

## Microhistories of Socialism. 7th Doctoral Workshop

**Veranstalter:** Centre for Cultural and Historical Research of Socialism (CKPIS); Igor Duda / Anita Buhin / Sasa Vejzagic, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Croatia; Chiara Bonfiglioli, Cork University

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**Bericht von:** Tina Filipovic, Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula

This year's doctoral workshop brought together nearly twenty participants whose research topics and methodologies are immersed in the concepts of the microhistory of socialism and transition. In the course of the workshop, members of the „Microstructures of Yugoslav Socialism: Croatia 1970-1990 (Microsocialism)“ research project presented the results of their research.

IGOR DUDA (Pula) emphasised the need to create a broader macro-historical framework in researching the history of socialism „from below“. Histories of individual municipalities, factories, institutions, collectives, even neighborhoods, often present a meaningful and dynamic, while neglected, research material, the use of which has been intensified in this region in the last fifteen years. ANITA BUHIN (Pula) talked about the self-managerial transformation of culture. Buhin used the activities of self-managing communities of interest for culture, a new organizational form for programme planning and financing, in the municipalities of Pula and Karlovac during the 1970s and 1980s as examples in presenting the possibilities and obstacles of self-managing socialism in the practices of cultural workers, with special reference to the creation of cultural policies in local companies.

CHIARA BONFIGIOLI's (Cork) lecture focused on women workers' activism within companies and municipalities. Based on examples from Varaždin and Duga Resa, Bonfiglioli advocated the paradigm of continuity of women's activities and topicality of women's issues through local sections of the Union of Women's Societies and the Conference for the Social Activity of Women. TINA

PALAIĆ (Ljubljana) opened the section of doctoral presentations with her presentation on the history of formation of the Museum of Non-European Cultures, a branch of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, and its main activities. Palaić interpreted the policy of collecting museum exhibits and presenting them to the public as a model of promotion of the Yugoslav policy of non-alignment, in particular the principles of cooperation and friendship between Yugoslavia and the countries of the Global South. The ensuing discussion featured the perception of race in the Yugoslav socialist imaginary, based on references from Catherine Baker's book *Race and the Yugoslav Region*. KATARINA BEŠIREVIĆ (Belgrade) presented the issue of self-perception, as well as the position and influence, of mostly young, alternative Yugoslav writers and artists during the late 1960s and early 1970s, based on the individual experiences of members of the Neo-avant-garde circle of Novi Sad. According to Beširević, the strength of political activism and critical thought in the work and activities of the Youth Tribune arose from the multicultural environment of Novi Sad, characterised by the permeation of Serbian, Croatian and Hungarian intellectual circles.

One particular feature of rural eastern Moravia – the municipality of Velehrad, and its patriotic clergy in Czechoslovakia, in relation to the dominant narrative about communism on the part of the Catholic Church, became MIRA MARKHAM's (Chapel Hill) case study. „Operation Velehrad“ in 1950 was a successful action of the local party organization which, in collaboration with priests loyal to the regime, organised a traditional religious pilgrimage under state sponsorship, using it also as a platform for political mobilisation. TATIANA CHURCHULIEVA-KNIGHT (Cologne) presented the role of folklore and folk music in the cultural policy of socialist Bulgaria. With the help of oral history, she examined the daily lives of mostly amateur musicians who performed at weddings, highlighting their practicality, self-confidence and resourcefulness in making new instruments and producing music.

JONATHAN RASPE (Princeton) dealt with the process of employing Kazakh workers in

the steelworks of the Karaganda region as a form of Soviet discriminatory policy towards ethnic Kazakhs. Using the example of public and media discourse in the Soviet union and strict criteria for hiring workers at the Termitau plant in the late 1950s, Raspe clearly outlined the obstacles that the Kazakh industrial workers faced in their endeavours to become part of the Soviet heavy industry workers' milieu. DORA TOT (Bologna) named her presentation after the Yugoslav film comedy about World War II partisans, *Find a way, comrade*, alluding to work atmosphere and living conditions of eight Hidroelektra's (a large Yugoslav construction company) civil engineers during their three-year stay in Algeria, working as technical cooperation experts. Inadequate pre-departure preparation of experts, lack of legal, administrative, and often logistical support, as well as different work and living conditions, forced these Yugoslav professionals to improvise while solving various problems. Tot concluded that everyday experiences of Yugoslav engineers in Algeria could have caused the early termination of bilateral investment cooperation agreements and shaken the Yugoslav political and economic cooperation with developing countries.

SAŠA VEJZAGIĆ's (Pula) lecture focused on the formation of large construction companies in Zagreb and the most Northern Croatian region of Medimurje, their structure, operation, investment and personnel policy, and the impact of associated labour on the functioning of large business systems. Vejzagić also addressed the issue of the relationship between companies and municipalities in the business world, the impact of political decision-making, markets and local interests on business operations, as well as the rise of technocrats whose work biographies he has been following in his research.

The next block of doctoral presentations began with ZORAN VUČKOVAC's (Giessen) overview of business and structural changes and crises in the Ljubija iron mine in northern Bosnia and Herzegovina from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s. The focus of his research lies on evaluating the metamorphosis of the role and importance of mines in the lives of the local population, primarily work-

ers, during the period of economic crisis and the fall of socialism, the Bosnian war and the first wave of postwar privatisation. BRUNO RAGUŽ (Zagreb) presented the framework of his doctoral research in the course of which he investigates the impact of the Sisak Oil Refinery on urban development of the city. In his upcoming research Raguž intends to pay more attention to the issues of housing construction, co-financing of school equipment and the construction of kindergartens, sports, cultural and artistic activities and the quality of life of Sisak in general, upon which the refinery had a direct impact.

The topic of PETAR MARKUŠ's (Zagreb) presentation were various forms of deviant behaviour, moral aberrations and deviations from the Communist Party line in the activities of members of the Karlovac City committee of the Communist Party of Croatia (KPH)/ League of Communists of Croatia (SKH) in the first postwar years. Thanks to the Register of sanctioned members, Markuš was able to piece together the problems that presented the biggest challenges for this local branch of the socialist avant-garde. Practicing religion, chauvinist and nationalist statements, alcoholism, as well as various economic crimes, were some of the most common threats to the exemplary behaviour of Communist Party members. VALENTINA KEZIĆ (Zagreb) showed the importance of the establishment of the workers' newspaper of the Svilana silk factory in Osijek, as well as its activities, in the first years of its existence. Examples of articles criticising the operation of the company that Kezić highlighted in her presentation prompted a discussion about the existence and possible forms of censorship in this type of media. MIRJAM VIDA BLAGOJEVIĆ (Zagreb) addressed the history of the development of public healthcare and social medicine in interwar and post-war Osijek. Reorganisation of work processes at the public healthcare institution in Osijek in every new decade was an attempt at responding to new healthcare needs of the local population, which was primarily concerned by lack of investment in infrastructure, healthcare staff and the inadequate disease prevention scheme.

OLHA MARTYNIUK (Regensburg) exam-

ined different layers of memory as regards the historical role of the Red Army in the liberation and unification of Ukraine in World War II, using the examples of two Ukrainian cities from different pre-war and war contexts, Ternopil and Vinnytsia. By describing the policy of monuments building and renaming streets dedicated to Red Army heroes, Martyniuk introduced various war memorialisation processes that became particularly visible immediately after Ukraine's first democratic elections in 1990. In her presentation, TINA FILIPOVIĆ (Pula/Zagreb) gave an outline of political activities of partisan war veterans and their organisation in Sisak during the 1970s and 1980s. By reviewing the degree of veterans' involvement in everyday politics, as well as the goals of their political activism, Filipović concluded that the politicisation of mostly retired veterans and their political activity was the only way to preserve their position in late socialist Yugoslav society.

The last day of the workshop began with a lecture by IGOR DUDA on the institution of Local Communities in Yugoslavia as a phenomenon likened to the institution of extended family, where residents of a village, street or neighborhood were meant to decide on various common needs and projects in their own living environment. Duda presented the competencies, structure and functioning of Local Communities as the key element of direct democracy and social self-management, using examples from specific Local Communities from all over Yugoslavia. MILENA BŁAHUTA (Warsaw) in her doctoral research tries to reconstruct the points of erasure and transformation of the collective memory of life in socialism among the inhabitants of Borovo Naselje. With the help of interviews with former employees of the Borovo footwear factory, and the analysis of contemporary discourse about Borovo as a place of remembrance, Błahuta tries to examine the structure of memories that play a major role in shaping the post-war identity of the nearby city of Vukovar. In the last doctoral presentation, MARTIN BABIČKA (Oxford) analysed the concept of the sociotechnical imaginary created by filmmakers and writers in promoting the newly built Dukovany nuclear power plant in Czechoslovakia as the factory

of the future. The movie *Atomic Cathedral* and book *The Harvest of Light* are, according to Babička, showcase examples of the propaganda presentation of nuclear energy as the best eco-alternative in the 1980s, which in turn guarantees the preservation and further growth of living standards.

Despite the diversity of topics and methodological approaches, there was a fruitful dialogue between participants keen on finding new comparisons and suggestions that will enrich their respective researches. During the discussions, some of the very often addressed issues were how to properly position the subject of research, shape key research questions and avoid generalisations while drawing conclusions. The four-day meeting offered a glimpse into the everyday life of people in socialism, detected contradictions between proclaimed politics and practice, sought deeper explanations of certain phenomena and in the end deconstructed, or reconstructed, socialism both as an idea and a socio-political system. Case studies from various parts of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the USSR and Algeria focused mainly on examples from urban, industrial centers where workers, at least nominally, participated in socialism-building „from below“ and thus influenced the understanding of the role of the individual in the transformation of the modern society. The focus on interdisciplinarity, comparison and different types of archival sources has once again proved to be an important prerequisite for work concerning micro-history.

Doctoral workshops of the CKPIS and the Faculty of Humanities in Pula have been organised since 2015. After last year's virtual workshop, this year's workshop was successfully held in-person, and the participants visited the Historical and Maritime Museum of Istria and the temporary exhibition *Dušan Ćurić: Pula photo report* during the informal part of the programme. The main goal of the workshop – the permeation of different research concepts and perceptions with the aim of including doctoral students in the latest trends in historiography – has thus been successfully achieved.

**Conference overview:**

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### *Workshop opening*

#### *Lecture*

Anita Buhin (Juraj Dobrila University of Pula): Culture from below: Selfmanagerial transformation of culture on the local level

Lecture / Chiara Bonfiglioli (University College Cork): Microhistories of aktivni žena: finding women's agency in the archives (1950s-1970s)

#### *PhD presentations*

Tina Palaić (University of Ljubljana): Non-Aligned knowledge production: The case of the Museum of Non-European cultures in Ljubljana

Katarina Beširević (University of Belgrade): The Neo-Avant-garde art scene in Yugoslavia: The Novi Sad circle

Mira Markham (University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill): Operation Velehrad, 1950: State-sponsored pilgrimage in Stalinist Czechoslovakia

Tatiana Churchulieva-Knight (University of Cologne): Transitional sounds - The wedding bands of Southern Bulgaria between socialism and post-socialism

Jonathan Raspe (Princeton University): Forging national cadres for Soviet Kazakhstan: The campaign to recruit Kazakh steel workers, 1958-1960

Dora Tot (University of Bologna): Find a way, comrade! Yugoslav technical cooperation experts at the Algerian construction sites during the 1980s

#### *Lecture*

Saša Vejzagić (Juraj Dobrila University of Pula): Formation of large production companies and the effects of the associated labor on their consolidation

#### *PhD presentations*

Zoran Vučkovac (University of Giessen): Archives of late socialism and early transition: The case of Iron Mine 'Ljubija'

Bruno Raguž (University of Zagreb): The role of Refinery in Sisak's development in the 1960s and 1970s

Petar Markuš (University of Zagreb): Deviant behavior and social issues in the City Committee files of the Communist Party of Croatia in Karlovac 1946-1953

Valentina Kezić (University of Zagreb): Look from the inside. Newspaper „Svilana“ about the life and work of the Osijek silk factory (1977-1980)

Mirjam Vida Blagojević (University of Zagreb): Socialization of medicine and the development of public health in Osijek from the mid-1920s to the late 1980s

Olha Martyniuk (Leibnitz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies, IOS Regensburg): Monuments and names of streets dedicated to the memory of Red Army soldiers in Ukraine

Tina Filipović (University of Zagreb / Juraj Dobrila University of Pula): Former fighters as activists in building the self-managing socialism - initiatives, critiques and suggestions of SUBNOR Sisak

#### *Lecture*

Igor Duda (Juraj Dobrila University of Pula): In pursuit of direct socialist democracy: Local communities in Yugoslavia in the 1970s and 1980s

#### *PhD presentations*

Milena Błahuta (University of Warsaw): Borovo Naselje - the memory of social change

Martin Babička (University of Oxford): „The Harvest of Light“: The sociotechnical imaginary of the Ducovany Nuclear Power Plant

#### *Closing remarks*

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