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This article, based on published sources, tries to present the Croatian history of the second half of the 20th century in a European context. It should be pointed out that the communist regime of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ), and thus the Socialist Republic of Croatia (SRH) in the period 1945-1990 causes various controversies, therefore also about whether it is a totalitarian or authoritarian regime. As part of these considerations, published sources such as: books, anthologies, scientific articles, testimonies of participants of the time and events, periodicals and films were primarily used. Equally, for the purposes of the article, unpublished archive material of the Yugoslav communist regime, State Security Service (SDS) for the observed period was also consulted.

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I. INSTEAD OF AN INTRODUCTION-THE BETRAYED IDEALS OF THE NEW MAN

The intention of the article is to present the Croatian history of the second half of the 20th century in the European context through a comparative analysis of published and partly unpublished sources. As part of further considerations, it should be pointed out that the communist regime of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ) in the period 1945-1990 caused various controversies, therefore also about whether it was a totalitarian or authoritarian regime. Thus, for the period up to 1953, there is mostly a consensus that this is a totalitarian phase of the regime that later acquires the characteristics of authoritarianism whose

tendencies began in the mid 1960s, although not everyone agrees with this either. For example, some authors have argued that the Yugoslav regime was never totalitarian.¹

As far as the formal Croatian position is concerned, the Yugoslav regime was totalitarian, and in 2006 the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia (RH) legislated *The Declaration on the Condemnation of Crimes Committed During the Totalitarian Communist Regime in Croatia 1945-1990*.²

The article tries to present the real picture of the political situation in the second half of the 20th century, i.e. in the period of communism in the Socialist Republic of Croatia (SRH), which is particularly important in the context of state repression, which in that period was the *modus operandi* in dealing with political opponents at home and abroad.

For example, at the end of 1970. Television Zagreb (TVZ) premiered Ivan Hetrich's film, *The Sign of Cain*, a crime drama in which the author openly draws a critical analysis of the socio-political situation in the country at the time, even though the film is set in the capital of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, Zagreb. The main character is a respectable high-ranking politician, seriously ill, with a rare blood type and his life depends on donations from a young and promising "head of propaganda" in a respectable Zagreb company. However, it turns out that the "promising boss" is

¹ Merkel 2011, 1. *Tito's Yugoslavia was never a totalitarian regime but, without a doubt, an authoritarian personalist regime in which the Party had an additional governmental function.* Cf. for more on this, see: *Croatia Encyclopedia, online edition.* Institute of Lexicography Miroslav Krleža (2021) 2013-2024, (hereinafter: HE MI), KPJ, acronym for Communist Party of Yugoslavia. (→ League of Communists)

² Narodne novine, (hereinafter:), number (hereinafter: no.) 76/06.

prone to crime, so he organized the emptying of the full treasury of his company. However, the action goes awry and he accidentally kills a policeman during a robbery. When the police quickly track him down, he begins to blackmail the politician by demanding an alibi that will save him from criminal prosecution and long-term imprisonment (at that time certainly the death penalty). The politician realizes that the departure of the head of propaganda would mean death for him because he runs out of the necessary doses of blood. The protagonist experiences an intimate drama, but still refuses to give him an alibi. He chose death, renouncing his family and everything he had achieved, not wanting to continue his life thanks to a cowardly and immoral decision.

Hetrich's film is interesting on several levels in the context of the time of its creation, but from today's point of view, it is intriguing how openly and without artistic concealment a critical picture of Croatian reality is presented, understandably without pretensions to go deeper into questioning the political and constitutional basis of the Yugoslav political system. The main character, whose participation in the National Liberation Front (NOB) is of crucial importance for the story, is highly moral, honest and intellectually superior, openly criticizes the dependence of the judiciary on political decisions, and accuses the party leadership of bureaucratization and corruption. The main emphasis is on disappointment due to the daily neglect of the ideals of the anti-fascist struggle, conducted with the aim of establishing a just society and the emancipation of all people (national emancipation has also been declaratively proclaimed). However, the director did not engage in a comprehensive pessimistic discourse and a kind of hope is shown through the flawless functioning of the police, who in a very short time track down the robber and murderer.

Three years before the television premiere of *The Sign of Cain*, the *Declaration on the Position and Name of the Croatian Language* was drafted, which demanded an equal position of the Croatian language in the Yugoslav Federation.³ The declaration was accepted by the majority of

Croatian cultural and public workers, and it was also signed by Miroslav Krleža,⁴ who would shortly after resign from the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia (CK SKH).⁵ A month after the publication of *the Declaration* in the *Telegram* magazine, elections for the Parliament and the Federal Assembly were held with the possibility of running more candidates. Voting freedom was limited in many ways, but the elections represented an unprecedented progress towards the electoral democracy of the SFRJ, which, after its establishment, existed as a dictatorship of the Communist Party (KP) under the leadership of the undisputed authority of Josip Broz Tito.⁶ Everything points to the conclusion that the critical discourse of *The sign of Cain* is self-evident and in fact a logical reflection of cultural and artistic circles on the first signs of the weakening of the dictatorship.

Less than a year after the television premiere of the film, the political scene began to be dominated by a rebellion articulated by politicians of the younger generation gathered in the movement for national emancipation Croatian Spring, intellectuals and cultural workers of Matrix Croatica, and students of the University of Zagreb, whose leaders Josip Broz Tito would deal with.⁷

Dismissals, political trials and prison sentences followed, but in 1974 a new Constitution was adopted, which allowed a partial degree of independence of Yugoslav federal units. Such a sequence of events was the reason for numerous assessments that the participants of that movement succeeded to some extent, because the totalitarian political system was finally abolished and an authoritarian political system was established, under the leadership of one party and one leader. Very limited political and artistic freedoms were allowed, which legitimized the Yugoslavia at that time in the world of Western democracies as a state with its own authentic construction of socialism, distanced from the rigid

³ See more: Bukvić 2022.

⁴ Cf. HE MI 2013–2024, "Krleža Miroslav."

⁵ Cf. Đodan 1998, 620, Gotovac 1989, 147–152, 160, Tuđman 2011–2, 200.

⁶ Cf. HE MI 2013–2024, "Broz Josip - Tito."

⁷ Cf. Krašić 2018, Vlasnović and Begonja 2023, 263–265.

Eastern bloc under the patronage of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (SSSR).

What influences the softening of the character of the political order, especially in the second half of the 60s and the beginning of the 1970s, is the fact that certain freedoms really seem to occur. The regime is somewhat loosening and becoming more permeable to dissonant tones towards social reality. In the assessments of that period, it is almost customary to point out certain stereotypes about the beginning of the 1960s as a period of freer exchange of thoughts, ideas, freer movement of people, and the new political atmosphere foreshadows the demise of Aleksandar Rankovic.⁸ Reforms are initiated in many areas of social life. In the discussions on the amendments to the Constitution of 1963, i.e. about the constitutional amendments that were passed until 1971, the problems of the economy, society and national antagonisms in Yugoslavia were increasingly critically discussed, and which were becoming more and more visible to ordinary people. The fact that Josip Broz Tito expressed himself about these problems, i.e., his increasingly frequent appearances in the 60s when he put these issues on the agenda, considering them crucial for the survival of Yugoslavia, should testify to the "democratic" nature of the order at that time. From today's perspective, many associate Rankovic's fall with the loosening of party discipline, which gave impetus to the expansion of freedom. The method of governance in the federation began to change, which was accompanied by criticism of centralism, bureaucratism, arbitrariness and authoritarianism. An image is being created that the power of the State Security Service (SDS) has weakened, which has created a sense of democratization of society in the public. Compared to other communist countries, the political situation in Yugoslavia was generally considered less restrictive. The centralized state apparatus was reduced, but the republican and local bureaucracy grew. The role of the secret police in the execution of "public policy" has been reduced, especially after Rankovic left the political scene, but it has not been eliminated. The Security Directorate

(Counterintelligence Service – KOS), which operated in the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), to a certain extent replaced the secret police, but ostensibly did not control society in the totalitarian sense as OZNA (Department for the Protection of the People) or UDBA (Directorate of State Security) had previously done.⁹ In the 1960s, there was a partial shift in economic policy towards the acceptance of market laws. This is a period of industrialization in which the growth rate of GDP for the entire decade was 6.3 percent. The economic reform that began in 1965 sought to develop a "self-managed market economy" with a special emphasis on increasing openness to the world, and to a certain extent small private entrepreneurship was allowed, and such a development of market relations as well as the strengthening of decentralization in decision-making suggested the "pluralization" and "democratization" of relations in Yugoslavia.

However, in this context, it seems extremely important to question the relationship between the scientific and political actors of the time, respected far beyond the Yugoslav borders. Is it possible from today's perspective, based on more objective and precise interpretations based on historical and scientific facts, to find something like the awareness of the then established Croatian philosophical elite about the need and manner of democratic transformation of the political and social system? That is, whether the communist so-called loosening of discipline was preceded by structural theorizing, a kind of "socialist response" as the only competition to the liberal political theories of the time that dealt with issues of freedom and justice. How relevant was this opinion and how it developed after the end of World War II, when it comes to influencing the "democratization of society"? And whether political changes were actually predominantly conditioned by international political and economic movements, and were carried out by one leader and a very narrow circle of his associates.?

⁸ Cf. HE MI 2021, "Ranković Aleksandar."

⁹ Croatia, Croatian State Archives, OZNA for Croatia, Fund 1491, HR-HDA-1491-OZN, (*Officially 13 May 1944*), Cf. Jurčević 2005, 241-275, Radelić 2019, 11, 321.

II. TOTALITARIANISM OF POLITICS, PLURALITY OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY?

There is no doubt about how successful the Yugoslav project of building a political community was for Mirjana Kasapovic. She points out that it is actually "the most unsuccessful European state because it has failed twice in a period of 70 years".¹⁰ Arguing with the thesis of abandoning totalitarianism and establishing an authoritarian political order as a milder type of autocracy, Kasapovic adhered to the theory of Juan J. Linz, an eminent American sociologist and political scientist,¹¹ who defined the difference between totalitarian and authoritarian orders according to constitutional characteristics. Kasapovic concludes that after World War II, a totalitarian political regime was established in Yugoslavia:

The League of Communists of Yugoslavia was the only political party, Marxism was the official party state ideology that was studied in schools, and the regime often mobilized the masses massively and in an organized way to express support for it and thus legitimize it.

In addition, the systematic cultivation of the cult of personality continued, so Josip Broz Tito was elected president of the Yugoslav federation for life, whose birthday was publicly celebrated with monumental stadium performances of North Korean choreography and aesthetics, and each republic had at least one city named after "the dearest son of all nations and nationalities", as it was publicly called.¹² The repressive apparatus, the political secret police and the army have always been under the control of one party, they could act and develop without any democratic control, deal with dissenters in the cruelest way without any legal and moral consequences, historical facts about the Partisan crimes immediately after the World War II were concealed and falsified, complete control over the economy and the media. Thus, speaking about the essence and character of the Yugoslav state, Kasapovic concludes that it is understandable that

"liberal enclaves" were created within the social order – in theater, music, literature, film, since they are "characteristic of many autocracies, but they do not change their essence".

There are, of course, opposing views that speak with more favor and less severity about the time of the emergence of the Yugoslav state until its disintegration. Moreover, they see in the very "manner of disintegration and revival of nationalist ideologies" one of the fundamental reasons why Yugoslav democratic achievements are not valorized in a methodologically correct and neutral way.

Thus, Sergej Flere from the University of Maribor disputes the claims that the political order in Yugoslavia after the mid 1960s was totalitarian, relying on the theories of Friedrich and Brzezinski from 1956.¹³ He argues: in the 1960s, several million copies of religious newspapers were published annually in Yugoslavia, and the companies did not fully function according to the principles of the "planned economy". The political system was one-party, however, the republics (and since 1971 also the provinces) acted as autonomous political systems, caring about their interests, even clashing over them. Although Josip Broz Tito was elected as a lifelong president whose cult was carefully nurtured, power was limited by the federal character of the state. It is interesting that Flere also refers to Linz and his considerations of social transitions towards democracy and draws a completely opposite conclusion from Kasapovic. On the other hand, quoting Linz (and Stepan) he said:

Democracy theorists place Tito's Yugoslavia in a category different from other communist systems because they believed that workers' self-management was a form of democracy and that it could develop positively.¹⁴

A little later, sociologists from the University of Maribor published a paper in the international journal *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, published by the well-known publisher *Elsevier*, supporting all the main emphases that Flere

¹⁰ Kasapović 2023.

¹¹ See more: Linz 2000, 245.

¹² Cf. Banac 1995, Vlasnović 2024, 268.

¹³ Cf. Flere 2012.

¹⁴ See more: Linz in Stepan 1996.

presented in his work. The Croatia professional public reacted dividedly, from completely denying the relevance of the claims of Slovenian sociologists, partially agreeing and trying to further specify the basic concepts, to accepting most of the arguments presented. The work of Slovenian authors is a typical example of manipulation in science with the clear goal of revitalizing and trivializing the basic objective fact that the regime of the second, communist Yugoslavia was totalitarian and criminal (Jurcevic, 2014).¹⁵ Yugoslavia was not a totalitarian regime as a whole, it was totalitarian in the political sphere, especially in the periods of purges from undesirable left and right turns and its arguments were based on physical repression, it was quite democratic, although completely unfinished in the industrial sphere, and broad-minded in the sphere of economic distribution (Katunaric, 2014).¹⁶ Yugoslavia was a totalitarian dictatorship until the end of the 1960s, and since then an authoritarian dictatorship. The difference is this: a totalitarian regime demands that we believe in it to the end, and an authoritarian regime is enough to obey. The legitimation of the system in Yugoslavia did not come from Marxism and Leninism, as in most Eastern European countries, but from the success of the anti-fascist struggle led by Josip Broz Tito, who then "achieved brotherhood and unity of 'our' peoples and nationalities". The Yugoslav regime, according to the cult of the undisputed leader, had the characteristics of an authoritarian dictatorship, which lasted until Tito's death (Cipek, 2014).¹⁷ The theses in the article are relatively balanced, although they are still "hard" and require greater nuance. Croats never lived under non-totalitarian regimes until the 1990s, so Yugoslavia is no exception. A number of other countries had totalitarian rule, although never of left-wing provenance, such as Italy, Greece, Spain and others. The Yugoslav social reality was much more layered than what a large number of critics see (Jakovina, 2014).¹⁸

¹⁵ Lučić 2014.

¹⁶ Lučić 2014.

¹⁷ Lučić 2014.

¹⁸ Lučić 2014.

In an effort to define the political order of the Yugoslav socialist federation, of which Croatia was a part in the second half of the 20th century, there is therefore no unified opinion of the professional and academic community. Moreover, in most cases the views are completely opposite even when they are based on the same theoretical sources. This is neither good nor bad, and by all accounts, it will remain so. Perhaps it is more correct to think that the interpretations of Yugoslav social reality are actually much more layered than its everyday reality.

"Freedoms" show themselves to be very limited tolerance towards public opinion and are always subordinated to the party's view of reality. Critical discourse (as in *The sign of Cain*) is allowed to a certain extent, but it is still an unquestionable (and institutionally prescribed) ideological basis that feeds on the source of Marxist ideology - historical development should end with the realization of the collective goal of complete justice, and the introduction to a classless society must take place under the leadership of the working class represented and wholly managed by the Communist Party. This means that the lack of enthusiasm of the individual on this path is interpreted as bourgeois despondency, and often as betrayal. The Party fully implements the dogmas of the new secular religion and in fact the only freedom that appears on the horizon can only be critically related to "heretical" phenomena, the "infidels" did not enjoy any space of freedom.

If we try to understand the Yugoslav project of "self-governing democracy" from the perspective of utopia, we again come to the conclusion that its realization requires a monopoly on truth, morality and salvation. Every utopian project requires that the construction of a new world be realized on the assumption of the complete destruction of the old. In order for a utopia to be perfect, not a single remnant of the old must survive, because it is "like a rotten apple that destroys all the healthy fruit in the basket". As L. Svendsen points out, political utopias in modernity are in many ways secular variants of the Christian notion of paradise, and this is especially true of ideologies that strongly

insisted on their scientific foundation, such as Marxism and Nazism.¹⁹

III. THE BEGINNING OF TITO'S PERIOD AND THE FOUNDING POLICY OF THE SFRJ

Analyzing the activities of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) and Croatian communists in the period before World War II, Croatian historian Jere Jareb points out the changes in the attitude towards the national question. In 1924, he went from being a party defending integral Yugoslavism to a "party that was breaking up Yugoslavia". He believes that one of the conclusions of the resolution voted at the Fifth Congress of the Comintern in July 1924, which states that there is resistance to national oppression in Yugoslavia, which directly refers to the working masses, therefore the right of the peoples to self-determination should be taken as a starting point for the separation of Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia from the composition of Yugoslavia and the creation of independent republics.²⁰ Furthermore, he believes that the Croatian communists, by formulating their views in such a way, were certainly under the strong influence of the Croatian Republican Peasant Party (HRSS), a party that enjoyed exceptional popularity among the masses, programmatically oriented towards the republican state system in the independent Croatian state. The conclusions of the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, held in Dresden in October 1928, after the Croatian deputies were killed in the National Assembly in Belgrade,²¹ warned that the aspiration of the people for independence was obvious, which should not be ignored and that "concretizing the position on the right of the people to self-determination would mean supporting the creation of an independent Croatia".²²

However, independence in this context was interpreted by the paradigm of class. The party opposes the "bourgeois leadership" of the

Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), which, in their opinion, creates the illusion of the possibility of independence within the state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS), when in fact "the ground is being prepared for a new agreement".²³ Therefore, it can be accepted that the communists advocated the disintegration of Yugoslavia from 1928 to 1935. After giving up the anti-Yugoslav policy, they remained inclined to the principle – the right of the people to self-determination. Jareb assesses this period as a time of a kind of fracture within the corps of Croatian communists who are "torn between the alternative Croatia and Yugoslavia".²⁴

This attitude of the Croatian communists in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was maintained until 1935, when the transformation occurred, that is, the struggle for the creation of a Yugoslav federation modeled on the Soviet communist model began. Thus, in the interwar period, the communists radically changed their policy towards other parties and classes several times, and in the 1930s they led the policy of the Popular Front, softening dogmatism towards other opposition parties, without rejecting democracy and avoiding rhetoric dominated by the notion of class struggle. Fearing Nazi and fascist threats, "they began to distinguish fascism from parliamentary democracy."²⁵ Thus, after softening its stance towards Western democracies, the party accepts the federalist order for the national question, however, "with considerable meandering even after its victory in World War II."²⁶

The implementation of this model began with Tito's arrival as secretary of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1937, when the Communist Party of Croatia, the Communist Party of Serbia, the Communist Party of Slovenia,²⁷ the Provincial Committees for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, were founded, as part of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. And as Banac points out, the Communists, unlike other opposition parties, did not rely on any single

¹⁹ Svendsen 2023, 204.

²⁰ See more: Jareb 1960, 119.

²¹ Cf. Vlasnović 2021, 295-297.

²² Jareb 1960, 119.

²³ Jareb 1960, 120.

²⁴ Jareb 1960, 120.

²⁵ Radelić 2006, 26.

²⁶ Banac, 1995, 277.

²⁷ Cf. Mišković and Bader 2021, 176-178.

national group, which gave them "a kind of flexibility and the possibility of building success on the assumption that only they could solve the national question in Yugoslavia".²⁸

The events of the war and the situation in the country forced the Communist Party of Yugoslavia to allow a very high degree of independence.²⁹ The Partisan leadership brought solutions according to which Croatia, as well as Slovenia, could define themselves as sovereign states. Since 1943, Croatia has shaped its state bodies and created a legislative system. At the Second Session of the National Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Croatia (ZAVNOH) in October 1943 in Plasko, Andrija Hebrang spoke about future federal republics, the resolution of the minority issue, against the king and the government, and the ZAVNOH made a decision on the annexation of Istria and the Croatian Littoral. Thus, issues from the "competence of the state as a whole" were resolved.³⁰ In addition, a kind of sovereignty was reflected in the fact that the Croatian Partisans, as well as the Partisans of other future federal units, had their main headquarters. However, this form of "sovereignty" that relied on commanding military autonomy had no chance of surviving, was considered extremely dangerous for party state control, and very soon this model was suspended. On the day of the renaming of the People's Liberation Army (NOV) and the Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia (POJ) into the Yugoslav Army (JA) on March 1, 1945 and the abolition of the main headquarters of the federal units, the federal armies, which had been an important element of statehood until then, were also abolished.³¹

The General Staff of the Yugoslav People's Army for Croatia was abolished on 18 May 1945. On 10 August 1945, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia took over the direct leadership of party organizations in the Yugoslav People's Army through the Political Department (Directorate) of the Ministry of National Defence. With these solutions, the

wartime independence of the federal units was completely abolished. The growing area under communist control, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) and the Ministerial Council, marked the abandonment of the practice of wartime independence and orientation towards solving their peculiarities. The republican authorities became the executors of the policy determined by the federal leadership, Yugoslavia became a highly centralized country. Given the one-party dictatorship of the centralized Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the federation was reduced to a mere slogan with no real content. It should be recalled that *the General Regulation on the Appointment of Governments* in Belgrade was drawn up by the Presidency of the AVNOJ on March 31, 1945. From that moment on, there is a general form for the appointment of all governments, their name, number of departments and competencies, and the method of taking the oath. Regulations were allowed to be published solely on the basis of laws of the Federal Assembly and instructions of the government. "The only concession to federalism was that AVNOJ did not publish these recommendations in the form of a law, but in the form of a recommendation."³²

The Law on the Government of the Federal Republic of Croatia was a reflection of this recommendation. The telegraphic connection with Belgrade was maintained by the federal units exclusively through the Politburo of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The presidents of the federal governments became the secretaries of the politburo (in Croatia it was Vladimir Bakarić).³³ The federal government could repeal all provisions of the republican if they were not in accordance with federal laws, and those concerning the federal unit were under the supervision of the federal public prosecutor who could issue a complaint, which was dealt with by the Presidency of the ZAVNOH.³⁴

³² Radelić 2006, 243.

³³ Cf. HE MI 2021, "Bakarić Vladimir."

³⁴ Radelić 2006, 243. *It is known that in the autumn of 1945 there were objections from Slovenia that federal laws and proposals should be accepted after prior agreement in the federal units, and that the right term for the legal and political creation of the people was the state, and not that*

²⁸ Banac 1995, 277.

²⁹ Cf. Vukelić and Šumanović, 2021.

³⁰ Radelić 2006, 242.

³¹ Cf. Begonja 2021.

Nevertheless, Vladimir Bakarić, the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Croatia, assessed the new Yugoslavia and its first Constitution (January 31, 1946) as "the complete opposite of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia".³⁵ The right to self-determination, which included the right to secession, gave the illusion of freedom and national emancipation and would prove to be the most common delusions. However, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav state institutions, despite leaning on Soviet-style constitutionalism, have indicated interesting differences in *the Constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ)* and *the Statute of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia*. Namely, Soviet constitutional solutions provided for the right of each Soviet republic to secede from Moscow, as well as allowing them to maintain relations with foreign states, conclude treaties, establish diplomatic relations, and form their own military formations. Such a broad republic was not envisaged by the Yugoslav Constitution. Real political life did not establish federalism and everything took place according to the strategy and political visions of the Communist Party. Moreover, not only actions, but also ideas and opinions aimed at the separation of the republics were persecuted. The persecutions were systematic and organized on the basis of the provision that "preaching hatred and discord is contrary to *the Constitution*" which emphasized national equality, but very selectively (only the Yugoslav nations were taken into account), the Germans, for example, were omitted and mostly expelled in a rather cruel way. In this sense, the

the names contained words such as federal unit or terrestrial. Jovan Đorđević, a member of the Constitutional Commission at the Ministry of Constituent Affairs, responded to the remarks with the thesis that the participation of the federal units is ensured through participation in the Federal Assembly, i.e. the Ministerial Council, and that it would not be correct for draft laws to be submitted to the presidencies of the provincial governments for approval before they are adopted in the Federal Assembly.

³⁵ Radelić 2006, 244. "(...) the adoption of the Constitution finally liquidated Yugoslavia as a country of national oppression, it finally liquidated those old reactionary Greater Serbian elements, which had been oppressing us Croats for so many years, it opened the way for us peaceful and free construction in a new fraternal union."

provisions of *the Law on the Prohibition of Incitement to National, Racial and Religious Hatred and Discord* of 1945, as well as *the Criminal Code* of 1951, were also in this sense.³⁶ The federal Yugoslav state was established as a federation of republics, not as a "federation of nations" because it was considered, on the basis of the Lenin-Stalin solution of the national question, that the sovereignty of the nation was realized by the sovereignty of the nation state. Nations are not reduced to republics, but include all members of the nation outside the parent republics, and at the same time republics are identified with nation states. Although republics were defined as sovereign homelands of sovereign nations, the idea of republican sovereignty was contradicted by Article 9 of the Federal Constitution, which stipulated that certain rights belonged only to the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as Article 11, which required that republican constitutions be in accordance with the constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In the event of a discrepancy between federal and republican law, federal law was above republican law.

The sovereignty of the republic was also limited in other ways. Thus, the minority had the same rights as the majority, and at the same time it was part of the majority nation in another republic. All citizens had the same rights throughout the territory, and they could move quite freely, so this meant that everyone could participate in political participation, i.e. in sovereignty in each of the republics. For example, Serbs in Croatia had the same rights as the majority, i.e. Croats, and at the same time they were part of the majority nation in Serbia. As citizens, if we stick to the example of Serbs and Croats, they had the same rights throughout the territory of Yugoslavia. This meant that every Croat and every Serb, as well as

³⁶ Cf. Criminal Code of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, Official Gazette of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, no. 13/1951., *Criminal Code - 14th edition*, Newspaper Institution Official Gazette of the SFRJ, (1974). Criminal Code of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Official Gazette of the SFRJ, no. 44/1976. The new law also contained provisions concerning political crime, which were described in Chapter XV. HR-HDA-1561-SRH-RSUP-SDS, code 31, ordinal 266, Criminal Code of the SFRJ (Copy of Chapters XV and XVI) NN 1978.

members of other nations, could participate in political participation, in fact in sovereignty in each of the republics. Thus, no nation was truly sovereign in its republic, just as no republic was. *The Constitution* of January 31, 1946 formally establishes federalization, but in fact provides for firm centralization. It emphasizes the sovereignty of the people, and the entire order rests on the supervision of the political leadership. Republicans have only negligible rights. Federalism was intended to serve as a lightning rod for national sentiments, without limiting the authority and jurisdiction of a centralized administration.³⁷

IV. A NEW MAN AFTER THE "RESOLVED" NATIONAL QUESTION

After the end of World War II, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, led by Josip Broz Tito, transformed the post-war policy into a proclamation that the national question had been solved by the revolution as an earlier assumption that the communists could solve the national question. There should have been no controversy, especially in the political sphere. The regime was to concentrate on consolidating power, one aspect of which was the creation of a "new man", a guarantor of the socialist economic, cultural, political and educational take-off. At the same time, the model is, as has been said, the Soviet model (the Society for Cultural Cooperation of Croatia and the Soviet Union was founded in Zagreb on the model of similar ones at the federal level) and any different opinion is denounced as backward and counter-revolutionary.

In this enthusiasm, the role of the Enlightenment was important, the significance of which the communists understood well, which, as Radelic points out, is characteristic of all modernization movements, regardless of ideology.³⁸ Literacy and the increase of educational institutions were directed towards the consolidation of common memory and a unique interpretation of the past. Self-identification was based on the National Liberation Front, and later self-management was

designed as a scientific confirmation of the right path. The communist propaganda of that time mercilessly dealt with other ideologies, especially religion, presenting them as primitivism.

By imposing their values, the communists are trying to annul the traditional heritage. National is meant as ethnic, the revolution solved the national question, but, as it was pointed out, "the masses are not yet mature". The possibility of national affirmation is allowed only through the work of cultural and artistic societies and their care for some traditional values, but not as a value system of everyday life. The tradition was reshaped according to the doctrine of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, to which other civilizational achievements were adapted. On a superficial level, the communists respected differences to some extent, but in every possible way they expelled them from public life in order to push them into oblivion. In the new socialist community, there was a tendency to respect national forms through a federal system. However, traditional content with a clearly expressed difference in national and religious components was tried to be concealed.³⁹

Communist propaganda and ideological shaping of all social spheres had their own specific structure built on argumentative single-mindedness, society was permeated with it in its entirety. However, this is still a less traumatic sequence of contemporary Croatian history than the post-war merciless confrontations with the unsuitable. Imprisonment, confiscation of property, politically staged trials with a special emphasis on war crimes committed immediately after the end of war operations mark an extremely traumatic social and political context, which was not at all a stimulating atmosphere for any theoretical reflections on democratization or national equality. Quite predictably, the regime sought both philosophical and scientific support during this period, and it would not be long before it received it in a rather authoritative way.

³⁷ Radelic 2006, 245.

³⁸ Radelic 2006, 164.

³⁹ Radelic 2006, 167.

V. PRAXIS, CROATIAN SPRING – THE WEAKNESS OF THE REGIME WITHOUT A HINT OF AN INDEPENDENT CROATIA

The movement under the name Croatian spring is often recorded in the collective memory as a time of some kind of national euphoria encouraged by the then republican party leadership, which was joined by students and intellectuals, thus creating a movement that opposed centralization and party dictatorship. In the collective memory, and mostly thanks to the optimism of remembrance, this period of contemporary Croatian history is perceived as a time in which freedom was almost within reach.⁴⁰ But what was the Croatian Spring in its essence and what kind of freedom did its leaders imagine?

The dismissal of Aleksandar Rankovic, the grey eminence of the police state, at the Brijuni Plenum in 1966 was perceived by the Croatian public as a confirmation of the victory of the "democratic" forces within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ), which for a moment might have looked like a path to democratization. The younger guard of the Croatian party leadership, Savka Dabčević-Kucar, Ante Miko Tripalo, Pero Pirker and others,⁴¹ stood at the head of this movement, demanding economic, national, democratic and labor rights, which was the platform that ensured the homogeneity of the movement. In such an atmosphere, however, questions of different political possibilities arise, different positions that were not close to the party structures are politicized, which in turn leads to the encouragement of new issues, which nevertheless happens on the margins of the mainstream political stream.

Everything that the Croatian communists demanded-national equality within the federation, clean accounts, more autonomy in political decision-making within each federal unit, did not pose any particular danger to the ruling regime. As one of the leading figures of the Republican Party, Savka Dabčević-Kucar, pointed out – "yes,

an independent Croatia, but only in socialist Yugoslavia", was the legitimization of the movement. Therefore, even today, all polemics take place on the basis of whether the Croatian Spring is a movement that implied the abolition of the political order of the time (which would have happened if it had not been forcibly silenced) or whether it was an intra-party reform aspiration, albeit with somewhat more freely expressed demands than it has ever been since the establishment of the Yugoslav federation.

The movement stood for more democracy, civil and national freedoms and rights, clean accounts, full equality of peoples and republics *within the framework of the socialist system and the Yugoslav state union* with the necessary transformations of *socialism into socialism with a human face, and Yugoslavia into a state community of truly equal peoples and republics*. There were no significant differences within the movement on these issues. In Karadjordjevo, quite expectedly, the reformists within the SKH were completely neutralized,⁴² and it would be difficult to conclude that the key people had a clear vision of Croatian independence, that is, leaving the common state and under what conditions.⁴³ Therefore, the conclusion is imposed: the Croatian Spring in its essence, according to the intentions of its protagonists, was not a subversive but a reform movement, however, the initial reforms within the SK opened up space for action for other segments of the movement as well.⁴⁴ A true reform that would lead to the establishment of a democratic order and consequently Croatian independence could not be carried out in a social system that, among other things, was based on the monopoly position of one party – the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.

In addition to demands such as the reform of the foreign exchange regime "for the benefit of those who exercise them", the return of funds "to those who produce them", and the "alienated centers of power" are criticized, the Croatian Spring was basically a socialist heterodoxy that did not intend to abandon the values of socialism. These values

⁴⁰ Cf. Krašić 2018, Vlasnović and Begonja 2023.

⁴¹ Cf. HE MI 2021, "Dabčević-Kučar Savka, Tripalo Ante Miko, Pirker Pero."

⁴² Cf. Mišković and Bader 2021, 179-183.

⁴³ Cf. Mesić 2012, XXIX-XXXI.

⁴⁴ Kriste 2012, 43-44.

themselves, endangered by the anachronistic orthodoxy of the Party, tried to be realized in a democratic way, still within the borders of the socialist political system and Yugoslavia as a state.⁴⁵ The Croatian Spring came as the climax of the struggle for economic and social democratization. It was a struggle for self-management, economic and social reform, equality of peoples and nationalities, a struggle for the values of the so-called socialist democracy as a higher form of democracy than the "mere" civil and parliamentary one – for the so-called social or socialist democracy, based on the Marxist ideas of "liberation of man and society".

However, despite the fact that the demands of the Croatian party leadership were presented in a way that conceptually did not differ significantly from the *critique of dogmatic Marxism* by prominent representatives of Croatian philosophy and political theory gathered around the editorial boards of the journal *Praxis*, Gajo Petrovic, Milan Kangrga and Branko Bosnjak saw nothing but nationalism and old civil-bourgeois critical forms in it.⁴⁶ They believed that in this way, primarily because internationalism as the ideological flywheel of social transformation had been betrayed, it was not possible to return to the original meaning of the socialist revolution, in which they saw the realization of freedom and equality that the bureaucratized party leadership hinders and abuses.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, even today, in a part of the professional public, *Praxis* figures as an intellectual opposition (or, as Kasapovic puts it, a liberal oasis) to the then, indisputably

dictatorial government, which is supported, among other things, by the fact that the journal was shut down by the deprivation of state funds after decades of continuous publication. But what did freedom and equality mean to *the Praxisians*, how did they think and define these terms, and could they have had an impact on the political situation? The answer to the first question is unambiguous and it is quite clear that they did not derive their theories according to the model of the libertarian authorities of their time, nor could they do so given their formative socio-historical context.⁴⁸ As for the second question, things are not entirely unambiguous.

The leading people of the magazine's editorial board were communists declared by the list, and most of them were participants in the National Liberation Front i.e. completely attached to the doctrine of the Comintern), and they gained full active maturity many years after Yugoslavia rejected the Soviet model of socialism, and Tito opposed Stalin. As they insist on Marxism (as well as the critique of Stalinism) as the fundamental position from which they articulate their critique of society, one could conclude that the reach of *praxis*-philosophy does not go beyond support for a regime that points out only some "deviations" that can be corrected. In order to do this, it is necessary to reach for Marx again, more precisely his philosophical opus, the essence of which is reflected in practical action. In the editorial of the first issue of the journal in 1964, it was said that socialism was the only human way out of the

⁴⁵ Vujić 2012, 33-41.

⁴⁶ Cf. HE MI 2021, "Petrović Gajo, Kangrga Milan, Bošnjak Branko."

⁴⁷ Cf. Croatian State Archives, Fund 1561, State Security/ Security Service, HR-HDA-1561-SDB, code 4.0, ordinal 14/1971, 8/10. A group of intellectuals from the University of Zagreb who advocated a neo-Marxist approach to philosophy and social sciences known as *praxis*-philosophy in the journal *Praxis*. The authorities of the time saw their actions as an opposition and a "coup from the left". HR-HDA-1561, code 10.1, ordinal 58/1976., 7/55-13/58. Such cases are also known in Yugoslav practice, as the case of the "new left", which before the 21st session of the Presidency of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia almost dictated public opinion in Yugoslav university centers through a number of newspapers and magazines (*Praxis*, *Student*, *Philosophy*, *Our Days*, *Index*, *Katedra*, etc.).

⁴⁸ Mikulić and Žitko, 2015. Nevertheless, dialogue with philosophers and theoreticians of the non-Marxist thought tradition was not a priori rejected, which is why the editorial of the first issue of the journal from 1964, among other things, said: *Without understanding the essence of Marx's thought, there is no humanist socialism. But our program is not to interpret Marx's thought to arrive at an "exact" understanding of it and to only "defend" it in this "pure" form. We do not care about preserving Marx, but about developing living revolutionary thought inspired by Marx. The development of such a thought requires a broad and open discussion, in which non-Marxists will also participate. That is why our journal will publish not only the works of Marxists, but also the works of those who deal with the theoretical problems that bother us. We believe that the understanding of the essence of Marx's thought can be contributed by its intelligent critics, rather than by limited and dogmatic adherents.*

difficulties in which humanity was entangled, and Marx's thought was the most adequate theoretical basis and inspiration for revolutionary action. One of the basic sources of failures and deformations of socialist theory and practice in the course of recent decades should be sought precisely in the overlooking of the "philosophical dimension" of Marx's thought in the open or covert denial of its humanistic essence. The development of authentic, humanist socialism is impossible without the renewal and development of Marx's philosophical thought, without a more in-depth study of the works of all important Marxists, and without a truly Marxist, non-dogmatic and revolutionary approach to the open questions of our time.

Although *Praxis* broadly covered the problems of social and political phenomena of the time, the critique of the methods of achieving socialism in Yugoslavia represented the backbone of their philosophical creativity on the basis of *Anti-Dogmatic Humanist Marxism*. They chose the name *Praxis* because they believed that it was the key concept of Marx's thought, a term that best reflects the humanistic vision of the really human world. A prerequisite for the emergence of *Anti-Dogmatic Marxism* in Yugoslavia was the break with the Soviet Union in 1948, i.e., the so-called historical Tito's "No" to Stalin. This opened up space for new interpretations of Marx's thought as well as the need for further reflection on the socio-political reality in Yugoslavia. "Thus, *Praxis* soon became the most influential voice of leftist criticism, and criticism from the left, of failures in the process of building socialism."⁴⁹

"Praxis" means not only what the term names in the narrow sense of the word – a philosophical group of so-called anti-dogmatic Marxists that operated in the period 1964-1974 with the associated journal under the same name *Praxis* and a regular annual conference called "Korcula Summer School" – but also the specific historical, political and cultural context of their activities, or in one word: the epoch of the 1960s in Yugoslavia. The *Praxis* group itself referred to such a dual status of the avant-garde and the critique of

socialism most often in cases of conflict with the party nomenclature, expressing directly the (theoretical) attitude of philosophical criticism. Indirectly, as an effect on the part of the political recipient of its theoretical message, it in any case also transmitted a (practical) attitude of political competition with the ruling apparatus, although the goal of the theoretical critique of the government – regardless of the possible personal ambitions of the theoretician – is to improve the government, not to take power.⁵⁰

In a collection of essays and articles from 1965 Gajo Petrovic problematizes these issues. In the text "Marx as a Philosopher" he criticizes those who claim that Marx is not a philosopher, that is, the transition of Marx's research interest from the field of philosophy to political economy or social sciences. In the text "Marx's Philosophy", G. Petrovic continues his reflection on the essence of Marx's philosophy and introduces the definition of Marx's philosophy as a philosophy of act or practice:

If we characterize a philosophy as a philosophy of act (work, practice), it must mean that the act (work, practice) derives from the essence of its theoretical content, that the transition from theory to practice is its essential 'thesis'. Therefore, if we characterize Marx's philosophy as a philosophy of action, we must explain what are its essential theses, which are why it cannot remain a pure theory, but must grow into a work of revolutionary change of the world. (Petrovic, 1965: 73).⁵¹

So, there is a pronounced ambition to influence political processes, so Mikulic says:

With philosophy understood in the sense of critiquing the alienation processes within a socialist society and the transformation of socialism from a project of liberated social life into a system of human management, *praxis*-philosophy pretends to directly influence its object, the social condition, from a theoretical metaposition.

⁴⁹ Bogdanić 2015, 26.

⁵⁰ Mikulić 2009.

⁵¹ Žitko 2015, 148.

And what kind of situation is it that wants to change and where did it go wrong with Yugoslav authentic socialism? Mikulic sees the key problem with *Praxis* in the fact that with his intellectual authority and international reputation within the order of power, he (it) became a direct competitor to Tito for redefining the project of self-management as a true democratic order, which did not need any political theory since from the position of the supreme political authority he believed that he was the one who had to dictate social changes and the way they would be carried out. *The Praxisians*, he says, nevertheless managed to create a theory that overcomes the state of an inauthentic, alienated socialist project, based on the principles of revolutionary theoretical practice or thought of the revolution, a critique of the party bureaucracy and democratic centralism as alienated forms of socialist rule, through which the party nomenclature ruled the state and society.

Petrovic says that man realizes his essence, that is, he avoids alienated existence if *he acts revolutionarily, and acts revolutionary if he realizes his essence*, that is, realizes *historically created possibilities*. The normative concept of alienation is conditioned by the criticism of Stalinism, but in a negative sense – Stalinism represents a deviation of socialism that tells us that it should not be.⁵²

However, *the Praxisians* were not able to make the necessary theoretical maneuvers to neutralize their own weak points until the end of their group existence. Apart from the critique of nationalism, other aspects of Yugoslav socialism have hardly been seriously touched. Like their counterparts in Western Marxism, *the Praxisians* suffered from inhibition in dealing with fundamental economic and political issues – and when such questions did come on the agenda, they had to be translated into the language of academic philosophy, with an important part of the issue "especially when it comes to Yugoslav self-management, remaining lost in translation".⁵³

In this sense, an appendix to the proceedings of the conference on *Praxis* and the "Korcula Summer School" held in 2011 in Korcula is indicative, in which Alen Suceska states that "the Praxisians critique is not a structural analysis of the existing social reality, but a value judgment".⁵⁴

Neven Sesardic makes a very harsh criticism of the philosophy of *Praxis*, pointing out that it was not until 1960 at the Bled philosophical conference that the editorial board of this renowned journal abandoned Stalinist positions with the publication of Gajo Petrovic on the triumph of creative Marxism over dogmatic Marxism, which was quite a delay in relation to the political separation of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. He believes that the basic problem with *Praxisian* Marxism was that its progenitors did not adopt it on the basis of considering its advantages over other opinions, but uncritically accepted it as scoundrels, completely carried away and without the desire to question possible alternatives.⁵⁵

Sesardic considers the departure that took place in Bled to be an extremely small step compared to the official party positions, since a slightly larger one was not even possible due to the likely rejection. Therefore, he sees nothing in *Praxis* but "family quarrels" and the creation of some illusion of alleged dissidence and readiness for merciless criticism of everything that exists. The monopoly of the Communist Party was never questioned, but on the other hand, they never attacked those who acted from such positions (Milovan Djilas, Mihajlo Mihajlov),⁵⁶ in order to avoid accusations of flattery to the regime. The *Praxis members* were silent about the true critics of Titoism who paid for their statements with prison sentences.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Veljak 2015 55.

⁵⁵ Sesardic 2022, 369.

⁵⁶ Cf. HE MI 2021, "Đilas Milovan, Mihajlov Mihajlo."

⁵⁷ Cf. Đodan 1998, Veselica 2003, Tuđman 2011, HR-HDA-1561-SRH-RSUP-SDS, dossier Tuđman Franjo no. 229562, HR-HDA-1561-SRH-RSUP-SDS, dossier Veselica Marko no. 205673, HR-HDA-1561-SRH-RSUP-SDS, dossier Đodan Šime no. 238694, HR-HDA-1561-SRH-RSUP-SDS, dossier Gotovac Vlado no. 204605. See more: Gotovac 1989, 145-146, 156-157, 162-163. Letter from Vlado Gotovac to the Board of Directors of the Croatian Philosophical Society dated February 24, 1981 Gotovac also reproaches some public

⁵² Žitko 2015, 152-156.

⁵³ Žitko 2015, 157.

Sesardic notes that this strategy could not be overlooked even by proven *Praxis* sympathizers, so he gives an example when in 1975 eight Belgrade *Praxisians* supporters were expelled from college, Gerson Sher, who was finishing his praiseworthy book on *Praxis*, published an article in a well-known left-wing magazine entitled "Tito Silenced the Loyal Opposition".

VI. INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

If one could briefly summarize the attempt at a more extensive historiographical coverage of half a century of contemporary Croatian political history, it seems acceptable to concentrate on those important episodes that particularly influenced the development of society. Therefore, it should be emphasized that the struggle for freedom and democracy from 1945 until the fall of communism and Croatian independence in 1990, on the theoretical and political level, marked the fate of the entire population, but certainly not all sections were equally relevant. Regardless of which definition of the Yugoslav order we adhere to, whether we understand it as totalitarianism or authoritarianism, or whether we try to recognize the gradual transition from one form of government to another, it is justified to concentrate on those attempts at criticism that tried to impose themselves as an alternative to the official one-party communist government. Thus, a critical discourse on possible alternatives could not arise *ab ovo*, but simply had to be part of the social, political, cultural atmosphere.

In such circumstances, it was not realistic to expect that a school of thought would emerge that could, for example, think about justice in a free society like the Austrian political theorist Friedrich Hayek. It was not realistic to expect that one of our intellectual authorities would deprive the question of the common good of a free and spontaneous order of some generally accepted purpose. Civilization and modernity in the free world of liberal democracies simply do not know such purposes, about which there is universal

officials and the editorial board of the magazine *Praxis* for giving arguments to the prosecutors' indictments and court verdicts with their criticism of the Croatian national movement.

agreement. So, as Hayek puts it, "in a free society, the common good basically consists in facilitating the pursuit of unknown individual purposes."

The common good is recognized in governance. The American philosopher John Rawls could not have been close to them with his theory of justice, who believes that even in a radically pluralistic society it is possible to find a common purpose because it is a consequence of the requirements of rational people who know what they would like to be, what they want to achieve, have an idea of their own nature, personality and purposes, and all this is different. But Rawls says, that doesn't mean an agreement on the interpretation of the commons isn't possible.

At the time when liberal theories of a just and functional society were emerging in socialist Yugoslavia and Croatia, Marxism had state protection as an official ideology, which means that *the common good and the common purpose* were prescribed by the law passed by the Communist Party. The law clearly stipulated that secondary education had a compulsory subject in the curriculum – *Marxism*. There is no significant rebellion against the system that lasted until the end of 1989 and, as Sesardic well notes, the philosophers of practice of the time did not show any intention to express their disagreement with the system that had outlawed the views of non-Marxists for years, and in which the state ensured the status of a *protected philosophy* for Marxism.

From all of the above, it follows that any more relevant criticism of Yugoslav communism that would have at least a slight ambition to go beyond the prescribed ideological framework, had to at least indirectly call into question the one-party system. Neither the Croatian reformist communists nor *praxis*-philosophy were ready to do this. Moreover, Gajo Petrovic, the central figure of *Praxis*, in an interview for the German *Spiegel* in 1970, when asked whether it was necessary to think about introducing a multi-party system in democratic socialism in the future, replied that its goal was the withering away of the state and the withering away of parliamentary democracy, that is, the withering away of parties,

and advocated socialism without parties. As Sesardic well concludes, instead of multi-party system, Petrovic advocates the withering away of parties, "obviously a very long process whose final result has remained completely unspecified, so it is unclear why such an outcome would be desirable at all."⁵⁸

It should be added to this that after Tito's death in 1980, Croatia faced a decade for which it is widely believed that pluralism of opinion is gaining more and more space, which is mostly incorrect because these are indeed "liberal oases" that did not significantly change the character of the regime.⁵⁹ Since the crime of opinion was legally sanctioned throughout this period, and the State Security Service carried out several cruel executions of political dissidents abroad, there was no question of any kind of tolerance or transformation of political power. All those tendencies that we label as progressive and free-thinking penetrated art and culture, inspired by the models of liberal democratic countries, however, they took place under the watchful eye of the security and intelligence apparatus, always ready for sanctions or intimidation. Thus, it was possible to think about the issues of freedom, justice, liberal democracy, throughout the described period in a consistent and argumentative way from non-Marxist positions, but, paraphrasing a joke from the time of socialism - you can have your own opinion, but you must not agree with it - it best reflects the scope of true dissident activity.

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