

NEWSLETTER

No. 61, Pula, November 2021

CENTRE FOR CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH OF SOCIALISM



NEWS FROM CKPIS

CKPIS Winter Semester: Marko Zubak and Ana Rajković Pejić

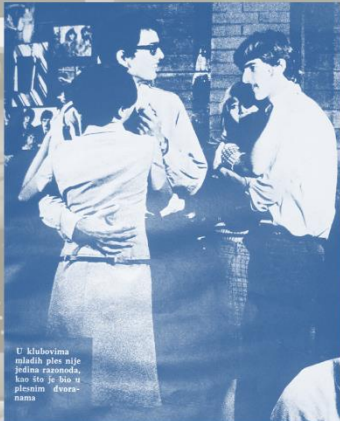
In November we had two first guests in the series of online public lectures *CKPIS Winter Semester*. Marko Zubak (Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb) talked about clubbing culture in late Yugoslav socialism, while Ana Rajković Pejić (Croatian Institute of History, Slavonski Brod) analysed the identity of Croatian women activists in the interwar period. Find out more about the Winter Semester at our [webpage](https://www.unipu.hr/ckpis/dogadjanja).

Zimski semestar CKPIS-a
Ciklus javnih online predavanja

Marko Zubak
Klupska kultura
zrelog i kasnog socijalizma

Ponedjeljak, 15. studenog 2021., 18.00
<https://ovh.unipu.hr/b/and-gdp-arf>

<https://www.unipu.hr/ckpis/dogadjanja>



Zimski semestar CKPIS-a
Ciklus javnih online predavanja

Ana Rajković Pejić
Između „neporočne Hrvaticе“ i „muške
Mare“. Identitet hrvatskih aktivistkinja
između dvaju svjetskih ratova

Četvrtak, 25. studenog 2021., 18.00
<https://ovh.unipu.hr/b/and-gdp-arf>

<https://www.unipu.hr/ckpis/dogadjanja>



Also in this issue at pp. 4-7: interview with Ondřej Vojtěchovský



CONFERENCES AND CFP

4th Hermann Weber Conference for the Historical Research of Communism: "In the Cold War the Battalions of Better Welfare Benefits are Decisive" - The Relationship between Communism and Social Policy since 1945, Berlin, 9-10 June 2022

During the 1953 Bundestag election campaign, MP Ludwig Preller coined the pithy phrase: "In the Cold War, in particular, the battalions of better welfare benefits are decisive." He was referring to a topic that was of outstanding importance to communism and the fight against it: the welfare state. Although for Marx social policy was primarily a system-stabilising and thus anti-revolutionary element, the promise of the elimination of social inequalities played a central role in the seizure of power by communist parties in the 20th century: e.g. Russia in 1917, China in 1949 or Cuba in 1959. Workers and marginalised groups hoped that the communist focus on the proletariat would lead to improvements of social security [.\(Read more\)](#)

Application deadline: 31 December 2021



PUBLICATIONS

Christian Axboe Nielsen: *Nismo mogli vjerovati... Raspad Jugoslavije 1991 -1999.* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2021)

Autor na temelju haške i druge povijesne dokumentacije rekonstruira i analizira propast Jugoslavije te politička i vojno-redarstvena zbivanja 1990-ih, kao i kasniji put ove regije prema Europskoj uniji. Knjiga je u Danskoj, gdje je objavljena 2018. dobila brojne pozitivne recenzije, a nezavisni list Information proglasio ju je najboljom knjigom na ove teme. [\(Read More\)](#)

Hannes Grandits, Robert Pichler, Ruža Fotiadis (eds.): "Kosovo in The Yugoslav 1980s", *Comparative Southaast European Studies*, 69, 2-3, 2021

The question of Kosovo within the context of the Yugoslav 1980s pervades this thematic issue: each of the 10 research articles, as well as both of the personal accounts ("Living Memories"), contribute to answering how the escalating situation in this part of Yugoslavia during late socialism affected political developments, public opinion, and knowledge production within the Yugoslav state, including, of course, personal life trajectories. As a prism that reflects and refracts social, political, and economic conflicts in late socialist Yugoslavia, "Kosovo in the Yugoslav 1980s" offers insights and empirical research by reconsidering the developments of that era from a Yugoslav perspective.

[\(Read More\)](#)



POSITIONS, GRANTS AND STIPENDS

FZH-Fellowship in Contemporary Urban History, Hamburg Institute for Advanced Study

The Research Centre for Contemporary History in Hamburg (Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg – FZH), in cooperation with the Hamburg Institute for Advanced Study (HIAS), invites applications for one or two fellowships on urbanity and urban history in a contemporary historical perspective. The new FZH-Fellowship in Contemporary Urban History is supposed to strengthen the international network of the institute and is therefore open to early postdoctoral researchers and senior researchers (advanced postdocs, professors) with a record of accomplishment of research in contemporary urban history or neighbouring disciplines. We are particularly interested in methodologically and thematically innovative projects in urban history since the 1970s. Topics include but are not limited to politics and administration of the modern city – and various forms of participation of its citizens –, urban economy, city-wide and district-related urban identities, aspects of spatial and social mobility as well as urban culture and subculture. Comparative projects are particularly welcome. ([read more](#))

Application deadline: 31 December 2021

Scholarships for PhD funded programme, European University Institute, Florence

The call for applications for the EUI funded PhD programme is opening on 1 November 2021. The EUI Department of History and Civilization offers exceptional opportunities to study global connections within early modern and modern European history in a unique international context. In the first and second years doctoral researchers study historiographical and methodological issues and focus on an in-depth exploration of selected central themes of European history. In the third and fourth years, researchers focus on their individual research, and are invited to present the results of their work at seminars and workshops. ([read more](#))

Application deadline: 31 January 2022

6 PhD scholarships "Study of Culture", University of Giessen

Giessen University's International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC), offers a three-year, structured PhD-programme in the study of culture. The GCSC focuses its research within the following Research Areas: Research Area 1: Cultural Memory Studies / Research Area 2: Cultural Narratologies / Research Area 3: Cultural Transformation and Performativity Studies / Research Area 4: Visual and Material Culture Studies / Research Area 5: Media and Multiliteracy Studies / Research Area 6: Cultural Identities / Research Area 7: Global Studies and Politics of Space / Research Area 8: Cultures of Knowledge, Research and Education / Research 9: Ecology and the Study of Culture. In addition, the GCSC has established research groups organized around "emerging topics" that are expected to contribute to the research profile by establishing and strengthening links to neighbouring disciplines as well as to emerging topics in contemporary public discourse. Thus far, Emerging Topic Groups have been established on "Ecology", "Migration", "Religion" and "Life Sciences". ([read more](#))

Application deadline: 1 February 2022



INTERVIEW OF THE MONTH

by Nemanja Stanimirović

Ondřej Vojtěchovský is head of the Institute of World History at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, and a researcher in the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in Prague.

[\(read more\)](#)



Ondřej Vojtěchovský

In your book *From Prague against Tito!* you have focused on the political emigration, which is by definition a transnational concept. What does such perspective, which goes beyond a national or binational-comparative approach, bring to the study of the Tito-Stalin split?

When I started my research on the Cominformist emigrants, there were two main perspectives on the Tito-Stalin conflict. The first one, represented by the splendid work of Ivo Banac *With Stalin against Tito*, was focused on the „Cominformist splits” within the Yugoslav communist movement itself. The second one followed the Yugoslav-Soviet dispute on the level of the international relations or the power relations between Moscow (and its Eastern European satellites) and Belgrade. However, my research led me into the other spheres affected by the conflict: the international communist movement, as a complex web of interconnected communists from various parts of the world. In individual stories of these emigrants one can follow “entangled histories” and an “international” dimension of Yugoslav communism: the Spanish Civil War, Yugoslav economic migrant communities in Czechoslovakia, France, the USA or Argentina, Yugoslav diplomacy etc. On the other hand, the common “internationalist” affair created inevitably a space for contending different local traditions of individual communist movements. I was interested not purely in comparing them but also in analysing their mutual interactions.

You say that the activities of all political emigrants were always circumscribed by the political climate and goals of their hosts. As you brilliantly narrate, the political situation varied over time, but what would you say was the main factor for making Prague the epicentre of Yugoslav pro-Soviet groups, and how did Prague and Czechoslovakia in particular, and not some other European city and country, influence the development of the anti-Tito's political emigration?

In 1948, Czechoslovakia had the best preconditions to become the leading centre of anti-Titoist emigrants. Czechoslovakia was economically the most developed country of the Soviet camp, it had wealthy communist party with abundant internationalist experience. Czechoslovakia as a democratic republic used to be a refuge of communist and other left political emigrants already in the interwar period. There was a strong traditional sympathy for Yugoslavia in the public. Unlike the other Soviet-bloc countries, Czechoslovakia had no conflicts in the past with Yugoslavia. Hence, for Moscow it was a best solution to establish the centre of anti-Titoist campaign in Prague, because no one could say that the motives behind were laying in an ancient hostility toward Yugoslav people. On the contrary, to fight Tito was presented as a pure

internationalist help to the Yugoslav people suffering under his rule.

You acknowledge that, barring necessary and constant fluctuations, there were merely around 150 *informbiroovci* in Czechoslovakia. Why is it relevant to study such a, in your own words – “marginal phenomenon”, and what are the benefits of adopting a micro-focus on the intellectual work of a relatively smaller political group?

In my today's opinion, the relatively small number of cominformist emigrants is not a reason to call them a marginal phenomenon in the history. Of course, they lost their cause and did not enter the “History” as “big men and women”. But the political emigration is mostly composed of relatively small number of active persons. Lenin himself could remain an unsuccessful isolated emigrant, if a historical coincidence did not give him an opportunity to act after February 1917. Historians should study not only “the winner's side”, but also the alternative. Moreover, through such “small” topics we can study more general phenomena.

In short, what would you say are the main takeaways for understanding the activity of the Czechoslovak Communist party when observing their relationship with the Yugoslav political emigrants?

French historian Muriel Blaive characterized in her book on

Czechoslovakia in 1956 *A Missed Opportunity* (Promarněná příležitost) very fittingly a character of Czech nationalism. Czechs used to consider themselves a progressive and advanced nation, who was not poisoned with irrational “nationalism” like their neighbours were (including Slovaks). The principle of Czech nationalism, Blaive argues, is in refusing being nationalists while blaming others of nationalism. And this approach was also present in Czechoslovak communists’ dealing with their Yugoslav guests. Yugoslavs should be grateful for Czechoslovak hospitality and use the opportunity to learn from the “more advanced and cultured” Czechs how to be good communists. If they refused to accept such a position, the hosts called them nationalists, who were not willing to get rid of their “Titoist” bad habits.

How does Czechoslovak Communist Party compare to other instances of another Eastern European CP treating their own opponents? What does the story you researched tell us about the functioning and the hierarchy within the postwar pro-Soviet bloc?

Czechoslovakia had several important specifics. The political asylum was not legally regulated in Czechoslovak law. It exposed the emigrants to the arbitrary dealing of the Party or Security service apparatus. On the contrary to the USSR and other bloc countries, the emigrants

were not granted the Czechoslovak citizenship automatically. In many aspects, it made them disadvantaged toward local population. When they became Czechoslovak citizens finally (after the split with Tito was over), they were said to forget their old fatherland because they were “Czechoslovaks” from now. The socialist Czechoslovakia manifested itself to be a national state of Czechs and Slovaks, not a community based on the ideology.

In defining the term political emigration, you say that in this case, it means a palpable organization, mostly consisting of diplomats, students and scientists. Yet, as you also acknowledge, not all of them were Stalinists, but merely opposed Tito, and were often accused of Trotskyism and other “deviances”. How does a historian explore the relationship of an individual member’s ideas to the organization’s stances, and how is a historian to escape the traps of believing the labelling coming from above?

In the early 1950s, it was impossible to be a communist, a member of the party without being Stalinist at the same time. Despite internal clashes all communists in that period were sharing Stalinist political culture and discourse. Even Tito and those Yugoslav communists who remained loyal to him were not able to cut themselves off from Stalinism

immediately. The problem of those who were accused of any “deviance”, was that nearly everybody could become a target, including high-positioned leaders like Tito, Slánský, Rajk, etc. But Stalinism was a very complex phenomenon which allowed to operate very different sorts of persons under the same banner: narrow-minded radicals as well as gentle intellectuals. Both could be praised, and both could be condemned, if needed.

Finally, what book would you recommend to a young student who has just started becoming interested in the Yugoslav history or history of socialism, and why?

I would choose rather a fiction than any scholarly work: Yugoslav partisan novels from the 1950s and early 1960s, like Branko Ćopić's *Silent Gunpowder*, or

Dobrica Ćosić's *The Sun is Far Away*. These “socialist realist” works deal in the very raw and documentary style, with internal conflicts and contradictions within a communist antifascist resistance. They lay out without hesitation a dark side of the revolutionary war. I would say it is worth of reading not only because of its literary quality, but also because it contributes to better understanding a mental framework of a people who became communists.

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