



Not even a Desperate Attempt to Defend Socialism: Two Theoretical and Ideological Currents in Contemporary Slovenian History¹

Ni očajanički pokušaj obrane
socijalizma: dva teorijska
i ideološka toka u savremenoj
slovenačkoj istoriografiji

The 1930s and the 1980s were both marked by major and significant social crises that would eventually usher in two different kinds of society. The crisis of the 1930s resulted in the Second World War. Its particular outcome in Slovenia and Yugoslavia was the development of a multinational federal state and socialism. The crisis of the 1980s eventually led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Slovenian secession and the transition to capitalism. The aim of this article is to compare these two periods. The national programme is seen as the key here. For, unlike in the 1940s, a significant portion of the social movements of the 1980s simply lacked one.

YUGOSLAVIA, THE NATIONAL QUESTION, SOCIALISM, SELF-MANAGEMENT, CIVIL SOCIETY

Tridesete i osamdesete godine 20. века obeležene su velikim i značajnim društvenim krizama koje su na kraju dovele do razvoja dva različita društvena poretka. Kriza tridesetih godina rezultirala je Drugim svetskim ratom, a razvoj multinacionalne savezne države i socijalizma javlja se kao njena direktna posledica za Sloveniju i Jugoslaviju. Kriza osamdesetih godina dovodi do raspada Jugoslavije, otplenja Slovenije i prelaska na kapitalizam. Ideja rada je da se uporede pomenuta dva perioda. Ono što se pokazuje kao ključna razlika su nacionalni programi. Znatan deo društvenih pokreta u osamdesetim godinama, za razliku od četrdesetih, jednostavno nije imao nacionalni program.

JUGOSLAVIJA, NACIONALNO PITANJE, SOCIJALIZAM, SAMOUPRAVLJANJE, CIVILNO DRUŠTVO

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The following article will discuss two different historical periods: the 1930s and the 1980s. The 1930s and the 1980s were both marked by major and significant social crises that would eventually usher in two different societies. The crisis of the 1930s resulted in the Second World War. Its particular outcome in Slovenia and Yugoslavia was the development of a multinational federal state and socialism. The crisis of the 1980s eventually led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Slovenian secession and the transition to capitalism.

Any comparative assessment of these crises is not an easy task. Initially they appear to be very different: in the 1930s the whole world was on fire, while in the early 1990s wars only broke out in the peripheries. Furthermore, whereas the 1930s led to an armed confrontation between two polarised movements in Slovenia, the 1980s are held in high regard as a period of national unity, with the military conflict of 1991 seen as a limited confrontation with an external armed force.

CONTESTING NARRATIVES ON THE SLOVENIAN PAST

The nationalist ideology of the Slovenian state has to date had the most success integrating the crises of the 1930s and 1980s into a single narrative. For example, by making the day of Resistance to Foreign Invaders a national holiday (it is celebrated on and generally referred to as 27 April, the date when, in 1941, different progressive groups founded the Anti-imperialist Front of the Slovenian Nation), the Slovenian nationalist narrative integrates communist-led resistance against Nazi and fascist invaders during the Second World War with the history of Slovenian state-building. Nationalist ideology plays up the patriotic side of the resistance movement while explicitly resenting its traumatic side, that is, its revolutionary side.

Multiple political factors shaped the ideology in question. It all started in the 1980s, when the fate of Slovenian anti-partisan fighters immediately after the Second World War became public knowledge. The newly established political parties in many ways shaped their public image around responses to the fact that in the early summer of 1945, around 12.000 anti-partisan fighters and some civilians were killed by the Yugoslav (ex-partisan) army (see Čepič et al.: 436). Liberal political parties condemned post-war atrocities in general terms and criticised the communist usurpation of the resistance movement and the authoritarian or totalitarian regime that eventually followed, but continued to defend the resistance and most of its institutions (such as the Assembly of the Representatives of the Slovenian Nation, convened in Kočevje in 1943). After all, the victory of the partisan movement brought substantial territorial gains for the Slovenian nation. The right-wing parties denounced the partisan movement altogether and strived to improve the public image of the anti-partisan fighters who, up to the late 1980s, had been officially treated simply as national traitors or, at best, as a tragically misguided formation.

The celebration rituals of 27 April revealed that a compromise between these contested narratives was possible, but at a price—the rehabilitation of the image of the anti-partisan fighters. It was a price that liberal politicians were unable or reluctant to pay. In 2005, while serving as Prime Minister, Janez Janša, the undisputed leader of the Slovenian political right, praised the partisans and even the partisan movement itself—but only in its pure form, as resistance against foreign invaders (see Janša). Then in 2006, France Cukjati, President of the National Assembly and a member of Janša's Slovenian Democratic Party, went even further and spoke of the disappointment supposedly felt by both sides—the partisans and their domestic adversaries, it was said,

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It is not a coincidence that Tine Velikonja, a notable biographer and collector of the testimonies of the anti-partisan fighters, explicitly compared Janez Marn alias Črtomir Mrak, a disputed figure in the Slovenian anti-communist movement of 1941–1945, with Sholokhov's fictional character Grigori. According to Velikonja, Janez Marn as a pre-war Christian Socialist who joined the partisans, deserted with the Chetnik movement and eventually became chieftain of a gang of deserters who also cooperated with the Germans. Velikonja credits him with fine virtues, especially his endeavour to survive, his passion and even his bitter end, which somehow mirrors that of Sholokhov's Grigori, except for his selfishness, as he fought only for his gang members. Janez Stanovnik, a Christian Socialist and a partisan who knew Mrak well, testified that Mrak was the founder of the Black Hand, an organised group of notorious murderers whose victims were the relatives of the partisans and activists of the National Liberation Movement (see Velikonja and Trampuš).

both got a raw deal in 1945 (see Anonymous). In other words, it was once possible to praise the partisans within the right-wing historical narrative, if only for their (ultimately individual) valour as resistance fighters. The partisan and even anti-partisan fighters of the 1940s could thus be compared to the Slovenian Police and Territorial Defence Forces in the war of 1991. In essence, they were all brave and free-spirited and they all loved their motherland. Social revolution, which was an integral part of the Slovenian national liberation struggle from 1941 to 1945, thus became a mere conspiracy, a pretence for violence by a communist clique exploiting otherwise honourable and patriotic individuals.

This narrative, which integrates individual virtue with real history, is not without a certain appeal. As in a good, or even a cheap but effective, work of fiction, it allows for identification with the protagonist virtually regardless of his or her affiliation. Grigori Melekhov, the main character of Mikhail Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* (*Tikhiy Don*), is a young Cossack, passionate, brave and resourceful. Amid turbulent historical events he tries to be loyal to himself and his passions. An inability to adapt forces him to switch sides repeatedly—he becomes an Imperial army horseman, a White, a Red and ultimately a bandit. His character is positive, regardless of his affiliation. But Sholokhov's epic does not have a happy ending.² Grigori returns home a desperate man, ultimately crushed by the history he so long evaded.

Returning to the nationalist narrative in Slovenia, it is possible to equate partisans and their adversaries only by representing them as uniformly miserable. To reiterate, this portrayal is wholly adequate for a work of fiction, but is clearly lacking with regard to the national narrative of the past. This is particularly true when the narrative is staged in the current memorial landscape of Slovenia, filled as it is even today with countless monuments and street and school

names praising not only partisans but also communist revolutionary heroism, sacrifice and victory. Conversely, the memorial markers of the anti-partisan fighters had for decades been limited to symbols of their inglorious deaths—mostly wooden crosses and other modest religious images and signs merely designating the places of their execution. All this began to change in 2013, with the commemoration of the establishment of the first anti-partisan fighting unit in Šentjošt, a village near Ljubljana (see Košak). The event featured a small parade by men wearing the uniforms of the Slovenian Home Guard, the Quisling anti-partisan unit established by the Germans in 1943.

Open celebration of anti-partisan forces was something new in Slovenia. The economic crisis at the end of the first decade of the new millennium, and then the so-called refugee crisis of 2016, marked a substantial ideological shift in Slovenian right-wing politics. Any concession regarding the positive historical role of partisan resistance now became unacceptable. And it seems that the once seamless national narrative is now starting to show cracks. Empowered by several resolutions of the European Parliament,³ the narrative faces its greatest challenges to date. It is highly likely that the nationalist narrative will be replaced by an alternative narrative, one that underscores the discontinuity of the crises of the 1930s and the 1980s. As this would be utterly devastating for our memory landscape, it is imperative that we take a closer look at the differences between the 1930s and the 1980s.

NOT EVEN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO DEFEND SOCIALISM

Why did Yugoslav socialism—as a social system which, in economic terms, was a system of social ownership of the means of production, and, in political terms, a system of countless committees and assemblies

3 See the European Parliament's recent resolution on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe, which equalises the roles of Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union in the Second World War and extends this treatment to their respective symbols. Interestingly but not surprisingly, it is silent on the communist contribution to the victory over fascism. (See European Parliament)

4 Even though the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and its activities had been totally banned in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians since 1921, Slovenian communists managed to spread their ideas through legal press. Especially after the economic breakdown of 1929, they made extensive efforts to prove that capitalism does not work for the great majority of the population and is coming to an end. A notable contributor on the topic in Slovenia was economist Stane Krašovec. In essays published in the legal (communist-sponsored) journal *Književnost* in the 1930s, he explained why the middle strata is doomed under capitalism (see Krašovec). *Književnost* also published the authoritative explanations of prominent Soviet economist (of Hungarian descent) Jenő Varga on why capitalism is about to rot (see Varga). It is worth noting that Varga modified his opinion after the Second World War: in post-war nationalisations and other state interventions in the economy he saw a stabilising factor of capitalism in the West and was subjected to fierce criticism in the Soviet Union at the time (see Mommen: 167–91).

for every imaginable social issue—collapse so easily? In the late 1930s and early 1940s, during the Second World War, the opponents of the communist-led national liberation struggle were fully aware that the victory of the communists would put an end to the world they knew and ruled over. They knew that relations of property and political domination would change completely. So, they fought back with everything they had. But in the 1980s and 1990s, not a single bullet was fired in defence of social property or socialism. This detail is widely praised in public debates, and also by historians. In fact, the praise is so overwhelming that it belies a lack of proper explanation.

The consensus view within the discipline of Slovenian history is that socialist economy was generally inefficient (see Lorenčič: 26–27 and Prinčič: 1102) and heavily dependent on foreign credit (see Repe 2001: 10–13 and 2003: 114). That might be true. But the feudal economy became inefficient, too, and during the crisis of the 1930s capitalist economy proved to be untenable for many. The radical left at the time pointed out this inefficiency, and was able to provide ample empirical and theoretical evidence for its claims.⁴ And yet the elites and the ruling classes fought back in defence of this inefficiency. Credit has been an essential feature of capitalist economy since its very beginning (see Arrighi); it even predates capitalism as a mode of production characterised by a free labour-force. The debt crisis, and with it the notion of living beyond one's means, is an essential phenomenon of contemporary capitalist societies, and it has had catastrophic consequences for millions, even in the most advanced countries. Yet the ruling classes and their neoliberal ideologues unconditionally defend the rationality of the system, and spare no expense in doing so, even as anti-systemic challengers on the left attack their claims in light of the very evident financial turmoil brought about by the crisis of 2008.

When Socialism and its forms of property relations hit a rough patch in the 1980s, no one stood up for them. Rastko Močnik once asked for whom exactly the socialist economy was untenable.⁵ There were of course conflicting views on models of privatisation in the 1990s (see Lorenčič: 193–212). And of course, the communist elite and the managerial class eventually realised that the system is not working, and that the only way to maintain their privileges was through a shift in economic and political systems (see Močnik 2006: 167, 205–206). But one also has to take into account that as late as 1988, The League of Communists of Slovenia had around 110.000 members (see Repe 2001: 5). In a country with a population of roughly two million that is an enormous figure. The Party had so-called cells (officially called Primary Organisations) in virtually every enterprise. And it all begs the question: Why was there not a single naive and hopeless attempt to organise working people and citizens to defend their rights under the system of self-management as the latter slowly withered away over the course of the 1980s?

As far as I know, nothing of the sort occurred. There are anecdotes about how, back in the early 1960s, critical intellectual and publicist Jože Pučnik tried to recruit complete strangers on the bus for anti-communist rebellion (see Kermauner: 80–81). But one would be hard pressed to find so much as a hypothetical mention of defending the ailing system in the late 1980s, even in fiction. Even rare cases of suicide among old Communist revolutionaries—suicide being the most primitive and desperate form of rebellion—have yet to find any place in the (popular) culture. A political comic by Zoran Smiljanič entitled 1991 could perhaps be conditionally considered an exception. It tells the story of an anonymous Yugoslav People's Army conscript, self-described only as a Yugoslav, who dozed off and missed the retreat

5 Rastko Močnik posed this question in 2014 in the framework of discussions following the foundation of a new radical political party in Slovenia—the Initiative for Democratic Socialism.

of the Yugoslav army from Slovenia. Thinking the retreat was a drill, he initially remains in the barracks by himself and reads the Yugoslav constitution. When eventually faced with the Slovenian army, he refuses to accept the new reality, and everyone takes it as a joke. He is the embodiment of every stereotype of the latter-day Yugoslav federation and society. In the end he freezes to death, air rifle in hand, while on guard on a deserted hill, waiting for the Yugoslav People's Army to return.

Again, the exception (if it is that) proves the rule. A general overview of (real life) popular sentiment and its concrete forms at the time reveals no such longing for political or social utopia. The 1990s were actually ushered in by a flood of conspiracy theories about the so-called Udbomafia (a sort of deep state allegedly centred around the old Yugoslav intelligence service) and Milan Kučan (see Repe 2015: 455–96). In 1987, there was a major strike at the Litostroj factory in Ljubljana. This was an important event in the crisis period, but it did not spark mass popular mobilisation. The arrest of four individuals the following year did.

This brings us to the question of progressive social forces in the 1980s, namely intellectuals and activists—the so-called left—who are the usual suspects whose historical task (in the Marxist tradition) is to organise the masses. What was their role in these processes?

THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The national question seems key to this argument. It is the political issue par excellence in modern Slovenian history, and it can be used to connect the crises of the 1930s and the 1980s in a sensible way. It also helps us understand how the two epochs differ.

In the 1930s and 1940s, all major Slovenian political groups and forces proposed some kind of national programme or plan of action, or at the very least they had a more or less refined idea of the future prospects of the Slovenian nation. The leading Slovenian Catholic party (the Slovenian People's Party) proposed many programmes and plans. It tried hard to secure autonomy for Slovenians within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia before proposing, in the initial stages of the Second World War, setting up a Slovenian puppet state for German and then later Italian invaders (see Perovšek: 339–42, Čepič et al.: 81–114). These proposals turned the party towards collaboration. And they all failed. As the war dragged on, hard-line Catholic right-wingers gave up on the restoration of Yugoslavia, while others secretly proposed some kind of federation. It was in this situation that the National Liberation Movement took the initiative. The movement was led by the communists, but it successfully made alliances with splinter groups from the Catholic camp and other patriotic groups and workers in the field of arts and culture.

One could say that the communists in Slovenia reinvented themselves in the mid-1930s by working on the national question. Their idea was very simple. Theoretically, it rested on the most basic Marxist conceptualisations of history and class struggle: the nation as a historically produced community which is open to further transformations, the working class as a principal agent in the contemporary national community, and so on (see Sperans). It was very easy to translate these concepts into patriotic slogans. In propaganda and declarations, they boiled down to a mixture of an easy-to-understand patriotism plus a leading role for the working people and their rightful claims.

This narrative was acceptable to many groups and individuals who had strongly disagreed with the communists at first. For example, it is still not entirely clear why, once they had left the Slovenian

People's Party by the mid-1930s, Christian Socialists did not take the initiative. Their theories and concepts were much more sophisticated. If we compare the assessments of fascism offered by Edvard Kardelj, a communist, and Bogo Grafenauer, an intellectual close to the Christian Socialists who would go on to become a prominent historian, we can see that the two differed in a number of ways. While Kardelj wrote extensively about fascist manipulation, he treated it in a matter-of-fact way and failed to explain properly how such manipulation really works (see Kardelj). Bogo Grafenauer, on the other hand, got to the heart of the matter by proposing a critique of liberal democracy and parliamentarism and their relativism regarding the truth. In order to explain why fascist propaganda is so successful, he proposed a hypothesis about the existence of a 'fascist condition' ('fašistično dejstvo') as a condition in modern bourgeois society that predated fascism itself: 'The fascist condition without the fascist doctrine came into being due to the liberal attitude regarding the truth and above all the equivalence of different truths. These truths might contradict one another, yet according to the liberal view they deserve the same respect and recognition as equals. Not the idea, fascism put the method first.' (Grafenauer: 116–17)

Both Kardelj and Grafenauer did, however, agree on the importance of the social question in their historical moment, and both found liberal democracy, with its formality, to be very problematic.

Let us now turn to the 1980s and early 1990s. Some time ago, historian Božo Repe (2001: 28–29) claimed that the League of Communists of Slovenia lost the initiative in the 1980s when it refused to propose its own (national) programme. The opposition did propose a programme. But the issue here is not some loosely defined general opposition. A national programme was introduced in 1987 by the group around *Nova*

revija, a journal which consisted of various anti-communist, predominately nationalist intellectuals. The thesis proposed by Repe makes sense. However, I would argue that the ruling political party—The League of Communists of Slovenia—was not the only group to lose the initiative. I would also bring into the picture the intellectual groups and social movements that emerged in the early 1980s. Unlike the intellectuals at *Nova revija*, these groups did not focus on the problems of the Slovenian nation and its prospects for total sovereignty.

Nova revija challenged the political monopoly of the League of Communists of Slovenia in 1987. In the now famous issue 57 of the journal, Tine Hribar argued, in a manner rather typical of the outlet, that the power of the existing Slovenian state derives not from the sovereignty of the Slovenian nation but rather from ‘the *power and self-management* of the working class and the working people’. The total political monopoly of the Party is granted, since the Party is considered the ‘inner force of self-management’ and ‘the leading ideopolitical integrating force in the political system’ (Hribar: 23). The main idea behind issue 57 was to break the monopoly of the League of Communists of Slovenia and open the debate on the sovereignty of the Slovenian nation and its place in Yugoslav federation.

The leftist groups and movements mentioned above were already critical of the Party in the early 1980s, albeit in a less explicit manner. Admittedly, at that time the economic crisis in Yugoslavia had yet to evolve into a political crisis. That happened in the second half of the decade. These oppositional groups were comprised of Marxist intellectuals writing for various publications in the early 1980s, including the magazine *Mladina*, the journals *Časopis za kritiko znanosti* and *Tribuna*, and the Krt book series. They criticised the regime by focusing on its crisis management and the dysfunctionality of the economic system

of self-management, and would later turn to criticism of education reforms, freedom of speech, and so on. These groups and intellectuals were working under the cover of the Alliance of the Socialist Youth of Slovenia, an organisation which became increasingly independent from the early 1980s on (see Vurnik). Several movements proliferated under the protection and sponsorship of the so-called youth alliance; these included the ecologists, an early gay and lesbian movement, a peace movement, and a few non-political clubs in the Slovenian countryside (see Muršič). Even the punk counterculture benefited from the youth alliance.

The point I would like to make here is that these groups and individuals did not think at all about national issues. Problems of Slovenian sovereignty were not pertinent to their immediate goals. Gregor Tomc, punk activist and hardly a leftist, got the chance to contribute to issue 57, and he was a bit confused when he received instructions from the editorial staff to write a piece on civil society in the Slovenian framework:

First and foremost, being Slovenian was never a strong feeling for me. I feel connected to Ljubljana. I am a guy from Kodeljevo and that represents me best. In a similar way, I feel connected to other places outside Slovenia where I spent some time. Contrary to abstract national affiliation, particular persons, adventures and memories bond me with these places. My affiliation with Slovenia is superficial and loose. My authentic feelings are much more bound up with other places. For that reason, I found it hard to start writing on the topic. (Tomc 1987: 144)

The real problem for Gregor Tomc was socialism itself, the repressive nature of the state, and so on. What the movements and individuals wanted, at least initially, was a level playing field in social and public

life, free from administrative and other interference from the ruling political party, the League of Communists. What they wanted most was their own autonomy and freedom. And looking at their production in the fields of social theory, culture and the arts, one could argue that they were able to achieve most of their goals within a so-called socialist civil society.

My hypothesis is that the socialist system was able to absorb and balance out significantly higher levels of dissent and conflict than is generally believed.⁶ But what these groups and individuals did not do was engage in broader social activism outside the narrow limits of (their own) artistic and intellectual autonomy. Their critiques and claims were of course universal, but their concrete social action was very limited, at least initially; they were 'single issue movements', as Rastko Močnik put it (2014). But this changed in the late 1980s, at a critical moment of social crisis.

The same could actually be said of the group around *Nova revija*. Initially, in 1987, their proposal for a national programme amounted to little more than the musings of a group of intellectuals. This changed in 1988, when the state security agency and the police arrested three individuals for leaking a military document. The Committee for the Defence of Human Rights was established soon thereafter. This association's membership consisted of around 100.000 individuals and 1.000 legal entities and included representatives from basic communist party organisations, workers' collectives and even the emerging lesbian movement, but also from the Catholic church and *Nova revija* (see Žerdin: 405). So, the left-wing intellectuals from the socialist civil society were eventually capable of coming together for a common cause, and that did mean taking a further step out of the comfort zone of their particular autonomies. It was a risk.

6 Already in the early 1970s, such distinguished Slovenian sociologists as Vladimir Arzenšek claimed that Yugoslav society lacks institutional outlets for conflict resolution (see Tomc 1985: 9–10).

The main question here is why that kind of risk was not taken a year earlier, during the Litostroj strike? A clear answer is hard to come by, but the consequences of a lack of broader social mobilisation around this event are easy enough to identify. The strike happened because the workers' salaries were not adjusted to inflation. The workers at Litostroj established a strike committee under the leadership of France Tomšič (an institution with no legal grounds in the then-valid constitution) and supported the idea of founding the Social Democratic League of Slovenia. It is clear that the workers' industrial action followed patterns with which some of them were familiar—France Tomšič, for example, was an engineer with experience in the West. Their ideal was an independent trade-union organisation and a two- or multi-party political system. The reinvention of socialist self-management on the basis of the critique developed by left-leaning intellectuals from the beginning of the decade was out of the question (see Centrih: 155). It is worth noting that France Tomšič, an active member of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights, proposed a call for a general strike in June 1988, but other influential members of the Committee favoured mass rallies and dismissed his idea (see Centrih: 155 and Žerdin: 124–29).

CONCLUSION

To be clear, as doctrine, the national programme proposed by *Nova revija* was by no means imposed on or accepted by other movements, individuals or groups. For one thing, it was a critical public intervention rather than a clear, elaborate programme. What *Nova revija* achieved in 1987 was more of a political scandal and a broader polemic. Unlike the 1930s and 1940s, no single clearly delineated group or party was dominant. Groups and individuals maintained their autonomy, and

this eventually led to the formation of political parties. Those who did not aspire to formally enter the political sphere maintained their autonomy as intellectuals or activists.

But then something happened. As the political crisis matured in the late 1980s, debates about the Yugoslav constitution and the sovereignty of republics and regions took centre stage. Separatism was on its way. Social issues came second. The Marxist critique from the early 1980s simply evaporated. Marxists did not even have ambitions of winning hegemony in the civil society of the late 1980s. One might say that when it appeared in 1989, UJDI, The Association for the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative, which was made up of left-wing intellectuals in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, was a kind of attempt to reverse these processes. But it lacked social impact and was short-lived. In this context, it seems that the initiative of *Nova revija* is best characterised as a sign of a shift in public polemics, and not as a socially impactful event establishing the domination of a new group. ♡

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Povzetek

Članek primerja dve teoretski in ideološki konjunkturi na Slovenskem v dveh zgodovinskih obdobjih. Obe konjunkturi sta pripeljali do družbenih prelomov, vendar z različnimi učinki, neenakimi posledicami za družbene skupine in razrede. Prva konjunktura zajema trideseta leta 20. stoletja, ko je komunističnemu gibanju kljub pretežno skromnim in močno poenostavljenim teoretskim in ideološkimi konceptom nazadnje uspelo povezati napredne levičarske skupine v narodno-osvobodilni in revolucionaren projekt. V nasprotju s to konjunkturo pa je druga, tj. konjunktura iz osemdesetih let, kljub neprimerno razvitejšim in bolj sofisticiranim družbenim teorijam ter barvitejšo polemiko pripeljala zgolj do vzpona civilne družbe. Kljub velikemu začetnemu optimizmu je ta civilna družba nazadnje zagotovila samo avtonomijo kritičnih levičarskih intelektualcev, ne pa tudi emancipacije delovnih ljudi in marginaliziranih družbenih skupin. Prva konjunktura si je za cilj ambiciozno zastavila odpravo kapitalizma, druga pa se je na koncu zadovoljila s t. i. normalizacijo slovenske družbe v skladu z ideali zahodnega sveta.

Druga pomembna razlika, ki loči ti konjunkturi, pa zadeva nacionalno vprašanje oziroma nacionalni program. Medtem ko so v štiridesetih letih 20. stoletja tako rekoč vsa pomembnejša gibanja (ne glede na ideološki predznak) predstavila določen nacionalni program ali vsaj postavila nacionalno idejo v središče svojih razmišljanj, tega pri naprednih gibanjih iz osemdesetih let pravzaprav ne najdemo. Kljub temu nacionalistična ideologija današnjega dne ob najrazličnejših priložnostih obe obdobji oziroma konjunkturi povezuje v enotno nacionalno pripoved.

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