

Tatjana Jukić

Post-Socialism Remembers the Revolution: The Comedy of It

Revolution and the state of exception

The post-Yugoslav imaginary depends on post-socialism for its constitution: it is mobilized in post-socialism; post-socialism is its rationale, the logic of its coherence. Yugoslavia, before its disintegration in the 1990s, was above all a socialist project and it cannot be properly understood outside its socialist agenda.

In addition, the post-Yugoslav imaginary seems most productive where it addresses what was specific to Yugoslav socialism; there are elements to Yugoslav socialism that seem to be surviving as exceptional compared to other post-socialist cultures in Europe. Most importantly perhaps, socialism in Yugoslavia had been constituted from within the revolution, and revolutions operate as crisis and critique of *raison d'État*. This is why socialist states constituted in revolutions differ structurally from those that are instituted bureaucratically (which was the case with most European state socialisms, instituted as an extension of the international position and influence of the Soviet *state*, in the wake of the Second World War). In Yugoslavia, revolution was acknowledged as the founding event of its socialism, yet socialism evolved with and into a *raison d'État* that could not sustain the libidinal configurations and the assemblages of affect formative to the revolutionary communities. Thus melancholia, which best captures the libidinal configuration constituent to the revolutionary collectives, gave way to the masochism of the post-revolutionary state, suggesting that masochism provides the script which couches the revolutionary melancholia within structures and institutions of the post-revolutionary state.¹ It follows from here that Yugoslav socialism labored around a state of exception, also that psychoanalysis is critical to understanding both the logic of revolutions and the constitution of (post-)socialism.²

I am deliberately playing with the “state of exception” here, a term put forward by Giorgio Agamben when he maps out the concerns of biopolitics. Agamben uses it to describe the pitfalls of *raison d'État*. In order to do that, he em-

1 Paradoxically perhaps, this is why post-socialism in the former Yugoslav republics compares more functionally to post-Soviet cultures than to post-socialism in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, or Romania.

2 See Jukić 2011 for a more detailed elaboration of this argument.