



# Antipolitika

anarchist journal from the balkans

July 2023 / issue 3

Nationalism

## Antipolitika

We do not have classics or founders whose portraits we hang from the walls, those made out of bricks, or mental ones, all the same. We tear down the walls, and we avoid idolatry like the plague.

Bakunin and comrades did not found the anarchist movement, nor did they synthesize its principals in pure intellectual contemplation. On the contrary, the anarchist movement grew out the wing of the International Workers Association (also known as the First International) which consisted of proletarians who didn't even call themselves anarchists in the beginning. Bakunin did not join the International as an anarchist, he became one influenced by the practice and vision that was already being done and developed by those proletarians.

These people, at the beginning of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century already had a strong vision of the possibility of a new world based on solidarity and mutual aid. In that vision, the International was a revolutionary organization, but also an embryo of a new society within the shell of the old world, it was simultaneously organized and imagined as a global network that was supposed to organize and coordinate the whole of social and communal life—a kind of an anti-state.

This indicates to us that anarchist thought came to be as a reflection of practice. But, in order for our movement to breathe freely and truly be alive, it is necessary for practice and analysis to always reflect one another, forever changing, in continuous movement.

Those whose vision didn't go beyond the idea of "socialist" parties that seize state power, did not understand this movement: for them, it was "apolitical" because of its indifference towards the participation in parliamentary politics. But, in reality, something completely different was the case.

As we refuse the legitimacy of the state, as an institution which with violence secures the existence of an exploitative system, so do we refuse "politics" as a separated sphere of life, one dealt with by specialists. We are interested in life, and in order for us to live and breathe freely, the sphere of the political needs to be dismantled—same as with the state/capital/patriarchy.

Anti-politics is life without walls and fences, it is our heart, and the new world we carry inside it.

*People who talk about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life, without understanding what is subversive about love and what is positive in the refusal of constraints, such people have corpses in their mouths.*

Raoul Vaneigem

*The anarchists are not promising anything to anyone.*

Maria Nikiforova

*No theory, no ready-made system, no book that has ever been written will save the world.*

Mikhail Bakunin

*Fight to maintain this feeling for organization and do not allow it to be destroyed by those who think that anarchism is a doctrine which has nothing to do with real life. Anarchism is the opposite of sectarianism and dogma. It perfects itself in action.*

Nestor Makhno,  
addressing B. Durruti and F. Ascaso

*We follow ideas and not men, and rebel against this habit of embodying a principle in a man.*

Errico Malatesta

Image on the front and back cover: Franjo Tuđman and Slobodan Milošević during the meeting at Brdo near Kranj in 1991.

Photographer: Jeremy Sutton-Hibbert

This issue of the journal has three versions, one in english, second in greek, and the third in the language we call "ours", also known as serbian, croatian, serbo-croatian, bosnian, bosniak, ≠montenegrin, bunjevac, shtokavian etc. All standards of our language are used in Antipolitika.

[antipolitika.noblogs.org](http://antipolitika.noblogs.org)

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# Contents

- 7 **The Misery of Nationalism**  
Introduction to Antipolitika#3
- 11 **The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism (1984)**  
Fredy Perlman
- 35 **Preliminary Theses on the Greek Nation for Everyday Use**  
Our baba doesn't say fairy tales and friends
- 43 **Why Should We Belong to the People?**  
De Passage
- 49 **Nationalism as the basis of every state**  
A contribution to the anarchist analysis  
of nationalism in post-Yugoslav territory
- 55 **You Cannot Fight Imperialism with Anti-imperialism**  
Clandestina
- 73 **Jungslawen and Nihilist Nationalism 1907–1914**
- 97 **In the dungeon of nationalism**  
The Communist Party of Yugoslavia  
and the national question
- 133 **The National Phenomenon**  
Group against nationalism
- 147 **Contra Aztlán.**  
A Critique of Chicano Nationalism  
Ediciones Inéditas
- 153 **The Rise and Rule of the Extreme Centre**
- 159 **Psamtik's Children**  
or Which Language Will The Revolution Speak  
Nina Čolović
- 185 **To Find Another Human Being**  
Robert Musil's Ideas on Nationalism  
in *The Man Without Qualities*



*Two sides of nationalism: Hooligans attacking Pride in Belgrade;  
Leftist politician (Možemo) paying respect to Franjo Tuđman's grave in Zagreb.*

# The Misery of Nationalism

## Introduction to Antipolitika#3

In front of you is the third issue of Antipolitika, dedicated to the subject of nationalism and nation-states. In capitalist everyday life – which is most evident in times of war but is nevertheless a constant reality – our lives do not belong to us. Nation-states make sure that we, as individuals and as communities, do not freely dispose of the land and water (privatization and nationalization), our time (schools, prisons, wage labour, “free time”...), our bodies (wage labour, war, restrictions on access to knowledge, medicine and procedures like abortion...). So how could we ever be called upon to love and defend “our” nation, when nothing is really ours to love and defend?

As anarchists, we do not want to move across or beyond nations, but explicitly against them: firstly against the nation that is attributed to us, then against all others. We do not want an international movement, but an anti-national one. For there is nothing inherently good in belonging to a nation or a people, even if it is a “small” nation or an oppressed people. The history of the victorious People’s liberation struggle led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, showed us that whenever seizing state power, or building any form of power structure, is the goal of a struggle, the slogan of national liberation becomes just another ideological legitimization of one’s right to rule over others.

Furthermore, the looting wars of the 90ies demonstrated the false dichotomy of right-wing and left-wing nationalism, the false dichotomy of “winners” and “losers” of a war, as well as the false dichotomy of “aggressors” and “victims”.

Milošević and his Socialist Party of Serbia represented the anti-imperialist wing of nationalism, one which proclaimed to be against the western powers, and tried to align itself with russia and china, utilizing at the same time a leftist and anti-globalist rhetoric. Tuđman, on the other hand, was the head of an openly right-wing nationalist regime, with pro-fascist elements, and an enthusiastically pro-western ideology. These differences did not in any way hinder the cooperation between the two regimes, nor did it in any way change the fact that both regimes primarily focused their energies on getting rich and powerful. While the most horrific war crimes were being committed – during the serbian and croatian aggression in bosnia, the ethnic cleansing of croatia by the tuđman regime and of kosovo by the milošević regime – the capital flow never stopped, and with each atrocity the ruling classes became more powerful.

The front and back cover pages of our journal show the nationalist presidents of serbia (milošević) and croatia (tuđman) during the meeting of the heads of yugoslav republics in 1991 at the Brdo Castle near Kranj, in slovenia. This photograph depicts the two seemingly opposing sides of a nationalist conflict. During this meeting, the participants were making agreements on the process of the dissolution of the federal state, and soon this process was pushed into the phase of a bloody war which caused many deaths and tragedies. Today, we know that during the whole duration of the war, the nationalist leaders of the so called warring sides, communicated and coordinated, in a common project of primitive accumulation in the most brutal form of a war against proletarians. In this process, the ruling classes of serbia and croatia profited enormously, not in spite of the suffering of the wide population, but precisely because of that suffering which they caused and coordinated. The cynicism went so far that the „enemy sides” were even trading ammunition and weapons with each other during the war.

The photograph also shows the real two sides of any war. The ruling classes on one side (or in this case on both sides of Antipolitika) and the other side, of the assaulted proletarians, represented here in the obedient waiter who is trying do his job and be almost invisible while doing it.

The other false dichotomy represented here is the one of „winners“ and „losers“. If you are on the other, attacked, raped and pillaged side of a nationalist conflict, that is, on the side under the attack of states and ruling classes, terms such as the winning and losing side of a war are meaningless, because it is obvious that everyone on your side has lost, and in such a brutal way.

Still, the misery of nationalism manifests differently in the „winner“ and „loser“ states.

In serbia, where the nationalist project failed in its publicly stated goals, this „loss“ is used to fuel further nationalist frustrations, and, especially after the NATO bombing of serbia in 1999, the ideology which states that the nation is a victim of power-



ful, omnipresent, and malign forces – giving more ideological justification to different kinds of fascist thugs who would like to present themselves as being „against the dominant liberal order“ or even against western imperialism (which they manifest by beating up people they perceive as being queer, for example).

In Croatia, where nationalists achieved all of their stated goals, nationalism is an all-present legitimate ideology. Even the lefty-liberal party currently in power in the city of Zagreb went to tudman's grave to lay flowers, in salute to the great president and great daddy of all croats.

This nationalism of the “winners” is further reinforced by the insistence on the narrative of the victim, and when a nation is defined as a victim, every action from the nationalist side is legitimate and unquestionable. Paired with the “victim” narrative, being the “winner” of a war makes nationalism in Croatia so unquestionable that, for example, WW2 era fascist slogans are tolerated if they are used by the veterans of the war of the 90ies (in Croatia officially called „the homeland war“). With Serbia being the main “aggressor” (against Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo), Croatia is left completely off the hook for its attack on Bosnia and ethnic cleansing of the Serbian population in Kordun, because one cannot be the “victim” and “aggressor” at the same time.

Which of these two sides of nationalist misery is more miserable, is hard to say, but most importantly – it is totally ludicrous to propose that we should choose between them.

Ever since nationalism was introduced against us in the Balkans, there were those who opposed it and fought against it. The first socialist programs written in the serbo-croatian language called explicitly for the destruction of all states in the Balkans. Including not only the imperialist forces such as Austro-Hungary and Turkey, but also newly established small, “free” and anti-imperial states such as Serbia, whose nationalists were formulating their own genocidal program at the time.

What they called for was the establishment of a Balkan federation, not as a federation of nations and states, but as a federation of revolutionary proletarians determined to free the World from the misery of capitalism and states.

These are the historical aspirations that we would like to affirm, transform, transcend and realize.

We are a federation of despair transmuted into love and rage. A Balkan federation without states and nations!



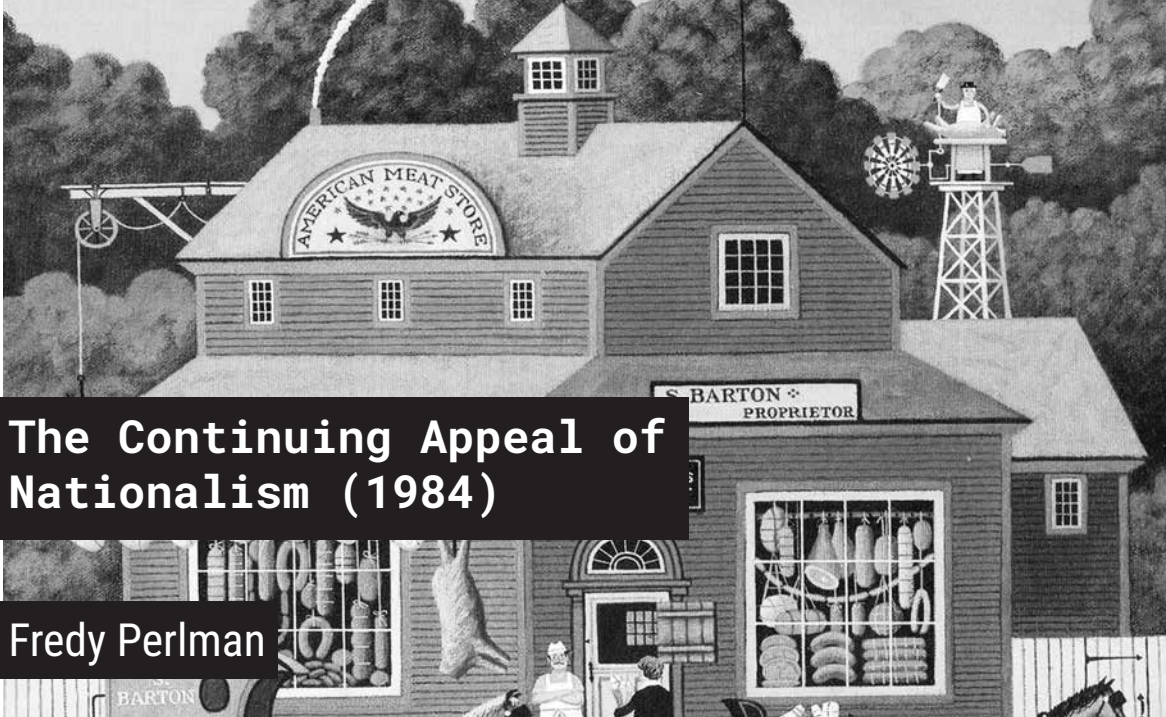
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BREADMAKERS  
& OF  
RAVENTHICKET

YOU NAME IT  
WE'LL BAKE IT

RAVENTHICKET FARMS



## The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism (1984)

Fredy Perlman

**N**ationalism was proclaimed dead several times during the present century:

- the First World War, when the last empires of Europe, the Austrian and the Turkish, were broken up into self-determined nations, and no deprived nationalists remained, except the Zionists;
- after the Bolshevik coup d'état, when it was said that the bourgeoisie's struggles for self-determination were henceforth superseded by struggles of workingmen, who had no country;
- after the military defeat of Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany, when the genocidal corollaries of nationalism had been exhibited for all to see, when it was thought that nationalism as creed and as practice was permanently discredited.

Yet forty years after the military defeat of Fascists and National Socialists, we can see that na-

tionalism did not only survive but was born again, underwent a revival. Nationalism has been revived not only by the so-called right, but also and primarily by the so-called left. After the national socialist war, nationalism ceased to be confined to conservatives, became the creed and practice of revolutionaries, and proved itself to be the only revolutionary creed that actually worked.

Leftist or revolutionary nationalists insist that their nationalism has nothing in common with the nationalism of fascists and national socialists, that theirs is a nationalism of the oppressed, that it offers personal as well as cultural liberation. The claims of the revolutionary nationalists have been broadcast to the world by the two oldest continuing hierarchic institutions surviving into our times: the Chinese State and, more recently, the Catholic Church. Currently nationalism is being touted as a strategy, science and theology of liberation, as a fulfillment of the Enlightenment's dictum that knowledge is power, as a proven answer to the question "What Is to be Done?"

To challenge these claims, and to see them in a context, I have to ask what nationalism is – not only the new revolutionary nationalism but also the old conservative one. I cannot start by defining the term, because nationalism is not a word with a static definition: it is a term that covers a sequence of different historical experiences. I'll start by giving a brief sketch of some of those experiences.

\*\*\*

According to a common (and manipulable) misconception, imperialism is relatively recent, consists of the colonization of the entire world, and is the last stage of capitalism. This diagnosis points to a specific cure: nationalism is offered as the antidote to imperialism: wars of national liberation are said to break up the capitalist empire.

This diagnosis serves a purpose, but it does not describe any event or situation. We come closer to the truth when we stand this conception on its head and say that imperialism was the first stage of capitalism, that the world was subsequently colonized by nation-states, and that nationalism is the dominant, the current, and (hopefully) the last stage of capitalism. The facts of the case were not discovered yesterday; they are as familiar as the misconception that denies them.

It has been convenient, for various good reasons, to forget that, until recent centuries, the dominant powers of Eurasia were not nation-states but empires. A Celestial Empire ruled by the Ming dynasty, an Islamic Empire ruled by the Ottoman dynasty, and a Catholic Empire ruled by the Hapsburg dynasty vied with each other for possession of the known world. Of the three, the Catholics were not the first imperialists but the last. The Celestial Empire of the Mings ruled over most of eastern Asia and had dispatched vast commercial fleets overseas a century before sea-borne Catholics invaded Mexico.

The celebrants of the Catholic feat forget that, between 1420 and 1430, Chinese imperial bureaucrat Cheng Ho commanded naval expeditions of 70,000 men and sailed, not only to nearby Malaya, Indonesia and Ceylon, but as far from home ports as the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and Africa. The celebrants of Catholic conquistadores also belittle the imperial feats of the Ottomans, who conquered all but the westernmost provinces of the former Roman Empire, ruled over North Africa, Arabia, the Middle East and half of Europe, controlled the Mediterranean and hammered on the gates of Vienna. The imperial Catholics set out westward, beyond the boundaries of the known world, in order to escape from encirclement.

Nevertheless, it was the imperial Catholics who “discovered America,” and their genocidal destruction and plunder of their ‘discovery’ changed the balance of forces among Eurasia’s empires.

Would imperial Chinese or Turks have been less lethal had they “discovered America”? All three empires regarded aliens as less than human and therefore as legitimate prey. The Chinese considered others barbarians; the Muslims and Catholics considered others unbelievers. The term unbeliever is not as brutal as the term barbarian, since an unbeliever ceases to be legitimate prey





and becomes a full-fledged human being by the simple act of converting to the true faith, whereas a barbarian remains prey until she or he is made over by the civilizer.

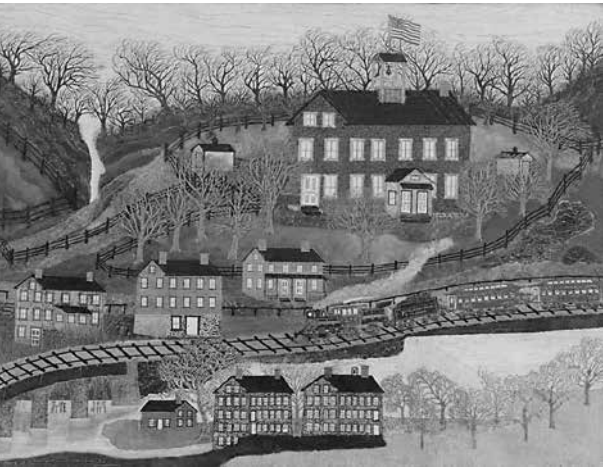
The term unbeliever, and the morality behind it, conflicted with the practice of the Catholic invaders. The contradiction between professions and acts was spotted by a very early critic, a priest called Las Casas, who noted that the conversion ceremonies were pretexts for separating and exterminating the unconverted, and that the converts themselves were not treated as fellow Catholics but as slaves.

The critiques of Las Casas did little more than embarrass the Catholic Church and Emperor. Laws were passed and investigators were dispatched, but to little effect, because the two aims of the Catholic expeditions, conversion and plunder, were contradictory. Most churchmen reconciled themselves to saving the gold and damning the souls. The Catholic Emperor increasingly depended on the plundered wealth to pay for the imperial

household, army, and for the fleets that carried the plunder.

Plunder continued to take precedence over conversion, but the Catholics continued to be embarrassed. Their ideology was not altogether suited to their practice. The Catholics made much of their conquests of Aztecs and Incas, whom they described as empires with institutions similar to those of the Hapsburg Empire and the religious practices as demonic as those of the official enemy, the heathen empire of the Ottoman Turks. But the Catholics did not make much of the wars of extermination against communities that had neither emperors nor standing armies. Such feats, although perpetrated regularly, conflicted with the ideology and were less than heroic.

The contradiction between the adventurers' professions and their acts was not resolved by the imperial Catholics. It was resolved by harbingers of a new social form, the nation-state. Two harbingers appeared during the same year, 1561, when one of the Emperor's overseas adventures



proclaimed his independence from the empire, and several of the Emperor's bankers and provisioners launched a war of independence.

The overseas adventurer, Lope de Aguirre, failed to mobilize support and was executed.

The Emperor's bankers and provisioners mobilized the inhabitants of several imperial provinces and succeeded in severing the provinces from the empire (provinces which were later called Holland).

These two events were not yet struggles of national liberation. They were harbingers of things to come. They were also reminders of things past. In the bygone Roman Empire, Praetorian guards had been engaged to protect the Emperor; the guards had assumed ever more of the Emperor's functions and had eventually wielded the imperial power instead of the Emperor. In the Arabic Islamic Empire, the Caliph had engaged Turkish bodyguards to protect his person; the Turkish guards, like the earlier Praetorians, had assumed ever more of the Caliph's functions and had eventually taken over the imperial palace as well as the imperial office.

Lope de Aguirre and the Dutch grandees were not the Hapsburg monarch's bodyguards, but the

Andean colonial adventurer and the Dutch commercial and financial houses did wield important imperial functions. These rebels, like the earlier Roman and Turkish guards, wanted to free themselves of the spiritual indignity and material burden of serving the Emperor; they already wielded the Emperor's powers; the Emperor was nothing more to them than a parasite.

Colonial adventurer Aguirre was apparently inept as a rebel; his time had not yet come.

The Dutch grandees were not inept, and their time had come. They did not overthrow the empire; they rationalized it. The Dutch commercial and financial houses already possessed much of the New World's wealth; they had received it as payment for provisioning the Emperor's fleets, armies and household. They now set out to plunder colonies in their own name and for their own benefit, unshackled by a parasitic overlord. And since they were not Catholics but Calvinist Protestants, they were not embarrassed by any contradiction between professions and acts. They made no profession of saving souls. Their Calvinism told them that an inscrutable God had saved or damned all souls at the beginning of Time and no Dutch priest could alter God's plan.

The Dutch were not crusaders; they confined themselves to unheroic, humorless, and businesslike plunder, calculated and regularized; the plundering fleets departed and returned on schedule. The fact that the plundered aliens were unbelievers became less important than the fact that they were not Dutchmen.

West Eurasian forerunners of nationalism coined the term savages. This term was a synonym for the east Eurasian Celestial Empire's term barbarians. Both terms designated human beings as legitimate prey.

\* \* \*

During the following two centuries, the invasions, subjugations and expropriations initiated by the Hapsburgs were imitated by other European royal houses.

Seen through the lenses of nationalist historians, the initial colonizers as well as their later imitators look like nations: Spain, Holland, England, France. But seen from a vantage point in the past, the colonizing powers are Hapsburgs, Tudors, Stuarts, Bourbons, Oranges – namely dynasties identical to the dynastic families that had been feuding for wealth and power ever since the fall of the western Roman empire. The invaders can be seen from both vantage points because a transition was taking place. The entities were no longer mere feudal estates, but they were not yet full-fledged nations; they already possessed some, but not yet all, the attributes of a nation-state. The most notable missing element was the national army. Tudors and Bourbons already manipulated the Englishness or Frenchness of their subjects, especially during wars against another monarch's subjects. But neither Scots and Irishmen, nor Corsicans and Provençals, were recruited to fight and die for “the love of their country.” War was an onerous feudal burden, a *corvée*; the only patriots were patriots of Eldorado.

The tenets of what was going to become the nationalist creed did not appeal to the ruling dynasts, who clung to their own tried and tested tenets. The new tenets appealed to the dynast's higher servants, his money-lenders, spice-vendors, military suppliers and colony-plunderers. These people, like Lope de Aguirre and the Dutch grandees, like earlier Roman and Turkish guards, wielded key functions yet remained servants. Many if not most of them burned to shake off the indignity and the burden, to rid themselves of the parasitic overlord, to carry on the exploitation of countrymen and the plunder of colonials in their own name and for their own benefit.

Later known as the bourgeoisie or the middle class, these people had become rich and powerful since the days of the first westward-bound fleets. A portion of their wealth had come from the plundered colonies, as payment for the services they had sold to the Emperor; this sum of wealth would later be called a primitive accumulation of capital. Another portion of their wealth had come from the plunder of their own local countrymen and neighbors by a method later known as capitalism; the method was not altogether new, but it became very widespread after the middle classes got their hands on the New World's silver and gold.

These middle classes wielded important powers, but they were not yet experienced in wielding the central political power. In England they overthrew a monarch and proclaimed a commonwealth but, fearing that the popular energies they had mobilized against the upper class could turn against the middle class, they soon restored another monarch of the same dynastic house.

Nationalism did not really come into its own until the late 1700s when two explosions, thirteen years apart, reversed the relative standing of the



two upper classes and permanently changed the political geography of the globe. In 1776, colonial merchants and adventurers reenacted Aguirre's feat of proclaiming their independence from the ruling overseas dynast, outdid their predecessor by mobilizing their fellow-settlers, and succeeded in severing themselves from the Hanoverian British Empire. And in 1789, enlightened merchants and scribes outdid their Dutch forerunners by mobilizing, not a few outlying provinces, but the entire subject population, by overthrowing and slaying the ruling Bourbon monarch, and by remaking all feudal bonds into national bonds. These two events marked the end of an era. Henceforth even the surviving dynasts hastily or gradually became nationalists, and the remaining royal estates took on ever more of the attributes of nation-states.

\* \* \*

The two eighteenth century revolutions were very different, and they contributed different and even conflicting elements to the creed and practice of nationalism. I do not intend to analyze these events here, but only to remind the reader of some of the elements.

Both rebellions successfully broke the bonds of fealty to a monarchic house, and both ended with the establishment of capitalist nation-states, but between the first act and the last they had little in common. The main animators of both revolts were familiar with the rationalistic doctrines of the Enlightenment, but the self-styled Americans confined themselves to political problems, largely to the problem of establishing a state machinery that could take up where King George left off. Many of the French went much further; they posed the problem of restructuring not only the state but all of society; they challenged not only the bond of subject to monarch, but also the bond of slave to master, a bond that remained sacred to the Americans. Both groups were undoubtedly

familiar with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's observation that human beings were born free, yet everywhere were bound in chains, but the French understood the chains more profoundly and made a greater effort to break them.

As influenced by rationalistic doctrines as Rousseau himself had been, French revolutionaries tried to apply social reason to the human environment in the same way that natural reason, or science, was starting to be applied to the natural environment. Rousseau had worked at his desk; he had tried to establish social justice on paper, by entrusting human affairs to an entity that embodied the general will. The revolutionaries agitated to establish social justice not only on paper, but in the midst of mobilized and armed human beings, many of them enraged, most of them poor.

Rousseau's abstract entity took the concrete form of a Committee of Public Safety (or Public Health), a police organization that considered itself the embodiment of the general will. The virtuous committee members conscientiously applied the findings of reason to human affairs. They considered themselves the nation's surgeons. They carved their personal obsessions into society by means of the state's razor blade.

The application of science to the environment took the form of systematic terror. The instru-





ment of Reason and Justice was the guillotine.

The Terror decapitated the former rulers and then turned on the revolutionaries.

Fear stimulated a reaction that swept away the Terror as well as the Justice. The mobilized energy of bloodthirsty patriots was sent abroad, to impose enlightenment on foreigners by force, to expand the nation into an empire. The provisioning of national armies was far more lucrative than the provisioning of feudal armies ever had been, and former revolutionaries became rich and powerful members of the middle class, which was now the top class, the ruling class. The terror as well as the wars bequeathed a fateful legacy to the creed and practice of later nationalisms.

The legacy of the American revolution was of an altogether different kind. The Americans were less concerned with justice, more concerned with property.

The settler-invaders on the northern continent's eastern shore needed George of Hanover no more urgently than Lope de Aguirre had needed Philip of Hapsburg. Or rather, the rich and powerful among the settlers needed King George's apparatus to protect their wealth, but not to gin it. If they could organize a repressive apparatus on their own, they would not need King George at all.

Confident of their ability to launch an apparatus of their own, the colonial slave-holders, land-speculators, produce-exporters and bankers found the King's taxes and acts intolerable. The most intolerable of the King's acts was the act that temporarily banned unauthorized incursions into the lands of the continent's original inhabitants; the King's advisers had their eyes on the animal furs supplied by indigenous hunters; the revolutionary land-speculators had theirs on the hunters' lands.

Unlike Aguirre, the federated colonizers of the north succeeded in establishing their own independent repressive apparatus, and they did this by stirring up a minimum of cravings for justice; their aim was to overthrow the King's power, not their own. Rather than rely excessively on their less fortunate fellow-settlers or backwoods squatters, not to speak of their slaves, these revolutionaries relied on mercenaries and on indispensable aid from the Bourbon monarch who would be overthrown a few years later by more virtuous revolutionaries.

The North American colonizers broke the traditional bonds of fealty and feudal obligation but, unlike the French, they only gradually replaced the traditional bonds with bonds of patriotism and nationhood. They were not quite a nation; their reluctant mobilization of the colonial countryside had not fused them into one, and the multi-lingual, multi-cultural and socially divided underlying population resisted such a fusion. The new repressive apparatus was not tried and tested, and it did not command the undivided loyalty of the underlying population, which was not yet patriotic. Something else was needed. Slave-masters who had overthrown their king feared that their slaves could similarly overthrow the masters; the insurrection in Haiti made this fear less than hypothetical. And although they no longer feared being pushed into the sea by the continent's indigenous inhabitants, the traders and speculators worried about their ability to thrust further into the continent's interior.

The American settler-invaders had recourse to an instrument that was not, like the guillotine, a new invention, but that was just as lethal. This instrument would later be called Racism, and it would become embedded in nationalist practice. Racism, like later products of practical Americans, was a pragmatic principle; its content was not important; what mattered was the fact that it worked.

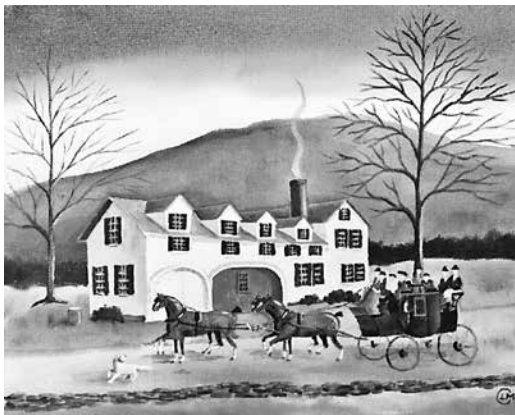
Human beings were mobilized in terms of their lowest and most superficial common denominator, and they responded. People who had abandoned their villages and families, who were forgetting their languages and losing their cultures, who were all but depleted of their sociability, were manipulated into considering their skin color a substitute for all they had lost. They were made proud of something that was neither a personal feat nor even, like language, a personal acquisition. They were fused into a nation of white men. (White women and children existed only as scalped victims, as proofs of the bestiality of the hunted prey.) The extent of the depletion is revealed by the nonentities the white men shared with each other: white blood, white thoughts, and membership in a white race. Debtors, squatters and servants, as white men, had everything in common with bankers, land speculators and plantation owners, nothing in common with Redskins, Blackskins or Yellowskins. Fused by such a principle, they could also be mobilized by it, turned into white mobs; lynch mobs, "Indian fighters."

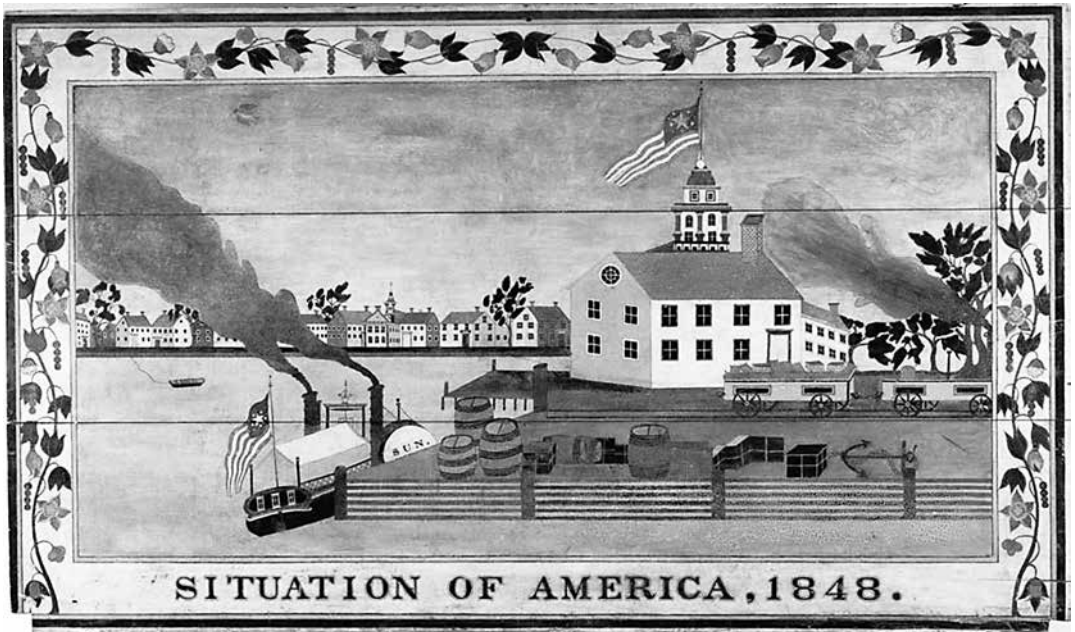
Racism had initially been one among several methods of mobilizing colonial armies, and although it was exploited more fully in America than it ever had been before, it did not supplant the other methods but rather supplemented them. The victims of the invading pioneers were

still described as unbelievers, as heathen. But the pioneers, like the earlier Dutch, were largely Protestant Christians, and they regarded heathenism as something to be punished, not remedied. The victims also continued to be designated as savages, cannibals and primitives, but these terms, too, ceased to be diagnoses of conditions that could be remedied, and tended to become synonyms of non-white, a condition that could not be remedied. Racism was an ideology perfectly suited to a practice of enslavement and extermination.

The lynch-mob approach, the ganging-up on victims defined as inferior, appealed to bullies whose humanity was stunted and who lacked any notion of fair play. But this approach did not appeal to everyone. American businessmen, part hustlers and part confidence men, always had something for everyone. For the numerous Saint Georges with some notion of honor and great thirst for heroism, the enemy was depicted somewhat differently; for them there were nations as rich and powerful as their own in the trans-montane woodlands and on the shores of the Great Lakes.

The celebrants of the heroic feats of imperial Spaniards had found empires in central Mexico and on top of the Andes. The celebrants of nationalist American heroes found nations; they transformed desperate resistances of an-archic villagers into international conspiracies masterminded by military archons such as General Pontiac and General Tecumseh; they peopled the woodlands with formidable national leaders, efficient general staffs, and armies of uncountable patriotic troops; they projected their own repressive structures into the unknown; they saw an exact copy of themselves, with all the colors reversed – something like a photographic negative. The enemy thus became an equal in terms of structure, power and aims. War against such an enemy was not only fair play; it was a dire ne-





cessity, a matter of life and death. The enemy's other attributes – the heathenism, the savagery, the cannibalism – made the tasks of expropriating, enslaving and exterminating all the more urgent, made these feats all the more heroic.

The repertory of the nationalist program was now more or less complete. This statement might baffle a reader who cannot yet see any "real nations" in the field. The United States was still a collection of multilingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural 'ethnicities', and the French nation had overflowed its boundaries and turned itself into a Napoleonic empire. The reader might be trying to apply a definition of a nation as an organized territory consisting of people who share a common language, religion and customs, or at least one of the three. Such a definition, clear, pat and static, is not a description of the phenomenon but an apology for it, a justification. The phenomenon was not a static definition but a dynamic process. The common language, religion and customs, like the white blood of the American colonizers, were mere pretexts, instruments

for mobilizing armies. The culmination of the process was not an enshrinement of the commonalities, but a depletion, a total loss of language, religion and customs; the inhabitants of a nation spoke the language of capital, worshipped on the altar of the state and confined their customs to those permitted by the national police.

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Nationalism is the opposite of imperialism only in the realm of definitions. In practice, nationalism was a methodology for conducting the empire of capital.

The continual increase of capital, often referred to as material progress, economic development or industrialization, was the main activity of the middle classes, the so-called bourgeoisie, because capital was what they owned, it was their property; the upper classes owned estates.

The discovery of new worlds of wealth had enormously enriched these middle classes, but had also made them vulnerable. The kings and nobles



who initially gathered the new world's plundered wealth resented losing all but a few trophies to their middle class merchants. This could not be helped. The wealth did not arrive in usable forms; the merchants supplied the king with things he could use, in exchange for the plundered treasures. Even so, monarchs who saw themselves grow poor while their merchants grew rich were not above using their armed retainers to plunder the wealthy merchants. Consequently the middle classes suffered continual injuries under the old regime – injuries to their property. The king's army and police were not reliable protectors of middle class property, and the powerful merchants, who already operated the business of the empire, took measures to put an end to the

instability; they took the politics in hand as well. They could have hired private armies, and they often did. But as soon as instruments for mobilizing national armies and national police forces appeared on the horizon, the injured businessmen had recourse to them. The main virtue of a national armed force is that it guarantees that a patriotic servant will war alongside his own boss against an enemy boss's servant.

The stability assured by a national repressive apparatus gave the owners something like a hothouse in which their capital could grow, increase, multiply. The term 'grow' and its corollaries come from the capitalists' own vocabulary. These people think of a unit of capital as a grain or seed

which they invest in fertile soil. In spring they see a plant grow from each seed. In summer they harvest so many seeds from each plant that, after paying for the soil, sunshine and rain, they still have more seeds than they had initially. The following year they enlarge their field, and gradually the whole countryside becomes improved. In reality, the initial 'grains' are money; the sunshine and rain are the expended energies of laborers; the plants are factories, workshops and mines, the harvested fruits are commodities, bits of processed world; and the excess or additional grains, the profits, are emoluments which the capitalist keeps for himself instead of dividing them up among the workers.

The process as a whole consisted of the processing of natural substances into saleable items or commodities, and of the incarceration of wage workers in the processing plants.

The marriage of Capital with Science was responsible for the great leap forward into what we live in today. Pure scientists discovered the components into which the natural environment could be decomposed; investors placed their bets on the various methods of decomposition; applied scientists or managers saw to it that the wage workers in their charge carried the project through. Social scientists sought ways to make the workers less human, more efficient and machine-like. Thanks to science, capitalists were able to transform much of the natural environment into a processed world, an artifice, and to reduce most human beings into efficient tenders of the artifice.

The process of capitalist production was analyzed and criticized by many philosophers and poets, most notably by Karl Marx,<sup>1</sup> whose cri-

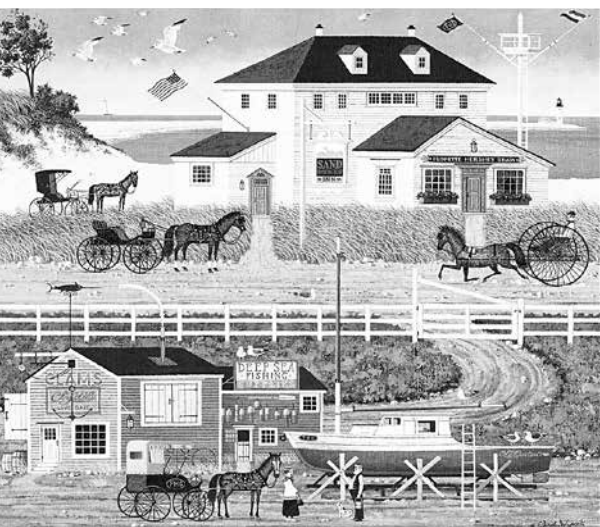
tiques animated, and continue to animate, militant social movements. Marx had a significant blind spot; most of his disciples, and many militants who were not his disciples, built their platforms on that blind spot. Marx was an enthusiastic supporter of the bourgeoisie's struggle for liberation from feudal bonds – who was not an enthusiast in those days? He, who observed that the ruling ideas of an epoch were the ideas of the ruling class, shared many of the ideas of the newly empowered middle class. He was an enthusiast of the Enlightenment, of rationalism, of material progress. It was Marx who insightfully pointed out that every time a worker reproduced his labor power, every minute he devoted to his assigned task, he enlarged the material and social apparatus that dehumanized him. Yet the same Marx was an enthusiast for the application of science to production.

Marx made a thorough analysis of the production process as an exploitation of labor, but he made only cursory and reluctant comments about the prerequisite for capitalist production, and the initial capital that made the process possible.<sup>2</sup> Without the initial capital, there could have been no investments, no production, no great leap forward. This prerequisite was analyzed by the early Soviet Russian marxist Preobrazhensky, who borrowed several insights from the Polish marxist Rosa Luxemburg to formulate his theory of primitive accumulation.<sup>3</sup> By primitive, Preobrazhensky meant the basement of the capitalist edifice, the foundation, the prerequisite. This prerequisite cannot emerge from the capitalist production process itself, if that process is not yet under way. It must, and does, come from outside the production process. It comes from the plundered colonies. It

2 In *Ibid.*, pages 784–850: Part VIII: The So-Called Primitive Accumulation.

3 E. Preobrazhensky, *The New Economics* (Moscow, 1926; English translation published by Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965), a book which announced the fateful "law of primitive socialist accumulation."

1 The subtitle of the first volume of *Capital* is *A Critique of Political Economy: The Process of Capitalist Production* (published by Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1906; republished by Random House, New York).



comes from the expropriated and exterminated populations of the colonies. In earlier days, when there were no overseas colonies, the first capital, the prerequisite for capitalist production, had been squeezed out of internal colonies, out of plundered peasants whose lands were enclosed and crops requisitioned, out of expelled Jews and Muslims whose possessions were expropriated.

The primitive or preliminary accumulation of capital is not something that happened once, in the distant past, and never after. It is something that continues to accompany the capitalist production process, and is an integral part of it. The process described by Marx is responsible, for the regular and expected profits; the process described by Preobrazhensky is responsible for the takeoffs, the windfalls and the great leaps forward. The regular profits are periodically destroyed by crises endemic to the system; new injections of preliminary capital are the only known cure to the crises. Without an ongoing primitive accumulation of capital, the production process would stop; each crisis would tend to become permanent.

Genocide, the rationally calculated extermination of human populations designated as legitimate prey, has not been an aberration in an otherwise

peaceful march of progress. Genocide has been a prerequisite of that progress. This is why national armed forces were indispensable to the wielders of capital. These forces did not only protect the owners of capital from the insurrectionary wrath of their own exploited wage workers. These forces also captured the holy grail, the magic lantern, the preliminary capital, by battering the gates of resisting or unresisting outsiders, by looting, deporting and murdering.

The footprints of the national armies are the traces of the march of progress. These patriotic armies were, and still are, the seventh wonder of the world. In them, the wolf lay alongside the lamb, the spider alongside the fly. In them, exploited workers were the chums of exploiters, indebted peasants the chums of creditors, suckers the chums of hustlers in a companionship stimulated not by love but by hatred — hatred of potential sources of preliminary capital designated as unbelievers, savages, inferior races.

Human communities as variegated in their ways and beliefs as birds are in feathers were invaded, despoiled and at last exterminated beyond imagination's grasp. The clothes and artifacts of the vanished communities were gathered up as trophies and displayed in museums as additional traces of the march of progress; the extinct beliefs and ways became the curiosities of yet another of the invaders' many sciences. The expropriated fields, forests and animals were garnered as bonanzas, as preliminary capital, as the precondition for the production process that was to turn the fields into farms, the trees into lumber, the animals into hats, the minerals into munitions, the human survivors into cheap labor. Genocide was, and still is, the precondition, the cornerstone and ground work of the military-industrial complexes, of the processed environments, of the worlds of offices and parking lots.

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Nationalism was so perfectly suited to its double task, the domestication of workers and the despoliation of aliens, that it appealed to everyone – everyone, that is, who wielded or aspired to wield a portion of capital.

During the nineteenth century, especially during its second half, every owner of investable capital discovered that he had roots among the mobilizable countryfolk who spoke his mother's tongue and worshipped his father's gods. The fervor of such a nationalist was transparently cynical, since he was the countryman who no longer had roots among his mother's or father's kin: he found his salvation in his savings, prayed to his investments and spoke the language of cost accounting. But he had learned, from Americans and Frenchmen, that although he could not mobilize the countryfolk as loyal servants, clients and customers, he could mobilize them as loyal fellow-Catholics, Orthodox or Protestants. Languages, religions and customs became welding materials for the construction of nation-states.

The welding materials were means, not ends. The purpose of the national entities was not to develop languages, religions or customs, but to develop national economies, to turn the countryfolk into workers and soldiers, to turn the motherland into mines and factories, to turn dynastic estates into capitalist enterprises. Without the capital, there could be no munitions or supplies, no national army, no nation.

Savings and investments, market research and cost accounting, the obsessions of the rationalistic former middle classes, became the ruling obsessions. These rationalistic obsessions became not only sovereign but also exclusive. Individuals who enacted other obsessions, irrational ones, were put away in madhouses, asylums.

The nations usually were but need no longer have been monotheistic; the former god or gods

had lost their importance except as welding materials. The nations were mono-obsessive, and if monotheism served the ruling obsession, then it too was mobilized.

World War I marked the end of one phase of the nationalizing process, the phase that had begun with the American and French revolutions, the phase that had been announced much earlier by the declaration of Aguirre and the revolt of the Dutch grandees. The conflicting claims of old and newly-constituted nations were in fact the causes of that war. Germany, Italy and Japan, as well as Greece, Serbia and colonial Latin America, had already taken on most of the attributes of their nationalistic predecessors, had become national empires, monarchies and republics, and the more powerful of the new arrivals aspired to take on the main missing attribute, the colonial empire. During that war, all the mobilizable components of the two remaining dynastic empires, the Ottoman and the Hapsburg, constituted themselves into nations. When bourgeoisies with different languages and religions, such as Turks and Armenians, claimed the same territory, the weaker were treated like so-called American Indians; they were exterminated. National Sovereignty and Genocide were – and still are – corollaries.



Common language and religion appear to be corollaries of nationhood, but only because of an optical illusion. As welding materials, languages and religions were used when they served their purpose, discarded when they did not. Neither multi-lingual Switzerland nor multi-religious Yu-

goslavia were banned from the family of nations. The shapes of noses and the color of hair could also have been used to mobilize patriots – and later were. The shared heritages, roots and commonalities had to satisfy only one criterion, the criterion of American-style pragmatic reason: did they work? Whatever worked was used. The shared traits were important, not because of their cultural, historical or philosophical content, but because they were useful for organizing a police to protect the national property and for mobilizing an army to plunder the colonies.

Once a nation was constituted, human beings who lived on the national territory but did not possess the national traits could be transformed into internal colonies, namely into sources of preliminary capital. Without preliminary capital, no nation could become a great nation, and nations that aspired to greatness but lacked adequate overseas colonies could resort to plundering, exterminating and expropriating those of their countrymen who did not possess the national traits.

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The establishment of nation-states was greeted with euphoric enthusiasm by poets as well as peasants who thought their muses or their gods had at last descended to earth. The main wet blankets amidst the waving banners and flying confetti were the former rulers, the colonized, and the disciples of Karl Marx.

The overthrown and the colonized were unenthusiastic for obvious reasons.

The disciples of Marx were unenthusiastic because they had learned from the master that national liberation meant national exploitation, that the national government was the executive committee of the national capitalist class, that the nation had nothing for workingmen but chains. These strategists for the workingmen, who were

not themselves workingmen but were as bourgeois as the ruling capitalists, proclaimed that the workingmen had no country and organized themselves into an International. This International split into three, and each International moved increasingly into the field of Marx's blind spot.

The First International was carried off by Marx's one-time Russian translator and then antagonist Bakunin, an inveterate rebel who had been a fervent nationalist until he'd learned about exploitation from Marx. Bakunin and his companions, rebels against all authorities, also rebelled against the authority of Marx; they suspected Marx of trying to turn the International into a state as repressive as the feudal and national combined. Bakunin and his followers were unambiguous in their rejection of all states, but they were ambiguous about capitalist enterprise. Even more than Marx, they glorified science, celebrated material progress and hailed industrialization. Being rebels, they considered every fight a good fight, but the best of all was the fight against the bourgeoisie's former enemies, the fight against feudal landlords and the Catholic Church. Thus the Bakuninist International flourished in places like Spain, where the bourgeoisie had not completed its struggle for independence but had, instead, allied itself with feudal barons and the Church for protection from insurgent workers and peasants. The Bakuninists fought to complete the bourgeois revolution without and against the bourgeoisie. They called themselves anarchists and disdained all states, but did not begin to explain how they would procure the preliminary or the subsequent industry, progress and science, namely the capital, without an army and a police. They were never given a real chance to resolve their contradiction in practice, and present day Bakuninists have still not resolved it, have not even become aware that there is a contradiction between anarchy and industry.

The Second International, less rebellious than the



first, quickly came to terms with capital as well as the state. Solidly entrenched in Marx's blind spot, the professors of this organization did not become enmeshed in any Bakuninist contradiction. It was obvious to them that the exploitation and the plunder were necessary conditions for the material progress, and they realistically reconciled themselves to what could not be helped. All they asked for was a greater share of the benefits for the workingmen, and offices in the political establishment for themselves, as the workingmen's representatives. Like the good unionists who preceded and followed them, the socialist professors were embarrassed by "the colonial question," but their embarrassment, like Philip Hapsburg's, merely gave them bad consciences. In time, imperial German socialists, royal Danish socialists and republican French socialists even ceased to be internationalists.

The Third International did not only come to terms with capital and the state; it made them its goal. This international was not formed by rebellious or dissenting intellectuals; it was created by a state, the Russian state, after the Bolshevik Party installed itself in that state's offices. The main activity of this international was to advertise the feats of the revamped Russian state, of its ruling party, and of the party's founder, a man who called himself Lenin. The feats of that party and founder were indeed momentous, but the advertisers did their best to hide what was most momentous about them.

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The First World War had left two vast empires in a quandary. The Celestial Empire of China, the oldest continuous state in the world, and the Empire of the Tsars, a much more recent operation, hovered shakily between the prospect of turning themselves into nation-states and the prospect of decomposing into smaller units, like their Ottoman and Hapsburg counterparts had done.



Lenin resolved this quandary for Russia. Is such a thing possible? Marx had observed that a single individual could not change circumstances; he could only avail himself of them. Marx was probably right. Lenin's feat was not to change circumstances, but to avail himself of them in an extraordinary manner. The feat was monumental in its opportunism.

Lenin was a Russian bourgeois who cursed the weakness and ineptitude of the Russian bourgeoisie.<sup>4</sup> An enthusiast for capitalist development, an ardent admirer of American-style progress, he did not make common cause with those he cursed, but rather with their enemies, with the anti-capitalist disciples of Marx. He availed himself of Marx's blind spot to transform Marx's critique of the capitalist production process into a manual

4 See V.I. Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964; first published in 1899). I quote from page 599: "if...we compare the present rapidity of development with that which could be achieved with the general level of technique and culture as it is today, the present rate of development of capitalism in Russia really must be considered as slow. And it cannot but be slow, for in no single capitalist country has there been such an abundant survival of ancient institutions that are incompatible with capitalism, retard its development, and immeasurably worsen the condition of the producers..."

for developing capital, a “how-to-do-it” guide. Marx’s studies of exploitation and immiseration became food for the famished, a cornucopia, a virtual horn of plenty. American businessmen had already marketed urine as spring water, but no American confidence man had yet managed an inversion of such magnitude.

No circumstances were changed. Every step of the inversion was carried out with available circumstances, with tried and tested methods. Russian countryfolk could not be mobilized in terms of their Russianness or orthodoxy or whiteness, but they could be, and were, mobilized in terms of their exploitation, their oppression, their ages of suffering under the despotism of the Tsars. Oppression and exploitation became welding materials. The long sufferings under the Tsars were used in the same way and for the same purpose as the scalplings of white women and children had been used by Americans; they were used to organize people into fighting units, into embryos of the national army and the national police.

The presentation of the dictator and of the Party’s central committee as a dictatorship of the liberated proletariat seemed to be something new, but even this was new only in the words that were used. This was something as old as the Pharaohs and Lugals of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, who had been chosen by the god to lead the people, who had embodied the people in their dialogues with the god. This was a tried and tested gimmick of rulers. Even if the ancient precedents were temporarily forgotten, a more recent precedent had been provided by the French Committee of Public Health, which had presented itself as the embodiment of the nation’s general will.

The goal, communism, the overthrow and supersession of capitalism, also seemed something new, seemed to be a change of circumstances. But only the word was new. The goal of the Dictator of the Proletariat was still American-style progress, capitalist development, electrification,



rapid mass transportation, science, the processing of the natural environment. The goal was the capitalism that the weak and inept Russian bourgeoisie had failed to develop. With Marx’s Capital as their light and guide, the dictator and his Party would develop capitalism in Russia; they would serve as a substitute bourgeoisie, and they would use the power of the state not only to police the process, but to launch and manage it as well.

Lenin did not live long enough to demonstrate his virtuosity as general manager of Russian capital, but his successor Stalin amply demonstrated the powers of the founder’s machine. The first step was the primitive accumulation of capital. If Marx had not been very clear about this, Preobrazhensky had been very clear. Preobrazhensky was jailed, but his description of the tried and tested methods of procuring preliminary capital was applied to vast Russia. The preliminary capital of English, American, Belgian and other capitalists had come from plundered overseas colonies. Russia had no overseas colonies. This lack was no obstacle. The entire Russian countryside was transformed into a colony.

The first sources of preliminary capital were Kulaks, peasants who had something worth plundering. This drive was so successful that it was applied to the remaining peasants as well,

with the rational expectation that small amounts plundered from many people would yield a substantial hoard.

The peasants were not the only colonials. The former ruling class had already been thoroughly expropriated of all its wealth and property, but yet other sources of preliminary capital were found. With the totality of state power concentrated in their hands, the dictators soon discovered that they could manufacture sources of primitive accumulation. Successful entrepreneurs, dissatisfied workers and peasants, militants of competing organizations, even disillusioned Party Members, could be designated as counterrevolutionaries, rounded up, expropriated and shipped off to labor camps. All the deportations, mass executions and expropriations of earlier colonizers were re-enacted in Russia.

Earlier colonizers, being pioneers, had resorted to trial and error. The Russian dictators did not have to resort to trial and error. By their time, all the methods of procuring preliminary capital had been tried and tested, and could be scientifically applied. Russian capital developed in a totally controlled environment, a hothouse; every lever, every variable, was controlled by the national police. Functions which had been left to chance or to other bodies in less controlled environments fell to the police in the Russian hothouse. The fact that the colonials were not abroad but within, and therefore subject not to conquest but to arrest, further increased the role and size of the police. In time the omnipotent and omnipresent police became the visible emanation and embodiment of the proletariat, and communism became a synonym of total police organization and control.

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Lenin's expectations were not, however, fully realized by the Russian hothouse. The police-as-capitalist worked wonders in procuring preliminary capital from expropriated counterrevolutionaries,

but did not do nearly as well in managing the capitalist production process. It may still be too early to tell for sure, but to date this police bureaucracy had been at least as inept in this role as the bourgeoisie Lenin had cursed; its ability to discover ever new sources of preliminary capital seems to be all that has kept it afloat.

Nor has the appeal of this apparatus been on a level with Lenin's expectations. The Leninist police apparatus has not appealed to businessmen or to established politicians; it has not recommended itself as a superior method of managing the production process. It has appealed to a somewhat different social class, a class I will briefly try to describe, and it has recommended itself to this class primarily as a method of seizing national power and secondarily as a method of primitive accumulation of capital.

The heirs of Lenin and Stalin have not been actual Praetorian guards, actual wielders of economic and political power in the name and for the benefit of a superfluous monarch; they have been understudy Praetorians, students of economic and political power who despaired of ever reaching even intermediate levels of power. The Leninist model has offered such people the prospect of leaping over the intermediate levels directly into the central palace.

The heirs of Lenin were clerks and minor officials, people like Mussolini, Mao Zedong and Hitler, people who, like Lenin himself, cursed their weak and inept bourgeoisies for having failed to establish their nation's greatness.

(I do not include the Zionists among the heirs of Lenin because they belong to an earlier generation. They were Lenin's contemporaries who had, perhaps independently, discovered the power of persecution and suffering as welding materials for the mobilization of a national army and police. The Zionists made other contributions of their own. Their treatment of a dispersed re-

ligious population as a nation, their imposition of the capitalist nation-state as that population's end-all and be-all, and their reduction of a religious heritage to a racial heritage, contributed significant elements to the nationalist methodology, and would have fateful consequences when they were applied on a population of Jews, not all of them Zionists, by a population welded together as a "German race.") Mussolini, Mao Zedong and Hitler cut through the curtain of slogans and saw Lenin's and Stalin's feats for what they were: successful methods of seizing and maintaining state power. All three trimmed the methodology down to its essentials. The first step was to join up with likeminded students of power and to form the nucleus of the police organization, an outfit called, after Lenin's, the Party. The next step was to recruit the mass base, the available troops and troop suppliers. The third step was to seize the apparatus of the state, to install the theoretician in the office of Duce, Chairman or Fuehrer, to apportion police and managerial functions among the elite or cadre, and to put the mass base to work. The fourth step was to secure the preliminary capital needed to repair or launch a military-industrial complex capable of supporting the national leader and cadre, the police and army, the industrial managers; without this capital there could be no weapons, no power, no nation.

The heirs of Lenin and Stalin further trimmed the methodology, in their recruiting drives, by minimizing capitalist exploitation and by concentrating on national oppression. Talk of exploitation no longer served a purpose, and had in fact become embarrassing, since it was obvious to all, especially to wage workers, that successful revolutionaries had not put an end to wage labor, but had extended its domain.

Being as pragmatic as American businessmen, the new revolutionaries did not speak of liber-



ation from wage labor, but of national liberation.<sup>5</sup>This type of liberation was not a dream of romantic utopians; it was precisely what was possible, and all that was possible, in the existing world, one needed only to avail oneself of already existing circumstances to make it happen. National liberation consisted of the liberation of the national chairman and the national police from the chains of powerlessness; the investiture of the chairman and the establishment of the police were not pipe dreams but components of a tried and tested strategy, a science.

Fascist and National Socialist Parties were the first to prove that the strategy worked, that the Bolshevik Party's feat could actually be repeated. The national chairmen and their staffs installed themselves in power and set out to procure the preliminary capital needed for national greatness. The Fascists thrust themselves into one of the last uninvaded regions of Africa and gouged it as earlier industrializers had gouged their colonial empires. The National Socialists targeted Jews, an inner population that had been members of a "unified Germany" as long as other

5 Or the liberation of the state: "Our myth is the nation, our myth is the greatness of the nation"; "It is the state which creates the nation, conferring volition and therefore real life on a people made aware of their moral unity"; "Always the maximum of liberty coincides with the maximum force of the state"; "Everything for the state; nothing against the state; nothing outside the state." From *Che cosa è il fascismo and La dottrina del fascismo*, quoted by G.H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (New York, 1955), pp. 872-878.

Germans, as their first source of primitive accumulation because many of the Jews, like many of Stalin's Kulaks, had things worth plundering.

Zionists had already preceded the National Socialists in reducing a religion to a race, and National Socialists could look back to American pioneers for ways to use the instrument of racism. Hitler's elite needed only to translate the corpus of American racist research to equip their scientific institutes with large libraries. The National Socialists dealt with Jews much the same way as the Americans had earlier dealt with the indigenous population of North America, except that the National Socialists applied a later and much more powerful technology to the task of deporting, expropriating and exterminating human beings. But in this the later exterminators were not innovators; they merely availed themselves of the circumstances within their reach.

The Fascists and National Socialists were joined by Japanese empire-builders who feared that the decomposing Celestial Empire would become a source of preliminary capital for Russian or revolutionary Chinese industrializers. Forming an Axis, the three set out to turn the world's continents into sources of primitive accumulation of capital. They were not bothered by other nations until they started to encroach on the colonies and homelands of established capitalist powers. The reduction of already established capitalists to colonized prey could be practiced internally, where it was always legal since the nation's rulers make its laws — and had already been practiced internally by Leninists and Stalinists. But such a practice would have amounted to a change of circumstances, and it could not be carried abroad without provoking a world war. The Axis powers overreached themselves and lost.

After the war, many reasonable people would speak of the aims of the Axis as irrational and of Hitler as a lunatic. Yet the same reasonable peo-

ple would consider men like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson sane and rational, even though these men envisioned and began to enact the conquest of a vast continent, the deportation and extermination of the continent's population, at a time when such a project was much less feasible than the project of the Axis.<sup>6</sup> It is true that the technologies as well as the physical, chemical, biological and social sciences applied by Washington and Jefferson were quite different from those applied by the National Socialists. But if knowledge is power, if it was rational for the earlier pioneers to maim and kill with gunpowder in the age of horse-drawn carriages, why was it irrational for National Socialists to maim and kill with high explosives, gas and chemical agents in the age of rockets, submarines and 'freeways'?

The Nazis were, if anything, yet more scientifically-oriented than the Americans. In their time, they were a synonym for scientific efficiency to much of the world. They kept files on everything, tabulated and cross tabulated their findings, published their tabulations in scientific journals. Among them, even racism was not the property of frontier rabble-rousers, but of well-endowed institutes.

Many reasonable people seem to equate lunacy with failure. This would not be the first time. Many called Napoleon a lunatic when he was in prison or in exile, but when Napoleon re-emerged as the Emperor, the same people spoke of him with re-

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6 "...the gradual extension of our settlements will as certainly cause the savage, as the wolf, to retire; both being beast of prey, tho' they differ in shape" (G. Washington in 1783). "...if ever we are constrained to lift the hatchet against any tribe, we will never lay it down till that tribe is exterminated, or driven beyond..." (T. Jefferson in 1807). "...the cruel massacres they have committed on the women and children of our frontiers taken by surprise, will oblige us now to pursue them to extermination, or drive them to new seats beyond our reach" (T. Jefferson in 1813). Quoted by Richard Drinnon in *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building* (New York: New American Library, 1980), pp. 65, 96, 98.

spect, even reverence. Incarceration and exile are not only regarded as remedies for lunacy, but also as its symptoms. Failure is foolishness.

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Mao Zedong, the third pioneering national socialist (or national communist; the second word no longer matters, since it is nothing but a historical relic; the expression “left-wing fascist” would serve as well, but it conveys even less meaning than the nationalist expressions) succeeded in doing for the Celestial Empire what Lenin had done for the Empire of the Tsars. The oldest bureaucratic apparatus in the world did not decompose into smaller units nor into colonies of other industrializers; it reemerged, greatly changed, as a People’s Republic, as a beacon to “oppressed nations.”

The Chairman and his Cadre followed the footsteps of a long line of predecessors and transformed the Celestial Empire into a vast source of preliminary capital, complete with purges, persecutions and their consequent great leaps forward.

The next stage, the launching of the capitalist production process, was carried out on the Russian model, namely by the national police. This did not work in China any better than it had in Russia. Apparently the entrepreneurial function was to be entrusted to confidence men or hustlers who are able to take other people in, and cops do not usually inspire the required confidence. But this was less important to Maoists than it had been to Leninists. The capitalist production process remains important, at least as important as the regularized drives for primitive accumulation, since without the capital there is no power, no nation. But the Maoists make few, and ever fewer, claims for their model as a superior method of industrialization, and in this they are more modest than the Russians and less disappointed by the results of their industrial police.

The Maoist model offers itself to security guards and students the world over as a tried and tested methodology of power, as a scientific strategy of national liberation. Generally known as Mao-Zedong-Thought,<sup>7</sup> this science offers aspiring chairmen and cadres the prospect of unprecedented power over living beings, human activities and even thoughts. The pope and priests of the Catholic Church, with all their inquisitions and confessions, never had such power, not because they would have rejected it, but because they lacked the instruments made available by modern science and technology.

The liberation of the nation is the last stage in the elimination of parasites. Capitalism had already earlier cleared nature of parasites and reduced most of the rest of nature to raw materials for processing industries. Modern national socialism or social nationalism holds out the prospect of eliminating parasites from human society as well. The human parasites are usually sources of preliminary capital, but the capital is not always ‘material’; it can also be cultural or ‘spiritual’. The ways, myths, poetry and music of the people are liquidated as a matter of course; some of the music and costumes of the former “folk culture” subsequently reappear, processed and packaged, as elements of the national spectacle, as decorations for the national accumulation drives; the ways and myths become raw materials for processing by one or several of the “human sciences.” Even the useless resentment of workers toward their alienated wage labor is liquidated. When the nation is liberated, wage labor ceases to be an onerous burden and becomes a national obligation, to be carried out with joy. The inmates of a totally liberated nation read Orwell’s 1984 as an anthropological study, a description of an earlier age.

It is no longer possible to satirize this state of affairs. Every satire risks becoming a bible for yet

<sup>7</sup> Readily available in paper back as Quotations from Chairman Mao (Peking: Political Department of the People’s Liberation Army, 1966).

another national liberation front.<sup>8</sup> Every satirist risks becoming the founder of a new religion, a Buddha, Zarathustra, Jesus, Muhammad or Marx. Every exposure of the ravages of the dominant system, every critique of the system's functioning, becomes fodder for the horses of liberators, welding materials for builders of armies. Mao-Zedong-Thought in its numerous versions and revisions is a total science as well as a total theology; it is social physics as well as cosmic metaphysics. The French Committee of National Health claimed to embody the general will of only the French nation. The revisions of Mao-Zedong-Thought claim to embody the general will of all the world's oppressed.

The constant revisions of this Thought are necessary because its initial formulations were not applicable to all, or in fact to any, of the world's colonized populations. None of the world's colonized shared the Chinese heritage of having supported a state apparatus for the past two thousand years. Few of the world's oppressed had possessed any of the attributes of a nation in the recent or distant past. The Thought had to be adapted to people whose ancestors had lived without national chairmen, armies or police, without capitalist production processes and therefore without the need for preliminary capital.

These revisions were accomplished by enriching the initial Thought with borrowings from Mussolini,

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8 Black & Red tried to satirize this situation over ten years ago with the publication of a fake Manual for Revolutionary Leaders, a "how-to-do-it guide" whose author, Michael Velli, offered to do for the modern revolutionary prince what Machiavelli had offered the feudal prince. This phoney "Manual" fused Mao-Zedong-Thought with the Thought of Lenin, Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler and their modern followers, and offered grizzly recipes for the preparation of revolutionary organizations and the seizure of total power. Disconcertingly, at least half of the requests for this "Manual" came from aspiring national liberators, and it is possible that some of the current versions of the nationalist metaphysic contain recipes offered by Michael Velli.

ni, Hitler and the Zionist State of Israel. Mussolini's theory of the fulfillment of the nation in the state was a central tenet. All groups of people, whether small or large, industrial or non-industrial, concentrated or dispersed, were seen as nations, not in terms of their past, but in terms of their aura, their potentiality, a potentiality embedded in their national liberation fronts. Hitler's (and the Zionists') treatment of the nation as a racial entity was another central tenet. The cadres were recruited from among people depleted of their ancestors' kinships and customs, and consequently the liberators were not distinguishable from the oppressors in terms of language, beliefs, customs or weapons; the only welding material that held them to each other and to their mass base was the welding material that had held white servants to white bosses on the American frontier; the "racial bond" gave identities to those without identity, kinship to those who had no kin, community to those who had lost their community; it was the last bond of the culturally depleted.

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The revised thought could now be applied to Africans as well as Navahos, Apaches as well as Palestinians.<sup>9</sup> The borrowings from Mussolini,

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9 I am not exaggerating. I have before me a book-length pamphlet titled *The Mythology of the White Proletariat: A Short Course for Understanding Babylon* by J. Sakai (Chicago: Morningstar Press, 1983). As an application of Mao-Zedong-Thought to American history, it is the most sensitive Maoist work I've seen. The author documents and describes, sometimes vividly, the oppression of America's enslaved Africans, the deportations and exterminations of the American continent's indigenous inhabitants, the racist exploitation of Chinese, the incarceration of Japanese-Americans in concentration camps. The author mobilizes all these experiences of unmitigated terror, not to look for ways to supersede the system that perpetrated them, but to urge the victims to reproduce the same system among themselves. Sprinkled with pictures and quotations of chairmen Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong and Ho-chi Minh, this work makes no attempt to hide or disguise its repressive aims; it urges Africans as well as Navahos, Apaches as well as Palestinians, to organize a party, seize state power, and liquidate parasites.

Hitler and the Zionists are judiciously covered up, because Mussolini and Hitler failed to hold on to their seized power, and because the successful Zionists have turned their state into the world's policeman against all other national liberation fronts. Lenin, Stalin and Mao Zedong must be given even more credit than they deserve.

The revised and universally applicable models work much the same as the originals, but more smoothly; national liberation has become an applied science; the apparatus has been frequently tested; the numerous kinks in the originals have by now been straightened out. All that is needed to make the contraption run is a driver, a transmission belt, and fuel.

The driver is of course the theoretician himself, or his closest disciple. The transmission belt is the general staff, the organization, also called the Party or the communist party. This communist party with a small c is exactly what it is popularly understood to be. It is the nucleus of the police organization that does the purging and that will itself be purged once the leader becomes National Leader and needs to re-revise the invariant Thought while adapting himself to the family of nations, or at least to the family bankers, munitions suppliers and investors. And the fuel: the oppressed nation, the suffering masses, the liberated people are and will continue to be the fuel.

The leader and the general staff are not flown in from abroad; they are not foreign agitators. They are integral products of the capitalist production process. This production process has invariably been accompanied by racism. Racism is not a necessary component of production, but racism (in some form) has been a necessary component of the process of primitive accumulation of capital, and it has almost always leaked into the production process.

Industrialized nations have procured their preliminary capital by expropriating, deporting,

persecuting and segregating, if not always by exterminating, people designated as legitimate prey. Kinships were broken, environments were destroyed, cultural orientations and ways were extirpated.

Descendants of survivors of such onslaughts are lucky if they preserve the merest relics, the most fleeting shadows of their ancestors' cultures. Many of the descendants do not retain even shadows; they are totally depleted; they go to work; they further enlarge the apparatus that destroyed their ancestors' culture. And in the world of work they are relegated to the margins, to the most unpleasant and least highly paid jobs. This makes them mad. A supermarket packer, for example, may know more about the stocks and the ordering than the manager, may know that racism is the only reason he is not manager and the manager not a packer. A security guard may know racism is the only reason he's not chief of police. It is among people who have lost all their roots, who dream themselves supermarket managers and chiefs of police, that the national liberation front takes root; this is where the leader and general staff are formed.

Nationalism continues to appeal to the depleted because other prospects appear bleaker. The culture of the ancestors was destroyed; therefore, by pragmatic standard, it failed; the only ancestors who survived were those who accommodated themselves to the invader's system, and they survived on the outskirts of garbage dumps. The varied utopias of poets and dreamers and the numerous "mythologies of the proletariat" have also failed; they have not proven themselves in practice; they have been nothing but hot air, pipe dreams, pies in the sky; the actual proletariat has been as racist as the bosses and the police.

The packer and the security guard have lost contact with the ancient culture; pipe dreams and utopias don't interest them, are in fact dismissed



with the practical businessman's contempt toward poets, drifters and dreamers. Nationalism offers them something concrete, something that's been tried and tested and is known to work. There's no earthly reason for the descendants of the persecuted to remain persecuted when nationalism offers them the prospect of becoming persecutors. Near and distant relatives of victims can become a racist nation-state; they can themselves herd other people into concentration camps, push other people around at will, perpetrate genocidal war against them, procure preliminary capital by expropriating them. And if "racial relatives" of Hitler's victims can do it, so can the near and distant relatives of the victims of a Washington, Jackson, Reagan or Begin.

Every oppressed population can become a nation, a photographic negative of the oppressor nation, a place where the former packer is the supermarket's manager, where the former security guard is the chief of police. By applying the corrected strategy, every security guard can follow the precedent of ancient Rome's Praetorian guards. The security police of a foreign mining trust can proclaim itself a republic, liberate the people, and go on liberating them until they have nothing left but to pray for liberation to end. Even before the seizure of power, a gang can call itself a Front and offer heavily taxed and constantly policed poor people something they still lack: a tribute-gathering organization and a hit-squad, namely supplementary tax farmers and police, the people's own. In these ways, people can be liberated of the traits of their victimized ancestors; all the relics that still survive from pre-industrial times and non-capitalist cultures can at last be permanently extirpated.

The idea that an understanding of the genocide, that a memory of the holocausts, can only lead

people to want to dismantle the system, is erroneous. The continuing appeal of nationalism suggests that the opposite is truer, namely that an understanding of genocide has led people to mobilize genocidal armies, that the memory of holocausts has led people to perpetrate holocausts. The sensitive poets who remembered the loss, the researchers who documented it, have been like the pure scientists who discovered the structure of the atom. Applied scientists used the discovery to split the atom's nucleus, to produce weapons which can split every atom's nucleus; Nationalists used the poetry to split and fuse human populations, to mobilize genocidal armies, to perpetrate new holocausts.

The pure scientist, poets and researchers consider themselves innocent of the devastated countrysides and charred bodies. Are they innocent?

It seems to me that at least one of Marx's observations is true: every minute devoted to the capitalist production process, every thought contributed to the industrial system, further enlarges a power that is inimical to nature, to culture, to life. Applied science is not something alien; it is an integral part of the capitalist production process. Nationalism is not flown in from abroad. It is a product of the capitalist production process, like the chemical agents poisoning the lakes, air, animals and people, like the nuclear plants radioactivating micro-environments in preparation for the radioactivation of the macro-environment.

As a postscript I'd like to answer a question before it is asked. The question is: "Don't you think a descendant of oppressed people is better off as a supermarket manager or police chief?" My answer is another question: What concentration camp manager, national executioner or torturer is not a descendant of oppressed people?

Detroit, December, 1984





## Preliminary Theses on the Greek Nation for Everyday Use

### Our baba doesn't say fairy tales and friends Athens

#### For the text and its context

The following text consists of a few preliminary theses on the Greek nation and state. In its basic lines, it was written in 2018 as a contribution to a discussion group now long gone, when the so-called “Macedonian issue” was, once again, the talk of the day. This old text was reformulated in 2022 to be as comprehensible as possible for readers not familiar with the Greek context. With it, we try to open a dialogue, badly needed today, on the thorny topic of the nation and nationalism from a proletarian perspective; that is, from a perspective not interested at all in preserving the present form(s) of society.

In 2018, almost everyone in Greece had an opinion on the “right” name for Macedonia, which very often appeared in Greek public discourse as “the neighbouring state.” Despite the over-heated atmosphere, or because of it, the proper point of departure for us, which we still view as methodologically indispensable, was the need to *take a step back*. Before we start wondering about those participating in a public debate about the

name of another state, we need to tackle the conditions that make such a debate possible. Why was such a debate not held for other former Yugoslavian nation-states? Why was there no such discussion about how Croatia or Bosnia should be called? Why did no one in Greece ever question Slovenia's choice to enter the EU and NATO?

The national(ist) tension around “Macedonia” formed the occasion for the text, but the text itself is not about it. It is not a historical text concerned with the expansion of the Greek state into Ottoman Macedonia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its concomitant violence on those who did not conform to its national criteria. There are quite a few texts on this topic and some are, indeed, remarkably good. Moreover, we were not (and are not) interested in offering yet another timeline of the recent economic relations between Greece and Macedonia or of the (geo) political processes that lead to the Prespa Agreement. Our problem here is a preliminary one. It is the Greek nation(alism) and its socially

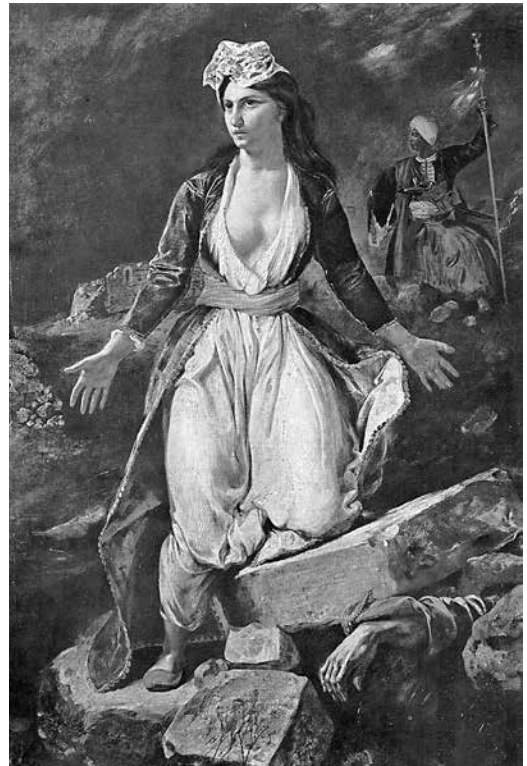


constitutive power as a crucial dimension of our social and political present.

The more abstract you go on nationalism, the easier things appear. Today it is actually easy to disavow nationalism. Back in 2018, what was recognized as *nationalism* from a political spectrum, ranging from the official state to a rather big part of the *antagonist movement*, was just its most loud, obvious, and trivial aspects. The problem, of course, with such an impoverished formulation of nationalism, is that it leaves both the official version of the Greek state and Greek society outside the scope of its critique; that is, almost everything. In this respect, the following text could be summarized, with some stretching, as follows: 1) *nationalism is neither extreme nor merely an ideology*, and 2) *a critique of nationalism without a critique of the nation is not a critique at all, it is deception through verbalism*.

On March 10th, 2018, a demonstration was held in on the occasion of the arson of the Libertatia Squat during a “pro-Macedonian” rally in January of the same year. On the same day,

just after the demonstration, the Balkan Solidarity Network held a public meeting on nationalism with comrades from Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Slovenia. Even though the organisers had not discussed in advance how the meeting would proceed, every comrade focused on the nationalism of ‘her/his’ country. It is precisely in this political attitude that we find the very core of a proper anti-national political perspective. In short, one should *always* start from where they are positioned, their ‘own’ nation and state. Any other starting point leads directly to benefiting “your” foreign, or internal, affairs apparatus. Second, it is only from here that one can make the move to a more general critique of nationalism, not just as an ideology, but as a constitutive social force. It is at this level that different experiences from different countries and historical trajectories can enter into a useful dialogue and become more concrete. The third move is to return to the point of origin, which also constitutes the permanent target of proletarian critique.



## I.

There is something misleading in dealing with Greek nationalism during this period, when public discourse was dominated by so-called national issues, the “Macedonian” and the notorious “Turkish provocations.” This does not come from some extraordinary “external event”, but from the dominant approach according to which nationalism is something that occasionally *comes and goes*. Hence, nationalism is represented as an abnormal, extreme situation, the exact opposite of “democratic normality.” In its most benign version, this political position conflates *the object with its intensity*, designating only some of its loud moments as nationalism. In such a discursive context, nationalism is cut off from the conditions that make it a decisive aspect of social life. Even with the best of intentions, this approach secures nationalism by obscuring its permanence and its formative power. A consistent critique must therefore start from what is rendered invisible. We could call it *the everyday life of nationalism*.

## II.

Under liberal democracy, nationalism is a rather infamous term, thus any person could easily declare themselves an anti-nationalist. The nation, however, is a whole different story. Opposition to the nation as such is more than unpopular; it is almost inconceivable. Even with Marxism and Anarchism, opposition to nationalism rarely touches upon the nation itself. After all, nation does not come with an “-ism” like ideologies do. Therefore, no question can be raised about it since everyone knows that every human being must “belong” to a nation as everyone “*must have a nose and two ears.*”<sup>1</sup>

1 Ernest Gellner (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell Publisher, p.6.

It was (and is) the strategic social predominance of nationalism that made the decoupling between nationalism and the nation possible. By being decoupled from the nation, nationalism is decoupled from its greatest achievement, the nation-state, which is no more than nationalism *stateified*. Thus, the nation is insulated from nationalism. The former is rendered a self-evident *conditio humana* while the latter is reduced to a perverted “set of ideas.” Nationalism becomes a disease of the nation. Without it, it could be perfectly healthy. As if to say: “*everyone can be a proud Greek without being a Nazi.*” Trying to play the former against the latter strengthens the former, in turn recreating the conditions for the latter.

## III.

The widespread banality goes like this: *Nationalism is what nationalists do*. So we must assume that those who are not (labelled as) nationalists must also have some non-nationalist activity (be it left, moderate, liberal, etc.). According to these metrics, activity can be measured solely based on the political identity of those involved in it. Subjects appear only as producers, but never as (social) products. However, no one creates themselves on their own in a vacuum. Quite the opposite is true. Both the repertoire of choices as well as the very criteria by which a subject actually makes a choice are historically specific social products formed (and disintegrated) through power relations. Through this lens, many “natural” and “neutral” social realities resurface as crucial pillars of Greek nationalism: Greek (light blue) identity cards, as well as the condition and consequences of not possessing one, ridiculous phrases such as “the Greek light” and “Greek nature,” fustanellas and clarinets (combined), national celebrations taking place at Greek schools, Greek schools themselves, the Constitution of Greece, according to which “All Greeks are equal

before the law" (Article 4) and its ramifications on non-Greek members of the working class. Simply, *nation(alism) makes nationalist subjects..*

#### IV.

If any decent person in Greece happens to encounter a rally for "Macedonia" full of (neo-)Nazis, priests and clowns dressed in ancient-style helmets, one will immediately understand that this is a nationalist event. However, the impression is quite different when the Greek left-wing Prime Minister states that by trying to win "a descriptive phrase in front of the name Macedonia" he is defending a strong "national position." "We are not going to give," he said, "we are going to take."<sup>2</sup> The same "non-nationalist" impression accompanies the statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, boasting that the Greek state managed to force Macedonia to change its name without a war. In his words, the only other "country that has changed its name throughout not only the 21st but also the 20th century was Austria that changed it because it was defeated in a war and the Austro-Hungarian Empire was dissolved after the First World War."<sup>3</sup> Detecting nationalism in the January 2018 "Macedonian" rallies in Greece is a cheap shot which, unfortunately, comes at a cost. By locating the enemy *this way*, this "anti-nationalism" leaves the official version of the Greek state, the major force of Greek nationalism, outside the scope of critique.

In contrast to the mob that took to the streets, the Greek state today does not aim to block the use of the name *Macedonia* by the Macedonian

2 "Tsipras on the Scopje issue: Great victory if we win a descriptive phrase in front of Macedonia," *I Kathimerini*, 25-05-2018

3 Nikos Kotzias' *Interview*, 19-06-2018, <https://www.mfa.gr/epikairoτητα/proto-thema/sunenteuxe-upourgou-exoterikon-kotzia-sten-ekpompe-kalemera-el-lada-tou-ts-ant1-me-ton-dpho-papadake-19062018.html?fbclid=IwAR0qwEuOqpdxa-2c54U9xFAVnJNlriPHe9IFnQKX7sQiJ3m0pD2WsnPV3sl> (access 02-03-2018).



state. Every serious state functionary in Greece understands that the obsession over the name *Macedonia* has been an obstacle to the productive exercise of its power. State power does not manifest itself only in conditions of open, armed conflict. It also takes *the form of determining and framing* the choices of those upon which it is exercised, without weapons. As a shrewd official put it, "patriotism is judged in the international relations of forces."<sup>4</sup> The Greek state, a member of the EU and NATO, turns out to be a force capable of imposing constitutional changes on Macedonia not limited to its name. Despite the differences between them, both versions of Greek nationalism, the 'uncompromising' and 'realistic', fight to defend and strengthen Greece. Apparently, Greece has enough room for both. Against Turkey in particular, *the all time classic real enemy*, both 'moderate' and 'radical' patriots converge. In fact, when circumstances require, they can come close enough to become a unified military fist.

4 Evangelos Venizelos, "Occasioned by the Name: Conjunction and Strategy over the Balkans," 24-02-2018, <https://ekyklos.gr/sb/579-omilia-ev-venizelou-stin-ekdilosi-me-aformito-onoma-sygyria-kai-stratigiki-sta-valkania.html> (accessed 07-03-2022).

## V.

Although class struggle tends to create rifts in national unity, this does not in any way justify the naive belief in an allegedly anti-nationalist 'essence' of the working class. It is the atrocities of the 20th century, which extend into the 21st, that set the bar for any meaningful evaluation of proletarian activity. In short: *this activity was not able to prevent them*. The collapse of the European labour movement in the nationalist frenzy of the beginning of the Great War and the failure of the revolutionary struggles after 1917 contributed decisively to the fierce victory of the nation over class. This victory opened the way for the real subsumption of the proletariat to the nation(alism). With regard to the participation of European "ordinary workers" in the First World War, Eric Hobsbawm points out that "*supporting their government in the war was quite compatible with protesting their class consciousness and their hostility towards their employers.*" On the other hand, Ian Kershaw refers to the effect of patriotism and militarism on the consciousness of socialist workers; "*As army conscripts they had been indoctrinated in patriotism and discipline. They now turned out to be patriots first, socialists second.*"<sup>5</sup> The simple fact that our times are *after the 20th century*, that is, after two World Wars, the Shoah and the massacres that accompanied the nationalisation of the Balkans, makes every 'internationalist class automatism' a dangerous folklore.

## VI.

But why so much fuss with the nation? What is your (our) problem, after all? These questions, even when not explicitly stated, weigh on our mind

5 See E. J. Hobsbawm (1993) *Nation and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, p.124 and Ian Kershaw (2015) *To Hell and Back: Europe, 1914-1949*, London, Penguin Random House, p.

even before we attempt to start talking. It must be said as simply as possible. From a proletarian point of view, a radical critique of the existing society – proletariat included – remains ridiculous without a radical critique of the nation as a regime of social relations. It is not only that the *capitalist state is national* but also that in times of crisis it is the power of the nation that plays a decisive role in determining what can and cannot be said, questioned or done (with impunity). Being against the nation as a social regime means to stand against the misery, exclusion, and violence that it entails. In Greece, the proletarian condition is (re)produced daily through the hierarchisation between Greeks and non-Greeks. In Greece, Greeks 'naturally' come first. Domestic racism (anti-migrant, anti-Muslim, anti-Romani) and anti-Semitism are inconceivable without this national(ist) order from which it draws power and legitimacy. But the nation's power is not infinite, so it is necessary to turn to where it *actually fails*, where cannot pass as the 'natural', self-evident order of things. We need to orient ourselves towards the points where friction and conflict emerge. These points are, as the nation itself, almost everywhere: at the border, in the city centre, at school, on the street, on the bus, at work, in the hospital, even (especially!) on the fucking beach. We need to start from there, not public sector unions.

## VII.

The nation is not just a domestic reality, its domestic power is also pivotal on the international plane. Consolidating Greek supremacy over a multinational working class is crucial for the Greek state to maintain its (armed) power position over the Balkans, the Aegean Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean. Greece has a long history of aggressively addressing its northern and eastern neighbours and this history is part and parcel of its own historical formation. The fact that Greece is itself a result of the disintegration

of the Ottoman Empire has largely determined its geopolitical orientation and the 'hotspots' that appear as 'national security threats.' The very existence of Turkey, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Albania is a constant reminder of the limits of its northern and eastward expansion, a reminder that its aspirations have not been entirely successful. Despite occasional tactical shifts, no amount of government action or 'international pressure' have ever managed to erase these 'strategic concerns.'

VIII.

So-called national issues are *by definition* issues of the Greek state, since only it can start and stop diplomatic negotiations, establish a surveillance zone in its territory to manage 'dangerous' minorities, talk about 'equality for all,' create a university on the ruins of a looted Jewish cemetery, impose "correct" names on places, or ban languages and minorities (Turkish, Macedonian). It is the Greek state which can take part in (and declare) wars and sign peace treaties. Thus, the only proletarian anti-nationalist critique is that of the Greek state itself. Not of its right-wing or left-wing governments, the European Union, or the USA... If the target of critique is not the Greek state but, say, the 'subordination' (participation) of Greece to 'imperialist formations and plans,' what you get is the bad ol' national strategy of *exiting* the EU and NATO. This anti-imperialism is revealed as yet another version of the 'national independence' project.

IX.

National unity should not be taken for granted in advance. Its celebrated *naturalness* should be grasped as an ongoing endeavour towards achieving it. The nation patches together what class struggle and social antagonism wreck.

*The nation patches the nation up* and this goes all the way to the top level of the state. Even commonplace appeals to 'national interests' do not entail some general agreement among patriots. The very notion of national interests and what it means to serve them are open to different, occasionally conflicting, interpretations. In 1916, such conflicts even led to the division of Greece into two different states. However rabid and bloody these divisions might be, they never question the significance of the nation and the state. On the contrary, they always defend dominant social relations and institutions, even if their proponents need to dye their hands in the blood of their compatriots from time to time.

X.

There is a widespread analysis that divides working class activity into the "indignants" (square movement of 2011 as well as into the movement (?) around the July 2015 referendum. This overtold story goes somehow like this: "*Well, maybe Syn-*





*tagma square was full of Greek flags and maybe there were full-blown nationalists in the crowd, but it was actually the workers/unemployed that fought against austerity (or neoliberal) measures and a few years later they were actually the ones who fought and won the (majestic) battle of saying 'NO' to the EU mandates."* A proletarian perspective worthy of its name must first and foremost identify the national(istic) character of these struggles through which Greek workers/unemployed/petty bourgeois fought for the liberation of Greece from the shackles imposed on it by 'foreigners.' Those who fought, did so as Greeks to force their state to protect them from the consequences of bankruptcy. As Greeks, they declared with their ballot their opposition to "German/European loan sharks." We are fed up with this apologetic discourse glossing the nation with working class polish, *what we need is a coherent discourse capable of reading the nation into the class.* To develop such a consistent anti-national critique is not the easiest task of our time.

## XI.

Since nation(alism) is not merely a set of ideas but a regime of social relations, that there is no such thing as a 'zero degree of nationalism.' For

those living within its borders, the Greek nation is not something that can simply be bypassed or done away with. To avoid engaging it is to leave its power intact. The Greek nation is a great part of the condition that contains us and without a concrete, practical critique of this condition, no critique of the existing society is possible. Nation(alism) triumphs even among its (alleged) enemies when they prove able to speak only in its language: *FYROM, Skopje, the neighbouring country, Skopjean irredentism, etc.* Condemnation of other nations is just all too easy, as easy as finding shit in the sewer. It is also convenient for the Greek state.

On the other hand, the somewhat *blasé* disdain of all nationalisms indiscriminately, as in the slogan "no nation unites us, no name separates us," leaves Greek nation(alism) in Greece specifically intact by equating it with Macedonian nation(alism). This equation is somehow soothing because it never really comes into direct contact with the hard edges of the dominant domestic nation(alism). In its inability to make concrete distinctions, this abstract rejection of *nationalism-in-general* silently fails to come up against the regime of power in which the domestic 'antagonist movement' is positioned. The fact that this political approach is sometimes flattered by posing as the culmination of radicalism does not seem to be the most serious of its problems.



## XII.

There was definitely a time, especially in Europe, where nation(alism) could more easily *appear* in the cloak of *progress*, as modern citizens replaced the subjects of the old empires. However, by producing and then excluding the non-national, this social regime brought about new subject formations such as minorities, *citizens-with-less-rights*, the non-citizen (with no rights) and, of course, the national enemy. In places as mixed and multi-ethnic as the Balkans, the nation from

the get-go became a driving force for endless oppression, disaster, and death. Its actual power cannot be done away with by ignoring it or, worse, positing it as some secondary derivative of capital. This latter political position, still strong among the so called 'radical milieu', is just another way to not-confront nationalism, only in a somewhat more sophisticated manner. As *inseparable from* but *not reducible to* capital, the nation needs to be dealt with and confronted in its own right. In Greece, as elsewhere, this is not the most modest of our tasks.





## Why Should We Belong to the People?

De Passage  
Paris

**T**he following text has been written and largely diffused in the context of the Yellow Vest movement in the end of 2018 and the first part of 2019 in France. The more or less direct references to the concept of the People were constant and omnipresent throughout this period and beyond. Although the anarchists and other individuals supposedly hostile to any form of national consensus were largely present in this movement, anti-nationalist critiques were extremely scarce, most of them being directed against the extreme-right scum. Chasing them out of the demonstrations were often decreed as the ultimate victories against the nationalist plague. However, Right wing and Left wing protesters shared an almost uncontested presence of the same national symbols: national flags (often doubled by the regionalist flags), references to the 1789 Revolution (such as the Guillotine and the Constituent Assembly), slogans appealing to “our” People, attacks against “foreign” capital (multi-national corporations, trucks importing products

that compete with the “national” market, etc.)... The “immigration question” was simply left out of this movement, even though at the very same time there were systematic revolts in the prisons for undocumented migrants all over France. All of this in a rarely seen complacent silence that drowned hundreds of outbursts of plain xenophobia in the normality of the everyday life which was incidentally also the normality of the Yellow Vest movement. Those who broke up this silence were either ignored completely or most often treated as traitors to the People...

The word “People” is meant here in its historical sense as it took shape since the French Revolution. The English word “People” can not fully translate the historical meaning of the French people which is a reference not only in the French Constitution where it is a simple equivalent of the “nation”, but also in the everyday language where it can refer to a mass of those who are not in the government (including the rich) as well as to an

ethnic group (similar to English “a people”). In other words, the French people is at once “common folk”, “the People” as in “We, the People” of the American Constitution, and “a people” as in “the French are a weird kind of people”.

*This article was written with the hope of doing evil to the national consensus. Now that the Yellow Vest movement is happily dead, the question remains of the utmost importance. The national idiocy that preceded it has not been massively questioned, not by anarchists and not by anyone else. Nothing tells us that the Covid-19 crisis and its sequels will not enforce this ferociously stupid idea. For these reasons it seems to us that an effort must be made in this direction.*

—

*Workers! Remember – flattering the Great shows a despicable lack of principles, but  
flattering The People is criminal!*  
Flora Tristan, Letter, March 29<sup>th</sup> 1843

It’s tempting, is it not, to appeal to “the People”? To begin with, the term is fashionable. Sure, it’s not the first time in history, but given that it seems to be asserted everywhere, it must be important to defend it.

What’s more, it’s romantic, the People. It’s exciting. It’s impressive. When one calls upon the People to rise against the Elites, for example, it sounds so vibrant – even though it does nothing more than drag down the deafening dead weight of all the revolutions and the social movements of the past.

We remember the victories of the “People” cutting off kings’ heads, the “People” building barricades, the “People” united against the injustice of the high and mighty. We forget that the same “People” are also those who massacred, in turn, Protestants, Muslims, Jews. That they howled

with joy at public executions (are we now so far away from that?). That they kept the women out of their triumphant parades. That the “People”, in short, not only have never been united, but even that the overwhelming majority of them have never missed out on the chance to crush the seeds of revolt under their feet.

It’s said that yesterday is past, and so we speak, in a haphazard sort of way, of the People of the countryside, those of the sea, of People in vests or scarves, of the sovereignty of the People, angry People, People in the street, but also silent People, of People on the left and People on the right, of the little People, of the representation of the People, of forgotten People... Each with their own notion of People – there’s something for everyone!

But what does it matter? The People is something to be! It is strength, justice, the future. In short, it is the Good, and with all these images, it is also the Beautiful. It is so good and so beautiful that everyone’s competing to prove how much they’re part of it. It’s a delight to belong to the People. The academics hide their diplomas, the politicians hide their power, the bosses hide their fortune, and everyone marches together, hand in hand – it’s good, isn’t it, to be among the plebs! Now it’s my turn – I belong to the People too, or at least my parents do. It’s so important to belong!

And yet, if we scratch and scratch at it, it itches. We are the People. Great. But which one?

The People of the workers? And the bosses who can only exploit, do they not work as well? Are they part of the People too? Yes for the “small” ones (merchants, farmers, craftsmen...) but no for the bigger ones? According to what scale?

The People of the poor? Very well, but let’s make it clear: who are the poor? Those who “benefit from the system”, for example, are they the “bad” poor?



A bourgeois in ruin, does he belong to the People? A prole who eventually bought a house with a garden and a huge 4X4 after 30 years of over-work, does he still share the anger of the People?

We should set some boundaries, agree on some criteria of belonging to the People. For example: to have no power over anyone. Or not being a landlord. Or to be in favor of emancipation and freedom for all individuals.

We should also be careful as to what the People fights against. For example: against all the men and women of the State, of the Clergy, of Capital (and when we say “fight”, we include all the physical means to do it). Such was one of the meanings of the word in the times of the Commune and the social revolts that followed it, before the reactionaries did away with that meaning once and for all...

Without it, without criteria, everything goes, everything melts into the pot of the People, without

anyone knowing who exactly has the right to be there or not. Those who revolt march along with those who are revolted by any kind of revolt, the (real) poor march along with the other (a little bit less real) poor that they hate, the workers accompany their bosses and liberal managers... Since we see everybody accepted and everything excused within the popular mass, we must ask the following question: what makes the unity of this most brilliant and most magnificent People?

“We” live on the supposedly same land (be it thousands of kilometers wide), “we” speak the same language (the newly arrived are rarely taken into account), “we” live under the same laws... Let’s be clear: is the unity of this distinguished People not built simply and purely on its national borders? For if we look close enough, and if we listen to its spokespersons, there are indeed geographical boundaries delimiting our People – our workers and our poor! At times you only need to walk a few meters to become *someone else’s* working-man, *someone else’s* poor. So now, it becomes



all different, for the People suddenly becomes much tighter when you're on the wrong side of the fence.

You will say that we're nit-picking. But if you insist on spray-painting it on banners and shouting it through megaphones, you may as well try to know what you're talking about.

For if it's not really the People of the workers, nor the People of the poor, nor even the People of the disenchanted, what's left of this united front if it's not a way of standing against all the others? Even if for several centuries the French People have thought it possible to represent values that are both "theirs" and "universal"! The fragrance of this contradiction is commensurate with the civilising barbarism that it sent throughout the world.

It is most probable that there is little – or that there is nothing – that differs the People fight-

ing its Elites and the same People fighting another People in front. We fight against the political and the financial Elite, but we are happy to vote for the masters that *represent us* (or we're disappointed that they *do not represent us enough*). We fight against a life of toil, but we want to save our *companies* working in our *country* where they provide our *jobs*. And in the same movement we drown in oblivion the vast People of the massacred and the exploited, who bend their backs at "our" borders as well as everywhere else – all for the same reason of being instruments of their masters and not the masters of their lives.

And all these funny questions of belong are much harsher when you're unfortunate enough to actually be a worker and/or poor. These questions are hardly a matter of life and death for the diplomats, the businessmen, the artists and the academics. Now, the Romanian, Ethiopian, Chinese workers, whether they live in Romania, Ethiopia,

China or France, are they part of “our” People since they are workers and/or poor?

No matter how deep we look into the popular swamp, the People seems to remain a simple double of the Nation (even if it is “unconsciously” or even “innocently”). This is why it can’t stop swinging between claims of Popular sovereignty and plain xenophobia – the two being altogether compatible. As long as the artifice of such national unity is not smashed up and trampled underfoot, the People will always defend their “kin” to the detriment of all the others, their noses glued to their own navel.

But it is reassuring, a navel. It helps to know where you come from. It also helps to know where you’re going. It is only normal that everyone seeks a community to snuggle up to, a group to belong to. When one is alone, how vast the world is! How senseless life seems!

The double advantage of being in a group is that, on the one hand, our particular role is fully acknowledged and our singular responsibility wholly dissolved. How practical!

Being part of the People is, also, a question of belonging. I was born in this part of the world, I speak this language, I’m part of it. My everyday acts, my aspirations, the shallowness of my braveness and the greatness of my cowardice have no importance at all. By belonging to a People, I bathe in its aura, I take some of its glory, and I can comfortably disappear with no responsibility whatsoever. I am already someone (actually, *something*). I take what the State has chosen for me long before my birth: my nationality, the most normal way of living in this society, the holidays I’m supposed to celebrate, the “duties” that accompany the “rights” which I won’t take the trouble to question. I don’t ask myself if I really want to be part of this People, the whole of it, once and for all, forever.

It seems that in these marvelous times, one should absolutely get an identity of some kind to hold one’s head up high. You should claim you belong to this or that group – often precisely the one that you never had the chance to choose in the first place – in order to conquer the rights that were so unjustly taken away from you. Thus, personal isolation is confused with the race for



collective grievances – grievances that may give, even fleetingly, some sense to life, a dignity to be earned. But, alas! Fulfillment as a member of the social fragmentation knowingly produced by this society can only slip through one's fingers – for this society is known for putting us in different boxes all the better to smash us all up.

The People is no exception. Its defenders tell us with no small pride that the People does not think, the People acts. Here again, we must disappoint you. The People, in and for itself, is nothing. It does not think. It does not act. To be completely honest, it doesn't even exist. Like all phantoms of unity, the People is but a thread that ties us to our servitude. What *is* or *is not* the People, is fully determined by those who hold its reins. Not only to recuperate it, as all the rival camps like to accuse each other of doing, but also to show the direction, to guide from below, against the darkness and towards the light. Nothing would be more logical: the very idea of People's sovereignty – once more in fashion these days – can come to being only through political representation; a herd looking for master is the only People there is.

In 1871, Gustave Courbet proposed to abolish God by decree. Not the clergy, not religion, not the Church, but God *himself*. If we all want to have air to breathe today, it may be necessary to

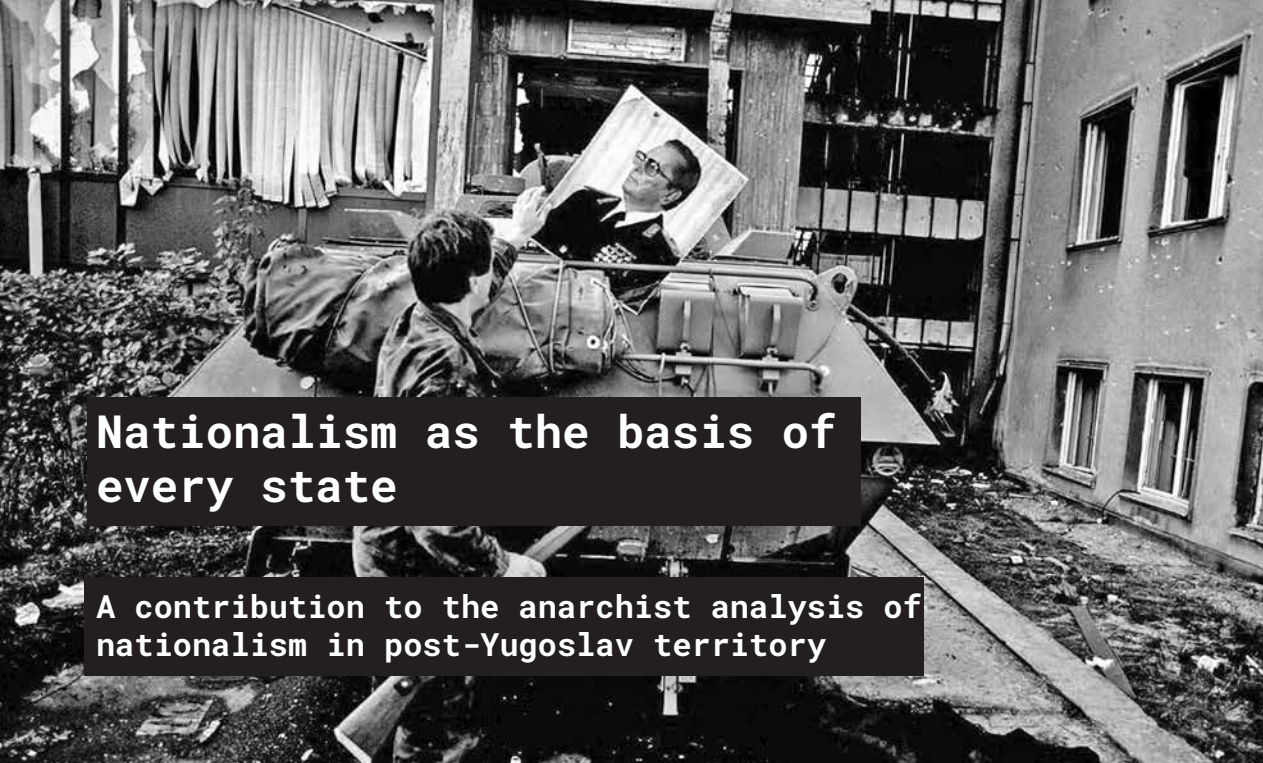
get rid of the idea of the People – not just populism, which simply grows in that fertile, phantom ground, not even of nationalism, which reduces it to the skeleton of itself – but the People, the good ol' People itself.

Against national idiocy, we must more than ever assert that individuals may find each other beyond national borders, giving warmth to each other – because nobody is self-sufficient – to smile and share a common effort. For us, this effort must go against everything that allows a human being to give an order to another, and against everything that makes the latter obey.



*The Origin of the World, Gustave Courbet, 1866 (abolition of God?)*





## Nationalism as the basis of every state

A contribution to the anarchist analysis of nationalism in post-Yugoslav territory

*This text was prepared by a comrade from Zagreb for the occasion of the anti-nationalist events held in Thessaloniki in March 2018*

**N**ationalism is repeatedly “surprising” us; the issue of its attractiveness is perpetual, as well as its ability to mobilize masses willing to rush into new conflicts – if not wars – then imaginary, mythological battles. After all, nationalism is precisely that, a mythology about soil and blood, about people and victims, about “our” righteousness and “their” aggression. It is proven to be a powerful weapon in the hands of the state and capital, whose interests were protected by many in the name of national interests and pride, which they adopted as their own. Even when national movements appear to come from “below”, their results are always clear: an even stronger state and a sturdy position of capital.

Contemporary nationalism cannot be viewed outside the framework of its historical development or continuity, because, since it became

a driving force, it emerged as an ideology that can easily adjust to different contexts, while in essence always remaining the same. From the destruction of the old empires, the creation of national states, and to this day, nationalism is constantly present. Speaking from the perspective of the post-Yugoslav region, the continuous presence of nationalism in this territory since the nineteenth century has culminated several times over the last hundred years. Nationalisms had different names, Croatian, Yugoslavian, German, Serbian, Italian, Hungarian and others, but in their core they had the same purpose: to set up a new government, to establish one's hegemony, all through the mobilization of masses in order for victory to be complete, and always in the “name of the people”. Who would be crazy enough to die for the interests of the state and capital? But in the name of the people and nations, many are ready to give their lives, and even more willing to take away someone else's life. This mythological ideal of purity, incorruptibility, and justice, which is depicted through the iconology of fictitious

history, all under the colourful rags we call flags, helps to create a sense of unity and belonging. An elusive goal that is, like the promise of Paradise, offering a way out of a bad situation for which the blame is always on "the others". It is constantly promising a better future that never comes.

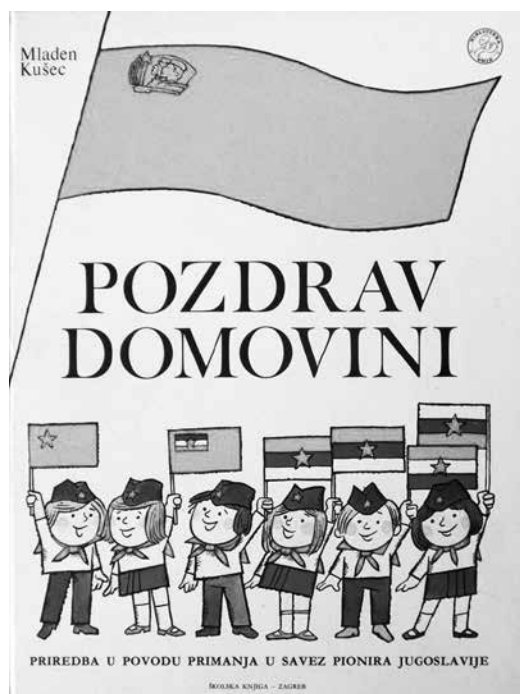
When we look at our own recent history, one can wonder where did the nationalism that caused the greatest massacre in Europe after the Second World War come from. Was not Yugoslavia a space without nationalism, or at least the space for a new, Yugoslav nation and different ethnic groups? How was the national question treated in Yugoslavia?

All these questions do not have simple answers, and some of these answers can show that nationalism is not just right-wing but also leftist and that precisely because of this, the "socialist utopia" easily became a nationalistic dystopia.

If we look only at the anti-fascist struggle in Yugoslavia, the largest organized anti-fascist move-

ment on Europe's occupied soil, and if we briefly analyse the basis of its calls to resist the foreign occupier and its domestic servants, and also what was its ultimate goal, we will very easily come to some conclusions. The call to the uprising was addressed to "patriots", it had a national charge and it advocated for the liberation of the country from a foreign occupier. Of course, it also called for the fight against fascism, but it saw itself as a war for national liberation. This was extremely important for a newly established government in the last phase of the war, because the Partisans, already established as the Yugoslav Army, took control over parts of the territories of Italy and Austria (which are still today occupied by those states) in order to expand their territory and bring national liberation to the areas inhabited by Slavic populations. Anti-fascism was not a national in Yugoslavia, it had Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian, Bosnian, Albanian, Macedonian and Montenegrin marks, but also a Yugoslav one, as the idea of creating a new nation. Based on fraternity and unity, as one of its basic slogans, the creation of a national state freed from a foreign occupier was still seen as the ultimate goal. Hypothetically speaking, we cannot help but wonder how much resistance would have been directed towards a non-foreign occupier. Of course, this does not diminish the fact that the struggle against fascism was important and far-reaching, and that it involved all layers of society. However, the struggle against fascism was not the only thing that took place, leading us to the conclusion that anti-fascism alone is not enough, especially if it is in any way patriotic-oriented.

This can primarily be seen through the strong identification with the state, born in the bloody war that was at the same time a struggle for national liberation. The "national" army, as with any nation-state, was made up of all, so all men over the age of 18 were soldiers, and the army was one of the strong foundations of the new state. In that sense, the society was quite militarized, and



the army was present in many segments of the social, political and cultural life. On an anecdotal level, we can only mention the military show "Permission to speak", which was screened on state television every Sunday morning. Since the very first days of nationalism and the French Revolution, a strong identification with the state as "my own" and the military as a guarantor of security has been shown many times as the path to massacre.

In addition, this identification with the "homeland" and its glorification was imprinted from the earliest days; many children's books were filled with state flags, the size and importance of the homeland were celebrated as well as its beauty and strength, its fraternity and its protection. The homeland and the remembrance of how her freedom was achieved through bloodshed were the matters that could not be questioned.

The Yugoslav government saw its internal structure as a solution to the "national question" through the creation of national states (repub-

lics) that formed the Federation (with the autonomous provinces), and thus the idea of a nation based on ethnicity never ceased to be present. The idea of "blood and soil" or "one people, one nation, one country", survived despite the declarative "fraternity and unity", which was certainly of importance to a large number of people, but not necessarily for the republican government. An interesting example in this regard is the language policy that has been the cause of conflict for almost the entire time of the existence of Socialist Yugoslavia. Although the federation did not have an official language, Croato-Serbian was preferred (even though Macedonian, Slovenian, Albanian, Hungarian and few "smaller" languages were also spoken). The position, the name, and the standard of Croatian and Serbian, although different variants of the same language, were the subject of constant discussion and conflicts that on several occasions culminated and provoked nationalist tensions in the country. Despite the fact that these discussions often happened on an academic level, their influence should not be neglected, as a part of the academy played an important role in preserving and building nationalist ideology. In addition, one should not forget that language standardization is one of the key tools for building "national identity". Because of that, the decisions about the language for official documents were made by the republican government.

The republican authorities have been the foundation of national states that will declare their independence in the nineties. Party cadres of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia or of the republican party organizations moved to new nationalist parties in 1990 and in that way represented not only the institutional but also the personnel continuity of the state. For example, in Croatia, 97,000 members (more precisely, first 27,000, and then 70,000 after the election victory in 1990) have moved from SKH (Croatian League of Communists) in the newly founded HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union)





tian Democratic Union). In fact, the new nationalist party has become symbolically the heir of the old party. The transition from left to right included only one step – a new party membership card.

Although the national question existed before, it was differently perceived from this point onwards, the question of domination and new divisions of the territory demanded a wide mobilization, and thus a new “national awakening”. This process was launched a little earlier by several different actors. Today we know (though at the time it was not known) that the republican secret services conducted a silent “war” against each other decades before the collapse of Yugoslavia. The Catholic Church initiated in Croatia the rehabilitation of Alojzije Stepinac (a cardinal of the Catholic Church convicted for collaboration with the Nazi Independent State of Croatia), and a series of other actions aimed at spreading a new “national spirit”. Football fan clubs, a sort

of indicators for dominant political trends, have increasingly focused their conflicts on national divisions and less on inter-regional and regional levels, which was the case up to that point. In Serbia, the anniversary of the Kosovo battle (the mythological conflict from Serbian nationalist folklore) was celebrated, and Milošević rode the nationalist wave. In Kosovo and in parts of Macedonia a low-intensity war broke out a decade before the breakup of the SFRY, while the media systematically kept silent or reported only the bare minimum.

Towards the end of the 1980s, the ground for bloody clashes was laid, only the division of new positions and the introduction of “new” (actually old) actors that would lead the “people” into a new “national victory” was not completed. At the same time, the whole preparation looked like the “people” were seeking a way out through nationalism, as an authentic movement from below.

However, there was a series of actors that created or permitted such a development because of their interests and interests of the future states. For states, this is a completely normal way of acting.

Of course, the process of starting the conflict was not quite easy, because much of the society did not want the war, nor did it think that nationalism was something good or that the war was a solution to the accumulated problems. Threats, massive “national assemblies”, the raising of barricades, armaments (independently or organized by this or that republican government or army), the murders of individuals who opposed the war at the institutional level, the destruction of anti-fascist monuments, the burning houses of neighbours of the “wrong” ethnic affiliation, spreading fear, systematic nationalist propaganda through the media and many other abominations were a part of a mechanism that raised a new level of nationalism and hatred towards “others”. At the moment when the war started, when the grenades were being launched everywhere, and war operations involved the destruction of more and more lives, nationalism was normalized and omnipresent to the point that every criticism was almost impossible because it did not reach anyone.

This superficial review of the construction and culmination of nationalism in Yugoslavia already gives a clear idea that nationalism, coming seemingly “from below” or “from above”, is always the same more or less controlled process whose goal is always simple: power and riches for the old/new government. If we look at the nationalist movements in the past, such as fascism in Italy, or Nazism in Germany, we cannot fail to notice that both of them, like many populist movements of today, were “anti-systemic”, and that they in the same way apparently provoked the old or-

der, referring to the lack of “national interests”, “identities”, “traditions”, “national economics” etc., while at the same time acting as spokespersons of the working class or “people” calling for a “strong but social state”. In the end, with the help of the old order, they ensured the continuity of state and capitalism, which was their goal from the beginning.

In the modern world, such a seemingly “anti-systemic” nationalist option is represented by the war in Ukraine, the referendum in Catalonia and Spain, Britain’s Brexit, or the conflict over the name of Macedonia. All these examples have a common link: their base is in the same nationalist ideology, albeit apparently with a different denomination. Leftist or right-wing nationalism have the same consequences, all the wars of national liberation that the socialist governments of the world have endorsed (just as those capitalist ones did) have shown precisely that. Nationalism has proved to be a good tool for all.

Our anarchist solidarity does not know the nation, does not know ethnic or other divisions! Against every idea of the nation, state, and capital!



CARTE UTOPIQUE DE L'EUROPE PACIFIÉE  
 LES NATIONALITÉS SOLIDARISÉES DANS UN LIEN FÉDÉRATIF  
**CONFÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE**

LE DROIT DE TOUS SUBSTITUÉ A LA VIOLENCE DE QUELQUES UNS



**GRAND DÉSERT DU SAHARAH**


*Les Européens y tracent des routes parsemées de puits artésiens et ombragées de palmiers. Ils pénètrent dans la Nigritie ou Soudan, région inexplorée, d'où ils tirent les plus riches produits et qu'on pourrait appeler les INDES AFRICAINES.*

**NIGRITIE ou SOUDAN  
 ou  
 INDES AFRICAINES**

*Aussi riches que les Indes Asiatiques et beaucoup plus voisines de l'Europe.*



"Confédération Européenne - Carte utopique de l'Europe pacifiée" (1867), the 'European Confederation', 'utopian' map of a 'Europe of Peace' (detail).



# You Cannot Fight Imperialism with Anti-imperialism

Clandestina  
Thessaloniki

Today, *imperialism* is generally understood as a term describing the tendency of certain countries to exploit other countries. This seemingly straightforward formulation leads to very different and often contradictory interpretations – and political practices.

## introduction

**H**ow do populations in exploited countries resist? What are the consequences of the fact that populations residing within the ‘powerful countries’, though not responsible for their position, have a share in their country’s privileges? Doesn’t the notion that “[entire] countries exploit other [entire] countries” imply that societies should be organized into States in order to resist exploitation? And finally, does the existence of competing imperialisms mean the end of so-called globalisation? All these questions make it clear that imperialism is not easy to define. In any case, the very meaning of the word has changed “no less than twelve times” between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt. “*Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word*”, 1964.

The following text, based on the premise that **colonialism is the cornerstone of the capitalist system**, first discusses the consequences of the complete absence of the concept of imperialism in Marx’s work. Then it briefly dwells on the fact that anti-imperialism, employed by the Left in the service of “fighting imperialism”, resorted to the same ideologies that the bourgeoisie had used against feudalism, i.e. the alleged necessity of the nation-State, the myth of “development” and “progress”, and the predominance of the economic over the social and the political. Finally, some thoughts are presented on the return of anti-imperialism in the current period, where the alleged triumph of globalised capitalism is followed by a deep crisis, in the context of which intense antagonisms within the system are on the rise.

## Part I

### The free market leads to war, and so does Lenin's anti-imperialism

*Marx made a thorough analysis of the production process as the exploitation of labor, but he made only cursory and reluctant comments about the prerequisites for capitalist production, and the initial capital that made the process possible. Without initial capital, there could have been no investments, no production, no great leap forward. (...) This prerequisite cannot emerge from the capitalist production process itself, if that process is not yet under way. It must, and does, come from outside the production process. It comes from the plundered colonies. It comes from the expropriated and exterminated populations of the colonies. (...) The primitive or preliminary accumulation of capital is not something that happened once, in the distant past, and never after. It is something that continues to accompany the capitalist production process, and is an integral part of it.*

Fredy Perlman. *The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism*, 1984

imperialism:  
the origin of a term

As mentioned above, Koebner and Schmidt distinguish twelve changes in the concept of imperialism within the course of a hundred years. Robert Young documents these different uses of the term<sup>2</sup>: The word "imperialism" was first used in English in 1858, as a synonym for despotism (in the same sense Marx would later use it). In the fiercest colonial power of the time, smugly calling itself the 'British Empire', the term imperialism was initially derogatory and referred to the regime of Napoleon III. From 1880 to 1890

<sup>2</sup> Robert Young. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* 2007.

the term acquired a positive meaning in English, denoting a potential Anglo-Saxon federation spreading across the globe, which would unite, within the British Empire, all states with a population of British origin, like the US and Australia. In 1895 the term "new imperialism" described the new explosion of European colonialism. After the Boer Wars (1899-1902), the term maintained its negative connotations vis-a-vis both French and British colonialism. In 1902, John A. Hobson, in his work *Imperialism: A Study*, linked imperialism to capitalism. Underconsumption, he wrote, was the basic cause of capitalist crisis, and imperialism created new markets in order to address this problem.

### Marx and imperialism

Marcel Stoetzler remarks that "Marx used the word imperialism rarely and only in what was then its conventional sense, namely as a near-synonym of *caesarism* or *bonapartism*. In these contexts, imperialism denoted rule on the basis of alliances of the elites with the lower classes against the liberal bourgeoisie, or indeed against parliament, and governance above particular political parties, modelled on the imperial Roman example and based on centralized state agencies and monopolies".<sup>3</sup>

Anthony Brewer analyses Marx's view of the progressive role of colonialism in the age of industrial capitalism: "Marx defined capitalism in terms of the relation between a class of free wage labourers and a class of capitalists. Competition compels accumulation and technical progress. Capitalism does not need a subordinated hinterland or periphery, though it will use and profit from one if it exists. Up to the industrial revolution, capitalism's external relations were

<sup>3</sup> Marcel Stoetzler. "Marx, Karl (1818-83) and imperialism", *Palgrave Encyclopaedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism*, vol 1. 2016.



mediated through merchant capital, and did not necessarily transform the other societies which were drawn into the world market. Once industrial capital had taken charge, capitalist conquest could play a progressive (though brutal) role by initiating capitalist industrialization.”<sup>4</sup>

As the Indian marxist Prabhat Patnaik put it: “The model of capitalism analysed by Marx in *Capital* is for all practical purposes a model of a closed and isolated economy. To be sure, one can extend this model to incorporate a colonial relationship, viewed essentially as providing a market where metropolitan goods are transformed for those third world products which are required by the metropolis; but colonialism as a provider of surplus for accumulation in the metropolis (...)” According to Patnaik “imperialism does figure in Marx’s discussion of primitive accumulation of capital. But after that it is scarcely seen to play any significant role in his analysis.” Imperialism for Marx belongs to the prehistory of capitalism”.<sup>5</sup>

## imperialism and classical marxism

Rosa Luxemburg attempted to address the analytical blind spot in Marx’s work in her “economic explanation of imperialism”, as she called it.<sup>6</sup> According to Luxemburg, the constant expansion of the capitalist mode of production is impossible within the confines of a purely capitalist system. It is only possible if it is accompanied by a constant expansion of consumption. However, the more the capitalist system and automation develop, the less buying power the workers have, so the system has to reproduce itself through a third, basically precapitalist and extra-capitalist, mode of production. In her own words: “[The] predominant methods [of capitalism] are colonial

policy, an international loan system – a policy of spheres of interest – and war. Force, fraud, oppression, looting are openly displayed without any attempt at concealment, and it requires an effort to discover within this tangle of political violence and contests of power the stern laws of the economic process.”

Lenin, who was above all interested in assuming the role of the leader of the proletariat, demanded of his followers doctrinal obedience to his own theoretical constructions of marxism. He was not concerned with improving Marx’s analysis, but with the promotion and unshakeable validation of his own political choices as an unquestionable consequence of Marxist orthodoxy. Lenin’s political judgement was limited to thinking that the clash of capitalist states for control of the colonies would accelerate the collapse of capitalism and that the Bolsheviks should be ready to seize the opportunity. He thus simply needed to establish himself as Marx’s undisputed successor in the analysis of the status quo, and this is how his famous 1916 pamphlet on imperialism should be understood. His essay echoed the arguments of Bukharin (‘imperialism is the politics of finance capital’) who, in turn, had echoed the analysis on finance capital of the Austrian theorist of German social democracy Hilferding (1910): „finance capital means a union of capital, as the formerly separate sectors of industrial, commercial and banking capital are now under the control of the big finance capital with which the industrial and banking magnates are closely associated. As for the theory of ‘underconsumption’ in the capitalist metropolises as the cause of imperialist expansion, it was formulated as early as 1898 by the bourgeois economist J.A. Hobson”.

As far as the analytical strand itself is concerned, Lenin’s approach has little to add. The generative link between finance capital and imperialism is simply announced without explanation – the explosion of finance capital at the end of the 19th

4 Brewer 1980.

5 Patnaik 2017.

6 Rosa Luxemburg. *The Accumulation of Capital* 1913.

century coincided with the new phase of capitalist colonialism, but both should be seen as consequences of the same changes in the capitalist system, not as consequences of each other. Obviously imperialism is not a stage of capitalism and certainly not the last (it should rather be considered as a precondition for the emergence of capitalism), whereas permanent primitive accumulation, of which imperialism is a part, is a permanent feature of the capitalist system. What is new and decisive in Lenin's analysis are the political conclusions: "If the capitalists could avert crises at home, then capitalism would be everlasting. They are decidedly blind pawns in the general mechanism (...) disintegration throughout the world is spreading farther and farther" For Lenin, "[t]hese blind pawns, the Bolsheviks are able to use them for the interests of the revolution", since "for the stabilisation of Socialist Democracy, the alliance with one imperialism against another is not unrealistic in principle (...) Our policy is grouping around the Soviet Republic those capitalist countries which are being strangled by imperialism. (...) The doubts and fears that still exist in the advanced countries, which assert that Russia could risk a socialist revolution because Russia is a vast country with her own means of subsistence while they, the industrial countries of Europe, cannot do so because they have no allies – these doubts and fears are groundless. We say: 'You now have an ally, Soviet Russia.'"<sup>7</sup>

### anti-imperialism as a product of leninist tacticism

Lenin's aforementioned quote refers to the (desirable) possibility of a tactical alliance of the "Socialist Republic" with the USA. "Britain emerged from the war with vast colonies. So did France. Britain offered America a mandate—that is the language they use nowadays—for one of the col-

onies she had seized, but America did not accept it. U.S. businessmen evidently reason in some other way. They have seen that, in the devastation it produces and the temper it arouses among the workers, war has very definite consequences, and they have come to the conclusion that there is nothing to be gained by accepting a mandate. (...) America stands in inevitable contradiction with the colonies, and if she attempts to become more involved there she will be helping us ten times as much. The colonies are seething with unrest, and when you touch them, whether or not you like it, whether or not you are rich – and the richer you are the better – you will be helping us (...) America cannot come to terms with the rest of Europe – that is a fact proved by history."<sup>8</sup> Lenin's belief in himself as the infallible and demonic engineer of the revolution led him to treat the capitalists of the United States as simplistic businessmen. Note here that in 1913, US Ambassador to Britain W. Page wrote to US President Wilson: "The future of the world belongs to us. . . . Now what are we going to do with the leadership of the world presently when it clearly falls into our hands?" And in 1914: "What are we going to do with this England and this Empire, presently, when economic forces unmistakably put the leadership of the race in our hands?"<sup>9</sup>

In this competition on the world chessboard, the Communist International's support for "self-determination of the peoples" did not precede, but rather actually followed that of the United States: on January 8, 1918, US President Wilson, addressing the US Congress, turned many of the demands of the progressives of the time into the slogans of US foreign policy: free trade, democracy and self-determination of the peoples. On February 11, 1918, Wilson declared: "National as-

<sup>8</sup> Lenin, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Letters of ambassador Page to president Wilson, 1913 and 1914, quoted in Aimé Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, transl. by Joan Pinkham, Monthly Review Press, New York 2001, p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> V. I. Lenin, Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets, December 29, 1920.

pirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. Self-determination is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of actions.”<sup>10</sup>

After the weakening of the European powers caused by their competition for control of the colonies, Lenin agreed with Wilson on the prospect of turning colonized territories into nation-states: «...we have arrived at the unanimous decision to speak of the national-revolutionary movement rather than of the “bourgeois-democratic” movement (...) It is beyond doubt that any national movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement,” (...) we, as Communists, should and will support bourgeois-liberation movements in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary.»<sup>11</sup>

This shift in analysis, tactics and strategy led to a series of propaganda stunts, with Bolshevik leaders promising Muslim former subjects of the Russian empire a “holy war against imperialism”, cheering “Long live Soviet power, long live sharia”.<sup>12</sup> In 1920, at the Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East in Azerbaijan, Gregory Zinoviev, General Secretary of the Communist International exclaimed: ‘Brothers, we summon you to a holy war [jihad], in the first place against British imperialism!’ The Red Army leader Mikhail Frunze in May 1920 told the 118 delegates at the First Congress of Turkestan Women – all wearing veils – that in the eyes of Soviet authorities their *paranji* (the heavy horsehair veil that reached almost to the ground) did not imply anything negative about them or their political outlook. In fact, during the civil war

these veils even served a military purpose: the delegates could help liberate Turkestan, he declared, adding that ‘under the paranji beats an honourable heart, under the paranji [one] may faithfully serve the revolution, and the paranji sometimes hides a courageous scout for the Red Army’.<sup>13</sup>

The theoretical scheme within Leninist tacticalism used to establish Marxist theology is summarized by Marcel Stoetzler:

“Central to the Leninist concept of imperialism is the notion that ambiguous capitalism that brings intensified exploitation together with the possibility of emancipation (as described by Marx and Engels) has turned circa 1900 into entirely negative capitalism: the latter is ‘monopoly capitalism’ characterized by finance capital, a corrupt workers’ aristocracy and imperialism and needs to be fought and destroyed by any means necessary. Entirely bad as opposed to ambiguous capitalism is complemented by the notion of bad, perverted nationalism (imperialism) versus good, benign nationalism (as in ‘healthy patriotism’ etc.) (...) The Leninist take on the concept of the right of nations to self-determination historically is rooted in the nineteenth-century idea, then shared by liberals and democrats, that nationbuilding overcomes late-feudal atomization and creates with a unified national society the conditions for emancipatory movements. Arguably there is an element of orientalism in the Leninist assertion that the ‘peoples of the East’ need nation-building as the first stage of emancipation, whereas those in ‘the West’ have passed this ‘stage’ and are ready for class struggle unencumbered by nationality and ethnicity. (The real-politics of ‘socialism in one country’ quickly

10 11 February, 1918: President Wilson’s Address to Congress, Analyzing German and Austrian Peace Utterances, <http://www.gwpda.org/1918/wilpeace.html>

11 V. I. Lenin, The Second Congress Of The Communist International, July 19-August 7, 1920.

12 Dave Crouch, “The Bolsheviks and Islam”, International Socialism 2 : 110, Spring 2006.

13 Red Army leader Mikhail Frunze, 1920 quoted in D.T. Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Soviet Central Asia*, New York 2004.

replaced even this geographically limited anti-nationalist stance.)"<sup>14</sup>

## colonialism as a precondition of capitalism

*In other words, the essential thing here is to see clearly, to think clearly – that is, dangerously – and to answer clearly the innocent first question: what, fundamentally, is colonization? (...) To admit once for all, without flinching at the consequences, that the decisive actors here are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant, appetite and force, and behind them, the baleful projected shadow of a form of civilization which, at a certain point in its history, finds itself obliged, for internal reasons, to extend to a world scale the competition of its antagonistic economies.*

*Pursuing my analysis, I find that hypocrisy is of recent date; that neither Cortez discovering Mexico from the top of the great teocalli, nor Pizzaro before Cuzco (much less Marco Polo before Cambaluc), claims that he is the harbinger of a superior order; that they kill; that they plunder; that they have helmets, lances, cupidities; that the slaving apologists came later; that the chief culprit in this domain is Christian pedantry, which laid down the dishonest equations Christianity=civilization, paganism=savagery.*

*Yes, it would be worthwhile to study clinically, in detail, the steps taken by Hitler and Hitlerism and to reveal to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century that (...) what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not crime in itself, the crime against man, it is not the humiliation of man as such, it is the crime against the white*

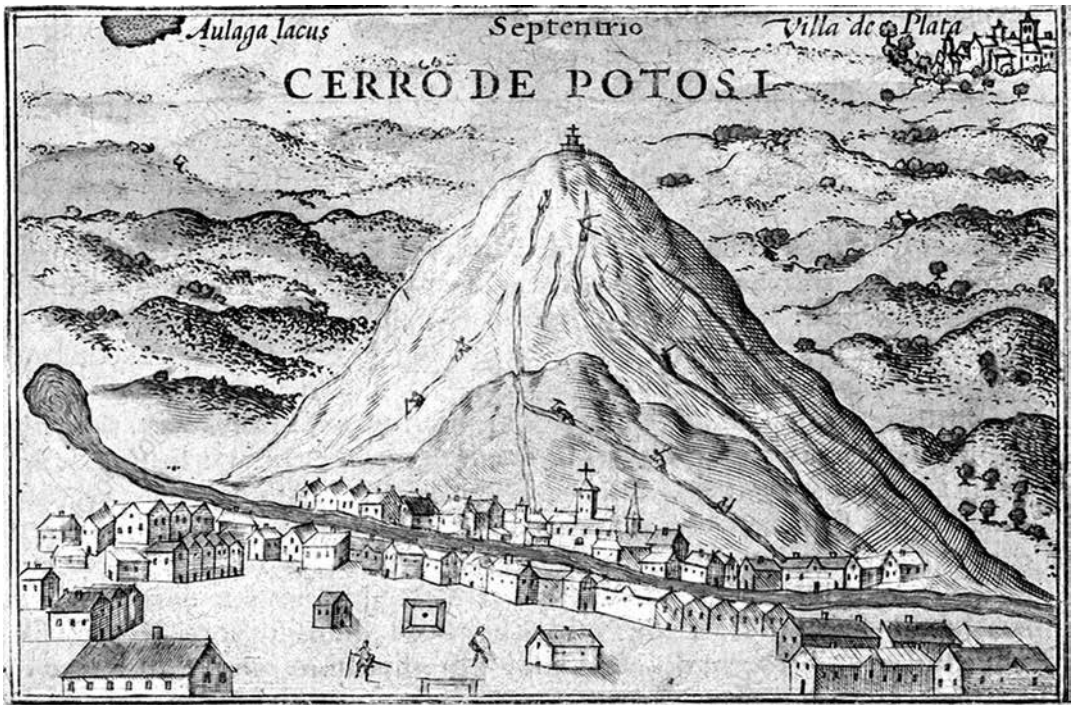
*man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa.*

Aimé Césaire,  
*Discours sur le colonialisme*, 1955

## Part II the 'new world', the divine sharing of the planet and triangular trade

The Age of Discovery is a loosely defined European historical period from the 15th to the 18th century. It began with the desire of European powers to replace the 'Silk Road' with an alternative, maritime route of valuable products 'from the Indies' in order to avoid passing through the Muslim kingdoms that resulted in heightened costs of spices and other exotic products. The naval forces of the Iberian kingdoms were pioneers in this endeavour. Ships from Lisbon attempted to reach the Indies by circumnavigating Africa, while the Catholic kings of Castile and Aragon financed Columbus' expedition to reach the Indies by sailing round the world. In 1470, navigators from Lisbon discovered an uninhabited island in the Equator, with an ideal climate for tropical farming, upon which the colony of São Tomé was founded in 1493. With the aim to establish extensive sugar plantations, the Portuguese entered into an agreement with the neighbouring African kingdom of Congo. The king of Congo converted to Christianity and, in exchange for European products, supplied the 'explorers' with slaves for the plantations. This was the beginning of colonialism, the slave trade and the 'triangular trade'. Meanwhile, Columbus' maritime expeditions were 'discovering' the 'new world'. In 1494, Pope Alexander VI divided the world into the maritime kingdoms of Iberia with the Treaty of Tordesillas: All lands west of the

<sup>14</sup> Marcel Stoetzler. "Critical Theory and the Critique of Anti-Imperialism", *The SAGE Handbook of Frankfurt School Critical Theory*, τόμος 3. 2018.



meridian that passed through the Azores would belong to the throne of Lisbon and the lands east of an imaginary line (“Linea Alexandrina”) to the throne of Castile and Aragon. To this day, Portuguese is spoken in both West African countries and in Brazil Portuguese, and not Spanish as in the rest of South and Central America. The Treaty of Tordesillas was supplemented by the Treaty of Saragossa (1529), which divided the Asian ‘possessions’ into the kingdoms of Iberia, ‘West and East of the Antimeridian’ (which explains why Spanish is also spoken in the Philippines and why Portuguese is still recognised as an official language in East Timor and Macau).

On July 9, 1595, a slave revolt, the *Revolta Angolar*, broke out in São Tomé. The rebels seized the capital, the revolt was put down in blood a year later. The colonialists, not wanting to risk a new rebellion, decided to transfer the “triangular system” to the so-called New World, to the Americas. The transatlantic slave trade, which operat-

ed from the late 16th to the early 19th century, formed the basis of the better known ‘triangular trade’ system, a system of circulation of slaves, agricultural products and manufactured goods between Africa, America and Europe. African slaves were used in ‘colonial’ agriculture in the Americas, and products were then exported to Europe. The goods were processed in Europe and some of them were then exported to Africa, in exchange for African slaves, who were then transported from Africa to the Americas.

Slaves were brought to the New World not only for the plantations, but also for the precious metal mines, such as gold (the “Eldorado” sought by the conquistadors) and, most importantly, silver. Potosí is a city and capital of the department of the same name in Bolivia. In the 16th century, the region was considered the world’s largest industrial complex and was under the control of the Spanish colonial government. The foundation of the city of Potosí was due to the discovery of

silver in the area in 1544. Native Indians were forced into forced labour in the silver mines of Potosi. From the very beginning, thousands of slaves died due to the harsh conditions and high altitude, from pneumonia or mercury poisoning during the silver processing. By about 1600, mortality in local Indian communities skyrocketed. In 1608, the Spanish mining lords petitioned the throne of Madrid to allow them to import African slaves. It is estimated that during the colonial years eight million Indian and African slaves died for the extraction of silver.

The colonial possessions turned the kingdom of Castile and Aragon into the Spanish Empire, “where the sun never set” as it was spread across the world. But the maintenance of all these possessions was very expensive and the precious metals coming from the new possessions were mainly used to finance wars in Europe and to defend overseas possessions from pirates and mercenaries. Eventually, by not following the transition from feudalism to capitalism, the Spanish Empire entered a long path of decline.

### birth of the capitalist system

World domination was claimed by forces from northern Europe, which were ready to capitalise on the new conditions. In 1602, the world’s first official stock exchange was created by the Dutch East India Company (VOC). The VOC became the first company in history to issue bonds and shares. Global systems theorists Wallerstein and Arrighi consider the economic and financial dominance of the Dutch Republic in the 17th century as the first historical model of capitalist hegemony. The ‘merchant capitalism’ of the Netherlands was based on trade, shipping and finance rather than on manufacturing or agriculture. The huge accumulation of capital during this period created a demand for ‘investment opportunities’. This required new institutions to regulate investment capital,

which led to the creation of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange and the Amsterdamsche Wisselbank. There were also innovations in marine insurance and in the legal structure of business, such as the creation (also for the first time in history) of joint stock companies. After the Dutch East India Company (VOC), founded in 1602, the Dutch West India Company (WIC) was established (on 3 June 1621), with the Netherlands’ involvement in the slave trade to the New World (the ‘investment opportunities’ mentioned above) as its main jurisdiction. It was also a kind of state monopoly capitalism, since the VOC and the WIC had exclusive jurisdiction over their individual sectors, while at the same time being under the control of the federation (Staten-Generaal) of ‘parliaments’ of the independent regions of the Netherlands.

The Netherlands, having gained their independence from the superpower of the time, Spain, through a 30-year war, established capitalist hegemony over hitherto unbeatable Spain and Portugal, only to be subsequently defeated (in another 30-year war) by the English navy, which was involved in promoting competing colonial and commercial projects. Through ‘iron and blood’, Britain eventually emerged as the driving force of world capitalism. The present-day center of the global financial system, Wall Street, is located on the same spot where the Dutch West India Company had established the ‘Waalstraat’ when Manhattan was the center of a city then called New Amsterdam, ruled by one of the greatest slave traders of the time, Pieter Stuyvesant (in whose honour the eponymous cigarettes are named). On 13 December 1711, while the city had passed under the control of the English throne and was renamed New York, the city council established a statutory market for African and Indian slaves on Wall Street. The large profits of the merchants and speculators who flocked to the slave market and the additional transactions between them eventually led to the creation of the New York Stock Exchange at the same location.

The new use of Wall Street began just a decade after the former colonial possessions of North America gained their independence from European colonialism and the United States began to write its own colonial history, in a way bridging the first wave of the expansive occupation of the whole planet by Western powers (15th to 18th centuries) and the second wave, the colonialism of industrial capitalism at the end of the 19th century, i.e. what is referred to as “new imperialism”. The second wave of colonialism was largely triggered by the Industrial Revolution. The industrial states needed the colonies as sources of cheap and steady flow of raw materials, as markets for the manufactured goods of the colonial power in question, but also as outlets for the investment of surplus capital (with guaranteed prospects of high profits with minimal risk). In the context of industrial competition between European states, colonies were also used to control strategic points such as the Straits of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal. In addition, colonies could be used as military bases spread around the world.

### revolts as the driving force of history

In this bloody account of the birth of capitalism through colonialism to “imperialism” at the end of the 19th century, the record of revolts, generally ignored by Eurocentric historiography, could not be ignored. Indeed, the revolts during the first wave of colonialism were not even mentioned in the labour and socialist movements. The first anti-colonial revolt, of the slaves in São Tomé, took place already in 1595, as we have seen, and led to a rearrangement of the triangular trade. We will only mention the largest of the revolts that followed, when the triangular trade evolved into the transfer of slaves from Africa to the “new world” and the creation there of the great plantations of “colonial products”: revolts such as the famous “Nannie of the Maroons”, the African slave who started the first



“Maroon war” in 1734, in Jamaica. It was followed in time by the 1751-1757 rebellion in St. Dominic, for which its leader, the African slave François Mackandal, was put to the stake ‘as a sorcerer’ by the French colonialists. This was followed by the great indigenous uprising of 1780-1782 in Bolivia and Peru and the uprising of the ‘Black Jacobins’ of Haiti in 1791. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the slave revolts and the anti-capitalist revolutions in the “new world” determined the course of capitalism (an alternative version of Marx’s formulation that the history of humanity is the history of the struggle of classes). The rebellion in São Tomé contributed to the transfer of the plantations to the “new world”. The revolts in the Caribbean (mid – to late-18<sup>th</sup> century) and the anti-colonial bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Latin America transferred the “activity” of the European colonialists to the slave plantations in the southern USA or Brazil. The end of slavery in the USA (1865) and Brazil (1888) turned the attention of colonialists to the creation of slave plantations in Africa itself, in what was called “the scramble for Africa” – with terrible consequences, e.g. in the “free (for exploitation) state of Congo” (owned by the Belgian throne) from 1885 to 1908, five to ten million Africans died on rubber plantations.

## conclusions from the brief genealogy of decolonialism as capitalism

*According to a common (and manipulable) misconception, imperialism is relatively recent, consists of the colonization of the entire world, and is the last stage of capitalism. This diagnosis points to a specific cure: nationalism is offered as the antidote to imperialism: wars of national liberation are said to break up the capitalist empire.*

*This diagnosis serves a purpose, but it does not describe any event or situation. We come closer to the truth when we stand this conception on its head and say that imperialism was the first stage of capitalism, that the world was subsequently colonized by nation-states, and that nationalism is the dominant, the current, and (hopefully) the last stage of capitalism. The facts of the case were not discovered yesterday; they are as familiar as the misconception that denies them.*

Fredy Perlman. *The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism*, 1984

The passage from feudalism to capitalism is not a result of the development of productive forces; for centuries there were capitalist societies where the capital-wage labour opposition was in no way central, the first realisation of segregated labour was not that of the industrial worker but of the mercenary soldier. Primary accumulation did not happen once, it is a process that has continued uninterrupted. Even in the narrow sense in which Marx described it, it happened much earlier and in places other than Europe. In the context of the Western world, within which Marx considered the phenomenon of primitive accumulation, it included many more expressions.<sup>15</sup>

For decades, the main interpretation of imperialism by the left was that it expressed *anisotropic development*, i.e. that imperialist countries kept the 'third world' underdeveloped (preventing its 'true' capitalist development) in order to exploit it, while from the very first moment of colonialism (triangular trade) the central issue was who determines, by sword and cannon, the value of people and natural resources in the global division of exploitation.



ings of the conference: *Towards a Global History of Primitive Accumulation*, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, May 9-11, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> For summaries of this idea, mainly developed in the works of Silvia Federici, George Caffentzis and Peter Linebaugh, see for example: Camille Barbagallo, Nicholas Beuret and David Harvey (eds.) *Commoning with George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici*, Pluto Press 2019. See also the Proceed-



### Part III Anti-imperialism as foreign policy

imperialism and anti-  
imperialism in the Cold War era

As we have seen earlier, Lenin's state capitalism chose to "use" the national ideology, decorating it with various anti-capitalist chips and emancipation nuggets in order to build a new unifying ideology called anti-imperialism. The formation of colonised populations around the world into nation states under the control of local communist parties and bourgeoisies created a global, also imperial, system centred on the USSR. The attachment to the military machine of the Soviet empire would protect the new nation-states from the plunder of their raw materials by the "imperialists". Of course, the "homeland of socialism" would undertake that "exploitation" of natural wealth, while its regional allies were to undertake rapid industrialization, in order to reverse the "anisotropic development" supposedly "imposed by imperialism" – this was the alternative description of "primitive accumulation", this time "in favour of socialism".

Maoist China emerged as a competitor "from the Left" of the Soviet empire, which was already competing with Western European and North American capitalism. In April 1969, in his keynote address on China's foreign policy to the 9th CC Congress, Marshal Lin Biao (Mao Zedong's official successor) declared a two-front struggle against the US and the USSR, describing both superpowers as "paper tigers of imperialism" and declaring his country's readiness to engage in large-scale wars: "Imperialist war is the eve of the socialist revolution. This basic thesis of Lenin has not lost any of its relevance. According to the historical experience of the First and Second World Wars, we can be sure that if the Russian revisionists, the Ameri-

can imperialists and the world reaction decide to start a third world war, this will inevitably accelerate the development of contradictions, stirring up popular revolutions, which will send the whole pack of imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries to the grave an hour earlier. Then China, intensifying its warfare against the USSR, began its gradual rapprochement with the US in order to... defend Stalin's political legacy as the world leader of the International Proletariat, "a legacy which the USSR had renounced with its destalinization".<sup>16</sup>



16 Lin Biao. Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, delivered on April 1 and adopted on April 14, 1969, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/linbiao/1969/04/01.htm>

In the 1970s, while the “homeland of socialism” imposed colonial policies of state capitalism in its zone of influence, in the “free world” a new colonialism was beginning, with IMF loans to the newly decolonised countries that turned them into debt colonies. Within the capitalist metropolises, central to the sphere of politics and public discourse was the anti-imperialist revolutionary militarism that led to an incredible patchwork, including the IRA, ETA, Gaddafi, the Stasi, the RAF, “marxist” Palestinian organisations, “Carlos the Jackal”, support for “anti-imperialist” dictators in the “Third World” and others, in a way that was more reminiscent of a bad detective novel than of a meeting of liberatory practices and aims. At the same time, the Maoist “three worlds theory” for which tens of thousands of rebels died all over the world, eventually turned into a diplomatic card in international relations, at the time when the Communist Party of China was transforming into what it is today, having managed to change its model of totalitarianism without even having to change its name. In Angola, as a result of the US-Communist China “raprochement”, the US supported (from the 1970s to the 1990s) the Maoist guerrilla group UNITA against the pro-Soviet People’s Liberation Movement of Angola (MPLA) in a civil war between two communist anti-imperialist guerrilla groups that cost the lives of 500,000 people.

After the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the Balkan region we experienced the grotesque but also extremely tragic event of the support of the “anti-imperialist” Milošević by the Greek business world, the media, the Orthodox Church, the Communist Party, various branches of the State apparatus and the neo-Nazis. The avowed Greek anti-imperialists, in the last phase of the wars in the former Yugoslavia, heavily denounced the “NATO-manufactured” war.

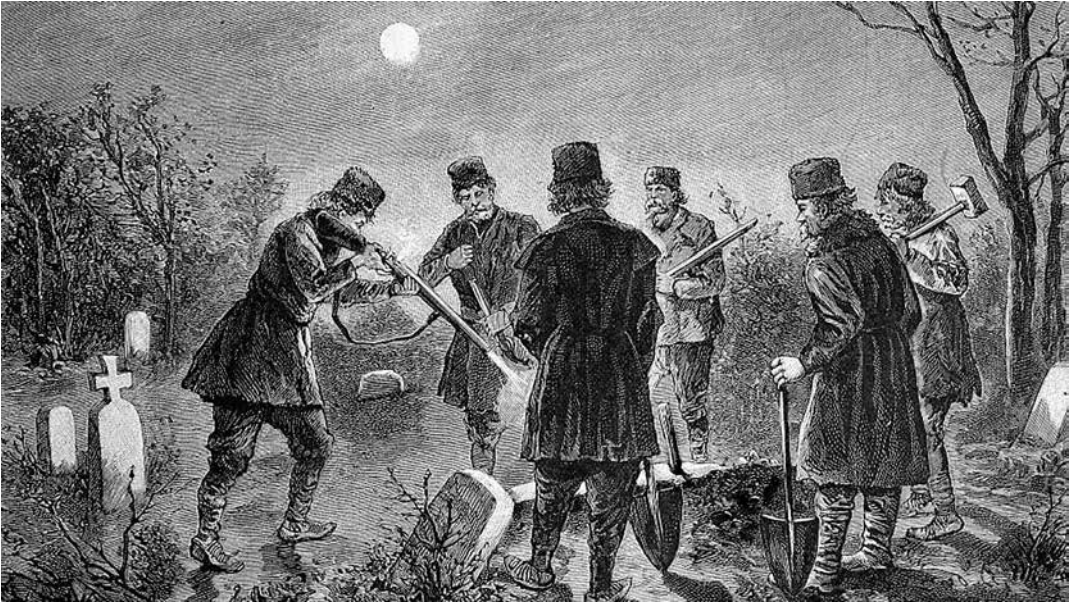
It is interesting that the model of the “pro-NATO

KLA” was the coalition of various anti-imperialist communist pro-Hodja (“Interventionist”) organisations in Kosovo. In the aftermath of the Yugoslav army’s violent repression of the Albanian workers’ protests in Kosovo on the basis of ethnicity (1981), various left-wing groups came together to form the Kosovo People’s Movement (LPRK). They advocated Albania’s “genuine Stalinism” against the “West-friendly revisionists” of Belgrade, presenting the exploitation of the Albanian-speaking agricultural and industrial proletariat of Kosovo as Yugoslav imperialism in collaboration with the capitalist West. After the collapse of the Hoxha regime in Albania, all that remained of “Stalinist anti-imperialism” in Kosovo was nationalism, which sought allies in NATO.

the “peculiarity” of the Balkans

The history of the Balkans has its own special and very important characteristics. At regular intervals nowadays some Balkan country is described as a ‘powder keg’, maintaining the stereotype of the description of the Balkans as the ‘powder keg of Europe’ created in the years preceding the First World War. This, moreover, according to the dominant narrative, is confirmed by the outbreak of the Yugoslav wars immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the first European stereotype of the Balkans was that of the vampire – remember Le Fanu’s horror novel *Carmilla* (1872) or Bram Stoker’s better-known *Dracula* (1892).

From the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century, the Balkans began to become a popular topic of conversation and travel destination, as urban travelers from the developed European nation-states saw the exotic Balkans as a lively laboratory where they could become spectators of their own past, as various ethnogeneses were unfolding right before their eyes, while the Balkan absence of capitalist ethics and Eurocentric scientism fascinated Westerners with their wild, animalistic, daily



life. The ethnically impure, 'bastard' and 'foreign' identity of the Balkans is best expressed in the figure of Dracula, the half-human sub-human who infectiously threatened racially pure Europe. In the novels of the period, various fictional Balkan countries such as Ruritania, Styria or Herzo-slovakia appeared, capturing the transcendental character of ethnogenesis. In the years that immediately followed, transcendental succession wars were provoked, as the various local bourgeoisies chose to identify their interests with some of the major European powers that had transferred their confrontation with each other to the outside of Europe and in this case wanted to maximise the benefits of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The speed with which the civilised West was able to move from horror literature to the horrific reality of wars for capitalist expansion is only comparable to the speed of capitalist expansion itself. At the beginning of the 20th century, the antagonism of the national capitalist classes was looking for an excuse to erupt in the Balkans. At the end of the same century, the Balkans had to return to war, this time for the sake of so-called capitalist globalisation. And now we

hear war cries again, in the context of intra-capitalist competition.

#### **Part IV The struggle against imperialism cannot be anti-imperialist**

To challenge capitalism is to alter and eventually abolish the way it reorders power. But in order to do so effectively, we need to comprehend exactly what it is that we challenge. Power, we argue, is not an external factor that distorts or supports a material process of accumulation; instead, it is the inner driving force, the means and ends of capitalist development at large. From this viewpoint, capitalism is best understood and contested not as a mode of consumption and production, but as a mode of power.<sup>17</sup>

If anti-imperialism has historically been the answer to the question of how to deal with the non-economic aspect of capitalism (an aspect

17 Shimshon Bichler and Jonathan Nitzan. "Capital as Power – Toward a New Cosmology of Capitalism," Dissident Voice, May 2010.

that followers of 'exogenous socialism' discovered far too late) in such a way so as to serve the interests of Bolshevik and then Maoist state capitalism, we should probably be asking another question: How will the struggles of those experiencing the brutality of plunder in the capitalist periphery avoid limiting themselves to nationalism and to suggesting alternative routes to capitalist plunder? How can those of us in the prosperous zones organize without ignoring planetary inequality and without resorting to orientalism? How do we connect the struggles of the excluded and those threatened with exclusion with struggles in the global capitalist centers? How do we manage to respond in an internationalist way to the emergence of the far right, supposedly directed against the effects of globalization? How do we stop the capitalist war machine? The answers to these questions depend on the collective intelligence and multilevel activities of the movement. Here we will simply make a few points.

There are many who benignly ask: "But shouldn't the populations in the capitalist periphery organize themselves to resist their exploitation?" However, in every single historical instance, it has been observed that when a population organises itself in a vertical, pyramidal system of power "in order to resist the powerful countries", the administrators of that system will attempt to integrate it into a wider pyramidal system. In other words, they will not turn against the stronger capitalist powers let alone against hierarchical systems in general. Moreover, contemporary internationalized capitalism, beyond the vertical structures on which it is based (the various nation-states, their armies and their police forces), is ruled by a suffocating transnational network of banks, but also by a media system that shapes the imaginary dimension of humanity, and determines our abstract and symbolic thought. If we seek to weaken vertical power structures and open up cracks in the grid of the global economy, we must first

try to change that very symbolic system. This cannot be done by reproducing interpretations that have failed on all grounds.

It should also be pointed out that while capitalism is becoming increasingly universal, the 'unified theory' that attempted to explain it has long since disintegrated. Has there ever been an example of internationalist organization and action against colonialism other than that of the anti-imperialism of the Soviet empire? Here the answer is yes. The First International, its very existence and its stated goals, liberated forces across the globe. The IWW was a model of organization with a genuinely internationalist revolutionary character, as immigrants from Europe organized alongside immigrants from Asia and descendants of African slaves in the US. The IWW supported the rebellious Indian peasants in Mexico and furthermore, organized the first mixed unions of African and white workers on the African continent. "For a long time, anarchism could be said to be more seriously internationalist than its competitor [marxism]. This attitude partly arose because anarchism rode the huge waves of migration out of Europe that characterized the last 40 years before World War I: Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, Poles, Jews and so on poured into the New World, round the Mediterranean, and into the empires being created by the Europeans in Asia and Africa. (Malatesta spent years in Argentina and Egypt, for example, while Marx and Engels stayed in Western Europe)."<sup>18</sup>

In many corners of the globe "mass proletarian migration took place, forging transnational networks of militants and creating radical publications. The combination of these processes resulted in the creation of a movement that spread across all continents".<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, as

18 Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt (eds.). "Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940", Studies in Global Social History, 6, 2010.

19 Adams 2003.

D. Broder states, "...the Comintern was from the outset a largely European phenomenon (...) there was some Asian representation, but none from Latin America or Africa.". The Comintern spread thanks to the politics of so called 'anti-imperialism'. Broder quotes Ho Chi Minh's characteristic autobiographical phrase: "What first drove me to believe in Lenin and the Third International was not communism but patriotism".<sup>20</sup>

In stark contrast to this priority of the fatherland, the practical support offered to anti-colonial struggles by anarchist organizations (culminating in the "tragic week" of Barcelona, i.e. the workers' uprising against Spain's colonial war in Morocco, 26 July – 2 August 1909) was accompanied by explicit opposition to both militarism and nationalism.

Two years before the publication of Lenin's pamphlet on imperialism, William Du Bois, a widely misunderstood African-American writer and militant, had published a lengthy analysis in the *Atlantic Monthly* entitled "The African Roots of War" in which he linked the carnage of the First World War, not to "uneven development", the 'merger of banking capital with industrial capital' and 'monopoly capitalism' but approached the war as a clash of competing interests among Western powers as part of a process that had begun in the late 19th century.

"It is no longer simply the merchant prince, or the aristocratic monopoly, or even the employing class, that is exploiting the world: it is the nation; a new democratic nation composed of united capital and labor. The laborers are not yet getting, to be sure, as large a share as they want or will get, and there are still at the bottom large and restless excluded classes. (...) Such nations it is that rule the modern world. Their national bond is

no mere sentimental patriotism, loyalty, or ancestor-worship. It is increased wealth, power, and luxury for all classes on a scale the world never saw before."<sup>21</sup>

In *The Souls of White Folk* (1920), Du Bois interprets the "new imperialism" as a necessity for the reproduction of power in the West:

"It is plain to modern white civilization that the subjection of the white working classes cannot much longer be maintained. Education, political power, and increased knowledge of the technique and meaning of the industrial process are destined to make a more and more equitable distribution of wealth in the near future. The day of the very rich is drawing to a close, so far as individual white nations are concerned. But there is a loophole. There is a chance for exploitation on an immense scale for inordinate profit, not simply to the very rich, but to the middle class and to the laborers. This chance lies in the exploitation of darker peoples. It is here that the golden hand beckons. Here are no labor unions or votes or questioning onlookers or inconvenient consciences. These men may be used down to the very bone, and shot and maimed in "punitive" expeditions when they revolt. In these dark lands "industrial development" may repeat in exaggerated form every horror of the industrial history of Europe, from slavery and rape to disease and maiming, with only one test of success, – dividends!"<sup>22</sup>

Anti-imperialist struggles against colonialism trusted the framework of the national-patriotic state-capitalist perspective, instead of striking at the heart of capitalism as a system of power based on plunder, war and racism – but also on integration. In trying to reduce everything to the "central capital/labor opposition", most theorists

20 David Broder, "Machete and Sickle", <https://jacobin-mag.com/2019/03/latin-american-communism-comintern-third-international>.

21 W.E.B. Du Bois, "The African Roots of War", *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1915.

22 W.E.B. Du Bois. *The Souls of White Folk*, New York 1920.



of marxism ignored crucial categories such as colonialism and militarism. The tacticalism of Leninism brought in national ideology through the back door. This is not without significance, as today we are experiencing the seemingly paradoxical phenomenon of 'progressive' members of the transnational global elite speaking out against rising populist nationalism. Is it possible that capitalism, which relied on national ideology (as a unifying ideological regime replacing religion), is now promoting transnational formations, while defining populist nationalism as its opponent? Transnational capitalism is seeking greater profits through the transfer of production to zones of low labor costs, combined with a new colonialism (plunder of resources through 'free trade', borrowing and constant 'low-intensity' warfare in the periphery) and with the attack on rights and benefits in the 'privileged zones',

creating conditions of extreme inequality within the capitalist centres. In this context, we could define 'imperialism' as the economic, cultural and military expansionism (outside the narrowly conceived capitalist mode of production) which aims to reproduce capitalism as a global system. In addition, there are 'individual imperialisms', which describe the respective attempts at expansionism (not necessarily territorial) of supranational formations or regional powers as part of a competition for power within the world system. Finally, within the global capitalist division and according to their potential, all States are expansionist, as they support the expansionism of their bourgeois classes on the one hand and participate in supra-state formations, which have been set up precisely for the needs of the imperialist aspect of the world system on the other. National ideology is still necessary: it is the most effective

false consciousness of the oppressed. Confrontations bring about a new equilibrium, since in each country the decrease in the quality of life can be justified as the result of a 'national enemy' (another State, a supranational organization, but not capitalism and its crisis). They also constantly prepare the grounds for war, the ultimate reboot and restart operation of the capitalist machine.

Nationalism was useful for the so-called bourgeoisie in its first steps, because it united them by dividing them. Transnational capitalism is not threatened by the individuation of its subjects. On the contrary, it blueprints and reproduces all kinds of separation. While inter-State rivalries and antagonisms between various supra-State formations are increasing, capitalism's global domination is not being questioned in the least. Indeed, not only is the capitalist imaginary not being challenged, but we are seeing apathy soar to unimaginable heights. Contrary to Guy Debord's reassuring prophecy that "the days of this society are numbered (...) its inhabitants have been divided into two parts, one of which wishes to destroy it" (maybe the most famous aphorism from the 4th Italian edition of the *Society of the Spectacle*), 'nationalisms from below' across the world are now engendering divisions guaranteed to help people deeper internalize the structures of our own submission.

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# Jungslawen and Nihilist Nationalism 1907–1914

## 1.

The Jungslawen were the young yugoslav revolutionary nationalists of bosnia and croatia who politically developed in the years immediately prior to the First World War.

Because they were so much inspired by the european nationalist movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and because of a strong german intellectual influence among them, historian Milorad Ekmečić gave them the name “Jungslawen”.

Today, the most well known and appreciated section of this movement is Young Bosnia, a group that in 1914 assassinated Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Many anarchists today in the Balkans are ready to point out the anarchist influences on this group, or to even proclaim them anarchists, even though Young Bosnia members clearly rejected anarchism in favor of nationalism.

The aim of this text is to try to sort out this confusion.

In order to take a better look at what the Jungslawen were, we will start from some aspects of the histories of serbia, croatia and bosnia, and then move on to examine the ideas that influenced the yugoslav revolutionary nationalist movement from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2.

In the process that lasted from 1804 to 1835, and which Leopold von Ranke called “The Serbian Revolution”, serbia was established as a de facto independent state, and this independence was officially acknowledged at the Congress of Berlin in 1878.

During this process, feudal relations were abolished in serbia, and first attempts to establish a liberal constitutional system were made. A few political parties were founded and they existed in an uneasy relationship with the often autocrat-

ically minded rulers (first princes, later kings) from the two rival dynasties (Obrenović and Karađorđević).

By far, the most numerous class in serbia were small peasants, who owned small pieces of land. From the small numbers of the educated, a new ruling class was formed: the bureaucracy. This is what Bakunin wrote about serbian bureaucrats in his book *Statism and Anarchy* (1873):

“While they are young and not yet corrupted by state service, these individuals are for the most part distinguished by fervent patriotism, love for the people, a quite sincere liberalism, and lately even adherence to democracy and socialism. As soon as they enter state service, however, the iron logic of their position, the force of circumstances inherent in certain hierarchical and profitable political relationships, makes itself felt, and the young patriots become bureaucrats from head to toe, while continuing, perhaps, to be both patriots and liberals. Everyone knows, though, what a liberal bureaucrat is; he is incomparably worse than a simple and straightforward bureaucratic scourge.”

In 1903, king Aleksandar Obrenović, who was a pro-austrian autocrat, was assassinated by a group of conspirators who were all officers in the serbian military. Petar Karađorđević (from the rival dynasty) became the king. During this whole period, the dominant political party was the People’s Radical Party, which supported the assassination and tried to align serbia more closely to russia and france.

This event created great tensions between the austro-hungarian empire and serbia. These tensions were further escalated by a series of events such as: the so called “Pig War” 1906-1908, which was a trade war in which austro-hungary imposed a trade embargo on serbia; the unilateral annexation of bosnia by austro-hungary in

1908 (serbian nationalists saw bosnia as a serbian land, and this move was seen as illegal by the european powers); and the unexpected victories of serbia in the Balkan wars 1912-1913 with the subsequent territorial expansion of serbia at the expense of turkey.

### 3.

Nationalism was developing in croatia in the circumstances predominantly determined and limited by the fact that croatia was a territory inside the austro-hungarian empire. In 1867 the habsburg empire was reformed as the austro-hungarian empire. The so called “Austro-Hungarian Compromise” established the empire as a dual monarchy, an alliance of two sovereign states. Next year, in 1868, a “Croatian-Hungarian Settlement” was reached, under which an additional dualism was introduced, this time in the hungarian part of the empire. In the croatian understanding of this compromise, croatia was to be seen as a state and a nation, which is in an alliance with hungary, which is in turn as a larger unit in an alliance with austria. As the hungarian side had a different view of the settlement, this created nationalist tensions.



*The Assassination of King Aleksandar and Queen Draga in 1903*

Croatia had a parliament, a government, and an appointed “*ban*” – effectively a prime-minister.

The various political parties formed in Croatia were usually defined by their views of the settlement of 1868. Another crucial question was that concerning the large ethnic Serbian population in Croatia.

The nationalists of Croatia approached this question in different ways, but there were two primary strands of thought.

First, there was the Illyrian and later Yugoslav movement of the People’s Party, and later Independent People’s Party and even later the Progressive Youth, and other groups. According to this view, the Croats and Serbs of Croatia were both parts of the same nation, which should be called Yugoslav. In accordance to this idea, the Croatian parliament made various decisions, like in 1861 when they decided that the official language of Croatia will be called Yugoslav.



Ante Starčević

In contrast to that, the second strand exemplified by Croatian nationalist ideologue Ante Starčević insisted on the importance of maintaining the Croatian national name and the “historical rights” attributed to this name. According to this view, there was no Serbian nationality in the territory of Croatia. But Serbs as such were not rejected. Starčević (whose mother was Serbian) considered Serbs to be Croatian. In fact, Starčević also considered all Slavic inhabitants of Serbia, Bosnia and Montenegro to be Croatian. Starčević and his followers formed the Party of Rights, which later had many different factions, all of which can be categorized by using the name “rightists”, as opposed to the Yugoslav-oriented “progressives”.

#### 4.

In 1878, the same Congress of Berlin that recognized the independence of Serbia (and Montenegro), made the decision that Bosnia, even though still officially a part of Turkey, should be administered by Austria.

Of all of the territories that will later be parts of Yugoslavia, Bosnia was perhaps the one that was most clearly in a colonial position. The old feudal system created by the Ottoman Empire was still in force, and the territory was administered by a governor appointed by Austria.

In 1914, there were 93,336 serf families in Bosnia. The Orthodox population, which comprised more than 40% of the total population, controlled only 6% of the land. More than 90% of the land had Muslim owners – this, of course, does not imply that all Muslims were land owners. On the other hand, most state bureaucracy consisted out of foreigners. The minority of locals who were employed by the state were almost exclusively Catholics.

This means that out of the three main ethnic groups living in Bosnia, the Serbs were the most

alienated one. But still, the youth nationalist movement that developed in the years prior to WWI was composed of people of all three ethnicities and closely, personally and ideologically aligned with the young nationalists from Croatia.

### 5.

Even though the young nationalists of Bosnia (Young Bosnia, YB) and Croatia (Young Croatia, YC) were closely connected, it can not be said that they had a direct counterpart in Serbia.

The closest thing to a Young Serbia was a group of students gathered around the magazine *Slovenski Jug* (Slavic South), published in 1903. The group was led by Ljubomir Jovanović – Čupa, who was one of the leaders of the student demonstrations against King Aleksandar in 1903, and was referred to as the “Mazzini of Young Serbia” by one of the ideologues of YB Vladimir Gaćinović.



The parents of Gavrilo Princip in front of their family house

But this was obviously an older generation than YB and YC.

By the time the Jungslawen were active and forging connections in Serbia, there was no equivalent group in Serbia. What did exist there, was a group of nationalist officers who in 1903 conspired to assassinate the king, and now formed a secret society called “Unification or Death”, better known as the Black Hand.

This is the group that the Jungslawen formed a close relation with in Serbia. Čupa’s group formed the civilian part of the Black Hand. His enthusiasm for and knowledge of European 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist secret societies such as the Carbonari, provided a useful blue-print for the formation of the Black Hand, as well as for their secret rituals and oaths.

### 6.

Young Bosnia as a concrete organization did not exist. What existed were many secret clubs that were established everywhere where high-schools existed in Bosnia. It is more accurate to say the Young Bosnia name was used to designate a generation, or a certain milieu.



Čupa as a fighter in a chetnik detachment (Back row with the black hat)

The first clubs of this sort were organized in the Mostar Gymnasium. They were formed in 1905, one by Dimitrije Mitrinović (soon to become the main ideologue of YB), and the other by Bogdan Žerajić (soon to become the martyr of YB). Soon the groups spread across bosnia, and one of the most important groups was established in Sarajevo in 1911 and was called the “Serbo-Croatian Progressive Organization”. Gavrilo Princip became its member.



In 1912, Dimitrije Mitrinović wrote and published a program titled “Program of the Youth Club National Unification” (no such group actually existed) and the Jungslawen groups in bosnia and croatia adopted it as their own.

## 7.

Unlike the YB, a concrete group called Young Croatia did exist.

This was a group of the “rightists” youth that separated from the main Party of Rights in 1910, and published the eponymous magazine. They were starting to separate from the older generation on similar lines as the Jungslawen in bosnia, by adopting and agitating for more militant methods of struggle. For a group coming out of the rightist milieu, and even aligned with the most anti-serb and chauvinistic faction of that movement associated with Josip Frank, they were starting to get more and more open to the idea of yugoslav

cultural cooperation, even though for the time being they still supported an exclusive croatian nationalist program according to which only the croatian nation existed in croatia and bosnia.

Still, there were obvious contradictions in the group, evident considering that both Mile Budak (a horrible writer and a future ustasha) and Tin Ujević (a genius poet, and a future yugoslav revolutionary nationalist, aligned with the Black Hand) were members.

But this is only a more narrow way in which the name Young Croatia can be used.

The more wider way is to use it to designate a new movement which developed in croatia especially during the Balkan wars (1912-13), and



*Tin Ujević, Krešo Kovačić and Ljubo Weisner – Zagreb 1911*

which was made up both from parts of the rightist youth (such as the Ujević group in YC) which adopted the Yugoslav nationalist position, and parts of the pro-Yugoslav “progressive” youth which adopted more militant methods of struggle. This new grouping became the Young Croatia which was the direct counterpart to Young Bosnia, and it understood itself as the Yugoslav revolutionary nationalist youth.

8.

In Serbia, already in 1902 a secret group was formed as a “private initiative”, variously referred to as the “Macedonian Committee”, “Serbian Committee” etc. The group was inspired by the militant Macedonian-Bulgarian group VMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) which was coordinating guerrilla warfare in Macedonia, then still a part of Turkey.

The goal of the group was to organize pro-Serbian Chetnik detachments, which would be a paramilitary formation serving the nationalist interests of the Serbian bourgeoisie, without officially being tied to the Serbian state.



*Black Hand symbol*

Soon this group was completely taken over by the state and existed as a secret organization called “Serbian Defense”, which was an intelligence network as well as a structure used to

organize guerrilla warfare, in the form of Chetnik detachments.

When in 1908 Austria decided to annex Bosnia – meaning it decided to stop pretending to recognize Turkey’s sovereignty over Bosnia, and just openly declare it its own territory – this created great tensions inside Serbia.



*Chetnik symbol*

The move was seen as a great provocation against Serbian interests and an intense nationalist mobilization was put in motion. There was open speculation that a war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia might break out.

In these conditions, “Serbian Defense” was renamed “National Defense” and reorganized as a public nationalist political organization. National Defense was in charge of public nationalist manifestations, as well as enlisting people into Chetnik detachments in preparation for a possible war. Soon the organization became a mass one.

But, the Serbian bourgeoisie decided to follow the lead of great powers, back out from a nationalist position ready for war, and come to terms with the annexation. This was seen as treason by the more extreme nationalist circles in Serbia.



*Voja Tankosić dressed as an albanian fighter*

## 9.

The more extreme nationalist circles were especially influential in the serbian military. Soon a group of younger conspirators and assassins from 1903 decided that the government consisted of weak men and traitors, and that it is up to them to act.

Their organization was formalized in 1910-11 under the name "Unification or Death", and better known as the Black Hand.

The Black Hand was an extreme nationalist secret society with some proto-fascist elements. Although they did not act publicly, they decided to start a newspaper called *Pijemont* (named after the italian state piedmont (piemonte), seen as the state that led the process of italian unification) which would serve their purposes. The newspaper was edited by Čupa, who also introduced many free-masonic influences in the group.

The ideology propagated by the group was one of extreme nationalism, and of open propagation of the cult of the nation and the state. They advocated the suspension of freedoms, human rights and democracy in order to protect the interests of the nation. In their ideology, the yugoslav idea was often conflated with the idea of greater serbia.

The group was lead by the fanatical and unscrupulous colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević – Apis, who was seen as the gray eminence of serbian political life and was feared by politicians. His right-hand man was Voja Tankosić, the main chetnik commander and organizer of chetnik training camps. Tankosić was described by his contemporaries as a stupid man who was known to personally kill deserters and enemy soldiers by using a knife.

The Black Hand had an effective control of the chetnik organization, and placed its members in the influential positions inside the National Defense.

Here it is important to take into account that the National Defense continued to be used as an intelligence organization, a network of agents, closely working with the chetnik organization and the serbian state. But now the National Defense was getting its parallel secret, we can say a "deep state", center controlled by the Black Hand, of which many of its members were not aware.

From 1908, National Defense increasingly focused on bosnia, where it was developing its network of agents. The focus was completely switched to bosnia after the victories of the serbian army in 1912-13, after which the serbian state took control of the large parts of macedonia. The Black Hand was well placed to use the networks established by the National Defense, without the knowledge of the serbian government. It is exactly through these channels that Young Bosnia members were sent to Sarajevo to assassinate Franz Ferdinand.

The victories in macedonia did not mean that the tensions between the Black Hand and the serbian government disappeared. The military authorities in the newly conquered areas of macedonia and kosovo, many of which were Black Hand members, refused to acknowledge the supremacy of civilian authorities over them, and these territories were ruled as occupied territories by the military. In this period, Apis' power became officially recognized, when he assumed the position of the head of serbian military intelligence.

### 10.

To the Jungslawen of croatia and bosnia, serbia started to seem more and more attractive. It was an independent south slavic state, with a political and economical system that seemed very egalitarian to the young nationalists, especially when compared to austria.

Vladimir Čerina, the leader of the nationalist revolutionaries in croatia, had this to say about the serbian democracy: "Serbia is a vibrant democracy, like nowhere in Europe: their socialists and anarchists are more numerous than our conservatives, and girls are more emancipated there than here." This was a very typical view. When the members of YB temporarily lived in Belgrade (they were often expelled from bosnian schools because of their activities, and would continue their education in serbia, where they forged relations with the Black Hand) they were very impressed by the egalitarian culture in Belgrade, where people of very different social standing would socialize together in bars. And even though they were not religious, they liked to attend liturgy in a small Belgrade church called Ružica, because there they could see king Petar attending it himself.

The activities of YB also inspired YC to move more into the pro-serbian direction. When Bogdan Žerajić attempted to assassinate the gov-

ernor of bosnia Varešanin in 1910 (and then committed suicide, thus becoming the martyr and a great source of inspiration for the young revolutionaries), his friend and YB ideologue Vladimir Gaćinoć stated that Žerajić wanted to kill Varešanin to avenge 19th century croatian nationalists Eugen Kvaternik and Vjekoslav Bach. Kvaternik and Bach attempted an armed insurrection against austria in 1871. When the attempt failed, Varešanin was blamed for their deaths by the croatian "rightists". Both Kvaternik and Bach were close collaborators of Ante Starčević and among the founders of the Party of Rights.

This sacrifice by Žerajić led young "rightists" like Tin Ujević to adopt a yugoslav nationalist and a pro-serbian position: "Serbs are shooting and avenging our martyrs."

But a major push for the pro-serbian cause were the successes of the serbian army in the balkan wars – they created a pro-serbian frenzy among the youth both in croatia and in bosnia. Ujević



Vladimir Čerina



proclaimed: "Our people in the Monarchy do not realize how much is our Serbia ours, how it is a hundred times more, I won't say Serbian, but more Croatian than Croatia itself, and they have to realize, to hear and to see." His close collaborator and also a former "rightist", Krešo Kovačić, insisted that: "Croats should never forget that one free Croatian state exists: Serbia, and likewise, Serbia should never forget that one enslaved Serbian state exists: Croatia."

Both Ujević and Kovačić went to Serbia, as well as other Croatian Jungslawen like Vladimir Čerina, Luka Jukić, Oskar Tartaglia, and Pavle Bastajić, who all forged relationships with the Black Hand. We know for sure that Tartaglia and Bastajić became members of the Black Hand, Ujević and Kovačić wrote a revolutionary nationalist brochure published by the Black Hand publishing arm *Pijemont*, and Luka Jukić got weapons and training from Voja Tankosić and his chetniks. He would use this training and weapons to attempt to assassinate ban Cuvaj in Zagreb in 1912.

Bosnian nationalist revolutionaries had an even closer relationship with the Black Hand, and according to the memories of one of them, Mustafa Golubić, "all members of Young Bosnia became members of the Black Hand" – he probably referred to the ones who went to Serbia. Many of them became chetniks, went to the training camps and had combat experience in Macedonia.

Some of them, like Princip and his friends, were deemed too sickly and inadequate for guerrilla warfare by Tankosić, but the fact that they were of poor health, contemplating death and sacrifice and ready to die for a nationalist cause, made them very good potential assassins. It is unclear if Apis and Tankosić actually thought that the assassination of Franz Ferdinand would be successful. It was speculated that they actually believed that Princip and his friends would fail, and

that this would be an embarrassment for the Serbian government, which the Black Hand saw as their enemy. In any case, they provided the Young Bosnia assassins with cyanide capsules so that they can commit suicide after the assassination.

## 11.

The ideology of the Jungslawen was primarily inspired by the nationalist movements that led to the unifications of Germany and Italy. The anarchists, leftists, as well as nationalists, who today admire Young Bosnia, are in denial when it comes to what the foundational core of their ideology was: liberalism.

The Jungslawen had different ideological influences, but those that defined their goals – the society they would like to see in the future – were liberal.



Pierre Ramus – *The Lie of Parliamentarism Sarajevo* edition 1914

For example, they published a booklet by the Vienna based anarchist Pierre Ramus *The Lie of Parliamentarism*. And this was indeed an anarchist critique of parliamentarism as such. But when they themselves wrote about parliamentarism as it existed in bosnia or croatia, they did not write about the *lie of parliamentarism* (in serbo-croatian: "laž parlamentarizma"), but about *fake parliamentarism* (in serbo-croatian: "lažni parlamentarizam").

Time and time again they concluded how they chose revolutionary means because it was futile to use parliamentary means of political struggle in a land with fake democracy such as bosnia. On the other hand, they saw the parliamentary system that was in force in serbia as authentic and attractive.

Not only that, but even though they were sensitive to social and economic injustice, they thought that if a yugoslav nation-state would be formed on the ruins of the austrian empire, one that would implement both the agrarian and parliamentary system that existed in serbia (which would be the core territory of this new state), this would automatically solve the social, economic and political problems they were facing.

## 12.

Some cognitive dissonance was required in order for such a view of serbia to be maintained.

This was made easier by the fact that, according to their own memories, while they lived in Belgrade, Young Bosnia members socialized almost exclusively among themselves. According to one of them, Ratko Parežanin, while living in Belgrade for months (and being a roommate of Gavrilo Princip), he not only did not become friends with any of the local youth, but did not even speak with even one of them. Their only contacts in Belgrade were the ones connected with the Black Hand.



*Black Hand members*

At that time there were young anarchists and revolutionary-syndicalists in Belgrade. If the bosnian Jungslawen had any contacts with them, the locals could have described to them that they participated in many strikes, that some of these strikes were brutally repressed and that in some cases there were workers who were shot dead by the state, as well as that their friends, the chetniks, were sometimes used to brutalize the workers movement. They could have also told them that anarchist newspapers were being banned by the state.

But since such conversations did not happen, the Young Bosnians, who read anarchist literature and sympathized with some of its content, did not have to face the reality of who their new allies were, or perhaps did not want to face that reality. And thus they were able to make the closest relationship with the antidemocratic and proto-fascist Black Hand, while at the same time admiring "serbian democracy".



*Gavrilo Princip (right) with a Black Hand member (center) in Belgrade*



*Arrest of Nedeljko Čabrinović in Sarajevo*

The only one among them who would later describe himself as an anarchist, Nedeljko Čabrinović, was also the only one who had some contacts with the young anarchists of Belgrade. Because of this, he would oscillate between anarchist and nationalist positions, and as such would be looked on with contempt by Gavrilo Princip who considered him “not sufficiently intelligent” and “not national enough, because he used to be an anarchist and a socialist”.

### 13.

The sympathies for some aspects of anarchism were real, but they were also consciously superficial.

The Jungslawen saw themselves as revolutionaries and were looking for inspirations among other revolutionaries. At the time it was hard for anyone who wanted to “overthrow the political system” not to be inspired or partially influenced by the example of anarchist revolutionaries.

The sympathies were mostly for the “anarchist methods” used at the time, sometimes even referred to as “russian methods” – but in these methods (such as, for example, assassination), there

was nothing inherently anarchist, and the youth was aware of it.

During his trial, Princip stated clearly that even though he thought that a society set up along the lines proposed by Kropotkin was theoretically possible if the circumstances were to change, this was not their concern: “But as we were nationalists, and even though we read socialist and anarchist literature, we did not deal with that issue that much, because we thought that we have a different duty, a national duty.” He also clearly stated that their goal was the establishment of a Yugoslav nation-state, either in a form of a republic, or as a monarchy.

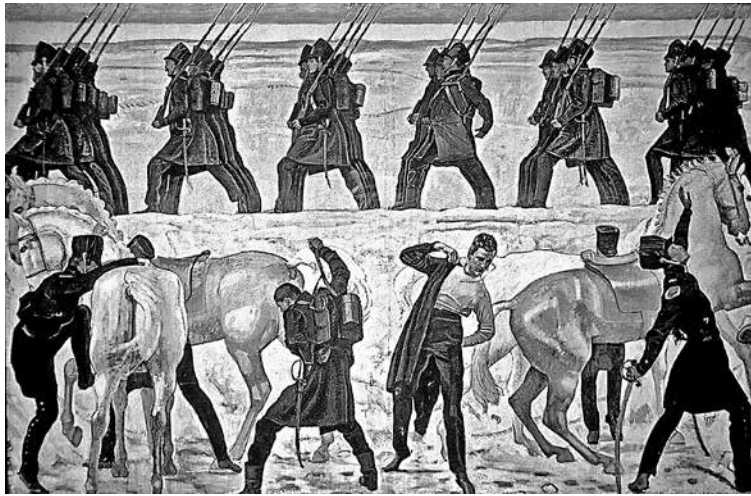
Even Nedeljko Čabrinović, who for some time at least considered himself an anarchist, phrased it like this: “I am a supporter of the radical anarchist idea, so that with terrorism we can destroy the current system and instead of it place a new, more liberal system; therefore I hate all of the representatives of today’s allegedly constitutional system, not as persons, but as the ones who are in the government that oppresses the people.”

An equation of “anarchism” with certain form of militant struggle is evident here, as well as the underlying liberalism.

### 14.

The reasons for this are obvious if we consider that the Jungslawen thought that every nation should have its own “French Revolution”, and that they printed and spread the “Declaration on the Rights of Man and of the Citizen” with enthusiasm.

One of the historical influences that was very inspiring for the Jungslawen were the 19th century German liberal nationalist student clubs, the Burschenschaften. They had a big role in the March revolution and in the unification of Ger-



*Jena students depart for the War of Liberation 1813*

many in 1871. They were liberal and extremely nationalist, advocating for freedom, rights and democracy, but sometimes excluding Jews from their membership for not being “national enough”.

Mitrinović’s program, which was adopted by all of the Jungslawen and to a large degree determined their phraseology, also had an underlying liberalism to it. It stated that the aim of the “club” was to spread the national consciousness among the parts of “our divided, many named and multi-cultural nation” which are completely or not sufficiently conscious of their national rights, national duties and national worth: “All the elements that are not national enough should be repressed (anational and antinational in the material and spiritual life of our people).”

The goal of this program was modernization. For YB, ‘modernization’ meant the adoption of the values of liberal Europe and its culture. Mitrinović phrased it like this: “We can not be insensitive towards the rich and multifaceted life of the modern and strong West, because in that case, uncultured and un-modern as we are, that rich and strong West will run us over, by the force of its culture.” And during the trial for the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Vaso Čubrilović, the

youngest of the accused, summed it up like this: “A nationalist fights so that his nation achieves the level of other nations, to culturally and politically uplift the nation.” This idea of achieving the level of other nations is present everywhere in YB writings. As Danilo Ilić put it, also during the trial: “If the Germans achieved to be one nation, why can’t Serbs, Croats and Slovenians do the same.”

For them, nationalism was a necessary condition for the establishment of democracy, universal suffrage, national sovereignty and the abolition of aristocratic privileges.

## 15.

As was already stated, the Jungslawen had many superficial sympathies for the assassinations committed by anarchist and nihilist revolutionaries. But there were similar sympathies for the methods used by the revolutionary syndicalists. This influence was coming from France and Italy, with Georges Sorel as an especially important figure.

The Jungslawen sympathized with the non-parliamentary ways of struggle and saw them as potentially useful in their own context. In fact, it



*Striking students 1912*

was this generation which popularized the word 'štrajk' (strike) in serbo-croatian.

But again, the basis and aims for these methods were transformed: instead of focusing on the proletariat and the rise of solidarity within it with each new strike, like the syndicalist did, the nationalist youth saw the strike as a method of transformation of an anational people into a nation. Instead of general strike that will overthrow capitalism, they believed in a revolution which will create the yugoslav nation state.

In 1911, a high-school student Milivoj Ćerbak attempted to assassinate a teacher, and when he failed he killed himself. This led to the first "student strike" in croatia, consisting mostly of high-school students. Šćerbak was in fact a leader of one of many student nationalist revolutionary groups. The second student strike broke out in 1912 when ban Cuvaj started openly using absolutist methods in the running of the political life of croatia. Students occupied the University building and placed a black flag on it. More than 300 students participated.

In Sarajevo, student demonstrations were held in solidarity with the students of Zagreb. These demonstrations were organized by the "serbo-croat" revolutionaries which Gavrilo Princip belonged to. This developed into a "student ge-

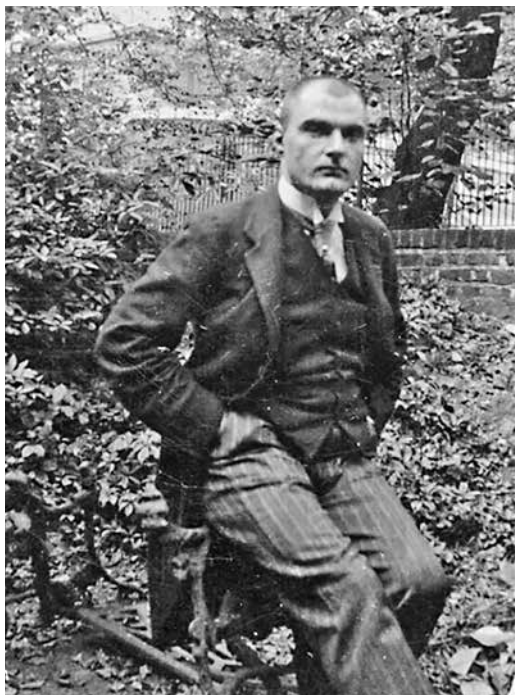
neral strike" in croatia, and was an important step in the spread of the yugoslav nationalist idea, as well as in forging closer ties between serbian and croatian youth, including the former "rightists" who now held pro-serbian views and were getting ready for a national revolution with the aim of establishing a yugoslav state: In their view, Ante Starčević was himself a yugoslav because he believed that all serbs are croats – They believed that the yugoslav idea reformulated the same program, but on a higher lever, and now with revolutionary methods at its disposal.

## 16.

The Jungslawen developed their ideas in a period when the ideas of "integral nationalism" were popular among young nationalists. This doctrine coming out of france insisted on the importance of a culturally homogeneous nation with a unitary culture.

The influences of integral nationalism are especially noticeable in the youth's idea that the individual parts of the yugoslav nation can not survive in an isolated condition, as well as that a nation that is being formed, or is in danger, should require great sacrifices from its individual members, especially from the youth. Under this doctrine, what is moral is whatever serves the nation.

The notion that the unity and homogeneity of a nation is a prerequisite for its survival and development, resulted in an aggressive tendency among the proponents of integral nationalism to assimilate other nations. Integral nationalism was an important chapter in the history of reactionary ideas in the european history, one which provided a link between the liberal extreme nationalist ideas of the 19th century and fascism. And it is exactly among those intellectuals in france and italy who decided to combine aspects of integral nationalism and revolutionary syndicalism that the first fascist programs were formed.



Dimitrije Mitrinović

The Jungslawen were greatly shaped by the tendency which was often called the "revolt against reason". This included not only the already mentioned influence of Sorel, in the way he formed his syndicalist ideas insisting on the importance of myth, but in the first place in the influence that Nietzsche had among them.

The nationalist youth in Bosnia and Croatia read a lot, and always, spending all of the money they had on books (often renting books from small bookstores that also served as lending libraries): they read while walking in the street, during meals, and in the evening before they went to sleep. And a favorite among the authors they read was Nietzsche. It was said by his friends, that Gavrilo Princip quoted Nietzsche all the time.

The motives of will and determination, vitality and activity, are very strong among the Jungslawen. One of the members later said that the whole program of YB could be summed up in one word:

action. Princip believed that for the development of a strong will, sleeping with a bomb (something that he practiced) is a much more adequate method than all of the popular ideas of French pedagogues.

It is then not surprising that the Jungslawen were very open to the ideas of the avant-garde art movements, especially futurism and expressionism.



Poem by Miloš Vidaković 1911

Miloš Vidaković, a member of Young Bosnia, wrote about the *Futurist manifesto* even before it became well-known (1909). The youth greeted the futurist destructive program with enthusiasm, and according to Vidaković, the goal of the youth was a radical fight until the point of sacrifice. In the poems of these young revolutionaries, death and blood are constantly present, as is the idea of making the ultimate sacrifice by giving up

ones life for the good of the nation, sometimes in a war where everyone, including the poet himself, dies.

Dimitrije Mitrović went one step further and in 1913 he wrote his own futurist manifesto: *Aesthetical Contemplation*. Mitrović was also the one who made direct contacts between YB and German expressionists in 1912.

The idea of a break with older generations, whose moderate politics the young nationalists rejected, was very complementary with the theme of the conflict between fathers and sons often present in expressionist works, as well as with Heinrich Mann's view that expressionism was a "spirit made stronger by action".

## 17.

The Jungslawen enthusiasm for the German nationalist movement was reciprocated, when in the first edition of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote about the Sarajevo assassination of Franz Ferdinand by Young Bosnia: "It was the hand of the goddess of

justice that removed the greatest and the deadliest enemy of German Austria, the archduke Franz Ferdinand".

In the later editions this sentence was cut out, and today Hitler's attitude towards Young Bosnia is usually illustrated by a photograph made after the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia which shows the German soldiers presenting Hitler with the memorial plaque dedicated to Gavrilo Princip and the assassination.

What did Hitler exactly think of in this moment is impossible to say, but we can say something about the relationship between some of the members of the Jungslawen and fascism.

After the First World War, the Jungslawen affiliated individuals, had different political developments, but some very prominent ones were affiliated with fascist movements, and explicitly tied those movements to the ideas of the Jungslawen.

Ljubo Leontić, an important part of the Yugoslav revolutionary nationalist youth from Croatia, worked with enthusiasm on the establishment of



Adolf Hitler examines the 1930 Gavrilo Princip memorial plaque removed from Sarajevo by German troops after their invasion of Yugoslavia and presented to him on his 52nd birthday on April 20 1941



*Ljubo Leontić as the leader of the fascist Orjuna in the 1920s*

a common revolutionary organization and was cut short in his efforts by the Sarajevo assassination (on that very day Leontić organized a meeting of young nationalists to establish a new organization).

In the 1920s, Leontić was the leader of ORJUNA (Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists), a fascist organization that advocated for the establishment of an integral Yugoslav nation. This organization also advocated for the establishment of a corporatist system, celebrated “domestic productive capital and labor” and condemned financial and speculative capital as parasitic and anational.

Dobroslav Jevđević, a member of Young Bosnia who knew Princip personally, became one of the leaders of ORJUNA, especially of their paramilitary chetnik detachments that were used to crash the workers movement. During the Second World War, Jevđević was a collaborationist.



*Ljubo Leontić as a member of the Partisan Antifascist government (AVNOJ) in 1943*

Niko Bartulović was a nationalist revolutionary from dalmatia, and after the war, as a member of ORJUNA, he wrote a brochure which set out as its explicit goal to explain how the fascist organization had its roots in the pre-WW1 youth movement.

In the 1930s, a new fascist organization appeared in Yugoslavia. This was Zbor, which would later become the main collaborationist organization during the Nazi occupation of Serbia. One of its leaders was Ratko Parežanin, a member of Young Bosnia, and a one-time roommate of Gavriilo Princip.

The communist and anti-stalinist writer Miroslav Krleža, who personally knew many of the Jungslawen leaders, wrote this about Vladimir Čerina, one of the leaders of the Jungslawen in Croatia: “His voice manifested the proto-fascist symptoms of hysterical chauvinism.”

It is hard to disagree with Krleža if we take into account what Čerina wrote about the poet Vladimir Nazor: “This apostle of our national energy, optimism and religion, destroyer of barbaric culture, and the herald of civilized barbarians, of us, tomorrows renewers and victors, the finest and



most passionate voice of our Blood and Race, the poet of the future Revolution of Souls, a visionary of the New Fatherland, illuminator of the land and life and the revealer of new Heroes, he comes from God."

It is also perhaps interesting to note that when the 1914 assassination happened, Dimitrije Mitrinović received the news about it in Germany, while in the house of the British-German race theorist and antisemitic writer Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who Mitrinović tried to recruit for one of his magazine projects (Mitrinović was very eclectic in this regard, and tried to recruit both Chamberlain and Kropotkin for his ideas).

18.

As was already mentioned, while Nedeljko Čabrinović was in Belgrade, he debated young local

anarchists, unlike all other members of Young Bosnia, and was torn between nationalist and anarchist positions.

He ultimately went back to nationalism, and this can perhaps also be partially explained by the fact that while in Belgrade he also met Krsto Cicvarić. Cicvarić was the most prominent advocate of anarcho-syndicalism in the pre-WWI Serbia.

At the time he met Čabrinović, Cicvarić was himself switching to nationalist positions and was one of the editors of the Black Hand run newspaper *Pijemont*. But, while more and more adopting nationalist positions, for the time being, he continued to call himself an anarchist.

In fact, Cicvarić tried to synthesize anarchism and nationalism in a pamphlet he wrote titled "How will we defeat Austria", and which he gave to Čabrinović (Čabrinović explicitly confirmed that he read this text during his trial).

This is an extraordinary text, and perhaps a first example of something that can be called nation-



An issue of *Pijemont* 1913

Krsto Cicvarić

al-'anarchism'. In it Cicvarić calls for an "all-serbian revolution" lead by the "serbian proletariat" (which he says consists mostly out of peasants), which would be a continuation and the finalization of the serbian revolution from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The goal of a such a revolution, would be the establishment of a "greater serbia" in which there would be social justice and equality, without "tears and blood". This was a clear attempt to combine anarchist ideas, with nationalist rhetoric, but it ultimately ended up in nationalism. After WW1, Cicvarić became an open nationalist, antisemite and advocate of fascism, and during the nazi occupation of serbia in WW2, he was a collaborationist.

So, while Čabrinović was having dilemmas about his nationalism on the one hand, and anarchism on the other, he was approached by someone (who was quite possibly a Black Hand agent) who told him that he can be both. Among the intellectual influences of the Jungslawen there were many instances of the mixing up of nationalism and more revolutionary, anarchist and syndicalist influences (in a superficial form), but this text was unique in its attempt to explicitly combine such opposing ideas.

But, of course, not all of the Jungslawen who survived WW1 went into the officially fascist direction.

An extremely interesting case is Vaso Čubrilović. Čubrilović was the youngest of the Sarajevo assassins who was tried, and he became a prominent historian and died at a very old age in 1990.

During the 1930s, Čubrilović became a member of a nationalist intellectual group called the "Serbian cultural club", and in 1937 he wrote a paper for the yugoslav government titled "The Expulsion of Albanians" in which he scientifically developed methods for the "albanian problem in kosovo" by recommending different ways to realize a total ethnic cleansing of albanians from yugoslavia. Some of the recommended methods were: violent police repression, burning of villages and neighborhoods, economical pressure, religious discrimination, and others.

But, unlike many other nationalist intellectuals, during WW2 Čubrilović supported the Partisans,



*Vaso Čubrilović as an old man and as the youngest member of Young Bosnia*

not the collaborationist forces. And after the war, in 1945 he became a government minister in the new titoist regime. Already in 1944 he wrote a new scientific paper on ethnic cleansing called "The Minority problem in new Yugoslavia", this time for the regime lead by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. In it he advocated for the expulsion of albanians, germans, italians, hungarians and romanians out of yugoslavia, as "non-national elements", stating that the ongoing war is the most suitable period for such solutions, and that the war provides opportunity to achieve in months or a year, what would require many years or decades to be achieved in peace times. The new regime did indeed decide to banish most of the local german and italian population. Although there was a lot of repression directed towards the albanian population, the decision to implement the Čubrilović plan against the albanian population was not made until 1999, when the Milošević regime managed to temporarily displace many hundreds of thousands of albanians from kosovo, and kill thousands of them.

## 20.

It is important to say that there was at least one member of the Jungslawen generation who publicly renounced nationalism after WW1, while at the same time adopting revolutionary socialism. This was Rudolf Hercigonja, who was tried in Zagreb before 1914 for being part of a revolutionary nationalist group, but became a communist after the war.

Hercigonja wrote a pamphlet in 1919 in which he renounced yugoslav nationalist ideas, condemning the new state as equally repressive as the austro-hungarian empire, proclaiming it to be a big prison that needs to be blown up. He signed the text with names of dead comrades from the Jungslawen generation. Hercigonja was a part



*Hercigonjas revolutionary communist group from the 1920s*

of a communist group in yugoslavia which was sometimes called anarchist because of their anti-parliamentary orientation. This group also had contacts with the council-communists from germany. After the group assassinated the yugoslav minister of police in 1921, Hercigonja went to the USSR where he was murdered in the stalinist purges.



*Rudolf  
Hercigonja*

## 21.

Miroslav Krleža wrote that for Young Bosnia nationalism was much more important than the idea of social justice. In his novel *Zastave* (Flags), he wrote that YB supported the serbian imperialist policy in kosovo and macedonia. We can certainly agree with this if we know that many members joined chetnik detachments who committed many crimes in those areas, and pursued extreme nationalist goals. At the same time, these young nationalists were oblivious to, or chose to ignore, the anti-worker and anti-socialist violence that these same chetnik detachments were committing in serbia.

The Jungslawen completely conflated their nationalist goals with the realization of some kind of social justice. This is evident in the way Tin Ujević wrote about serbian victories in the balkan wars 1912-1913. He characterized these serbian territorial expansions as a “utopia being realized” and “the impossible becoming a realized fact.”

This confusion came out of the fact that the Jungslawen were able to conceptually differentiate between Nation and State, but were unable to determine the correct relation between the two phenomenon.

In a nationalist frenzy, partially induced by oppression and poverty, partially by a nihilist disposition and strong death drive and the will to end their lives while sacrificing themselves on the altar of the fatherland, they convinced themselves that the Nation was a realization of a Utopia.

Today, we are unfortunately not beyond such confusion.

A few years ago, during a discussion on the legacy of Krsta Civiarić, a “serbian anarchist” made a claim that there was no contradiction in Cicvarić using nationalist language while still being in his

anarchist phase, and that when Cicvarić spoke of the creation of “greater serbia” by that he meant “yugoslavia”, and both of these things were equated with the realization of anarchy (greater serbia = yugoslavia = anarchy). According to this person, what Cicvarić and the Young Bosnians wanted, was the “unification of a people into anarchy” – This, a paraphrase of a sociological definition of a nation, is the closest thing to an actual definition of the absurdity that national-‘anarchism’ is.

Additionally, in the streets of Belgrade, we can see graffiti written by an antifascist group that state that the WW2 collaborationist prime-minister and a nazi Milan Nedić “was a traitor”. Here, more than a 100 years after Cicvarić, we see an attempt to phrase libertarian politics by using nationalist language.

This is an impossible goal, and any attempt to combine anarchism with nationalism, will only result in nationalism.

We should indeed be able to conceptually differentiate nation and state, but only so that we would be better equipped and more effective in rejecting both. From the Jungslawen example we can learn that throwing out a particular state through the door, while still embracing nationalism, will only bring back the state through the window. And with the state, all of the repression that comes with it, as Rudolf Hercigonja learned in the most brutal way when he declared the whole of yugoslavia to be a giant prison.

From this example we can also learn that however noble and sympathetic some nationalist fighters might seem, because of the injustices they suffered throughout their whole lives, as victims of oppression and exploitation, and regardless of their noble intentions and illusions, the way they chose to struggle and goals they set out for themselves, will only reproduce oppression and exploitation.

We should learn this not in order to moralistically condemn anyone, but in order to be more effective in combating the miserable state of the world, partially created by nationalism and nation-states.

All in all, this is a very sad, if instructive, story, and it does seem to me inappropriate to finish it with an uplifting slogan. But sometimes being sad is an appropriate feeling. Rather than make anarchist heroes out of the Jungslawen, we can maybe better feel sad for their faiths, as well as for all whose lives were made more miserable by nationalism.

But I can use a trick here, and end the article with a few photos from the 2014 bosnian uprising, an uprising which had a very good slogan written on the walls of bosnian cities, while the headquarters of nationalist parties were set on fire: "Death to nationalism!".



*Death to nationalism*



Bosnia 2014



Bosnia 2014



*Nedić traitor – an antifascist graffiti from Belgrade – any attempt to combine libertarian ideas with nationalist rhetoric will only reproduce nationalism*

### Used and useful books:

- Miloš Vojinović, *Političke ideje Mlade Bosne*, Filip Višnjić, 2015.
- Josip Horvat, *Pobuna omladine 1911-1914*, SDK Prosvjeta – Gordogan, 2006.
- Vladimir Dedijer, *Sarajevo 1914*, Prosveta, 1966.
- Veselin Masleša, *Mlada Bosna*, Kultura, 1945.
- Mirjana Gross, *Nacionalne ideje studentske omladine u Hrvatskoj uoči I svjetskog rata*, u: *Historijski zbornik, godina XXI-XXII, 1968-1969*.
- Leo Pfefer, *Istraga u Sarajevskom atentatu*, Nova Evropa, 1938.
- Vojislav Bogičević, *Sarajevski atentat – stenogram Glavne rasprave protiv Gavrila Principa i drugova*, Državni arhiv Sarajevo, 1954.
- Ratko Parežanin, *Gavrilo Princip u Beogradu*, Catena Mundi, 2013.
- Dobroslav Jevđević, *Sarajevski zaverenici*, Familet, 2002.
- Miloš Ković, *Gavrilo Princip – dokumenti i sećanja*, Prometej, 2014.
- Niko Bartulović, *Od revolucionarne omladine do ORJUNE: istorijat jugoslovenskog omladinskog pokreta*, Direktorijum Orujne, 1925.



**ЖИВЕО  
У КОНГРЕС  
КПЈ**



# In the dungeon of nationalism

## The Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the national question



### Introduction

When talking about the breakup of socialist Yugoslavia, one of the mentioned causes is the centuries-old ethnic hatred between Serbs and Croats, because of which the state that tried to unite them simply could not survive. In addition to the fact that this argument is nationalistic and simplifies the history of socialist Yugoslavia to the point of absurdity, it also projects back into history conceptions about the ethnicities of people in the northern Balkans that took their current form precisely during the period of socialist Yugoslavia. In the 19th century, as in the first half of the 20th century, there coexisted heterogeneous ideas about who the people living in the north of the Balkans are, what name to use for them, whether they are one nation or several nations, etc., and they depended to a large extent on the current political interests of representatives of a particular idea<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> There were ideas of exclusive Croatian and Serbian nationalism, but also ideas about Yugoslav nationalism, that is, ideas about the creation of a unified Yugoslav nation (for example, within the Illyrian movement in Croatia in the 1930s,

The crimes of the Ustasha regime in the second world war affirmed in a bloody way a hitherto politically and socially marginal vision of ethnic relations in the northern Balkans. As much as the victory of the National Liberation Struggle (NLS, NOB) under the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY, KPJ) was the negation of that vision, the established state, the socialist federal republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) failed to deconstruct the artificial ethnic divisions with its national policies, but instead institutionalized and strengthened the ties of territory, ethnicity and state administration. The sentiments and

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which advocated the idea of the unity of the southern Slavs, or "Illyrians"). It should be noted that the ideas of exclusive nationalisms were often formulated in a drastically different way than they are formulated today. For instance, the main ideologist of Croatian nationalism in the 19th century, Ante Starčević, believed that there were only two Slavic peoples in the Balkans – Bulgarians and Croats, which for him meant that "Serbs" should be called "Croats". On the other hand, Vuk Karadžić believed that all speakers of the Štokavian dialect are Serbs, speakers of Kajkavian are Slovenians, and speakers of Čakavian are Croats.

ideas about nations that today's people with the experience of life in yugoslavia and post-yugoslavia have are not the result of historical events and ideas of figures from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century that are today part of individual national narratives<sup>2</sup>. To assume a continuity of these ideas to the present is an ahistorical and nationalist idea. These sentiments and ideas are above all the result of decades of institutionalization of nations in the yugoslav socialist republics, institutionalization of capitalist relations and everything that this entails in people's everyday experience. As followers of the Comintern and Lenin's bourgeois ideology of national liberation<sup>3</sup>, the idea that an alternative to the kingdom of yugoslavia could be anything other than some different form of state power was lost from the horizon of KPJ political views very early (1920). Due to the same loyalty to Lenin, the KPJ was the main enthusiast of progress and capitalist development, which are necessarily intertwined with nationalism. Thanks to the policies of the KPJ and SFRY, the reproduction of the life of the workers will remain a byproduct of the reproduction of the state and capital, and the "liberated" people of oppressed nations will become the basis of future national police and national armies.

The goal of the text in front of you is to provide an overview of the policies of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia regarding the national question, from its founding in 1919 until the collapse

2 For example, the ideas of Ante Starčević (1823-1896) and the attack on Stjepan Radić in 1928 in the assembly of the kingdom of yugoslavia for the croatian national narrative, or the ideas of Dositej Obradović (1739-1811), Vuk Karadžić (1787-1864) and the Serbian revolution (1804-1835) for the serbian national narrative.

3 Rosa Luxemburg never stopped warning about the opportunism of Lenin's national policy, and in her book, the *Russian Revolution* (1918), wrote that the Bolsheviks, with their ideology of national liberation and the right of nations to self-determination, secured the ideology of the counter-revolution and strengthened the position of the bourgeoisie, weakening the position of the proletariat.

of the SFRY in 1991; to consider them in relation to their historical, social and economic context from a perspective for which the only alternative to capitalist society can be achieved through a complete dismantling of its fundamental elements – abstract labor, commodity production, gender, state and nation. The historiography from the period of the SFRJ evaluates the national policy of the KPJ throughout history from a Leninist angle, evaluating everything that is close to it as positive, and everything that departs from Lenin's conceptions as delusional or inadequate to the problem at hand. Contemporary historiography also approaches the evaluation of these policies exclusively from the bourgeois dichotomy of right or left, and not from the perspective of the workers. The right-wing perspective sees in yugoslavia only the suppression of national freedoms, which we will see is very far from the truth. The left-wing perspective is largely guided by the logic of conquering and preserving the continuity of state power, positively evaluating policies that, according to them, contributed to the influence of the KPJ and the stability of the SFRY.

The text is divided into three chapters: Nationalism as a strategy for attaining power (from the founding of the party in 1919 to the end of the war in 1945), Nationalism and primitive accumulation (the period of the so-called revolutionary statism 1945-1963) and Nationalism and the domination of the state over society (the period of the so-called socialist self-management from 1963 onwards). These sections present the national policies of the KPJ in relation to its role as promoter of the interests of capital, leader of industrialization and guardian of state power. Since the historical period covered by the text is already quite large, for the sake of brevity I will not deal with phenomena of nationalism that are not closely related to party policies, debates about nationalism and the political system of Yugoslavia in the later 80s, constitutional changes

in 1988, nor the events that followed and led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia<sup>4</sup>.

### **Nationalism as a strategy for attaining power**

From the founding of the party in 1919 until the end of the war in 1945

*Our parties must know that they are fighting not only for the eight-hour working day, etc., but also for winning over the masses under the given circumstances, they must know that the national question in many countries is one of our strongest weapons in the victorious struggle against the existing regime.*

Zinoviev, closing remarks  
Executive Committee of the Communist International  
III. Extended plenum, June 1923

The first world war found the peoples that are considered yugoslav in unequal political positions. The serbian bourgeoisie had a national state and aspired to the liberation and unification of the still unliberated serbs. The croatian bourgeoisie was divided, without a national state, but with a degree of certain autonomy and a strong influence of state law on their national ideology. The slovene bourgeoisie lived in several crown lands, without a national state and state tradition. The montenegrin bourgeoisie built its national state, at the same time retaining a serbian identity, but with separate national characteristics. The macedonian segment was not recognized as a nationality and they were the object of appropriation by several bourgeoisies of the balkan states.

4 On the question of the collapse of yugoslavia, consult the text 'How [not] to do a critique: Demystifying the anti-imperialist narrative of the collapse of Yugoslavia', by the collective Our baba doesn't say fairy tales in the second issue of Antipolitika dedicated to yugoslavia.



VMRO (IMRO) leaders Alexandrov and Mochev

Until the founding of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the labor movement in slovenia, bosnia and herzegovina, vojvodina and croatia was under the influence of austria and hungary, while the movement in serbia was influenced by german social democracy. Social democratic parties in yugoslav countries, created at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, underwent a long and different evolution in relation to the national question. The Serbian Social Democratic Party (SSDP) operated in an independent national state where the Serbian bourgeoisie built its national program and in the context of the unfinished liberation and unification of the serbian people. As a party from an independent state, the SSDP enjoyed greater independence in the II. International and the national question for them is primarily political and economic. On the other hand, until the war, due to the underdevelopment of the socialist movement and its subordination to the social democratic party of austria in the

II. International, for the social democratic parties under the austro-hungarian rule the national question was a cultural question within the limits of legitimism and the demand for a democratic and federalist transformation of the austro-hungarian monarchy. However, the perception of the national issue as a cultural one changed after the balkan wars and the victory of serbia.<sup>5</sup> The SSDP was the first to come up with the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination, with the idea of the connection between the struggle for social and national liberation, and with the Balkan Federation as a formula for solving the balkan issue. After the unification in 1918 of the kingdom of serbia, montenegro and the south slavic parts of austria-hungary into the kingdom of serbs, croats and slovenes (from 1929, the kingdom of yugoslavia)<sup>6</sup>, the SSDP perceived the new state as a national state, and the serbs, croats and slovenes as one nation. Regarding the question of the form of the state, they advocated centralism, which they believed gave great advantages to the

5 Social democratic parties from other yugoslav countries reproached the serbian socialists for giving great importance to other balkan states and not taking into account the slavic peoples under austria-hungary. Until the first world war, the SSDP did not accept the Yugoslav national program neither as a program of rapprochement and reciprocity, nor as a program for the liberation of the peoples under austria-hungary and their unification with serbia within the framework of yugoslavia. The serbian social democrats kept the idea of a balkan federation, and those under austria-hungary of yugoslavia. Serbian socialists explained their balkan policy with the need to unite the balkan nations in defense against imperialism, primarily from austro-hungary.

6 Although before the war, King Aleksandar advocated the policy of greater serbia, for strategic reasons he favored the idea of Yugoslavia during the war. Namely, in order to create a strong, stable and legitimate state under one ruler, it was necessary for the nation and the state to be equal, and that is why there had to be one nation – a yugoslav one. Although the idea of yugoslavism had ethnic (and even racial) roots, because it was based on the idea that there is some kind of unity among the slavic peoples, especially the southern slavic peoples, which leads to their merging into one nation – yugoslavian, with the creation of the state it became rather only a political project, which did not exclude the recognition of cultural differences.

struggle of the proletariat, and regarding the national question, unitarism.<sup>7</sup>

In December 1918, the leaderships of the social democratic parties of serbia and bosnia and herzegovina initiated the unification of labor organizations in the new state. The congress of the unification of social democratic parties and organizations was held in Belgrade from April 20th to 23rd, 1919. At the congress, a decision was made to establish the Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (communists) (Socijalistička radnička partija Jugoslavije (komunista) – SRPJ(k)). Apart from the members of the social democratic parties, it consisted mainly of independent leftists, many of whom came, at least in the



*Delegates of the First Congress of the SRPJ(k) in front of Hotel Slavija, Belgrade, 1919*

7 It is interesting to note that since 1918 there was a south slavic communist group under the bolshevik party in russia, which consisted of thousands of slovenes, serbs, bulgarians and croats, and which published its own newspaper, *Svetska revolucija* [World Revolution]. The group soon split into two factions regarding the question of the post-war political system: one faction stood for yugoslavia as a state of the south slavs, and the other for a balkan federation that would include albanians, greeks and romanians, and in some variants hungarians as well. After returning from russia and immediately before the founding of the Socialist Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (communists), many of them, the aftermath of the abolition of the kingdom of shs, accepted the idea of national unity of yugoslavs.

former austro-hungarian regions, from the ranks of the Nationalist Youth<sup>8</sup>. The unification of yugoslavia in 1918 was supported by the entire yugoslav social democracy. The SRPJ(k) accepted the unification as a result of the national revolution of the yugoslav bourgeoisie, but rejected the monarchism and centralism of the legal and political system. It recognized three national bourgeoisies – croatian, serbian and slovene – but not that there are three peoples. For them those were rather three historical names for the same people. Therefore, nationalist conflicts are the conflicts of national civil parties arising from the capitalist system and from the way that the unification was carried out. As a solution to the national question, they advocated a reorganization of the monarchy into a republic and one national state with the widest self-government rights of regions, districts and municipalities.

From its foundation, the “radicals” within SRPJ(k) accepted the ideas of III. International: the idea of an armed path to socialism through the unification of the labor movements of the yugoslav peoples into a single proletarian front; the thesis about a unified yugoslav nation; the idea that the establishment of the kingdom of serbs, croats and slovenes facilitates the pure class struggle of the proletariat and that the national question is a bourgeois question. On the other hand, the “centrists” stood for legal forms of action and social reforms. They accepted the stance about of national unity of serbs, croats and slovenes,

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8 The term “nationalist youth” pertains to youth factions of “revolutionary nationalist” orientation from bosnia and herzegovina and croatia (in connection with nationalist circles from serbia) that were active at the beginning of the 20th century (before the first world war) and that mostly accepted the idea of yugoslav nationalism and creation of a yugoslav state and nation by uniting serbia and montenegro with the yugoslav countries that were then still under the austro-hungarian rule. Mlada Bosna is the most famous faction of “nationalist youth”. After the first world war, some youth nationalists became communists, while many became fascists (Orjuna, Zbor, chetnik organizations).

but were against the centralization of the party and believed that its federalization could serve the idea of national unity.

It should be mentioned that the position of the Comintern on the unification of the yugoslav peoples expressed in the *Proclamation to Communist Parties of the Balkans* in 1920 was that the kingdom of serbs, croats and slovenes was created by the armed force of the Entente and serbia as its ally, without considering the opinion of the nation. Relying on the Entente, the bourgeoisie and the nationalist social-democratic movement, its task was to become one of the centers of the world counter-revolution and so to prevent revolutionary movements on its territory and oppose the russian and international socialist revolution. The Comintern rejected such unification because it was not based on the self-determination of the nation and because it presented a significant territorial expansion of serbia, making the national question in the balkans even more complex. Their idea was that, after a successful proletarian revolution, the balkan proletariat would achieve its state unification in a federated socialist balkan (or balkan-danube) Soviet republic.

At the Second Congress of the SRPJ(k) in Vukovar on June 20th to 25th, 1920, the “radical” current became the dominant one. The party changed its name to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) and joined the Comintern. Part of the centrists left the Congress, and the rest were expelled from the party in December 1920. The position of the Comintern that the kingdom of serbs, croats and slovenes<sup>9</sup> must be replaced by the soviet republic of yugoslavia, which should enter the federation of the balkan-danube coun-

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9 The KPJ sometimes uses the term “dungeon of the people” referring to the kingdom of serbs, croats and slovenes in its propaganda. The same term was used by other communists for the austro-hungarian monarchy and the russian empire.



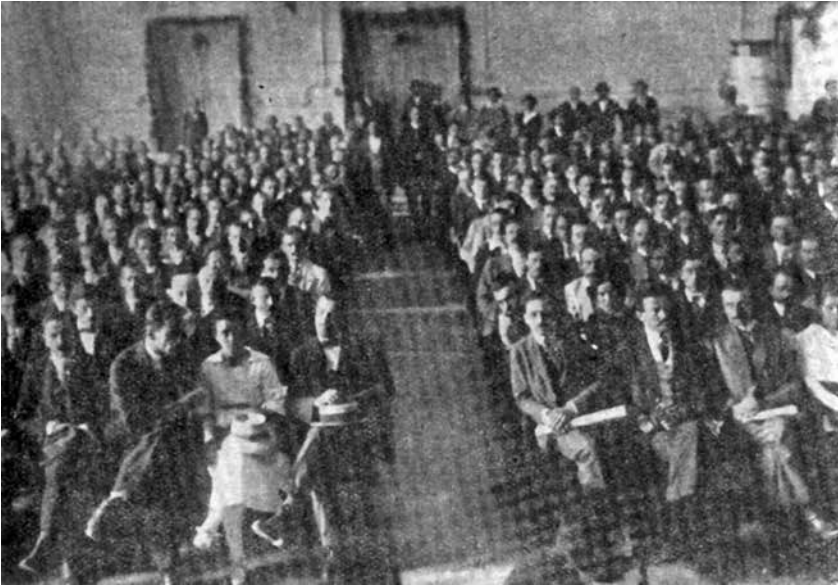
*Provinces of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1920-1922)*

tries<sup>10</sup> and be part of the international federation of soviet republics was now accepted. However,

they rejected the Comintern's idea of an expanded serbia and serbian hegemony, claiming that in

10 While in the XIX century the idea of a balkan federation was present among socialists, the dominant conception of such a federation at the time was that of a federation of municipalities or communes under the influence of Proudhon, anarchism and russian populist socialism. The issue of the method of uniting the yugoslav peoples was first raised by the socialist parties in 1908 in connection to the issue of the austro-hungarian annexation of bosnia and herzegovina. The slovenes and croatian socialists believed that the introduction of more slavlic peoples within the borders of austria-hungary would accelerate their transformation into a confederation of nations. Serbian socialists, on the other hand, emphasized that the unification of the yugoslav peoples could not be achieved within the framework of austria-hungary, but through a unified balkan socialist policy. Already in 1903, they developed the idea of the Balkan Federation, and in 1910, at the Balkan Conference of Socialists in Belgrade, which was attended by delegates from the socialist parties of serbia, slovenia, slavonia, bosnia and herzegovina, turkey, romania, greece and croatia, as well as delegates from the socialist organizations of macedonia and

montenegro, the idea of the Balkan Socialist Federative Republic was confirmed. However, there was no agreement on the method of unification, and only the bulgarian and serbian socialists accepted the idea of the Balkan Federation as a political expression of the unification of the balkan nations. The idea was also supported by the II. International. Upon the outbreak of the first balkan war, the II. International supported the idea of a democratic federation of the balkan nations, which would include serbia, romania, bulgaria, greece, turkey and albania, and suggested that the peoples under the austro-hungarian monarchy should work on implementing the right to democratic self-government. Thus, the International proposed different options to individual nations and did not take state unification into consideration. Serbian socialists stuck to the idea of a Balkan Federation even during the first world war, and the idea was confirmed at the II Balkan Socialist Conference in Bucharest in 1915. Socialists under austria-hungary came closer to the idea of unification through the Balkan Socialist Federative Republic only after the February Revolution in Russia, and especially after the so-called October Revolution.



*Second Congress  
of the SRPJ(k) in  
Vukovar, 1920*

the new state there would be only one nation, the yugoslav nation, as well as national minorities.

Despite the great success of the party in the elections in August 1920, already at the end of the year, the KPJ's mandates in the National Assembly were annulled by the law on the protection of public safety and state order (zakon o zaštiti javne bezbednosti i poretka u državi), the leadership was arrested, forced into exile and illegal activity. Two central questions for the party became the question of the continuation of communist activity in conditions of illegality and the national question. In the debates, two camps were formed – "left" and "right". The so-called "left" began to believe that national and class oppression are interconnected and ultimately accepted the Comintern's position that the serbian bourgeoisie oppresses the slovene and croatian bourgeoisie, which encourages their tendency towards federalism or even openly anti-yugoslav sentiments. They believed that nationalist initiatives in certain regions should not be stifled because this can only strengthen separatism. Rather, it is necessary to respect inherited political traditions because the working class of oppressed nations

cannot be indifferent to the national position of their nation. According to the "leftists", KPJ must reckon with separatism and federalism, even if these are delusions. Some of the prominent "leftists" were Đuro Cvijić, Vladimir Čopić, Ante Cilića, Kamilo Horvatin, Kosta Novaković and Triša Kaclerović.

The "right" wing first started talking about the three nations. However, the national question was separated from the tasks of the class struggle. They believed that the state should not be organized on an ethnic federal basis but on the basis of the autonomy of individual segments of the yugoslav peoples, which was an idea close to the original idea of yugoslavia as a centralist state that the KPJ advocated in 1919. The national question should be solved by the national bourgeoisie, and the KPJ must speed up social changes grounded in the class struggle, which will lead to the removal of this question from the agenda. The assessment of the "rightists" was that the revolution was far away and that autonomy was the best way to prevent ethnic divisions. They rejected the thesis about the serbian bourgeoisie as the only cause of the emergence of national



*Ustashes in 1930s*

tensions and did not differentiate between civil parties in power and those in the opposition, which according to the “left” was a position that reduces the possibility of the expansion of the allied front. Prominent “rightists” were Sima Marković<sup>11</sup>, Lazar Stefanović and Ljuba Radovanović, all of whom were members of the pre-war Serbian Social Democratic Party.

For both “leftists” and “rightists”, the national question was a means of achieving a goal, i.e. the socialist revolution. However, the “left” accused the “right” of opposing the separatist and federalist ideas of the croatian working masses and of being bureaucratic centralists. The “leftists” believed that federalism would speed up the revolutionary process because the accelerated resolution of the national question would destabilize the state. On the other hand, the “rightists” believed that autonomism would contribute to this same goal because avoiding the national question would stop the unfavorable effects of nationalism on the unity of the working class. This division of opinions regarding the national question will exist until after III. national conference (1924). It is interesting to note the arbitrariness with which these positions are called “left”

<sup>11</sup> Before the first world war, Sima Marković was a revolutionary syndicalist, that is, a member of the radical wing of the SSDP called “direktaši” because of their insistence on direct action.



*Partisan leadership*

and “right”. The position that became the dominant one subsequently called itself “the left”. In the historiography from the period of socialist yugoslavia, there is a consistent agreement with the position of the “left”, usually followed by the statement that the “right” did not “realistically” view the situation. A “realistic” position was thus the one that led to more power.

After the IV. congress in 1922, the Comintern gained more and more authority over the member parties, and a special commission for the KPJ was formed. The Commission found that the national issue was of central importance in the conflict within the KPJ. As a solution to the situation in the balkans, the KPJ delegate at the IV. congress emphasized the “struggle against imperialist peace and imperialist war” as well as the Federative Soviet Republic of the Danubian and Balkan countries.

The national question was officially put on the agenda at the II. KPJ national conference in Vienna in May 1923. One of the main problems under discussion was the so-called croatian question, i.e. the mass support of the croatian workers and peasantry to the Croatian Peasant Party (Hrvats-



ka seljačka stranka, HSS), and a similar situation in bosnia and herzegovina and slovenia. The serbian hegemonic and centralist policies were declared to be the main cause of such a situation. National conflicts were now interpreted as conflicts of entire tribes, not just tribal bourgeoisies. The conflicts of the bourgeoisie were caused by the unequal economic development of these bourgeoisies. The issue of nationally toned movements of macedonian turks, germans, hungarians, bunjevci and romanians was addressed. Macedonians were not mentioned as a nation or tribe, and the term 'tribe' was used for serbs, slovenes and croats, although there were also dilemmas about the use of that term. The term 'nation' was used for non-slavic peoples such as germans, hungarians, etc., and the term 'population' only for macedonians. As part of the conference, it was decided that it is necessary to open a debate on the national question and that comrades who were interested in that question should discuss it in the party press. The debate was conducted within the framework of the Independent Workers' Party of Yugoslavia (Nezavisna radnička partija Jugoslavije, NRPJ), the legal party through which the KPJ operated until the NRPJ was banned in 1924. In the same year, the journal *Borba* (banned in 1924, as well as the journal *Radnik*) called for a debate on the national question.

The book *The National Question in the Light of Marxism* by Sima Marković represents a special contribution to the debate. It was the first extensive theoretical work on the national question after unification. Marković believed that until 1920, the political discourse was dominated by social themes, and after that by national ones, which tends to "mask and obscure the social structure of political life, blurring the class struggle..." The first period is characterized by a class alliance of the bourgeoisie with the aim of stabilizing its power and in that period, neither the slovene nor the croatian bourgeoisie had an interest in em-



*Sima Marković*

phasizing their national issues. In the second period, the bourgeois rule was consolidated and the slovene and croatian bourgeoisie grouped together as the hegemony of the serbian bourgeoisie became stronger. Marković accepted the thesis of the Comintern about the hegemony of the serbian bourgeoisie, but emphasized that it is not a political but rather an economic hegemony. He rejected the idea of national yugoslavism and replaced it with the concept of the yugoslav state as a multinational community. According to Marković, the republican democratic arrangement and national peace would create space for the workers' struggle. He held that in yugoslav conditions, federation and confederation could only be a slogan of separatist bourgeois nationalism against which the working class must fight just as much as against serbian centralist imperialism. As a solution between centralism and federalism, he proposed cultural and political autonomy for the provinces, for all nations, parts of nations and national minorities who have de-

clared that they want to be in a common state. Such a solution would provide slovenes and croats with a guarantee against serbian hegemony. Marković did not consider the people's right to self-determination up to secession as a binding issue, but as an expedient issue that should be regulated by the constitution. Nevertheless, he believed that the majority of nations would opt for the yugoslav state framework.<sup>12</sup>

During the debate, three positions crystallized. The first, which was in extreme minority, denied the existence of the national question in the kingdom of serbs, croats and slovenes. The second, trying to justify the party's earlier policy, claimed that the national question arose only after 1920. The third position was that the national question had existed since the beginning of the creation of the kingdom and that the idea of denying it was deeply erroneous.

The idea of federalism was also discussed, with August Cesarec<sup>13</sup> contributing the most. He did

12 He wrote that slovenes, serbs and croats can be treated as three branches of one nationality. They are ethnically, namely, one people, but they no longer feel that way because for centuries they lived under different cultural, economic, political and social conditions. In addition, the fact that they do not feel like one nation is the fault of the slovene, serbian and croatian bourgeoisie. For now, these three branches are not ready to live in one state, but they could become one nation in the course of future historical development. In some of his writings, he wrote that the solution of the national question in the age of imperialism (the period from around the 1870s culminating in the first world war) is impossible. However, he adds that this question is generally impossible to solve within the framework of capitalism.

13 August Cesarec (1883-1941) was a writer, translator and member of the KPJ since its foundation. Before the first world war, he participated in the social democratic movement and was a member of the Nationalist Youth. In 1912, he was arrested and accused of participating in the assassination of the royal commissioner Slavko Cuvaj, for which he was sentenced to five and than three years in prison. At the end of 1918, he joined the renewed Social Democratic Party and opted for the so-called "left" that would found the SRPJ(k) in 1919 (KPJ from 1920). In 1919, in the kingdom shs, together with Miroslav Krleža, he founded and edited the magazine Plamen,



August Cesarec

not consider the federation as a principle but as a stage that will be necessary as a transitional form even after the proletarian revolution. According to him, the goal of achieving a federation cannot be considered bourgeois only because its bearer is the bourgeoisie, which he explains with the idea that there are national movements of oppressed nations that strive to complete their national revolution. Even if it results in additional national tensions, the federation can facilitate their resolution by sensitizing people to abandon nationalist delusions and by creating relations that are ready for the class struggle, said Cesarec. Thus, he implied that the interests of the bourgeoisie to complete national revolutions coincide with the interests of the people assigned

which was banned in August of the same year. In the fall of 1922, the KPJ sent him, as a delegate, to the IV. Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. After the Congress, he stayed in Moscow for five months, and on his way back he was arrested at the border and then sentenced to two months in prison. Upon news of his arrest and imprisonment, the newspapers *Borba* and *Savremenik* demanded his release, and Miroslav Krleža criticized the state of affairs in the kingdom at that time in his famous article "The Case of August Cesarec" published in the newspaper *Nova Evropa* (No. 16, 1923). During the NDH, he was detained in Kerestinac, from where he escaped in an organized escape. The escape failed due to poor organization and all the surviving fugitives were captured. A few days later, they were sentenced to death for attempting to rebel against the government. He was probably shot together with other comrades in Zagreb's *Dotrščina* on July 17, 1941.

to belong to that nation. At the same time, nationalism is seen as an obsession that people will abandon once they are brought into an economic and institutional framework which in reality fosters nationalist feelings and conflicts.

In their report at the III. extended plenum in June 1923, the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) pointed to the great success of the HSS at the elections for the National Assembly. They wrote that the HSS makes excellent use of the revolutionary feeling of the peasant proletariat and that it uses revolutionary, anti-monarchist rhetoric in its agitation<sup>14</sup>. The national sentiments of the working masses are, in their opinion, also exploited by the slovene and croatian bourgeoisie. Unlike them, the KPJ did not take a "correct position" on the national question, which is why it did not formulate appropriate slogans and ultimately did not establish a connection with the agrarian masses and the industrial proletariat<sup>15</sup>. In addition, at the plenum itself, it was stated that among some communist parties there is 'nihilism towards the national question', and the KPJ was also mentioned among such parties. Zinoviev pointed out Sima Marković as the only one from the leadership of the KPJ who correctly understood the national issue, and he himself believed that the national issue is one of the most important levers for the overthrow of the regime in the kingdom of serbs, croats and slovenes<sup>16</sup>. The ECCI concluded that

14 In the period during 1924 and 1925, on the initiative of Zinoviev, the Comintern joined the HSS to the Krestintern (Peasant International, founded by the Comintern).

15 KPJ's delegate 'Vladić' Đuka Cvijić defended the KPJ and said that the issue was not addressed due to illegality, but that the KPJ firmly stands in opposition to serbian hegemony, for the revision of the constitution and the self-determination of all nations and tribes.

16 Zinoviev's final speech at the session: "Radić and others largely succeeded in trapping many workers in their nationalist (separatist) networks due to the yugoslav party's misunderstanding of the national issue... Our parties must know that they are fighting not only for the eight-hour working day,



*Stjepan Radić – Croatian People's Party*

the communist parties must reconsider their attitude towards the 'pure class struggle' and understand their struggle as the struggle of the entire nation for socialism. The KPJ must expand the front of allies among the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie.

After the III. plenum of the ECCI, the KPJ begins to advocate the idea of the right of the people to self-determination until secession and to reject the idea of splitting yugoslavia unless it is in the interest of progress and the class struggle of the proletariat, that is, if it is not opportune. However, this decision was up to the NRPJ (KPJ). From that moment on, the KPJ began working on establishing cooperation with peasant parties and talking about serbs, slovenes and croats as nations. In accordance with that, the position on

etc., but also for winning over the masses under the given circumstances, they must know that the national question in many countries is one of our strongest weapons in the victorious struggle against the existing regime. Undoubtedly, our parties must remain workers' parties, but these workers' parties must also know how to properly respond to the national question in all these countries where this is a burning issue. Therefore, we demand that, in countries where the national question plays a major role, our parties are able to use the national element in the fight against the civil regime." It is interesting that the success of the HSS was attributed exclusively to the exploitation of the national issue, and not, for example, to the fact that the party addressed the peasantry in a predominantly peasant country, while the peasantry was never the focus of the KPJ.

the unification in 1918 was being revised – now they believed that this was the first time that the unification of the three yugoslav nations was carried out. These nations are ethnically related, but still distinct.

At the III. national conference in January 1924, the idea that the preservation of the yugoslav state unity is the direction of historical progress and the interest of the class struggle of the proletariat emerged. Apart from the issue of the political position of the croatian and slovene nations, the KPJ also deals with the issue of the autonomy of montenegro and the violence, colonization and assimilation of macedonia, as well as the movements for the autonomy of bosnia and vojvodina. For the first time, the existence of the macedonian and montenegrin nations is recognized. For the future state they chose the name Federative Workers' and Peasants' Republic of Yugoslavia, and for the current monarchy, they required the abolition of vidovdan constitution with the adoption of a republican-federalist one that was suppose to enable more equality for all nations. The connection between the national and peasant issues is discussed, and it is concluded that the proletarian revolution in the conditions of the social and national structure of the kingdom of serbs, croats and slovenes is impossible without connecting the struggle of the working class with the struggle of the peasant masses. Hence, if there is something opportune to gain support in order to conquer power, it must be part of the class struggle.

At the conference, the *Resolution on the national question* was issued. They concluded that it is in the interest of "historical progress and the liberation struggle of the working people that 1) the hegemony of the serbian bourgeoisie and its militaristic clique, which is one of the main strongholds of the counter-revolution in the balkans, is eliminated by the realization of the nations's full right to self-determination, 2) that the working

class helps the struggle of the peasant masses and oppressed nations against capitalism, 3) that by uniting the working people of various nations in a joint struggle against capitalism, the preconditions for the creation of a federative worker-peasant republic will be established in yugoslavia, the balkans and the danube area.' In addition, the *Resolution on anti-militarist propaganda* was adopted, which advocated the protection of nationalities in the army, i.e. actively helping the aspirations of individual nations for equality with the serbian army and for the right of everyone to serve the army on the territory of their own nation. According to the KPJ, therefore, the existence of national armies is an anti-militaristic goal.

At its 5th Congress (June-July 1924), the Comintern re-actualized the idea of breaking apart the kingdom of serbs, croats and slovenes which it had already proposed back in 1920. They believed that the general slogan of the KPJ on the right of peoples to self-determination must be expressed in the form of separating croatia, slovenia and macedonia from the composition of the kingdom and creating independent republics. The KPJ did not accept that decision. The Comintern found justification for this idea in the speech of Filip Filipović, a delegate of the Balkan Communist Federation, who interpreted the kingdom of serbs, croats and slovenes as an agent of the counter-revolutionary policy of french imperialism and said that the KPJ advocates the idea of self-determination until secession and complete independence of macedonia, thrace, dobrudja, slovenia and of croatia, which was accepted as early as 1923 at the Conference of the Balkan Communist Federation.

In April 1925, the extended plenum of the Executive Committee of the Comintern passed a *Resolution on the Yugoslav question*. The Resolution stated that 'no fear of igniting national passions should prevent the Party from appealing to the

masses with all its might in this most important issue (the national issue). If the Party is afraid of the flaming elements of national movements, it will never become the victorious leader of the great revolutionary people's movement that will emerge in Yugoslavia from a revolutionary combination of workers', peasants' and national liberation movements'.<sup>17</sup>

In 1925, Sima Marković – who already clashed with the Executive Committee of the Comintern and Zinoviev because of their position on the KPJ at the III. plenum of the Comintern in 1921, considering that the Executive Committee was insufficiently informed about the situation in the kingdom – clashed with Stalin and Dimitri Manuilski, again over the national issue. They considered Marković's position on the national question to be social democratic and anti-Leninist, and Stalin accused him of reducing the national question to a constitutional one.<sup>18</sup>

On III. Congress (1926), the KPJ continued to ignore the request of the Comintern for the disintegration of the kingdom of serbs, croats and slovenes. According to the KPJ, the kingdom is a multinational state in which the serbian nation appears as the ruling one. The KPJ started expanding the issue of national exploitation to all social groups within a nation, which is why the stance on civil opposition parties from oppressed nations is being upgraded. Hence, the spectrum of potential allies continues to expand as well.

In 1927, the conflict over the national question broke out again, Sima Marković was dismissed and Đuro Cvijić<sup>19</sup>, a representative of the mod-

erate "left", was appointed in his place. With the aim of bolshevizing the KPJ, the Comintern formed the Parallel Center of the KPJ in Moscow. The ideological basis of the Parallel Center was represented by the early work of Đuro Cvijić, who was skeptical of parliamentarism and reformist unions during the 1920s, and supported the federalist model of yugoslavia in which the constit-

of the nationalist youth as a young man and participated in the assassination of the royal commissioner Slavko Cuvaj, for which he was sentenced to five and then three years in prison. In 1917, he joined the Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Slavonia. From November 1918, he became the editor-in-chief of the socialist newspaper *Sloboda*, in which he collaborated with Krleža. As a delegate of the left of the Social Democratic Party, he participated in the preparation of documents for the founding congress of the SRPJ(k) in 1919. He was arrested on August 9, 1919 for his involvement in the Diamantstein Affair (an alleged attempt at a communist uprising in the kingdom). Faced with the danger of a new imprisonment, he emigrated to austria in September. Together with Kamilo Horvatin, he was the editor of the party magazine *Borba* since its launch in 1922. In 1923, he was elected to the management of the so-called "left" of the party and at the same time for the KPJ delegate at the extended session of the executive committee of the Communist International in Moscow. During 1924, in *Borba*, Cvijić joins the intra-party debate on the national issue, which he also discusses at the 5th extended plenum of the executive committee of the Comintern. Due to factional struggles in the KPJ, the Comintern dismissed the party leadership elected at their Third Conference and appointed Đuro Cvijić as the secretary of the Provisional Leadership in 1925. At the Plenum of the KPJ Central Committee in November 1926, Cvijić was elected political secretary. In April 1928, he participated in the Moscow consultation where the Open Letter of the executive committee of the Comintern to the KPJ was accepted, condemning the fractions in the KPJ. He was one of the first to agree with that letter. In 1928, Cvijić was convicted as the chief editor of *Borba*. 32 charges were brought against him and he was sentenced to two and a half years in prison because of the articles written in *Borba*. He was released in 1931 after the intervention of Miroslav Krleža. After the ustasha "Veletić Uprising", which was supported by the KPJ, in 1933-1934, following the directive of the party, Cvijić published the newspaper *Hrvatski put* (The Croatian Way) which was the organ of the so-called national revolutionary groups formed in the country. Due to his opposition to the leadership, he was expelled from the party in 1937. He was liquidated in Stalin's purges in the so-called Soviet Union in 1938.

17 For comparison, Sima Marković wrote that socialism cannot be developed from flaming national passions, but from democracy.

18 The debate was published in the *Brochure on the position of the Communist International on the KPJ dispute and in Bolshevik*. Marković was executed in Stalin's purges in 1939.

19 Đuro Cvijić (1896-1938), like August Cesares, was part

uent nations have the right to self-determination until secession.



*Đuro Cvijić*

KPJ accepted the idea of the Comintern about the necessity of splitting up the kingdom on the IV. Congress in 1928 in Dresden. Namely, in the meantime, the leader of the HSS, Stjepan Radić, was shot in the National Assembly, and at the VI. Comintern Congress the possibility of a world imperialist war was discussed. Within the KPJ, there was a belief that the murder of Radić would have an impact on the radicalization of the HSS towards the destruction of the kingdom, and they concluded that their new task was to coordinate the croatian peasant movement and the movements of other oppressed nations with the class struggle of the proletariat. However, the integrated revolutionary struggle of the proletariat and the peasantry on the territory of the kingdom would be the future bourgeois-democratic revolution, which would only prepare the ground for the socialist revolution. Therefore, the national question is not part of the class struggle, but must be solved by the bourgeois revolution. In addition to the slovene, macedonian and croatian issues, the montenegrin, albanian and hungarian national issues were discussed at the conference.

In January 1929, the 6 January dictatorship (šestojanuarska diktatura) was introduced. King Aleksandar I. Karađorđević dissolved the national assembly, banned the work of all parties, trade unions, and political gatherings, introduced censorship, proclaimed the ideology of "integral yugoslavia" and changed the name of the country into kingdom of yugoslavia. In response to the introduction of the dictatorship, the KPJ leadership issued a directive to raise an armed uprising.



*King Alexander I of Yugoslavia*

After the Dresden Congress, the KPJ began to support and cooperate with various militant nationalist organizations that fought against the serbian rule, including the Kosovo People's Defense Committee (Komitet narodne odbrane Kosova), the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (Unutrašnja makedonska revolucionarna organizacija, VMRO), and the ustasas. During the dictatorship, in the early 1930s, the

KPJ often collaborated directly with croatian and macedonian nationalists. For example, in September 1932, the ustashas organized the so-called "Lika Uprising" ("lički ustanak", also known as the Velebit Uprising), that is, an attack on a police station in which ten people participated. On this occasion, the KPJ wrote a Proclamation in the party organ *Proleter*:

"... from the fact that the ustasha movement started in Lika and northern Dalmatia – the poorest regions of Yugoslavia – it can be concluded that social and economic factors play a big role in that movement. But the national element is also significant, because the movement is most developed in the Croatian parts of Lika and Northern Dalmatia. The Communist Party welcomes the ustasha movement of the Lika and Dalmatian peasants and is completely on their side. It is the duty of all communist organizations and every communist to support, organize and lead this movement. ..."

It is important to emphasize here that the ustasha "movement" was at that time made up of only several hundred people. It was a terrorist type of organization that was supported and financed by Mussolini's fascist Italy, which also served as the base of that organization. In addition, the Lika Uprising was not initiated by the local population, but by the ustashas without any communication with the local people. This is evidenced by the fact that the ustashas smuggled the weapons needed for the "uprising" from Italy via Zadar (then under Italian control). When the Yugoslav authorities carried out the repression against the local population, introduced a curfew and arrested many innocent peasants, they discovered that the local peasantry was full of weapons because many were involved in arms smuggling due to poverty. If the ustashas were in any way connected with the local population, the smuggling of weapons from Italy would not have

been necessary. The question is how much the KPJ could have been misinformed about the circumstances of the Lika Uprising and the nature of the ustasha "movement", and how much it is an authoritarian misunderstanding of what social movements are.

Three months later, in the *Proleter* issue of February-March 1933, the earlier described positions of the Central Committee of the KPJ in relation to the ustasha movement were confirmed, and the membership of the KPJ was called upon to help the "national revolutionary movement". The police terror that followed the attempted uprising further brought the KPJ and ustashas, especially those in prisons, closer together. In February 1933, *Proleter* published a large article entitled "For the help and liberation of political and military convicts" in which the release of all political prisoners from "Greater Serbian prisons", including numerous ustashas, was advocated. At the beginning of 1934, the "Community of political convicts: Croatian national revolutionaries, Macedonian national revolutionaries and communists" was formed in the Lepoglava prison with the aim of a joint fight against the dictatorship. The KPJ was aware of the fascist nature of the ustasha "movement" from the beginning and officially condemned the "fascist elements", their ideology and methods. It is difficult to say how it is possible to support an organization while condemning its ideology and methods. The Leninist ideology of supporting so-called national liberation movements enabled the KPJ to support a fascist organization, thinking that they were thereby supporting the poor peasants of Lika and Dalmatia who were fighting against police violence, poverty and "national" oppression.

During the IV. KPJ national conference in 1934, it was decided that in order to strengthen the interest of the Croatian and Slovene masses in the party and to fight against bourgeois nation-

alism within the KPJ, KP Croatia and KP Slovenia have to be established, and in the near future KP Macedonia, for the purpose of mobilizing macedonians amid the circumstances that two neighboring states did not recognize the existence of the macedonian people, politically nor historically.<sup>20</sup> The idea of a Balkan Federation of worker-peasant republics was no longer insisted upon. The goal of breaking up yugoslavia was much less pronounced, and was completely abandoned after the conference. The KPJ strived to gain as much independence as possible from the Comintern. The dominant line of the party became the fight for national and social equality, the transformation of yugoslavia into a democratic state of equal nations and nationalities, and the creation of a broad anti-fascist front of democratic forces.

Soon after, propaganda texts no longer address the working class, but the peoples. One text from 1937, for example, is called "Workers! Working people! Slovenes!", and the *Proclamation of the Communist Party of Croatia* from the same year begins with "Croatian people!". In both texts, they address many social strata – peasants, small traders and craftsmen, honest intelligentsia, citizens. In these and other texts, they explain how workers' struggles and struggles for national liberation are connected, how the slovene and croatian industry and workers should be protected from outside capitalists and from Belgrade. Their interests should be protected from the Belgrade bank and centralization through taxes, financial resources and favorable loans.

In the same year 1937, Stjepan Cvijić, Đuro Cvijić's brother, published a pamphlet about the

People's Front in Chicago under the title *The Working Class and the Croatian National Movement*. It was soon banned in Yugoslavia, but circulated illegally. Cvijić's stance expressed in the brochure was the stance of most leading members of the party at the time. He fully supported the line of the People's Front and called for the establishment of a new constitutional assembly in yugoslavia that would bring a solution which would satisfy the majority of serbs, slovenes and croats. In addition, he called for the national self-determination of montenegrins and macedonians. For him, socialism is the ultimate goal of the struggle for a democratic yugoslavia, and it will, among other things, put an end to nationalist tensions in the country. He emphasized that all "nations" should have their own constitutional assemblies within which they could freely decide on joining yugoslavia. The peoples of bosnia and herzegovina, kosovo and vojvodina should have assemblies as well. This is an idea close to Josip Broz Tito's model, which included a new constitutional assembly during the war (AVNOJ) as well as provincial assemblies, and which became the basis for republics and provinces in socialist yugoslavia.

During the period of the People's Front (1935-1939), the politics of the KPJ acquired some new elements due to the mobilization against fascism. Although the "Greater Serbian hegemony" remained the main enemy, the KPJ attacked the imperialist powers' attempts to exploit peripheral nationalisms. In this period, primarily under the influence of Tito, elements of yugoslav patriotism temporarily appeared in the rhetoric of the KPJ.

Debates about the national question intensified in March 1938 after the nazi annexation of austria and the arrival of german troops at the border of yugoslavia. With the goal of defending the state, the KPJ leadership issued a proc-

20 KP Croatia and KP Slovenia were founded in 1937, KP Macedonia and KP Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1943, KP Serbia in 1945. KP Kosovo and KP Vojvodina were founded in 1944 as provincial committees of the KPJ, that will be part of the KP Serbia from 1945. Special party organizations, ie the Union of Communists (SK) of Kosovo and the SK Vojvodina, were founded only in 1968.



lamation calling for cooperation not only with the United Opposition<sup>21</sup> but also with Yugoslav monarchist centralists and nationalists who opposed the government. The proclamation provoked sharp criticism from KP Croatia (KPH), whose leadership claimed that such cooperation was out of the question for them. Some Croatian communists set the solution of the Croatian national question as a precondition for their support for a united Yugoslavia. Tito harshly criticized such a position as sectarian. The Croatian national issue escalated again in December of the same year during the elections. Since Croatia was one of the Communist strongholds in the 1920 elections, the KPJ hoped to repeat that success. However, disagreements between the leadership of KPJ and KPH made this impossible. The KPH saw the mass support for the HSS as a sign that, according to public opinion, only that party was the true representative of Croatian national interests, so they believed that a confrontation with the HSS would further reduce the support of the KPJ among the "Croats". The KPH constantly emphasized that Croatia is a special case in Yugoslavia and that the only right thing for the Popular Front is to align with the party that represents the interests of the "Croats" and that considers them oppressed in Yugoslavia. While the KPH carried out tactics of infiltration into the HSS and other organizations of the United Opposition, Tito and the Provisional Management<sup>22</sup> accused it of

21 The United Opposition, or the National Opposition List of the Bloc of People's Accord, was a political list that opposed the ruling Yugoslav National Party in the 1935 elections for deputies of the kingdom of Yugoslavia. The list consisted of the following parties: the Peasant-Democratic Coalition, the Yugoslav Muslim Organization, one wing of the Democratic Party (Ljubomir Davidović) and one part of the Agrarian Party. The holder of the list was Vlatko Maček. The United Opposition advocated a federalist organization of the kingdom of Yugoslavia.

22 In 1936, Tito was appointed organizational secretary of the Central Committee of the KPJ and the deputy of Milan Gorkić, who became the general secretary. In May 1937, Tito

condescending to Croatian nationalists, despite the fact that the KPJ used the same tactics on other occasions. Conflicts over the national



Milan Gorkić

formed the Provisional Management in the country. Milan Gorkić, real name Josip Čižinski (1904-1937), was the general secretary of the KPJ from 1936 to 1937. At the age of 17, he became the secretary of the SKOJ District Committee for Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the age of 18, he was the deputy editor-in-chief of the trade union newspaper *Radničko Jedinstvo*. In 1923, he secretly left the country and participated in the Second KPJ party conference in Vienna. From Vienna, he was sent to Moscow for education. He worked in the apparatus of the Comintern performing various duties. Between 1928 and 1935 Gorkić was the Organizational secretary of the Communist Youth International. He wrote numerous brochures and articles in various magazines. As an instructor of the Communist International, he traveled to various European countries. In September 1936, the Executive Committee of the Comintern dismissed all members of the KPJ Central Committee except Gorkić. On September 9, 1936, he was appointed general secretary of the KPJ, while Josip Broz became the organizational secretary. In 1937, he was invited to Moscow, where he was arrested in July or August. He was allegedly tried as a Gestapo spy, after which he was liquidated.

question caused by the KPH<sup>23</sup> case continued in the party even after 1940.

The nationalist and opportunistic politics of the KPJ became particularly evident during the war. The proclamation of the Central Committee of the KPJ from July 12, 1941 begins with "People of Yugoslavia!" and in separate paragraphs it addresses the "Croatian people" and the "Serbs". It calls for an uprising against the fascists, the german occupiers and the ustashas, and emphasizes that it is necessary to preserve "national heritage" and "glorious traditions". "Sons of the Croatian nation", "the bright Croatian name"

23 For the sake of context, it is necessary to refer briefly to the policy of the kingdom in this period. The fear that internal divisions over the croatian issue, linked to the influence of external forces (primarily fascist italy), could become a threat to the survival and security of the yugoslav state, led by Prince Pavle I, (the regent of the kingdom after the assassination of Alexander, from 1934 to 1941) and the political elite to modify the constitutive concept of national unity in favor of a compromise with the croatian concept of the nation. The previous concept of national unity, according to which the yugoslav state represents one, yugoslav nation, was abandoned by August of 1939 with an agreement between the crown and croatian politicians. For the sake of context, it is necessary to refer briefly to the policy of the kingdom in this period. The fear that internal divisions over the croatian issue, linked to the influence of external forces (primarily fascist italy), could become a threat to the survival and security of the yugoslav state, led by Prince Pavle I, (the regent of the kingdom after the assassination of Alexander, from 1934 to 1941) and the political elite to modify the constitutive concept of national unity in favor of a compromise with the croatian concept of the nation. The previous concept of national unity, according to which the yugoslav state represents one, yugoslav nation, was abandoned by August of 1939 with an agreement between the crown and croatian politicians led by Vladko Maček. With this agreement, the autonomous banovina of croatia was formed within the kingdom of yugoslavia. According to historians, that agreement reduced tensions between "croats" and other segments of the south slavic peoples, it put the croatian question ad acta, and briefly eliminated two radical options for the future of yugoslavia: the doctrine of radical yugoslav integralism and the doctrine of croatian separatism. It also reduced the presence of radical anti-yugoslav, anti-serb and anti-croatian rhetoric in the public. On the other hand, the Agreement promoted a concept that could no longer be compatible with the original idea of the identity of the yugoslav state and nation.

and "illustrious ancestors" are also mentioned. During the entire war period, the KPJ emphasized the principle of national emancipation far more than the idea of social justice and socialist revolution. Apart from political opportunism, it was also an expression of loyalty to the main allies, the united kingdom and the so called soviet union, who recommended not to open political issues (and especially not in the form of a civil war) in the middle of the war for the liberation of the country from the occupiers.

In addition to the nationalist politics and rhetoric, opportunism was also reflected in political alliances with bourgeois parties. The Popular Front in Yugoslavia included reformist socialist parties as well as bourgeois parties that accepted the leadership of the KPJ. For Josip Broz Tito, the Popular Front essentially meant infiltrating legal parties and creating cells within them that corresponded to the KPJ



First session of the AVNOJ, Bihać 1942

Central Committee. With this tactic, the KPJ gained a base within all major parties and increased its membership from 1,500 in 1937 to 8,000 in 1942.

It took a long time for the top of the partisan movement to openly admit its communist political orientation. Instead, they emphasized the patriotic character of their struggle, talking about brotherhood and unity, an ideal that could easily be identified with liberal-democratic values. Even when it became clearer at the end of 1943 that the new Yugoslavia would be politically different from the old one, socialism was still not in the program of the incoming government, the fight against capitalism was not mentioned at all, and the monarchy was not banned. Partisan rhetoric skillfully united specific nationalist patriotic elements with Yugoslav elements that were attractive to many. Also, it promised radical changes, but without specifying what kind of changes they were. The partisan movement and the idea of a new Yugoslavia captured many different currents and populations, offering something to everyone, but nothing specific to anyone.

In the historiography and theoretical texts from the period of socialist Yugoslavia, it was said that “the first historical merit of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia is precisely that it recognized the connection between class and nation as the only possibility of fighting for socialism in Yugoslavia and that it knew how to successfully organize a revolutionary struggle on the platform of democratic patriotism which immanently contained the daily permeation of class and nation, national freedom and class emancipation, national affirmation and social progress”<sup>24</sup>. The historical events were evaluated from a perspective that was already familiar with which currents within the KPJ will dominate and what the results of the war would be. Only victories – either as the dominance of a current within the party or as victory in the war and

the conquest of power – dictated which position would be marked as correct and “left” and which would be determined as delusions and “right”. This was not only a matter of the ideologization of the literature from the socialist period, because even in very recent literature from the post-socialist period there is no questioning of categories such as, for instance, the party “left” and “right”. In the interwar period, many of the communists from the KPJ had original and elaborate ideas about the national question, as well as their hearts in the right place. Nevertheless, the politics of the party itself regarding many issues, including the national one, was not based on the analysis of capitalist social relations and the power that the working class had to potentially end those relations, but exclusively on the analysis of political power. Also, it was not guided by the goal of spreading the communist idea among the widest possible population, because otherwise these ideas would not have been intentionally hidden. The goal was exclusively to strengthen the party’s power, regardless of the method. When Marxists/Bolsheviks talk about the difference between reform and revolution, they are only talking about different methods of gaining power. The goal itself, the conquest of power, is not questioned. If this is the goal, it is clear that tactics will be constantly changed depending on the circumstances. In the interwar period, the KPJ tried almost all stances on the national issue that were possible in the Yugoslav context at that time. To summarize only some moments in rough outlines: from the initial acceptance of Yugoslav national unitarism (1919-1921) and advocacy for Yugoslavia as a Soviet republic that would be part of the federation of Balkan-Danube countries (1919-1934), through the recognition that “Serbs”, “Slovenes” and “Croats” represent three different nations (beginning of the twenties), advocacy for the Federative Workers’ and Peasants’ Republic of Yugoslavia (1924), open support for nationalist movements (1926-1935), a temporary return to Yugoslav patriotism during the period of the Popular

24 Quoted from: Šuvar, Dujić i Mimica: *Klasno i nacionalno u suvremenom socijalizmu* [The Class and the National in Contemporary Socialism], Zagreb: Naše teme, 1970.

Front, but with a parallel tightening of the croatian question and infiltration into bourgeois parties' (1935 – 1939), to the intensification of nationalist rhetoric during the war. Everything that could at some point contribute to strengthening the power of the KPJ became the 'correct Marxist position', and anything contrary to that a 'delusion'.

### Nationalism and primitive accumulation

The period of so-called revolutionary statism 1945–1963.

*A nation is a specific national community created on the basis of the social division of labor in the epoch of capitalism, i.e. at the developmental level of productive forces when the quantity of surplus social labor began to be transformed into a new quality of social integration at a higher level, that is, on a compact national territory, within the framework of a common language and close ethnic and cultural affinity in general.*

Edvard Kardelj, Development of the Slovene National Question, 1939.

During the war, the main headquarters, regional councils and joint bodies at the level of the federation were formed within the framework of the five "nations" (montenegro, macedonia, serbia, croatia and slovenia) and bosnia and herzegovina<sup>25</sup> – the Supreme Headquarters, the Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugosla-

25 Before the second world war, bosnia and herzegovina was considered the joint territory of two nations – serbs and croats, as well as muslims, who before the second world war were considered by the KPJ to be a separate ethnic group without the characteristics of a nation. In May 1968, the Central Committee of BiH expressed the view that muslims had developed into a nation, which was confirmed by the new yugoslav constitution in 1971. It should be emphasized that some republics had several constituent nations, for example, croatia was a national state of croats and serbs, while bosnia and herzegovina was a nation of serbs, croats and muslims.



Second session of the AVNOJ, Jajce, 1943

via (AVNOJ) and others. At the second session of the AVNOJ, in 1943, a constitutional decision was made to build yugoslavia on a federal principle "which will ensure full equality to Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and Montenegrins, that is, the peoples of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina". After that session, the national anti-fascist councils of all the nations of yugoslavia constituted themselves as supreme authorities in the federative units and confirmed the decisions of AVNOJ, which laid the constitutional and legal foundations of "Yugoslavia as an equal community of Yugoslav nations and nationalities".

The first constitution of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ)<sup>26</sup>, adopted in 1946, confirmed the decisions of the second session of the AVNOJ. Each nation constituted itself as a distinct political entity expressed in a people's republic, with the exception of bosnia and herzegovina (see footnote 21). Although there are not many discussions about the national question in this period, the identities of the political and state institutions of yugoslavia as conceived by the political elite were ethnically and nationally based, because yugoslavia was a country of south slavic peoples and nations, and the nations constituted themselves into republics. Therefore, although it

26 It was renamed to Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with the adoption of the 1963 constitution.



*Coats of arms and flags of FNRJ*

was accompanied by a lesser tendency of cultural and linguistic homogenization than in some other national projects as ethnically based, yugoslavianism was also a national project with the aim of building a certain national identity. In the post-war period, while the country was still in danger, yugoslavism could still serve as a basis for potential resistance. And when it is no longer necessary, there is a system of nationally based republics ready to take on the task of ensuring the continuity of the reproduction of the state and capital.

In order to better illustrate the yugoslav national policy, it is useful to briefly compare it with that of the so-called soviet union. Let's start with similarities. In both countries, the system of ethno-territorial federalism was applied, that is, "ethnic" groups were territorialized and institutionalized through a complex hierarchy of units with regard to the level of statehood and sovereignty: soviet (USSR) and socialist republics (yugoslavia), autonomous republics (USSR) and autonomous provinces (yugoslavia), autonomous districts and regions (USSR, yugoslavia) and groups without

their own territory (USSR and yugoslavia). In both cases, republics were basic party and administrative units, as well as territorially defined national states of titular nations, or majority ethnic groups. The aim of the national policies was to prevent the supremacy of the dominant nation (russians and serbs), while satisfying the "right" of the dominant ethnic group in a certain territory, that is, the "constituent people" to self-determination. In both the USSR and yugoslavia, patriotism was an acceptable expression of loyalty to the new system, and both systems ultimately strengthened the bond of ethnicity, state and territory thus creating the basis for the emergence of new nations.

Unlike the USSR, where the soviet republics were the bearers of the right to self-determination, the yugoslav constitution did not specify whether this right belonged to the republics or to "nations/peoples". The issue of personal national identification in the soviet union was a characteristic attributed at birth, while in yugoslavia it was a matter of personal choice expressed at the population census, which enabled the change of national identification,



Yugoslavia, 1946–1990

as well as the selection of the identity “yugoslav”<sup>27</sup>. While in the USSR there was an overlap of soviet and russian institutions, because the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR) had the status of a leftover territory after other national and autonomous republics took their piece of common territory, in yugoslavia federalism was also applied to serbia because of the KPJ’s determination to prevent serbia from becoming a dominant nation modeled after the russians in the USSR. For the same reason, two autonomous provinces were created – kosovo and metohija (kosmet), and vojvodina<sup>28</sup>.

27 Contrary to the tendency of the official policy, which in this period promoted identifying as “yugoslav” as an expression of loyalty to socialist yugoslavia, which will cease to be official policy from 1960, this identification will grow precisely in the next period, reaching its peak in the 80s.

28 The RSFSR also had autonomous republics within it, but they did not have the same symbolic weight as kosmet and vojvodina for serbia.

Finally, one republic was created in yugoslavia without a clear titular nation – bosnia and hercegovina, for which there is no analogous example in the USSR. This period, which ended with the adoption of the new constitution in 1963, is called the period of “revolutionary statism” and was marked by the formation of a centralist state system, state ownership of the means of production, and centralized planning of production and distribution, and therefore the state did still not function as a federation. According to the official historiographical interpretations of this period from the 1970s, there were two reasons for such an arrangement. The first was to defend the newly established socialist system against counter-revolutionary attacks. Another reason was the lack of other models of building socialism, apart from the soviet one, in the challenging context of complex international relations. A solid state centralist system was seen

as the only possibility for the KPJ to save the state at that moment. Accordingly, the idea of the death of the state, which was set at the Third Congress of the People's Front of Yugoslavia in 1949 as one of the central concepts of Yugoslav socialism, was mentioned only at internal party gatherings and had no influence on political decisions.

Nationalization in Yugoslavia was carried out in several stages after 1946 and, as in other socialist countries, represented the material basis of the power of professional managers. In order for this stratum to fulfill its political destiny, which had already been fulfilled by the bourgeoisie in the countries of developed capitalism, it had to make industrialization and economic progress its main goal. Since the territory of Yugoslavia was industrially underdeveloped, and the majority of the population was peasantry, the historical role of the new nation-states was to ensure and strengthen the legal, institutional and ideological framework for the further development of the capitalist commodity-production system. The peasantry had to be dispossessed and proletarianized in order to be included in the new economic system. And in order for the population to be legitimately used as a resource in accordance with the new ideology, it had to be considered a constituent people or nation. For members of a nation freed from an external occupier, work was no longer a burden and exploitation, but a national obligation that was to be fulfilled with joy. Already in 1937, in the proclamation of the Communist Party of Croatia<sup>29</sup>, we can see how the KP viewed the workforce as a resource: "To all the slanderers who slander the Communist Party for neglecting their country and their people, we communists cry out: We, communists, love our homeland and our people!", "...it is necessary that the Croatian workers, organized in these organizations, lead a joint fight against com-

29 See the Declaration of the Communist Party of Croatia, in: *The National Question in the Works of the Classics of Marxism and in the Documents and Practices of the KPJ/SKJ*, Zagreb: Udžbenici i priručnici politologija 5, 1978.

mon enemies – Croatian and foreign capitalists – who most heartlessly exploit and destroy the precious national capital – the Croatian workforce." Nationalism, as part of the KP discourse, had not only the role of mobilizing the people against the foreign occupier during the war, but also the role of actively encouraging people to fight for the state after the war. The task of national entities and institutions was not the cultivation of language, culture and customs, but the development of the economy, the transformation of the peasantry into workers, the army, and petty-bourgeois enterprises into large capitalist enterprises.

In the post-war period, the transformation of the peasantry into a working class had not yet been fully completed, and there was a need for the accumulation of primary capital in order to give the commodity production system new momentum. As in the case of other countries without external colonies, primary accumulation could be carried out through the expropriation of the peasantry, preferably those peasants who did not yet have the status of a nation. The greatest pressure on the peasantry was exerted in the period from 1946 to 1953, and included the forced appropriation of agricultural products and a collectivization modeled after the one carried out in the so-called Soviet Union. The amount of certain agricultural products that the peasants had to sell to the state was often higher than the average amount of products produced in that year, which led to several peasant revolts. One of such rebellions was the armed uprising of peasants from Cazinska Krajina in Bosnia and Kordun in Croatia, which broke out on May 6, 1950. The vast majority of the rebels from the Bosnian part were Bosniaks. Many people had not yet rebuilt their houses after the war, they could not feed their families, and fulfilling the already unrealistic obligations to the state was made even more difficult that year by a great drought. Therefore, the state brutally oppressed them with police violence, confiscation of property and mobilization for forced labor in forests, construction sites and factories. During the

uprising, the peasantry set fire to several local government archives, disarmed policemen, tore down telegraph poles, confiscated a number of cooperative warehouses, and captured several political officials. The state quickly suppressed the uprising by sending several hundred soldiers against the rebelling peasantry. More than seven hundred people were arrested, fifteen of them were killed during the capture, eighteen of them were sentenced to death, 275 people were sentenced to long prison sentences, including life sentences, several convicts died as a result of overworking in a mine in Zenica, and some committed suicide. Between 70 and 100 families of bosnian insurgents were forcibly moved to Srbac in cattle wagons without water or food. In Srbac, the older exiles were engaged in begging, and the children looked after the cattle of the wealthier locals.

In 1939, in his book *The Development of the Slovenian National Question*, Edvard Kardelj, who was the vice-president of the federal government after 1945, and then the minister of foreign affairs, defined the nation in the following way: "A nation is a specific national community created on the basis of the social division of labor of the era of capitalism, i.e. at a such development level of productive forces when the quantity of surplus social labor begins to be transformed into a new quality of social integration at a higher level, that is, on a compact national territory, within the framework of a common language and close ethnic and cultural kinship in general."<sup>30</sup> It should be said, however, that many elements of the division of labor in yugoslavia were made possible only thanks to the nation-state, its legal framework and the army. Socialist yugoslavia was significantly more successful in this task than the previous states. With its national-liberation

rhetoric during the war, its nationally and ethnically based republican system and institutions, its army and later the system of workers' self-management, the KP achieved an unprecedented level and, as Kardelj would say, "quality of social integration".

The capitalist system of social regulation is only effective if every segment of society is subordinate to it and dependent on it. After the nation-states were established, the primary accumulation after the war in yugoslavia took place in several parallel processes: 1) the expropriation of the peasantry; 2) the domestication and concentration of the workforce through shock work, the introduction of an increasing number of workers into factory work and urbanization, 3) the establishment of a state ownership monopoly. In all these processes, ethnically based yugoslav nationalism played an important role in identifying the population with the new regime of labor and state power. The temporary central state monopoly as one of the ways of ensuring the continuity of the state and capitalist production would be replaced by completely different methods in the next phase.

**Nationalism and the domination of the state over society**  
the period of so-called socialist self-management from 1963 onwards

*In socialist self-governing relations, the interests of the working class, which has fought for the position of the ruling class in the nation, become the interests of the nation, and the interests of the nation become the interests of the class.*

Tito, report  
X. SKJ Congress

At the VIII. congress of the League of Communists in 1964<sup>31</sup>, the national question was put

30 In the second amended edition from 1957, Kardelj criticizes Stalin and, unlike him, claims that the national question is not only a question of the peasantry but of the whole society – the urban petty and middle bourgeoisie of the subjugated nation and the intelligentsia, both of which play a role in national liberation movements.

31 In 1952, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia changed its name to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.



on the agenda due to the struggle between the republics over the distribution of the centralized national income, the crisis of production and other problems allegedly created by the centralist state system. Suddenly, the legacy of revolutionary statism had to be liquidated, so in the same year economic reforms were started, which would enable “freer socio-economic relations” and the work of “objective economic laws”. At the same congress, for the first time, next to Tito’s name on the ballot stood croat, not yugoslav.

A year earlier, the new constitution confirmed workers’ self-management as the basis of social organization and, in principle, created the legal prerequisites for its further development. The introduction of self-management began at the beginning of the 1950s, and it was reformed twice – in the 1960s and 1970s – in the direction of an increasingly free market.

The key person in the creation of the new economic policy was Boris Kidrič, the long-time leader of the Communist Party of Slovenia. Kidrič believed that the yugoslav alternative to the soviet “socialist primary accumulation” was found in “socialist commodity production” which was necessary in the transitional period from capitalism to communism. The necessity of such a model, for him, stemmed from the failure of the USSR – statist socialism inevitably leads to the strengthening of bureaucracy, the stifling of socialist democracy and, finally, to the transformation of state socialism into state capitalism. In order to prevent the further development of capitalism, according to Kidrič, it is necessary to organize society according to the law of value, (even though this principle represents the very essence of the capitalist mode of production and social regulation). Already at the plenum of the KPJ central committee in January 1949, Kidrič pointed out that centralized control over distribution threatens the free functioning of economic laws, which are the main impetus for production. At the sixth

congress of the KPJ in 1952, he insisted on this approach: “...the new economic system must be based on objective economic laws and it must avoid administrative suppression of these laws to the greatest extent possible”. In order to ensure the growth, quality and diversity of material goods and the normalization of living conditions, he considered that it was necessary to increase the productivity of work, that is, to introduce labor-intensive innovations in production.



*Boris Kidrič*

SKJ found itself faced with a problem: how to force the workers to work more, while at the same time remaining within the socialist ideological framework. Neglected during the previous period, the idea of the withering away of the state had now been elevated to the level of a ruling doctrine. In addition to serving the party to prove the advantages of socialist democracy as opposed to the non-socialist character of the USSR, it enabled the ideological legitimization of institutional changes in the direction of strengthening the role of the market, and was institutionalized primarily through the concept of workers’ self-management. Self-management, introduced from above and not as a result of workers’ struggle, as a concept enabled a number of things. As the income of a working collective now depended on their success in the market, everyone was individually motivated by their own survival to work as hard as possible. In this way, productivity was increased and socioeconomic conditions for fur-

ther industrialization were created. At the same time, the ideological concepts of the withering away of the state and workers' self-management ultimately ensured the survival of the current government, and in a broader sense, as we will see, the survival of the state. The workforce was forced to work more, the legitimacy of the state was ensured so it could continue to calmly take care of preserving the continuity of "objective economic laws", i.e. of capital.

According to László Sekelj, self-management was from the beginning conceived exclusively as a model of administrative decentralization, and, according to him, the only real result of self-management was the shift of the center of power from the federation to the republics. Compared to the period of "revolutionary statism", the state continued to exercise its redistributive function, only through somewhat different institutional methods.

The idea of brotherhood and unity, which was dominant in the previous period, was gradually abandoned to be replaced in the early sixties by the concept of socialist yugoslavia, then in the early seventies by the concept of the unity of the yugoslav peoples and nationalities. From the Eighth to the Tenth Congress, in parallel with the emphasis on the importance of the market independence of labor collectives, changes were consistently made in the direction of strengthening and expanding the powers of the republics and provinces, which was justified by the need for the affirmation of nations in self-governance.

The first signs of the abandoning of yugoslavism appeared already at the aforementioned VIII. Congress of the League of Communists, when the republicanization of the party took place, and Tito put "croat" next to his signature for the first time. At the same congress, the top party leaders of the republics (at the 9th congress the provinces as well) get the right to independently cre-

ate their own policy. According to the Congress Resolution, as well as according to Kardelj's and Tito's report, the main elements of the reform of the economic system were: the denationalization of funds and decision-making at all levels of socio-political communities, the abolition of all central funds intended for economic investments; the independence of labor collectives in deciding on the entire expanded reproduction; labor organizations and their interests as carriers of integration processes; free operating of the economic laws of commodity production, etc. According to Tito's report, "the Yugoslav socialist integration is a new type of social community, in which all nationalities find common interests", "international economic relations must be set up in such a way as to ensure the fuller development of the entire social community and of all its national parts". In his report, Kardelj developed the thesis about national economic independence and national states of a socialist character: "The starting point of inter-national economic relations is certainly the economic independence of each nation that provides independence of labor and of the disposal of the product of labor, that is, of building the material base of its own culture and civilization." While he believed that the state was dying historically and that it would be replaced by an association of free producers,



VIII. Congress of the League of Communists, Belgrade, 1964

Kardelj at the same time insisted that nations naturally tend towards their states, so that yugoslavia had historical meaning only if it enabled all yugoslav "completed" nations to achieve this goal. Other speakers at the congress also emphasized the greater importance of republics. For example, Veljko Vlahović, one of the three secretaries in the Executive Committee, said that "our development, the expression of which is the new Constitution, affirms the nation in self-management", and he also used the concept of socialist commodity production in his presentation.

After the Brioni Plenum, i.e. the Fourth Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (CK SKJ) in 1966, the right to appoint senior and middle managers passed from the organizational secretary of the CK SKJ to the republican personnel commissions, which further strengthened the power of the republics.

In 1968, the most massive and most articulated student revolts took place in yugoslavia up to that time, started because of the poor living conditions of the students, they soon turned into demonstrations against the class society and the ruling bureaucratic class, which was then declared the "red bourgeoisie". The manner in which the SKJ reacted to the student riots confirmed the nature of their nationalist policies and further cemented the path that the SKJ would take. Nationalism becomes a means of political manipulation and redirection of conflicts that occurred on other lines, for example on class lines. While the demonstrations took place in Zagreb, Belgrade, Pristina and other cities, only in Pristina was the army deployed against the demonstrators. On the other hand, in Zagreb, the headquarters for suppressing the student movement was made up of those who would soon become the ideologues of croatian nationalism, and authorized members of the SKJ proclaimed at student assemblies that "the Chetniks have

taken over power in Belgrade". Nationalism was increasingly becoming the new legitimizing basis of SKJ.

At the Ninth Congress of the SKJ, in 1969, national independence was openly emphasized as a constitutive principle of yugoslav socialism. In addition to the term national independence, the term national sovereignty was also used. These were the party's general stances on national independence presented at the congress: that "real freedom, sovereignty and equality of nations are based on the social and economic position of the working man. Conversely, the social position of the working man cannot acquire a socialist content without the realization of freedom, the sovereignty of nations"; "only as the leading force of its nation, i.e. its republic, the working class can assert itself as the leading force of the socialist social movement in the entire society", and "in today's material and social circumstances, it is not possible to completely overcome the contradictions of national interests in economic relations". Thus, the official policy of the SKJ implied a further heterogenization of the workforce on a national basis, along with a homogenization within the borders of the republics. According to SKJ, the contradictions of national interests are basic social contradictions, and the working class of one republic has more in common with the power centers of the republic to which it belongs than with the working class of other republics. At the same congress, the President of the SKJ labeled the unrest in Kosovo as a nationalist and irredentist diversion.

At the same time as emphasizing the importance of the nation and the strengthening of national economies, during the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Congresses, the SKJ nominally criticizes nationalism, unitarism and particularism. The problem of unitarian nationalism is that it ignores national issue in the name of an "abstract internationalism", and the problem of particularistic nationalism is



that it ignores the national issues of other nations in the name of one nation. We see that criticisms of both types of nationalism do not come from criticism of nationalism as such, but are themselves rooted in nationalist ideas. In essence, nationalism is the neglect of nationalism<sup>32</sup>. More than ever, it was emphasized that communists must first of all attack the nationalism of their own people, and only then those of others. In the discourse, particularist nationalism is mainly associated with slovenia, macedonia and especially croatia, for which the more expressive formulation “separatist nationalism” is used. There were no more precise explanations for this kind of nationalism, except for the idea that it is connected with liberalism and technocracy and that it represents the political platform of various opponents of socialism.

Between the Ninth and Tenth (1974) congresses, the principle of national, republican and provincial sovereignty was continuously normatively and in-

stitutionally strengthened with a parallel narrowing of the federation’s jurisdiction. In addition, the SKJ was continuously consolidating its power over society by granting a series of economic privileges to key layers of society at the republican, provincial and local levels. The most important changes in that area were brought about by the constitutional amendments adopted in 1972, which represented the first phase of constitutional reforms incorporated in the new constitution from 1974. In principle, the amendments opened up the space for each republic to define its political organization with their own constitutions. Furthermore, the amendments became the political basis of the increasingly aggressive nationalism of the SKH in SR Croatia. Writing about the emergence of the so-called “croatian spring”, that is, the so-called “mass movement” (MASPOK, 1967-1971), historians from the yugoslav period will often say that the “nationalists” (I use nationalists in quotation marks to refer to the nationalists outside the SKJ, because the term was used in a vague way in the literature from the period, probably to conceal the fact that the leadership and SKJ membership was, in fact, also nationalist) and ustasha emigration used tactics of relying on national communists, taking over the discourse

32 An example of such an attitude is given by Šušar, Dujčić and Mimica in “The relation between the class and the national in contemporary socialism”; in: Class and nationalism in contemporary socialism, Zagreb 1970: “Nationalism is the theory and practice of subordinating class interest to national interest, their separation and mutual cancellation.”

of the League of Communists to which they then gave their own emphasis and direction in order to spread misconceptions and turn the discourse to their own advantage. However, the same can be said for SKJ, which had been using nationalist discourse for some time in order to strengthen its power over society and divert attention from other social divisions. In addition, it is indicative that it was so easy for the ustasha emigration and “nationalists” to rely on the SKJ discourse. Finally, the leaders of MASPOK were members of SKH, Savka Dabčević-Kučar and Miko Tripalo, and not some random “nationalists”.

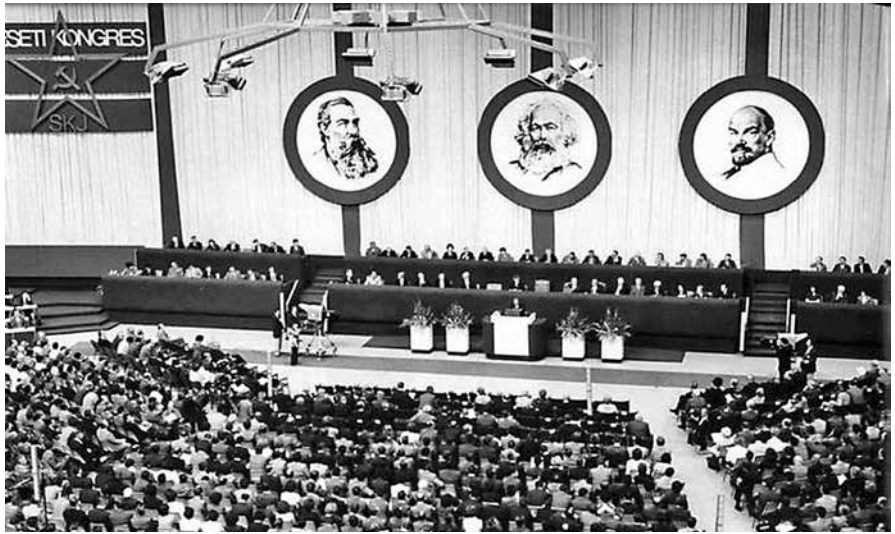


*Miko Tripalo, Drniš, 1971*

In 1970 and 1971, in parallel with the condemnations of nationalism expressed by the Central Committee at the 10th session and the Executive Committee on several occasions, some members of the SKH – while criticizing insufficiently nationalist members of the SKH – openly said that attacks on nationalists are attacks on the Central Committee of the SKH itself. The issue of Croatian national interests becomes mainstream, and those who advocated them in the party were considered “progressive”. A meeting of the SKH Executive Committee with Tito<sup>33</sup> on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1971, was supposed to have the function of pac-

ifying the more nationalist part of SKH. However, they continued with alliances with nationalists outside the SKH and, in addition, they had the ambition that the SKH, that is, its “progressive nucleus” should be at the head of MASPOK. It was not about a few marginal members of SKH, but about people from the very top. MASPOK’s demands ranged from reducing the share of profits generated in SR croatia that is sent to the center of the federation, to opposing the greater representation of people attributed serbian nationality in politics, the army and the secret services, to promoting the idea that the croatian variant of the language is separate in relation to the serbo-croatian language. SKH functionaries and “nationalists” spoke the same language: both emphasized the necessity of a national state and the thesis that croatia had been robbed. Seeing the direction in which things were headed, many “moderate” SKH members began to accept nationalist arguments out of opportunism. At student protests expressing support for SKH’s nationalist policies, slogans such as “croatian banks must keep their funds in their vaults” and “Long live brotherhood”, but without unity, could be heard. Within the party, and within some institutions and work organizations of strategic importance, pressure was being exerted on those who did not agree with MASPOK, which was already demanding a national currency, a national army and territorial expansion. Nationalists outside the SKH were creating their own organizations in work collectives and introducing personnel changes by nationality in the name of “rejuvenation” and “expertise”, which was supported by some from the top of the SKH, representative bodies and authorities, as well as by some of the deputies in the Federal Assembly (e.g. Marko Veselica, Jure Sarić). Finally, some of the demands of the croatian MASPOK would be accepted as official policy valid for all republics and integrated into the 1974 constitution. For comparison, when riots broke out in kosovo in 1981, an army with tanks

33 When Tito was forced to criticize MASPOK, he emphasized more than ever before that he was a croat. Allegedly, the MASPOK had a little song on Tito: “Druže Tito / I kiss you on the forehead / come on put on / an ustasha suit”.



X. Congress of the League of Communists, Belgrade, 1974

was sent against the demonstrators, and some of them were killed, although their demands were far more modest than those of MASPOK. Namely, they were demanding the status of a republic, a constitution instead of a statute, special national holidays and a flag.<sup>34</sup> Kosovo albanians were not recognized as a nation but as a nationality, and it seems that some nationalisms were considered more dangerous than others. The nationalisms of “unfinished” nations were clearly more dangerous, although the criteria for a nation to be recognized as “complete” were completely arbitrary, i.e. they were guided by the liberal logic that completed nations are those whose political “representatives” have access to more power.

At the Tenth Congress in 1974, Tito declared: “In socialist self-management relations, the interests of the working class, which has fought for the position of the ruling class in the nation, become the interests of the nation, and the interests of the nation become the interests of

the class” (Tito’s paper, X Congress of the SKJ, “Communist” Belgrade 1974, p. 47). In the same year, a new federal constitution, the constitutions of the republics and, for the first time, the constitutions of the autonomous provinces, were adopted. State sovereignty was given to republics, and political legitimacy to nations, that is, constitutive peoples (*narodi*). The yugoslav people and the yugoslav identity no longer existed in the political sense. In addition, the constitution confirmed the use of the term “working people” instead of working class, and all members of one nation, that is, of an administrative-political entity (republic, province, municipality, local communities) are normatively equal.

This constitutional concept, which is sometimes referred to as the “fourth Yugoslavia”, is mainly attributed to Edvard Kardelj. Despite the fact that not all fractions of the SKJ were completely unison in this matter<sup>35</sup>, Kardelj’s concept was ul-

35 From the eighth congress, then intensively during the constitutional debate until the split of the SKJ in January 1990, there will be debates between supporters of Kardelj’s concept and advocates of the previous concept of socialist Yugoslavia. However, the question is how fundamentally different were these two concepts, given that both are based on the establishment and strengthening of ethnically defined nation-states.

34 Granting or not granting certain rights to individual groups was often justified by the extent of that group’s participation in the war. For example, one of the main arguments against the creation of the republic of kosovo in 1945 was a minor participation of kosovo albanians in the partisans.



*Edvard Kardelj*



*Yugoslav leadership – Kardelj, Ranković, Tito*

timately the dominant one. Namely, he consistently advocated the thesis that communists must dominate the nation to which they belong, and that the state must be, according to Stalin's formulation, "socialist in content, national in form." His concept of Yugoslavia was based on the idea of the so-called "withering away of the state", while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of republics as states in which nations exercise their sovereignty. Kardelj tried to hide this paradox by constantly nominally attacking statism and bureaucracy. Indeed, criticisms of statism and bureaucracy are a necessary chorus of almost every text from the late sixties and seventies.

How exactly was the withering away of the state conceived? According to Kardelj, the state had to be replaced by countless basic organizations of united labour (osnovne organizacije udruženoga rada, OOUR), self-management interest communities (samoupravne interesne zajednice, SIZ), socio-political organizations, national defense institutions and numerous other organizations. OOURs were supposed to represent the democratization of society at the level of production

itself, and through them workers were supposed to manage their own labour and overall social reproduction. However, combined with the market and national republics, all they contributed to was extreme atomization, strengthening the state's dominance over society and national divisions among the workforce. To each OOUR, other OOURs represented competition, the republican economies became national economies, and the horizontal linking of workers across the borders of the republics became extremely difficult. As early as 1965, the republics had autonomous banking systems, with only a unified tax system surviving. At the end of 1976, 2,892 labour organizations (radna organizacija, RO) had 15,302 OOURs, of which the headquarters of the OOUR was in a different republic from the center of the labour organization in only 2.1% of cases, and in 1981, 4,541 ROs with 21,488 OOURs and in the second republic the seat was even less, only 1.5% of OOUR. In 1976, there were 123 SOURs (complex organizations of united labour) in Yugoslavia with 887 ROs, of which only two were based outside the home republic of the SOURs. At the end of 1980, there were 364 SOURs with 2,807 ROs, of which only 45 or 1.6% were based

in another republic (Korošić, 1988). Since 1970, when inflation began, trade between the republics declined to 20% compared to the total economic activity.

OOURization not only fragmented the working class on a national basis, but, contrary to Kardelj's intention, created a huge state bureaucratic structure that was constantly growing in size and complexity. One year after the adoption of the law on united labour (1980), there were 94,415 OOURs in Yugoslavia. To illustrate the complexity of the structure, let's mention the example of the post, telephone and telegraph (PTT). The PTT contained no fewer than 291 OOURs, two labor organizations without OOURs, 26 labor organizations with OOURs, four labor communities that had OOURs, and 22 other labor communities. Even air traffic control at the federal level was organized into 52 different units, 21 of which were OOURs. This system had indeed achieved that more workers participated in the various administrative bodies of their OOURs and SOURs. However, the reality was far from workers managing the factories and the entire process of social reproduction. They participated in decision-making only in their small unit, without any real influence on what was happening outside of it.

In this period, the Congress of self-managers of Yugoslavia was convened only twice – in 1971 and 1981. The idea to form a Council of United Labour in the Federal Assembly, as was the case in the republican and provincial ones, was not supported by the majority and was attacked as unitary. Given that the Yugoslav, that is, the supra-national working class does not exist, there is no need for the existence of a Yugoslav parliamentary council. Although Tito spoke of a united working class until his death, politicians who actually had an influence on specific policies, such as Kardelj and Vladimir Bakarić, advocated the idea of national working classes, or working classes of completed nations.

In the literature from the 1970s, the strengthening of nationalism from the second half of the 1960s onwards is attributed to statism, bureaucratization and technocracy. That is, the aspirations of the bureaucratic, republican and technocratic strata to strengthen their authority and power in the name of safeguarding the interests of their nation, at the expense of self-management. Nationalism has also been attributed to economic inequalities between republics, the struggles of republican bourgeoisies and the interests of individual republican leaders. However, as it is evident from the debates and conclusions of the SKJ congresses, as well as the policies it adopted, the SKJ itself gave these strata power and systematically strengthened it. As stated by Jelka Kljajić-Imširović, active in the radical current of the student movement of 1968, "some of the criticized more specific manifestations of nationalism are not – it is more than obvious – the result of the action of anti-party nationalist forces, but the logical consequence of certain systemic principles of the official party policy" (Kljajić-Imširović, 221). "The ideological and normative-institutional subordination of class and social interests to national ones, in the name of their unity within the framework of 'national independence' (VIII Congress), and especially within the framework of 'national sovereignty' (IX Congress), hindered and limited integrative processes within Yugoslav society, contributed to the antagonism of essentially identical class and social interests on a national basis, and thus to the difficulty or blocking of the possibility of constituting an autonomous self-management movement and an authentic class and social consciousness" (Kljajić-Imširović, 242).

In the text "The relation between class and nationalism in contemporary socialism", (in the collection of the same name from 1970) Stipe Šušar, Andrija Đujić and Vatroslav Mimica wrote:



“The nation was formed and exists as a form of organizing the class division of society, which is the ‘most natural’, and therefore the most progressive, at a certain level of development of human productive forces. [...] In order to lead the nation in the direction of socialism and lead socialist practice, it [the working class] must identify itself as much as possible with the nation and exclude the exploiting classes and strata from the nation. The working class is, therefore, neither supra-national nor anti-national nor non-national. As long as it exists as a class and as long as the nation exists, the working class is struggling for the role of the leading class of its own nation. The interests of the working class and the interests of the nation it leads necessarily coincide. In these circumstances, the violation of national interests threatens class interests, as well as vice versa. [...] In the national liberation struggles, the essential connection between national and class interest, their basic identity in the struggle for progress, is most clearly reflected.”

In the same collection, Šefko Međedović says:

“The nation, as a social grouping, as a certain form of social life, is the result of the social division of labor developed by the capitalist mode of production (and which itself is the result of that division of labor); Therefore, the nation represents the ‘end point’ of this society – the completed capitalist society. In this sense, as a social historical form of social community (community of social life), it constitutes a higher historical form of association of people in society, a form of socialization of the production process and social life. The national constitution expresses and represents the social process of abolishing feudal, medieval, patriarchal forms of social life...”

The progress that Šušvar, Međedović and others talk about is exclusively a capitalist bourgeois preoccupation typical of yugoslav ideologues and theorists. In order to achieve progress, the entire society must be sucked into production, the state and the nation. Nothing can remain outside of this relation, and this is achieved through the so-called socialization. Thanks to yugoslav socialist self-management and its ubiquitous intricate architecture of basic organizations of united labour (OOUR), capital has finally triumphed in these areas: abstract labor was somewhat rationalized and humanized, and as a social relation it was generalized to a larger portion of society, the wage relation became a statist relation, society became the state. The nation as a “form of socialization of the process of production and social life”, as Međedović says, is the crown of that process in two ways: first, as a result of concrete policies of the federation and republics aimed at preserving and strengthening the concept and interests of nations, and second, as a subjective glue that further bound each individual to the interests of capital and the republic/nation to which he was assigned. In this context, an autonomous self-governing movement as mentioned by Jelka Kljajić-Imširović could not stand a chance.

## Conclusion

The role of KPJ nationalist policies in maintaining the continuity of capitalism and the state

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Marxist leadership of the SSDP was concerned about the militancy of the workers in serbia at that time. They were worried about the lack of interest of the workers for political struggle (by which they meant the struggle to conquer state power) and they feared that due to too many strikes, “foreigners will lose interest in investing their



Yugoslav military parade  
1985

much-desired capital.”<sup>36</sup> Dušan Popović believed that the class position of the Serbian proletariat was closer to the lumpenproletariat, and Dimitrije Tucović stated that the masses are inclined to anarchism, and that they should be led on the right path<sup>37</sup>. Here too, capital had to carry out its “civilizing mission”<sup>38</sup>, and the workers did not yet understand and accept that path to communism. So the working class continued fighting. During the entire period of socialist Yugoslavia, as well as during the war in the 90s, there were constant strikes and rebellions. Therefore, capital and the state were always forced to find new strategies to crush resistance.

In a territory where many languages and dialects were spoken, and the different visions of national identities and relations that the bourgeoisie slowly built were not yet completely stable and

affirmed by national states, emerging national sentiments could serve the KPJ as one of the strategies of attraction and shaping people to become manageable for their politics. That is why the national question has been one of the central issues for the Communist Party of Yugoslavia since its foundation. As the geopolitical situation in the Balkans and Europe changed in the interwar period, the KPJ changed its attitude towards the national question. Cooperation with bourgeois parties and fascist organizations was legitimate if it contributed to the power of the party. The KPJ famously led the people’s liberation struggle on the platform of bourgeois anti-fascism, combining specific nationalist patriotic elements with Yugoslav patriotism and without mentioning any anti-capitalist goals. As early as 1920, any hint that the revolution should mean the liberation of the people from the state – not this or that government, but the state as such – disappeared from party discussions. And when, after the victory in the war, the goal was the formation of a new state, the ideology of national liberation or national liberation struggle became just another ideological legitimization of one’s right to rule over others.

36 Vinaver, Vuk, 1964. „Sindikalno-štrajkački pokret u Srbiji (1903-1910)” [The syndicalist striking movement in Serbia (1903-1910)], *Istorija 20. veka*, 6/1964, Beograd, str. 37.

37 Ješić, Rafajlo, 1969. „Ideološko-političke struje u radničkom pokretu Srbije 1903-1914” [Ideological and political tendencies in the workers’ movement in Serbia 1903-1914)], *Tokovi revolucije*, 4/1969, Beograd, str. 101

38 Marx, *The Communist Manifesto, Grundrisse*, etc.

Like other communist parties in the world, the KPJ in Yugoslavia historically contributed to the imposition of capital as the only possible form of human community, which requires different tactics to domesticate the workforce. After the establishment of the new state, nationalism was first used as one of the strategies of accumulation and concentration of the workforce, and then from the 60s onward as one of the strategies of atomization. As pre-war Yugoslavia was dominantly an agrarian country, and the workers were militant and "inclined to anarchism", the role of the new state was to build and strengthen the legal, institutional and ideological framework for the further development of the capitalist commodity-production system and to turn the population into functional citizens ready for large amounts of work. In other words, the new state needed to turn the mass into a nation. In this sense, the transformation of the population into constitutive peoples and nations was functional for their legitimate exploitation as resources through shock work. For members of a nation freed from an external occupier, labour ceases to be exploitation and becomes a national obligation that is fulfilled with joy. (In parallel with the shock work of the constituent peoples and nations, accumulation was carried out through the expropriation of the peasantry.)

The rigidity of the central state monopoly could not ensure the continuity of the extraction of surplus value for a long time, so the managers of Yugoslav capitalism recognized that social regulation should be left to "objective economic laws". In parallel with the ever-increasing turn to the logic of the market, since the 60s, changes had been consistently made in the direction of strengthening and expanding the powers of the republics, which was justified by the need to affirm nations in self-management. Workers were no longer tamed by the necessity of defending

and building a new common state of the south Slavs, but by the need to defend of their own income, the income of their working collective and the profit created in their own republic, i.e. by means of atomization. The strengthening of nationalism in this context is not only a matter of the institutional and political structure that favored it through the strengthening of the power of ethnically based people's republics and their political leaders, but it is a necessary element of capitalist society. When abstract labor and the form of value are the basis of social regulation and when labor is absorbed by institutions and organizations imposed from above as were the OOURs, even if these institutions are called self-management, there will be a tendency for people to act driven by their particular interests. Reasoning which is selfish, particularistic and without solidarity is the most meaningful and logical reasoning in capitalist societies. Nationalism is one type of such reasoning.

In the 1990s, global capital had to find a new basis of legitimation for even harsher regimes of value extraction. For the countries of peripheral capitalism, this often meant forced restrictive economic measures, the implementation of which was facilitated by the further brutal atomization and crushing of the power of the workers by inciting ethnic hatred, military operations and ethnic cleansing, in short; by war. The disintegration of Yugoslavia and the war were by no means only a matter of external pressures and interventions, but also of the very logic of capitalist societies such as the ones like Yugoslavia were. Capitalism and nationalism did not suddenly appear out of nowhere. Rather, socialist Yugoslavia had the historical role of developing, consolidating and maintaining their continuity in this territory. With the war and the new states, nationalism only took on a different spectacular form.

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## The National Phenomenon

### Group against nationalism Thessaloniki

**T**his text is the first chapter of a publication named “The enemy is...! Nation, anti-imperialism, and antagonistic movement” by the Group against nationalism in 2007. This group was part of the Fabrika Yfanet squat and assembly which is still active in the city of Thessaloniki. In its path, the collective, on the occasion of the pogrom of September 4<sup>th</sup> 2004, after the defeat of the Greek national football team by Albania, recognised the necessity to deal with the issue of nationalism-patriotism. A smaller group, through the assembly, decided to focus more on the issue and to go further with the existing analysis.

We believe that even today, 14 years later, this text has much to offer in terms of the conundrum of what constitutes a nation and what elements nationalism is nurtured from. This is important because we continue to confront nationalism in schools, in squares, in protests, and even in social movements. We believe that a project like this can be a first step towards its deconstruction.

In the well-known joke *Stalin in Vienna*<sup>1</sup>, a Russian artist is exhibiting a painting with the same name depicting the alleged wife of Stalin alone in the Kremlin. After the reasonable question by the officer: “And where is Stalin [in the painting]?” the immediate response is served with a taste of bad humour: “In Vienna”. Both protagonists in this joke know for a fact, but hide it diligently, that the “magnificent Georgian” was in Vienna during the winter of 1913. There, as Lenin’s envoy, he was “set to write a great article”<sup>2</sup>, the notorious “Marxism and the National Question”, in which the future General Secretary presents us with a definition for the ‘nation’ based on five objective criteria: language, territory, economic life, psyche, and culture. By meeting all these criteria, one could be considered ‘a nation’.

1 The title of this joke can also be “*Lenin in Warsaw*” or “*Brezniev in Athens*” or any other general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in any given European capital.

2 From a letter by Lenin. Michael Lowy, *Marxists and the National question*.

Beside the morbid reference to Stalin, the endeavour to objectively define the nation has produced many variations where a nation is defined either by language, or by religion, other times by common origin, tradition, history, common lived experiences, political rights, patriotic loyalty, etc.

Broadly speaking, all these definitions belong to a field where, at one end the 'nation-blood', the German romantic perception emphasising the 'cultural criteria' (language, religion, territory, race) can be found, and at the other, the 'nation-contract', the French or selective perception which emphasises 'political criteria' (rights, laws, political consciousness, memory). Both approaches soon lead to a methodological dead-end. An endeavour that aims beyond current nationalisms and tries to find universal and stable core elements of a nation is bound to fail.

Even the strongest leads of the nationalistic arsenal can be logically examined. Language, con-

sidered the less ambiguous symbol of national identity, proves inadequate if one considers people that share the same language without any common sense of a shared national identity (e.g., Americans, Australians, New Zealanders), but also the national states that validate their unity without a single national language (e.g., Switzerland). Religion also can be subjected to the same criticism. The religious variety that exists in the USA has never threatened to break up the country into many separate nations, while on the other hand countries, like Italy and the Philippines, which share a common Catholic faith do not feel that they belong to a common 'Catholic nation'. The common racial origin and its biological foundation has no basis in any serious historical or scientific research. People blending in with each other is a constant reference in space and time. In the same way, devotion to a constitution and the recognition of civil rights for holders of national citizenship fail to obtain the required social legitimacy by the alleged natives, even for second or third-generation immigrants. The case of the modern French Republic and its inability to accept immigrants from the former colonies, even if they are recognised as French citizens, is indicative. Essentially, there is no heuristic method nor objective criterion that can determine where and when we have a nation. The concept of nation is like the myth of Proteus. Every time we think we nailed it, it turns into something elusive.

The solution could be found in the subjective perception of the nation. Renan says that the "*nation is whatever a group of individuals defines it*" meaning that a "*nation is our will to become a nation*". The priority for what constitutes a nation should not aim at conscious political will nor rational planning, but rather at the imagination. A nation is what a group of people feels and imagines it is. It does not matter whether the racial continuity or the cultural unity turn out to be myths criticised by rational thinking. Once some people think these myths are valid, they tend to



produce concrete results in terms of coherence and their social practices. In the same way, the social contract and social referendum of Renan in political perception concerning the nation are both figments of the imagination and simultaneously effective in reality for those who invoke them as a binding tie. In a nutshell, we reach the point of Benedict Anderson: *Nations are imagined communities*<sup>3</sup>, adding to what Etienne Balibar explained; under certain circumstances, *only imagined communities are real*.

The subjective perception offers a perspective but does not bring the conversation about the nation to an end. The elements highlighted above as part of the objective perceptions (blood, race, territory, political rights) are essential to verify the historical landmarks or historical dynamic which led to the emergence of different ideas, assigned to a space and time, concerning the nation. The individual examination of specific historical nations and nationalisms goes beyond the objectives of this text. We will try to move at a more abstract level; this is our methodological reference. However, to highlight thoroughly the concept of the nation, we will deal with two more terms: nationalistic ideology and national identity.

### i. nationalistic ideology

To approach nationalism as an ideology, a perception of ideology itself is required. Let us say with some relative ambiguity that ideology is “*more or less a systematic set of ideas and performances that vindicates and rationalizes relationships of power and sovereignty, but also integrates individuals in such a drastic way*”.<sup>4</sup> Quoting Althusser, “*Ideology functions in a way that recruits subjects*”. A methodological remark: the



approach to ideology adopted here is far from the doctrinal view of some Marxists that relate ideas to the objective reality of productive relations, using the term ‘false consciousness’ or ‘the subjective manipulation of objective truth’. Ideologies may involve inconsistencies and antinomies or put forward unstable and contradictory principles, however, they are part of reality because their consequences are entirely real. Regarding the relationship of a subject with reality and the one-way determination of the former by the latter or vice versa, we shall oppose it with “*the crucial ambivalence of our human presence in our own history, part-subjects, part-objects, the voluntary agents of our own involuntary determinations*”<sup>5</sup>. “*It is true that men do not make history as they please and that their conscious goals do not always coincide with the actual results: but neither do they execute a pre-established order; they are not forced to live through a basic structure which*

3 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

4 Nikos Demertzis, “Nationalism as ideology” in collective volume *Nation-State-Nationalism*. (Not translated into English)

5 E.P. Thomson, *The poverty of theory and other essays*.



they do not know”<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, social reality is not beyond human grasp nor independent of the acting and thinking of social subjects. Thus, social subjects cannot be understood outside the social reality that surrounds them. They are simultaneously its creations and its creators.<sup>7</sup>

But why should we perceive nationalism as ideology rather than as a concept belonging to the same category as kinship, in the anthropological sense of the word, or religion, as an anthropological system of ideas, as Benedict Anderson suggests? As with any other ideology of modernity, in nationalism the invocation of an extra-social expert, like God, is replaced by the need for ideas founded on evidence and arguments of the em-

pirical, worldly, non-metaphysical type. This indicates its inherent rationality which is designed to legitimise the correctness of its claims rather than the substance of what is being said. “*Logic is the template through which ideology shapes its claims, the ‘syntax’ it adopts in order to formulate its interpretations*”<sup>8</sup>. This is an *instrumentalist rationality* which refers to the structure rather than the content of ideas.

In addition, nationalism differs from religion in one more way. The doctrines of the latter, at least as far as traditional societies are concerned, are by definition stable and immutable (truth by revelation) and any attempt to modify the doctrine is considered to be a cult. On the contrary, it is impossible to imagine an identical nationalistic ideology in a given space and time. The content of nationalism is subject to the circumstances of each society in the form of various cultural and political ideas. But also, within a society, nationalism has the potential to change throughout history with a unique degree of effectiveness, as far as the interests of power are concerned, and in a way that is linked to the transformations caused by the historical agency of the masses. Perhaps this is a clue which explains its great resilience.

Nevertheless, apart from individual historical differences, nationalistic ideology as a manifestation of the phenomenon, retains in all its versions some basic prerequisites:

- (A) There is a nation with obvious and fitting characteristics.
- (B) The nation must have or assert its political sovereignty.
- (C) The interests and values of the nation come before any other interest and value.<sup>9</sup>

6 J. Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology*.

7 P. Lekkas, *The nationalistic ideology – five work assumptions in the historic sociology*. (Not translated into English)

8 Ibid.

9 Nikos Demertzis, *ibid*.



## ii. nationalism and identity

The dual functional role of ideology results from the preceding definition: it is explanatory and ethical. Ideology contains perceptions and doctrines which describe and interpret the world while also evaluating it. It depicts the 'being' of the world, as well as the 'how it should be'. Any reference in 'being' is accompanied by a reference in 'how it should be'. This indissoluble coexistence of the two functions results in the element of practice. The inconsistency, or even the correspondence, between the two images imposes specific ways of behaviour and political agency to either bridge the gap or maintain the equilibrium between the two. In other words, as ideology describes how the world 'should be', it also dictates what 'we should do' to get there, from interpretation to incitement and finally to appropriate behaviour. In this way, nationalism intends the formation of the collective and individual identities which define and bond its entities.

Before continuing, we could eliminate the artificial dilemma of the juxtaposition between a collective identity and multitude of individual identities. Every identity is individual, however each was forged historically, constructed within a field of social values, rules of behaviour, and collective symbols. People's identities never coincide with each other's, yet they are invariably obtained remotely.<sup>10</sup> Besides this, the nationalist message is not assimilated uniformly by each person. It is open to a series of possibilities, from total adoption to partial acceptance and is subjected to modification or even osmosis with other ideologies.

The question then is why do subjects accept nationalist ideologies? Or rather, what does the

constitution of an identity, and more specifically the national identity, mean to a subject? Identity appears to be necessary to a person to enter the symbolic social order and assume a position within it. From this standpoint, a person forms an elementary coherent sense of the self, emerges as a subject, and perceives the world as a world of meaning. Every identity is constructed through a central concept which organises and gives meaning to other identities. Therefore, through the ideological form of the nation "*a subject integrates this inculcation into a more elementary process (which we may term 'primary') of fixation of the effects of love and hate and representation of the self*"<sup>11</sup>. National ideology contains idealistic signifiers (the name of the nation, that of the homeland) through which the sense of the sacred, love, respect, sacrifice, or fear can be imparted. This is the point where nationalism begins to resemble religion. It is a secularised way of signifying power, time, society, and death. Or, as Benedict Anderson would say, it is a way of converting the random into destiny.

To sum up, we would say that ideologies become primarily accepted because they tend to form subjective identities by offering individuals the imaginary and symbolic context through which they attempt, without ever fully accomplishing it, to conceal their divided character and presence of randomness and of the alarmingly strange representation of difference and heterogeneity in social relations<sup>12</sup>. However, this elusive sense of completeness is always connected to relations of supremacy in the economic, political, and private context.

However, in all its forms, the identity constituted by nationalist ideology shares some significant

10 Etienne, "The historical nation" in Balibar E. & Wallerstein I., *Race, Nation, Class: ambiguous identities*.

11 Ibid.

12 Nikos Demertzis, *ibid*.

common characteristics. It is an overriding identity which orchestrates, integrates, organises, reformulates, and arranges hierarchies, or even disrupts all other social and individual identifications. This, for example, means that before being right-wing or communist, worker or boss, man or woman, father or son, healthy or 'mentally ill', you are Greek, Turkish, American, or Israeli, etc..

Thus, being definitive as a superior social bond, nationalism comes very close to putting an end to all discussion around social construction by rendering its contrasts and contradictions meaningless<sup>13</sup>. Nationalism shapes an image of totality within which it is restricted when it does not consciously aim to eradicate the non-identical so that the symbolic difference between 'us' and 'aliens' is highlighted and experienced as primary and non-reductionist. Remembering the terminology proposed by Fichte in the *Address to the German Nation*, individuals must constantly fantasise external borders as a projection and defence of an internal collective personality<sup>14</sup>. According to the rhetorical scheme of inversion proposed by Slavoj Žižek: *"Ideology is not a dreamlike illusion that we build to escape insupportable reality; in its basic dimension it is a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our 'reality' itself. The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel: The social antagonism as an internal part of each society"*<sup>15</sup>. In other words, nationalism is an attempt of universalisation that fails to hide the traces of its impossibility.

By using the term 'social antagonism', we do not want to restrict it to the variously implicit class struggle. Power relations lie in the political sphere, in class contradictions, in the exploita-

tion of nature, racism, sexism, and all aspects of everyday life where authoritarian practices are reproduced. However, we do not want to attribute centrality to any of these elements.

At this point, we could rethink the concept of the 'nation', starting from nationalism. The 'nation' itself is a void signifier, it does not have any conceptual meaning outside the practices used by subjects of modern societies to define and to institutionalise their state. The fact that the 'nation' itself is meaningless is also evident in the fact that, while *"it appears as what gives plenitude and vivacity to our life, and yet the only way we can determine it is by resorting to different versions of the same empty tautology. All we can ultimately say about it is that the Thing is 'itself, 'the real Thing', 'what it really is about', etc. If we are asked how we can recognize the presence of this Thing, the only consistent answer is that the Thing is present in that elusive entity called 'our way of life'"*<sup>16</sup>. Nationalism is structured around this absence of meaning, which at the same time gives meaning to itself. The construction materials are the cultural (language, religion, tradition) and political (will, laws, constitution) features. Our empirical view is that even though political and cultural elements coexist in every national identity, eminence is usually given to the former.

We would like to focus on two of these: language and race. Firstly, the creation of a linguistic community is required. What matters in this process is not the unity or purity of the national language, but its ability to function as the language of public and private life, daily relations, and official institutions. However, the 'linguistic' community is insufficient on its own. The creation of a 'racial' community is also required (broadly speaking, the concept of a kinship extended to the national population). This racial community is consol-

13 Ibid.

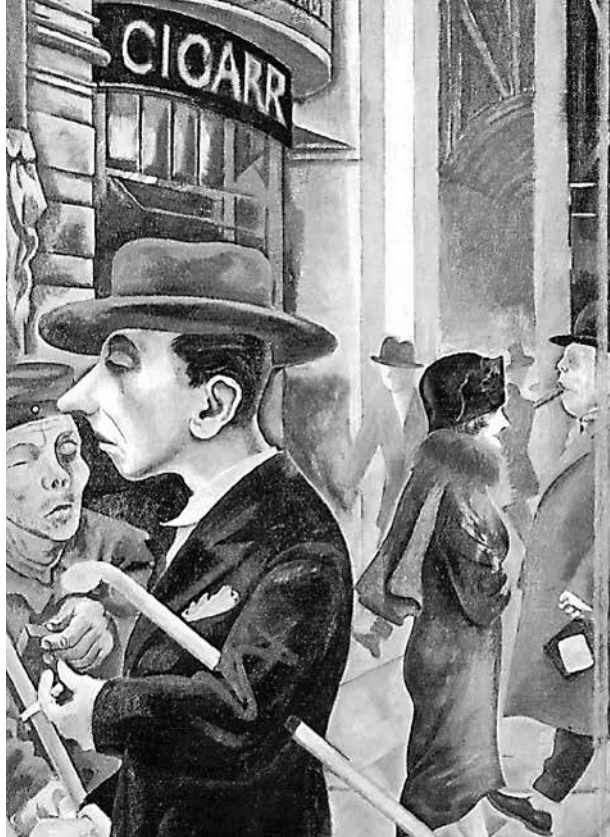
14 Etienne Balibar, *ibid*.

15 Slavoj Žižek, *The sublime object of ideology*.

16 Slavoj Žižek, "Enjoy Your Nation as Yourself", in Les Black and John Solomos, (ed.), *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*.

idated based on the ideology of intermarriage. The mechanism that plays a decisive role (in the same way schools contribute to the creation of the linguistic community) is the modern family (because of the dissolution of traditional forms such as 'generation' or 'kin'). The modern family 'generates' private life and simultaneously constitutes the basic cell of the State, which is protected and controlled due to its integration into the mechanisms of education, public health, and social welfare<sup>17</sup>.

This assertion shows another aspect of the incivensiveness of national identity. A person is enacted as *homo nationalis* throughout their life through a multitude of everyday practices (from tax offices where one is served to the courts to which one will appeal), rather than just doctrines. Basically, the organisation of everyday life relates subjects with the national unity that they belong to via the most catalytic correlation of dependence.



### iii the construction of nation

The nation does not predate nationalism, neither logically nor historically. Even though the nation is presented by nationalism as ubiquitous in space and time, it is a historical construction constituted and legalised by national ideology. As Gellner mentions, "*Nations can be defined in terms of the age of nationalism and not vice versa, as is commonly believed*".

In this historical era of transition from the traditional (*Gemeinschaft*) to modern societies (*Gesellschaft*), humans institutionalise the nation as an imaginary community. According to Anderson, the nation is an imaginary community on one hand because it is perceived as a deeply rooted horizontal fellowship, while on the other, because the members of even the smallest nation will never know all other members of the national com-

munity, as family, even though they imagine and believe they belong to and participate in it. The nation exists as a 'mental' unity of people, 'existing' at the level of being the object of an imaginative perception.

The special sense of 'belonging' which characterises the nation emerges as an entanglement of a vertical and horizontal identification. The individuals of a community are vertically identified by the nation and its symbols, and precisely for this reason they are also identified inter-subjectively, recognising each other based on the horizontal common conceptual denominator of the 'nation'<sup>18</sup>. Thus, as Benedict Anderson has pointed out, the horizontal companionship fantasised by national subjects emerges. Here, we should highlight the difference between solidarity and

17 Etienne Balibar, *Research on Nationalism and Racism*.

18 Nikos Demertzis, *ibid*.



hostility created in traditional societies. There, the central point of reference is not an abstract concept of the nation, but the clan, village, feudal, guild, or religious community, entities specific and tangible, defined by the immediate experiential human field. Moreover, the convolution against external threats is almost always a result of the circumstantial reaction to external danger which diminishes once the threats have passed<sup>19</sup>. With what has been said up to this point, we do not want to oppose imaginary communities and propose traditional ones as the only real thing. On the contrary, under the historic conditions of modernity, any community which is reproduced through institutions is imaginary. This assertion is synonymous with the assumption made at the beginning, which is that in modern history, only imaginary communities are actually real. The important thing to note is that, even if the anthropological descriptions of traditional communities

do not correspond to historical reality, they tend to function for the human imagination as a nostalgic memory of an intimacy once shared. However, this nostalgia interprets absence as loss. It provokes grief for something we believe we have lost, even though, in reality, it was never ours. Nationalism uses this subjective psychological need and offers the opportunity to reconstruct this mythical 'lost intimacy' induced by tradition.

What has been said so far is evident of the constructivist concept of nation. In other words, nations are constituted and dissolved historically and are not unchangeable natural concepts. This alone is not enough to justify a view of history as an open procedure and not as determinism. The view of nations as historical constructions is also being accepted by an essentialist conception of nation, highlighting the fact that even, if nations were once constructed, national identity is nevertheless historically unified and unchangeable through time. In this model of thinking, the nation exists today because it has always existed in the seed and this pre-eternal national nucleus goes through millennia of ethnogenetic progression and multiple stages of evolution to mature into the current form of the nation-state. Correspondingly, there is also a functionalist conception of nation, where the nation is produced exclusively through state structures, functioning as a tool for the effective exercise of state power, regardless of nationalism and the social process of its formation. This absolute reduction of the nation to the state also involves a static and mechanical perception of history. On the contrary, we believe that the historical constitution of national identity is neither given nor unchangeable over time, but periodically varies depending on the basis for the dynamic social relations and is not reduced into an inter-historical unified shape<sup>20</sup>.

20 Dimitris Dimoulis – Chrostitina Gianouli, *Nations – Ranks – Politic – The dialectics of war*. (Not translated into English)

19 Pantelis Lekkas, *ibid*.

#### iv. The birth and reproduction of the nation

Certainly, for the ideology of nationalism and the global reality of the nation to emerge, a whole range of cultural, philosophical, political, economic, institutional, and technical conditions are necessary. We will not argue that there is a deterministic linear evolution which leads from pre-existing institutions to the national state, but rather a sequence of conjunctural relations that will integrate many unequally superannuated institutions and mechanisms into new political structures. For example, the progressive formation of the absolute monarchies of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries led to a complete monetary monopoly, fiscal and administrative centralisation, judicial unification, the ever progressing bureaucratisation of the tax system, and the relevant internal pacification achieved through uniform policing and concentration of the armed forces. The previous notion of territorial integrity is thus overthrown in a very decisive way. The Reformation and Counterreformation accelerated the transition from the competition between the state and Church (i.e., between the theocratic and the secular state) to their complementarity. The reappearance of Roman law (instead of customary law), mercantilism, and the consolidation of feudal lordships<sup>21</sup> had, for the most part, totally different scopes, but, progressively, they produced the elements of the national state, or rather, they were involuntarily nationalised and began to nationalise society. All these processes, provided they were repeated and integrated into

21 "The reaction of aristocrats in the early 18th century aims at the knowledge – power mechanism that connects the administrative mechanism with the state authoritarianism, in an ultimate effort to re-claim their rights. In this context, they juxtapose to legal knowledge, a new historical discourse and a subject that speaks for its own self. The nation under an unclear, indefinite and ambiguous meaning, will fuel conflicts, some of which will acquire great significance during the period of the French Revolution." (Michel Foucault, *Society must be defended*).

new political structures, played an essential role in the emergence of national formations<sup>22</sup>. The prevalence of the nation state meant that many of these processes were completed. The creation of a national army, the standardisation and rationalisation of positive law, compulsory education, and the disciplinary governance of the population drastically differentiated the national state from any previous type of state.

The crucial point here is the remarkable degree of legitimacy that national states have gained in the eyes of their populations. As a result of the monopoly on violence the modern state has secured for itself, it achieved ethnic homogenisation and discipline among its citizens. Its successful reproduction, however, lies in its ability to respond to the needs of its citizens in an unprecedented way. This step in the evolutionary chain is best represented by the institution of the welfare state, a product of the institutionalisation of social struggles beginning at the end of the 19th century which became the main regulation during the 20th century. This is what allows the status of the 'citizen' to be replaced by that of the 'member of an ethnic community' – a state which interferes with the reproduction of the economy, particularly with individuals, family structures, and public health systems, a state which is generally present in the whole range of private life. As a result, the very existence of all individuals, regardless of their social class, was completely subjected to the status of national state citizen<sup>23</sup>.

What Foucault, from a completely different perspective, shows is the transition from the 'territorial state' to the 'population state' and the subsequent increase in the importance of biological

22 Etienne Balibar, *Ibid*.

23 *Ibid*.

life and the health of the population as a precondition of sovereign power<sup>24</sup>. It opens the possibility of a biopower that goes in two directions: on one hand, it aims at the body-machine and increasing its capacities, extracting its strengths, integrating it into an effective and economically structured system of control; the anatomic-politics of the human body. On the other hand, the biological processes are set in the epicentre by the authority: births, deaths, and survival fall within a whole series of regulations and adjustments, a biopolitics of the population. All these create an authority whose supreme function from now on is no longer just to destroy, but to surround life end-to-end<sup>25</sup>. It is the biological life that, in steps, occupies the centre of the political scene. The citizen of the national state recognises a kind of life which is taken care of by their 'own' state, which excludes from its structures the foreigner, the other, and the health hazard to the national body.

From a classical political point of view, this deduction is described in political rather than biological terms in the concept of 'the People'. Usually, the term is used with a meaning that "*oscillates between two opposing poles: On the one hand, the whole 'People' as an integral political body, on the other hand, the subset 'People' (popolo) as a fragmentary multiplicity of deprived and excluded bodies*"<sup>26</sup>. Here, we are interested in the former, a community that inscribes its political struggles on the horizon of its own state<sup>27</sup>. As such, people are linked to the social contract and popular sovereignty. 'The People' as a concept emerges with the French Revolution and 'does not exist' except through its representation. It must be understood not as a

sociological but as a 'political idealisation'. Simply, 'The People' exist primarily through the act which establishes them as sovereign, i.e., based on the contract that constitutes it. This agency is the political function of representation/authorisation/commission. Representation is becoming the new political religion of the modern age, the official ritual of the production of the 'one and indivisible' people, of its overlapping with the nation<sup>28</sup>.

On the other hand, a cardinal role in the development and dissemination of the national idea is played by factors such as the printing press, newspapers magazines (print capitalism, as Benedict Anderson mentions), and the standardisation of printed national languages. The degradation of the sacred language, Latin<sup>29</sup>, the spread of certain colloquial languages as instruments of the administrative apparatus, new printing technologies, but also the circulation of the printing press under the conditions when capitalism emerged, have transformed the world, changing once and for all the way in which information, feelings, and ideas are exchanged between people. Among the sources of nationalism, is not simply language, but the printed language, which dethrones the language of sacred texts and imposes itself on local dialects by being recognised as the official language of the state.

The mental concept of the nation would be unthinkable without the corresponding ruptures

28 Andreas Pantazopoulos, *For the People and the Nation – The Moment Andreas Papandreou 1965 – 1989*

29 "Sacred language is considered an outgrowth of reality and not an arbitrary representation of it, a part of Truth and not merely a means of expressing it.

Those who possess it and who are few in number are considered a strategic layer of the cosmological hierarchy. The fate of the diversity of human languages and the territorial limitation of each religion shake the ecumenical imaginary of Christianity.

and contribute to the degradation of sacred languages." [Anderson, op. cit.]

24 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

25 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*

26 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

27 Etienne Balibar, o. p.

in the organisation and perception of time and space. *"In the post-traditional universe of Discourse, time is institutionalized in opposition to space. The rupture, the distancing of time from space divorced its subjective conception from the hitherto local and concrete character of and gave rise to a universal, measurable, but also abstract conception of temporality"*<sup>30</sup>. Where before existed the simultaneous presence of the past and future in a momentary present, the messianic time described by Walter Benjamin, is now replaced by 'homogeneous, empty time', another concept borrowed from Benjamin. *"The flow of time is no longer conceived as an infinitely recurring one and takes on, as a function of the development of secular science, the form of an evolutionary series, i.e., an uninterrupted flow of developments leading from one point in time to the next, an endless sequence of causes and effects measured by clock and calendar"*.<sup>31</sup> The chronological sequence becomes logical. Being conscious of time is expressed in all aspects of social life, from economic production to political action and cultural expression. The abstract conception of time is connected, without being unilaterally reduced to it, to the generalisation of the commodity economy and the dominance of the general equivalent: money. Measurable time becomes the generalised criterion of exchange value, the time divided, to be compared and then homogenised to be exchanged.

Nationalism does not come to talk about discontinuities, ruptures, and incompatibilities. It comes to give birth to the empty, homogeneous time of the nation. The nation is not presented as one of many forms of social solidarity which appear throughout history, but as a social bond always present in time. A community ideal with constant firm roots in the past which will form

the basis for the future settlement of human affairs through its historical continuity. It comes from the past as a natural cultural community, to be realised as a political entity in the present and completed as an ideal nation (as each nationalism understands it) in the future.

Regarding the perception of space, the change taking place has, at its core, the notion of geopolitical territory. Political authority has always been connected to territory. What changes is the nature of this connection. In feudal Europe, feuds were defined by their centre, borders were permeable and vague, with authorities being weakened invisibly as they pervaded each other<sup>32</sup>. In modernity, borders acquire an exclusive, non-negotiable, non-fluctuant, unchanged character, which can only be transformed by war. This delimitation is a movement with a dual role. It simultaneously separates and divides people,

32 Benedict Anderson, *Idib*.



30 Nikos Demertzis, o. p.

31 Pantelis Lekkas, *The Game of Time* (Not translated into English)



divided in every inch of the land. National political hegemony does not exist without reference to an ideal or existing territory, inherently bringing it into a constant confrontation, either obvious or obscure, with other nation states. The rivalry between them is a given despite rhetorical schemes regarding peaceful nationalism.

Here we must emphasise something which usually eludes the appropriate amount of attention. The stage at which the nation state presents itself and, in the end, wins universal recognition is the battlefield, where it proves its efficiency compared to other forms of state organisations, such as traditional empires, at winning wars. As time passes, the increasing scale of war and particularly increasing reliance on technological advances, industrialisation and specialisation, combined with the developing commercial, legal, and diplomatic interaction between states gave the modern, centralised nation state a clear advantage against other state forms<sup>35</sup>. The ability to conduct war depended on the efficiency and ability of a state to extract resources, men, weapons, food, and taxes to support its war efforts. The development of some of the main mechanisms of the modern state appeared as an incision between war and efforts to finance it. On one hand, this led to the monopolisation of the means of coercion and the systematic organisation of disciplinary means by the state. On the other hand, the more people became involved in war and fighting, the more they became aware of their position as members of a political community. General conscription begins to match the high demand for participating in political procedures. This boosted a series of representative institutions characteristic of the modern state. In this context, the nation plays a dual role; it is used by governments to legitimise the state's actions, but it is also used in the struggle to participate in political procedures. In both cases, the superfi-

aiming to unify them under the political roof of the nation, but also fragments communities to network them, encloses territory to homogenise different cultures, and individualises to destroy diversity and differences<sup>33</sup>. The nationalisation of territory and the territorialisation of nation are simultaneous processes. *"Frontiers and national territory do not exist prior to the unification of that which they structure: there is no original something-inside that has later to be unified. [...] The State marks out the frontiers of this serial space in the very process of unifying and homogenizing what these frontiers enclose."*<sup>34</sup> The king's body, which symbolises totalitarian authority, is replaced by national territory in which authority is reproduced uniformly and is un-

33 Nikos Poulantzas, *State, Power, socialism*.

34 Nikos Poulantzas, *Idib*.

35 Stewart Hall – Bram Gieben, *Formations of Modernity*



cial national identity ensures the coordination of politics, conscription, and legality.

War exists in the beginning of the nation state, but national identity is the most successful means for the legitimisation of every war effort. This proven relation has maintained its significance for the entirety of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and even today as mercenary armies seem to take up much of national armies' dirty work. In the end, the fatherland is saved by the fatherland thanks to the uniquely efficient ability of nations to create opposing sides which possess the necessary means to wage war against each other at any time. The national community is mature enough to express, through the bearing of arms, the unity it is experiencing in times of peace as a fundamental part of social and economic processes. National conflict does not merely constitute a cynical slogan that deceives the masses but is rather the consequence of an already stabilised, structured, and nationalised organisation of financial interests and mechanisms of armed violence. However, it presents a high range of autonomy from direct financial interests as the reality of a world divided into nations and the existence of minorities in neighbouring states creates instances of conflict that cannot be controlled based on the smoothness of capital accumulation. In other words, nations, based on their own logic of attraction and repulsion, determine a context of international political antagonisms which cannot be reduced to its financial dimension<sup>36</sup>.

These two notions, the nation and capitalism, present from their beginning an intense connection which never becomes identification. As early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the formation of the capitalist economy on an increasingly international level initially in the form of expanding market rela-

36 Dimitris Dimoulis – Christina Giannoulis, Idib. (Not translated into English)

tions, and later the formation of industrial capitalism was a primary and decisive factor in the extent and limits of state power. The imperative request of the up-and-coming bourgeoisie was for the creation of a state structure which, thanks to its stabilising ability, would ensure a coordinating framework for the new capitalist economy by enforcing the law, securing contracts and transactions, and promoting competitive claims on property rights. However, the form that the nation assumes does not directly equate with capitalist relations of production. *"...in the history of capitalism, state forms other than the national have emerged and have for a time competed with it, before finally being repressed or instrumentalized"*<sup>37</sup>.

For example, the empire, the city, the Hanseatic League. In other words, the form of the nation state is not some bourgeoisie plan but rather the result of a series of political alliances and class struggles that crystallised in different geopolitical formations of class and state power. Forces that aimed to concentrate political power and financial arrangements, rupturing and uprooting any authority left in the aristocracy and clergy, as well as financial interests that sought to remove obstacles to the expansion of market relations projected through strong social networks, both rural and urban, which allied with but also clashed between themselves whenever the economy was limited within national borders and threatened by the arbitrary intervention of the state. In the end, we could say that the nation state, with its centralised structure, class composition, and demarcated territory was the historical balance point for the twofold competition of the bourgeoisie classes. Between an external struggle as individual agents of capital antagonise each other, seeking to support their 'own' state mechanism, while at the same time transcending any and all national borders, and an internal struggle, much more basic and essential for any kind of

37 Etienne Balibar, Idib.

social structure, namely the one between classes. Passing through the clashing rocks of local, communal resistance and working class internationalism, the nation state was, historically, the most successful response to the development of an internal market and exploitation of labour. However, due to capitalism's uneven historical development, in both time and space, capitalist relations developed in different ways and in different times in various geographic regions. Thus, instead of a single international bourgeoisie, many different bourgeoisies emerged, in reference to certain nationalised territories. How this and the subsequent means through which alliances and conflicts emerged, should be researched individually for each nation state.

What is written here is an attempt to analyse the processes and changes outlining certain tendencies and development procedures which led to the rise, but sadly not yet the fall, of the nation state. However, there will always be the 'contingency', the 'uncertainty', and the 'unpredictability' which defined both the prevalence of the nation state structure over other state forms, as well as the appearance and survival, at times, of certain states and not others. History, because of human intervention, does not submit to laws, is not predefined, nor is it understood in its entirety in retrospect.

On the other hand, the coincidental element inherent to every ethnogenesis should not be considered a historical arbitrage. That is what is called 'raw material', or a 'proto-ethnic' subterrain, where every nationalism draws elements from, a variety of local, scattered, and conflicting traditions, composing its own myth, a novel historical creation. The nation, however, cannot be traced back to any unique and individual local tradition, religious heritage, or linguistic peculiarity. Although it is supported by those and does indeed use materials from the past, it transforms, reformulates, and homogenizes them, mainly by prioritizing them so that they cease to be what they once were. It inscribes its own tradition.

As Agamben observes; "*Purity never exists in the beginning*". The formational, initial state is the linguistic and biopolitical blend, while the catharsis and production of nationally distinct people is the result of a strenuous process and not, by any means, a natural process attributed to ancestors<sup>38</sup>. The conclusion is, then, converted into the End/purpose and thus into the Beginning, both with regard to time and logic<sup>39</sup>. In this 'sequence of events' presented by nationalism, Benjamin's Angel "*sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet*"<sup>40</sup>. We see the very same thing.

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38 Akis Gavrilidis, *The Incurable Necrophilia of Radical Patriotism*.

39 Ibid.

40 Benjamin, "IX", *Theses on philosophy of history*.



## Contra Aztlán. A Critique of Chicano Nationalism

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The cap above is an image making the rounds as a counterpoint to now-President Donald Trump and the hat that he's made (in)famous. It serves as a visual reminder that a great deal of the U.S. territory was once Mexican national territory. A Chicano act of détournement.<sup>1</sup> Though it's an act of détournement which lacks a critical analysis of Mexican history. That such much of the Chicano movement's nationalist fervor arises from Mexico's territorial loss at the hands of U.S. racist aggression. This resulted with the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848, which 'ceded' the territory now known as California and a large area roughly half of New Mexico, most of Arizona, Nevada, Utah and parts of Wyoming and Colorado to the USA.<sup>2</sup>

Last year, two artists undertook the task of surveying the northern border of Mexico as it was

in 1821, marking it with obelisks that lie well within the current U.S. borders. Today we refer to this historical form of the Mexican republic as the First Mexican Empire; this empire extended well into the Central America, extending into the national territory of Costa Rica. If these artists were to survey the southern border of this Empire then we would begin to see the glaring oversight of this project. Yes, they claim to want to show the transient nature of borders but they inadvertently highlighted what the project of the Mexican republic is really about: the extraction of Capital to be found within its borders without the need of wars of aggression (colonialism); a project which prefers the class warfare of privatization of natural resources<sup>3</sup> held in common and the extraction of surplus value from its native, Black

1 Further reading on détournement, *Détournement as Negation and Prelude* by SI 1959

2 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

3 A prime, current example is the the current struggle against the Constellation Brands by the people of Mexicali, Mexico and its surrounding areas from taking their water. For further reading see here: <https://edicionesineditos.com/2018/01/17/communique-our-resistance-at-rancho-meno-6-arbitrary-arrests/>

and mestizo populations. Once this State project held a territory which was once much more vast. The nostalgic picture of a peaceful homeland that Chicane/xs often project onto Mexico begins to lose its luster. Yet from this nostalgia is born much of Chicano Nationalism.

common denominator that all members of La Raza can agree upon.”



*Make America Mexico again*



*Alurista*

## ¿Aztlán Libre?

It is the Chicano poet, Alurista, whom is largely credited with spreading the story of Aztlán as the mythic homeland of the Mexica. He also wrote what would become the leading document for Chicano nationalists: *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*. In it we find the first few fundamental errors in Chicano Nationalism:

“Nationalism as the key to organization transcends all religious, political, class and economic factions or boundaries. Nationalism is the

Hic salta, hic Aztlán: a new nation to arise in what is currently the U.S. Southwest/West as part of the assumed patrimony of all Chicane/xs, by way of a supposed shared ethnic heritage.<sup>4</sup> As an anti-state communist I desire the overthrow of capitalism en su totalidad. How then could even Chicane/x anti-state communists/anarchists support a plan which would inevitably align us with a new national bourgeoisie? The contradictions are glaring and would result in no liberation of the actual people which would make up this “Chicane/x nation” from either wage labor or general exploitation. Yet another revolution forestalled in the name of national sovereignty. Though there may be certain things which bind Chicane/xs across these “factions” and “boundaries” which Alurista alludes to, it is these binds that dampen the communist project which understands that the notion of a Chicane/x Nation is a false one. Fredy Perlman, in his incendiary essay *The Con-*

4 I note that this is a supposed shared heritage for even if the territory which Alurista calls Aztlán were truly the ancestral homeland of the Mexica, not every Chicane/x could lay “claim” to it since not all Chicane/xs bear Mexica heritage. Chicane/xs contain a multitude of ethnic heritages, including from Native Peoples from so-called Mexico, other origins such as from Europe and Africa. Chicane/x is not a race.



Brown Berets 1970

tinuing Appeal of Nationalism, wrote:

“[One] might be trying to apply a definition of a nation as an organized territory consisting of people who share a common language, religion and customs, or at least one of the three. Such a definition, clear, pat and static, is not a description of the phenomenon but an apology for it, a justification.”

This fabricated justification is used to allow the project of capitalist exploitation. Further, if we were to begin to analyze this homeland which Chicano Nationalists hope to reclaim we also run into the fundamental contradiction wherein this supposed homeland has already been continuously occupied for millenia by

many different Native peoples. To mention a few: the Tongva-Gabrielino, the Chumash, the Yuman, the Comanche, the Apache, the Navajo and the Mohave.

Further, the *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* states that Chicano Nationalists “declare independence of [their] mestizo nation.” Here creeps in the danger of a new form of oppression: yet another settler-colonial, mestizo nation once again makes an enclosure around Native peoples. Though the National Brown Berets, a Chicano Nationalist group, instead claims that.

“The amount of mixture of European blood on our people is a drop in the bucket compared to the hundreds of millions of Natives that

inhabited this hemisphere. The majority of us are of Native/Indigenous ancestry and it is that blood that ties us to and cries out for land.”<sup>5</sup>

A strange play of blood belonging lays the groundwork for a presumed claim to Aztlán. Kim Tallbear, an antropologist at the University of Texas, Austin and a member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate of South Dakota, laments:

“There’s a great desire by many people in the US to feel like you belong to this land. I recently moved to Texas, and many of the white people I meet say: “I’ve got a Cherokee ancestor”...That worries us in a land where we already feel there’s very little understanding of the history of our tribes, our relationships with colonial power...”<sup>6</sup>

Chicanxs are the historical product of colonialism, racism, capitalism, slavery genocide and cultural erasure. Part of the struggle to liberate Chicanxs (and all people) would inevitably incorporate the reclaiming of lost ancient ways, but this cannot overtake the struggle of Native peoples who have managed to maintain a direct connection to their deep past & present. Indigeneity is more than just genetic heritage; it is a real cultural link. And a politics based on genetic heritage begins to look more and more eugenicist.<sup>7</sup> It is unclear how the Chicano Nationalist project would differ from the sovereignty that the American Colonialists merchants (“Founding Fathers”) sought to establish from the English Crown.



la causa plan spiritual de Aztlán

### Against All Nation-States, Against the Police

The original 10-point Program of the Brown Berets includes the demand that “all officers in Mexican-American communities must live in the community and speak Spanish.”<sup>8</sup> Forty-seven year later in 2015, the LA Times reported that 45% of the LAPD force is Latino and yet relationships between the LAPD and the city it overlooks remain strained.<sup>9</sup> It could be said that at the time of the drafting of this program that this was a radical demand, but 61 years prior there is an anecdote that exemplifies that Mexican-Americans had already known another way was necessary.

8 Hecho en Aztlán, “Brown Beret Ten-Point Program” (1968)

9 LA Times, “LAPD is more diverse, but distrust in the community remains.”

5 National Brown Berets, *Our Nation Aztlán*. [Site is gone, link is cached content]

6 New Scientist, “There is no DNA test to prove you’re Native American.”

7 It is worth noting that the notion of La Raza Cósmica created by Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos (a notion widely embraced by Chicano Nationalists) is essentially Eugenicis.

“...scores of cholos jumped to their feet and started for the spot where the [LAPD] officer was supposed to be sitting. If he had been there nothing could have prevented a vicious assault and possible bloodshed”<sup>10</sup>

Now the context: Mexican-American LAPD Detective Felipe Talamantes, along with other Mexican-American LAPD Detectives, arrested three members of the P.L.M., a Mexican Anarchist-Communist organization, in Los Angeles under trumped up and false charges in 1907. At the time it was noted that it was highly possible that the LAPD detectives were working under direction of the Mexican Federal Government, then headed by dictator Porfirio Díaz. It was seen as a way to clamp down on Mexican radicals in the USA just prior to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910.

Someone in the courtroom said that Det. Talamantes might have been in attendance at a hearing resulting in the scene described above with the jumping cholos. At the time there was already a very strained relationship between the LAPD and Mexicans in Los Angeles. Consequently, there was massive support by Mexicans, Mexican-Americans and white radicals for the three anarchists. Noting that on principal, all anarchists are against the institution of the police. Throughout their imprisonment they were able to raise a remarkable \$1,950 in their defense: remarkable in light of the meager size of the contributions ranging from \$0.10 to \$3.00.<sup>11</sup> This anecdote is so telling since it mattered little to the those who supported the 3 arrested that the LAPD detectives were themselves also Mexican-American. These detectives were clearly understood to be complicit

with the white-majority which controlled the conservative power structure which was local governance at the time.

To this day Chicano National Liberation group, Unión del Barrio, advocates in Los Angeles what the Brown Berets advocated back in 1968: a Civilian Police Review Board. As the more radical elements of the Black Lives Matter movement call out for the wholesale abolition of the police, Chicano Nationalists, in their racialized myopia, fail to see and acknowledge the anti-Black origins of the police in the U.S.A.<sup>12</sup>

Fredy Perlman notes something curious about pro-nationalists and says:

“It is among people who have lost all their roots, who dream themselves supermarket managers and chiefs of police, that the national liberation front takes root; this is where the leader and general staff are formed. Nationalism continues to appeal to the depleted because other prospects appear bleaker.”<sup>13</sup>



Mugshot of Ricardo Flores Magón. Arrested by the LAPD in 1907

But what is the prospect, however bleak, the anti-state communists offer?

10 LA Times, Nov. 13th 1907

11 Edward J. Escobar, *Race, Police and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945*, p. 58

12 For further reading, see *Origins of the Police* by David Whitehouse

13 Fredy Perlman, *The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism* (1984)

## Contra el nacionalism, por el comunismo y anarquía!

Chicano nationalists often talk about “the border jumping over them” to counter the racist narrative that Mexicans are somehow invaders of what is now the American SouthWest. They rail against borders that their parents, grandparents and others have to perilously cross, yet they evidently do not desire the abolition of borders but rather desire a re-drawing of them. Anti-state communists (& anarchists) desire the wholesale abolition of borders, nation-states, capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism and work. Though of course it is a difficult push forward these measures without speaking to the experience of identity, speaking through the lens of a purely national liberationist scope is to speak in half-measures.

Mao Zedong thought, a frequent source of much National Liberation ideology, here is critique by Perlman:

“Few of the world’s oppressed had possessed any of the attributes of a nation in the recent or distant past. The Thought had to be adapted to people whose ancestors had lived without national chairmen, armies or police, without capitalist production processes and therefore without the need for preliminary capital.

These revisions were accomplished by enriching the initial [Mao Zedong] Thought with borrowings from Mussolini, Hitler and the Zionist state of Israel. Mussolini’s theory of the fulfillment of the nation in the state was a central tenet. All groups of people, whether small or large, industrial or non-industrial, concentrated or dispersed, were seen as nations, not in terms of their past, but in terms of their aura, their potentiality, a potentiality embedded in their national liberation fronts. Hitler’s (and the Zionists’) treatment of the nation as a racial entity was another central tenet. The cadres were recruited from among people deplet-

ed of their ancestors’ kinships and customs, and consequently the liberators were not distinguishable from the oppressors in terms of language, beliefs, customs or weapons; the only welding material that held them to each other and to their mass base was the welding material that had held white servants to white bosses on the American frontier; the “racial bond” gave identities to those without identity, kinship to those who had no kin, community to those who had lost their community; it was the last bond of the culturally depleted.”<sup>1</sup>

The project of supplying Chicaxs with an alternative to National Liberation, or some other false appeal to Nationhood, is one that is more necessary than ever. As radical Chicaxs who desire to truly free this world (or perhaps destroy it), we should take it upon ourselves to create the rhetoric, the movements, the history which we want to see in the world. I look forward to helping find, create and elevate such work which would fulfill this project of total liberation, not just for Chicaxs, but for oppressed people everywhere.



1 Ibid





## The Rise and Rule of the Extreme Centre

**A**fter the global electoral defeat of the leftist political parties (especially in Latin America, but also in Greece and some other places), it seemed as though we were looking at a global reign of the far right next. A certain degree that was the case, and we have seen the rise of Trump, Johnson, the Visegrád group, Bolsonaro. Given their passion for fueling brutal border regimes, maintaining white supremacy and deadly racist policing, encouraging further class divisions and repressing anarchist and antifascist activity, while more or less openly encouraging, if not directly supporting, nationalist, racist, and neo-Nazi street thugs, they definitely present a very concrete danger for everyone opposing their regime and fighting for freedom and social justice.

*The rise of support for electoral far right has, however, contributed to the formation of another nationalism feeding extreme, seemingly in their opposition, but equally dangerous, though different in its image and methodology: the rule of extreme centre.*

Its consequences are perhaps even more long-standing than classic far right politics. Namely, the extreme centre generates less rebellion, yet causes plenty of damage to our ability to achieve fundamental social change; it suck out the oxygen from social movements that are generating a subversive potential. It simply reaffirms a status quo based on the concepts of a capitalist state and nationalism. Furthermore, extreme centrists often pose themselves as an alternative to an actual far right, thus, in practice, working as an all-encompassing state apparatus, catching all forms of life. They are the true successors of the conservative anthem *There is no alternative*.

The debate on the dangers of extreme centre in territories that are under, or have just dismissed, far right governments, is of course demanding. On the one hand, we are in a situation wherein, often, only anarchists are capable of a quick or immediate response to the growing fascism. After Trump's election, civil society players were in disarray for months, while only the antifascists and anarchists had the capacity to go on the streets



and fight neo-Nazis and police immediately. On the other hand, strong repression by the state has its consequences. With many comrades wounded, imprisoned, awaiting trials, on the run, and financially crumbled from fines and court fees, and even allied civil societies broken down in what seems a complete social claustrophobia, it is understandable that anything that could offer breathing space for a social movement seems better than this. By fighting the extreme centre, we do not mean to imply that anarchism thrives better under the far right, or that we are not aware of the horrific toll their rule takes on subversive individuals, movements, and their infrastructure.

However, when it comes to the horrors of the state, there is no hierarchy, no competition, as to which faction causes the most damage to the potential of freedom. Even if something is seemingly less threatening, we must carefully explore the dangers that lie ahead. As anarchists, we must take on hard debates, especially in times when we have the attention of the wider public. Once the global extreme centre comes to power again, that political space will be gone, and we will find ourselves isolated and persecuted once more, out of public sight, with a window of opportunity for a revolutionary change gone for at least a generation.

## Building unity on the centre producing nationalism on the fringes

Extremism is always proclaimed from the position of those that hold power. Anarchism is dubbed extreme because it endangers centrist concentration of power. Extreme right is named as such because it is in the interest of those that concentrate power, to have a counter-pol to even further delegitimize subversive anarchist ideas by proclaiming them the same method on the other end of the spectrum.

Despite electoral losses on the part of traditional centrist political parties, as was witnessed for instance during the last European elections, the politics of the extreme centre – at least in Europe and the U.S. – today prevails in social and political logic. From left to right, from liberal to conservative, from political parties to human rights NGOs, everyone desires to be on the “apolitical”, neutral centre. If not in name, then in politics.

Concepts like rule of law and order, lawful border protection, responsible migration, social responsibility, compassionate policing, dialogue, unity, democratic order, rational political choice,

are all vocabulary of the new extreme, the one becoming today's zeitgeist. They all symbolize the reaffirmation of concentration of power in the state, different systems of oppression, and capital, all maintained and administered through brutal force against the growing number of those who lack resources versus those who are fighting for their ultimate control.

The Extreme centre always presents itself as the carrier of rationalism, pushing every other political concept into the territory of emotion, irrationality, political naivety. The extreme centre wants us to meet in the middle, on a seemingly neutral ground that allows for compromise, dialogue, negotiations and humility, that is supposedly leading towards respectful mutual understanding. The extreme centre is thus proclaimed as moral and ethically neutral.

As anarchists who have in the last decade participated in social movements that have put the question of democracy at the centre of their agenda, such as Occupy/Movement of the



squares, we should be careful when we encounter those phrases and remember our historical experiences. Wherever the assemblies waded on achieving negotiated compromise, rather than building their power out of affinity groups, we have witnessed how the most subversive ideas and methods were pushed out of the movement (usually connected with the condemnation of militant direct action). It all led to the process of painful self-neutralization that brought down a whole generation of disillusioned comrades who got radicalized during Occupy/Movement of the Squares but vanished after its defeat.

If, in the context of establishing the extreme centre neutral means not taking sides, that is not an option for anyone who aspires to revolutionary change. If dialogue means the speech of those who concentrate power, against the speech of those who are robbed of the power to take it back, then it is not a dialogue, it is oppression. If humility is to be shown towards those who concentrate power to oppress, then it is not humility, it is humiliation. If respect means kneeling to authority, then it is not respect, it is repression.

Let us take a look at the case of the extreme centre in the Balkans. Slovene two-term (social-democrat) president Borut Pahor runs on the agenda of historical reconciliation, both in relations to the question of civil war in Slovenia between the pro-Nazi quisling army and leftist partisans, a subchapter of World War II, and the question of the Balkan wars during the 1990s. As much as it is important to remember and acknowledge all victims and acts of war, we must not mistake that with victimization of the pro-Nazi units, and the decontextualization of the situation. By advocating a blank and absolute historical reconciliation, the Slovene president is actively, if not directly, opening a political space in which public relativization of fascist politics and its material effects becomes possible, and global historical

consensus around fascism becomes forgotten. He is advocating a similar political compromise, and unity as the highest value of politics, when it comes to contemporary political parties as well, including those that actively participated in the “liberation” of Slovenia, which ignited the war for independence that was followed by nationalist civil wars and bloodshed in other republics of former Yugoslavia in the ‘90s. Unity in the centre enables public acceptance and normalization of the electoral far right, establishes ground for maintenance of social status quo, and moves the entire political spectrum to the right. Through this sort of unification, the concept of what is *political* shrinks; it allows for public denunciation, ignorance and especially repression of every anti-parliamentarian subversive activity. What is seen as building a centre, in effect becomes the dangerous extreme, dressed as a reasonable alternative to the rising far right’s policies.

Unity in the centre, which defines the mainstream political agenda, brings the final blow to every social movement. Under Trump, people in the U.S. rose up against the police, went as far in community self-defense as to create and maintain autonomous police-free zones, managed to ignite a mainstream discussion about abolishing the police, and brought the territory of the so-called United States to the brink of revolutionary momentum, with the state unable to take control for weeks and months. The subsequent electoral unification of the ruling class (Democrats and moderate Republicans) behind Biden had a clear message. Trump became a no longer useful tool and is therefore an acceptable victim in the process of maintaining business as usual. In less than a year, discussion went from abolishing the police to de-funding the police, and then back to reforming the police by directing more funding to them, and finally to celebrating the police as victims who gave their lives on January 6 to stop the rise of fascism.



## Every Nationalist Move is Legal

After 9/11 and the subsequent global war on terror, resulting in numerous open wars and shadow wars, mainly in the Middle East, the politics of the extreme centre were seen as reasonable answer to what was conceived of as the need for the preservation of Western values. If the response to attacks in the West by the far right was bluntly open nationalism and racism (closing borders, hatred for minorities, travel bans, racist policing, racial profiling etc.), the extreme centre invented bureaucratic justification to produce the same nationalistic political result.

In 2015, the European Schengen border regime effectively fell apart as a result of the struggles of migrants; they brought down an entire border regime and it took European Union days to re-establish it. Slovenia's government, led by the Party of Modern Centre, set up kilometers of barbed NATO wire on its southern border. They called

them obstacles for the movement; they wanted to assure legal migration through appropriate procedures. In practice, that meant that they pushed people to crossing on the most dangerous parts of the border, killing many in the process. Slovenia remained one of the countries in the EU with lowest number of people granted asylum due to its severe legislature. When in 2020 the far-right government of Janez Janša came to power, they did not need to change anything. The system of almost airtight migration policy was already in place.

Denmark is a similar story, currently run by a social-democratic government. It recently accepted legislation that enables the deportation of migrants to offshore camps (for instance, in Africa), thus legally preventing the return of the deported who might otherwise try to free themselves and seek asylum in another European country.

Due to its liberal standard and commitment to compromise in the middle, the extreme centre recognizes every extreme (except their own) as a threat to their rule. As they often run as a rational alternative to far-right electoral politics, they have a tendency to create laws and increase police authority to battle neo-Nazi online and street groups. They similarly often campaign on the concept of fighting against hate speech on social media. Because they view extremism of any kind as a threat to their rule, they create procedures against extremism in general, and not against specific fascist politics, which is how they present their policies in public. As a result, measures taken against the far right in reality affect anarchist and anti-fascists as well (or only). When Facebook recently accepted new rules to fight hate speech, for instance, it banned several anarchist and antifascist sites, including CrimethInc., SubMedia, Redneck Revolt, etc. The extreme centre always searches for bureaucratic solutions to the issues endangering their rule under the theme of “rule of law and order.”

The COVID-19 pandemic became the perfect playground to test the extreme-centrist politics of control and nationalism in practice. The Labour leader of New Zealand, celebrated for the successful fight there against the virus, is a good

example that shows how anti-pandemic measures were – Instead of collective care, protection of the most vulnerable, and effective fighting against a dangerous virus – full of measures that even more bluntly showed all global inequalities and established a system of control never witnessed before. The three pillars of the fight against the pandemic were nationalism (closing into the borders of states), fear (of the other, who carries the disease), and capitalist exploitation (working from home for those that can afford it thanks to the work of those who cannot).

### **Non-centrist Future**

We are living in the era marking the end of the historical compromise between the ruling and working class, which in Europe resulted in the formation of the welfare state. As the access to resources is shrinking due to climate change, ecological catastrophes, wars, and capitalist exploitation, the formulation of a new definition of community is underway. If left to the rule of statist elements, be that extreme-right, extreme-centre, or any other parliamentary option, the majority of people will continue to be forced to live on the margins of society in ever more deteriorating conditions.



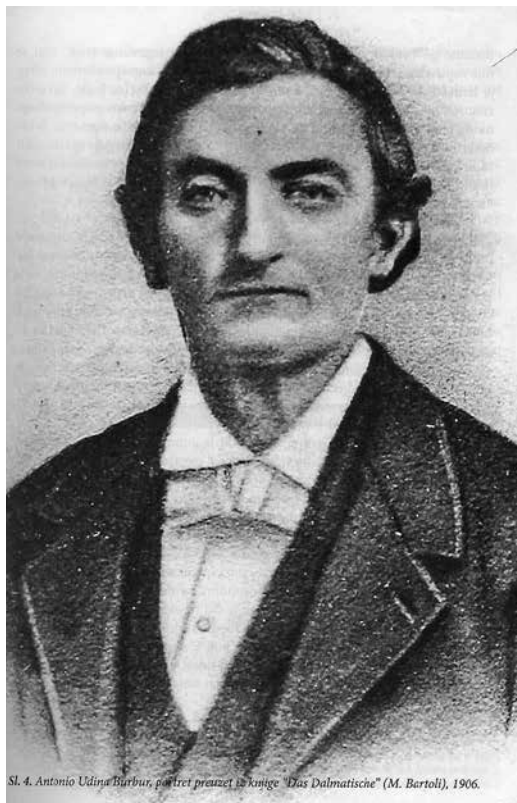
## Psamtik's Children or Which Language Will The Revolution Speak

Nina Čolović

There is a belief that for some languages it is possible to determine a specific date, as well as the immediate cause of death. This type of forensic investigation has been carried out on the island of Krk in the case of Vegliotic, a dialect of the Dalmato-Romance language, whereby the last speaker Tuone Udaina Burbur was killed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1898, in a mine explosion during the construction of a local road. In 1897 linguist Matteo Bartoli started interviewing Udaina and writing down rhymes, phrases and memories in Vegliotic.

They came from a not-so-reliable speaker who had not used the language for twenty years. The search for a language taking its dying breath is more a matter of building up some form of a memory of the language, scraping up lullabies, nursery rhymes, stories and lingering words from the bottom of the stomach, because language dries up right before the passing of those who knew it hitherto, at the moment when conversations and other forms of communication between speakers dry up. The death of a lan-

guage occurs with the death of speech collectives, the disintegration of speech interaction and speech networks, and reports on deaths seldom mention accidental and unfortunate circumstances. As early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, other varieties of Dalmato-Romance, which were also spoken on the island of Rab, in Zadar, Split, Dubrovnik, Ulcinj, Budva and other coastal settlements, faded into toponyms, substrates of the Chakavian dialect and the parts of fishermen and maritime nomenclature, supplanted by Venetian, and Vegliotic, later on, replaced by Italian and South Slavic idioms. That the birth and death of a language has nothing to do with the chance and the natural occurrences can be seen on the examples of two languages into which Dalmato-Romance and its Vegliotic dialect would be drowned. With the unification of the Apennine States, the Florentine Tuscan was selected in a dialectically disintegrated area in 1861 to be elaborated into standard Italian language, while New Shtokavian was imagined into four standard varieties (in four nation-states); Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian and Montenegrin



Sl. A. Antonio Udina Burbur, portret preuzet iz knjige "Das Dalmatische" (M. Bartoli), 1906.

Tuone Udaina Burbur

(BCSM), and thirty years earlier into Croato-Serbian/Serbo-Croatian (in Yugoslavia). Dalmato-Romance, Venetian, BCSM and Italian are a testament to various wounds, inflicted in certain historic, economic and political contexts, and caused by (structural and later planned) modelling of speech networks in line with religious, imperial/colonial and state policies and interests. The paper explores the modes and methods of exploitation, structuring and regulation of speech networks as resources and tools in the construction of ethnic groups, as well as historic and contemporary (nation) states. It also questions the role of standardisation in anarchistic, emancipatory perspectives (if such a role even exists), or those that aim to be as so, with a view of different objectives and contexts of their formation and implementation.

## How and Why were Standard Languages Created

Unlike the Venetian language, which was used to define customs duties, calculate taxes and process the cost of Levantine spices, cotton and silk, Dalmato-Romance languages were languages without (recorded) literacy. The basic conditions for the creation, consolidation and functioning of religions, empires and states are created through the development and use of writing, whose primary tasks were to serve the economic interests of landowners and merchants, to write down Rigvetic hymns, Quran's Ayats and Old Testament Commandments, and, at the same time, to expand the will of God's regents on Earth onto each subject in every part of the administered land, even the farthest one. Recording merchants' debt or keeping track of grain supply by a special way of knotting cotton strings (*quipu*, used by the Inca), or reciting bigger chunks of religious texts was replaced by practical and complex possibilities of recording and organising ideas and economic relations.

"(I)n the Old World the economic, administrative, political and ideological functions of writing were indispensable for focusing the emergent power of the dominating elite. (W)riting makes the qualitative leap from potters' marks and other simple inscriptional techniques to a fully-fledged, flexible recording system when the elite institutionalizes its power as the state: centralized, transcendent and usually unchallengeable, except by other states or strong factions within the elite" (Maisels 1999: 247). In comparison to pictograms and ideograms, forming potentially endless and not so systemized sign circuits, which could vary from situation to situation, and were limited by scope and usability of the material they were recorded on (stones, shells, clay bowls), a minimal and (depending on the developmental phase, more or less) unified inventory of graphemes allowed for



the unbound creativity, as well as high uniformity of use, in the design of messages. Writing guaranteed permanence, verifiability and an upgrading of information that could be retained, updated and elaborated no matter the passage of time or, equally, their filtering, organisation and interpretation in line with the type and form of continuity that was necessary to be produced in order to raise, cast off and carry forward certain forms of economic, imperial, state and/or religious power.



*Quipu strings*

The spoken nature of language means that it is constantly changing and diverging. Language migrates together with its speakers, it merges and accumulates different experiences of speakers in different spaces, as well as different impacts and experiences conceptualized by it and involved in communication. Change slowdown and stabilisation, and at the same time the control of linguistic forms, are a result of the expansion of writing and its evolution, spread forth with the invention of the printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when linguistic structures were torn from material circumstances and situations in which they get produced; they are torn from speech practice in which linguistic structures are formed and in which they become intelligible. By alienating language from speech, the letter made it possible to overcome time and space, to bind and intertwine linguistic, and with them cultural, signs

into a mystified narrative of longevity and history, ingrained into associated religious groups, peoples, nations and states.

To understand how the written language was pulled away from speech and how this has enabled it to grow into the fabric of ethnic groups, nations and countries, it is necessary to go back to the first level of alienation, the original separation by which language was taken from its material conditions in the process of its creation. In order to be able to create shared knowledge, language had to be removed from the singular communicative events and variations led by interests and goals of individual speakers. At the same time, abandoning not only individuals, but also entire groups of disenfranchised speakers as a result of the social and, above all, class stratification of the collective. In the tensions of dissonant speech practice, those forms of speech work (i.e. *speech as work*) that are attributed to the organization and survival of the community are sharpened, by distilling speech practices into condensates that make that organization more systematic, economical and efficient. Speech work is evaluated by regulatory (vertical) hierarchies that are in place in various social and economic contexts, and which evaluate in what form and how it can be useful for the distribution of other tangible and intangible resources that are conceptualized and transmitted by that work. By repetitively gathering and legitimising certain speech practices, joint work of non-harmonious, mutually opposing, conflicting interventions has created contours and mechanisms necessary for the creation of speech networks which will bring about the collectively shaped and collectively consumed knowledge. Contrary to Chomsky, whose transformational-generative grammar is based on the idea that linguistic competence is the ability to generate a set of grammatically validated sentences off which it is possible to peel the burden of their performance and the layers of history, empirical (corpus) linguistics asserts

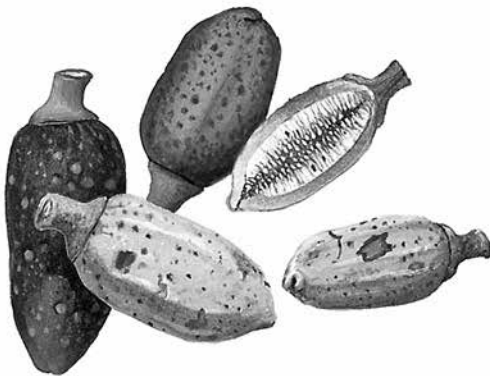
that no speaker possesses all the pieces of the puzzle. Rather, language is complemented (never perfected) in transformative dynamics of exchange and interaction with other speakers.

The first is a form of separation by the first level of sedimentation or the inflow of language knowledge (or **language as knowledge**). The insights considered essential to its existence and functioning in a historical, economic, and geographical context were stored by the speaking collective (which grew out of speech interactions) into linguistic structures and constructions. For example, the toponyms *Mur j* (> Vegl. *Murái* <Lat. *Moretum*, 'place where mulberry grows') and *Sarak jt* (<Vegl. *Saracáit* <Lat. *Ceresetum* 'place where cherries grow') have been preserved (Spicijarić Paškvan 2014), and are a testament to particular fruits that grew in particular parts of Krk. In BCSM languages genitive or accusative is telling of whether slices or whole loaves of bread are necessary (*to give of bread* or *to give bread*), while in the Aboriginal language, a special grammatical ending (noun class) indicates whether a certain plant is edible or not, so that the food gatherers would know what to collect in the forest (ripe fruits of *Ficus pleurocarpa* belong to this category (*balam gabi*), unlike when the referent is the peel, which is cut for producing

covers, in that case bearing another morphological mark (*bala gabi*) (Dixon 2015), or Venezuelan piroa language in which noun classifiers give out features which are grammatically attributed to various botanical phenomena (*isose*, 'hard, empty shell', *isot'a*, 'spherical fruit', *isot'æ*, 'fat, woody vine', Bates et al. 2009).

This is knowledge that is not known by only one narrow, controlled circle of people, but knowledge that a large speaking collective is familiar with because it has been invaluable for survival. It was collaboratively constructed and available to all speakers, and is existent without any intentional, subsequent interventions by academic and state institutions. However, the initial detachment of language from speech practices is no less oppressive than that which will move it miles and centuries away from the concrete speech situations in which it arose; negotiating the structure and use of shared resources meant approximating (averaging) speech practices (not all possible speech practices, but building cross-sections of those into which symbolic and material power is injected within a collective), reducing phenomena, relationships and experiences to their schematized models (*isot'a* says that it is a "spherical fruit" rejecting a whole array of other possible semantic components associated with the fruit), as well as the hierarchical organization of extracted conceptual fragments (core meanings and forms govern the conceptual branching of the categories they occupy, so 'spherical fruit' attracts further visual properties of the fruit to its semantic structure to the detriment of, for example, olfactory connotations or information related to the place and methods of cultivation or the mode of ripening).

When the branching of literacy (whereby literacy in Egypt and Mesopotamia was primarily a prerogative of specially educated castes in the service of rulers and temples), through which also the economic, administrative and religious



fruits of *Ficus pleurocarpa*

activities are carried out, allowed the acquisition of certain epistemic sediments (language), the preconditions for their elaboration, spreading and control were laid down. Selectively grabbed and transferred knowledge from different speech contexts to repetitive and literal writings would be distributed between complementary and interconnected domains of state and economic business. Specializations of individual domains are developed together with language specialization, which will be the root of today's idea of the functional division of language, whereby language standardization should 'cultivate' different functions of language (according to the needs of institutions, and then speech collectives, but only to the extent they need it to communicate with these institutions), and whereby the collected epistemic material is broken down by institutional domains, establishing a specific distribution of speech work: how institutional domains will organize that knowledge and which patterns (speech work and related forms of work) they will impose. By elaborating ownership, trade, cultural and diplomatic relations, individual domains in charge of managing different aspects of the organization of work and life build different orders of linguistic (epistemic) structures that serve the specific managing purposes or to specific ways of speaking. Here, language is imposed as the basic epistemic layer whose development and 'cultivation' enabled the construction of administrative, economic, agrarian and cultural knowledge to be managed by specially educated elites, from Babylonian and Egyptian scribes to present day professors and academics. It has become established with the earliest countries that the basic precondition for the direction of economic and political activities is the education and appointment of a special group of scholars (once scribes, today national philologists; Croatian, Serbian, English, Russian specialists) responsible for managing the most basic skill; for establishing control over language in order to be

able to establish control over what knowledge and how it shall be produced. (The intertwining of language with script and text will lead to the terms *književni jezik*, "literary language" in BCSM, *Schriftsprache*, "written language" in German as synonyms for standard language.) The beginnings of the school system and organised education therefore do not coincidentally emerge with the establishment of this specialised caste, with the creation of writing schools in Nippur or Ur in southern Mesopotamia, having in mind that these schools needed to make sure that the collected raw material, the collected epistemic layer generated by the work of speech collectives and speech networks (speech collectives in permeation and intertwining), gets neatly and consistently reworked and shaped by developing institutional interests in a certain area; from city-states to imperial colonies (with the expansion of the occupied land and the population whose work had to be controlled).

While the collectivization of language knowledge inevitably means moving away from situational and contextually related speech actions, the distance in the second detachment between language and speech is created by the privatization of language achieved by its institutionalization; by institutionally encouraged and maintained awareness of language as a written phenomenon and by using writing to model and direct the linguistic (fundamental epistemic) resources and other forms of knowledge shaped by it and in it. These pre-standardisation processes can be divided into two parts; the canonisation phase and the vernacularisation phase.

The second detachment of language from the speech work is the continuation and elaboration of the first one. Grabbed forms and structures, born out of conflicting and unequally valued speech practices, already averaged, schematized and made hierarchical, are refined in such a way that priority is given to those forms and structures

that dictate the ways of averaging, schematization and hierarchization. The forms and structures that acquire a certain dose of symbolic and material power within speech collectives and networks are raised by a lever of now recognizable and comprehensive (institutional) jaws to scribes' tables, administrative writings or religious books. This pre-standardization phase (before the emergence and mass spreading of the printing press) can be called **canonization**, because forms and structures are filtered and sharpened by creating and collecting functionally similar or comparable texts that establish similarities and reflections between these forms and structures, either by consistently appearing together in the same text or network of texts (by sharing place) or by resembling each other (by analogy or metaphor). Bundles of forms and structures are bound into linguistic canons integral to literary, philosophical, religious canons; as the texts worthy and necessary of learning were selected, multiplied, categorized, interpreted and reinterpreted, so were selected, multiplied, categorized, interpreted and reinterpreted, reciprocally checked, corrected and affirmed the worthy language constructions. Linguistic and textual canonization enable and follow each other. As Davis shall demonstrate (1998: 9), "(...) copying and archiving are the very stuff of canonizing. (...) A work becomes canonized (a) by being preserved by copying until its status as a classic is ensured; and b) by being classified as belonging to a collection of some kind. Scrolls can be canons in their own right, but multiple scrolls need to be archived: that means labelling and sorting in a certain order". Canonical status is consolidated and confirmed by actions such as exegesis, teaching or critical evaluation, processes traditionally associated with canons. Forms and structures are repeated from text to text, and their outlining from manuscript to manuscript creates patterns, canonical languages suitable for the accommodation and socialisation of certain ideas in a certain political context; Classical Babylonian on the shoulders of the Old Babylonian idioms, forged by

the Epic of Gilgamesh, or the literary canon of the Greek epic with the Homeric language of the Ionian and other, once spoken, Greek dialects.

Canonical forms were imposed by deities, celestial and earthly, authorities of God, rulers and academia (with writing schools as its predecessors), whose continuity, together with that of the linguistic structures and forms that would direct the interpretation and limits of their understanding, had to be assured by the continuity of their texts. The selected parts of language knowledge were edited and reviewed from text to text in order to achieve the meanings that could be gathered into ideas that the 'big narratives' aimed to offer. Sometimes, these practices would move away from the living speech exchange to the extent that desirable forms and structures would stretch so far as to act with a pen and continue to do so long after speech use ceased, so that, for instance, extinct Sumerian was used as a diplomatic and literary language in Akkadian Assyria by the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, and Latin for a long time in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe. In contrast to the Akkadian, which no longer circulated in speech networks, speaking practices in Latin turned and moved away from deadened Latin letters to living forms of the so-called vulgar Latin; "Though exemplified in Caesar's histories and Cicero's essays and speeches, it was a language spoken by virtually no one. (...) And while the natural, spoken language continued to flourish and to change somewhat from generation to generation, as it always had, Classical Latin, once fixed, remained frozen in time, the same in 950 or 1950 C.E. as in 50 B.C.E." (Solodow 2001: 108). The examples of Sumerian in Assyria or of modern Latin in Europe point out to more radical disparities in relation to the practices of active speech collectives, by adopting a dead idiom (making public communication and coping in all aspects of life, regulated by this communication, even more inaccessible). But, the time of spoken and written production (which can never be fully synchronized due to the tendency of the

letter to slow down, stabilize) in canonization is in the opposite, regressive gap since the text does not lag behind the experience of future readers whose language has changed over time, but is dusty and obsolete already at the time of its creation, whether some particular meanings or semantic characteristics of old forms and structures are withdrawn from the past, or just the breath of those times has been extracted from mothballs to creep into sentences ensuring their echoes in what is yet to be recorded. By moving towards the past (that is, its canonized form by transforming it into a systematic historiographic text), the connection between the work of speech collectives and the products of that work is broken; and this is because there are no more speech collectives that would continue to develop and transform the accumulated knowledge (as in the case of Sumerian) or because enough time has passed to erase the memory of the existence of that link (as in the case of Ionian and other Greek dialects that erected and fortified Homer's Troy and Ithaca).

Oblivion is at the heart of the social contract that attributes language as a knowledge to those who claim it to belong to them by divine, royal, state, and/or academic law. Speech collectives, which are not or are not fully aware how their work is related to the knowledge that is often abused to structure the circumstances and forms of their



*Troy I*

everyday life, cannot redirect, deny or reverse this work towards the release and appropriation of generated knowledge. Because of that, the oblivion is relentlessly encouraged, diving further into the past and into ever more closed and cleansed texts.

In contrast to modern standard languages, which present themselves as relatively compact and uniform structures (German, Finnish, or Mandarin), and which are subsequently differentiated and arranged into distinct and intertwined functional domains (the language of administration, literature, science, media), canonization does not know compactness and uniformity, but is bothered with individual functional domains (administrative, legal), that are loosely connected and there is still no interest in their structured merging. The Old Church Slavonic language, the first written (canonical) Slavic language (recorded in Glagolitic, and later in Cyrillic script), was made for the purpose of creating a liturgy in Slavic languages (based on a Macedonian dialect from the Thessaloniki area).

In 863 brothers Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius from Constantinople set out to baptize Slavs, at the invitation of the Moravian prince Rastislav of the Mojmirovic dynasty, with the first translations of the ritual and biblical texts, whereby the Moravian principality in alliance with Byzantium saw a way to prevent the influx of books and



*Cyril and Methodius*

missionaries from the Frankish empire to Slavic countries from the west (Sesar 1996). The manuscripts and translations of the Gospels, church books, didactic and legal texts (“Zakona sudnyj ljudem”, “Nomocanon”) have been preserved in Old Church Slavonic, honing the religious and legislative reach of the Church and Slavic rulers.



Zakona sudnyj ljudem

Considering prakrits (ancient Indian languages), Ollett (2017: 3), notes that “(t)o ask “What is Prakrit?” is not just to ask what it is like, but to ask how, by whom, and for what purpose Prakrit was ‘posited’ as a language over the course of its history.” The prakrit canonical languages of literature gathered and expanded the power of the court (“Seven Hundred Verses”, “Ravana’s Curse” in Maharashti) and religious doctrine (Buddhist texts written in Pali or Magahdi) (*ibid*: 8). Greek *koiné* (κοινός, “common”), which stretched from the Ancient Greece to the wider Greek-speaking

area, and then with Alexander’s conquests in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC onto the Mediterranean and parts of the Asian continent, adhering to the language of literature, the Old Testament postulates of the Septuagint (translation created from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC), administrative and legislative provisions to control the newly acquired country (Rodríguez Adrados 2005), could seem as an exception to the canonization, but it should be differentiated from modern standard languages primarily by the lack of planned regulation of language knowledge. *Koiné*, like other canonical languages, crystallizes by accumulating, storing, organizing and validating a set of domain-specific texts, that are yet to be sewn together and structured by explicit codifications and policies.



The consolidation of functional domains would begin with the second pre-standardisation period, **vernacularisation**, with the onset of printing, the Reformation, and imperial appetites. It will last from the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when vernacularized canons were affected by standardization. It should be noted that canonization and vernacularisation, as periodization macrophases, are

theoretical projections that serve to shed light on the roots and motives of standardization as a sociolinguistic phenomenon, which in more precise temporal and spatial determinants requires more precise demarcations, so its tendencies at various places even a century or two earlier (for instance, in editions and reviews of Old Slavonic texts in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries). Geopolitical maps of Europe and the world from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards were effected by religious conflicts, wars and colonial expansions, dissolving the centralized structures of the Catholic Church in Europe and discontinuing imperial territories across the Atlantic and Pacific, leading to the need to strengthen and develop bureaucratization in centres of power, seats of monarchies and early modern states.

In contrast to the canonization to which speech collectives serve as mines from which a continuous influx of knowledge arrives, needing to be filtered, processed and used in order to satisfy the thirst of the elite who enjoys the exclusivity of knowledge and the truths hidden in the esotericism of their language, vernacularisation opens the shells of canonical languages so that they could speak to the people, “serfdom born in masters’ houses” (the meaning of the Latin *verna*, hence etymologically the term “vernacular”; *vernaculus*, “domestic”). Vernacularisation does not occur by coincidence at the time of the establishment of a different kind of slavery, with the transition of feudal to capitalist relations, where the former serfdom, freed from their land and the means of production, needed to be pinned to the walls of the master’s house with different methods. Latin, which linked the European aristocracy and clergy, and excluded peasants and labourers, could not provide the shift from the Church and the authority of the ruler to the political and economic arrangements that would integrate land and population outside the growing state boundaries, anaesthetising class and social differences. The vernacularisa-

tion is a two-way process, yet not a dialogue: while canonization was interested only in the exploitation of the produced linguistic material, not bothering much with the speakers, as they paid their tithes and feudal aids, vernacularisation created the so-called “people’s languages”, applying Latin, Greek, Old Church Slavonic models on the contemporary, living speech work (later on, models from more established, prestigious vernaculars such as German or French for the creation of the new ones). Vernacularisation reaches out for the membranes of classical phonological, grammatical and lexical structures, forged and elaborated over centuries to accommodate, shape and transmit discourses and ideologies relevant to the maintenance of elites, to coat and tighten freshly collected speech material. The connection of Polish or South Slavic Chakavian with Proto-Slavic, or the echoes of Latin in Romanian or Italian (genetically related languages) are not unusual in developmental terms, whereby the relative chronology of the transition from one phonological or morphological form to another can be regularly reconstructed. In contrast to the phonological, grammatical and lexical changes resulting from the dynamics of speech exchange, transplanting the ossified membranes of classical languages into the torn segments of speech use is reflected in the processes such as, among other things, calquing (the literal translation) of the grammatical and lexical constructions or attributing canonical morphological and syntactic characteristics to the detached speech segments (for instance, attaching the classical grammatical morpheme on the spoken lexeme or the spoken grammatical morpheme on the classical lexeme (for e.g. the comparative of the adjective *jun-iji* ili *mlad-ě* in Old Church Slavonic texts (Damjanović 2005: 53)). Vernacular exploitation of the speech work no longer needed transcription and archiving, because the patterns and mechanisms by which the torn knowledge would be processed and solidified have already been unravelled and

polished in Latin and ancient Greek books and grammars.<sup>1</sup>

The transplantation of classical structures into the phonologies, grammars and vocabularies of the European speech idioms in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century did not take place in a vacuum, in isolated linguistic sections. Since linguistic canons were built and maintained by the production of textual canons and vice versa, text was still relatively controlled as an ideal arena for experimentation; where linguistic forms and structures remain engaged in disciplining text and text in disciplining linguistic forms and structures. In the vernacular period, the canonical scribes would be replaced by translators, with the translation as the fundamental place where the language of common people merges with the language of the Church and the state. Given that vernacularisation is preceded by a heterogeneous mix of dialects, regional and local dialects, it is not possible to talk about a technical and horizontal transfer of language forms and structures from the source language A to the target language B (if these are the determinants that can ever be attributed to any translation anywhere), whereby both idioms would be recognizable and equal to each other. Rather, it is about the active construction and dedicated carving of the language B. The construction of language B took place by selecting certain aspects of speech use and their elabora-

tion according to prestigious canonical models. The borders and structure of translation were controlled by lexicography, then a newly formed philological profession, derived from the sporadic practice of systematizing word meanings and forms on the margins or in glossaries of religious and literary writings. The material of the first dictionaries and grammars (as separate books) was almost as a rule bilingual or multilingual, organized mainly according to the principle Latin – vernacular or vernacular – Latin (e.g. Nebri’s Spanish “*Dictionarium latinum-hispanum* et *hispanum-latinum*” from 1492 or Vrančić’s “*Dictionarium quinque nobilissimarum Europae linguarum Latinae, Italicae, Germanicae, Dalmatiae et Ungaricae*” from 1595, in which Hungarian and Croatian national lexicographies claim their origins).

1 The persistence of the application of classical language patterns still characterizes many standard languages today. Hall (1950: 15) gives examples from English; the verb to be should be followed by an indirect object (It is I), although the use of direct object (It is me) is common in colloquial usage, accompanied by Latin in which only *sum ego* is possible, not \* *sum me*. Directness / indirectness measures the distance of an object from the action by which it is affected, where the distance between the actor and the action increases in the Latin model. The imperative of avoiding double negation has the same roots, where for example Latin *non nihil* meaning “not nothing” - or “something” - is a part of the logical structure of standard English, although double negation as a way of annulling a claim is an integral element of speech use (ibid: 17).



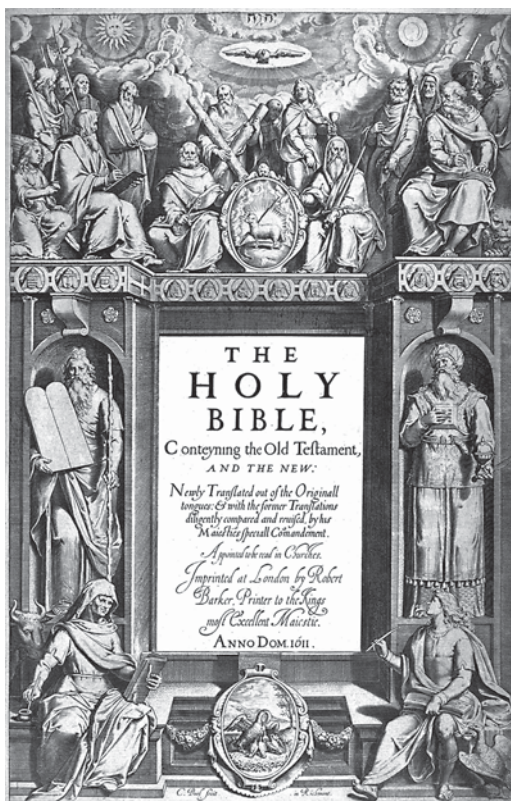
*Dictionarium latinum-hispanum et hispanum-latinum*



With the advent of the printing press in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (i.e. after the 16<sup>th</sup> century incunabula phase), the text could be published and distributed in a significantly larger number of copies, overcoming the previously limited circle of readership. The interests of printing capitalism (as Anderson writes in 1983/1998: 47) would correspond to those of religion (from Gutenberg's Latin Bible of 1455, Mentelin's in High German from 1466, to the Old Church Slavonic "Missal according to the Law of the Roman Court" of 1483, the incunabula to which Croatian philology relates itself, or the Albanian "Meshariah" of 1555). As reformers wanted to spread the doctrine of faith to more and more people, the printing industry was also striving to extend its consumer reach in order to promote the wide consumption of texts as a new kind of consumer good among the new merchant and educated classes. The bound of the Reformation and print production is enabled by shifting of authority of religious instruction from the clergy to the biblical text itself, in its translated and adapted versions (Wright 2010: 26); anyone who could read (and had access to the books) could learn from the copy at hand. Due to competitive interpretations of the Bible in the reformist and counter-reformist aspirations in religious campaigns on European and colonized soil, and to the conflicts between Protestant and Catholic aristocracy, lexicographic and translation practices, instead of priests, regulated the direction and manner of reading religious texts, and with that the borders and modalities of comprehension and production of text, and thus the limits and modalities of comprehension and production of linguistic forms and structures. By making religious education available to the somewhat larger part of the population, direct contact with religious texts was achieved, and where literacy was not achieved, sermons and public readings of excerpts from vernacularized texts were organized. In 1522, in the translation of the New Testament, as in 1534, in the complete translation of the Vulgate, Luther selected

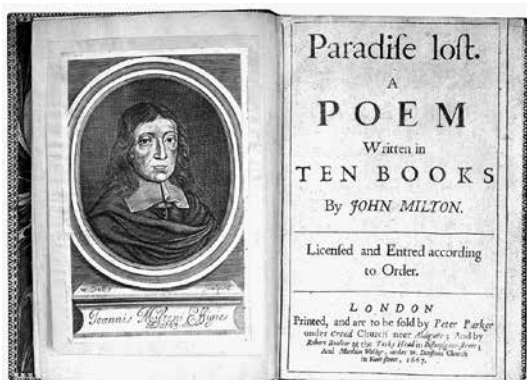
the Upper Saxon dialects for the construction of language of the German Bible, determining the direction of later standardization of German to be based on that linguistic material. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Czech national revivalists would return to the Bible of Kralice (1593) as the "golden age of Czech language and literature" in the standardization of the Czech language (Sesar 1996: 30), and modern English would be outlined by the King James's Bible (1611) as much as the works of Shakespeare and Milton.

According to Febvre's and Martin's (as they say, conservative) calculations (1958/1976: 262), 150 000-200 000 editions were printed during the 16<sup>th</sup> century alone (with data for Paris, Lyons, England, Germany, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium), when each edition could be pre-



King James Bible

pared in 1000 copies (which would mean 150-200 million individual copies) (ibid.), a leap that greatly exceeded the conditions and potentials of the production of manuscripts. Sanders (2010: 120) notes that "One hundred thousand copies of Luther's translation of the New Testament were printed in Wittenberg alone during his lifetime." In areas influenced by the Eastern Church, which was not affected by the Reformation, certain components of canonization and vernacularisation would be amalgamed by the growth of vernaculars in cities such as Minsk, Kiev and Moscow, with handwriting, copying practices still sustained until the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Sesar 1996: 96).



Milton, *Paradise lost*, first edition

The loss of territory and the dominance on the Mediterranean market to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire since the 15<sup>th</sup> century (the conquests of Thessaloniki in 1430, Constantinople in 1453, Cairo in 1517, Crete in 1669), curtailed the corridor of European empires to the unexplored shores of Africa and the newly discovered continents, in search of further strongholds of Christianity and the economy. Standard languages with their vernacular pre-phase are produced on the European soil, and then exported to other continents with colonial armies and administrations. Most standardized languages today can be found largely in Europe ("(...) the standardization criterion (is) completely useless in compiling a list of world languages: its use in Africa

and much of Asia would show that inhabitants of these continents do not speak languages at all...", Matasović 2001: 17). Vernacularisation and standardization are part of colonial ventures that have drastically altered the linguistic map of the world, no less devastating than other forms of cultural appropriation and violence.<sup>2</sup> Out of today's 6 000 to 7 000 idioms attributed language status in linguistic descriptions (variations stem from methodological inconsistencies, including the inability to make a clear distinction between what should be counted as a language and what as a dialect), only 4% can be found in Europe, the poorest linguistic region (largely a result of standardization, implemented consistently in all three of its phases), about 15% of the world's languages managed to survive in South and North America, 31% in Africa and the other 50% in Asia, Australia and Oceania (Matasović 2005).

Colonial powers have tried to apply the same procedure used to create European vernaculars to the languages of Africa, South and North America and Australia. If Indo-European dialects could be crumbled into the Latin-Greek models of grammatical cases or verb tenses, missionaries believed, then they should be able to do the same with Navajo, Cherokee, Comanche, Malagasy, Fulbe or Congo. Similar to the Dalmatian language on the Adriatic coast, many African,

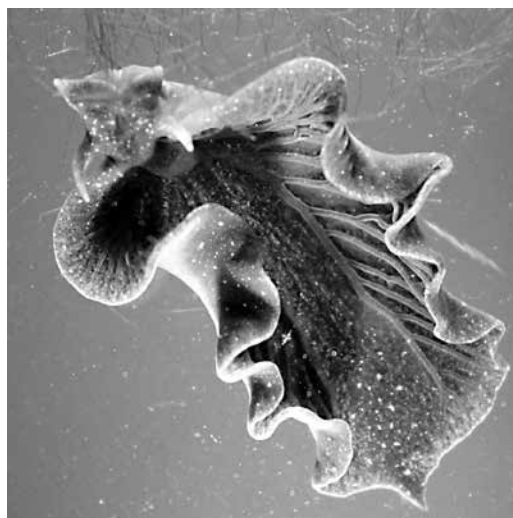
2 At the very end of the 19th century Milivoj Šrepel writes about the tasks of philology, in the way which is eerily reminiscent of its bourgeois, colonial and racist legacy: "As the real field of philology is language and its literature, it goes without saying that there can be no philology where there is no literature. The nation which does not have literature cannot have its own philology. Samoyeds, Hottentots, all peoples ancient or modern, who for some reason could not or did not know how to get rid of primitive cruelty and natural barbarism or leave a work of literary significance, can be interesting subjects for anthropologists, ethnographers, historians, historians, economists, a philosopher, a linguist, but not a philologist. Philologists are only interested in educated peoples who have left clear traces of their culture in preserved written works." (from „Klasična filologija: Uputa u pojedine struke klasične filologije“, Matica hrvatska 1899) (italics mine).

American and Australian languages have not had developed or preserved literacy (where literacy existed, as in the Mayan context (where few records managed to survive to this day), manuscripts were often destroyed), thus no written stories and culture; ideas about how these cultures should look like would be carved according to the interests and standards of European philologies with their graphemes, tools and categories. From the rupture of the Latin-Greek models, which distended and disintegrated on the European spoken idioms, let alone on historically, typologically and areally different, though no less demanding languages, descriptive methods were derived to enable and systematize the translation of religious texts for Christinization purposes.



*Arte de grammatica da lingoa mais usada na costa do Brasil*

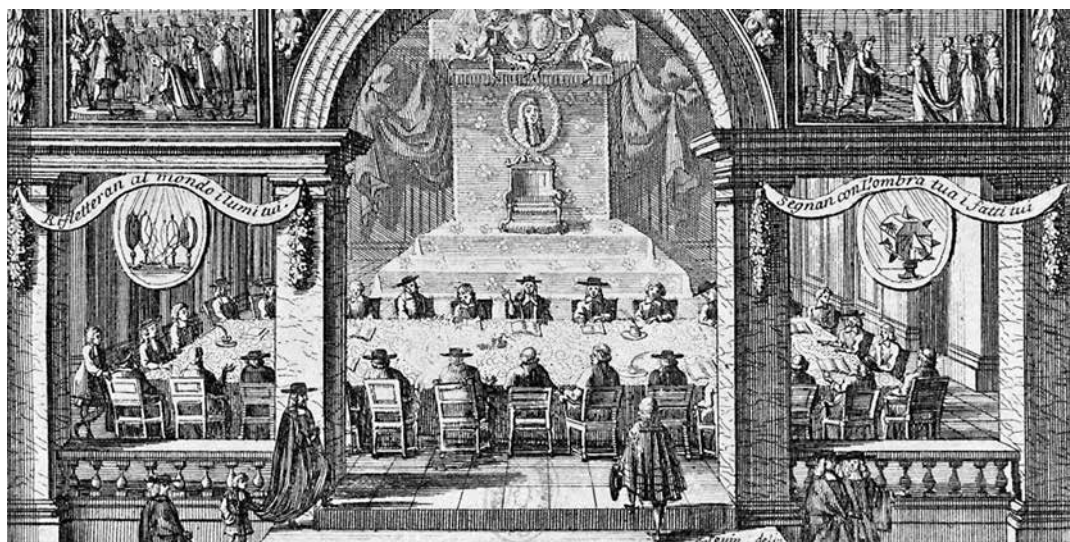
Anchiet's *Arte de grammatica da lingoa mais usada na costa do Brasil* from 1595, grammar of the Tupiniquim dialect of the Tupi language, a former Brazilian lingua franca (which can only be glimpsed into today on pages of missionary grammars, with 150 tribal groups murdered in 1557) faltered encountering structures that could not be defined neither as prepositions nor as adverbs (Zwartjes 2002, 2011); da Costa's *Arte tamulica* from 1649 and de Aguilar's *Arte Tamul* (dated also to the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century) stumbled on ablative functions, looking for the traces of Latin in Tamil suffixes (James 2019). It was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the advent of colonial corporations, supported by European rulers and parliaments, that colonial administrations became more systematic in extracting and organizing language knowledge. In order to be able to dispose of the looted resources and work of the population in the acquired territory, with as little reliance on local mediation as possible, the British East India Company taught administrative workers (officially known as *writers*), languages of the subordinate population, but also classical Arabic, Farsi, Sanskrit, and Bengali (Rahman 2008), participating in the vernacularisation and the laying of the foundations for standardization.



*elysia chlorotica*

Just like *elysia chlorotica*, a type of sea slug that by consuming algae absorbs the chloroplasts and acquires the ability to photosynthesise, or the fairy-tale mythical creatures that drain and consequently manifest human strength and personalities, **standardisation** is a process of devouring networked speech collectives (the biting of the parts of speech networks in the transformation of the ethnic groups into nations, “the people’s languages” into “national ones”) in order to chew not only their words and sentences but also the palate, the larynx, the lungs, the belly with which they were uttered. By standardization, speech collectives would be pressed hard against the ribs in order to establish control over the modes and rhythm of speech production as the next step in the management and the organization of enslaved labour. Standardization would allow the written language (the language of texts (in/by) which it is canonised and vernacularized) to be camouflaged as the spoken one, passed onto speech collectives as the mirror image of their work, which now (internalized) must be reproduced in a coordinated way, in order to release through speech networks a language that is both familiar and foreign, a hybrid, monstrous creature, patched up from the

language of the elite and the raw everyday speech, the language of the newly-constructed “nations”. Standardisation would whisper into the ears of speakers how to breathe, how to condense the air into required linguistic structures and forms, threatening any creative resistance, accidental slips or refusals to cooperate, with its laws and rules written in codifying grammars, dictionaries and spelling manuals, and the interventions of national philological academies and institutes (such as the proscriptive *Académie française*, the *Real Academia Española*, the Институт русского языка имени В. В. Виноградова, institutions which are legally and politically endowed with the power of the control over language in the service of the state and capital). “(In) the time of French classicism in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the class exclusivity of the French literary language was consciously encouraged by the selection and codification of its courtly usage (Vaugelas and Ménage, and the development of its special resources was to be taken care of by the French Academy). Under the influence of the Port-Royal’s *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* (1676), its standardized norm was fully intellectualized” (Hávraneč 1932/2015). Even after the Revolution, the republican govern-



Académie française

ment had no intention of interrupting the process of building the French language, which was supposed to guarantee the paving and consolidation of the nation's foundations, whereby, according to a report to the National Convention in 1794, out of 25 million inhabitants, 6 million did not know a word of French, while 6 million knew only the basics, without the possibility of, for example, participating in any complex conversation (Rickard 1974: 120/121). From Vaugelas's *Remarques sur la langue françoise* to the contemporary language interventions, "good use of French" remained entangled with the "good texts", which, continued to serve in the standardization, with the development of modern education in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as the examples of dictated use, instructing speakers what to do and how to behave.

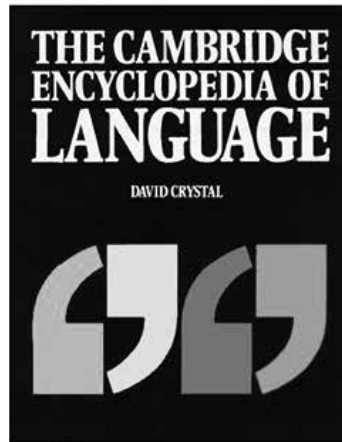
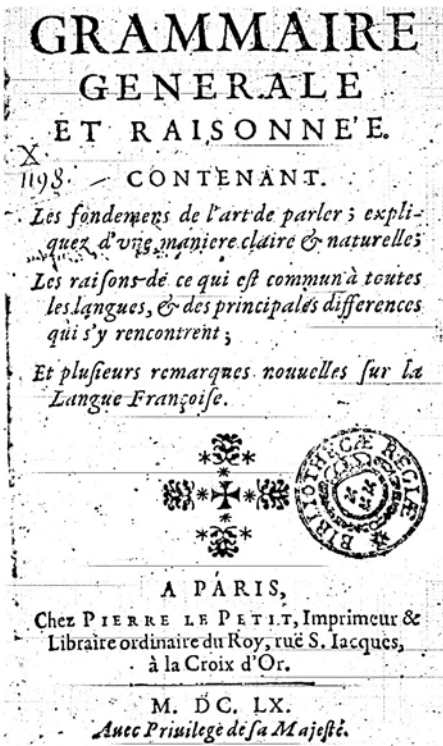
The processes of institutional extraction, appropriation and processing of language knowledge, in canonization and vernacularisation, and then by standardization procedures and mechanisms, robbed the speakers of the fruits of the work without them even being able to grasp what had happened to them. Standardization, as the culmination of transcriptional, archival, translation and philological practices, returns distorted epistemic material to speech collectives, with its anachronism and variability, uncharacteristic and elusive for the speakers to whom it is addressed and who are socialized in it. The exploited material was collected at some past moment, skipping a few steps in generational exchange, but in its transformations, it remained familiar, accessible enough that the written word could leave the impression of representation, a disinterested imprint of the current speech practices. Ripping the language from the material circumstances of its production, the acute alienation of the produced knowledge from the way it is formed, the distance engendered gradually, starting from the emergence of the jointly constructed and collectively shared knowledge, suppresses and maintains the speaker's insecurity

with their own words and sentences. The standard language declares itself as the evidence given in writing; it is the language as it is and as it should be, anchored in the accepted texts and codified grammars, as well as in the written notation which will allow for the uniformity of performance (national, disguised into practical). Johann Adelung's slogan "Write as you speak and read as it is written" (Butler 1969: 418) (embraced by Vuk Karadžić) and Václav Ertl's "Write as the good writers write" (1929/2015) (found in Ljudevit Jonke's work, 1965: 186-188) are not contrasting as it may seem, nor would any be necessarily emancipatory if we were guided by them. "Write as you speak and read as it is written" can be transformed into a universal principle and the core of standardization. Speech collectives, alienated from their own work, where access to as you speak is blurred and difficult (even seemingly accessible phonetic components elude the ear, even at the most rudimentary level of phonological recognition), standardization offers writing as alleged authentication, speech check (read as it is written), despite the fact that it is only an imposed substitution for the repressed forms of living linguistic knowledge. Reading in both principles serves to verify speech practice and to its correction and discipline, from old scribes to modern schools of philology, selected and refined texts accumulated by transcription, archiving, translation, teaching and publishing: "It is clear that the good writer is just a mere fiction, an abstract notion that really doesn't exist anywhere. It was constructed by the set of features established by observing and comparing writers who really existed and whose works have a wide and decisive influence on shaping the language of their time. Therefore, in principle, it is not about Nĕmcova or Neruda or Čech or Jirásek, etc., but about Nĕmcova and Neruda and Čech and Jirásek, etc., about all of them together and no one in particular" (Ertl 1929/2015). National philologies in charge of collecting Nĕmcova, Neruda, Čech, Jirásek, or

Voltaire, Balzac, Flaubert, Hugo, Zola, in constant reinterpretations of the text (in accordance with what they should serve at some point), they reinterpret the linguistic forms and structures, squeezed out of them, to which they will attach (just like to the text) a “broad and decisive influence”. “Broad and decisive influence (of certain writers) (on the shaping of the language of their time)”, which creates a “good writer” and thus a “good language”, serving as guidance in eliminating and rebuking deviations and disobediences, uncovers that canonization and vernacularisation are not only historical phases that stretch into standardization, but rather constitutive parts of standardization as the insatiable project integral to the nation-state building, in which elite textual and linguistic envelopes wrap themselves around speech work, permeating it and suppressing unauthorized and disruptive (“wrong”) forms.

## Language in the Grip of Ethnicity, Nation, and State

Speech collectives do not correspond to ethnic groups or nations (to the states the least, which need elaborated laws and regulations, institutionalized education, and an army of proof-readers to try to curb them); languages overflow outside the borders of ethnic groups, nations, and states, no matter how neatly its edges have sought to be straightened and folded within them. Crystal’s “Encyclopaedia” presents the linguistic picture of contemporary Europe divided into as many as five major dialectal continuums (1987: 25), in which inter-dialects and dialects interconnect and intertwine; on the West Romance, West Germanic, Scandinavian, North Slavic and South Slavic dialectal continuum.



Where Swedish or Italian ends, and Norwegian or French begins in their standardized forms may seem clear in school curricula and textbooks, but on dialectological maps not so much; dialects of Bohuslän, Dalsland, West Värmland, West Dalarna, Härjedalen and Jämtland on the borderlands of Sweden and Norway (Keel 2020), or Occitan and Franco-Provençal on the borders of France and Italy (Bert and Costa 2014), can be disentangled only by using the criterium of territorial borders (a procedure, unfortunately, not uncommon in dialectological systematizations). It can also be noted that there is no continuous and correct

distribution in these dialectal watercolours; wars, famines, and peace agreements have shaken the linguistic maps every once in a while. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, for example, the immigration of Hungarian speakers led to the separation of West Slavic from South Slavic idioms. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century Chakavian dialects were displaced in the Ottoman conquests, disappearing in some places (for instance in Kostajnica, today with an Eastern Bosnian Shtokavian dialect), retreating in others (to the narrower coastal belt) (Lisac 2009: 15), and even extending all the way to the Hungarian, Austrian, Slovak and Moravian villages (see for e.g. Houtzagers 2008).

In order to achieve the illusion of a national, ethnic uniformity, which will blur and curb ideological and class differences, standard languages are taken as a homogenizing factor of classification according to which all dialectal and speech forms, of this or that standard language, gravitate in a given space, although, if one insisted on relations, the opposite would be true, taking into consideration that standard languages are derived from the dialectal material. Dialects and speeches are considered branches of standard language, and the farther they are removed from the standard, the weaker, more fragile and inadequate they are considered to be. Prejudice about the weakness and fragility of dialects is accompanied by the belief that they are pale imprints of standard language because they do not have developed structures that can carry all the needs of speakers, which are supposedly absorbed and articulated by the standard language. The preconception about the inherent deficit of dialects is used to rationalize the implementation and establishment of standardization, which would be entrusted with the tasks on which dialects are said to be failing. These tasks (administration, education, military training) are not the needs of speakers, but the needs of the state, capital and nations. What possibilities of utterance will open up in a dialectal idiom depends on what speakers do with the material they draw with their speech. Other language varieties, contrary to popular belief, are no less deprived of norms (phonological, morphological and syntactic

constrains) and the potential to capture any part of the experience and needs of speakers ("About this norm, the system of rules of the everyday speech, it suffices to say that what belongs to it is what is acceptable to the collective that speaks that language (dialect), 'that what is received in the language community' (of those who speak that language) (...)", Hávraneč 1932/2015). This norm is an effect of politically and economically dominant speech practices that emerge as structures, more elastic and prone to change as social circumstances change, than standard languages are, and which, as we should not forget, is as suffocating, albeit in a different manner, compared to the standardized ones.

As dialectal continuums evidence, the borders separating speech practices and separating speech collectives do not exist, they are only imagined as intelligible and non-ambiguous lines, whether academic or ethnic, national and/or state constructs, where the constructed status of the standard languages makes them not much different from Esperanto or Wolapúk, the *aposteriori* artificial languages created on the Romance and Germanic base. Linguistic geography records how far some linguistic changes (isoglosses) have spread in space, demonstrating that they do not only ignore border police and international agreements, but also the cultivated ideas of belonging to certain nations, ethnic or other random groups. Nevertheless, state interventions can restrain them; for instance, the systematic marginalization and even prohibition of the use of Welsh in 19<sup>th</sup> century in Great Britain had an impact on its current distribution. The epistemic material used to construct the Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian, Montenegrin (or Serbo-Croatian / Croato-Serbian), Slovene, Macedonian and Bulgarian languages is cut and drawn out of the South Slavic dialectal continuum, from the same part of the continuum, the same Herzegovinian-Shtokavian dialect (to the anguish of the separatist standardologists). That state borders with their official, national languages arbitrarily

tear apart the fluid and variable speech networks can also be seen in the structure of appropriated material transformed into standard languages: a speaker of the Hvar Chakavian and the speaker of the dialect of Križevci-Podravina Kajkavian dialect will have difficulty understanding each other even if both dialects belong to the Croatian language, while speakers of the Gorski Kotar Kajkavian dialect from Lukovdol in conversation with speakers of the Dolenjski idiom in Novo Mesto will not have such difficulties, although one is part of Croatian and the other of Slovenian.

**a. Standardization by revival:** Around 200 BC Classical Hebrew ceased to be a spoken language, preserved by the texts of the Bible and the Mishnah (with Gemara, another part of the Talmud, already written in the more dominant Aramaic), remaining only on paper for the next 1600 years (as today Latin and Sanskrit), in ritual and liturgical contexts (which in that period partly encouraged literature modelled on the biblical text). In the early 1880s, Peres (1964, as reported by Fellman 1973: 28) found in Jerusalem's Jewish communities speakers of Ladino, the Palestinian Arabic and North African dialects of Arabic, Georgian, and various Yiddish dialects, before the first major immigrations to Palestine (First Aliyah from 1882-1904 and Second 1905-1914), which brought different varieties of Russian, Romanian and other European languages. Eliezer Ben Yehuda summarizes the revitalization program with the words: "The Hebrew language will go from the Synagogue to the House of Study and from the House of Study to the school and from the school it will come into the homes and... become the living language" (Ha-Zevi 31 (1886 / 1887) (in Fellman's translation from Heb., 1973: 49). These schools would emerge together with the first agricultural settlements in Palestine, funded and encouraged by the work of Zionist societies such as *Hovevei Zion* or *Alliance israélite universelle* (ibid: 95). In creating the state of Israel, Hebrew was to sacralise the colonial order and put Israel at the end of the narrative about the chosen people and the Promised Land, beginning with the ancient Hebrew texts and concluding with the contemporary Hebrew or Ivrit. Standardization by revitalization traces the fragment of history that needs to be resurrected, and with it the ideologies and beliefs that will legitimize the newly formed states, nations and ethnic groups.

**b. Linguistic separatism and unitarism:** With the Indian Independence Act of 1947, Great Britain divided the colonized territory into two separate states, India and Pakistan, which would also



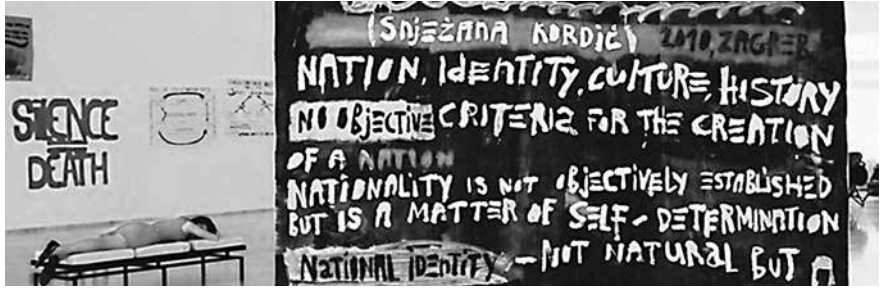
*Hovevei Zion or Alliance israélite*

Standard language is an intricate set of highly regulated and disciplined rules, which can never be fully realised<sup>3</sup>, but one that is rarely challenged or abandoned in the scholarly and political debates, which are mainly focused on debating the ways standardisation should be conducted, or how to make standard languages more equal to other variations, and whether some form of standardisation would be more ethical, more open and less invasive than others:

3 "If you introduce rules that only you know, then you have the power. Partially refer the subordinates to secrecy, but you always leave the possibility to say that something is wrong, and that is why there are culprits among subordinates. The fact that the language community does not depend on ethnic borders is forgotten, that it is a conditional projection." (Škiljan 2005, [https://govori.tripod.com/dubravko\\_skiljan.htm](https://govori.tripod.com/dubravko_skiljan.htm), last accessed 24th of May 2021)



An art instalation  
with the chapter  
titles of the book  
*Language and  
Nationalism* by  
Snježana Kordić



tear apart the language. In the example which is probably most similar to the sociolinguistic situation of BCSM\_Serbo-Croatian / Croato-Serbian language; Hindi and Urdu speakers communicate without difficulty, but just as standard Croatian is written in Latin script, and Cyrillic is prioritized in standard Serbian, so Hindi is written in Devanagari, used also in the Sanskrit texts, and Urdu in adapted Arabic script. Like Catholicism, Islam, and Orthodoxy in the Balkans, Hinduism and Islam in India and Pakistan have served as an excuse to assert different “civilizational, cultural foundations” of the constructed languages, primarily religious vocabulary, without significant deviations in phonological, morphological, and syntactic structure. The Hindustani dialect map (shared name for the Urdu-Hindi speech continuum) indicates outspread speech networks, with West Hindi Haryanvi, Braj, Bundeli, Kannauji and East Hindi Awadhi, Bagheli, Chhatisgarhi (Smith 2017). Modern Hindustani (i.e. standard Urdu and Hindi) is quite distorted in relation to its Khariboli basis, just as the modern BCSM language from Neo-Stokavian dialects. Results of the People’s Language Linguistic Survey of India from 2010 reveal an even more complex language situation – as many as 780 varieties in the Indian subcontinent in active use.<sup>4</sup> It would be no less reductionist to try to arrange the languages of Pakistan according to the ethnic group-language key; in addition to Urdu and English as a colonial

legacy, Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi and various other idioms are spoken, which further disturb any ironed language projections. The codifications of the BCSM\_Serbo-Croatian / Croato-Serbian language or Urdu / Hindi\_Hindustan reflect two tendencies by which language policies have circulated from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day; tendencies of separation and tendencies of convergence, by tearing off a smaller or larger piece of speech network. Serbo-Croatian / Croato-Serbian is created by drawing on a (selected) pool of speech material for institutional needs, as BCSM languages do. These two tendencies, despite the fact that they are often romanticized in ideologically two different spheres; anti-nationalist and nationalist discourses, both in different historical moments and contexts served to build national spaces, bounded by armies, constitutions and laws, and ultimately the language itself that was to carry and, more importantly, systematize culture and history.

### **b.1. One language in several countries and one country with several languages:**

In the literature, BCSM languages or Urdu\_Hindi are occasionally described as examples of polycentric standard languages. (In the post-Yugoslav context, the concept was popularized with the book “Language and Nationalism” by Snježana Kordić (2010) and, on it based, the Declaration on the Common Language in 2017) Polycentric languages are considered to be languages with two or more standard variants in different insti-

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.peopleslinguisticsurvey.org/Default.aspx> (last visit on the 17th of November 2022)

tutional contexts; such as English in its British, American, Australian and other standard versions in countries formerly under the British Crown, or German in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Belgium.

At the same time, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Belgium are examples of countries with more official standardized languages; German, Rhaeto-Romance, French and Italian, in the second case Luxembourgish, German and French or, in the third, German, Dutch and French. Labelling BCSM as a polycentric language would not change anything in particular, leaving states to continue to stretch the language according to their interests, whereby the Declaration on the Common Language itself allows for the existence of “variants, which (states) freely and independently codify”. German, Dutch and French in Belgium will make more linguistic resources available to the state, for it to regulate its political and economic interests (even “in the language (...) policy may be reflected different distribution of individual industries, if they coincide, at least in part, with the spatial distribution of speakers of different languages”, Škiljan 1988: 16). No matter if more states exploit the same organic material or one state exploits more differentiated organic materials, even if the pressure on speech collectives can be a bit lighter, it is still there with the same purpose as in a single state-language relations.

**c. Standardization of regional and minority languages:** Standardization is not only in the interest of the state, but also in that of different types of regional and minority organizations and (self-) governments, which embark on this journey considering the impact of standardization of some dominant or state-sponsored languages on the speech communities with whom they build connections based on ethnicity or some other category. Basque (*euskara*), spoken in the border areas of Spain and France (Spanish Autonomous Basque Country (with Gipuzko, Bizkaia, Araba)

and Nafarro and French Labourd, Nafarro Beherea and Zuberoa (Ula 2012)), from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, pressed by industrialization (where with abandoning speech environments, with time, language was also abandoned) and difficult access to public education (with a period of flourishing publishing and language use at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), was banned in favour of Castilian during Franco’s regime. (Clark 1979: 133-138, at the time of writing the book, four years after Franco’s death, points out: “Despite the Spanish government’s commitment to protect the country’s regional languages, *ikastolas* (i.e. Basque schools) are subject to considerable harassment from police and educational authorities. These schools are often placed under surveillance on the grounds that they are the centres of subversion or anti-Spanish propaganda.”) The Basque Nationalist Party and other nationalist groups have found in language endangerment fertile ground for narratives about the necessity of creating a Basque nation (Ula 2012). The standard variant of Basque (*euskara batua*), built under the wing of the Basque Language Academy (*Euskaltzaindia*), today destabilizes the diversity and richness of the language (Hualde and Zuazo 2007), made up of eight dialects with 25 sub-dialectal groups (Clark 197: 149). As early as in the 1920, “(t)he (...) Spanish philologist Ramón Menéndez Pidal, who was invited to Bilbao to speak on the topic of the unification of the Basque language, expressed the view that (...) the creation of a written standard (...) (could be) potentially harmful, since the spread of an artificial standard without scientific interest could mean the disappearance of the vastly more valuable historical dialects.” (Hualde and Zuazo 2007). The standardization of regional and minority languages does not help the languages or their speakers. It is exactly the opposite, it helps building and establishing ethnic borders and national aspirations based on them, while eradicating and destroying the same languages that it allegedly saves.

## Abolition of standard languages

Wherever there is some form of government, there is language standardization. The management of the population and their work, territory and (social, economic, environmental, and other) resources requires, as one of its basic preconditions, the management of language. There are a few ingrained attitudes that remain to be dismantled (if some of them have not already been disintegrated in the previous sections), so that the claim that we don't really need standard languages, but that they need us, can be defended:

1. that without standard language there is no mutual intelligibility;

As the level of intelligibility varies among standard languages (if we imagine the construct of a speaker of such a language, because no one speaks any standard language, no matter how hard they try; as a form of social control, this ideal should remain unattainable), so varies the level of intelligibility among organic idioms. The difference between the intelligibility provided by standard language and comprehensibility provided by organic idioms is within their reach; while standard languages mostly follow the borders of ethnic groups, nations and/or states,

organic idioms emerge from everyday interaction and reach as far as the threads of speech networks do, transcending the borders of ethnic groups, nations or/and states (as in the part of the dialectal continuum on which BCSM\_Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian language is built on) or staying inside the more constrained space (as in the case of, for e.g., Basque compared to French or Spanish).

2. that grammar is a part of language that should be actively maintained;

Language itself does not know error. Errors are attributed to it from the outside; in other words, language innovations are interpreted as errors in relation to the proscribed language forms. Deviations from the norm indicate tendencies and directions of language changes, allowing language to develop. Although most language innovations will be hampered by time and place, some of them will spread with the support of speech collectives and become part of general speech and eventually written use (for instance, Czech present suffix – *uju*, once considered incorrect, today the standard alternative to the suffix – *ují* (e.g. *opravují (úkol)*) or today's English *you* which will replace *thou, thee, thy*).

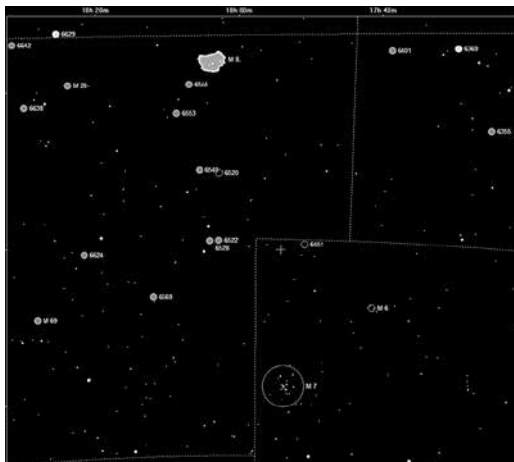


Phonology, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics of dialects, local speeches and other linguistic varieties are shaped by speech practice. For example, as much as in the standard BCSM languages there are regular suffixes *-em*, *-im*, *-am* in the first person singular (*ja plešem, mislim, čitam*), so in Chakavian dialects regular suffixes are *-en*, *-in*, *-an* (*plešen, mislin čitan*). The norm does not need an incentive to arise, an incentive is needed, as shown in today's science of language, to the research into the circumstances and processes of that emergence. Linguistic norms are structures that have been ossified, stabilized, anchored and that need to be dissolved and questioned in the context of dissolving and questioning other, related structures that have been raised by human labour.

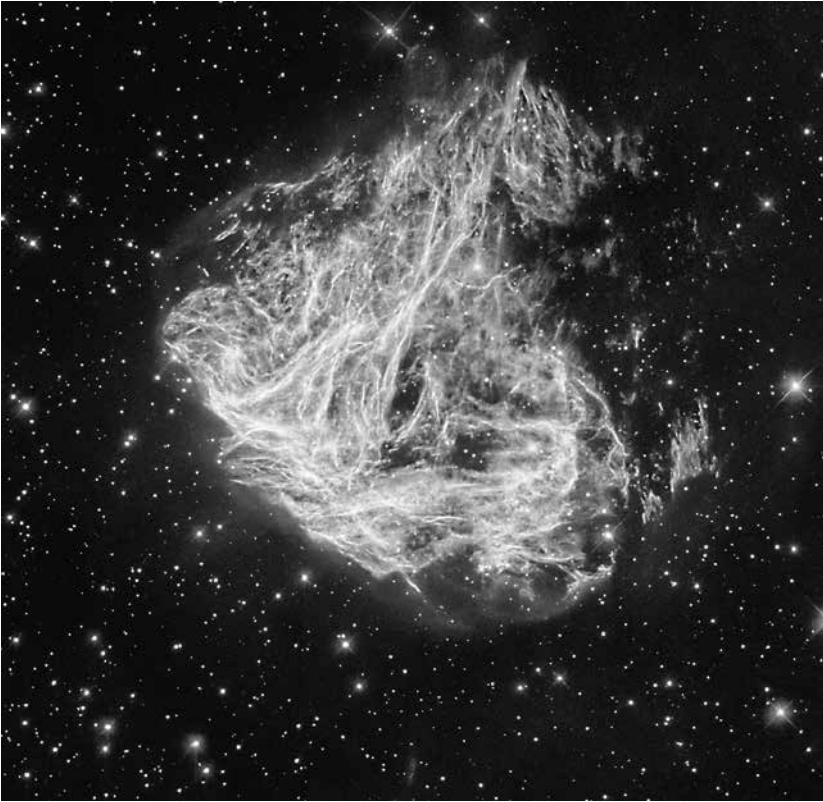
3. that there is no science or profession without professional jargon immersed in standard languages;

Scientific considerations require precision, unambiguity and transparency; Cassiopeia (Greek: Κασσιόπεια), Aldebaran (Arabic: نازدب دلآ), 94 Aurora or OGLE-2005-BLG-390Lb are constellations, stars, asteroids and planets named according to the international astronomical conventions, to distinguish certain phenomena and objects in the sky and make them undoubtedly recognisable, regardless of whether they are caught by NASA satellites or telescopes from observatories in Višnjan (Croatia), Erbil (Iraq) or Sydney.

OGLE-2005-BLG-390Lb



Unlike the predominantly polysemous spoken language (which organizes multiple meanings within one construction according to the principle of linguistic economy), science strives for the homonymy (in which one construction retains only one meaning). Whether an astronomical body is assigned the value of Cassiopeia or OGLE-2005-BLG-390Lb, these designations serve to unambiguously indicate which entity is in question and attribute certain properties to it (the Greek name signifies that it came from Ptolemy's classification and the number will refer to the year of discovery or location of the observed body). The polysemous nature (potentials of metaphor or metonymy) or the word-formation possibilities of spoken language (e.g. sunspots or vocal cords in relation to the voice) can serve to build taxonomies or other complex relationships by expressing features or relationships relevant to the understanding a phenomenon, just as numerical statements can help to obtain additional information, but in a limited form, with a minimum and controlled level of polysemy within a classification. Terminology is a codebook, which can integrate the constraints of the spoken language (along with the mathematical operations or geometric rules, for example in thermodynamics or architecture), but they are regulated and developed by highly specialized speech collectives. A biochemist working on a vaccine for COVID-19 in Istanbul constructs the comparable methodology and lists of active substances with the ones of a colleague in Copenhagen (even if the surrounding text requires translation, terminology is kept transparent; BCSM *supernova* and *fotosfera*; Hung. *szupernóva* i *fotoszféra*; Port. *supernova* and *fotosfera*). Standardized terminology is deliberately confused with standard languages; terminology can be very easily standardized even without standard languages which, likewise, can exist without terminology (standard BCSM languages are still alive even though they provide meagre terminology for computer technology).



### Insurgent linguistics

Standard languages should be primarily considered a political and historical phenomenon closely related to the construction, maintenance and reproduction of the exploitative structures such as colonial empires, capitalism, and nation-states. Advocating for the unitarian or polycentric versus separatist language approaches, Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian as a shared language or Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian as variants of one polycentric language, can expand the space of public and institutionally supported communication, but not emancipate language as collectively produced and collected knowledge. The abolition of standard languages requires the removal of this knowledge from the governing of the nation-states with their national academies and national philologies, towards its functions inside speech networks and speech

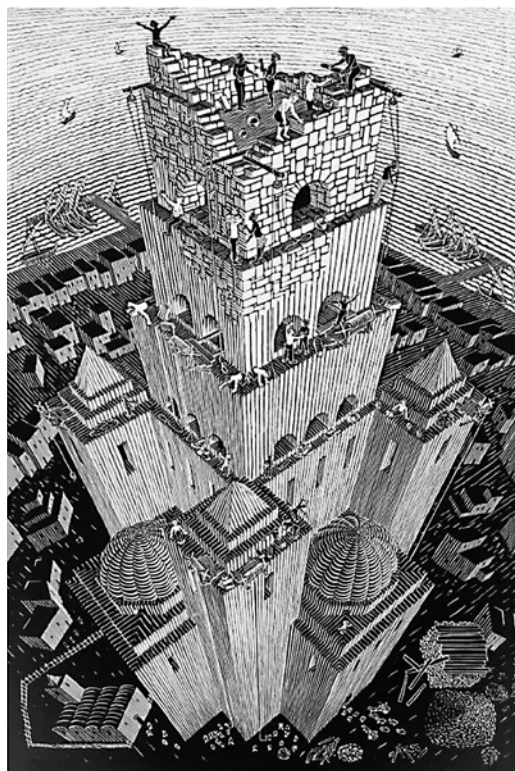
collectives, from which it was taken away. In collaborative community work, by documenting, analysing and examining that knowledge, resisting the regimes that exploit it, which, by silencing the languages, also silence their speakers, language can become accessible and transparent to all those speakers and researchers who need to reach for it.

The abolition of standard languages cannot happen by itself, nor does it offer an instant solution. Standard languages are the extension of the power of the state and capital. Only the abolition of state and capitalism can unravel the ways in which language is complicit in generating social and economic divisions, but also in weaving possible solidarities. Oppression over speech work is intertwined with all other forms of violence in

society and cannot be left aside in any form of emancipatory work that strives for the radical transformation of the circumstances and modes of our lives. At the same time, the abolition of standard languages is also the unfolding and the release of repressed forms of knowledge, collected and arranged by diverse, but interconnected speech collectives (regardless of the (physical or virtual, technologically supported) place they emerge in, given that each language is woven in contacts and exchanges through its historical development). In the Pama-Nyungan Wergaia language of the Boorongo tribe in Australia, the branched out astronomical classifications allow the estimation of the time when certain agricultural cultures will be available, build upon the appearance of the night sky (Hamacher 2011). A Dravidian Solega recognizes as many as four species of honey bees (Si 2016), and in Vegliot there are carefully distinguished species of fish, which Vegliot fishermen taught Chakavian speakers about (Spicijarić Paškvan 2014).

The only thing that the abolition of standard languages could endanger are the authorities of nations, states, empires, capital and academia. Commitment to their abolition is a way to collect and reorganize the scattered pieces of knowledge and incorporate them into the better worlds we wish to build.

***The revolution will be Babel.***



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## To Find Another Human Being

### Robert Musil's Ideas on Nationalism in *The Man Without Qualities*

The question of human passions puzzled young Robert Musil (1880–1942) in regard to the overwhelming situation of rising nationalist sentiments, soon followed by “war psychosis” and “peace psychosis,” as he called them. He would later conclude on this matter: “We do not have too much intellect and too little soul, but too little precision in matters of the soul.” The outbreak of the First World War had a major impact on the ironically distant 34-year-old Robert, who at that point started his profound engagement with political questions. Even though he wrote about the narrowness of the bourgeois society before the war, during the turbulent period from 1914 to 1921 he wrote many essays specifically on the topic of nations and nationalism with his ideas on the topic and personal sense of identity changing significantly over time, from cultural nationalism to the realization that the nation is a fantasy: “To be precise, the nation is a fantasy (“Einbildung”) in all versions that have been offered of it.” In explaining nationalism and war enthusiasm, he relied neither on mass psychology nor the tendency to pathologize these sentiments. Rather, he traced the continuity of human experience.

Nevertheless, this text is not about his essayistic writing, but it is rather a – hopefully persuasive – reading proposal for a text that might be one of the most complex analyses of the myth of nation and nationalism: his novel *The Man Without Qualities*.<sup>1</sup> All the paragraphs in the text that are aligned to the right are excerpts from the novel.

Musil's motivation for the research on nationalism was his will to overcome alienation in human relations. We are nothing to each other, he wrote in an essay on the topic of nation: “Why all this talk of

1 Musil began writing at the end of 1898, but continuously re-worked the text either until parts were published or until his death in 1942. The first part came out in 1930 and the second in 1933. Several chapters were then published following his death in 1943 and eventually the critical edition by Adolf Frisé appeared in 1952. *The Man Without Qualities* part one was published for the first time in English in 1953, translated by Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser. Part two followed in 1955, and part three in 1961 by Secker & Warburg (London). In Serbo-Croatian, the first edition of the first two volumes appeared in 1967, translated by Zlatko Gorjan and published by Otokar Keršovani in Rijeka under the title *Čovjek bez svojstava*, which translates to “*The Man Without Properties*,” in our opinion a closer translation from the German “*Eigenschaften*.” Both the newest Croatian complete edition and the newest Serbian edition are published with the title *Čovjek bez osobina* which is closer to the English translation, *The Man Without Qualities*.

“We Germans”? Such expressions are only ways of faking a community between manual laborers and professors, gangsters and idealists, poets and film directors. No such community exists: The true ‘we’ is: We are nothing to each other.” Even while writing autobiographical notes about childhood fights, Musil wondered about this. Is it the fist fighting, wrestling, and throwing rocks at one another as children that shapes us into those who become capable of later treating fellow humans as absolutely senseless objects? *An Attempt to Find Another Human Being* is the title of another essay, but it could also be a description of Musil’s life work.

Regrettably, a great many people nowadays feel antagonistic toward a great many other people. It is a basic trait of civilization that man deeply mistrusts those who are outside his own circle, so it is not only the Teuton who looks down on the Jew but also the soccer player who regards the pianist as an incomprehensible and inferior creature.

Ultimately a thing exists only by virtue of its boundaries, which means by a more or less hostile act against its surroundings

Not that Ulrich thought this out in such detail, but he knew this condition of vague atmospheric hostility with which the air of our era is charged

Musil’s monumental three-volume novel consists of two narrative lines. One follows a nationalist campaign attempting to organize an event to celebrate “Kakania” (the Austro-Hungarian Empire), this attempt representing an ideological effort made by the protagonists to gather the nationalities of the empire under one common idea, even though none of them knows what this event should be like. On the other hand, there is the line of the main protagonist, Ulrich, who can be described as a subject without a nation or other relevant properties and who is in love with his twin sister. The two narrative lines are connected by Ulrich, who serves as the secretary of the campaign. Because incest destroys the social and psychological laws

determining identities of gender, sexuality, and kinship on which property, nationality, and culture identities are based, the narration positions Ulrich to question all aspects of these identities.

On the question of the nation specifically, the following are some of the myths that are analyzed in the novel: the myth of the nation as fatherland/homeland (“Heimat”); the myth of the nation as a monocultural community, bound within its (particularistic) “Kultur” and in contrast to (universalist) “Zivilisation”; the myth of the nation as the grassroots German-language community; the myth of the nation as a mass society; and the myth of the nation as a race.

Content aside, the novel also makes a critique of the “symbolic form of modernity,” the modern novel. Three main characteristics of the modern novel, or rather, the *Bildungsroman*, are subjected to systematic scrutiny in *The Man Without Qualities*: the linear and continuous conception of time, expressed through a novelistic plot understood as a diachronic succession of events; the life adventure of the protagonist as a journey of the development (“Bildung”) of an independent, free, and individual subject; socialization in national culture, through the immersion of individual identity in the broadest collective and community identity of the nation and its history, language, and territory.

The policeman began by watching it over his shoulder, subsequently turning to face it and then coming closer; he attended as an observer, like a protruding offshoot of the iron machinery of the state, which ends in buttons and other metal trim.

There is always something ghostly about livin constantly in a well-ordered state. You cannot step into the street or drink a glass of water or get on a streetcar without touching the balanced levers of a gigantic apparatus of laws and interrelations, setting them in motion or letting them maintain you in your peaceful existence; one knows hardly any of these levers, which reach

*Pulcinella hatches from the egg*



deep into the inner workings and, coming out the other side, lose themselves in a network whose structure has never yet been unraveled by anyone. So one denies their existence, just as the average citizen denies the air, maintaining that it is empty space. But all these things that one denied, these colorless, odorless, tasteless, weightless, and morally indefinable things such as water, air, space, money, and the passing of time, turn out in truth to be the most important things of all, and this gives life a certain spooky quality. Sometimes a man may be seized by panic, helpless as in a dream, thrashing about wildly like an animal that has blundered into the incomprehensible mechanism of a net. Such was the effect of the policeman's buttons on the working-man, and it was at this moment that the arm of the state, feeling that it was not being respected in the proper manner, proceeded to make an arrest.

So he could, even at such a moment as this, himself appreciate this statistical demystification of his person and feel inspired by the quantitative and descriptive procedures applied to him by the police apparatus as if it were a love lyric invented by Satan. The most amazing thing about it was

that the police could not only dismantle a man so that nothing was left of him, they could also put him together again, recognizably and unmistakably, out of the same worthless components.

All this achievement takes is that something imponderable be added, which they call "suspicion."

Let us be clear at the very beginning Musil's opinion on the state, according to the analysis in his essays. In contrast to what he identified as a German intellectual tradition of blind faith in the state, he rejected it as a "bad machine," an inflexible form of political organization that prevents the development of human beings. He was against the "organization of mankind into states" because he thought that the heterogeneity of modern cultures and the fluid, ever-changing nature of human experience could not be contained in rigid political forms without the use of violence. For him, the institution of the "modern constitutional state" always represented an act of violence and those violent historical circumstances that characterized the founding of the sovereign state proved to him its "non-social character": "[which] follows, of



*Wrapped Pulcinella.  
Child surrounded by  
his family*

course, not from the evil will of its inhabitants but from its nature, structure, and way of functioning; this makes it an almost completely self-enclosed system of social energy, with an infinitely greater variety of vital relationships internally than externally. The state is a form that, in order to be able to provide stability for life to develop, must first encapsulate itself and make itself impermeable." Therefore, in Musil's analysis, the state is, by its nature, totalitarian.

What preoccupies Musil in the novel are modern identity and subjectivity. Throughout the rather simple plot, he explores the link between the "I" and the "we" and how nationalist, racist, and patriarchal ideologies reduce the subject to its cultural origin or bodily/sexual disposition, imposing on it an allegedly natural and therefore inescapable essence coded in terms of gender, ethnicity, and class. The novel, and Musil's entire opus, focuses on that integral aspect of modernity which is the gradual disappearance of the early-modern idea that personal and cultural identities are grounded in intrinsic disposition (the "expressivist" conception) and how it is imperceptibly re-

placed by the idea that the social and symbolic order constitutes and consolidates the identity of the human subject. *The Man Without Qualities* aims at the liquidation of the "expressivist" concept of identity that dominated the political and cultural discourse of Musil's time.

The historical background of the "Parallel Campaign" from MWQ was one in which emerging nationalist movements clashed with residual values, privileges, and political institutions of the older system. New social groups started to emerge as Austria-Hungary went through modernization, seeking to be recognized as equal members of the empire. People of diverse "ethnic" origins migrated from villages to the factories in the cities and acquired education so as to fit into an increasingly diversified labor market. The nation-state and nationalism served as apparatuses of integration in this process, substituting and compensating for the social bonds that were lost together with feudalism. Still, the political structure of the country could not accommodate the demands of all the groups because this would have challenged the foundation of the

empire, which was the implicit agreement that the Hungarians and German-speaking Austrians were to be the normative cultures and economically privileged groups in their respective parts of the empire. Because of the empire's refusal to integrate its margins, these groups did not see themselves as parts of the imperial totality and therefore had no belief in the ability of the center to represent their interests. This was a crucial moment in the history of Balkan nationalisms.

All citizens were equal before the law, but not everyone was a citizen.

Its highest official, the ministerial head of the police division that was called, in Kakania, by the psychological designation Ministry for Inner Concerns, in his welcoming 'speech drew his listeners' attention to these pictures, which, he said, showed the spirit of the police as a true manifestation of the people. The natural admiration for a spirit of such helpfulness and discipline was a fountain of moral renewal in an age such as this, when art and life only too often sank into mindless sensuality and self-indulgence.

Kakania was making certain military preparations in the south, to show the world that it would not allow Serbia to expand to the sea but would permit it only a railway line to the coast. And reported on a par with all the events of this magnitude was the world-famous Swedish actress Vogelsang's confession that she had never in all her life slept as well as on this, her first night in Kakania

But even those gentlemen who on festive occasions wear gold-embroidered foliage and other rank growths on their tailcoats held to the realpolitisch prejudices of their game, and since they could discover no solid clues behind the scenes of the Parallel Campaign, they soon turned their attention to something that was the cause of most of the obscure phenomena in Kakania, called "the

unliberated national minorities." We all talk as if nationalism were purely the invention of the arms dealers, but we really should try for a more comprehensive explanation, and to this end Kakania makes an important contribution. The inhabitants of this Imperial and Royal Imperial-Royal Dual Monarchy had a serious problem: they were supposed to feel like Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian patriots, while at the same time being Royal Hungarian or Imperial Royal Austrian patriots. Their understandable motto in the face of such complexities was "United we stand" (from *viribus unitis*, "with forces joined"). But the Austrians needed to take a far stronger stand than the Hungarians, because the Hungarians were, first and last, simply Hungarians and were regarded only incidentally, by foreigners who did not know their language, as Austro-Hungarians too; the Austrians, however, were, to begin with and primarily, nothing at all, and yet they were supposed by their leaders to feel Austro-Hungarian and be Austrian-Hungarians—they didn't even have a proper word for it. Nor was there an Austria. Its two components, Hungary and Austria made a match like a red-white-and-green jacket with black-and-yellow trousers. The jacket was a jacket, but the trousers were the relic of an extinct black-and-yellow outfit that had been ripped apart in the year 1867. The trousers, or Austria, were since then officially referred to as "the kingdoms and countries represented in the Imperial Council of the Realm," meaning nothing at all, of course, because it was only a phrase concocted from various names, for even those kingdoms referred to, such wholly Shakespearean kingdoms as Lodomeria and Illyria, were long gone, even when there was still a complete black-and-yellow outfit worn by actual soldiers. So if you asked an Austrian where he was from, of course he couldn't say: I am a man from one of those nonexistent kingdoms and countries; so for that reason alone he preferred to say: I am a Pole, a Czech, an Italian, Friulian, Ladino, Slovene, Croat, Serb, Slovak, Ruthenian, or Wallachian and this

was his so-called nationalism. Imagine a squirrel that doesn't know whether it is a squirrel or a chipmunk, a creature with no concept of itself and you will understand that in some circumstances it could be thrown into fits of terror by catching sight of its own tail. So this was the way Kakanians related to each other, with the panic of limbs so united as they stood that they hindered each other from being anything at all. Since the world began, no creature has as yet died of a language defect, and yet the Austrian and Hungarian Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy can nevertheless be said to have perished from its inexpressibility.

A stranger to Kakanian history might be interested to learn just how so seasoned and eminent a Kakanian as Count Leinsdorf coped with this problem. He began by excising Hungary altogether from his watchful mind; as a wise diplomat, he simply never mentioned it, just as parents avoid speaking of a son who has struck out for independence against their wish and who, they keep expecting, will yet live to regret it, the rest he referred to as the "nationalities," or else as the "Austrian ethnic stocks." This was a most subtle device. His Grace had studied constitutional law and had found a definition accepted more or less worldwide, to the effect that a people could claim to count as a nation only if it had its own constitutional state, from which he deduced that the Kakanian nations were simply national minorities, at most. On the other hand, Count Leinsdorf knew that man finds his full, true destiny only within the overarching communal framework of a nation, and since he did not like the thought of anyone being deprived in this respect, he concluded that it was necessary to subordinate the nationalities and ethnic breeds to an all-embracing State. Besides, he believed in a divine order, even if that order was not always discernible to the human eye, and in the revolutionary modernist moods that sometimes overcame him he was even capable of thinking that the idea of the State, which was coming so strongly into its own

these days, was perhaps nothing other than the Divine Right of Kings just beginning to manifest itself in a rejuvenated form. However that might be as a realist in politics he took good care never to overdo the theorizing, and would even have settled for Diotima's view that the idea of the Kakanian State was synonymous with that of World Peace – the point was that there was a Kakanian State, even if its name was a dubious one, and that a Kakanian nation had to be invented to go with it. He liked to illustrate this by pointing out, for instance, that nobody was a schoolboy if he didn't go to school, but that the school remained a school even when it stood empty. The more the minorities balked against the Kakanian school's efforts to bind them into one nation, the more "necessary the school, in the given circumstances. The more they insisted that they were separate nations," the more they demanded the restoration of their so-called long-lost historic rights, the more they flirted with their ethnic brothers and cousins across the borders and openly called the Empire a prison from which they must be released, the more Count Leinsdorf tried to calm them down by calling them ethnic stocks and agreed with their own emphasis on their underdeveloped state; only he offered to improve it by raising them up to be part of one Austrian nation. Whatever they wanted that did not fit in with his plan or that was overly mutinous, he blamed in his familiar diplomatic way on their failure so far to transcend their political immaturity, which was to be dealt with by a wise blend of shrewd tolerance and gently punitive restraints. And so when Count Leinsdorf created the Parallel Campaign, the various ethnicities immediately perceived it as a covert Pan-Germanic plot. His Grace's participation in the police exhibition was linked with the secret police and interpreted as proof positive of his sympathies with that politically repressive body.

At that moment, German centralism was decentered and the sphere of culture was transformed

*The attempts of a  
Pulcinella child*



into an arena of struggling particularisms. After the collapse in 1918, Austria was the first country of Europe to experience postcoloniality: not only was the culture characterized by conflicts between a residual feudal system and the emerging capitalist one, but also by the struggle between the crumbling imperial regime and various identitarian movements – nationalist, racist and fascist movements, Zionism and antisemitism, the women's movement and anti-feminism. After the war, the empire was divided into separate nation-states, and what remained after every nation claimed its part was today's Austria. This is how cultural identities that were honored as necessary and natural expressions of the order of the world were taken away from the Austrian subject. As modernization arrived relatively late to Germany and Austria, all these transformations were felt more dramatically and therefore it was impossible for the individual to relate "naturally" to the new world and other human beings. It is important to say that Musil in his essays never attributed the collapse of the empire to a sudden development of national sentiments among the non-German people of the empire. He clearly identified their revolt as a concrete consequence of state

repressiveness and violence towards them.

In her home, nationalism and racism were treated as nonexistent, even though they were convulsing half of Europe with hysterical ideas and everything in the Fischel household in particular turned on nothing else.

The modern consciousness is a product of reification: individuals and social functions are disconnected from the tradition in which they were previously embedded and reduced to isolated parts organized according to some principle. This requires a new kind of consciousness, a new subjectivity. The first moment in the becoming of modern subjectivity is the creation of "the individual" as an autonomous, centered, monadic being. However, "individualism" is just an ideology required to aid the tension resulting from the subject being divided, which is exactly what happens with reification. The subject, in reality, yet has to realize herself as a free, independent individual, and she does it by objectifying her qualities. The bourgeois chooses a profession that has nothing to do with the rest of his being and the proletarian sells to the master the only thing she owns –

labor power. This separation between inside and outside, private and public is the main determinant of the modern subject. The problem of how to relate to one another in these circumstances is, by consequence, a specific modern problem.

our celebrated moral freedom [is] an automatic mental by-product of free trade

The result of this split is a strictly contemplative attitude where the world of commodity exchange appears to consciousness as a second nature to which the individual has to adjust in order to survive. In other words, since he feels he can't act in order to change this social order or simply to fulfill his inner desires, he assumes an attitude of reflection and contemplation.

This method, which admittedly kills the soul but then so to speak, preserves it for general consumption by canning it in small quantities, has always been its bridge to rational thought, convictions, and practical action, in their successful conduct of all moralities, philosophies, and religions. God knows, as we have already said, what a soul is anyway. There can be no doubt whatsoever that the burning desire to obey only the call of one's soul leaves infinite scope for action, a true state of anarchy, and there are cases of chemically pure souls actually committing crimes. But the minute a soul has morals, religion, philosophy, a well-grounded middle-class education, ideals in the spheres of duty and beauty, it has been equipped with a system of rules, conditions, and directives that it must obey before it can think of being a respectable soul, and its heat, like that of a blast furnace, is directed into orderly rectangles of sand. All that remains are only logical problems of interpretation, such as whether an action falls under this or that commandment, and the soul presents the tranquil panorama of a battlefield after the fact, where the dead lie still and one can see at once where a scrap of life still moves or groans.

The reification argument helps to understand the mentioned expressivist conception of identity. A person's statements, behavior, and social position are seen as expressions of her identity, the essence of which is taken to be an internal personal kernel. So, a person possesses a particular essence that is expressed in, and hence determines, their race, culture, gender, and social rank. Self-realization is compatible with socialization. Musil was explicitly opposed to this concept and in his opinion what determines humans is an emptiness, a lack that is irremediable, and no matter what role, group, profession, model or ideal the subject may identify with, it will always just be an

emergency substitute for something that is missing.

The novel asserts that the universal human element resides in the inexpressible ability to differ, in this

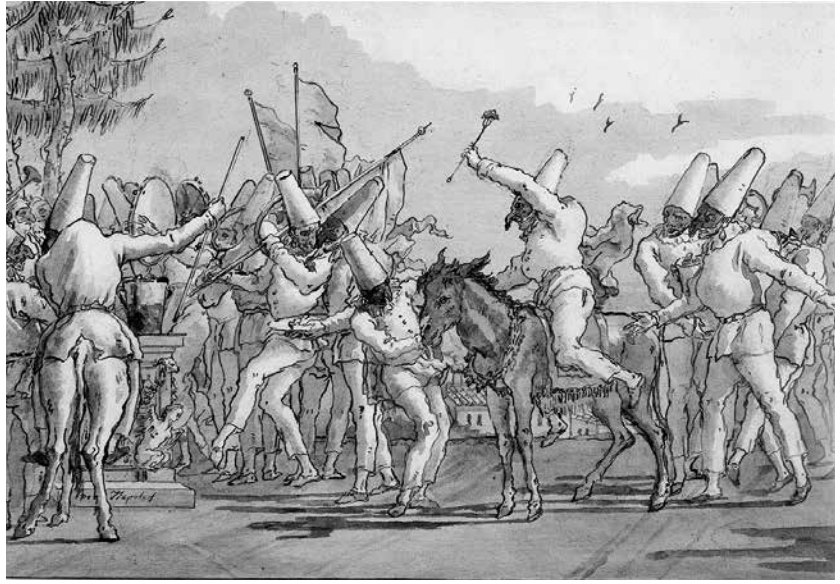
inclination toward the negative

which, according to the narrator, leads a person to abolish reality and to change the world.

Musil argued that World War I made people recognize that identity was a fiction, but also increased the demand for this fiction. The patriotic enthusiasm, as well as the later nationalist and racist movements, compensated for the social bonds that modern society dissolved. Society attempted to reinvent for itself an identity of race and nationhood that would warrant some stability in the midst of the destabilizing forces of modernization. Refusing to model his identity on these political fictions, Ulrich loses his foundations and is thrown back upon himself, forced to conjure up his identity from within his own self. Unfortunately, this is impossible since identity is by definition produced only through a process of



*Pulcinellas in  
the festival  
procession*



identification with an other. But what becomes of the subject if there is no other to identify with, other than nations, genders, etc.? What if the social field offers no possibilities of recognition? In this situation, are the only outcomes possible for the subjects either fascism or madness? Either they lay down in defense, sacrifice their ego, and solidarize with the group-ego of the collective, or they shut themselves up in solitude leading to autistic or schizoid conditions? Trying to protect their integrity, subjects withdraw into their interior. But because in this pseudo-reality, as Musil calls it, every action seems like it is being done mechanically, inwardness becomes illusory because it is not nourished by any social interaction. Therefore, modern society tends to produce "divided selves."

Having a split personality has long since ceased to be a trick reserved for lunatics

The characters in Musil's novel are such schizoid subjects. On the one hand, the elite and the people who want to celebrate the nation, and on the other, murderers and the mentally ill. Taking

no part in the initiatives from which his countrymen draw the meaning(s) of their existence(s), he rather identifies with a criminal, the murderer Moosbrugger. He

idolizes all the villains and monsters of world history

There is a constitutive tension between "exactitude" and "soul," science and poetry, the "ratioide" and the "non-ratioide" in Ulrich as a man without qualities, and the ultimate reason for such a character to be conceptualized is to discard the metaphysical fiction of the identical self. Without qualities or foundation, Ulrich is less solid, but more human.

Musil offered an alternative, conceptualizing subjectivity as a processual phenomenon: the person moves toward subject positions, identities that it must assume as they promise unity and recognition, but afterwards it rejects them because the positions never fulfill that promise. Subjectivity is a process, a transition, a being in-between. Identifying means self-alienation.



The story tells how Ulrich becomes involved in the Parallel Campaign after his father has told him to. When his father dies, he meets his long-lost twin sister Agathe at the funeral, where they both wear Pierrot costumes. Pierrot is a clown-like figure originating from the *commedia dell'arte* that became a motive for an endless number of modern artists because of his emotional ambiguity – melancholy and comedy –, and because of his mask which, in some way, suggests a refusal of identity. The appearance of Agathe in the second part of the novel is crucial for the construction of Ulrich's precarious subjectivity. Instead of each constructing an identity through an evolutionary process of self-recognition and search for authenticity, the twins, with their specular characters, mutually deny any identity that is given in advance.

I suggest you try looking at a mirror in the night: it's dark, it's black, you see almost nothing at all; and yet this nothing is something quite distinctly different from the nothing of the rest of the darkness. You sense the glass, the doubling of depth, some kind of remnant of the ability to shimmer – and yet you perceive nothing at all!

Pierrot appears as a motive in cultural periods marked by ideological disorientation when collective identities of ethnicity, class, gender etc. are being restructured. With the death of the father and Agathe leaving her husband, the siblings experience a state of experimental destitution in which all identities have no content. After the encounter Ulrich decides to leave the Campaign and to go live and travel with his sister-soulmate who also becomes his lover. Ulrich says,

We have yielded to an impulse against order

This is true because the prohibition of incest is the foundation of every social order. If individuals couple with their family members then different families cannot be connected by exchange of family members and this is what the constitution of the social community presupposes. This prohibition is also required for the constitution of gender, and all other identities. The incest taboo implies that every subject must also have a gender identity, which determines if they are the object of exchange, and a group identity, which defines the social limits within which this exchange can

*Pulcinella gets  
beaten*



happen. In fact, women, not men, are exchanged between families and this is what defines men as representatives of the social field, which is naturalized by patriarchal ideology. This is why this part of the novel is entitled *The Criminals*.

Life within the family is not a full life: Young people feel robbed, diminished, not fully at home with themselves within the circle of the family. Look at elderly, unmarried daughters: they've been sucked dry by the family, drained of their blood; they've become quite peculiar hybrids of the Me and the We.

Exceeding all identities, Musilian subjectivity transforms itself reactively through its resistance to the laws of culture, which work to affix it in one stable position. Ulrich imagines the perfect society as a

vast experimental station for trying out best ways of being a human being and discovering new ones

Historical traumas, in this case, the dissolution of the empire, cause a symbolic castration of masculine identity. Lacking a legitimate principle of power and authority, society loses its means

of achieving consensus and distinguishing progress from decline. The monster, which can be another ethnic group, feminists, or whatever character, then appears as an imaginary substitute that allows members of the community to believe that there is an agency or rationality at work, because, "better an evil rationality than none." Agathe, Ulrich, other MWQ characters, and other Musilian characters represent this figure of monstrosity. As with the case of collective longing for a *Führer* or messiah who would again bind individuals in an expressivist community, the monster could be interpreted as an expression of a collective wish for the recovery of patriarchal power and authority. Conversely, the Musilian monster is a sign of the destruction of authority – Ulrich, the man without qualities, stands between the logic of a society mobilizing for war and the counter-logic of criminality, madness, and femininity.

"All right," Ulrich conceded, "I meant to say that just as we already have the technology to make useful things out of corpses, sewage, scrap, and toxins, we almost have the psychological techniques too. But the world is taking its time in solv-

ing these questions. The government squanders money on every kind of foolishness but hasn't a penny to spare for solving the most pressing moral problems. That's in its nature, since the state is the stupidest and most malicious being there is.

The elite and the people in MWQ are eager to celebrate the unity of the nation, but approaching August 1914 a feeling is spreading that things cannot go on unless a messiah comes soon to unify the nation. With the racialized collective cry for a *Führer*, armaments, and the expulsion of minorities, Kakania eventually implodes into totalitarianism and war. In contrast, there is Ulrich, who seeks to preserve an identity that may resist the ideological appeal of nationalism, thus identifying with the criminal.

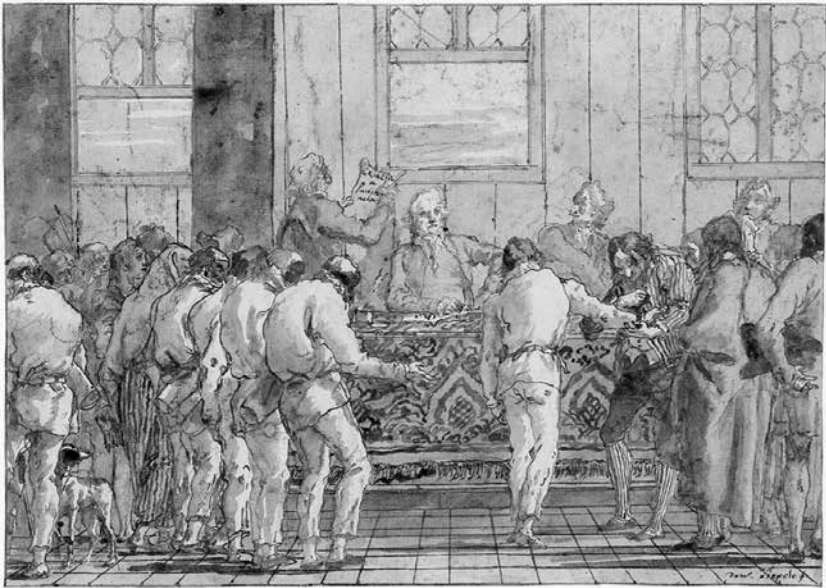
In early sketches Musil tells the reason: "Aversion against the competent, self-righteous, and enlightened people drives him toward Moosbrugger," who is a schizophrenic murderer.

the only thing that differentiated his own life from that of the insane was the consciousness of his situation

This antinomy appears in Musil's key terms – "man" and "properties." A man *without* properties equals pure subjectivity to which a transgressive force of negativity is inherent. She is a madman, an anarchist perhaps, a man who is a property or quality of her own. A man *with* properties equals pure identity, an individual drilled to become an obedient citizen/soldier. Musil sees no compromise between the two options which account for the impossible choice between madness and fascism, of

the two poles of the Neither-Nor of the age

Ulrich refuses the option to circulate from one function to the other within the social machinery, to never be aware of the whole by always adapting to the demands of some small tasks, and to be an obedient functionary without agency and conscience. The only option left is to become a man without properties, and this is how the novel highlights the logical, existential, and political conclusion of the dilemma: If every quality is defined in national, racial, ethnic, or gendered terms, a person wanting to resist nationalism, racism, ethnocentrism, and sexism must become a man without properties.



Pulcinella is pardoned

“Everyone starts out wanting to understand life as a whole,” he said, “but the more accurately one thinks about it, the more it narrows down. When he’s mature, a person knows more about one particular square millimeter than all but at most two dozen other people in the world; he knows what nonsense people talk who know less about it, but he doesn’t dare move because if he shifts even a micromillimeter from his spot he will be talking nonsense too.”

“But this inner freedom consists of being able to think about everything; it means knowing, in every human situation, why one doesn’t need to be bound by it, but never knowing what one wants to be bound by!”

In this far from happy moment, when the curious little wave of feeling that had held him for an instant ebbed away again, he would have been ready to admit that he had nothing but an ability to see two sides to everything

Musil’s first choice for the name of the novel was “The Spy,” and Ulrich’s name was supposed to be “Anders,” which means “other” or “different,” because the spy, as someone faking an identity, and the other seemed to be the only positions available to a person wanting to claim a subjective agency in the face of these ideologies that reduce every individual to an expression of the national essence. In the context of the nationality question, the spy – the double – represents a wish for an alter ego without national affiliation. Ulrich, Agathe, and other characters symbolically destroy the ideological order that ascribes identities to people and articulate the arbitrary limits of the imagined community by demonstrating that the subject can neither be explained by nor reduced to any identity.

The lessons that Musil draws from the experience of World War I are, first, that all ideas about human nature are wrong and, second, that most people are

not able to accept this insight. In order to be what they are, a lot of individuals must believe that there is a reason for being what they are, and that one’s destiny is, or can become, an expression of a larger value system or unifying narrative. In his essays from the early 1920s, Musil states that there is a residual mental structure continuing to generate belief in laws and essences that, while purporting to explain the identities and destinies of persons, in fact prevent them from facing the contingency of their existence. His diagnosis of the process of modernization is that capitalism helped destroy all old social bonds reducing the person to a function of her social position. Since modern society is so diversified, and interconnections are complex, the identity prescribed to an individual with her social position cannot “express” society as a whole since it is just a small part of it. The function of this small fragment in the social totality remains unknown to the person, and therefore one has an impression that society is run by some unknown self-perpetuating machinery that actually renders the individual superfluous. In such a situation, nationalism and racism are substitutes for the social bonds capitalist society has dissolved because they connect the individual to society in an immediate, almost physical way. As an alternative to these conservative attempts to heal the problems of modernization, Musil comes up with his “Theorem of Shapelessness,” which is the very idea elaborated in *The Man Without Qualities*. According to him, the nation is a fantasy, a faked community. He defines his task as a search for a better ideology, one that would produce philosophers rather than cannibals, solidarity rather than egoism, and peace rather than war. By ideology, he doesn’t mean a disguise of social and economic relations, but an “intellectual ordering of the feelings – an objective connection between them that makes the subjective connection easier.” This ideology should give coherence and stability to the “I.” In a draft for *The Man Without Qualities* he writes, “Each ideology, even the pacifist one, leads to war.” Still, he says that if yearning for belief and identity is a constant desire of the shape-

*Pulcinella is  
hanged*



less human subject, this desire must be fulfilled by ideologies other than racism, nationalism, and imperialism.

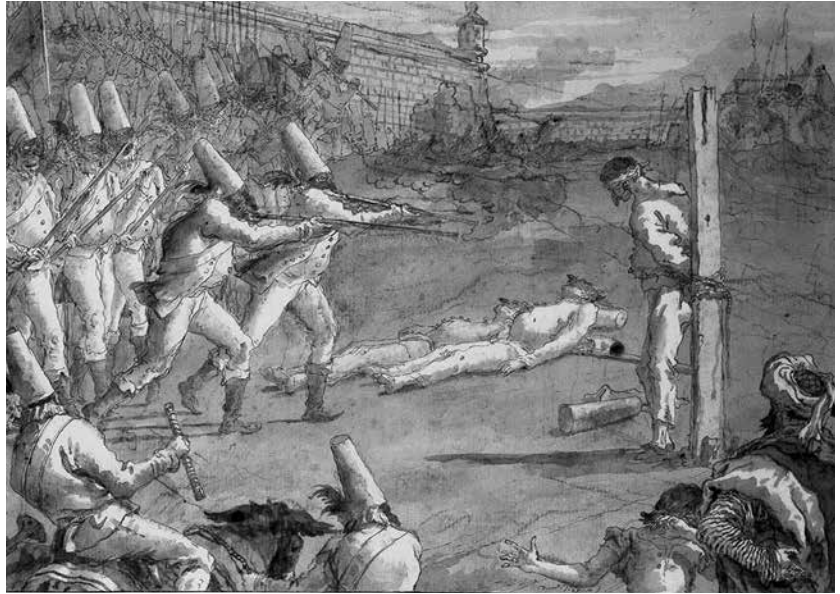
Give me the newspapers, the radio, the film industry, and within a few years ... I promise I'll turn people into cannibals

"What people are" evidently keeps changing as rapidly as "What people are wearing," and both have in common the fact that no one, not even those in the fashion business, knows the real secret of who "these people" are. But anyone trying to run counter to this would look silly, like a person caught between the opposing currents of an electric therapy machine, wildly twitching and jerking without anyone being able to see his attacker. For the enemy is not those quick-witted enough to take advantage of the given business situation; it's the gaseous fluidity and instability of the general state of affairs itself, the confluence of innumerable currents from all directions that constitute it, its unlimited capacity for new combinations and permutations, plus, on the receiving end, the absence or breakdown of valid, sustaining, and ordering principles.

Musil thought that his discovery of human "shapelessness" also entails an opportunity: "The challenge is to create an organization that protects the possibilities. Belief in humanity. Doing away with half-witted ideologies of state and nation." Therefore, the most important task of a new ideology would be to enable people to resist ideological manipulations by which the ruling elites attempt to augment and justify their power. What interests Musil the most in this matter are political affection and human emotion. The experience of war for him brought up the question of how it is possible that mass violence comes to equal love and collective solidarity.

So they are, Ulrich hastened to concur, sports are rough. One could say they are the precipitations of a most finely dispersed general hostility, which is deflected into athletic games. Of course, one could also say the opposite: sports bring people together, promote the team spirit and all that which basically proves only that brutality and love are no farther apart than one wing of a big, colorful, silent bird is from the other.

The shooting of  
Pulcinella



Human nature is as capable of cannibalism as it is of the Critique of Pure Reason; the same convictions and qualities will serve to turn out either one, depending on circumstances, and very great external differences in the results correspond to very slight internal ones.

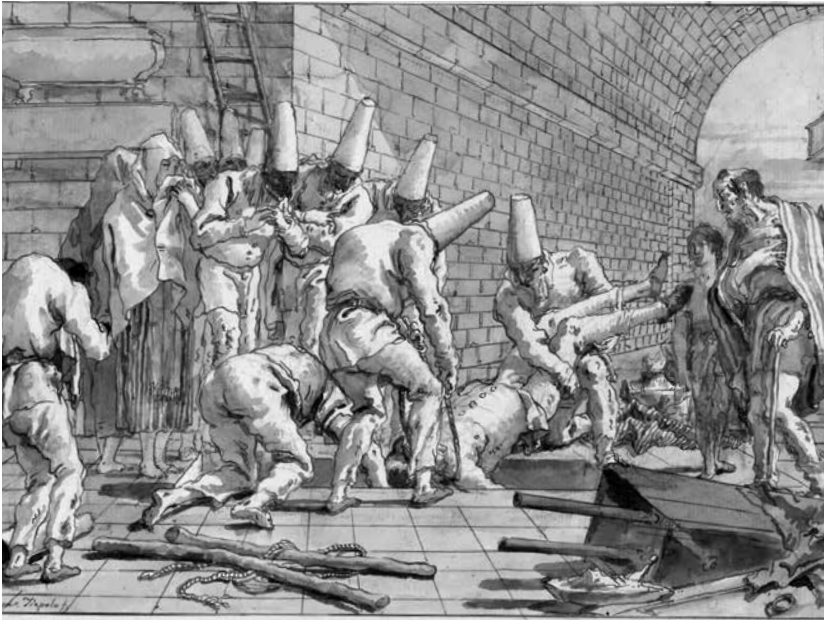
the emotional life of mankind slops back and forth like water in an unsteady tub

By the end of the Campaign, Ulrich proposes a research project to investigate the unknown laws of human affection able to provide the basis of ideological engineering that could rather encourage other possibilities of humanity than the monstrosity. So, he attempts to construct a philosophy of emotions, which is what forms the theoretical core of the novel. With the experience of 1914, Musil compared the collective energy released by the war to the experience of some exhilarating sense of being emptied and enveloped by a larger reality reported by mystics. Since it seemed that this borderline sensation of utopian dimensions would continue to attract people, he thought it necessary to examine how these affections work and if it was possible that their

utopian content could somehow be salvaged and managed in some constructive way. In his opinion, as long as there was no understanding of the phenomenon of passion and affection, there was a risk that a shift from peace to the ecstasies of the tribe could happen again.

There are quite many relevant works dedicated to this topic coming from these experiences, like Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), Reich's *Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), Hermann Broch's research into mass insanity, *Massenwahntheorie* (1939-48) and later projects by Adorno and Horkheimer, and Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power* (1960). Within this topic, Musil's aim was to separate the utopian aspect of affective bonding from its destructive aspects, and apart from writing essays on the topic, his methodology was actually the writing of the novel. As he said – art is a “moral laboratory,” and so is *The Man Without Qualities*. Unlike theoreticians, scientists, and philosophers who, due to methodological expectations, had to reach a conclusion about their inquiries, Musil worked on the problem of how to find another human being his whole life. Therefore, *The Man Without Qualities* is essentially

*The burial of  
Punchinella*



an unfinished novel. Because it was an open experiment, the novel changed over time in terms of ideas, characters, and plots. In a way, this kind of commitment without the need to find an ultimate solution or a personal feeling of closure is one of the preconditions to being open to others. There is no way to conceptualize interpersonal relationships because they are philosophically irreducible. But the goal of the “attempt to find another human being” could be to construct a human who is as resistant as possible to the appellations of the group ego of the nation or race, and receptive to passions of solidarity. Musil’s result of this attempt is the subject without a nation.

the need to organize the inner resources of  
human tenderness

Knowing that the world might have been different and (that) he might have been born as somebody else, Ulrich writes, in an essay on patriotism, that one should never think of one’s own fatherland as the best one. Musil’s multicultural experience was conditioned by his experience of the empire and his own life history, having been born in Brno,

in today’s Czech Republic, to German-speaking parents. State borders have been changing since his time until recently in this region, but cultural borders cannot be delineated. Another Austrian author of the period, Otto Bauer, wrote that individuals living in border zones inhabited by several nationalities could not simply grow into members of one nation. An individual affected by different national cultures does not simply combine the character traits of two (or more) nations but rather possesses an entirely new character. This is also why multinational descendants, in times of national struggle, can be condemned as transgressors or traitors. In a similar way, in *www*, Musil evokes a society in which the multiplicity of cultures, histories, and identities enables the individual to go beyond them.

For the inhabitant of a country has at least nine characters: a professional, a national, a civic, a class, a geographic, a sexual, a conscious, an unconscious, and possibly even a private character to boot. He unites them in himself, but they dissolve him, so that he is really nothing more than a small basin hollowed out by these many



streamlets that trickle into it and drain out of it again, to join other such rills in filling some other basin. Which is why every inhabitant of the earth also has a tenth character that is nothing else than the passive fantasy of spaces yet unfilled.

This permits a person all but one thing: to take seriously what his at least nine other characters do and what happens to them; in other words, it prevents precisely what should be his true fulfillment. This interior space, admittedly hard to describe, is of a different shade and shape in Italy from what it is in England, because everything that stands out in relief against it is of a different shade and shape; and yet it is in both places the same: an empty, invisible space, with reality standing inside it like a child's toy town deserted by the imagination.

The tenth character cancels all the others because it makes it impossible for the person to take them seriously. For Musil, it is a lack, a lack that generates a need that cannot be satisfied by any social identity and that therefore must negate them all. In this view, selfhood is enabled only by temporary identification that compensates for the original lack. If these identifications are not really transitive and they last, supported by ideologies, they will stabilize into properties and characters, which might be mistaken for realities and hence block other possibilities. Still, for Musil,

to be more than one is

to supersede every identity is what defines the human condition. The novel thus demonstrates how the human condition precludes the attempt to fix a person to a specific identity, because the Musilian subject is always in process, forever deterritorialized. Therefore, at the core of the Musilian subject there is the power of distancing and differentiation that prevents the person from investing too much in her identities and that estranges reality, so that the existing social order comes to appear

as just one among an infinite number of possible worlds. The author Stefan Jonsson thinks that this subject not only stands for endless possibilities but also shows Musil's failure to construct a viable alternative to the human being. In Jonsson's opinion, the realization of this subject would be in anarchist action at best, and/or self-chosen isolation and misanthropy at worst. "Anarchist action at best" meaning that there should be something more than that?! Musil was apparently not satisfied with anything but a transcultural, possibly even transgender utopia, and his commitment to possibility prevented him from envisioning every conceivable ending of the novel. There is only one time he actually suggested a political maxim, in an essay on socialism, and this was: act in solidarity! Apart from that, he didn't have any idea of action, which is one of the reasons he was referred to as a "conservative anarchist." Again, what are the principles to base our judgment on? As anarchists before us concluded, to achieve anarchy, freedom for all, there is no particular need for people who consider themselves anarchists. There is a need for people who think for themselves.

Stopping to think is dangerous.

For to think without pursuing some practical purpose is surely an improper, furtive occupation; especially those thoughts that take huge strides on stilts, touching experience only with tiny soles, are automatically suspect of having disreputable origins. There was a time when people talked of their thoughts taking wing; in Schiller's time such intellectual highfliers would have been widely esteemed, but in our own day such a person seems to have something the matter with him, unless it happens to be his profession and source of income. There has obviously been a shift in our priorities. Certain concerns have been taken out of people's hearts. For high-flown thoughts a kind of poultry farm has been set up, called philosophy, theology, or literature, where they proliferate in their own way beyond

anyone's ability to keep track of them, which is just as well, because in the face of such expansion no one need feel guilty about not bothering with them personally. With his respect for professionalism and expertise, Ulrich was basically determined to go along with any such division of labor. Nevertheless, he still indulged in thinking for himself, even though he was no professional philosopher, and at the moment he could see that to do otherwise was to take the road leading to the beehive state.

Regardless of his powerful intellectual concentration, Musil repeatedly confessed in his essays his failure to give his ideas a systematic form. But if he, as Ulrich, believed in thinking as non-stop motion, then systemic forms were not really possible for him, and therefore there was no actual failure from his side. Clarity exists only in the sphere of illusions and words – at the very end of systems is where life begins. *The Man Without Qualities* is a logical consequence of this idea of thought, as a novel that found its end only at the end of a life.

This is the lesson we get from Ulrich who, having no particular properties, stays open! – open to others. So, in regard to Musil's question of how to find another human being, we would simply say that in solidarity action we meet others, who are personally nothing to us, and we don't treat each other as means to achieve some goal – as it has been in all capitalist social relations, and even in leftist struggles – but we rather have each other as the goal that is to be achieved. The goal to develop our personalities – to be a *quality* rather than to have qualities. In the words of Gustav Landauer, "...the one who truly feels to be a part of this world does not have to worry anymore where she is coming from, and where she is go-

ing – there is no difference between herself and the world outside. Such people will live together, as the ones who belong to one another. This will be anarchy."

### List of used and recommended works:

Robert Musil: *The Man Without Qualities*, 2 volumes; translated by Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike; Alfred A. Knopf publisher, New York, 1995.

Robert Musil: *Precision and Soul. Essays and Addresses*; edited by Burton Pike and David S. Luft; The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1990.

Stefan Jonsson: *Subject Without Nation. Robert Musil and the History of Modern Identity*; Duke University Press, Durham, 2001.

Ramón Máiz: *Lost illusions in Interwar Europe: nation and self in Robert Musil*, in *Araucaria* Vol. 24, No. 49 (2022); University of Seville.

Markus Zisselsberger: *Cultural Nationalism in the Twilight of History: Robert Musil's Austrian ImagiNation*, in *Modern Austrian Literature* Vol. 37, No. 1/2 (2004); Association of Austrian Studies.

Gustav Landauer: *Anarchic Thoughts on Anarchism* [1901], in *Gustav Landauer: Revolution and Other Writings: A Political Reader*; translated and edited by Gabriel Kuhn, PM Press, Oakland, 2010.

### Visuals:

Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo, Entertainment for Youngsters (Pulcinella), around 1797-1804, Venice



