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### Science, Philosophy and Ideology in Slovenia 1941-1945. PhD Project.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of my PhD research project is to elucidate the production of knowledge during the period of the Yugoslav revolution, a topic which has been traditionally either neglected or elaborated in an oversimplified manner. The latter is true for earlier Slovene (Yugoslav) historiography of national liberation struggle starting back in early 1960s, and, as one might argue, for the most important part of current elaborations as well, with two notable exceptions, both of them in the fields of literature and art history: "The History of Slovenian Literature, Literature during the War Years 1941-1945", written in the early 1970s by Viktor Smolej,<sup>2</sup> and a recent in-depth study by Miklavž Komelj, entitled "How to Imagine Partisan Art".<sup>3</sup> Smolej noticed that the cultural activities during the war years in Slovenia barely introduced anything new in realm of literary genres, irreversible change might be detected only in its new conditions of existence. By saying so, Smolej implicitly outlined the possibility to elaborate cultural artifacts as products of distinguished social apparatus and by doing so, he made an important step toward a materialist theory of art-ideology-politics relations; in a materialist analysis cultural activities must be elaborated as a distinguished type of social production, as Pierre Macherey argued in the late 1960s. Miklavž Komelj on his part argues that partisan art is understandable only as a radical break with the understanding of art itself. For the most part however, in the mainstream of historiography the subject in question has been limited by topics, such as political ideas, programs and ideologies of political parties and groups involved in social struggles or singular cultural enterprises; the role of ideas – political doctrines and works of art has been usually identified as something secondary, even obscure comparing with major war events and struggles for political power or the establishment of new political institutions. Ideas, usually synonymous for ideologies are therefore considered as some sort of propriety of distinguished political groups or (international) movements, whereas people obtain object status of those ideas.

Three main current approaches toward the set of problems in question still maintain hegemony in Slovenian scholarship as well as in mainstream public discussions. Firstly, it is right-wing nationalist historical revisionism. Its enterprise is to build a historical narrative on three basically equal totalitarianisms – fascism, Nazism and communism, but in reality it focuses exclusively on "bolshevism". The "Slovenian totalitarianism school" has also a dissident subgroup, introducing a fourth totalitarianism – clericalism ("clero-fascism"). Secondly, we have objectivism – refuting totalitarianism as analytical point of departure and focusing on pure narration in old Ranke style ("*Was eigentlich geschehen ist*"). Finally, there is victimology: focusing on dissidents, middle groups and neglected or repressed individuals, building historical narrative by taking their views at face value. My PhD project starts with criticism of these approaches through developing a new concept: "zoo-keeping". It stands for the common practice to reduce distinguished individuals – theoreticians and revolutionaries like Edvard Kardelj – as a data bank in order to satisfy the objectivist criteria in mainstream historiography which is still predominant in Slovenia when it comes to analyzing WW2 and the revolutionary period. As a result, Kardelj's works never meet deep theoretical analysis. By doing so, i.e. describing his political roles, using data from his works, making use of his

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<sup>1</sup> Under the direction of Prof. Rastko Močnik, University of Ljubljana and Dr. Peter Klepec Kršič, Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

<sup>2</sup> Viktor Smolej: Zgodovina slovenskega slovstva. VII: Slovestvo v letih vojne 1941-1945, Ljubljana, Izd. in Založila Slovenska Matica, 1971.

<sup>3</sup> Miklavž Komelj: Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?, Ljubljana, Založba \*cf, 2009.

photographs as illustration material, historians usually bypass the polemics, where taking theoretical position would be unavoidable. In other words: Kardelj is put in a position where he can be easily controlled by authors, through their technique of mastering historical sources. By doing so, authors produce ideological distance and face a minimum risk to be labeled as partial or unbalanced in the debates on the troubled past.

The criticism in question raises several problems. It is necessary from a methodological point of view – avoiding it would mean uncritical use of secondary historical sources; from an epistemological point of view it is rather unproductive, since the practice of historiography, if taken under critical examination, most often completely lacks any theory or notes on the concepts it employs, such as “nation”, “ideology”, “concept” or “totalitarianism”. In order to overcome this difficulty, additional elaboration of other schools of historiography dealing with the international communist and workers’ movement had to be taken into account, for example the works by Sheila Fitzpatrick, Eric Hobsbawm, Immanuel Wallerstein, Marcel van der Linden and the researchers of the Annals of Communism project conducted by Yale University. In realm of philosophy, works by Alain Badiou, especially his critique of the systems of real socialism and his development of the communist hypothesis, will be also critically evaluated.

Additional analyses will expand the framework of research; yet not so much in realm of additional historical data but mere in ambition to develop an alternative point of view in order to grasp historical phenomena in Slovenia (Yugoslavia) in light of transformations in the global capitalist world-system. I argue that the kingdom of Yugoslavia was not a mere periphery of the capitalist world-system but a periphery of the European semi-periphery comprising fascist states; that is the context in which a distinguished knowledge production took place. It took shape in social struggles referring to development of the alternative modernization models of economy, politics, education, art and culture. It is self evident therefore that the analysis had to deal not only with the central state institutions dedicated to science and primary education, but also with daily press, esoteric journals, manuscripts written by the convicts in penal colonies, illegal brochures, textbooks used in Party schools which were organized on liberated territories during the war, propaganda materials printed by the liberation movement and their opponents etc.

In the late kingdom of Yugoslavia the main conflict inside elites happened between two different models of corporativism, the fascist (centralist) and the catholic (autonomist) concepts. This conflict eventually destabilized the country, but in public debates it also mobilized several distinguished social doctrines, scientific theories and philosophies ranging from neo-Thomism to dialectical materialism. My project is examining their capabilities for social mobilization as well as the immediate effects on them, caused by the occupation in 1941. The latter forced the leftist anti-systemic movement to establish illegal political, educational, scientific, art and cultural institutions while right wing conservatives accepted the cultural autonomy granted to them by fascism and after 1943 even by Nazi invaders. The mobilizing potential of the pre-war catholic anti-capitalist-corporatist thought and its anti-statist political strategy was essentially lost; accepting the cultural autonomy imposed by the Italian military and police force, their social concepts in political practice lost the pre-war minimal distance toward fascism. Ideologists of political Catholicism, like philosopher Aleš Ušeničnik, became consequently marginalized and pro-fascist fractions in the Catholic political camp won complete hegemony.

On the other hand, the leftist revolutionary national liberation movement, led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Slovenia), managed to overcome in their immediate political

practices the theoretical obstacles which were rooted in the orthodoxy of the Third International's Marxism-Leninism. A close reading of political and proto-theoretical texts, written by revolutionary leader Boris Kidrič, has provided several hints that he implicitly rejected naïve Marxists' understanding of social classes as merely identity groups, but understood them rather as social concepts which are necessary in order to illustrate the relationship between distinguished social elites and other groups according to particular political and economical projects. In other words: since the elites in late kingdom of Yugoslavia failed to unite themselves around a determined political and economical project – as did the elites in Germany by the project of rearmament and reconstruction in the 1930s –, it were the capitalist elites and the non-capitalists as a social class which remained on the eve of occupation; their class character was then possible to examine only in their relation to the fascist and Nazi imperial enterprise.