



Project Yugoslavia: The Dialectics of the Revolution

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Let us begin with statements of fact: The political reality called Yugoslavia that emerges in the course of the Second World War is a revolutionary creation. It proceeds from the demand which instructs a revolutionary subject, from the demand for the overcoming of the existing state of affairs. The formulation and explosion of this demand takes shape in the process of the formation of the Partisan movement, which unites the people of Yugoslavia in their rebellion against the occupation by the Axis powers in 1941 and their fight against the capitulation and collaboration of the apparatuses of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The subject of this demand has a singular name—the *Struggle for the Liberation of the Yugoslav Peoples (Narodno-oslobodilačka borba)*. These statements, however, leave us with a dilemma: should we read the essence of the politics of Yugoslavia in the antagonistic relation out of which it was constituted, in the act of resistance and the struggle for liberation, in the violent confrontation with the political antagonist; or rather does its essence lie in the constitution of a political bond, in the movement of the masses, in the desire for the unification of a collective? What should the emphasis be placed upon: the figure of the Two or the figure of the One? This dilemma holds the key to an understanding of the historical significance and indeed the singularity of the Yugoslav project. To come closer toward grasping it, let us examine the two figures in detail.

The figure of the Two: which form corresponds to the antagonistic relation that emerges in the Struggle for the Liberation of the Yugoslav Peoples?

The antagonism in question, as well as the elements that constitute it, might be first and foremost, read in terms of two classical political motifs: the *struggle against tyranny* and the *struggle against foreign domination*. These motifs, as we know, are fundamental for modern politics. They bring to light concepts of the sovereignty of the people and of national liberation, concepts that correspond to the moments of the historical ascendancy and the consolidation of the bourgeoisie: the French Revolution of 1789, which decapitates the king and promotes the bourgeois class as the new representative of the people; and the so-called *springtime of nations* of 1848, which establishes the nation-state as the central political form supporting the domination of capital.

If we approach the constitution of the Yugoslav project through these motifs, this means putting at the forefront the struggle for the defence of the sovereignty of the statist political order and, at the same time, the struggle for the affirmation of the 'nation' as an irreducible political authority.

Does this mean that the Yugoslav Partisans are fighting to defend and liberate a state, that they are waging a war for the independence of a national community within definite territorial borders?

This conclusion is obviously reductive, but it is also dangerously deceptive. For even if it is unquestionable that these central motifs of bourgeois politics are inscribed in the politics of the Struggle for the Liberation of the Yugoslav Peoples, the effects that these motifs produce are neither simple nor unambiguous. Yes, it is a struggle against tyranny and against foreign domination—but this does not mean that we can reduce the Struggle for the Liberation of the Yugoslav Peoples to a purely defensive act within the boundaries of the existing national state. Because the Partisans are not only fighting against the Fascist and Nazi occupation, they are also fighting against the state that collapses in front of this occupation. They are fighting against the monarchical construction

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This group exhibition catalogue seeks to investigate the treatment of (post-) Yugoslav history from a contemporary perspective. The exhibition presents artistic projects as well as theoretical positions that highlight political and socio-economic aspects of the post-Yugoslav reality. It aims to strengthen and establish critical viewpoints on the various politics of the former Yugoslav nation states in the so-called transition to capitalism.

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