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On the Eve of Dissolution:

Yugoslav Cinematography and Socio-Political Crisis from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s

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Abstract

The paper offers an analysis of the intellectual activism in Yugoslavia in the decades prior to the armed conflicts and the dissolution of the federal state – early 1970s to the late 1980s. The legislative, economic and political reforms in the country explain the subsequent occurrences in the region. The Prague Group of film directors is analysed in the context of the critical intellectual activism. The criticism expressed through their cinematography is mostly focused on the self-management system and the inability of Yugoslav socialist society to meet the needs and interests of its citizens. The analysis is aimed at identifying the early indicators of the crisis in Yugoslavia and describing the way the intellectual elite perceived them.

Keywords

Yugoslav Prague Group, self-management, League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY)

The period of time between the mid-1970s and late 1980s in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was characterized by several very important socio-political changes and economic reforms. These occurrences are fundamental to understanding the subsequent rise of nationalism and outbreak of armed conflict in the region. I find the role of intellectuals in Yugoslavia in this period to be particularly important, if not crucial, in identifying the early signs and underlying causes of the later crisis and dissolution of the state. In this essay I analyze the position of intellectuals regarding the political and economic crises and social changes. I will contrast their attitude of active participation with one of passiveness and obedience. I will include those Yugoslav film directors that were members of the *Prague Group*, among the intellectuals portraying a critical and active attitude towards the surrounding reality. The criticisms voiced in the films produced by G. Marković, R. Grlić, G. Paskaljević, L. Zafranović, E. Kusturica and S. Karanović will provide me with abundant material for analysis and with the evidence about the everyday life of Yugoslavs at that time. I will also include the work of Ž. Žilnik who did not graduate from the Film Academy in Prague, but was very active in the period that I will analyze. I find his artistic approach to be closely related to the topic I am discussing. I will evaluate the impact that the work of the Prague Group had on the social environment by contrasting it with the much sharper and politically more subversive criticism of the Yugoslav Black wave movement in the 1960s.

In the first part of the essay I will offer a brief overview of the socio-political and economic changes that took place in the SFRY. I will observe the way in which these events affected the everyday life of Yugoslavs and explain the reasons for the growing economic gap between the republics and the provinces. The analytic work of Laslo Sekelj *Jugoslavija: struktura raspadanja*[1] will be the mostly used source in this section of the essay. I will also offer a brief comment on the role of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) and the growing ideological, economic and cultural cleavages in the Yugoslav society. I will link these occurrences with the specific Yugoslav interpretation of socialism and break with the Soviet model of economic development.

The main topic in the second part of the essay will be the role of intellectuals in the 1980s crisis within Yugoslav society. In this regard, I find to be very useful and insightful the work of Valere Philip Gagnon[2] and the analysis of the Yugoslav intellectual elite by Jasna Dragović-Soso[3]. I will comment on the part of the Yugoslav intelligentsia which served as a bridge between criticism and rejection of nationalism towards conformism and co-optation. I will discuss the way this ideological transition was perceived at its very beginning.

In the third part of the essay I will support my thoughts on the critical intellectuals and the party line on the crisis, elaborated in the beginning, by focusing on the cinematographic work of the *Prague Group*. I consider the abovementioned film directors as a part of the critical intellectual current active at that time. I will contextualize their interests and the problems they were preoccupied with in the socio-political circumstances of Yugoslavia. I will analyse the main

1.   Sekelj, Laslo: *Jugoslavija, struktura raspadanja*, Rad, Beograd, 1990. The author did not have at her disposal the English translation of the book by Vera Vukelić *Yugoslavia: The Process of Disintegration*, Dist. Columbia University Press, 1993. All the quotations from the Sekelj's book are translated by the author of the essay.

2.   Gagnon, Valerie Philip: *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*, Cornell University Press, 2004

3.   Dragovic-Soso, Jasna: *"Saviours of the Nation": Serbia's Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism,* London, 2002

issues the directors raised in their films and try to explain the origins of their concerns regarding the anomalies within Yugoslav socialist society. An invaluable source of information for my analysis is Daniel Goulding's book[4] on Yugoslav cinematography. I will also mention the current projects and activities that the directors are involved in, and the opinions of some of them on Does the Prague Group still exist? I will also discuss the need of the post-Yugoslav cultural space for (another) Prague Group.

My arguments will be supported by the sociological, political and textual analysis of the following films: *Beach Guard in Winter (*Čuvar plaže u zimskom periodu*)* by Goran Paskaljević, 1976*; National Class up to 7865 cm (Nacionalna klasa do 7865 cm)* by Goran Marković, 1979; *Something in Between (Nešto između)* by Srđan Karanović, 1983; Štefica Cvek *in the Jaws of Life (*Štefica Cvek *u raljama života)* by Rajko Grlić, 1984; and *How Steel Was Tempered (Tako se kalio čelik)* by Želimir Žilnik, 1988. The analysis will be based on socio-economic and political grounds, while the film production study will be used as the method of analysis of the processes which consequently led to the dissolution of the Yugoslav state.

In order to define precisely the period of time that will be covered in my analysis, I will establish time limits – the years 1974 and 1987. The first one is marked by the adoption of the 'new' Constitution of Yugoslavia according to which territorial division was introduced throughout the society – in the economic and institutional spheres, in the sectors of culture and education, even in the organizational structure of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. In his study *Jugoslavija, struktura raspadanja,* Laslo Sekelj interprets this constitutional change as the establishment of *"one party in eight states"*[5].

The second limit represents the year when the *Proposals for the*

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4.   Goulding, Daniel: *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience*, Indian University Press, 2002

5.   Sekelj, Laslo: *Jugoslavija, struktura raspadanja*, Biblioteka Dijalog, Rad, 1990, p 215.

Slovenian National Program[6] was published by Slovenian journal *Nova Revija* and when the amendments on the 1974 Constitution were introduced. Two opposite and incompatible approaches to the crisis emerged on the Yugoslav political scene – autonomy or co-federation vs. centralism or federation.[7] This ideological conflict marked the new phase of the Yugoslav crisis. Following Sekelj's line of thought, it can be named *a different party in each state*.

Almost a decade and a half between these two time limits provide ammunition for my analysis: the *Law on Associative Labour* was adopted in 1976[8]; *Pluralism of interests* became the fully-fledged term for the *Yugoslav type of democracy*[9]*;* the Federal Presidency

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6.   Debeljak, Aleš: *Cosmopolitanism and National Tradition: Case of Slovenia*, International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society, Volume 19, November/ September 2003.

7.   "*S obzirom na supstrat političke legitimacije, označili smo slovenački model transformacije političke oligarhije u političku elitu modelom nacional-pluralizma. Primereno ovom kriterijumu, srpski model transformacije političke oligarhije u političku elitu označavamo nacional-boljševizam.*" [*"As regards the substratum of the political legitimacy, we name the Slovenian model of the transformation of the political oligarchy into political elite as the national-pluralist model. According to the same criteria, the Serbian model of the transformation of the political oligarchy into a political elite we name national-bolshevism"*] Sekelj, Laslo: *Jugoslavija, struktura raspadanja*, Biblioteka Dijalog, Rad, 1990, p 220.

8*.   Zakon o udruženom radu [Law on Associated Labour]* (1976) introduced the *voluntary mutual adjustment principle* as the basic socio-economic associative force. This legislative change increased the independence of the self-management labour units which were declared free to associate with each other on the basis of mutual benefit regardless the republic or province they were located in. This innovation was supposed to promote competitiveness among Yugoslav companies and make them assume responsibility for their economic activities. However, the business initiatives were not completely independent. They had to be approved and were managed by the central administrative offices controlled by the LCY. Consequently, companies were motivated to cooperate only with long-standing clients and usually with those located in the same republic/province. The Law caused the atomisation of the productive forces and the labour market. In short, the economic and institutional changes were not followed by political reforms and democratization. J. Kornai defines Yugoslav self-management as *shop-window democracy*, since the introduction of economic freedom and tight political control are self-contradictory measures.

9*.   Pluralizam samoupravnih interesa* [*Pluralism of interests]* was an official term in the Yugoslav political agenda introduced by one of the self-management ideologists, Edvard Kardelj, in the 1960s in order to meet the needs of the intellectual elite and to weaken the claims of political dissidents of the need for democratization in the political and economic spheres. It arose from the Yugoslav interpretation of the *path to communism* which implied socio-economic diversity with no political

was established after the death of the then president Josip Broz Tito and the *nationality quota* principle was introduced into the decision-making process on the federal level *(princip ključa)*[10]; the irredentist attitude among Kosovo Albanians emerged together with the grievances of Kosovo Serbs based on ethnic discrimination and threatened security.

The economic crisis and austerity measures of the 1980s made the socio-political situation in the country even more critical. Since Yugoslavia had an important geo-strategic position during the Cold War and the US and Western Europe had political interests in this region, the SFRY had access to generous foreign loan arrangements which kept its economy afloat (Lorraine M. Lees)[11]. The 1980s were a hard time which involved paying back the debts and complying with the requirements of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) – severe austerity measures and the reduction of public expenditure. Paying back foreign debts became even more difficult when the second oil crisis in 1979 struck the USA and Western European countries.

Susan Woodward in her book *The Balkan Tragedy*[12] explains the

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pluralism. The LCY delegated its competences of social and economic development to society and its institutions; it even tolerated diverse opinions within the mono-party system (the political dimension of pluralism of interests), but it remained the only political and ideological authority in charge of monitoring the *building of a socialist society* (*izgradnja socijalizma*).

10.   Sekelj criticizes the role and aims of the quota principle: *"[...] nacionalni ključ igra funkciju selekcije umesto sposobnosti i pogleda na svet; dozvoljen je samo jedan pogled na svet ali sve šarenilo nacija"* [...the "quota system" represents a selection principle, instead of being a display of potentials and different worldviews; only one worldview is allowed but a huge ethnic diversity is exhibited"] Sekelj, Laslo: *Jugoslavija, struktura raspadanja*, Rad, Beograd 1990, p. 201.

11.   In her book *Keeping Tito Afloat* Lee explains that Yugoslavia played a crucial role in the foreign policy of the USA during the Cold war as a *wedge* to dismantle the Eastern European Block of socialist countries. The message that the successful Yugoslav economy sent to other socialist countries was that a different road to socialism, an alternative to the Soviet one, was possible. In actual fact, the losses of the Yugoslav economy were permanently covered by foreign debt and financial aid provided mostly by the US government.

12.   Woodward, Susan: *The Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, Brookings Institution Press, 1995

impact that the oil crisis and indebtedness of Yugoslavia had on the economies of the Yugoslav republics. At that point, the republics and provinces were highly independent in administrating their budgets, in designing production circles and arranging export-import contracts. Since Yugoslavia as a whole was under the pressure of the international financial agencies, its individual constituent units were forced to increase productivity and cope with austerity measures. Due to the oil crisis Western countries were not a reliable market any more. Therefore, the Yugoslav republics had to shift their exports towards the CMEA, the Middle East and the Non-Aligned Movement countries.[13] Republics, whose economies were based on the exploitation of raw materials and agricultural production, were especially at a disadvantage (namely Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia, albeit partially).

According to IMF guidance, tax incentives and export subsidies were targeted at the producers of manufactured goods. The inability of some republics and provinces to change the type and capacity of their manufacturing lines as well as their trade arrangements on the local and international market increased the asymmetrical economic development among the regions. The territorial units that managed to cope with the changes became autarkic and anti-solidarity oriented economies. The main interest of the republics was to strengthen their own economies and cope with the strict debt repayment policies, even if this eroded the socialist ideas of equality and solidarity[14].

Woodward argues that the economic scarcity of the 1980s in Yugoslavia was also caused by inappropriate governance, such as: the (mis)use of the industrial investments for covering the

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13.   Since these markets were not highly demanding, Yugoslav society was not forced nor motivated to invest in new technologies or to improve the quality of production. This had a twofold impact: unemployment with a brain-drain effect and a decline in the competitiveness of the Yugoslav economy which turned out to be one of the biggest problems in the subsequent process of transition in the late 1990s.

14*.   Fond za ubrzani razvoj nerazvijenih područja* - The Fund for the Accelerated Development of Underdeveloped Regions – founded at the time of the Kraiger's economic reforms in 1965 – was fading away in the 1980s since the developed regions were reluctant to support the underdeveloped ones.

administrative costs of the regional bureaucracies and LCs structures; there were no investments in innovation and new technologies and the Yugoslav economy was soon lagging behind Western countries; ineffective production resulted in an *economy of shortages*; a lack of job opportunities gave rise to a high unemployment rate, *gastarbeiter*[15] and a brain drain effect; what is more, there was an expansion of the shadow economy and increase in corruption, as well as a distrust of official institutions and the creation of informal safety networks.

Plenty of explanations have been put forward for the reasons underlying the Yugoslav crisis and armed conflicts. A summary of the basic ideas will be given. Ivan Iveković[16] for instance, identifies the reasons for the Yugoslav dissolution as being the economic crisis and emphasizes the unbalanced development of the regions. Susan Woodward, as it was explained above, pays special attention to the impact of the international financial institutions – the IMF and the WB – on the dynamics of the Yugoslav economy and consequently on its socio-political environment. Laslo Sekelj[17] argues that the cause of the Yugoslav crisis was immanent to the self-management system itself, since neither *radničko samoupravljanje* (interpreted as self-management*)* nor *delegatski sistem* (self-government*)* were based on integrative principles and moreover they were in sharp contradiction to the mono-party system.

Dejan Jović[18] argues that none of these arguments individually should be considered as *the* reason. In order to make a comprehensive

15. According to Ljubo Sirc 11% of the active population of Yugoslavia in 1972 was employed in the Western European countries as *guest workers. Socialisme de Marche et Conflits en Yougoslavie,* Extrait de la *Revue D'études Comparatives Est-ouest,* January 1977, Volume 8, Num 1, p. 83.

16. Iveković, Ivan: *Ethnic and Regional Conflicts in Yugoslavia and Transcaucasia: a Political Economy of Contemporary Ethnonational Mobilization*, Ravenna, 2000.

17. Sekelj, Laslo: *Jugoslavija, struktura raspadanja,* Rad, Beograd, 1990, p. 236.

18. Jović, Dejan: *Jugoslavija - zemlja koja je odumrla* [Yugoslavia – a State that Withered away], Fabrika knjiga Beograd i Prometej Zagreb, 2003 and Jović, Dejan: *Razlozi za raspad socijalističke Jugoslavija: kritička analiza postojećih interpretacija* [*Reasons for the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia: a critical analysis of the existing interpretations*], Reč 62/8, 2001.

analysis all of them should be taken into account and should be contextualized in post-1948 Yugoslavia. After the split with Stalin's views on socialist development, Yugoslav communists re-discovered the concept of *withering away of the state*[19] and consistently implemented it in Yugoslav society – the process started with the decentralisation and concluded with territorial disintegration. Due to this antistatist ideological approach to socialism, Jović argues that the federal state lost its capacity to protect and represent its citizens which created a breeding ground for ideological manipulation.

At this point of the discussion the *post factum* analysis of the *real* reasons of the Yugoslav dissolution it is not of crucial interest. What is more instructive is identifying the explanations of the crisis and the ideologies that were used as surrogates for critical and politically responsible reasoning. The regional power holders masked their interests with primordialist or statist approaches to ethnonationalism, excluding in that way possibilities for political reform.

Primordialism interpreted the asymmetric economic, cultural and political development of the Yugoslav regions as the result of the different origins of the nations. The argument that the strikingly different blood flowed in each nation's veins was based on the assumption of belonging to different civilizations. In the same vein, the rise of nationalism and armed conflict was explained as an outcome of *ancient hatred* and therefore as an unavoidable and unsolvable problem.

The nationalist elites in almost all Yugoslav republics – Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slovenia to a certain extent as well – adopted the primordialist approach in defining their national identity. This interpretation of the Yugoslav conflict was very common in Western academic circles[20]. Nowadays, most

19. The concept of the withering away of the state was adopted by the Yugoslav communists after rereading Lenin's *State and Revolution* (1917).

20. The journalist Robert Kaplan was among the first to write about the Balkan conflicts from this perspective in his book *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*, New York Vintage Books, 1994

social scientists reject this explanation as an incorrect outsider understanding of Yugoslav society which only served as an excuse for the passive attitude of the international community towards the problems in Yugoslavia before and during the armed conflicts.

The other approach questioned the legitimacy of Yugoslavia *per se* and the viability of such an **artificial** polity. The criticism was based on the perception that Yugoslavia was a **prison of nations** crying out to be dismantled. According to this approach, when democratization was about to start, the ethnic conflict arose as a consequence of the political opinions and repressed emotions being expressed for the first time openly. However, Valère Philip Gagnon[21] points out that the shortcoming of this approach is the fact that political elites usually have strong control over the resources of power and are able to deal with tensions in the social and political space.

It is of great interest to mention the observations made by several social scientists (Maria Todorova, Boris Buden)[22] about the common ground or the branch off of the post-communist and post-colonial discourses. Communism was interpreted by all the anti-communist factions in the ex-Yugoslav space as an oppressive power imposed from outside, completely alien to its national identity, aimed to spoil the purity of the nation. By liberating itself from communist ideology, the nation would recover its genuine beauty and primordial values.[23] The argument that the official ideology – not only the common state – was a prison brings post-communist discourse in Eastern European socialist countries close to the post-colonial one.

21. Gagnon V.P.: *The Myth of Ethnic War*, Cornell University Press, 2004, p.25

22. Todorova, Maria: *Imagining the Balkans,* New York, Oxford, 1997; Boris Buden discussed this issue on his lecture *Od društva tajne do tajne društva* [From the Society of Secrets to the Secret of Society] held in the Serbian National Library in Belgrade on 09/10/07. For further reading on the cultural and social transformation see Buden, Boris: *Vavilonska jama*, Fabrika knjiga, Beograd, 2007.

23. In this regard, communism was interpreted in Croatia as the legacy of the Serbian political and cultural influence in the region. In the 1990s it was labelled by the Croatian media – Buden's example – as *Serbo-communism*. Serbian post-communist discourse instead traced the origins of communism to Bolshevik Russia and shifted responsibility to late 19th and early 20th century's Russophile intellectuals. As a counterbalance they emphasized the cultural and historical relations that Serbia had with the Western Europe – France and Great Britain primarily.

The institutional, political and economic decentralization of the Yugoslav state, as was mentioned at the beginning of this essay, had a huge social impact. The autarkism of the regions brought about a certain rigidity of the labour market and reduced job opportunities; the citizens were socially demobilized and deprived of an opportunity to identify alternatives and choose the best one. Instead of the stimulating effects of competitiveness within economic sectors, a rivalry between the republics arose. The concept of solidarity became problematic, since the principles of equality and mutual help were applied only within the particular republic or province. Solidarity **(solidarnost)** was replaced by the unity **(jedinstvo)**; the latter lacks the aspect of volunteerism and implies confrontation in interpersonal relations and social organization.

The everyday life of the **common people** – their schooling and employment, marriage, even travelling and spending holidays – was reduced to the territory of one republic or province. V.P Gagnon argues that the homogenization of the regions was a precondition for the regional political elites to implement their political agendas. However, the real nature of regions is the complete opposite – heterogeneity.[24]

In spite of their economic, political and historic particularities, in the 1980s all the Yugoslav republics encountered similar social problems. It made the Yugoslavs more compact and coherent from the perspective of the common citizens' needs and grievances. Consequently, national identity and division along ethnic lines were not among the relevant issues in everyday life. The explanation for this was not Yugoslavia being a **multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-confessional paradise**. The reason was that Yugoslavs had economic and ideological issues as their priorities rather than nationalism.

Ana Dević's content analysis of the social and political science journals and daily newspapers in Yugoslavia from the late 1960s till

24. *"...territorially bound space is the image of the political space, and the 'imagined community' which may not, and usually does not, coincide with the social realities within that territory."* Gagnon, Valère Philip: *The Myth of Ethnic War,* Cornell University Press, 2004. p. 14.

the early 1990s in *Ethnonationalism, Politics, and the Intellectuals: The Case of Yugoslavia*[25] shows that the topics covered in the periodicals varied over this period of time. From the mid-1970s until the late 1980s, the most intriguing issues for both the intellectual elite and the public generally were mostly related to: legislative and economic reforms; nationalism and liberalism as a threat to socialism in Yugoslavia; Yugoslav and foreign literature.

Another source of data that can support my thesis are the results of polls carried out in all Yugoslav republics and provinces that V.F. Gagnon published in his book *The Myth of Ethnic War.* I would argue that the most significant answers are those that Serbian citizens gave in 1990 to the question: *Where do you most markedly feel inequality in Yugoslavia?* The last answer on the list given by only 13 percent of the interviewed was: *In relation to the various nationalities*, while the first one on the list (21 percent) was *the relations between individual republics*. The citizens in Serbia identified the potential danger on the level of inter-republic relations and not on an ethnic relations level.

Also very informative was the result of the poll carried out in 1990 in Bosnia and Herzegovina when 81.6 percent of the young population agreed with the following statement: *I am Yugoslav and cannot give priority to a feeling of some other belonging.* It is important to stress that party officials from several republics used to openly express their discontent with the increasing expression of Yugoslavism. This proves, once again, Gagnon's thesis that no matter how hard the political elites try to impose homogenization of the political/cultural/social space – by use of threats or violence – the social reality is almost never homogenous.

After the previous display of data an intriguing question arises: How can the absence of civic reaction or resistance to the

25. Dević, Ana: *Ethnonationalism, Politics, and the Intellectuals: The Case of Yugoslavia*, in International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1998, p. 397. The author distinguishes the journals funded by the LCY organs from those funded by Self-Management Interest Communities run by universities and professional associations. The topics and spheres of interests vary according to the financier.

occurrences be explained if – as the statistics show – most of the citizens had a clear picture of the arising crisis? How did the official institutional networks that should have conveyed the protest in the Yugoslav society suddenly disappear? Laslo Sekelj explained the way in which they were dismantled and analysed the issue at the moment when it was still an on-going process (1990).

"Novi autoritarizam, koji nastaje iz postupnog i višestranog dekomponovanja prethodnog autoriteta i normativnog socijalnog modela, legitimiše se kao nacionalni i demokratski. Tojnovoj ideološkoj manipulaciji, međutim, zapravo nema ko da se suprotstavi. Jer nema izgrađenih konkurirajućih ideoloških sistema niti sa socijalističke niti sa liberalne strane. Sa socijalističke, zato što je Savez komunista Jugoslavije uspeo totalno da iskompromituje socijalizam i komunizam, a sa liberalne, zato što su vladajući ideološki aparati sprečili stvaranje sistema i liberalne inteligencije, tim pre što danas u Jugoslaviji zastavu liberalizma razvijaju nacional-liberali a ne socijal-liberali."[26]

The lack of federal state institutions was compensated for in the 1990s by the creation of new institutional networks – either by marking the local territory as *our state* and fitting it to the nation, or cherishing the cross-border dimension of *our nation* and fitting it to the state. In either case – *the ethnification of territory* or *the territorialization of ethnicity*, according to V.P Gagnon – the newly created political elites made use of all suitable means in order to gain legitimacy.

26. *"The new authoritarianism that emerges from a gradual and multilateral decomposition of the previous authority and normative social model, obtains its legitimacy as national and democratic. However, there is nobody to oppose this recently emerged ideological manipulation, because no competitive ideological systems are in place, neither from a socialist nor from a liberal perspective. Not from a socialist one because the League of Communist of Yugoslavia managed to discredit both socialism and communism, while the liberal one failed because the governing ideological elite prevented the creation of the system and liberal intelligentsia, and what is more the banner of liberalism lies in the hands of the national-liberals and not social-liberals."* Sekelj, Laslo: *Jugoslavija, struktura raspadanja*, Rad, Beograd, 1990, p 156.

"One way to demobilize a population is to reconceptualise the political space, thereby fundamentally shifting the focus of political discourse away from issues around which challengers are mobilizing the populace, towards the question of who "owns" space: the right to make decisions about this space belongs to these "owners".[27]

In order to understand the discussed social changes it is important to observe the position of the League of Communists in Yugoslav society and the changes of its organizational structure and direction. Before 1974, the LCY was an extra-constitutional political body while the new Constitution gave it the status of a supra-constitutional institute. The LCY was defined by the Constitution as *the primary and essential force in developing the social relations of the self-management type and above all in raising the socialist and democratic consciousness of society*.

In this respect, Laslo Sekelj includes the Yugoslav socio-political system among those *with a political supra-determinant* and finds this political aspect contradictory to the one of self-management and marketization introduced in the economy. Sekelj identifies this ideological and structural discrepancy as the root cause of the political and socio-economic crisis of the socialist Yugoslav society.

Another socio-political change was brought about by the 1974 Constitution through the concept of *good moral character (moralno-politička podobnost)*. Ideological suitability was a requirement for admission to any managerial or civil service job. At the same time it enabled the party to have a tight political control over the state apparatus and society. The ideological criteria for selecting personnel led to a vast deprofessionalization in all sectors, especially in high managerial positions, education and the army. The politicians used to be recruited among the managers; a successful manager would continue his or her career in politics, while movement in the opposite direction was very rare.

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27.   Gagnon, Valère Philip: *The Myth of Ethnic War,* Cornell University Press, 2004., p. 8.

The party structures also went through a process of decentralization in the late 60s and early 70s. After the period of *traditional bolshevism* that, according to the Sekelj's study, was dominant among the Yugoslav communists before 1964, another phase of *republicanization* of the LCY was introduced. The official political discourse pushed aside the idea of *Yugoslavism* and promoted *consumerism* in the economic, and *provincialisation* in the cultural and political spheres. It gave rise to the cleavages among the LCY membership – the horizontal one between the regions resulting in *our* and *their* communists (absurd from the point of view of the communist beyond-national orientation); and the vertical division between the *common members* and the *party moguls* (absurd since communism propagates overall equality).

Citizens were discouraged from taking part in political life and from opposing the reigning demagogy. Animosity towards the Communist party kept many people away from politics, especially the youth from urban areas. Most of them had negative attitudes, because the aims and values promoted by the party did not meet their needs and interests. Since the majority of them did not have access to the dissidents' activist networks either, they remained marginalized and silent. For many young people from rural or underdeveloped areas, party membership was the only – and quite a reliable – way to find a job, make a career and integrate into urban society.

Rural structures and newcomers to the cities became the core of the state bureaucracy and intellectual circles. Ivan Iveković defines this phenomenon as the creation of the *hybrid intellectuals* and *half-breeds of distorted modernization*[28]. Although settled in the urban environments, the *half-breeds* still maintained strong ties with the countryside and never removed the anti-urban sentiments from their frame of mind. They accepted the achievements of modernization and technological progress, as Iveković argues, but they were still longing for the traditional idyll and the apathy of countryside life.

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28.   Iveković, Ivan: *Ethnic and Regional Conflicts in Yugoslavia and Transcaucasia: a Political Economy of Contemporary Etnonational Mobilization*, Ravenna, 2000, p. 58.

With the emergence of the political crisis most of them turned into nationalist leaders or harsh advocates of nationalism.

The conservative peasant mentality outlived the communist modernisation and reappeared in the avatar of the industrial workers who strongly supported nationalist ideology. It can be explained, as Dubravka Ugrešić argues in her book *The Culture of Lies,* by the fact that the position of Yugoslav intellectuals was never linked to that of a leading and progressive social element.

> *"The socialist slogan – 'worker, peasants and honest intellectuals' – had forever placed the intellectual on the periphery and that's where he stayed. The contemporary Yugoslav writer was rarely called upon to be the "spokesman of the people".[29]*

Membership of the LCY decreased from the early-1970s due to the previous purges of the Serbian and Croatian dissidents' networks. According to Sekelj, the state crackdown on its ideological opponents in 1968 was the turning point in the ongoing crisis of the party[30]. It caused bitter resentment of the critical intellectuals and made them realize that the Yugoslav system could not be reformed from within, through the party structures. Svetozar Stojanović commented as follows on the post-purges times:

> *"[...] for both students and professors, writers and filmmakers, the crackdown [on the Praxis group] represented the moment of truth which showed the face of autarkic rule for what it was and the impossibility of implementing truly liberal reforms. It implied that any continuation of activism had to take place outside the existing structures and the Party, giving rise to new extra-systematic forms of political protest akin to those employed by East European dissidents."[31]*

29.   Ugrešić, Dubravka: *The Culture of Lies: Antipolitical Essays*, Phoenix House, 1998, p. 37.

30.   Sekelj, Laslo: *Jugoslavija, struktura raspadanja*, Rad, Beograd, 1990., p. 157-181.

31.   Stojanovic Svetozar in Popov, *Contra Fatum,* pp.401-2 in Dragović-Soso,

The intellectual elite in Yugoslavia created opportunities for mutual cooperation and activism in the spirit of the Helsinki Accords' legacy. Most of them conveyed their criticism through political activity, academic writings or art. The wide-spread form of activism used by Yugoslav intellectuals involved drafting petitions and open letters in defence of civil rights, organizing the *flying universities*, i.e. meetings of intellectuals and discussion groups in private homes; and the dissemination of books and journals through *samizdat* publishing nets. The Yugoslav intellectual elite did not share the same views on the possible solutions of the crisis. Among Croatian dissidents, a wide-spread idea was that of national sovereignty, while Serbian intellectuals considered the restructuring of the political system as the issue of the utmost concern.

The informal intellectual networks were actually round tables at which participants were free to express their criticism or suggestions and to exchange experiences. Through discussions, the participants – regardless of their political stance or the intellectual sphere they were active in – would become informed about the main issues their colleagues were concerned about in other regions. Such an 'inclusive' cooperation between the dissidents' networks was perceived by the Yugoslav regime as a major threat. The countrywide inter-republican cooperation could seriously endanger the process of political and national homogenization of the individual territories that the *party branches* were trying to apply in practice.

However, the very fact that the networks were informal and secret made them inaccessible to the wider public, and the effects of their work- limited.

> *"In Yugoslavia's relatively happy, consumerist, hedonist, megalomaniac ecstasy the public word was powerless. In that noise of ovations to Tito, our critical whisper was not heard. Politics boycotted and attacked us, and the press followed the political mainstream. That is why we had a small influence and represented a sect without any larger impact."[32]*

Jasna: *Saviours of the Nation*, London, 2002, p. 49.

32.   Quoted in Đukić, Čovek u svom vremenu, p.266 taken from Dragović-Soso,

After Tito's death in 1980 another wave of changes in Yugoslav society took place. It was noticeable – especially in Serbia and Slovenia – that the role of censorship and ideological control was loosening; repression measures were less used against the critical intellectuals and their activities. Apart from the already mentioned channels of expressing criticism, new instruments appeared, such as the *Writers' Association of Serbia*, or the intellectual group gathered around Dobrica Ćosić comprising mostly of *Serbian Academy of Science and Arts* members (SANU).

The establishment of the *Committee for the Defence of Freedom of Creation* within the *Writers' Association* is of great importance for the analysis of intellectual activism. Its establishment reflects the overall thaw of the strict party-controlled thinking. It represents the victory of freedom of artistic expression and at the same time the defeat of the conservative idea that art can be contained.[33] The initiative of defending artistic licence – which was also interpreted as the freedom of speech – was a force of cohesion among intellectuals of different orientations, the *nationalists*, *new leftists*, *liberals*. Their aim was not to support an individual dissident or his political views, but to defend the principle of freedom of artistic creation.

In the sphere of art and cinematography, many authors maintained trans-republican connections and cooperated in spite of the territorial division of the cultural institutions. Economic liberation and political decentralisation were reflected in Yugoslav cinematography in that film companies were founded individually in each republic and province.[34] Such changes produced a twofold effect. On the one hand, competence in censorship was reduced to a narrow circle of regional party officials who applied different

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Jasna: *Saviours of the Nation*, London, 2002, p. 52.

33.   The establishment of the Committee was triggered by the 'Đogo case' in 1981, when the Serbian poet Gojko Đogo was arrested for the 'hostile propaganda' expressed in his poetry.

34.   After decentralization, the feature film industry in SFRY consisted of *Avala Film* and *Zvezda film* in Belgrade, *Jadran film* in Zagreb, *Triglav Film* in Ljubljana, *Kosovo film* in Pristina, *Neoplanta film* in Novi Sad, *Lovcen film* in Podgorici, *Bosna film* in Sarajevo.

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criteria for censoring a work of art. Economy-wise the films had to be attractive to a wide audience in order to comply with financial accountability policies, i.e. to be profitable enough to justify the allocated funds. This was one of the reasons, according to Daniel J. Goulding in *Liberated Cinema*, why film production in Yugoslavia was very low in the early 1970s (together with ideological purges and the spread of TV culture).

On the other hand, the decentralization of the cultural sphere had positive outcomes, such as the multiplication of the funding sources – film production was funded by both regional and central budgets. The sixteen films produced in 1974 compared to the thirty in 1982 best illustrate the growth of Yugoslav film production.[35] Since film capacity augmented, opportunities arose for all nations and all regions in Yugoslavia to express their creativity and show their authentic perception of reality through film. In other words, the supremacy of the big cities and developed regions in cinematography was over.

Political and economic changes created an opportunity for the appearance of a new generation of film makers who worked together in informal groups or independently. The *Prague Group* in Yugoslav cinematography refers to the directors who studied at the Prague Film Academy (FAMU)[36] and whose first films appeared in the mid 1970s. The members of this *new generation* of directors were Lordan Zafranović, Goran Marković, Rajko Grlić, Goran Paskaljević, Emir Kusturica and Srđan Karanović as well as the cameramen Živko Zalar and Vilko Filac. The directors of the *Prague Group* shared the same film training, education, artistic sensibility and interests. They

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35.   Goulding, Daniel: *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience*, Indian University Press, 2002, p. 143.

36.   The Prague Film and Television Academy of the Performing Arts (FAMU) is the oldest film school in Central Europe, established in 1946. Together with the Theatre school (DAMU) and the music school (HAMU), FAMU forms a part of The Prague Academy of the Performing Arts (AMU). The golden age of Czechoslovak film was in the 1960s, during the era of increased political and cultural freedom. The top directors of the time included Miloš Forman, Jiří Menzel, Ján Kadár, Elmar Klos, Vojtěch Jasný, Věra Chytilová etc. The Soviet crackdown on the Prague Spring brought the era of creativity and stimulating ideas to an end.

used to cooperate and help each other in the realisation of their film projects[37].

However, they did not and do not conceive themselves as a group, or an artistic movement, or an organized intellectual group. Goran Marković in his book Češka š*kola ne postoji*[38] openly stated that the name of the group was forged by journalists, and that the members of the group had worked independently and with different artistic approaches since they finished their studies in Prague[39]. Srđan Karanović comments that the retrospectives and film shows dedicated to the Prague Group are meaningless since each director has an original approach to cinematography. They need to be presented in individual retrospectives and *cannot be put in the same box*[40].

However the critical approach is common to all the directors of the Prague Group. Their films dealt with the contemporary themes and problems that Yugoslavs faced in everyday life.[41] Since the directors were brought up and intellectually formed in times substantially different from the post-war period – the environment of self-management, the decentralized state, unemployment, economic shortages, reigning corruption, cronyism and wide spread professional negligence – the criticism of the directors in the 1980s is noticeably different from the one expressed in the Yugoslav cinematography by then.

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37. For example, the film *Bravo, maestro* was directed by Grlić, and Karanović collaborated on the script; Grlić also collaborated on the script of several other films directed by Karanović; the cameraman Zivko Zalar worked with Grlić, Karanović and Marković.

38. Marković, Goran: Češka škola ne postoji [*The Czech School does not Exist]*, Prosveta, Beograd, 1990.

39. Interview with G. Marković *Sudija nije brojao do osam* [*The referee did not count to eight*] in *Dnevnik*, September 14, 2003.

40. Interview with S. Karanović, *Ne pripadamo istoj fioci* [*We can't be put in the same box*] in *Vreme* No 523, Janurary 11, 2001.

41. The only exceptions are the films *Occupation in 26 Tableau* by L. Zafranović (1978) and *Petria's Wreath* (1980) which cover topics from the past. Therefore, they will not be included in the analysis.

As Goulding puts it, *"the new generation of film directors adopts an attitude of critical accommodation rather than dialectical confrontation."*[42] Such attitudes proved to be effective in conveying the criticism of the consumer society and self-indulgent Yugoslavs. The films easily communicate to the audience and by means of humoristic – sometimes ironic – tones depict negative features and contradictions within Yugoslav society.

The work of Goran Paskaljević[43] – which consists of over 30 documentary and 13 feature films – portrays common people with all their vulnerability and introverted emotions. Paskaljević's artistic expression is characterized by the specific human trait and sensible description of the protagonists' personal drama. His first feature film *Beach Guard in Winter* released in 1976 shows a young man Karlo striving to become a man on his own – independent from his parents, accepted and respected by society. Karlo encounters serious difficulties in the Yugoslav socialist society of the mid 1970s – he cannot find a job or marry the girl he loves. Despite the fact that her parents and Karlo's father are against the marriage, the young couple tries to live together. They soon realize that without any source of income and living space they can only depend on their parents and thus be prevented from making decisions about their own lives. Karlo is discouraged by his father from taking a job in a laundry ('a job for women') or from becoming a beach guard. His marriage fails, his father dies and he is forced to go abroad in search of a job. The strong ties of the patriarchal family frustrate the young couple and offer them no opportunity for change. The economic crisis forces Karlo to search for a job far away from home, but gives him no opportunity to find it in other regions in Yugoslavia.

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42. Goulding, Daniel: *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience*, Indian University Press, 2002, p. 145.

43. Filmography of Goran Paskaljević includes: *Pas koji je voleo vozove*, 1977 (*The Dog who Loved Trains*); *Poseban tretman* 1980 (*Special treatment*); *Varljivo leto 68*, 1984 (*The Elusive Summer of 68*); *Tango argentino* 1992; *Tuđa Amerika* 1995 (*Someone Else's America*); *How Harry Became a Tree*, 2001; *San zimske noći*, 2004 (*Midwinter Night's Dream*); *Optimisti*, 2006 (*Optimists*).

A similar destiny is shared by Goran Marković's[44] protagonist Floyd in *National Class up to 7865 cm* (1979). Floyd is an immature, hyperactive man in his late 20s who is trying his best to avoid the trap of the middle class way of life. He is a car racer, obsessed with his *Fića* – the Yugoslav model of the *Fiat* car – and speeding down the streets of Belgrade is all that matters to him. He opts for studying instead of working although he lacks any intellectual curiosity and financial means. He desperately tries to avoid military service, and above all tries to protect his bachelor status by engaging in short and superficial relationships with women. He desperately tries to have his car repaired and win the race *National class up to 7865 cm*. However, bad luck changes Floyd's life – his Fića grounds to a halt at the very end of the race; he ends up as a conscript, married to his pregnant girlfriend he does not love. Marković skilfully combines an easy-to-understand narrative with witty humour and charming aesthetics in expressing this social critique.

It is possible to draw a parallel between these two young men and Štefica Cvek, a young woman from a Croatian province. She is a protagonist of Grlić's[45] Štefica *Cvek in the Jaws of Life* 1984 – an imaginary character of a TV serial. Her life is a script written by a director woman. Štefica's adventures therefore follow the specific feminine line in her perception of life and critique of reality. She is a typist in a big state-owned company, living with her aunt and trying to settle down in Zagreb. Štefica›s only friend is her female colleague who is trying to introduce her to the rules of competitive urban life. The low-spirited and depressed Štefica cannot adapt to the basic rule of the struggle – to smile and be sexy no matter how you feel. Štefica, a newcomer to the city is on the one hand prevented by her rural upbringing from understanding urban culture and on the other affected by the lack of integrating networks. At her blind dates Štefica

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44. Filmography of Goran Marković includes: *Specijalno vaspitanje* 1977 (*Special Education*); *Variola vera* 1982; *Tajvanska kanasta,* 1985 (*Taiwan Canasta*); *Tito i ja,* 1992 (*Tito and Me*); *Srbija godine nulte* 2001 (*Serbia Year Zero*), *Kordon,* 2002.

45. Filmography of Rajko Grlić includes: *Bravo, maestro!* 1978 (*Bravo, Maestro!*); *Samo jednom se ljubi, 1981 (The Melody that Haunts My Memory)*, Štefica *Cvek u raljama života 1984 (Štefica Cvek in the Jaws of Life)*, *Za sreću je potrebno troje* 1985 (*Three for Happiness*), *Josephine* 2000.

meets a wide range of male characters, all of them representing *typical Balkan men.* The Serb boasts about his virility and physical strength, proud of his primeval instincts and primitivism. The Croat is a frustrated intellectual, who uses nationalism as an excuse for his failed marriage and ruined career, escaping the issue of his sexual inhibition and alcoholism. The men Štefica meets have different origins and sensibilities, but none of them meets her need for love. The sentimental drama comes to an end when she starts attending an English course and with a colleague of hers finds a common language.

This burlesque display of local prejudice and mocking of nationalism as a possible way out from the crisis reveals wrongly articulated discontent in the society. Pavle Levi points out that the nationalism in the Balkans was more a social reaction to arriving capitalism than a rediscovery of the national roots.

> *"What the contemporary outbursts of ethnic nationalism in the former Yugoslav lands may be said to explicate is, then, not some "intrinsic" regional tribalism, but the post-socialist radicalization of collectivist resistance to, or denial of society as inherently heterogeneous and antagonistic; radicalization of that social dynamic which, in fact, made years of successful implementation of the paternalistic state-socialist doctrine possible in the first place."[46]*

All three protagonists, Karlo, Floyd and Štefica, are under their parents' and families' pressure to **become a real man / a true woman** by being strong and healthy, serving in the armed forces if a man, being chaste but seductive if a woman, getting a steady job, establishing harmonious and long-lasting relations. This strict patriarchal pattern had to be respected, for any resistance and disobedience would have been ruthlessly suppressed. There was another reason for obeying the rules – there were simply no

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46. Levi, Pavle: *Disintegration in Frames: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Cinema,* Stanford University Press, 2007, p. 8.

alternatives on offer.

Both male protagonists, Karlo and Floyd, are forced to accept the imposed patterns of achieving the Yugoslav ideal of a man and enjoying the **better life of tomorrow**. They both end up defeated and prevented from creating their own life arrangements. Floyd had to accept that he was not a match to the national class in any category and he resigned. Karlo did not fit in the national class either. He left the country and the woman he loved for a badly- paid job as a gastarbeiter in Sweden. What defeated them was socialism itself, the betrayed and misused one. Yugoslav society did not need people like them; their personalities were too weak or too eccentric; there was no need for their skills and talents, and no room for their aspirations.

However, the dreams of the female protagonist came true. When she met her Mr Right, Štefica finally made her way through the urban jungle – she got financial support and protection while living a long and happy life with her spouse. Unlike the other protagonists, Štefica ended up happy and protected from life, however much she may have failed to integrate into the hectic urban life of Zagreb. The script writers, Rajko Grlić and Dubravka Ugrešić, mock the clichés by widening the picture through the life story of the female director Dunja who created Štefica's character. Her personal drama shows the same aspects of Yugoslav society but from a different perspective.

Dunja realizes that the institution of marriage has been trivialized, inter-personal communication interrupted, sexuality inhibited and that her search for love is illusory. Her partner is a mediocre literary critic whose compromise with the establishment's viewpoint and his blunt critique illustrates the co-operation of Yugoslav intellectuals. The combative spirit of Dunja's generation has vanished while the remnants of the 1968 revolution are here only to remind one of its defeat. The embodiment of the defeat is Dunja's friend from her student days, a broke hippie who drops by and stays for a few days, sleeps on her balcony, and plays a guitar, still true to his rebellion adolescent principles. Dubravka Ugrešić in her book *The Culture of Lies* explains the impact of *soft* censorship in Yugoslavia in the 1980s:

"As there had never been an official culture established in Yugoslavia (which did not prevent the existence of official figures in cultural life), there could never be its natural opposite, an underground, alternative or parallel culture, such as was richly cherished by other socialist countries. All in all, the Yugoslav writer rarely had the opportunity of being a dissident, or at least not for the same reasons and not as often as in other socialist countries. If he did happen to become one in his own environment, others would set to healing his wounds. A Zagreb dissident would have his books published in Belgrade or Ljubljana, and vice versa, of course."[47]

The question remains: Would a harsh and consistent oppression in socialist Yugoslavia – together with the absence of democracy of the Western type omitted by means of the pluralism of interests – have helped in consolidating the social groups opposed to the arising nationalist tendencies?

The film **How Steel Was Tempered** by Želimir Žilnik (1988)[48] is also centred on the everyday life of the little people. From the very title – a play on words and allusion to the literary tradition is the usual way Žilnik draws attention to the main idea of his films – the author narrows the critique on the Yugoslav socialist system and its shortcomings. At first sight, the characters are portrayed in contours representing the prototypes of the **socialist working people** – foundry workers whose moral duty is to work hard and strengthen the foundations of socialist society.

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47.   Ugrešić, Dubravka: *The Culture of Lies, Antipolitical essays,* The Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 37.

48.   The title of this film is a quote from the Soviet novel written by Nikolai Ostrovsky "Как закалялась сталь" (*How was steel forged*). Filmography of Želimir Žilnik also includes: *Rani radovi,* 1969 (*Early Works*); *Paradies* 1976; *Lijepe* žene *prolaze kroz grad*, 1986 (Nice girls go through the town); *Tito po drugi put među Srbima,* 1993 (*Tito Among the Serbs for the Second Time*); *Dupe od mramora*, 1995 (*Marble Ass*); *Kud plovi ovaj brod*, 1999 (*Wanderlust*); *Tvrđava Evropa*, 2001 (*The Fortress Europe*), *Kenedi se vraca kući,* 2003 (*Kennedy Goes Back Home*); *Evropa preko plota*, 2005 (*Europe Next Door*).

However, Žilnik introduces us to the bunch of idlers and timeservers in the foundry, who have no motive to fulfil the production quota, and whose farcical *self-management blues* sung all day long makes us smile bitterly. While the managerial staff is afraid that the workers in the smelting plant will discover their embezzlement and theft, the workers are rebelling for the improvement of basic working conditions. The film follows the life story of Leo, one of the foundry workers, with all its ups and downs, worries about an uncertain future, a low income and alternative ways to earn money. He has problems with housing and supporting the family and no qualifications to find another job.

Leo, as many other workers, thinks that the self-management can be improved by introducing higher salaries, competent managerial staff, more challenging tasks, by offering the possibilities for promotion, and finally by raising the participation of the workers in the process of self-management[49]. The concept of the socialist Yugoslav society denied the class struggle. The idea of self-management was contradictory by itself to the social dialogue or strike. Consequently the trade union had no instruments to help the workers. Its role was reduced to a supplier of low price food instead of helping the workers in coping with the ongoing *stratification of the society*.

The informal networks organised around the highly positioned managers and party members left the workers out of the distribution of resources. According to the self-management doctrine the *means of production* belonged to the workers (and not to the state as in the countries of the real socialism). Consequently, there was no threat of the bureaucracy exploiting the workers. However, the *organization of the work* and coordination of the business activities were entrusted to the managers and controlled by the party. In such circumstances the class of politicians and businessmen emerged as

the exploitative element. The workers' *fatigue of the system* was intensified by the overall corruption. Nobody was able to fight it, nobody approved it, and still everyone relied on it. The workers found themselves in the paradoxical state of *"powerful impotence."*[50]

Leo finds the solution to '*Mismanaged Self-Management*'[51] – as Goulding names it – in changing the socialist path that the country has taken and turning Svetozar Marković's ideas towards the right direction. Unfortunately, Leo does not succeed in carrying out his ideas. He joins the establishment's art project and earns money as a model of a shock-worker. Leo replaces his reformative enterprise with one of co-optation and compromise.

In the last scene of the film he is standing in the smelting plant with his son in his arms and pointing at the smelter. *"The work in the smelting plant will always be waiting for you"*, Leo says to his baby boy. His words sound threatening; they are also advice to be clever and avoid the trap of self-management, which he himself had fallen into. At the same time Leo admits his defeat and sardonically comments that society might care more for the generations to come.

Žilnik›s film offers the experience of the Yugoslav people with the self-management system, while Srđan Karanović[52] puts in the limelight *the way others see us.* His film *Something in Between* (1983) exposes Yugoslav socialism to the neutral eyes of a foreigner, a young American journalist Eve, who stops in Yugoslavia on her way to Turkey and starts living in Belgrade.

Upon her arrival she gets involved in an affair with Marko, a charming well-off restaurant owner, who compares having sex with "*having a coffee, espresso, in-and-out*". They enjoy the carefree life in Belgrade, travel to the Adriatic coast for a weekend, to have fun and fish for dinner. *"Yugoslavia is Turkey, Vienna and Venice"* is how

49. In this order the Yugoslav workers listed their priorities in the V. Arzensek's survey published in *The structure of motivations of the employees*, in *Teorija in prakse,* Num 2, 1971; taken from Sirc, Ljubo: *Socialisme de Marche et Conflits en Yougoslavie*, Extrait de la *Revue D'etudes Comparatives Est-ouest*, January 1977, Volume 8, Num 1, p. 42.

50. Rus, Veljko: *Odgovornost in moc v delovnih organizacijah,* Kranj, 1972, p. 102 in Sirc, Ljubo: *Socialisme de marche et conflits en Yougoslavie*, Extrait de la *Revue d'etudes comparatives est-ouest*, January 1977, Volume 8, Num 1, pp. 39-91

51. Goulding, Daniel: *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience*, Indian University Press, 2002, p. 159

52. Filmography of Srđan Karanović includes: *Petrijin venac,* 1980 (*Petrija's Wreath*); *Virdzina,* 1991 (*Virgina*); *Sjaj u ocima* 2003 (*Loving Glances*).

Marko defines Yugoslav culture, cuisine and mentality. The first day of her stay in Belgrade Eve searches for the bugs in the hotel room in line with Western preconceptions of Eastern European countries. Marko explains in his limited English: *"This is no America, no Watergate. We are no East no West, in the middle"*. He suggests Eve writes an article about self-management, Tito and the non-aligned movement, as if they were exotic souvenirs or Yugoslav goods for export. Eve's first impression is that "*the people here are simple and their life easy"*. American workers would certainly like to read about this *third way*.

Later on, Eve falls in love with Marko's best friend Janko and lives with him. The more time she spends with Yugoslavs, the less she understands their life style, aspirations and world views. Her impressions go from one of amazement to complete confusion and resentment. She ends up defeated in understanding the *Yugoslav experiment*, and leaves the country in the gun smoke of a military manoeuvre and simulation of war. She leaves for Turkey carrying Marko's child. At the moment of her deepest disillusionment Eva realises that Yugoslavia is *'not the West - not the East, it is something in between'*.

She asked many questions but got few answers. Why are the shortages of food and petrol so common? "*There is no coffee to buy and everybody drinks coffee. What a country!*" Why are the power cuts called an *energy conservation programme*? Why does she have to wait three weeks for the contact lenses to be delivered? How come Janko, a renowned surgeon lives with his mother and has no flat of his own?

> *"Do you know how difficult it is to get an apartment here?! Especially for single people? I've been on the waiting list for three years, and will wait for the next three."*

While Janko furiously explains the housing system organized by the state to her, Marko's answer was much simpler: "*You're spoiled. Americans never grow up*".

Eve's questioning of *why everything in the country has to be done through personal connections* brings up the issue of corruption and

the grey economy which was a leit-motive of the films of the 1980s. Due to weaker trust in state institutions, Yugoslavs replaced them with groups of friends and relatives in order to cope more effectively with the economy of shortages and rising social inequality.

> *"The family became a focus for widespread connections, spanning international boundaries. But that represented a turning inward in structural terms, deepening and reinforcing particularistic bonds which took on renewed vigour. That trend occurred in the absence of the alternatives to locally-based ties and informal connections, the ubiquitous "veze" that were increasingly the only way to get things done."[53]*

Powerlessness in making decisions both in their private lives as well as in the workplace is common to all the film protagonists. The young American journalist, Eve, observes the uncertainty of everyday life in Yugoslavia:

> *"It is so strange, I can't control the events. At one moment I think I'm leaving for Istanbul, at the next that I'm staying here and having a family."*

Janko faces serious problems in the hospital he works at – professional negligence reigns at all levels together with the disorganization and irresponsibility of the personnel; the hospital equipment is out of order, medical supplies are being stolen; the patients are made to wait while the absurd civil defence exercise is taking place on the premises.

> *"Ovo više nije bolnica. I niko nije kriv. Kad se dele viškovi onda su zasluge pojedinačne, a kad je krivica onda je ona kolektivna. E, kolektivno ćemo otici u tri lepe."[54]*

53. Denich, Bette: *Unmaking Multi-Ethnicity in Yugoslavia: Metamorphosis Observed*, Special Issue: War among the Yugoslavs, Anthropology of East Europe Review, Vol.11, Nos.1-2, 1993, p. 6.

54. *"This can't be called a hospital any more. And nobody is to blame. If it's about distributing surplus, then the merits are individual, but when we talk about*

While Janko is trying to stay attached to his job and prevent the world around him from falling apart, his best friend advises him:

Marko: " Ne glumi mučenika, nego počni da živiš. [...] Ti si pravi čovek, u pravo vreme, na pogrešnom mestu. Balkan ostaje Balkan. Idi za njom u Ameriku da radiš posao koji civilizovani ljudi umeju da cene, furaj nostalgiju i radi svoj posao.
Janko: Štos je u tome - pogrešno mesto učiniti pravim."[55]

The protagonists cope with the arising crisis in different ways. Going abroad seems attractive to Marko; he would like to "**see the world**" and **"witness the collapse of capitalism"**. Janko, however, chooses to stay in Yugoslavia at the expense of his happiness and career. The ways out of the crisis were being blocked including the one of being a Yugoslav.

Janko: "Sometimes I feel like a plant."
Eve: "Patriot?"
Janko: "Kind of."

Yugoslavs like Janko come from one of the five sources of Yugoslav self-determination identified by Sekulić, Hodson and Massey in the study ***Who were the Yugoslavs? Failed sources of a common identity in the former Yugoslavia*** based on survey data from 1985 and 1989.

"Urban residents, the young, those from nationally-mixed parentage, Communist Party members, and persons from minority nationalities in their republics were among those most likely to identify as Yugoslavs. None of these factors, however, proved sufficient to override the centrifugal forces of rising nationalism." [56]

responsibility, it's always collective. Well, that's exactly how we'll go to hell – collectively."

55.   "- Stop playing the martyr and get a life. [...] You're the right man, at the right time in the wrong place. The Balkans will always be as they are. Go with her to America, do your job for civilized people and they'll appreciate it, just wax nostalgia and do your job.- The point is to make the wrong place right."

56.   Sekulić, Massey, Hodson: "Who were the Yugoslavs? Failed sources of a

Marko perceives Yugoslavism as a uniqueness of the cultural diversity, as an exclusive advantage of his country:

Janko: "What I like about this country is this mixture; I couldn't live in America."

The perceptions that Yugoslavs and Americans had about each other, offers an interesting insight into their societies both going through the social crisis of the '80s:

Janko's: "[in America] half of the country is insane, and the other half is run by gangsters!"
Eva: "We are not perfect; but at least we're not a bunch of primitives, illiterates and snobs. [...] You can't even kill the president in this country. You have eight of them."

The protagonists seem to be trapped in the present time and forced to follow the elaborate channels of social communication. The moment of change had passed and nobody expected the revolutionary time to recur. The onetime rebels survived only to be pop-culture heroes. Instead of imagining the future, the protagonists prefer recalling the **bright** past. Marko remembers it with nostalgia:

"I like the '60s, The Beatles, power to the people, flower children... there was a kind of hope."

The film ends with an optimistic tone. An old woman, Janko's grandmother, offers encouraging words – life is not good or bad, life is a game. The true art is to play the game somewhere in between and never give up the struggle.

Despite specific individual features, the film makers of the Prague Group shared an affinity with the Czechoslovak tradition of the **author's film** of the late 1960s. The criticism they expressed was more an observation rather than an outburst of rage. Their approach

common identity in the former Yugoslavia" in *Conflicts and Tolerance*, Jesenski Turk and Hrvatsko sociolosko društvo, Zagreb, p. 1.

to social critique differs considerably from that of the Yugoslav *black wave* in the 1960s and appears as a natural outcome of the specific socio-political circumstances at that time.

> *"Nedostatak povijesne svijesti pogodovao je veličanju praške škole: oštrica Grlićevih filmova Bravo maestro i Samo jednom se ljubi doimala se tupom u odnosu na Zasedu Živojina Pavlovića, Okupacija u 26 slika bila je manje suptilna analiza rađanja ustaštva nego Kaja, ubit ću te! Vatroslava Mimice, Dušan Makavejev ipak je superiorniji modernist nego Kusturica i Karanović, a Markovićeva redateljska vještina manje je dojmljiva nego ona Branka Bauera. Ipak, Pražani su popunili prazninu u jugoslavenskoj kinematografiji u trenutku kada je ona gotovo izdahnula pod ideološkom stegom, a i na međunarodnoj sceni je prepoznata kao zanimljiv istočnoevropski fenomen. Barem to treba cijeniti!"*[57]

The film directors of the Prague Group are still active in film production. Goran Paskaljević finished his films *Optimisti (The Optimists)* in 2006 and *Medeni mesec (Honeymoons)* in 2009; Goran Marković, who was also dedicated to the theatre and documentary films, finished his films *Turneja* (*The Tour*) in 2008 and *Falsifikator* in 2013. Srđan Karanović's latest film *Sjaj u očima* (*Loving Glances*) was released in 2003 and was scheduled in the main competition for 60th Venice film festival. Lordan Zafranović is living in Belgrade after a decade spent abroad. Žilnik finished his film *Kenedi se* ženi in 2007 (*Kennedy is Getting Married*).

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57. *"The absence of a historical consciousness was favourable for the glorification of the Prague Group: the sharpness of the Grlić's film* Bravo maestro *and* The Melody Haunts my Memory *seems blunt in comparison with Pavlović's* Ambush*; the* Occupation in 26 tableau *is a less subtle analysis of the rise of Croatian nationalism than Mimica's film* Kaja, I'll kill you!*; Makavejev is a much superior modernist than Kusturica and Karanović, while Marković is less impressive as a director than Branko Bauer. However, the Prague guys filled in the gap in Yugoslav cinematography at the moment when it breathed its last under the weight of ideology, and on the international level it [the Prague Group] was recognized as an interesting East-European phenomenon. We should appreciate that!"* – Nenad Polimac at www.kulturaplus.com visited on 10 Jun 2007.

In 2006 the director Rajko Grlić gathered several film makers from ex-Yugoslav republics and together filmed *Border Post (Karaula)* (2006).[58] The film shows humorous moments in the lives of Yugoslavs bordering on tragedy – on the Yugoslav-Albanian check point before the outbreak of the war. The funds for this project were jointly invested by regional governments. The film was warmly received by audiences in Western Balkan countries which confirms the assumption that the ex-Yugoslav cultural space has not been destroyed. Moreover, it has become more active over the years thanks to the political stabilization and economic improvements in the region. Over the past decade, the films from former Yugoslav republics have had positive reception at international festivals. For example, Srdan Golubović's film *Klopka,* 2007 (The Trap), Stefan Arsenijević's *Ljubav i drugi zločini,* 2008 (*Love and Other Crimes*), Vinko Brešan's *Nije kraj, 2008* (*Will Not End Here*), *Rajko Grlić's Neka ostane medju nama*, 2010 (*Just Between Us*), Jasmila **Žbanić**'s *Na putu*, 2010 (*On the Path*) were warmly welcomed at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival, one of the most prestigious festivals in Central Eastern Europe.

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58. Rajko Grlić worked as the director, Ademir Kenović, Zoran Cvijanović as producers, Zoran Trninić as the director of photography, Sanja Ilić-composer, Andrija Zafranović-editor of the film.

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FILMS

Čuvar plaže u zimskom periodu *(Beach Guard in Winter) by* Goran Paskaljević, *1976*

Nacionalna klasa do 7865 cm (National Class up to 785 cm) by Goran Marković, 1979

Nešto između (Something in Between), by Srđan Karanović, 1983
Tako se kalio čelik, (How Steel Was Tempered), by Želimir Žilnik, 1988

Štefica Cvek u raljama života, *(Stefica Cvek in the Jaws of Life), by* Rajko Grlić, 1984

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