



# Five-Year Plans, Explorers, Luniks, and Socialist Humanism: Anton Sovre and His Blueprint for Classics in Slovenia

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About a year before the pandemic struck, personal archives of Anton Sovre (1885–1963), the doyen of Slovenian classicists in the postwar period, were rediscovered and eventually made their way to the National and University Library in Ljubljana.<sup>1</sup> During the fifties, Anton Sovre was an inspiring professor at the University of Ljubljana<sup>2</sup> and a member of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Among the new sources now available to researchers is an essay on the Prospective Development of Classical Philology from 1959. The document was written in the course of preparation for the Third Yugoslav Five-Year Plan (1961–1965), or the “prospective plan,” *perspektivni plan*, as the project was called in contemporary lingo – written because every discipline had to provide one, but destined to remain, as Tacitus would say, *in arto et inglorius labor*, while failing to touch the hearts and minds of the decision-makers.

The original five-year plans for developing the national economy of the USSR consisted of a series of nationwide centralized economic

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1 I am grateful to the head of the Manuscript Department at the National and University Library in Ljubljana, Marijan Rupert, and his colleagues, who kindly assisted my work with these documents even though they have not yet been cataloged.

2 Smolej, “Filozofska fakulteta (1919–1971),” 64 ff.

plans, 13 in total. In the 1920s, there was a debate between Bukharin's followers on the one hand and Trotsky's supporters on the other. The former group considered that the existing economic policies provided sufficient state control of the economy and sufficient development. The latter argued in favor of more rapid development and greater state control.<sup>3</sup> The plans focused on the economy, but science and scholarship were also put on a planned basis.<sup>4</sup>

These five-year plans outlined programs for vast increases in the output of all sorts of industrial goods. However, the output levels planned were "usually wide of the mark" – and more importantly, they were wide of the mark "in ways that became familiar to all involved."<sup>5</sup> After the communists gained power in Yugoslavia in 1945, they copied the idea immediately. The First Five-Year Plan was prepared for the years 1947–1952. Its objectives were to overcome economic and technological backwardness, strengthen economic and military power, enhance and develop the socialist sector of the country, and narrow the gap in economic development among regions.<sup>6</sup>

Significant effort was made to communicate this strategy to the impressionable masses. It is difficult to pick *unum ex multis*. But it might suffice to give an example: the assiduous book of encouraging poems about the endeavor, *Long Live Tito's Plan* by the Croatian poet Ferdo Škrlić, published by Farmers' Unity in 1947, alone included no less than 34 rhythmical masterworks along the following lines:

Mi, borci iz rata,  
Pozdravljamo Tita,  
Naša pjesma rada  
Slavi novi dan.  
S lica nam se radost  
Zrcali i čita,  
Jer smo opet borci  
U bitki za Plan!

- 3 For the details of this transition, see Cook, "Party and Workers in the Soviet First Five-Year Plan," 327–51.
- 4 For a contemporary overview, see Brožek, "Current Five-Year Plan of Soviet Science," 391 ff.
- 5 Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of Soviet Economy*, 27.
- 6 Prezidij ljudske skupščine LRS, "Zakon o petletnem planu ... v letih 1947 do 1951."

We, fighters from war,  
 Send greetings to Tito,  
 The song of our work  
 Now hails the new man.  
 As joy is reflected  
 From each of our faces,  
 We are once again fighters,  
 We fight for the Plan!<sup>7</sup>

Despite all the good intentions, the First Yugoslav Five-Year Plan followed suit of the wildly overambitious First Soviet Five-Year Plan. Both were based on the naive paraphrase of Karl Marx as formulated by Party activists in 1927: “Our task is not to study the economy but to change it.”<sup>8</sup> Instead of rising, Soviet consumption collapsed, resulting in disastrous famines. While the results of Yugoslav economists were not as horrific as the ones achieved by their Soviet mentors, the country was soon to become acquainted with the economic problems that would eventually become chronic. These included significant foreign debt, low labor productivity, and inefficient use of capital.

This is where the protagonist comes into the picture. Anton Sovre (1885–1963) was a school inspector with the reputation of being an outstanding translator.<sup>9</sup> Before the war, he published translations from Plato (1923 and 1929), Apuleius (1925), Sophocles (1922) and Euripides (1923), Seneca (1927), Marcus Aurelius (1934), Augustine (1932), and Horace (1934–35). His productivity increased during the war and exploded afterward; he translated a selection from the Pre-Socratics (1946), Lucian’s *Satires* (1946), the complete works of Homer (1951), substantial selections from Plutarch (1950 and 1959), Plato (1955 and 1960), Herodotus (1953–1955), Plautus (1954), Aeschylus (1963), Sophocles (1962), Euripides (1960), Erasmus (1952), Theophrastus (1971, posthumously), and the Greek lyrical poets (1964, posthumously).<sup>10</sup>

Unlike several other Slovenian classicists,<sup>11</sup> Sovre was not considered a threat by the Communist powers that be. He knew how to talk up

7 Škrljac, *Živio Titov plan*, 5.

8 Hunter, “The Overambitious First Soviet Five-Year Plan,” 255. For this homage to Marx’s Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, Hunter is citing Stanislav G. Strumilin, “Industrializacija sssr i jepigony narodnichestva,” 10.

9 His youth and education were analyzed by Kristan, “Anton Sòvre in Anton Sovrè,” in 2021. His approach to translation was evaluated by Gantar, “Sovretov prevajalski ideal,” in 1986.

10 For a detailed bibliography, see Gerlanc, “Bibliografija Antona Sovreta.”

11 See Movrin, “Classics in Postwar Secondary Education.”

his relatively uneventful conduct during the war and make himself a bit of a silent hero. In the archives of the Central Committee, one can still find his autobiography, with a charming description of what he did – or perhaps did not do – during the occupation: “I was an ‘activist without a function,’” he wrote in the questionnaire. “Apart from propaganda, my work was mainly in suppressing faintheartedness among comrades and strengthening their will to persist, advancing passive resistance, defending or covering for teachers and professors who were suspected or charged, etc.”<sup>12</sup> The same archives have preserved his *karakteristika*, or character evaluation, written by a Party member for the Party, which duly stressed the facts that mattered: “He did not sign the infamous memorandum against Communism and the Partisan movement. Even today, we may count him among the positives, despite his not being politically active because of his professional work.”<sup>13</sup>

Sovre was one of the representatives of the country’s literary life chosen to publish their welcoming compositions in the newspaper printed on May 9, 1945,<sup>14</sup> the day the Partisan army entered Ljubljana, just hours after the German occupation and the war in Europe had ended with the armistice signed in Berlin – and thus stood a good chance of a late-bloomer academic career.<sup>15</sup> The only obstacle was his lack of a doctorate. This difficulty, shared by other aspiring academics of the time, was overcome by a new government decree on university personnel, which allowed for “summoning specialists regardless of their formal qualifications,” as well as removing professors from the university “due to their professional, moral, or social unsuitability.”<sup>16</sup> Based on this paragraph and the opinion of two professors, Sovre was rapidly made associate professor in April 1946.

He was not an international scholar. “I had no contacts abroad, nor do I have any today,” he wrote in his application for full professorship (*o tempora, o mores*; but these were times when contacts, particularly

12 SI-AS 4483, “Vprašalna pola, Anton Sovre,” March 16, 1949; cf. Movrlin, “The Anatomy of a Revolution,” 154. For the original documents, see Movrlin, “Fran Bradač, Anton Sovre, Milan Grošelj, Jože Košar in Fran Petre,” 449.

13 SI-AS 4483, “Vprašalna pola, Anton Sovre,” March 16, 1949; the evaluation was written by Jože Košar.

14 Sovre, “Zahvaljeni, rešitelji, in iz veselih src pozdravljeni,” published in *Slovenski poročevalec*, May 9, 1945, 1.

15 For the context, see Gabrič, “Odpuščanje profesorjev Univerze v Ljubljani,” 14–19.

16 Kozak and Kidrič, “Začasna uredba Narodne vlade Slovenije o univerzitetnih oblastvih in učnem osebju,” 158.

in the West, could do serious harm, and Sovre was aware of that).<sup>17</sup> His translations, nonetheless, remain a groundbreaking achievement; most are still used, and after he died, the national translation award was named after him. His output was crowned, in 1959, by a translation of *De rerum natura* by Lucretius.<sup>18</sup> Welcomed by the proponents of dialectic materialism,<sup>19</sup> over 500 pages of this publication remain one of the most majestic editions and the stateliest Slovenian classical translation of the era, if not the century. In 1959, when Sovre published Lucretius, he was already the decision-maker among Slovenian classicists – and was thus asked to submit his proposal. The manuscript preserved represents a unique insight into the status quo and the timid hopes of the discipline, whose suspiciously bourgeois credentials frequently made it the scapegoat of the regime.

The broader context of the document was the Third Yugoslav Five-Year Plan, covering the years from 1961 to 1965. The preparations started in early 1959. The institution behind the process was the Federal Institute of Economic Planning – and unlike the earlier attempts, which

17 Anton Sovre, “Personalna mapa – življenjepis,” January 20, 1951; University of Ljubljana Faculty of Arts, archives.

18 Researching the archives of the publisher which brought out Lucretius, I happened upon a case of a manuscript submitted by what George Orwell might term an unperson. In 1954, Slovenska matica was trying to decide whether to publish “The History of Greek and Roman Philosophy,” written by Dr. Josip Jeraj (1892–1964). National and University Library Ms 1987 preserves its carefully-worded evaluation. The editor Božidar Borko wrote that the level of the text might be somewhat high for the “Philosophical Library” series since it is “based on careful examination of the sources, attested by quotations, some of them in Greek,” and “has the scholarly apparatus.” He showed the text to Alma Sodnik, who taught history of philosophy at the University of Ljubljana, and together, they reached the inevitable conclusion: “The manuscript must be first inspected by comrade Boris Zihlerl; he should decide whether, in principle, the text ideologically corresponds to what is needed in contemporary philosophical thinking and philosophical education.” On May 15, 1954, publisher’s representatives Anton Melik and Ferdo Godina sent the text to Boris Zihlerl, the head of the Ideological Commission of the Communist Party’s Central Committee. It seems that he was not impressed; one suspects that his final decision was influenced by the fact that the author, Dr. Josip Jeraj, got his doctorate in theology – and was indeed a Catholic priest. His manuscript was never published. It took another quarter of a century before a book on this topic, Primož Simoniti’s translation of Karl Vorländer’s *History of Philosophy*, became available in Slovenian – alas, again with scholarly apparatus, but the publisher had decided that this was still better than nothing.

19 For a representative review, see Pirkovič, “Nesmrtni helenski genij,” published in *Naša sodobnost* in 1959.

focused on heavy industry and agriculture, this one tried to balance the economy<sup>20</sup> and even included a chapter on science and research. It required every department in every university to report its ambitions, and the report signed by Sovre was duly submitted.

This Five-Year Plan was stillborn from the very beginning and marked by significant political disagreements. The two northern republics, Slovenia and Croatia, pushed for decentralization and for giving the republics more influence regarding their budgets. The southern and less-developed republics saw this position as somewhat selfish. They demanded the return of uncompromising central planning, which meant significant investments in heavy industry in their regions.<sup>21</sup> True to style, the authorities in Belgrade published the plan five-to-twelve on Saturday, December 31, 1960, only a few hours before it was supposed to come into effect.<sup>22</sup>

The necessary input was gathered during the two years before that, with institutions over the country queried for suggestions. On October 17, 1959, Anton Sovre opened the proposal in his prodigiously bombastic style:

Considering today's immense speed of progress within the technical sciences, in the time when humans are successfully preparing for the occupation of the solar system, it does not seem strange that humanist education once again got the role of the sacrificial lamb, to be slaughtered at the altar of the disciplines of the natural sciences. What is the meaning, we hear people grumble, for our society to spend the money to get acquainted with the world that was extinct thousands of years ago while this precious workforce could be better used in other fields? Away with this anachronistic rubbish, what need is there of Homers, what need of Platos, of Aristotles? All very lovely, but such reasoning is essentially an echo of vulgar practicalism, which does not see (or cannot see) the dialectical connection between the average level of general culture and the external technical achievements. True, dealing with antiquity does not have such shining perspectives as nuclear physics or astronautics, yet the ancient culture is nonetheless the cornerstone of our entire cultural building.

20 Borak, *Ekonomski vidiki delovanja in razpada Jugoslavije*, 48.

21 Prinčič, *V začaranem krogu*, 151–75.

22 Zvezna ljudska skupščina FLRJ, "Družbeni plan ... od leta 1961 do 1965." Specific steps to be taken in 1961 were published on the same day; see Zvezna ljudska skupščina FLRJ, "Zvezni družbeni plan za leto 1961."

He then promptly proceeded to show the three reasons which make antiquity relevant for the present generation. These reasons are 1) science, 2) culture, and 3) education. First, science, because antiquity remains to be explored, despite centuries of research; discoveries appear daily, Sovre explains, bringing methodological enrichment of other disciplines, such as literature and art history. "If we remember that classical philology in some of its branches, such as syntax and stylistics, remains several horse lengths ahead of the philologies of the modern languages, it would be truly pity to undercut its research activity."

It is easy to believe his claims since his own stylistics certainly shine when it comes to defending the role classics can play in the field of culture.

The entire European culture, our entire way of thinking, and the relationship toward sciences and arts have their roots planted in the ground of antiquity. To remove antiquity from our cultural life means to cut the branch on which we are sitting. I am saying this with full presence of mind, and I wish from all my heart that the decision-making circles would think about this metaphor. If the modern man were to forget everything that these millennia of heritage have brought to him, he would be back to the primitive level, and there would be no Explorers and no Luniks!<sup>23</sup> Whenever during the course of history, a certain period has disavowed antiquity, it always got lost in unimportant experiments; when antiquity provided rebirth, it created great things.... To cut the story short, the cultural tradition of antiquity has to be the seed and the impulse for independent creation, and the humanism of antiquity should be the first step to the realization of socialist humanism. It is precisely the literature of antiquity that represents an inexhaustible treasury for the education of the new, complete, and rich socialist personality.

Having proven the cultural significance of antiquity for the education of socialist personality, Sovre eventually proceeded to show its educational relevance.

23 Explorer 1, the first US satellite and America's answer to Sputnik 1, was launched on February 1, 1958. "Lunik" was a media nickname for the Soviet Luna program, a series of robotic spacecraft missions sent to the Moon, with Luna 1 being the first spacecraft to escape the Earth-Moon system in January 1959 – and Luna 2 successfully hitting the Moon surface in September 1959, inspiring Sovre to write these lines a few weeks later.

By learning Latin grammar, young people train their brains, and this training helps them in their further studying for their profession, as well as in their later practical life,<sup>24</sup> where they generally know their way around for the most part easier than their colleagues who did not go to humanist schools. I remember how, right after the First World War, the shoe factory manager in Ptuj – a German from Vienna – kept offering me a job. “Sie haben,” he said, “die klassische Schulbildung hinter sich und verfügen daher über ein trainiertes Gehirn: und die Industrie *braucht* trainierte Gehirne.”<sup>25</sup> Despite his capitalist ideology, this man valued the worth of classical education correctly. This recognition is nowadays finding its way even in America, and classical studies have been gaining much ground there. For even America needs trained brains. The more meager and slower successes of the American astrophysicists<sup>26</sup> seem to have their cause, in the final analysis, in the fact that the Russian brain, after centuries of humanist education, is trained better than the American brains, which have no such tradition. (I do not know what is going on with classical schools in Russia today; even if they really curtailed it, the sediment of tradition is there, and this leaven keeps having an effect. In any case, after the last war was over, they published the translation and extensive commentary of Lucretius’ poem *On the Nature of the World*.) Suppose I add to this practical side of classical education its ideal side, the very fact that studying ancient authors cultivates aesthetic sensibility and imparts universal knowledge. In that case, one can easily understand what loss it would be to discard this precious ideological material. That is why classical languages need to be given the position that belongs to them, not because of tradition and piety but because of their utility and actual worth. One probably does not need to point out all the areas where the influence of antiquity is manifested, starting from Greek drama, still alive on the stages of the world, through Greek philosophy, which is the basis for all the European currents of thought, to the Roman law,

24 One can vividly imagine Sovre crossing this part out while rereading the program and deciding that sometimes, less is more.

25 “You have had the classical education in school, and you thus possess a trained brain – and the industry needs trained brains.”

26 This was in 1959 when the USA was still lagging in the space race. The Soviets were triumphant with the first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1, in October 1957, as well as with the first animal in a spacecraft, Laika, aboard Sputnik 2, in November 1957 – and were well under way to put the first human in orbit, Yuri Gagarin in Vostok 1, in 1961.



the foundation for the legal consciousness of the world. These are well-known facts. We should consider these facts when preparing the prospective plan of scholarly work. Otherwise, time might show cracks in the sensitive field of social sciences, and future generations might be starved of classical humanism because we are pushing it today into, one could say, hopeless defensive.

This is where the crude reality can suddenly be gleamed behind the cautious rhetoric. One doubts whether Anton Sovre harbored any illusions regarding life in the Soviet Union, where his younger brother Baltazar Sovre lost his life during the Great Terror, shot at 42 “for spying, anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda” on December 22, 1937.<sup>27</sup> He was certainly able to observe, with his own eyes, the Stalinist onslaught on the Slovenian classical gymnasia that lasted from 1945 to 1949, and his feigned ignorance must have been rhetorically crafted *dissimulatio*. But all that was ancient history. Written in 1959, these pleas came only one year after the school reform of 1958,<sup>28</sup> which destroyed the few remaining classical gymnasia, once again significantly undermining the position of Latin. Latin gained some ground after Yugoslavia was ostracized by Stalin and his Cominform in 1948 and was forced to look for help in the capitalist West.<sup>29</sup> Ten years later, Stalin was dead, even if not yet buried;<sup>30</sup> the threat was gone, and there was no need for the Yugoslav communists to dialectically compromise with the class enemy any longer.

That is why the proposals regarding classical studies that followed in the “prospective program” were little more than a wish list. They called for research in medieval Latinity in the region, understanding the influence of European Renaissance humanism on the local Reformation movement, and the influence of antiquity on Slovenian literature. They included a daring proposal for the division of labor between classics departments in Yugoslavia; Ljubljana would become the center for historical syntax; Skopje in Macedonia for Mycenaean and Belgrade for Byzantine studies.

27 Vujošević Cica, *Nestajali netragom*, 253. For details about Baltazar’s life, see Kristan, “Anton Sòvre in Anton Sovrè,” 93.

28 Gabrič, *Šolska reforma 1953–1963*. For a concise overview of the economic context of the Second Five-Year Plan – namely crisis, strike actions, and stagnation, see Prinčič, *Slovensko gospodarstvo v drugi Jugoslaviji*, 48–57.

29 See Movrin, “*Gratiae plenum*,” *Keria* 12, no. 2–3 (2010). For English translation, see “Yugoslavia in 1949 and its *gratiae plenum*.”

30 The Father of Nations was only taken from the mausoleum on October 31, 1961, under cover of Halloween night, to be quietly interred near the Kremlin wall.

In the sphere of culture, the document suggested a translation program, calling for prioritizing Plato, Aristotle, Greek lyrics, Greek tragedy, Polybius, Vergil, Cezar, Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus, as well as those Byzantine writers that deal with the Slavs.<sup>31</sup> Finally, in the sphere of education, it called for new dictionaries. In the end, it proposed an institute for classical studies to be created within the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts while calling for returning Latin to schools to allow classics students a modicum of hope for a career.

A remarkable feature that stands out in the essay is another colleague who participated in the writing – mentioned in the very beginning. In the opening paragraph, Anton Sovre refers to one of his students:

After a discussion with several colleagues in the profession, and particularly with the help of my student Dr. Gantar, I propose the following prospective work program for my discipline.

At that time, Kajetan Gantar (1930–2022) had already defended his PhD thesis on Homer. Due to political reasons, he was initially blocked from getting a university position. However, the situation changed somewhat during the thaw in the sixties, when he could finally get the position of lecturer, and he eventually became the leading classical scholar and translator in the country.<sup>32</sup> In January 2022, weeks before he was to be presented with the Prešeren Award, the highest national recognition in the sphere of culture, for his lifetime achievement in translation, I interviewed him in front of the audience in the great hall of the Slovenian Academy of Arts and Sciences. I could not resist the temptation; I asked him about the program submitted by his professor over six decades earlier, specifically about the curious fact that the leading figure of the discipline referred to his student in the opening paragraph. As usual, Gantar's answer was highly informative – and marked by his characteristically understated humor:

Professor Sovre wanted me to be his successor, and after my first seminar paper, he came up excitedly and said, “Come to me and our head of department, [Milan] Grošelj; you will become my successor.” However, I did not have the moral and political qualifications needed;

31 True to its name, Yugoslavia fostered Slavonic studies and instigated a search for the relevant sources; for the political discussion of this topic on the highest level, in the Politburo, see Movrin, “Yugoslavia in 1949 and its *gratiae plenum*,” 306.

32 For an overview of his work, see Čop, Hrovatič, and Rott, “Bibliografija.”

I had been imprisoned by the OZNA [secret police] for a while, and so on – even though classical philology was not a particular priority of the regime. [...] I was then offered a job by my former headmaster, Stane Melihar. He had been dismissed from the headmaster's post [at Ljubljana Classical Gymnasium] because he had allowed various subversive activities – various literary study groups not exactly in line with Marxism – to appear at the Classical Gymnasium. However, Stane Melihar was sent [by the Germans] to Dachau during the war, so he was untouchable as a personality. Still, he was deprived of the directorship since the fact that he had allowed such things suggested that he was not alert enough. A similar thing happened [at the Classical Gymnasium] in Maribor, [Jože] Košar was removed from his position [of the headmaster] when dissidents appeared there. Well, Melihar eventually became a high-ranking official in the administration of the Slovenian republic in the Secretariat – this was what you would now call a ministry, but then it was called Secretariat for Culture and Enlightenment – and he oversaw the Council for Science. Whenever there were various five-year or seven-year research plans to be produced, this Council for Science asked for such plans to be made – plans of what was to be done. Melihar told me, “If you are out of a job, I will take you; I need somebody, and you are reliable.” He knew me from my student days. “And you know languages; you will help me.” His Council for Science was the predecessor of what is today the Ministry of Science, except that there were only two people back then – Stane Melihar as the head and me as a clerk. The University did not come under our jurisdiction at all, nor did the Academy, only certain technical institutes which were not a part of the University. Our only non-technical institute was the Institute for Ethnic Studies, which was somewhat different. [...] The institutes had to work out these plans, which were more like wish lists – and above all, calculate what should be done. I knew how the technical institutes and the Institute for Ethnic Studies did it, so Professor Sovre once called me to his home. I was living nearby, he knew me as his former student, and he said, “I am the only classicist at the Academy, now I am trying to arrange for Professor [Milan] Grošelj to become a member as well, but I have to submit this [prospective plan] by such and such a deadline, so write something down.” So, I wrote something after the same pattern I saw with the technical institutes – I no longer have that paper; I gave it to Sovre. Then Sovre told me: “But Mr. Gantar,” – not just me, he called everybody “Mister,” never “Comrade” – “but Mr. Gantar, I cannot submit this [under my name], this is yours.” I said, come on. So, he said, “I suppose it was

done the way it should be done.” I told him I do not consider the text to be my personal masterpiece; I did it the way they did at the Institute for Research of Materials and Structures or the Laboratory for Hydroelectric Power Stations – if they can do it, we can do it for classical philology, too.<sup>33</sup>

Gantar’s insider information explains the sudden change of tone after the first two and a half pages, from what Cicero might term *genus orationis Asiaticum*, beloved by Sovre, toward the stricter standards of the *oratores Attici* (or at least *genus medium ... atque ex utroque mixtum*, to use Quintilian’s phrase). *Le style, c’est l’homme*; one can safely say that sections 2 and 3 of the document were predominantly based on the draft prepared by Gantar, with Sovre only occasionally writing over the top of his initial draft, while the magnificent introduction on “the topical relevance of classical philology” in section 1 was penned by Sovre, apparently to avoid the feeling of merely signing somebody else’s rough copy.

More importantly, Gantar’s testimony underlines the problems with such planning. First, the context of the five-year plans, “the instability, the cycling behavior, and the tendency toward radical administrative strategies that excessive bureaucratization imparts.”<sup>34</sup> This was deeply flawed. None of these plans were successful, but this one was particularly ill-conceived.

The proposals were submitted in late 1959, duly analyzed, and then put together by the end of December 1960. One sterling example of the economic fiascos from that period was a facility in Velenje, initiated by Slovenian authorities in 1961 and meant to convert coal into gas. It would cost an obscene amount of money, about 6 percent of Slovenia’s GDP at the time,<sup>35</sup> and was canceled when it became clear that the local brown coal could not provide enough energy to compete with cheap gas from abroad – but not before the equipment had already been bought. It was later dubbed “The largest non-natural economic disaster in Slovenia.”<sup>36</sup>

33 Movrin, “Filologija ne gradi samo na logiki,” 169–70. The interview was published posthumously, paying the journal’s respects to the scholar who published one of his last scholarly papers in its first issue; see Gantar, “Ovidijeva poezija ob soočenjih z Avgustovim režimom.”

34 Beissinger, *Scientific Management, Socialist Discipline, and Soviet Power*, 298.

35 According to the official data from World Bank, GDP in Slovenia was worth 61.53 billion us dollars in 2021; adjusted for recent inflation, those 6% would currently mean around 4 billion USD.

36 Repe, “Energokemični kombinat Velenje,” 119.

Already in June 1962, a mere year and a half into the project, Tito proclaimed that the solution for the problems that had accumulated in the country called for the revision of the Prospective Plan. Only a month later, the Central Committee held a plenary meeting and declared that the Five-Year Plan had become unrealistic and that “organized work should immediately start” for creating the Seven-Year Plan for 1964–70.<sup>37</sup> The whole circle started again. Indeed, the soundest study of that context, the analysis of the socialist economy in Slovenia between 1955 and 1970 by historian Jože Prinčič, is titled *The Vicious Circle*.<sup>38</sup>

The second and perhaps more significant problem was that the Party was not interested in what classicists had to say. Even the republics themselves had a minimal role. As Boris Kraigher, the president of the Executive Council of the People’s Republic of Slovenia, noted on the eve of the project, December 30, 1960,

a constitutional right of the republic to make its own Plan would be unrealistic. In fact, the republic has no such possibility. Yugoslavia is a space united; everything is decided by the federal Plan. From that perspective, the republics can have programs but no plans.<sup>39</sup>

This somber realization explains why Sovre, far further down the pecking order from Kraigher, speaks of a “program” and not a “plan” in his first sentence. His input was mostly irrelevant; classicists, with their modest proposal, were just one of the many scholarly communities involved in what was, in the end, a pointless ritual. The policy toward Latin in schools remained the same; if anything, it became more hostile during *anni di piombo* of the seventies, when the very concept of a gymnasium was attacked and demolished.<sup>40</sup>

Interestingly, the proposals suggested by Gantar and Sovre eventually came to fruition once this policy fell apart – together with the

37 The Seven-Year Plan was another example of parroting the Soviet system, where Khrushchev had been espousing this innovation; see Hoeffding, “Substance and Shadow in the Soviet Seven-Year Plan,” 394–406. For the Yugoslav variant (and the Slovenian opposition), see Prinčič, *V začaranem krogu*, 195–210.

38 Prinčič, *V začaranem krogu*; for a wider context, see Ellman, “Rise and Fall of Socialist Planning.”

39 The minutes of Session 68 of the Executive Council, held on December 30, 1960, are cited by Prinčič, *V začaranem krogu*, 161. For further details about the “program” in question see Ljudska skupščina LR Slovenije, “Resolucija o programu ... od 1961 do 1965. leta.”

40 Baskar, *Latinščine, prosim*. For the context, see Milharčič-Hladnik and Šušteršič, *Šolska reforma je papirnati tiger*.

Berlin wall.<sup>41</sup> In the early nineties, gymnasia returned and started teaching Latin; some of these students went on to study classics, and the number of translations eventually far surpassed those proposed above. Research on Slovenian Humanists, interdisciplinary studies in the Reformation, translations of Greek philosophy, lyric poetry, tragedy, and historiography, as well as Roman epic and lyric poetry, philosophical and historical prose; Latin-Slovenian dictionary in six volumes; thriving contacts with universities all over Europe; specialized scholarly journals; and the expansion of the Department of Classics in Ljubljana – everything that Kajetan Gantar was envisioning at the turn of the sixties was eventually achieved. Primarily due to his focused grassroots efforts, as he translated key texts by Aeschylus (1957 and 1982), Aristotle (1959 and 1964), Procopius (1961), Horace (1966 and 1993), Sappho (1970), Propertius (1971), Catullus (1974), Hesiod (1974), Ovid (1977), Pindar (1980), Plautus (1970 and 1991), Herondas (1971), Sophocles (1973, 1978 and 1985), Terence (1987), Homer (1994), Euripides (2001), Longinus (2011), and others – and tended to the discipline, *in dürftiger Zeit*, bringing up generations of classicists who then translated many more. As the notorious Soviet mantra had proclaimed back in the thirties: *Plan – zakon, vpolneniye – dolg, perevypolneniye – chest'*; “Plan is law, fulfillment is duty, over-fulfillment is honor.” Paradoxically, it took the system’s collapse to bring about the dream of every socialist planner: the Plan that was not only fulfilled but over-fulfilled.

A thought that lingers, however, is the one articulated by the astute scholar and researcher of Soviet economy, Holland Hunter: “A number of alternative paths were available, ... leading to levels of capacity and output that could have been as good as those achieved ... yet with far less turbulence, waste, destruction, and sacrifice.”<sup>42</sup>

41 For an evaluation of the broader phenomenon, see the final chapter by Ellman, *Socialist Planning*, 362–95.

42 Hunter, “The Overambitious First Soviet Five-Year Plan,” 256.

## PERSPEKTIVNI RAZVOJ KLASIČNE FILOLOGIJE

Po razgovoru z nekaterimi stanovskimi tovariši, posebno pa ob sodelovanju mojega učenca dr. Gantarja, predlagam za svojo stroko tale perspektivni delovni program:

I

### Aktualni pomen klasične filologije

Ob silovitem tempu, s katerim napredujejo danes tehnične vede, v času, ko se človek uspešno pripravlja na okupacijo sončnega sistema, pravzaprav nikar/ čudno [ni], da je humanistična izobrazba pri nas iznova prevzela vlogo daritvenega jagajetaja ki naj se zakolje na oltarju prirodoznaskih disciplin. Kakšen smisel ima, slišimo zabavljati, da naša družba troši denar, zlasti pa [dragocene] delovne moči, ki bi jih koristneje porabljali na drugih področjih, za spoznavanje pred tisoči let izumrlega sveta? Proč s to anahronistično navlako, kaj nam #treba je Homerjev, kaj Platonov, Aristotelov? Zelo lepo, [ali] takšno umovanje [je] v bistvu odmev grobega praktიცizma, ki ne vidi # [ali] ne more videti - [dialektične povezanosti med splošnim kulturnim povprečjem in zunanji tehničnimi dosežki. Res je, da ukvarjanje z antiko nima tako bleščečih perspektiv kakor jedrska fizika in astronavtika, zato pa je antična kultura slej ko prej temeljni kamen naše celotne kulturne stavbe.

Trije momenti so, ki se mi kaže v njih pomembnost antike za nas, to je znanstveni, kulturni in vzgojni moment.

Znanstveni pomen. Kulturna dedina antike navzlic [stoletnemu] proučevanju še davno ni dovolj raziskana. [Tako rekoč vsak dan] prihajajo [na svetlo] [nove] arheološke najdbe ter [nam] osvetljujejo antično družbeno [in] gospodarsko [in] [pa tudi] politično življenje z vedno novo lučjo. Novi prijemi in nove metode v analizi literarnih in likovnih umetnin so privedli do razkritja novih estetskih [in] etičnih vrednot, obenem pa pomenijo metodološko obogatitev slovtvens in umetnostno-zgodovinske vede sploh. (Čelo Slovenci, katudi po mednarodnem merilu ne pomenimo na tem področju tako rekoč nič, smo pred nedavnim v Gantarjevi disertaciji Oblikovanje prostora in časa v Homerjevih epih dobili delo, ki je vpoštovanja vreden doprinos k homerskemu slovtvu.) Če pomislimo k temu, da je klasična filologija v nekaterih panogah, recimo v sintaksi in stilistiki, za več konjskih dolžin pred filologijami modernih jezikov, bi bilo resnično škoda, da bi ji povsem spodvezali raziskovalno dejalnost.

Kulturni pomen. Vsa evropska kultura, ves način mišljenja in odnos do znanosti in umetnosti ima korenine v antičnih tleh. Odpravljati antiko iz našega kulturnega življenja se pravi žagati vejo, na kateri sedimo. To trdim ob popolni prisebnosti in odkritosrčno želim, da bi se odločilni krogi zami-

slili ob tej metafori. Ko bi moderni človek nenadoma pozabil vse, kar mu je prinesla ta tisočletna dedina, bi zdrknil nazaj na raven primitivnosti, in ne bilo bi Explorerjev in Lunikov! Kadar koli se je v zgodovini kaka doba oddaljila od antike, vselej se je izgubila v brezpomembnih eksperimentih; ko pa jo je antika spet prerodila, je ustvarila velike seči: zakaj antika je bila, kakor pravi dr. I. Prijatelj, vsem velikim dobam zlat korektiv zoper mlado zaletelost in staro okorelost. Nam antična kultura ni več norma, kakor je bila srednjemu veku - tedaj je odkritje klasičnega strokovnega slovstva (medicine etc) pomenilo pozitivno povečanje znanja -, četudi se še danes lahko učimo od grške filozofije in umetnosti; nam zanimanje za antično kulturno tradicijo ne narekuje potrebe po obnavljanju konkretne vsebine preživelih virov, pač pa potrebo po obnovitvi humanistične kulture kot žive oblike, ki jo moramo polniti z novo vsebino: skratka, antična kulturna tradicija nam mora biti seme in spodbuda za samostojno ustvarjanje, antični humanizem prvi korak na poti do ostvaritve socialističnega humanizma. Zakaj ravno antična književnost predstavlja neizčrpno zakladnico za vzgojo nove, polne in bogate socialistične osebnosti.

Vzgojni pomen. S tem sem prišel do tretjega, to je vzgojnega pomena antike. Po znanem nehumanističnem naziranju je učenje latinščine nenadomestljivo sredstvo za logično šolanje duha in za pridobivanje formalne izobrazbe. Res je, da opravljajo to nalogo poleg matematike tudi materinščina in drugi moderni jeziki, vendar ne v tolikšni meri kakor latinska slovnica. Moderni jeziki so si podobni v zgradbi, območje iste kulture pa razvoj tehnike in civilizacije jih zbližujeta: gramatični procesi so pri vseh bolj ali manj enaki, beseda dobiva isti pojmovni obseg, razlike postajajo minimalne. Zato je tudi napor pri usvajanju modernih jezikov razmeroma majhen. Namen učenja modernih jezikov je njih vladovanje, pedagoški pomen latinščine pa izvira iz njenih specifičnih lastnosti, kakršne so racionalnost, strunna duhovna disciplina, smisel za natančnost in red. O tem priča vsaka Liviova in Ciceronova perioda, arhitektonska zgradba, ki nam omogoča, da z enim pogledom objamemo cel kompleks prerasličnih sodb. Kdor ne pozna latinske periode, sploh ne ve, kaj zmore človeški jezik.

Ob učenju latinske slovnice si mladi človek trenira možgane, in ta trening mu pomaga, da se tudi pri nadaljnem študiju za poklic in v kasnejšem praktičnem življenju znajde povečini laže kakor njegovi tovariši, ki niso obiskovali humanističnih šol. Spominjam se, da me je neposredno po prvi svetovni vojni vabil direktor ptujske tovarne za čevlje - bil je dunajski Nemec -, naj stopim pri njem v službo. "Sie haben," je dejal, "die klassische Schulbildung hinter sich und verfügen daher über ein trainiertes Gehirn: und die Industrie braucht trainierte Gehirne." Mož je kljub svoji kapitalistični ideologiji pravilno ocenjeval vrednost klasične izobrazbe. To spoznanje si danes utira pot celo v Ameriki, in klasični študij se tam močno uveljavlja.

Zakaj tudi Ameriki so potrebni trenirani možgani. Slabši in počasnejši uspe-



ni ameriških astrofizikov - kaj velja, da imajo vzrok konec koncev v tem, ker so ruski možgani po stoletja trajajoči humanistični vzgoji bolj trenirani mimo ameriških, saj ti te tradicije nimajo. (Kako je s klasično šolo v Rusiji danes, ne vem; pa tudi če so jo omejili, usedlina tradicije je tu, in ta kvas učinkuje naprej. Vsekakor so ob koncu zadnje vojne izdali prevod in obširen komentar Lukrecovega poema O naravi sveta.) Če pridnem tej praktični strani klasičnega pouka še idealno stran, namreč, da študij antičnih avtorjev kulti- vira estetski čut in posreduje vsestransko razgledanost, je pač ka-li umljiva, da bi bilo škoda zavreči ta dragoceni ideološki material. Zato je treba klasičnima jezikoma dati tisto mesto, ki jima pripada, ne zaradi tradicije in pietete, ampak zaradi njih koristnosti in stvarne vrednosti. Saj menda ni treba posebej poudarjati vseh področij, na katerih se manifestira vpliv anti- ke, od grške drame, ki na svetovnih odrih še zmeraj živi, preko grške filozofije, ki je osnova vseh evropskih miselnih tokov, pa do rimskega prava, ki temelji na njem svetovna pravna zavest. To so znana dejstva. In ta dejstva moramo imeti pred očmi, kadar sestavljamo perspektivni program znanstvenega dela, da se ne bodo s časom pokazale razpoke na občutljivem področju družbe- nih ved in da ne bodo prihodnji rodovi stradali klasičnega humanizma, ker ga danes potiskamo v, rekel bi, brezupno defenzivo.

## II

### Naloge klasične filologije v naši republici

Perspektivne naloge na področju klasične filologije bi bile trojne: raziskovalne, kulturne in pedagoške.

Raziskovalne naloge. Spričo širokega razmaha, ki ga je klasična filologija doživela v zadnjih sto letih, je izključeno, da bi v naši republici imeli specialiste za vsa njena področja. Zategadelj je nujno, da se omejimo na nekatere posamezne veje, in to predvsem take, ki imajo pogoje v naših stvarnih potrebah in možnostih. Najpomembnejše med temi nalogami so:

a/ Srednjeveška latinska književnost na naših tleh. To delo bi bilo treba organizirati v sodelovanju z rokopisnim oddelkom NUK.

b/ Vpliv evropskega humanizma na naš protestantizem. Tu naj bi poleg klasičnih filologov sodelovali še slavisti, romanisti in zgodovinarji.

c/ Slovenski humanisti na tujem. Precej naših humanistov je delovalo na Dunaju in v drugih evropskih univerzitetnih centrih: treba jih je le odkriti. Kako se taki reči streže, je pokazala A. Sodnikova s svojo študijo o "Kranjcu Matiji Hvaletu iz Vač".

d/ Antični vplivi na slovensko kulturno preteklost. Razen vpliva antike na Frešerna ni bilo o tej stvari napisano tako rekoč nič. In vendar je znano, da je bil Gregorčič goreč oboževalec Homerja; da je Aškerc rad zajemal snovi tudi iz rimske zgodovine; da je Finžgar za svoj roman Pod svobodnim soncem



d/ prevod nekaterih grških dram, in sicer: Aischilos Oresteia in Uklenjeni Prometeus; Sofokles Elektra, Filoktet, Oidipus na Kolonu; Euripides Medea, Ifigenja na Tauridi, Bakhe. Kot nujno dopolnilo k prevodom pa bi bil potreben prikaz izvora in razvoja grške dramatike, antičnega gledališča in odrske tehnike;

e/ prevod Polibiove Zgodovine;

f/ poljušen, z literarno pretenzijo pisan prikaz helenistične kulture in prevod poglavitnih del iz njenega obdobja, na primer Teofrastovih Značajej, Herondovih Mimiambov in nekaterih lirikov (Kalimaha, Asklepiada, Meleagra);

g/ izbor iz Vergila, ta naj bi obsegal Ekloge v celoti, odlomke iz Georgik in vsaj I, IV in VI spev Eneide;

h/ prevod rimskih zgodovinarjev Cezarja, Salusta, Livia, in Tacita.

i/ Poleg prevoda celotnih del Platona in Aristotela bi bilo treba pripraviti iz njih še filozofske čitanke; isto velja za Cicerona, Seneka, Bostia, pa tudi za kasnejše avtorje, denimo Spinozo, Bacona in Huma.

k/ Pomembno nalogo vidim tudi v prevodu nekaterih bizantinskih piscev, recimo Prokopia, Ane Komnena, Nikefora, Konstantina V škrlatu rojenega, ki obravnavajo tudi zgodovino južnih Slovanov. K temu bi bil potreben še prikaz bizantinske zgodovine in kulture. O tem Slovenci nimamo še nobenega dela. Tu je bržda naše poznavanje antike najbolj pomanjkljivo. Napačna je predstava, da je bila bizantinska doba samo petrefakt slavni antičnih tradicij, narobe: Bizanc je po razpadu zahodne polovice rimskega imperija živel še 1000 let in nosil v sebi še toliko vitalnih sil, da je razvil naravnost neverjetno kulturno ekspanzijo, vključil v svojo idejno sfero vse Podonavje in Balkan, prekvasil duhovno življenje južnih in vzhodnih Slovanov ter mu s cirilskim pisomom dal neizbrisen zunanji pečat. Oči srbskih kraljev in bolgarskih carjev so bile tudi v časih njih največje moči uprte v zlato mesto ob Bosporu, obli-to z magičnim sijem davnine. Veličastne kupole kraljevskih zadužbin na Kosoven, stroge poteze pravoslavnih ikon, barvite inicialke v srednjeveških rokopisih so poleg cirilice še danes glasna priča bizantinskega kulturnega vpliva. Že zavolje tega mogočnega vpliva na južne pokrajine naše države je nujno, da se tudi pri nas bizantologiji posveti večja pazljivost.

l/ Glede na čedalje živahnije gospodarske in kulturne stike med našo državo in Grčijo bi bilo treba na naših univerzah uvesti tudi pouk novogrškega jezika in književnosti.

Pedagoške naloge. Pedagoške naloge pravzaprav ne sodijo v ta okvir, marveč v področje šolstva; vendar se mi kljub temu zdi prav, da opozorim na potrebo izdaje nekaterih pripomočkov za uspešno pedagoško, pa tudi kulturno-prosvetno in znanstveno delo. Predvsem bi bilo treba

a/ izdati latinsko-slovenski besednjak. Da bi se nadaljeval tisk Wiesthalerjevega rokopisa, ne kaže, ker je delo za naše razmere preobširno in po frazeologiji močno zastarelo. Potreben je nov slovar (v obsegu 1500-2000 strani), delo zanj pa naj bi se organiziralo kolektivno, ker ga en sam člo-

vek ne zmore v doglednem času. Tudi na izdajo grško-slovenskega slovarja bo treba misliti, vendar zanj sila še ni tolikšna kakor za latinskega.

b/ Potreben je, dalje, filozofski slovar, ta naj bi vseboval poleg izrazo-  
alovja antične filozofije tudi srednjeveško.

c/ Oskrbi naj se priročnik antične mitologije, bodisi v leksikalni obliki,  
bodisi kot sistematski prikaz, pisan z literarno ambicijo.

### III

#### Finančno in kadrovsko vprašanje

Da bo moč izvršiti nakazane naloge, je treba zagotoviti poseben sklad za zbiranje gradiva, ki je v zvezi z našo kulturno-zgodovinsko preteklostjo, in za pripravo latinsko-slovenskega besednjaka. Sklad za znanstvene naloge naj bi znašal vsaj 300.000 din letno, ravno toliko sklad za slovar, ali pa naj bi se nastavil poseben uslužbenec. Slovenski založniški svet bi moral izdatno podpreti izdajanje prevodov iz obeh klasičnih literatur in poljudnoznanstvenih del s tega področja.

Predvsem pa je treba rešiti kadrovsko vprašanje. Zanimanje za antiko je pri našem delovnem človeku presenetljivo živo. To se je pokazalo n. pr. ob izidu Iliade, Odiseje in prvega dela Plutarha, saj so bile knjige navzlic razmeroma visoki nakladi razprodane že v nekaj tednih. Zato ni dvoma, da bi se našli tudi mladi talenti, ki bi bili voljni posvetiti se klasičnemu študiju, samo ko bi imeli perspektive za eksistenco v svoji stroki. Tako pa se mora še tistih nekaj ljudi, ki so dokončali ta študij, ubadati s pisarniškim in računovodskim delom pri Kompas, Medexu in drugih podjetjih ali pa s poučevanjem matematike, zemljepisa in kaj vem katerih predmetov še, ker ni možnosti za namestitev v njih matični stroki, odkar so klasične gimnazije odpravljene in latinščina izrinjena iz šol. Tak odnos prosvetne politike do klasičnih jezikov je krivičen, krivičen pa tudi do teh mladih ljudi samih, ker jim ni dano, da bi delali v stroki, za katero imajo kvalifikacijo. Zategadelj je nujno potrebno, da se na določnem številu gimnazij obnovi obvezni pouk klasičnih jezikov: zanimanje zanj je še zmeraj precejšnje. Dalje bi bilo treba okrepiti klasični seminar na filozofski fakulteti ali pa - če bi ta seminar zaradi brezperspektivnosti glade zaposlitve absolventov kot pedagoška ustanova izgubil pogoje za obstoj - ustanoviti poseben institut za klasično antiko oziroma posebno sekcijo za antično književnost pri Institutu za literature na SAZU. Tak seminar (sekcija, institut) bi moral imeti vsaj pet sodelavcev: univerzitetnega predavatelja ali znanstvenega sodelavca ali asistenta za grški in latinski jezik; univerzitetnega predavatelja ali znanstvenega sodelavca ali asistenta za

antično književnost in umetnost;

univerzitetnega predavatelja ali znanstvenega sodelavca ali asistenta za bizantologijo;

lektorja za latinski jezik;

lektorja za klasično in novo grščino.

Vsekakor je nujno, da bi po odpravi klasične gimnazije ostalo v naši republiki vsaj še eno močno žarišče humanistične kulture.

Ljubljana, dne 17. oktobra 1959.

*(Handwritten signature)*



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## ABSTRACT

About a year before the pandemic struck, personal archives of Anton Sovre (1885–1963) were rediscovered, and they eventually made their way to the National and University Library in Ljubljana. During the fifties, Anton Sovre was the undisputed *éminence grise* of the field of classics in Slovenia and among the new sources now available to researchers is an essay on “Perspective Development of Classical Philology” from 1959. The document was written in the tradition of the Five-Year Plans, and its rhetoric is often amusing. Its content, however, was written mainly by Sovre’s best student. At that time, Kajetan Gantar (1930–2022) had already defended his PhD thesis on Homer. Due to political reasons, he was initially blocked from getting a university position. However, the situation changed somewhat during the thaw in the sixties, when he could finally get the position of lecturer, and he eventually became the leading classical scholar and translator in the country and Sovre’s successor. His proposal for the future of the discipline shows strategic thinking, which was confirmed by the decades that followed.

**KEYWORDS:** five-year plans, Anton Sovre, Kajetan Gantar, classical tradition, history of classical scholarship, University of Ljubljana

Petletke, Explorerji, Luniki in socialistični humanizem:  
Anton Sovre in njegov načrt za klasično filologijo v Sloveniji

## IZVLEČEK

V obdobju pred izbruhom pandemije se je znova pojavila rokopisna zapuščina Antona Sovreta (1885–1963) ter sčasoma prispela v Narodno in univerzitetno knjižnico v Ljubljani. V petdesetih letih je bil Anton Sovre nesporna siva eminenca klasične filologije na Slovenskem in med novimi viri, ki so zdaj na voljo raziskovalcem, je tudi njegov spis »Perspektivni razvoj klasične filologije« iz leta 1959. Dokument je nastal v tradiciji petletnih načrtov, njegova retorika je pogosto svojska. Njegovo vsebino pa je v veliki meri napisal Sovretov najboljši študent. Kajetan Gantar (1930–2022) je takrat že obranil svojo doktorsko disertacijo o Homerju. Zaradi političnih razlogov so mu sprva onemogočili zaposlitev na univerzi. Razmere so se nekoliko spremenile med odjugo v šestdesetih letih, ko je končno lahko začel predavati, sčasoma je postal vodilni klasični filolog in prevajalec v državi ter Sovretov naslednik. Njegov predlog za prihodnost discipline priča o strateškem razmišljanju, ki se je potrdilo v naslednjih desetletjih.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** petletka, Anton Sovre, Kajetan Gantar, klasična tradicija, zgodovina klasične filologije, Univerza v Ljubljani