

Work as a Cure

Reana Senjković

Prologue¹

In early spring of 1958, an “unexpected guest” entered Inspector Mane Brzica’s office at the Department of Juvenile Delinquency in Zagreb:

– Long time no see, my man ... – Brzica greeted him [...]. Old furniture which, according to the office fashion rules, should have been trashed long ago, contrasted with freshly painted white walls. Vimpi felt a loose spring rub him annoyingly beneath the armchair he crawled into.

– You did not expect me, did you? – started the visitor questioningly, indirectly. Brzica would rather laugh in his face.

– I did. To be honest: I did. Only I was not sure when. Nor on which side of the lock we’d meet? This one or the other one ... I much prefer that we do not see each other on the side I lock and unlock!

Vimpi laughed with restraint.

With his professionally streamlined manner, Brzica opened a notebook, took his pen, coughed, cleared his throat and asked slowly with his silent bass:

– So, what brings you here, Vimpi?

Vimpi inhaled and talked, talked, talked ... It seemed to him that he would not be able to stop. The Inspector’s silence was a reliable sign that he was listening attentively [...].

[Vimpi] did not forget to complain that his plan for setting up a brigade of black angels failed when he set it forth to ‘these jaded guys from the City Youth [Committee]’.

Brzica openly told him that what he had thought out was more than brilliant. He did not guarantee a positive response, but he gave his word that he would set to work, that he would knock on every door and dial each and every telephone number in order to obtain permission to found a brigade of stigmatized bums:

– A feeling tells me (and you, Vimpi, know all about policemen’s heightened sense

¹ This work has been fully supported by Croatian Science Foundation under the project Transformation of Work in Post-transitional Croatia(IP-2016-06-7388).

of smell) that this will be a good thing. (Zlatar 1978: 88-89)

The event described by writer and journalist Pero Zlatar in his novel *Bitange, mirno!* is also mentioned in the famous Croatian sociologist's study on voluntary Youth Work Actions (*Omladinske radne akcije, ORA*; hereafter YWA) *Bratstvo i jedinstvo* (Brotherhood and unity):

In the midst of agitation for the first renewed federal work action in 1958 in the City Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Zagreb came a young man called "Vimpi", who enjoyed a reputation of one of the "chiefs" of Zagreb's young ticket scalpers. Vimpi, whose real name is Vilko Kokalj, is a typical representative of a postwar youth gone astray. His father, being a forced laborer, took him when he was still a child to Nazi Germany, where, amidst the deported workers, he was witness to the demoralization and decline of a social system where, in fact, all the means of self-sustainment had been good and legitimate. There, as a child, he learned that fists and craftiness are the main means of sustaining life. After he came back to his homeland he continued with a similar way of life and by virtue of his strength, although small in stature, his energy and intelligence, he imposed himself as a leader of young ticket scalpers. He served several sentences for affray and tyranny, until he realized while serving his last sentence that in socialist society such a path leads to nowhere. He was thinking about his destiny and about his friends' destiny, and decided that he would take the path of social rehabilitation. So in the spring of 1958 he came to the Committee and proposed to the secretary that he would himself organize a brigade composed of young people with whom society did not know how to deal. He set two conditions: first, that employment be guaranteed for each of the participants, and second, that they be assured of an apartment. [...] And so it was. In 1958 "Vimpi" even organized two brigades named Polet and the next year, 1959, two more. (Supek 1963: 275-276)

Vimpi's fictionalized character in Zlatar's novel addresses his friends (who were startled by the idea that they should join the brigade that would build a section of the highway between Zagreb and Ljubljana) as follows:

This is the last day I belong to the world, our world, which is well known in Zagreb. I don't want to remain a man with no future, dumped by the people and sitting where I grew up and where I intend to stay. I am too old to be delirious with shallow stories about an easy life out there in some land of false promises. In order to stay here, in order to survive and find a job – a job because of which I won't get goose pimples when I hear the screech of tires in front of the house for fear that cops are coming to bust me – I need to change. And I will! But I also want for all of you I invited to come with me. The highway is our prime chance. And even bigger temptation. I beg none of you and I force nobody to join me. There will be no problems if somebody decides to drop out. We should let those who aren't able to

find the strength to put a cross ... a thick cross ... against everything they have done so far withdraw. Whoever wants to stay on the street, if anyone does, will balance freedom and jail like a clown. I am convinced that he, or she, all the same, will, sooner or later, end thoroughly outlawed ... You should know that there will be no mercy on the highway. They will monitor us from all sides because we are coming already marked. For that reason I repeat once more: those who think they won't be able to go through with it should stay! And those who will listen to me should be ready for the greatest sacrifices ... For the greatest discipline, for life to a schedule, for backbreaking toil. Only that way will we be able to become visible to people who gave us a chance and who will, when we come to Zagreb after two months, continue to lend a helping hand so we are able to find a decent job ... (Zlatar 1978: 97-98)

Rudi Supek is particularly interested in Vimpi's brigade's behavior, its achievements and its prospects. Vimpi, who was appointed commander of the brigade, as Supek discovers, maintains strict discipline, although at times by his own "methods". Eventually, the brigades are awarded shock brigade medals (Supek 1963: 276). On that occasion, the work actions' newspaper recalls:

When, a month ago, a brigade whose arrival was not scheduled came to the "Ivan Milutinović" youth work camp, now it can be said openly, many shook their heads doubtfully. Young men who made up the brigade carried their reputation as uncared-for delinquents, numbering various members of Zagreb's underground groups, and all kinds of things. How would these people, who had never done anything in their lives, perform construction duties here, how would they who are not used to any discipline and order obey a strict regime of community life and our camp rules – many wondered. Wasn't it too risky to bring such a brigade to the camp which is considered the best [of all the camps during the highway building activities]? [...] In the end, when summing up their one-month stay and work in the actions was done, it turned out that they committed fewer violations of discipline and order than some of the other brigades, that they were, all in all, good brigadiers.

[...] Exactly that is the greatest success of their stay on the highway. Tomorrow, when these young people, determined to take the other path, which is better than the one they were treading in recent times, get a job in working companies, the first days will not bring with them the usual disappointments. They are already accustomed to efforts, they have learned to work honestly for their living.

Furthermore, during the month of community living in the camp, young men from the "Polet" brigade came together with hundreds of boys and girls from all over the country. They found much in common – they rejoiced and were excited because of the same things, in a word, they are not separated by some unbridgeable gap. (cf. *ibid.*: 276-277)

However, Vimpi did not come from nothing: the archeology of literature on the Yugoslav YWAs, including its fictional corpus, uncovers Radža, the main character in Josip Barković's 1947 short story. He went through a cathartic transformation similar to Vimpi's: coming from a very poor family and used to spending his days on the street, involved in petty theft and occasional fighting, he joined the Zagreb youth brigade in building the Šamac-Sarajevo railway. Finally, he became an exemplary brigadier (Barković 1947).

The framework

The milieu of Yugoslav voluntary although the YWAs, being a long-term venture, underwent several substantial shifts in terms of interpreting their goals, has been perceived not only as a place, or *mis-en-scène*, where the prime values of Yugoslav socialism were displayed,² but also as a kind of social laboratory where these values could be observed and tested. As early as during the first phase of construction of the *Bratstvo i jedinstvo* highway from 1946 to 1950, the idea that work would cure social ills was brought to life: in order to rid the town of Zagreb of female down-and-outs, but also in order to re-educate them and involve them in building the country, a number of them were joined in a brigade that had the duty to clean the roadways of sand, to neaten the verges and the like (Celmić 2006: 175). Moreover, in May 1951, Yugoslavia freed 1,097 political prisoners jailed on charges of supporting the Russian-led Cominform. "The former prisoners will go to work", as one of the American newspapers reported, "on a 'volunteer' basis to prove their loyalty by building a railway line between Breza and Vareš, two industrial centers in Bosnia" (Anonymous 1951: 10).

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the projects of "re-socializing" juvenile delinquents were encouraged by changes to the concept of the YWAs (which resulted in changes to their organization), but also by contemporary shifts in social psychology theory. In the early postwar years in socialist Yugoslavia, as well as in other newly founded European socialist states, it was expected that all sorts of criminal behavior, including juvenile delinquency, would gradually disappear together with the remnants of the political system that had supposedly caused them. However, not only did they not disappear, they actually grew in number, so that society was compelled to adopt a "more realistic approach" (Špadijer-Džinić 1968: 269). Otherwise, as Slovenian psychologist Leopold Bregant noticed as early as 1954,

2 "Participation in the youth work actions represents the inclusion of the new society's material basis in such a way that the ideal of that society is already given in the very organization of the working actions as anticipation" (Grgić-Bigović 1978: 18).

“[i]n parallel with the introduction of social management in public life, interest in-creased in phenomena such as behavior of juveniles coming into conflict with the normal perspectives and demands of society” (Bregant 1954: 51).

From 1952 to 1958, only local YWAs were organized, following the assumption that a period of the country’s reconstruction had been completed (and that the foundation for its industrialization was provided), but also as a consequence of the findings that voluntary youth work was economically unjustifiable. The 1958 revival was thus announced by moving the emphasis away from the economic to the social sphere, or, as Rudi Supek put it: “Youth Work Action finds its justification primarily in bringing together young people, in its educational significance, which will always reimburse losses in economic terms” (Supek 1963: 14). However, as could be detected in the then American newspapers, the reasons were somewhat more complex:

Teenage Yugoslavs, often accused of apathy and waywardness, are being drafted for road-building in the hope hard work will keep them out of mischief. The Yugoslav Communist Party is so anxious about the younger generation it has decided to revive a postwar system of labor brigades, in which youngsters will be enrolled for building tasks. (Anonymous 1958: 8A)

Only three years later, the principles of self-management were introduced to the YWAs too: in 1958 they were organized and supervised the same way as immediately after the war, “semi-militarily” and “authoritatively”, but from that year onwards “we notice gradual liberalization [...] and the introduction of various democratization measures that, in 1961, logically led to the adaptation of a new ideal of governance – social self-government” (Supek 1963: 177). Interestingly enough, the first Yugoslav film on the topic of juvenile delinquency is Toma Janjić’s *Crni bis-eri* (Black Pearls) of 1958, the same year the federal YWAs were renewed. The film follows the efforts of a new head of the juvenile correctional home on the island of Badija to positively affect the lives of his protégés, the boys that had hitherto been considered incorrigible. His success is presented as the result of a different, relaxed, softer and friendlier approach to children.

Is Hard Labor Really That Bad?

The “socially neglected youth’s self-rehabilitation” case of Vilko Kokalj and his gang was, for Rudi Supek, “probably one of the most interesting” among a number of attempts at “correcting” (socially rehabilitating) the delinquent youth at the YWAs. Moreover, it was a case that “induced responsible social factors to field-test the problems of juvenile delinquency [...], also by sending them to youth brigades” (Supek 1963: 275, 271-272).

The same year Rudi Supek published his study on *Bratstvo i jedinstvo* YWAs Alojz Majetić published his novel *Čangi*. After having fun with his friends and drinking a lot, Majetić's main character steals a car and hits a passer-by. In order to find a safe haven from the police chase, he chooses to join the work actions. However, Čangi does not feel very secure while staying in the camp: his fellow brigadier Flor, a young man with a perfect socialist biography, doubts his genuine desire to participate. Eventually, we find out that Flor was witness to Čangi's outrage. After a while, the tensions between the two break out in a fist fight, but, ultimately, Čangi decides to measure his strength against Flor's by dumping soil from trucks. Quite unexpectedly, he finds himself enjoying heavy physical work under the hot sun and, at the same time, he finds meaning in "serving the common goal". Thus, although he does not avoid legal punishment in the sequel to the novel (which was published seven years later; Majetić 1970), he was, at least for a time, converted to a person on the verge of a meaningful life.³

The phenomenon of Yugoslav voluntary YWAs alone, not to mention the idea of sending the youth who had gone astray to the actions in order to re-socialize them, undoubtedly belongs to a set of past experiences that are prone to interpretation from a highly normative perspective designed at the peak of the Cold War: "The best way for the Western world to face this war was to establish itself as the champion in the struggle against the new totalitarianism, which was labeled as the necessary and inevitable consequence of Communist ideology and programme" (Losurdo 2004: 30). Hence, although it became one of the core "explanatory" categories concerning the socialist countries, the category of totalitarianism is not devoid of serious flaws, as Domenico Losurdo admonishes: "[...] it transforms an empirical description tied to specific characteristics into a general logical deduction" (ibid.: 50).

Thus, if we wish to reflect on efforts to "bring back" delinquent youngsters from the margins of society to its mainstream or, as we may also put it, from materially and socially unproductive to productive activities, we need to take a closer look at the concepts of delinquency and labor in a somewhat wider context.

Delinquency is commonly defined as an offence or misdeed, usually of a minor nature, especially one committed by a young person, or as conduct that is out of line with accepted behavior or the law. A bottom-up view sees delinquency as a way to obtain material possessions, along with popularity and admiration within a certain social group. As such, it opposes not only socially accepted behavior, but also undermines the accepted and preferred mode of earning a living. The crime that continued to exist in the European socialist states after 1945, which was not only an

3 Nonetheless, Majetić's novel was banned immediately after it was published due to "pornography and incorrect representation of youth", but this official ban actually ensured Majetić's status as a rebel in literary and pop-cultural circles at that time, which led to greater interest in his work.

economic problem, but also a threat to internal discipline and morale, was interpreted, according to Eric Buchholz, as “a hang-over (‘a worm continuation’) of the non-socialist past, or [as] a direct consequence of capitalist efforts to undermine the socialist system” (cf. Sperlich 2007: 194).

On the other hand, the concept of labor (which was yet to become, in Marxian terms, the *need*) was one of the most important defining concepts in all socialist countries, although even Karl Marx’s concept of labor, on which they relied, proved to be “highly complex and heterogeneous”, containing a tension between alienated and non-alienated work activity – between integrated organic craft work and atomized, mechanical fragments of activity (cf. Berki 1979: 35).

When it comes to reflecting on juvenile delinquents who were included in voluntary youth work brigades, the term *voluntary*, already prone to interpretation by means of the ideological signifiers, would most likely be immediately questioned. At the very least, the idea of volunteering for the actions, if scrutinized from today’s perspective and within the Yugoslav context, demarcates a clear line between voluntary labor and labor that is forced by whatever means, including labor aimed at re-education or punishment. Yet, it seems that this line needs to be wide enough to form a sort of no-man’s land and to include cases where people decided that they had better choose to take part in work actions for whatever reason, including their future prospects,⁴ but also those in which people took part in the actions only because they had no other way to spend their summer vacation. Likewise, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the problem of juvenile delinquency preoccupied not only socialist authorities, astonished by its persistence in spite of supposedly uncondusive social circumstances, but also the “general public’s attention” in the West. In 1962, the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service suggested that, in industrialized countries:

Juvenile delinquency is largely a reaction to unprecedented material wealth and the orderly, often boring society that produced it. And delinquents will not be bribed back into the fold by offers to teach them the techniques and graces of that society. On the contrary, what is needed is something exciting, something involving physical challenge, something that can bring delinquents together with other

4 Alternatively, as one of the characters in the early Yugoslav film *Život je naš. Ljudi s pruge* (*Life is Ours. People from the Railway [Building Actions]*), directed by Gustav Gavrin in 1948, put it straightforwardly: “A shock-worker or not, it is all the same. You’ll receive the medal for the action, and the medal for taking part in digging the tunnel, the most difficult object. And whether you’ve been working or not, that is not written on your forehead. You come back, the medal is shining ... ‘Well ... I’ve been to the actions ...’ And all the doors are open. And they say: ‘Here you are, do you want a scholarship?’”

energetic [...] young people in a situation where they face together the necessity for some sort of even rudimentary social order. (cf. Gillette 1968)⁵

Moreover, the Executive Board of UNESCO expressed at its 78th session in 1968 “the hope that the Director-General will be able to submit to the General Conference at its fifteenth session proposals on the measures that UNESCO might take in 1969-1970 to reinforce its youth programme” (“Report on Youth” 1968: 1). Although this urge was the outcome of the worldwide “student revolt movement”, the report clearly stated that “the problem of juvenile delinquency has been attracting the general public’s attention [...] for some fifteen years past” (ibid.: 9). In addressing the multiplicity of causes that led to the profusion of the phenomenon, the countries in which “radical and far-reaching social and economic changes, socialist or otherwise in type, were initiated either as a sequel to the Second World War or in the process of decolonization” were mentioned too. As was noted, “time and again hopes of economic, social and cultural progress, and above all of structural change, have run into material difficulties, or suffered from dilatory execution”. Therefore the spectrum of what was recognized as “protest from the young” was attributed to “this situation, and more particularly [to] the tension between those who fought for independence and those who had no part in the struggle” (ibid.: 8).

However, UNESCO’s carefully weighed opinion was an exception in observing what was clearly defined as an issue. Only five years prior to the UNESCO report, Carl Leiden, visiting professor of government at the University of Texas, wrote somewhat spitefully on the problem of juvenile delinquency in state socialist countries:

We think of long sideburns and uncut hair, leather jackets and narrowed trousers as the hallmark of western delinquency, but visitors in the communist countries have observed similar grooming and attire there. One should make no mistake of the fact – delinquency is to be found in Moscow, Leningrad, and other Soviet cities, along with East Berlin, Poznan, Budapest, and Peking. Guarded references in the communist press and fuller comment from political refugees and western visitors have lent substantial support to this contention. Young Soviet hoodlums carry guns and knives and act very much like their western counterparts, performing all the while only perfunctory lip service to communism. They commit crimes of violence; they steal and cheat; they pride themselves upon their ability to live on the fringe of excitement. They riot occasionally, as in Vladivostok two years ago, and they are a happy reminder that the Soviet Union has its problems, too. (Leiden 1963: 152)

5 URL: <http://www.ourstory.info/library/5-AFSIS/Gillette/volunteers05.html> (retrieved July 23, 2019).

For this author, “the existence of delinquency in the Soviet Union [was] an indication that youth has not been brain-washed there” (ibid.: 153). Yet, for him, this does not imply that juvenile delinquents were not brainwashed on the other side of the Iron Curtain too. They, unlike their Eastern counterparts, as the author explicitly states (by referring to one of the most popular series of 1950s American films that shifted the youth rebellion closer to the mainstream), were “rebels without a cause”, since “a stable, politically free state produces little need for [...] revolt and rebellion” (ibid.: 153, 155). Along these lines, and given Leiden’s competence evident in his assistance in composing the 1968 American Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Control Act, we may speculate that the delinquency that existed in Western countries was not expected either.

Yet the idea that labor has healing powers was neither new nor innovative, as was demonstrated by *Time* magazine’s Washington correspondent in his 2009 article entitled “Is Hard Labor Really That Bad?”. Alex Altman presented his version of its history beginning with Sisyphus, then skipping to Oscar Wilde’s sentence to two years’ hard labor and then to the Soviet gulag, Nelson Mandela’s imprisonment on Robben Island and the U.S. military’s sentencing of Army Private John Suarez in 2008 and the late Sergeant Santos Cardona in 2006 (2009). Indeed, and also in relation to young delinquents, the idea seems more vital today than in most periods of its history. Filip Coussée summarizes recent research on youth work and organized leisure activities as follows:

Academic research in Flanders—as in UK, Germany, USA, [...]—underpins the belief that youth work (especially if it concerns structured programmes) produces positive outcomes for its participants. Participation in structured youth activities contributes to academic results (Fredricks & Eccles 2006), to the development of social and cultural capital (Dworkin, Larson & Hansen 2003), to mental health (Mahoney, Schweder & Stattin 2002), it promotes a sense of citizenship (Williamson 1997), contributes to the process of achieving independence whilst maintaining a good relation with the parents (Larson, Pearce, Sullivan & Jarret 2007), prevents all kinds of risk behaviour (Mahoney, Stattin & Lord 2004), leads to a stronger position in the labour market (Jarret, Sullivan & Watkins 2005), nurtures democratic skills and attitudes (Eccles, Barber, Stone & Hunt 2003), [...] Developmental and community psychologists and sociologists seem to find each other promptly in further unravelling the relation between participation and positive outcomes. (Coussée 2009: 45)⁶

6 Coussée’s list of youth work’s positive outcomes, but also his rhetoric, resemble those used in discussing the issue in the public discourse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Delinquency vis-à-vis labor

In order to come closer to interpreting the attempts at “re-socializing” Yugoslav juvenile delinquents at the YWAs, Alexei Yurchak’s insight into the everyday life of the last Soviet generation, and more precisely, his thesis that the authoritative discourse by that time had become generally performative and lost its constative dimension, thus allowing the dispersion of meaning(s), may be instructive. Following Austin’s, Derrida’s, Bourdieu’s and Butler’s germane discussions while also using the respective proposals of Amy Hollywood and Saba Mahmood, Yurchak points out that “the performative reproduction of the form of [late Soviet] rituals and speech acts actually *enabled* the emergence of diverse, multiple, and unpredictable meanings in everyday life, including those that did not correspond to the constative meanings of authoritative discourse” (Yurchak 2006: 25).

In the Soviet case, the *performative shift* “at the level of concrete ritualized forms of discourse” began, as Yurchak asserts, as “a byproduct of the changes – beginning in the 1950s – in the conditions under which Soviet authoritative discourse was produced, circulated, and received” (ibid.: 26). Yurchak’s persistent insistence on scrutinizing the adjustments that were made to Soviet authoritative public speech would help us anchor the second phase of the Yugoslav YWAs’ history in a time category comparable to that of the “last Yugoslav generation”. Accordingly, we need to raise the question whether Yugoslav YWAs are to be considered successful performances (meaning that they were successful in performing what was meant to be performed), or whether they were misperformed. In order to provide an answer we should examine the very idea that first guided the project. In doing so, we should surely stress the difference between “after the war” actions (that were designed to unite the need to rebuild the country’s infrastructure with the “enthusiasm” that sprung out of stepping into a “new future”) and the actions that followed (insisting on the concept of brotherhood and unity). Here, we could offer data on the Yugoslav YWAs’ failure in terms of their economic profitability, first stated publicly in 1952. We could even try to insist on elaborating the possibility of (a certain) resistance or, at least, negotiating practices in participating in the efforts already made during the postwar reconstruction of the country, but also during the history of the Yugoslav YWAs. There would doubtlessly be enough evidence to prove such an interpretation (or interpretations), ranging from almost anecdotal evidence about parents forbidding their daughters from taking part in the actions “because only hooligans gather there” to severe cases in which some working organizations required their young workers to participate. In addition, one will find confirmation that the actions tended to become deprived of their content, in particular towards the 1980s:

Even today our work-site is poorly organized. They are moving us from one ground to another; again, there is not enough work for all of us. [...] We gather stone that was left after mining and we carry it away to the piles. [...] Several soldiers punched the rocks not far away. They told us that all we are doing is useless since tomorrow the terrain will be mined again. (Jilek et al. 1981: 16)

When I came out of my tent, I noticed some commotion in the camp. Television Zagreb, while shooting a half-hour broadcast about the work actions, filmed the scouts in front of our camp. [...] After that, the cameraman entered the camp to film our brigade. [Our commander] tried to make an atmosphere of joy, song and content, thus helping the people from television, who had been largely directing (or producing) the scenes of this documentary. (Ibid.: 79)

Thus, considering both Čangi's fictional and Vimpi's actual experience, one could concentrate on cultural performance alone, guided by the idea that "successful performance depends on the ability to convince others that one's performance is true" (Alexander 2006: 32). This may prove to be in line with Evgenii Aleksandrovich Dobrenko's recent perspective on the *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*:

[...] the ideology that not only dominated economics, but also gave it meaning, was shaped in Socialist Realism itself. [...] Socialist Realism's basic function was not propaganda, however, but rather to *produce reality by aestheticizing it*. [...] To aestheticize is to re-create the world, to transform it 'according to the laws of beauty and harmony'. (Dobrenko 2007: 4)

For Dobrenko, since "an enormous rift" existed "between the original reality of socialism and the socialist ideal", socialist realism became "a mechanism for bringing them into correspondence" (ibid.: 8). Thus, "the basic function of Socialist Realism [was] to create socialism – Soviet reality, and not an artifact" (ibid.: xii). Dobrenko found the idea to be in accord with what Clifford Geertz discovered while examining the state ceremonials of Bali. Geertz called them "metaphysical theatre", 'theatre designed to express a view of the ultimate nature of reality and, at the same time, to shape the existing conditions of life to be consonant with that reality; that is, theatre to present an ontology and, by presenting it, to make it happen – make it actual'" (ibid.: 21). In the same vein, the famous Georgian philosopher Merab Mamardashvili argued that Soviet history "had created a 'self-imitating man, in whom a historical man might well not recognize himself'". For him, this new person's consciousness has been led "into an antiworld of shadows and images that cast no shadows of their own', 'a world behind the looking glass, made up of imitations of real life', a world of 'illusory illusions' and 'life imitating life'" (cf. ibid.: 16).

Each of these ready-made possibilities for interpreting the Yugoslav YWAs, together with potentially introducing Foucault's idea of heterotopias, Arnold van

Gennep's and Claude Lévi-Strauss's idea of the *rite de passage*, or Jean Baudrillard's observation that the "mode of production" has transformed into a "code of production", lead us to understand the actions as detached from reality (if defined as the totality of what is, as opposed to what merely seems to be). We would see them as a stage in which the defining concepts of socialism/communism were to be performed, where the illusions were to be imitated, where the idea of transition from socialism to communism was ritualized by inscribing it onto the brigadiers' bodies, also (or even more so) onto the young delinquent participants' bodies...

However, we should consider yet another possibility offered by Saba Mahmood, who draws on Butler's Foucauldian point that "the possibility of resistance to norms [is located] within the structure of power itself rather than in the consciousness of an autonomous individual", while "agentival capacity is entailed not only in those acts that result in (progressive) change but also those that aim toward continuity, stasis, and stability" (Mahmood 2001: 212; cf. Yurchak 2006: 28). Indeed, while paving her way to posing the question whether "[t]o endure is to enact?", she clearly states that "if the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific (both in terms of what constitutes 'change' and the capacity by which it is effected), then its meaning and sense cannot be fixed a priori" (ibid.).

Hence, in rethinking the proposal to interpret the "last Yugoslav generation's" voluntary work actions in terms of the participants' resistance to what was announced in the invitation to them to partake, we need to return to the lesson we learned from Alojz Majetič's *Čangi*. Although the novel already gained the aura of being "unsuitable" for "the regime" shortly after it was published, we should not overlook the main character's change that followed his conflict with Flor, the character personifying "the regime" itself. This observation could be reinforced by the quotation from the *Bratstvo i jedinstvo* YWAs' newspaper Rudi Supek used to demonstrate Vimpi's brigades' success: not only did they go to the actions voluntarily, but the brigadiers were highly motivated to prove themselves within the reigning value system. In keeping with this, a parallel interpretation could be proposed that would bridge the gap between our "impartial" post-insight(s) or "induced" interpretation(s) and the mere fact that today, more than 1,700 former brigadiers (belonging to the "last Yugoslav generation") found the Internet to be friendly enough to host them (at bilten-ora-sfrj.com) in their wish to warn that "Maybe we'll be very old the day we'll meet beside the track [...] on both sides of what we've done", and to preserve what they believe to be their community and, more importantly, their values. With this in mind, one should assume (at least) that we should not be too eager to conclude that Yugoslav voluntarily work actions were nothing more than yet another "totalitarian" misperformance.

Bibliography

- Alexander, Jeffrey C. (2006) Cultural pragmatics: social performance between ritual and strategy. In: Alexander, Jeffrey C./Giesen, Bernhard/Mast, Jason L. (eds.) *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual*. Cambridge, 29-89.
- Altman, Alex (2009) Is Hard Labor Really That Bad? In: *Time*, August 12, 2009. URL: <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1915823,00.html#ixzz2RCdqDs8f> (retrieved July 23, 2019).
- Anonymous (1951) Yugoslavia Frees Political Prisoners. In: *The Milwaukee Journal*, May 7, 1951: 10.
- Anonymous (1958) Yugoslav Teen-Agers Again in Labor Gangs. In: *The Miami News*, March 29, 1958: 8A.
- Barković, J. (1947) Radža. In: *Na pruzi. Zbornik radova književnika iz Hrvatske o pruzi Šamac-Sarajevo*. Zagreb: 95-107.
- Berki, R. N. (1979) On the Nature and Origins of Marx's Concept of Labor. In: *Political Theory* 7/1: 35-56.
- Bilten ORA SFRJ: *Leksikon omladinskih radnih akcija*. URL: http://www.bilten-ora-sfrj.com/public_html (retrieved November 12, 2014).
- Bregant, L. (1954) Sociološko-psihološko istraživanje besprizornih maloletnika. In: *Socijalna politika* IV/7-8: 51-62.
- Celmić, I. (2006) Kako smo gradili Autoput Beograd-Zagreb. In: *Ceste i mostovi* 52/1-6: 156-175; 52/7-9: 93-106; 52/10-12: 105-107.
- Coussée, F. (2009) Youth work and its forgotten history. A view from Flanders. In: Verschelden, G./Coussée, Filip/Van de Walle, Tineke/Williamson, Howard (eds.): *The History of Youth Work in Europe*. Strasbourg: 45-61.
- Dobrenko, E. A. (2007) *Political Economy of Socialist Realism*. New Haven.
- Gavrin, Gustav (1948) *Život je naš. Ljudi s pruge*. Belgrade.
- Gillette, A. (1968) *One Million Volunteers. The Story of Volunteer Youth Service*. New York. URL: <http://www.ourstory.info/library/5-AFSIS/Gillette/volunteersTC.html#TC> (retrieved July 23, 2019).
- Grgić-Bigović, J. (1978) *Maloljetni delinkventi i radne akcije*. Zagreb.
- Janić, Svetomir (1958) *Crni biseri*. Sarajevo.
- Jilek, M./Kokot, M./Potočnjak, Ž./Tadej, P./Vidušić, M. (1981) *Četiri priče s 'Otoka mladosti'*. Zagreb.
- Leiden, C. (1963) A Gold Medal for Delinquency. In: *Crime & Delinquency* 9: 152-157.
- Losurdo, D. (2004) Towards a Critique of the Category of Totalitarianism. In: *Historical Materialism* 12/2: 25-55.
- Mahmood, S. (2001) Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival. In: *Cultural Anthropology* 16/2: 202-236.
- Majetić, A. (1963) *Čangi*. Novi Sad.

- Majetić, A. (1970) *Čangi off Gottoff*. Zagreb.
- Špadijer-Džinić, J. (1968) Sociološki pristup istraživanju maloletničke delinkvencije. In: *Sociologija* 10/1: 269-280.
- Sperlich, P. W. (2007) *The East German Social Courts: Law and Popular Justice in a Marxist-Leninist Society*. Westport.
- Supek, R. (1963) *Omladina na putu bratstva. Psiho-sociologija radne akcije*. Belgrade.
- UNESCO (1968) *Report on Youth*. 15th General conference in Paris on October 21, 1968. URL: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000160212> (retrieved July 23, 2019).
- Yurchak, A. (2006) *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton.
- Zlatar, P. (1978) *Bitange, mirno!* Zagreb.