

Aleksandar Pavlović  
Mark Losoncz

## BELGRADE 1968 PROTESTS AND THE POST-EVENTAL FIDELITY: INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL LEGACY OF THE 1968 STUDENT PROTESTS IN SERBIA<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Even though Belgrade student protests emerged and ended abruptly after only seven days in June of 1968, they came as 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. This article focuses on the intellectual destiny and legacy of the eight professors from the 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". 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 the highest positions in Serbia – Dragoljub Mićunović as one of the founders of the modern Democratic Party and the Speaker of the Parliament, former Serbian President and Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica and former Prime Minister late Zoran Đinđić. Still, while some members became strong 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.

### KEYWORDS

1968 Belgrade student protests, Case of eight professors, Belgrade Faculty of Philosophy, Praxis, Korčula Summer School, Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, Josip Broz Tito, Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

### Introduction: The Elusive Legacy of Belgrade 1968 Rebellion

This article argues 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 the multiparty

---

1 The paper is a part of research project no. 43007, funded by Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development – Republic of Serbia.

system in Serbia and its politics after the breakup of Yugoslavia.<sup>2</sup> We focus here on its intellectual legacy and the events that amplified public relevance of several critical intellectuals; being pushed and pulled out of the faculty's classrooms during the 1970s and 1980s, these scholars such as Dragoljub Mićunović, Vojislav Koštunica and others pursued political careers and thereby largely marked the late Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav period in Serbia.

In the narrow sense, Belgrade student rebellion emerged and ended abruptly after only seven days in June of 1968. Certainly, it did not arise *ex nihilo*, and should rather be perceived as a focal or cumulative point of an accumulated dissatisfaction and antagonisms stretching for a decade, marked with rising social inequality, bureaucratization and unemployment.<sup>3</sup> The direct cause could be easily labelled as “the banality of rebellion” – in the evening of June 2, there was a popular show at the Workers University in New Belgrade, called “The caravan of friendship”, featuring folk and pop singers from the former Yugoslavia. There were not enough seats for the students, and hence they clashed with the brigadiers who had privileged entrance, and security who prevented them from entering, and continued the clashes with the police who came to intervene. The following day, the students organised themselves, formulated their demands and attempted to organise a walk from New Belgrade to the Assembly to present it. They were stopped and many brutally beaten by the police. Over the next few days, the students focused on protesting at their Faculties. They renamed the University of Belgrade – Red University “Karl Marx”, voiced their discontent and demanded free speech and abolishment of privileges.<sup>4</sup> A number of prominent public figures such as their professors, writers, actors and artists supported their demands. On the evening of June 9, in a public speech broadcasted live, President Tito essentially declared that the students were right, that their concerns should be taken on board, and fatherly advised them to continue their studies. The students took this as their victory, celebrated it long into the night and the next day decided to stop the blockade of the University.

These protests certainly had significance in several ways – this was the first mass student rebellion in the socialist Yugoslavia; it demanded profound changes, accused the leaders of creating an unjust society, exposed police brutality that

---

2 This article benefited from the material that Aleksandar Pavlović used during his research stay at The Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives in Budapest, for which he is much indebted to the Visegrad Fund and OSA friendly staff. The authors are also grateful to their colleagues Vladimir Zorić, Igor Cvejić and Milivoj Bešlin who provided a number of relevant information, comments and suggestions.

3 Such view of the Belgrade 1968 as a consequence of a long period of antagonism spurred by industrialization and socialist reforms, is often promoted in both domestic and foreign scholarship (see: Kanzleiter 2009, 2011; Popov 2008, esp. Ch. 4 and 5, 110–210).

4 Some of the most vocal slogans used during the protests were: “Down with the Red Bourgeoisie!”, “We Want Socialist and Social Reforms!”, “International unity of proletariat and progressive intelligentsia”, “Freedom to Criticize and True Self-Management”, “Long Live Comrade Tito and the Party”, “We Want our Place in the Society”, “We Want Work” etc., and the University got renamed into the “Red University Karl Marx” (According to Dragoljub Mićunović, it was his proposal that Ljubomir Tadić voiced in order to counter the proposal that the University changes its name to “Red University Josip Broz Tito” [Mićunović 2013: 227]).

seemed unnecessary and counterproductive, amplified some critical voices and prompted a number of public figures to support the students and their demands for comprehensive and profound reforms.

Still, it appears that its direct influence on the Yugoslav politics remained relatively modest. In a nutshell, with all the sympathies for the students, their rebellion did not question the existing ideological and political framework; on the contrary, they demanded the return to the original Party doctrine and did not question Tito's authority. Secondly, while the force of the protests certainly unpleasantly surprised the authorities, recent historians rightfully pointed out that they were far less troubled by this than they were with the Prague Spring; in any case, Tito resolved this rebellion routinely (see: Bešlin 2009: 58). Thirdly, the somewhat reformist course undertaken by the Yugoslav communists was already under way for a couple of years before the protests broke out (Ibid, 58).

Among the more solid achievements of the protests, one could point out that some of the student demands were soon inserted nearly verbatim into the League of Communists of Yugoslavia's new *Guidelines (Smernice)*, conveniently published on June 9, that is, the day the demonstrations ended;<sup>5</sup> yet, this eventually amounted to not much more than another grand public gesture, comparable to Tito's speech to the students. In addition, students' standard, living and studying conditions were certainly improved in the following years. Still, when it comes to a profound ideological and social reform that actually constituted the essence of students' demands, it was never actively pursued. Quite the contrary – the following years rather brought the opposite trend: dismissal of the less rigid and reform-oriented politicians in Serbia and Croatia as “liberals”, purge of the so-called nationalists from the office in Croatia and Serbia, and sharp increase in sentencing intellectuals for years-long prison sentences for voicing their opinions (see: Gruenwald 1979: 1-15). As younger historian of Yugoslavia Milivoj Bešlin claims, when one looks at the context of political and social processes that followed, “in essence, the premise about the ‘68 students movement as a historical turning point holds no ground” (Bešlin 2009: 61).<sup>6</sup>

## On Spontaneity and Responsibility

So, if Belgrade 1968 rebellion was not politically so turbulent and ground-breaking, and if Tito and the party were not so worried about it, what were they concerned about? As we claim, their primary concerns were to maintain the ideological monopoly on *truth*, that is, to secure the students' continuing fidelity to the political ideology promoted by the party. In order to do so, they needed to silence their potential ideological adversaries, and from that perspective we will approach

---

5 The official explanation of the Party was that the *Guidelines* were already adopted in May, i.e. over a month before the protests started. While the Party certainly did not produce the entire document during the week of protests, in some important respects the *Guidelines* clearly responded to the student's requests. Thus, they emphasized the need for employing and giving more prominent role to educated youth and young experts as a prerequisite for a successful reform, claimed that housing funds have been increased and that workers self-management over the funds has been strengthened (Smernice 1968: 1).

6 Unless stated otherwise, all translations from Serbian into English are ours.

the infamous case of the expulsion of the eight critically minded professors from Belgrade University.

In his public speech on June 9, Tito made sure to emphasize that this revolt rebellion broke out spontaneously among the students, and that ninety percent of them are loyal socialists who do not fall prey to revisionist and anti-socialist ideas (Popov 2008: 101). This intervention was to refute any ideas that any organisation, especially foreign one, nor the international wave of protests, was behind the student's movement.<sup>7</sup>

Behind closed doors, however, Tito and other leaders did actually worry about “bad” influences the students were exposed to and did put the blame on certain professors. One of the leading Serbian communists of the time, Draža Marković, wrote down in his diary on June 16, 1968 that it is “a surprising fact that some philosophers – scholars (M. Marković, Z. Pešić, S. Stojanović, V. Milić etc.) are not so much devoted to science, but that they showed great talent for concrete political action, which they continue and have great influence on student organisations” (Marković 1987: 73). More importantly, Tito himself insisted on punishing the hostile professors on several occasions from 1968 to 1971. For instance, in a meeting of the Presidency of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in late 1971, he criticized the too liberal Serbian leaders for their weakness towards those elements that turn the youth into a wrong direction. We knew precisely, added Tito, who actually caused and who was actually the protagonist of the student rebellion. Similar accusations Tito repeated the following year, when he said “too liberal” Serbian establishment personified by Mirko Tepavac, Marko Nikezić and Latinka Perović, was removed from the office, merging their fate with the case of the said professors and thereby turning it into a major political question:

“I stated my view on the television. I didn't reveal everything. But I said what I thought, and I still that now.

Those that we had business with at universities and before the student protest showed up. These are several professors, some philosophers, various Praxis members and other dogmatists, including those that performed various defamations in the Security Service and so on. All that somewhat united today. Each of them, of course, is working for himself, and yet they are united in their efforts to create among us some chaos and bring shady business. We need to resist them vigorously, resolutely tell them NO. [...] There's no place for them, not even for where they're now. Should such persons educate our children at universities and schools? That's no place for them. [...] So, we need to disable such persons, and we'll disable them if we realize where they are now, if we resolutely prevent their actions. And, in the last instance, sometimes it'll require taking administrative measures.”

(Tito's 1968 speech to the Congress of Yugoslav Trade Unions, see: Mićunović 2013: 241–242)

---

7 As well to refute the connection of their demands with the previous critique of Yugoslav socialism, as exposed by the said Milovan Đilas – Đilas' *Nova klasa* from 1961 identified the emergence of the privileged layer of socialist bureaucracy that he called the new class. The students' slogans such as “Down with the Red Bourgeoisie”, rather resembled this critique, and hence Tito did not forget to refute these links and influences.

“Those elements that [...] drive our youth into a direction that is not favourable to our development. [...] what did we do there so far? We didn’t replace a single man. At Belgrade University, for example, we knew exactly who caused and who was actually the protagonist of those well-known student protests.

I’ve been telling for years now that there are professors at Belgrade University and Zagreb University who are raising our youth in such a manner that they’ll be absolutely alienated from our socialist system. And I’ve been talking that we need to hold these professors responsible and disable them to work at our universities. By now, I achieved nothing. I openly said who these persons are, and here today I have a list with their names [...]. So, comrades, these are the things that irritated me very much.”

(See: Bešlin 2009: 58)

To be sure, certain Belgrade professors of philosophy were influential in at least twofold manner. First, they were members of the Praxis group and attendees of the Korčula Summer School; these internationally recognized intellectual group gathered prominent Yugoslav and international philosophers (such as Bloch, Habermas, Marcuse, Goldmann, etc.), all of which worked on a strong, leftist critique of all social phenomena (*Kritika svega postojećeg*). Still, while the majority of Praxis professors from Zagreb remained relatively detached from the student movement and rebellion in Zagreb in 1968, Belgrade professors were quite active, providing assistance and ideological guidance to the students. For that reason, recent historian Hrvoje Klasić describes the Belgrade 1968 “as much a professor rebellion as it is a student rebellion” (Klasić 2012b).

By all accounts, the said professors were not direct instigators of the rebellion, which, as mentioned, actually broke out as a clash with the brigadiers to turn into something else. True, they were among those who took the walk the next day and witnessed the violence, but so were some prominent politicians and many university staff. Namely, the professors attended an early morning plenum of all university and local political representatives, where they all decided to come together to the Student city prior to the walk (Popov 2008: 38-39).

Still, if one follows the communist doctrine, there is perhaps not such a huge contradiction between Tito’s publicly proclaimed spontaneity and internal claim for responsibility. For, spontaneity featured as an important concept among the communist thinkers. Revolutionary spontaneity or spontaneism is a belief that the revolution will – and in fact should – come from below, without a vanguard role of the leading party. As the most vocal advocate of spontaneity and social movements and protests coming from below, Rosa Luxemburg in her analysis of the 1905 Russian revolution famously proclaimed that “spontaneity plays such a prominent role... because revolutions allow no one to play schoolmaster with them” (Luxemburg 1971: 245). This at the time led to the claims that she diminishes the role of the Marxist party as the leader of class struggle and overestimates the role of the unorganized working class and denies the importance of premeditated and organized political action. Yet, as scholars emphasize, “it would be more accurate to say that for Luxemburg spontaneity and organization are not separable or separate activities, but different moments of a single political process – that one does not exist without the other” (Schulman 2016: 22).

“But there is spontaneity and spontaneity” says Lenin in his critique of spontaneism and his particular understanding of spontaneity. Lenin was fiercely against spontaneism, and believed that workers need to be led and that there is no spontaneity without a good preparation. “The ‘spontaneous element’, in essence, represents nothing more nor less than consciousness in an embryonic form” (Lenin 1966: 74). From this vintage point, the Yugoslav communists identified the group of Belgrade professors perhaps not as the real instigators by means of actually plotting the rebellion or personally setting it off directly, but precisely in the Leninist way as bearing this consciousness whose embryonic form they recognised in the 1968 protests.<sup>8</sup>

### Intellectual Legacy: The Case of the Eight Professors and Their Pre-1968 Philosophical Background

In the remainder of this article, we shall look at the case of the eight professors from the Faculty of Philosophy who were identified as the protests’ instigators and subsequently expelled from the University of Belgrade due to their “ethico-political unsuitability”, as one of the most prominent legacies of the Belgrade 1968 protests (one could as well call it a side-effect).

Namely, an historical fact regarding the Belgrade *soixante-huitards* that obviously needs to be interpreted is that its key intellectual actors, who suffered from the sanctions imposed by the Yugoslav state in the greatest extent, were almost exclusively philosophers or at least exponents of social theory. It is not only that their career institutionally extended from the Philosophical Faculty in Belgrade to the post-1968 Centre for Philosophy and Social Theory, but their theoretical work and public engagement were largely embedded in the intellectual currents that were characteristic of the epoch. What is more, as it has been shown, the state apparatus, including Draža Marković and Tito himself, often referred to them simply as “philosophers” or, in a more subtle way, as “members of the Praxis school [*praksisovci*]”. It is no coincidence that a well-known ironic poster in 1968 presented the image of Socrates as someone “wanted dead or alive”. Although it would be exaggeration to say that philosophy or theory as such served as the key “militant tool” for those participating in the mass demonstrations, one can hardly deny their

---

8 In addition, it is worth reminding ourselves that the communists always had somewhat loose standards when it comes to proving guilt in the court of law, to say the least. Hrvoje Klasić claims that the Korčula Summer School and Praxis philosophy were tolerated as it was believed that they were irrelevant, without significant social impact and readership (Klasić 2012b). Moreover, Tito and the political elite actually welcomed the early works of the Praxis school, inasmuch as these brought a critique of the Soviet thinkers as “Stalinist Marxism” for their doctrinarian approach to Marxism, thereby providing a theoretical justification for Tito’s split with Stalin and the superiority of the Yugoslav unique self-management way of socialism. The problem occurred when the students apparently applied their theory in practice. At that moment, Klasić claims, political elite woke up and saw the potential that the Praxis philosophy has (Klasić 2012b). Since the Praxis school continued exposing negative phenomena in the Yugoslav society, such as bureaucratization, class differentiation between the party leaders and workers, personality cult etc. (see, for instance, Stojanović 1972: 375–398, republished in English in *Praxis International* the following year [Stojanović 1973: 311–333]), their clash with the ruling elite seemed inevitable.

significance for the intellectual dimension of Belgrade's 1968. Roughly speaking, just as Western Marxism was associated with the New Left in the 1960s and with its culmination in the protests of 1968, the Praxis school might be treated as one of the theoretical and ideological forerunners of the Yugoslav 1968.

The roots of this significance can be traced back to the philosophical debates of the 1950s. Apart from the general role that Marxist theories played in Eastern Europe after World War II in modernizing intellectual discourse and making its terminology as coherent as possible, Marxist theories also served as a decisive battlefield where many key symptoms of large-scale social conflicts appeared (for instance, the shifts in Stalin's philosophical writings in many ways reflected the concrete changes in Stalinist *Realpolitik*). In the case of Yugoslavia, after the Tito–Stalin split in 1948, philosophy was one of the main registers that staged the tensions between those faithful to the earlier Stalinist setting and those seeking for a different framework, including new conceptual tools. The struggle between these opposite tendencies culminated in the conference held in Bled where, according to the commonly accepted interpretation, the politically mostly post-Stalinist, but ideologically still Stalinist-inspired “dialectical materialists” suffered defeat from those who were insisting on a Marxist theory that gives central importance to *praxis* as an ontologically specific social activity, embedded in the freedom of individuals. Within the latter framework, social reality is not reduced to being a field of always already overdetermined and necessary relations, but it is also interpreted as a horizon that can be freely produced and transformed by the actors. Consequently, Praxis philosophers rejected so-called reflection theory according to which human epistemological capacities are limited to the passive representation of previously given material processes. As Mihailo Marković, one of the leading members of the Belgrade wing of the Praxis school put it: “first of all, it [reflection theory] ignores the complete experience of German classical philosophy and returns to the dualism of the material object *in itself* and the spiritual subject from the 18th century; secondly, it implicitly and dogmatically claims that the decisive characteristic of the mind is reflection – how could we then criticize the products of the intellect if they are *per definitionem* the reflections of reality, that is to say, if they are simply true? And thirdly, this theory is false because it is factually so that the mind does not merely follow and copy the passive material processes, but often anticipates and conceptualizes material objects that do not exist yet.” (Marković 1975: 22) Moreover, these conceptual insights were followed by certain historical-philological tendencies, namely, by reorienting the emphasis from the late Marx (who was, allegedly, inclined to economic determinism) to the young Marx who laid down the humanistic-anthropological foundations of Praxis philosophy *avant la lettre*. In that regard, it is worth mentioning that the works of the young (“real”) Marx were published in Sarajevo in 1955 (Marx–Engels 1953), accompanied by an introductory text by the Praxis philosopher Predrag Vranicki and an article on the Marxist theory of alienation, written by another Praxis philosopher, Rudi Supek (Supek 1955). Thus, the Praxis school not only contributed to the growing pluralism of Marxism in Yugoslavia<sup>9</sup> and to the undoing of the monopoly of the

9 It is worth mentioning here that the Korčula Summer School and the *Praxis* journal were open even to non-Marxists such as Eugen Fink and Gustav A. Wetter.

Party with regard to philosophical issues, but in a certain way also joined the wider tendencies of Western Marxism whose main exponents, in parallel to the decline of revolutionary movements in Western Europe, mostly ignored the critique of political economy for the benefit of general ontological or ideological-cultural topics (Anderson 1976). The same insight can be applied to the Budapest School (Ágnes Heller, Mihály Vajda, György Márkus and others), whose members aimed to reinvent Marxism (hence the expression “the renaissance of Marxism”) and reject its Stalinist forms in the name of an ontological and anthropological-ethical theory that returns to the “real” Marx and stresses, *inter alia*, the everyday needs of the individual (that are suppressed or ignored by “real socialist” states as well).<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, when the members of Praxis school insisted that workers’ self-management had been introduced in Yugoslavia with serious limitations, their arguments were much less based on economic analyses than on all-embracing ontological theses on the potential freedom of the human individual and, correspondingly, on the need of “humanizing society” (and, less emphatically, nature). Interestingly, the individualistic tendencies in Praxis philosophy were so strong that Danko Grlić, one of its exponents, even concluded in 1968 that “every type of creation is the work of a personality and of a lonely individual, and not a collective act” (as cited by Koltan 166).

---

10 The Budapest School cooperated with the Praxis school in many ways. Firstly, Ágnes Heller and György Lukács were members of the international advisory board of the *Praxis* journal. Secondly, members of the Budapest school attended regularly the Korčula Summer School. As Heller emphasizes: “I got in touch with the world in Korčula” (as cited by Köhler 2012: 307). The experience of Korčula impressed the members of the Budapest school so much that they even considered the possibility of creating a similar institution in Keszthely, Hungary. In the decisive year of 1968, there were six Hungarians in Korčula: Ágnes Heller, György Márkus, Mária Márkus, Zádor Tordai, Vilmos Sós and Ferenc Tókei. In her lecture on Marx’s theory of revolution and the revolution of everyday life, Heller self-consciously referred to the ideas of the New Left, including the new vision of sexuality. As this Korčula Summer School coincided with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the participants of the School formulated a declaration in sign of protest. As Hungarian soldiers contributed to the invasion, the Hungarian participants of the School found it convenient to formulate their own letter of protest in which they expressed their demand for real socialist democracy or for “socialism with a human face” (all of them signed the letter except from Tókei). It was in this moment that Heller was reading the protest letter of the Hungarian delegation and Ernst Bloch came up to the stage in order to kiss her enthusiastically. After they returned to Hungary, they were called “the Korčula petitioners” (*korčulai aláírók*) and severe sanctions followed. According to Heller, “in 1968 in Hungary the signing of the Korčula declaration was the real dissident gesture” (Heller, internet). Similarly to the members of Praxis school, in the post-1968 course of events (more precisely, in 1973) the members of the Budapest School were expelled from their workplace (the Institute for Philosophy and the Sociological Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) and the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party stated that “the Korčula declaration harmed the party discipline” (as cited by Köhler 2012: 310). Similarly to many of their Yugoslav colleagues, the members of the Budapest school sought the solution in leaving Hungary (this was allowed for them in 1977). Without going into details, it is worth noting that the articles written by the members of the Budapest school were still published in Hungarian as well, owing first of all to the journals (*Új Symposion*, *Létünk*, *Híd*) of the Hungarian nationality in Yugoslavia that had their own affiliations with the 1968 events (Szerbhorváth 2005, Vékás 2017: 126–129).



Undoubtedly, these aspects significantly contributed to the fact that the members of the Praxis school played a crucial role in the protests of 1968, especially in Belgrade. In that historical context, the theoretical conclusions regarding the spontaneity of the human individual could be transformed into the affirmation of a social movement, with special emphasis on the call for the freedom of speech and the full acceptance of ideological pluralism, as well as the demand for the extension and deepening of self-management as the condition for the self-cultivation of the individual. One might claim from a retrospective point of view that the stress given to the role and freedom of the individual, and, accordingly, the ignorance regarding class (and, more generally, economic) analysis and the category of the proletariat, also served as a continuity factor – from this position, it was relatively easy to transform humanist Marxism into a dissident liberal discourse that was more or less indifferent to the critique of capitalism, but became an important factor in criticizing Slobodan Milošević's authoritarian regime in the 1990s. However, the very same conceptual configuration made possible a different route as well: that of the intellectual who does not undermine or ignore internationalistically engaged class categories for the benefit of the free individual, but for the ideology of ethnic community. Both strategies appeared after the 1968 protests.

### **The Aftermath: Expulsion and Redemption**

Meanwhile, Tito's aforementioned speeches set off a chain of events that bind together the destiny of reformist Serbian politicians and the eight professors accused of inspiring the students to mutiny. Namely, even though Tito immediately demanded their removal, the professors kept their posts for years. To some extent, this was due to the mild reaction to these claims of the then Serbian party leadership, which by early 1972 completely fell out of his favour. Somewhat paradoxically, it proved easier to remove from the office these so-called liberals such as Nikezić, Perović and Tepavac, who withdrew already in late 1972 after being pressured by Tito and the Communist Party. But the professors did not want to resign and, time and again, procedures triggered at removing them from the Faculty of Philosophy proved inefficient. Namely, as Yugoslavia was a workers' state, and a relatively liberal one in comparison to the countries of the Eastern Bloc, dismissing someone from his/her post required a rather complicated procedure. According to the principles of Yugoslav self-management, the professors could be fired only by the decision made by the self-managing organs of their Faculty. At the time, Faculty of Philosophy and University of Belgrade consisted of several bodies where power and influence resided. Each could have been used as a vehicle for punishing the disobedient lecturers and/or the Faculty's management. In addition to the standard Faculty's Council (i.e. *Teaching Scientific Council – Nastavno-naučno veće*), as the highest self-managing of the Faculty, authority comprising some 150 lecturers, there was also Workers Assembly (*Radnički savet*), which included all the employees; however, while in factories and companies Workers Assemblies were important, at the Faculty they had little influence compared to the Faculty's Board. More important was the Faculty's branch of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, gathering only those employees which were members of the party. Once the

attack on the disobedient professors started, the expectation was first to have the Faculty's League of Communists of Yugoslavia branch to condemn them. Such decision would not mean their immediate removal from the Faculty, but would have had ethical and symbolical significance, proving that the said professors departed heavily from the Party line and the official doctrine. This would have discouraged their colleagues of backing them up and would thus open the door for their removal from the Faculty through other bodies. This attempt failed completely. Party members from the Faculty refused to accuse their colleagues, and thus the University's Party Committee disband its Faculty's branch altogether in 1973. What is more, in July 1974 the Faculty Council unanimously (150 votes in favour and only one abstention) supported the professors' right to voice their views without suffering consequences (see Antić 1974: 1–4).

Throughout this turbulent period, Praxis members continued publishing articles and kept their critical edge, and continued attending the Korčula Summer School. This only widened the already growing rift between the Party officials and *Praxis*. To name but a few most prominent examples of such rift in the 1970s, public funding for *Praxis* became delayed and reduced, several issues of the journal were temporarily banned by court decisions in 1971 and 1972 (Zabrana "Praksisa" 1971: 6; Sisak: Privremena zabrana "Praxisa" 1972: 5) and the critiques from highest party officials progressed from mildly commending them for "deviationism" (word used in 1968 by the then Croat Communist Party leader Mika Tripalo, see: Antić 1968) to full-fledged accusations of being "totally anti-socialist and anti-Marxist" (1972 words of the leading communist leader of Croatia Josip Vrhovec) (see Stankovic 1972: 1). Simultaneously, the smear campaign in the Yugoslav press intensified, with the Praxis school being dismissed as "false Marxists" and the eight professors being described as "anarcho-liberals" hungry for political power (Ibid.).

Finally, after years-long cat-and-mouse game, Yugoslav authorities managed to expel the professors from classrooms through a series of legislative moves that blatantly broke all the principles of self-management on which the Yugoslav society allegedly resided. In order to increase political influence on the University, they changed the composition of the Belgrade University Council, which previously comprised solely of lecturers, by reducing the number of lecturers only to half, while having the other half being elected by external bodies. Furthermore, a special law – *lex specialis* – about "ethico-political suitability" was passed on the Federal level in 1973, to open the door for firing these professors on the grounds of their "unsuitability", but even that proved insufficient to have the professors banned from teaching. Then, in late 1974, another legal measure was introduced – giving the Serbian Assembly rights to "put at disposal" ("*stav na raspoloženje*") i. e. to remove from classrooms "unsuitable" lecturers, which in practice meant to be suspended from work but to receive certain financial compensation. Such a measure was not only in stark contrast with the self-managing principles, but had also been passed only in Serbia and not on the Federal level, and the professors complained that it was unconstitutional. Finally, on January 28, 1975, the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Serbia issued a decree about "putting at disposal" the eight professors of the Faculty of Philosophy: Mihailo Marković, Ljubomir Tadić, Miladin Životić, Zagorka Pešić-Golubović, Svetozar Stojanović, Dragoljub

Mićunović, Trivo Indić and Nebojša Popov. Most of them spent the next six years on visiting lectureships or study visits abroad, and hence this period only consolidated their already respectable international reputation.<sup>11</sup> Unsurprisingly, *Praxis* journal and Korčula Summer School soon followed their fate: with all funding to *Praxis* being denied, the editors sent a letter to their readership in March 1973, informing them that the journal effectively ceased to exist (Lešaja 2014: 61, 73). The last Korčula Summer School took place in 1974, as no further funding was approved for it henceforth (Ibid: 85–88).

Once they were effectively expelled from the classroom, further measures were made to remove them completely from work. Still, they did not fall down without a fight – with the assistance of liberally minded lawyer and human rights defender Srđa Popović, they vigorously fought a legal battle to annul the Assembly’s decree, even appealing to the International Labour Organization. The establishment responded by abolishing the problematic decree about “ethico-political suitability” and by limiting the duration that a person could remain “at disposal”; hence, in 1981, several professors found themselves unemployed in a country with officially no unemployment. As Mihailo Marković later wrote in his memoirs: “that was I guess the first time that the two members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences (Ljuba Tadić and myself) register themselves at the Bureau of Unemployment” (Marković 2008: 167).

After another appeal, the eight professors were finally employed at the Institute for Social Sciences, at the separate department called the Centre for Philosophy and Social Theory,<sup>12</sup> where they kept their critical edge and argued for political pluralism. This Centre was clearly a dissident institution: “all original founding members of the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory were ‘Belgrade Praxis members’ and active participants of the Korčula Summer School”, and some of them were the most notable professors who supported the 1968 Belgrade student protests (Mihailo Marković, Ljubomir Tadić and Svetozar Stojanović) (Cvejić, Nikolić and Sladeček, in manuscript).

From the late 1980s onwards, they and their colleagues employed in the meantime, became politically active and at times occupied highest positions in Serbia. Dragoljub Mićunović was one of the founders and the first president of the Democratic Party, and later the Speaker of the Parliament; Vojislav Koštunica left the Democratic Party to found his own party in 1992, and was Serbian President from 2000 to 2003 and Prime Minister from 2004 to 2008; Zoran Đinđić replaced Mićunović as the leader of the Democratic Party and was subsequently Serbian Prime Minister from 2001 until his assassination in 2003. Kosta Čavoški, who was also among the founding members of the Democratic Party, later embraced a right-wing course and became a fierce Serbian nationalist. Ljubomir Tadić was among the founders of the Democratic Party and remained influential in the party, and

11 Other repressive measures against them were also used; for instance, the professors were occasionally deprived of their passports (according to Mićunović, he was unable to travel for six years, see: Mićunović 2013: 258).

12 The negotiations took place between Milan Dragović, Serbian Executive Council’s Vice-president and Serbian Secretary for culture and education Milan Milutinović. A reconstruction of that conversation can be found in Marković 2009: 167–168).

his son Boris Tadić later led the Party and acted as Serbian President from 2004 to 2012. Vesna Pešić was a long term leader of the Civic Alliance of Serbia (*Građanski savez Srbije*) and influential politician during and after Milošević's era. Mihailo Marković wrote the political programme of Milošević's socialist Party and was considered to be its ideologue prior to his resignation in 1995. He also embraced nationalist views. Svetozar Stojanović – also had nationalist ideas, and acted as the special advisor during Dobrica Ćosić's short presidency of Yugoslavia. Nebojša Popov, the founder and President of UJDI, a pro-democratic and pan-Yugoslav party that advocated the survival of Yugoslavia. Several other, lesser known colleagues, such as Trivo Indić or recently deceased Aleksandar Nikitović, were long-term advisors to Serbian presidents Boris Tadić and Vojislav Koštunica. Our guess is that probably half of the Institute's staff occupied high or highest political positions in Serbia in the 1990s and 2000s. Ideologically speaking, they positioned themselves broadly, advancing far-right to far-left views, with some being fierce nationalists who vigorously defended the Serbian cause, while others acted as fierce anti-war liberals who accused the regime for atrocities and insisted on the recognition of Serbian guilt and Serbian crimes committed during the 1990s.

## 1968 and the Post-Evental Fidelity

According to the philosophy of Alain Badiou (Badiou 2009), events are intervening in historical situations by introducing universally relevant ideas that cannot be reduced to the “inconsistent multiplicities” in which they appear. Badiou elaborated a typology of post-evental subjectivity that might be summarized as follows: 1. the faithful subject (characterized by fidelity to the truth of the event); 2. the reactionary subject of denial (who suggests that nothing happened); 3. the obscure subject (who leads a counter-attack in the name of preventive counter-revolution); 4. the resurrected subject (who revitalizes the truth of the event after a certain while). Slavoj Žižek added two types of subjects to Badiou's list: 5. the subject of reactive reintegration (who seemingly affirms the event but in fact betrays it); 6. the subject who forces the truth of the event without taking into consideration its possible tragic consequences (Žižek, internet). This seemingly abstract typology might be very useful in interpreting post-1968 subjectivities. First of all, there is certainly a reactionary subject according to whom nothing essential happened in 1968 – it was merely an Anti-Oedipal protest of hysterical teenagers, a street carnival. As Alexandre Kojève famously formulated it: nothing serious happened because nobody died (see Tamás, internet). From the viewpoint of reactive reintegration, 1968 was mainly a turning point in Western(ized) lifestyle, a globalized event of “sex and drugs and rock ‘n’ roll” or the affirmation of corporeal hedonism, but certainly not, for instance, a politically relevant protest against state authoritarianism and state capitalism. The reactive subject often claims that the students misunderstood their position by relying upon a radical leftist scenery – what they really did is that they anticipated the liberal pluralism of the following decades, and, what is more, their usual demand for workers' self-management is today satisfied by post-Fordist teamwork. There is also an attitude that might be called obscure: according to the exponents of “neoconservative counter-revolution”, 1968 is to be blamed for

contemporary nihilism and relativism, for the crisis of authority, moral behaviour and “traditional values” (one of the main representatives of this post-1968 subjectivity is certainly Nicolas Sarkozy – see Samuel, internet). However, one might also come to the conclusion that it is typical for the obscure subject to appropriate certain *soixante-huitard* ideas, namely, the anti-etatist and anti-institutional ones, but in a distorted way, for the benefit of the ideology of free market.

To our purpose, it is of great importance to pose the question whether there are any aspects of the Yugoslav 1968 that make it relevant as an event with a universal and, at least in a certain way, original message. In that respect, Boris Kanzleiter’s research demonstrates (Kanzleiter 2009, 2011) that the Yugoslav 1968 functioned as a kind of synthesis of the 1968 rebellions despite their plural character. That is to say, 1968

in Yugoslavia represented neither the longest nor the most spectacular, and not even the most massive experience, and yet in it one could find the condensation of its global essence. ... For, the Yugoslav 68’ was at once a critique of the mechanisms of alienation and the exploitations of the market (this was in fact its reaction against the deadlocks of the Yugoslav market reforms) and also a critique of the technocracy as well as the party state and the state party, respectively. The document drafted by the Belgrade students (‘3000 words’) very precisely illustrates the point in question: ‘Briefly, the ideal of the students is a democratic socialism’. It is symptomatic that the Belgrade students protested hand in hand against the repression in Warsaw as well as the intervention in Czechoslovakia, but also against the repression of Western-German students. What happened in Yugoslavia in fact represented a synthesis of the whole of 68’, and this is the proof that that year ultimately does not succumb to false dichotomies such as East/West, market/state, etc.: on the contrary, it was ubiquitously harnessed against state-capitalism which bases itself not only on welfare but also on conformism and paternalism. (Losoncz 2015: 56–58)

More locally, post-Yugoslav scholars argued that, if the League of Communists of Yugoslavia followed the true reformist course and did not remove the liberals from the office, the new leadership would keep Yugoslavia alive or, at least, prevent its violent dissolution. New age Yugoslav historians, such as Hrvoje Klasić, seem to continue such currency by considering that the Belgrade student protests of 1968 were among the most emancipatory drivers that occurred in Yugoslavia, due to their universalist and pro-democratic claims. This goes in line with the historical interpretation of 1968 generally. As Geoff Eley puts it: “The movements of 1968 provided the flashes of a future still being shaped” (Eley 2002: 363).

Perhaps, after decades of dissolution, conflicts and economic turmoil in what was once Yugoslavia, it is now worth reminding ourselves of this legacy that professes the possibility of the ideological alternative, of socialism with a human face, of egalitarian society beyond liberalism, capitalism and real-socialism. In today’s ideologically and intellectually apathetic and sterilized Serbian society, nurturing this legacy about the possibility of an ideological alternative is our best chance – if not the last resort.

## Bibliography

- Anderson, Perry (1976), *Considerations on Western Marxism*, London: Verso.
- Anonim. (1974), „Praxis” Supporters in Yugoslavia Sentenced, “Praxis” Supporters in Yugoslavia Sentenced”, 3 October 1974. HU OSA 300-8-3-11027; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Background Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.
- Anonim. (1972), “Sisak: Privremena zabrana ‘Praxisa’”, *Vjesnik*, 26 July 1972, p. 5.
- Anonim. (1971), “Zabrana ‘Praksisa’”, *Politika*, 11 August 1971, p. 6.
- Anonim. (1968), “Smernice o najvažnijim zadacima Saveza komunista u razvijanju sistema društveno-ekonomskih i političkih odnosa”, *Politika*, 14. June 1968, p. 1.
- Antić, Zdenko (1968), “Publication of ‘Praxis’ to be Stopped?”, 22 April 1968. HU OSA 300-8-3-10136; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Background Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.
- Badiou, Alain (2009), *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event 2*, London: Continuum.
- Bešlin, Milivoj (2009), “Uticaji ‘juna ’68.’ na političku situaciju u Jugoslaviji”, in: Tomić, Đorđe and Petar Atanacković (eds.), *Društvo u pokretu: novi društveni pokreti u Jugoslaviji od 1968. do danas*, Novi Sad: Cenzura, pp. 49–63.
- Cohen, Robert S. And Mihailo Marković (1975), *Yugoslavia: The Rise and Fall of Socialist Humanism*, Nottingham: Spokesman Book.
- Čosić, Dobrica (2000), *Piščevi zapisi (1951–1968)*, Beograd: Filip Višnjić.
- Cvejić, Igor Olga Nikolić and Mihal Sladeček, *Istorija instituta za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju*, in manuscript.
- Eley, Geoffrey (2002), *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gruenwald, Oskar, “Praxis and Human Rights in Yugoslavia”, Prepared for presentation at the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington Hilton Hotel, August 31–September 3, 1979.
- Heller Ágnes, “1968”, (internet) available at: <http://www.c3.hu/scripta/beszelo/97/11/13.htm> (viewed 29 August 2018).
- Kanzleiter, Boris (2011), *“Rote Universität”: Studentenbewegung und Linksopposition in Belgrad 1974-1975*, Hamburg: VSA.
- . (2009), “1968. u Jugoslaviji: tema koja čeka istraživanje” in: Tomić, Đ. and P. Atanacković (eds.), *Društvo u pokretu: Novi društveni pokreti u Jugoslaviji od 1968. do danas*, 30–49.
- Klasić, Hrvoje (2012a), *Jugoslavija i svijet 1968*, Zagreb: Ljevak.
- . (2012b), “Raspad Jugoslavije se vidio još 1968. godine”, [https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/klasic\\_raspad\\_jugoslavije\\_se\\_vidio\\_jos\\_1968\\_godine/24534252.html](https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/klasic_raspad_jugoslavije_se_vidio_jos_1968_godine/24534252.html) (page accessed 1.5.2018.)
- Koltan, Michael (2012), “Filozofija ‘Praxisa’ i studentski prosvjedi 1968. godine”, in Olujčić Dragomir Oluja and Krunoslav Stojaković (eds.), *Praxis*, Belgrade: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, pp. 148–173.
- Köhler, Matthias István (2012), “Korčulanska letnja škola i ‘Budimpeštanska škola’”, in Olujčić D. O. and K. Stojaković (eds.), *Praxis*, pp. 301–317.
- Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich (1966), *Essential Works of Lenin: “What is to Be Done” and Other Writings*, New York: Dover Publications.
- Lešaja, Ante (2014), *Praksis orijentacija, časopis Praxis i Korčuljanska ljetna škola (građa)*, Beograd: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung.
- Losonc, Márk (2015), “Šta li će biti sa tobom, postjugoslovenski svete..? / Qu’est-ce que tu seras devenu, monde post-yougoslave...? / Was wird aus dir geworden sein, post-jugoslawische Welt ...? / What will have become of you, post-Yugoslav world...?”, *Anachronia* 13: 51–81.

- Luxemburg, Rosa (1971), *Selected Political Writings of Rosa Luxemburg*, New York and London: Monthly Review Press.
- Maliqi, Shkelzën (2008), "Kosovo 1968: eine Gegenbewegung zu Belgrad", in Kanzleiter Boris and Krunoslav Stojaković (eds.), "1968" in *Jugoslavien: Studentenproteste und kulturelle Avantgarde zwischen 1960 und 1975; Gespräche und Dokumente*, Bonn: Dietz, pp. 73–78.
- Malavražić, Đorđe (prir.) (2008), *Šezdeset osma: lične istorije (80 svedočenja)*, Beograd: Službeni glasnik.
- Marković, Mihailo (2008), *Juriš na nebo*, I-II, Beograd: Prosveta 2008.
- Marković, Dragoslav Draža (1987), *Život i politika 1967–1978*, I, Beograd: Rad.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels (1953), *Rani radovi*, Zagreb: Naprijed.
- Mićunović, Dragoljub (2013), *Život u nevremenu*, Beograd: Arhipelag.
- Popov, Nebojša (2008), *Društveni sukobi: izazov sociologiji*, "Beogradski jun" 1968. Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2008.
- . (1988), *Contra Fatum: Slučaj grupe profesora filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu 1968–1988*, Beograd: Mladost.
- Samuel, Henry, "Nicolas Sarkozy blames the generation of 1968", (internet) available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3557797/Nicolas-Sarkozy-blames-the-generation-of-1968.html> (viewed 29 August 2018).
- Schulman, Jason (2016), "The Mass Strike and Rosa's Theory of Spontaneity", in Ehmsen Stefanie and Albert Scharenberg (eds.), *Rosa Remix*, New York: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, pp. 22–24.
- Stanković, Slobodan, "Zagreb 'Praxis' against Stalinist Dogmatism", 27 July 1972. HU OSA 300-8-3-1071; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Background Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.
- Stojanović, Svetozar (1973), "From Post-revolutionary Dictatorship to Socialist Democracy", *Praxis: International Edition* 9(4): 311–334.
- . (1972), "Od postrevolucionarne diktature ka socijalističkoj demokratiji (jugoslovenski socijalizam na raskršću)". *Praxis* 9(3–4): 375–398.
- Supek, Rudi (1955), "Značaj teorije otuđenja za socijalistički humanizam", *Pregled* 37(1): 51–58.
- Szerbhorváth György (2005), *Vajdasági lakoma*. Pozsony: Kalligram Könyvkiadó.
- Tamás Gáspár Miklós, "Miért éppen Hobsbawm?", (internet) available at: <http://valasz.hu/publi/miert-eppen-hobsbawm-55610/> (viewed 29 August 2018).
- Vékás János (2017), *Utak 2*. Zenta: VMMI.
- Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Universal Exception*, London: Continuum, 2006.
- ., "On Alain Badiou and Logiques des mondes", (internet) available at: <http://www.lacan.com/zizbadman.htm> (viewed 29 August 2018).

Aleksandar Pavlović  
Mark Lošonc

### Beogradski šezdesetosmaši i naknadna vernost Događaju: intelektualno i političko nasleđe studentskih protesta iz 1968. godine u Srbiji

#### Apstrakt

Iako su beogradski studentski protesti izbili i završili se u junu 1968. godine posle svega nedelju dana, oni predstavljaju zbirnu tačku nagomilanog decenijskog društvenog nezadovoljstva i protivrečnosti, kao i filozofskih istraživanja neortodoksnih marksista iz Praksis škole (*Praksisovci*). Protesti su iznenadili jugoslovenske vlasti kao prva masovna pobuna nakon

Drugog svetskog rata koja je eksplicitno kritikovala rastuću društvenu nejednakost, birokratizaciju i nezaposlenost, i zahtevala slobodu govora i ukidanje privilegija. Ovaj članak fokusira se na sudbinu osmoro profesora sa Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu bliskih Praxis idejama, koje je režim identifikovao kao podstrekače protesta i kasnije ih proterao sa fakulteta zbog njihove „moralno-političke nepodobnosti“. Nakon međunarodnih i unutrašnjih pritisaka, oni su kasnije ponovo zaposleni u zasebnoj istraživačkoj jedinici nazvanoj Centar za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, gde su zadržali svoju kritičku oštricu i zagovarali politički pluralizam. Od kraja osamdesetih godina prošlog veka, oni i njihove kolege iz Centra postaju politički aktivni, nalaze se među osnivačima i kasnije liderima Demokratske Stranke i povremeno zauzimaju najviše položaje u Srbiji – Dragoljub Mićunović kao predsedavajući Narodne skupštine, bivši srpski predsednik i premijer Vojislav Koštunica i nekadašnji premijer Zoran Đinđić. Međutim, dok su neki članovi osmorke i Centra postali čvrsti anti-nacionalisti i antiratni aktivisti, drugi su prigrlili srpski nacionalizam, tako predvodeći intelektualni razdor na Prvu i Drugu Srbiju koji je obeležio srpsko društvo devedesetih godina prošlog veka, i ostao uticajan do danas.

**Ključne reči:** Beogradski studentski protesti 1968, slučaj osmoro profesora, Beogradski Filozofski fakultet, Praxis, Korčulanska letnja (ljetna) škola, Centar/Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, Josip Broz Tito, Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija.