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Aleksandar MATKOVIĆ

Institute of Economic Sciences, Belgrade

salematkovic@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-1802-8661

**A Tale of A Journey Through Time: On the Forgotten Children's Book
on Capitalism in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia
and its Place in the Life of Edvard Kardelj**

ABSTRACT: Few works of economic history venture into literature, let alone qualify as a “children’s novel”. Yet, Edvard Kardelj’s “A Journey Through Time” (1934) stands out as a unique contribution, written by a leading Yugoslav communist – in fact, Tito’s second-in-command. Despite its pre-war and post-war success, Kardelj’s early works, including this one, receive little attention today. To bridge the gap, this article first explores Kardelj’s Marxist education and Slovenia’s children’s publishers, and exposes the interrelationships between the two. The article then proceeds to analyse the book’s contents, and in doing so, it touches upon Kardelj’s conception of “progress”, before continuing on to assess the book’s reception in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and its brief role in post-war Yugoslav Marxist education. The article ultimately outlines the book’s place in Kardelj’s opus and the role of his early educational aspirations in the evolution of Yugoslav self-management.

KEYWORDS: Children’s literature, Edvard Kardelj, Marxist education, Slovenia, Yugoslavia

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the 1920s: The Context

To begin with, children's literature in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia seems to have held a special place in society. The question of the wellbeing of children was in itself a hotly debated topic in the Kingdom. As such, it was often featured in the works of communist writers. For example, Draga Stefanović, a prominent communist in the women's movement, was writing on the impoverishment of children following the First World War, with figures of up to 95.000 wartime orphans in the year 1924, who were not yet taken care of by the state, while the Belgrade weekly "Politika" from 26 March 1923 published figures showing that, of more than 2000 Belgrade's proletarian children who were examined during the year, more than 80% showed some form of stomach ailments, mostly due to malnutrition, and had high degrees of infant mortality.¹ However, the situation was only aggravated by the war – meaning that the problem was one of chronic nature, and it was not uncommon to have children's strikes occurring across the country, even before the country was established (for example, in the Kingdom of Serbia, on October 1906, one documented strike was held in the "Crveni breg" led and zinc mine near Avala, by children ages 5-10, due to low wages).² In addition, Dimitrije Tucović, the most prominent communist of the time, wrote about the textile industry around Leskovac, where children ages 8-14 were working 12 hour shifts and enduring beatings in 1914.³ As the situation worsened, communist literature in prisons, such as the hotspot in Sremska Mitrovica, became abundant with texts studying the topic of abandoned children in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.⁴ It is, thus, not surprising why the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) had even adopted its own children's magazine, *Budućnost* (*The Future*) as one of the official magazines of the Party at its Second

¹ Draga Stefanović, „O nevoljama naše dece”, *Opština i naša deca* 1926/5, u: *Novi Plamen*, 8. 12. 2021, <https://www.noviplamen.net/glavna/draga-stefanovic-o-nevoljama-nase-dece/>. Date accessed: 4. 6. 2025.

² Stefan Gužvica, „Deca rudari u štrajku – još jedna 'romantična' priča iz Kraljevine Srbije”, *Novi Plamen*, 27. 1. 2023, <https://www.noviplamen.net/glavna/deca-rudari-u-strajku-jos-jedna-romanticna-prica-iz-kraljevine-srbije/>. Date accessed: 4. 6. 2025.

³ Dimitrije Tucović, „Mali mučenici iz leskovačkih fabrika”, *Radničke novine*, 5. 5. 1914, 256, <http://www.znaci.net/00003/442.pdf>. Date accessed: 4. 6. 2025.

⁴ Archives of Yugoslavia (AJ), Fund 722B, Political Convicts in Prisons. Sremska Mitrovica. Materials from the library. "Značaj i položaj radnih žena u zemljama Jugoslavije" by Mariborski 25–30. 09. 1937, 108–109.

Congress in Vukovar by 1920. This led to the first children's science-fiction and utopian literary work in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, a story about "young Zora" who dreams of an alternative school in the future, where children will lead the learning process, rather than be led.⁵ This was at the time when the First World War and the physical destruction of the country slowed down the children's publishing industry. In addition, most of their publications were foreign translations,⁶ and the CPY was adequate to fill in the gap. Thus, as we shall see, this engagement brought about a change in the way children's literature was conceived of, with an emerging wave of youth radicalization appearing as a social consequence of the World War. However, in the aftermath of the War, the Yugoslav example was not alone. A similar process, in which communists tried to put forward alternative pedagogical conceptions occurred both in the region and elsewhere. To name just a few examples: to the north of Yugoslavia, the short-lived Soviet Republic of Hungary was a place where György Lukács would turn to fairy-tales as one of the tools for Marxist education during his time as the People's Commissary for Education and Culture. In Germany, Walter Benjamin was using the radio to the same ends, while, in Russia, Alexandra Kollontai, who was translated in Yugoslav periodicals,⁷ would write short stories intended to foster the education of working-class women. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was thus part of a wider trend.

However, the circumstances under which the Marxist education of working-class children took place in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia is also important to note, as it occurred after the infamous *Obznana* was declared. Namely, *Obznana* was a document not unlike the German Reichstag Decree, which banned working-class organizations like unions, limited freedom of speech and made the communist party and Marxist education illegal in 1920, when Kardelj was 10. Disappointed by the harsh upbringing within the new country in the aftermath of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, young working-class children, like Edvard Kardelj, tried to find a way of making sense of the

⁵ Biljana Andonovska, "Introduction to A Walk Through the Future" in: *The Unpredictable Past of the Future: The Political Potential of Utopia*, ed. Ivana Momčilović (Belgrade/Ljubljana: Edicija Jugoslavija/Založba Sophia, 2024), 112.

⁶ Tatjana Hojan, „Mladinska matica”. *Otrok in knjiga: revija za vprašanja mladinske književnosti in knjižne vzgoje* 6/1977, 5.

⁷ Stanislava Barač, *Feministička kontrajavnost: žanr ženskog portreta u srpskoj periodici 1920-1941* (Belgrade: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2015), 132.

social reality around them. Most often, they did so by joining local self-education clubs and the communist movement, which, at that time, offered a venue to discuss the problems of working-class emancipation and a framework for critically reflecting on their social surroundings.⁸ It is thus no wonder that the influence on children's education was an important political matter for both left-wing and right-wing publishers, as well as other social actors, like the police and the government's censorship. It is against this background that one must understand Yugoslavia's youth culture in the beginning of the 20th century, of which Kardelj's own upbringing was a prime example. Hence, we will proceed to trace Kardelj's early childhood and education, and trace his development up until the time that he wrote his first and only children's book.

*Marxist Education and Working-Class Children in Ljubljana:
On the Early Kardelj*

Although Kardelj produced more than 6,000 pages of published, and another 6,000 pages of unpublished texts – one of the largest in the world by volume coming from socialist thinkers of his time⁹ – his work receives surprisingly little attention today. With two brief exceptions, Kardelj's biography has not been the subject of any recent scientific study.¹⁰ His early period, along with his engagement with children's literature, is completely unknown and,

⁸ As, for example, Kardelj himself did in his "On the crisis of contemporary youth". Written in 1929, when Kardelj was 19 years old, the text explains that economic progress, and the ensuing proletarianization, had destroyed the economic basis of the family, as both men and women had to work. According to the young Kardelj, this has exposed the youth's education to the whole of society, in the absence of the family. At the same time, the society of the time was facing a crisis following the First World War, meaning that a gap between what they were thought at school and the social reality outside of the school, had left the "contemporary youth" to fend for themselves. Cf. Edvard Kardelj, *Sabrana dela: prva knjiga: maj 1928-decembar 1934* (Beograd: Izdavački centar Komunist, 1989), 21–22.

⁹ Ivan Bratko, „Vzpon velike osebnosti”, *Delo*, 15. 2. 1979, 13.

¹⁰ When it comes to recent studies, Pirjevec, Jože. *Tito and His Comrades* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), sections 3–5 mention brief aspects of Kardelj's biography. However, the only known attempt at a scientific biography of Kardelj is found in a 30-year old doctoral dissertation, otherwise not published as a book: John K. Cox, „Edvard Kardelj: A Political Biography” (Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, Department of History, 1996)

ever since the breakup of Yugoslavia, there hasn't been a single published text on the matter. The following section aims to fill this research gap.

Firstly, there were at least three major hotspots for youth Marxist education in 1920s Ljubljana, all of which were attended by Kardelj and, thus, shaped his worldviews. To begin with, Kardelj's parents played a role. His father, a textile worker, a union-member and a member of the Social-Democratic Party, and his mother, a worker at the tobacco factory in Ljubljana, were both members of the "Svoboda" working-class education and gymnastic club, which had a special section dedicated to children's education.¹¹ This family connection was crucial as, in addition to establishing social ties and playing at the "Svoboda" club, it provided Kardelj with an opportunity to listen to debates between older socialists regarding problems of living standards among the Yugoslav working-classes in Slovenia at a young age. The youth section of the club also led him to participate in its working-class choir called "Ivan Cankar", which was established by a young poet and "Svoboda" colleague, Srečko Kosovel (1904-1926). Although the two never met in person, Kosovel would greatly influence Kardelj. In fact, Kardelj's interest in social issues actually started by way of reading children's literature, written by Kosovel. In a 1959 interview for a Belgrade newspaper, Kardelj would recall Kosovel as the most important figure in influencing his interest in social affairs.¹² Despite dying at the early age of 22, Kosovel was known as one of the most influential poets of his generation, publishing already from the age of 11.¹³ In that sense, "children's literature" was not a field reserved for textbooks written by teachers, but was a very famous field in Slovenia at the time – and, as mentioned, it offered working-class children a way of self-reflecting on their own social surroundings. Thus, in addition to Kosovel, what strengthened Kardelj's convictions were, according to his own memory, also the social clashes outside the school. For example, Kardelj witnessed first-hand the clashes between the worker's and the "Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista" (*Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists*, ORJUNA), a unitary proto-fascist organization with its own paramilitary formation. The ORJUNA members clashed with Croatian nationalists and

¹¹ Janez Vipotnik, Ivo Matović, *Edvard Kardelj: životni put i revolucionarno delo* (Gornji Milanovac: Dečje novine, 1981), 15.

¹² Miklavž Komelj, *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost*, (Ljubljana: Založba */cf, 2009), 83.

¹³ A good description of Kosovel's influence can be found here: Komelj, *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost*

communists in 1924, in the mining and working-class city of Trbovlje, where Kardelj was working as a newspaper dispatcher at the age of 14.¹⁴ In a very interesting biographical detail, Kardelj would later return to the club to re-live his experiences and, at the age of 18, appear as an actor at its “Working-class stage” in the socio-political drama called “Crisis” by Rudolf Golouh, which premiered on May 1st 1928, half a year before the start of the dictatorship by King Aleksandar. During the third act of the drama, the aforementioned ORJUNA is depicted through a clash with local workers. In the final act, the drama ends with the workers taking over their factory once the strike-breakers were expelled, which means that some forms of self-management were being depicted in the more radical artistic sections of the aforementioned club.¹⁵ Hence, one may say Kardelj re-enacted his youthful experiences on stage. In this, he was not alone, but was, in fact, accompanied even by future Yugoslav leaders like Boris Kidrič, with the play being organized by his personal friend, Bratko Kreft.¹⁶

Thus, there can be no doubt to the importance of such experiences for Kardelj’s generation. However, back in 1924, after his clash with the Yugoslav proto-fascists, Kardelj would be invited to join a second Marxist education club. This time, it was a clandestine reading group around the tavern “Pri Štrajzlu”. Apart from his friend Boris Kidrič, the group also included Boris Zihlerl, who later became a famous literary scholar, and member of the Slovenian Central Committee’s main Marxist Centre, the Party activist Maks Stermecki, and Aleš Bebler, who became an important Yugoslav diplomat. The “crew” also frequented the “Delavski dom” (Worker’s House), which became known as the “Red University” (a moniker given to various institutions across the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, including prisons), where they would recruit po-

¹⁴ Edvard Kardelj, *Sabrana dela: prva knjiga: maj 1928-decembar 1934*, X; By that time, he was also working as a dispatcher for a newspaper called *Autonomist* due to poor family finances; Stevan Bezdanov, *Vaspitanje i obrazovanje u misli i delu Edvarda Kardelja* (Novi Sad: Misao, 1981), 3.

¹⁵ In fact, the artistic youth section was “responsible” for the banning of the club in 1935, when the authorities discovered that, in addition to socialists, the club’s artistic youth section was increasingly under the influence of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Cf. Moša Pijade, *Istorijski arhiv komunističke partije Jugoslavije, Tom II, Kongresi i zemaljske konferencije KPI, 1919-1937* (Beograd: Istorijsko odeljenje Centralnog komiteta Komunističke partije Jugoslavije, 1950), 484.

¹⁶ Bratko Kreft, “Manifest je začel s pesnikom”, *Delo*, 15. 2. 1979, 13.

tential students. They received their books mostly from Berlin's left-wing political parties of the time, and often via Dušan Kermavner, one of the "crew" members who studied in Berlin between 1922 and 1923, where he got involved with the Spartacist League (by that time, a member-organization of the Communist Party of Germany) and obtained Marxist literature.¹⁷ From there on, the group read "translations of the French social historian Albert Mathiez to stories by Maxim Gorky, Jack London, Heinrich Heine, and the Czech avant-garde socialist poet Jiří Wolker. The first full book of political theory they read was Nikolai Bukharin's *ABC of Communism*: there soon followed *Das Kapital* (which they had read earlier in condensed form) and The Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Material in the Yugoslav languages included works by the contemporary Croatian authors August Cesarec and Miroslav Krleža; stories from the Slovene writer and publicist of liberal leanings Ivan Cankar; and the journals *Književna republika*, *Mladina*, and *Svobodna mladina*."¹⁸

The group had managed to exist in secrecy thanks to Vlado Kozak, the son of the tavern's keeper, whose mother had enough means to bribe the police.¹⁹ Thanks to *Mama Kozak's* influence, her son had the opportunity to keep the circle going, offering Ljubljana's youth a chance to educate themselves outside of the official school curriculum, as was often the practice for working-class families at the time.²⁰

¹⁷ Carole Rogel, "The Education of a Slovene Marxist: Edvard Kardelj 1924-1934", *Slovene Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1-2, 1989, 177.

¹⁸ Cox, "Edvard Kardelj: A Political Biography", 29.

¹⁹ Rogel, "The Education of a Slovene Marxist: Edvard Kardelj 1924-1934", 177.

²⁰ Even outside of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, this was more of a rule than an exception, due to inability of different states to fully integrated the working class at the time. A recent example of a "bottom-up" subjective history of various sections of the US working class can be seen here: James R. Barrett, *History from the Bottom Up and the Inside Out* (London: Duke University Press, 2017), 101; According to Barrett, the very nature of manual work, which implied migration in the cases of sailors, lumberjacks, etc. has exposed the workers to new ideas and a cosmopolitan perspective. Of course, one must take care and note that Barrett's essays are autobiographical and hence it is questionable to what extent can his experiences be considered universal, especially since he intentionally focuses on individual, rather than collective examples, oftentimes excluding the role of ideology. However, this does offer us a glimpse of a tendency that can be said to definitely exist wherever manual labor is mobile, even though it, by itself, does not completely shape the identity of a worker.

Ultimately, at the behest of the “Štrajzl” group, Kardelj would officially join the SKOJ, the Union of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia, in 1926. At the time, the youth and revolutionary youth movements were making a comeback as well, with SKOJ activists beginning to gather members from Slovenia’s middle classes. The young Kardelj, enrolled in the state male teacher’s school in Ljubljana in 1925, was already somewhat familiar with SKOJ’s official herald, *Mladina*, which was also previously read in “Pri Štrajzlu”, meaning that these groups intermingled with one another. *Mladina* also published the poems of the aforementioned Srečko Kosovel,²¹ which had attracted Kardelj to their circle of collaborators. At this time, during his schooldays, Kardelj had shown a keen interest in history, and started his first articles, like “Delovna škola” (Working school), with his own views on education.²² At the end of his schooling period, he also formed a club of his own, the “Samoizobraževalni klub” (Self-education club) in June 1929, which was coordinated by the so-called “Teacher’s movement” a movement of teacher’s advocating for a progressive socialist education that later on formalized with the help of the CPY.²³ Thus, from “Svoboda” to “Štrajzl” and the brief “Samoizobraževalni klub”, one can see Kardelj constantly returning to Marxist education.

²¹ Komelj, *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost*, 83.

²² In this short text, mentioned in the beginning of this article, basing himself on various pedagogical theories and methods (Paul Oestreich, Blonskij, the so-called Dalton-Laboratory Plan, and the Pankhurst method), Kardelj made an outline for a school based on collective education through creative labor rather than passive individual learning by intellectual means; Kardelj, *Sabrana dela: prva knjiga: maj 1928–decembar 1934*, 7–13.

²³ The formalization of the movement occurred following the adaptation of the popular-front approach by the Comintern and the CPY around the year 1937. According to Jovanka Kecman, “At the end of 1936, the ‘Teachers’ Movement’ was formed as an organization of progressive teachers in Slovenia, who in 1937 established the Cultural-Publishing Cooperative “Pedagoški tisk.” At the beginning of 1937, the Croatian Teachers’ Cultural Support Cooperative “Ivan Filipović” was formed in Zagreb, and at the end of the same year, the Teachers’ Cultural-Publishing Cooperative “Vuk Karadžić” was established in Belgrade. In August 1939, the Teachers’ Cultural Cooperative “Petar Kočić” was formed in Banja Luka and the Teachers’ Cultural-Educational Cooperative “Narodni učitelj” in Podgorica. These cooperatives attracted and brought together a large number of teachers, especially young ones, and developed a variety of activities.”; Jovanka Kecman, „O naprednom učiteljskom pokretu u Jugoslaviji s posebnim osvrtom na položaj i delatnost učiteljica (1936-1941)“, u: *Istorija XX veka: zbornik radova*, ed. Živko Avramovski (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1970), 272.

However, near the end of Kardelj's schooling, he became a member of the Ljubljana city committee of SKOJ in 1928, as well as a member of the CPY. He rapidly rose through the ranks, becoming co-opted into the Provincial Committee of SKOJ for Slovenia in 1929, and becoming one of SKOJ's secretaries shortly thereafter. His communist activities, however, hampered any prospects of his future work in any of Slovenia's schools. In fact, that same year, 1929, Kardelj was arrested. The dictatorship of King Aleksandar was established on January 6th 1929, following which "Mama Kozak" was no longer able to buy off the police. As a result, Kardelj, along with most of his friends, was arrested by the police.²⁴ In an almost symbolic turn of events, the police had interrupted the 19-year-old Kardelj at a time when he was writing a text entitled "On the Crisis of Contemporary Youth".²⁵ As a member of SKOJ, Kardelj was first detained for a month, and then incarcerated and sent to the infamous Glavnjača prison in Belgrade.²⁶ The police, who were fervently anti-communist, and felt they were given free rein following the declaration of dictatorship, tortured him during the investigation, which lasted for an incredible period of seven months. Similar experiences of torture abound in memoirs of communists at the time. According to one description, during his detention, Kardelj faced "hanging from the ceiling while being hoisted by his feet facing up, being told he would be thrown from the sixth floor and shattered all over the concrete tiles in the garden; or being told that, if he does not give out the names of his comrades, he would be placed in a sealed bag and thrown into the Danube river, whose waters would swallow him alive".²⁷ However, like his clashes with ORJUNA in Golouh's drama, Kardelj would "re-live" his clashes with the police in another novel called "Boj" (*Struggle*) in which the main character is spiritually reborn after being tortured by the police.²⁸ However, apart from personal horrors, Kardelj's arrest had put an end to his potential career of a teacher in Slovenia: previously, Kardelj's father had attempted to secure a place for

²⁴ Rogel, „The Education of a Slovene Marxist: Edvard Kardelj 1924-1934”, 178.

²⁵ Kardelj, *Sabrana dela: prva knjiga: maj 1928–decembar 1934*, 19; See footnote number 19 for more context on the text.

²⁶ Mihailo Šaranović et al. *Edvard Kardelj: 1910-1979*, (Beograd: Novinska agencija Tanjug, 1979), 281.

²⁷ Ibid, 248.

²⁸ Rogel, „The Education of a Slovene Marxist: Edvard Kardelj 1924-1934”, 178.

him in a school next to one of Slovenia's mercury mines.²⁹ The place where he was supposed to teach, after finishing his own school in June 1929, was called Podkraj (now part of Litije); Kardelj never managed to take up his post, however, as he was arrested in November 1929.³⁰ Following the event, the Court for the Protection of the State had sentenced the young Edvard Kardelj to two years of harsh prison in Zabela next to Požarevac, out of which Kardelj would come out only in 1932. It is after this period of harsh incarceration that "A Journey Through Time" was written.

Mladinska matica: More Than a Publisher

Like many others, during his time in Zabela, Kardelj would go on to finish the prison "university," also called the "red university," although the archival material from that prison's Marxist education programs appears to have been lost with no fund existing in the Archives of Yugoslavia that would provide us with more clues. However, what is known is that, upon finishing his prison sentence, Kardelj would return to Slovenia and, along with Boris Kidrič and others, commence work on re-establishing the Communist Party organizations, including the Party's Provincial Committee. This would include their attempts at reaching out to a wider audience.³¹ As a result, Kardelj's literary

²⁹ Šaranović et al, *Edvard Kardelj: 1910-1979*, 248; This is very likely, as other biographies, such as Cox's, also mention that Kardelj had previously gotten a job at a small school near the mercury mines near Litije, thanks to his father; Cox, "Edvard Kardelj: A Political Biography", 31.

³⁰ Bezdanov, *Vaspitanje i obrazovanje u misli i delu Edvarda Kardelja*, 9; As before, Kardelj managed to work out his experiences via a play, which resulted in the drama „Struggle”; in which one of the main characters experiences a “moment of rebirth” after incarceration, and describes the night in which he was tortured as; “one of the most important in my life. Up until now, in my thoughts, and in my work as a communist, despite my proletarian upbringing, I dealt mostly with theory. Now I knew and felt what it all means. Struggle!... Struggle!...” (Rogel, „The Education of a Slovene Marxist: Edvard Kardelj 1924-1934”, 178); Because of this, different biographies would underline the importance this moment had on Kardelj. As Kardelj himself described it: „In the whole atmosphere, I didn't even feel the beatings. It is hard to describe. It's just that, not for a single moment did it cross my mind that I cannot last.” (Šaranović et al, *Edvard Kardelj: 1910-1979*, 248)

³¹ This occurred ahead of the Fourth Conference of the CPY for Slovenia, which took place in 1934, just before Kardelj's departure for Moscow, where he would further continue his Marxist education once again.

engagement became increasingly prolific. During this time, Kardelj published his texts on "Fascism" (1934) and the "Slovenian National Question" (1936). Moreover, according to Franc Šetinac, one of Kardelj's biographers, this was not the result of a "task" given to Kardelj by the Party, but rather the other way around. It was Kardelj who emphasized the need to break out of the "sectarian" party circles, and direct their communication to the wider audiences, as part of the Party's work on the "popular front". For a party with less than 400 people in the Slovenian branch at the time,³² this entailed a radical shift, albeit ultimately a successful one. Subsequently, to give an example, one party conference would be held in the residency of the bishop of Ljubljana, a left-leaning catholic who belonged to the circles of "Christian collectivists".³³ They could also have been counted as people who would have read the Party's – and by extent, Kardelj's – publications. In the final instance, Kardelj's personal interests and his responsibilities as a Party member, particularly in engaging with Slovenian youth, appear to have become intertwined.

However, other social actors with similar interests got involved, too. Namely, this was the time of a great student upheaval that definitely made the public ready for such a work beyond the usual readership. Due to the increasing dictatorship that encroached upon the autonomy of the university, student-Marxist groups would form to defend academic freedom across the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, organizing themselves at the university level: thus the "Central Marxist Group" was formed in the Belgrade University, the "Central Student Council" in the Zagreb University, and the "Communist Student Fraction" in the University of Ljubljana, which was led by the University Committee of the CPY and issued the herald *Rdeči signali, revolucionarno glasilo študentov* in 1932.³⁴ These university-level groups emerged from large numbers of students drawn from various faculties. In the case of Ljubljana, student organisations held even greater significance, given that the university was only established as late as 1919. Certain left-wing publishers – such as the well-known Slovenian publishing house "Mladinska matica" – must have taken note of the growing radicalisation among Slovenian

³² Vipotnik, *Edvard Kardelj*, 9.

³³ Franc Šetinc, *Misel in delo Edvarda Kardelja* (Ljubljana: Prešernova založba, 1980), 19.

³⁴ Miroljub Vasić, *Revolucionarni omladinski pokret u Jugoslaviji 1929-1941* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1977), 245.

youth, who were, incidentally, their largest readership. Hence, by the time Kardelj was released from prison in 1932, it appears that other social actors were already becoming receptive to the idea of publishing more radical material related to children's education. As Ivan Bratko, a Slovene writer and publisher, noted, "The idea — to write a brief outline of the economic history of humanity for young people — was, so to speak, in the air. At that time, we were eager for works such as Engels' "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State," Filipović's "The Development of Society," etc. Kardelj's booklet had the additional advantage that its focus was skillfully, unobtrusively placed in the present!"³⁵

However, instead of publishing with the much smaller and communist-run "Mala knjižnica" – which would have been logical for both the publisher and the author – Kardelj's work made it to the very top of mainstream publishers. But, why did "Mladinska matica" offer Kardelj, an ex-convict with no previous authored books, the opportunity to publish an influential children's book, and how this related to the publisher's identity, thus warrants explanation. Namely, a decade prior to their first contact in the 1930s—at a time when Kardelj was beginning to emerge as a writer—children's literature was experiencing a revival. Several short-lived attempts were made to establish reputable publishing houses in Slovenia, such as "Knjižnica za mladino", "Mladinska knjižnica", and "Jan Legova knjižnica za mladino", with varying degrees of success. Most of these efforts took place during the 1920s, in the aftermath of the First World War, and were attempts to address the problems faced by the vast number of children whose families had been shattered by the war. The most successful and enduring of these was precisely the "Mladinska matica" publishing house. It was established in 1927 with the intent to "finally fulfil an old wish of Slovenian teachers: to offer young people good book collections at affordable prices."³⁶ It was also a symptom of the "Teacher's movement", which was in the process of consolidating itself.³⁷ This publishing house managed to operate until the time of

³⁵ Edvard Kardelj, *Potovanje skozi čas* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1982), 102.

³⁶ Hojan, "Mladinska matica", 5.

³⁷ It did so by way of improved unionizing beyond the divisions set by competing political interests, and by establishing an all-Yugoslav teacher's alliance following the *Celje Declaration* of 1926, by which it allowed teachers of different political backgrounds to join the "Association of Yugoslav Teachers", the main teacher's trade union in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia; Bezdanov, *Vaspitanje i obrazovanje u misli i delu Edvarda Kardelja*, 9.

the German occupation of 1941. By that time, it was Slovenia's most successful pre-war publishing house, whose works were also translated into Croatian and Serbian, the two other main languages in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. It also gave out scholarships to talented children. According to one biography, the managing board of "Mladinska matica" actually reached out to Kardelj with the suggestion for such a book, meaning Kardelj was not the initiator.³⁸ This begets some explanation. Namely, at that time, the core of Mladenska matica was formed around left-wing authors like Jože Ribičić and Alojz Hreščak, Anica Černejeva, Anka Levčeva, Albert Širok, and others. Kardelj was probably persuaded to write the book by one of them, Alojz Hreščak, who was his personal friend, in addition to being a board member of "Mladinska matica".³⁹ By then, Kardelj was known as a communist and gifted thinker. However, due to state censorship, all of his previous works were written under pseudonyms, and he was yet to establish himself as a writer, which could best be done if he avoided adult literature altogether. According to one testimony, Alojz discussed inviting Kardelj to submit a book to "Naš rod" – a series published by Matica – which was formed to deliver four cheap books each year, at 25 dinars for the subscription to the whole year, in 9 instalments. At 40,000 printed books each year, it easily outweighed all other publishers, most of which remained at 3,000 books per year.⁴⁰ The series published mostly left-wing authors (Hudales, Seliškar, Ingolič, Bevk, Klopčič, Župančič, Winkler, Vida Taufer, Anica Černe, Karel Širok). Each year one book of prose was included, and Hreščak suggested a book of economic history to be designated for that role for 1934. The other three books that were published in the series for that year were "Kresnica", a 96-page collection of poems written by schoolchildren coming from poor families, often describing their daily lives and immediate environment, most often their mothers and fathers. Apart from that, the series also featured a book called "Droplet" by Anica Černajeva, which writes a "history" of one drop of water, starting from the point of its evaporation from the sea, and follows it until it returns to the sea once more. Franca Bevk's "Tovariš" ("Comrade"), features a third history, that of a friendship of two boys from an elemen-

³⁸ Ibid, 10.

³⁹ Janko Svetina, „Pot marksistične misli med mlade ljudi. Kako so leto 1934. sprejeli Kardeljevo Potovanje skozi čas“, *Delo*, 15. 2. 1979, 15.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 16.

tary school onwards.⁴¹ All in all, one can say that the entire series revolved around unusual histories, from an actual history of proletarian children's poetry to histories of friendship, water, and capitalism. While seemingly eccentric, these books had a collective educational purpose, as they focused on describing „how the world works” via tales and stories. In a preface to one of the book's post-war editions, Kardelj underscores the importance of publishing such a book under censorship and dictatorship, and dates its writing to 1933.⁴² In any case, the result of his collaboration with Mladinska matica was that on June 14th 1934, about 20,500 school children who were subscribers of their “Naš rod” edition – a sizeable portion of the country's school population⁴³ – received the three above-mentioned books, and, among them, “A Journey Through Time”, Kardelj's first printed book, and the first one to bear his name.⁴⁴

The Book Itself: Towards a Kardeljian Conception of Progress?

This section will briefly present the content of the book itself. Admittedly, there are few works of economic history that venture into the realm of

⁴¹ T. [only initials exist], „Prikazi i beleške”, *Srpski književni glasnik* 3/1934, 72, https://digitalna.nb.rs/view/URN:NBN:RS:SD_E74E1D9A175FE5728805716D3DEA6D36-1934-K003. Date accessed: 4. 6. 2025.

⁴² Kardelj, *Sabrana dela: prva knjiga: maj 1928–decembar 1934*, 129.

⁴³ The education system in Slovenia was such that the majority of the pupils finished only their mandatory eight-year primary education. Up until World War I they could only proceed to one of Slovenia's eleven grammar schools for secondary education, while the University of Ljubljana was established only in 1919. The numbers for the secondary schools ranged from 5,000 in the school year of 1918/1919 to over 13,000 just before the Second World War. Without the number of primary school pupils, it is hard to estimate the market penetration rate of Matica's books, but the numbers for secondary education at least offer a glimpse. The number of primary school pupils could thus be as much as three to five times larger than the figures for secondary education in Slovenia. This means that Matica's books could influence a sizeable portion of the school population. Also, in 1953, the number of primary school pupils was 90,000, meaning that the 1934 figures would have been lower than that – thus implying that Matica could have covered at least 1/3 of the primary school population, if not more; Aleš Gabrič, “The Education System in Slovenia in the 20th Century”, *Družbenoslovne razprave* Vol. 16, No. 1–2, 2000, 14, 21; Ivan Bratko confirms that Matica's large distribution network played a key role in Kardelj accepting to publish the book with them, instead of “Mala knjižnica”, his Party's own publishing house; Kardelj, *Potovanje skozi čas*, 99.

⁴⁴ Svetina, „Pot marksistične misli med mlade ljudi”, 15.

literature — let alone identify themselves as a 'novel'. Such is, however, the case with the unique work of children's literature that "A Journey Through Time" represented upon its release. In the story, on a hot summer's night, a young boy named Štefan falls asleep, confused after reading a book of history. In his dreams — or rather, nightmares — he is visited by dozens of historical figures who pass through one another in quick succession before vanishing. Soon afterwards, a tall figure enters Štefan's room and is recognised by the boy as "Učjenjak Vse-moč" or "Professor Omnipotent" — a scientist with "silver linings" in his dark beard, a description somewhat reminiscent of Marx. The scientist invites Štefan on a journey through time in his flying machine, called "Time", which can transport its passengers to different historical epochs through willpower alone. Initially taken aback when he learns that the journey will trace the history of the economy, the puzzled Štefan is reassured by the scientist, who explains that history might be better understood by considering its existential dimension — that is, how human beings have economised in order to survive through the ages. Together, they begin their travels at the "dawn of time", starting with natural history and the age of the dinosaurs, before leaping through the first human communities, the Middle Ages, and into the period of modern capitalism. From herds of hunter-gatherers to "natural economy" and agriculture, each subsequent chapter explores complex topics such as the division of the sexes, the emergence of the first factories, and the formation of states — from antiquity to the rise of the first nation-states during the period of industrialisation.

So far, English-speaking biographies tended to downplay the complexity of the book, accusing it of "pure (although simplified) economic determinism [...] a modern-day fairy tale, complete with a happy ending"⁴⁵ or "a thinly veiled socialist allegory and an extremely biased teaching aid".⁴⁶ As there is currently no other literature on the subject, such descriptions merit attention and require updating. First and foremost, the editors of Kardelj's "Collected Works" state that, in the manuscripts found in his estate, there are notes dated 1932 from chapters of Heinrich Cunow's "General Economic History" and "The American Economic History" by H. V. Faulkner⁴⁷. Thus, Kardelj based the empirical parts of the book on novel Marxist and non-Marxist works, rather than

⁴⁵ Rogel, "The Education of a Slovene Marxist: Edvard Kardelj 1924-1934", 182.

⁴⁶ Cox, "Edvard Kardelj: A Political Biography", 33.

⁴⁷ Kardelj, *Sabrana dela: prva knjiga: maj 1928-decembar 1934*, 4.

relying solely on Marx or on 19th-century literature – sources that themselves do not present a simple picture of progress. Therefore, the description of the book as a “thinly veiled socialist allegory” should be qualified. This is especially important to keep in mind, given that Marxist approaches could not be expressed freely at the time. Kardelj himself later admitted, in a 1963 post-war re-publication of his book, that due to state censorship during the 1930s, “Many thoughts could not be developed into greater clarity and many words were not fully expressed, or were expressed—in an Aesopian manner.”⁴⁸ This was often acknowledged in pots-war introductions by Slovenian publishers, as it influenced the finished book. According to Ivan Bratko: “At that time, he wrote in such a way that the dull-witted regime censor could not catch him. He avoided this danger in various ways. A story for youth, the thought of the censor, and the consistency to say what he wanted despite everything — these three tasks he performed in an unforced way, in a concise, short narrative.”⁴⁹ For example, the entire story could not be set in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia but had to be told through the development of the world as a whole, focusing on distant countries such as China or the USA. Slovenia and Europe, whenever they are mentioned, are referred to in the past tense. Due to this, the book was never intended as a teaching aid for actual history but rather, as we have seen, as an attempt to engage working-class children with socio-economic relations often excluded from their everyday experience. In fact, Kardelj had already attempted to bring the topic to children’s attention using a similar approach in March 1933, in an article for “Naš rod” titled “Traders and Trade”. In the article, he – acting as the narrator – and a young boy named Matija sail to Singapore and India on a ship called “Thought”⁵⁰ to trace the production of pepper that Matija’s mother wished to buy for her kitchen⁵¹. However, this article contains little to no depiction of pro-

⁴⁸ Ibid, 129.

⁴⁹ Kardelj, *Potovanje skozi čas*, 101.

⁵⁰ The naming is emblematic. Kardelj may have had in mind Marx’s method of analysis, which entails re-creating an “ideal average” of the capitalist mode of production in the realm of abstraction, beginning with economic history. The “machine” in *A Journey Through Time*, initially called “Time,” is revealed under a different name at the end of the book: “‘Time’ is all-encompassing thought, probing ever deeper into the essence of nature, humanity, time, and space...” (Kardelj, *Sabrana dela: prva knjiga: maj 1928–decembar 1934*, 169). Given that Marxism was a “Weltanschauung” – a worldview – shared by both the author and the book at the time, this is not entirely implausible.

⁵¹ Kardelj, *Sabrana dela: prva knjiga: maj 1928–decembar 1934*, 87, 402.

gress – unlike “A Journey Through Time”. While certain passages clearly convey a sense of progressivism, seemingly rooted in “economic determinism”, the theme of progress remains central to the work. It is precisely for this reason that the work is best approached through an analysis of progress. Upon closer examination, the narrative proves less linear than the aforementioned remarks might suggest, giving us reason to pause. The book follows Marx’s own approach, portraying capitalism as simultaneously progressive and destructive, prone to both social and economic crises. Here, crises are described as an integral part of a specifically capitalist form of progress—or more precisely, the book portrays progress as it occurs within capitalist societies, never neglecting to acknowledge its costs. At one point, Kardelj even echoes Walter Benjamin’s trope concerning the inseparability of “documents of human culture”, that is, cultural achievements from violence. For example, while the professor describes the ancient slave labour of Egypt, Štefan shivers and asks himself: “Was it truly possible that monuments of human culture could arise out of such suffering?”⁵² Shortly thereafter, Štefan asks why “relations between humans turn out so badly,” to which the professor once again points to the particular crisis-ridden form that progress takes under capitalism. The ruins of slavery are then depicted, with Štefan reflecting: “Italy is dead. It has become a vast cultural desert [...]”. In the following sentence, “Štefan began to notice: the Romans were incapable of progress, while the barbarians would be the ones who would create a new culture, one which would be more enduring...”. In the second edition of 1969, this passage was altered to read: “The Roman Empire lies dead,” with any mention of barbarians removed. Instead, slave and peasant revolts are highlighted, which are ultimately not futile, as the subsequent passage indicates. If anything, the passage suggests that history is driven by the struggle between oppressors and the oppressed, and soon portrays oppressive systems as becoming burdensome to themselves. “The old Roman society was not capable of progress anymore, but a new one was already in the making, one which will be able to produce a new culture”.⁵³ Progress would thus signify the possibility of a new culture, rather than merely the production of “more commodities.” The sole strand of progressivism for which Kardelj might be criticised here is one that implies a strict dualism between culture on the one hand, and nature on the

⁵² Ibid, 142.

⁵³ Ibid, 146.

other. As Janez Vipotnik, one of Kardelj's biographers, noted in his review of the book, there is a sense that Kardelj seeks to portray a universal human yearning for freedom, equality, and brotherhood across various stages of history. This may well have been a concession to the book's pedagogical purpose. As Vipotnik summarized, "During the collapse of feudalism, people believed that a new world would emerge in alignment with the slogans of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and fraternity. However, in order for these ideals to be realized, humanity would first need to eliminate the causes of oppression—causes that lead to man subjugating man, and one nation dominating another. The book concludes that humanity's yearning for freedom, equality, and brotherhood is eternal. This longing resurfaces repeatedly in new historical forms, surmounting obstacles and barriers imposed by nature—both external nature and human nature, including the nature of human society. Thus, humanity's struggle with nature and the prevailing conditions of human society is unending."⁵⁴ While retaining the distinction between nature and culture, the book does not suggest that progress must entail the perpetual plundering of resources; rather, as we have seen, progress transforms into qualitative advancement. In other words, it is the progress of human development, rather than that of an economic system. This distinction between development and progress must be considered crucial.

This is most clearly seen when the book reaches the age of capitalism and begins to depict economic progress in increasingly contrasting terms. The world market is portrayed as arising from the plundering of colonies, yet simultaneously as forging connections between disparate parts of the world and overcoming provincial worldviews. In this respect, Kardelj's approach resembles that of Marx, who acknowledged certain positive "civilising" aspects of capitalism. Throughout the book, Kardelj comments on the various forms that progress takes, rather than adopting a strictly progressivist stance himself. This is particularly evident when the book addresses the emergence of factories under capitalism. In a footnote, Kardelj suggests that the description of the factories was "done according to Gilbert-Silberstein,"⁵⁵ a 19th and 20th cen-

⁵⁴ Vipotnik, *Edvard Kardelj*, 6.

⁵⁵ Kardelj's reference to Silberstein is curious, though. The author in question was economic journalist from the 19th and early 20th century, who was also known for his satirical descriptions of progress. When not dealing with the theory of relativity or Darwin, Silberstein wrote satirical books, such as "His excellence: The Android", about a robot who becomes a president. He also happened to die the same year when "A Journey Through

tury satirical writer and economic journalist who sometimes parodied the notion of progress. And, admittedly, even the late Kardelj had certain views which simply cannot be squared in a simple notion of progressivism. For example, his once influential, but forgotten engagement in ecology. During his address to the “Yugoslav Alliance for the Protection and Improvement of the Human Environment” he advocated against the “conviction that the wealth of nature is unlimited” and that it can, therefore, be exploited without limits, in a brief reference to the “Limits to Growth” which came out a year before.⁵⁶ But ultimately, an explanation might lie in a familiar influence of Kardelj’s – Srečko Kosovel. Interestingly, Kosovel wrote a very similar 2-page concept for a song that has an almost an identical structure as Kardelj’s “A Journey Through Time”. The song was called “Potnik v brzovlaku” (The Passenger in the Train), “a poem concerning the drama of the soul” (as the subtitle says).⁵⁷ Written in 1923, more than 10 years before “A Journey Through Time”, when Kosovel was 19, and Kardelj was only 13 years old, it is something akin to Kosovel’s poetic depiction of economic history, which also rests on the motif of travelling through the ages.⁵⁸ It is certainly more than a likely coinci-

Time” was published, meaning that the reference might have been a tribute to Silberstein. Although Kardelj did not reference where exactly the factory descriptions are taken from, there is an article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* called “In the Modern Factory” in which Kardelj’s description matches Silberstein’s line by line. The introduction to the piece is ripe with overblown descriptions of the factory system, which Silberstein compares to the Italian Cinquecento and makes a play on the advent of electricity and the *chiaroscuro* methods of emphasizing contrast on an image. Silberstein uses somewhat Marxist language to describe the development of the plants in an unknown location, while mentioning value-creation and capital expansions... pointing out that the author might have been interesting to local Marxists with German connections, such as Kardelj and his group in “Pri Štrajzlu”, mentioned in the beginning.

⁵⁶ Nikola Prelog, *Borba za život: platforma za ekološku akciju*, (Beograd: Komunist, Jugoslovenski Savet za zaštitu i unapređenje čovekove sredine, 1973), 13.

⁵⁷ Srečko Kosovel, „Potnik v brzovlaku”, in: *Srečko Kosovel – Vsem naj bom neznan: neobjavljeni del zapuščine*, ed. Miklavž Komelj (Novo mesto: Založba Goga, 2019), 826.

⁵⁸ In the Prologue to the poem, Kosovel similarly begins with a progression from the ancient times to industrial society. The song begins with the verses: “The song of the pipers in the twilight. Birth. Song of water and sky. Voices of Egypt and Asia. Babylonia. Nature.”, followed by the “First Station: Greek coast.”. Here, at a “white city”, the train stops and the “morning of Greece” is depicted by poets and statesmen at the square. The word “train” was crossed over by Kosovel, and the word “galley” added next to it. The verses then depict the traveller eager to go onwards. The “Second Station” of the song were the middle

dence that appears in both Kosovel and Kardelj, especially since Kardelj's story ends, so to say, in the same place as Kosovel's "The passenger in the train": with a sleeping boy, the son of a train station worker, who just woke up next to a speeding train. That the economic "history" of "progress" depicted in the work ultimately proves to have been a dream is somewhat reminiscent of Kosovel's song, in which the "inventions" and "progress" are portrayed as having a "swaying" effect on humanity by the song's end, cautioning the reader against a simplistic capitalist progressivism. As Kardelj was an avid reader of Kosovel, this may offer clues that prevent us from characterising Kardelj as a straightforward progressivist. Although it remains unknown whether Kardelj was familiar with this particular song, the reference to Kosovel appears significant. Moreover, throughout his career and in the book itself, Kardelj seems to have been more interested in the diverse forms progress can take, rather than being an uncritical advocate of progress *per se*. In the Slovene language, even the titles of the song and the book share the same root, found in both "Potovanje" (journey, travel) and "Potnik" (traveller). The "potovanje", that is, the "travel" or "journey" undertaken by Štefan in Kardelj's book, or by the traveller in Kosovel's song, is anything but linear in either case. Indeed, it is this non-linear approach to social evolution that lends the book its critical force. Various ages are depicted through both progress and suffering, including those relating to the Slovenes, who first appear in the book during the feudal period as serfs. Using Slovenian national history as an example, the book reveals the Janus-faced nature of progress and particularly highlights its pitfalls when left unchecked. Post-war editions, which Kardelj edited himself, even include additional passages to highlight the ambiguity of progress beyond the first version, which

ages, in which the verses oscillate between sections on God and sickness, with the "Third Station" of the song depicting the traveler yearning for the "white sky". The verse ends with: "they gave me four hectoliters of gasoline – when it runs out, I don't know what will happen. 'You don't know? You fall and burn.' 'A pilot doesn't believe he burns because he only believes in another life.' 'And if I burn, my soul burns.'" One is left wondering whether or not this is another statement on the nature of progress, ending with a plane crashing and burning, perhaps emphasized even more by the next verses. Here, the penultimate verse of the song ends with the idea that technical inventions have briefly "swayed" the traveler: "The traveler remembers the words he heard = in a dream = Greek and medieval the Beauty of great inventions sways him for a while, then throws him away. He gets on the train, then gets on a plane at high pressure and flies away.", before once again recounting the "stations"; Srečko Kosovel, „Potnik v brzovlaku”, 828.

had to pass state censorship⁵⁹. In fact, it is in one such place that the book concludes. In the penultimate chapter — the “end of history”, so to speak, at least the history of capitalism as portrayed in the book — begins with a classical description of a crisis of overproduction. Immediately after Štefan and the professor reach the industrial age, the reader encounters the following description:

“The machines work in England, as in China, America, the African Congo, in Slovenia, and elsewhere. Out of all the factories, day by day, fully loaded trains emerge into the world. The warehouses are full. The stockpiles swell. And then, one day, all the markets overflow, and the industrialists have nowhere else to sell the commodities that they have produced. An economic breakdown occurs. Prices fall because the more commodities there are on the market, the cheaper they become. The factory plant grinds to a halt, the machines stop, boilers cool, the workers are cast adrift. Unemployment grows, and hunger starts knocking at your door. You see — this is a crisis. In the history of industrial economies, there have been many such crises. They appear from time to time.”⁶⁰

And, to drive the point home further, when Štefan asks, “How does mankind heal itself from such crises?”, the professor offers no definitive answer. His initial response is that one looks to new markets. However, in attempting to overcome such crises, colonialism is effectively reinvented, as peripheral lands are forced to open their borders to the commodities of advanced countries.⁶¹ Thus, the crisis is universalized, and the professor announces, somewhat elusively that, “We have reached the end of human history and we will soon be back home.” Thus, the pinnacle of capitalist progress is the end of human history, and this takes us “home”. But then the professor makes a retrospect on what they have seen so far, and acknowledges that human industry has the capacity to feed and care for the entirety of mankind. The development of natural sciences, technologies and automation, have the means to become universal as well. It is, perhaps, in the ultimate chapter, that this opens up space for an alternative form of progress. In it, the professor ends the journey by

⁵⁹ In later post-war editions, the following passage is added to prof. Omnipotent’s introductory speech regarding the evolution of economic relations between people: “They have brought people great benefits and encouraged the progress of technology and culture, but often they have also caused great misfortunes and hardships for man...”. This was noted by Kardelj’s publishers; Kardelj, *Potovanje skozi čas*, 100.

⁶⁰ Kardelj, *Sabrana dela: prva knjiga: maj 1928–decembar 1934*, 168.

⁶¹ Ibid.

leaving Štefan in his “humming machine”, while Štefan finds himself amongst the gearwork and the machines. The overwhelming noise then starts to resemble human sentences, through which the machines, it seems, have addressed him, remind him that only he has the power to steer historical developments through his technical ingenuity, machines and inventions. And, yet, the last sentence Štefan could hear is not addressed to him as a human, but is a statement by the machines: “We reshape society”, with the penultimate message reminding him that, while they are the creation of humankind, they have their own “will, which you must obey”.⁶² The Slovenian original: “preustvarjamo družbo”, can also be understood not only the sense of re-shaping or transforming, but also as “re-creating” society in the literal sense. An interesting conclusion here is that society is created anew not by humankind alone, but only through the interaction between humankind and the means of production⁶³. There is no one single subject or agent, even despite the fact that the book ultimately revolves around Štefan. This possibly alludes to the problem of “socializing the means of production”, which was highly debated in communist circles. Given the preceding chapter, one may conclude that Kardelj had ended the story with a presupposition that the “will of the machines” is curtailed in capitalism, producing crises instead of emancipation.⁶⁴ Even though humankind organizes them, in the end, they organize humankind – they have the ability to “reshape society”, for better or for worse. An implicit message here is that an alternative form of socio-economic organization might reverse the situation, and help unleash the emancipatory potential of technology, sciences and machines which already exist in history. According to Ivan Bratko, this was the result of Kardelj’s attempt to avoid state censorship: “For the change of the social system, for the destruction of capitalism and for the building of socialism, he found a new, appropriate ‘Aesopian’ expression: we are transforming society. He expressed himself beautifully for the conclusion and crown of the historical journey through time.”⁶⁵ Following the Paris Commune and the

⁶² Ibid, 170.

⁶³ It is interesting to note that here, in the very last paragraph, the role for an alternative form of progress is outlined for both humans and machines – and not for humankind alone.

⁶⁴ After all, they have the capacity to produce “more than what is needed by the whole of humanity”, but are instead made to stockpile unsold surpluses and create unemployment; Kardelj, *Sabrana dela: prva knjiga: maj 1928–decembar 1934*, 169.

⁶⁵ Kardelj, *Potovanje skozi čas*, 101.

October Revolution, the idea of a social transformation based on collective, planned co-regulation between industry and humans beyond the profit motive was, after all, not unheard of. As we have seen, Kardelj himself even appeared in a drama during his youth that addressed this very theme. To emphasize the point, the concluding paragraph describes Štefan responding to a machine sound emblematic of industrialisation — specifically, that of a passing train (which may also serve as an allusion to the opening of Kosovel's "Passenger in the Train"). The narrative subsequently discloses that Štefan is, in fact, the son of a railway worker, who was simply roused from his slumber by the train⁶⁶.

*How "A Journey Through Time" Polarized Society:
On the Reception of the Book in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia*

The book caused quite a stir in Slovenia. Even contemporaries at Mladinska matica noted that of the entire series, "A Journey Through Time" was one of those that made the most impact on the public.⁶⁷ It was not widely read just because of the unusual mix between economic history and children's literature. It was also "widely read, because it represented an economic history of socio-economic relations in a way that was essentially different from that known from the usual historical school books", as one newspaper put it.⁶⁸ As was to be expected, this wide circulation also alerted the right-wing, and mostly Catholic, circles. This is understandable given the prevailing climate of anti-communism at the time. In *Ženski svet*, Janez Rožencvet wrote that the book would infuse children with "a rather confusing conception of history". In *Mentor*, a text from an author who remained anonymous hailed the book for its adequate and fun way of bringing economic history close to children, but added that it's a "shame" that is based on a "materialist view of history". In *Mladiki*, an author named only as "S.V.", stated that "we should reject this book, along with Mladinska matica" if they continue to espouse "Marxist ideology"

⁶⁶ The worker in question is actually described as a "railway guard," which may also carry symbolic meaning, given the central role of the train in Kosovel's work and the fact that progress disintegrates in his poem. One could speculate that a human "guarding" the "machines" — such as a speeding train to prevent it from derailing — fits perfectly within the book's thematic framework.

⁶⁷ Svetina, „Pot marksistične misli med mlade ljudi", 15.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 16.

which is “alien to the predominantly Catholic spirit of the Slovene nation”, and called for a more “Catholic” way of writing books. In line with that, other major journals like *Slovenec* even declined to review the book, and only briefly mentioned that it simply exists among the books published in the *Naš rod* series. Thus, the right-wing press at the time was critical of the book, and this prompted further reactions by the church.

A few years later, in an attempt to affirm Catholic youth publishers like “Vrtca”, which had about 2500 subscribers, these circles wanted to lessen the influence of Mladinska matica, and turned to the Yugoslav Ministry of Education and to the court of the King, with the accusation that Mladinska matica is spreading communism to children. Simultaneously, pamphlets began to be dealt on the streets of Ljubljana, urging parents to protect their children from reading their books in 1937, due to what they perceived as “communist propaganda”.⁶⁹ Thus, the overall polarization of the social field between the left and the right reflected itself in a debate over the influence on children’s literature.⁷⁰ Albert Širok, Kardelj’s friend from Mladinska matica, remembers that co-ordinated actions in Belgrade and Ljubljana occurred, but failed to cause any damage to them. *Naš rod* was not censored, while Mladinska matica continued on to exert an influence all the way up to the Second World War.

This was not only a Slovenian occurrence, but a consequence of the attempts by the Catholic church to renew itself outside of Slovenia as well. A brief description of this period should be sufficient to understand the context in which the attacks on left-wing literature occurred in Slovenia:

“In the 1930-ies, the Christian movement experienced a significant shift. The global economic crisis had not spared Slovenia. In 1931, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, in order to promote the renewal of the Christian movement not only on the religious level but also on economic, socio-political and educational levels. Catholic peasant masses were rather responsive to new forms of Catholic activism during the dictatorship of Yugoslav King Alexander. Slovenian theologian and Catholic philosopher Dr. Aleš Ušeničnik believed that the solution of social issues lied particularly in the implementation of natural and Christian moral principles as wells as through consistent rejection of liberalism, socialism, and communism. With the

⁶⁹ Hojan, „Mladinska matica”, 8.

⁷⁰ Svetina, „Pot marksistične misli med mlade ljudi”, 16.

establishment of Catholic Action (Katoliška akcija or shortly KA), the Church aimed mainly at young people who would help creating 'a new Christian society'. The activity of the KA members eventually became so radical in their Christianization, that it averted not only secular, liberal, and Marxist-oriented people, but also a lot of individuals within the Catholic wing itself."⁷¹

According to the historian of Yugoslav anti-communism, Rastko Lompar, members of the Catholic Action, led by local Jesuits with the support of the Pope, were at the forefront of anti-communist circles, and were mostly active in the northern parts of Yugoslavia, namely, Croatia and Slovenia, where the catholic church was traditionally strong. Apart from attacks on Kardelj's book, they organized "anti-communist courses", issued their own journals at least since 1923. They became increasingly active following Hitler's rise to power in 1933, which coincided with the publication of Kardelj's book. The extent to which they became close to Nazism is testified by the fact that *Katolički tjednik*, a Croatian journal published by the same group, regularly quoted Goebbels and other Nazi officials in their critiques of communism during the early 1930's.⁷²

On the other side of the political spectrum, the majority of other media houses held the work in high regard. These positive receptions range from *Učiteljski tovariš* to *Pohod. Srpski književni glasnik*, lauded the work for brining such an important topic to schoolchildren. *Jutro* also mentioned the topic as being inadequately thought in schools and lauded Kardelj for bridging this gap. *Sloboda*, *Slovenija*, *Popotnik*, and the American *Prosveta* hailed Kardelj for establishing a new, and much needed, path in the field of youth literature. *Književnost* considered it to be the best book in the series that year, and hailed its ability to break with the "idealistic and metaphysical view of history, that Slovene teachers, and not only children, often have". In this case, it should be dully noted that *Književnost* was previously affiliated with Kardelj himself, so their positive reaction might have been less neutral towards him.⁷³ However, that is not suffi-

⁷¹ Zorica Petrović, "The Roman Catholic Church and Clergy in the Nazi-Fascist Era on Slovenian Soil", *Athens Journal of History*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2018, 231.

⁷² Rastko Lompar, „Antikomunizam u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1934–1941” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, 2023), https://nardus.mpn.gov.rs/bitstream/id/159895/Disertacija_15112.pdf. Date accessed: 18. 6. 2025.

⁷³ In order to spread Marxist though, Kardelj and a friend called Bratko Kreft established the publishing house "Ekonomska enota" and started publishing the "Književnost" review. "Sodobnost" was, likewise, a left-wing split-off from the more clerical "Ljubljansko zvonu".

cient to account for the “surprisingly positive” reactions that the book had caused across the entire political spectrum, as was noted by both contemporaries and different biographers alike.⁷⁴ Even influential liberal journals, like *Zvon*, which was far from being communist in terms of its political positioning, publicly invited Mladinska matica to continue to publish more works along the line set by Kardelj. And Mladinska Matica would actually do so.⁷⁵ Namely, four years later, in 1938, it published Oskar Hudales’ “Zgodbe o bombažu” (Tales of Cotton), which further explored contemporary capitalism, focusing on its international perspective: “colonialism and the economic, commercial and social aspects of cotton production. Both books drew attention to the exploitation and injustices of capitalism and indicated the need to abolish the capitalist social order,” according to one review.⁷⁶ This might have been a contributing factor in the subsequent clerical attack on the publishing house, which was mentioned before. All in all, of all Kardelj’s works from the period, this one seems to have left the most positive impact on the Slovenian society at the time, across the entire political spectrum, with the sole exclusion of the extreme right-wing groups associated with the Catholic church and sometimes Nazism.

Post-War Editions until the Breakup of Yugoslavia

After 1945, “A Journey Through Time” was published four more times: first, in 1963, a jubilee edition was published for the work’s 30th anniversary, with Kardelj’s short introduction. For this occasion, the work was re-published as “Potovanje skozi čas: oris gospodarske zgodovine za mlade ljudi” [“A Journey Through Time: An Outline of an Economic History for Young People”] by Murska Sobota: Pomurska Založba in 1963,⁷⁷ illustrated by Ljubo Ravnihar (a Hungarian translation of this edition was done by the same publishing house in 1965, under the title: “Utazás a századokon át: gazdaság-történeti ismertető fiatalok számára,”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ See: Svetina, „Pot marksistične misli med mlade ljudi”, 16; Šetinc, *Misel in delo Edvarda Kardelja*, 20; Cox, „Edvard Kardelj: A Political Biography”, 33.

⁷⁵ Svetina, „Pot marksistične misli med mlade ljudi”, 15.

⁷⁶ Hojan, “Mladinska matica”, 10.

⁷⁷ Edvard Kardelj, *Potovanje skozi čas: oris gospodarske zgodovine za mlade ljudi* (Murska Sobota: Pomurska založba, 1963)

⁷⁸ Edvard Kardelj, *Utazás a századokon át: gazdaság-történeti ismertető fiatalok számára* (Murska Sobota: Pomurska založba, 1965)

and illustrated by Vidic Janež). The Hungarian translation was done for a very interesting reason: namely, the publishing council and editorial staff of the publishing house that issued this believed that it would “serve the youth of the Hungarian nationality in Prekmurje and Vojvodina” – regions of Yugoslavia with a large Hungarian minority – “which by their social structures are predominantly peasant and therefore already by their social origin less imbued with a progressive view of the development of human society.” They thus believed that the work, “despite the fact that it was written before the war, is still an excellent source of information for simple peasants and peasant youth.”⁷⁹ This tells us what kind of readership the publishers had in mind for the book. Accordingly, this edition was done in collaboration with the famous Hungarian publishing house “Forum”, located in Novi Sad, Vojvodina. Then, under a somewhat different title: “Potovanje skozi čas: naš čudoviti svet” [“A Journey Through Time: Our Wonderful World”] it was published by Mladinska Knjiga (successor to Mladinska Matica) in Ljubljana in 1969.⁸⁰ The illustrations for this edition were done by the famous Yugoslav artist Oto Bihalji-Merin, at the special behest of Kardelj who took great interest in the visual presentation of the book ahead of the Belgrade Book Fair of that year. However, the printed version unfortunately never made it in time due to the typesetting of the book being outsourced to Italy.⁸¹ The third time, the book appeared in a Serbian translation as “Putovanje kroz vreme: taj divni, čudesni svet” [“A Journey Through Time: that Beautiful, Wonderful World”], published by both Vuk Karadžić in Belgrade and Mladinska knjiga in Ljubljana, in a joint Serbo-Slovenian edition, in 1972.⁸² The fourth publication, again titled “Potovanje skozi čas” [“A Journey Through Time”], was released by the State Publishing House of Slovenia in Ljubljana in 1982.⁸³ This was also the first edition to be printed following Kardelj’s death in 1979. However, for some of the previous editions, Kardelj made

⁷⁹ ARS, Fund SI AS 1277 Edvard Kardelj – Krištof, box 118, Telegram from Pomurski tisk v Murski Sobot to Kardelj from 5th March 1964, by their director, Stefan Antalič.

⁸⁰ Edvard Kardelj, *Potovanje skozi čas: naš čudoviti svet* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1969) ARS, Fund SI AS 1277, Edvard Kardelj – Krištof, box 10, Telegram from Mladinska knjiga to Kardelj from October 16, 1969, by Ivan Potrč; The telegram also mentions Croatian and Serbian editions of this in 1969, in both Cyrillic and Latin script, but this could not be verified. The only Serbian translation there is, exists in the form of the 1972 translation mentioned above.

⁸² Edvard Kardelj, *Putovanje kroz vreme*, (Beograd: Vuk Karadžić/Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1972)

⁸³ Edvard Kardelj, *Potovanje skozi čas*, (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1982)

some noteworthy changes which show us what plans both he and the publishers might have for the future. Namely, for the first post-war edition by “Pomurska Založba” in 1964, Kardelj wrote a special short introduction, and for the second edition (the 1969 “Mladinska knjiga” edition), he personally collaborated on revisions to the original manuscript.⁸⁴ These revisions consisted mostly in clarifying the original text. However, Kardelj also made attempts at sounding more “politically correct”. For example, he edited out phrases such as “savage people” for African certain tribes, and the like. Such revisions must be seen in the light of his work on developing a non-aligned “worldview” in which a senior Yugoslav official depicting other people as “savage”, would have been seen as a politically insensitive move, to say the least. This might also have been necessary given that there were some attempts at the internationalization of “A Journey Through Time”. The revised 1969 edition was also awarded at the “Moscow International Competition for the Most Beautiful Book” on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Lenin's birth in April 1970. The book was given a “Diploma of the Second Degree” (meaning: second place) in competition with 27 other books from Yugoslavia.⁸⁵ Moreover, in Kardelj's personal fund in the State Archives of Slovenia, there exists a correspondence between him and Ivan Potrč, the main editor of the same 1969 edition which won the Moscow award, indicating that there was also a planned English edition, under the title “The Wonderful World”, taken from a verse by Shakespeare, which also inspired the subtitle for the original 1969 edition – “Naš čudoviti svet” [Our Wonderful World]. There was also a suggestion by Bihalji-Merin to use “Ljudsko društvo” [“Human Society”] for the title of the future Serbian edition, but it seems that this suggestion, along with the English translation, was dropped for reasons which remain unknown to this day.⁸⁶ As a result, this key work by Kardelj remains untranslated into English to this day—despite clear indications that there had once been an intention to promote it both in the East and the West.

As shown in the preceding section, major Yugoslav publishing houses continued to publish and promote the work until the early 1980s. However,

⁸⁴ Kardelj, *Sabrana dela: prva knjiga: maj 1928–decembar 1934*, 129.

⁸⁵ ARS, Fund SI AS 1277, Edvard Kardelj – Krištof, box 11, Telegram from Mladinska knjiga to Kardelj from July 1st, 1970, Ljubljana.

⁸⁶ ARS, Fund SI AS 1277, Edvard Kardelj – Krištof, box 10, Telegram from Mladinska knjiga to Kardelj from October 16, 1969, by Ivan Potrč; Telegram from Mladinska knjiga to Kardelj from August 5, 1969, by Ivan Potrč, 1.

the final edition, released in 1982, coincided with the onset of an economic crisis that would soon escalate into a political one. This process ultimately culminated in the breakup of Yugoslavia. With the disintegration of the country, Kardelj became an unwelcome figure in the political and cultural spheres of the successor states (Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia). As anti-communism gained ground, there was little incentive to republish a book by Tito's second-in-command. The Yugoslav system of Marxist education was dismantled, often violently, in ways that included book burnings and the destruction of entire libraries containing works by Marxist authors and Yugoslav officials — at times resulting in the documented loss of hundreds of thousands of volumes. In one of the worst documented cases of "libricide", an entire high-school library in Vukovar, named after Edvard Kardelj, was the subject of artillery fire during 1991.⁸⁷ In best-case scenarios, books were removed from bookstores and relocated to library basements. Those responsible for these acts continued to boast publicly about them with impunity well into the early 2000s.⁸⁸ All of this made the prospects of republication appear both risky and potentially counterproductive, even for publishers who may have had a strong intention to do so. However, there is currently no evidence to suggest a re-publication was considered in any of the successor states. As a result, the book remains forgotten, despite its role in pre-war Yugoslavia and Kardelj's own evolution as an author.

The Role of the Book in Kardelj's Opus

In this article, we have started from Kardelj's own Marxist education as a pupil, only to see that, once he finished his own schooling, he attempted to make his own contribution to the field he studied in. In the first section, it was clear that both the Communist Party and Slovenian radical publishers wanted to see the book appear in print. The role of the book in Kardelj's opus is then multi-faceted, as it reflects different social players at the time, and fills the gap in children's literature. However, one could rightly ask – what happened afterwards?

In order to answer such a question, we shall only briefly sketch a line of continuity in Kardelj's work and thought, which may help guide future researchers on the topic, should interest arise in it. Namely, towards the end of his life,

⁸⁷ Ante Lešaja, *Knjigocid - uništavanje knjiga u Hrvatskoj 1990-ih* (Zagreb: Profil, 2012), 78.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 125.

Kardelj was working on reforming the Yugoslav schooling system so that manual labour could be integrated with education, and further developing the educational aspects of self-management in order to overcome the separation between manual and intellectual labour. According to his comrade and former Central Committee member of the Slovenian branch of the CPY, Vida Tomšič, Kardelj used to joke that his first text was on the “working school”, and that, quite possibly, it would also be his last. According to Tomšič, “Fate would have it that this has indeed proved to be true. His last public appearance was a lecture on the occasion of his honorary doctoral degree, which was awarded to him by the “Džemal Bijedić” University in Mostar [Bosnia] on November 23 1978. It was dedicated to the same idea of a complete integration of work in the school, and the school into associated labour. Of course, this time, the idea was even stronger, sharper, and all-encompassing, since it was put into the context in which one needed to constantly stress the interrelationships and mutual conditioning between science, education and practice as an essential ingredient of self-management.”⁸⁹ In his introduction to the last edition of “A Journey Through Time”, Ivan Bratko also confirms that, towards the end of his life, Kardelj wanted to go back to his earliest works towards the end of his life, with the intention to write a full collection of memoirs, entitled “Sperans”, which he never managed to do. According to him, “A Journey Through Time” would have played a crucial role, as it was Kardelj’s first literary experiment: “with it he crossed the authorial Rubicon, which was achieved by very few of his generation. And, so this ‘worklet’ is the instructive cornerstone in the structure of Kardelj’s oeuvre”.⁹⁰

From his pre-war work as a theorist and activist, to his post-war work as a politician, Kardelj’s oeuvre suggests a strong, and yet often unseen, line of continuity. Although Kardelj’s role as an educator is yet to be studied in its entirety, it also deserves further attention from researchers, in order to better understand the evolution of Yugoslav self-management. His role in shaping the post-war system of Marxist education, which included student and young worker’s education is a case in point, were surely helped by his experience with clubs and schools he himself once belonged to in his early youth.⁹¹ His work on developing the

⁸⁹ Bezdanov, *Vaspitanje i obrazovanje u misli i delu Edvarda Kardelja*, XVIII

⁹⁰ Kardelj, *Potovanje skozi čas*, 103.

⁹¹ Kardelj was a key member of the Council of the Slovenian main Marxist Center, part of the Slovenian Central Committee, and of the Council of the Center for Social Research in Belgrade, the main Marxist scientific institutions which overlooked a decentralized

Yugoslav system of local communities [mesne zajednice], which were communal points in neighbourhoods where citizens could exercise their rights to self-manage their own communal spaces more directly, and which also included a socializing aspect for children, given their role as meeting points for the local community, must also be seen in the light of his early experiences with communal living and working-class self-organization. And lastly, his work on reforming primary and secondary education, mentioned by Tomšič, meant that her words were not simply a eulogy: from the workplace to the school, to one's living spaces and the family, Kardelj's political work actually touched upon key aspects of the many environments in which a child is brought up. Thus, if one looks at Kardelj's biography in retrospect, one can realize a clear guiding line that stretches all the way from his first essays to his practical attempts at ensuring the upbringing of children beyond the confines of manual labour. In this sense, one can talk less so of a theoretical continuity, but rather an influence or, more precisely, aspiration, that guided his work all the way up to the end of his life. It is this lineage of thought and action that "A Journey Through Time" belongs to. Its multifaceted depiction of progress as both emancipatory and repressive can be said to underpin Kardelj's efforts to promote human development over profit-oriented progress. The social transformation he discussed at the end of the book, and later helped to realize, was not only inspired by the events that occurred in Paris in the 19th century and in Russia in the 20th. On the contrary, it was also integral to the processes that unfolded in Yugoslavia during and after the Second World War. Only after the war did they crystallize into an approach to politics, economics, and society that came to be known as "socialist self-management." From this perspective, "A Journey Through Time" may be regarded as one of the earliest literary precursors of self-management. At the same time, its author sought to ensure that such a vision could take shape as a lived reality in Yugoslavia, rather than be confined to a brief passage at the end of a book.

SUMMARY

There are few works of economic history that might delve into the foray of literature, let alone call themselves a "novel". Such is, however, the case with

system of Marxist centers across the country. They were tasked with establishing curricula for political schools.

a unique work of children's literature, called "A Journey Through Time" (1934), a nowadays completely forgotten, and yet pivotal work by one of Yugoslavia's top-tier communists, Edvard Kardelj. Although Kardelj produced more than 6,000 pages of published texts, and another 6,000 pages of unpublished work, his opus receives surprisingly little attention today. Not least, when it comes to his early period, or his engagement with children's literature – about which there is not a single published text in the last several decades. The aim of this article is, therefore, to bridge this gap and offer a glimpse at Kardelj's early activism and pedagogical work in order to shed some light on the background against which "A journey through time" was written. Based on archival research in the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia in Ljubljana and Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, it does this in three main sections: the beginning uncovers Kardelj's own Marxist education as a child, the development of the children's publishers in Slovenia, like "Mladinska matica", and their collaboration. The second section analyses the book, while the third assess its role in Kardelj's opus. Since Kardelj was a key figure in the Yugoslav society and beyond, uncovering the book and Kardelj's early period will prove valuable for future researchers of the period.

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Резиме

Александар Матковић

ПРИЧА О ПУТОВАЊУ КРОЗ ВРЕМЕ: О ЗАБОРАВЉЕНОЈ ДЕЧЈОЈ
КЊИЗИ О КАПИТАЛИЗМУ У КРАЉЕВИНИ ЈУГОСЛАВИЈИ И
ЊЕНОМ МЕСТУ У ЖИВОТУ ЕДВАРДА КАРДЕЉА

АПСТРАКТ: Мало дела из области економске историје залази у књижевност, а још ређе се квалификује као „дечји роман”. Ипак, *Путовање кроз време* Едварда Кардеља издваја се као јединствен допринос, написан од стране водећег југословенског комунисте – заправо, другог човека иза Тита. Упркос предратном и послератном успеху, Кардељева рана дела, укључујући и ово, данас су мало позната и ретко проучавана. Да би превазишао тај јаз, овај чланак најпре описује Кардељево марксистичко образовање и словеначке издаваче дечје литературе, осветљавајући везе између њих. Затим се анализира садржај саме књиге, при чему се прави осврт на Кардељево поимање „прогреса”, а потом се разматра и пријем књиге у Краљевини Југославији, као и њена кратка улога у послератном марксистичком образовању у Југославији. На крају, чланак анализира место које ова књига заузима у Кардељевом опусу.

КЉУЧНЕ РЕЧИ: дечја књижевност, Едвард Кардељ, марксистичко образовање, Словенија, Југославија

Постоји веома мало дела из економске историје која залазе у сферу књижевности, а камоли да себе називају „романом”. Међутим, то је случај са јединственим делом дечје књижевности под називом *Путовање кроз време*, данас потпуно заборављеним, а ипак пресудним делом једног од најистакнутијих југословенских комуниста – Едварда Кардеља. Иако је Кардељ објавио више од 6000 страница текстова, и написао још 6000 страница необјављених радова, његов опус данас привлачи изненађујуће мало пажње, посебно када је реч о његовом раном периоду или ангажману у дечјој књижевности – о чему у последњих неколико деценија не постоји ниједан објављени текст. Циљ овог чланка је да попуни

ту празнину и пружи увид у Кардељево рано ангажовање и педагошки рад како би се осветлило окружење у коме је написано *Путовање кроз време*. Заснован на архивском истраживању у Архиву Републике Словеније у Љубљани и Архиву Југославије у Београду, чланак је подељен у три главна дела. Први открива Кардељево марксистичко образовање током детињства, развој дејих издавачких кућа у Словенији, попут „Младинске матице”, као и њихову сарадњу. Други део анализира саму књигу, док трећи процењује њену улогу у Кардељевом опусу. Будући да је Кардељ био кључна фигура у југословенском друштву и шире, анализирање ове књиге и Кардељевог раног периода могли би бити драгоцени за будуће истраживаче који се буду бавили поменутим периодом.