

**Lev Centrih, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia):
The Journal *Perspektive* and Socialist Self-Management in Slovenia: In Search
of a New Anti-Stalinist Society. Towards a Materialist Survey of Communist
Ideology.**

Abstract

The paper deals with the social and political transformations in Slovenia (Yugoslavia) in the first half of the 1960s based on the example of the journal *Perspektive*, which was published from 1960 to 1964. *Perspektive* represented a continuation of the tradition of socio-cultural journals that, since the end of the war, had been developing a critical mindset and theory in Slovenia. The journal *Perspektive* progressed the furthest in this direction, reaching deep into socio-political issues and being eventually liquidated because of this.

It has been argued very often that the Yugoslav system of socialist self-management had been an illusion (a mere ideology) and one-party system-bureaucracy on the other hand its reality. The aim of the following article is not simply to provide another refutation of that common argument based on the ideology/reality dichotomy, but rather to show that a striking similar logic of argumentation can be found at the very ideological basis of the Yugoslav critique of Stalinism; a critique which had very concrete social effects. Unlike most of the contemporary critiques of socialist systems (those based on simple dichotomies), Yugoslav critique of Stalinism opened great possibilities for the development of social sciences and even political creativity. An ultimate aim of this paper is to show the (historical) structural reasons for this. These social effects will be illustrated and elaborated through the case of the journal *Perspektive* which provides a perfect outlook of the struggles taking place inside the ideological state apparatuses in socialist Slovenia (Yugoslavia).

Perspektive could not be labeled a public enemy, like a street gang, because the masses had failed to react appropriately when it existed, and would be even less capable of doing so after it was gone. If that is the case, and *Perspektive* in fact never got the ideological status of an outlaw gang – the scum of society (as it was common practice in the USSR during the period of socialist construction) – then we may, in absence of a more appropriate notion, truly define it as a political Party.

Introduction¹

Research into the *Perspektive* phenomenon dates back to 1990, when historian Božo Repe published a work under the title *Obračun s Perspektivami* (Showdown with *Perspektive*),² where he reconstructed, on the basis of a thorough analysis of archival material, the escalation of the conflict between the inner circle of *Perspektive* and the official party line. From 1994 to 1996 the ZPS (Scientific Publication Center) in Ljubljana carried out an in-depth project entitled *Slovensko Perspektivovstvo*³. Two important members of the inner circle of *Perspektive* participated in this project: Vital Klabus and, most importantly, Taras Kermauner, who also published an essay on this subject in 1995⁴. The themes of this project included the problem of intelligentsia in socialism, the difficulty of typifying totalitarianism, the relationship and dialog that *Perspektive* had with similar journals, and also a study of the dramatic works which appeared in *Perspektive*. A transcript of a conference, which took place in Ljubljana on October 16, 1995, was published. Another significant contribution to this

¹ The author is grateful to Michael C. Jumič for his valuable work on stylistic matters.

² Repe, Božo: *Obračun s Perspektivami*, Ljubljana 1990.

³ *Slovensko perspektivovstvo* [Slovene Perspectives], in: *Borec*, no. 535–537/1994; no. 551–552/1996.

⁴ Kermauner, Taras: *Perspektivovci* [Perspektivians], Ljubljana 1995.

subject was Lev Kreft's book, entitled *Zjeban od absolutnega* (Fucked by the Absolute, 1998).⁵

The following article represents a continuation, but also a revision, of my earlier research attempts⁶, which focused on the problems of systemic changes in Slovenia (Yugoslavia) in the early 1960s. My initial inquiry was intended to shed light on the transition from a totalitarian to an authoritarian regime in Slovenia/Yugoslavia (as defined by the model of Juan J. Linz)⁷. An examination of the journal's activities confirmed that the Yugoslav regime after the Cominform split relied more on the hegemonic apparatus within civil society than on conventional repression, and eventually led to the conclusion that the journal *Perspektive* assumed the role of a political party as defined by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*.

Although this analysis was founded on a highly critical stance towards the ideological practice of labeling socialist systems as *a priori* and allover totalitarian; and although my acceptance of Linz's moderate model of transition was conditioned upon a critique of his liberal ideological point of departure, initial acceptance of Linz's basic totalitarianism/authoritarianism dichotomy came with a price. Not only was it revealed to be redundant in the light of conceptual apparatuses analysed by Gramsci, Foucault and Althusser; it also produced an ideological differentiation between the history of the Yugoslav communist movement and the history of the international communist movement under the waning hegemony of the USSR, the All-Union Communist Party resp. Communist Party of the Soviet Union (AUCP(b)/CPSU). The initial totalitarianism/authoritarianism dichotomy relied on an understanding of the pre-1948 period in the international communist movement (especially in the realm of ideology) as monolithic. This rigidity made it necessary to take the ideal of the Comintern/Cominform (or any Communist Party at that time) as an empirical social fact, and not as a signifier indicating countless strategies that often resulted in compromises and failures to maintain order and control in the realms of politics, economy, ideology and theory. As a result, the notion of Stalinism in our earlier analysis virtually froze the whole pre-1948 history of the international communist movement, and critiques coming from Yugoslavia appeared simply as attempts to chip away at the Stalinist monolith. Since the analysis revealed that virtually everyone was fighting Stalinism, it spontaneously became our undisputed point of reference – an ultimate antonym to freedom, democracy, and the productive development of Marxist theory and revolutionary political initiative, i.e. socialism. The empiricist simplification came easily because the analysis clearly showed that virtually every achievement and failure of the emerging system of socialist self-management was measured by its relative distance from Stalinist praxis. The ultimate promise of socialist self-management emerged – the withering away of the state (and eventually the Party, politics, power, etc. as well). That very promise was said to have generated a number of conflicts on various political levels: first within the Party itself, and then between the Party and new social movements (*Perspektive* circle, students etc). However, what this analysis failed to adequately elaborate were the conditions of these conflicts – the fact that the social struggles of the 1960s were fought on a platform of socialism. And this platform must not be taken as a self-evident fact.

⁵ Kreft, Lev: *Zjeban od Absolutnega*. *Perspektivovci in perspektivasi*. Portret skupine [Fucked by the Absolute. *Perspectivians in Perspective*. A Group Portrait], Ljubljana 1998.

⁶ Centrih, Lev: *Perspektive in hegemonija* [Perspektive and Hegemony], in: 2000, no. 159, 160, 161, Ljubljana 2003; Centrih: *Revija Perspektive in systemske spremembe v Sloveniji v prvi polovici šetdesetih let 20. stoletja* [The Journal *Perspektive* and Systemic Changes in Slovenia in the first Half of the 60's in the 20th Century] BA Dissertation (mentors: Prof. Božo Repe, PhD and Prof. Avgust Lešnik, PhD), Ljubljana 2004, 68 pp.

⁷ Linz, Juan J.: *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, London 2000.

Unlike the 1980s, when critiques of the socialist economy were elevated to a sort of contest of providing more and more evidence of its inefficiency and irrationality, in the 1960s, the focus was on emerging social inequalities and commercialization as the immediate results of the decentralization of the mid 1950s. Although the prevailing discourse happened to be radical humanist, unlike in the 1980s, there was not a single jot to be heard about civil society, human rights, and other words sacred to liberalism. There seems to have been one interesting exception, however: the discourse on totalitarianism. But unlike the 1980s and 1990s when, under the strong influence of *nouveaux philosophes*⁸, the word was primarily used to denote communist bestialities and abuses of power, in the 1960s the notion of totalitarianism was a sort of synonym for the Marxist concept of alienation, and as such was capable of denoting statism, bureaucracy, and Stalinism, but also consumerism; in short, virtually any kind of power relation. Within the circle of *Perspektive*, socialist self-management appeared as the vital social force capable of combating these phenomena of modern industrial societies. It seems that socialism, which was widely recognized as a world process at the time, still provided fertile ground for an alternative political imaginary. The aim of the following article is to elaborate how this political imaginary took shape and what strategies were employed by the agents involved, in our case the League of Communists and the circle of *Perspektive*.

On the history of the world socialist/communist revolution

In the communist movement of the 20th century, time was everything. “[W]eeks and even days decide everything,” Lenin warned the Central Committee in late autumn of 1917, when the revolution was the “task of the day”. But soon, time began to slow down, even though it was already terribly late: “We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must redress this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or we shall go under.” was Stalin’s warning to the managers in 1931; the order of the day that followed was “Five year plan in four years!” Just a few years later, socialism was said to be essentially built. Finally, time began to run extremely slowly, but even then there was no time for laziness. In 1977, it was scientifically and legally proved (Constitution of the USSR, 1977) that that very same socialism had finally matured. The époque of Communism was already here, although communism itself had yet to arrive. To make matters worse, it was not exactly clear where socialism ends and communism begins. Nonetheless, another (and probably the last) call came from the Party: “[T]here must be no delay in effecting the necessary transformations”; “The Soviet people has built socialism. The Soviet people will build a communist society” (The Program of CPSU, 1986).

Most of the essential elements of Braudel’s famous theory of historical time are present here: the short time of men, when failures could have terrible immediate consequences for the agents involved (masses, classes, individuals, the Party – its leadership, etc.); followed by the time of production cycles – in our case those of steel and iron – the time of technology; and finally the time of the historical époque, the *longue durée* – communism. What certainly does not fit into Braudel’s model is the way the époque suddenly ended – literally before the contemporaries’ eyes – somehow simultaneously as broadcasts from the Central Committee went silent.

What happened? According to one scholar, the Party’s Secretariat was split into several sub commissions, and the basis (*obkoms*, *raykoms*, *gorkoms*, *kraykoms*, primary organizations,

⁸ Geraud, Geoffroy Pascal: Making Antitotalitarianism without Totalitarianism: French “public intellectuals” Discourse on Yugoslavia at the Beginning of the 90’s, in: Uneventment of History – the Case of Yugoslavia, *in print*.

etc.) was suddenly deprived of information about what they were supposed to do or what was going on and *vice versa*: reports from the basis became virtually useless.⁹ After that, accumulating items of value became the new pastime: dachas, cars, telephones, even toilets. What is ironic is that it were neither communists nor Marxist scholars (critical or dogmatic) who ultimately declared that not only the *époque* of communism, but communism itself, had actually taken place in the history of the mankind.

It could not be otherwise. The Sophists were too busy piling up evidence that, although society was in fact steadily progressing toward communism, there was always something more to achieve: another step of progress to be made, more mistakes to be fixed, better use of science and technology to be made, etc. Critical Marxists, on the other hand, were at least by the 1980s coming to terms with realizing that the dreams of October were essentially over: another socialist/revolutionary strategy was necessary. Neglected stories of unsung and overlooked rebellions had to be taken into account. Marx (and now even Lenin) needed new and better company; be it Lacan, Hegel, *subcomandante* Marcos (“We take shit on all avant-gardes!”) or St. Francis of Assisi – anyone but Engels (the almost complete disappearance of Engels¹⁰ is perhaps the most visible sign that something had really changed; not only in epistemological, but also in political conjuncture!) Post-Marxism had “emerged”.

The proclamation that communism had in fact existed ultimately fell to those who had been most anxiously looking forward to drawing up its death certificate. By proclaiming the end of

⁹ Kotkin, Stephen: *Armageddon Averted. The Soviet Collapse 1970-2000*, New York 2001, p. 77.

¹⁰ The best critiques of Stalinism from the 1960s and 1970s were re-examinations of Lukács and independent Marxists of the 1930s, and marked Engels as the “weakest link” in Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy; of course not in the sense of his theoretical weakness or lack of originality, but rather as a subject in a relation of domination which might be described essentially as a relation between a Teacher and his pupil. (Even today it is not easy to imagine an utterance, involving both characters, where name of Engels would not come after that of Marx; Engels - Marx Gesamtausgabe: EMGA instead of MEGA? One thing is certain: “Engelsism” does not exist.) In line with this relation, Engels is the one who provided the Method by systematizing the opus of his Master – Karl Marx. A firm ideological basis for this relationship had been provided during the late period of the Second International, but reached its peak during the Third. If Engels once declared himself a pupil of Marx, Stalin did the same in reference to Lenin. This gesture itself did not make him a special figure in the Party, just as Engels’s allegiance to Marx in one of his letters did not make him Marxism’s second classic author; it was the paper entitled *The Foundations of Leninism* (1924) which produced the signifier “Leninism”, which the ideological apparatus (of the AUCP/b/ and the Comintern) embraced immediately. It was perfect, because it marked a new era of the October Revolution, a discontinuity with the Second International; and, when fused with Marxism, it sounded even stronger, since it symbolized continuity with the teachings of Marx and Engels, teachings which had been saved from characters like Kautsky and Bernstein and were thus uncorrupted. It was one of the priority tasks of the Comintern to maintain that purity. Doing this meant control, and the control operates through laws: Engels’ remarks on Marx’s work appeared more crucial than ever; they eventually became a corner stone of *diamat* (as dialectical materialism, when a study subject, was abridged in the USSR). The same holds for Lenin; Lenin fought against revisionism of the Second International; now he in turn had to be defended from the same revisionist menace. *The Foundation of Leninism*, signed by Stalin, called just for that. Trotsky might have fought Stalin, but he could not fight Leninism. Stalin’s declaring himself a humble pupil put him in a position which was not easy to challenge, since it was nothing but a voice of defense operating through a few summaries of Lenin’s texts. When Stalin eventually won, the elevation of his interpretations of Lenin to something like Stalinism was not only completely redundant, but also potentially dangerous (Stalinism *versus* Marxism/Leninism). Stalinism as a notion with a negative connotation became widely popular only later, and one might argue that it was so widely used only to secure the legitimate use of notions such as Marxism (-Leninism). In order to make this viable, the “emancipation” of Engels was crucial; namely his establishment as a theoretician whose original theoretical contributions were largely elucidated through a critique of the “Stalinist” vulgarization of his works. The best work by far on this topic in Yugoslav Marxism was Božidar Debenjak’s book, entitled *Friedrich Engels – zgodovina in odtujitev* (Frederick Engels – History and Alienation /Maribor, 1970, 1981/). This practice also “emancipated” Marx. Since debates on Engels always had harsh political connotations regarding socialist strategies, connotations which hinted not only at theoretical rigidity, but also Party politics in East and the West, the extinction of the latter was not without consequences for Engels. His actuality – compared to Marx, Lenin or Mao – seems lost; post-Marxism is a signifier of that loss.

history (and ideology), communism's adversaries defined communism and, given its pervasiveness, actually did so by following the basic teachings of the orthodoxy: if communism marks the dawn of the real history of the mankind, then the end of history means the end of communism. The logic was simple: the end of anything presupposes its prior existence. Communism as a state and an order of things had existed after all, but only retroactively, in magic words like "post-communist", "post-socialist"; it had ceased to exist as a promise whose reality was either a permanent struggle¹¹ or a permanent danger. At the end of the day, communism became (empirically) identical with any non-capitalist *ancient regime*. How was this possible? How could a handful of bourgeois reactionaries like Fukuyama succeed where millions had failed? (Any communist attempt to provide a more accurate date for communism's birth was soon elevated to a *Witz*, like *The Train to Communism*: "[...] Brezhnev finally suggested: cover the windows and let's just pretend we are there already!") In the 1920s, the brilliant scholar M. N. Pokrovskii explained that just when he had defended his apparently naive and controversial thesis, the socialist revolution had actually happened as early as February 1917; according to him, the Great October only made *de iure* (symbolic) what had already existed *de facto*; but Pokrovskii did not forget to add that the progress from *de facto* to *de iure*, the fight for denoting reality – which also transforms reality itself – took its toll in blood and bullets¹². Flash forward to the end of the century, and it turns out that all that was needed was silence – the silence that follows defeat.

Since the states of real socialism did not collapse under the pressure of a military offensive, one must take a closer look at the dissolution of the ideological state apparatus. It would matter very little if those apparatus had churned out nothing but rubbish; what matters is that they spoke a lot. Nor would it matter if their products were considered a disgrace for Marxism; all that matters here is that their disappearance ultimately marked a transformation in the theoretical, political and ideological conjuncture in which the emancipatory projects of 20th century had been possible. By the early 1990s, very few still wanted to battle for the cause of communism, and even those who did had rejected the old rules. How could it have been otherwise? And if John le Carre was right in saying that communism was lost once the emperor admitted that he was naked, we should add that the final blow was dealt by his silence. The silence left an empty space, and bourgeois scholars easily settled in. What should have been a permanent, open-ended struggle finally became an empirical but crystallized reality of the past. All without a single shot being fired.

Not that the identification of communism with certain phenomena of empirical reality does not go back much further; on the contrary, it was essential for both liberal and conservative critiques that political censorship, the lack of the freedom of speech and alternative political parties, the bullying of critical intellectuals, shortages of meat and fresh vegetables in stores, and labor camps were the very essence and truth of communism (here distinctions between communism and socialism are meaningless). But until the 1980s, these views were still a long way from winning ideological/theoretical hegemony. And their prime adversaries were no longer ideologists within the USSR (for example, M. A. Suslov in the 1960s and 1970s) or

¹¹Cf. Pupovac, Ozren: Projekt Jugoslavija: dialektika revolucije [Project Yugoslavia: Dialectics of the Revolution], in: Agregat, no. 9-10, Ljubljana 2006, pp. 108-117; Pupovac: Nothing Took Place but the Place: Djindjić's Yugoslavia, in: Uneventful of History – the Case of Yugoslavia, *in print*. Pupovac's analysis is based on deep critique of the liberal conceptualization of sovereignty – stating that Yugoslavia's greatest problem had been the unsatisfactory definition of the sovereign power. The main thesis of Pupovac, referring to Yugoslavia is that it must be analyzed as an unfinished project; what appeared to be its main weakness was in fact its mode of introducing political (revolutionary) invention. Our article is deeply indebted to this elaboration.

¹² Pokrovski, M. N.: Povijest Rusije. Od njezineg postanka do najnovijeg vremena [History of Russia. From its Beginning until the Contemporary Period], Zagreb 1935, pp. 505-510.

the raw products of the ideological state apparatus of the USSR in general, but new social movements which, among other things, addressed the same issues as they did, and could be even more merciless in their critiques. The key difference was that this new left refused to recognize the Soviet path as the right way toward communism (it goes without saying that they had no intention of recognizing the Soviet order of things as communism), and, by doing so, put the issue of socialism/communism in a completely different problematic. Emerging anti-colonial (national, revolutionary) movements which flirted with the ideal of socialism and recognized the USSR as their ally but refused to follow the Soviet example posed an even bigger problem. The red danger was real, and, most importantly, it spoke a lot. Its tongues were as dangerous as bullets, perhaps even more. They did not simply praise the legacy of October; they re-created and redefined October itself. Ironically, it was not Suslov's terribly boring speeches on the international significance of the October revolution which struck fear into the hearts of anti-communists and fueled the imaginary about the giant red octopus whose tentacles stretched across the globe from the Kremlin, but rather "unauthorized" signs of October, the transmission of which the Kremlin (earlier Comintern, Cominform) had always wanted and occasionally managed, but ultimately failed, to control. Only this time, the failure was much more conspicuous.

Even though Laclau and Mouffe announced in the mid-1980s¹³ that the classical Marxist debates centered around the problems of the hegemonic role of the working class – debates which were admittedly grounded in a certain *apriorism* – must be overcome once and for all, their point of departure was still heavily dependent on the Marxist orthodoxy, which had for decades been making a significant and creative political impact. After all, it was the "old socialist strategy" which, in its emancipatory struggles, had brought up so many questions that needed to be answered or addressed. Its permanent failure to reform itself and the strategy for managing that failure were to eventually become a goldmine for new political and theoretical agendas. It turns out that being a socialist militant (or theoretician) in 20th century was possible almost exclusively by detecting the voids and shortcomings of the old socialist platform. It seems that only through a critique of that platform – which was, all shortcomings aside, recognized as anti-capitalist and anti-liberal – it was possible to think of the articulation of new social struggles without taking a step back towards a liberal-democratic political agenda. One could even posit as a minimal definition of radical socialism one that recognized that October, even if its solution was inadequate, at least provided an answer at a time when virtually all anti-systemic movements had failed miserably – a new and progressive critique of bourgeois civilization. In other words, criticizing capitalism, imperialism, (neo) colonialism, consumerism etc. in the radical left leaning agendas of the 20th century was impossible (or at the very least unproductive) without first taking a position (glorifying, critical, theoretical, etc.) on October and its aftermath! The collapse of the USSR (and the bloc) meant the loss of the primary empirical object of critical socialist and Marxist orientation. The socialist world system collapsed as well. A new left and the new social movements eventually lost their orientation in the "Empire of human rights", namely liberal identity politics¹⁴, including (especially!) those who claimed (and still claim!) to be beyond "identity". No wonder that today, in light of the political impotence and obscurantism revealed by contemporary leftist global movements' lack of self-reflection (self-criticism) and unwillingness to take any kind of responsibility (except perhaps for their own particular selfish interests), some left leaning scholars are rediscovering Lenin (*Leninist gesture*)¹⁵.

¹³ Laclau, Ernesto; Mouffe, Chantel: *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London-New York 1985.

¹⁴ Cf. Močnik, Rastko: *Teorija za politiko [A Theory for Politics]*, Ljubljana 2003, pp. 165-202.

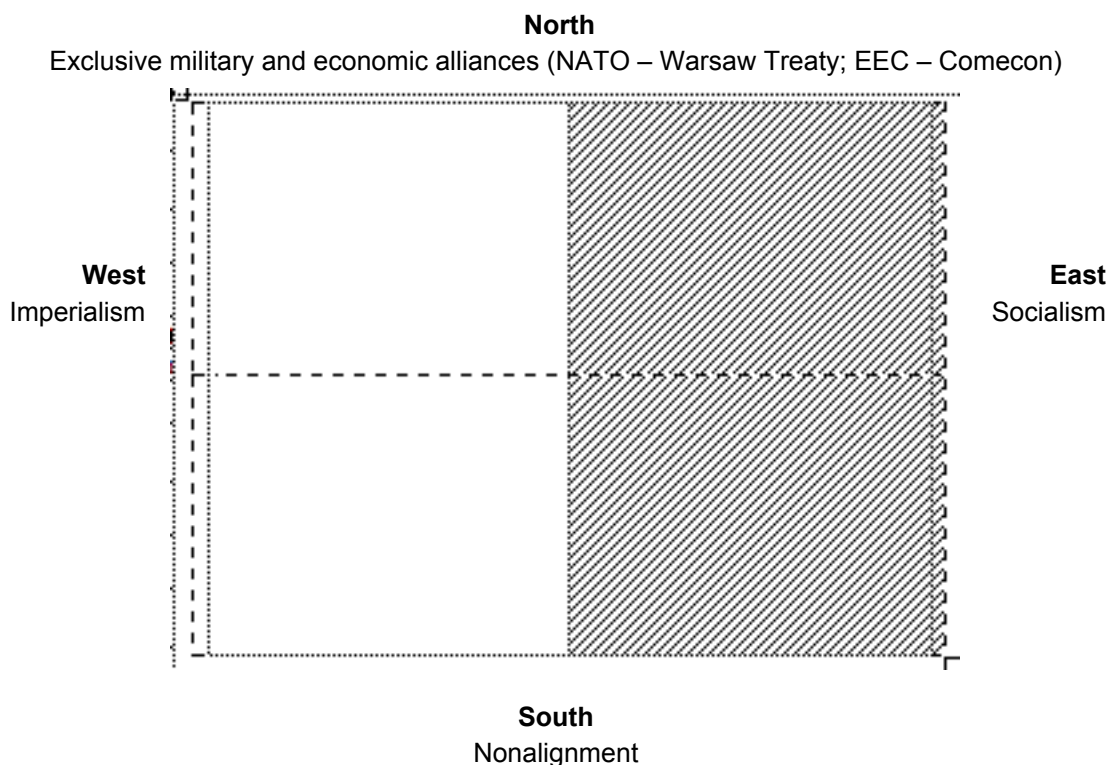
¹⁵ Budgen, Sebastian; Kouvelakis, Stathis; Žižek, Slavoj (eds.): *Lenin Reloaded. Toward a Politics of Truth*, Durham and London 2007.

The history of Yugoslav socialist self-management and the journal *Perspektive*

The Yugoslav communists of the late 1950s have provided an interesting notion that is rich in theoretical promise; alongside an understanding of socialism as a world process, the Third Program of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) included the notion of socialism as a world system¹⁶. An epistemological comparison with Wallerstein's model of the capitalist *world system* is tempting. One must be careful, however. First, we must keep in mind that, unlike Wallerstein's thorough study of complex economic-political processes of the modern age, the Program of the LCY is a mere descriptive document – with some pretense of theory, but nothing more. For this reason, it will be juxtaposed with Wallerstein's example solely in an analogical way to examine the potential epistemological value of the notion of a socialist world system.

Whereas Wallerstein's model depends on the theoretical elaboration of world history through the centre (dominance) – periphery (subordination) economic relation, the idea of the socialist world system in the Program of LCY is articulated through the dual relation of east – west and north – south. The first pair fits well into Wallerstein's model: socialist revolutions were said to be successful only in relatively undeveloped countries (i. e. the periphery). In these circumstances, and especially under imperialist pressure (i. e. pressure from the center), in the USSR – as the first land of the socialist revolution – a development of socialist relations had been initially impossible due to the need to build an appropriate infrastructure first; statism and bureaucracy and other deformations followed as a consequence. (These tendencies were also said to have become strong in Yugoslavia soon after the war, and have yet to be completely overcome.) Be that as it may, the socialist forces in the USSR were said to be strong enough to overcome the toughest obstacles that the “cult of personality” could put in their path. Even though the USSR gained enormous economic power, the imperialist powers maintain their economic advantage and use it to exercise their influence around the world through the politics of economic dependency. On the other hand, the very existence (survival) of states under socialist construction had a profound effect on capitalist countries, as seen in the nationalization of means of production and growing political influence of working class organizations. The second, or north/south, relation refers to the very existence of mankind itself: essentially between two super blocks (NATO, Warsaw Treaty) and the rest, the non-aligned nations who are in a majority.

¹⁶ “Socialism is becoming more and more a matter of practice of all nations; it is becoming ever more unified world process and world system.” Program Zveze komunistov Jugoslavije [adopted at 7th Congress of LCY, 1958], Ljubljana 1984, p. 26.



Note the ambiguous status of the USSR: in the first relation (west-east) it appears as a state where, owing to the defeat of the “cult of personality”, socialist forces are essentially progressive, while in the second (north-south), the USSR is a potential agent of the destruction of the mankind.

This ambiguity was crucial for the LCY’s idea of socialism as a world process/system. If unconditional support for the Soviet Union had been necessary before the Second World War – when they were building their heavy industry – it was now an anachronism, because the USSR had become a world super power. Its military and state machinery, unlike in the 1920s and even 1930s, had reached its absolute peak of development. A new imperialist war against the USSR appeared to be unthinkable due to its possession of the A- and H-bomb, and, even worse, the very concept of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army that took shape soon after October, an Army which was to serve not only to defend the young Soviet republic, but also to wage revolutionary war (a tool of the international workers movement – of the newly established Comintern) in support of revolutions in other countries, was ultimately buried. In the language of economism still predominant within Yugoslav communists at that time, which teaches the primacy of technology over any kind of social relations, in the USSR the productive forces had come into open conflict with social relations. The USSR, a state built on internationalism – the vision of the world republic of Soviets – declared that it was building socialism, but ultimately appeared incapable of accomplishing its historical mission. As early as 1943, with the dissolution of the Comintern, the international communist movement received a clear message: you’re on your own! It was not a coincidence that the Red Army renamed itself to the Soviet Army at the moment when crossing borders of the USSR. And the Soviet anthem was changed from “*Arise, you branded by a curse! You whole world of the starving and enslaved!*” (as *The International* was translated into Russian) to “*The unbreakable union of free republics! Great Russia has welded forever*”. While it is true that Soviet influence was decisive for the establishment of Peoples democracies in Eastern Europe, these states did not become Soviet republics, but

maintained the modern form of state sovereignty. The final result of this process was that, at the end of the day, the USSR was just another sovereign state. For the Left, its repressive apparatus was unmasked and revealed as imperialist by Prague Spring of 1968 at the latest. Although the USSR did continue to support several anti-colonial and revolutionary struggles, including communist parties in the West, it did so without taking any political responsibility. The one exception were the events in Cuba in 1962, but then it was widely believed that the world was standing on the edge of nuclear apocalypse. That was clearly the extinction of Soviet internationalism. The obvious limitations of the Soviet state evoked two notable responses even before the Cuban crisis. The first was Mao's thesis that the new world war might bring earlier elimination of imperialism. But he went even further: "Even if the U.S. atom bombs were so powerful that, when dropped on China, they would make a hole right through the earth, or even blow it up, that would hardly mean anything to the universe as a whole, though it might be a major event for the solar system."¹⁷ The second, humanist response, came from the Yugoslav communists in their Program. Their essential proposition was that the impossibility of a global revolutionary war meant that the USSR no longer occupies a central place in the global communist movement, and that consequently capitalism/imperialism can only be defeated through a thorough transformation of the socialist state (that very state that was supposed to eventually be abolished).

The premise was clear and still relied on Boris Kidrič's critique of Stalinism from soon after Cominform split, which went so far as to call the system of the USSR state capitalism¹⁸. In other words, the gap between capitalism and socialism was said to be growing smaller and smaller. But assessments of this kind were not only a merciless critique of the USSR. Since the working class in the West (at least in Europe) had been winning one concession after another, and since, in a number of places, the state was accumulating control over the means of production, all that was needed was for the workers to win control of the state. For Yugoslav communists, the political form for securing that control fell to local progressive and democratic forces. But only in a sense – and this was crucial – that the Soviet "mistakes", namely abolishing private property but empowering bureaucracy, were not to be repeated. This meant that existing socialist states were to introduce a new example of progressive social movements, an example suited to the new world situation, where the international workers movement was becoming ever more decentralized. The communist party was to detach itself from the state; its power was supposed to be primarily educational, based more on ideological struggle than conventional force, which also implied an end for its monopoly on the heritage of Marxism-Leninism. But most importantly, the means of production were to be handed over directly to the producers, thus introducing social property as opposed to state property.

The critique (self-criticism) of the earlier role model was thus essential: Yugoslav communists and Marxists labeled it Stalinism, a notion which won enormous popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. Ironically, the strong and decisive worldwide impact of the Yugoslav initiative was guaranteed by the lack of appropriate self-criticism in the USSR (and the Eastern Bloc in general), which refused to recognize its own past as Stalinism¹⁹. There, the only thing that

¹⁷ Tse-Tung, Mao: The Chinese People cannot be cowed by the Atom Bomb (January 25, 1955), in: Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Vol. 5, Peking 1977, p. 153. Available at: <http://www.marx2mao.com/Mao/AB55.html> [Visted on February 9, 2009].

¹⁸ Vranicki, Predrag: Historija marksizma [The History of Marxism], Zagreb 1961, p. 575.

¹⁹ Cf. Althusser, Louis: Introduction: Unfinished History, in: Lecourt, Dominique: Proletarian Science? The Case of Lysenko, digital reprint, 2003, pp. 7-16. Althusser – even though he denounced the notion of Stalinism as theoretical concept, defines this inability of reflection (writing Marxist history of that period) as symptomatic silence. The latter does not imply of course that no history or any other narratives referring to the period in question existed (implicitly or explicitly). On the contrary: the

would have seemed more ludicrous than a critical overhaul of the past was the beginning of the dismantling process of the state. For the USSR, the cold war was like a duel between two gunfighters. The countries of real socialism were obsessed by the dilemma of who will (or should) draw first. Drop a gun to win a gunfight? (As a matter of fact, Gorbachev eventually did just that, but only after he realized that his six-shooter was loaded with blanks.) It turned out that duels of this kind were a modus of social struggle within Yugoslavia. In our case: between the Party and the journal *Perspektive*.

*Perspektive*²⁰ was published by Državna Založba Slovenije (State Publishing House of Slovenia, SPHS), though the publication of a journal for social and cultural issues at this time without some sort of indirect, informal consent or encouragement from the League of Communists was very difficult to imagine. In this case, the initiative most likely came from the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia (CC LCS). The key figure was Boris Kraigher (representative of the so-called wing of party liberalism), at that time president of the Executive Council (i.e. the government) of the Peoples Republic of Slovenia²¹. In this sense *Perspektive* was supposed to represent one of the centers of resistance against party conservatism. This was also implicitly stated by Stane Kavčič²², head of the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee of the LCS, in his article *Rojstvo in smrt Perspektiv* (Birth and Death of *Perspektive*)²³. Here it is interesting to note that the members of the inner circle of the new journal were mostly individuals who had played a key role in the defunct journal *Revija 57*, which was also renowned for critical social analyses from socialist positions. Jože Pučnik, who in his radical criticism stood out the most and was at that time (as the only person) sentenced to a lengthy prison term on the basis of the *Law of Hostile Propaganda*, was to eventually work with *Perspektive*. If the qualitative leap from the journal *Beseda* to *Revija 57* lies in the latter's direct critiques of social problems (for instance the party monopoly²⁴, the position of the individual in relation to the collective, etc.), then *Perspektive* represents an attempt to articulate ideal concepts which originated from its own position and were based on its own concept of socialist self-management.

Lev Kreft classified the inner circle of *Perspektive* as a social group of the secondary, and partially of the primary, kind with its own identification value system. Here the question of internal differentiation comes up. One possible solution can be found in the testimony of the members of the inner circle of *Perspektive*. Vital Klabus, for instance, states the internal strife between litterateurs and essayists, the latter drifting further into political waters because of their analytical themes. Tensions were said to have grown as the end drew near²⁵. The dispute between litterateurs and essayists is also evidenced by the fact that only two litterateurs participated in the final meeting with Kavčič. A similar picture of internal differentiation is provided by Taras Kermauner, who treats litterateurs (Kos, Kozak) as the

condition of the symptomatic silence that Althusser had in mind was inflation of narratives about October, the struggle for socialism and communism. Relying on legal reckoning with Stalin's period – with a lack of Marxist analysis – might be considered as a symptom of the silence in question.

²⁰ The following chapter, describing the activities of the journal *Perspektive*, have been already published in Slovene language, see: Centrih, *Perspektive in hegemonija*, pp. 221-228.

²¹ Taras Kermauner remembers meetings between the future *Perspektive* editor D. Smole and Boris Kraigher immediately before the founding of the journal. See: Kermauner, *Perspektivovci*, p. 101.

²² Stane Kavčič, president of the Ideological commission of the CC LCS (1963-66), president of the Executive Council of the SRS (1967-72), is known as key representative of so-called Slovene party liberalism.

²³ Kavčič, Stane: *Rojstvo in smrt Perspektiv* [Birth and Death of *Perspektive*], in: *Nova revija*, Ljubljana 1985, pp. 487-489.

²⁴ Borec, 1996, p. 42.

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 37-39.

group being the least in favor of a conflict with the regime, in diametrical opposition to which he sees the position of Jože Pučnik, as well as his own, with Veljko Rus positioned somewhere in the middle²⁶. The internal differentiation within the inner circle of *Perspektive* was also discussed at the conventions of the Executive Committee (EC) (former Politburo) of the Central Committee of the LCS²⁷. Despite these developments, however, the inner circle of *Perspektive* achieved a sufficiently solid homogeneity, which prevented a serious internal conflict from breaking out. External pressure was undoubtedly the main reason for the latter. It is also impossible to typify radical conceptual differences (at least in terms of textual analysis) among those authors who wrote about and developed the problems of socialist self-management and society in general, such as Jože Jerovšek, Veljko Rus and Taras Kermauner. Jože Pučnik established contact with the journal only after being released from prison in 1963, what made his influence very limited.

It is possible to conclude that, with the exception of individual conflicts, there was a strong inner consensus about theoretical guidelines, as well as a functional strategy. In its first two years of publication, *Perspektive* did not actively enter the social arena. This represented the period of development of its social concept. The journal's first foray into public events occurred in January 1962, at a time when expedited debates about the draft of a new constitution were appearing in many newspapers and journals (*Delo*, *Naši Razgledi*). In the issues of the first two years, debates about consumerism / consumer society, proprietorship, power / authoritativeness and self-management can be noted. The journal's "pro-western" philosophical and sociological orientation is immediately apparent (neo-Marxism, Existentialism)²⁸ and most visible in the publication of translated excerpts of the works of Sartre, Heidegger, Gorz, and Kolakowski, as well as a special interest in the early works of Karl Marx. Direct criticism of self-management in practice also appears. Janez Jerovšek's article *Osebnost in družbeno upravljanje* (Personality and Social Management)²⁹ is characteristic, as he discusses the problem of the participation of citizens in the system of authority and makes use of statistical data. The author comes to the conclusion that there exists too great a concentration of functions, through which a layer of the excessively socially engaged people is created. He also analyses research carried out by the Pedagoški inštitut (Pedagogical Institute) concerning the relationship between society and community. He concludes that the activeness of individuals in the organs of management is too small, and that the most important decrees of the Peoples' Committee are decided upon by individuals who force them through the community organs without the active participation of the members of the community committee. A discussion of less important matters should have taken place; many times, committee members allegedly voted against their will. The author offers the improper management of conventions and a non-democratic atmosphere as reasons for this, although he critically admits that the results of the research (which has been conducted locally) were not representative for the whole of Yugoslavia.

The concept of self-management that appears in *Perspektive* was formed in this period. It can be traced through many authors, and is presented in a most transparent fashion in Taras Kermauner's article *O eni izmed značilnosti socialisticne države* (On One of the Characteristics of the Socialist State, 1962) and Veljko Rus's article *Socializem in lastništvo* (Socialism and Proprietorship, 1961). Both authors theoretically rely on the concept of

²⁶ Repe, Božo: Vpliv "Djilasovščine" na Revijo 57 in *Perspektive* [An Influence of "Djilasovščina" on Revija 57 and *Perspektive*], in: Borec, no. 535-537/1994, p. 933.

²⁷ Repe, Božo: *Obračun s Perspektivami* [Showdown with *Perspektive*], Ljubljana 1990.

²⁸ Kozak, Rus, and Kermauner completed their studies in France in 1957/1958. See: Repe, Vpliv "Djilasovščine", p. 933.

²⁹ *Perspektive*, no. 4, 1960/1961, pp. 460-473.

alienation developed by Marx in his *Critique of National Economy (Paris Manuscripts 1844)* and the theory of social groups put forth by Sartre in his work *Critique of the Dialectical Mind*. For both authors, labor represents a socializing factor, and as such is a unifying process³⁰. Like Edvard Kardelj, these authors start from the premise that Yugoslav society lives through a transitional period. Veljko Rus uses the problem of proprietorship to demonstrate this. "Socialism is the intensive conflict of two civilizations: the one based on proprietorship or non-proprietorship, and the other based on labor."³¹ Rus classifies proprietorship as a relationship (of alienation) which expresses well-being as the realization of possession, that is, as the exclusivity of applicability³². This relationship originates appropriation or tendencies of authoritativeness, which burden socialist society during a transitional period. In Yugoslavia, which, according to both authors, wanted to overcome the anachronism of ownership through self-management, these deformations expressed themselves in occurrences of bureaucratism. As a part of the official discussions of the time, the expression *bureaucratic deformation* was reserved for Stalinism, and in special cases for critiques of individual tendencies of this kind within the Party. The fact that the authors of *Perspektive* often resorted to this phrase when criticizing the monism of the LC in any form must be taken into account. Kermauner recognises the roots of appropriation in the general deficiency, which he sees as a basic symbol of socialist society. If there is a deficiency of material goods, conflicts for power inevitably arise with this power which is seen as insurance against deficiency³³. Authority (power) and authoritativeness still exist in socialism, and the state is still a necessity, even though it is subjected to the process of withering away. Kardelj at this point (in a rather contradictory manner) legitimates the LC's exclusivity as that of a dominant force responsible for securing the revolution. By this contradiction, the withering away of the party is delayed for an indefinite period of time. At this point, Kermauner rejects the monism of the LC, demanding the restriction of authority even in circumstances of deficiency (*reign of necessity*)³⁴. This must be the task of the state as a factor of revolutionary force³⁵, which in this case is no longer merely a factor of alienation.

The authors of *Perspektive*, it must be said, recognized the legitimacy of the revolution, as well as the historical role of the LC, which was to be revolutionized by the immediate relinquishing of its monopoly. Here Kermauner presupposes the necessity of allowing the formation and realization of new social groups³⁶. According to him the "[A]ctual, basic bearers of realization are individuals, who overcome their loneliness by consorting amongst themselves, creating social groups, integrating themselves into history, freeing themselves

³⁰ *Perspektive*, no. 13, 1961/1962, p. 281.

³¹ *Perspektive*, no. 8, 1960/1961, p. 915.

³² *Ibid.* p. 899.

³³ *Perspektive*, no. 12, 1960/1961, p. 237.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 240.

³⁵ "The revolutionary state is the expression of the revolutionary group. In transforming, through the state, the objective structure of society, the group changes itself: in it and through it the individuals, who comprise it, realize themselves. This group of course is not the only group in a determined society and its activity is thus not the only activity of this society [...] nevertheless this group has, in its attitude towards other groups, a special place. By being the only one in a position of power it can enable or disable other groups to carry out their plans. [...] If this group remains revolutionary even under these new historical circumstances [...] then its historical role is residing in the fact that besides developing productive forces it permits the realization and articulation of new social groups (these are understood as being those, who develop history, who fight against authoritativeness, etc. and not conservative or reactionary, i.e. those who maintain the system of authority and antiquated way of life (i.e. the classical political parties, note: L.C.)." See: Kermauner, Taras: O eni izmed značilnosti socialistične države [On One of the Characteristics of the Socialist State], in: *Perspektive*, no. 12, 1961/1962, p. 241.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

from their circumstances and opening themselves to the future”³⁷. Kermauner rejects the Marxist concept of the working class as a universal historical subject which had served as the basis of Kardelj’s model of socialist self-management. Instead, he turns to Sartre’s Existentialism, where the subject is represented by the individual. It is through these paths towards the realization of this ideal model that the authors of *Perspektive* see the project of socialist self-management. Lev Kreft correctly summarizes that the excerpts from Sartre’s *Critique of the Dialectical Mind* published in *Perspektive* echo the journal’s political program³⁸: the authors of *Perspektive* did not limit their analyses to criticism of the pro-centralist factions within the LC, but rather made the whole project of self-management the subject of their criticism.

At this point the authors of *Perspektive* were still not the subject of harsh criticism at the meetings of the Ideological Commission and the EC of the Central Committee of the LCS, although some discontent was already to be observed. Examples of this early criticism were one Party member’s remarks that the mood amongst the editorial board of *Perspektive* is “unhealthy” and Kardelj’s reproach that there is no proper Marxist journal in Slovenia. Boris Kraigher came to the defense of *Perspektive*, saying that *Perspektive* derives from the position of the defense of working self-management³⁹. The first expert analysis of Kermauner’s claim of the necessity of the (co-)existence of multiple social groups having equal rights was carried out by the philosopher Boris Majer, and his evaluation was later used by the Ideological Commission. He claimed that these new social groups would definitely obtain a non-socialist character, in other words, that they would become a place of asylum for anti-socialist ideas⁴⁰. At the same time *Ljudska Mladina Slovenije (People’s Youth of Slovenia)* began to publish a journal entitled *Problemi*, which carried on a debate with *Perspektive*.

The concept of self-management and functioning, or the extension of the inner circle of *Perspektive* into the socio-political sphere must be considered through the journal’s position. Journals like *Perspektive* did not have a workers’ council of their own with a comparable status or the jurisdiction of workers’ councils in the economy. Self-management in culture (as well as in the fields of social service, education, science and medicine, which were known as “public services”) of the 1950s expressed itself mainly through the institutions of the *Council of the institution*⁴¹, two thirds of which were composed of representatives of the People’s committee (commune) or the National Assembly of the Republic, with only one third of members of the workers’ collective of a particular institution. Their task was primarily monitoring the use of funds and work plans, and they often represented a factor of informal control and pressure. The leadership of *Perspektive* was a council of co-workers on paper, but in reality had no power because it did not have the character of an official institution. The journal was completely dependent upon the SPHS and under the supervision of its *council of the institution*. Seen in this context, the constitution suggested by *Perspektive* had the goal of leveling the self-management status of economic and cultural activities, and was meant to achieve the liberation of the cultural sphere from political supervision. This is how the *Accompanying Suggestions for the Draft of a Constitution for the People’s Republic of*

³⁷ Ibid., p. 242.

³⁸ Kreft, Lev: Zjeban od absolutnega, p. 121.

³⁹ Repe, Obračun, pp. 20-21. Repe cites the minutes of the sessions of the EC of the Central Committee of the LCS.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

⁴¹ Rusinow, Dennison: The Yugoslav Experiment 1948-1974, 1978, p. 71. See also: Kardelj, Edvard: Socijalistička demokracija u jugoslavenskoj praksi [Socialist Democracy in Yugoslav Practice], in: Borba, no. 1-3/1955, p. 4.

*Slovenia*⁴², which the members of *Perspektive* and *Oder 57* adopted at the group meeting that took place on November 15-23, 1962, came into being.

A point of interest of this meeting was the fact that these two councils of co-workers by themselves formed a body of self-management on a symbolic level, because in essence they did not have the power. This, in itself, carried a political demand, and both councils took over the role of a political subject. In the *Uvodnih obrazložitvah* (Introductory Clarifications), they put forward their observations concerning the subordination of working communities to political communities and the closed nature of self-management regarding individual working organizations. The authors therefore suggested a greater independence for working organizations and more opportunities for their integration: working organizations should have a social role, permitting them to take over the role of the community as a political and territorial community⁴³. The authors welcomed the definition of all organized social collectives as workers' organizations, and at the same time criticized the gap between economic organizations and social activities, claiming that this reduces them to wage earning activities. Herein lies the authors' discontent with the role of the *Council of institutions*, whose members were usually political and public workers and as such did not actively participate in the activity of the workers' organization (they had in mind cultural institutions). To them, the role of the Council of co-workers seemed more appropriate. At this point, they referred to a constitutional principle that defines the situation of the individual is determined by his labor⁴⁴. In their proposal for Article 55, they demanded the independence of (non-economic) working organizations, which could not be violated even by the founder. From this point on, the Council of Institutions was only to supervise of the use of funds. The director (*Proposition for Article 62*) was to report to the workers' collective that had elected him, and that through this would become an organ of self-management as opposed to a representative body of the external political community⁴⁵.

The new constitution of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (SRS)⁴⁶ was ratified on April 9, 1963. It formally placed working organizations in culture and in the economy on the same level (*Article 20 and 26*), although it still contained the notion of "public service". Accordingly, the *Council of Institutions*⁴⁷ was suspended. Despite this the Council of Co-workers of the journal *Perspektive* did not formally gain the legal status of a working council, and still remained tied to the SPHS.

At this time, harsh criticism began to be directed against *Perspektive* at meetings of the EC of the Central Committee of the LCS. Accusations that the journal was fostering doubts about the general principles of the foundation of socialism, as if the forces hostile to socialism were standing behind it, can be traced to this time. Ideologist and university professor Boris Zihel

⁴² *Perspektive*, no. 22, 1962/1963, pp. 137-152.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴⁴ Suggestion for the 36th article: "Working organizations are led by members of the working collective directly and not through bodies of management, which elect them. In cases where the nature of the activity of a working organization demands this, those co-workers, who have a partial or periodical relationship with the working organization, are also considered as members of the working collective" (*Ibid.*, p. 141).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.

⁴⁶ The constitution of the SRS enacted the multichamber system in 1963: The Chamber of Republics as a council of delegates of citizens in communities; The Chambers of Working Communities: Economic Chambers, Chamber of Education, Chambers of Health and Welfare and the Organizational-Political Chambers. See: *Ustava Socialistične republike Slovenije*, [Constitution of the SRS], Ljubljana 1963, articles: 138-146.

⁴⁷ *Perspektive*, no. 30, 1962/1963, p. 1302.

had already identified the journal's board as an opposition group, although in his opinion administrative interference would not be effective. Instead, he supported ideological counter-action, but not in the form of a direct polemic⁴⁸. The center of this ideological counter-action was to be the journal *Teorija in Praksa (Theory and Practice)*, which was being created at the time (before, the polemic with *Perspektive* had been mostly directed by the Mladinska Organizacija (the youth organization of the LC) through the journal *Problemi*). The conflict escalated when the inner circle of *Perspektive* began to extend the spectrum of its activity from a classical inter-journal/journalistic polemic into attempts of an inter-journal cooperation and the foundation of informal forums, creating a free space for polemics and dialogue in which official politics could not interfere. This was one of the basic goals that the staff of *Perspektive* had been working towards since the days of *Revija 57*. The extension of the journal's activities was very closely linked to the establishment of contact between the inner circle of *Perspektive* and the nascent student movement. Students at the Faculty of Economics had, motivated by their dissatisfaction with the programmes and the general situation, held two independent student assemblies (October and November, 1963) that produced harsh criticism of academic reforms. *Perspektive* published reports and other documents from both meetings⁴⁹, a move especially significant because other journals and newspapers barred the publication. Through *Perspektive*, students gained access to the public, a fact which made the affair echo to the point that the Socialist Alliance of Working People and the Executive Council interfered, attempting to smooth things over by approving new scholarships and the construction of new student dorms⁵⁰. Cooperation with the student movement also triggered internal disagreements about this continued activity, according to Veljko Rus. A polemic about the necessity of a political program emerged, although this type of activity was consciously opposed on both occasions, according to Rus, who revealed neither the concrete content nor the method of articulation of such a potential program⁵¹. Party leadership considered the alliance formed by students and *Perspektive* as dangerous. Relations hit a low point following the publication of two articles by Jože Pučnik, who had just been released from prison: *O dilemah našega kmetijstva (On Dilemmas of our Agriculture)* and *Iz oči v oči (Face to Face)*. Pučnik was the most radical member of the inner circle of *Perspektive*. His solution was the removal of communists from power positions. He went so far as to attempt to encourage activism among the common people, efforts leading to his complete isolation within the inner circle of *Perspektive*⁵². This also led to the editorial staff of *Perspektive* being invited to a discussion with the head of the Ideological Commission of the CC LCS, Stane Kavčič, on January 24, 1964.

⁴⁸ Repe, *Obračun*, pp. 34-46.

⁴⁹ *Perspektive*, no. 33/34, 1963/1964, pp. 463-476.; *Perspektive*, no. 35, 1963/1964, pp. 621-636.

⁵⁰ See: *Problemi*, no. 18/19, 1964, p. 590; Borec, 1996, p. 72.

⁵¹ Veljko Rus: "Events more than once brought us to the point where we began discussing the need for the formation of a political program. At least twice: both times when some sort of political movement began to form among students. Both times we consciously decided against the drafting of this kind of program, firstly because the anarchic inter-group relations clearly could not guarantee the execution of such a program, and secondly because – in case politically connected activities are rising – our writing would become technical and artistically unimportant. In short we were aware that we did not descend from this world and that a transformation into a political team would force us not only into moral irresponsibility concerning the movement, but also into intellectual suicide. We knew that we weren't capable of responsibly leading a political movement, because responsibility for such movements is also a warranty of succeeding, which can be achieved only through the struggle for power. This was not only objectively impossible, but also a subjective obstacle due to the resistance to politics, which demands constant confrontation, the formation of coalitions, etc." See: Borec, 1996, pp. 107-108.

⁵² Kermauner, *Perspektivovci*, pp. 78-82.

Conclusion: how the journal *Perspektive* was liquidated

Having closely studied the role of intelligentsia in socialism, Lev Kreft accepted the term totalitarianism as a suitable designation for the situation and atmosphere in which *Perspektive* was active.⁵³ He claimed that the relevancy of totalitarianism as omnipresent management in the name of an idea can be clearly seen in the pages of *Perspektive*, considering the method of discourse used by the Party leadership in its opposition to *Perspektive* as an indicator. Kreft used the published transcript of the final meeting of members of the editorial board of *Perspektive* and Stane Kavčič to analyze this discourse. He identifies it as a combination of repressive tolerance and pedagogic repression. According to him, the language is still caught between the old Stalinist paradigms and newer technocratic articulation, beginning to appear in pragmatic contracts and calculations⁵⁴. My earlier critique of Kreft's analysis was based on his failure to recognize the significance of the fact that the transcript of the three hour meeting was made public at all, and most importantly, that it was published in *Perspektive*.

The focus of the argumentation which we expressed earlier was the Soviet practice of the 1930s, which had some tempting formal similarities to the Yugoslav practice up until the mid 1950s (the so called Djilas's Plenum). At that time essentially all polemical confrontations with the opposition were highly classified: only the winners' denunciations were published, the losers' voices (counter arguments) remained completely absent.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, this argument was incorrect and, what is worse, it missed Kreft's point. Instead, a more fundamental question should have been posited: how could it be that a meeting of this kind took place at all!

One must admit that an open polemic between Stalin and the Bakhtin circle on the critique of formalism, including a direct and public exchange of arguments, would have been highly unlikely (keeping in mind that Stalin gave so few personal interviews for a reason). But what about the 1970s, and a heated exchange of opinions between Mikhail Suslov and Evald Ilyenkov or Aleksandr Zinovyev on dialectics? Again, not altogether impossible, but still not very likely. Not because Stalin or Suslov would not have wasted their precious time dealing with the politically incorrect defacing of books whose *dramatis personae* were of next to no importance. After all, it was Stalin who was happy to answer some questions on linguistics addressed to him by a group of students in 1950. And even if Politburo member Andrei Zhdanov did in fact personally instruct Dmitry Shostakovich how to play the piano in order to save him from Western decadence, the "Stalinist" Party and its wise leaders had essentially different ways of exercising the power and influence of their teachings. Three classic examples come to mind. Trofim Lysenko was a Bolshevik, and a tough one; for over two decades, he fought on the agricultural front against the circle of the world famous Academician Nikolai Vavilov. And he eventually won: at a session of the All-Union Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences in 1948, a final showdown with his opponents took place.⁵⁶

⁵³ Kreft, Lev: *Perspektive in položaj intelligence v socializmu* [Perspektive and the Status of the Intelligentsia in Socialism], in: *Borec*, no. 535-537/1994, p. 923.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 926.

⁵⁵ See an ultimate classic of that kind: the top classified transcript of the February-March Plenum of the Central Committee AUCP(b) in 1937 (a showdown with Bukharin and Rykov) and compare it with the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks). Short Course*, 1939 (especially chapter 12). Getty, Arch J.; Naumov, Oleg V.: *The Road to Terror. Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*, New Heaven and London, 1999, pp. 364-419.

⁵⁶ For more about long struggle of T. D. Lysenko see in an excellent analysis provided by Lecourt: *Proletarian Science?*

Before passing to the concluding remarks, Lysenko considered it his duty to make the following statement: "The question asked in one of the notes handed to me is What is the attitude of the Central Committee of the Party to my report? I answer: The Central Committee of the Party examined my report and approved it (*a storm of applause intensifies into a standing ovation*)."⁵⁷ Jean Champenoix, correspondent of *Les lettres Françaises*, put the decisive outcome of that session into following headline: "A Great Scientific Event: Heredity is not Governed by Mysterious Factors."⁵⁸ The second example would be the Scientific Session of the USSR Academy of Science and the Academy of Medical Science in 1950 issuing that scientific conferences should be organized to consider problems pertaining to Pavlovian physiology. At the outset, the Academician Konstantin Bykov, the key figure at this session, informed his colleagues that Stalin was urging them to criticize and to be self-critical. The subsequent defeat of the enemies of Pavlovian teachings paved the way for the emergence of the „new Soviet Psychiatry“.⁵⁹ The third example would be the February-March Plenum of the Central Committee of the AUCP(b) in 1937, when the showdown with Nikolai Bukharin took place. The highly classified transcript reveals the strategies behind the attacks on Bukharin and his defense. At one point the debate reached a boiling point: "Voice: He won't get away with it! Voroshilov: He must not get away with it! The Central Committee is not a tribunal. We do not represent a court of law. The Central Committee is a political organ. Its members are duty-bound to discuss such a grave matter [...]"⁶⁰ The resolution of the Plenum was "... to transfer the case of Bukharin and Rykov to the NKVD."⁶¹

Let's take a closer look at the last example. The relation between the Party and the State is here of utmost importance. The Party and the State are essentially inseparable, and yet they maintain separate institutions; that is decisive. The Party cannot, in any sense, be a substitute for the State, even though it deals with the same issues as the State and even if Party members occupy equally important government posts: the February-March Plenum was attended by Nikolai Yezhov, who was a Central Committee member, but also the head of the NKVD! The opposite is also true. When Perestroika, in its last phase, radically parted with this principle in favor of the State (the Soviets), the mighty USSR fell to pieces.⁶² In our case, the substitution of the State in favor of the Party would have enabled Yezhov to shoot Bukharin on the spot, but according to the Bolshevik (or, if you will, "Stalinist") "either/or"-doctrine, this would have also meant two possible and equally worse outcomes: the dictatorship of the Party (instead of the Proletariat!), namely its complete detachment from the masses, or the submergence of the Party in the masses ("We are all Communists now!", from the movie *The Battle of Sutjeska*, Yugoslavia, 1973), in other words, anarchy. Stalin was being completely earnest and sincere when he said "I think that the Bolsheviks remind us of the hero of Greek mythology, Antasus [i.e. Antaeus, *note* L.C.]. They, like Antasus, are strong because they maintain connection with their mother, the masses, who gave birth to

⁵⁷ Lysenko, Trofim Denisovich: The Situation in the Science of Biology; available at: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/lysenko/works/1940s/report.htm> [Visited on January 27, 2009]; This translated English version does not include the emotional reaction of the listeners, like the one cited in brackets; it has been included in the Slovene version: Lysenko, T. D.: *Položaj v biološki znanosti*, Ljubljana 1950, p. 40.

⁵⁸ *Les lettres Françaises*, 26.8.1948. Cited in: Lecourt, *Proletarian Science?*, p. 18.

⁵⁹ Windholz, Georg: Soviet Psychiatrist under Stalinist duress: the design for the 'new Soviet psychiatry' and its demise, in: *History of Psychiatry*, no. 10 /1999, p. 332.

⁶⁰ Getty; Naumov, *The Road to Terror*, p. 376.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 411.

⁶² Ironically, Gorbachev was not the first one who wanted to resolve the contradiction between Party and the State in favor of the latter; basically the same proposition came from Lavrentiy Beria soon after Stalin's death, undoubtedly for different reasons though. See: Kotkin, *Armageddon*, pp. 79-80.

them, suckled them and reared them. And as long as they maintain a connection with their mother, with the people, they have every chance of remaining invincible.”⁶³

And how did the Bolsheviks maintain their connection with the masses? This point has been clarified by the first and second examples. The Party essentially produces mountains of resolutions, declarations, warnings, reports, denunciations, protests, recommendations, and drafts. It is decisive that it never demands pure obedience; it wants far more: discussions, including criticism and self-criticism, with amendments. But most importantly, by doing so, the merging of the Party's doctrine with practice can be facilitated. The Party's signs and codes circulate; they become the tools of everyday practices. One could hardly solve a single problem without using those signs and codes.⁶⁴ And this very practice – the circulation of the Party's doctrines in the form of signs, codes – in return transforms the masses themselves. (For that very reason the Party must never stop transmitting its messages!) What is finally the essence of that transformation? In a nutshell, that they practically cease to exist as masses, but become working people organized in countless collectives, or, more precisely, in apparatus which provide the material existence for the circulation of the doctrine, namely the place where the knowledge of the Party is absorbed and further elaborated (merged with all sorts of activities). It would be impossible to provide a full account of these collectives/institutions: The Trade Unions, Pioneers, colonies, shock brigades, Komsomol, Universities, Institutes, The Peoples Courts (there was no separation between branches of authority in the USSR!), demonstrations, manifestations, campaigns, local and all-union journals and newspapers, ad hoc assemblies at places of work and so on and so forth. It must be noted that Party organizations existed in all of these institutions⁶⁵. It is true that even the smallest and most insignificant Party cell (or Primary organization) in the most remote part of the USSR represents the Party in accordance to its position in the vertical chain of command. But in order to avoid the naïve and idealist assumptions embedded in early theories of totalitarianism (Carl Friedrich, Zbigniew Brzezinski)⁶⁶, which postulated that the Party exercises total control because it is omnipresent (it knows, hears, sees, smells, feels everything) and relies on a materialist position, we have to introduce a proper distinction (relation) between concepts and empirical reality. If the Party cell represents the Party, that does not mean that it is merely a pure reflection of the center (i.e. the Politburo on a smaller scale). Its representation is rather a kind of practice itself. The relation between the Party center (Central Committee) and the Party periphery (the cell) is one of knowledge in the strongest possible sense. Without this consideration, the Party would be unthinkable. And the same is true for the ideological (Stalin's) or theoretical notion of the masses in relation to the

⁶³ Cited in: *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks). Short Course*, 1939; available at: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1939/x01/ch13.htm> [Visited on January 26, 2009]; Cf. Žižek, Slavoj: *Zgodovina in nezavedno* [History and the Unconscious], Ljubljana 1982, pp. 175-234.

⁶⁴ Cf. Kotkin, Stephen: *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization*, 1997, p. 229; Marcuse, Herbert: *Soviet Marxism. A Critical Analysis*, New York 1969, pp. 86-92.

⁶⁵ “The most active and politically conscious citizens in the ranks of the working class and other strata of the working people unite in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), which is the vanguard of the working people in their struggle to strengthen and develop the Socialist system and which represents the leading core of all organizations of the working people, both public and state.” Constitution of the USSR, 1936. Cited in *Short course*.

⁶⁶ Even scholars, such as Stephen Kotkin, who passionately refuse the “totalitarian school” at this point usually, make essentially the very same mistake by following the old common sense tradition of comparing the Party with the structure of the Roman Catholic Church; comparing *obkoms* with the Catholic episcopacies etc. Ironically, similar but more appropriate comparisons might be detected in the writings of distinguished Bolsheviks as well. Mikhail Pokrovskii more correctly compared the Bolshevik Party not with Catholic Church but with Calvin's militant Protestant organization. See: Pokrovskii, M. N.: *Lenin as a Revolutionary Leader*, in: M. N. Pokrovskii, *Russia in World History. Selected Essays*, Ann Arbor 1970, pp. 201-202.

Party. While it is true that, to a certain extent, the Cell actually is a closed circle, an exclusive debate club – a place where the wrong choice of words in discussing resolutions of the Party leadership could have terrible consequences for the agents involved – what really makes a Cell is its practice of intervening in the reception of knowledge directly at the collective of the workers. This is how Party members practice being communists: essentially, they operate in the same way as all other shock workers, collective farmers, biologists, physiologists, professors of philosophy and cosmonauts, but they are also responsible for taking the initiative and setting the best possible example when dealing with all sorts of difficulties. In other words, what makes them communists is their effort in solving practical tasks – more or less crucial for the development of socialist society, armed with the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, they transform instructions from the center into reality. What they have in common with their non-Party comrades is language: they share the same signs and codes when working together to solve empirical problems. They attend the same meetings, participate in the same discussions, raise their hands together, and applaud and criticize together. If “Stalinism” was a civilization, as Stephen Kotkin claims, it was a civilization of meetings, of endless discussions on all levels of society. It was to this civilization that Vladimir Mayakovsky erected a timeless monument soon after October; a poem entitled *Incessant Meeting Sitters* (published in *Izvestia*, 1922). All problems, disciplinary measures, etc. had to be addressed at the appropriate level and place. On the horizontal level there were discussions and quarrels (see our cases concerning the Academy of Sciences and the Central Committee); between different levels, on the other hand, there were no usual discussions, and communication between different levels could be defined as a relationship of questions and answers, or possibly appeals and recommendations, and sometimes instructions (which provide a veritable treasure trove of arguments based on authority). Stalin’s answer to the students of linguistics and his appeal to the psychologists are typical examples of this inter-level communication. Lysenko could count on the Central Committee’s support, and won a standing ovation for it, but a discussion with his colleagues had to take place nonetheless! To summarize: those who made mistakes or deviated in any way could be unmasked and then corrected or punished only on the level where they performed their basic activity, their work.

This lengthy sidebar now brings us back to the meeting between the Party (the League of Communists of Slovenia) and *Perspektive*. We proposed a new question, namely how that kind of meeting could have happened in the first place. The Ideological Commission of the Central Committee and the editorial board of a rather obscure journal: two obviously incompatible levels. Formally speaking, this scene would appear to be even more terrifying than the February-March plenum of 1937. Bukharin and Rykov were at least thrown into the ring with their equals – after all they were both Central Committee candidates (though brutally insulted and intimidated the whole time, they were nevertheless both addressed as Comrades – not gravely as citizens). It should therefore come as no surprise that Kreft used the term totalitarianism in order to illustrate the atmosphere of the meeting.

In his memoirs entitled *Crossing Encounters* (Navzkrižna srečanja, 2008), Taras Kermauner described a meeting with Boris Zihelr in the 1950s; his aim was to get a job as an Assistant at the Department of Philosophy (University of Ljubljana). The whole meeting was more than less devoted to theoretical issues, and Kermauner had little difficulty charming and lulling the professor; he even got him to speak Russian. The matter was not without its uncomfortable moments, like when Zihelr kindly advised the young man to join the Party, but in general the game was predictable: a discussion between two philosophers. True, one of them was a famous pre-war revolutionary with considerable political influence, while the other was merely a graduate student approaching the first step of the job ladder within the University’s

bureaucracy. It was the discourse, produced and circulated at the institution of the University as it was, that provided all the requisite codes and signs which essentially enabled the two to communicate as equals. This equality was of course an effect of ideology, but no less real, since it provided the young Kermauner with space to maneuver. Yes, he would have to consider joining the Party, that was the price, but he got the job.

Ten years later, the meeting with the head of the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee, also attended by Kermauner, was nothing like that. This time it was the Ideological Commission of the Party that was under pressure to properly use all the signs and codes in order to achieve its goal, namely to avoid administrative measures (violence) and instead educate and discipline the *angry youth*. The meeting had been organized because *Perspektive* supposedly had a problem; a pretty big problem, actually. But it turns out that this unusual meeting had been called because it was the Party itself that was in deep trouble!

In order to reconstruct the polemic at the meeting, which was published in the last issue of *Perspektive*⁶⁷, we shall form two series. The first will trace the development of the argumentation by the Ideological Commission; the second will describe the argumentation used by the editorial board of *Perspektive*. (Only text parts within quotation marks are original utterances from the meeting; other parts are for reasons of space summarized reconstructions of longer paragraphs.)

- I. "Since the initiative for the meeting is on our side, we hope you will give us the advantage of a 'first strike'."
- II. The journal *Perspektive* has in general played a critical and therefore constructive role in society. Its activities reflected the successes and failures of our society.
- III. "No one ever had any intention of imposing any limits to the orientation of the journal or its editorial board; not even to enforce certain patterns or give any directives or concrete orders. Nor does this meeting have any such intention."
- IV. You have a problem. We called this meeting because distinguished articles have recently been published in *Perspektive* which are against the very principle of the journal. These articles are symptoms; their only purpose is to conjure up a day of reckoning upon the whole system, that is, upon everything that our society has created so far. The journal has consequently found itself at a crossroads: "either to continue in the existing way, namely the way of integration, to be a part of our social activities, or to choose the other way, the path of isolation." The aim of this meeting is a) to warn you about that alternative; b) to ask if you can sense this alternative or not; c) if so, are you capable of liquidating this alternative d) do you have any intention of liquidating it?
- V. Examples. The main failure of the articles in question (especially those contributed by Jože Pučnik) is their idealist premise; i.e. addressing some real problems, but passing judgment in the name of an ideal society that does not exist and could never exist.
- VI. Preliminary conclusion: Kavčič repeats his warning concerning the alternative outcome, adding that it could have catastrophic consequences; not for socialism (or the LCS) but for the journal. "We only wanted to warn you as comrades [...] to give you a chance to consider things sincerely, think seriously, search yourself, in order to realize where all that is objectively leading you." [...] "You need to understand that the ultimate outcome does not depend on others but entirely on you. You will be the ones choosing the path of integration and real life. Isolation means hara-kiri."

⁶⁷ Listnica uredništva [Editorial Reports], in: *Perspektive*, no. 36/37, 1963/1964, pp. 896-926.

VII. There are certain articles which call for the formation of a new political party. It does not matter if you can see this or not; your writing objectively means just that. "Sincere political men made this analysis; we shall not make any retreat from that analysis."

VIII. There are certain political questions which cannot be re-addressed, like the nationalization after World War II. You must recognize some questions as closed for good.

IX. It is not that we are afraid of your writings; you will not go on barricades and start the revolution, we know that well. It is about you: due to certain tendencies you might come into a fatal conflict with society; it might happen so quickly you won't even notice. Neo-whiteguardism is hidden behind these tendencies. You are capable, intelligent; it would be a shame to lose you; and yes, this could make you fall into oblivion.

X. We shall not censor you.

XI. We know there are many things wrong inside the working councils and the League of Communists. We do not expect you to glorify all of our institutions.

XII. There are plenty of people in Slovenia and Yugoslavia in general who strongly believe that you should have long since been in prison. They are completely wrong! However there are certainly other people waiting in the shadows who undertake provocations, who are doing the best they can to put you in prison. Open your eyes!

XIII. "I am neither an investigative judge nor a prosecutor. I am not talking with you from a position of power [...] we are having a conversation in order to warn you [...] We do not want anything to happen to you."

XIV. "To tell you honestly: liquidation of the journal is out of question. These measures will not be taken by us. But if you decide to make hara-kiri, then we shall politically isolate you first, and then socially and publicly defeat you, and then liquidate your journal. We do not want that; if it were otherwise, we would not tell you this in the first place.

XV. "This meeting will leave a sour taste in the mouths of all those who are awaiting the confiscation of the journal."

1. We made our decision to intervene concerning certain deformations in our society at the meeting of the Publishing house. We do not agree completely with your analysis.

2. Reading Pučnik's article, you drew an illogical consequence. What he advocates is direct democracy and not the formation of a new Party.

3. We are not going against the authority, since we are all against authority, including you! We are against authority as a system.

4. The problem of the relationship between ownership and non-ownership; the very relation regarding the object must remain open. Your argument means the closing of that urgent debate.

5. Where exactly is the line between acceptable and unacceptable issues which may or may not be addressed in the articles?

6. Yes. There has been some demagogy and shallowness in certain published articles. Those articles will be revoked.

7. We are sick of being publicly labeled as an opposition of the court or as being in favor of compromise!

8. We are no politicians. The structure of our thinking is not political, cannot be political and does not even claim to be political. Our aim is not to form an alternative political Party.

9. We nevertheless feel that you are afraid that our activities might cause something...

Two pairs of arguments are essential here. The Ideological Commission made two key remarks: a) you are about to form an alternative political Party; b) we are not afraid of you! *Perspektive* countered with two replies: a) we are not about to form a political party, we are against politics in any form (and so are you!); b) you are nonetheless afraid of us. To put it plainly, both the IC and *Perspektive* gave a basically correct analysis of each other. The IC

was right in saying that *Perspektive* is becoming a new Party; on the other hand, *Perspektive* was also right in stating that the IC (the Party) was frightened. But how could the Party be so afraid? The League of Communists was obviously dissatisfied with the course of the earlier polemic, whose agents were several journals – remember that *Problemi* and *Teorija in Praksa* had been established with the sole purpose of confronting *Perspektive*! And they had proven to be ineffective. *Perspektive* then began to appear as an opposition group. Action was needed. But what kind? Ideological counter actions on the relevant level did not deliver the desired results. An easier way would have been to introduce even harsher pressure through the State Publishing House – through its workers' council or Party organization – with termination as a last resort. That eventually happened a couple of months later, but the Party was by no means in favor of that solution.

The transcript clearly reveals that as the debate heats up, the IC becomes more repetitive: administrative measures shall not be used (*Verneinung* in its purest form). Nor were they to be used! *Perspektive* told them upfront: we are against authority, but that is only possible because you are against it as well! The IC could not negate that premise. That was decisive. Their line of argumentation was defeated. Yes, we – the Party, not society in general – have the ability to politically defeat you and shut you down – it finally came out. But we will not. The Party had promised to lead through pedagogy, through convincing. It was this very declaration, found in the third Party program, which would detach the Party from the State. But not mechanically: detachment is only possible if the State and the Party engage in a mutual process of transformation.

This was the basis of the critique of the earlier Soviet model (Stalinism) and also a formula for securing the achievements and further development of socialism as a way of steering clear of either anarchy or the restoration of a bourgeois state system. It might be true, as Kreft noted that all the basic discursive operations usually attributed to “Stalinism” were present in the IC’s argumentation. (The elements of paranoia were also there: *there must be somebody who stands behind all of this!*) However, what was really new was not the more recent, more pragmatic technocratic articulation (is pragmatism not an essential dimension of Stalinism?), but the fact that the Party (IC) took the matters into its own hands. The Central Committee concluded that the level where *Perspektive* should be challenged had been essentially transgressed, so it intervened directly, and by doing so it lost ground. The Ideological Commission was on its own! In an earlier period, its products would have been sent to the basis and used in fights among the immediate builders of socialist society, that is, those for whom the revolution had been carried out in the first place. But in our case, the Party found itself literally detached from the masses (*Problemi* and *Teorija in praksa* had let the Party down). Its weapons, the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, only made sense if they were used either in the practice of the immediate producers (who might be also communists) or in the political struggle for power. Using classics as they were used in the initial stages of the conflict was now out of question (*Problemi* and *Teorija in praksa* had let the Party down and did not participate in the meeting!) The second option was the only way left for the Party: the use of ideology in the struggle for power. Since the revolution had already been achieved, there could only be a defense of the victory – in other words, ruling. But herein lies a trap: the Party should simply not rule anymore. Undoubtedly, this is what compelled the IC to claim that they are not addressing the journalists “from a position of power.” Why on earth are we discussing this with the IC then? Out of a common love for philosophical debate? Obviously Kavčič did not. As mentioned above, *Perspektive* told the IC just the same when reminding it that, just like the Party itself, they were opposed to authority. To which the Party replied that they could address the journal from a position of power, but only potentially. *Perspektive* on the other hand could promise any concession that the Party

wanted, including merciless criticism of their own articles. We might even say that at the time, *Perspektive* chalked up a victory. In either case, *Perspektive* was eventually liquidated, but did nevertheless retroactively gained the status of a political party. How?

The liquidation of *Perspektive* sparked protests from several other journals – including *Problemi* (there were even demonstrations in the student dormitory district of the city)! *Perspektive* had been stopped, but the old practice of every organization to mobilize support (and to confirm it) no longer worked. The poet Niko Grafenauer described the end of *Perspektive* quite correctly: a non-administrative administrative measure. *Perspektive* could not be labeled a public enemy, like a street gang, because the masses had failed to react appropriately when it existed, and would be even less capable of doing so now that it was gone. As a matter of fact, the Party did not even try to do anything. If that is the case, and *Perspektive* in fact never got the ideological status of an outlaw gang – the scum of society (as it was common practice in the USSR during the period of socialist construction) – then we may, in absence of a more appropriate notion, truly define it, along with *Problemi* and other journals, as a political Party.