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Historicizing the Left Alternative to Self-Management Socialism in the Yugoslav Centre and Periphery

Abstract

The article aims at answering the question regarding how to recognise the most problematic aspects of the Yugoslav late-socialist social contract through an analysis of left-wing social criticism, which in Slovenia gathered the greatest momentum at the time of the student movement in the early 1970s. Through a critical review of the writings about this phenomenon produced by its contemporaries, by the dominant cultural circles from the 1980s and 1990s, and, finally, after 2000, by historiography, the author illuminates the restrictive interpretive frameworks and proposes a broader, transnationally based approach to this problem. In this way, he attempts to envelop the wide gamut of leftist social criticism, which at times radically encroached upon the conventions of real self-management socialism, yet at the same time failed to establish itself as a viable alternative.

Key words: Yugoslavia, Slovenia, self-management socialism, 1971–1974, student movement, New Left

INTRODUCTION: THINKING UTOPIA

Following the pluralisation and democratisation in the early 1990s, the protagonists of Slovene leftist social criticism from the times of socialism found themselves at different ends of the new political spectrum. The reason why Slovenia hardly experienced any excesses of the “right turn,” which were observed in almost all other Yugoslav successor states, and was left almost completely untouched by the phenomenon, was largely in the 1950s and 1960s generations, already a little tired of the “long march through the institutions,” and their

successors from the 1980s, who had just claimed their place in the establishment of the new state. But the utopian visions mulled over even in the early 1980s were somewhat difficult to consider in the prospect of the restoration of capitalism. The primacy over “real dissent” (I cannot expound here on the usage of quotation marks in the limited use of this social phenomenon in Yugoslavia, particularly in Slovenia) was taken by the bourgeois-oriented intellectuals from the circle around the *Nova revija* magazine, which strongly conditioned the historical narrative. As a rule, a-national left-wing movements and individuals were not relevant to the nation-centred historiography; their engagement was thus crammed into a simplified scheme of an intra-Party battle between conservatism and liberalism. Not even the Slovene student movement of the early 1970s, the purpose of which will be presented herein in its “hermeneutic” sense and placed in a considerably broader, transnational framework of operation, could break out of these restrictive parameters.

But an unreflected upon adoption of the vocabulary of the Party apparatus of the time and a clinging only to the punchiest slogans on egalitarianism have lead even foreign authors of classic historiographic surveys into producing superficial evaluations of the student movement as grist to the mill of the conservative powers that took over Yugoslavia after 1971/72 (Marković 2003: 406). The recent problem-based historiography is much more nuanced in posing questions on the conceptual sources, motivations, tactics and political implications of Yugoslav leftist criticism, although in the case of the student movement it remains focused on either the centre (Belgrade) or on the year 1968 (Kanzleiter 2011a; Klasić 2015). As long-term chronicler of Yugoslav political development Dennison Rusinow has observed, the student movement was perhaps the first important political manifestation in the fifty years of Yugoslavia’s existence in which ethnicity played no role at all (Rusinow 1977: 234). While this is probably not entirely the case, it is true that the students of the three major university centres (Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana) shared the greater part of the frame of reference and emerged as an impressively uniform social force. Today, the historians from the former Yugoslav republics also emphasise the differences among them, arising primarily from the different interpretations of the national within student and other left-wing movements, which is understandable in light of the further life trajectories of the individual exponents; but still, this form of rebellion interfered with so many other conventions of late-socialism that it deserves a more complex treatment: one that should bring to the front the theoretical tool kit and organisational methods of the movement, which can be encompassed more accurately if analysed – not isolated, of course – on the example of a smaller and more compact cultural

milieu. We shall therefore try to undertake a historical explanation of the performance of the Ljubljana left-wing student movement in the years 1971–1974 as an example of historical phenomenon that significantly surpassed the mental horizon of the real self-management socialism of that time, but which the existing historiography still too often covers in an overly superficial manner.

In view of the much broader debate that has developed since the 1990s about the nature of revisionist “dissent” around the literary and intellectual journal *Perspektive* (Repe 1990; Slovensko perspektivovstvo 1996; Kreft 1998; Centrih 2003; Kos 2015), and of the historiography related to the emergence of new social movements in the 1980s (Figa 1997; Patterson 2000; Vurnik 2005; Lusa 2012), the phenomenon of leftist student rebellion from the beginning of the 1970s appears as a suitable focus for addressing more generalized problems of historiography in the post-Yugoslav milieu which this reader is addressing. Since we are only dealing with the early attempts to historicize the phenomenon of Yugoslav left-wing rebellion, we can take a closer look at the formation process of the dominant narrative in the public discourse, the (inadequate) historiographic interpretative framework and, in conclusion, draw attention to the aspects that will allow us to gain a broader perspective of the late-socialist Yugoslav society through an analysis of leftist criticism. In order to more explicitly indicate the neuralgic points through which left-wing social criticism insinuated itself into the very foundations of the Kardeljian self-management social contract, of the foreign policy of active coexistence, Tito’s cult of personality and other axioms of Yugoslav political construction, we intend to invest the text with nuance by providing concrete examples of the students’ public engagement, which I have treated extensively on some previous occasions (Ramšak 2015).

THE COMPARTMENTALISATION OF UTOPIA

At the beginning of the 1970s, when Slovene students spoke most scathingly of the everyday practice of Yugoslav self-management and its foreign policy of “active coexistence,” the Slovene student movement was a relatively heterogeneous phenomenon imbibing and uniquely combining different ideological currents. As a result, one could hardly divide it into two completely different currents: one striving for the freedom to think differently, the other “parading with empty words on the criticism of everything existing,” as

they were strictly separated by the Slovene conservative philosopher Tine Hribar (1981: 233). His differentiation employed the words of another public intellectual, Taras Kermauner, a member of the first post-war “critical generation” gathered around the officially dissolved journal *Perspektive*. Even in the 1970s, Kermauner regarded young students as the radical negation of the Party and therefore advised them to turn their attention to the revision of judicial procedures against their persecuted predecessors (e.g., the dissident Jože Pučnik) and to try to find theoretical bases for their critical engagement, which had swept the University of Ljubljana as early as the first half of the 1960s (Kermauner 1970: 39–40), rather than be fascinated by the movements of their colleagues in Paris, Berlin and on US campuses. The hypothesis that for Slovenia the year 1968 already happened in 1964, which was subsequently adopted by the sociologist Dimitrij Rupel (1989), clearly points out the primacy of *Perspektive*-based criticism among leading Slovene intellectuals in the 1980s and 1990s. By and large, the later historiographic, comparative and philosophical reflections placed a much greater emphasis on the latter rather than on the student movement itself.

The standpoint shared by the majority of the group around the *Perspektive* journal (termed *perspektivaši*) and the main rationale of student criticism were quite similar. Both took “Truth” (revolution) seriously and fiercely rejected Stalinism, bureaucratism, liberalism, and capitalism, unlike the intellectual circle around the *Nova revija* journal in the 1980s (Kreft 1998: 154–155). Both in Belgrade and Ljubljana, students took care of the “continuity of revolution” in place of the corrupt Party bureaucracy (Kanzleiter 2009: 36), the difference being that the Ljubljana movement was perhaps even more inclined to the ideas of the New Left and other influences from the West. Embracing Marcuse’s utopian third way actually provoked allegations of the negligence of pitfalls in everyday self-management practice (Kreft 1998: 101–102; cf. Hedžet Tóth 2010).

In this regard, Taras Kermauner (1970: 40) pointed a finger at the “hypocritical” and inconsistent revolutionary enthusiasm of the Slovene New Left students, even comparing them to the rebellious offspring of the Paris’ *filis à papa* (“*they would like to Vietnamize Jordan, they dream of Vietnamizing Greece, yet they leave themselves, us, our society-country out of these visions*”). That may have applied to the first year of the student revolt (1968), when the students were at least seemingly supported by Tito himself, but in the first half of the 1970s, which was marked by an intensive Party campaign against “ultra-left demagogy,” the radical critics had to withstand repressive measures. The reason for that was that their initial global criticism (as observed in the case of attacks on Tito’s foreign policy) shifted its

focus onto the domestic situation and began the questioning of the axioms of Titoism that other groups of social critics did not dare mention.

CLOSER TO BELGRADE OR CLOSER TO PARIS?

In regard to 1968, and particularly within the Belgrade-Zagreb-Sarajevo triangle, Madigan Fichter (2016: 115), in one of her recent articles, highlights pan-Yugoslavism, which especially during crises presented a frustratingly unified front to the country's authorities. In his extensive monograph entirely dedicated to the year 1968 in Yugoslavia, Hrvoje Klasić elaborates on the distinctive differences between the student movements from various Yugoslav centres, including the peculiarities of the Ljubljana movement. In the demands for social equality made by the students in Ljubljana, the Zagreb historian recognises an abundance of leftist radicalism, considerably more pronounced than that in Belgrade; but the Slovene authorities nevertheless did try to meet them and thus solve at least the most pressing social issues (Klasić 2015: 177).

Particularly interesting and controversial is Klasić's finding that during the June events, no other university centre except that in Ljubljana emphasised national components, a point he carries further by observing that while Slovene national interests were always present in the thinking of students and politicians in Ljubljana at the end of the 1960s, the terms "Yugoslavia" and "Yugoslav" were – according to Klasić (2015: 174) – only rarely used. This conclusion is in sharp opposition to the findings by Slovene historians that precisely in the Slovene student movement is where internationalism was most pronounced. Even though Ljubljana students did address the discrimination against Slovene minorities in Austria and Italy, which they perceived as a result of "neo-Fascist" policies propagated in the immediate capitalist vicinity, and even though in December 1970 they did organize a rally against the "Italian appetites" for the former Zone B of the Free Territory of Trieste, which was attended by as many as 8,000 people, they firmly rejected the efforts at agitation on the part of Croatian nationalist student leader Dražen Budiša (who only managed to attract the attention of Maribor college students) (Čepič 2005: 1064; Pivec 2010).

The most accurate diachronic reconstruction of leftist activism in Ljubljana between the end of the 1960s and the mid-1970s is found in the contribution by Zdenko Čepič in a survey of the recent history of Slovenia (2005), but even that largely relies on the

compendium of documents about the Slovene student movement published in 1982 (Baškovič et al.). In order to understand at least the basic conceptual premises of left-wing engagement under these circumstances of clear historiographic deficit, one has to first resort to the analyses and contemplations written in recent years by former activists themselves (Mihevc 2008; Štrajn 2008; Pivec 2010). But the phenomenon of left-wing rebellion, both in its Ljubljana and somewhat less so in its Belgrade version, is still usually explained more or less only in the framework of Yugoslav domestic political parameters; whereas, as Madigan Fichter (2016: 119) emphasises, the activists of 1968 (those in the West and East, as well as those in Yugoslavia) had much more in common with one another than socialist Yugoslavia's officials wanted to acknowledge - and, we might add, more than they could imagine existed on their mental horizon of socialist modernity.

The pronounced social tone and class rhetoric of student criticism gave rise to evaluations that the student movement functioned as “a support of ‘healthy’ (conservative) forces in the struggle against ‘liberal deviation.’” From that point of view, one could argue that the Party conservatives in Slovenia abused it in their struggle against Stane Kavčič’s “liberals” in the beginning of the 1970s, or even ascribe the student movement “a tendency towards re-Stalinization” (Baškovič 1982: XI–XII). Such a view is similar to that which appeared in Croatia, yielding the claim that by advocating the egalitarian position the students in fact objectively favoured the monopoly of the state and supported its centralist tendencies (Kanzleiter 2011b: 99). On the other hand, we can call into question claims about students’ absolute faith in the Slovene liberal government (Klasić 2015: 172). Speaking in terms of favourable factors in the political opportunity structure (Tomić 2009: 18–19) at that time, student leaders took advantage of the liberals’ hesitation to use force against them. However, they were generally against the 1965 economic reform, which was the main goal of the Kavčič government; albeit they were unable to articulate a consistent criticism of Yugoslav political economy and borrowed the main concepts from Belgrade and Zagreb philosophers. The key concept of the young Karl Marx’s philosophy was *alienation*; which however, according to radical Yugoslav critics gathered around the journal *Praxis*, could be found in any society, including one that was socialist (Gruenwald 1983: 4). *A Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing* thus included the incomplete self-management order and its practices impeding freedom, creativity and general human development.

The former student activists commented on the hypothesis about their anti-liberal orientation by pointing out that the democratization of the public discourse, which they

demonstrated through their acts, was an inherent trait of their engagement (Pivec 2010: 299). Their campaigns were undoubtedly strongly characterized by neo-Marxist criticism of the class division still present in Yugoslav self-management socialism. Tellingly, even now there is no consensus about whether in the crucial period when Yugoslavia could still be reformed the political leadership should have introduced more market mechanisms or should have strengthened the principles of Marxism (cf. Kirn 2014; Samary 2017). The radical student movement definitively favoured the second option, which, however, does not mean that one could simplistically regard it as a force of dogmatic communism, as they soon distanced themselves from this position. The movement's call for the abolishment of class stratification appeared hand in hand with those for greater political democratization, with the latter not meant as an introduction of the principles of Western liberal democracy, but as an opposition to authoritative mechanisms which the Yugoslav Party tended to re-introduce in the 1970s.

Despite the fact that the social and political movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s were inherently global, having multiple linkages beyond the Iron Curtain (Iordachi, Apor: 2013: 18), there are actually very few studies dealing with the reception and the consequences of the New Left's concepts in GDR, the ČSSR, Poland, Hungary and elsewhere in east-central Europe (Bren 2013; Arndt 2013). More often than not, when eastern, but also southern or northern European stories are compared, the respective cases are placed side by side by virtue of their simultaneity, rather than examined in terms of actual transfers and cross-fertilizations across borders (Gildea, Mark 2013: 4).

But how do we explain, for example, the student problematization of technological progress and the cult of "bourgeois" success assumed by market-oriented liberals and conservative bureaucratic structures alike, while limiting ourselves to national points of view, categories and fixations? (cf. Arndt 2011). A more comprehensive analysis of the student movement phenomenon requires us to proceed beyond the problem itself and its key concepts, such as the New Left's criticism of oppression in advanced industrial (capitalist and state-socialist) societies; their peace initiatives; and their clear support for a pluralisation of lifestyles. The openness of state borders, possibilities of studying abroad, widespread knowledge of foreign languages, cultural bonds with neighbouring Italy and Austria, and in the case of Slovene students in particular, a strong influence of Western university centres, especially in the USA, France, Germany, as well as the Netherlands and Italy, all need to be appropriately taken into account and considered when discussing the transfer of the New Left principles into the student movement's political agenda and national culture in general.

Applying Johannes Paulmann's (1998) claim about transnational transfers – that historians should compare the object under investigation as observed in its old context with the same object now understood in its new context – it should be fruitful to focus on comparing Yugoslav-related cases with the number of studies dealing with the New Left phenomena in the USA, West Germany, France, the Netherlands and elsewhere, while paying special attention to the intermediaries and the results of these transfers in the socialist self-management environment.

SELF-MANAGEMENT SOCIALISM IN THE MIRROR OF THE STUDENT MOVEMENT OF LJUBLJANA

In the aftermath of the Hungarian and Polish developments in 1956, left-wing intellectuals from western Europe started turning away from the “official” Marxism-Leninism still propagated by their Moscow-dependent Communist Parties. They discovered not only the young Karl Marx, but also the pre-war Marxists, such as Rosa Luxemburg, György Lukács and Antonio Gramsci, who campaigned against orthodox Marxism, economic determinism, and the authoritarian tendencies of the Bolsheviks. Herbert Marcuse, the most renowned representative of the Frankfurt School, according to whom both in capitalism and socialism the developed industrial society entangled man in the system of production and consumption, became the “prophet” of the global student movement in the 1960s. Society no longer faced direct exploitation of the proletariat, but a dissuasion from the satisfaction of man's real needs. In Marcuse's opinion, the agent of revolt against the new methods of social constraint was no longer the working class, which had lost its revolutionary potential, but the intelligentsia (Judt 2007: 402–404). Besides informing about the developments in the major centres of student rebellion, the Belgrade magazine *Student* and the Ljubljana magazine *Tribuna* began publishing theoretical articles by H. Marcuse, R. Dutschke, D. Guerin, P. Kropotkin, L. Luxemburg, etc. (Kanzleiter 2011b: 87; Zubak 2008). Another important platform for becoming acquainted with the latest theories by Marxist humanists and New Left thinkers was the summer school organized by the group Praxis from 1964 to 1974 on the Adriatic island of Korčula. Featuring a number of world famous philosophers and sociologists (H. Marcuse, E. Fromm, L. Kołakowski, E. Mandel, E. Bloch, H. Lefebvre, L. Goldman), it attracted many eager students from Slovenia, too.

The Yugoslav conservative philosophers had no doubt that the theoretical source of Yugoslav “abstract humanists,” as the Praxis circle and their student followers were called, were the main representatives of the Frankfurt school (T. Adorno, J. Habermas, M. Horkheimer, and H. Marcuse). The latter, whose first work *Eros and Civilisation* was translated into Serbo-Croatian as early as 1965, earned a long list of reproaches, starting with the misunderstanding of the role of the revolution and the role in it of the working class (Đorđević 1979: 38–40). Chief Yugoslav ideologue Edvard Kardelj accused the Yugoslav followers of the critical theory of the “alchemist mixture of abstract principles” and alienation from social practice (Sher 1977: 201). There was the prevailing belief among the leading Party proponents that the New Leftists were missing a theoretical concept, were incapable of analysing the existing conditions and of suggesting changes, meaning that their criticism was utterly useless in the self-management society (Đorđević 1979: 109–111). Moreover, in the heated debates about the removal of eight professors from the Belgrade Faculty of Arts, which Slovene students also protested against, the Yugoslav New Left were accused of not sharing “fanatic social romanticism” with their role models in the West, of having the classic rule of intellectual elite as their objective and of manipulating the students while striving towards this end (SI AS 1).

In fact, the Yugoslav philosophical avant-garde rejected the New Left “romantic utopianism,” the negative view of science and technology, and the Maoist Cultural Revolution, which they considered a return to primitive communism (Gruenwald 1983: 81). It can be noted that this “missing” part of the New Left spectre was somehow filled by students and their questioning of the established attitude towards science and nature. For them, much the same as for Marcuse, the “logos of technics” represented the logos of the instrumentalization of the human, which unfolds through the dominion over nature (Marcuse 1964: 116). They were steered into problematizing the mystification of science and technological fetishism common to capitalist and state-socialist industrial societies, not only by Marcuse, but also by Elamar Altvater, Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker and Werner Heisenberg. In the students’ opinion, the spirit of educational reform current in Yugoslavia at that time was also infused by uncritical understanding and acceptance of science as a shortcut on the way to abundance. According to the most ardent critics, allegiance to the primacy of non-scrutinized science was therefore only a synonym for a technocratic vision of the development of a consumer society and a transferral of patterns from developed industrial societies into the socialist environment (Vakanjac 1971: 6). Therefore, the questioning of the

nature of the relationship between the scientific theoretical and practical reasoning and the ideologizing of science (Detela 1973: 1) undermined the foundations not only of the capitalist society, but also of the *grand narrative* of socialist industrial development.

In the early 1970s, the Slovene student rebels were also influenced by romantic notions of third world revolutionaries and Trotskyite strategies of organization, which reached Slovenia via France. Even if the fascination with Maoism and at that time ongoing China's Cultural Revolution was not as strong as in western Europe – which, unlike the Soviet Union, perceived it as a pure and incorrupt form of revolution (Fields 1984; Bourq 2005) – the Slovene students did use it merely as organizational tactics in order to bypass the rigid Communist Party structure. With such aspirations, they tried to establish the *13th November Movement* at the end of 1971, the aim of which was to launch an alternative platform for social reflection from the position of revolutionary Marxism and with no Communist Party intrusion (SI AS 2). Although the movement did not surpass the most basic phase of operation and had to stop assembling after a few meetings, its members were immediately accused of shaping “parallel political groupings.”

It was the students of social sciences and humanities, mostly from the Ljubljana Faculty of Arts, who stepped to the forefront of radical criticism. Within the newly established Student Assembly of Ljubljana higher education institutions, which by contrast to its bureaucratic predecessor was a manifestation of more autonomous self-organizing, they formed so-called action committees, which organized a number of public discussions and speakers' platforms addressing urgent social issues. When campaigning for their environmental demands in April 1971, two thousand students took to the streets, occupying Aškerc Street (seat of the Faculty of Arts) and then the centre of Ljubljana. Though peaceful, the march and the rebellious slogans were met with repressive measures. The students responded in May of that same year by occupying the Faculty of Arts for over a week, which was the culmination of the student engagement covering the entire post-war period. The protesters placed great emphasis on the need for change in Yugoslav society (new models of social coexistence, issues related to alienated politics, the atrophy of the League of Communists, social injustice, reform of the University) (Štrajn 2008; Mihevc 2008). Their claims thus combined calls for greater social justice, several New Left theoretical concepts, and aspirations for the democratization of public debate, with the democratization not interpreted from the point of view of liberal democracy, but as a sphere of rights within

socialism with fewer explicit and authoritative interventions by the Party (Graovac 2010: 396).

In the field of “global criticism,” the student internationalists were upset not only by the developments in Czechoslovakia and Poland, but also by the American interventions in Vietnam and Cambodia, the rule of the military junta in Greece, and the authoritative regimes in Spain, Portugal and elsewhere. Just like in the USA and throughout western Europe, the Vietnam War turned into a catalyst for the mobilization of critical student populations. The situation made the Yugoslav students aware of Yugoslavia’s political and economic cooperation with the USA and repressive regimes all over the world. They accused the Yugoslav state, which was supposed to adhere consistently to the principles of workers’ internationalism and solidarity with persecuted communists and socialists, of being unprincipled and pragmatic in its foreign policies.

In Slovenia, the doubts about the principled character of the non-aligned foreign policy known as “active peaceful co-existence” had been expressed since 1970 by Jaša Zlobec (the *enfant terrible* kept under the scrutiny of the State Security Service under the codename “Trotskyist”), who pointed out the hypocrisy of the declaratory support for socialist movements in the third world, on the one hand, and the economic cooperation with the USA and even support for regimes persecuting communists, on the other (Zlobec 1970a: 2; Zlobec 1970b: 4; Zlobec 1971: D). Even more attention was paid to the trial of the Belgrade student functionary Vladimir Mijanović, who not only expressed support for striking Bosnian miners, but also, in the aftermath of the US invasion of Cambodia, accused Yugoslavia of collaborating with fascist capital, supporting the USA, and, on top of that, facilitating the “export” a of workforce to western Europe (Pahor 1970: 3). The Slovene students also demonstrated solidarity with their French colleagues at a practical level: when the French Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas visited Ljubljana in April 1971, they organized a protest meeting in front of the Executive Committee building. Shouting “*Vive le Mai 68*”, they were “accompanied” by the police to the nearest entrance hall, where they had to remain until the departure of the distinguished French guest (*Tribuna* 1971: 3).

The Slovene authorities bothered less with the innocent protests organized by a dozen or so students than with open and direct attacks on President Tito as the first man of Yugoslav foreign policy. The criticism was spurred by the participation of the Yugoslav delegation headed by Tito in the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the Persian Empire in Persepolis in October 1971. Students asked Tito whether there was not a contradiction in terms between

the proclaimed principles of socialism and cooperation with progressive, even guerrilla movements, on the one hand, and political cooperation with regimes persecuting left-wing parties and violating the basic principles of human rights, on the other (Kristan 1971: a). Clearly already guilty of offending Tito, the students as well as some philosophers went a step further and began questioning Tito's cult of personality, which up to that time had been regarded as an untouchable topic. To quote the philosophy student Mladen Dolar (1971: 4): *It seems that our community has recently witnessed friction in many areas, yet the impediments will not be possible to do away with if we foster untouchable topics and taboos nor if we take the stance that our society has no faults at all.*

The real outcomes of the new political direction and the actual scope of the highly praised self-management reform course from the 1970s were revealed in the beginning of 1974, when the student movement carried out one of its last major actions (SI AS 3). Towards the end of January 1974, Ljubljana as the most liberal Yugoslav university centre at that time, hosted a meeting of six representatives of Faculty Committees of the Belgrade, Ljubljana and Zagreb Faculties of Arts (Miodrag Stojanović, Zoran Djindjić, Lino Veljak, Mario Rubbi, Darko Štrajn and Vinko Zalar); they discussed the current situation by using New Left vocabulary and they summarized the main points in the *Plan of the Resolution of the Association of Faculty of Arts Students*. The student representatives first presented an alternative explanation of the origins of and potential solutions to the early 1970s crisis. They expected that the working class, together with the intelligentsia and youth of socialist orientation, would stand against the privileged elites, while in reality the crisis infiltrated into the structure of the economic and political establishment whose factions began to fight amongst themselves. Despite the continual proclamation of self-management principles, several "self-management congresses" and even a constitutional reform, the major social issues remained unresolved in the students' opinion: the working class was still denied a decisive impact on the political and economic spheres, social power was still concentrated in the hands of political and economic elites, income was distributed on the basis of capital and not work, social differences kept increasing, unemployment compelled workers to seek jobs in the capitalist labour market, monopolism in the economic and political spheres gave rise to monopolism in the fields of education, science, mass media and culture; genuine Marxist criticism was stifled, the freedom of creation depended on the goodwill of political forums, universities were perceived as technocratic factories of personnel and a service for perpetuating bureaucracy; while the media were subjugated to the needs of daily politics. The

students argued that in such conditions Marxism could not function as a real continuity of revolution, as it gave rise to conflicts between the centres of political power and the exponents of Marxist theory (SI AS 4). By the end of the 1980s, when some of the latter had climbed up the political ladder, Marxism had practically disappeared without a trace.

CONCLUSION: THE ORIGINALITY OF THE LEFT VIEW OF THE LATE-SOCIALIST MAINSTREAM

There is a consensus among those who have written more extensively about the Yugoslav student movement in recent years that it cannot be considered as a turning point in the history of socialist Yugoslavia (Bešlin 2009: 246–252). Yet this does not mean that we can describe it as a “loyal opposition” to the aging regime. Rereading and reinterpreting the “sacred” texts or even attempts to create one’s own organisations were deadly threats to the ruling ideology and its representatives. However, employing actions such as manipulations, information blockades, and integrating independent institutions into the Party structure was enough to separate the small number of student leaders from their peers, and, especially, masses of workers. In this sense, Vladimir Arzenšek, a psychologist from the University of Ljubljana, could not recognize any potential for establishing an organized pressure group outside the Party even at the height of ferment among students, identifying the main reason for the de-politicization of Slovene society in the gradual improvement of the living standard (Arzenšek 1970a; Arzenšek 1970b: 46).

However, a group of a few dozen radical students, unsatisfied by the “unionist” demands being met so quickly, started to perceive themselves as the only revolutionary subject that the Party failed to manipulate. In this context, they found a model for their activities in different student associations (American and German SDS, French Trotskyites), underprivileged groups (Black Panthers in the USA) and counter-culture groups (Dutch Kabouters), with which they maintained close contacts, reported regarding their actions and harboured many sympathies for. It was certainly more than just a sense of the common struggle of a new generation that was shared by Western students and their sceptical peers in east central Europe (Mark, von der Goltz 2013: 142–143). Well-informed about the “dark side” of the Western countries, especially the Austrian and Italian attitudes towards Slovene minorities, the Slovene students had no illusions about liberal democracy, but at the same

time they understood the logic of the party *Herrschaft* in state-socialist countries. They recognized in Yugoslavia forms of abuse of power and alienation characteristic of capitalist societies as well as those of socialist countries - but, generally speaking, anti-imperialism, anti-consumerism, and New Left concepts actually assumed similar meanings to those in Western countries (cf. Mark, von der Goltz 2013: 162).

Perhaps the long-term meaning of cultural and political alternatives triggered by the transnational concepts, too, should be contemplated parallel to the developments occurring to the west of Yugoslavia in the past 50 years. In the beginning of this decade, Vladimir Tismaneanu (2011) wrote that the contemporary contribution to the understanding of the “historical puzzle” of the international meaning of 1968 provided some of the answers that might not have been available in the 1990s. Something similar would, no doubt, have to be underlined in the introduction or conclusion to any study that would set out to historicize the phenomenon of leftist alternative thought in Yugoslavia in 2018 or even 2028.

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