UDK 328.123(497.4)"1945"

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Opposition in Slovenia in 1945

The attitude of the Slovenes towards the communist regime which rose to power in 1945 has been a subject of numerous and conflicting assessments. Over the years, certain 'historical' stereotypes have developed, without being substantiated with specific data or analyses. While black and white characterisation is not something peculiar to the Slovene appraisal of the recent past, it is somehow curious that this open issue has received no critical historiographic analysis for a such long time. As a result, two opposing stereotypes have prevailed among the public, according to individual beliefs and political orientation.

The first was formed soon after the Second World War by the leading communist ideologists. As its 'source', the following words pronounced by Josip Broz-Tito before the elections for the Constituent Assembly, held on 11 November 1945, have frequently been quoted: 'In Serbia, the opposition mainly relies on the remaining supporters of Milan Nedić and Draža Mihailović. (...) The opposition in Croatia relies on the Ustaša who shout today, 'Long live the king!' (...) In Slovenia, it relies on the remnants of the Bela garda (White Guard).'[1] Others similarly claimed that the political opinions of the regime's opponents were formed under the influence of 'foreign powers'. In public statements, rather than referring to their political adversaries as 'opposition', they usually branded them as paid western spies and the remnants of those 'anti-popular forces' who were responsible for the catastrophe that befell the first Yugoslavia in April 1941.

A typical example of such reasoning were the words of Boris Kraigher, the Slovene Interior Minister, at a session of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Slovenia in June 1947. In reference to the so-called Nagode trial, he pointed out that the trial 'should be seen as a strike at the political centre, i.e. the bourgeoisie, and characterised as anti-state espionage.' Following his proposal, the Politburo decided that 'by means of this trial and through political activity, they should clearly present this group as a handful of spies and class enemies, paid by foreigners, whose activity is devoid of any political contents or basis.'[2]

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[1] Josip Broz Tito: *Graditev nove Jugoslavije* [Building of the new Yugoslavia]. Prva knjiga. Ljubljana 1948, p. 153.

[2] *Zapisniki politbiroja CK KPS/ZKS 1945–1954* [Minutes of the Political Bureau of the Central

Stereotype based on such assessments can be found in the book *Zgodovina Slovencev (History of Slovenes)* from 1979, which only marginally mentions the attitude of the Slovene population towards the new political reality of 1945. As evidence of overwhelming popular support for the new regime, also claimed by leading communists in 1945, the official election results were presented. The only reference to the opposition is that, due to its impotence, 'it has chosen the path of abstinence, intrigue and false propaganda, both at home and abroad.'[3]

A totally opposite view regarding the opponents of the new regime of 1945 emerged in the 1980's and strengthened in the 1990's, after the fall of the communist regime in Slovenia. It was based on the hypotheses of a strong opposition which had been wiped off the face of the earth only by the terror of the political police of the communist regime. Such hypotheses, however, found no backing in the contemporaneous historiographic analyses. The first in-depth analysis of the political opposition in Yugoslavia in 1945 was made by Vojislav Koštunica and Kosta Čavoški in their monograph Stranački pluralizam ili monizam *(Party Pluralism or Monism)* published in 1983 in Belgrade. The authors, however, dealt mainly with Serbia, scarcely mentioning Slovenia.[4] The first work on the political opposition in Slovenia was *Oblast in opozicija v Sloveniji (The Regime and Opposition in Slovenia)*,[5] written by Peter Jambrek in 1989. Still, this was more of a sociological and politological outline of the need to establish a democratic society and organise political opposition, without actually touching upon the opposition in Slovenia in the past. The 1992 monograph by Jera Vodušek Starič, *Prevzem oblasti 1944–1946 (The Takeover of Power 1944–1946)* also follows the same scheme. In the chapter on the opposition, the author refers almost exclusively to Serb and Croat politicians, making no mention of the Slovene.[6]

Nevertheless, the opponents of the communist regime from 1945 were frequently mentioned in daily newspapers and polemics between the party elites, and all too easily qualified as the opposition. The problem with this stereotype is that its authors were unable to indicate who these people actually were and what were their aspirations or political programmes. The chief argument against those asserting the contrary was that they bore the legacy of indoctrination under communist education.

Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia / League of the Communists of Slovenia]. Ljubljana 2000, p. 85.

3 *Zgodovina Slovencev* [History of Slovenes], Ljubljana 1979, p. 890.

4 Vojislav Koštunica – Kosta Čavoški: *Stranački pluralizam ili monizam : društveni pokreti i politički sistem u Jugoslaviji 1944–1949* [Party Pluralism or Monism: Social Movements and the Political System in Yugoslavia 1944–1949] Beograd 1983.

5 Peter Jambrek: *Oblast in opozicija v Sloveniji* [Regime and Opposition in Slovenia]. Maribor 1989.

6 Jerca Vodušek Starič: *Prevzem oblasti 1944–1946* [The Takeover of Power 1944–1946]. Ljubljana 1992. The chapter entitled 'Opposition' is on pages 314–328.

The undeniable fact is that the 1945 regime enjoyed strong support from one sector of the population, while meeting with the opposition of those who disagreed with its political objectives and, even more, means. The dissatisfaction with the regime, from which the opposition grew, is strongly expressed in the anonymous letters addressed to Boris Kidrič, President of the Slovene government, in the first months after the war. Some of them referred to the post-war executions, blaming the existing regime for the crime. In the letter of mid-September 1945, 'Vilemira' from Lower Carniola, introduced herself to Kidrič as a 'sister of two Home Guard members (Domobranci) who had laid their lives on the altar of their homeland, at its orders.' She told him that they were taken from Teharje around 20 June and accused him as being responsible for their killing, 'because their innocent blood, shed two months after the end of the war, will one day drown all of you as well.' She stressed that those executed 'did not fight for the 'freedom' we enjoy now but for a better future of the nation.'[7]

In an anonymous letter, a 'Catholic priest' complained to Kidrič about the inhumane treatment of detainees, adding that the general amnesty was of little use, since many of those who should have been released had been killed beforehand. He also posed the Prime Minister Kidrič a political question, 'Is this supposed to be a preparation for the election? Bad, very bad!'[8]

There were other expressions of clear dissatisfaction with the regime. In another letter, 'Catholics' joined the criticism from the pastoral letter of the Yugoslav Catholic bishops, levelled at the new regime because of its disregard of religious freedom. In their letters, the wives of the detained former Yugoslav army officers expressed despair and a growing distrust in the uprightness of the regime. Of particular interest is the letter signed 'an old partisan craftsman' who accuses the new elite for the privileges afforded to themselves, showing that also the partisans were rapidly turning away from the regime they had helped to put in power.[9]

While some letters were undoubtedly written by genuine opponents of the regime, in some others, also signed, individuals criticised specific errors of the regime without expressing a general dissatisfaction with it or the desire for its replacement. However, the very fact that so many criticisms were expressed anonymously is indicative of the restricted atmosphere in which people were afraid to freely speak their mind in public.

Still, criticism or disagreement with the regime cannot simply be equated with the opposition, in the sense of an organised political party as it was known in democratic countries. Many of those who opposed the regime had no intention of founding an opposition party, which would formulate its disagreement

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7 Arhiv Republike Slovenije [Archives of the Republic of Slovenia](ARS), AS 223, box 28, Pismo Velimire – tov. Kidriču [The letter by Velimira to comrade Kidrič], undated.

8 AS 223, box 28, Katoliški duhovnik – Gospodu predsedniku narodne vlade za Slovenijo [A Catholic priest to the President of the National Government for Slovenia], undated.

9 All the aforementioned letters are kept in: AS 223, box 28.

with the existing regime and its politics into a comprehensive democratic political programme. The authors of the aforementioned anonymous letters make no reference to any political authority or Slovene politician abroad who could be harmed by such support. As the only one genuine stance, that by the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church is frequently mentioned. Although characterised as the greatest opposition to the communist regime, the Church's attitude towards political issues often did not stem from a democratic platform and was certainly not one expected from a democratically oriented opposition. Similarly, it can be said of many opponents of the communist regime after 1945 (and also of the 'belated' critics from the post 1990 period), that they expressed only anti-communist views which were not necessarily democratic. In the editorial of the miscellaneous *Temna stran meseca (The Dark Side of the Moon)*, Drago Jančar stressed that the Slovene communists could not use the anti-fascist struggle as an excuse for the crimes committed after seizing power. He also wrote down a thought which leaves little room for doubt, 'While every democrat may be an anti-fascist, not every anti-fascist is necessarily a democrat.'[10] This could be equally applied to the opponents of the third totalitarian system of the twentieth century, 'Every democrat may be an anti-communist, but not every anti-communist is necessarily a democrat.'

Those Slovenes who opposed the political orientation leading towards the communist totalitarian system were many and could easily be listed. The difficulty arises when attempting to identify those opponents of the communist regime who wanted to publicly present a different, more democratic vision of the future. The first question is where to place, in this scheme, the leaders of the so-called Tabor Parliament of 3 May 1945, who were not in the country at the end of the war. Their activities before the end of the war met with little response at home, and even less abroad, among the victors of the Second World War, which had already recognised the provisional government, following the agreement between Josip Broz-Tito and Ivan Šubašić, with the former as the President of the Government of the Liberation Movement and the latter as the President of the Royal Government in exile.

In Slovenia, the Liberation Front, led by the Politburo of the Communist Party of Slovenia, enjoyed considerable public support immediately after the war. This was mainly due to the fact that the Liberation Front was part of the anti-fascist coalition, which placed Yugoslavia/Slovenia on the side of the victors, and that the occupiers were chased from the Slovene territory by the Yugoslav army. After the war, Slovenia expanded westwards at the expense of Italy, becoming a federal unit of Yugoslavia. For the first time, the name 'Slovenia' was used as its official name of this federal unit. The new regime scored additional political points by introducing the changes that had already been de-

[10] Drago Jančar: *Temna stran meseca*. [The Dark Side of the Moon]. In: *Temna stran meseca : kratka zgodovina totalitarizma v Sloveniji 1945–1990* [A Brief History of Totalitarianism in Slovenia], Ljubljana 1998, p. 22.

manded in the previous Yugoslavia, but only implemented after the war. Among these were the agrarian reform and the emancipation of women, paving the way for the first Slovene lady minister.

The relatively wide public support enjoyed by the new authorities was also confirmed in the reports of those who would have preferred to see someone other than Tito and the communists in power. In Autumn 1945, the American embassy in Belgrade reported that, under Tito's dictatorship, Yugoslavia was turning into a totalitarian police state, and that, although its citizens did not enjoy any of the fundamental political liberties, no real opposition was on the horizon.[11] Few months later, in January 1946, the British Embassy relayed to London that, but for the partisans, Yugoslavia would have seen the end of the war in total ruin. The British ambassador blamed the old political parties and their misjudgement of the political situation for the fact that the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which before the war was an insignificant underground party, was, by the end of it, at the head of the strong liberation movement and also of the country.[12]

The Slovene political parties, groups and politicians, who could have been the nucleus of a democratic opposition in 1945, were even weaker than their peers in Serbia or Croatia. There were no attempts to organise an opposition in Slovenia in the first post-war period, although this would have been possible, at least in principle, due to the pressure from western powers and the agreement between Tito and Šubašić. In 1945, nine political parties operated in Yugoslavia. Two of them, the Agrarian Party and the Communist Party were not even registered, since they entered the ruling People's Front as a whole; formally, the ruling Communist Party thus still operated illegally. Applications for the registration of the parties were mainly submitted by the denizens of Zagreb, Belgrade and larger Serbian cities. No Slovene politicians were among them.[13]

Apart from the members of the Liberation Front and the Slovene members who were part of the ruling People's Front of Yugoslavia, some Catholic and liberal politicians considered the possibility of organising themselves politically in the first months after the war in Slovenia. However, as written in a report by the Yugoslav secret police, OZNA, these were 'totally amateur and incoherent attempts to resume their political activity, which do not go beyond the area of

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[11] Lorraine M. Lees: *Keeping Tito Afloat. The United States, Yugoslavia, and The Cold War*. The Pennsylvania State University, 1997, pp. 5–6.

[12] Katarina Spehnjak: *Javnost i propaganda : Narodna fronta u politici i kulturi Hrvatske : 1945–1952* [The Public and Propaganda: The Popular Front in the Croatian Politics and Culture : 1945–1952] Zagreb 2002, p. 26.

[13] Momčilo Pavlović: *Politički programi Demokratske narodne radikalne, Jugoslovenske republikanske, Demokratske, Socijalističke i Socijal-demokratske stranke Jugoslavije iz 1945. godine* [Political Programmes of the Democratic National Radical, Yugoslav Republican, Democratic, Socialist and Social Democratic Party of Yugoslavia from 1945]. In: Istorija 20. veka, 1985, No. 1, pp. 119–155; Zdenko Radelić: *Hrvatska seljačka stranka 1941.–1950.* [Croat Peasant Party 1941.–1950.]. Zagreb 1996.

their permanent residence.'[14] Several Catholic and liberal politicians had already emigrated, while some of those who had remained in Slovenia operated in the Liberation Front. Others again had been imprisoned, awaiting the so-called political judicial trials. The secret police had more work with the persecution of political adversaries in other urban centres, especially Belgrade and Zagreb, where the opposition was much more varied and active. In Slovenia, the negotiations between the remnants of the formerly most important Slovene parties bore no fruit.

With the communist regime exercising a total control over the police, army and mass media, the opposition in Belgrade and Zagreb had no real opportunities for work. Milan Grol, the leader of the most significant opposition party, the Democratic Party, wrote in his party paper *Demokratija (the Democracy)*: 'How can we speak of equality in the political struggle, promised by Tito and his clique, when the People's Front is holding one hundred and thirty papers, and the opposition only one,'[15] i.e. his *Demokratija*. On 20 September 1945, the paper published a joint statement by the opposition parties, announcing the boycott of the elections because of the government's failure to secure equal conditions for their operation. The statement was not as important for Slovenia, where no opposition parties were registered, as it was for Serbia and Croatia. Grol strengthened the postscript which read: 'Today's message will be followed by the decisions of the groups in Zagreb and Ljubljana' with the claim that agreements had been concluded with opposition leaders from other parts of the country: 'The exchange of thoughts with the progressive groups from Ljubljana also ensured this solidarity.'[16]

The problem with Grol's remarks is that he never explained who 'those from Ljubljana' were. Whereas the names of the opposition leaders from Belgrade and Zagreb were known to all, the 'Slovenes' remained without personal names or even party appurtenance. Even when the Croat Peasant Party considered forming a coalition of peasants' parties, it hoped that it would be joined by the Agrarian Party (a specific name) from Serbia and 'the representatives of the peasants from Slovenia',[17] again being unclear as to who these were. The 'Slovenes' remained nameless also after the elections, when, due to a landslide victory of the People's Front, the opposition leaders from all over the country tried to associate.

The reasons for such impotence among the opposition in Slovenia can be traced back to the wartime events on Slovene soil. The Liberation Front developed widely ramified activities, attracting many of those who, before the war, had supported the traditional Slovene parties. These, in turn, had been losing

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[14] Iz *arhivov slovenske politične policije* [From the archives of the Slovene political police]. Ljubljana 1996, p. 169.

[15] Demokratija, 25. 10. 1945, No. 5.

[16] Demokratija, 27. 9. 1945. No. 1.

[17] Radelić, Hrvatska seljačka stranka, p. 51.

power and influence due to their inactivity. Even before its first congress, held on 16 July 1945 in Ljubljana, the Slovene Liberation Front was a uniform political organisation led, behind the scenes, by the Communist Party of Slovenia. In the first post-war months, such a relationship between the Yugoslav Communist Party and the People's Front had not yet been established at the Yugoslav level, as the Party was still consolidating the Front as its transmission organisation.

Hence, it is much more difficult to identify opposition figures with a clear democratic vision of the future in Slovenia than in Serbia or Croatia. A possible organisation of the opposition in Slovenia was considered only by rare individuals who were in touch with the opposition in other parts of Yugoslavia. The group from Slovenia which kept contacts with the opposition leader Milan Grom was the circle of Črtomir Nagode, which had initially participated in the Liberation Front under the name of Stara Pravda (Old Cause), until its departure in 1942, due to differences regarding Yugoslavia's future. Ljubo Sirc, Nagode's political collaborator, who had also visited Grol, wrote in his memoirs, 'In Ljubljana we made another attempt at organising the opposition. Dr Nagode, another professor and myself met with two representatives of the Catholic Party and the Social Democrats. Our discussions were without result. The main reason for this, according to me, was the clear impossibility to organise any public activity, which scared the leaders and their potential followers.'[18]

Fear was not the only reason for the failure. There was also a lack of trust between those who were supposed to form a joint anti-communist opposition, especially those who had cooperated with the occupier during the war. Some opposition figures counted on their old friends who had already been in the Liberation Front in 1945, but such expectations proved unfounded. Črtomir Nagode wrote in his diary that his companion Leon Kavčnik in September 1945, after 'looking over the opposition came to the conclusion that it was best for us to wait passively.'[19]

Because of the inability to bring together a noticeable opposition party, the attention of the opponents turned towards the ruling party, i.e. the non-communist faction of the Liberation Front. On 24 October 1945, Nagode made the following entry in his diary, 'Apparently, Snoj, Kocbek and Vavpetič are about to organise an opposition.' However, Franc Snoj, the pre-war member of the Catholic Party, denied such allegations two days later, as diligently recorded by Nagode.[20]

Word of it reached the ears of the political police who shifted their attention from the impotent opposition to the anti-communist opposition within the Liberation Front, especially the Christian Socialists around Edvard Kocbek, the Catholic politician Franc Snoj and the liberal Vlado Vavpetič. Many believed,

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18 Ljubo Sirc: *Med Hitlerjem in Titom* [Between Hitler and Stalin]. Ljubljana 1992, p. 234.
19 ARS, AS 1931, 80–1/IV, Nagodetov dnevnik [Nagode's diary], no. 0357.
20 ARS, AS 1931, 80–1/IV Nagodetov dnevnik [Nagode's diary], no. 0359.

both then and later on, that the one who could have done most for the pluralisation of Slovenia was Edvard Kocbek. However, as a professed anti-clericalist, he believed that the Liberation Front should remain a uniform organisation of a wide people's movement, which would ensure the ideological autonomy of its constituents. Rather than working on the formation of Christian socialists as an independent political group or even a party outside the Front, he concentrated his efforts on cultural-political work and ideological consolidation, which the Christian socialist group, as the bearer of Christian spiritual values, should possess in the Liberation Front. His main objectives were the reissuing of the *Dejanje (The Act)* journal, founding of an independent publishing house and care for religious education, i.e. cultural and political, rather than only narrow political tasks.[21]

Even after reading, and praising in his diary, the only opposition paper, Grol's *Demokratija*, or when criticising the pastoral letter by the Slovene Catholic bishops, Kocbek did not mention that this was an opposition, neither did he hint that such thinking was closer to him than that officially advocated by the Liberation Front. When discussing the inequality of non-communists in the Front and the excessive influence of the communists in it, he and Lado Vavpetič did not contemplate the breaking of the Front, but a greater autonomy of its constituents. Kocbek noted down in his diary the thought of Vavpetič that 'with his companions he felt part of the unrecognised, yet existing IDP (Independent Democratic Party). (...) He expresses the desire for ideological uniformity of the Liberation Front and the collective independence of its members.'[22]

The communists were well aware of their dominance in the Liberation Front. Explaining to Chuvachin, a counsellor in the Soviet Embassy in Yugoslavia, the reasons for the 'failure' at the November 1945 elections in the Maribor district, where most ballots were dropped in the so-called 'black box', belonging to the opponents of the People's Front, Edvard Kardelj, consistent with the communist doctrine, blamed foreign agencies, the influence of the British from their occupation zone right behind the border with Austria, and the activity of 'reactionaries' who, according to him, were supposed to have been imprisoned after the elections. Kardelj's explanation to Chuvachin, that in the Liberation Front there was no other party than the Communist, and that Christian Socialists (named Christian Democrats in the counsellor's report) posed no problem, was also interesting. Kardelj concluded that 'the election results would have been much the same, had the Communism Party ran instead of the People's Front.'[23]

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21 For more on this, see Aleš Gabrič: *Na ostrem robu med pozicijo in opozicijo* [At the Sharp Edge Between Position and Opposition]. In: *Krogi navznoter, krogi navzven : Kocbekov zbornik.* [Circles Inside, Circles Outside : The Kocbek Miscellaneous], Ljubljana 2004, pp. 146–159.

22 Edvard Kocbek: *Dnevnik 1945* [The 1945 Diary]. Ljubljana 1991, p. 50.

23 *Vostočnaja Evropa v dokumentah rossijskih arhivov 1944–1953 gg.* [East Europe in the Documents of the Russian Archives] Tom I, 1944–1948 gg. Moskva–Novosibirsk, doc. 117, p. 314.

Elsewhere in Yugoslavia, the People's Front and the Communist Party could not boast of such general support. Interestingly enough, Kardelj did not place the blame for the poor election results on the Roman Catholic Church which was considered the strongest opposition force in Slovenia. In Croatia, however, apart from the Church, the Croat Peasant Party was very strong and active too. In Slovenia, the Roman Catholic Church was the only major organisation that had not been subjected by the communist oligarchy (which had subjected almost all government and non-government institutions). Following its tradition, the leadership of the Slovene Catholic Church, in the absence of its supreme shepherd, Bishop Gregorij Rožman, who had fled abroad, declared loyalty to the new regime on 11 July 1945. This step was made by Canon Anton Vovk, accompanied by the representatives of the clergy of the Diocese of Ljubljana, during the visit of the primer minister Boris Kidrič. After expressing their loyalty, in their statement they undertook to make joint efforts in the restoration of the homeland and mentioned that during the war, the Church suffered as had all people, and that, amid the chaos, some priests and Catholics had sinned as well. They expressed hope that the new authorities would allow the performance of normal religious practice, given that the freedom of conscience was assured.[24]

In its statement, the Church leadership did not take a political stand towards the new regime, but accepted it as an indisputable fact. The Catholic Church throughout the whole of Yugoslavia responded to the regime's terror with the apostolic letter of the Yugoslav bishops, adopted at the Bishop's conference, held in Zagreb between 17 and 22 September 1945. Among the signatories of this letter were Ivan Tomažič, the Lavantine bishop (Maribor), Anton Vovk, Vicar General of the Diocese of Ljubljana and Ivan Jerič, Vicar General of Prekmurje.[25]

The bishops intentionally refrained from directly expressing their views on wider political issues and the new social order, adhering to the principle: 'Give to Ceasar what belongs to Ceasar, and to God what belongs to God.'[26] Instead, they concentrated on the role of the Catholic Church in the new regulation of relations between the Church and the state, pointing out, in compliance with Canon Law, that the Vatican should have the last word on this (and not the government of the state in which a local Church operates). Quite justifiably, the Church leadership sharply warned about the crimes committed by the regime, the spirit of non-freedom and injustice which had spread to all spheres of life. However, in the face of numerous violations of the rights of the Catholic Church, its faithful and other people, and the exclusivism of the ruling ideology, the Catholic bishops did not voice their demands so that the diversity of beliefs

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24 *Resnici na ljubo : izjave ljubljanskih škofov o medvojnih dogodkih* [Let the Truth Be Known : Statements of the Ljubljana Bishops on Wartime Events]. Ljubljana 1998, pp. 17–21.

25 Anton Vovk: *V Gospoda zaupam : iz zapisov nadškofa Antona Vovka* [I Trust in the Lord : From the Records by Archbishop Anton Vovk]. Ljubljana 2000, pp. 114–128.

26 Ibid, p. 115.

be respected but on the basis of the 'only salvific truth' of their own ideology. On the one hand, they criticised the new revolutionary spirit in the educational system (i.e. the imposition of an ideology), while, on the other, they warned about religious education being progressively eliminated from the curriculum (i.e. putting an end to their own imposed ideology) and the propagation of the 'theory of evolution of man from ape.' Instead of equalising the church and civil marriage, they attacked the latter as a foreign body in the new reality which deprived Christian marriage of holiness. The separation between ours (= correct) and yours (= wrong) is evident also in one of the final accentuations of the pastoral letter: 'We, the Catholic bishops of Yugoslavia, as teachers of truth and representatives of faith, firmly condemn the materialist spirit which brings no good to humanity. At the same time, we condemn all ideologies and social systems which do not build their human form on the principles of Revelation and Christianity but on the erroneous foundations of the materialist, i.e. atheist, philosophical doctrine.'[27]

Just like the leading communist ideologists, the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, as teachers of truth, referred to one and only truth. The difference between them, however, was that the communists were in power and that they enforced their truth by all available means. In their response to the pastoral letter, Tito and Kardelj mainly addressed the first signatory, Alojz Stepinac, Archbishop of Zagreb and President of the Yugoslav Bishop's Conference, thereby showing that they considered the letter as a mostly Croat issue. At the session of the Slovene government on 1 October 1945, the Interior Minister, Zoran Polič, said that he was told by Anton Vovk that 'most of the statements in the pastoral letter did not apply to Slovenia but to Croatia.'[28] The fact that the pastoral letter was issued on the same day as the declaration of the opposition parties to boycott the elections, gave it a strong political tone.

The reading of the pastoral letter in churches may be considered as the single most resolute public gesture against the communist regime in 1945. Nevertheless, given the said differences between anti-communism and democracy, the declaration was essentially more anti-communist than democratic. However, if there was anyone in Slovenia who really wanted to show western European democratic orientation and also made some concrete steps in this direction, it was an underground youth organisation whose activity did not leave much trace.

The word is about the League of the Democratic Youth, which was founded in the first months after the war and became more active in the pre-election period. Ivan Žigon, one of its leading members wrote in his memoirs, that 'the most probable hypothesis is that the opposition tandem Grol-Šubašić organised

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[27] Ibid, p. 126.

[28] ARS, AS 223, box 306, Zapisnik 5. redne seje Narodne vlade Slovenije, 1. 10. 1945. [Minutes from the Fifth Regular Session of the National Government of Slovenia, 1 October 1945].

it in order to win votes for the forthcoming elections.'[29] Some Slovene leaders were related to notable politicians or public workers. The main organiser of the League was Vladimir Krek (in the sources, Lado, for short). He was a nephew of Miha Krek, the émigré champion of the Slovene People's Party. As it was common in clandestine organisations, the members of the League of the Democratic Youth only knew the next person in the chain of command, so as to minimize the risk of damaging the organisation if arrested by the political police. In Autumn 1945, the League started issuing its first modest publications and, towards the end of the year, its cyclostyle bulletin *Zarja svobode (The Dawn of Freedom)*, which was supposed to voice the views of the Christian democratic and Christian socialist youth. Ivan Žigon wrote the following about the bulletin: 'Some time after New Year 1946, very undemocratic and provocative articles appeared in *Zarja svobode*. One even read, 'Death to Tito!' This disturbed me, because it smelled of the communist methods and when the publishing of Zarja svobode came into my hands, I eliminated such radical excesses or returned them to the author for correction. I did not want our paper to resemble the communist scrawls riddled with vulgarities and attacks.'[30]

The few preserved issues of *Zarja svobode* confirm Žigon's allegations that they wanted to stand up against the communists by advocating democracy. As an example, let us mention the introductory article of the Fifth Issue of Zarja svobode from 17 February 1946 entitled *'The Victory of Democracy in the United Nations Organisation'*. A summary from a UN session was published, at which Aleš Bebler, the Yugoslav delegate, demanded that 'all war émigrés be returned to the countries from which they had fled'. Apart from the expected support by the Soviet and Polish delegates, Bebler encountered equally anticipated opposition from Eleanor Roosevelt. She was the US delegate to the UN between 1945 and 1953, became President of the Human Rights Commission in 1946, and was one of the idelogical authors of the 1948 UN General Declaration on Human Rights. According to *Zarja Svobode,* Roosevelt rejected Bebler's demands with the argument that a distinction should be made between war criminals who should be extradited to the countries where they committed crimes, and the political opponents of the existing regimes. She said: 'It would contradict the most fundamental democratic principles if political opponents were forcedly returned to the regime demanding their extradition.' The British delegate, in his turn, repudiated the demand of the communist Yugoslavia by taking the example of Karl Marx, the model of all communists, who was granted political asylum in Great Britain, where he wrote the works that became the basis for the ideology which turned to be one of the greatest opponents of the British political system. He presented this as evidence of the democratic orientation of the British, which they had no intention of relinquishing.[31]

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29 Ivan Žigon: *Življenjski izzivi* [Life's Challenges]. Ljubljana 1994, p. 77.
30 Ibid, p. 80.
31 ARS, AS 1799, box 192, Zarja svobode [The Dawn of Freedom], 17. 2. 1946, No. 5.

The preserved issues of *Zarja svobode* present the League of the Democratic Youth as an advocate of anti-communist and, also, democratic values. While it is not known whether they published a political programme (though some guidelines were published in the First Issue of Zarja svobode, which I could not find among the reviewed material and are probably not preserved), the existing papers in the party bulletin express clearly enough the demands for fundamental political rights. The leading members must have had good connections with the Slovene politicians abroad or with foreign representatives in Slovenia (a British Consulate operated in Ljubljana at the time), and probably with both, since the news and the details brought by the party bulletin could not be traced in the one-sided Slovene journalism of the time. When reporting on the session of the UN Security Council over the Greek issue, the editorial board of *Zarja svobode* annotated: 'The speech by Mr Bevin (the British Foreign Minister) is quoted more extensively because our daily papers did not report it.'[32]

In mid-February 1946, the party leadership was still quite optimistic about continuing its work, but the arrests of the leading members at the end of the month halted the organisation's operation, which had proved a decent rival to the communist youth organisation at some higgh schools in Ljubljana.

Not everyone in Slovenia, with the exception of some deceived individuals and foreign agents, unanimously hailed the new regime as the leading communists liked to brag. Searching for the answer why the disenchantment with the new regime did not find expression in the formation and support of a stronger opposition party, as was the case in Serbia and Croatia, requires a thoughtful analysis and not stereotypes, such as the elimination of the opposition by the political police of the new totalitarian regime. The reason will probably have to be sought also in the different development of the liberation movement in Slovenia from that in other parts of Yugoslavia. The call to resistance, which enticed oppressed nations, was propagated only by the Liberation Front behind which the communists hid. In the widely ramified resistance movement which, unlike in other parts of Yugoslavia, was not limited only to the liberated territory, succeeded in attracting also those who, before the war, had been the electoral basis of the traditional Slovene parties, which, due to their passivity, steadily lost the support of those who wanted some action taken, as they could no longer beat the humiliation of the occupation. After the 1945 liberation, the new regime in Slovenia had no need to establish a wide front organisation, behind which the communists could hide, as they had already done so during the war, unlike in other Yugoslav republics.

The scenario, whereby a small revolutionary group of people without moral reservations and with popular slogans, took advantage of the chaos and seized power had already been seen in history. Less understandable and more illogical, though, is the one whereby a political group claiming an eighty percent support

[32] ARS, AS 1799, no. 192, Zarja svobode [The Dawn of Freedom], 6. 2. 1946, No. 3a, p. 1.

of the population, is unable to react appropriately in the same chaotic situation and whereby its circle of supporters shrinks to a minority.

Povzetek

Opozicija v Sloveniji v letu 1945

Na moč politične opozicije v Sloveniji po letu 1945 sta bila dva različna pogleda. Prvega so po vojni oblikovali vodilni komunistični politiki in zatrjevali, da prave opozicije v Jugoslaviji ni in da gre le za "reakcionarne sile", ki so pripeljale prvo Jugoslavijo (Kraljevino Jugoslavijo) do poloma. Drugi pogled je nastal v času demokratizacije ob padanju komunističnega režima (konec osemdesetih in v začetku devetdesetih let 20. stoletja) in je v nasprotju s prvim govoril o močni opoziciji po letu 1945, ki naj bi jo uničil teror komunistične tajne policije.

Za razliko od Srbije in Hrvaške, kjer se je delovala tudi prava politična opozicija, združena in registrirana v več strankah, do tega v Sloveniji ni prišlo. V Sloveniji niso nasprotniki nove oblasti niti poskusili registrirati svojega delovanja ali izdajati lastnega opozicijskega časopisa. Večji del predvojnih politikov katoliške in liberalne usmeritve je bil tedaj že v emigraciji, manjši del v zaporih, nekaj pa jih je bilo tudi že v vladajoči Ljudski fronti Jugoslavije, katere del je bila na Slovenskem Osvobodilna fronta, ki so jo vodili slovenski komunisti. Od nekomunističnih politikov v Osvobodilni fronti so številni pričakovali, da bodo uspeli slovensko družbo pluralizirati ter prisiliti vodilne komuniste v to, da bi večstrankarski sistem tudi dejansko zaživel. Toda svetovnonazorsko od komunistov drugače usmerjeni politiki tega niso hoteli ali pa uspeli narediti. Kot edino pravo politično opozicijsko delovanje v prvem letu po drugi svetovni vojni v Sloveniji je tako mogoče označiti delovanje Zveze demokratične mladine, ilegalne mladinske organizacije, ki je uspela izdati tudi nekaj skromnih ilegalnih časopisov.

Razlik v političnem razvoju neposredno po koncu druge svetovne vojne v Sloveniji od tistega v Srbiji in na Hrvaškem ne moremo pripisati zgolj v terorju komunistične policije, saj je bil ta enak v vsej jugoslovanski državi in bi lahko, nasprotno, pričakovali, da bo ta prej opravila z opozicijo v Srbiji, ki je bila osvobojena pol leta pred Slovenijo. Vzroke za dokaj šibko moč politične opozicije v Sloveniji je treba zato iskati tudi drugje. Pomemben vzrok je bil tudi v svojevrstnem političnem razvoju dogodkov na Slovenskem v vojnih letih, saj so pred vojno tradicionalno najpomembnejše slovenske stranke ubrale pasivno politično držo, voljo ljudi do odpora pa je uspela v svoj prid usmeriti pred vojno nepomembna komunistična stranka. Za razliko od odporniških gibanj v ostalih

delih Jugoslavije je bila slovenska Osvobodilna fronta aktivna tudi na okupiranem ozemlju in je uspela v različne akcije, dejavnosti in organizacije pritegniti širok krog Slovencev, ki so bili še pred vojno tradicionalno navezani na katoliške ali liberalne stranke in društva. Ko je partizanska vojska maja 1945 vkorakala v Ljubljano, Osvobodilni fronti kot nosilki oblasti ni bilo šele treba začeti pisati političnega programa, plesti mrež množičnih organizacij in iskati somišljenikov, ker so to v dobršni meri opravili že med vojno (kar za večji del Jugoslavije ne velja). Na čas po koncu vojne se je namreč Osvobodilna fronta pripravila mnogo bolje kot vse druge politične organizacije v državi. To pa je pustilo bore malo manevrskega prostora drugačnim političnim opcijam. Te so se leta 1945 ob iskanju možnih zaveznikov v Sloveniji vsepovsod srečevale tudi s težavo, da je delovno področje, kjer so bili še pred vojno pomemben dejavnik, že uspela "prekriti" katera od organizacij v okviru Osvobodilne fronte. To so ugotavljali tudi tisti posamezniki, ki so menili, da je potrebno vzpostaviti opozicijo komunističnemu režimu, nato pa so ugotavljali, da za kaj takega ni realnih pogojev, da ni možno najti ljudi in ustreznega prostora za politično delovanje.