

Breaking Point of Structures: From Concrete Poetry to Partisan Print

Interview with Rastko Močnik by Sezgin Boynik

Medium Cool

SB We can start by going back to the late sixties to discuss your involvement in conceptual art practices at that time. You claim that in the sixties despite all the interest in liberation and hedonism there was also a strong tendency towards the constraints, asceticism, discipline and the systems. To start with: in which way did this orientation in conceptual art influence your work in theory?

RM It actually started earlier. The first works were done by Marko Pogačnik and Iztok Geister. Pogačnik was responsible for the visual part and Geister for the literature part of the OHO movement. Their first works go back to the first half of the sixties. They started to publish in *Tribuna*, the student weekly. Pogačnik became a member of the editorial board of *Tribuna* around 1966. At the beginning of the school year of 1966–67, Pogačnik and myself published a whole issue of this weekly as a conceptual artwork. This was very early print art in Eastern Europe. We didn't know that this would become a genre of a sort, like the artist's book. This issue was completely organized and designed by Pogačnik and myself; as it was a student weekly, it was published in ten to twelve thousand copies.

SB As a mass-produced art.

RM Yes. I think it's unique in the world to have an artist's book published in so many copies. Pogačnik was this kind of ascetic pre-conceptualist, we could say a purist artist. He was using very minimalist visual tools, while I was influenced by Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan at that moment published *The Medium is the Message*, and my theory about the newspaper was that it is a mosaic of "cool medium", or should be made such that it would trigger high participation from the readers. The only kind of suggestions I had for the visual part coincided well with Pogačnik's minimalistic visual tools. So, one of the characteristics, or interventions, of this issue was the idea that the reading of the newspaper should begin from the back page. Thus, the title was on the back page (laughs). That probably corresponded with the reading habits of the epoch, because on the front page you had the official news, and the interesting part was on the back page. Also, the weather forecast was on the back. All the useful things were there. We used typographical means too, different types of letters, etc. Nobody has so far explored this particular work of art.

SB How did this special issue look?

RM It looked like an ordinary issue. The format was the same. It opened in the same way. Only the material part, the imprint, was different. Well, to a certain extent, it was reversed, and then there was a lot of typographical richness of different fonts, as we would say today. At that time the printing of the newspaper was rotation print, and the beginning of the layout was made by hand. There was a semi-craftsmanship. I have very romantic and nostalgic memories of that period. Especially because the people who were doing the material part of the newspaper were highly skilled and very well educated.

SB Were they also students?

RM No, they were workers in the printing house. They read all the newspapers, and they were very well educated.

At least in Slovenia, they were traditionally the avant-garde of the labour movement. The graphic workers had a very strong tradition of trade unions. They were an avant-garde, militant, and well-organized part of the workers' movement; already from the beginning of the twentieth century, even in Austria. So, we had very good relations with them. You have to know that *Tribuna* was traditionally, even from 1964 I would say, a non-orthodox newspaper, and had occasional troubles with authorities. Sometimes we had to come to the printing house and intervene with some texts, or we would change certain expressions in the contributions, because we didn't want to get banned, which would mean losing financial support. The thing was that if you got banned you would get much prestige and glory, as a dissident, in the public opinion, but it would hit you materially. So we avoided this, we had some trials for offending socialist construction etc., but the verdicts were relatively mild, and always conditional. In Slovenia at that time you didn't go to prison for verbal delict. While in Belgrade, you could get one year easily.

SB Even in 1964–65?

RM Yes. The atmosphere was drastically different. Here in Ljubljana, the persecutions were less severe because of the public opinion; persecutions had very unfavourable public repercussions. This was so from 1964 onwards when the cultural journal *Perspektive* was banned. The editing house decided that they would not publish it anymore. That was the kind of last semi-Stalinist intervention in Slovenia. It had such bad repercussions in the public opinion that the authorities became more careful after that. We had good relations with these people in the printing house, and what we did with Pogačnik was a unique kind of excess, and a part of the editorial board did not support it, but they let us do it. Let me make a digression about our relations with other people, non-students. Once we were cleaning the offices in *Kazina*, which was at that time the Student Union house, now it is for folkloristic groups etc. [It is an old Austrian building, which was a casino at the end of the century, it was built in 1850]. We had huge offices in this building, which was heated by house heating. So there was a worker who was taking care of the stove and the heating. Once after cleaning our premises, we brought a lot of paper downstairs to the cellar, where this guy was working. Then we told him that we needed all this stuff to be burnt. And he asked: "Immediately!?" So, there was solidarity from the workers. I remember this detail.

OHO Contradictions

SB Can you tell us about your involvement with the OHO group, and about their initial years?

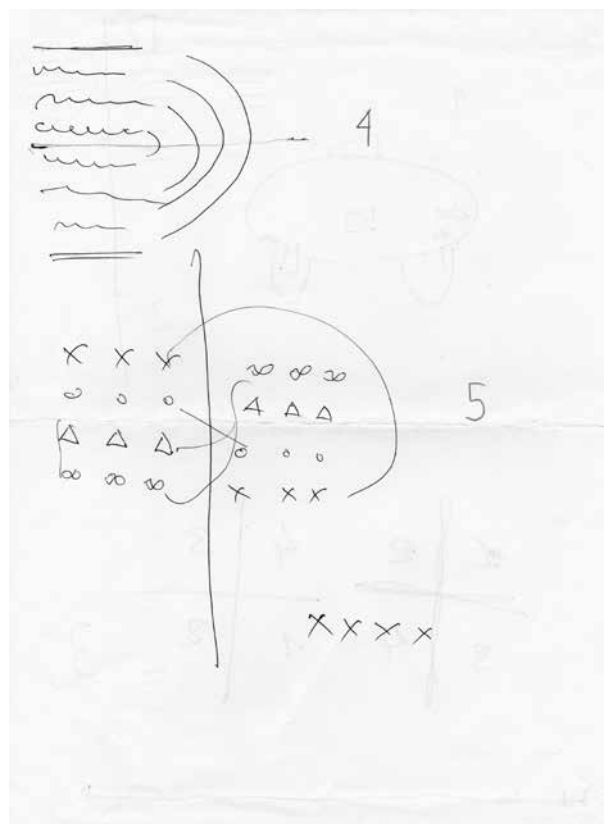
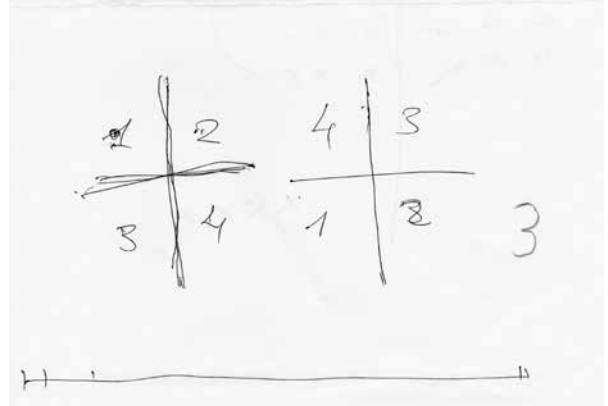
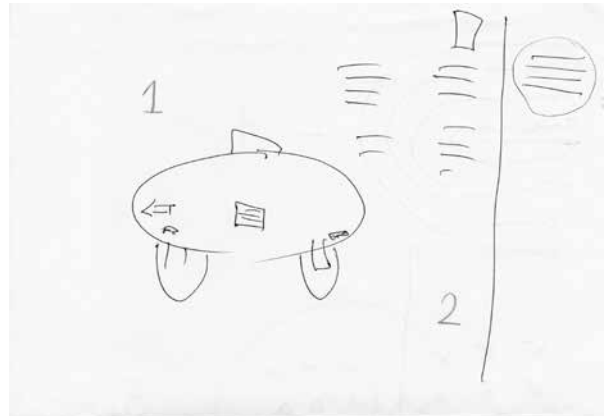
RM The beginning of the OHO was contradictory. On the one hand, there was what later would be called conceptualism, which was an ascetic minimalistic technique combined with a strong participation of the viewers. That part of the conceptualism fitted our political position: the mobilization of the masses and students for relevant social and political issues. Participation of the viewer was okay for us. On the other hand, Pogačnik was at that time tending

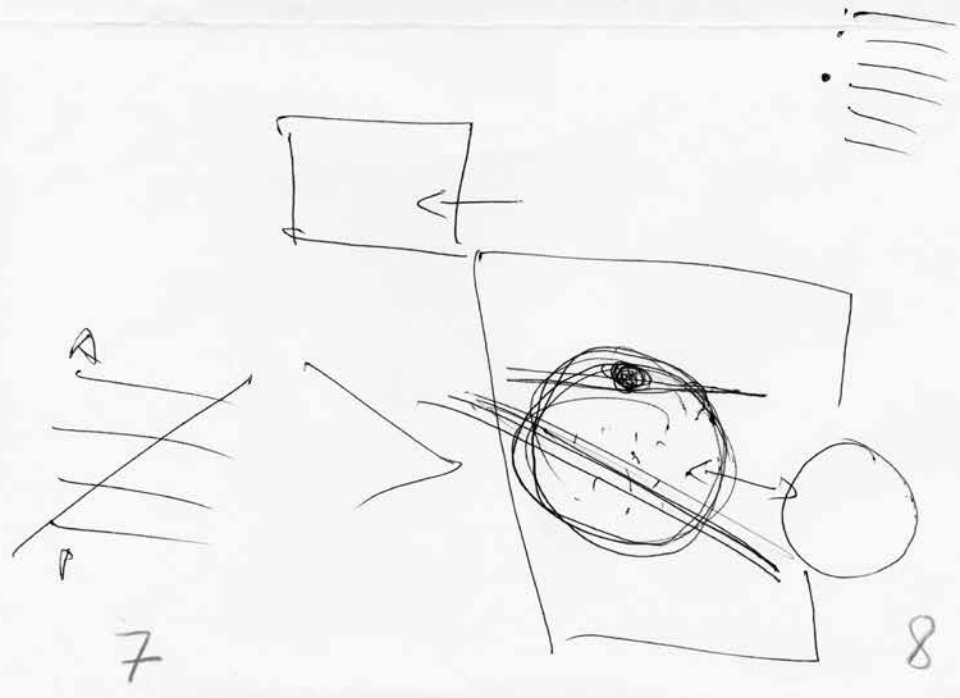
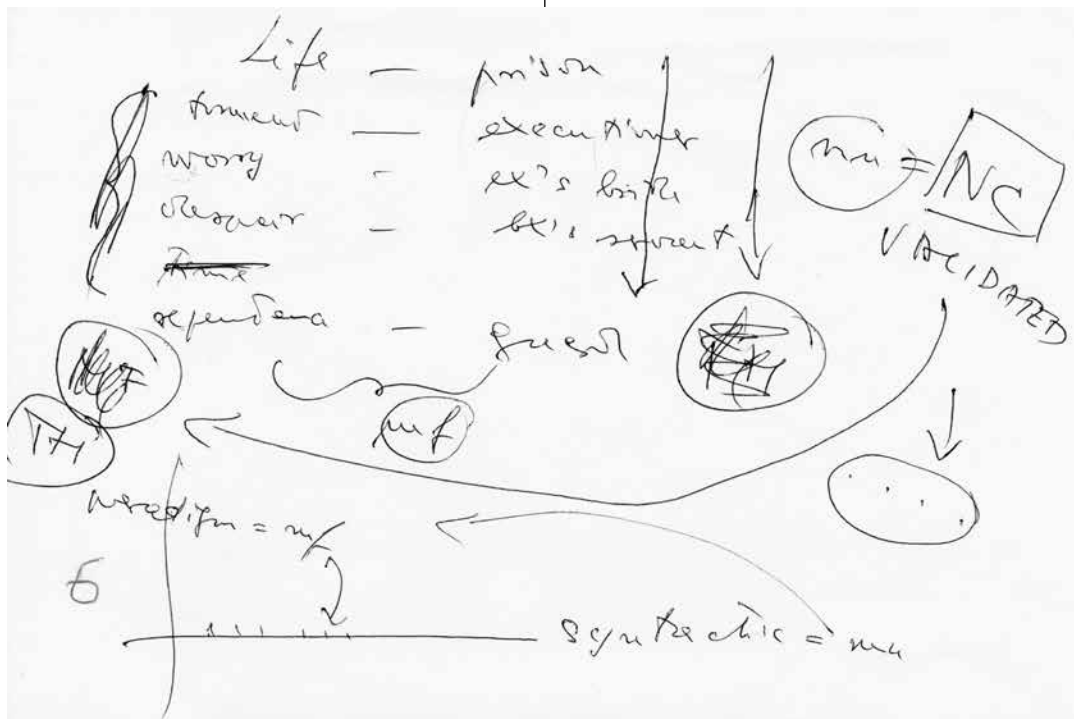
towards the consumerist ideology, which was not a mere Pop Art. He wanted to merge the consumerist culture with conceptualist techniques. For instance, he was drawing the *étagères* (shelves) of the supermarket—different types of cups, or knives etc. It was a kind of apotheosis of the richness of consumerism, drawing, in this case, different knives designed for different purposes; one knife for meat, another for potatoes, another for cheese, another one for grapefruit. We were, of course, opposed to consumerism, in the sixties' spirit of being against-capitalism, against unnecessary spending, against pseudo-riches, etc. Personally, I interpreted Pogačnik's position as sensualism, which I thought to be a minimalistic suggestion of sensual pleasure. I was more interested in this from a theoretical point of view, which at that time was under the influences of Wilhelm Reich, psychoanalysis, Herbert Marcuse, "one-dimensional man", liberation of senses, sexual revolution, etc. This was my theoretical entry into this ascetic conceptualism.

I actually wrote few texts in defence of OHO, although their position was not understood by the general public. This was in 1966–67. I wrote a short article in a fortnightly journal published by *Delo*, called *Naši Razgledi*, and which later changed its name to *Razgledi*. It was established in the early fifties, and the editorial board were communist party members who were kicked out of the party in the late thirties, 1936–37 because they were anti-Stalinist. In the thirties, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) was Stalinist and a member of Komintern, while those people were opposing this trend – and they were kicked out. You have to know that in the thirties KPJ was an illegal party, so these people were double-illegals, being kicked out of an illegal party, and still persecuted by the reactionary Yugoslav regime. Since the beginning of the fifties, *Razgledi* has been a unique phenomenon in the socialist world. It was a platform for debating current political, cultural, social issues. It was especially so, which I only later realized, particularly because they had no photographs; they had only text. It looked very dull but very intellectualist. In the old times, you had this manual technique of composing the text using the correction sheets. This journal looked like a set of correction sheets put together. Extremely dull, but it was economical. They used the paper very well and economically, and then retroactively I found out that all the relevant and important debates were present there.

SB Like what? Regarding culture?

RM Yes, but also the world politics, strategies of socialism and the like. I usually recommend to my seminar students doing historical work to start from this journal, as in its pages you can see what were the issues being debated at particular periods, what was the international position of Yugoslavia, what were the cultural controversies... *Razgledi* registered and also carried out debates on non-alignment, on the block conflict, on the Cold War, on decolonization; it was an intellectually superior journal with relevant and relatively free debates. They played an important public role in the last Stalinist intervention in 1964, when they actually broke the old guard in the party who wanted to have ideological purity. I published a short text there, which was hermetic because it was written as vocabulary, like a dictionary, with the entries and commentaries. There was a McLuhan kind of ideology behind it. It was about fashion, like mini-skirts and coloured long skirts. I was writing about these trends, and I published another short-hermetic manifesto-like defences of the OHO under the name of *Poezija* OHO. After that I published a longer text in *Tribuna*, which was very much written in the spirit of the times: defending the sensual revolution, the masses returning to the streets and having festivities, you know this kind of mild hippie like position with a strong aesthetic tendency. Art will save the people— this was the basic idea behind it (laughing).





I proposed this interpretation of OHO. However, later the mystical interpretation prevailed, proposed by Tomaž Brejc and Pogačnik himself. Unfortunately, Brejc and others are retroactively projecting a later phase to the beginning of the OHO. This was only one part, the other outcome of OHO were Milenko Matanović, who was doing Pop and Op art, and David Nez who was more ascetic, but still had an open and definitely not mystical position. Also, Matanović, who now works as a psychotherapist, was at that time pleasurable, and more connected to Reich's sexual revolution, claiming an emancipation from middle-class blockages, etc. So, that was Matanović, and *Problemi Katalog* was part of this tendency of merrymaking and fraternizing.

SB You have contributed to *Problemi Katalog*, which is about revolutionary subjectivity and sexuality.

RM Yes. My contribution was two pages mirroring each other. But nobody was actually reading it in this way, even though it was obvious, because the fonts suggested it. I can write it again. [Scheme no. 4] The idea was: you have four different fonts and then you have this mirroring, with the negative part on one side and the positive part on the other. Due to the technical limitations we had to do it vertically, instead of, as initially planned, in a horizontal layout. There are two manifestoes in *Katalog*. This one is first, and the other is Geister's. He claims that the world is composed of things. It was some kind of orthodox "reist" (in the sense of the term introduced at that time by Taras Kermauner, literary critic and essayist) minimalism: the world is composed of things and words are things—we have to honour this being of things in themselves. Geister is now an ecologist defending this same position. Nature is as it is, we should not touch it, and the processes that are going on are all natural, including pollution. He is officially an ecologist, but he has this crazy idea that nature is so strong that pollution is part of the natural process; all the chemical processes are natural processes, so nature will ultimately win and doesn't matter what we do now.

SB How much of Heidegger's influence was there in the "reist" position?

RM In the mid-sixties, Heideggerianism, understood as anti-humanism and anti-activism, started to affirm itself in academic circles. For us, activists and leftists, Heideggerianism was very annoying. Heideggerians accused us of being nihilists, and that we belonged to the despicable European metaphysics etc. It is ironic that later, in the eighties, Heideggerians embraced a most vulgar nationalist activist position, and provided ideological justification for the destruction of the Yugoslav federation and for the restoration of capitalism. At the time of *Katalog*, however, I did not perceive the "reist" position as Heideggerian. For me, it was more a minimalistic sensualism. It seems that in OHO's practice there was also a line that was incompatible with materialist and minimalist positions; a line of natural mysticism. There were language-systems and the interest in becoming absorbed by nature, the forest, etc. I never really understood this preoccupation with the forest and the grass. Milenko Matanović and Naško Križnar have a short film where Milenko is standing between two fields. One is yellow and the other is green. There is a nice pleasurable rock music soundtrack. Matanović looks to the left and sees the yellow field, he then looks to the right and sees the green field. It is all very reduced: only two colours and the head, but on the other hand it is very sensualistic, because it is a rich yellow field and a rich green field. There is gaiety involved in that, some sort of gladness, not the mere worship of nature. Parallel to this there are those projects with ropes separating the grass. I always understood it as a childish game: the grass is full of pleasure, so you play with it as children do. It never seemed to me as being important (laughs). Geister was a kind of orthodox

reist, very minimalistic, and he was furious when Pogačnik designed the national emblem, the official coat of arms of the newly constituted Republic of Slovenia, in 1991. He is a kind of taciturn person, does not speak much. Then I met him on the street by chance and he just burst out (something very unusual for him) that Pogačnik designed the national emblem; he was really hurt by this profanation of the purity of conceptual art.

SB I can understand this disappointment, because conceptual art from the beginning had a radical position, with strong political and social consequences. It had a very strong institutional critique, especially towards the national institutions.

RM Yes, exactly. It was normal for those times that if you wanted to do something relevant, you had to go outside the institution. That's, for instance, why the first people entered the institution much later—Živadinov and his colleagues.

SB But that was later, in the eighties.

RM Yes, while up until then, if you wanted to be "authentic", or simply relevant, you had to be outside the institution. That was the kind of presupposition of everything we were doing. Of course, all these institutions were representing nationalist traditional art. It was not very difficult to reject them. In any case, they would not accept us; the rejection did not cost much. While Živadinov succeeded in entering the institution, the central cultural establishment—Cankarjev Dom, with his *Krst Pod Triglavom*.

SB Let's come back to the eighties later. Now, I want to continue with *Problemi* issue and your involvement there. As a philosopher, did you consider this artistic involvement as a solution to some theoretical questions, or was it just a mere experiment?

RM Well, I never considered myself as an artist. I wrote a manifesto; it's not in the spirit of OHO. Because it plays on meaning, not on graphical aspects (even though it includes that too). The really functional side is the meaning. It's not by any means the OHO approach. However, *Katalog* was more open. *Katalog* had this OHO side, which was dominant, but then Milenko Matanović designed the frontispiece, which is the cistern with all those signs. So, our interpretation was that it is a heterogeneous display of different sign systems. And this was explosive!

SB Sign systems of what? Were you aiming to create a new language?

RM It's a heterogeneous construction of already existing languages, the traffic signal, etc. This kind of pure and nicely reduced sketch of the system [drawing something], and then you have this one arrow here indicating that you should overcome the given situation. Then here it says that the cistern is full of dangerous contents, there are lights... So you have different symbolic systems that are put into a collage here, and supposedly this collage should be dangerous, and would explode if... (laughs). [Scheme no. 1]. This was suggested because it is a system indicating something inflammable, like gasoline, or whatever. I guess for Matanović it was just a visual play. At that time, he was interested in reducing photographs to the basic strokes, to the basic features. He was doing portraits, for instance. On the other hand, Braco Rotar and myself were more interested in structuralist questions, the sign systems as heterogeneous, which means non-saturated and not totalized systems. It was in the spirit of '68, the influence of Derrida and, of course, Althusser with his non-completion of the system, his thesis on overdetermination by contradictions was important for us. We were against totalization.

SB Were you by then already under the influence of structuralism?

RM Yes, you can see translations of Barthes in *Katalog*, and I think of Sollers. So it was a *Tel Quel* position, which was later named post-structuralism, but it was flirting with

Leftist currents at that time, partly with Situationists, and partly with Maoism. That kind of interesting combination was possible in France at that time. The Italian contributions, like Sanguinetti, were more anarchist types, such as Debord. Sollers was Maoist. It was the Maoism of “one divides into two”, emphasizing the antagonisms.

SB Later on, you were also involved in the “programmed art” issue of *Problemi*. It seems that the structuralist approach becomes more obvious in that issue. How did you come up with that special issue?

RM Well, Pogačnik was experimenting with programmed art already at that time. And that was kind of a bizarre enterprise because he was drawing by hand a series of visual phenomena, like an ear for example, in large series which would be printed. But, he did this mechanical reproduction by hand. He drew, for example, a hundred and more human figures on canvas. In this spirit, we decided to make a special number of *Problemi*, dedicated to programmed art. The journal had the idea at that time that the issues would be thematic. Either thematic in an artistic sense, or thematic with respect to the contents. There was one issue on the national question, which was a philosophical-sociological thematic issue. And ours was thematic in the sense that all the artefacts presented would be programmed. We published an invitation to the readers to contribute to programmed art. You have to remember that at that time, we didn't have computers, so all was hand made, primitively done. I published a drama there. I made it an orthodox Saussurean thing. There was a lexicon of vocal emissions, gestures, and positions of the body, and a syntax of how to connect them. Each of the “lexical” items ran on its own logic. If the same constellations of three or four elements would appear twice, there was an additional rule of how to get out of this dead end.

SB So, it was not as constrained as it looks. There was an exit point.

RM There was this very punctual contradiction worked into the programme, but it also had a solution to this contradiction. So, in principle it was infinite. We also decided that the editing principle of the whole issue would be programmed.

SB According to the structure of your contribution, or to another?

RM No, according to a new logic. We invented this in the garden of Pogačnik's house in Kranj. It was a beautiful afternoon. We had all the materials and thought to organize the whole issue in this impersonal, non-semantic, programmatic way. We divided each page into four channels, and we then linearly organized the material we had—whatever materials we had—according to the weight of the contributions, as a sort of vulgar materialism. We were literally weighing the contributions (the papers, photos, pictures) with a kitchen balance, one of the old type, not electronic. We organized these materials from the heaviest to the lightest. The idea was that the heavy is really heavy, and that you should consider it heavily. And the light is lighter. We decided to run those materials through four channels; the first, then the second, then the third, and the fourth. But the next page would not repeat the same pattern, it would not continue linearly from where the previous page stopped. [Scheme no. 3]. The idea was that the system would rotate. And, when one contribution finished, you plug in the next one in the place where the previous ended. On the final run, it was completely illegible. Or better, it could make sense only if you took time, a lot of time, meaning if you had a lot of time to engage with it. At first sight, it was absolutely chaotic, but there was logic, and indeed a simple logic in it. We had quite a lot of fun doing it. As a result, we lost the financial support for this issue. It became serious. This issue was displayed in the parliament. And one of those non-orthodox

liberal members of parliament said: “We are giving public money for these kinds of crazy things!” The financier, which was the organization of socialist youth (or maybe youth, not socialist, at that time it was only Savez Omladine), decided that they would not pay any money for this. However, that was not a problem because at that time the financial situation was not so bad; the situation worsened for the journals in the mid-seventies with the crisis. In the sixties, we not only had money for printing but also for honoraria for the contributors.

SB From the sales?

RM No, that was only a plus. People who contributed texts and poems got honoraria. Proofreaders got honoraria, while the editors didn't get anything. It was an honour to be an editor. All the other contributors got money. So the cut was no problem for us, because you just lowered the honoraria, distributed the same amount of money in a different way, and you could cover the issue.

SB Maybe also print fewer copies.

RM Well, this was already printed when it became a scandal. So, this is the story of programmed art.

SB What about other contributors whose works were printed in a preconceived way, whose artworks became part of another artwork?

RM Well, the people who participated were also doing programmed art. There was little outside involvement. There was Marko Švabič who was not an OHO member, and his contribution was a photo-novel showing a girl who passed across the window of a fast food restaurant. He was an interesting artist, and the son of a photo-reporter of *Delo*, a very good one. In his prose, Švabič used archaisms, unusual words. It's very difficult to define his output, but I can say that he was the most important prose writer at that time. One of his inventions was, for instance, to write in the margins of the pages, to use all the available empty spaces in the magazine. In the margins he wrote small prosaic pieces, like in three or four lines. Something like small art pieces. For instance: “I met comrade Popit in the supermarket, and I said to myself: ‘Svašta!’” [“Srečal sem tovariša Popita v supermarketu, in si rekel: ‘Svašta!’”]. Popit was the general secretary of the Communist Party, but at that time general secretaries were still going to supermarkets. Popit lived near Marko's place, across the street. Marko wrote those vignettes in a sort of Yugoslavian—a hybrid idiom. I remember also other examples: “I bumped into Josip Vidmar [he was a conservative literary critic], he was smiling like some Ms. Žgajner” [“Srečal sam Josipa Vidmarja na ulici, nasmehnil se je kot kakšna gospa Žgajner”]. This lady was a fictive character. Or, “I put a bee inside a cup and gave it grass to eat, but the next day the bee escaped” [“Položil sem hrošča v kozarec in mu dal travo za jesti, a naslednji dan sem videl, da je pobegnil.”]. That kind of stuff! Some were humorous, but also very reistic. That was a new genre at that time. These kinds of contributions were in *Problemi Magazin*. The original idea was to use all available space in the magazine, including the usually blank margins of the pages. The person who continued these kinds of ludistic approaches to literature in Slovenia was Emil Filipčič. The standard location of his literature was blocks of officers in JNA (Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija/ Yugoslav People's Army), and the language used in these locations was a pidgin.

SB It seems that *Problemi* was quite a heterogeneous publication.

RM Yes, conceptually the publication was very diverse. Quite soon, however, two main blocks crystallised. On one side, there were literary “traditionalists”, as we perceived them: existentialist modernists, a position that developed in the late fifties. With them, Heideggerian philosophers and essayists. On the other side, there were avant-gardists and our “theoretical” group. There were also several inter-

mediate and conciliatory positions. Conflicts in the editorial board were frequent, but they were productive. I enjoyed, for instance, debating with the Heideggerian philosopher Ivo Urbančič: he was sharp, witty, and often had a point. To make room for this “hyper production”, in the late sixties to early seventies, *Problemi* decided to diversify the issues. Not ideologically or conceptually, but by the genres. We were editing *Razprave*, that was the theoretical issues of the journal, *Literatura*, that published literature, literary criticism and essays, and *Magazin*. *Magazin* came out as commentaries on current social, political and cultural matters that had been printed before in *Problemi*. That was the time when *Problemi* started to come out in an A4 format. It was printed in a big format so that we wouldn't waste paper; this was for economic reasons. In the beginning of each issue, the actual commentaries were on yellow and thinner paper. This later became an independent publication as *Problemi Magazin*. There were twelve issues each year, five or four of them were *Literatura*, five or four were *Razprave*, and the rest was *Magazin*. The magazine was heterogeneous as hell. It was like journalistic commentaries, but more sophisticated than in the usual press. I was responsible for the fashion section. I only published two commentaries. It was something about sex and fashion, and I remember that I wrote very dynamic, essayistic pieces, which means very fast changing of focus, and I liked this kind of writing because I never considered myself to be a writer. This was more a kind of substitutive satisfaction. I remember one of the sentences saying: “there are not two sexes, there is one sex, or there are many, but not two”. That was in the spirit of Wilhelm Reich. At that epoch, there were popular writers, like Norman Brown who wrote *Love's Body*, or Paul Goodman who wrote *Growing up Absurd*, Marcuse of course... We concocted a philosophy of history according to which the human body in the process of evolution had to be de-sexualized in order to be able to work. Initially, the whole body was eroticized or sensualized (which is also what Freud claims), but through evolution, this eroticism had been limited to certain zones because you have to work, use your hands and other parts of the body for something other than sexual pleasure. This rhymed well with the Marxist revolutionary project that was based on the abolition of work, so it intended to spread the erogenous zones throughout the whole body. That was the kernel of the politics of the sexual revolution. Also, by all means, that implies that phallogentric gender division is repressive. My fashion writings were about these issues.

Material Resistance

SB You also wrote literature studies, if I may call them that. In the seventies, you moved from experimental writing to more theoretical projects.

RM Well, these experiments did not last so long, and they were just punctual interventions into what I consider to be the most interesting artistic practice at that time. The ideological-political practice with the student journal *Tribuna* belonged to the same horizon. The editorial boards that came after us to *Tribuna* were even better. And they were several times banned. My textual practices before 1969 originated in a certain theoretical embarrassment. I was unable to articulate my theoretical tools, basically textbook Marxism plus Frankfurt school plus academic phenomenology, with the *pensée sauvage* of the sixties. This changed with my later studies. I studied in Paris in 1969 and 1970, doing post-graduate studies on semiotics. At that time we imagined that all human sciences would become semiotics and that semiotics was the key to everything because it was a formalization of symbolic systems, and everything human is symbolic, so that's it! In Paris, I came to know several inter-

esting people. One of them was Jean-Louis Schefer, who was an art critic and a very hermetic writer in the field of art history. He wrote on renaissance painting, on Saint Augustine, on melancholia, and he also wrote on cinema. Very few of his writings are translated into English; only a collection of essays, on early paintings. He was a very particular person, living like a hermit, reading Saint Augustine, and he was persuaded that European culture is wild, anti-Semitic, and lost from the very beginning of Christianity. It is a strange argument, but he could prove his thesis. He said that I should go to the seminar of Lacan, convinced me that it was the most important thing that was happening at that time. So we went there. That was incredible. Lacan lectured standing. He was a tall and thin man, a very extraordinary figure, and he spoke very slowly, so you could understand every sentence, but the way his sentences were composed together was an enigma. So it was definitely very interesting, also very popular. You had to come at least half an hour before the start because it was always full, people were sitting on the floor. After that, we realized that without reading Freud we couldn't follow what was spoken about in the seminar. So we read that, and Lacan's *Écrits* were already out. Even though it was an absolutely unreadable text, I would say that we somehow understood it, because the atmosphere was such that we could understand it, at least reasonably understand it.

SB What exactly did you understand from Lacan? How did that change your earlier occupations?

RM Well, by that time we were already Althusserians. He introduced over-determination, contradiction, displacement, condensation into Marxism, and Lacan was not so far from there. Semiotics were the same. Soon we began thinking that semiotics were Saussurean, and therefore wrong. But it has instruments and concepts that are useful for formalization. At that time, I was following Greimas's seminar. He was conservative but very liberal in the pedagogical sense; the only thing he requested was a formalization of some kind, any kind. We were Marxists, and he didn't care about that, even though he was an anti-communist, privately. For him, the important thing was some sort of formalization. Whether his, or someone else's formalization, or you could invent your own formalization, but he wanted to have a type of writing that was verifiable and could be repeated in different materials. That is formalization in its basic sense.

SB What was expected from you was to generate your own systems, or to understand the existing systems?

RM Or to take any system, Jakobson's, Greimas's, actant structure, or even Propp's. My approach at that time was close to Voloshinov's position, especially to his objections to Saussure—that Saussure's theory is abstract, aprioristic, and rigid. My thesis was that this is true, but that we don't have other available instruments. The way to use the available semiotic concepts was to push the rigid and abstract approach until the point that it breaks down. And when it breaks down, there is *materia*, there is the material level that resists, and there you get something, but you don't know what!

SB Can you give a concrete example of how this works?

RM The concrete example is my first analysis of one of France Prešeren's sonnets. Another presupposition of mine at that time was that if you wanted to do a sociology of literature, which was my field, then you would have to show that sociology of literature can operate on the finest works of art, on the canonical works, on the most elitist works, because if it worked there, it would work everywhere. This is the exact opposite of what happened later, with mass, popular, and trivial culture becoming the reference point. My idea was that you had to be able to sociologically interpret works of art and the very fine ones, not the trivial ones, the stereo-

typical and formulaic ones, and it's not difficult to formalize them because they already are formalized in a certain way. Now, if you take lyric poetry, you have the advantage that it is already organized, in its own way—metrically and according to poetic forms. On the other hand, however, you have to explain why (and how) something so intimate and individualistic as lyric poetry is at the same time also a standard mechanism of nation building. You have Pushkin in Russia, Mácha in Czech literature, Mickiewicz in Poland, Petöfi in Hungary, Prešeren in Slovenia. This is a common phenomenon—romantic lyric poetry and nation building go together. This history of lyric poetry and nation building starts in the 1820s to 1830s, and it develops very fast; it is actually about the constitution of the bourgeoisie. I made a relatively primitive scheme of Prešeren's metaphors in the sonnet. The sonnet says, "don't be afraid of my poems" (the sonnet is addressed to his beloved), "don't be afraid of my poems, they are like the light of the moon as opposed to the shining of the sun". The light of the moon is tender, and only deploys, discovers, reveals the beauty of nature—as my poems reveal your beauty. The shining of the sun is aggressive and violent. I made this kind of Aristotelian metaphor scheme, which I took from Lacan [laughs]. However, in Prešeren's sonnet, one element is missing, the subjectivating element. So, here you have: the moon against the sun—and if this is like my poems, what are they against? This missing element was my starting point. The missing element is the signifier that would be efficient, that could catch her love. So the signifier of the poem is proclaimed as non-efficient, as aesthetic, which means that nothing performative able to perform there; there is no illocutionary force, the discourse is "etiolated", as Austin would say, it only has this kind of aesthetic, blocked signifying action. My theory at that time was that the whole poem rotates around this missing element, something that does not declare itself; that's his desire, which he cannot realize. So, that was my first analysis of Prešeren. The second one is even better because in the first analysis I had to resolve to a pseudo-Freudian explanation. After that, I found another sonnet, which is also canonical, which performs the construction of the subject of national zero-institution. The subject is both supposed to believe and to know. It's actually not a metaphor, it is a structure based on similarity, a poetical figure that explicitly presents both elements, the metaphorical element and the literary one—it is the figure called "simile". So, the opening line says, "life is prison", so you have life: prison. [Scheme no. 6] It is a very good sonnet because it is kind of suicidal, at a certain point it says something like "gentle death don't hesitate, come fast and soon". So the question is how can suicidal poetry be social and constructive? It is a good question, ha! So, you have "life is prison", you have: torment (*skrb*), worry, despair, time as a negative category—the negative time is *rabelj* (executioner, *dželat*, *bourreau* in French), worry is executioner's bride, despair is executioner's servant, and repentance (*kes*) is the prison guard. It is a very black, gothic sonnet. What you have is this: in the horizontal dimension, the elements are in a metaphoric relation (in Jakobson's terms). In the vertical dimension, the metonymic relation binds the terms together. There are two metonymic columns, in which each horizontal pair of terms is metaphorically connected. The column composed of metaphorical terms, presenting the prison universe, can be understood on the level of the native linguistic competence. It can be understood and accepted as "true" by the native speaker-hearer. Prison, executioner, his bride, his servants, prison guards—those elements fit "naturally" together. As a consequence, the column of the terms with the literary meaning ("life is full of worries, of despair etc.") can be accepted as worthy of consideration. This is precisely the way in which the "national" language operates: it presents itself as ideologically neutral, and as capable to

carry any ideological utterance whatsoever—as the vehicle of the liberal bourgeois pluralism ("freedom of consciousness"). As the support of ideological dialogue.

SB What does this operation do to the artwork?

RM It perfectly realizes Jakobson's thesis about poetic language. According to Jakobson, natural language is structured so that syntactic relations are metonymic, and paradigmatic relations are metaphoric. Poetic language reverses this relation and projects the metaphoric principle upon the syntagmatic axis. Rhyme is the most obvious illustration of this proceeding. [Scheme no. 6] Poetic language is the inversion of the "natural" way. In this sonnet, this inversion perfectly works. But there is another thing. This sonnet proposes a pessimistic thesis about life. It is explicitly, literary, stated in the first column (literal meaning—"life, negative time, worries..."), and it is metaphorized in the second column ("prison, executioner...", the metaphorical terms). In the first column there is the thesis; in the second, its metaphoric figuration. On the natural linguistic competence basis, you accept the metaphorical column and its prison universe of terms bound together by metonymies (executioner, executioner's bride, prison, guard, etc.—that go together according to natural linguistic competence). You accept the validity of this—it is validated on the level of the zero-institution, or the national language as a zero-institution. From here you are prepared to consider the thesis of the literary meaning column as possible: that torment, worry, despair, repentance are components of life. On one side, there is a set of terms you accept on the basis of your natural competence, and on the other side, there is the ideological position, which you don't need to accept, but you accept it as worthy of consideration, because its metaphorization fits on the natural level.

SB On the content level, it seems that they are opposed to each other, life, prison, but on the formal level, they go together.

RM Precisely. Prison is proposed as a metaphor of life. You accept prison and all its attributes on the level of natural competence. It all goes together. Then you read the metaphor from the metaphorical meaning towards literary meaning, which indicates worry, repentance, etc., and you say: well if the metaphorical set is naturally fitting together, then the ideological component, the secondary signifying system, is at least worthy of consideration—I don't need to accept it, but it's possible. From the position of the "subject supposed to know" (the subject of the natural linguistic competence) you are lured towards the position of the "subject supposed to believe" (the subject of ideology). Here [Scheme no. 6, no. 7] you identify with the subject supposed to know, because you know the language, here you identify with the subject supposed to believe. These kinds of operations form the basis of the national constitution. Nation is ideologically pluralistic. The natural language, mother tongue, is a container, or better, the formal matrix, where all possible ideologies can be expressed. You don't need to accept them. But you can consider them, because they are expressed in this universal matrix.

Additional Element

SB Now I think I better understand your thesis on the bricolage form of ideological institutions. Also, I can relate to your theory on the supplementarity of ideologies from your book *Three Theories*. There is one question, however, even if your formalization allows for the supplement, or excess, which offers the possibility of different ways of expression, or a break—why is it always happening in the same way? Or, more precisely, why is it so that despite these excesses, there is a constant in the ideological structure reproducing itself?

Revolucija je brez projekta: ni pot, ampak to, kar je

Vse poti peljejo v samomor: revolucija ne more zvladati — zavlada lahko le nekdo v njenem imenu: uboj in samouboj. Zaveznitvo z levico je vstop v sistem, pot na OBLAST. Infiltracija je priznavanje ureditve: mučno ginevanje.

Revolucija je brez projekta: pluralizem projektov

Vse poti, ves RAZVOJ pelje v samomor: ni prihodnosti, ampak sedanost. Od vseh projektov je samo to, kar je.

Revolucija je sedanost – revolucija je identiteta

Identiteta je v nenehnem uporabi proti vsaki oblasti. Boj življenja s smrtjo. **Revolucija je permanentna revolucija.**

*Identiteta:
akcija,
ki hoče samo sebe*

Dopolnitev subjekta: avtoerotična orgija. Upor je funkcionalna protiutež pomiritvi; prostor nemira, ki se vanj steka vse neracionalno. Družbena higiena: permanentno samozadovoljevanje.

*Akcija,
ki hoče samo sebe:
ni PODOBE,
ki bi se ji akcija
prilikovala*

Akcija, ki se hoče: neidentična akcija. Ni cilja: nevklenjena ekstaza. Ekstaza, ne zavezana drugosti: zavezana sebi. Projekt: proicio — ekstaza: eicio.

**Sedanjest:
ejakulacija**

Ekstaza je subverzija subjekta (gen. ob.). Ejakulacija je poezija. Poetična subverzija.

Pluralizem

Subverzija subjekta je konec enoličnosti. Konec individualistične obsedenosti: pluralizem. Ekstatična skupnost.

**Revolucija
je permanentna
revolucija:
POETIČNA
SUBVERZIJA**

**THE REVOLUTION HAS NO PROJECT:
BEING NOT A PATH BUT WHAT IT IS**

All paths lead to suicide: revolution cannot rule – what can happen is someone ruling in its name: killing and self-killing. Allying with the left means entering the system, a path to POWER. Infiltrating means recognizing the regime: a tortured passing.

**THE REVOLUTION HAS NO PROJECT:
A PLURALITY OF PROJECTS**

All the paths, all the PROGRESS, it all leads to suicide: there is no future, only the present. Of all the projects there is only what is.

**THE REVOLUTION IS THE PRESENT –
THE REVOLUTION IS IDENTITY**

Identity consists in constant resistance against any power. The struggle of life against death. The revolution is a permanent revolution.

**IDENTITY:
AN ACTION
DESIRING ITSELF**

Completing the subject: the auto-erotic orgy. Resistance is a functional counterbalance to reconciliation; a space of agitation where everything irrational converges. Social hygiene: permanent masturbation.

**AN ACTION
DESIRING ITSELF:
THERE IS NO IMAGE
THE ACTION
MIGHT CORRESPOND TO**

An action desiring itself: a non-identical action. No goal: ecstasy unfettered. Ecstasy unbound to alterity: bound to itself. Project: proicio – ecstasy: eicio.

**THE PRESENT:
EJACULATION**

Ecstasy is the subversion of the subject (gen. obj.). Ejaculation is poetry. Poetic subversion.

PLURALISM

The subversion of the subject puts an end to uniformity. The end of individualist obsession: pluralism. Ecstatic community.

**THE REVOLUTION
IS A PERMANENT
REVOLUTION:
POETIC
SUBVERSION ■**

Translation: Katja Zakrajšek.

RM Because the model which I proposed, the supplementary institution, is constructed to guarantee social cohesion. So, it is in advance conceived of as totalizing. It's not conceived of as disruptive. In its normal functioning, an institution always generates contradictory situations. This may open towards innovative or revolutionary practices that dislocate or abolish the institution and replace it with a new one. Or it may lead to conservative practices that attempt to save the institution, to reproduce it. However, because the symbolic system is never complete, it cannot be reproduced by simple repetition. Thus, a supplement is invented, or introduced in order to complete, or saturate, totalize this contradictory structure.

SB I was thinking of a supplement that transcends, goes outside of the system.

RM To understand this, you have to refer to Malevich's "additional element", which is exactly the opposite of the supplementary institution. You have impressionist painting, and Cézanne introduces this virus, this disruptive supplement, which destroys the impressionist configuration and creates a new one.

SB So, the system you described is not the same as Malevich and avant-garde.

RM Well, let's say that the departure point is the same. But then there is a bifurcation: one solution of the systemic contradiction leads towards the destruction of the system, towards the creation of something new, the revolution—the other solution is conservative, it reproduces the system by patching it up with the supplementary institution. I described the second—the conservative path. That was our concern since the sixties: the capacity of the system (or of systems: the capitalist system and the post-capitalist system) to integrate resistance, to recuperate subversion, to "suck in" anti-systemic practices.

SB So, the system you applied to Prešeren is suited to explain how the nation is formed.

RM Yes, how nation is constructed as a new structure out of this medieval, or semi-medieval social system, where you have peasants, and intellectuals, or, better, clergy, aristocrats, bourgeois, who speak their own dialects, or communicate only marginally, who remain in their closed universes.

SB Can we say that this is an act of putting things in order.

RM Yes, in a new order. I mean, the effects are nonetheless revolutionary, even though they are only revolutionary in a bourgeois way. Because the medieval system is hierarchical, you have the aristocracy at the top and the peasantry at the bottom. The whole system is made so that they don't mix and only communicate marginally, and the only diagonal is religion, which guarantees that everyone remains in his/her own place. Now, you create [Scheme no. 8] a zero-institution where everybody is equal, has freedom of consciousness. Of course, it's a nation, which has a border and is hostile to other nations, but in itself it is egalitarian and presumably free. Within itself, socially, it is of course heterogeneous, it is composed of antagonistic classes. However, the ideological solution of this squaring the circle frames heterogeneity within an institution of homogeneity, within the zero-institution of the nation. The nation provides co-existence of heterogeneous, even antagonistic ideologies and positions.

SB Including class?

RM As well. Now, this has to be developed. We are on the level of ideology, not of production of the surplus value, not on the level of exploitation. This national ideology precisely guarantees the specific capitalist mode of exploitation, based on contractual exchange among equal and presumably free contractors. This position, the zero-institution and competition among ideologies that are free and equal, which means equal competition—that's a classical

bourgeois constitution, the French Revolution. It means competition among ideologies, and of course, at each moment one ideology is dominant. This model does of course not integrate unfair advantages on the level of civil society, which means that certain people possess the means of production and other people possess only labour power. Zero-institution sustains the political illusion of equality and freedom in a bourgeois society. This construction guarantees that some bourgeois ideology will be dominant. The dominance is guaranteed first by the very construction of the bourgeois nation which fragments social fields into separated, isolated individuals. Secondly, it is guaranteed by processes that work in other dimensions, in the dimension of economic relations, in what Marx in the *Jewish Question* calls the "civil society, *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*"—which means the real, not ideal relations among people. This construction does not prejudge which ideology will be dominant—whether conservative, or social-democratic, or liberal, but some sort of bourgeois ideology will be dominant. Of course, if you want to develop proletarian class struggle, you have to break out of this national constitution.

The Zero-Institution

SB In the model you are proposing, this seems like a very difficult project, as the zero-institution is naturally understood. Because those participating in class struggles are also using the same natural language (system) of the zero-institution.

RM Of course. But every ideology, at least as long as it is successful, efficient as ideology, appears as pseudo-natural common-sense, as self evident. So, the problem of the proletarian class position is that, first it has to express itself within the situation, which is national, and dominated by capital. And nowadays it has international and global capital against it, while labour is still fragmented, even within nations. On the other hand, proletarian internationalism was introduced so that you could break this bourgeois national institution. Now, as it happens, all socialist revolutions were at the same time struggles against imperialism. Even the Soviet Revolution was struggling against semi-feudal and dependent Russia. Later revolutions, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cuban, Yugoslav were anti-imperialist, which means they were also struggling for national liberation. They had to solve this problem in practice. They had to liberate the nation from external imperialism, but also break down this nation, due to the fact that the nation by itself is a bourgeois construction. What happened with all these revolutions was that they succumbed to these contradictions, sooner or later they became national bureaucratic or even national comprador bourgeois states.

SB Why do you think that happened?

RM Because the world system was, and still is, based on nation construction. It's not enough to nationalize the means of production, you have to break away from the structure of the world system, which is constructed so that local ruling classes accommodate capital, which is now global. For instance, if you read Samir Amin, he says that nowadays the only transformative agenda is national populism, he is very pessimistic. By that, he means national liberation against imperialism plus populist socialist elements. SB Do you think that this position is insufficiently breaking away from the existing constraints of national ideologies?

RM Look, I only know the Slovenian situation well. In Slovenian national liberation, in the partisan struggle, the idea was, of course, the emancipation of the Slovenian nation, which meant emancipation from the German and Italian imperialism. But then communists, who were internationalists, would normally want to go beyond mere national

emancipation. However, they were controlled by Stalin, and he didn't want to have a revolution in Yugoslavia. At least not an independent one. The communists were kind of inhibited. The liberation movement, led by communists, nevertheless started to establish a new popular government during the armed struggle (national liberation councils as local authorities; anti-fascist councils as the highest bodies of the future republics). On the other hand, Christian-Socialists, who were mostly intellectuals, were much more openly revolutionary than the communists, propagating a much more radical rhetoric. Christian-Socialists had no international connection, no *Komintern*, and were much freer at propagating their revolutionary programme. One of them, who was a literary man, Edvard Kocbek, said that we should also change the Slovenian national character. There are ten programmatic points of the Liberation Front; they announce the liberation of national territory and the introduction of social justice. The programme is written in a kind of mixed jargon, not in a communist style *per se*. But there is this bizarre point—the transformation of Slovenian national character. I interpret this as the remnants of an archaic language of the nineteenth century. Under the anachronistic label of the “national character”, the programme announces the transformation of the nation-form from the structure of oppression into a structure of emancipation; some sort of socialist nation, I would say. This idea, which is clumsily formulated in the programme of the Liberation Front, had already been propagated by Ivan Cankar, the *fin de siècle* writer, who introduced the idea of proletarian nations. He considered all Yugoslav nations to be proletarian nations. Concretely meaning the nations that are proletarian with respect to imperialist powers, precisely European powers, German, French, British, or imperial Russian. He said that each of them is *narod proletarec*. The changing of national character would mean, in Operaist terms, the class composition of proletarian nations. Kocbek was a Christian, so his language is very mystified. Basically, he wanted to make a world revolution. He expressed himself in cosmic terms, he had this idea that he was participating in a kind of global transformation of the universe. It was very well written. He would be a very good journalist. He had literary talent and the sense of the immensity of what was happening. On the other hand, communists were pragmatic, they were looking to the mid-term. We have to take power, nationalize banks and factories, and give the land to peasants. Kocbek saw the situation as a mega-historical transformation. So, that's still the question of squaring the circle, because you are enclosed in the bourgeois construction, which remains there after you have nationalized the means of production, and after you think that you emancipated the working people.

Partisan Subjectivities

SB It seems that there were some very strong utopic elements there. What were his [Edvard Kocbek's] particular programme or activities to break from these dynamics, which were understood as naturally connected to each other [nationalism and ideology]?

RM You should read Miklavž Komelj's *Partisan Art* book on this point. Namely, *Partisan Art* is a polemic against my text published in the catalogue of the exhibition on Partisan Print. I was invited to write a text to a catalogue of the exhibition on partisan print (organized by mgjc museum). There I said that nowadays we can better understand the so-called Stalinism in the partisan movement. The presumed Stalinist in the partisan movement was the chief of agitprop, Nikolaj Pirnat who was a painter. He studied in Zagreb with Ivan Meštrović, and then studied in Prague and in Paris. He was not a naïve person. In January 1944 he wrote a circular letter to partisan units announcing that there would be a

partisan exhibition on the liberated territory. Pirnat asked partisan artists to send their visual works, and said that they were free to choose the technique and motifs, but of course “we will not indulge in landscape, and still life because they are petty bourgeois genres”. Partisan artists, people who were fighting on the field, but also they were producing art and were provoked by this and thought that this was dogmatism, sectarianism, a control of artistic freedom, etc. This became an ideological conflict within the partisan movement. In October 1944, the partisan leadership convened an artistic plenum on this question at the partisan headquarters in Rog. The highest ranking communists, the partisan leaders went because they were afraid to lose the artists. [It is typical of the communists in Slovenia, and mostly in Yugoslavia, to fetishize intellectuals. They saw intellectuals as an avant-garde of the construction of socialism. For instance at a certain moment in 1944, in February, when one of the greatest poets of the partisan movement was killed, the whites killed him, they formed *kulturniška četa*, a cultural unit, which would not participate in direct fighting, but would organize meetings etc. The only one who didn't retreat into that unit was the poet Ivan Minatti, a guy I knew.] Partisan leaders esteemed intellectuals and artists highly; they wanted to avoid conflict with them, so finally this bourgeois line won. One of the partisan commanders, who had been a fighter in Spain before, Aleš Bebler, wrote in an article for *Ljudska pravica*, the organ of the Communist Party of Slovenia, that the position of the liberation front was cultural freedom and freedom of artistic expression. Then I argued, in my article, with some nastiness, that we could then, through contemporary art, better understand what Pirnat meant by bourgeois genres. Pirnat's adversaries argued that, according to him, one should not paint a birch tree without a kalashnikov leaning against it, or without bullet holes. Well, I wrote—we now call it the acousmatic procedure, it is a concept now. We can understand this through contemporary art! Komelj got angry, one can understand it, he is a poet. He first wrote a very good article in defence of artistic freedom and proposed a different theory of partisan art. The good side of his article is that he compares the white guards' poetry and art with partisan art, and of course he shows that partisan art is linked to the avant-garde and is sophisticated, while white guard art is folkloristic, kitsch. I liked this article, even though he was polemicizing against me. When I later republished this text, I added a footnote saying that whoever read my article should also read Komelj's. Later, in the second chapter of his book on partisan art, he further polemized against my position. I wrote a very short response, which was only published in a Trieste journal of Slavic philology.

SB These texts were recently published in a journal called *Slavica Tergestina*?

RM Yes, Gal Kirn and Jernej Habjan edited *Slavica Tergestina*, no. 17, 2016. In this later text, I wrote about how Božidar Jakac, the painter of this [he points at the portrait of Tito hanging on the wall that was painted by Jakac] responded to Pirnat. He made a linocut of the viaduct that was blown up by the partisans, with a destroyed train beneath. There you have this blown up viaduct with the remains of the train under it, and the title is “Still Life” (*mrtva priroda*). I think this is great! The linocut is made as a reportage photo with expressionist elements [especially the sky that has a cosmic expressionism]. It's very witty. And then I went back to the debates of the thirties. My thesis is that the problem was resolved in the thirties. At that time, there was a big struggle called *sukob na književnoj levici*, a struggle on the literary left, between orthodox communists like Oskar Davičo, Koča Popović, and Milovan Đilas, against Miroslav Krleža.

SB But Davičo and Ristić were Surrealists.

RM They were surrealists. I am talking about their second phase when they were communists. Like Aragon. On the other side Krleža, who was against dogmatism in art, and against party directives, etc. Now here in Slovenia you didn't have precisely this conflict, but different conflicts about the tendency in the arts. The problem was how to speak to masses? Avant-garde poets and writers asked this question because if you sent the avant-gardist extravaganza to people, it would have meant nothing to them. They could not connect with it. So, the solution was, already in the thirties, to go back into popular genres which are either folk songs, or religious art, or the school (academic) canon, and to work through them. I think this is a good procedure. You take the clichés of canonical, bourgeois or even religious art and try to subvert them so that people can understand it, but also make them see how you changed it. This is the procedural, processual part. For instance, there is one poet, Matej Bor, who was a Mayakovsky type of poet. My mother who was young at that time, liked him a lot. She said that his avant-garde poems were great. He had lines like "spirit is ecrasite, our fists are stronger than your tanks", these kinds of oppositions, of fist and metal. But then he went to the partisans and saw that they were peasants and workers, simple people. Then he changed his style to traditional verse rhyme, totally different. But he was a person with talent. His pseudo-traditional poetry is still great! The so-called "social poets" opted for this kind of formulation already in the thirties.

SB Could we say that for these ideologues the point was to make the tendency clearer?

RM They introduced this virus of the avant-garde into the formulas and clichés of the popular, folk, religious culture. There is an excellent piece that was written by partisans, literally in the woods, and published in the partisan press. It is an elegy, a classical piece in the elegiac hexameter-pentameter. The title is the name of a village and a date. Everybody knew that the village was burnt. So you have a depressive, very elegiac landscape of the burnt village, the houses without roofs, the graves of people who were killed, like: "they were working, living together, now they are lying dead together". Very heart breaking, even for me. Then in the last two verses, it says, "but there is one living thing in the village, the water still springs from the source", and the last line, "partisans, while passing, quench their thirst from the source" ["v njem partizani gase žejo si mimogrede"]. It's incredible! You have all this depression, gloom, dark colours, and heart-breaking sorrow, and then you have this point of life and at the very end, the passers-by, the liberators. You have this kind of standard canonical form, even the high-brow culture, the hexameter-pentameter, who cares about that anyway, but well done, the craft is well done, and at the end you have the reversal; it is all going to change, not everything is dead, and the column of partisans is passing-by. It is incredibly effective. The same guy, later, wrote a hymn to Stalin [laughs]. But, nevertheless... I knew him; he was an editor in a publishing house. My mother worked with him, and would complain about how boring he was. She would say that he was like a professor. But during the Second World War, he was a young partisan.

SB Do you think this message reached people, the peasants, workers, masses?

RM Of course! Many pieces of the partisan poetry were made into songs for singing and became popular lore. People still sing them, and mostly do not know who wrote the text, who composed the music. It is genuinely popular—people's lore. For instance this guy who was killed, Karel Destovnik-Kajuh, was a city person, but had an incredible talent in mimicking folk songs; good euphonic, good rhymes, easy to remember. An avant-gardist, who was Christian-Socialist, Jože Javoršek... he was a controversial person, because he was gay, you know the partisan strug-

gle was not gay liberation. So, this guy said that one of the reasons why they started to put rhyme in traditional verses was because there was no paper, so you had to remember. Javoršek was good. I knew him too. He was a very good stylist. He was the first one in Slovenia to introduce a consciousness towards ecological problems. He partly lived in France, partly here. Many here didn't like him, they thought he was an opportunist. You know the communists had power, and they were pragmatic people. Those Christian-Socialists were marginalized, before, during, and after the war, and they had time to develop culturally. Most of them had great skill in language, especially in verse, and they had some kind of international awareness, because of Christian universalism, which was missing with the communists, because Yugoslav communists opposed *Komintern* and other Soviet backed international organizations. It was only with Non-alignment that internationalism emerged in Yugoslavia, but that was late. ■