



Slovenian Intellectuals of the 1960s from the Political Point of View¹

Slovenački intelektualci
u šezdesetim godinama
s političke tačke gledišta

This article focuses on the question of how the activities of the intellectuals in the 1960s were observed and evaluated by the leading politicians of the Communist Party of Slovenia. The negative reputation that the Slovenian political leadership acquired with its rough intervention in the cultural scene in 1964 was the foundation for the consideration of how to avoid such scandals in the future. In the second half of the 1960s, the League of Communists of Slovenia commissions for ideological questions were led by people who defined the role of intellectuals in society in an entirely different manner than the older generation of communists. Hence, as long as this group of politicians prevailed in the Slovenian political leadership, the door was open for diversity in the sphere of culture.

SLOVENIA, MAY '68, INTELLECTUALS,
COMMUNIST PARTY OF SLOVENIA,
CULTURAL POLICY

U radu se analizira način na koji su vodeći političari Saveza komunista Slovenije videli i valorizovali aktivnost intelektualaca tokom šezdesetih godina prošlog veka. Negativna reputacija koju je slovenačko političko rukovodstvo steklo 1964. godine grubom intervencijom u sferu kulture poslužila je kao polazište za razmatranje strategije kako da se izbegnu slični skandali u budućnosti. U drugoj polovini šezdesetih godina komisijom za ideološka pitanja Saveza komunista Slovenije upravljali su ljudi koji su definisali ulogu inteligencije u društvu polazeći od potpuno drugačijih pretpostavki nego starije generacije komunista. Sve dok je grupa mlađih političara preovladavala u slovenačkom političkom rukovodstvu, vrata za različitost u sferi kulture su bila otvorena.

SLOVENIJA, MAJ '68, INTELJEKTUALCI,
KOMUNISTIČKA PARTIJA SLOVENIJE,
KULTURNA POLITIKA

1
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This article takes a look at how the activities of cultural workers towards the end of the 1960s were observed and evaluated by those who made the decisions regarding the public image of the Slovenian cultural scene. Predictably, in a one-party authoritarian system, this power was assumed by the politicians and ideologues of the League of Communists of Slovenia (LCS). However, the Party's politics was not in the least straightforward or unchangeable. Through the decades, it instead went through several periods in terms of its attitude towards producers of literature and other art forms (see Gabrič 1998, Ramšak). In the 1960s, several Yugoslav republics saw a strengthening of the role of the upcoming generation of communists who were not limited by dogmatic Marxist models and were therefore more favourably inclined towards different artistic and scholarly activities. The negative reputation that the Slovenian political leadership acquired with its rough intervention in the cultural scene in 1964 (see Inkret) was also behind the leadership's new resolve to avoid such scandals in the future without losing the influence on the cultural sphere.

In 1964, Stane Kavčič, president of the ideological commission of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Slovenia (CC LCS), was at the helm of the cancellation of the journal *Perspektive* (see Repe 1990). Kavčič belonged to those leading communists who supported a calmer attitude towards intellectuals, and as a reformist in economy he knew that the participation of experts was crucial for a successful functioning of society as a whole. The cancellation of the third journal of upcoming intellectuals in a row caused a strong public reaction—and not only in Ljubljana or Slovenia. Politicians criticised the contributors to *Perspektive* for defending standpoints that at times seemed unacceptable. Criticism focused on Jože Pučnik, who was imprisoned once again, and on Veljko Rus, who called for the organisation of those

with fewer rights while allegedly also demanding 'that trade unions be shaped as a political opposition to the leading cadres in labour organisations'.² Measures taken by the authorities resulted in a scandal which made the authorities realise that the affair had significantly more negative consequences than positive ones, as even those cultural workers who otherwise supported them would publicly express their disagreement. As it often happens with strict censorship, what the authorities triggered with their measures against *Perspektive* was precisely the opposite of what they wanted: 'The interest in *Perspektive*, which had been largely unknown and certainly not read by many people, has increased, and now people are looking for it in libraries and elsewhere in order to learn about its contents.' Those who agreed with the cancellation of the journal wondered why the measures had not been implemented earlier, and at the same time cautioned that the censorship should not be 'restricted only to Ljubljana', as 'similar things are happening elsewhere as well, which indicates that *Perspektive* has a certain influence in the field'.³

Negative responses to the cancellation of *Perspektive* also came from the rest of Yugoslavia. During their visit to Zagreb, members of a delegation of the LCS leadership also discussed the issue with the philosopher Gajo Petrović, a co-founder of the Korčula summer school and the journal *Praxis* (for which see Sher), where he was also editor-in-chief. Petrović did not support the repressive measures, even though he disagreed with many positions expressed in *Perspektive*. As the Slovenian politicians hinted that *Praxis* should not advertise *Perspektive*, they learned that this was not the intention and that the two publications had not been, and did not intend to become, connected in any way. Petrović only spoke highly of Rus, who became a member of the *Praxis* editorial board.⁴

2
SI (Arhiv Republike Slovenije) AS 1589 (Centralni komite Zveze komunistov Slovenije), III, t.e. 149, Informacija o simpoziju 'Alienacija in reintegracija človeka naše družbe', 15 January 1964. (Here and elsewhere, archival sources are given in footnotes.)

3
SI AS 1589, III, t.e. 149, Informacija o nekaterih pojavih in komentarjih na terenu ob ukinitvi *Perspektiv*, 29 June 1964.

4
SI AS 1589, IK, t.e. 42, Lojze Skok: Zapisek razgovorov na Gradskem komitetu ZK Zagreb, februar 1965.

5
SI AS 1589, IV, t.e. 144,
a.e. 353, Položaj sloven-
ske politične emigraci-
je—njena nacionalna
in moralno politična
zavest (po 'Svobodni
Sloveniji'); *ibid.*, Tabor.

Criticism of the measures taken by the Slovenian authorities was also expressed beyond the Yugoslav borders. Slovenian (as well as Yugoslav) authorities were constantly worried that domestic opponents of the regime would establish political connections with anti-communist émigrés. They monitored the negative responses to the events surrounding *Perspektive* and its contributors in the press of the Slovenian diaspora.⁵ They could not know, however, what political analysts thought about the issue—or perhaps it never crossed their minds that foreign intelligence services such as the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) could possibly be interested in such minor details. But in June 1965, a CIA analysis of the Yugoslav intellectuals who opposed the regime mentioned Milovan Djilas and 'Djilasism' in the introduction (CIA: 1) before focusing on the events in Slovenia:

The Slovenian literary magazine, Perspektive, became the first publication to criticize the regime openly on such sensitive issues as agricultural policy, the one-party system, the effectiveness of self-management of enterprises, the conformity of the press, the affluence of the party hierarchy, and other 'failures' of the Yugoslav system. (CIA: 2)

The affair was obviously quite prominent, since CIA agents were familiar with the facts. Their analysis also included the emergence of a new journal, thus spelling more trouble for Yugoslav authorities; this journal was none other than *Praxis*, an outlet 'which appeared soon after *Perspektive's* demise' (CIA: 4).

It is therefore not surprising that *Perspektive* remained in the focus of the leading politicians for quite a long time. For several years, they would see descendants or at least conceptual successors of *Perspektive* in publications by Slovenian intellectuals that they assessed

as unacceptable. In the political terminology of the 1960s, the terms *perspektivovec* or *perspektivaš* (supporter of *Perspektive*) were used to refer to those intellectuals who formally declared themselves as Marxists but whose positions often opposed the ideology and politics of leading communists. The authorities evaluated the activities of other journals with equal scepticism, and they realised that the cancellation of *Perspektive* had by no means benefitted them in the long term.

In the mid-1960s, most of the criticism of Party ideologues was aimed against *Tribuna*, a journal run by students at the University of Ljubljana in which a new generation of writers and theorists, approximately a decade younger than the generation of *Perspektive*, had already started to assert itself. As they listed the mistakes of this journal's editorial board, the conclusion of LCS leaders was simple: “*Tribuna*” published a few articles recently which can be deemed as clear attempts to revive the ideological and political concepts of “*Perspektive*”. The dissatisfaction of leading Slovenian communists was strengthened by their realisation that the student organisation of the Communist Party insisted on the position which it had already expressed during the initial scandal, namely: ‘We do not agree with the “*Perspektive*” group or its writings, but its cancellation was nonetheless unnecessary. It is better to write about, discuss and criticise the issues, in any manner and from any position, than disregard them completely.’ The editorial board of *Tribuna* was replaced by new cadres,⁶ but the journal remained the target of repeated critiques. Yet it persisted and preserved its critical outlook on the society. In January 1967, the leadership of the LCS warned the leadership of the Party organisation at the University that it should ‘take a stand regarding *Tribuna*, as it continues to provide fertile ground for reactionary ideas’. Instead of focusing on student matters, the editorial board of *Tribuna* continued to address new issues,

⁶ SI AS 1589, III, t.e. 149, Informacija v zvezi s ‘Tribuno’, glasilom slovenskih študentov, 25 February 1965.

7
SI AS 1589, IK, t.e. 181,
34, Zapisnik 15. seje
Izvršnega komiteja
CK ZK Slovenije, 30 Ja-
nuary 1967, p. 5.

8
SI AS 1589, III, t.e. 181,
Zapisnik razgovora
pri sekretarju CK ZKS
Albertu Jakopiču
glede objave v Biltenu
CK ZKS o razmerah
v Idriji v zvezi z usta-
novitvijo revije 'Kaplja',
2 February 1966, p. 6.

including 'a debate or dialogue with clericalists regarding the basic questions of the Party and its role'.⁷

The next periodical which the authorities suspected of reviving the ideas of the supporters of *Perspektive* was founded not in Ljubljana but in the small mining town of Idrija. In early 1966, the first issue of *Kaplje* circulated among the readers. Initially, the leadership of the League of Communists in Idrija was not concerned with this journal (see Gabrič 2017: 22–26). However, the Party central in Ljubljana wondered whether it was appropriate that a journal which they did not control had started to spread its influence. Unlike other local publications, *Kaplje* received no financial subsidies, and so these other outlets were expected to 'improve and rejuvenate their editorial boards' to 'ensure that "*Kaplje*" fails on its own, without garnering much attention'.⁸ However, contrary to these aspirations, *Kaplje* was frequently discussed in political circles in the following years. Local forums indeed followed the activities of this journal, but they did not implement any political measures against it. Cooperation of the *Kaplje* team with the editorial boards of other Slovenian journals, contributions by individual writers who were politically questionable in the eyes of the authorities, and particularly cross-border cooperation with the Slovenian minority living in Italy enabled *Kaplje* to make an impression not only on the Slovenian cultural public but also on the politicians (see Gabrič 2017: 26–30).

Many other journals targeted by the internal criticism of the Party ideologues were published as well. On the cultural scene, public debate strengthened and some positions went far beyond the lines of those that had been persecuted and penalised only a few years earlier. Nonetheless, Slovenian political leadership no longer wished to take similar actions. Attempts were made, though, to restrict the influence of critical

intellectuals and their publications by supporting those journals which rejected their positions on a supposedly expert level.

In 1961, the Higher School of Political Science was established as a Marxist research institution dedicated to educating political and social-science cadres as well as journalists. Highly influenced by leading Party ideologues, the school was eventually nicknamed *the red seminary*. In 1964, the school launched the journal *Teorija in praksa*. A number of leading Slovenian politicians were appointed to the editorial board, expecting that the journal would establish a dialogue on a highly professional level with the other journals and contribute to the assertion of the Marxist worldview with convincing arguments. However, for some of the politicians the manner in which the new school and journal approached the task was unsatisfactory. The school leadership wanted to fulfil the academic criteria needed for the school to become a member of the University as soon as possible. The more narrowly-envisioned ideological goals championed by the politicians were therefore neglected. In January 1967, Albert Jakopič, a disgruntled member of the CC LCS, assessed that *Teorija in praksa* failed to oppose *Tribuna*, adding that he did not understand 'how our own publications could contribute to disintegration'.⁹ France Popit also underlined unacceptable theses from selected *Tribuna* articles, which he would have expected *Teorija in praksa* to criticise. The explanation of the journal's managing editor, Stane Kranjc, who stated that *Teorija in praksa* 'addresses certain issues on a level of serious publications and without any pretensions of acting as an arbiter',¹⁰ was not able to satisfy the politicians from the older generation.

The nascent politics of more 'liberal' part of the Slovenian leadership, which strived to establish a constructive dialogue with the intellectuals, can be followed as of the second half of the 1950s. At that

9
SIAS 1589, IK, t.e.
32, Zapisnik 13. seje
Izvršnega komiteja
CK ZK Slovenije,
9 January 1967, p. 8.

10
Ibid., p. 21.

11
SI AS 1589, IK, t.e. 15,
Zapisnik razširjene
seje Izvršnega komi-
teja CK ZK Slovenije,
29–30 March 1962,
pp. 151–52.

12
SI AS 1589, IK, t.e. 32,
Zapisnik XII. seje
Izvršnega komiteja
CK ZK Slovenije,
8 March 1966,
p. 15 (France Popit), pp.
28–29 (Vlado Krivic).

13
See SI AS 1589, IK, t.e.
33, Zapisnik XIV seje
Izvršnega komiteja
CK ZK Slovenije,
4. 4. 1966, and Zapisnik
XV. seje Izvršnega ko-
miteja CK ZK Slovenije,
19. 4. 1966.

time, the Slovenian government was headed by Boris Kraigher, who was deemed the political enabler of *Perspektive*. He believed that the contributors of *Perspektive* ‘do not enjoy any political support or represent any significant political force; and, secondly, most of them defend—with conviction rather than only tactically—the socialist positions and the workers’ self-management in all of their statements’.¹¹

Changes in the attitude of the authorities towards culture and cultural workers were also influenced by the political developments in Yugoslavia. Slovenian politicians focused their attention on the economic reform under the leadership of Boris Kraigher, which was welcomed in the developed parts of Yugoslavia and therefore also in Slovenia. On the other hand, this affected the revival of national tensions in Yugoslavia, in respect to which Slovenian politicians were relatively united—much like in the case of the economic reform. Slovenian politicians also began to underline the specificities of the Slovenian language and culture, suggesting that, due to the small size of the market in Slovenia, Slovenian culture should receive more subsidies than cultural activities in other Yugoslav republics.¹² Only a decade earlier, such demands could still be rejected by the Slovenian leadership (see Gabrič 2015: 225–234). The unity of the Slovenian politics was also strengthened by the political conflict in the leadership of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1966, which was followed by the removal of Aleksandar Ranković from his prominent political function. Tumultuous political developments also resulted in the rejuvenation of the leading political structures and in a different understanding of the social role of intellectuals. With these issues, however, the unity of Slovenian politics ended. The older members, led by Edvard Kardelj, perceived the rejuvenation of the Party leadership as an attack on their leading political positions.¹³

The assessment of the role of intellectuals in socialist society was also among the causes for the divisions between old and young communists. Boris Zihlerl, who had been the leading cultural ideologue only a decade and a half earlier, said that he was not keen on the changes. He was surprised to encounter a lack of understanding even at the Higher School of Political Science. The discussion about democratic centralism gave him the impression that 'the opinion prevails that this is something completely obsolete, that it is only here to embellish our programmes and statutes while being completely unbinding'. Suspecting that he has become too 'old-fashioned' to 'understand things', Zihlerl struggled in vain to conceive of a way of uniting the positions of the communists 'without returning to a kind of leadership we know from the past'.¹⁴

Former head of the Agitprop, the censorship apparatus of the Communist Party in the first post-war years, Zihlerl was not the only one to assert that types of leadership known from the past had already been surpassed. In the mid-1960s, during the disputes with the cultural workers, other advocates of harsh methods from the Slovenian political leadership also remembered the times when the retaliation against those with different opinions had been much swifter and more brutal. For example, in May 1966, during yet another discussion about the journals which published contributions that were not to the liking of the authorities, Edvard Kardelj mentioned that the law on press should be amended because it was 'bad and obsolete', as it had been written for completely different times, times that had already passed. 'When the Agitprop actively intervened and summoned those who introduced hostile ideas, this law was appropriate, which is not the case anymore',¹⁵ assessed Kardelj. At a session at the beginning of 1967 (yet again while listing the offences of the journal *Tribuna*), Slovenian

14
SI AS 1589, IK, t.e. 32, Zapisnik XI. seje Izvršnega komiteja CK ZK Slovenije, 8 February 1966, p. 29.

15
SI AS 1589, IK, t.e. 33, Zapisnik XVIII. seje Izvršnega komiteja CK ZK Slovenije, 23 May 1966, p. 32.

16

SI AS 1589, IK, t.e. 34, Zapisnik 15. seje Izvršnega komiteja CK ZK Slovenije, 30 January 1967, p. 5.

17

SI AS 1589, III, t.e. 193, Zapisnik seje komisije za družbeno-politične odnose in idejno-politične probleme, 6 December 1966, pp. 8–9.

top leadership wondered how it could ‘compensate for the deficit’ after something like the Agitprop was no longer possible.¹⁶

In the second half of the 1960s, however, the LCS commissions for ideological relations, culture, education and research were led by people who defined the social role of intellectuals on entirely different foundations than the older generation of Communists, which had still dictated cultural politics in the 1950s. In December 1966, while preparing materials for a comprehensive Party consultation, France Hočevar—a lawyer and, at the time, vice-president of the Slovenian government—emphasised two fundamental shifts in the assessment of the role of intellectuals in society. The first shift entailed ‘the aspirations to provide the intelligentsia with a position in the society and define it, in its relation to the League of Communists, as a creative part of the society. The aim of these positions is to break away from the current attitudes towards the intelligentsia and reveal the causes of the unsatisfactory state of these relationships’. The second fundamental shift entailed the distancing from the previous politics of favouring the technical intelligentsia, which was supposedly closer to the working class due to its more production-oriented work than the intelligentsia in the social sciences and humanities, which supposedly was removed from the working class and the Communist Party as its vanguard. Defending this second shift, Hočevar claimed that ‘our position is that the intelligentsia should be included in its totality, without favouring the technical section’. It was also deemed necessary to surpass the mentality of certain communists who believed that ‘the development of our society depends on the productive force of the working class, thus underestimating the connection between the working class and the intelligentsia, which causes conflicts that are also underestimated by the communists’.¹⁷

Following such principles, the consultations about the educational, cultural and academic matters, organised in the context of the LCS commissions in the following years, represented an open confrontation of different positions, aimed at solving pressing issues. During these consultations, the disagreements between the older and the younger generation of cultural workers were more frequent than between the politicians and the cultural workers. Rather than the Party ideologues, it was Josip Vidmar—the patriarch of Slovenian cultural workers who believed that the new policies were undermining his own cultural authority—who would most frequently express his disapproval of the younger intellectuals' ideas. When, in 1965, Vidmar was among the people asked by the editorial board of *Teorija in praksa* to express their position on current issues in cultural politics, the very manner in which the question about the role of cultural workers in the society was asked bothered him (see Vidmar: 77). When Catholic intellectuals were given more opportunities to present their views publicly, Vidmar mentioned to Kardelj that the influence of the clericalists was strengthening at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, a key Slovenian institution which Vidmar happened to be the president of at the time. In 1968, Vidmar was the first to sign the statement *Demokracija da—razkroj ne!* (Democracy Yes—Disintegration No!). During the discussions about how to solve the crisis in the Slovenian National Theatre in November 1969, he disagreed with the proposal that 'all movements should be equal in the theatre, especially if [...] they exist only under the influence of the current fashion in Europe'. He believed that such matters belonged to somewhat more experimental theatres.¹⁸

Vidmar's traditionalist positions provoked resistance not only among the younger generation on cultural workers but also high up in the Party. At the session of the Central Committee of the LCS

18
SIAS 1589, IV, t.e. 144, a.e. 354, Zapisnik 1. seje začasne delovne skupine, ki je bila ustanovljena v skladu z zaključki razgovora o problematiki Drame SNG, ki je bil dne 21. novembra 1969, pp. 14–15.

19
SI AS 1589, IV, t.e. 6,
Dokumenti Komunist,
20 March 1970, p. 14.

20
Ibid., pp. 22–23.

in March 1970, he argued that the Party should make better use of the opportunities to disseminate the tremendous emotive power of communist thought among the youth, where various Western philosophic orientations were spreading.¹⁹ Yet again, a younger communist from the so-called liberal section of the Party disagreed with him—in this case Janez Kocijančič. His reaction to Vidmar’s words was published in the documents of the LCS leadership under a meaningful title: ‘Young people are experimenting in the field of culture—yet this is not anti-communism.’²⁰

In comparison with the preceding two decades, characterised by swift changes in the field of cultural politics, the intellectuals now experienced a minimal and almost imperceptible pressure from the political authorities. The introduction of various aesthetic and theoretical movements in the Slovenian cultural sphere of the late 1960s was also a consequence of this (relative) openness. For as long as the so-called liberal part of the Party prevailed in the Slovenian political leadership, the door was open for cultural diversity. When this political leadership was replaced at the beginning of the 1970s (see Repe 1992: 204–34, Ramšak: 46–53), its cultural orientation declined as well, followed by renewed repression on the cultural scene. ♡

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Povzetek

Članek se osredotoča na vprašanje, kako so vodilni v Zvezi komunistov Slovenije ocenjevali delovanje intelektualcev v šestdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja. Tedaj se je v vodstvu okrepila vloga mlajše generacije komunistov, ki ni bila opredeljena z dogmatičnimi marksističnimi obrazci in je bila bolj naklonjena raznolikosti umetniškega in znanstvenega delovanja. Negativni sloves, ki ga je leta 1964 pridobilo slovensko politično vodstvo zaradi grobega posega na kulturno prizorišče, je bilo izhodišče za premislek, kako bi se tovrstnim aferam v prihodnje izognili, ne da bi ob tem izgubili vpliv v kulturni sferi. V drugi polovici šestdesetih let so komisije Zveze komunistov Slovenije za idejna vprašanja vodili ljudje, ki so vlogo intelektualcev v družbi opredeljevali drugače kakor starejša generacija komunistov, ki je nadzorovala kulturno dogajanje v petdesetih letih. Zaradi tolerantnejšega odnosa so bila posvetovanja o šolskih, kulturnih in znanstvenih vprašanjih vse bolj odprto soočanje različnih stališč. Bolj kakor razhajanja med politiki in kulturniki so postala izrazita razhajanja med kulturniki starejše in mlajše generacije ustvarjalcev. V primerjavi s hitro spreminjajočimi se kulturnopolitičnimi obdobji prejšnjih dveh desetletij so bili izobraženci pod manjšim pritiskom oblasti. Vstopanje različnih umetniških in znanstvenih usmeritev v slovenski kulturni prostor v šestdesetih letih je bilo tudi posledica te kulturnopolitične odprtosti. Dokler je v slovenskem političnem vodstvu prevladovala skupina mlajše generacije komunističnih politikov, so bila vrata raznolikosti v kulturni sferi širše odprta. Zamenjavi tega političnega vodstva na začetku sedemdesetih let pa je sledil tudi zaton te kulturnopolitične usmeritve in nov pogrom na kulturnem prizorišču.

Aleš Gabrič

Aleš Gabrič is Research Advisor at the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana and Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. His main research field is post-war cultural policy in Slovenia. Other research foci include censorship, education and intellectuals in twentieth-century Slovenia. His books include Šolska reforma 1953–1963 (The School Reform of 1953–1963 [INZ, 2006]), Sledi šolskega razvoja na Slovenskem (Tracing the Evolution of Slovenian Schools [Pedagoški inštitut, 2009]) and, most recently, V senci politike: opozicija komunistični oblasti v Sloveniji po letu 1945 (In the Shadow of Politics: Opposition to Communist Rule in Slovenia after 1945 [CZ, 2019]). Currently, Gabrič is the president of Slovenska matica, a cultural and research society which runs the second oldest Slovenian publishing house.