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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Contesting ideas in socialist Yugoslavia: the Korčula Summer School, the Kumrovec Political School, and their legacy (1964–2003)

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Aim: This study examines two key educational institutions in socialist Yugoslavia: the Korčula Summer School (1963–1974) and the Political School of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Kumrovec (1975–1990). The objective is to analyze how they embodied divergent approaches to Marxist education and ideological formation, and to assess their role in the evolution and decline of Yugoslav socialism.

Methods: The study employs a historical-comparative design, drawing on archival records, memoirs, and testimonies alongside existing historiography. A hermeneutic and critical-theoretical framework is used to reconstruct the ideological and institutional dimensions of both schools. Korčula is investigated mainly through secondary literature, while Kumrovec is analyzed through internal documents and participant accounts. A diachronic comparison situates both schools within the broader trajectory of Yugoslav socialism after the 1948 Cominform split.

Results: The Korčula Summer School became an international forum where Yugoslav and Western intellectuals debated Marxism beyond Soviet orthodoxy, fostering pluralism and reinterpretations. Yet, it was criticized for elitism, detachment, and limited impact, and it failed to embed itself in Yugoslav society. Its suppression in 1974 reflected both state intolerance of independent thought and its weak institutional base. By contrast, the Kumrovec Political School embodied centralized ideological training, designed to produce loyal cadres through doctrinal instruction. Archival evidence shows, however, that its mission was undermined by rote learning, heterogeneous students, and careerist motives, reducing Marxist education to rhetorical conformity. Together, the two institutions, one oriented toward intellectual production, the other toward ideological reproduction, exposed the contradictions of Yugoslav socialism, torn between aspirations for openness and demands for control.

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Cite as:
Gruica T. Contesting ideas in socialist Yugoslavia: the Korčula Summer School, the Kumrovec Political School, and their legacy (1964–2003). ST-OPEN. 2025;6:e2025.2519.3.

DOI:
https://doi.org/10.48188/so.6.8

Conclusions: The analysis shows that Yugoslav leadership failed to reconcile Marxism as a living philosophy with its use as a political instrument. The closure of Korčula and the shortcomings of Kumrovec illustrate the regime's preference for conformity over critical engagement, contributing to the erosion of socialist legitimacy. Together, the schools exemplify the paradox of Yugoslav socialism: the aspiration to chart a "third way" and the simultaneous reproduction of authoritarian practices.

Keywords: Marxism; Korčula; Kumrovec; ideology; Yugoslavia

Introduction

At the mayoral elections in the city of Graz, held on 17 November 2021, Elke Kahr, a representative of the Communist Party of Austria, was elected. In addition to being the first female and communist mayor of Graz, she also sparked media interest due to her affinity for the so-called "Tito's socialism" and "Yugoslav Marxism" (*1*). This raises the question of what socialism is in this context, and what specifically "Tito's socialism" entails; what its defining characteristics are, how it differs from other forms of socialism, and why, according to Kahr, this form is the "closest to the ideal" Marxism (*1*). A historical overview of Marxist ideology reveals that it has been repeatedly "tested and failed," reinterpreted, schismatically divided, and dissected through post-Marxism to such an extent that, using the analogy and imagery from the introduction of Marx's *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, it may have transformed from a "specter haunting Europe" into not a specter but a zombie, a walking dead (According to Moša Pijade's translation (*2*), the term *bauk* is used instead of "specter," but for the sake of the metaphor, the literal translation of the German *Gespenst* is employed here) (*3*). When discussing Marxism, socialism, or communism, we are not merely referring to a philosophy or a set of economic, social, and political ideas, but to an ideology with its own evolving vocabulary and immutable dogmas. This perspective allows us to understand how ideological systems evolve while retaining their labels despite numerous changes, as exemplified by the People's Republic of China, which remained "communist" through both the radical phase of Maoism and the pluralistic era of Dengism (*4*).

Based on my preliminary student work (*5*), this article offers a substantially revised and expanded analysis of the two institutions. In contrast to the earlier version, which was primarily descriptive and relied mostly on secondary literature, the present study incorporates previously unexamined primary sources, such as internal party documents, archival testimonies, and institutional records—that provide new insights into the functioning and contemporary reception of both the Korčula Summer School and the Political School in Kumrovec. The theoretical framework has also been expanded to engage more deeply with questions of ideological apparatuses, cadre formation, and intellectual dissent within socialist regimes. In this way, the article aims to move beyond historical comparison and offer a critical interpretation of how these two schools represent opposed models of Marxist engagement within the Yugoslav socialist project.

The article examines the period from 1964 to 1990, focusing on the activities and development of the Korčula Summer School and the Political School of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) in Kumrovec. While these two institutions may initially appear unrelated, they were both oriented toward the same overarching goal: the formation of an ideological foundation for the new Yugoslav society. Although nominally aligned in their purpose of shaping Yugoslav socialism, they emerged from fundamentally different sources and pursued divergent agendas: Korčula functioned as a semi-autonomous, international forum that fostered critique and pluralism; Kumrovec served as a centralized institution for ideological instruction and loyalty cultivation. There is a plausible reading that suggests the Political School in Kumrovec was, in some ways, a reactionary continuation of the Korčula project—established in response to the Party's dissatisfaction and now brought fully under state control, stripped of its intellectual openness. Rather than concealing this asymmetry, the article takes it as a point of departure for understanding the plurality of ideological currents active within Yugoslav Marxism. The aim is not to define Marxism, socialism, or communism in abstract terms, nor to compare Yugoslav models with other communist regimes. Rather, the objective is to offer a critical chronological reconstruction of two educational initiatives that embodied divergent responses to the ideological needs of the Yugoslav state: one invested in the philosophical rearticulation of socialism, the other in its doctrinal consolidation. Together, they illuminate how the Yugoslav government sought to institutionalize a consistent ideological commitment in support of the Titoist "separate road" announced after the 1948 split with the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties (Cominform), and the broader attempt to transform Yugoslav society along distinctively self-managed lines.

The *Praxis* School members and dissidents

On 28 June 1948, in Bucharest, delegates of the communist parties of France, Italy, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, and the Soviet Union unanimously condemned Yugoslavia and Josip Broz Tito through the issuance of a document known as the Informbiro Resolution. This resolution accused Yugoslavia of engaging in anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary activities, branding Tito a "Trotskyist" and an enemy of "Marxism-Leninism," and resulting in Yugoslavia's ideological isolation during the 1950s (*6*). Some historical accounts suggest that the 1948 conflict between Tito and Stalin was driven less by ideological divergence and more by geopolitical tensions—most notably Yugoslavia's unilateral support for the Greek communists during their civil war. Stalin, wary of provoking a direct confrontation with the West in the atomic age, perceived Tito's assertiveness as destabilizing. This reading situates the Informbiro Resolution not solely as a doctrinal dispute but also as a contest for authority within the international Communist movement (*6*). Nevertheless, in the wake of the split, and in contrast to Stalinism, Yugoslav theorists began developing their own doctrine of "workers' self-management," based on the principle of the "three Ds" (DDD): debureaucratization through workers' councils, decentralization of administration, politics, and culture, and democratization of all spheres of life. This model aimed to involve a broader segment of society in economic and social processes, with workers' councils empowered to make key decisions on entrepreneurial matters (*6*).

To frame this development, which we will term "Titoism," we start with Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism as dominant orthodoxies from which it split. While Titoism is indeed primarily characterized by the aforementioned workers' self-management model and its break from Soviet influence, it is essential to recognize that Titoism arose within the multinational and political realities of Yugoslavia, where the cult of personality surrounding Josip Broz Tito also played a significant role in shaping its development. In other words, workers' self-management constitutes a key element of Yugoslav socialism but should not be conflated with Titoism as a whole; rather, Titoism encompasses broader political and ideological dimensions beyond the scope of workers' self-management and represents the overarching ideology upheld by the highest leadership of the Yugoslav Socialist Party. This context is particularly important because it underscores that Titoism functioned less as a strict ideological continuation of Marxist-Leninism and more as a pragmatic framework aimed at preserving federal cohesion and political stability. One of the goals of this paper is thus to demonstrate that the practical and symbolic dimensions of Titoism—anchored in Tito's leadership and the necessity to govern a diverse federation—often took precedence over its Marxist theoretical underpinnings, thereby rendering its ideological claims somewhat nominal despite its explicit Marxist origins (*7*).

This is evident in the fact that "self-management" did not ensure autonomy independent of the Party. During the 1950s and early 1960s, a number of independent intellectual forums began to develop, including student journals such as Pregled and Gledišta. Separately, in 1964, a group of philosophers from the University of Zagreb—including Branko Bošnjak, Milan Kangrga, Rudi Supek, Gajo Petrović, Predrag Vranicki, and Danilo Pejović—founded the influential journal *Praxis*, which was primarily shaped by philosophers from the same university (*8*). The first editors were Gajo Petrović and Danilo Pejović, who served as equal co-editors. In 1966, Pejović resigned and was replaced by Rudi Supek. Supek himself stepped down in January 1974, and Ivan Kuvačić took his place, editing *Praxis* alongside Gajo Petrović until its final issue (*9*). A defining characteristic of these publications was the emergence of a new Marxist philosophy centered on alienation, or *Entfremdung*, specifically worker alienation—a concept describing the condition in which a worker loses their humanity and becomes, figuratively, "one of many cogs in the industrial machine" (*8*). This philosophy of alienation critiqued not only Western capitalism but also bureaucratic socialism and "Marxist-Leninism," as a Soviet interpretation of Marxism, which, while developed by Lenin, was re-institutionalized under Stalin in a different, totalitarian form known as "Stalinism" (*7*). According to this emerging philosophy, worker alienation and dehumanization could occur even within a communist regime, offering Yugoslav intellectuals an ideological framework to oppose Stalin and a set of ideas that appeared to align with the ideal of workers' self-management (*7*). Thus, the critique of Stalinism, both in philosophy and other fields, began in Yugoslavia following the 1948 conflict with Stalin and the Cominform (*9*). From its inception, this critique was tied to efforts to identify and apply a more suitable interpretation of Marxism and socialism. The intense pressure exerted by the Informbiro sparked a reaction in Yugoslavia against "Marxism-Leninism" and "Stalinism" and opened opportunities to explore alternative pathways to socialism (*8*, *10*).

In order to understand the ideological developments that culminated in the 1948 split with the Cominform, it is important to recall that the foundations of the Yugoslav socialist

state were laid during World War II. In 1943, at the second session of the AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia), the Partisan movement under Tito declared the formation of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia. This state was officially renamed the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945. In the immediate post-war years (1945–1948), Yugoslavia closely followed the Soviet model, centralizing power through the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY), establishing state control over the economy, and suppressing political pluralism. The regime's ideological foundation was Marxism-Leninism, with Stalinist characteristics dominating both governance and education. This phase of alignment with the Soviet Union was abruptly terminated by the 1948 Cominform Resolution, which led to a radical rearticulation of Yugoslav socialist ideology (*6*, *8*).

While some early writings—particularly those aligned with official Party rhetoric—seemed to suggest an apparent alignment of Yugoslav theorists with the state's ideological project, this view is ultimately unsustainable. The philosophers associated with *Praxis* were not proponents of state ideology but critical interlocutors, operating at the outer limits of tolerated political discourse. Their work was animated by a hope to push Yugoslav socialism in a more humanist, democratic direction, rather than simply endorsing the Party line. It can be noted, without delving deeply into the philosophy of the *Praxis* group, that in Greek philosophy, the term praxis refers to an action in which the "act itself is the goal" (*11*). For example, an individual who paints with the aim of becoming a skilled painter focuses primarily on cultivating the human capacities involved in this form of work. Since the goal of becoming a particular type of person is realized through the act of working, this activity persists even after the goal is achieved; thus, the skilled painter continues to practice painting, striving to remain a quality artist throughout their life (*9*). By substituting "skilled painter" with "good communist," one can discern the social and ideological dimension of the *Praxis* group's philosophy. The same applies to the summer school on Korčula, not as an organ of state ideology, but as a critical platform seeking to influence it, namely, through the attempt to establish a system for the ideologization of society (*12*).

Although later ideological institutions in Yugoslavia—such as the Political School of the League of Communists in Kumrovec—bear structural similarities to earlier international communist education centers (such as the Comintern's Communist University of the National Minorities of the West (KUNMZ) or the International Lenin School, which aimed at "Bolshevizing" national parties), the Korčula Summer School operated from an entirely different premise. Unlike these rigid models of cadre formation and ideological reproduction, Korčula served as an open, international, and often critical forum for rethinking Marxism itself. Its orientation was creative rather than indoctrinatory, pluralist rather than prescriptive, and driven by the intellectual momentum of a post-Stalinist, post-Cominform Yugoslavia trying to articulate its own conceptual grammar of socialism (*7*).

State suspicion and the dissidents not by choice

The Yugoslav political leadership never incorporated the philosophy of praxis into the official state ideology of self-managed socialism. Although some of the group's themes superficially resonated with state rhetoric, *Praxis* thinkers maintained a critical stance that ulti-

mately placed them at the margins of official ideology. It can be argued that the leadership maintained a cautious distance from the intellectual circle associated with *Praxis*, largely out of fear that their critique could evolve into ideological dissent (*10*). Consider the example of Milovan Đilas, who was expelled from the party in 1954 due to his political writings. The ideological discord between Đilas and the Yugoslav leadership began in 1953 when he authored and published the article "The New Class", condemning the Yugoslav authorities for failing to realize Marxist utopian ideals and labeling the leadership an "oligarchic clique" (*13*). In his article "The Ideal", published in *Borba* on 13 December 1953, Đilas writes: "...the endless clamor over the otherwise uncontested communist ideal, which no reasonable person would dispute, diverts attention from the current bureaucratic reality and practice... This is precisely what is happening in the USSR, and similarly affects our country..." Through this article, it can be inferred that Đilas's critique of Yugoslav communism lies in its failure to fulfill communist ideals, rather than a desire to reject those ideals (*14*). Following his expulsion, Đilas was convicted and imprisoned on charges of spreading "hostile propaganda," which included his condemnation of the state leadership for inaction during the Soviet invasion of Hungary. This criticism did not stem from Đilas's rejection of Marxism but rather from his adherence to the official state ideology and narrative, particularly his belief that Yugoslavia possessed a unique self-managed workers' socialism superior to the Soviet system. Here we can also clarify in short that Marxism denotes the philosophy, and the social and economic theory developed by Karl Marx, while communism is the political ideology and system aiming to realize its goals and ideas. In other words, Marxism is the theory, and communism is the goal and political practice inspired by that theory. Finally, it is worth noting that, alongside Moša Pijade, Đilas was one of the most influential propagandists of communist doctrine in Yugoslavia, having been imprisoned before World War II for his political convictions. Through this ideological conviction, it became possible to recognize that, in reality, these ideals had not been realized. Thus, from a war hero and holder of party membership card No. 4, Đilas seemingly "overnight" became a dissident (*15*). With this in mind, the state leadership likely viewed a group of Marxist philosophers developing their philosophy through critiques of Soviet communism as a potential catalyst for critiques of Yugoslav communism itself (*16*). A second reason for distrust toward the *Praxis* group can be attributed to the 1968 student demonstrations, which were perceived as anti-party and anti-state activities (*17*). The fact that *Praxis*, both as a journal and a movement, gained significant popularity within student circles could only further exacerbate the state leadership's suspicions (*17*).

Philosophical Summer School on Korčula

How and why was the publication of the *Praxis* journal funded, and how was the Summer School organized? How did *Praxis* manage to thrive despite obstacles? One key reason lies in the fact that, starting in 1965, the *Praxis* journal was published internationally in French, English, and German, quickly attracting the attention of Western intellectuals, particularly among French thinkers and members of the Marxist Frankfurt School (*10*). The popularization of the philosophy of praxis was primarily driven by philosophers from the University of Zagreb, such as the already mentioned Gajo Petrović, Rudi Supek, and Milan

Kangrga (later joined by Ljubomir Tadić from the University of Belgrade), who, during their studies and academic work, established connections with leading global intellectuals of the time (*10*). The journal's international editorial board soon included prominent figures like Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas, and it was read even by non-Marxists such as Eugen Fink and Martin Heidegger (*17*). Events similar to those in Yugoslavia after 1948 occurred in other socialist countries and communist movements following Stalin's death in 1953, particularly after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, sparking broader interest in exploring alternative forms of socialism (*15*). In the early 1950s, the West still largely perceived Yugoslavia as "uncivilized," where "civilized" philosophical discourse seemed implausible. Yet, as Lord Byron's works suggest, there was a certain allure to the "uncivilized" (*8*). This context informed the idea of hosting an international summer school on Korčula, where Western intellectuals could gather to "drink wine and read Marx on the beach," creating a space for cross-border intellectual exchange and collaboration across Cold War divides (*9*). The concept of summer schools as sites of intellectual dialogue and ideological exchange was not new in the socialist world. Yugoslavia, in line with its unique position between East and West, adapted this model to its own goals (*10*). While the Korčula Summer School represented a unique effort to engage Western intellectuals and foster critical thought, it was also rooted in a broader tradition of politically and philosophically oriented educational initiatives dating back to earlier communist movements. For example, as early as the 1920s, the Comintern had established party schools, including the KUNMZ in Moscow and the International Summer School, aimed at "Bolshevizing communist parties in capitalist countries" (*18*). Notably, Josip Broz Tito and Edvard Kardelj had attended KUNMZ, making the idea of founding a summer school in Yugoslavia with similar objectives neither unfamiliar nor unprecedented for the state leadership (*18*).

This tradition of organizing ideological and educational gatherings served as a foundation for Yugoslavia's unique approach. However, the Korčula Summer School and the *Praxis* journal did not merely replicate the Bolshevik model. Instead, they sought to redefine Marxist thought in accordance with Yugoslav experiences and global intellectual currents. As Gajo Petrović stated:

> "...we maintain that the primary task of the Marxists and socialists of individual countries is, along with the general problems of contemporary world, to illuminate critically the problems of their own countries. The primary task of Yugoslavian Marxists, for example, is to critically discuss the Yugoslavian socialism. By such critical discussions Yugoslavian Marxists can best contribute not only to their own, but to the world socialism too." (*12*).

While it would be inaccurate to claim that the Korčula Summer School and *Praxis* aimed to "Titoize" Marxists in capitalist countries, it is plausible to argue that there was an interest in bridging the Frankfurt School and Yugoslav intellectuals to resist Stalinism and reject Marxism-Leninism in favor of a new Marxist philosophy (*10*).

Organization of the Summer School

The Philosophical Summer School on Korčula initially began as a postgraduate program for sociology students from the Universities of Zagreb and Belgrade. Due to the close connections between the departments and professors of philosophy and sociology, as well as

the establishment of the international edition of the *Praxis* journal, steps were taken to transform the summer school into a forum for *Praxis* members. The original structure of courses, seminars, and open discussions was retained, preserving its foundational goal of advancing student education while enabling collaboration and correspondence with international colleagues (*9*). The program's focus aligned with that of the journal: fostering debates on critical issues of the era from the perspective of a "humanistic Marxism" (*9*). Participants in the summer school included the aforementioned Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, and Eugen Fink, as well as Ernst Bloch, Zygmunt Bauman, Lucien Goldmann, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and numerous others. The event became a central gathering point for leading Western leftist intellectuals and members of the Frankfurt School (*9*). Critical debates initially flourished within the relatively open intellectual and political climate of 1960s Yugoslavia, until the 1968 student demonstrations mentioned earlier. By this time, the *Praxis* group was increasingly represented by a younger generation, including Nebojša Popov and Božidar Jakšić, who used the journal to address sociological conflicts and issues within Yugoslavia. Older members like Gajo Petrović, meanwhile, faced repeated expulsion from (and reinstatement to) the Communist League (*10*). Despite the Summer School's success in uniting the international left, it failed to fulfill expectations of expanding "Tito's socialism" (*9*). The school's international and multilingual character, combined with the participation of philosophers from diverse Marxist and non-Marxist intellectual backgrounds, led to organizational challenges in coordinating debates and programs. Discussions predominantly gravitated toward shared themes, such as the philosophies of G. W. F. Hegel or Immanuel Kant, while the envisioned "international" dimension of the school remained unrealized due to linguistic inconsistencies (*17*).

Korčula's unique intellectual positioning

Korčula's internationalism, even if not fully realized, should not be considered merely symbolic; it helped position Yugoslav Marxism as a mediator and interlocutor between competing socialist paradigms (*19*). The school's integration of Western critical theory into a praxis-informed Marxism embodied a "third way" between Soviet dogmatism and Western capitalism. Marcuse's recurrent presence, including his influential 1968 lecture "The Realm of Freedom and the Realm of Necessity," underscored this cross-pollination, bringing Frankfurt School critiques of alienation and advanced industrial society into dialogue with Yugoslav self-management and socialist humanism (*9*, *19*). Compared to contemporaneous reformist movements in other socialist states—such as Hungary's cautious post-1956 liberalization under Kádár or Czechoslovakia's Prague Spring—Korčula institutionalized an intellectual openness that was rare in the Eastern Bloc (*19*). While Hungary and Czechoslovakia struggled with top-down reformist models ultimately crushed by Soviet intervention, Yugoslavia temporarily nurtured a semi-permissive environment where Marxism could be philosophically reimagined and debated across ideological lines. This distinctive positioning also extended beyond Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia's non-aligned status lent Korčula a unique diplomatic and intellectual leverage, allowing it to engage with critical Socialist and Marxist discourses from postcolonial and developing world contexts (e.g. India, Cuba, Algeria, and Egypt), where questions of autonomy, anti-imperialism, and socialist experiment were gaining popularity (*19*). Although Korčula's engagement remained firmly rooted

in European philosophical traditions, its global aspirations reflected Yugoslavia's geopolitical ambition to serve as a bridge between capitalist, Soviet, and non-aligned worlds (*9*, *18*).

Failure and the end of the Summer School

Despite its groundbreaking openness, Korčula's intellectual project was fraught with contradictions. The theoretical richness and cosmopolitanism of the school often contrasted with tensions between philosophical abstraction and political immediacy. The 1968 student protests in Belgrade, inspired by self-management ideals yet critical of *Praxis* philosophers' perceived detachment, exposed a rift between intellectual discourse and grassroots revolutionary praxis (*19*). The students' call for "integral autogestion" highlighted systemic failures to realize self-management as genuine workers' control within an increasingly bureaucratized state apparatus. Furthermore, the state's tolerance was always conditional. Korčula's critical stance—exemplified by its outspoken protest against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia—invited growing suspicion and repression (*10*, *19*).

Other critiques directed at the Summer School also point to the possible beginnings of re-traditionalization and ethnicization within Yugoslav society. Serbian politicians criticized the *Praxis* group because the Summer School and journal were predominantly led by professors from the University of Zagreb, while Croatian politicians could question the *Praxis* members since most of the mentioned professors—Petrović, Kangrga, Popov, Jakšić, and Tadić—were ethnically Serbian (*17*).

With the renewed dogmatization of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in the early 1970s, repressive pressure on the *Praxis* group intensified. The state leadership's open hostility toward them is exemplified by Edvard Kardelj, the chief theorist of workers' self-management, who labeled the Summer School an "alchemical mix of humanism and liberalism," and by Vladimir Bakarić's infamous remark that "this confused group (the *Praxis* members) should be struck with an iron rod over the head to teach them sense" (*9*). Such rhetoric reveals that, unlike internal institutions like Kumrovec, which were tasked with ideological reproduction, the Korčula Summer School was viewed by the Party not as an instrument of education but as a threat to orthodoxy. From its inception, the *Praxis* group faced accusations of promoting "humanism"—an abstract term used by critics to undermine the socialist foundations of their philosophy (*17*). The root of this critique can be traced to Gajo Petrović's description of *Praxis* as a movement with a "fundamental desire to contribute, within its capabilities, to the development of philosophical thought and the realization of a humane human community" (*12*).

Parallel to state condemnation, internal conflicts arose. Figures such as Ivan and Rudi Supek advocated a broadly humanistic and ethically oriented socialism, reflecting their cultural and philosophical backgrounds rooted in liberal civic traditions. In contrast, thinkers like Milan Kangrga adopted a more confrontational and doctrinaire tone. This distinction shaped both their public reception and their relationship with Party authorities—Supek garnering a degree of respect from certain intellectual circles, while Kangrga reportedly provoked anxiety even among high-ranking officials (*10*, *17*).

In preparing the text, I also consulted some former members of the Zagreb Institute of Philosophy and Ruđer Bošković Institute (whom I will not name here as they wished to

remain anonymous), who confessed that among certain intellectuals in Zagreb during the 1970s and 1980s there was a palpable fear of Kangrga, describing him as a "Mallet", as well as a prevailing belief that both he and Gajo Petrović enjoyed a certain type of support from the Belgrade party elite, allegedly ranging from Ranković to Milošević, as mediated through Stipe Šuvar. The anecdotes gathered also confirmed that the *esprit général* was one of fear and distrust, and that a paranoia prevailed among scientists, coupled with a pervasive fear of repression and violence by the Communist Party. This atmosphere of suspicion and caution deeply shaped the intellectual environment and contributed to both external pressures and internal fractures within the community. Since these claims are difficult to verify and largely anecdotal, I will limit myself to what can be substantiated by available literature, but still consider them relevant for understanding the political and symbolic space in which the *Praxis* members operated. At the very least, such claims confirm that suspicion toward *Praxis* members circulated even among parts of the philosophical community that were nominally close to them. Moreover, if, as is often argued, the marginalization of the Praxis group was politically orchestrated and disproportionate to their actual activities, then the fact that they were feared or silenced even by "their own" further confirms their isolation. This isolation was not only the result of state repression but also a product of internal tensions within the intellectual elite, differences in party membership, ethnic background, methodological approaches, and personal rivalries (*9*, *12*). In this sense, the marginalization of the *Praxis* group cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between the state and critical intellectuals. It also occurred due to the absence of a broader solidarity network (mainly due to personal relations and feuds), that could have politically protected or at least publicly legitimized them. Thus, they remained ideological dissidents not only in relation to the state but also toward their own environment, philosophical, academic, and even republican (*9*).

Parallel to state condemnation, internal dogmatic conflicts arose. At the 1960 Bled Conference of Yugoslav philosophers and sociologists, a new generation of professors turned against the philosophy of praxis, rejecting the "philosophy of alienation" in favor of freer exploration within critical philosophy (*15*). While the 1960 Bled Conference did bring together various Yugoslav philosophers and sociologists, there is little archival evidence to suggest that it constituted a decisive generational shift against the *Praxis* group or its ideas. Rather, the growing tensions throughout the 1960s reflected a more gradual shift toward ideological retrenchment. A final reason for the Summer School's failure lies in the same factors that led to Đilas's clash with the state leadership: Yugoslavia's ruling elite never fully shed elements of Stalinism and bureaucratic socialism (*15*).

By 1974, the Summer School was quietly discontinued. The state leadership, having never officially acknowledged it, did not formally ban it either; instead, it withdrew financial support. The *Praxis* journal, as Gajo Petrović described, "Existed and did not exist" in the 1970s, lingering like a "living corpse" between life and death (*8*). Former printing houses refused to publish the journal after 1974, though it was never officially outlawed. Attempts to revive it continued until 1977, without success (*9*). Similarly, the Korčula Summer School was neither banned nor voluntarily dissolved but effectively stifled through the loss of funding and access to its usual venues. Alongside the expulsion of members from the League of Communists, some professors, including those from the journal's Belgrade editorial team, were dismissed from their academic positions (*9*).

The Political School of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) in Kumrovec

The establishment of the "Political School of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Kumrovec" was initiated by Josip Broz Tito, according to available records (*20*). His proposal was endorsed by the Presidency of the CPY, which tasked the Center for Social Research in December 1974 with developing the concept for the school, later officially established by decree. The core idea behind the Political School was to provide advanced education for "…fighters of our socialist society…" or, as Tito phrased it during his visit to the school, for "…good communists who do not know what communism is…" (*21*).

The significance of Tito's vision is underscored by the first interview with the school's director, Juraj Hrženjak, published in *Komunist* in late 1975. Hrženjak described his aim to develop the Political School into a "…true Titoist forge… [producing individuals – author's note] who will successfully implement the decisions of the Party and Tito in building Yugoslavia's socialist self-managed system, brotherhood and unity, non-aligned policy, and the promotion of equality and active participation in the international workers' movement…" (*21*). Nearly all school documents, director interviews, and academic texts emphasized these goals as the school's guiding principles. After Tito's death, interpretations of his words became particularly crucial for the school's continued development (*20*).

For example, Tito's assertion that "communists must constantly learn, drawing lessons from daily practice and aligning it with the teachings of Marxism-Leninism" was prominently featured beneath a photograph of the school's imposing architecture in the 1987 yearbook of its 13th generation (*21*). During his first discussion with the school's leadership on 11 July 1976, Tito remarked:

> "The school was necessary, and I believe it will continue to grow. You see, we have a vast number of good communists who are theoretically weak. This must be corrected—the fundamentals of Marxism must be mastered.... I am very pleased to hear about the progress of your classes, the impressions gained, and especially that participants have developed a love for learning and are equipped for further independent study. This is a significant achievement. It is good that people are gradually realizing how little they know and that they must study even more. For only those who know nothing believe they know everything. I recommend that students also engage with broader literature connected to Marxism. There are many valuable and interesting works. A communist must strive to be as versatile as possible, and there is always time for such pursuits" (*21*).

The official rationale for founding the school included statements such as: "The experience of our revolutionary movement has irrefutably shown that a socialist revolution is only possible as a conscious activity grounded in the study of Marxism," and that neglecting Marxism "has always led to the ossification of revolutionary thought" (*21*). While both the Korčula Summer School and the Political School in Kumrovec may be rhetorically associated with the ideological unification of Yugoslav society, their historical roles and institutional functions were fundamentally distinct. Korčula was created by critical Marxist intellectuals, often positioned at the margins of political power, who sought to rethink the foundations of Yugoslav socialism through creative, pluralistic, and transnational dialogue. Kumrovec, by contrast, was a centralized, state-run initiative whose primary function was the transmission and internalization of Party doctrine. Korčula was imagined as a site of production of new philosophical approaches and critical reflection whereas

Kumrovec was established as a site of reproduction, where Party-approved ideology was formalized and disseminated (*21*, *22*).

One of the key lessons drawn by the leadership from the perceived failures of Korčula was its relative distance from "ordinary people" and from effective ideological consolidation. In response, the Political School deliberately targeted workers, not intellectuals. Graduates were expected to become propagators of Marxist-Leninist and Titoist values among their communities and workplaces. This emphasis on direct ideological practice was institutionalized through a curriculum that prioritized students from working-class backgrounds. At the school's inauguration, Edvard Kardelj declared:

> "This School should not produce doctrinaires, career politicians, or individuals with mere book knowledge who cannot apply it. It is a school for fighters of our socialist society who have already demonstrated the capability and will to engage in political-social practice. Here, they will arm themselves with new Marxist knowledge for more effective societal work" (*22*).

Repeating the same mistakes

However, this vision was not realized. According to records from the school's then-director Ivica Račan, most "working-class" students abandoned their previous jobs in production after completing their studies, indicating a discrepancy between the expected and actual motivations for attending the school (*21*). In practice, the student body proved too heterogeneous. Račan also lamented that students arrived both underqualified—lacking sufficient prior knowledge—and inexperienced, with only 2–3 years of party membership. Additionally, many came with "inadequate ideological-political and cognitive capabilities, alongside familial, work, and health issues" (*21*). As a result, only one-third of students successfully mastered the curriculum's "Fundamentals of Marxism." Over the course of a year, students were expected to cover approximately 15,000 pages of predominantly Marxist literature. A further challenge was the program's heavy emphasis on pre-Marxist philosophical traditions, particularly classical German idealism, which occupied a disproportionate share of the curriculum. Račan noted: "Understanding Marx requires reading Hegel, and perhaps Fichte, Schelling, and Kant, but it is unacceptable to spend twice as much time on Hegel as on the development of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia from 1919 to 1952" (*21*). Regarding faculty and staff, the school saw constant rotation and replacement of professors, preventing any single group from monopolizing leadership or facing nationalist critiques akin to those directed at the Summer School. Leading scholars in the humanities and politicians from all republics were recruited to teach. During the 15 generations of students who passed through the program, around 600 instructors participated, reflecting the institution's broad staffing structure. The Political School's trajectory mirrored Yugoslavia's own. After Tito's death, its curriculum shifted to address emerging challenges, tightening ideological-theoretical instruction and organizing scientific conferences to reinforce ideological discipline and the principles of "brotherhood and unity." This was partly a response to rising nationalism, prompting school leadership to emphasize its role as "Yugoslavia in miniature." Indeed, the school became a microcosm of the country, making it unsurprising that the socio-economic crisis of the late 1980s severely impacted it. Funding dwindled to just 1/12 of previous levels by 1990 (*20*). The school did

not long outlive its founder. The dissolution of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia at its 14th Extraordinary Congress in 1990 marked the end of the Political School as well. Its closure symbolized the broader collapse of the ideological and institutional frameworks it sought to uphold (*20*).

Student reception, careerism and institutional contradictions

The reception of the Kumrovec Political School among its students reveals a clearly ambivalent relationship to the institution's stated ideological mission. While officially conceived as a prestigious site for the formation of politically conscious and ideologically loyal cadres, the lived reality within Kumrovec often diverged sharply from this ideal. Testimonies from former teachers, like the memoirs of Momčilo Diklić, from former students, and faculty reports suggest that many participants attended not out of genuine ideological enthusiasm but from a sense of career calculation, obligation, or social pressure (*23*). For many attendees, particularly younger cadres emerging from various republics of the federation, Kumrovec was perceived foremost as a stepping stone within the party-bureaucratic hierarchy rather than as a space for intellectual development (*24*). It is reasonable to assume, that such "instrumental" attitude contributed to a pervasive atmosphere of performativity rather than authentic engagement (*25*). The political culture of late Yugoslavia increasingly incentivized strategic conformity and rhetorical loyalty as prerequisites for career advancement within the LCY apparatus (*25*). Additionally, we can make the claim that this instrumentalization of ideological education undermined any true ideas about the school's emancipatory pretensions, if they even existed. Looking at the curriculum, with teacher memoirs confirming the emphasis on memorization, doctrinal reiteration, and rhetorical repetition, the School cultivated mainly what can be described as "rhetorical loyalty"—the ability to echo party slogans and ideological formulas convincingly, even if without substantive understanding or conviction (*23*, *24*).

A notable feature of Kumrovec was the palpable disconnect between the lecturing personnel and the student body. The instructors, often entrenched in orthodox ideological positions and committed to the party's official doctrines, appeared increasingly out of touch with the pragmatic attitudes of many students. For a significant portion of the latter, engagement with the Yugoslav Communist Party was less a matter of ideological conviction and more a strategic means to secure future career advancement within the political and bureaucratic apparatus. This gap reflected a broader generational and motivational divide, where the school's formal educational objectives clashed with students' instrumental view of the party as a system to be navigated rather than embraced. This claim becomes evidently clear if we analyze the memoras of Momčilo Diklić, who was a teacher at the School (*23*, *24*).

The institutional contradictions at Kumrovec extended beyond pedagogical style and student attitudes to the broader political and symbolic context in which the school operated. According to Diklić, whom we can consider an unreliable narrator and thus his claims approached with scrutiny, while the school officially championed the ideology of "brotherhood and unity," the foundational principle of Yugoslav federalism designed to reconcile ethnic diversity within a socialist framework; however, by the late 1970s and 1980s, the

lived reality of increasing "nationalist" assertion and inter-republican rivalries sharply contrasted with this rhetoric (*23*). The school's ideological discourse was insufficiently equipped to address or mediate these tensions, as the official curriculum did not engage with the competing national narratives gaining traction across the republics nor provide frameworks for understanding or managing the growing demands for political autonomy and ethnic recognition (*23*, *24*). It is true that Kumrovec trained many individuals who would later assume key roles in the political transformations of the 1990s, particularly in Croatia, where figures such as Ivica Račan transitioned from Yugoslav communist officials to leaders of post-socialist parties like the Social Democratic Party (SDP) (*25*). This continuity suggests that Kumrovec existed less as a transformative educational institution and more as a training ground for political management and ideological messaging-skills readily adapted to post-socialist state-building projects. A notable example of the disconnect between the lecturing personnel and the students is Diklić's observation that many cadres educated at Kumrovec, as mentioned initially committed to Yugoslav unity and socialism, ultimately embraced nationalist and anti-Serb positions amid the federation's disintegration (*23*). Diklić's characterization of certain positions as anti-Serbian and nationalist likely reflects a dismissive attitude toward Yugoslavia and its communist ideals rather than an objective assessment of the complexities involved (*23*). While Diklić's analysis provides valuable insight into institutional continuity and elite formation, it must be critically assessed; the rise of republican nationalism was closely tied to longstanding grievances over Serbian political dominance, centralization, and repression of cultural and political autonomy within the federation (*24*, *25*). The nationalist responses of the late 1980s and early 1990s were as much defensive reactions to federal authoritarianism and Serbian hegemonic ambitions as ideological betrayals (*24*). Furthermore, the collapse of Yugoslavia and ensuing wars were the result of multifaceted causes, including militarism, ethnic mobilization, and the failure of federal reforms, rather than a simple narrative of nationalist betrayal propagated by republican schools such as Kumrovec (*24*, *25*).

The end of both Schools

In the 1980s, the journal *Praxis* International was reestablished and continued its work. In the final two decades of the twentieth century, the focus of the *Praxis* group, alongside uniting intellectuals from Eastern and Western Europe, was directed toward the rise of nationalism in Yugoslavia. In 1989, on the initiative of Branko Horvat and *Praxis* representative Nebojša Popov, the political party Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (UJDI) was founded in the halls of the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. Its unitarist and Marxist position may have represented, for some, the last desperate attempts to save the Socialist Federation. The dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Homeland War marked the subsequent end of the Political School in Kumrovec (*9*). The Political School reflected the ideals of Socialist Yugoslavia, as well as the political state of the country. Despite similar problems shared with the Summer School, it is impossible to definitively judge its success or failure. The goal of revitalizing communist ideals in Yugoslav society unquestionably remained unfulfilled, while the aim of creating a political elite remains a controversial question. The school's building still stands in ruins, and considering that some of its for-

mer students and collaborators remain active in politics today—such as former Prime Ministers of Croatia Ivica Račan and Jadranka Kosor, former President of Slovenia Borut Pahor, and other politicians like Milorad Pupovac and Žarko Puhovski—there is a risk of falling into the trap of media-friendly interpretations portraying the school as a "shadow government," which remains impossible to prove (*9*).

Kumrovec in ruins, Račan's leadership, and late currents

By 1990, the Political School in Kumrovec had closed its doors as the League itself collapsed. The imposing four-floor complex, complete with lecture halls, a cinema, sports facilities, and 145 bedrooms, was abandoned. For a short time, it was repurposed by the newly independent Croatian state. Initially, the Ministry of the Interior took over the premises, using it for training police and other security personnel; soon thereafter, the Ministry of Defence converted the site into an academy for the Croatian Army. During the Siege of Vukovar in late 1991, the facility even sheltered displaced civilians from the ravaged city, offering refuge until the refugees departed in the early 2000s. Though the building remained state-owned, its role as a political school vanished. By 2003 it was empty once more, its halls abandoned, copper roof panels looted, and interiors left to decay (*26*).

Among the school's last stewards was the already mentioned Ivica Račan, director of the Kumrovec institution from 1982 until its closure in 1990. Račan, who at that time already was a rising star in Yugoslav politics, having served on the Central Committee of the Croatian League of Communists, would later reemerge as leader of Croatia's Social Democratic Party and ultimately Prime Minister in 2000. Even after the school itself vanished, its alumni and faculty remained influential. Many former students transitioned into roles within the newly formed institutions of independent Croatia; military, police, civil service, and academia; carrying with them the institutional culture and connections forged in Kumrovec (*26*).

Now, here we can mention Račan's coalition government (2000–2003), which quickly encountered mass mobilizations that tested Croatia's new democracy. In February 2001, nearly 100,000 war veterans and their supporters converged on Split to protest an investigation by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia into General Mirko Norac's alleged role in atrocities during the 1991 war (*27*, *28*). Moved from across the country, the demonstrators demanded the government's resignation, the suspension of cooperation with The Hague, and early elections, which briefly threatened to topple Račan's reformist administration (*29*). Split's rally was certainly the largest and most dramatic (*27*). Throughout Račan's premiership, smaller protests, over war-veteran benefits, border negotiations, and economic reforms, eroded parts of his coalition and underscored deep cleavages within Croatian society between wartime narratives and transitional justice (*28*). These events revealed that Račan's political adversaries were not only the remnants of the old regime seated now in Belgrade under Slobodan Milošević, but also former comrades and *protégés* who saw Kumrovec's legacy through divergent lenses (*30*).

I may be permitted a personal note of contemplation: during a train journey to Munich, I once listened to a striking recollection about Račan's late-night conversations and his constant struggle to balance political pragmatism with what was just and humane, even under overwhelming public pressure. Though anecdotal, such impressions remind us that

behind official programs and party schools there remained intimate exchanges and moral deliberations that subtly shaped leadership styles, and, by extension, the trajectories of Croatia's early post-communist governance.

Discussion and final syntheses

In contemporary scholarly literature, the Korčula Summer School and the Political School of the LCY "Josip Broz Tito" in Kumrovec are rarely, if ever, placed within the same analytical context or subjected to comparative study. This oversight is surprising given their shared context within the Yugoslav socialist project and their roles as educational initiatives aimed at engaging with Marxist thought, albeit in significantly different ways. The Korčula Summer School, active from 1963 to 1974, emerged as a space for critical intellectual exchange, attracting Western thinkers such as those from the Frankfurt School and Yugoslav philosophers linked to the *Praxis* journal to challenge dogmatic Marxism-Leninism (*9*). In contrast, the Political School in Kumrovec, founded in 1975 on Tito's direct initiative, aimed to reinforce ideological conformity among young LCY cadres following the political purges of the early 1970s (*21*).

By juxtaposing these two institutions and analyzing them within their temporal proximity, a compelling—though necessarily interpretive—narrative emerges: the failure of the Korčula Summer School likely indirectly contributed to the Yugoslav leadership's decision to establish the Kumrovec School, revealing not only a continuity of critique but also a fundamental misunderstanding of Marxism's philosophical demands. While there is no explicit archival evidence confirming a direct causal link or planned succession, the discursive and ideological shifts embodied in Kumrovec can be read as a corrective response to Korčula's perceived excesses. This framing does not assert institutional continuity but proposes a symbolic and strategic reorientation: a move from critical inquiry to ideological reproduction. The Korčula Summer School, with its international reach and emphasis on humanist socialism, can be seen as an ambitious experiment in intellectual freedom within a socialist state. It facilitated dialogues that questioned Stalinism and sought to redefine Marxism beyond Soviet orthodoxy (*9*). However, its critical stance, amplified by the *Praxis* journal, drew suspicion from Yugoslav authorities (*8*). By 1974, amid rising tensions with the state, the school was effectively shut down, its organizers branded as dissidents, and its activities suppressed (*8*). This closure marked a significant retreat for independent philosophical and Marxist thought in Yugoslavia, signaling the regime's intolerance toward philosophical inquiry that deviated from official narratives (*8*).

The timing is crucial: just one year later, the Political School in Kumrovec was founded, symbolically located in Josip Broz's birthplace, as a countermeasure to ideological deviations within the LCY (*21*, *22*). This sequence suggests that the perceived failure of Korčula-its inability to align with state priorities and its increasingly dissident profile—possibly shaped the Party's approach to ideological education going forward, pursuing a more controlled, centralized approach to Marxist education, embodied in Kumrovec. The two schools thus bookend a shift in state ideology: from tolerating dialectical exploration to enforcing dogmatic clarity.

A linear analysis reveals that critiques leveled at the Korčula Summer School and *Praxis*-accusations of elitism, detachment from practical socialism, and a focus on Hegel and other "foreign" philosophers—resurfaced in evaluations of the Kumrovec School, albeit in altered form (*21*). At Korčula, the state criticized the intellectualism of *Praxis* philosophers as disconnected from Yugoslav socialist realities, branding their work as dangerously revisionist. Similarly, the Kumrovec School, designed to instill Marxist theory and self-management principles in young cadres, faced internal and external critiques for its rigid, formulaic approach, which failed to foster genuine philosophical reflection. Archival evidence and scholarly accounts, such as those by Josip Mihaljević, show that Kumrovec students struggled with abstract Marxist curricula, often producing mechanical recitations rather than critical insights (*21*).

This recurring pattern of critique across both institutions points to a deeper issue: the Yugoslav leadership, including Tito himself, appeared unaware of—or indifferent to—the intellectual rigor required to teach Marxism as a living philosophy rather than a static doctrine. In this sense, the repression of *Praxis* and the creation of Kumrovec illustrate a fundamental misunderstanding: critical Marxism was not the problem, it was the very condition of Marxism as a lived situation. The Kumrovec School, with its emphasis on ideological loyalty over inquiry, mirrored the shallow application of Marxism that had been challenged at Korčula, suggesting the state learned little from the earlier experiment's demise (*20*, *21*). This pattern lends credence to Milovan Đilas's concerns that Marxism in Yugoslavia had degenerated into, or perhaps always had been, a hollow and superficial construct (*13*, *14*). If Yugoslav Marxism was indeed an empty shell, as Đilas argued, it explains the state's hostility toward any intellectualism—from *Praxis* or elsewhere—that threatened to expose this void. The *Praxis* philosophers and Korčula participants may not have chosen the role of dissidents; rather, the regime made them dissidents by refusing to tolerate the gap between Marxism as a philosophical endeavor and its reality as a political instrument (*8*, *10*, *15*). Thus, the tensions between the Korčula and Kumrovec schools may also echo earlier ideological rifts on the Yugoslav Left, particularly the "Conflict on the Left" during the interwar period. In this context, cultural figures, e.g. Miroslav Krleža, found themselves caught between party orthodoxy and broader intellectual currents—a tension that resonates with the later experiences of *Praxis* philosophers. The intellectual fear Krleža reportedly felt towards Party enforcers after 1945 points to a longstanding dilemma: how to think freely under a regime that insists it has already arrived at the truth (*22*)?

We can also say that, while the ideological distinctions between the Korčula Summer School and the Kumrovec Political School reveal important divergences in style and ambition, they often played out within a political environment that remained deeply repressive. The regime's tolerance for theoretical experimentation was ultimately bounded by its need to control dissent, leading many later commentators to view these ideological refinements as discursive veneers, overlaying the persistent machinery of state control (*19*, *23*). In this sense, The Political School in Kumrovec also reflected broader trends in cadre education across socialist states, resembling similar institutions in countries such as the GDR, USSR, or Czechoslovakia—though a detailed comparative analysis remains outside the scope of this article (*30*, *31*).

Returning to the outset, in the context of analyzing "Tito's socialism"—a topic that recently drew media attention due to Elke Kahr's election—the question arises: Does a clear definition of Yugoslav socialism exist, or is it a myth rooted more in symbolism than coherent ideology (*1*)? While Yugoslav "Tito's socialism" is often associated with self-management and independence from the Soviet model, this analysis of Yugoslavia's intellectual history under Tito reveals no unified "Yugoslav" Marxist system. Instead, there was an adapted version of socialism that balanced pragmatic needs of a multinational state with superficial adherence to Marxist ideals. The leadership itself lacked a clear vision for defining socialism and Marxism in practice, evident in the discrepancy between rhetorical commitment to workers' self-management and the reality of a single-party system that stifled critical thought, as seen in the suppression of *Praxis* and Đilas's critiques. Far from an ideal Marxism, "Tito's socialism" thus becomes more a reflection of political flexibility and compromise than a consistent philosophical vision.

Tabular analysis of key terms

In this work, we have employed terms such as Stalinism, Marxism-Leninism, Titoism, humanistic Marxism, and others. The conclusion makes clear that, while all these terms point to the same idea—communism—they differ significantly in both practice and theory. Therefore, it is best to synthesize all differences in tabular form (**Table 1**).

Table 1. The views of communist concepts by different historical actors

Concept	Karl Marx	Joseph Stalin	Josip Broz Tito (Titoism 1945–1954)	Political School in Kumrovec	Summer School in Korčula (*Praxis*)
View on Marxism	Dialectical materialism; historical materialism; class struggle as history's driver (*2*, *3*)	Marxism-Leninism; centralized, dogmatic application of Marx's ideas (*32*)	Titoism; pragmatic Marxism adapted to the national context, rejection of the Soviet model (*6*, *19*)	Official LCY* ideology; Marxism as state doctrine, focus on party loyalty (*20*, *21*, *23*)	Humanistic Marxism; emphasis on Marx's early works, creativity, and freedom (*12*, *17*)
Class struggle	Central to revolution; proletariat vs. bourgeoisie to abolish capitalism (*32*)	Subordinated to party control; proletariat led by the vanguard, state as a tool (*34*)	National unity over class; worker self-management as an alternative to conflict (*19*)	Diminished importance; unity of Yugoslav nations under LCY leadership as priority (*23*)	Alienation as key struggle; human emancipation beyond mere economic class (*12*)
Role of the state	Temporary "dictatorship of the proletariat" for transition to stateless society (*2*)	Permanent, totalitarian state; socialism in one country; state as ultimate goal (*32*, *33*)	Decentralized socialist state; self-management to avoid Soviet control (*19*)	State as educator; strengthened LCY authority through ideological training (*20*)	State as a potential obstacle to human freedom; critique of rigid structures (*17*)
Key difference	Pure theory; utopian, universal, stateless communism as the endpoint	Practical authoritarianism; Marxism as state ideology, without the withering of the state	Multinational socialism; pragmatic blend of Marxism with Yugoslav identity (*6*)	Institutional Marxism; tool for training LCY cadres, not critical inquiry (*23*)	Intellectual humanism; Marxism as philosophy, not state doctrine (*12*, *17*)

*League of Communists of Yugoslavia (Croatian: *Savez komunista Jugoslavije*, SKJ).

Methodological overview

This study employs a historically grounded, comparative and hermeneutical methodology that draws on both primary and secondary sources to examine the evolution, divergence, and ideological significance of two educational institutions in Socialist Yugoslavia: the Korčula Summer School (1964–1974) and the Political School of the League of Communists in Kumrovec (1975–1990). While these institutions are rarely analyzed together, their temporal proximity and contrasting institutional logics invites a critical comparison, and allows us to build a new understanding of ideology in Yugoslav socialist reproduction and dissent.

Compared to the initial student essay, which primarily juxtaposed the Korčula Summer School and the Political School in Kumrovec with the aim of illustrating the marginalization of the *Praxis* group and the Party's attempt to ideologically compensate for the space it left behind, the present version places significantly greater emphasis on the Kumrovec school itself (*5*). Rather than treating Kumrovec merely as a reactive formation or institutional mirror to Korčula, this study approaches it as a historical and ideological phenomenon in its own right—with its own pedagogical logic, political objectives, and internal contradictions. This reframing allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the Party's ideological apparatus in the later phases of Yugoslav socialism, and enables a closer investigation into how Kumrovec functioned as a distinct mode of ideological reproduction, rather than simply as the negation of *Praxis*.

The work is based on a diverse range of materials that include archival sources, such as yearbooks and internal documents of the Political School (notably those cited in Mihaljević 2018 and Kašić 1984), as well as memoirs and personal accounts like those of Momčilo Diklić, which, despite their evident subjectivity, provide valuable insights into the institutional culture, discursive norms, and internal contradictions of Kumrovec. In addition to published materials, the research incorporates anecdotal testimonies that served as heuristic points of inquiry. One such instance is a conversation with Dr. Dragiša Veljković, a psychiatrist now based in Slovenia, who shared with me his recollections of having known Ivica Račan during his latter's tenure as director of the Political School, and having advised him during his role as Prime minister. Although clearly unverifiable as a factual source, this account proved helpful in formulating questions about Račan's leadership and the legacy of Kumrovec. While anecdotal and testimonial sources cannot be treated as fully reliable historical documentation, they were never employed to establish empirical facts. Rather, they served to reconstruct the intellectual and ideological atmosphere of the period. Their inclusion in the study is guided by the principle of contextual relevance, and any claims derived from them are clearly marked and critically distinguished from assertions grounded in archival or historiographical evidence.

Given the complex historiographical terrain and the relative scarcity of accessible internal documents from the Korčula Summer School, the analysis of that institution necessarily relies more heavily on secondary literature and interpretive synthesis. Conversely, Kumrovec, due to its formal integration within the state apparatus, offers more traceable documentation, but also risks overdetermining the narrative through official discourse.

Where possible, these imbalances are acknowledged and mitigated through cross-referencing and comparative triangulation.

Alongside such primary material, the study draws extensively on historical and philosophical literature, including works by Banac, Djokić, Stefanov, Jakovljević, and others, in order to situate the investigation within the broader scholarly discourse on Yugoslav socialism, dissidence, and ideological education. Sources were selected for their capacity to show the philosophical orientation of the *Praxis* group and the role of Marxism in Yugoslavia, the institutional evolution and pedagogical function of Party schools such as Kumrovec, and the wider socio-political transformations that unfolded across the federation from the 1960s through the early 2000s.

The research primarily adopts a diachronic comparative approach, focusing on the trajectory of two institutions that embodied opposed responses to the ideological needs of the Yugoslav state. Rather than treating them as isolated case studies, the analysis places both schools within the broader transformation of Yugoslav socialism following the 1948 Cominform split, paying particular attention to the interplay between political events (e.g. 1968 protests, early 1970s party violence) and institutional developments. This temporal method enables the tracing of ideological continuities and reactions, such as the hypothesized strategic reorientation from the pluralism of Korčula to the doctrinal closure of Kumrovec. The chapter structure follows this logic, combining chronological reconstruction with a thematic-hermeneutic analysis, such as cadre formation, intellectual repression, and the changing meaning of Marxism in Yugoslavia.

Secondly, the study is shaped by a hermeneutic and critical-theoretical orientation. Ideology is approached not as a closed doctrinal system, but as a more fluid, historically contingent mode of meaning-production, transmitted through institutions, discursive practices, and political rituals. This interpretive framework makes it possible to analyze ideology both in its explicit manifestations, such as Party curricula, declarations, and administrative structures, and in its more implicit tensions, such as the marginalization of intellectuals, the reproduction of conformity, and the uneven legitimacy of pluralism within the socialist project.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the lack of comparative analysis in contemporary scholarly literature obscures a key insight that extends far beyond mere historical review: the failure of the Korčula Summer School and the subsequent attempt of the Political School in Kumrovec are not isolated events but deeply interconnected moments in Yugoslavia's complex and problematic engagement with Marxist ideology. We can say that, Yugoslav socialism's attempt to balance Marxist humanism with political pragmatism ultimately collapsed under the weight of its own fundamental problems. The regime's suppression of critical thought (Đilas, Korčula, *Praxis*) and reliance on ideological indoctrination (Kumrovec) exposed it as a system more invested in self-preservation than socialist transformation—a lesson resonant far beyond the Balkans. Korčula and Kumrovec are pure microcosms of Yugoslavia's existential struggle to define itself; the former symbolized an idea of hope of a socialism

which is rooted in humanism and critical thought; the latter epitomized the compromise of reducing ideology to a performative exercise. Together, they reflect the regime's inability to evolve beyond its foundational problem caused by the 1948 Condemnation: advocating for a "third way" socialism while replicating the authoritarian tendencies it claimed to reject.

Established in 1963 as a space for critical intellectual exchange and a humanistic approach to Marxism, the Korčula Summer School faced state resistance due to its independence and intellectual freedom, culminating in its suppression in 1974. Just one year later, in 1975, the founding of the Kumrovec School on Josip Broz Tito's initiative marked a shift toward institutionalized, controlled ideological education aimed at preserving loyalty to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). By examining them together, it becomes evident that the state's response to Korčula's collapse-seen as a—threat to the official line—directly shaped Kumrovec's creation as an attempt to bridge ideological discord within the party through rigid cadre training. However, this transition failed to address the fundamental critiques underlying both initiatives: the rejection of dogmatism at Korčula and the superficial application of Marxism at Kumrovec reveal that the state neither understood nor wished to embrace the philosophical depth required for a genuine grasp of Marx's ideas.

This continuity not only confirms the skepticism of Milovan Đilas, who warned in works like The New Class and The Unperfect Society about the hollowness of Yugoslav Marxism, but also exposes the regime's intellectual shortcomings in prioritizing pragmatic control over theoretical coherence. Đilas, a former ally of Tito turned dissident, argued that the revolution had been betrayed by the creation of a new bureaucratic elite—a critique echoed in Korčula's critical spirit and Kumrovec's inability to foster authentic Marxist thought. While Korčula sought to explore Marxism as a living philosophy, it faced repression; Kumrovec, in turn, reduced it to a mere tool for indoctrination, repeating the same errors in a different form. This dynamic suggests that the Yugoslav regime was either incapable of—or unwilling to—reconcile Marxism's utopian visions with the realities of governance, resulting in a system that turned potential allies into enemies.

Far from being mere educational initiatives, these schools reflect the broader failure of Yugoslavia's socialist experiment. Korčula represented an attempt to free Marxism from dogmatic constraints and orient it toward humanist ideals, while Kumrovec was a reactionary response to that very liberation, aimed at consolidating the party's ideological monopoly. Both, in their own ways, revealed the regime's inability to embrace critical thought as an ally rather than a threat. Instead of supporting intellectuals like the *Praxis* group or even Đilas in their efforts to refine socialism, the state pushed them into dissidence—not because they sought to dismantle the system, but due to its own failure to embody the principles it publicly espoused. This paradox, where Marxism served as a facade for maintaining power rather than a genuine guide for social transformation, highlights the inherent tension between theoretical ideals and political reality. In doing so, Korčula and Kumrovec stand as symbols not only of missed opportunities but also of the limits of Marxism itself in confronting human and institutional frailties.

Provenance: Submitted. This manuscript is based on the student paper by Toma Gruica (*5*), titled "Državna ideologija i intelektualci u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji: Filozofska ljetna škola na Korčuli (1964.–1974.) i politička škola SKJ u Kumrovcu (1974.–1990.)," published in Čemu. 2024;30(1):186–96.

Received: 5 April 2025 / **Accepted:** 14 July 2025 / **Published online:** 30 September 2025.

Peer review: Externally peer reviewed.

Funding: This research was made possible due to the "Bischof Johann Weber Stiftung" Scholarship for doctoral students, of the Katholische Hochschulgemeinde Graz, Austria.

Authorship declaration: Toma Gruica is the sole author of this work.

Disclosure of interest: The author completed the ICMJE Disclosure of Interest Form (available upon request from the corresponding author) and declares no competing interests.

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