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**“Punk is a Symptom”: Intersections of Philosophy  
and Alternative Culture in the 80’s Slovenia**

**Abstract**

*All over Former Yugoslavia the eighties were marked by an appearance of a great number of new alternative culture movements, while at the same time significant new ideas were introduced in the field of philosophy and theory in general. The proposed paper focuses on a particular example of dialogue between theory and culture in this period: on the three special issues of the journal Problemi in 1981, 1982 and 1983 that were dedicated to the punk movement, i.e. the so-called Punk Problemi. It begins by analyzing the editorial to the first of these three issues, and its alleged “agreement” with the thesis that punk should be viewed as a symptom. The discrepancy between the critics of punk and the viewpoint of the editorship of the Problemi and their contributors is further explored through the analysis of the articles published in the three special editions. Finally the Punk Problemi are juxtaposed to developments in theory in the early eighties, especially the works on the theory of ideology, i.e. Mladen Dolar’s texts on fascism.*

**Key words**

former Yugoslavia, alternative movements, eighties, *punk*, theories on fascism

The main open public space for the introduction of new ideas and trends in post-WWII Slovenia were literary journals. Initially focused on literature these journals soon started to include a more varied selection of genres and topics and reached a much wider readership. One of the first journals of such importance was *Beseda* [Word], published from 1951 till 1957 when it was suppressed and forbidden. The same group of critical authors started publishing a new journal later the same year, called *Revija 57* [Journal 57], only to be forbidden a year later. The third in the series of critical journals, *Perspektive* [Perspectives],<sup>1</sup> was first published in 1960, bringing together authors from the two previous journals. The combination of political critique and contemporary literature managed to endure for four years, when it was forbidden as well.<sup>2</sup> When *Perspektive* were suppressed, another journal that had previously

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Cf. Lev Krefc, *Zjeban od absolutnega: perspektivovci in perspektivaši: portret skupine*, Znanstveno publicistično središče, Ljubljana, 1998.

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The ban was due to the intended publication of some critical texts on the conditions of the Slovenian rural population and some literary pieces that crossed the line of tolerated criti-

cism, e. g. the poem *Duma* [Word] by Tomaž Šalamun, a parody of an older Oton Župančič poem with the same title that starts “I walked our land and drank its beauty”. Šalamun rewrote it as: Fucked by the Absolute/ fed up with virgins and other dying sufferers/ I love you o neighbors, meek fantasies of God the Father/ I love you o integral characters of sweet gazing/ in my mind grace yielded// o proud possessors of anxieties/ o trained intel-



stayed mostly within the confines of allowed literary production, *Problemi* [Problems], welcomed the group of writers from *Perspektive*. Around 1968 this group – along with a few critical authors from younger generations – took over the editorial board of *Problemi* and transformed it into the most important journal of its time, introducing avant-garde literature trends (reism, ludism) and establishing links with contemporary artists. Two most notable early cooperations of this kind were the late 1960s publication of OHO-Katalog movement's edition of *Problemi* and early eighties publication of three "punk" issues of the journal (*Punk Problemi*), where the newly emerging music, art and social movement was given a platform to present its ideas while being criticised by the mainstream official media. They also included presentations of other new art groups (i.e. theatre Group 442/443 and their Pupilija Ferkeverk projects) and a special issue presenting Neue Slowenische Kunst in 1985. In mid-seventies the editorial team started to diverge, a trend that became evident during the 1974 polemic between Ivo Urbančič, a thinker of Heideggerian provenience, and Slavoj Žižek, who at the time already distanced himself from Heideggerianism and started his work in Lacanian direction. The loosely defined Heideggerian group left the journal in early 1980s to establish *Nova revija* [The New Journal], while *Problemi* were progressively shifting towards structuralism and – later – Lacanian orientation.

It was around these journals<sup>3</sup> that new generations of thinkers gathered and introduced ideas of existentialism, critical theory, structuralism, psychoanalysis and many other new philosophical and cultural trends. It was the publication of these that provided a public space, where almost complete freedom of expression was sporadically allowed, although on occasions severely supervised and criticized by the regime.<sup>4</sup> The relationship that the journals had with the official line after the persecution of *Perspektive*, was very complex, mostly they managed to keep a fine balance, being sometimes sharply critical, but still avoiding direct persecution or prohibition.<sup>5</sup> Publication of these critical journals was also of great importance because they were regularly including translations of foreign authors, often long before they were published in book format.<sup>6</sup>

The journals also provided a link that proved crucial for the development of critical thought from the beginnings in 1950s to the development of structuralist, poststructuralist and Lacanian theories, namely, a link between theory and literature/arts. The critical journals of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s all began as literary journals and then opened to topics of literary theory and criticism, philosophy, art theory and finally socio-political discussions. More importantly, the same authors were often active in many of these genres.

The first generation that prominently showed this tendency was the so-called "critical generation" of the 1950s. Active in *Beseda* and later in *Revija 57* and *Perspektive*, many of these authors successfully combined their modernist literary writing with theory and art, especially theatre. Born mostly in the 1930s they were the first generation after the war to collectively depart from the official mode of writing.<sup>7</sup> After the ban of *Perspektive*, the *Problemi* group<sup>8</sup> stayed true to the paradigm of cultural involvement of its predecessors, but took it even further. It was not only literature that they included, they also connected with the new developments on the art scene, first example of which was the cooperation with the OHO movement<sup>9</sup> in 1960s, resulting in OHO-Katalog (OHO Catalogue), a series of publications consisting mainly of theoretical texts and visual and concrete poetry.<sup>10</sup> In very broad terms, in the history of Slovenian art OHO group marks the shift from modernism to

avant-garde, the same change being represented in differences between journals *Perspektive* and *Problemi*. In late sixties, *Problemi* have again provided a space for the presentation of a young group of authors first calling themselves Group 441,<sup>11</sup> which began by staging avant-garde poetry readings and soon became problematic for the state.<sup>12</sup> Their works were presented in December 1968 as a special issue "442", similar to the OHO Catalogue edition.

lectuals with sweaty little hands/ o logicians,  
vegetarians with the thickest glasses/ o muz-  
zled rectors/ o ideologues with your whoring  
ideologies/ o doctors munching on punctua-  
tion marks and Škofja Loka pastries/ o mum-  
mified academicians patting passion and  
pain/ Pascal who tried and Bach who pulled  
it off/ o lusty inexpressible dried-up lyricist/  
o horticulture, the enlightened and the happy  
swallows/ o socialism à la Louis XIV or how  
to shelter the poor little creatures/ o one hun-  
dred thirty-five constitutional bodies or how  
to keep/ a dead cat from stinking/ o the revo-  
lutionary zeal of the masses or/ where is the  
sanatorium to cure our impotence// I walked  
our land and got an ulcer/ land of Cimpermans  
and pimply groupies/ land of serfs myths and  
pedagogy// o flinty Slovenians, object of his-  
tory crippled by a cold/ (translated by Tomaž  
Šalamun and Christopher Merrill, [http://www.writinguniversity.org/index.php/main/author/tomaz\\_salamun1/](http://www.writinguniversity.org/index.php/main/author/tomaz_salamun1/)).

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Some other important journals were: *Sodobnost*, *Teorija in praksa*, *Prostor in čas*, later also *Nova revija* etc.

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Miško Šuvakovič, *Anatomija angelov: razprave o umetnosti in teoriji v Sloveniji po letu 1960*, Znanstveno in publicistično središče, Ljubljana, 2001, p. 33.

5

This strategy did not, however, always succeed, and the official structures used many different tactics to obstruct their work. *Problemi* and *Tribuna* were repeatedly criticized for engaging with the new critical movements. *Tribuna* was targeted after the student demonstrations in 1971, where one of its authors, Frane Adam, was accused of having displayed an anti-regime slogan. The journal was subsequently obstructed from publication for a few months. In the early 1980s *Problemi* and its editor Mladen Dolar were accused of having supported the alleged nazi-punk movement by publishing *Punk Problemi*.

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First wave of such translations was done in the sixties with the translations of still partly controversial existentialist authors, Sartre and Camus. The most important wave of translations, however, followed from 1970 onwards (texts by Horkheimer, Marcuse, Althusser, Husserl, Heidegger, Saussure, Derrida, Or-

well's *Animal Farm* and also the first post-WWII translation of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, later Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari, Adorno, Gramsci, Balibar and a whole range of translations of Freud, Lacan and Alain-Miller.)

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The group continued to be active also after its *Journal 57* was officially forbidden, mostly within an experimental theatre group, *Oder 57* [Stage 57], which started by staging works by controversial Slovenian playwrights and foreign authors (Ionesco, De Ghelderode). Despite the differences in artist orientations within the group, they stayed active until 1964.

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The variety within the group that published *Problemi* was becoming more and more obvious and finally it caused their division later in the 1970s. Therefore we should strictly speaking be talking about "groups" within the *Problemi*.

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OHO movement was formed in 1966 by a group of young artists and writers, who wanted to break with the modernist tradition and started their first projects focusing on the idea of "object" and the conception of reism, the primacy of things or objects. In the late 1960s they shifted their focus to the conceptual world of structural relations and further to the ideas of the process art movement, doing art projects in manner of arte povera and land art. Later, they also explored other theoretical backgrounds, structuralism, poststructuralism, anti-psychiatry and even German idealism. OHO group was radically transformed in 1971 when its members moved from Ljubljana to a small Karst village, Šempas, where they established an experimental commune, called "Family in Šempas". Famously, another commune, called G7, was established in 1971 in a small village near Ljubljana, but none of the two provoked much official harassment.

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Žižek also contributed his texts to these publications.

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Cf. Aldo Milohnić, Ivo Svetina (eds.), *Prišli so Pupilčki: 40 let Gledališča Pupilje Ferkeverk*, Maska, Slovenski gledališki muzej, Ljubljana, 2009.

*Problemi* and their editorial board were also active in the next great wave of alternative culture movements of the early eighties that could be very schematically divided into three interconnected trends: punk movement, FV 112/15, and Laibach/NSK. All happening at the same time, in the early eighties, these three were a sharp break with the avant-garde movements of the sixties and seventies, but also a unique reflection of the contemporary Yugoslav political, economical and social crisis. In the second half of the seventies, as a reflection of current political and economic issues and only a few years after first British punk bands, a group of youngsters gathered to form the first Slovenian punk band, Pankrti [Bastards]. Provoked by the openly critical songs such as *Comrades, I don't believe you* or *Total revolution (... is not a solution)* and by provocative behaviour of young punkers, state organs started to repress, censor and persecute the protagonists of the movement. This repression reached its peak in 1981 with the "Nazi-punk affair", when a group of youngsters were arrested under fabricated charges of having established a national-socialist party, and many more were questioned and harassed.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, in the few years following the Pankrti first concert in 1977, many new groups sprung up and by the early eighties the punk movement was wide-spread in Ljubljana and other cities. Judged as an anti-cultural phenomenon by the political opposition and as fascist and destructionist tendency by the pro-regime literati,<sup>14</sup> the punk movement was obstructed from obtaining a space for representation in media but it also took the representative role for the newly emerging social movements that sought reforms and change with their pacifist, ecological, feminist and other programmes.

While punk movement consisted mostly of very young people, another related art and cultural student movement appeared at the same time.<sup>15</sup> Group FV 112/15 that started off as an alternative theatre allegedly got their enigmatic name by randomly choosing among slogans from the dictionary of loan words.<sup>16</sup> Soon this group managed to take over one night per week in a students' disco club which became the hub of the new alternative video and music production. Disco FV and its activities<sup>17</sup> also provided a space for development of new art genres, specific for this generation of artists: they introduced video art and graffiti art, while also exploring the relation between art and pornography and introducing pornographic material into art forms.<sup>18</sup>

The third movement that shocked Slovenia and Yugoslavia at the time was the new music group Laibach, started in 1980. Later it joined its affiliated groups, the painters' collective IRWIN, group of designers Neue Kunsthandlung/Novi kolektivizem and the Sisters Scipion Nasice Theatre to form Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK) in 1984.<sup>19</sup> If FV was subversive for its popularity, choice of video genre, use of pornography and its affiliation with the gay movement; and punk was subversive for its youth rebelliousness, Laibach and later the NSK were considered most dangerous because of their deliberate allusions to the national-socialism, an act that went against the total prohibition of the Nazi symbols in post-war Yugoslavia. The name Laibach was already indicative, for they had chosen the name that was used for the occupied Ljubljana by the Germans during the WWII. Questioning the interlacing of art and ideology, they played with the old symbols in completely new contexts, thus inventing the alleged new art movement, called retrogardism.<sup>20</sup> A 1983 deliberately shocking interview they gave for the national television caused another wave of criticism.

In 1987, during a wide debate on the proposals for the abolishment of the Relay of youth ceremonies, another scandal broke out in connection with the

NSK collective. Its designers' subgroup, Neue Kunsthandlung/Novi kolektivizem, participated in a competition for the official relay poster and won with a remade version of a Nazi propaganda poster by Richard Klein. The initial enthusiasm of the selecting commission was overshadowed when the reference was revealed and the group, together with the Slovenian Youth organisation leaders that first chose the poster became targets of the wide spread attack against "fascist elements", a repetition of the nazi-punk scandal and the initial criticisms of Laibach in the early 1980s.

During the "Nazi-punk scandal" and the Laibach/NSK affair, accusations of Nazi orientation became a useful label for discrediting newly emerging socio-political opposition, while the issue of Nazism or fascism was being debated on all levels of intellectual scene, in politics and in media.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly eno-

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The state organs were especially provoked by a publication of one of the Group 441 authors' poems in student journal *Tribuna*, namely, Ivo Svetina's "Slovenska apokalipsa" [Slovenian apocalypse]. They went on to become an avant-garde theatre group with performances (all in 1969) such as *Mold of Pupilija Ferkeverk*, short film *Brains gratin of Pupilija Ferkeverk* and finally *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo and the Little Pupilos*. This, most famous performance by the group, now called "443", included many subversive elements, most notably nudity and the slaughtering of a living hen and was proclaimed a threat to the public morality and accused of animal torture, while first *Tribuna* in 1968 and *Problemi* in 1969 were accused of having supported these subversive elements.

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For details, see an excellent collection of texts and documents from the period: *Punk pod Slovenci*, Univerzitetna konferenca ZSMS, Republiška konferenca ZSMS, KRT, Ljubljana, 1984/1985.

15

Cf. Božo Repe's paper in: Tine Hribar, Peter Lovšin, Peter Mlakar, Igor Vidmar (eds.), *Punk je bil prej: 25 let punka pod Slovenci*, Cankarjeva založba, Ropot, Ljubljana, 2003.

16

The FV 112/15 regularly included punk bands in the program of the disco club they ran.

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The dictionary was known by the name of its author as "France Verbinc" (thus "FV"), the slogan "c'est la guerre", was printed on page 112, line 15 (thus the numbers).

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Members of the FV group also formed an alternative music band, Borghesia that defined itself as a multimedia project, combining music with video art, using new tools such as VHS and computers. It was however video art that determined most of the activities of this generation of artists. Other genres included Xerox collage and graffiti, both frequently subversive

in form and content. For details on FV 112/15 cf. Petja Grafenauer Krnc, Nikolai Jeffs, Niven Korda, *FV: alternativa osemdesetih = alternative scene of the eighties*, Mednarodni grafični likovni center, Ljubljana, 2008.

19

Different alternative movements started to appear in connection to FV 112/15, most notably the movement against the discrimination of homosexuals, a unique phenomenon in Yugoslavia and communist part of Europe at the time. Apart from the special gay/lesbian nights in Disco FV they also organised Magnus, a festival of gay and lesbian film in 1984. In this context the boldness of the Magnus' demands is even more fascinating: they demanded the change of these legal regulations, addition of the article against discrimination of homosexuals in the Constitution, introduction of these topics in the school curricula and they also demanded Yugoslavia to act internationally against the states that still persecuted homosexual orientation (Romania, USSR, Cuba, Iran). Cf. <http://www.slovenskapomlad.si/1?id=168>. At the time, homosexual sex was still illegal in some parts of Yugoslavia and tabooed in others.

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For details on NSK cf. (ed) *Neue slowenische Kunst*. Irwin, Moderna galerija, Ljubljana, 1993; Inke Arms (ed.), *Irwin retroprincip*, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana, 2006 etc.

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Their first performances, using forbidden symbols, German phrases, army smoke bombs (in Belgrade in 1982) and other provocations unavoidably caused criticism among the state organs and resulted in a series of measures taken against the Laibach activities, most notably from the early 1983 on. City committee of the Socialist union of working people of Ljubljana demanded that Laibach should obtain a permission by the city of Ljubljana to use its German name, which de facto meant that Laibach was officially forbidden to perform in public.

ugh, few years before that, Mladen Dolar was already working on the subject as part of his BA thesis *Contradictions and Alternatives in Marxist Analyses of Fascism*. First of his papers on the topic was published in *Problemi* in 1978.<sup>22</sup> A book *The Structure of the Fascist Domination*<sup>23</sup> followed in 1982, one year after the Nazi-punk scandal. Two years later, the book *Filozofija skozi psihoanalizo* [Philosophy through Psychoanalysis],<sup>24</sup> a collection of materials from a seminar, organised by the Sigmund Freud School in Ljubljana, included a chapter "Ideologija, cinizem, punk" [Ideology, Cynicism, Punk]. This text complements Dolar's interpretation of fascism but shifts its interpretative stress on the self-management system as the background and target of the critique of punk movement and of Laibach/NSK.

Even before Dolar's book and the text on punk movement were published, a close link was established between *Problemi* group and the younger group of punks. Namely, in 1981, the very year of "nazi-punk scandal", the new movement was given space to present themselves in a special edition of the journal *Problemi*, called *Punk Problemi*, being followed by two consecutive editions in the next two years. The second of these, issued in 1982, caused particular upheaval, when the editors of the issue refused to quietly censor parts of punk bands' lyrics that were printed in the journal, but instead published pages with black rectangles marking the censored parts.<sup>25</sup>



Picture 1. Parts of pages 3 and 4 from *Punk Problemi*, 1982, with the censored text covered in black

The viewpoint the editorial board decided to take was very interesting: they agreed with an interpretation of punk movement *as a symptom*, but not in a way that symptomatic reading was understood by the mainstream criticism. In his editorial to the first issue in 1981 Slavoj Žižek mockingly “agreed” with the critics that presented punk as a symptom, but disagreed on their diagnosis, using the term “symptom” in a completely new, Lacanian way, marking the beginning of a completely new chapter of the relationship between socio-political reality, art scene and the critical journals. Contemporary critics of punk movement used the term “symptom” in a meaning of a sign of an underlying disease. Thus their diagnosis was that punk warns us of an alarming danger of “nihilist”, “foreign” or even “anarchist and fascist”<sup>26</sup> tendencies among the young generation, a spreading disease that needs to be “cured”, thereby also taking care of the symptom. The “benevolent” critics seemingly refrained from pointing a finger at the punkers, choosing instead to lay blame on the anomalies of the society. Žižek’s editorial interpreted symptom in psychoanalytic terms:

“Symptom is a phenomenon that – viewed from an ordinary, habitual perspective – seems ‘foreign’, ‘irrational’, ‘an invasion of immorality’. The symptom, however, reveals an intrusion of the suppressed ‘truth’ of the most calm, most normal everyday life, of exactly that life that is so shocked and annoyed by it. Symptom returns our suppressed truth in a perverted form. (...) punk literally *enacts* the suppressed aspect of ‘normality’ and thereby ‘liberates’, it introduces a defamiliarizing distance.”<sup>27</sup>

He took this comparison further and proposed a treatment similar to that of the psychoanalytic therapy:

“If the distinction between non-dogmatic and dogmatic Marxism has any meaning, this distinction must (also) mean that – when research of the social phenomena encounters a symptomatic point – ‘the symptom’ is above all allowed to speak, without being ‘understood’ (reduced to what is already known) in advance. Such is the aim of the present issue.”<sup>28</sup>

Understanding of punk as a symptom therefore enables us to see the “normality” of the social reality from a distance, in order to expose what has been suppressed for this reality to function. The solution to the alleged problem of punk is not to simply “understand” and rationalize the phenomenon, as Ego-psychology would have it in its interpretation of the Freud’s *wo es war* formula, but to “let the symptom speak”.

This, psychoanalytic view on punk can be related to the parallel interpretations in the two texts mentioned above, Dolar’s book providing a view on

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Cf. *Punk je bil prej*, op. cit.

23

Mladen Dolar, “O nekaterih vprašanjih in protislovjih v marksističnih analizah fašizma”, *Problemi, Razprave*, year 16, no. 177/180 (1978), p. 49–111.

24

Mladen Dolar, *Struktura fašističnega gospostva. Marksistične analize fašizma in problemi teorije ideologije*, DDU Univerzum, Ljubljana, 1982.

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*Filozofija skozi psihoanalizo*, DDU Univerzum, Ljubljana, 1984.

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This was obviously too provocative for the official line. Mladen Dolar, the editor of *Problemi* at the time, was accused of having allowed the publication of pornographic material – there were indeed body parts on display – and forced to pay a fine.

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This shows the (deliberate?) conceptual confusion in labels given to punk by its critics, of whom the interchangeability of anarchism and fascism is only one example, cf. *Punk pod Slovenci*, op. cit.

28

Slavoj Žižek, “Editorial” in: *Problemi*, year 19 (1981), no. 205/206.

fascism which departs from the mainstream Marxist analyses, and the book chapter "Ideology, Cynicism, Punk", which interprets punk as a reaction to the cynicism of the system.

Criticism of *Ich-Psychologie* is also a point in Dolar's book on fascism that can provide a different perspective on the Nazi-punk question. In his book, Dolar draws a trajectory from the analysis of the Marxist views on fascism as an agency of the monopolistic capital, through the interpretations of the Frankfurt school and the psychoanalytic explanations in Freud and Freud-based theories of Reich and Fromm. Within this trajectory he provides an interesting focus on Freud's *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* and Adorno's interpretation of it. Understanding the mass as the aggregate of individuals, who have the same object as their *Ichideal* and thereby identifying with each other, makes the identification with the desire of the other the principal mechanism of fascism. Based on this notion Dolar makes an interesting parallel in the last chapter, trying to compare the model of despotism as analysed by Alain Grosrichard<sup>29</sup> with fascism. The comparison ends with a twist:

"If the phantasm of the eastern despotism provided a key to the understanding of the power in the time of absolutism, namely, the European power of that time, if it was its miniature model, its metaphor, that nonetheless saturated even its reality; if it revealed its public secrets – then fascism provides the key to another reality, another inner economy (...) I think that fascism is above all a phantasm realised, a very existent metaphor, a phantasm of the contemporary capitalist society, its own image."<sup>30</sup>

Historical heritage of fascism, claims Dolar, is preserved "not in those movements or regimes that seem most similar by their appearance", but lives on "in late capitalism as such".<sup>31</sup> The key question, according to the author, is thus: "how does fascism continue today with different means"?

Another implication of Dolar's text leads us to the second text, mentioned above. If phantasm of eastern despotism reflected European absolutism, and fascism is a metaphor for capitalist society, what metaphor is socialism reflected in? The chapter "Ideology, Cynicism, Punk",<sup>32</sup> edited by Slavoj Žižek<sup>33</sup> answers this question. It starts with the accusations of fascism that targeted young group Laibach after their provocative TV performance in June 1983. The mainstream criticism focused on the allegedly fascist elements in their appearance and performance and, while admitting that their performance was intended as social critique, labels it as an undesirable type of critique, one that shows "anarchoid despair"<sup>34</sup> and "dehumanization". It demands instead for constructive rational criticism, which is precisely the view that the *Problemi* authors confronted.

The text explains the effect the Laibach performance had on the TV audiences and critics by their mimicking of the ideological ritual, without distancing themselves from it by irony or criticism. This act, claims the text, is exactly what is not permitted within the system. The ideology does not require the individual to *believe* in the rituals, but expects conformism in not ever admitting their disbelief. Pascalian solution where belief is constituted through habit reproduces the ruling ideology in a machine-like manner. This is what provoked such anger in spectators and critics of Laibach TV interview – they exposed the ritual itself in its bare mechanical functioning:

"The key point of Laibach performance, of the 'blind', 'mechanic' reading of totalitarian texts, is in the way they show the immanent decentralization of the ideological speech, the view of the bare non-thinking 'automatism', 'machine', through which the ideology is reproduced, (...) blocking the efficiency of the deceit, self-concealment that is indispensable for the successful reproduction of ideology."<sup>35</sup>



Ideology is being reproduced through a detachment; its perpetrators never take it seriously; but still behave as if they would. This however, is only one side of the ideological split, as the pretending subjects do *believe* that what they fake to believe is true. Here, the text continues the Pascalian theme by explaining de Sade's example (through Klossovski): de Sade pretends *not to believe* that God exists, while *knowing* that it does exist – in this equation the knowledge of the God's existence gets suppressed.<sup>36</sup> The contemporary "totalitarian" ideology, on the other hand, shows a different, more radical type of distance:

"Totalitarian universe is a universe of psychotic split, (...) a necessary knowledge that we "deceive" does not harm the belief in the success-effect of this deceit."<sup>37</sup>

Here the text introduces Sloterdijk's triad of cynical consciousness: naïve ideology – cynicism – cynicism, where the described logic is identified with the third. The cynical consciousness, as interpreted by Sloterdijk,<sup>38</sup> is not the naïve misguided ideological belief in the spirit of Marx's *sie wissen es nicht, aber sie tun es*, nor is it the un-manipulated Manipulator who himself does not believe the lies he's telling the crowds. The cynical consciousness is the *sie wissen was sie tun, aber sie tun es*, the answer to the direct criticism of the "naked emperor" as presented by what Sloterdijk names the "kynicism", merciless parody and sarcasm intended to show the contradicting reality behind the curtains of ideology. Fascism, claims the text, was not a mere manipulation, for the cynicism of power "must not be reduced to the element of the cynical detachment of disbelief",<sup>39</sup> Hitler really *believed* that Jews were the archenemy. Thus this ideological consciousness cannot be revealed by rational "enlightenment", it already *is enlightened*:

"The cynical subject is fully aware of the falsity of the ideological complex that it follows, but follows it anyway – reflection is already included in its position."<sup>40</sup>

This pathological split is crucial for the third part of the Sloterdijk threefold division. The cynicism is to a certain degree a reaction to the cynical distance, a synthesis that already includes the criticism. Both aspects of this cynical split are however, ideological:

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Ibid.

30

Cf. Alain Grosrichard, *Structure du sérail: la fiction du despotisme asiatique dans l'Occident classique*, Seuil, Paris, 1979.

31

Dolar, *Struktura fašističnega gospostva*, op. cit., pp. 155–156.

32

Ibid.

33

*Filozofija skozi psihoanalizo*, op. cit., pp. 100–129.

34

The quoted chapter and a few other texts are probably also authored by him, although the authorship is not explicitly stated. Apart from the longer chapters the compilation includes other materials, debates etc.

35

Op. cit., p. 102.

36

Ibid., pp. 107–108.

37

Ibid., p. 111.

38

Ibid., p. 112.

39

Cf. his *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1983 (English trans. *Critique of Cynical Reason*, Verso, London – New York, 1988.)

40

*Filozofija skozi psihoanalizo*, op. cit., p. 113.

"... the cynical consciousness of the fact that official ideology serves a particular interest, is no less ideological than the official ideology, perhaps even more."<sup>41</sup>

As one of his examples Sloterdijk also writes about the cynical potential of the workers movement's reference to its own objective historical role and the ideological necessity it gives to a particular political group. The "Ideology, Cynicism, Punk" takes this Sloterdijk's point even further. Self-management system, officially interpreted as having revealed the falsity of this ideological position of the Party in real-socialism in fact functions within the same cynical split:

"Here the state power does not – as was the case in the usual real-socialism – persuade the workers that it adequately represents them, that it leads the social process according to their will and in their best interest, but instead persuades them that it is them, the workers, who directly manage the social process, namely, if we proceed to the paradoxical conclusion, that they, the power in the strict sense, actually *don't exist*."<sup>42</sup>

This ideological falsity is not, however, limited to the level of an abstract mystification, a set of ideas that would have to be repeated and adhered to. Instead, it has actual, material consequences, the split is thus not "between 'reality' and its 'ideological mask', but in the midst of reality as such."<sup>43</sup> In the system of the false self-management the state power only fears one thing – that this system would start to be taken seriously. Therefore the material reality of the self-management is organized in such a way that taking it seriously is discouraged as much as possible:

"... what at a first glance might seem as the failure of the state power to make us take the 'self-management ritual' seriously, is actually the condition of its functioning: when we yawn during the meetings, when we keep to ourselves etc. and think that by doing so we're preserving certain inner freedom and detachment – it is precisely there that the power wants us to be."<sup>44</sup>

A cynicism of power that qualifies fascism as much as the self-management system, is subverted by Laibach/NSK and punk movement in two different ways, thus making the same qualification of both as having "fascist tendencies" even more inappropriate. If Laibach/NSK subverts the ideology by doing precisely what the cynicism of power is trying to prevent its people from doing, namely, taking it seriously, the punk movement uses different strategies. In its attempt to reveal the cynical character of the state power it uses first a kynical strategy: irony and sarcasm that target the hypocrisy of the ruling ritual. As the text suggests, however, there is another, perhaps even more provoking strategy used by the punk movement, a break with the model of return to the authentic self. The quest for authenticity of the previous generations' hippie movement – is seen by the punkers as a false and impossible flight, nothing more than a funny pose. The position, the "pose" of the punkers thus reflects precisely the impossibility of this authenticity and the falsity of escape, thereby "addressing the cynically split subject of the self-management system and enabling it to get rid of its habitual subjection"<sup>45</sup> to the system's automatism.

Helena Motoh

**»Punk je simptom«: sjecišta filozofije  
i alternativne kulture u Sloveniji osamdesetih**

**Sažetak**

*Diljem Jugoslavije osamdesete godine su obilježene pojavom niza novih alternativnih kulturnih pokreta, dok su istodobno značajne nove ideje uvedene u područje filozofije i teorije općenito. Ovaj se rad fokusira na specifičan primjer dijaloga između teorije i kulture u ovome razdoblju: na tri specijalna izdanja časopisa Problemi iz 1981., 1982. i 1983. godine, koji su bili posvećeni punk pokretu, tj. takozvani Punk Problemi. Rad započinje analizom uvodnika prvome od ovih brojeva, i njegovom navodnom »slaganju« s tezom da punk treba promatrati kao simptom. Diskrepancija između kritičara punka te stajališta uredništva Problema i njihovih suradnika se dodatno istražuje kroz analizu članaka objavljenih u tri specijalna izdanja. Konačno, Punk Problemi su supostavljeni razvoju teorije u ranim osamdesetima, naročito u djelima o teoriji ideologije, tj. tekstu o fašizmu Mladena Dolara.*

**Ključne riječi**

bivša Jugoslavija, alternativni pokreti, osamdesete, punk, teorije o fašizmu

Helena Motoh

**„Punk ist ein Symptom“: Schnittpunkte von Philosophie  
und alternativen Kulturen in Slowenien der Achtzigerjahre**

**Zusammenfassung**

*Die Achtzigerjahre waren jugoslawienweit durch das Auftreten einer Vielzahl frischer alternativer Kulturbewegungen gekennzeichnet, während zeitgleich tief greifende Eingebungen in das Gebiet der Philosophie bzw. Theorie in genere eingeführt wurden. Der vorgelegte Artikel richtet sein Hauptaugenmerk auf das Paradebeispiel für den Dialog zwischen Theorie und Kultur in diesem Zeitraum: auf drei der Punkbewegung zugeeigneten Sonderausgaben der Zeitschrift Problemi von 1981, 1982 und 1983, die sogenannten Punk Problemi. Die Arbeit setzt an mit der Studie des Leitartikels der ersten der einschlägigen Ausgaben und dessen vermeintlichen „Einverständnisses“ mit der These, der Punk solle als Symptom angesehen werden. Die Diskrepanz zwischen Punkkritikern und dem Standpunkt der Chefredaktion der Problemi nebst deren Mitarbeitern wird fernerhin ausgesponnen durch die Analyse der in den angeführten Specials herausgegebenen Artikel. Abschließend werden die Punk Problemi mit der Theorieentfaltung der frühen Achtziger kontrastiert, im Besonderen in den Werken zur Ideologietheorie, d. h. in Mladen Dolars Text über den Faschismus.*

**Schlüsselwörter**

ehemaliges Jugoslawien, alternative Bewegungen, Achtzigerjahre, Punk, Theorien über den Faschismus

41  
Ibid., p. 114.

42  
Ibid., p. 118.

43  
Ibid., p. 120.

44  
Ibid., p. 123.

45  
Ibid., p. 124.

46  
Ibid., p. 129.

**Helena Motoh**

**« Le punk est un symptôme » : les intersections de la philosophie et de la culture alternative dans la Slovénie des années 80**

**Résumé**

*Partout à travers la Yougoslavie, les années 80 ont été marquées par l'apparition d'une série de nouveaux mouvements culturels alternatifs, tandis qu'en même temps de nouvelles idées importantes ont été introduites dans le domaine de la philosophie et de la théorie en général. Cet article se concentre sur un exemple particulier de dialogue entre la théorie et la culture pendant cette période : sur trois éditions spéciales du journal Problemi en 1981, 1982 et 1983, dédiés au mouvement punk, appelés Punk Problemi. L'article commence par analyser l'éditorial de la première de ces trois éditions et son soi-disant « accord » avec la thèse que le punk devrait être vu comme un symptôme. La divergence entre les critiques du punk et du point de vue de la direction éditoriale des Problemi ainsi que de ces collaborateurs est davantage examinée à travers l'analyse des articles publiés dans les trois éditions spéciales. Enfin, les Punk Problemi sont juxtaposés aux développements théoriques au début des années 80, notamment dans les travaux sur la théorie de l'idéologie, c'est-à-dire des textes de Mladen Dolar sur le fascisme.*

**Mots-clés**

ex-Yougoslavie, mouvements alternatifs, années 80, punk, théories du fascisme