Political organisations in Serbia are divided into nationally and globalistically oriented ones, but they share the same neoliberal economic programme.

Trade unions in Serbia are weak, the level of workers' organisation into trade unions is low. The processes of the restoration of capitalism in Serbia will be completed through the privatisation of around seven hundred public companies, which provide the basic public goods to the citizens – electric power, water, public utility services. Experiences throughout the world show that such privatisations lead to low-quality, more expensive services. Also, workers who get dismissed from such companies will only add to the number of the unemployed and contribute to making the labour force even cheaper to foreign companies. Privatisations of public companies will further weaken trade unions, for these companies are trade unions' last strongholds. In privately-owned companies, organising into trade unions is made

more difficult or prevented altogether. The number of industrial workers has been reduced to around 200,000. The position of workers in privately-owned companies is extremely bad. Because of the high unemployment rate and great competition on the labour market, wages are low and do not enable even a bare subsistence. Workers are poorly paid, and there have been examples of their being denied elementary human dignity. On the other hand, the unemployment rate is enormous, and a great number of able-bodied men and women in their prime of life have left and are leaving the country.

The fact that people leave Serbia every day is rarely mentioned among the public. Being unable to find a job for themselves and secure any kind of earnings, Serbs are going abroad in search of work. In the past, the countries they most often went to were Germany and Austria; today, they go to almost all EU countries. Many find work abroad through newly established agencies that one can access in a couple of minutes on the Internet. It often happens



that those very agencies cheat workers out of a part of their earnings. However, as the population of Vojvodina is multinational in character, many of its inhabitants who belong to national minorities go to the EU as citizens of Bulgaria, Hungary or Slovakia. Thus, on 1st January 2011, the Government of Hungary passed a law prescribing that whoever has ancestors who lived in Austria-Hungary until 1932 may submit a request for being issued that country's passport provided that they possess a minimal knowledge of its language. Thus, there are areas in the northern part of our country where people go to work abroad on a daily basis because they are owners of a Hungarian passport. In 2016, the City of Subotica "lost" 20 of its inhabitants every day. Slovaks, on the other hand, have been issued identity cards by their "native" country, the so-called "krajankas", which automatically enable them to live and work in that country. In this way, some Hungarian and Slovak villages in Vojvodina have lost half their inhabitants.

The Workers' Video Club has recognised this phenomenon as an important one, not just because it refers directly to the working class of today, but also because it is the cause of many social problems. The most awful thing of all is that it does not get a mention in everyday public life. Young people are leaving, and old people stay behind to grieve over their departure. Families are falling apart, for parents leave their children in order to go abroad for three months. Serbian citizens must return to their native country after spending three months abroad. In this way, they spend six months a year at home and six months abroad. The living conditions of our workers who find employment abroad through agencies are inhumane. Our documentary film tries to show who these people going abroad to work really are, to present their reasons and their experiences acquired in foreign companies. It also tries to show how the policy relating to villages and agriculture in this country is conducted.

LEGALIZIRAJMO NOVA DRUŽBENA GIBANJA

krško

12. **K o n g r e s**<sup>'86</sup>  
**Z s m s**



DEMOKRATIZIRAJMO POLITIČNO KULTURO

krško

12. **K o n g r e s**<sup>'86</sup>  
**Z s m s**



ZA DELAVSKO DEMOKRACIJO

krško

12. **K o n g r e s**<sup>'86</sup>  
**Z s m s**



KOMPROMIS HROMI REVOLUCIJO

krško

12. **K o n g r e s**<sup>'86</sup>  
**Z s m s**



DA BESEDA NE DO DELIKT

krško

12. **K o n g r e s**<sup>'86</sup>  
**Z s m s**



ZA PLURALIZEM SAMOUPRAVNIH INTERESOV

krško

12. **K o n g r e s**<sup>'86</sup>  
**Z s m s**





LIDIJA K. RADOJEVIĆ  
AND ANA PODVRŠIĆ

# The Slovenian Youth and the Neoliberalisation of Yugoslavia: From Alternative Movements to the Liberal Third Bloc

[2017 — 2018]

This research discusses the role of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia (LSYS) in the formation of a powerful pro-Slovenian and anti-socialist coalition, united on national(ist) grounds, which emerged in Slovenia during the 1980s debt crisis in Yugoslavia. Within the framework of Slovenian debates, the discussions on the role of the LSYS during the 1980s focus mostly on their activities aimed at the pluralisation of the political mono-party system and exerting pressure on the League of Communist of Slovenia. The LSYS is therefore seen as a key and progressive actor in the democratisation of Slovenia. We counter this narrative by contextualising the LSYS activities within the framework of the neoliberalisation of Yugoslavia under the Washington Consensus agenda (WCA). The dominant reform agenda, combining economic liberalisation with a reinforcement of federal

state powers, offered the possibility to a new generation of liberally-oriented and urban youngsters to improve their political and economic power positions within Slovenia. Depending on the pursuit of (economic) neoliberal reforms, the LSYS became a channel for the proliferation of individual social actors that entered into pragmatic coalitions with local Communists and, if necessary, with right-wing forces. During the 1980s, the LSYS transformed from a site of a radical leftist critique to a channel for the political proliferation of actors with considerable cultural capital, who formulated the concept of a liberal “third block” for the first multi-party elections in order to separate themselves from the other two political parties. Overall, we show that the institutionalised youth had a key role not only in the reproduction of the Yugoslav socialism, but also in its demise.

LSYS's poster: an invitation to the meeting on November 21st 1988 at Republic Square in Ljubljana, City Museum of Ljubljana, LSYS Archives

# VSI NA ZBOROVANJE

**ZA**  
SPOŠTOVANJE ČLOVEKOVIH PRAVIC  
SUVERENOST SRŠ  
REFERENDUM

SOLIDARNOST Z JANEZOM, DAVIDOM, IVANOM, FRANCIJEM



**DOBIMO SE NA TRGU REVOLUCIJE  
PONEDELJEK, 21. NOVEMBRA  
OB 16. URI**

GOVORNIKI:

IGOR BAVČAR, JANEZ JANŠA, RUDI ŠELIGO,  
GORAZD DREVENŠEK in DR. ALOJZ KRIŽMAN

NASTOPAJO:

APZ »TONE TOMŠIČ«, JERCA MRZEL idr.

UNIVERSITETNA KONFERENCA SRŠ, DRUŠTVO SLOVENSKEGA PISATELSTVA, ODBOR ZA VARNOST ČLOVEKOVIH PRAVIC



Cover page of the journal *Punk pod Slovenci*, LSYS, Ljubljana, 1985



*Kosovo my country*, a badge that the president of LSYS Jože Školč wore on February 27th 1989 in the Cankarjev dom cultural and congress center at a meeting in support of miners' strike in Kosovo, LSYS, 1989, City Museum of Ljubljana, LSYS Archives

*Not to the left, not to the right...*, part of propaganda materials for the elections, LSYS, 1990, City Museum of Ljubljana, LSYS Archives

# ЗЕБЊА ВОЈА ЧОЛАНОВИЋ НА РАСКЛА ПАЊЕ



По мишљењу жирија ово дело  
обогаћује југословенски роман  
иронично-хуморним  
приступом мотивима  
који су често испуњени  
и трагичним смислом.  
Теме испразности људских  
подухвата, апсурда и  
поруге добиле су у овом  
делу примеран романескни израз.

Из саопштења НИН-овог жирија  
критике за роман године

*Нинова  
Награда  
1987.*

савремена проза

просвета

BORIS POSTNIKOV

# “The Financial Aspect Is Truly Unimportant”

A chronicle of the break-up of  
Yugoslavia viewed through ten NIN  
Awards

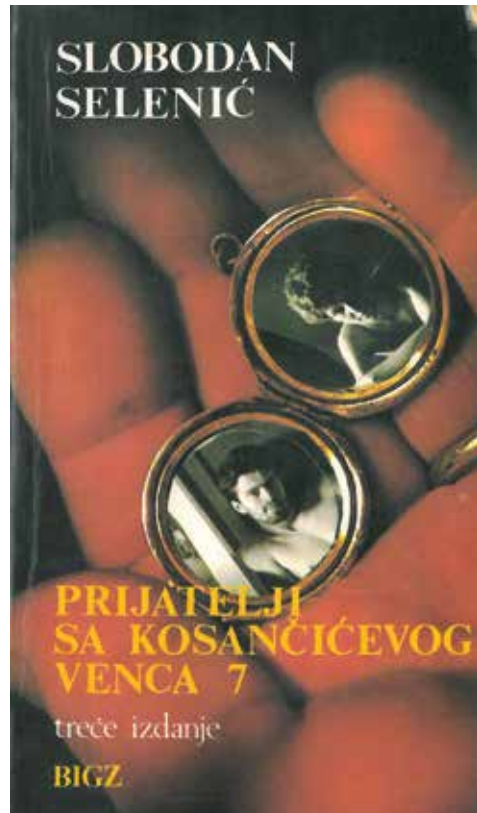
[2018]

The research deals with the literary production in Yugoslavia and analysing the elite literary representation of the socio-economic antagonisms of the 1980's, on the eve of the break-up of the state. As its point of entry, the research uses the award given by the weekly informational magazine (NIN) for the best novel, the most important Yugoslav literary accolade, to present, relying on a sample of works that received this prize, the basic political and poetic tendencies of the works that the very literary sphere of Yugoslavia judged to be the best. It points to the contradictions of the award itself, torn between the initial idea of constructing a common Yugoslav culture, on the one hand, and the centrifugal, pro-national forces, on the other, interpreting them as representative of the dynamics of the entire literary sphere. Using the available archives of the NIN Award, it records the basic statistical trends of the literary production of the time and the models of (self-)perception of the authorial position in order to compare them with the current ones. Through brief critical inter-

pretations of ten novels that received this award between 1981 and 1990, it points to the domination of a systematic literary criticism of the Yugoslav socialist project and the Communist ideology, a marginalisation of the economic context and class conflicts, and insistence on the articulation of social antagonisms through the prism of the national. It claims that, within the framework of the sharpening conflict between the working and the managerial class in the 1980's, such literature fulfilled the basic social function of class distinction. In doing so, it developed the key topoi of the subsequent revisionist interpretations of the history of the SFRY: the delegitimisation of the socialist project as inherently totalitarian, the erasure of the class dimension of social conflicts and the establishment of the narrative about the “perennial” and irreducible ethno-national differences. The literature which systematically marginalised its own economic context eventually became economically marginalised itself after the break-up of the SFRY.



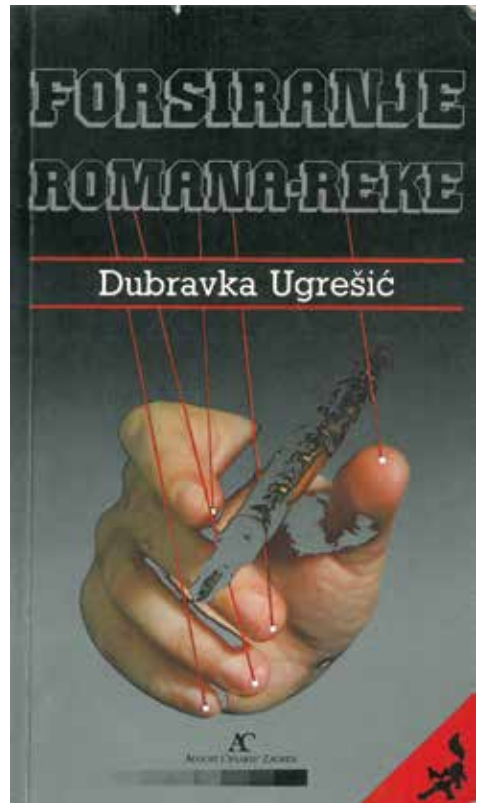
Cover page, Milorad Pavić, *Dictionary of the Khazars*, Prosveta 1989



Cover page, Slobodan Selenić, *Friends from Kosančićev venac 7*, BIGZ 1987



Cover page, Dragoslav Mihailović, *Booted Men*, BIGZ 1986



Cover page, Dubravka Ugrešić, *Fording the Stream of Consciousness*, August Cesarec 1989

Vigan Nimani, *04. 05. 1980.*, oil on canvas, 95x95cm, 2017





VIGAN NIMANI

# Turning One View

[2017 — 2018]



The paintings of Vigan Nimani are about socialism. Precisely, the atmosphere of the paintings is provided by the socialist-era life that he remembers from his childhood and reconstructs from photographs. Looking at these paintings, one can easily grasp the sense of being outside of time and in spaces that do not have specific locations. Yet, they are very familiar. The locals can recognize traces of some notorious socialist buildings, sights, and they would also easily connect these paintings with the seventies or the eighties, rather than with the contemporary situation. But the visual charm of the paintings introduces something in excess of the usual sociological analyses. The atmosphere of the paintings recalls a strange sort of attitude to socialism: something very strong and concrete, such as buildings, which still pervade our memories, but still that something exists only as a dreamy recollection of the past.

To paint the past of the local history is a risky business. On the one hand, there is a danger of falling into the trap of socialism as a modernist hype of architectural style that is nothing else but a retro-principle of cool or international *béton-brut*. On the other, there is the so-called anti-humanist horror of socialist organization, which reduces men and women to mere carriers of heavy structures, again symbolized by grey and colourless buildings.

Nimani is aware of these contradictions. His paintings do not result in a psychological and affective depiction of the historical past, he is interested neither in nostalgic exaltation nor in the Cold War totalitarian angst. What his paintings are built upon is research of existing books, catalogues, photographs, postcards. He collects these materials meticulously and researches the visual surfaces of these images in order to translate them into painterly solutions.

What characterizes Nimani's interest in images of the socialist past is the ambiguity existing in them. These images, seen in any official brochure or catalogue on socialist cities, are marked by a peculiar charm of presenting something new, as if they started from scratch, emerging from nowhere. The contradictory effect of socialist spaces (and images showing them) is directly related to these configurations without tradition, suspending the ethnic locality of the past. He is interested, in his research, in detecting and cataloguing these singular visual instances.

Finally, in his paintings Vigan Nimani goes back to the roots of this imagery. Not by evoking socialism through the doctrine of state-based ideologies and constructions, but by bringing forth the elusive character of the innovativeness and unprecedentedness of what happened in Yugoslavia after the Second World War.

This is not realised by a mere reflection of the photographic images into the

painting. Nimani works hard at translating the idea of these socialist images. This translation is obligatory for avoiding the surface visuality that is rubbed in along with the official psychological ambiguities.

Nimani's process is based on layers of technical reproductions of the same image in order to get the exact shapes that correspond to the blurry and ambiguous dimensions of his subject.

As a result, we have paintings that do not compromise with the mainstream understanding of socialism, but instead develop the main idea of the representation of the new in socialism by focusing on the technical aspect of the visuality of that world.

Paradoxically, because it touches upon concrete issues, this technical and painterly solution is strongest in the field which it negates, namely, in the domain of profound subjectivity and dreaming of utopia.

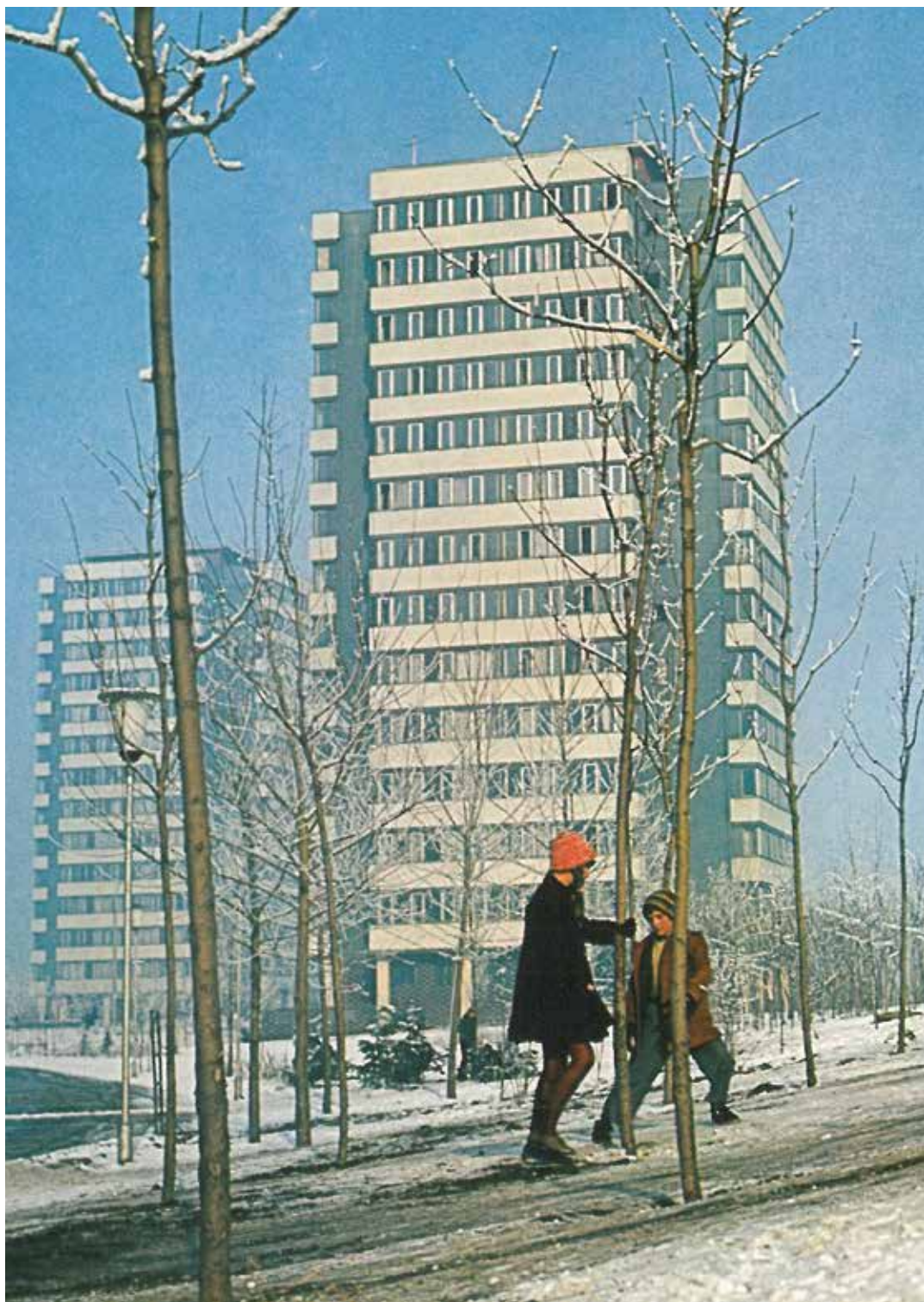
Sezgin Boynik,  
January 2018, Helsinki



Vigan Nimani, *Bankkos*, oil on canvas, 80x80cm, 2017



Vigan Nimani, *Retirement home*, oil on canvas, 80x80cm, 2017



ISKRA KRSTIĆ

# The Housing Policies in Socialist Yugoslavia

[2017 — 2018]



The research *The Housing Policies in Socialist Yugoslavia* was motivated by the assumption that the (lack of) success in this segment of the socialist project may have influenced the development and the direction of the tensions that, towards the end of the 1980's, led to the disintegration of the country and the wars over the heritage of Yugoslavia. This assumption, in its turn, is based on the understanding of urban development and housing as a medium that reflected the dynamics of power of various social groups and enabled its reproduction. With a view to shedding light on the main research question, we made an overview of the historical phases of urban development policies and the phases of their operationalisation, the accent being on the methodology and analytical categories from the domain of urban sociology and critical urban studies. Relying on the previous surveys of the relevant authors, we provided the basic characteristics of several partly discontinuous periods.



**A photograph of the model of Conceptual plan of New Belgrade, architect Nikola Dobrović, 1948, property of Belgrade City Museum**

During the first two post-World War Two decades, the basic institutions of the socialist housing policy were defined: the population strategy, the legal framework, the financing mechanisms, the technical-technological means and guidance. Housing was recognised as an existential need and legally defined as a right. The real estate and construction land market was abolished, and the public (socially-owned) housing fund was formed. Urban planning was more centralised than in the West, but it was at the same time more democratic and enabled greater authorial and civic freedoms than was the case in the East. In the mid-1960's, there was a partial reform of the housing policies, initiated by the economic reform in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and a broad spectrum of criticism of the method of urban development applied until then coming from the domains of sociology and architecture. The fundamental laws and the principles of egalitarianism and solidarity in the domain of housing remained unchanged. However, a coherent urban planning approach was abandoned, and the financing mechanisms became increasingly dependent on

the market component of the economy of Yugoslavia. Over time, there occurred a decomposition of socialist institutions and a restoration of capitalist relations and dynamics of the urban actors. Namely, the shortage of flats and the socio-spatial stratification in urban centres became increasingly acute, production within the framework of the public housing fund declined, the financiers (at the time, socially owned firms and individuals) gained increasing influence on formal and informal building. The changes of the Law on Housing in the early 1990's and the "total sale" of the socially-owned housing fund marked the end of the socialist housing policies.

Owing to the socialist housing policies, the housing crisis was considerably alleviated compared to the period between the great wars, the housing standard was increased and the modernisation of society was achieved. However, the intensification of market relations, under the conditions of economic stagnation, which affected the domain of housing as well, favoured the increase of social inequalities instead of the proclaimed democratisation. The unequal distribution and shortage of social-



**Photograph from the book *Novi Beograd: novi grad*, Kovačević, M., Đorđević, A. et al, Direkcija za izgradnju Novog Beograda, Belgrade, 1961**

ly-owned flats influenced the delegitimation of the socialist project, especially in the most affected population groups – the young, the unemployed and workers with lower qualifications. On the other hand, the state itself supported the normalisation of capitalist relations, legalising them gradually. Under such circumstances, the narrowed-down private sphere produced a feeling of increasing anxiety, which the new political actors could channel into destroying the common state.

Analysing the interdependence of urban development and the social structure, however, one should not neglect another actor – international corporations and fi-

nancial institutions. Since the 1970's, the IMF and the World Bank conditioned granting loans to developing countries by decreasing public spending and the deregulation of the legal framework. These actors decisively influenced the adoption of the model of privatising socially-owned housing in today's postsocialist countries, taking as their role model the privatisation of municipal flats in Britain carried out in the early 1980's. It stimulated a further commercialisation of urban space, investor-biased urban planning, a socio-spatial segregation, a radicalisation of the housing crisis and an epidemic of evictions that we are (currently) witnessing.





IRENA PEJIĆ

# The Case of the Sarajevo Daily *Oslobodjenje*

[2018]

In 1943, during World War Two, the first issue of the antifascist paper *Oslobodjenje* [*Liberation*] came out; at the time, it was published occasionally. After the end of the war, in the course of which some of its reporters were killed, *Oslobodjenje* became the title of a daily paper published by the Socialist Association of the Working People of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was published in Sarajevo.

The material that was researched, which encompassed the period of the 1980's, testifies to the fact that *Oslobodjenje* was a truly Yugoslav-oriented paper. Not only was its front page printed alternating the Cyrillic and the Latin script on a daily basis, the remaining pages in every issue were printed using both scripts as well. In this way, *Oslobodjenje*, with all its differences, preserved the idea of brotherhood and unity in its pages through its form and design. This is how its editorial staff write about it today: "From its incep-

tion, *Oslobodjenje* took pride in the fact that it was Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian in equal measure, that it belonged to all the peoples and citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is still the case."<sup>1</sup>

The 1980's were a turbulent period in socio-political terms, hinting to a certain extent at what was to follow in the Yugoslav society of that time. Leafing through the archive of *Oslobodjenje*, it turned out that this paper, just like some other Yugoslav daily papers, published critical texts about the social situation at the time. This is evidenced by the "YU PRESS" column of *Oslobodjenje*, which was usually printed on page two of the paper. The texts that were reprinted there, on a number of occasions, presented critical views of the social, economic and political situation that shook Yugoslavia in the 1980's.

Even though socialist Yugoslavia is often referred to as a country marked by Party censorship and lack of criticism

.....  
1 See <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/web-info/oslobodjenje-novine-za-bih>.



*Oslobodjenje*, July 7th 1988



*Oslobodjenje*, October 5th 1988

when it came to the decisions made by and the policy of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, the case of *Oslobodjenje* provides but one example that the overall picture was not so black-and-white. If we were to claim that the freedom of the media increased as the crisis deepened and it became increasingly certain that socialist Yugoslavia was falling apart and the free market was on its way, we would be neglecting the fact that it was precisely during the deepening economic and social crisis (however everything may have been *firmly held in control* by the Party) that the reporting in *Oslobodjenje* took the side of workers, after all.

Especially in the second half of the 1980's, *Oslobodjenje* reported on all the major scandals occurring in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also in Yugoslavia as a whole. The "Agrokomerc" affair was reported on regularly, as were the machinations of Party officials in the course of

the distribution of socially-owned flats, workers' strikes and increasing discontent, and what was certainly proving to be the worsening situation of the economy and society as a whole. Towards the end of the Yugoslav socialist system, the overall picture was by no means pretty or optimistic: with increasing frequency, on the pages of *Oslobodjenje* one could read about workers' strikes, redundant workers and dismissals, and about the increasing prices of electric power, cooking oil and bread. And at that time of crisis, the editorial staff of *Oslobodjenje* addressed many important issues pertaining to the working people, which did not concern merely reporting on the economically difficult and nationally tight social context, but also dealt with the specific issue of the responsibility of the Party and the trade unions with a view to preserving the idea of brotherhood and unity. National issues, thus, were not neglected, but they were not used for propa-



*Oslobodjenje*, May 10th 1987



*Oslobodjenje*, April 25th 1987

ganda purposes either; instead, they were placed within a broader socio-political context. The strikes were not national in character but led by workers, and the impoverishment was not primarily political but economic.

Nationalism did fill the pages of *Oslobodjenje* towards the end of the 1980's, which is indicative of the interest of the public in overcoming what was perhaps the deepest fear of the socialist working people. And yet, it would appear that *Oslobodjenje* did not fail to contribute to the struggle for dealing with predominantly workers' concerns until the very end of socialist Yugoslavia.

For the working people, the disintegration of Yugoslavia meant an even greater economic and social crisis, and we feel its consequences even today. To *Oslobodjenje*, it meant a new owner and a constant struggle for its place on the media market, numerous privatisation scan-

dals, questionable working conditions and delays when it came to the payment of the employees' salaries. The message that *Oslobodjenje* carried from its inception was reflected in its subtitle – "Death to fascism, freedom to the people!" – and it remains our task to win this freedom for ourselves through these stories.



All photographs are from Miloš Zvicer's collection

MILIVOJE KRIVOKAPIĆ  
(CULTURE CENTER PUNKT)

# Nikšić and Industriali- sation – from an Industrial Centre to the Post-socialist Margin

[2017 – 2018]

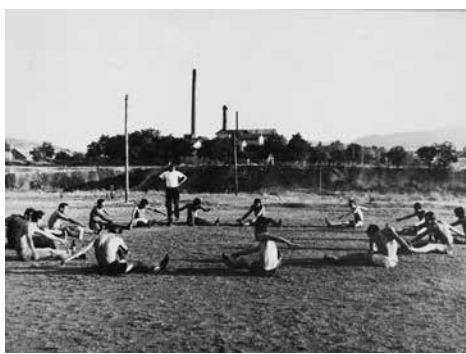
*The petroleum lamp, which replaced the mediaeval tallow candle, represented the greatest achievement of capitalist civilisation that reached those regions” – Drago Krndija, *The Industrialisation of Yugoslavia*, 1961 (a description of the necessity of industrialising the undeveloped parts of Yugoslavia).*

When using the term “the industrial centre of Montenegro”, it is not necessary to point out which city that is. Permanently marked by this designation, Nikšić will remain an example of speedy general development, but at the same time also a symbol of the ruination of the country in which it reached its development peak.

The ravages of World War Two necessitated a renewal of the country. The position of Montenegro was very difficult because of the bad state of its industry and economy in the period between the great wars.

When it came to providing the conditions for the general development of





Montenegro, Nikšić was selected to become its industrial centre. It was necessary to embark on industrial development “as a method of breaking the old economic structure and finding new points of supporting a dynamic long-term development” (Vukčević, 1983: 14).

The Five-year Development Plan of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY), which was passed on 28 April 1947, inspired the Assembly of the People’s Republic (PR) of Montenegro to pass, on 12 July 1947, the Law on the Five-year Development Plan of the People’s Economy of Montenegro in the 1947-1951 Period, which laid the foundations for the industrialisation of the Republic, and introduced “a process of rapid industrialisation” in Nikšić (Perošević, 2005: 1).

From 1951 onwards, the building of industrial facilities got under way. Apart

from a brewery (which was founded in the 19th century), a bauxite mine (1948), the metal-processing company *Metalac* (employing 800 workers), a construction company (1979, 3,000 workers), the wood-processing company *Javorak*, the Agricultural-Trading Combine Nikšić, the textile company *Koni* (360 workers) and the energy producer *Gornja Zeta* (1951), what turned out to be the most important development in Nikšić was the building of the Ironworks *Boris Kidrič*.

The positioning of the Ironworks in Nikšić was connected with the events of 1948 and the pressure exerted on Yugoslavia by the USSR. “The unfavourable strategic locations of the ironworks of that time, with the exception of the one in Zenica, form the military-strategic point of view, imposed the need for building such a black metallurgy facility inland”

(Perošević, 2007: 122). In keeping with this, the Government of the FPRY, on 16 December 1950, passed a decision on establishing the Ironworks in Nikšić as a state-owned economic company of general state import.

The Ironworks was an essential project viewed from absolutely all the socio-political aspects of the situation at the time. "This Ironworks should enable the industrialisation of Montenegro, which is the least economically developed region" (Krndija, 1961: 98). The building began in February 1951, and the first machine shops started operating in 1956. In the 1970's, the Ironworks employed 4,900 workers, and in 1988 the number of workers was 7,460. In terms of the average number of family members at the time, almost 30,000 inhabitants gravitated towards the Ironworks.

The Ironworks determined the entire socio-economic development of the city, and thereby the increase in the number of inhabitants. "In 1948 the city of Nikšić had 6,013 inhabitants, and in 2003, there were 59,179 of them, which means that the number of inhabitants increased by 9.8 times in the meantime" (Mičković, 2014: 703).

"In 1970, industry accounted for 70% of the domestic product" (Mičković, *ibid.*). The economic development was more intensive than in other parts of Montenegro, as evidenced by the fact "that the Municipality of Nikšić took up 14.95% of the territory of Montenegro, and in 1976 it accounted for 17.6% of the overall income of the Republic" (Mičković, *ibid.*).

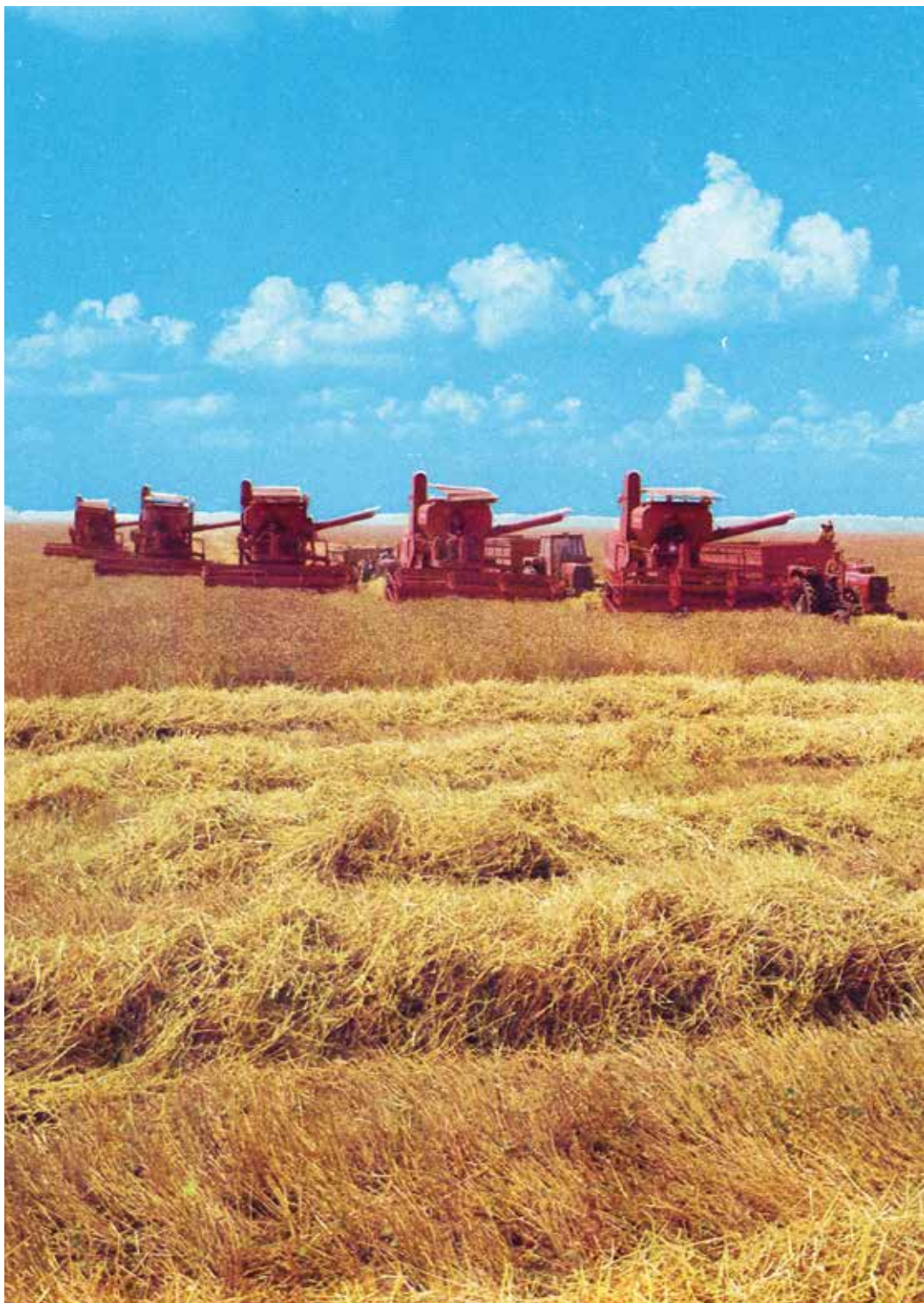
"The successes in developing industry and other branches of the economy created a solid basis for the entry of the masses in cultural life" (Krndija, 1961: 273). The importance of culture was best reflected in the continued organisation of the Painters' Colony by the Ironworks, "an exceptionally affirmative event through which

the Ironworks enriched its artistic collection" (Martinović, 1985: 318). The fate of this collection remains unknown, for the entire archive of the Ironworks has been destroyed by the present owners.

The current situation indicates that the era of industrialisation will remain an unparalleled moment of the development of Nikšić. The industrial potential has been destroyed through interest-based policies and suspect privatisations, and there seems to be no discernible way of reviving it. There may have been a chance for preserving the local industry by restructuring it in accordance with the newly emerging needs, but the dissipation of the working class and the appearance of neo-liberal political structures have contributed to that possibility not being realised.

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MILICA LUPŠOR

# The Industrial-agricultural Combine Servo Mihalj from Zrenjanin – the Greatest Food Manufacturer in the SFRY

[2017 — 2018]



The *Servo Mihalj* combine was founded in 1953 through a fusion of the Sugar Factory and the Starch Industry (the latter was in the process of being built). Until 1962, it operated under the name of *The Food and Pharmaceutical Industry Combine Servo Mihalj*.

Over the subsequent years and decades, the Industrial-agricultural Combine (IAC) *Servo Mihalj* increased the number of organisations it comprised, whether those were already existing firms or newly founded ones in the Municipality of Zrenjanin and the surrounding municipalities (a total of 53 settlements), and also in the Municipality of Kotor (Montenegro), where, within the framework of solidarity-type cooperation, money was invested for the purpose of draining the marshy terrain in Radanovići, of which a part was used for agricultural production, while another part was turned into construction land.

*Servo Mihalj* was the greatest food manufacturer in the SFRY, comprising 35 work units divided into four groups:

- agricultural farms dealing with the basic production of food and raw materials for processing (around 300,000 hectares of land being tilled, of which 53% was socially owned and 47% comprised small private farms that were collaborators of *Servo Mihalj*, mostly producing grain, sunflower seeds, sugar beet, soya), a large number of cattle- and poultry-raising farms, including the Fish-raising Farm in Ečka, which had the greatest carp catch in the country;
- processing factories (slaughterhouses, breweries, a winery, a distillery, sugar refineries, oil refineries, a dairy farm, a flour mill and baking industry, a starch factory...);
- factories established through *Servo Mihalj* funds that did not produce food: the pharmaceutical factory Jugoremedija, the cosmetics factory Luxol, the tannery Toza Marković, the tobacco factory DIZ, and the centre for processing seeds Banat seme;
- other work organisations such as the Technological-agricultural Institute, Traffic and Transport, the Thermal and Heating Power Plant, the graphic design company Budućnost [Future], the Internal Bank, SM-Commerce, Vojvodina (a hotel and tourist organisation)...

A number of joint services coordinated the entire system. The joint organs comprised the Workers' Council, as the highest management body, made up of delegates from all the basic organisations of associated labour (BOAL's), as well as delegates from work organisations and work communities that did not have a BOAL. The Workers' Council committees were the executive organs. There was also the Workers' Self-management Control Committee.

The following data from the year 1988 indicate the magnitude of the *Servo Mihalj* Combine:

- the Combine employed 20,802 workers on a full-time basis, had around 22,000 small-scale agricultural collaborators and a couple of thousand part-time employees doing various kinds of occasional work (seeding, picking, digging, warehousing...);
- there existed various funds into which a lot of money was channelled: the Business Fund, the Housing Fund, the Reserve Fund, the Underdeveloped Areas Fund. In the course of one year only, around 300 flats were built and given to Combine employees to use; alternatively, employees were granted funds to have individual housing facilities (houses) built;
- 380 primary school pupils received grants, as did 152 secondary school pupils and 57 advanced school and university students (including Master's Degree and doctoral students);
- over 10,000 workers participated in amateur sporting activities, there existed the Cultural-artistic Association *Servo Mihalj* with various sections (the folklore section, the music section, the writers' and poets' section...). The Centre for Education and Culture organised special education courses for the employees, youth schools, seminars, concerts, visits to theatrical performances, sporting events... The Combine supported various events in the city and its vicinity, shooting films, some sports organisation and clubs, and the like;
- the Combine produced 70% of starch, 15% of sugar, 20% of vegetable oil, 6 % of meat and meat products in Yugoslavia, and was in the 24th place (according to one survey in the 18th place) measured by the company income.

Several holiday resorts were built for *Servo Mihalj* employees (Vrnjačka Banja, Promajna, Dobro Vode, Kranj, Poreč), where they could go on holiday with their families under a favourable financial arrangement.

The *Servo Mihalj* management intended to expand the company operations in the sphere of food production onto the regions of Africa and the Middle East, in cooperation with our companies (*Zmaj* and *IMT*) and some foreign ones, under very favourable conditions: *Servo Mihalj* was supposed to provide support to them for the purpose of increasing the area of seeded land and the average yield per hectare in return for oil. The project was never realised on account of the decision to break the *IAC Servo Mihalj* up into work units in 1990, and its eventual closure.

Within the framework of the Combine there was the Technological-agricultural Institute, which operated as a research centre for developing and improving production, and its status as a research institution was recognised both domestically and abroad.

All the payment operations within the framework of the Combine were mainly carried out through the Internal Bank and the Panonska Bank. Due to the pressure exerted by commercial banks and the idea of founding a bank that would be a kind of solidarity-oriented development bank, these two banks, which had invested their funds in the founding of the Vojvođanska Bank (as majority shareholders) were closed down. The consequence of this was the collapse of the entire system of solidarity-oriented investments, business operations, covering current losses due to weather conditions, covering deficits in payment operations with foreign partners and the like, for the Vojvođanska Bank operated as a commercial bank, not as a solidarity-based development fund.



Photograph from the publication: *IPK Servo Mihalj, Služba marketinga, Turistička štampa, Belgrade, 1978*

The Combine ceased to exist in 1990, having been broken up into individual companies, which deteriorated very fast, went bankrupt, were sold at shamefully low prices, got closed down. After the privatisation, the only firms operating successfully are the oil refinery *Dijamant* and *Mlekara* [Dairy Products].

In this way, around 15,000 jobs were lost, as was cooperation with 22,000 small-scale collaborators, who had been given the opportunity of having secure sources of financing their production and guaranteed buy-up prices. For that reason, villages became empty, so that those who own farms and are capable of initiating a new production cycle are rare.

The closing down of *Servo Mihalj* influenced the development of the entire Central Banat region, and the high agricultural yields previously achieved, which were near the top European and world values, have never been attained again.



BOJAN MRĐENVIĆ

# We Create Our Path Walking

[2012 — ]



In the form of a visual archive, the work presents an artistic research connected to the town of Kutina and the *Petrokemija* factory, which manufactures mineral fertilisers. The material provides insight into the history of industrial production in Kutina and its surroundings from the time of industrialisation to the present day. Kutina represents the type of a small Croatian town which, during the course of industrial modernisation after the Second World War, increased and experienced prosperity. The space of the town and its surroundings, as it exists today, was created through founding the industry for processing mineral fertilisers, which determined the development of the entire territory referred to above: not just the production infrastructure, but also the establishment of the housing infrastructure, the organisation of life in the town, as well as the transformation of the natural environment.

One of the greatest Croatian companies, still owned by the state, is on a long



path towards privatisation. Despite the attempts of various local establishments to have the factory privatised, the concerted action of the united trade union workers' front has prevented each attempt of that kind until today. The trade union activities of the workers of *Petrokemija* represent a rare example of successfully protecting workers' rights and preventing privatisation.

It is not solely a local story; the story of Kutina is positioned within a broader set of geographic, socio-political and historical circumstances. The modernist social and cultural transformation with a view to raising the social standard is founded on the material transformation of infrastructure through industrialisation. The coming into being of the second Yugoslavia represents a historical victory over the colonial and peripheral position in which the state served primarily as a space for the exploitation of raw materials. The pro-

ject of socialist modernisation resulted in an in-depth change of what was until then an agrarian, traditional and economically underdeveloped society, and those transformations are very visible when we look at the examples provided by small towns. The capitalist system that was abandoned then is being restituted now through a reintroduction of private ownership. The question that imposes itself is: for whose benefit are cities being developed now, who has the power and control over urban space? In a period of exploitation and increasing inequality produced by neoliberal capitalism throughout the world, we should ask ourselves who has the right to nature, that is, to natural resources. In the process of producing mineral fertilisers, *Petrokemija* accounts for a quarter of the expenditure of gas in the whole of Croatia, which represents an important economic factor in the context of energy sources.



The present moment represents a long and uncertain phase for the industry and for the town. *Petrokemija* employed 3,000 people, which is one-fifth of the inhabitants of Kutina, so the question that remains is what the life of the town will look like if it closes down. It is uncertain in which direction the town may develop at the time of an economic crisis and de-industrialisation if all of its prosperity was ensured through industrial production. The entire production of food and agricultural production in the country depends on the existence of this industry.

The visual narrative is the result of years of gathering archive material and photographic work in the field. It combines various types of photographs that were made in various periods with varying intentions. The historic overview ends at the present moment, that is, proceeds from the present moment. We use history as a tool for understanding the processes

that constitute our social and economic reality. We imagine the future as well as the past from the present moment, we select what is to enter our memory, what place is to become referential. At the post-socialist moment of a powerful historical revisionism, such a narrative represents a shift away from the dominant historical narratives. The aim of establishing such a narrative is not to contribute to exact historiography, but to explore the ideas that constitute the foundations of the transformation and transition processes, the ideas that, for the purpose of a particular vision of modernisation, progress and development, bring about changes of the material reality. In this context, the archive may serve as a stimulus for political imagination: how to ponder one's own position and role at the moment of the current crisis, and how to ponder the decisions that influence the further directions of the path we are on.

Црвена е крвта што во  
 Црвена е молњата што  
 Црвено е небото, што в  
 Црвен ни е барјакот, шт

ПРЕС НА СКМ

ено единство

Страна 2

ОДЛИЧЕН ТРИМЕСЕЧЕН  
 БИЛАНС

Добивка

6,2 милиони

ИЗБОР  
 НА О

М.

И КОД ШИРОКА ПРЕНУ ИЛО

Workers' newspapers *Astibo*, first issue published in 1973.



FILIP JOVANOVSKI

## Textile and Sorrow

A Newspaper of the Working People as a (Political) Space for Collective Action

[2018]



The interest in Štip started with contradictory feelings – on the one hand, a rich cultural past, and on the other, a systematic destruction of culture in the “dark dictatorship period” (2006-2017) through the strengthening of patriotic and strictly Orthodox conservative feelings.

What was left from the strong and powerful textile industry in Štip, as the leading industrial branch in this town, was the privatization sieve, fragmenting the big companies Makedonka and Astibo into hundreds of private manufactures, thus drastically changing the labour relations.

It is precisely this topic – the exploitative conditions in which textile workers in Štip work – that first echoed in the work of the artist Filip Jovanovski. After half a year of informal cooperation with several textile workers and activists, on 1st July 2016 the Centre for Art and Culture *Textile* was founded in Štip, first as a two-week collaborative artistic project by



Workers' newspapers *Astibo*, first issue published in 1973

Jovanovski, in cooperation with the organisation *The Silent Majority*, featuring the civic initiative *Glasno/Loud* (Kristina Ampeva, Goran Trajkov, Denis Ampev, Elena Trajkov-Arseva, Laze Arsov), Kristina Kostova, Kristijan Panev, Vladimir Lukaš, the curator of the project Biljana Tanurovska-Kjulavkovski and the expert associate Ivana Vaseva. Conceived as a collaborative artistic process – a work in which the establishment and the creation of new relations, as well as collective work with a view to spreading the visibility of a particular problem through an artistic charge, is what matters – the programme included discussions on workers' rights and forms of trade unions, workshops for children, discussion meetings, music events and so on, and it tried to encourage a platform for reflection and sharing.

However, the main activity of the centre is the work of the organization *The Silent Majority*, subsequently transformed into *Loud Textile Worker*, which tries to promote, encourage and analyse the rights and the ways of organisation of textile workers in Štip and its region, in order to improve their labour and human rights. The long-term goal of the creation of this centre is for it to be a space where textile workers would meet and would gradually articulate and organise their struggle against the sordid, exploitative conditions in which they work. The transition from socialist to capitalist relations introduced a change in the working conditions: the workers work overtime, very often on weekends and holidays, without any financial compensation, under the dictatorship of the norm for the purpose of achieving higher production quotas, the monthly income is very low, below standard, and most often the attitude to and the treatment of the workers is below any humane level, with an element of strong psychological violence. Some of the insults thrown at the workers are as follows:

“Have you come to stand there like a dummy or to work? It is me who feeds you, you ungrateful creatures! If you were animals, you'd understand more! Today, you work till five because you're incompetent! If I throw you out of here, you'll starve!” etc. Because of the long working hours, they often have no time for their private and social obligations.

The new artistic project *Textile and Sorrow* by the artist Filip Jovanovski, in collaboration with the curator Ivana Vaseva, manifests itself in the form of a newspaper edited collectively with workers and activists from the *Loud Textile Worker* initiative as a (political) space for emancipation and collective action for better human and workers' rights.

The newspaper constitutes a historical (regarding its content and structure) reference to the legacy of the cultural life of the *Astibo* factory in Štip, which was reported on in the *Astibo* newspaper, published in the 1973-1993 period.

The work is further enriched by handmade bags, produced by *Loud Textile Worker*, and posters of several cover pages of the newspaper *Astibo*.



Photograph from the opening of the gallery September 1st 1984

CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER  
OF MONTENEGRO

## The Non-Aligned Countries' Art Gallery "Josip Broz Tito"



The Non-Aligned Countries' Art Gallery "Josip Broz Tito" commenced its work on 1st September 1984, the Non-Alignment Day, which pointed to its primary orientation of channelling its activities into improving and developing cultural cooperation, first and foremost among non-aligned and developing countries.

Three years earlier, on 17th December 1981, the Municipal Assembly of Titograd, acting on a proposal submitted by the Presidency of the Municipal Conference of the Socialist Association, passed the Decision on Establishing the Gallery, appointed the Gallery Council, electing Veljko Milatović, the then President of the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Montenegro, as its Chairman, and also electing 49 prominent cultural and socio-political workers as Council members.

Observing the principles of non-alignment and bearing in mind the significance of the future institution, it was decided that the Gallery's location should be the representative premises of the Petrovićs' Palace in Kruševac Park.



Unknown Author, *Bridges*, silk tapestry, 30,5x56cm, North Korea

The activities of the Gallery were essentially determined by the founder's decision, as a result of which the Gallery's work was oriented towards collecting representative fine arts works made by artists from non-aligned and developing countries, organising exhibitions, meetings and symposia dealing with contemporary fine arts, providing studios for residential visits of artists from non-aligned countries and printing publications dealing with related topics.

Apart from collecting art objects, forming collections, as well as a permanent display, the Gallery's activities were also aimed at organising many solo and group exhibitions, as well as competitions for documentary TV films about the art and culture of non-aligned countries.

During the course of its existence, the Non-Aligned Countries' Art Gallery "Josip Broz Tito" successfully fulfilled its programmatic tasks envisaged by its Statute, which resulted in the formation of a significant collection encompassing art ob-

jects from more than 50 non-aligned and developing countries. The art exhibits that were collected are very diverse, ranging from works that reflect the traditional and cultural values of the areas they originate from to numerous works of contemporary art.

The Gallery organised numerous solo and group exhibitions of diverse stylistic orientations and fine arts poetics.

In Harare, during the course of the 8th Summit Meeting of Non-Aligned Countries, the Gallery organised an exhibition of works from its collection, which was subsequently shown in Lusaka, Dar es Salaam, Delhi and Kairo as well. Some thematic exhibitions were shown in Egypt, Algeria and Syria, while the exhibition organised on the occasion of the 9th Summit Meeting of Non-Aligned Countries, which was held in Belgrade, attracted a lot of attention.

After more than a decade of successful operation, due to the changed social circumstances in our country and in the



Elba Jimenez, *Solentiname*, oil on canvas, 57x81,5 cm, Nicaragua

world, on 4th April 1995, based on a decision passed by the Assembly of Montenegro, the Non-Aligned Countries' Art Gallery "Josip Broz Tito" was merged with the Republican Cultural Centre, thus forming the Centre of Contemporary Art of Montenegro, an institution of special significance for Montenegro. For the purpose of more efficient monitoring and record keeping, the Centre of Contemporary Art of Montenegro classified the existing museum exhibits that had made up the Gallery collection into four separate collections, namely, those from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe.

The Centre possesses a detailed documentary archive, which has been methodologically processed in accordance with museum rules within the framework of

the established collections, wherein the art exhibits and their authors are analysed and presented in temporal, stylistic and factographic terms.

Apart from the fact that we may access a lot of information studying the collection of the Non-Aligned Countries' Art Gallery "Josip Broz Tito", we can conclude that it clearly reflects a page of the history of Montenegro which this Republic shared with the other Republics of the SFRY. That is a page markedly characterised by the seal of culture embodied in the works of art collected from non-aligned countries.

Nada Baković

Stills from *Comrade Women*,  
Doplgenger, Video (Found-footage), 6 min 10 sec, 2018





DOPLGENDER

# Comrade Women

[2018]



The work of the Doplgenger [Doppelgänger] duo is based on archive footage from the history of Yugoslav cinema. It begins with the words spoken by the severed head of Milena Dravić in the movie *W. R. Mysteries of the Organism*. She is on the other side of the system that, regardless of its ideological designation, has manifested the characteristics of a patriarchy until now. In such a system, some sort of a representation and identity of woman were the only possibility. As opposed to the totality and completeness, the linear articulation and discourse of man, this fragmented experience of woman and her butchered body will tell another, new and intermittent story.





Stills from *Comrade Women*,  
Doplgenger, Video (Found-footage), 6 min 10 sec, 2018



CRVENA

# The Contradictions of the Break-up: The Working People, Organised Holidays and Indivisible Remains

[2017 — 2018]

One of the special characteristics of the system of socialist Yugoslavia was the concept of “social ownership”. In other socialist countries, the issue of the right to private ownership of the means of production was resolved by introducing the state ownership of them. In Yugoslavia at that time, on the other hand, there was no explicit state ownership, as a matter of principle, ownership belonged to a “firm” articulated through various production, administrative and political organisations. The gradual change of the social ownership paradigm and the transition to the capitalist form of it began in 1988. The transition was mainly completed by the early 1990’s through the normalisation of “state ownership” and private ownership of the means of production, when socialist Yugoslavia became a thing of the past and newly established states came onto the stage of history. Even today, more than two decades later, it is difficult to estimate completely the severity of the consequences that this transition entailed, in view of





the fact that it affected all the institutional and social structures. Companies disappeared, as did machines, work collectives, numerous social organisations, as well as the entire additional structure that relied on them.

Within the framework of this research, we shall show one of the aspects of this transformation by reviewing the case of the former workers' resorts – places intended for the collective organised holidays of the working people of Yugoslavia, built all along the Adriatic coast during the period from the 1950's to the 1980's. Our analysis shows the complexity and the scope of this transformation, as well as its consequences for the working people, who were, in principle, the bearers of the former socio-political order. Focusing on the example of the former workers' resorts, we follow several important distinctive characteristics of socialist Yugoslavia: the institute of social ownership and the network of various self-management organisations, and we show that the disso-

lution of the federation – materialised, phantom-like, in the remnants of those resorts – still has not been effectively brought to a close.

We deal with the long and dynamic history of organised holidays as a mass practice, with its institutional and social form, whose disintegration was brought about by the disintegration of the Yugoslav political community. We review the history of the development of mass, organised tourism and generally the democratisation of tourism in socialist Yugoslavia until the 1980's, when this form of holidaying was pushed into the background by commercial tourism. In that sense, what is of importance is the actual context, as well as the dynamics of the establishment of workers' resorts as the institutional expression of the systematic development of social tourism among workers, and the complex network of actors, that is, various socio-political organisations that were involved in managing this sector.



In our research, we focus our attention onto the situation of today, onto the broken fragments, the remnants of that political and legal gap where the former workers' resorts, which were claimed by social organisations from the former Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, are positioned. Using the example of the fate of the workers' resorts located in Croatia that are claimed by B&H trade unions, we shall reconstruct and analyse the events, processes and causes that have resulted in B&H trade unions being in a position to still have to claim their property, more than two decades after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. We explore the complexity of the newly created situation (transition, privatisation, succession, unresolved legal-property and bilateral relations and the like) focusing on the example of the Municipality of Gradac, located on the Makarska riviera, which had as many as

18 resorts and hotels whose owners were from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia before the 1990's. Today, those are dilapidated facilities prone to ruin, occupying attractive locations by the sea, whose ownership is still the subject of inter-state litigation, and also of legal disputes in B&H, whose resolution is not in sight.

All photographs: Majlinda Hodža, from the series *Grand Hotel*, 2016-2018





MAJLINDA HOXHA

# Art in Grand Hotel

[2016 — 2018]

*The Grand Hotel* is a project that investigates one of Prishtina's most iconic landmarks. It is a photographic endeavour that aims to document a unique example of the region's socialist heritage.

The Grand Hotel Prishtina was completed in 1978 and was socially owned enterprise and a public asset of the Yugoslav state. During Tito's reign the building was considered a lavish five-star hotel and hosted Tito on numerous occasions in his own personal suite. The venue however quickly declined as a result of the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990's. During the late 1990s and especially during 1999 the Hotel was used as a military HQ for paramilitary troops. In the conflict's aftermath the hotel was privatized and partially refurbished only to change hands once again. As it stands the building is currently in liquidation and its fate remains to be determined by the Privatization Agency of Kosovo.

This turbulent history is embedded within the hotel's aesthetic form. As such the building represents a microcosm of Kosovo's political and economic transition. These historical events have been

materialized in the hotel's visual juxtaposition: the socialist décor is a stark contrast to the building's contemporary refurbishment. The themes embodied in this aesthetic investigation not only reflect the modern history of Kosovo but more broadly of the Eastern bloc.

My research also investigates and documents the art within the hotel's various lobbies and rooms. The hotel's collection includes various Modernist paintings, mosaics, tapisery and sculptures that were commissioned by local artists throughout the 70s and 80s. A significant portion of these artworks have been lost due to the buildings precarious administration. The research that I have undertaken aims to document the hotel's remaining collection. My photographic documentation (Medium Format) of the site, investigates the refurbishment of the socialist architecture and the effects that such remodeling has had to the hotel's character. These photographs not only signal a change in taste but a fundamental shift in architectural philosophy.







Photo: Kurs

KURS

# From Text To Exhibition Didascalies: How To Visualize Research

[2018]

KURS's primary task was to translate the theoretical, analytical and archive content, produced and gathered during the course of researches conducted for the exhibition „We built cities for you“, into visual language and a coherent representational whole.

A collage approach was chosen as a way to express as clearly as possible the thematic complexity and variability of the given material, itself dominantly textual. In order to simplify the content as much as possible, thus allowing a clearer reading and establishing a connection between the researches, the overall installation and composition have been derived in four levels. The first background plane is comprised of selected archive photographs representing the circumstances, people and infrastructure from the socialist period. This level is presented as rasterized and pale, almost invisible, constructing a

frieze. The key sentences, clearly and unequivocally conveying the message of the researches, have been written in the second plane, which also contains the relevant statistical data. The third layer is placed on frames, containing parts of research, as well as printed archive material (posters, photographs). The fourth and last layer consists of objects and artefacts standing unattached to the walls. The additional element connecting and contextualizing all of the researches are the printed pages of the Sarajevo „Oslobodjenje“ („Liberation“) newspaper, directly relevant to the themes of research.

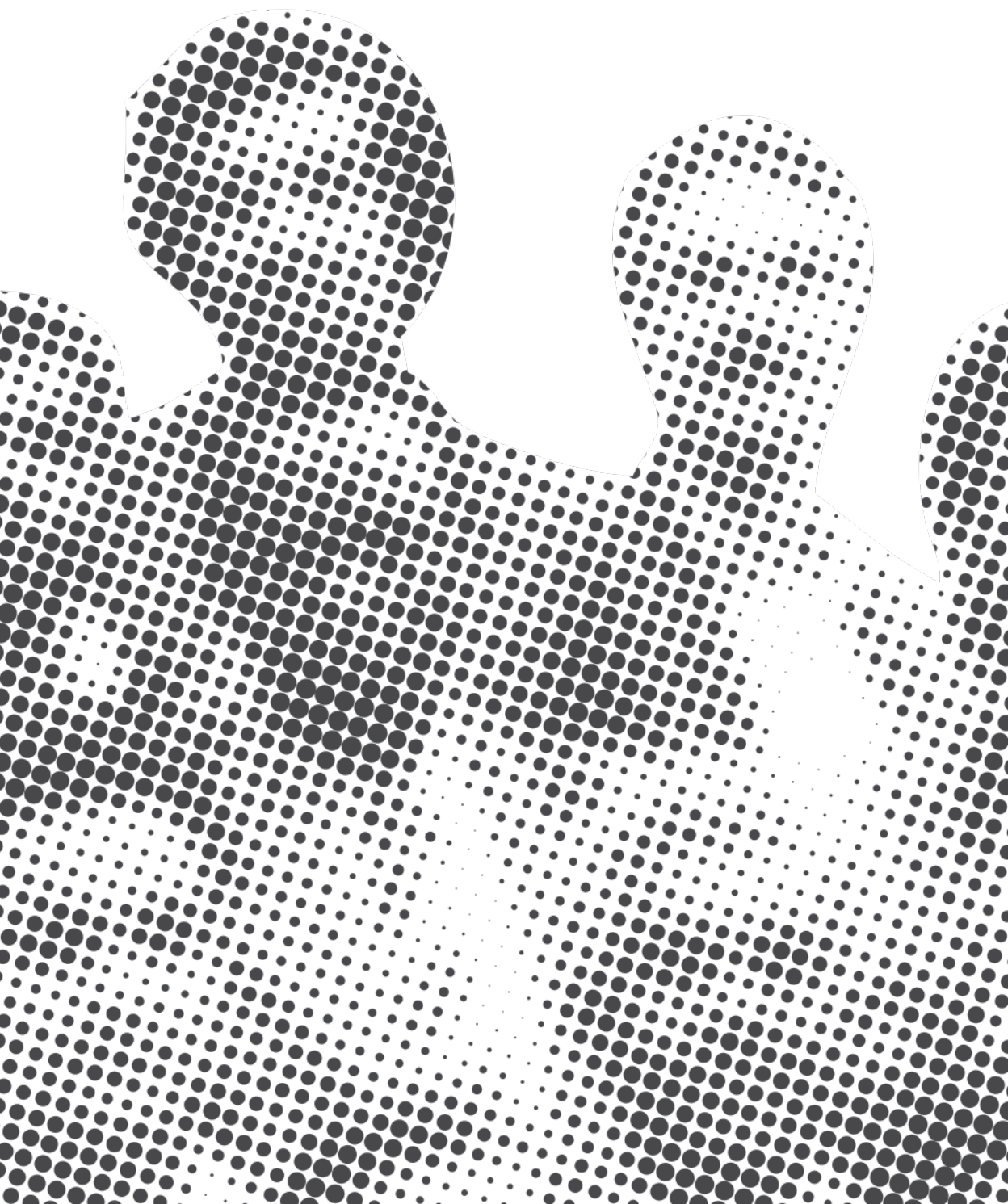
The interplay of different materials, subtle variations in printing paper, hand written and printed text, puts a further emphasis on the contradictions of Yugoslav socialism, which this exhibition chooses to talk about.





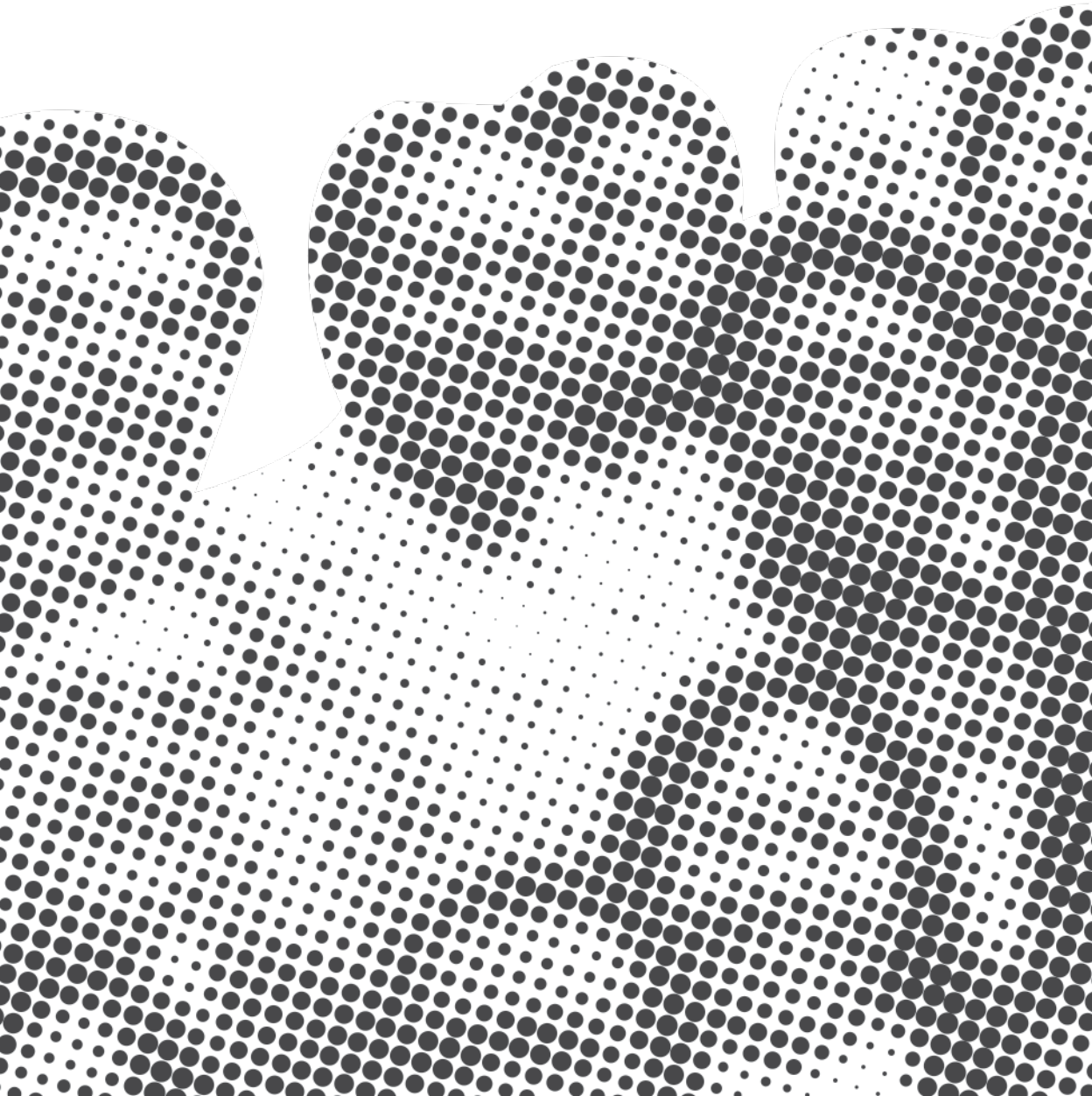
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# Biographies



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**Domagoj Mihaljević** (Zagreb, 1983) is economist, journalist and political activist. He studied law and economy, did bachelor and postgraduate studies in economy at Faculty of Economy in Zagreb. His texts and essays cover topics related to politics, history and economy, mostly related to Yugoslav past and Post-Yugoslav present. His articles are published in *Zarez*, *Le monde diplomatique* (Croatian edition), regional media portals *LeftEast* and *Bilten*, and Austrian economic journal *Kurswechsel*.

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**Artan Sadiku** is a theorist and activist from Skopje. His primary interests are theories of the subject, feminism and radical practices in politics and arts. He writes and published in many international journals and advocates for political mobilization beyond ethno-national formations, resistance to the neoliberal instruments and politics and a common Balkan alternative to them.

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**Mario Reljanović** is an associate professor at the Law Faculty of the Union University in Belgrade and head of the Legal Clinic for Labor Law at the same faculty. He works in the fields of labour and social rights, human rights and discrimination, and legal informatics. He has published dozens of papers in these fields to date. He collaborates with several civil society organizations.

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**Boris Postnikov** was born in 1979 in Split. He publishes essays, newspaper comments and literary criticism in the regional media. He is the author of the books *Post-Yugoslav Literature?* (2012) and *Several Messages of Our Sponsors* (2013). Since

2016, he has worked as an editor with the Zagreb weekly *Novosti*, prior to that he had been the Editor-in-Chief of the Zagreb cultural bi-weekly *Zarez* (2009-2013) and the programme *A Lexicon of Post-Yugoslav Literature*, broadcast by Croatian Radio's Third Programme (2013-2016). He lives in Zagreb.

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**Lidija Krienzer-Radojević** is a PhD student at the Kunst Universitaet Linz. She analyses the paths and modalities of the transformations that have taken place within the cultural sphere in post-socialist Slovenia. Her research fields of interest are cultural policy, the social embeddedness of art/cultural production, the formation of the sphere of culture under neoliberal conditions.

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**Ana Podvršič** is a PhD candidate at the University of Ljubljana and the University Paris-13. Her dissertation is about the postsocialist transition in Slovenia. Her research interests are critical international political economy, institutionalist political economy, the development of capitalism in postsocialist countries, the European integration process.

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**Snježana Ivčić** is a doctoral student at the Faculty of Political Sciences of Zagreb University, the Department of Public Policies and Development, and is particularly interested in the health care policy. She has been a member of the Basis for Workers' Initiative and Democratisation since 2015, and has been participating in the research *The Continuity of Social Conflicts in Croatia 1988-1991* since 2013.

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**Jasna Račić** is a contributor to the Peace Studies programme of the Centre for

Peace Studies in Zagreb. She has been participating in the research *The Continuity of Social Conflicts in Croatia 1988-1991* since 2013. She obtained a MSc Degree in sociology in 2014.

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**Sven Cvek** is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of American Studies of the English Department at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. He has been participating in the project *The Continuity of Social Conflicts in Croatia 1988-1991* since 2014. He is a contributor to the research project *The Cultural History of Capitalism: Britain, America, Croatia* (The Croatian Science Foundation).

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**Ivan Radenković** is a theoretician and activist. He received his Master's degree in Philosophy at the University of Novi Sad. His current interests revolve around: marxism, critique of political economy, history of economic ideas, class theory, industrial politics, trade union's history and pension systems. He is a member of the collective *Gerusija* and a part of the editorial board of Journal for theoretical practices *Stvar*. He published a research *Foreign Direct Investments in Serbia*, in Serbian and English. He also translates from English and Slovenian; composes, plays and produces music.

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**Maja Solar** holds a doctoral degree in Philosophy. Her research work revolves around the political theory. She is translating from French and English, as well as writing both poetry and prose. She is a member of the *Gerusia* collective, left-oriented theoretical and political organization, and one of the editors of the journal for theoretical practices *Stvar*. She published three books of poetry, and she is the author of more than thirty articles

from social theory. Her research fields of interest are marxism, feminism, socialism, property theories, luxury theory, anti-fascism and fascism, etc. Since 2015, she has been working as a translator for the Serbian edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

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**Vigan Nimani** was born in 1981 in Prishtina, Kosovo. He lives and works in Prishtina. He studied there at the Academy of Fine Arts Prishtina, and received his BFA in 2005.

Selected solo exhibitions: 2017 *Properties of the Undeveloped*, the Motrat Gallery, Prishtina; 2011, *Are You a Tourist or a Traveller*, the Stacion Centre for Contemporary Art, Prishtina. Selected group exhibitions: 2017, *Internet Disco*, Van Zijll Langhout / Contemporary Art, Amsterdam; 2016, *Just Hanging Around*, the Centre for Openness and Dialogue, Tirana; 2012, *Aftermath*, the National Museum of Slovenia, Ljubljana, etc.

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**Iskra Krstić** is an activist, independent researcher in the sphere of critical urban studies and a reporter of the Internet portal masina.rs. She obtained her Master's Degree at the Faculty of Architecture of Belgrade University in 2009, and another one at the Faculty of Political Sciences in 2013. She is a doctoral student at the Faculty of Political Sciences at Belgrade University. Her primary topic of interest is the urban development of Belgrade in the postsocialist period. She has published academic and newspaper articles and translations on her home portal and in a number of papers.

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**Filip Jovanovski** is a visual artist and civil activist. He completed his postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Fine Arts, the Department of Painting, in Skopje in 2012.

He often uses a curatorial approach in his works and creates socially engaged projects, often working with local communities.

In 2016, he realised his durational project called CAC (Centre for Art and Culture) TEXTILE in Štip, where he realised, together with textile workers, a two-week programme designed for their needs.

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**Ivana Vaseva** is a curator of projects that are often interdisciplinary and almost always collaborative and engaging, i.e. she confronts places of desires, contests established relations and questions the established ways of production and perception. She lives and works in Skopje, and jointly with the artist Filip Jovanovski manages the organization FRU – the Faculty of Things That Can't be Learned, and curates the AKTO Festival of contemporary arts. She is the editor of several books and author of many texts about contemporary visual arts.

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**Rade Pantić** is an art historian, holds a Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary studies of art and media theory on University of Arts in Belgrade. He is currently employed as a lecturer at Faculty for media and communications at Singidunum University in Belgrade. He is co-editor of publication *Contemporary marxist theory of art*. His interests include political economy, theories of ideology and film and visual arts theories.

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**Milivoje Krivokapić** was born on 10 August 1984 in Nikšić, the Socialist Republic of Montenegro, SFRY, where he attended primary school and grammar school. He continued his education at the Faculty of Law of the University of Montenegro. After graduation, he worked as a public

administration trainee and continued his professional engagement in a number of non-governmental organisations, where he still works today. He is one of the founders and the Executive Manager of the Cultural Centre PUNKT – Nikšić, and a columnist (still trying to become one) of a Montenegrin information portal. His interests are directed towards studies of law, culture, art, social conditions and policies. He is an antifascist and a heretic.

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**Milica Lupšor** (1963) lives in Ečka, near Zrenjanin (Vojvodina, Serbia). She is a technician in the sphere of biochemistry and molecular biology, a member of the precariat workforce and an activist of the Women's Work Rights Association *Roza* from Zrenjanin and the Left Summit of Serbia. She is the co-author of the documentary film *Obrani berači* [The Picked Pickers] (2014), dealing with seasonal agricultural workers in Vojvodina, and of the publication *Žene govore* [Women Speak] (2017), dealing with the working conditions of female workers in Serbia.

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**Bojan Mrđenović** (1987) graduated in 2015 from the Department of Film and TV Recording at the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb, where he works as an assistant lecturer today. He deals with film and photography. In his photographic work, he deals with critical observation and recording the social reality. Focusing on the context of postsocialism in his close surroundings, he explores how various ideas of progress influence the transformation of material space, how politics and economy shape social relations and individual experiences.

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**Doplgenger** is an artistic duo made up of Isidora Ilić and Boško Prostran.

Doplgenger lives and works in Belgrade. Doplgenger deals with the relationship between art and politics by means of re-examining the moving pictures regime and the mode of their reception. Relying on the tradition of experimental film and video, Doplgenger intervenes on already existing media products or produces in the form of expanded film. Even though the moving picture is their basic medium, their practice also involves text, spatial installations, performances, lectures and discussions.

[www.doplgenger.org](http://www.doplgenger.org)

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**Ines Tanović** was born in 1984 in Mostar, B&H. Graduated from the Department of History of the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, where she also obtained a MSc Degree. In addition to this, she obtained a Master's Degree at the European Regional Master's Degree Study of Democracy and Human Rights in Sarajevo. She has published scientific papers in professional periodicals in Croatia and B&H. She works as a researcher and coordinator in Sarajevo's Society for Culture and Art *Crvena* [Red], and as an editor and reporter for Radio *Crvena antena* [Red Antenna].

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**Boriša Mraović** (1981) is a researcher, editor and organiser in the Society for Culture and Art *Crvena*, where he also contributes to other activities dedicated to education, documentation and artistic production. He has participated in a number research projects in various fields, including political representation, electoral systems, local government and political theory. He has published texts in international and local academic periodicals, in collections of papers and in popular magazines.

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**Tanja Vukša** studied sociology at Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade and holds MA in Gender Studies from Cultural studies and gender theory department at Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade. She is a member of CPE (Center for the Politics of Emancipation), Left Summit of Serbia and community center *October*.

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**Vladimir Simović** is a sociologist and activist. He is a member of the Center for the Politics of Emancipation. His research and theoretical work focuses on Yugoslav self-management and theory of remembrance. For seven years now he has been writing analysis for various online and printed media such as *Biznis i finansije*, *Bilten*, *Mašina*, etc. He was co-editor of several research publications, one of which is *Balance sheet – Contribution to the Analysis of Capitalist Restoration in Serbia* (2015). He is also a member of the social center *Oktober* and he actively participates in the work of Left Summit of Serbia.

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**Srdan Kovačević** was born in 1982 in Zagreb, where he completed his studies of film recording at the Academy of Dramatic Arts. Works as a freelance cameraman and photographer. Lives in Zagreb.

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**The Workers' Video Club – Zrenjanin** is a group of workers engaged in activist work and organising protests in Zrenjanin, gathered around the case of the *Jugoremedija* factory, following the initiative of Nebojša Popov, the Editor-in-Chief of the periodical *Republika* for many years, made their first documentary film in 2010, which is how the Workers' Video Club got under way. From the very start, the work of the Club was based on self-organisa-

tion, self-education and continual investigation of topics related to workers and society. In 2011, the Club organised the first festival of workers' documentary film in Zrenjanin, entitled *Long Live Work...* Five such festivals have been held so far, and the Club has produced 13 documentary films and a multitude of video recordings.

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**Irena Pejić** is a political sociologist and researcher. In her academic work and as an activist she focuses on the questions of changes in postsocialist period in countries of Yugoslavia, questions of new political frames emerging after socialism, including far right politics and nationalism. She conducted several researches on phenomena that characterized fall of Yugoslavia. She is currently on her P.h.D in sociology at Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade.

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**Majlinda Hodža** (born 1984) currently based in Prishtina/Kosovo. Besides her art practice she is currently the art editor at Kosovo 2.0 magazine. She received a B.F.A. in photography at Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design and her MFA from Elam School of Fine Art at Auckland University in 2008. Her most recent exhibitions include *The Whale That Was a Submarine* at Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest (2016), *This is not a palm tree* at Neurotitan Gallery, Berlin (2016). In 2017 she was in residency at Studio Salzamt, Linz (Austria) and in 2013 Hoxha was awarded the ISCP residency in New York, USA.

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**The KURS Association (Miloš Miletić i Mirjana Radovanović)** employs means of artistic production to reflect on the broader social problems and engages

through different visual forms, producing murals, illustrations and wall newspapers. The main course of KURS's work is the production of educational and informative visually shaped content, presented through an artistic form of expression. In their work KURS relies abundantly on research and archive materials.

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**Vida Knežević** is an art historian, curator, member of Kontekst collective whose work is based on a process of connecting critical theory and practice, the field of arts and culture with wider social effects. She is co-editor of the media portal masina.rs that deals with the production of social critique. Member of Left Summit of Serbia. At the moment, she is working on her PhD theses on the question of theory and practices of critical Left in the Yugoslav culture in the period between the World Wars.

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**Marko Miletić** is an art historian, curator, member of Kontekst collective and Left Summit of Serbia, co-editor of the media portal masina.rs. From 2007 to 2010, he was working on the Kontekst Gallery project. Apart from organizational and curatorial work in the fields of culture and media, he is active on the question of political organizing and in the struggles for labor rights in the mentioned spheres. He publishes critical texts in local and regional media.

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**Anica Stojanović** received her Bachelor degree with honors in Philosophy at the University of Novi Sad, and her Master's degree in Cultural Policy and Management at the University of Arts in Belgrade. From 2011 to 2016 she worked as a project manager at Youth Center CK13 and was a part of the editorial board of Masina

web magazine from its establishment until 2017. Currently works as a yoga instructor.

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**Andrew Hodges** is a social anthropologist currently working at the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies in Regensburg, Germany. He has published books on football fans as political actors in Croatia and on the political economy of science in Serbia, and is currently researching labour relations in the Uljanik shipyard in Croatia. He also works as a translator (Croatian/Serbian-English), with five years' experience in academic and general translation.

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**Bojan Krivokapić** (1985), writer. He published a short-story book *Lilith Running, Demons Stumbling* (2013), a poetry book *The Flight of the Cockroach* (2014) and a novel *Spring on the Road* (2017). He lives in Novi Sad. [bojankrivokapic.com](http://bojankrivokapic.com)

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**Jelena Lalatović** (Belgrade, 1994) is a women's rights activist and a feminist literary critic. She graduated from the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade at the Department of Comparative Literature and Literary Theory. She is currently in the second semester of PhD program at the Faculty. She is a member of the revolutionary socialist organization *Marks21*. Also, she is a member of the editorial board of portal *Mašina* and of *Bookvica – the Portal of Rebelled Readings*.

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**Novica I. Petrović** was born in Zemun (Serbia) in 1952. Finished grammar school in 1971 in Belgrade. Graduated from the English Department of the Faculty of Philology of Belgrade University in 1975. Defended his MA thesis entitled *The*

*Entropy Motif in the Work of Thomas Pynchon and J. G. Ballard* in 2001. Obtained his PhD degree in 2005, having defended the thesis *Man and the Universe in the Work of Arthur C. Clarke and Stanislaw Lem* at the Faculty of Philology of Belgrade University. Works at the Faculty of Philology of Belgrade University as an Associate Professor in British and American Cultural Studies.

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**Jelena Mandić** is a translator, interpreter and language teacher. She graduated from the Department of French language and literature at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, and received her Master's degree in Cultural Policy and Management at the University of Arts in Belgrade.

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**Andreja Mirić** (Beograd, 1979) is working in the fields of Graphic Design, Exhibition Design, Architecture, Video, Photography. Graduated from the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade. Collaborated with various cultural institutions and organisations: Museum of Yugoslavia, Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina, Students Cultural Center, House of Culture "Studentski grad", Kontekst Collective, Cultural Center Rex, Remont gallery, Dis-patch festival, Sehsuechte film festival and others.

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