

FINAL REPORT

From Belgrade 1968 Student Protests to First and Second Serbia: Intellectual and Political Legacy of the Praxis School

Visegrad Scholarship
OSA
January 15 – March 15

The aim of my research was to shed additional light on the Belgrade 1968 protests and their aftermath. In particular, I focused on the case of 8 professors from the Faculty of Philosophy who were identified as the protest's instigators and subsequently expelled from the University of Belgrade due to their "ethico-political unsuitability". However, they later founded a separate research institute and advocated a multiparty system and democratization in Yugoslavia and Serbia, where some of them played leading political roles, which I perceive as one of the most prominent legacies of the Belgrade 1968 protest.

During my research stay, I investigated in more detail the hypothesis that Belgrade's June 1968 student protests left significant intellectual and political legacy by augmenting intellectual forces that criticized the Yugoslav regime and played a prominent role in the establishment of multiparty system in Serbia and its politics after the breakup of Yugoslavia. Moreover, the OSA holdings enabled me to trace in further detail the international perceptions of the Praxis group, their overall reputation and influence and ties with Hungarian, Czech and other Central European thinkers during this period, especially international cooperation and solidarity in criticizing the occupation of Czechoslovakia.

As I argued, even though Belgrade student protests emerged and ended abruptly after only 9 days in June of 1968, it was a cumulative point of a decade-long accumulated social dissatisfaction and antagonisms, as well as of philosophical investigations of the unorthodox Marxists of the „Praxis“ school („Praksisovci“). It surprised the Yugoslav authorities as the first massive rebellion after WWII to explicitly criticize rising social inequality, bureaucratization and unemployment and demand free speech and abolishment of privileges. My research focused on the intellectual destiny and legacy of eight professors from the Belgrade Faculty of Philosophy close to the Praxis school, who were identified as the protests' instigators and subsequently expelled from the University of Belgrade due to their „ethico-political unsuitability“ – Mihailo Marković, Ljubomir Tadić, Miladin

Životić, Zagorka Pešić-Golubović, Svetozar Stojanović, Dragoljub Mićunović, Trivo Inđić and Nebojša Popov. Under both international and domestic pressure, they were later reemployed in a separate research unit named the Centre for Philosophy and Social Theory, where they kept their critical edge and argued for political pluralism. From the late 1980s onwards, they and their colleagues became politically active and at times occupied highest positions in Serbia – Dragoljub Mićunović as one of the founders of the modern Democratic Party and the Speaker of the Parliament, former Serbian Prime Minister late Zoran Đinđić and former President and Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica. Still, while some members later embraced strong liberal position and acted as prominent anti-nationalists and anti-war activists, other embraced Serbian nationalism, therefore pivoting the intellectual split into the so called First and Second Serbia that marked Serbian society during the 1990s and remained influential to this day.

I formulated some of my research results in an article in English about the philosophical and intellectual traditions of the Praxis school, which I co-authored with my colleague Márk Losoncz, published in the appropriate academic journal *Philosophy and Society* (issue 30, NO. 1, 2019), that has been founded by the expelled Praxis professors:

<http://www.doiserbia.nb.rs/Article.aspx?ID=0353-57381901149P#.XIs8vChKhPY>

The OSA archival sources used during my research

The OSA holdings offered an important source of documents related to the Praxis school and the case of eight professors. These included key back issues of Praxis journals, but more importantly Radio Free Europe textual material stretching from the late 1960s to 1980s, such as RFE research reports, Yugoslav and foreign press clipping etc. Radio Free Europe meticulously followed their case and destiny over the years, thus allowing me to investigate the international outreach and impact and attention that the case of eight professors received abroad. In particular, the holdings include the documents issued by the Yugoslav officials and the Yugoslav communist party on these issues, as well as dozens of extensive research reports written by the RFE research section, which deal with this case continuously and extensively. The Archives thus aided me in several ways to understand the wider relevance and international importance of this clash between the Yugoslav regime and the eight professors who were ousted from the Faculty. The peak of the

attention that the RFE gave to this case was in 1968, i.e. during and after the student protests, then between 1971-1975, that is, the period when Praxis journal and professors were attacked and finally expelled, and then again 1980-1981 when they officially become unemployed and their case regained importance and international interest.

Most documents related to this case are under Praxis title, kept in the Yugoslav Subject Files, HU OSA 300/2/10, Boxes 337, 338 and 339. Another important source are Yugoslav Biographical Files, especially HU OSA 300/10/4 and HU OSA 300/10/5, where practically all eight professors and persons related to their cases have personal files, including several interviews from the foreign press and few of their articles. Finally, some relevant material is also available at Yugoslav Subject Files II HU OSA 300/10/3, Box 59, where a number of separate articles about Praxis and its protagonists is kept. These holdings also contain dozens of reports written by Radio Free Europe analysts Slobodan Stanković and Zdenko Antić. These reports are more detailed and analytical, and offer in-depth analysis of various issues related to Praxis and the eight professors, including reviews of the journal, some key articles, discussions about the Yugoslav and international context in which the Praxis school functioned and the like. These detailed reports show how Praxis and eight professors rose to become one of the main internal and international political issues in the former Yugoslavia in the period between 1968 and mid-1980s. The Archives also contain extensive press clipping from the Yugoslav press: *Politika*, *Borba*, *Vjesnik*, *Komunist*, and foreign one – *die Welt*, *die Zeit*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Guardian*, *Observer*, *Le Monde* etc. This enabled me to understand the wider international resonance of this case, the sheer interest of the international community, especially in the West, about this case, which exposed a rather different face of the Yugoslav regime than the one Tito and others wished to have – of liberal, conflict free Yugoslavia. But, also, this material also shows why the regime could not quite handle this case with overt brutality, like arresting and sentencing them all, because they were attentive of the international reception. In other words, Praxis and the case of eight professors was apparently for years one of the most interesting Yugoslavian phenomena that the Western press wrote about.

List of the OSA holdings used:

- Praxis journal HU OSA 300
1968-1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976-1979, 1980-1984,
- Praxis periodicals
1968-1980, 1981-1984
Praxis International (1989/1994)
Politics: political parties: Praxis / HU OSA 205-4-80 (folders Praxis 1968-1980 and 1981-1984)
HU OSA 300-10-2 Yugoslav subject files I, esp. Boxes 337, 338, 339

- Yugoslav biographical files II (HU OSA 300/10/5)
Svetozar Stojanović – HU OSA 300-10-5 Yugoslav Biographical Files II Box 12
Rudi Supek– HU OSA 300-10-5 Yugoslav Biographical Files II Box 12
Mihajlo Marković – 300-10-4:41/3
Ljubomir Tadić - 300-10-4:62/5 and 300-10-5:13/3
Trivo Inđić - 361-0-8:17/8
Nebojša Popov - 300-10-4:51/4
Zagorka Glubović - 300-10-4:49/9
Dragoljub Mićunović - HU OSA 307-0-2
Miladin Životić - 300-10-4:81/2
Gajo Petrović - 300-10-4:49/16
Rudi Super (300-10-5:12/10) etc.

In Budapest, March 15th, 2019

