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WAS TITO'S YUGOSLAVIA NOT TOTALITARIAN?*

ABSTRACT: *This paper is a response to an article "Was Tito's Yugoslavia totalitarian?" published in the journal *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47 (2014). The two authors indicate the inadequate theoretical framework and untenable interpretations made by Flere and Klanjšek, who provided a distorted picture of former Yugoslav society and the position of an individual in it. Their reduced theory of totalitarianism combined with their simplified interpretations served their aim of proving that the system established by the Yugoslav communists was not totalitarian nor did it strive to become one. Flere and Klanjšek's main argument for the absence of totalitarianism is that of a federal state concept of Yugoslavia, which is not in correlation with contemporary understanding of totalitarianism. By deconstructing their arguments, this article argues for a more elaborated and up-to-date conceptual understanding of Tito's Yugoslavia and its relation to the concept of totalitarianism.*

KEYWORDS: Totalitarianism, Yugoslavia, Communism, Federalism, Josip Broz Tito, Individual

Introduction

In their article Slovenian sociologists Rudi Klanjšek and corresponding author Sergej Flere, embarked on an attempt of defining the political regime of Tito's Yugoslavia, that is, to deal with the issue "of whether 'second', that is,

* In an attempt to open a dialogue and academic debate with the two authors, this article was initially submitted to the journal *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* in February 2016. However, since we received no answer regarding the peer-review process nor any information on whether the article was to be accepted or rejected, we have decided to withdraw our submission and publish it in another journal.

post-World War II Yugoslavia was a totalitarian state”.¹ Their *raison d’être* for embarking onto such investigation was the fact that Croatian Parliament and Constitutional Court of Slovenia recently designated Tito’s Yugoslavia as totalitarian.² Thus, their study presents a response to a political and judicial judgment, and its subsequent knowledge production of Tito’s Yugoslavia as a totalitarian political regime. There can be no doubt that both of the aforementioned institutional decisions are not based on scholarly investigation and thus remain open to such investigations. Unfortunately, most scholars in the countries established after the dissolution of the communist Yugoslavia neglect the concept of totalitarianism *in toto*. In this sense, Flere’s and Klanjšek’s study deserves acknowledgement as representing one of the few attempts to deal with the issue of totalitarianism in Tito’s Yugoslavia. If that was all what the two authors had in mind while writing it, then their attempt deserves credit. However, it seems that the idea was not to do a thorough scholarly research on communist Yugoslavia and provide an insight on state-of-the-art scholarly works and understanding of a concept of totalitarianism and its possible applicability to Tito’s Yugoslavia. Rather, the reader gets the feeling that the main purpose and aim of their study was to exculpate and save Tito’s Yugoslavia from totalitarianism. Thus, in the sense of scholarly research their attempt failed completely.

One of the first things that strike a reader in this article is the authors’ approach towards their understanding and usage of the concept of totalitarianism. While totalitarianism is not an easy concept to work with, it is a concept developed during the actual historical development of both fascism and communism as political systems. Unlike, say, generic fascism, totalitarianism was a term used to describe the changes of election laws requested by Mussolini, which the Italian politician and journalist Giovanni Amendola described in 1923 as *sistema totalitaria*.³ Ever since, the concept was highly used in scholarly investigations and intellectual debates on the nature of some of the regimes in Europe.⁴ During the Cold War period, totalitarianism was proclaimed ‘dead’ several times, but it managed to resurface in scholarly investigations.⁵ There exists an abundance of literature on this topic and concept of totalitarianism,

¹ Sergej Flere and Rudi Klanjšek, “Was Tito’s Yugoslavia totalitarian?”, *Communist and Post Communist Studies*, 47, (2014), 237. Flere alone first published their article in 2012. See Sergej Flere, “Da li je Titova država bila totalitarna?”, *Političke perspektive – Časopis za istraživanje politike*, 5, (2012), 7–21. In 2017 these authors published a book *Da li je Jugoslavija morala da umre... ili kako su etničke komunističke elite kontinuitetom svojih svađa dovele do neizbežnog kraha SFRJ* (Beograd: Den Graf, 2017) in which they have repeated some of the points made in earlier article.

² S. Flere and R. Klanjšek, “Was Tito’s Yugoslavia totalitarian?”, 237–238.

³ Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 14.

⁴ See for example a little-known book Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Totaler Staat – Totaler Mensch* (Wien: Paneuropa-Verlag, 1937).

⁵ See Daniela Baratieri, Mark Edele, Giuseppe Finaldi, “Beyond the Delusion – New Histories of Totalitarian Dictatorship”, in: *Totalitarian Dictatorship: New Histories*, eds. Daniela Baratieri, Mark Edele, Giuseppe Finaldi (New York – London: Routledge, 2014), 1–20.

written since the end of the Second World War, and especially since 2000.⁶ Unfortunately Klanjšek and Flere refuse to use or even reflect on the existing debates and scholarly works dealing with this, let alone to analyze it, question it, or support it. This is evident from the fact that the authors base their knowledge and scholarly research of this concept on a single definition, as conceptualized by Friedrich and Brzezinski in their 1956 book *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*. In fact, they acknowledge this by arguing that they avoid different conceptualizations and theories, because they “render the term difficult to use”.⁷ In order to avoid this “difficulty” they focus on a fifty-year-old model that, for them, presents “a more straightforward definition of totalitarianism?”⁸ In our opinion, to base an entire scholarly investigation on a definition of totalitarianism as it was elaborated fifty years ago, without reflecting on a vast amount of contemporary scholarship on this matter, brings little or no value to the question of totalitarianism, let alone to providing a sound and scholarly based conclusion on Tito's Yugoslavia.

While Friedrich and Brzezinski's model of totalitarianism was certainly more influential than, say, Arendt's model, it also proved to be more problematic. First, this is a model and not a theory of totalitarianism and thus rather simplistic and deterministic in a sense of providing a simple check list of in- or out. On the other hand, models tend to be static. They do not represent historical realities and are often ignorant of historical developments. In fact, it can be argue that such an explicit model takes totalitarianism as an accomplished historical reality. However, history teaches us a different story. None of the totalitarian experiments in twentieth century history, be they Fascist, National-socialist or Bolshevik, was ever accomplished as such and in fact, as Roberts argues “no one set out to create what actually resulted, no one knew what totalitarianism was – because it was just coming to be for the first time”.⁹

In their introduction (p. 238) to totalitarianism, Flere and Klanjšek argue, based on other author's views, that “communist systems [are] phenomena impervious to reform”. Therefore, they see them as static, as given, and determined. With such view, it comes as no surprise that the best model for them was the one elaborated by Brzezinski and Friedrich. However, we disagree completely with such static models ever occurring or existing in history. Nothing is static in historical development and everything has its own dynamic, changes, and transformations influenced by various national and supranational contexts. In fact, a look at David D. Roberts's seminal book *Totalitarian Experiment in Twentieth century Europe* would certainly be useful for the two authors. Roberts

⁶ See for example a special journal *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* (2000-2010) published by Taylor & Francis. For more details, see also Constantin Iordachi, “Introduction”, in: *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives*, ed. Constantin Iordachi (London-New York: Routledge, 2010), 27–33.

⁷ S. Flere and R. Klanjšek, “Was Tito's Yugoslavia totalitarian?”, 238.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ David D. Roberts, *The Totalitarian Experiment in Twentieth Century Europe: Understanding the Poverty of Great Politics* (New York – London: Routledge, 2006), 17.

argues for a different approach towards totalitarianism by saying that: “The key is to probe totalitarianism not as a form of rule or set of extreme outcomes but as a historically specific dynamic, which grew from aspirations that became possible only at a particular moment from within the ongoing modern political experiment, and through which certain extreme and unforeseen outcomes came to be.”¹⁰ Thus, what is in question here is not a static political regime, but rather a political and social experiment, a new mode of collective action. According to Roberts, totalitarianism stemmed from a possibility for a new collective action to be undertaken, a new mode of collective action, taken upon by the self-appointed elite which claimed “unique capacity to spearhead what it claimed was essential change beyond the liberal mainstream”.¹¹ In this sense, the elite claimed a monopoly of power while the state was an apparatus “for the new mode of action”.¹² Thus, totalitarianism was neither static nor defined. Rather, it presented a new possibility through which a new mode of collective actions could be undertaken. Taken as an experiment, totalitarianism presents aspirations, an attempt of creating alternative modernity, based on different sets of beliefs and actions. In our opinion, totalitarianism presents a departure within European modernity, a departure based on an idea of anthropological revolution that aimed at creating a modernity different from that time dominant liberal understanding of modernity. What took place was an interplay between the self-proclaimed elite, active within their specific national context, influenced by supranational historical developments.

In our opinion, it is wrong to view totalitarianism from a simplistic view of a desire for a top-down total domination. Instead, we argue for a more complex approach that takes seriously the belief and the desire of the self-proclaimed elite in a possibility of creating an alternative modernity, an alternative political, social, and economic reality by mobilizing their societies for this new mode of collective action. Within such view of a possible new revolutionary modernity, the individual matters as long as he/she obeys or follows the rules of this game. The elite draws strict boundaries, and propagates them as such through their monopoly of social surroundings, media, and knowledge production but also, if necessary, through practical examples of what happens to those crossing them or trying to bend them. The molding of a “new man/woman” was one of the key components of totalitarian experiment. It provided the possibility to attempt to mold an obedient individual not through the total control of his/her everyday activities and thoughts by repression and supervision, but rather through a social-anthropological revolution. Such a revolution, which would create this new, obedient and faithful, socialist man/woman, would come to exist through collective action undertaken by the self-proclaimed elite. The question here is not one of a total control over an entire population, but rather of an idea that the population needs to both realize and support the elite's collective action, or simply step aside

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 418.

¹² *Ibid.*, 433.

and remain silent. Even if certain “freedoms” were allowed, these do not connote the classical, western liberal meaning of freedom. In our opinion, they mean passive freedom, freedom given by the elite, controlled by the elite, and if necessary, taken away by the elite if it feels that their totalitarian experiment is in danger. In this respect, knowledge production plays a crucial role in totalitarian systems. In a system where the elite embarks on a large-scale revolutionary project of transforming its society, knowledge production, be it historical or contemporary, becomes an important instrument in the hands of the elite. Elite’s knowledge and view are transferred onto the society through education, newspapers, books, articles, encyclopedias, biographies, historical textbooks, political programs and brochures, movies, documentary films, etc. Thus, such highly reductive and controlled knowledge is presented to the population in order to achieve the anthropological revolution in a sense of creating a new, in this case, socialist/Marxist individual. Such regulation of knowledge with all its social and political aspects becomes important in the elite’s attempt to regulate its society *in toto* by which, as Kołakowski had argued: “What we call totalitarian government is regulation of everything what people do.”¹³ Once such knowledge becomes embedded into an individual, his/her joining of the party’s ranks further opens the possibility for social and political progress within the society, that is, of becoming part of the future elite whose task is to preserve the ideas and continue the experiment further. This further presents a certain negation of one’s personality, especially regarding his/her possibility of free will and free choice.¹⁴ Thus, the totalitarian experiment strives towards constant and perpetual reshaping, remolding of collective and personal memories, which are perpetually shaped in accordance with the current political needs of the self-proclaimed elites.¹⁵

Even if Flere and Klanjšek disagree with the outcomes of contemporary debates and research on totalitarianism, as they do, they should have at least shown the awareness of them. Instead, they have chosen to juxtapose Tito’s Yugoslavia to a fifty-year-old model of totalitarianism and based on this concluding that “the Yugoslavia of Tito is almost impossible to slot into a classification of political systems”.¹⁶ In fact, they went even further in claiming that even if a different conceptualization is to be used for Tito’s Yugoslavia, the outcome would be no different. This article will show that, on the one hand, such a conclusion is superficial and too simplistic, and on the other, that even when using this model of totalitarianism as presented by Brzezinski and Friedrich, Tito’s Yugoslavia can be classified as a state where the totalitarian experiment was implemented.

¹³ Leszek Kołakowski, *Male rasprave o velikim stvarima* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2013), 13.

¹⁴ Jacques Barrot, “Introduction”, in: *Crimes committed by Totalitarian Regimes*, ed. Peter Jamšek (Ljubljana: Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2008), 9.

¹⁵ Leszek Kołakowski, “Marksistički korijeni staljinizma”, *Treći program Hrvatskog radija*, 30, (1990), 11–16.

¹⁶ S. Flere and R. Klanjšek, “Was Tito’s Yugoslavia totalitarian?”, 244.

Federalism as Their Key Argument

Flere and Klanjšek's main argument for the claim that Yugoslavia was not a totalitarian state is the federal concept of Yugoslavia, especially the strengthening of republican statehood since the mid-1960s, and after the Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) 1974.¹⁷ In their Introduction the authors refer to the Declaration of the Croatian Parliament in 2006 by claiming:

This Declaration invokes the Declaration adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 1996 on the same issue, where totalitarianism is primarily designated by 'hyper-centralism', a quality which certainly does not pertain to Yugoslavia.¹⁸

Firstly, the authors are wrong when they state that the Declaration of the Croatian Parliament primarily refers to Resolution 1096 (1996). It primarily refers to Resolution 1481 (2006), while the Resolution 1096 is mentioned only at the end. However, an even bigger problem is that the authors selectively and inaccurately stated that Resolution 1096 defines totalitarianism primarily as "hyper-centralization". In Resolution 1096, the term is not strictly defined and was only one among couple of others. In addition, it should be noted that none of the six general characteristics of Friedrich and Brzezinski's model on which the authors base their article does not explicitly state the term "hyper-centralization".¹⁹

It is true that the constitutional changes in the period 1968-1971 as well as the Constitution in 1974 greatly reduced the centralized state, but it does not say anything about the deconstruction of the totalitarian paradigm. From their key argument, it is evident that the authors approach totalitarianism exclusively at the institutional level, while the level of society is in the background, and the level of an individual is completely lacking. On page 239 the authors' state that "The most notable change came in the 1974 Constitution, where republics were defined as 'states' and equipped with individual ministries for foreign and defense affairs." This claim is very problematic. Firstly, they claim that the Constitution of the SFRY from 1974 defined republics as states. While the first article of the 1974 Constitution did define republics as states and similar formulation also existed in (for example) the 1974 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Croatia (SRC),²⁰ to proclaim publically that for example Croatia was a sovereign state, could cause serious problems with the authorities, since such

¹⁷ „Ustav Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije”, *Službeni list SFRJ*, 9/1974.

¹⁸ S. Flere and R. Klanjšek, "Was Tito's Yugoslavia totalitarian?", 237, n. 2.

¹⁹ Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 9–10.

²⁰ „Ustav Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske”, *Narodne novine Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske*, 8/1974.

attributes were considered to be an unacceptable outbursts of nationalism. However, it should be stressed that the issue of the statehood of the republics becomes irrelevant when we speak about the totalitarian character of the system. The federalist concept of Yugoslavia does not deny the existence of a totalitarian ideology imposed to all the citizens of Yugoslavia until the breakdown of the system. This is most vivid from the basic principles of the Constitution of the SRC from 1974, which states that the purpose of education is “the acquisition of the Marxist view of the world”.

Another controversial claim is that, according to the 1974 Constitution, the Yugoslav republics had individual ministries of foreign affairs and ministries of defense. Firstly, the Federal Constitution as well as the constitutions of the Yugoslav republics did not prescribe which ministries (then secretariats) exist. The ministries were formed by the executive authorities, i.e. in SRC that was the Executive Council of the Parliament of the SRC. Its scope and domain were determined by special legal acts (laws). The SRC never had a Ministry (Secretariat) of Foreign Affairs. The only section that the SRC had was a special Committee for Foreign Relations within the Parliament, but even this was only in the second half of the 1980s. As for the independent ministries of defense, the fact is that, after the adoption of the Federal Constitution in 1963,²¹ the Executive Council of the Parliament of the SRC had a Ministry (Secretariat) of People's Defense.²² However, it is important to question what was the level of independence of this Ministry and was SRC autonomous in this field. We shall return to this issue later.

On page 240, the authors argue that all the republics had “their own national banks, ministries of foreign affairs and Territorial Army units under republican command (to be harmonized at the federal level)”. We should be very careful when we use the term “national”. In the Croatian and Serbian languages, words people's (narodni) and national (nacionalni) are not synonyms.²³ So, banks existed as people's (narodne) not national (nacionalne). Also, a proper translation of the names of six Yugoslav republics were People's Republics not National Republics (People's Republic of Slovenia, People's Republic of Serbia, People's Republic of Croatia, etc.).²⁴

In addition to the problem of terminology, there is another problematic implication – the claim that these entities and institutions were independent (“their own”). It is necessary to emphasize that the power and domain of these institutions were limited with decisions and formulations made at the federal

²¹ „Ustav Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije“, *Službeni list SFRJ*, 14/1963.

²² Ivo Perić, *Hrvatski državni sabor 1848.-2000.*, vol. 3 (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest; Hrvatski državni sabor; Dom i svijet, 2001), 293.

²³ Moreover, at the time of the existence of Tito's Yugoslavia, in some contexts, the term national (nacionalan) could have been given negative connotations. The adjective nationalistic (nacionalistički) was derived from this term, and was the adjective which communist rulers used primarily to define enemies of Yugoslav socialism and of their idea of “brotherhood and unity”.

²⁴ The names of the Yugoslav republics were People's Republics until 1963, whereupon they were renamed to Socialist Republics.

level. For example, the Article 117 of the 1963 Federal Constitution mentioned that “Issuance of banknotes and coins is made by the People’s Bank of Yugoslavia”, and that “the Federation ensures the unity of the monetary and credit system, determines the policy of issuing money and provides control of money circulation”. The 1963 Constitution of the SRC²⁵ had no reference to the People’s (or National) Bank. The Federal Constitution of 1974 provided more details regarding the position and domain of the People’s Bank of Yugoslavia and the People’s Banks of the Republics and Provinces. According to the Article 260, “the People’s Bank of Yugoslavia, the People’s Banks of the Republics and the People’s Banks of the autonomous provinces are institutions of a unified monetary system and implement a common monetary policy set by the Federal Assembly”. Article 263 says, “The status of the People’s Bank of Yugoslavia and unique monetary business of the People’s Banks of the Republics and the People’s Banks of the autonomous provinces are regulated by the Federal law”. Therefore, this unitaristic monetary system clearly determined on what level the monetary policy was developed. At the level of the republics, for example in the Constitution of the SRC in 1963, the People’s Bank of SRC is not mentioned, while in the Constitution of the SRC in 1974, its domain and scope were defined by the Article 339 which did not allow any deviance outside the frame defined by the Federal Constitution. At the very end of communist rule in Yugoslavia, the Croatian People’s Bank acted under the Law on the People’s Bank of Croatia,²⁶ which nevertheless remained under the Law on the People’s Bank of Yugoslavia and the Unique Monetary Policy of the People’s Banks of the Republics and the People’s Banks of the Autonomous Provinces.²⁷ Therefore, the claim that the Yugoslav republics had “national banks” suggests that republics possessed monetary independence, which is simply not true since the frame prescribed at the Federation level limited their independence.

Regarding the issue of the Territorial Defense (TD), the existence of which the authors cite as an argument of the non-totalitarian character of the system (the authors also repeated this in section *Armed forces*, p. 242), it should be noted that the authors gave an argument for a conclusion completely opposite to theirs. The authors claim that the Yugoslav People’s Army (YPA) was organized as totalitarian, but that the creation of the TD in 1968 changed that character because from that point on the republics had “their own institutionalized armed forces”. Here it is important to mention that since 1968 Yugoslavia had a two-component Armed Force, which included the YPA and the TD.²⁸ A task of the Armed Force was to defend the country and protect its constitutional order. Unlike the YPA, which operated as a typical army force, the TD was, according

²⁵ „Ustav Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske“, *Narodne novine Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske*, 15/1963.

²⁶ „Zakon o Narodnoj banci Hrvatske“, *Narodne novine SRH*, 55/1989.

²⁷ „Zakon o Narodnoj banci Jugoslavije i jedinstvenom monetarnom poslovanju narodnih banaka republika i narodnih banaka autonomnih pokrajina“, *Službeni list SFRJ*, 34/1989.

²⁸ Grubišić, J. et al., *Razvoj oružanih snaga SFRJ 1945–1985*, vol. 12 (Beograd: Vojnoizdavački i novinski centar, 1986).

to official documents, “the widest form of organization of the working people for armed struggle, with the task of supervising and being present throughout the territory of the SFRY”.²⁹ The basic principle of the TD was the principle of armed people, which was a popular military doctrine in Yugoslavia inherited from the tradition of partisan warfare during the World War II. This principle meant that the defense organization was based on the municipality, i.e. on mobilizing and arming of the local people, common citizens.³⁰

An important detail to note here is that the real motivation for the formation of the TD was the fear of the Yugoslav authorities from the intrusion of the Warsaw Pact forces. This fear came because of the 1968 Warsaw Pact forces intervention in Czechoslovakia. Due to this, the Yugoslav authorities created the General People's Defense (GPD) concept in 1968, which created the TD. The GPD concept, which was later expanded and related to the Social Self-defense concept, derived from Marx's phrase of “armed people”. Under the slogan “the enemy never sleeps”, the GPD concept and the Social Self-defense concept became a special school subject taught in all the Yugoslav high schools. Its purpose was to teach pupils about how to put gas masks, how to treat wounded people, how to make homemade explosives, how to throw a grenade, how to fire a rifle, etc. The GPD concept implied the intensive militarization of the society, with an intention to prepare the whole of society for partisan/guerilla warfare.³¹

In the chapter on the political police, the authors use federalism as their key argument (pp. 240–241). In short, the argument for the claim that Yugoslavia was not a totalitarian state is the “pluralism of UDBA”³² (phrase by authors of this article) after 1966. Flere and Klanjšek argue that the Yugoslav State Security Service³³ was divided between the Republics. While this is true, they also claim that there was a “lack of cooperation and coordination”. According to these claims, we can assume that e.g., if the Serbian SDB was looking for someone who escaped to the territory of Socialist Republic of Croatia, the Croatian SDB did not have to, or want to cooperate with their colleagues from Serbia. This certainly was not the case. If such a case ever happened, it certainly could not have happened during the life of Josip Broz Tito. The independence of the republican-level SDBs existed in the respect that the Croatian SDB did not interfere in the work of the SDB of Serbia and vice versa, but the federal SDB must have had a significant impact on the work of all the others. If there was a security issue which had a federal importance, security actions were coordinated by the federal SDB, while the lower levels of the SDB acted as executors of orders from the top. Finally, all the lower level SDBs operated according

²⁹ Davor Marijan, „Jugoslavenska narodna armija – važnija obilježja”, *Polemos*, 9, no. 17, (2006), 26.

³⁰ See Law of People's Defense (*Službeni list SFRJ*, 8/1969); Law on General People's Defense (*Službeni list SFRJ*, 21/1982).

³¹ Davor Marijan, *Slom Titove armije. JNA i raspad Jugoslavije 1987.-1992.* (Zagreb: Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga; Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2008), 33.

³² UDBA (in Serbian *Uprava državne bezbednosti*) was Yugoslav State Security Service.

³³ Since 1964 the name UDBA was changed in to SDB (in Serbian *Služba državne bezbednosti*).

to the same model created at the federal level. However, even if we fully accept the claims that the State Security Service was decentralized, that there was no cooperation and coordination, what does that mean for an individual who lived in this totalitarian experiment? Did the victim of the repression care from which level the repression came? Was it any easier for the victim if he/she knew that the repression he/she was facing was done by the republic or federal political police? To the end of the existence of communist Yugoslavia, the State Security Service exercised terror against the Yugoslav citizens in a wide range of forms, from blackmail to brutal physical violence. In fact, the repressive actions of UDBA/SDB crossed the borders of Yugoslavia and reached many Yugoslav emigrants in other countries of Europe.³⁴

With this regard, it is also important to note that totalitarianism does not entail only physical repression. There are different methods of repression by which the authorities can exercise their control and mold their society according to their own views, and consequently every individual. Kołakowski explained it by saying that the totalitarian system does not have to constantly use terrorist means of repression, and that the perfect (ideal) totalitarian system (which never existed, and could not be accomplished) would be an extraordinary form of slavery without masters.³⁵

Through the entire article, the authors repeat the argument of the political conflicts between Yugoslav republics and the principle of the collective decision-making. On p. 239 they say: “True, there was no political opposition in the classic sense (Ionescu and Madariaga, 1968), but the republics often opposed each other and ‘coalesced’, all this masked by an ideological unity newspeak.” Hereby, the authors claim that there was no “political opposition in the classic sense”, although they do not define what that exactly means. What is that other political opposition which they argue that existed? Possibly, the “opposition” to which the authors refer could only be the disputes, quarrels and disagreements within the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). So, there was no political alternative outside of the LCY. Inter-party conflicts have existed since the beginning of the LCY, and through time these conflicts led to the decomposition and the dissolution of the party primarily on the national basis. It is important to stress that no one within these inter-party conflicts during Tito’s life,

³⁴ For more on the repressive measures of the State Security Service see Hans P. Rullmann, *Assassinations Commissioned by Belgrade Documentation about the Belgrade Murder Apparatus* (Hamburg: Ost-Dienst, 1981); Marko Lopušina, *Ubij bližnjeg svog: jugoslovenska tajna policija 1945/1995*. (Beograd: TV Novosti, 1996); Jože Pučnik, ed. *Iz arhivov slovenske politične policije* (Ljubljana: Veda, 1996); Bože Vukušić, *Tajni rat UDBE protiv hrvatskoga iseljništva* (Zagreb: Klub hrvatskih povratnika iz iseljništva, 2001); Damjan Hančič and Renato Podbersič, “Totalitarian regimes in Slovenia in the 20th century”, in: *Crimes committed by Totalitarian Regimes*, ed. Peter Jambrek (Ljubljana: Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2008), 55. It should be noted that two senior officials of the Croatian SDB were recently tried in Germany for the murder of a Croatian emigrant in Munich in 1983.

³⁵ Leszek Kołakowski, „Marksistički korijeni staljinizma”, *Treći program Hrvatskog radija*, 30 (1990), 11–16.

which the authors take as an example of “non-classical” opposition, did not intercede for democratic elections and freedom of the individual, or for any other political program different from the communist one, which was essentially totalitarian. Even in the rare cases where a member of the LCY advocated reforms which would lessen the control of the Party or allow more criticism, this would be followed by (e.g. Milovan Đilas) swift expulsion from the Party, and most likely imprisonment.

In connection to all this, on page 242 the authors claim that in “official ideological texts (...) the proletariat had not replaced the concept of nationality”. The question is how these relate to each other, since one does not exclude the other. It is clear that the authors rely here explicitly on Dejan Jović's argument that in order to have a totalitarian version of ideology it would be necessary to have “Yugoslav essentialism”. Does this mean that one can speak of totalitarianism only within the boundaries of a single nation-state? The fact that the Yugoslav communists never denied the existence of nations (in their terminology “nations and nationalities”) nor ever really tried to enforce a policy of creating a Yugoslav nationality, should not serve as an argument for the negation of the presence of a totalitarian experiment. On the contrary, it should serve as a scholarly problem in trying to investigate how a totalitarian experiment directs its actions within such a society, and whether its practices and outcomes were to be different from those exercised in a nation-state.

In their conclusion, the authors reiterate that since the mid-1960s Yugoslav republics were autonomous and that they took care only for their particular interests. While this is true to some extent, Flere and Klanjšek fail to mention the fact that political power in all Yugoslav republics stemmed from the same political party – the LCY, as well as that all the LCY republical leaderships were subordinated to the central leadership based on the principle of “democratic centralism”. This meant that when the highest party hierarchy makes a decision, all the subordinate forums, from the republic to the municipal committee level, had to implement that decision. Therefore, the relevance of the SFRY's federal structure remains unclear concerning its totalitarian character. Especially when knowing that the leadership of each republic belonged to the same political organization (LCY), which was hierarchically organized and where the so-called democratic centralism principle existed. The LCY leaders in each republic were obliged to implement the decision reached at the top of the LCY headed by J. Broz Tito. The very low level of their independence was seen in 1971 and 1972, when all the reform-oriented republic leaderships (for example Savka Dabčević Kučar and Miko Tripalo in Croatia, Stane Kavčič in Slovenia, Latinka Perović and Marko Nikezić in Serbia etc.) were dismissed or forced to resign after Tito's open criticism. During Tito's life, the principle of “democratic centralism” had priority over the principle of federalism. The primary goal for the highest officials of LCY was to preserve their power and positions. Flere and Klanjšek reduce the question of totalitarianism down to the question of independence of the Yugoslav republics, leaving the issue of the position of the

individual in society completely out of sight, which is in our opinion a methodological mistake because institutions like republics do not feel the harmful effects of totalitarianism on their skin, people do.

The Role of Josip Broz Tito

In their article, Flere and Klanjšek also refer to the role of Josip Broz Tito, who, they believe, “can not be considered (...) a totalitarian dictator”, “but (...) a concerned political leader” (239). Their arguments are listed lower on the same page:

The ‘totalitarian dictator’ did not appoint the members of federal and republics bodies; instead, it was a long process of achieving ‘agreement’, harmonization, and manipulation. In his candid testimony, at the beginning of the 70s, S. Doronjski speaks of months-long ‘consultations’ to appoint federal functionaries from Vojvodina, where members of the province, republic and federal elite took part as well as Tito.

It is true that Tito did not formally determine the members of the supreme federal authorities, because he constitutionally did not have had such powers. However, the key question here is whether it was possible for someone to be appointed to a high federal office position if Tito was against his/her appointment? Flere and Klanjšek try to show that Tito was not a dictator and they base their argument on the fact that he allowed debates within the political party in which he was the highest authority. While this could be observed as an improvement in internal-party democracy in the LCY, the question is what was the impact of this on “ordinary” people who were not members or supporters of the LCY and thus could not gain high political positions?

The system was not totalitarian exclusively because of one individual (although Tito’s role was extremely important, especially in later periods since Tito was the most powerful Yugoslav integrative factor) but due to the very character of the political organization he headed. Depending on a number of conditions, in various stages of development of the communist system, a communist leader expressed different levels of dictatorial, charismatic, bureaucratic or personal characteristics.³⁶ His position in the political system depended notably on the tradition and strength of the ruling ideology and thus a communist leader was never above party ideology since the main source of the sovereignty of the General Secretary was the Party itself.³⁷

Furthermore, in their arguments the authors emphasize the poliarchic type of government. It is true that Yugoslavia eventually became more poliarchic. However, Tito was the one who had the decisive vote. His judgment was final. He arbitrated between different interests (so-called centralist vs. federalists; dogmatists vs. reformists), and through time he consolidated his position of supreme

³⁶ Todor Kuljić, *Oblici lične vlasti* (2nd edition) (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2009), 350.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 369.

arbiter. A case in point are struggles of lower level party officials fighting for their particular interests, and the winning side in these conflicts was always the one which gained Tito's support, i.e. in 1971/1972 Tito supported the centralists and dogmatics, and in 1966 or in 1974 he supported reformist and federalists.

In the chapter "Other features" (p. 243) Flere and Klanjšek discuss the party purges initiated by Tito and are attempting to provide some kind of justification of Tito. They say that "Tito's removal of the Croatian leadership in 1971 followed unrest among Croatian youth, when the leadership lost control over events, and not because the leadership unleashed heated discussions on inter-republic and interethnic issues". Even if we agree with this claim, what does it even matter? Are Tito's motives important, when we face the fact that he was able to remove them from their respective positions with only one inner-party speech (in Karadorđevo in December 1971)? This example also shows that the statehood and independence of the republics and their leaders during Tito's life were very limited. It also shows the contradiction in authors' arguments where at one point they argue that Tito's authority was limited due to the federal character of the state, and only few lines before they say that Tito purged the Croatian political leadership in 1971, the Serbian leadership in 1972, etc. At the end of the paragraph, they concluded that Tito was "not an example of civil society development", but he "did stimulate the development of republics and provinces, institutions and quasi-institutions". The authors do not explain in what sense Tito contributed to the development of the society. Some major Yugoslav problems were never completely resolved, as was the case with the key issue of Yugoslavia – the national issue. That is why, after Tito's death, Yugoslavia experienced numerous economic, social, political and national issues.³⁸ By not allowing open public debate on many crucial issues, many key problems came out in the open shortly after his death and erupted into a bloody war in the 1990s.

The authority of the LCY was a pyramidal one, and on its top, there was a single person with almost unlimited power – Josip Broz Tito, who was the head of the state until his death. This was possible because the Constitution of the SFRY in 1963 named him president for life. However, his political power was not based on the law, but rather on his charisma and the totalitarian character of the ruling political party. He was the leader whose position was in some extent pseudo-constitutional because sometimes he was the source of norms that regulate the life of the community. Tito's position created a quasi-legal situation since state institutions often ruled according to his guidelines and advice, and not according to legislation. Sometimes "the letter of the President of the Republic", various "guidelines", "resolutions", "Directions of Development", and similar "measures" were normatively stronger than legislative acts. These parallel norms were better suited to a state of emergency, rather than constitutional-law-based state.³⁹

³⁸ Steven L. Burg, "Elite Conflict in Post-Tito Yugoslavia," *Soviet Studies*, 38, no. 2, (1986), 170.

³⁹ Zoran Đinđić, *Jugoslavija kao nedovršena država* (Beograd: Narodna biblioteka Srbije – Fond Dr Zoran Đinđić, 2010), 120.

The Character of Yugoslav Institutions

Flere and Klanjšek claim that the Yugoslav Constitutions did not have a propaganda role.⁴⁰ The character of the Yugoslav constitutionality is properly analyzed by Zoran Đinđić (2010), who called it “ostensible constitutionalism”.⁴¹ His main objection is that in the socialist Yugoslavia, the parliament existed, but it did not form the government, as is the case in constitutional republics; instead it was the government (in terms of political power) which formed the parliament. Đinđić argued that constitutions of socialist Yugoslavia did not express what constitutions need to express - a social compromise - instead they expressed an action program of the only legal political party.⁴² The Yugoslav constitutions do not mark a framework which every social actor (including those who are the current holders of political power) must comply with and by which all social actors control each other. In Yugoslav Constitutions there are only the values listed to which all actors should strive.⁴³ Constitutional system in the Yugoslav communism had exclusively an instrumental role and it regulated only trivial political relations. Almost all conflicting situations were handled in the meta-constitutional space, usually in the top leadership of the LCY.⁴⁴ An understanding of the constitution as a “means” derived from the Marxist-Bolshevik concepts and definitions of the state prevailed in the Yugoslav constitutional law. In the Bolshevik concept of the political system there is no place for the functional control of the government, because the government had an unlimited power.

Frequent constitutional changes and the increase of the constitutional paragraphs were futile, in law-state sense, while in the elections people did not really elect, rather only confirmed the already chosen candidates. In traditional constitutionality, the Constitution has a crucial role in limiting the state power and in ensuring civil liberties, but in Yugoslav socialism this was not the case.⁴⁵ For the constitutional law system, the functioning of and respect for the constitutional and legal procedures are essential, but in the case of Yugoslavia, the key subject was located outside of the system procedures. According to the Yugoslav constitutions from 1963 onward, the LCY had a “leadership role on the basis of the legality of historical development”, which meant that the overlapping between state and the LCY was constitutionally legitimized. This opened the possibility of arbitrary enforcement of power, all within a system that did not clearly define the boundaries between the executive, judicial, and legislative power.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ S. Flere and R. Klanjšek, “Was Tito’s Yugoslavia totalitarian?”, 240.

⁴¹ Z. Đinđić, *Jugoslavija kao nedovršena država*.

⁴² *Ibid*, 71.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 58.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 53.

⁴⁵ Katarina Spehnik, *Javnost i propaganda: Narodna fronta u politici i kulturi Hrvatske: 1945.-1952.* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest; Dom i svijet, 2002), 88.

⁴⁶ D. Hančič and R. Podbersič, “Totalitarian regimes in Slovenia in the 20th century”, 57.

In this overlapping, the party was always ahead of the state and political decisions were made at the party meetings, and then implemented by the state. At each level of state and local governments, as well as in all major social organizations and work collectives, there was a party committee, which “directed” and actually decided. Party’s decisions have been disseminated as “recommendations” but in reality, they had an obeying character. The widespread party-network in practically all institutions, organizations and associations guaranteed the implementation of these “recommendations”, whereby the LCY determined the overall development of the society. The Party’s resolutions and decisions were largely binding for government bodies, as well as for all the socio-political organizations. Only in the 1980s did Yugoslavia have a shorter period when the communist elite respected, to an extent, the Constitution and laws. The political crisis and conflicts between Yugoslav republics, that have gradually received national character, led to the balance of power in which the Constitution and laws began to play an important role.⁴⁷ However, this was primarily related to legal entities – republics and provinces, not to an individual. Tito’s Yugoslavia was a party state, and despite the frequent changes, it remained non-democratic country up to its end, that is, the community without legitimacy.⁴⁸

Self-management Economy

In the section on the Yugoslav economy, the authors seek to confirm the thesis of the non-totalitarian character of Tito’s Yugoslavia by highlighting some features of the self-management economic model (p. 241). The self-management economy indeed significantly differed from the Soviet economic model, which was existent in Yugoslavia until the beginning of the 1950s. Yugoslav authorities propagated the idea that the state had handed over the management of the companies into the hands of the workers. The question here is that of the workers’ real influence in managing the companies. After the adoption of the Primary Act on Management in State Enterprises and Higher Economic Associations by Work Collectives in June 1950, the workers’ councils formally became the highest managing bodies in the enterprises. However, the LCY kept the key influence within the worker’s councils, and every economically or politically significant enterprise had its LCY branch.

The economic reform in 1965 was the strongest attempt to make Yugoslav economy more efficient and to realize the propagated workers’ self-management in practice.⁴⁹ However, how free this economy was is illustrated by the fact that private initiative was very restricted. Private enterprises could only be established in the field of crafts, with the restriction that prohibited employ-

⁴⁷ D. Marijan, *Slom Titove armije*, 29.

⁴⁸ Sabrina P. Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević* (4th edition) (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2002), 4.

⁴⁹ Richard P. Farkas, *Yugoslav Economic Development and Political Change: The relationship between Economic Managers and Policy-Making Elites* (New York: Praeger, 1975), 13.

ment of more than five workers.⁵⁰ During Tito's life, there existed not a single large private company in Yugoslavia, which most vividly speaks about the freedom of the economy. "In practice, entry of new firms was very limited in the period of maximal reliance on the market mechanism, 1965–73, and thereafter nonexistent".⁵¹

Flere and Klanjšek argue that since the 1960s there were no attempts to introduce a planned economy in Yugoslavia, in fact they even argue that state control over the economy was non-existent. This is another highly problematic statement. The plan of economic reform in 1965, on which the authors base their arguments, had a commanding character and has become a set of social guidelines, whose function was unclear, as was noted by Milenkovitch.⁵² Milenkovitch, who is the author to which Flere and Klanjšek refer to, held that the LCY managed the Yugoslav economic framework and changed not only the economic policy, but also the whole economic system. Even after the economic reform in 1965 "workers had relatively little influence over decision-making compared to the managerial elite".⁵³ According to Radelić, the main cause of the irrationality of the economic system was the rule of the LCY over the economy.⁵⁴ In the early 1970s, the 1965 economic reform was abandoned,⁵⁵ and the efforts for the introduction of a market economy stopped for the next 15 years.⁵⁶ With the Constitution of 1974, the affirmation of the BOAL (OOUR) system and finally with the Law on Associated Labor in 1976, the state commanded the abandonment of the economic functions of the enterprises and imposed its social definition.⁵⁷ It was a form of planned economy based on the principle of social arrangements and self-management agreements as the main regulatory institutions of economic life. This form of economy lasted until 1988, when new constitutional changes introduced a shift towards market economy and allowed private businesses.⁵⁸

Finally, the Yugoslav economic system was reformed several times, and during the 1960s, it was to some extent market-oriented, but political interference in the economy became stronger again in the second half of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s. Yugoslavia never created effective labor and capital markets, and the market never had a primary role in the Yugoslav economy.⁵⁹ Although it was different from the Soviet economy, it remained a form of socialist

⁵⁰ Zdenko Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji 1945.-1991.: od zajedništva do razlaza* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga; Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2006), 334.

⁵¹ Saul Estrin, "Yugoslavia: The Case of Self-Managing Market Socialism", *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 5, no. 4, (1991), 192.

⁵² Deborah D. Milenkovitch, "The Case of Yugoslavia", *The American Economic Review*, 67, no. 1, (1977), 55.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

⁵⁴ Z. Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji*, 337.

⁵⁵ D. Milenkovitch, "The Case of Yugoslavia".

⁵⁶ Z. Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji*, 337.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 490; Milenkovitch, "The Case of Yugoslavia", 58–59.

⁵⁸ Z. Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji*, 496.

⁵⁹ S. Estrin, "Yugoslavia", 189–191.

economy that was fundamentally anti-market oriented, often contradictory, and to an extent perhaps utopian. In fact, the Yugoslav economic system proved to be extremely inefficient and largely dependent on international loans, which led to increasing foreign debt.⁶⁰

Freedom of the Individual (in Arts, Culture, Media, Religion)

The main problem in Flere and Klačnjek's article is that the position of the individual within the Yugoslav society is nonexistent. Their article, which set out to answer the question of whether Tito's Yugoslavia was totalitarian, there is no analysis concerning the freedom of an individual. The communist regime systematically suppressed the fundamental human rights, and imposed only one worldview that was created by the communist thinkers and practitioners. The authors pay no attention to this key issue, except indirectly in some segments.

In the paragraph on art and culture (p. 242) the authors argue that the cultural life in Yugoslavia was diverse and plural, and they cite some authors whose works were performed in Yugoslavia, and who were not supporters of the communist idea. The fact is that in Yugoslavia the artists could use various art forms; painters could paint abstract paintings although Tito hated them. However, Tito knew that abstract paintings would not topple his rule. Only direct criticism was restrained, while the form mostly remained free, which is the main difference between Tito and for example Stalin, who prohibited any style other than socialist realism. This freedom of form created an image of freedom in the society, or at least a feeling that the Yugoslav communism was "more human" than the Soviet one. Grateful for the "freedom" given to them, many people (especially public intellectuals) censored themselves. Tito knew that a certain amount of freedom in the sphere of art and culture and the opening of national borders for intellectuals do not necessarily have to jeopardize his rule, but on the contrary, can facilitate its effectiveness.

When presenting their arguments on the position of the media, the authors reduced the problem to the issue of the religious press. The liberalization of the religious press during the 1960s occurred to some extent. The number of religious publications increased significantly during the 1960s. However, it should be noted that religious communities in Yugoslavia could only publish within the sole domain of religious teaching or performing of religious services. The legislation, such as the Law on the Legal Status of Religious Communities⁶¹ and the Basic Law on Publishing Enterprises and Publishing Institutions⁶² meant that the notion of religious press excludes socio-political aspirations and direct or indirect criticism of social and political activities and institutions of the system.⁶³

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁶¹ *Službeni list SFRJ*, 10/1965.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 44/1959.

⁶³ Josip Grbelja, *Cenzura u hrvatskom novinstvu 1945.-1990.* (Zagreb: Alineja, 1998), 135. Based on the new regulations in Croatia in 1964, the court banned one religious publication due to an

The issue of freedom of the media is much more complex than it is present in Flere's and Klanjšek's article. It is important to emphasize that, when speaking about the process of liberalization of the media in the 1960s, the influence of political structures was crucial. Journalists who carried the liberalization process were linked to a reform-oriented wing of the LCY and they shared the same fate. With the collapse of the reform policy, the period of liberalization of the media came to an end. The communist government in Yugoslavia, or that part which prevailed in the early 1970s, felt the need to "completely suppress the view that the press and the radio are an isolated and independent political factors, which create and express public opinion".⁶⁴ Political factors demanded media to fulfill the function assigned to them from the start of communist rule – to "completely serve socialism as instruments of political struggle".⁶⁵ The process of liberalization of the media was legislatively stopped in April 1973, when the Law on the Prevention of Abuse of Freedom of the Press and Other Forms of Information was adopted.⁶⁶ This law, which was in force until 1990, as well as the new Criminal Law in 1975, which contained restrictive provisions (Art. 133) on the promotion of the enemy and counter-revolutionary activities almost suffocated freedom of the media due to its repressive nature, putting them under tight state and party control.⁶⁷

The authors argue that one cannot speak of a monolithic religious and cultural sphere in Yugoslavia. We should be very careful when giving a definite appraisal of this because the relationship of the communist government with religious communities was extremely complex, and had changed through time primarily under the influence of international relations. Firstly, the communists heavily attacked the Catholic Church, as well as other religious communities, especially after World War II. The number of priests killed without trial or after unfair trials, was very high,⁶⁸ and some cases were truly terrifying.⁶⁹ Secondly,

article in which the issue of abortion was treated "in a way that slanders the medical call in Yugoslavia and disturbs the citizens" (Marko Lopušina, *Crna knjiga: cenzura u Jugoslaviji 1945–91*. (Beograd: Fokus, 1991, 45). In 1967 the Public Prosecutor's Office in Zagreb filed charges against the editor of a religious magazine for the abuse of religion and the Church for political purposes, and in 1968 Msgr. Franjo Kuharić (from 1970 the Archbishop of Zagreb) was fined and reprimanded because he had published an article in which contemporary political events were described (Ivana Hebrang Grgić, „Zakoni o tisku u Hrvatskoj od 1945. do danas“, *Vjesnik bibliotekara Hrvatske*, 42, no. 3, (2000), 131).

⁶⁴ Dragoslav Janković and Rodoljub Čolaković, eds., *Pregled istorije Saveza komunista Jugoslavije* (Beograd: Institut za izučavanje radničkog pokreta, 1963), 518.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ I. Hebrang Grgić, „Zakoni o tisku u Hrvatskoj od 1945. do danas“, 125.

⁶⁷ Božidar Novak, *Hrvatsko novinarstvo u 20. stoljeću* (Zagreb: Golden marketing–Tehnička knjiga, 2005), 747.

⁶⁸ See: Miroslav Akmadža, *Katolička crkva u komunističkoj Hrvatskoj 1945.–1980*. (Zagreb: Despot infinitus–Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2013); Radmila Radić, *Država i verske zajednice 1945–1970* (Beograd: INIS, 2002).

⁶⁹ As in the case of the Ljubljana Auxiliary Bishop Anton Vovk, who was, after a systemic communist propaganda against him, drenched with gasoline and burned by an enraged mob in 1952. Tamara Griesser Pečar, "The Roman Catholic Church in Slovenia Under Three Totalitarian

most of the possessions and property of churches were confiscated. However, the Yugoslav communist leaders were not naive. They knew from what kind of socio-politically, nationally and religiously heterogeneous people Yugoslavia was made. Tito knew that the influence of religion, especially the Catholic Church among the Croatian and Slovenian people was very high, so he was politically eclectic. In 1945, he tried to persuade Alojzije Stepinac, Archbishop of Zagreb, to separate from the Holy See, and when Stepinac refused he played aggressively – Stepinac was arrested in 1946, sentenced during a show trial to 16 years in prison, imprisoned and detained until his death in 1960.

What can be argued is that the decrease in repression came as a necessity after the Tito-Stalin split and especially after Tito's turning to the West. Furthermore, it was a logical step after the Yugoslav communists defeated all their political opponents and stabilized their rule. The relief of repression in the sphere of culture, art, media, and religion was motivated primarily to create a liberal image of Tito's rule in the West (within Yugoslavia as well), and not due to Tito's commitment to the ideas of freedom, pluralism and democracy.

The Period of Totalitarianism in Yugoslavia

The authors claim that Yugoslavia was totalitarian only until 1953, after which Tito's regime "liberalized", or converted from a totalitarian to authoritarian one.⁷⁰ However, by 1953 Tito's regime consolidated its power with brutal crackdown against all its actual, and potential political opponents, by taking into its own hands all means of production and a number of private goods (by nationalization, confiscation, expropriation) and by adapting laws to the communist political agenda. After that, a strong physical repression was not necessary because all potential opposition had been pacified.⁷¹ Tito's rule shifted into "low intensity totalitarianism".⁷²

Contrary to Flere and Klanjšek, our view is that Tito's Yugoslavia was totalitarian as long as the basis of the state-constitutional order came from the Program of the LCY,⁷³ which was adopted at the Seventh Congress of the LCY.⁷⁴ The totalitarian experiment remained in constant motion until the mo-

Regimes", in: *Crimes committed by Totalitarian Regimes*, ed. Peter Jambrek (Ljubljana: Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2008), 78–79.

⁷⁰ As an argument, the authors refer to Fisk who had in his article "The Constitutionalist Movement in Yugoslavia: Preliminary Findings", published in 1971 (*Slavic Review*, 30, no. 2, 277–297), stated that the rule of law applied in Yugoslavia. This Fisk's claim should be put in context. His article was published before Tito's purge of reform movement in 1971 and 1972.

⁷¹ "After the first wave of violence, when exemplary cases of judicial punishment and dismissals from employment appeared only from time to time, the society or rather, the people grew accustomed to lives in new circumstances". D. Hančič and R. Podbersič, "Totalitarian regimes in Slovenia in the 20th century", 56.

⁷² This is a sintagm formulated by Stéphane Courtois in *Komunizam i totalitarizam* (Zagreb: Alfa, 2011), 358.

⁷³ *Program Saveza komunista Jugoslavije* (Beograd: Kultura, 1958).

⁷⁴ *Sedmi kongres Saveza komunista Jugoslavije* (Beograd: Kultura, 1958).

ment when free association of citizens in the political parties was allowed, that is, until the moment when Yugoslav citizens were allowed to freely express their political opinions and worldview. During the 1980s, the communist system collapsed gradually,⁷⁵ and fell apart in 1989 when the Slovenian and Croatian section of the LCY made the decision to allow free multi-party elections.⁷⁶ The final disintegration and disappearance of the LCY took place at the 14th Congress of the LCY held from 20th to 22nd of January 1990 in Belgrade, when Croatian and Slovenian delegations left the Congress.

During Tito's life, Yugoslavia had a system based on the program of one political party that did not allow free elections, did not allow the free expression of other and different opinions, and which propagated and imposed one exclusive worldview on the whole of society. During Tito's life, the totalitarian experiment in Yugoslavia led by the communist elite was in its full swing, both ideologically and practically. Certain "relaxations" and the search for somewhat different directions in governing did not mean abandoning of their totalitarian experiment, but rather new ways of its realization and effectiveness.

Concluding Remarks on Totalitarianism in Tito's Yugoslavia

What Flere and Klanjšek are trying to say in their article is that Tito's Yugoslavia was not a totalitarian state because it had been changing institutionally during its 45 years of existence. This implies that totalitarian systems can only be static entities, ideal type realities, which remain unchanged and unmodified through time. The real question in place here is whether it is possible to look at historical processes as static? As demonstrated by Kołakowski, there was no perfect totalitarian system established, regardless of whether we are dealing with fascist or socialist/communist utopian practices and ideas.⁷⁷

The system of government in Tito's Yugoslavia was established on the model of the Soviet Union, and after the split with Stalin, the Yugoslav communists tried to distance themselves from the Soviet model and to create their own version of communism/socialism. In this sense, the opening to the West and a somewhat reduced level of repression was certainly beneficial for Yugoslav citizens. However, the new self-management socialism did not discard the key component of Yugoslav totalitarianism – the imposition of only one (communist) ideology and worldview to the whole society, and to every individual. The system that Yugoslav communists tried to implement was utopian and all means were justified to reach that utopia. The LCY was the source of all authority in the society, which therefore was neither legitimate nor democratic. In Tito's Yugoslavia, there was a so-called "unity of people's power" principle,

⁷⁵ See: Ivan Bilić, "Kronologija raspada SFRJ i stvaranje Republike Hrvatske do 15. siječnja 1992.", *National security and the future*, 6, no. 1–2, (2005), 73–184.

⁷⁶ Božo Repe, *Viri o demokratizaciji in osamosvojitvi Slovenije*, vol 2 (Ljubljana: Arhivsko društvo Slovenije, 2003), 44; Z. Radelić, *Hrvatska u Jugoslaviji*, 591.

⁷⁷ L. Kołakowski, „Marksistički korijeni staljinizma”.

which included the subordination of the judiciary to the LCY, prohibition of the freedom of political association, and the suppression of freedom of expression. Their power rested on the suppression of human rights, the elimination of independence of civil society, and on the violent imposition of communist ideology to the whole society.

Totalitarian ideologies place society above the individual and therefore one of the essential elements of totalitarianism is the constant assurance that everything that the system does serves a greater purpose for the common good. As Malia has stated, radical socialism is the greatest modern utopia that manifested in two most radical ways: nazism and communism. Both ideologies and movements which arose from them claimed their right to the name of socialism and “pretended to speak with a single voice for all the ‘people’” and “submerging the individual in the ‘collective’ or the ‘communal’, whether a fraternal internationalism or a particularistic *Volksgemeinschaft*”.⁷⁸ Communism abolished the principle of individual rights and in line with this the political system of the socialist Yugoslavia was based on a “unified working people” as a political entity and not on the individual as a holder of sovereignty.⁷⁹ As shown in our introduction, Flere and Klanjšek’s article suffers from the reduced theory of totalitarianism. However, even if we focus explicitly on a model as presented by Friedrich and Brzezinski, all six general characteristics of their model can be recognized in Yugoslavia.⁸⁰ Moreover, Flere and Klanjšek neglect the supplement that Friedrich and Brzezinski stated in the first edition (1956) right after listing these characteristics: “The enumeration of these six traits or trait clusters is not meant to suggest that there might not be others, now insufficiently recognized...”⁸¹

Moreover, at the beginning of the Foreword to the 2nd revised edition, Friedrich says that the “numerous developments in the practice of totalitarian dictatorship, the greatly increased documentation of past activities, and the vigorous discussion concerning the nature of this form of government have made it seem imperative that a new edition be prepared”.⁸² Furthermore, it should be noted that in the first edition (p. 296) Friedrich and Brzezinski stated that even after Tito-Stalin split, Tito’s communists established totalitarian predominance in Yugoslavia. In addition, in the second edition of the book, Yugoslavia was treated as a totalitarian state by the authors.

In conclusion, the two authors took and applied Friedrich-Brzezinski concept of totalitarianism on Tito’s Yugoslavia from a perspective of ideal type

⁷⁸ Martin Malia, “Nacism-Communism: Delineating the Comparison”, in: *The Lesser Evil – Moral Approaches to Genocide Practices*, eds. Helmut Dubiel and Gabriel Motzkin (London - New York: Routledge, 2004), 19.

⁷⁹ K. Spehnyak, *Javnost i propaganda*, 87.

⁸⁰ Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 9–10; Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Second edition, Revised by Carl J. Friedrich, fourth printing) (New York – Washington – London: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 22.

⁸¹ C. Friedrich and Z. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (1956), 10.

⁸² C. Friedrich and Z. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (1969), vii.

model. Although Friederich and Brzezinski allowed the possibility of change and development of totalitarianism within their own model, Flere and Klanjšek ignore such possibility. To look and comprehend the concept of totalitarianism from a perspective of a static model is in a complete discrepancy with historical processes as such. Historical processes are dynamic processes, dependent on various factors and various national and supranational influences, and therefore cannot and should not be look upon as static.

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WAS TITO'S YUGOSLAVIA NOT TOTALITARIAN?

Summary

This paper is a response to an article “Was Tito’s Yugoslavia totalitarian?” written by Sergej Flere and Rudi Klanjšek and published in the journal *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47 (2014). The authors indicate the inadequate theoretical framework and untenable interpretations made by Flere and Klanjšek, who provided a distorted picture of former Yugoslav society and the position of an individual in it. Their reduced theory of totalitarianism combined with their simplified interpretations served their aim of proving that the system established by the Yugoslav communists was not totalitarian nor did it strive to become one. Flere and Klanjšek’s main argument for the absence of totalitarianism is that of a federal state concept of Yugoslavia, which is not in correlation with contemporary understanding of totalitarianism. The fact that the Yugoslav communists never denied the existence of nations (in their terminology “nations and nationalities”) nor ever really tried to enforce a policy of creating a Yugoslav nationality, should not serve as an argument for the negation of the presence of a totalitarian experiment. On the contrary, it should serve as a scholarly problem in trying to investigate how a totalitarian experiment directs its actions within such a society, and whether its practices and outcomes were to be different from those exercised in a nation-state. Flere and Klanjšek also refer to the role of Josip Broz Tito, who, they believe, can not be considered a totalitarian dictator, but a concerned political leader. This article argues that the system was not totalitarian exclusively because of one individual (Tito) but due to the very character of the political organization he headed. Flere and Klanjšek claim that the Yugoslav Constitutions did not have a propaganda role. This article argues that the constitutional system in the Yugoslav communism had exclusively an instrumental role and it regulated only trivial political relations. The main problem in Flere and Klanjšek’s article is that the position of the individual within the Yugoslav society is nonexistent. Their article, which set out to answer the question of whether Tito’s Yugoslavia was totalitarian, there is no analysis concerning the freedom of an individual. The communist regime sys-

tematically suppressed the fundamental human rights, and imposed only one worldview that was created by the communist thinkers and practitioners. Finally, Flere and Klanjšek claim that Yugoslavia was totalitarian only until 1953, after which Tito's regime "liberalized", or converted from a totalitarian to authoritarian one. However, we argue that by 1953 Tito's regime consolidated its power with brutal crackdown against all its actual, and potential political opponents. After that, a strong physical repression was not necessary because all potential opposition had been pacified. Tito's rule shifted into "low intensity totalitarianism". By deconstructing their arguments, this article argues for a more elaborated and up-to-date conceptual understanding of Tito's Yugoslavia and its relation to the concept of totalitarianism.

KEYWORDS: Totalitarianism, Yugoslavia, Communism, Federalism, Josip Broz Tito, Individual