Community, Not Nation!

Platform of the Radical Antinational Tendency

SENKA

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The dominance of nationalist ideology in Serbia is not limited to politics and daily life, but is increasingly present among self-proclaimed "communists" and "anarchists".

Disgusted with this miserable state of affairs, we decided to write this text and use it as a platform to develop a new, radical anti-nationalist tendency, whose existence we see as essential.

This tendency must provide a response to the shortcomings of liberal anti-nationalism, which is never able to address root causes as it turns a blind eye to the causes of all social problems, including nationalism. It must also reject the cynicism and opportunism of left wing nationalism (from Stalinism and social democracy, to "anarcho-stalinism", the "chetno-left" and back again).

In the long term, we hope to shape an anti-nationalist tendency which will take on many forms, but will fundamentally seek a radical rejection of the alienating phenomenon of the nation in its entirety, from everyday life to the level of the spectacle.¹

Why Anti-Nationalism?

There are various strategies of domination used by the ruling classes to keep the population in asubordinate position. These strategies of domination often permeate into the most intimate spheres of our existence. As such, national identity is a weapon in the hands of state and capital that serves to fictitiously unite the population and thus serve as a method of social control.

At the same time, nationalism can have both left and right, as well as liberal and fascistic forms.°

Let's first take a look at the left-right dichotomy: The right wing strategy of domination utilizes national identity by appealing to supposedly natural characteristics and long term historical continuity. The fairytale nature of these fictions is alluring as it provides simple explanations and grandiose promises. On the other hand, leftists often speak of the working class as a homogeneous social group, giving it the same abstract and fictitious characteristics as those given to the nation. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a tendency to equate "the working class" with "the people", which is again just a more leftist way to affirm the idea of the nation.

The other dichotomy (fascistic vs. liberal nationalism) is represented in Serbia primarily in the divide between the so-called "first" and "second" Serbias. This division reveals another ideological construction which opposes nationalism through the ideal of the civic state. However, this is just another model of the nation state, but with a different ideological foundation. While fascistic nationalists, as advocates of the idea of "blood and soil", propagate the ethnically based nation, liberal "civic" nationalists advocate the myth of the "rule of law" and seek to base the nation on the status of the citizen of a modern nation state, with all of its totalitarian characteristics, and in the context of market supremacy over all other forms of social organization.²

¹ "In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation(...) The spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images."

Guy Debord, The Society of the Spectacle.

² Here we can draw attention to the inextricable link between liberalism and nationalism in Serbian history. The politician Jovan Ristić (1531- 1899) was simultaneously the founder of the Liberal Party and one of the most prominent formulators of the Serbian nationalist program ofthe 19 century. Ristic is included in the pantheon of ideologies of liberalism such as Latinka Perović, as well as nationalist intellectuals such as Milo Lompar, who, in writing about Ristić concluded that "there is a long term, often denied, alliance between liberal and national ideas".

None of these models question the idea of the nation state, the nation, or capitalism. In other words, they offer no solution to the atomization in which we find ourselves, completely unprotected from the domination of the state, nation and capital. The managers of our damaged lives³ can be recruited from the right and the left, and from fascistic or liberal circles.

These strategies of domination, left and right, fascistic and liberal, are not even clearly historically distinct, and concrete political strate-gies have always been fluid (left elements of nationalism and fascism; the left that continually appeals to the people, which is essentially the nation; the structural consolidation of nationalism in the Yugoslav system; liberals grasping for fascist solutions in times of crisis, etc). The impossibility of clear separation is rooted in the fact that all stra-tegies of domination share a common goal and are based on the same institutions. One becomes both a "citizen" and a "Serb" by birth, which in the nation state is equivalent to incorporation into the (civic or ethnic) nation.

The process currently underway in Europe, carried out by the ruling classes, is the generalization of the fascistic strategy, thus leading to the normalization of ethnically based nationalism in both left and liberal politics. Although we have never had faith in the state and li-beral ideas of human rights, the generalization of chauvinist attitudes sets us back on hard-won freedoms, and complicate future struggles, especially when it comes to the issues of racialized minorities and the normalization of the militarization of society.

Under capitalism, we are oppressed through wage labor, and nationalism presents that labor as beneficial to the progress and deve-lopment of the nation, which will ultimately advance the position of all classes as members of a common nation. The work may be hard, but when we have an ideologically constructed prophecy to guide us, subjugation is more effective.

Nationalism teaches us that freedom always implies the lack of freedom for another. Moreover, the creation of the modern nation state has always required the creation of homogenous and docile populations. The methods of homogenization in nation states always began with the imposition of standardized language and uniform culture created by bourgeois intellectuals and nationalist ideologues, to biological control of the population, to ethnic cleansing and genocide, all through institutions for the total control of the citizenry (hospitals, schools, prisons, army, police).⁴

³ "Reduced and degraded essence tenaciously resists the magic that transforms it into a façade... Only by virtue of opposition to production, as still not wholly encompassed by this order, can men bring about another more worthy of human beings. Should the appearance of life, which the sphere of consumption itself defends for such bad reasons, be once entirely effaced, then the monstrosity of absolute production will triumph.(...) Wrong life cannot be lived rightly."

Theodor Adorno, Minima Moralia. Preface and thesis 18. https://cominsitu.wordpress.com/wp-content/up-loads/2019/09/5580-minima_moralia reflections_on.p

⁴ Referring to these specific institutions, we rely on the perspectives of autonomist femi-nists from Italy from the 1970s. Explaining their conclusions, Silvia Federici emphasizes the operaismo term "social factory" put forward by Mario Tronti, but notes: "Tronti referred here to the increasing reorganization of the "territory" as a social space structured in view of the needs of factory production and capital accumulation. But to us, it was immediately clear that the circuit of capitalist production, and the "social factory" it produced, began and was centered above all in the kitchen, the bedroom, the home—insofar as these were the centers for the production of labor-poWer—and from there it moved on to the factory, passing through the school, the office, the lab. In sum, we did not passively receive the lessons of the movements I have mentioned, but turned them upside down, exposed their limits, using their theoretical bricks to build a new type of political subjec-tivity and strategy". According to these authors, the state is primarily incarnated in the institutions that organize, control, and ensure the reproduction of the labor force.

"The people" are often presented as a spontaneous community of culturally identical people, sometimes in contrast to the nation which is defined exclusively in political terms. However, all characteristics of the so-called Serbian people (as one example) were defined thro-ugh the violent process of the creation of the Serbian nation. There-fore, even if a strained conceptual difference between the people and the nation can be made, we are still essentially talking about the same phenomenon in which the violent process of homogenization, tho-ugh extremely abstract in nature, are now presented as spontaneous and natural "ethnic" characteristics. But it is clear that that belonging to a people is still determined either by existing state borders, or by the desired borders of expansionist nationalist programs. In Croatia, Bunjevci are considered Croats, but in Bačka (Vojvodina province, Serbia), some of them are considered a separate ethnic group. We can see in this case, that the dominance of Croatian, or Serbian nationa-lism can have a decisive influence on whether or not a group can be considered part of the nation/people, and not its socalled ethnic cha-racteristics, such as dialect, customs, traditional costume, etc. Likewi-se, nobody in Croatia speaks about the existence of a separate Lika nation/people, or a Timok nation/people in Serbia, even though the inhabitants of these regions share some of these ethnic characteristics which set them apart from the broader population:

"We live on the supposedly same land (be it thousands of kilome-ters wide), we speak the same language (the newly arrived are rarely taken into account), we live under the same laws... Let's be clear: is the unity of this distinguished People not built simply and purely on its national borders? For if we look close enough, and if we listen to its spokespersons, there are indeed geographical boundaries delimi-ting our People – our workers and our poor! At times you only need to walk a few meters to become someone else's worker, someone else's poor (...) The People, in and for itself, is nothing. It does not think. It does not act. To be completely honest, it doesn't even exist. Like all phantoms of unity, the People is but a thread that ties us to our servitude. What *is* or *is not* the People is fully determined by those who hold its reins.⁵

All of the above considered, it is clear why we believe that we must oppose nationalism even when it is presented to us in its supposedly most benign left wing and civic forms.

For us, our existence depends on ourselves and the comrades with whom we freely choose to associate. We do not need imposed ideo-logical narratives and identities because we intervene in our surroundings under our own power. We understand these surroundings with the help of collective intelligence in which we participate directly, without representatives.

What is the relationship between patriarchy and the nation?

In this system, women are assigned the crucial role of the reproduction of workers and cannon fodder. Thus it is necessary to control all people assigned the role of woman as reproductive workers, with the assistance of patriarchal values and violence.

The nuclear family, a completely modern institution, is proclaimed to be the basic cell of the nation (from "time immemorial", according to the ideologically constructed past of the nation), and women are assigned the role of the pillar of this capitalist institution for the reproduction of workers. Being a "good woman" is dependent on the level of identification with the tasks assigned by the dominant ideology as being part of her "nature". Violence against women has a disciplinary role when it comes to enforcing these roles.

⁵ De Passage, Should we belong to the people? Antipolitika 3, antipolitika.noblogs.org

Violence on the streets drives women into the private sphere, that is, into the false "security of the home", which is in turn, her workplace. Domestic violence serves to break the resistance of women within that realm. The husband is thus assigned the role of boss and cop, which is in accordance with the Serbian nationalist slogan "god-king-husband", which very clearly shows the hierarchy in the system of national reproduction. If we take into consideration the high rate of femicide in Serbia and the way in which the state treats the murderers, we can say that the state delegates its repressive function to men, giving them free rein to commit domestic violence in the name of the nation.

Thus the nation and state are not only embodied in institutions such as the army or the police, but also in institutions of national re-production such as the maternity hospitals and schools, and above all, the heteronormative household centered around private property, biological parentage and reproductive work which is normalized as female.

On the other hand, queer people, as well as disobedient women (those who reject "their own" ideologically constructed "female nature") create a problem for this kind of society because they subvert the idea that the primary role of humans is to reproduce themselves and the nation. The existence of queer people implies that human beings have the-ir own intrinsic value. Nationalist patriarchal ideology rejects such a perspective as it understands the value of an individual only in relati-on to service to the nation. That is why homophobia and transphobia are not random phenomena, but rather a disciplinary element of the system, which is there to enforce our gender based labor roles. If the gender-labor hierarchy is brought into question, through rejection of the patriarchal gender binary, the entire basis upon which patriarchal capitalism stands, expressed in the form of the nation, is put in dan-ger. That is why we are forced to strictly monitor and suppress our queerness and internalize shame and hate people who, through their self-determined lives, call into question this imposed hierarchy. The struggle against patriarchy, homophobia and transphobia is not just a question of "human rights" or minorities, but rather strikes at the core of the patriarchal, capitalist system of the nation and there-fore concerns everybody. The possibility of the self-determination of everyone and the creation of authentic communities of free individu-als is closely tied in to this struggle.

Antinationalism vs. anti-imperialism: Why we cannot fight imperialism with anti-imperialism?

Our anti-nationalism is opposed to the ideology of anti-imperialism which advocates support for nationalist movements as a tool against imperialism and which believes that there is some kind of fundamental difference and contradiction between nationalism and imperialism.

"Leftist or revolutionary nationalists insist that their nationalism has nothing in common with the nationalism of fascists and national socialists, that theirs is a nationalism of the oppressed, that it offers personal as well as cultural liberation.

According to a common (and manipulable) misconception, im-perialism is relatively recent, consists of the colonization of the entire world, and is the last stage of capitalism. This diagnosis points to a spe-cific cure: nationalism is offered as the antidote to imperialism: wars of national liberation are said to break up the capitalist empire.

This diagnosis serves a purpose, but it does not describe any event or situation. We come closer to the truth when we stand this conception on its head and say that imperialism was the

first stage of capitalism, that the world was subsequently colonized by nation-states, and that nationalism is the dominant, the current, and (hopefully) the last stage of capitalism. The facts of the case were not discovered yesterday; they are as familiar as the misconception that denies them."

If we look at things this way, it then becomes clear that: "Nationalism is the opposite of imperialism only in the realm of definitions. In practice, nationalism was a methodology for conducting the empire of capital." Therefore, instead of countering imperialism with nationalism:

"(..)we should probably be asking another question: How will the struggles of those experiencing the brutality of plunder in the capitalist periphery avoid limiting themselves to nationalism and to suggesting alternative routes to capitalist plunder? How can those of us in the prosperous zones organize without ignoring planetary inequality and without resorting to orientalism? How do we connect the struggles of the excluded and those threatened with exclusion with struggles in the global capitalist centers? How do we manage to respond in an internationalist way to the emergence of the far right, supposedly dire-cted against the effects of globalization? How do we stop the capitalist war machine? The answers to these questions depend on the collective intelligence and multilevel activities of the movement. Here we will simply make a few points.

There are many who benignly ask: "But shouldn't the populations in the capitalist periphery organize themselves to resist their exploitati-on?" However, in every single historical instance, it has been observed that when a population organises itself in a vertical, pyramidal system of power "in order to resist the powerful countries", the administra-tors of that system will attempt to integrate it into a wider pyramidal system. In other words, they will not turn against the stronger capita-list powers let alone against hierarchical systems in general. Moreover, contemporary internationalized capitalism, beyond the vertical stru-ctures on which it is based (the various nation-states, their armies and their police forces), is ruled by a suffocating transnational network of banks, but also by a media system that shapes the imaginary dimen-sion of humanity, and determines our abstract and symbolic thought. If we seek to weaken vertical power structures and open up cracks in the grid of the global economy, we must first try to change that very symbolic system. This cannot be done by reproducing interpretations that have failed on all grounds."

This symbolic system in Serbia is still significantly determined by nationalist ideology formulated in an anti-imperialist way. For example, in Serbia, both the left and right constantly call upon the example of the anti-imperialist struggle of Young Bosnia. The members of Young Bosnia fought bravely against the feudal and exploitative colonial system of Austria-Hungary. However, since they defined their movement as nationalist, their goal was not the abolition of exploitation as such, but rather that the Yugoslav nation, whose creation they were seeking, could reach the level of development of the most advanced exploiter. As such, they saw no contradiction in the fact that in their participation in the struggle against one imperialism they also supported the bloody expansionist aspirations of the Serbian bourgeoisie, especially directed against Albanians. One of the Sarajevo assassins, Vaso Čubrilović, directly and very explicitly formulated a plan for the ethnic cleansing of Albanians from Yugoslavia. As an expert in the field of ethnic cleansing,

⁶ Fredy Perlman, The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Clandestina, You Cannot Fight Imperialism with Anti-Imperialism, Antipolitika 3, anti-politika.noblogs.org

he offered his services to both the regime of King Alexander and the Titioist regime, and both accepted his services.⁹

In order for us to formulate our struggle against oppression and exploitation in an effective way, we must first reject the frameworks, symbols and models imposed on us by nationalist ideology—some of which we may not even initially recognize as such.

Why focus on Serbian nationalism?

Anti-nationalism has a specific significance for all of us who come from the area of the former Yugoslavia.

During the 1990s, a particularly violent and fascistic form of nati-onalism was used as the ideological basis for the process of primitive accumulation¹⁰ which was carried out in the form of a brutal civil war. While the ruling classes of Serbia and Croatia together coordina-ted the transition process from the so-called state capitalist system of SFRY (which itself was undergoing many liberal and market reforms), into a new system of free market extremism, the proletariat was drastically impoverished. The lives of the poor became quite cheap—redu-ced to mere bodies that could easily be sacrificed in a war whose sole purpose was to enrich the ruling classes.

Wars that nationalists today call Patriotic or Homeland wars can be characterized as wars of plunder—it was a brutal attack on the poor, for the sake of efficient extraction of wealth and its consolidation in governing structures. However, we should not forget that nationalism did not appear out of nowhere at the beginning of the war. Nationalism was formulated and reproduced as an essential part of the political and economic system of the SFRY. Republics of the SFRY were formed as nation-sta-tes, with their own constituent peoples and national "communist" parties 11 During the 1990s, that nationalism changed its form and intensity due to the changed historical circumstances in which the needs of the ruling classes changed. But nationalism always had its brutal and genocidal potential. As long as the national ideology is in force, the potential for genocide exists. That is why we must reject national ideology as such, be it in its left or right form.

We live in so-called Serbia, where the most dominant nationalism is by far Serbian. As a result, we understand that specific nationalism to most threaten our interests and our efforts towards liberation from exploitation and oppression. We reject nationalism as such and are specifically focused on the form to which we are most exposed, and which directly seeks to absorb us from the moment of our birth. Currently, the most prevalent form of that ideology is the one that speaks of the so-called Kosovo myth. ¹² Since Serbia took control of Kosovo in 1912, it has been

⁹ More information in: Jungslawen and Nihilist Nationalism 1907–1914, Antipolitika 3, antipolitika.noblogs.org ¹⁰ "Primitive accumulation" is the term that Marx uses, in Capital Vol. I, to characterize the historical process upon which the development of capitalist relations was premised. It is a useful term, for it provides a common denominator through which we can conceptualize the changes that the advent of capitalism produced in economic and social relations. But its importance lies, above all, in the fact that "primitive accumulation" is treated by Marx as a foundational process, revealing the structural conditions for the existence of capitalist society. This enables us to read the past as something which survives into the present, a consideration which is essential to my usage of the term in this work". Silvia Federici, Caliban and the Witch, Introduction.

¹¹ More in: In the Dungeon of Nationalism: The Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the National Question, Antipolitika 3, antipolitika.noblogs.org

¹² One of the most common strategies for legitimizing newly emerging nations or nations in turmoil is the formation and maintenance of ahistorical and mythologized narratives of the "golden age" of the people or nation. As

for Serbia and Serbian nationalists exclusively an occupied territory and its Albanian population seen as a problem to be solved by means ranging from repression to genocide."¹³

Serbia lost control of that territory in 1999 during a bloody attempt to realize genocide upon the Albanian population. 1415

a rule, these narratives describe a period of wellbeing, interrupted by some kind of historical injustice, with the key im-plication being that these injustices can be corrected through a nationalist struggle to recover the dignity of the nation/people. Their goal is to establish a narrative of the long historical continuity and unity of the nation/people, as well as its "authenticity", always with the aim of nationalist political instrumentalization. The Kosovo myth is just one such narrative, that in its current form, emerged in the 19th century in the service of na-tion building, and has since remained as the primary mythological bedrock of nationalist aspirations. That is why we do not deal with the "multicentury history" of the relations between Serbia and Kosovo in this text—that kind of formulation itself represents a nationalist falsification of history and projection of 19t century ideas onto the medieval past when the concept of the nation did not even exist.

settlements in the northwestern regions of Turkey. Even today, this is the primary means by which the chauvinist press incites the Serbian people to hate the "wild" Albanians, while hiding the savagery inflicted by the Serbian army against them. How many tears have been shed over the fact that historical Kosovo is flooded with Albanians (...) The fires of burning villages were the only signal by which individual col-umns of the Serbian army could communicate to others how far they had reached. And the Albanian population —the survivors who could still flee—were pushed in front of us and, through the desperation of seeing their homes burn, gave us stiff resistance in Bu-janovac, and later, with the Turkish army fight heroically at Kumanovo. The Serbian peo-ple paid for this barbaric policy of the Serbian government and Supreme command with the lives of many.soldiers. With the fall of Kumanovo, all of those Albanians, who the Serbian army had, advancing from the north, pushed in front of them, settled in Skopje, where, seeking refuge, often found death (...) Since military operations ceased, it would seem like the elimination of the Albanian population would also stop. That Albanian belt that stretched along the old Serbian frontier, from Mitrovica to Vranje, had already been cleared, for which one man who sits as a member of the National Assembly stood out in particular! Grave silence overtook Kosovo, occasionally marked by sporadic revenge attacks, which according to the admission given to me once by a local district executive, were the result of the "tactless" behavior of our authorities:

Dimitrije Tucović Serbia and Albania. 1914.

¹⁴ The Humanitarian Law Center published a comprehensive report about the number of victims of the 1999 war (the Serbian state never officially released those numbers, but did not deny the HLC report). According to this report, the NATO attacks killed a total of 754 people: 454 civilians and 300 members of the armed forces. 207 civilians were of Serbian and Montenegrin ethnicity, 219 were Albanian, 14 civilians were Roma, and 14 were of other nationalities. From among members of armed forces, a total of 274 mem-bers of the VJ/MUP of Serbia and 26 members of the KLA were killed. On the territory of Serbia, 260 people were killed; in Montenegro, 10; and in Kosovo, 488. According to the HLC and HLC-Kosovo data, in the period from March 20 to June 14, 1999, Ser-bian forces, under the pretext of "defending Serbian territory from NATO aggression and Shqiptar terrorists", killed 6,901 Albanians who were not participating in hostilities. During the same period, the KLA killed 328 Serbian civilians and 136 Roma and other non-Albanians who were not involved in the armed conflict. In the clashes between the VJ/MUP and the KLA, 1,204 members of the KLA were killed and 559 members of the VJ and the MUP of Serbia. The data clearly show that the leadership of the Republic of Serbia responded to NATO attacks by severe and massive retaliation against the Albanian civilian population—expelling and killing civilians, and burning whole villages and houses. During the NATO attack, in the Gjakova municipality alone, VJ and Serbian MUP units killed 909 Albanian civilians, in Orahovac 577, in Mitrovica 362, in Vucitrn 389, in Pec 496, in Glogovac 640, in Pristina 413, in Prizren 414, in Suva Reka 351, and so on elsewhere. On a single day, April 27, 1999, Serbian forces in the village of Meja killed 349 Albanian villagers, most of whose bodies were found in mass graves at the police training site in Batajnica near Belgrade. More than 260 villagers who were hiding in the forests of Sutice, Vrbovca and Cikatova were killed during a "survey of the terrain" on April 30 and May 1, 1999. In the same period, the KLA killed a total of 328 Serbian civilians and 136 Roma civilians, among them 32 Serbian civilians in Suva Reka, 25 in Djakovica, 22 in Pristina, 4 Orahovac, and 5 in Gnjilane. Source: www.h1c-rdc. org/?p=34890

 $^{^{15}}$ More on the occupation of Kosovo: Damjan Pavlica, Contemporary history of Koso-vo, Antipolitika 2, antipolitika.noblogs.org

Community, not nation: self-management is the essence of our communism/anarchy

We strive to create the conditions necessary for a life of total self-management—this necessitates a revolutionary overcoming of the miserable state in which we live, in which we have to toil and struggle for the most basic necessities of life, as if they were a privilege. In this miserable condition of our lives in capitalism, other people are, at worst, seen as competition or enemies and at best, as others, as atomized and alienated individuals, with whom we share space but not life. This is the normalized order, because in this kind of system we don't even have control over our own lives.

In opposition to this, is what we strive for: Community—the relationship of solidarity, mutual aid, and belonging that we all long for. It is a condition of total self-management, an authentic community of self-determined individuals. Nationalism, and the very idea of the nation, is one of the greatest enemies of the Community, because it gives false answers" to very real needs. The nation is a false community, it is a simulation, a spectacular response to our deep longing.

The history of anarchist and communist (we are not referring here to state-capitalist and, nationalist projects that called themselves communist) can be understood as anticipations and outlines towards a movement of total self-management. Self-management is the essence of our communism/anarchy.¹⁶¹⁷

From the moment that nationalism was introduced against us in the Balkans, there were those who opposed it and fought against it. The first socialist program in our language (1872) explicitly called for the destruction of all states in the Balkans. Not only imperialist powers such as the Austro-Hungarian or Ottoman empires, but against the newly formed, liberated anti-imperialist states such as Serbia, whose nationalists were already at work formulating their own genocidal programs.

That socialist program called for the formation of a Balkan federation, but not as a federation of nation states, but as a federation of revolutionary proletarians committed to the liberation of the earth from the misery of capitalism and the state. Those are the historical aspirations that we wish to affirm, transcend and realize. We are a federation of despair transformed into love and rage. For a Balkan federation without states and nations!

¹⁶ Pockets of freedom lie in the shadows of history that serve as guideposts for our imagination and orientation towards the realization of Community.

¹⁷ The capitalized letters of the Serbo-Croat version of the sentence "Self-management is the essence of our communism/anarchy" (Samouprava je Esencija Naleg Komunizma/ Anarhije) form the word SENKA, which is the name of the collective that signs this text, and is the Serbo-Croatian word for "shadow."

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SENKA Community, Not Nation! Platform of the Radical Antinational Tendency

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