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# THE TIME OF TITO'S YUGOSLAVIA: KEY ISSUES BETWEEN 1945 AND 1980

**T**ito's Yugoslavia is another name for the so-called Second Yugoslavia, a state established during World War II as the successor of the First Yugoslavia. The Second Yugoslavia was also referred to as the AVNOJ Yugoslavia, as it was in fact created as a federally organised state at the session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in the end of November 1943. At that time this previously political body of the Yugoslav liberation movement assumed a governmental, authority role as a legislative body. Thus a government change – a revolution in the political and legal field – was carried out in Yugoslavia. The name refers to this state throughout its existence, until its dissolution in the end of 1991 (or 1992, as each of the independent national states, emerging from the former Yugoslav parts, sees the end of the Yugoslav state differently, from its own viewpoint). However, the collocation can also describe the state in the time when it was led by Josip Broz Tito (born in 1892, died in 1980). After Tito's death Yugoslavia persisted

for another decade. However, this period was characterised by an economic and political crisis, which was largely a consequence of the preceding time when he was still alive, controlling all the aspects of the state politics. After Tito's death the main characteristics, forming in the development of the Yugoslav state until that time, started accumulating, and due to the inability to address these issues they ultimately caused this state's end.

Several periods can be distinguished in the periodisation of the Second Yugoslavia (1943/45–1991/92). Usually the reasons for the transition from one period to another were political in nature, and the developments in the economy should also be understood as developments in a certain area of politics or as a consequence of political decisions. By all means, one of the possible turning points that characterised the Yugoslav state is the death of its President (leader with many political functions) Josip Broz–Tito. The course of events in Yugoslavia without Tito – after Tito – was different than before. It was the time of the “gradual death” of the state which Tito had represented in the world. This decline took place over slightly more than a decade, and in this time Tito's Yugoslavia went through a profound crisis of all the elements it consisted of and was characterised by. During Tito's lifetime Yugoslavia was different than after his death, regardless of the fact that it was the same state with all of the manifestations and characteristics that a state can have. Tito's era was the period of Yugoslav development, and the time after his death was the period of its decline.

## I

During World War II new authorities were established simultaneously with the resistance against the occupiers, who had divided the Yugoslav territory. This implied a political revolution. The new Yugoslav authorities, established by the resistance – the liberation movement – were headed by the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ), which passed the decision on the establishment of a federal state – in contrast with the centralist system of the First Yugoslavia. The First Yugoslavia refused to acknowledge the existence of different nations, and only recognised a single Yugoslav nation. The AVNOJ postponed the question of the government's form – whether Yugoslavia would be a monarchy or a republic – for the time after the war: the people would decide by voting at elections. During the war the political system and the so-called class-based social changes were not discussed, but they were planned for.

The takeover of power during the war was accepted and in fact recognised by the Western Allies as well, mostly due to the military efficiency of the Yugoslav

Partisans in the struggle against the common enemy – the Nazi Germany, even if the Allies were in principle reserved if not outright hostile towards the communists. When they assumed control after the war, the communists, on the basis of an agreement with the King's government, initially shared the power with the pre-war, so-called bourgeois politicians. This situation lasted only until the autumn of 1945, when these politicians assumed the role of the opposition. They refused to appear at the Constitutional Assembly elections, which had plebiscitary implications for the new authorities, also with regard to the issue of the form of government. The bourgeois politicians realised that the political struggle with the communists, appearing in the form of the People's Front organisation (which, apart from the communists, also included various political and ideological groups, sharing the values that the liberation movement had fought for during the war), was in fact unequal and lost for them. The government of Yugoslavia was taken over by the communists, who established a system of people's democracy, although with a different structure and character than in the countries liberated by the Red Army.

The essence of the Second Yugoslavia was declared by its official state names: as far as the form of government was concerned, it was a republic; according to state organisation it was a federal state, a federation; and it had a socialist political system. This system was initially "concealed" with the name "people's democracy", even though it was obviously a system led, if not completely dominated, by the communists. In view of the official name of the Yugoslav state, the emphasis was initially placed on the state organisation – the federal character – as an essential and internationally recognised achievement of the revolution that had been carried out. The political system or government representing this federation was in the second place. Thus the state was, in 1946, named the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FLRJ). Its federal character implied the recognition of the individual nations as well as the right of these nations to their own self-determination. The primary emphasis of the second official name for this state was its political system – socialism. It was called the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ, 1963). The second Yugoslav state was a combination of the national and class-related outlook of the Yugoslav communists.

The "national" principle of the state – its federal character – was also depicted in the state's coat-of-arms. Initially – until the 1963 Constitution – this coat-of-arms included five burning torches, representing the individual nations; and subsequently six torches, representing their national states. The federal units of the federal state were called "republics". In both versions of the coat-of-arms the flames of the individual torches merged into a single flame on the top.

## II

With the end of the war the new state authorities started consolidating their position in all the aspects of life. The so-called second stage of the revolution began. It was class-oriented in character, and its intention was to provide the foundations for the communist rule. The revolution was implemented in an evolutionary manner.

The first essential change in the political field took place on 29 November 1945. On this day the Constitutional Assembly, elected at the elections on 11 November with the victory of the People's Front, declared a new form of government in Yugoslavia: a republic. The elections and the declaration of the republic were also acknowledged by the Western superpowers, which were otherwise quite reserved towards and critical of the new authorities and the new form of government. Two months later, on 31 January 1946, the Constitutional Assembly adopted the Constitution of the FLRJ. During the drafting of this Constitution minor disputes, especially between the Slovenian and Serbian members of the Assembly, were noticeable with regard to the change of the state organisation, its federal character, and thus the resolution of the national question. The disputes involved the interpretation of the principle of the nations' right to self-determination.<sup>582</sup>

Apart from the changes in the political arena the communists also addressed the economy as the essential condition for the strengthening of their political power, adapting it to the ideological outlooks of the new authorities. These adaptations involved the nationalisation of private property. The process took on various forms,<sup>583</sup> and the nationalisation of the assets of the Germans who had been Yugoslav citizens before the war was especially significant for the state. The expropriation of these Germans and people who had opposed the liberation movement during the war was referred to as "patriotic nationalisation", on the basis of the so-called patriotic motives. Primarily this nationalisation was not carried out due to class reasons, but as punishment for opposing the liberation movement. On the basis of "patriotic nationalisation", until the end of 1946 the majority of large economic undertakings became the property of the state. This form of nationalisation was followed by the "frontal", class-based "attack" against private property. The process was called nationalisation, as the foreign capital was

582 Aleš Gabrič: Nacionalno vprašanje v Jugoslaviji v prvem povojnem obdobju = The national question in Yugoslavia in the immediate postwar period. In: Jasna Fischer et al. (eds.), *Jugoslavija v hladni vojni. Zbornik z znanstvenega posveta Jugoslavija v hladni vojni, Ljubljana, 8.–9. maja 2000 = Yugoslavia in the cold war. The collection of papers at the Scientific Conference Yugoslavia in the Cold War, Ljubljana, 8–9 May 2000*. Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino and Toronto: University = Ljubljana: Institute for Contemporary History and Toronto: University, 2004, pp. 403–424, 425–448.

583 For more information about the processes of nationalisation see Jože Prinčič: *Povojne nacionalizacije v Sloveniji 1945–1963* [Post-war Nationalisations in Slovenia 1945–1963]. Novo mesto, 1994.

the first to be nationalised by the state. It took place in two stages. The first stage involved primarily the nationalisation of the considerable capital of the owners from the Allied and neutral states. At the second stage, in 1948,<sup>584</sup> the property of Yugoslav citizens was nationalised as well. At that point all economic property became state-owned.

### III

The essential political changes that consolidated the new authorities were carried out until the beginning of 1947. The 1946 Constitution of the Yugoslav state was, in many aspects, modelled after *the 1936 Soviet Constitution, also known as the Stalin Constitution*. Subsequently all the federal units of the federal Yugoslav state adopted their own constitutions as well. However, these were only “transcripts” of the Yugoslav Constitution. A year after the adoption of the Yugoslav Constitution, the Slovenian Constitutional Assembly adopted the Constitution of the People's Republic of Slovenia. Thus the new position of Slovenia in the Yugoslav state was confirmed and implemented. According to this Constitution Slovenia had a sovereign state authority in its territory, and it transferred the rights set out by the Yugoslav Constitution to the federal state. The powers of the federal – central – authorities were considerable. In practice the federal principle was subordinated to administrative centralism. The federal character manifested itself as a partial administrative autonomy of the individual republics.

According to the principle of the federal system of the Yugoslav state, the Republic of Slovenia, like all the other republics, had its own legislative body, the Assembly, its own government, as well as its own national communist organisation, which had been established in 1937. However, despite all of the Slovenian bodies of state authority the most important politics was created and managed in Belgrade, in accordance with revolutionary statism and centralism. Slovenia only enjoyed considerable independence in the field of culture and education, as no federal ministries existed for these areas. In this sense the nations were independent, while the central authorities or the federal ministries were in charge of all other aspects of the functioning of the state and the lives of the Yugoslav citizens. In the first post-war period the opposition between the federal principle and centralist practice did not appear to be problematic. However, this became an issue during the subsequent development of the Yugoslav political system, as this development was based on self-management and the Marxist idea

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584 *Uradni list Federativne ljudske republike*, No. 98–677, 6 December 1946.

about the decline of the state and the principle of sharing the so-called products of labour: that those who produce something should benefit from the economic results of their labour. The opposition between federalism, which emphasised a greater role of the republics in the decisions about their own development policies on the basis of what they produce, and centralism became the source of political disputes in Yugoslavia. The Slovenian politics supported federalism.

The issue of federalism resulted in the division into economically developed and underdeveloped republics. The economically-developed republics (Slovenia, Croatia), which argued in favour of federalism, produced more and invested (or could have invested) into their own development. On the other hand, the underdeveloped republics supported centralism, as they benefitted from the central political allocation of resources for their own development, which they were otherwise unable to produce on their own.

Immediately after the war the centralism of state administration was substantiated as an urgent measure in order to ensure the much-needed restoration and development. It was outlined in the sense of the Soviet planned economy, i.e. as a five-year plan. Such a plan could only be centralised and managed administratively. The “Soviet” model of centralism remained in force until the beginning of the 1950s, when the so-called Cominform dispute caused Yugoslavia to start searching for its own version of socialism. Such a version was found in self-management and embodied in the so-called 4D process: destatisation, debureaucratisation, decentralisation, and democratisation. Despite its good intentions, this comprehensive process was not very successful. The statism practice, connected with bureaucratisation and centralism, remained largely the same as before. Apart from the conviction that centralism was a precondition for a strong state, one of the key reasons for it was also the modelling after the organisation of the ruling (sole) political party, the Communist Party. The Party was strictly centralist in terms of its organisation and leadership. While the state was continuously federalised and ultimately turned into a federal state (according to its name rather than anything else: in reality it was much more like a union of states), the Communist Party remained centralised. The reason for this was the conviction that the Party and the working class this Party (supposedly) represented were the main substance of the state, which called for the centralism of its decision-making process.

Centralism with a prominent role of state administration, the so-called statism, was all-powerful until the middle of the 1950s. At that time the “struggle” for the reduction of administrative centralism and the strengthened position and role of the republics in relation to the federal state authorities began due to the orientation towards diminishing the role and power of the state and its

administration. The political struggle between centralism and federalism, which became evident at the end of the 1950s, characterised the political developments in Yugoslavia until its very end. In fact, the demise of Yugoslavia occurred primarily due to the differences in the understanding of centralism and federalism as well as the basic conditions of federalism: recognition of the right to the self-determination of nations.

In Yugoslavia the implementation of a new political system, the so-called people's democracy – a blend of the communist system and certain characteristics of a parliamentary democracy, including the multi-party system – began towards the end of the war. Unlike the countries liberated by the Soviet Army, in Yugoslavia the Communist Party had already assumed all of the political power during the struggle for the liberation of the state. In other people's democracies, where the revolution had not been carried out under the communist leadership, the process of the communist domination was somewhat slower and dictated from Moscow. Another aspect, important for the power of the Yugoslav Communist Party, was also the fact that it was pan-Yugoslav and that the independence of the national Communist Parties was limited: they were integral parts of the uniformly organised Yugoslav Party. In the political life the Communist Party, which was not even officially registered in line with the legislation authored by the communists themselves, appeared as the People's Front until the summer of 1948. Despite this mimicry, Yugoslavia was a so-called Party state. The Party leadership equalled the state leadership. In terms of personnel, the Party and governmental functions went hand in hand at all levels of the government. The state organisation largely resembled the organisation of the Communist Party, and the decisions of the Communist Party were critically important for the state government.

#### IV

The Cominform dispute in 1948 was profoundly significant for the contemporaneous events as well as for the further Yugoslav development. It began as criticism "between comrades", with Stalin criticising the Yugoslav Party and state leadership as well as their policies, which were supposedly incorrect in the Marxist-Leninist sense. This was something that Tito and his associates did not accept. Due to Stalin's conviction that the Yugoslav leaders should subordinate themselves to him, which was something that the Yugoslav leaders were not prepared to do, the dispute between the Soviet and Yugoslav Party and state leadership attained a broader dimension, as Stalin spread this dispute to the whole of his political bloc. The countries under Stalin's leadership became hostile

towards Yugoslavia, and due to their military threat Yugoslavia started turning towards the West in terms of military equipment and technology. It left the Soviet Bloc, but did not enter the Western Bloc due to its political orientation. However, because of its resistance against Stalin it was seen favourably by the West.

The ideological disagreement with Stalin's Cominform reproaches caused the Yugoslav political leadership to look for a form of socialism, different from the Stalin's model. The ideological disagreement with the other Communist Parties and the resulting search for an original form of socialism led to the introduction of workers' self-management. Swiftly – in just a few years – this model, implemented as worker's self-management in June 1950, became the foundation of the Yugoslav political system. After the initial enthusiasm, as the worker's self-management was an alternative to Stalin's model of socialism, its implementation became subject to disapproval. It turned out that the abandonment of the previous practices (especially centralism and the introduction of different relations between the republics and the federal government on the basis of the principle of payment according to one's work or managing the results of one's labour) called for changes. The opponents of self-management believed that this model may have demonstrated that socialism could be different from the Soviet system, but that in light of the normalisation of the relations with the Soviet Union after Stalin's death it was no longer necessary as a political tool for foreign affairs. Those who believed this were also convinced that self-management was inefficient in comparison with the previous socialist system, which emphasised the power of the state and its central authorities.

The political developments in Yugoslavia in the middle of the 1950s were strongly influenced by the aspirations for national unitarianism, calling for the denial of the certain rights of the nations or suggesting that these rights should no longer be paid much attention to. This gave rise to the so-called national question or the question of the existence of the nations as an essential condition for the Yugoslav federalism as well as to the question of the existence of the republics as national states. The opening of such questions resulted in the emphases that differences existed between the Yugoslav nations, caused by the differences in their development. The issue of upgrading the self-management model at the local and state level also arose, as self-management transcended the factories and was no longer merely a matter of the workers. To a considerable degree, these developments had the character of Pandora's box, influencing the further Yugoslav development.



## V

The beginning of the 1950s in Yugoslavia was marked by the formation of the self-management version of socialism. Political changes were carried out,<sup>585</sup> also with regard to the Communist Party. At its 6<sup>th</sup> Congress in November 1952 the Communist Party was renamed as the League of Communists (LCY = ZKJ). The name came from Marx's organisation of communists of 1847. According to the Yugoslav Party leaders the League of Communists was not a political party, but rather an association of politically and ideologically likeminded people, which only steered and led the country with its ideas, "by convincing others".<sup>586</sup> Such a role and position of the Communist Party only remained on paper, while in practice the League of Communists was a classic ruling Communist Party. Due to the various interpretations of the new role of the Communist Party, disagreements occurred in the top-level Yugoslav Party leadership. When the People's Front was renamed as well – it became the Socialist Alliance of Working People (SAWP = SZDL) – one of the Party ideologists, Milovan Djilas, saw this as an opportunity for political "pluralism" (the multi-party system may have been allowed by law, but it was unwanted in practice). The Socialist Alliance of Working People would supposedly take the place previously occupied by the Party in the government, while the Party would actually become the leading ideological force. The so-called first Party liberalism was formed. Since Djilas, due to such considerations, questioned the untouchable nature of the Party, as he rejected the "Leninist" principle of the Communist Party (which was what the League of Communists remained, despite the declarative changes), he was "removed" from the Party and state leadership. Initially he became "politically retired". However, because he criticised the policy of his former comrades, he was sentenced to several years in prison.

In the political field, in the beginning of 1953 the constitution was changed as well. A Constitutional Act was adopted, but due to the introduction of self-management into the constitutional system it contained so many amendments it was in fact a new constitution. Self-management became the political foundation of the state system. The new constitution was more class-oriented. It referred to socialism instead of people's democracy, and the assembly of producers was introduced into the legislative bodies at all levels. Less attention was paid to the federal nature of the state organisation. The authors of the Constitutional Act

585 See Mateja Režek: *Med resničnostjo in iluzijo. Slovenska in jugoslovanska politika v desetletju po sporu z Informbirojem* [Between Reality and Illusion. Slovenian and Yugoslav Politics in the Decade after the Cominform Conflict (1948–1958)]. Ljubljana, 2005.

586 Resolucija VI. kongresa Zveze komunistov Jugoslavije [Resolution of the VI Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia]. In: *Borba komunistov Jugoslavije za socialistično demokracijo* [The Struggle of the Communists of Yugoslavia for Social Democracy]. Ljubljana, 1952, p. 293.

referred to the united Yugoslav working class, which hinted at the possibility of national unitarianism and centralism. Placing the emphasis on the class for the purpose of self-management stirred awake the sleeping volcano: the national question. Due to the class aspect, the “common Yugoslav awareness” would supposedly be formed, pushing out the national aspect. Centralism as well as national unitarianism was a very tempting possibility for some, especially the Serbs. Such reasoning soon brought up the question of the role and position of the republics in the federation. At the same time, in view of the divergent economic development and economic situation, the question of the relations between the republics arose. It manifested itself through the relations between the developed and underdeveloped: in the issue of who benefitted more from the federation and who exploited whom in the economic sense. Because of the dissimilar outlooks on the role of the Yugoslav “centre”, the conflicts also became evident in the Yugoslav party-state leadership. Some of the Party leaders argued for the enhancement of self-management and decentralisation (among them Edvard Kardelj, the leading Slovenian politician in the Yugoslav Party and state leadership, author of constitutions and Party ideologist); while others argued for a stronger central authority and integration in all aspects (this opinion was represented by the Serbian politician Aleksandar Ranković, Party organisational secretary and head of the political police). The President of the State and General Secretary of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz-Tito, leaned towards the centralist side. Two blocs formed: the federalists and centralists, or the developed and underdeveloped. This situation persisted until the very end of Yugoslavia and was one of the key reasons for its demise.

Self-management was another generator of the national question. In 1955 the so-called communal system was introduced, bestowing not only administrative, but also political jurisdictions on the local communities (municipalities as the smallest administrative units). The communes were to assume certain functions of the state, and would function as the means for the “withering of the state”. Those who wanted to overcome the division of Yugoslavia into national republics saw the communes as a possibility for the abolishment of the national republics and transformation of Yugoslavia into a “federation” of communes. According to them, in this way the national principle of the federation would be abolished, allowing for the fusion into unitarian Yugoslavism. Certain hints with regard to the abolishment of the national republics were also stated at the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in April 1958. Kardelj stood up against such way of thinking and argued for the preservation of the national or republican principle of the Yugoslav federation. At the same time he resolutely rejected the Slovenian national egoism.

Different views were also apparent in the political evaluation of the so-called Trbovlje Strike. At the beginning of 1958 the miners of the largest coal mines in Slovenia went on strike (the first acknowledged workers' strike in Yugoslavia after World War II). The main reason were the inadequate salaries, resulting from the difference between the centrally dictated price of coal and costs of extracting coal in the Slovenian coal mines. Here the costs were higher than in the other Yugoslav coal mines. The miners blamed the Belgrade authorities for their meagre salaries. However, despite these social foundations, the strike was a political demonstration against the administrative management of the economic system and expression of the sentiment that Slovenia was economically neglected. The political evaluation of the strike in the Yugoslav Party leadership opened a discussion about the relations between the republics and the federation as well as about the mutual relations of the republics. This issue became a permanent feature of the Yugoslav domestic policy.

## VI

In the 1960s Yugoslavia found itself in an awkward political and economic situation, as the rapid economic development in the 1950s was followed by an economic standstill in the beginning of the 1960s. This stagnation encouraged the economic reform of 1961<sup>587</sup> as well as intensified and enhanced the opposition between the developed and underdeveloped republics. In Slovenia the Party leadership approved of the reform, which intervened especially in the foreign currency and foreign trade system. It saw the reform as an “exceedingly positive direction for Slovenia as the most developed republic”.<sup>588</sup> In the other republics, except for Croatia, the efforts to ensure economic progress were not met with approval. In the beginning of 1962 the aspirations of the federal authorities for greater centralisation re-emerged. Tito was favourably inclined towards a more prominent centralism as well: he saw decentralisation as a “sign of the disintegration of the state”.<sup>589</sup>

In the state and Party leadership, disagreements about the relations between the republics were caused by the different outlooks on the role of the federal government, the republics, and the development of self-management as a way of diminishing the importance of the central state authorities. This, along with poor economic management, was the reason for the convening of the three-day session

587 See Jože Prinčič: *V začaranem krogu. Slovensko gospodarstvo od nove ekonomske politike do velike reforme 1955–1970* [Vicious Circle. Slovenian Economy from the New Economic Policy to the Great Reform 1955–1970]. Ljubljana, 1999.

588 SI AS 1589, box 15, Stenogramski zapisnik seje IK CK ZKS, 20 September 1960.

589 *Početak kraja SFRJ. Stenogram i drugi prateći dokumenti proširene sednice IK CK SKJ održane od 14. do 16. marta 1962. godine*. Belgrade, 1998, p. 32.

of the Party leadership in the middle of March 1962. At this session Kardelj was especially criticised because he argued for federalism and self-management; nevertheless, he was supported by the Slovenian political leadership. The session failed to appease the disagreements, but it announced a stricter policy. The political “battle” at the time was won by the centralists, which was also evident from the constitution, adopted in April 1963. This constitution, also called The Self-Management Charter, defined self-management constitutionally. The state got a new name, clearly pointing out the socialist orientation of Yugoslavia (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), while a step back was taken with regard to its federalism and the rights of the nations in the Yugoslav federation.

In 1964 Tito’s position with regard to the relations between the nations changed, as he no longer supported the centralists. Unexpectedly, Tito placed the main emphasis in his speech at the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in December 1964 on the national question, which had not been the focus of much political attention after the end of the war due to the conviction that federalism had solved this issue. Much more – and in greater detail – was also said about the urgently needed reform of the federation. Kardelj spoke about this at the session of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (IK CK ZKJ) in November 1965 and suggested that the Yugoslav federation should be reformed by increasing the role of the republics. In November 1965 he proposed the complete sovereignty of the republics, while the federal government would only have the role of a technical instrument. He referred to socialism and the Party as the main cohesive forces in Yugoslavia.<sup>590</sup> The power of centralism and the centralists waned. This also became evident in the middle of 1966, when the second most important man in Yugoslavia, Vice President of the State Aleksander Ranković, was removed from the political life. The reason for his removal was his advocacy of centralism as well as his far too obvious ambition to succeed Tito. This was the “struggle” for Tito’s legacy. The reason and means for Ranković’s removal from the political life were the accusations that the political police under his control eavesdropped on Tito’s conversations, even wiretapping his private premises. Ranković’s “decline” had a significant long-term influence on the further development of the political relations in the Yugoslav state. The political police – State Security Administration, popularly referred to as UDBA (Serbien: Uprava državne bezbednosti = UDB) – lost some of its political power, while the power of the Army and the military leadership, most loyal to Tito, started to increase. The consequences were also apparent in the state organisation. Only four years after its adoption, the constitution was amended.

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590 SI AS 1589, box 54.

Meanwhile, a thorough economic reform was implemented in 1965, but it was unsuccessful and dwindled to nothing after a few years without yielding any concrete and long-term results. However, the reform of the state organisation began. The Yugoslav federation was “federalised” as the jurisdictions of the republics increased. In the end of 1968 a few amendments were made to the Yugoslav constitution. These constitutional amendments primarily altered the structure and powers of the Federal Assembly as well as more precisely defined the autonomous provinces in the context of Serbia: Vojvodina and Kosovo. The Assembly of Nations – consisting of an equal number of deputies from each of the republics and half as many deputies from the two autonomous provinces – was introduced in the Federal Assembly. Thus outvoting on the basis of the republican adherence of the deputies would be prevented. In the middle of 1971, 23 additional amendments to the SFRJ Constitution, thus 42 altogether, were adopted, which means that the Constitution was thoroughly changed. The constitutional amendments also largely solved the crisis of federalism, which had been apparent already since the beginning of the 1960s and had also not been addressed by the 1963 Constitution. These federal amendments redefined the Yugoslav federation. Both autonomous provinces in the context of Serbia became constituent parts of the federal state. Republics were defined as “states, founded on the sovereignty of the nations”, which was an expression of a greater independence of the republics and their position in the federal state.<sup>591</sup> The federal government lost some powers, including their control of the tax, financial and investment policies. The presidency of the state was introduced as a collective authority, tasked with representing Yugoslavia at home and abroad. The purpose of such a solution was to prevent an open competition between the potential successors to Tito. All republics and autonomous provinces were equally represented in the presidency through their own members. Apart from the amendments defining the Yugoslav federal state and its organisation, the so-called workers’ amendments expanded the self-management aspects.

## VII

Simultaneously with the reform processes in the field of the state economy and organisation, ideas on the necessity of liberalisation, also in the political arena, started developing and strengthening after the middle of the 1960s. Most demands for the liberalisation of the relations in the Yugoslav state and

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<sup>591</sup> *Uradni list Socialistične federativne republike Jugoslavije*, No. 29–71, 8 July 1971; amendment XX, section 3.

society stemmed from the much-needed changes in the economy, especially the requirement for the greater role of the market and introduction of the market-planned economy, which, in turn, called for changes of the political system. It was supposed to become more democratic, and the political power was to be decentralised, thus ensuring the increased role of the republics. Party liberalism<sup>592</sup> appeared in each of the Yugoslav republics and had various characteristics, depending on the particular local situation. All “liberals” shared a critical outlook on the contemporaneous way of thinking and leadership as well as on the position of the League of Communists in the state and society. Changes were demanded even with regard to this essential aspect of the Yugoslav state.

It was characteristic for “liberalism” that its advocates did not wish to change the political system of socialist self-management, but rather address the way in which it operated. They argued for a stricter separation between the Party and the state as well as for more democracy within the Party itself. They believed that the criticism of certain elements of Party activities would also ensure a reform of the political and economic regime. As far as the relations between the Yugoslav nations and the organisation of the federal state were concerned, “liberalism” especially underlined the importance of a greater independence of the republics. The “liberals” understood the relationship with the federation as a greater independence of the republics, especially in the field of investments. With certain investments – the so-called participation fees – the republics themselves would finance the necessary activities of the federal state, without the federal government specifying what and where they should invest. The republics were supposed to have more influence and freedom with regard to their own development.

The central figure of “liberalism” in Slovenia was Stane Kavčič, President of the Slovenian Executive Committee – Slovene government. In Slovenia, the main ideas about the urgency of liberalisation – not only of the Party, but, even more so, of the political and economic life – were created among the younger generation of social sciences experts. Kavčič and his associates argued for a swifter development of the service and energy industry in the economy, as well as for the introduction of other forms of ownership apart from the predominantly social property, for example shareholding. Furthermore, they wanted to ensure an improved functioning of the so-called market economy and emphasised the importance of establishing connections between the Slovenian economy and the neighbouring and West European countries.

Slovenian “liberalism”, its economic and political views as well as its understanding of the relations between the republics and the state centre became most obvious during the so-called Road Affair in the summer of 1969. The “Road

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592 See Božo Repe: *“Liberalizem” v Sloveniji* [“Liberalism” in Slovenia]. Ljubljana, 1992.

Affair” was the clearest manifestation of the aspirations for the “liberalisation” of the relations in the Yugoslav state and the Slovenian society. This was an open resistance of Slovenia and its government against the federation or the Yugoslav government. The affair broke out in the end of July 1969 as a reaction to a decision of the Yugoslav government that Slovenia disagreed with. As it happened, the Yugoslav government (with Mitja Ribičič, a Slovenian, as its President) did not allocate the loan from the International Bank for Development, intended for the construction of motorways in Yugoslavia, to the construction of a motorway in Slovenia. When the Slovenian government found out about this decision – not even officially, but rather from a short news agency item in the newspapers – a political “storm” broke out in Slovenia, despite the summer and holidays. Not only the Slovenian state and Party leadership, but also the people responded to the decision of the Yugoslav government. Their reaction was emotional, critical of the central authorities as well as of the Yugoslav state in general. Individual posters appeared, even calling for an independent Slovenia. Demands were made that Slovenian deputies in the Federal Assembly should “consider the possibility of resignation or questioning their further confidence in the Federal Executive Committee in case of extreme lack of understanding”.<sup>593</sup> The President of the Yugoslav Government Ribičič saw the reaction of the Slovenian government to the decision of the Yugoslav government as a referendum for the republic versus federation.<sup>594</sup>

In the Yugoslav political circles the Slovenian reaction was characterised as a nationalistic phenomenon, threatening the Yugoslav unity. Therefore the federal Party leadership called for a session on Brijuni islands (where Tito had one of his residence) and invited the Slovenian Party leadership. Tito reproached the Slovenian government with undermining the homogenous and monolithic nature of the state by opposing the federal government. He threatened to implement non-democratic measures against Slovenia.<sup>595</sup>

The way the Party handled the “Road Affair” caused a conflict in the Slovenian political leadership between the liberally-oriented state authorities and the conservative Party leadership. Despite the significant popularity of the “liberals” among the people, the hard-line side of the Party took the initiative. In this political conflict, “liberalism” was defeated.

The political offensive against “liberalism” at the Yugoslav level began in the end of 1971, when the Croatian “liberals” were removed politically, and reached its peak in the autumn of 1972 with the removal of the “liberals” in Slovenia and Serbia. In the end of September 1972, Tito sent a letter to the members of the

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593 SI AS 223, 34–37/66.

594 SI AS 1589, 5, Zapisnik 16. seje IB P CK ZKJ, 7 August 1969.

595 Ibid.

League of Communists of Yugoslavia, warning them that due to “liberalism” the very fate of socialism in Yugoslavia was at stake. Therefore the communists – whom he characterised as soldiers of the revolution – should strengthen their activities. He called upon them to defend socialism without the changes that the “liberals” argued for. Those who did not agree with this completely would get in trouble. Thus a political reorientation towards the left was carried out, a sort of a pseudo-revolution. The class aspects became increasingly important. The Party monopoly was restored and the Yugoslav society endured the “proletarianisation” in all areas, with the emphasis on the political system of socialist self-management. The period of a significant ideological as well as practical pressure of the League of Communists against the society began. This was the time of “neo-Stalinism”,<sup>596</sup> in Slovenia later referred to as the “leaden times”.

In Slovenia the time of “liberalism”, lasting for well over five years, ended with the politically enforced resignation of the President of the Slovenian Government Kavčič in the beginning of November 1972.

## VIII

The increasing class tensions were noticeable in all aspects of the political or social life. The restriction of the already achieved level of democratisation and freedoms intensified as well. The Party carried out a “purge”, and the political cleansing spread to the fields of culture, science, and even economy. Many leading economists who wanted to enhance the functioning of the so-called free market had to leave their positions. The already attained level of political debates was reduced as the courts once again started sanctioning any critical deliberations more severely. The oppression of “liberalism” and “the liberals” also took place at the Yugoslav universities, especially in Zagreb and Belgrade. At the Belgrade University some critics even received prison sentences. In Slovenia, four professors at the Faculty of Sociology, Politology and Journalism (now Faculty of Social Sciences) were accused of failing to lecture in the spirit of Marxism. They were not imprisoned, but they were forbidden from working with students.

In February 1974 a new constitution of the SFRJ was adopted, and all of the republics adopted their own constitutions as well. The 1974 Constitution – one of the longest in the world with its 406 articles – had a twofold character. On one hand it strengthened the federal nature of the state to such a degree that the critics of the constitutional system at the time (most of them were Serbian politicians)

<sup>596</sup> Jože Pirjevec: *Jugoslavija 1918–1992. Nastanek, razvoj ter razpad Karadjordjevićeve in Titove Jugoslavije* [Yugoslavia 1918–1992. Establishment, Development and Dissolution of Karadjordjević and Tito's Yugoslavia]. Koper, 1995, pp. 334–335.



believed that this Constitution introduced a confederate Yugoslavia. Because the republics became states in the constitutional sense, supposedly Yugoslavia was no longer a federal state, but rather a union of states. On the other hand the new Constitution intensified the class-based elements of the Yugoslav society and state. Its main purpose was to address the question of classes in the Yugoslav society, as the class relations – the single Yugoslav working class – were supposedly the assurance for the state community, its unity and its existence in general. Therefore the Constitution placed considerable emphasis on self-management and the so-called associated labour, which was the name for the integration of “free producers” (the working class) at all levels – from labour organisation to the state level. The so-called delegate system was introduced with the aim of ensuring that the representative bodies did not consist of elected professionals, or permanent Members of the Assembly. This would supposedly de-professionalise politics and “hand it over” to the citizens. Classic elections were abolished due to the conviction that they resembled parliamentary elections too closely. In the delegate system everything was based on elected delegates, who then went on to elect (from their own ranks) the delegates for the “higher” levels, up to the Federal Assembly. The delegate of delegates was “at the top”. In the second half of the 1970s, when the delegate system became fully functional, around 200,000 people in Slovenia – more than one tenth of the population or every fourth employee – were involved in delegations at various levels. The functioning of the delegate Assembly system turned out to be complicated, expensive, as well as inefficient. In practice it became apparent that the decisions, adopted by the delegates, were, as a rule, first agreed upon in the League of Communists. The new Constitution in fact represented a victory of the conservative forces in the Yugoslav state and Party leadership. The “federalisation” of the federation was seen as confederalisation in Serbia, for example. It is also what the Serbian national ideologue, writer Dobrica Ćosić, thought already in 1962, when he saw self-management and the enhancement of federalism by increasing the role and position of the republics in comparison with the “centre” as the disintegration of Yugoslavia.<sup>597</sup> The process was especially the result of the reform developments in the 1960s, expressed in the constitutional amendments of 1971 and then in the 1974 Constitution. These very changes became the focus of criticism and aspirations for changes in the time after Tito's death, when the agony of the Yugoslav federal state began.

The Constitution was especially criticised by those who believed it established an excessively loose state organisation. The Yugoslav state in fact became a union of six or eight states, as the autonomous provinces in the context of Serbia had

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597 Dobrica Ćosić: *Piščevi zapisi (1951–1968)*. Belgrade, 2001, p. 222.

virtually the same position as the republics. The Constitution was criticised most resolutely in Serbia, and the military leadership did not support it either. The military was troubled especially because the Constitution provided for the Territorial Defence as a part of the Yugoslav forces, organised in the individual republics and answering to the republican political leaderships. In the opinion of the military leadership this paved the way for the emergence of republican armies.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was convened soon after the adoption of the Constitution, in order to demonstrate the significance and power of the Communist Party. Its importance and political power was not only declarative: it was real. The new Constitution ensured the Party monopoly, and in practice the Party started acting as an all-powerful ruling force. This suited the Party conservatives and the Party leader Tito among them, because they were not completely convinced that the decision at the end of 1952 – that the League of Communists was no longer the leading governmental, but only ideological force – was correct. In view of the number of its members, the “power” of the Communist Party increased, also objectively. When the Party clearly announced its monopoly, the number of its members increased radically. In the end of 1974 the League of Communists of Yugoslavia had 1,192,466 members<sup>598</sup> – slightly less than 6 % of all citizens. This was caused by the fact that Party membership ensured a better chance of social success and represented a means for opportunism and careerism.

Meanwhile, any disagreement with the Party monopoly about the life in Yugoslavia was more or less surreptitious. Organised opposition did not exist, even though the political police registered various groups, supposedly critical of the “regime”. The number of people convicted of political offences was small, due to the policy of an iron fist in a velvet glove.<sup>599</sup>

Furthermore, the wind of “proletarianisation” could be felt during the 1970s in the field of politics and culture, and as far as the living standard of the Yugoslav citizens was concerned, this was a time of prosperity and well-being. Mass consumerism was encouraged by the favourable economic situation, largely made possible by foreign loans, as well as by the fact that the borders were open for the citizens and their travels abroad. However, excessive foreign borrowing resulted in the economic crisis that Yugoslavia had to face soon after the death of President Tito.

Tito died on 4 May 1980 in Ljubljana. With his passing the “death throes” of Yugoslavia that he had created and represented began as well. Soon all of the problems stemming from the whole post-war period – in the field of economy as

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<sup>598</sup> *Zgodovina Zveze komunistov Jugoslavije*, p. 393.

<sup>599</sup> Pirjevec, *Jugoslavija 1918–1992*, p. 351.

well as politics – revealed themselves. The relations between the Yugoslav nations and their republics – that is, federalism as one of the essential achievements if not the mainstay of Tito's rule – were especially problematic.

After Tito's death a new period began in Yugoslavia – a decade of crises in all the areas: from the economy and the increasing austerity to politics and the constant “disputes and conflicts” with regard to what Yugoslavia should be like, whose opinion would prevail, who would lead it, and who would shape it in accordance with their “national” aspirations. This was the time of the struggle to change everything that had been “holy”, the time of transforming Yugoslavia into some other, different state. The process ended with its disintegration.

