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## The Pedagogy of Workers' Self-Management: Terror, Therapy, and Reform Communism in Yugoslavia after the Tito-Stalin Split

### Abstract

*This article looks at the fields of psychoanalysis and psychiatry to read socialist Yugoslavia's complex international and political position. It argues that the history of postwar mental health professions in this country opens up a larger social and political story of liberalization and authoritarianism in socialist Eastern Europe. After 1948, the conflict with the Cominform, and split with the USSR, Yugoslavia went on to receive Western material help, as well as political support, and developed its own more liberal and internationally open brand of socialism, predicated on the ideas of workers' self-management and nonalignment. Yugoslav psychiatry and psychoanalysis became the most liberalized and Westernized professions in the region, but they also contributed to the operation of the violent "re-education" program at Goli Otok, the most authoritarian and repressive political project in Yugoslav history aimed at "re-educating" pro-Stalinists in the Yugoslav Communist Party. In this article, those two sides of the Yugoslav psychiatric profession will be demonstrated through the prism of self-management. First, the article discusses the application of psychotherapeutic techniques and self-management in the violent context of re-education camps for political prisoners. A similar combination of psychoanalysis and principles of self-management in "civilian" and Westernized child psychiatry is analysed in the second part. The article shows how these very similar notions and ideological principles could be used within the same sociopolitical framework and by the same profession but for radically different purposes.*

In 1948, Yugoslavia, a newly socialist, revolutionary country, which had just emerged out of the most devastating conflict in its brief history, experienced yet

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another exceptionally turbulent international episode: its close military, political, and ideological relations with the USSR crumbled within a few months, and Yugoslavia fell out of the Soviet sphere of influence. In June 1948, the Yugoslav Communist Party (CPY) was expelled from the Cominform, after the Cominform's damning resolution accused the CPY of deviating from Marxism-Leninism and promoting openly anti-Soviet policies and viewpoints.<sup>1</sup> The Tito-Stalin split ultimately benefited Yugoslavia: the country went on to receive enormous amounts of Western material help, as well as political support and, even more importantly, developed its own, much more liberal and internationally open brand of socialism, predicated on the ideas of workers' self-management and nonalignment. The Yugoslav regime's unique position within the Eastern bloc allowed its leaders to pursue experimental policies and to encourage rich exchanges with both the Eastern and the Western worlds. However, this political break had serious consequences for Yugoslav society, and Yugoslavia's position was further complicated by geography: it was surrounded by Soviet satellites, and the possibility of foreign invasion as well as internal treason was a real one for years. Moreover, the intimate ideological bonds between the Yugoslav and Soviet Communist Parties could not be broken off so easily, and many committed Communists' loyalties remained hopelessly confused.

Importantly, the country's dangerous departure from the increasingly oppressive Soviet zone sparked the most authoritarian and Stalinist-like political episode in Yugoslavia's history. Afraid for its survival and fearing popular defection to the Soviet side in case of invasion, the Yugoslav regime embarked on a long and thorough purge of its most esteemed cadres.<sup>2</sup> Thousands ended in political prisons, and the regime decided to devise a unique program of "re-education" for all those former comrades who "failed" to understand the true meaning of the Soviet-Yugoslav split. A number of "re-education" camps were established, the most notorious of which was the Goli Otok labor and prison camp complex, where a brutal psychological experiment was conducted with tens of thousands of inmates incarcerated on a secluded island off the northern Croatian coast. Very little has been published on Goli Otok in English, and its psychiatric aspect remains completely unexplored. This article aims to shed light on the way psychiatric and psychoanalytic ideas shaped the conceptualization and realization of this experiment.

But placing Goli Otok in the context of the history of psychiatry also sheds light on another important historiographical conundrum. For many years, scholars of socialism and of Yugoslavia remained puzzled by the brutal and repressive nature of Tito's anti-Stalinist initiative in 1949. The episode was particularly confusing because this increasingly authoritarian period was followed by a period of important social, cultural, and political liberalization as the country searched for alternatives to Stalinist socialism. This article will demonstrate that the state's liberal turn was not in fact a break from what came before. The harsh pursuit of suspected Stalinists after 1948 was predicated on the same core principles that motivated Yugoslavia's subsequent partial democratization. The theories of self-management, "creative initiatives" from below, and the decentralization of the political system guided liberalization in Yugoslavia, but they were also put into operation—although in a very altered form—very early on, in the repressive context of Goli Otok. Moreover, Yugoslavia's non-Stalinist, reform Communism was dependent on particular ideas of individual psychological

development and emancipation, and these became increasingly connected to and informed by specific psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic concepts. The combination of psychological reform and self-management marked Yugoslavia's experimentation with different forms of socialism in radically different social and political spheres. By focusing on the ideological continuities between the organizing principles of the camp and psychiatric, social, and cultural practices outside of it, this article will place Goli Otok firmly in the context of Yugoslavia's early experimentation with alternatives to Stalinism. It shows that the concept of self-management could be combined with various psychotherapeutic and psychoanalytic theories both in violent camps and in Westernized psychotherapeutic consulting rooms, in order to achieve rather different results in the realm of re-education. But even when it was implemented in the extreme context of violence and coercion in the camps, it still retained the connotation of personal growth, development, and ultimate liberation—although at Goli Otok, that liberation was to be achieved through a complete destruction and unraveling of the inmate's "treacherous" personality.<sup>3</sup> Psychoanalysis and psychotherapy were thus instrumental for both—unraveling and rebuilding.

In the aftermath of WWII and the split, Yugoslav psychiatry and psychoanalysis became the most liberalized and Westernized professions in the region, but they also contributed crucially to the operation of the violent re-education program at Goli Otok, the most authoritarian and repressive political project in Yugoslav history. Postwar psychoanalysis and psychiatry thus provide a useful lens through which to study the complicated and unexpected political alliances of the Cold War: of all the socialist countries, it was in Yugoslavia only that psychoanalysis thrived, received generous material and logistical support from the state, and became the most internationalized of all medical professions. From the early 1950s on, Yugoslav socialist psychoanalysis adopted the fundamental theoretical and practical assumptions of the French and British psychoanalytic schools and became a full-fledged member of the Western European psychoanalytic community, developing a rich culture of professional exchange with Western European as well as American colleagues.<sup>4</sup> But Yugoslav psychoanalysts and psychiatrists were also involved in more authoritarian "re-education" projects, in political abuses, and in the subsequent Eastern European psychiatric and pedagogical networks.<sup>5</sup> While the Yugoslav socialist regime allowed freedoms and opportunities unmatched in the socialist world, it also devised exceptionally brutal and oppressive measures to deal with opponents it considered particularly dangerous. From the early 1950s, Yugoslav psychiatrists and psychoanalysts regularly traveled to Western Europe and the United States on state fellowships in order to complete specializations and educational trainings and supervision; their work gradually became suffused with the ideas of direct democracy, liberalization of the self, and self-fulfilment. But at the same time, the Yugoslav state was equally interested in Soviet-style psychiatric experiments, and sent mental health professionals "to the West" in order to gauge prison psychiatric practices in the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup>

In socialist Yugoslavia, therefore, in every facet of society, psychiatry and psychotherapy became instrumental in shaping and reshaping minds, experimenting with new political ideas, and in building, as the Communist Party called it, a genuine democracy. Psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic theories became increasingly important for understanding and developing the notions of

individual enlightenment and self-management that underpinned Yugoslavia's reform Communism. In turn, various philosophical and sociological interpretations of self-management shaped the Yugoslav, Marxist version of psychoanalysis and encouraged its practitioners to think in more activist and politically engaged terms. In order to analyze this process, this article focuses on two distinct contexts in which psychoanalytic ideas affected political developments: prisoner rehabilitation in Goli Otok and the field of child psychiatry and psychoanalysis. In Goli Otok, the project of individual reformation took on an exceptionally violent guise, but it was informed by the same psychiatric and psychoanalytic principles that shaped the theory and practice of child psychology. Moreover, psychiatrists were centrally involved in these explicitly political enterprises, whether as liberal professionals or as contributors to the idea of violent re-education, and offered elaborate psychological interpretations of Marxist/Communist concepts and of the importance of self-management. This article will explore these two sides of the Yugoslav psychiatric profession through the prism of self-management. I will demonstrate how very similar notions and ideological principles could be used within the same sociopolitical framework and by the same profession but for radically different purposes.

### **The Search for Genuine Democracy: Self-Management**

After 1949 the Yugoslav political system saw itself almost exclusively as an ideological antithesis to the USSR, a "really existing negation of the concept of state socialism" and central planning.<sup>7</sup> It began searching for an alternative ideological and political basis for legitimation, which would move away from Stalinist totalitarianism without endangering the socialist essence of the Yugoslav revolution. In 1949, Kardelj suggested that socialism meant "such an organization of a people's community which would represent a mutual cooperation of equal, free people" and would eliminate "a uniformity imposed from above and hierarchical subordination to the centre."<sup>8</sup> Already by the early 1950s, the most important ideologues of Yugoslav Communism developed their doctrine of socialist workers' self-management, which was partly based on Engels' notion of the "state that withers away," on Marx's early writings and analysis of the Paris Commune, and on Gramsci's theories and partly inspired by the Yugoslav Communists' wartime experiences of popularly elected and popularly responsible committees/councils. The state soon implemented a set of legislative measures aimed at economic and political decentralization and "de-bureaucratization" through workers' councils and gradual democratization of cultural and social life. Such reforms, of course, stopped well short of introducing a multiparty political system and disbanding the political monopoly of the Communist Party, but they did de-Bolshevize Yugoslav socialism and ultimately helped build a more pluralistic society.

The fateful year of 1948 was not only marked by the bitter dispute with the USSR but also by a widespread sense of disappointment with the revolution, especially among Partisan resistance veterans. After their wartime experiences with radical politics and with the direct political participation of the masses through people's committees, Partisan veterans in Yugoslavia had a very different take on Party politics and military/political hierarchies. For instance, former Communist soldiers in Vukovar, Croatia, were, according to one official

Croatian Communist Party report, feeling “neglected, isolated, lonely and hopelessly abandoned to their own devices” and had no opportunity to participate in the political reconstruction of the country. Even the local councils of veterans’ organizations were deemed “declarative” and “delegate bodies” and were hardly aware of the social problems of their region; they met rarely, assumed either a passive or a technocratic/bureaucratic attitude, and appeared to provide very little opportunity for true political participation.<sup>9</sup> When the IB Resolution criticized the Yugoslav Party, among other things, for subverting democratic procedures, this became a hot topic of debates at Party cell meetings throughout the country.<sup>10</sup> The issue of social stratification and material privileges of Party administrators was an even more sensitive topic in a young socialist state.<sup>11</sup> As Goli Otok inmate Peter Komnecic wrote, 1948 was in fact a clash between the careerists and the honest, humble Communists: “True partisans didn’t know how to climb the ladder to the very top, with intrigues, behind-the-scenes calculations . . . they remained confused in their human and Communist pride.”<sup>12</sup>

Alarming for the political leadership, some of the former participants in the Partisan army were growing alienated from the emerging authoritarian Communist state and compared it unfavorably to the wartime experience of bottom-up initiatives, pluralism, and people’s committees.<sup>13</sup> Of all Goli Otok prisoners between 1949 and 1956, around 40 per cent were veterans of Partisan guerrilla warfare, the elite of the socialist revolution.<sup>14</sup> These people often understood the Resolution and discussions around the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict as an opportunity to critique what they considered to be the deviations of Yugoslav socialism—the increasing authoritarianism of the state machinery.

The Yugoslav state’s experiment with self-management was, to an important extent, a response to veterans’ and Party members’ critiques of the emerging internal political structure rather than merely a reaction to the Soviet assault or to Yugoslav Communists’ supposed primary allegiance to the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup> Even though the late 1940s and early 1950s saw many of them imprisoned and accused of treacherous pro-Stalinist loyalties, their words and concerns were nevertheless heeded and adopted. And in that sense, it was not all that surprising that self-management was practiced for the first time in the hellish conditions of Goli Otok. When it came to conceptualizing re-education and imprisonment, the 1948 conflict was an internal Party affair, and it meant that the inmates would be treated as a special category of prisoners. In fact, Goli Otok was meant to function as both a torture chamber and a Red University, in which “mised” comrades were brought back to the proper ideological path and not written off or executed as in Stalin’s Soviet Union. This, ironically, produced unprecedented brutality: in imprisoned partisans’ memoirs, diaries, and autobiographies, the very concept of self-management within the camp was marked as the most distressing circumstance, and former inmates described in great detail how they felt when their former wartime comrades inflicted immense physical and psychological humiliation upon them. This may go some way towards explaining the ultimate failure of the self-management experiment in Yugoslavia: its extremely authoritarian roots in 1949 marked the practice of self-management outside the prisons, and it is particularly striking that, even in the 1960s and 1970s, bottom-up self-managing structures in factories and political organizations were almost regularly set up and elaborated “from above.”<sup>16</sup>

### The Pedagogical Value of Self-Management and Coercive Re-Education

In his seminal work on the Yugoslav split with the Cominform, Ivo Banac rightly argues that the Yugoslav government's repressive response to perceived enemies of the state in 1948 and after was far from a straightforward struggle for liberalizing or de-Stalinizing society. In fact, it constituted the most authoritarian phase in the history of Yugoslav socialism, which was essential for establishing the Communists firmly in power and comparable to the Soviet collectivization drive and political terror of the 1930s. Banac adds that the Yugoslav leadership made a crucial decision in 1948 not to treat suspected Cominformists any differently from all other enemies of the state; in fact, the grand anti-Stalinist initiative of Tito's regime proved to be the most Stalinist move in his entire career.<sup>17</sup> While Banac's argument proved to be the most Stalinist anti-Stalinism of 1948 is insightful, it is worth asking whether the penal and psychological strategy for dealing with pro-Soviet Yugoslav prisoners was entirely identical to Soviet practice. In fact, memoirs and descriptions of inmates' experiences at Goli Otok and an array of related prison camps point in a different direction: these prisoners were, in fact, treated in an exceptional manner, and in this sense they represented a unique, category of prisoner. The system of "re-education" developed in the Goli Otok system was aimed precisely at those Communist comrades who breached the Party's trust—and while it may have been Stalinist in its cruelty, breadth, and violence, it was ideologically developed in opposition to Stalinist centralism and relied on the notion of prisoners' self-management. In that way, Goli Otok can be seen as an experimental ground, in which practices of bottom-up self-management were tested and coordinated from above, with grotesque and uniquely inhumane results. Moreover, psychoanalytic strategies were coupled with self-management to produce a terrifyingly successful model for breaking even the most resilient: to each other, prisoners were forced and expected to admit "every little dirty thought," to the extent that, as one former inmate admitted after having emigrated, he still felt guilty for not admitting to the collective that he had had hostile thoughts about escaping the camp.

Just as Yugoslav socialism after 1948 would become famous for the application of the ideology and practice of workers' self-management, Goli Otok was characterized by a specific "self-managing" structure among the prisoners. Since Goli Otok mainly held Communist Party members, whose membership often ran for decades and dated from well before the war, the system of re-education had to be conceived differently, and it ultimately aimed to convey the message that the imprisoned comrades understood the magnitude of their mistakes and could lead themselves and their colleagues out of the blunder, with the CPY's generous help. In fact, as former inmate Emilijan Milan Kalafatic testified, those who had "revised" their attitude had to repeat every single day at various local political meetings and classes, in front of the other prisoners, that "Yugoslavia was the only socialist country in the world, [and] celebrate the theory of the withering away of the state, although it was clear to everyone that the state apparatus of violence remained in its entirety, and was even augmented." This was the cornerstone of Yugoslavia's theory and application of workers' self-management after the 1950s, and, as we can see, it was first formulated and discussed in the violent context of Goli Otok.<sup>18</sup> As Edvard Kardelj wrote as early as 1949,

“attracting the masses to the state” would be completed “in such a way that each person will for some time be a bureaucrat”<sup>19</sup>—in the hellish rendering of a Red University in Goli Otok, each prisoner would also be a police investigator and re-educator, so that the group of offenders would be drawn back to the Yugoslav state as efficiently as possible.

Indeed, many former inmates testified that, the lower the level of the camp's organization, the less visible any representatives of state authority (such as policemen) were, giving the impression that the most “advanced” and “re-educated” prisoners mostly ran affairs and conceptualized the camp's program. As former inmate Dragoslav Mihailovic remembered, the increasingly porous boundary between the inmates and their keepers (policemen, guards, police investigators) further complicated the situation, making the experience of incarceration even more difficult to handle, since there could develop no real community of the imprisoned, no internal moral code of behavior.<sup>20</sup> Other memoirs argued that self-management was introduced so that all inmates would be tainted, so that all would participate in the crime. Many former inmates understandably saw the invention of self-management as an expression of the ultimate malice of the camp's ideologues: for Putnik, “this was the way to put the inmate in a situation in which he could never raise his head after his release, let alone condemn the system of “re-education.” Because, “it was he himself who created it and took part in it.”<sup>21</sup> According to psychiatrist Todor Bakovic, “it was not the policeman who beat and tyrannized, but the prisoner.”<sup>22</sup> Inmates served as re-educators, investigators and executioners; statements were not given to the police but to a room full of coprisoners and comrades.

Goli Otok was characterized by an elaborate hierarchy of prisoners, who were all forced to take part in each other's “re-education” process, a complex system designed to induce a radical differentiation among the camp's population. In fact, the camp's unique “apparatus of compulsion” rested on the core idea that prisoners should handle each other with their own hands, and the camp's machine became extremely efficient and self-propelled precisely because it soon appeared that the police meddled very little in these “internal” reckonings among inmates. In this imposed “internal” differentiation, all prisoners were led to believe that “those . . . who saw and understood their own betrayal ask and force the others to do the same.”<sup>23</sup> All the camps and prisons within the complex had their own centers of prisoners' self-management, which were nominally run by the inmates themselves but were effectively under the watchful eye of the police investigators. Each center had its own leader, deputy, foreman, and officer in charge of cultural affairs. This leadership structure was then replicated at the level of cells or barracks. Each cell or barrack was further organized into collectives (similar to Communist front organizations), while a small number of members of each collective also belonged to actives (those who made up the “re-education” vanguard in the prisoners' community). Barrack heads (room wardens) were also prisoners who had proved to the police investigators the authenticity of their political “revision,” and these persons controlled the ideological and political aspect of the re-education at this basic structural level within the camp's organization—in many ways, what happened in barracks, where all inmates returned each night, determined the prisoners' future.

It was this unique structure which insured that each inmate's immediate supervisor was his or her coprisoner.<sup>24</sup> In his interview with historian Vladimir

Dejijer, former head of the Goli Otok camp Ante Rastegorac, one of the most unreliable witnesses of this experiment, claimed that the differentiation among the prisoners came about spontaneously, as a form of “partisan initiative” from below, once people’s “illusions began to break down,” which led to physical conflicts between inmates of opposite opinions. Moreover, “quite a few even started treating the police investigators as their true comrades.”<sup>25</sup> The psychological system implemented at Goli Otok thus made it possible for Rastegorac to interpret the excesses of torture and other maltreatments at the camp as a result of spontaneous political differentiations and enmities in the prisoner population, of which the investigators were supposedly often not aware. In barracks, the room warden was to supervise the implementation of all measures of compulsory psychological and physical re-education—if necessary “strictly, ruthlessly, brutally.” Moreover, if the room warden failed in doing that, he or she might be branded as a “hypocrite” or even demoted to the camp’s lowest category of bandits. According to inmate Milinko Stojanovic, room wardens were allowed—even incited—to use their own imagination and personal ability to “improve the system of re-educational methods,” and some were eager to take this opportunity. Their role was not only to personally pressure the inmates to cooperate, but also to organize the entire collective in order to achieve this goal.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, each barrack had its own share of “bandits”—those who still failed to comply, self-criticize and admit their own dangerous past, and who were subjected to various degrees of physical and psychological torture: “boycott.” Nobody was allowed to communicate to the “bandits”; they were allocated the hardest and often most meaningless forms of exhausting physical labor. Moreover, higher-ranking prisoners—members of the collectives or activists—were tasked with the “re-education” of the bandits, and making their time at the camp as miserable and psychologically devastating as possible. In fact, in order to remain an activist, one had to not only to fully “revise” his attitudes, “clear his investigation,” and demonstrate a complete and accurate understanding of the Yugoslav position in its conflict with the USSR; one also needed to prove his “revision” in practice, by using any means available to “persuade” the “bandits” to change their orientation as well and join the collectives. In reality, this meant that all the activists had to excel in “chasing up” the bandits, in “exerting measures of psycho-physical methods of compulsion,” and in “making the bandits’ life as unbearable as possible: by cursing, yelling at, even hitting the bandits.”<sup>27</sup> This was indeed the true test of the validity of their “rebirth” as honest Communists. If they were suspected of faking their pressure on the bandits, the activists were likely to be demoted and relieved of their previous privileges within the camp, sometimes even severely punished. Furthermore, the activists made up the core element of the internal system of reporting, and were required to always carefully observe the behavior of members of the collectives, to watch for “passivists” and hypocrites, and to submit regular reports to room wardens and police investigators. As a result of this system, Goli Otok prisoners experienced most of their physical and psychological traumas not at the hands of the police but at those of their comrades, many of whom they had known quite well before their incarceration.

It was in the context of these collectives and actives, made up of one’s coprisoners and cosufferers, that the most important decisions about one’s fate at Goli Otok were made. Every inmate’s “revision” had to begin in his own

barrack, where his statements were discussed and (violently) reacted to by the rest of the community. Although this appeared to be a process entirely run and controlled from below—and all inmates were instructed to aid their coprisoners on their path to “re-education”—almost all former Goli Otok convicts agree that the collective’s treatment of those making public declarations in their barracks was carefully planned and closely monitored and orchestrated by the police. The declarations had a precise, pre-arranged script, and only rarely would someone deviate from it. After the room warden set the tone by characterizing himself as a former traitor who subsequently saw the depth of his own betrayal, all the others had to follow suit: it was important to always ascertain that there were no innocents at the camp, and that “there could be no heroes at Goli Otok, only re-educated arrestees.”<sup>28</sup> In front of everyone, these inmates were instructed to declare their dedication to brutally fighting the enemy and the bandits within the camp—and they were then expected to prove their statements in practice. These were two central elements in the camp’s re-educational system: insistence on brutal, disintegrating self-criticism and self-contempt, and declaration of intent to help in applying similar re-education methods to other prisoners.

Declarations were loud, violent, often very unruly affairs. The declaration moment was particularly stressful and dangerous: the inmate who was presenting his attitude found himself in the center of the room, and was prodded by the room warden as well as the activists to admit “what you did, what you used to think, what you are thinking now.”<sup>29</sup> Another inmate, Mihovil Horvat, described particularly aggressive declaration sessions when the inmate giving the statement would say something “wrong,” unacceptable: “The warden imperceptibly communicated to the collective what he wanted. With roaring and bellowing, hungry beasts jumped out of their cages, ready to dismember the victim. . . . Cries, screeches, screams, death covered in and supported by paroles, anger carried on the wings of the ancient hatred of the species towards a deviating individual, hits as an obvious manifestation of belonging, spitting as a sign of rancour, deformed faces as an expression of a complete determination to destroy the victim.”<sup>30</sup> The questioning of the inmates under such circumstances could take different turns. At times, the group was more lenient, and ready to “discuss” whatever ideological points or international events the inmate highlighted as unclear to him, but discussions were never free. In most cases, however, activists helped create a volatile atmosphere, screaming insults as the inmate declared his former “treason,” demanding that he tell the entire truth, and yelling slogans in support of Tito and the CPY. Moreover, all had to take part in the questioning—the refusal to participate could mean a demotion within the camp’s hierarchy and could lead to a renewed boycott.

The Goli Otok camp drew considerably upon early Soviet jurisprudence and its conceptualization of punishment as an opportunity for rebirth and rehabilitation. The 1920s Soviet prisons and labor colonies had applied a striking set of measures in order to re-educate political offenders, common criminals, and juvenile delinquents, as could be seen, for instance, at the Solovetsky labor camp, the Bolshevo camp for juvenile delinquents, and at Anton Makarenko’s Gorky colony for delinquent, orphaned, and/or homeless children in Kharkov.<sup>31</sup> All of these had highlighted—more or less cynically—the goal of re-education and political and moral rehabilitation and had vehemently insisted on the principles of

prisoners' self-government inside the camps. Similar to Goli Otok, these early Soviet prisons paid substantial attention to organizing cultural, artistic, and educational programs, as well as compulsory political discussion classes. As Peter H. Solomon has argued with regard to the NEP period, "the prison administration also adopted for Soviet prisons what was generally seen as the most advanced way of organizing the internal life of prisons—the progressive stages system—according to which a prisoner passed through a series of stages with progressively attractive regimes, in accordance with the progress of his rehabilitation."<sup>32</sup>

At Goli Otok, however, this self-managing structure of prisoner rehabilitation had another unique trait: it was centrally shaped by a host of psychotherapeutic and psychoanalytic concepts and practices that guided Goli Otok's project of personal evaluation on both individual and group levels. In fact, the Yugoslav camp placed heavy emphasis on psychotherapeutic and analytic techniques and concepts and seemed to be particularly interested in introspection, self-exploration, and self-knowledge. It was as though the entire process of investigation, confession writing, and interrogation primarily served as a basis for personal, psychological growth. In his work on the narrative structures of Soviet-era autobiographies and confessions, Igal Halfin argues that the ultimate goal of the Communist leaders was to achieve the absolute self-transparency of the Party membership and the population at large.<sup>33</sup> In order to fulfil this aim, Soviet authorities demanded that their subjects engage in constant, relentless life-writing and soul-searching—potential Party members as well as those arrested on suspicion of political treason were expected to always write and rewrite their own stories of conversion to Bolshevism and of past sins and betrayals, and these had a very similar overarching structure. They closely resembled, Halfin believes, classical religious texts and eschatology, and all relied on narrating the moral destruction of the pre-Bolshevik or sinful personality of the writer, glorifying his or her ethical and political growth following ideological awakening. These autobiographies in fact turned into stories of self-discovery. Similarly, prisoners of Goli Otok and related camps were also forced to write detailed autobiographies. In fact, Goli Otok's eerie focus on self-exploration, which went hand in hand with physical torture and brutally harsh labor, made it a rather unique institution in the Communist world. Very much inspired by Soviet Communist Party and NKVD practices of extracting confessions and redefining subjectivities, Goli Otok made use of a variety of psychiatric and psychoanalytic techniques in order to penetrate the depths of the prisoners' supposedly criminal mindsets and to reform them.

Arguably, it was precisely this combination of psychoanalytic working on the self and structural outlines of self-management that made the camp both terrifying and extremely successful in breaking the prisoners. As Steven Barnes has demonstrated, the Gulag hardly dispensed with the idea of "correcting" prisoners and combined violence, brutal forced labor, and physical exhaustion with systematic attempts at engineering a "total human transformation" of the inmates. Barnes' analysis of reformist attempts in the Gulag generally focuses on political re-education and ideological indoctrination. In partial contrast, Goli Otok was exclusively about inner psychological restructuring and self-transformation. This reliance on psychological and psychoanalytic ideas of development and reform may have constituted the core difference: unlike in the Soviet Union, the late 1940s and 1950s in Yugoslavia were marked by the striking ascent of

psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic ideas. As the country was reorienting its foreign policy away from the USSR, Yugoslav mental health professionals were increasingly drawn to Western psychoanalytic centers, and psychoanalytic theoretical frameworks and practices grew to be very influential within the country's psychiatric profession.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, even before 1948, Yugoslav discussions of WWII psychological trauma were dominated by psychoanalytically minded professionals such as Hugo Klajn, Stjepan Betlheim, and Vladislav Klajn. The growing influence of psychoanalysis in the psychiatric and medical professions outside the camp helped mold the techniques used at Goli Otok, alongside the Soviet concept that a Communist personality was redeemed and built through constantly seeking self-knowledge.

In a rare analysis of the psychiatric aspects of Goli Otok "re-education," psychiatrist Todor Bakovic proposed that the camp's principles of self-management were deliberately devised to rest on the psychoanalytic concepts of ambivalence and projection. Bakovic's statement regarding the straightforward and intentional application of psychoanalysis by Yugoslavia's police authorities is difficult to prove, however, given the extremely limited access to Goli Otok-related police archives and sources. Nevertheless, the resemblance between certain trends in immediate postwar Yugoslav "civilian" psychoanalysis and some of Goli Otok's most important techniques is striking; moreover, some mental health professionals straddled the worlds of therapy and police investigations. One such figure was Yugoslavia's leading postwar analyst and military psychiatrist Vladislav Klajn. In rethinking the role of psychoanalysis in a Marxist society, Klajn<sup>35</sup> proposed and then implemented a curious combination of techniques that significantly decreased the length of analysis, and sought to give the analyst a more direct and powerful leadership role in the process. It is likely that there was an intellectual link between this more authoritarian version of psychoanalysis and the psychological re-education that was implemented in the Goli Otok camp. Klajn proposed that when it was applied to "primitive," "undereducated" or "intellectually less elevated patients," the psychotherapeutic method needed to be more active, more "authoritative"; in short, the therapist had to lead patients and "force them to active cooperation."<sup>36</sup> For Klajn, Freud's insights constituted an invaluable contribution to understanding the psyche and mechanisms of mental illness. However, Klajn soon developed into a rather unorthodox "socialist psychoanalyst," attempting to devise an approach appropriate to Yugoslavia's particular profile. He mostly shunned long-term sessions in favor of shorter, more intense treatments, in which the importance and strength of consciousness and ego were emphasized over the unconscious, and he conceptualized the therapist as akin to a tutor who directed his patients in a firm, disciplined and, if necessary, heavy-handed manner, while dispensing "guidance" much more straightforwardly than an orthodox psychoanalyst.<sup>37</sup> Importantly, Klajn was also a high-ranking officer of the Yugoslav state police and a lecturer at the Federal State Police's Polytechnic. Due to his tight connection with police and military structures throughout the 1950s, recent research has related him and another psychiatrist from within the state police, Dr. Svetislav Popovic, to experiments and developments at Goli Otok.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, Klajn himself worked as the head of the neuro-psychiatric ward at the Belgrade hospital Dragisa Misovic, whose director was the senior physician for the Goli Otok prisoners and whose doctors regularly treated the camp's inmates as well as the

Yugoslav regime's highest functionaries (in his ward, Klajn introduced and supervised analytic psychotherapy for neurotic patients). But even if Klajn was not directly connected to the Goli Otok experiments—and the exact nature of his involvement remains unclear as the relevant archives have so far been unavailable to researchers—his conceptualization of “socialist psychoanalysis” as a more authoritarian version of psychotherapy informed by certain analytic categories probably influenced the formulation of violent “therapeutic” techniques at the camp, especially since he regularly lectured to state police employees.

In some of the most important practices at Goli Otok, the influence of psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic concepts and insights was painfully visible. In the international context of violent re-education camps of the 1950s, Goli Otok was exceptional in its heavy emphasis on psychotherapeutic and analytic techniques and concepts and its attendant and almost exclusive focus on introspection, self-exploration, and self-knowledge. It was as though the entire process of investigation, confession writing, and interrogation primarily served as a basis for personal, psychological growth. In former inmate Rade Panic's book based on his memories of Goli Otok, the room warden utters the following introductory words before the ritual “declarations of attitude” by a group of prisoners:

To revise or not to revise, this seems to you as a small difference. It's not. It's everything. It's your life. It's up to you what you will do with it. Until yesterday, I was just like you, a bandit, a stubborn foreign hireling, maybe not personally but certainly objectively speaking an agent of the Comintern. Then I saw the light. This should be your starting point, this realization that you are all bandits and traitors.<sup>39</sup>

Confessions thus did not serve to reveal the truth to the police—the police had already discovered it. Former inmate Vera Cenic testified that, even though the Goli Otok investigators always claimed that “the Party already knew everything,” she had been constantly pressed to “spit out everything, absolutely everything, and the Party would then ascertain how honest and prepared [she] was to revise her position.”<sup>40</sup> Unlike in the Soviet show trials, such confessions did not have any public, propagandistic, or political function either, given that the fate of Goli Otok's prisoners was hidden from the eyes of the wider population, and most of the inmates were never tried or convicted but only received “administrative sentences.” But the purpose of inmates' public declarations and self-criticism was precisely this self-realization, guided self-knowledge—that, even though they might not have been conscious of it or purposely engaged in treason and malicious endeavours, every single arrestee was harboring negative dispositions towards his or her own Party and state and was in need of a political and ethical “rebirth.” Goli Otok then served to make each prisoner conscious of these malevolent traits in his or her own personality.

Even though it was a physically brutal labor camp, Goli Otok allotted its inmates more than enough time for such self-reflection. The very living conditions, in a setting of bleak isolation, were supposed to induce introspection. The infamous investigation (*istraga*) never ended here: as there was no trial or conviction, there could be no end to such intimate, soul-searching investigations. On average, every inmate wrote and submitted between twenty and thirty

statements in the course of their *istraga*, and the very process of statement writing and revision was central to the re-education program.<sup>41</sup>

These life narratives were not focused on particular (real or imagined) crimes; they had to encompass the inmate's entire life, both rational and irrational spheres of his or her personality, and always started in early childhood. Women's camp commander Marija Zelic Popovic, whom most remember as an extremely physically brutal figure, would herself later recall how she strove to help the inmates realize and understand their "true" nature, of which many had not even been aware—that they were traitors and unreliable, that they had harbored negative and pernicious thoughts against their own Party and enmity towards the state—and to assist them to "unburden" themselves of such orientations and potentials. Although Popovic had no medical, psychiatric, or psychoanalytic training, she approached her task of restructuring the inmates' personalities in explicitly medical terms: "With each inmate I get her file, just like each patient is accompanied by a medical case history. . . . Now I see who I am really dealing with." The files also contained a "diagnosis" or at least an opinion of the police investigator in the first instance. Popovic then adopted the role of a stern and authoritarian analyst, who pressed the inmates to tell and retell, to reconstruct and examine their past decision-making until they realized the underlying source of their betrayal. She suggested how "they were sometimes not even aware of the path they had started walking down" and related her own traumatization as a result of this process because she had to deal with the inmates' "resistances" to this process of self-realization.<sup>42</sup> In most cases, this relentless search for "hidden" treacherous thoughts implied a purely fictional reconstruction of such ideas, which likely never existed but had to be spelled out as unconscious.

It was in order to help this process of "unearthing" and self-discovery that the camp relied on a set of analytic or quasi-analytic concepts and techniques concerned with intimate self-discovery. During such exercises, the confessing inmate would occupy the center of the room, while emotionally prodded by the room warden and activists to admit "what you did, what you used to think, what you are thinking now." On occasion, encouragement was given to focus on the deepest, most hidden (real or invented) thoughts, dreams, and affects. The investigators and camp guards at times confirmed themselves that the perfidious and treacherous thoughts which sometimes existed may not have been entirely known to the inmates themselves and therefore needed to be "recovered" and would prove to be a revelation of sorts to the subjects themselves: "First of all, you will tell your investigator all your . . . dirty thoughts. Every single one of your betrayals you will pour out to the investigator, every hostile activity and intention . . . . All your thoughts. You need to throw up all your filthy thoughts and to re-examine them in the hot light of the sun."<sup>43</sup>

The idea of "filthy hidden thoughts" that were unknown to the inmates themselves and had to be forcibly dug up and confronted resembled—and was most likely inspired by—the Freudian notion of the "unconscious." Former inmate Eva Nahiri described in her interview with writer Danilo Kis in 1989 that she was instructed to sit for days and write a report (*zapisnik*), in which she was to reveal "everything [she] knew and didn't know, everything [she] dreamed about," her entire internal life from the moment she "sucked in her mother's milk" until the time of incarceration. The investigators would then decide what

was relevant and, even more importantly, whether she was lying or not. Others were asked to write up all of their impressions of the Goli Otok camp and any associations they had in relation to it. If they mentioned anything remotely negative, they were placed back in isolation and “under boycott.”<sup>44</sup> Soon after his imprisonment, Kosta Perucica was subjected to torture in order to force him into an intimate account of his political development and philosophy. In his report, he was instructed to recount his wartime and postwar doubts about the Party to write “about things that had always been very unclear to me,” but also to remember every single letter he drafted, every passing conversation he had had with his colleagues, and the reactions and feelings such conversations elicited in him.<sup>45</sup> Although books, paper, and pencils were sorely lacking at other times, the camp provided willing inmates with all the necessary equipment to “pour their soul and their feelings out in writing.”<sup>46</sup>

Former inmate “Caca” remembered a particular form of self-criticism (*raskritikovanje*) practised in the female prison camp, in the course of which “bandits” were required to sit in the center of a circle made up of other, re-educated inmates, and to discuss the minutiae of their sexual lives, feelings, and fantasies and to describe physical relationships and experiences with husbands, boyfriends, and colleagues. In a strongly patriarchal setting, this “exercise” inevitably served to further humiliate and mortify those considered recalcitrant. Again, there seems to have been a warped application here of the psychoanalytic insistence upon the central role of sexual experiences and drives in the constitution of human personality.

The prisoners had little choice but to engage, therefore, in re-evaluations and re-assessment of their own motives, desires, and longings and to re-interpret their past relationships with their family members and others close to them, in the service of this entwined political and psycho-pathological model. Even ostensibly trivial inclinations and acts were to be “poured out” and examined, searched as indicators of particular personality traits. This was meant to lead to: “sharpening the criteria, a true transformation, into a man more conscious and more awake than before. Being at Goli Otok creates new people out of us. That new man realizes how naive and blind he was before. Old facts are re-evaluated in a new light. That’s why it’s normal for the investigation [*istraga*] to be renewed [and open] all time.”<sup>47</sup> The road of self-discovery was supposed to lead ultimately to a more satisfying and self-conscious form of living and to overcome inner alienation: “Your entire previous life was one large mistake. You looked around, you saw nothing. You listened superficially, you understood nothing. For some this will be the end, for others real life is only just starting. Life full of clear and sharp views, full of meaning.”<sup>48</sup> This insistence on self-exploration as a path to a higher quality of life and a more fulfilling sense of identity imbued official Goli Otok rhetoric with a warped sense of care and love for the inmates: all the brutality could be justified and endured if it served such a lofty psychoanalytic aim and if it fundamentally rested on this proclaimed respect for the fallen Communists’ personalities and on their eventual salvation.

The camp authorities regularly incited—often violently forced—the inmates to “remember” events from their past lives; communications, relations, and encounters with certain people; their impressions, feelings, or reactions to particular ideas or news. Partly, the purpose of constantly revisiting these reports

and confessions was to achieve this "remembering" of crucial events that the inmates may have omitted on purpose, forgotten or repressed.<sup>49</sup>

In the end, all inmates had to share their new realization that they had always been "spineless, cowards, without any memorable merits for the broader community." As one inmate reportedly declared: "My greatest disappointment in the conflict between our two parties was not the break between them but a division in my own soul. I believed my entire life that I had been brave . . . but only after the Resolution was declared did I understand what a coward I have always been." At Goli Otok he realized that he became a traitor to the Party because he had been afraid of the Red Army's invasion. Moreover, he was stunned to discover yet another hidden motive: "My next big weakness is my enormous thirst for power. I was hoping to become an editor-in-chief when the Russians arrived."<sup>50</sup> In a similar vein, Cenic felt forced to admit that only in prison did she finally understand that writing her diary, in which she expressed some criticisms of Tito, had been an act of political betrayal.<sup>51</sup>

According to most of the inmates' testimonies, the ultimate result—and possibly one of the aims—of Goli Otok's measures was not so much re-integration but in effect the disintegration of the prisoners' personality through self-analysis: "this perfidious, destructive self-analysis [led to a] demolishing of all life motifs. Convinced of the power of time they have, gradually and patiently they will take [the prisoner] from a rational critical attitude to the self, to pathological contempt for both his own personality and his closest environment."<sup>52</sup>

### Liberation through Self-Management

The concept of democratic self-management was also at the core of Yugoslav psychoanalysts' and psychiatrists' liberal turn in the 1950s. The very same combination of self-management and psychotherapeutic and psychoanalytic methods developed in "civilian" child psychiatry, where it was applied in pursuit of radically different aims, which centered on individual liberation and self-realization through self-exploration and discovery. When Yugoslavia began forging closer political, social, and cultural relations with Western Europe and the United States, it was psychiatry, psychotherapy, and psychoanalysis in particular that profited the most from this exchange, and these professions became thoroughly Westernised and firmly integrated in these alternative networks.<sup>53</sup> In the course of this transformation of the Yugoslav mental health professions, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts became primarily concerned with the issue of authoritarian family relations, aiming to liberalize and democratize society by democratizing the family.<sup>54</sup> This was by no means an isolated development: as Till Van Rahden has convincingly argued, in West Germany the idea that democracy ultimately rested on egalitarian and antihierarchical family practices increasingly gained ground from the 1950s on. A broad range of intellectuals and other public figures insisted that "patriarchal-authoritarian" understandings of fatherhood inhibited the development of democratic consciousness and fostered fascist and militaristic political choices. For many in Central Europe, then, the concept of political power was tightly related to ideas of fatherhood and familial authority, and attempts to democratise the social and cultural practices of the national public inevitably involved the promotion of new models of family relations.<sup>55</sup>

Yugoslavia offered an excellent site for social experimentation in this regard: through the combination of the country's more open version of socialism and Western psychoanalysis, psychoanalysts hoped to achieve a more humane society, neither capitalist nor Stalinist, a society deeply committed to human emancipation and autonomy that invoked early Marx as its ideological beacon. Individual self-realization was to be achieved only in a self-managing society—in which truly free, authentic, diversely educated workers and citizens took part in making all important decisions regarding their political, social, economic, cultural lives.<sup>56</sup> In other words, Yugoslav psychiatrists and psychoanalysts wanted to create a society devoid of hierarchies, patriarchy, and social and political authoritarianism; a combination of psychoanalytic psychotherapy and self-managing socialism was the key, and the experience of psychoanalytic treatment as well as the political conditions of anti-authoritarian self-management were supposed to transform the “primitive” and dictatorial Yugoslav psyche. In that sense, self-management—whether it was developed in an authoritarian context, or in the course of discussions regarding anti-Stalinism and liberalization—remained the mark of originality of Yugoslav psychiatry and psychoanalysis and provided the basis on which the postwar psychiatric understandings of the human psyche and its possible transformation rested.

The continuing importance of self-management within Yugoslav psychiatry indicates another important trait of the profession: its ongoing political involvement with the ideas and practices of reform Communism and its participation in explicitly political discussions. Vladislav Klajn remained an influential figure of Yugoslav mental health sciences throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and his students and mentees from “Dragisa Misovic” availed themselves of the opportunities offered to them by the country's opening up to the West. Klajn was also one of the very few surviving disciples of Yugoslavia's first trained psychoanalyst Nikola Sugar—the other one was leading child psychoanalyst Vojin Matic—and thus decisively shaped the increasingly liberal field of Yugoslav psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. While Klajn was very close to the Communist Party, Matic and a subsequent generation of younger, Westernised psychoanalysts were politically engaged in a different way: no dissidents, they forged strong personal and intellectual connections with *Praxis*, a group of humanist Marxists intellectuals who harshly criticized what they saw as a limited emancipatory potential of Yugoslav reform Communism. While Yugoslavia's most well-known political dissidents, philosophers, and sociologists gathered around *Praxis* complained that workers' self-management failed to reach its full potential, psychoanalysts made that very same point—and much earlier on—but were never persecuted.

Child psychiatrists and psychoanalysts in Yugoslavia were particularly concerned with the great demands of modernity and of the new democracy in Yugoslavia, which required increasing personal responsibility and exceptional mental stamina. Vojin Matic, for instance, articulated a very telling understanding of the role of individuals in a socialist society. He conjured up a memorable image of experimental direct democracy and emphasized the supreme role of psychiatry in preparing the population for it: “We are entering a society in which every individual carries his share of responsibility, in which awareness, pleasure derived from labour, and true personal dedication are more necessary than ever, in which every individual will make decisions about economic, foreign, internal policies, about war and peace. In such a society, every individual should be

raised in such a way as to be able to be involved in a community without fear or aggression, keeping the originality of his personality and feeling of personal freedom."<sup>57</sup> This utopian vision drew directly on Marx's "German ideology," which also served as the ideological foundation of the new platform of workers' self-management, as evidenced by Kardelj's contemporaneous injunction that socialist Yugoslavia should "constitute a free and courageous man whose worldviews and concepts were broad and diverse, and who was foreign to bureaucratism and narrow formalism of thinking."<sup>58</sup>

And indeed, in socialist Yugoslavia the issue of massive social and individual restructuring was high up on the political agenda. In particular, the elimination of patriarchal families was to be at the core of the social revolution and the true emancipation of self-managing socialism. Patriarchal psychodynamics generated an authoritarian father, an obedient and inconsequential mother, and highly hierarchical, disciplinarian relationships with children. Socialism, on the other hand, was to bring about the emancipation (political, social, personal) of women and to introduce egalitarianism in family relations. However, in Yugoslavia the entrenchment of traditional family authoritarianism belied the achievement of such lofty democratizing aims within families, and it also fatally harmed the process of raising self-managing citizens. Moreover, if the Yugoslav psychiatrists looked east, they could see a very traditional and authoritarian, custodial psychiatry, which could not provide any meaningful guidance when it came to re-educating parents. Paradoxically, it was in Western psychoanalytic and psychiatric ideas that Yugoslav child psychiatrists discovered a set of guidelines for eliminating familial pathologies and for creating a more humane version of socialism. Psychoanalysis, in particular, became the key intellectual tool for making families and parent-children relationships more socialist and more self-managing. In Yugoslav child psychiatric circles of the 1950s and 1960s, psychoanalysis was seen as "a democratic, liberating psychotherapy, which stands for independence and personal liberties of individuals."<sup>59</sup> As psychotherapist Vladeta Jerotic later confirmed, psychoanalysis coupled with self-analysis presented a unique way to achieving unsurpassed human autonomy, self-actualization, and educational growth: unlike traditional psychiatry, it educated without relying on authoritarianism and, by increasing patients' self-knowledge, "created pre-conditions for the constitution of a mature and autonomous personality" and for attaining the "freedom of self-development." For Jerotic, the ethics of psychoanalysis required that practitioners shun any attempts at manipulation or indoctrination and focus on advancing a democratic dialogue with the patient.<sup>60</sup> For these reasons, a society of true socialist self-managing workers was in fact impossible without psychoanalytic guidance.

The new socialist family in Yugoslavia was supposed to raise future self-managers and liberated workers, and it had the greatest responsibility in effecting this grand transformation of psychological consciousness and social practice. As one treatise argued in the 1950s, the family remained the first school of human emotions and of new, revolutionary social relations, which prepared both children and parents for their new social and productive roles and which therefore had to rest on the ideals of independence and lack of exploitation.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, patriarchal morality prevented people from becoming active participants in self-managing systems because it discouraged initiative and control from the bottom and produced personalities who tended to wait passively for orders

and directions rather than taking the lead themselves. The current society in Yugoslavia demanded "conscientious and well developed personalities who will be prepared to lead the process of societal transformation," and families could not raise such personalities if they insisted on patriarchal mores and fought against children's "stubbornness."<sup>62</sup>

In their quest to instil in their children blind obedience and subordination to higher authorities, patriarchal parents became guilty of producing automatons and weak personalities, who would only be capable of fulfilling other people's orders. On the contrary, the fledgling Yugoslav society of self-managers needed independent young people "who thought with their own heads."<sup>63</sup> The dangers of family authoritarianism were well illustrated in a clinical case treated by Ksenija Kondic, a young psychologist at Belgrade's Consultancy for mental hygiene. Kondic treated a ten-year old girl, Gordana, who had persistent problems with enuresis, although her family situation at first appeared stable and comfortable. Still, the psychologist soon noted that the relationship between the parents was fairly disturbed, but even more importantly, that the father's harsh treatment of the girl might be the core of the problem. According to Kondic's notes, the girl's mother confirmed that, unlike his gentle and open attitude towards their son, "the father was very cold [to the patient], and rigidly stuck to the view that a female child was less important than the male one." Moreover, "he wouldn't let her play with other children because she belongs at home" as a girl. It was precisely this lack of concern for the patient's feelings, itself a result of an inflexible patriarchal worldview, that produced timid, apprehensive children, unprepared for any autonomous decision-making. As Kondic concluded, the patient was growing up to be the kind of person a self-managing society was dreading the most. Gordana was the perfect image of submission: "she speaks softly, fairly fearfully, with her hands in her lap, often looking down." She was obedient, "never said a word more than she was asked." Moreover, "she moves exactly as she speaks—silently, she is barely audible, careful not to touch or move any object." Most damningly, "she never does anything before asking for permission first."<sup>64</sup>

Therefore, Yugoslav psychiatrists argued that the pathology of children was always fully reducible to the pathology of parents. The problem of rigid parents was placed at the core of this heated discussion, especially the personality and pernicious psychological and political influence of authoritarian, harsh, and perfectionist fathers (who were most often the first instances of discipline in a child's life), who could reportedly be responsible for enormous pathological personality changes in childhood and could also predetermine a child's problematic relationship with law and state. Regardless of whether the child became insecure or aggressive, problematic family relations robbed the society and state of valuable citizens.<sup>65</sup> Matic argued that not biology but parents constituted the fate of children. He and his colleagues used explicitly political terms such as "democratic" and "undemocratic" families and placed the idea of democratic family relations and their importance at the core of their professional ideology. In Matic's opinion "a child who grew up in a democratic family acts in a free way, is not withdrawn, is normally cheerful. However, a child who grew up in a nondemocratic family demonstrates in their social behaviour the exact opposite characteristics."<sup>66</sup> Parents and family relationships tended to crucially determine not only individual psychological characteristics but also national or cultural

mentality traits. Authoritarian, traditional, and nondemocratic families thus constituted an immense political problem and an obstacle on the path towards self-managing socialism.<sup>67</sup>

In their dealings with child patients and their parents, Yugoslav psychiatrists perceived the need to reform the structure of traditional families: at the Institute for neuropsychiatry of children and youth, for instance, a thirteen-year-old girl was treated whose mental state deteriorated dramatically after her parents moved in with the paternal grandparents. The psychologist in charge of this paradigmatic case related the severe decline of the quality of nuclear family life to this decision of the parents to live in an extended family and highlighted the pernicious effects that older and more traditional family members might have on the child's mental health as well as on the overall relationship between the child and her parents.<sup>68</sup> In an even more dramatic case, an eight-year-old boy was brought to see a therapist because he kept attempting to commit suicide. The boy lived with his parents and paternal grandparents, which seemed to reinforce a highly hierarchical family setup: the mother was, according to the therapist, consistently submissive toward her in-laws, while at the same time being extremely harsh and intolerant towards the boy. In addition, the boy reportedly witnessed instances of family violence committed by the alcoholic grandfather.<sup>69</sup>

Throughout such psychiatric discussions, patriarchy and authoritarianism were marked as the authentic cultural traits of the Yugoslav family (and social) structure, which set it apart in a broader international context. One of the central characteristics of the Yugoslav family structure was that "expressions of disobedience and resistance to parents, teachers and other adults, especially if they were higher up on the hierarchical scale, were condemned and punished, while obedience and submissiveness were encouraged. Parents and adults were sacred beings who may not be called in question or disputed."<sup>70</sup> This persistence of patriarchal dispositions within family was further coupled with parents' reported insensitivity to finer emotional conflicts of their children and their generally dismissive attitude towards their children's psychological problems. They often did not recognize such psychological changes in their offspring, were not privy to compassion, and even proved to be incapable of empathy. Parents were thus instructed to listen to children much more carefully, to respond to their questions and emotions rather than merely lecturing and offering advice, and to not dismiss their opinions because "children can understand everything in some way and everything can be told to them."<sup>71</sup>

Many of the Yugoslav child psychiatrists (especially those who underwent psychoanalytic training) proposed an activist psychoanalysis, which might abandon its "aristocratic" position and get involved in proper social change. What they had in mind was changing the society by revolutionizing family relationships and structures through clinical practice. This unusually activist stance might be one of the most defining features of Eastern European (socialist) psychoanalysis and it was founded on the ideas of self-management and its continuous implementation in both families and society at large. Tadic drew a direct parallel between a "patriarchal family" and "bureaucratized social" relations, equating in fact nondemocratic familial arrangements with dictatorial political structures and concluding that youth needed to liberate itself from both in order to realize its own authentic emotional, cognitive, social capacities. Family thus

became yet another experimental site in which hierarchical relations were to be gradually unraveled and, just as in Goli Otok, patients were to be induced to replace them with more egalitarian and self-managing structures. The issue of human freedom and its relationship to authoritarianism thus came to the very center of the psychiatric understanding of child and youth psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. Tadic used a very peculiar terminology to describe the position of a child psychotherapist who was asked to treat a patient by parents or a state agency: "a psychotherapist must be aware of a trap, in which they often fall, to become a protector and advocate of the interests of the family and of the society, and to serve their interests uncritically." This was particularly important because it was most often the case that the decision regarding psychotherapy was not made by the patients themselves but by their parents, schools, psychological centres, etc., who "should take responsibility for their part in the development of mental disturbances in children and youth." Furthermore, sending a child to a therapist could be "the last and most decisive pressure and enslavement." Clinical contexts thus turned into arenas for political experimentation and activism: "The therapist should not act like a person who offers freedom to the enslaved while smiling at and encouraging the enslaver" but should instead increase the political awareness and liberation potential of the enslaved.<sup>72</sup>

The new conception thus emerged of the child psyche as authentic and separate from adult psychologies—children were to be viewed as personalities, and psychiatric and psychoanalytic professionals stressed the supreme significance of warmth, love and respect that needed to be directed at children. As Matic warned, parents needed to learn that a child was, after all, a very reasonable creature.<sup>73</sup> In fact, if treated with confidence and respect, the child would "become more willing to take responsibility" for his or her own behavior.<sup>74</sup> While the ultimate aim should be *cooperation* with rather than control over children: "physical punishments are not only senseless but could also be tragic for the child."<sup>75</sup> In treating children, it was particularly important that the psychoanalyst demonstrate respect, authentic interest, and curiosity and pay painstaking attention to everything the patient said or did; the therapist thus assumed the role of a liberator, emancipator. The therapist, moreover, aimed to reduce the child's dependency on the parents, while an appreciation of the patient's opinion needed to be communicated and followed through consistently. Slovene analyst Meta Kramar noted that the "therapist . . . enabled him [the adolescent patient] to become active in his own life and assume initiative, and above all to become autonomous in his decisions." Moreover, the "therapist's respect for the patient's autonomy should be even more firmly embedded in his relationship with the patient in child psychiatry, because the patient, as a child, was used to assuming a more passive and subordinated position before adults."<sup>76</sup> In fact, such psychoanalytic insights provided an excellent framework for political interventions: the therapist needed to help their young patients to "fight for their true needs and independence," even if it meant encouraging children and adolescents not to accommodate to the demands of their—flawed—family environment. Following the lead of Anna Freud, Franz Alexander, and Virginia Axline, Tadic recommended that analysts and therapists behave as "the good parent," correcting the mistakes of patriarchal child-raising, "by accepting the [patient] exactly as they were, with their good and bad traits, by listening carefully and appreciating them without judging, devaluating and condemning them." In this

way, therapy could alter children's and young people's social potentials and abilities and teach them to engage in social relations differently in the future.<sup>77</sup>

## Conclusion

A complex relationship thus developed between psychiatry/psychoanalysis and Yugoslavia's project of building anti-Stalinist socialism. This experiment in reform Communism was often reliant on psychiatric and psychotherapeutic concepts, as the Goli Otok re-education procedures reveal. But even in "civilian" psychotherapy, where direct political control was much subtler and more flexible, the notions of self-management and direct Marxist democracy shaped psychiatric and psychoanalytic discussions to a critical extent. This was particularly true in the field of child psychiatry, which had much in common with theories and practices of education and re-education, and which allowed its practitioners to discuss at length the process of constructing proper political citizens. In fact, perhaps because of their intense political involvements, Yugoslav psychoanalysts gradually started to consider their discipline a tool for political and social emancipation. Although European psychoanalysis had traditionally been criticized for its individualism and social and political isolationism, Yugoslavia's new brand of Marxist psychoanalysis forcefully responded to that challenge, fashioning itself as an explicitly activist science, a vehicle of revolution that started at the level of individual psyches and families. By revolutionizing and de-Stalinizing family relationships, it aimed to thoroughly transform the supposedly authoritarian national psyche and prepare Yugoslav citizens for their future roles in a self-managing Marxist society. In that sense, psychoanalysts and psychiatrists assumed for themselves a core political educational responsibility. This democratizing project, however, had first been put in practice in the extremely nondemocratic context of Goli Otok, where the combination of self-managing and psychotherapeutic procedures and practices aimed to de-Stalinize in an excessively brutal manner.

This combination of Marxism, violence, liberalism, and Western psychoanalysis was only possible due to the peculiar political position Yugoslavia enjoyed in Cold War Europe. In other words, Yugoslavia's complex international and political role can be read not only in political and diplomatic history but also in the fields of psychoanalysis and psychiatry. This is where unexpected alliances crossed the traditional Cold War fault lines most vigorously: Yugoslav physicians and psychiatrists used their contacts and exchanges with their West European and American colleagues to introduce new concepts into Yugoslavia's long-standing political discussions regarding alternatives to Stalinism. Some of these concepts likely informed Goli Otok practices, while at the same time thoroughly reshaping generations of Yugoslavia's child psychiatrists and psychotherapists. The history of postwar mental health professions in this country opens up a much larger social and political story of liberalization and authoritarianism in socialist Eastern Europe: while Yugoslavia remains a special case in the history of East European socialism, its partial democratization was not incompatible with a variety of authoritarian practices, which were partly inspired by the country's very exposure to Western practices and professional networks. The strict divide between Eastern authoritarianism and Western liberalism broke down, and ideas, practices, and influences turned out to be more adaptable to different

ideological contexts than traditional accounts of the Iron Curtain would suggest. This story shows that Eastern Europe could serve as an experimental ground for various innovative political or professional combinations and as a meeting point for ideological concepts, therapeutic models, and medical personnel from both the Eastern and the Western blocs.

### Endnotes

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1. See Leonid Gibianskii, "The Soviet-Yugoslav Split and the Cominform," in Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii, *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944–1949* (Boulder, CO, 1997); Rinna Kullaa, *Non-Alignment and its Origins in Cold War Europe: Yugoslavia, Finland and the Soviet Challenge* (IB Tauris, 2011); Tvrtko Jakovina, *Americki komunisticki saveznik: Hrvati, Titova Jugoslavija i SAD 1945–1955* (Zagreb, 2003); Vladimir Dedijer, *Izgnubljena bitka J. V. Staljina* (Belgrade, 1969).
2. See Ivo Banac, *With Stalin against Tito: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism* (Cornell, 1988).
3. This peculiar combination of therapeutic self-reform and destruction has already been studied in the context of the Soviet Gulag; see Steven Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton, 2011).
4. Archive of Yugoslavia, Fond 36, f. 47, "Izvestaj o putovanju u inostranstvo radi posećivanja kursa socijalne psihijatrije." The case of Vojin Matic, the most important postwar psychoanalyst in Yugoslavia, was quite instructive and even paradigmatic of the complex influences to which Yugoslav psychiatry was subject at this time: in the summer of 1948, he was scheduled to go to an unspecified clinic in Leningrad for a neuropsychiatric specialization; when that prospect was rendered impossible due to the dire political relationships between Russia and Yugoslavia, Matic received WHO funding and traveled to Paris instead the following year (Archive of Yugoslavia, Fond 31, Komitet za zastitu narodnog zdravlja, f. 65–92, "Spisak lekara predlozenih za specijalizaciju u inostranstvu"). There, at Georges Heuyer's clinic, he developed a life-long interest in child psychoanalysis and made contacts that would determine his career as well as the development of child psychiatry in Yugoslavia. Matic educated an entire postwar generation of psychoanalysts in Yugoslavia and maintained close professional relationships with leading French psychoanalysts such as Deatkine and Serge Lebovici.
5. Amnesty International, *Yugoslavia: Prisoners of conscience*, (London, 1985); British Medical Association, *Medicine Betrayed: The Participation of Doctors in Rman r ska prava: Mojr., 1921–19 unnecessary. ensitivities around its meaning "I transposed Human Rights Abuses* (London, 1992), 64–82; Vladimir Markovic, *Za ljudska prava: Moje disidentske uspomene* (Belgrade, 1999).
6. Aleksandar Pavkovic, Pismo od 26.9.1998, quoted in Dragoslav Mihailovic, *Goli Otok 5* (Belgrade, 2012), 355–359.
7. Marie-Janine Calic, *Geschichte Jugoslawiens im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2010), 240.
8. Radovan Radonjic, *Sukob KPJ s Kominternom I drustveni razvoj Jugoslavije, 1948–1950* (Zagreb, 1979), 281.
9. Archive of Yugoslavia, 297, k-24, Zabeleska sa sluzbenog putovanja u Vukovar, d. br. 943. In the immediate aftermath of the war, partisans and their families seemed to be left at the mercy of the emerging state administrative structures, which frequently treated them in a ruthless, disrespectful, and authoritarian manner. Moreover, the administrators

who dealt with veterans often had very little sympathy for their political and/or social position, mainly because they themselves were unrelated to the resistance struggle—some were even former collaborators or apolitical careerists: “In Zvornik, the civil servant in charge of invalid pensions was a former municipal notary . . . in the Independent State of Croatia” while in Vlasenica, Bosnia, the administrator dealing with war veterans often kicked them out of his office. Yet another one, in Bosanska Gradiska, had been imprisoned after the war because he had been a member of the Ustasha court-martial during the war. (Archive of Yugoslavia, 297, k-25, Izvjestaj Komisije o obilasku terena u vezi rješavanja socijalnih problema, d. br. 1016). This predictably led to a dire neglect of social problems in various municipalities, so that local party and veterans' organizations had very little insight into the economic difficulties and political frustrations of veterans and their families (Archive of Yugoslavia, Savezni SUBNOR, 297, f.2, Govor Marsala Tita, OSnivacki kongres SUBNOR-a, 29 and 30 November 1947; Archive of Yugoslavia, 297, 133, Komisija za probleme dece palih boraca i zrtava fasistickog terora, porodica palih boraca i clanova Saveza boraca, d. br. 24).

10. Ivo Banac, *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita: Informbirovski rascjepi u jugoslavenskom komunistickom pokretu* (Zagreb, 1990), 229–30; Radovan Radonjic, *Izgubljena orijentacija* (Belgrade, 1985), 56–61.

11. Dusan Bilandzic, *Borba za samopuravni socijalizam u Jugoslaviji, 1945–1969* (Zagreb, 1969), 31.

12. Dragan Markovic, *Josip Broz I Goli Otok* (Belgrade, 1990), 390–94.

13. Radonjic, *Sukob KPJ*, 174–88.

14. Banac, *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita*, 150.

15. Sharon Zukin, *Beyond Marx and Tito: Theory and Practice in Yugoslav Socialism* (Cambridge, 2008), 51–52.

16. See Harold Lydall, *Yugoslavia in Crisis* (Oxford, 1989); P.H. Liotta, “Paradigm Lost: Yugoslav Self-management and the Economics of Disaster” (*Balkanologie*, 2011), 5:1–2.

17. Banac, *Sa Staljinom protiv Tita*, 241–42.

18. Emilijan Milan Kalafatic, “Pismo Predsedniku SFR Jugoslavije i Saveza Komunisti Jugoslavije Josipu Brozu Titu,” 525–26.

19. Kardelj, “O narodnoj demokratiji u Jugoslaviji” in *Problemi nase socijalisticke izgradnje*, 431.

20. Dragoslav Mihailovic, *Goli Otok* (Belgrade, 1990), 105.

21. Branko Putnik, *Logor u Bileci* (Belgrade, 1995), 393.

22. Todor Bakovic, “Psiholoski aspekti golootocke torture I sadistickog mucenja,” in *Goli Otok (1949-1956): Radovi sa okruglog stola, Podgorica 27. juna 1995* (Podgorica, 1998), 212.

23. Milinko Stojanovic, *Goli Otok: Anatomija zlocina* (Belgrade, 1991), 185–86.

24. Kosta Perucica, *Kako su nas prevaspitavali* (Belgrade, 1990), 134–44.

25. Dragan Markovic, *Josip Broz I Goli Otok* (Belgrade, 1990), 433.

26. Stojanovic, 59.

27. Miroslav Popovic, *Udri bandu* (Belgrade, 1989), 112–13.

28. Rade Panic, *Titovi Havaji* (Belgrade, 1997), 41.

29. Mihailovic, *Goli Otok*, 76–78.
30. Mihovil Horvat, *Goli Otok—stratiste duha* (Zagreb, 1996), 159.
31. See Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps* (New York, 2003); Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (New York, 2012).
32. Peter H. Solomon, “Soviet Penal Policy, 1917–1934: A Reinterpretation,” *Slavic Review* 39, no. 2 (1980): 195–217.
33. Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Auto-biographies on Trial*, Cambridge, 2003.
34. **Article I.** Mat Savelli, “The Peculiar Prosperity of Psychoanalysis in Socialist Yugoslavia,” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 91, no. 2 (April 2013), 262–88.
35. Klajn was a veteran partisan fighter with the rank of colonel of the Yugoslav army and a high-ranking Communist Party functionary as well as a practising psychoanalyst. Following his medical studies and specialization in psychiatry, Klajn underwent two years of training analysis with Nikola Sugar between 1938 and 1940 and was a permanent member of Sugar’s psychoanalytic circle in interwar Yugoslavia.
36. Vladislav Klajn, “Problem rehabilitacije—rehabilitacija neuroticara,” *Vojno-Sanitetski Pregled* (1958), 7–8, 531.
37. Petar Klajn, *Razvoj psihoanalize u Srbiji* (Subotica, 1989), 78–83, 109.
38. . Petar Kostic, *Psiholoska anatomija Golog Otoka* (Belgrade, 2012), 41–42.
39. Panic, 41.
40. . Vera Cenic, *Kanjec film* (Vranje, 1994), 121.
41. Radonjic, 76.
42. Iskaz Marije Zelic, II Programme of Radio Belgrade, May 3, 1990.
43. Panic, 44–45.
44. Simic and Trifunovic, 36–37.
45. Kosta Perucica, *Kako su nas prevaspitavali* (Belgrade, 1990), 70–71.
46. Stojanovic, 231.
47. Panic, 44–45.
48. Mihailovic, 243.
49. Inmate “Jelka,” quoted in Simic and Trifunovic, 159–60; Stojanovic, 87.
50. Panic, 60–61.
51. Cenic, 124.
52. Mihailovic, 16.
53. Interview with Dr. Nevenka Tadic, February 7, 2014, Belgrade, Serbia; interview with Dr. Dusan Popovic, February 13, 2014, Belgrade, Serbia.
54. Nevenka Tadic, *Psihijatrija detinjstva i mladosti* (Belgrade, 1989 [reprinted]), 18–19.
55. Till Van Rahden, “Families Beyond Patriarchy: Visions of Gender Equality and Child Rearing among German Catholics in an Age of Revolution,” in Nancy Christie, Michael Gauvreau, and Stephen Heathron, eds, *The Sixties and Beyond: Dechristianization*

- as *History in North America and Western Europe*, Toronto, 2013, 270–93, and “Fatherhood, Rechristianization, and the Quest for Democracy in Postwar West Germany,” in Dirk Schumann, ed., *Raising Citizens in the “Century of the Child.” Child-Rearing in the United States and German Central Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Studies in German History 12), New York, 2010, 141–64.
56. Vojin Matic, *Kada pocinje vaspitanje deteta* (Belgrade, 1955), 61–62.
57. *Ibid.*, 62.
58. Kardelj, *Borba*, January 14, 1950.
59. Tadic, 20.
60. Vladeta Jerotic, “Psihoanaliza, autoanaliza i autonomija licnosti,” *Psihoterapija*, (1975), 2:215–17.
61. Branka Savic, “Porodica i drustvo (porodica i vaspitanje dece)” (Belgrade, 1958), 28.
62. Zagorka Pesic, “Sukob starog i novog u braku i porodici unnecessary. ensitivities around its meaning I transposed ” (Belgrade, 1958), 16–17.
63. *Ibid.*, 25.
64. Ksenija Kondic, *Prirucnik za vezbe iz psihopatologije detinjstva I mladosti* (Belgrade, 1991 [reprinted]), 18–19.
65. Rahela Galevska, “Poremecena porodica i deca” (public lecture) (Belgrade, 1958).
66. Matic, *Mentalna higijena*, 49.
67. Galevska, 36.
68. *Ibid.*, 38–39.
69. *Ibid.*, 32–33.
70. Tadic, 30.
71. Matic and Milica Jojic, *Vaspitanje deteta* (Belgrade, 1957), 84–85.
72. Tadic, 18–19.
73. Matic, *Decje neuroze* (Belgrade, 1957), 18–19.
74. Matic, *Psihofizicki razvoj deteta* (Belgrade, 1964), 31.
75. Matic, *Decje neuroze*, 19.
76. Meta Kramar, “Prikaz psihoterapije decaka sa govornim smetnjama,” *Psihijatrija danas* (1976), 1–2:196.
77. Tadic, *Psihoanaliticka psihoterapija dece i omladine* (Belgrade: Naucna knjiga, 1984 (re-printed)), 66–67.