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## THE INTERNATIONAL PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM OF SELF-MANAGING SOCIALISM: THE CASE OF *PRAXIS*

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### ABSTRACT

*The article focuses on self-managing socialism as an alternative to both capitalism and Soviet-type socialism. It looks at the discussions of self-management as a laboratory of intellectual ideas. As a case study it takes the Yugoslav philosophical journal Praxis and its associated Summer School on Korčula as spaces both virtual and real, which gathered intellectuals and acted as a point of mediation through which the actors from diverse intellectual and political contexts could think in an intertwined manner about the prospects of socialism. The method of this essay is intellectual history, with a political-historical contextualization of the discussions through 1967, that is leading up to the events and discussions of 1968, which represented both the high hopes and the failures of socialism. The aim is to look at different approaches to self-managing socialism and to highlight the difficulties of developing it conceptually.*

*Keywords: self-management, Praxis, Yugoslavia, intellectuals, Marxist Humanism*

### IL PROBLEMA FILOSOFICO INTERNAZIONALE DEL SOCIALISMO AUTOGESTITO: IL CASO *PRAXIS*

#### SINTESI

*Il saggio si incentra sul socialismo autogestito quale alternativa sia al capitalismo sia al socialismo di stampo sovietico, esaminando le discussioni attinenti all'autogestione come laboratorio di idee intellettuali. Come caso di studio prende in esame il giornale filosofico jugoslavo Praxis e la relativa scuola estiva sull'isola di Korčula come spazi sia virtuali sia reali che riunivano intellettuali e fungevano da punto di mediazione attraverso il quale gli attori provenienti da diversi contesti intellettuali e politici potevano contemplare in maniera interattiva le prospettive per il socialismo. Il metodo impiegato nel saggio è quello della storia intellettuale con la contestualizzazione storico-politica delle discussioni fino al 1967, ossia quelle che portarono agli eventi e le discussioni del 1968, che allo stesso tempo rappresentavano le grandi speranze e i fallimenti del socialismo. L'obiettivo è quello di esaminare i diversi approcci al socialismo autogestito ed evidenziare le difficoltà del suo sviluppo concettuale.*

*Parole chiave: autogestione, Praxis, Jugoslavia, intellettuali, umanesimo marxista*

## INTRODUCTION

“*The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Marx’s birthday coincided with the time of revolutionary movements in Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, and France*” (Stojanović, 1969, 190). This was the opening line of Svetozar Stojanović’s essay entitled *The Possibilities of Socialist Revolution Today*, published in number 1–2 of the 1969 volume of the Yugoslav philosophical journal *Praxis*. This issue, entitled *Marx and Revolution*, represents a collection of the proceedings of the Korčula Summer School in 1968. Since activists around the world used the language of Marx in their demands while referring to a wide diversity of circumstances and contexts, Stojanović believed that “*the revolutionary forces once again confirmed*” the relevance of Marxist socialist thought at the end of the 1960s. To show that he was not alone in this belief, Stojanović referred to Jean-Paul Sartre’s journal *Les Temps Modernes*, which had announced in its May-June edition that: “*In the future we know that socialist revolution is not impossible in one country of Western Europe, and maybe even two or three!*” (Stojanović, 1969, 190).

Yet it has often been argued that the aftermath of the events of 1968 – notably the defeat of the Prague Spring in August of that year – caused widespread shock in left-wing circles around Europe (Van der Linden, 2007, 179). In the words of Polish dissident Adam Michnik, the march of Warsaw Pact troops into Prague over the night of 21 August marked the “*death of revisionism*” (Tismaneanu, 2011, 2). The failure of the revolutionary potential of 1968 represented the end of certain illusions about the nature and limits of Marxism in the European East and West alike. In an interview in 1978, Ágnes Heller, a Hungarian philosopher of the Budapest School around Georg Lukács, stated the following:

*1968 was a year of optimism. The prospect of Europe unified under democratic socialism seemed a real possibility at the time. We anticipated that within such an international context, the economic reforms then being launched in Hungary would initiate a social transformation of the system. However, as I have already said, our optimism proved to be based on illusions, as the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia finally showed. August 1968 marked the end of our reformist illusions and aspirations* (Heller, 1978, 160).

While keeping in mind the trauma induced by the stifling of the Prague Spring, this essay looks into the period prior to the invasion by Soviet-led troops into Czechoslovakia. As a symbolic year, 1968 simultaneously represented both the hope of a reformed socialism as well as its failure. Hence this paper reflects on the period prior to 1968 in which the achievement of an alternative, reform-type socialism – that is, self-managing socialism – was seen as plausible. In order to do so, this paper contextualizes the international Marxist (or generally leftist) discussions held at the Korčula Summer School on the Yugoslav Adriatic island of the same name, where intellectuals from around the world gathered to exchange their ideas and opinions. This study frames the discussions of three presenters at the 1967 summer school, within the contemporaneous, wider context of mid-century

European integration as well as the long-term project of the internationalization of socialism. I will suggest that the thrust of their discussions about self-managing socialism prior to 1968 was – although filled with disagreements, conceptual inconsistencies, and misunderstandings – seen in Marxist terms as the only viable way out of the seeming contradictions of modern life.

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

### Origins of *Praxis*

In the early 1960s, a group of professors affiliated with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb (and later also the University of Belgrade) envisioned a new philosophical journal, as well as an associated summer school to take place on the Adriatic island of Korčula (Kangrga, 2002, 31).<sup>1</sup> The idea behind the journal and the school emerged from discussions at an international philosophical symposium held in Dubrovnik in 1963, entitled *Progress and Culture*, organized by Zagreb-based philosophers Milan Kangrga and Gajo Petrović. The symposium acted as a way to gather well-known Marxist intellectuals and philosophers from across Europe, including, among others, the already world-known German sociologist and philosopher Erich Fromm, French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre, and Romanian-born French Marxist theorist Lucien Goldmann (Kangrga, 2002, 212). This practice – to overcome the East-West binary of the Cold War through an international exchange of Marxist ideas – set the stage for the emergence of *Praxis* and the format of the Korčula Summer School.

Both the summer school and the journal (published in a domestic Serbo-Croatian edition as well as a multilingual international edition) acted as spaces of exchange, gathering renowned representatives of contemporaneous trends in global Marxism, including philosophers and sociologists, but also non-Marxists, and those simply interested in the theoretical dialogue between “East” and “West” (cf. Stefanov, 2014). On the pages of *Praxis*, philosophers critical of what they viewed as the Stalinist type of bureaucratic socialism could debate on common topics from their desks in Paris, Prague, Budapest, Belgrade, New York, and beyond. At the Korčula Summer School, Yugoslav intellectuals and students could meet face-to-face with their colleagues from the West and East and exchange ideas, books, and glasses of Pošip wine, indigenous to the island of Korčula (Kangrga, 2002, 212).

The philosophical orientation of the journal *Praxis* was Marxist Humanism or, more broadly, critical Marxism. Since definitions of Marxist Humanism and critical Marxism deserve their own papers, I will just mention few of their main characteristics. The political language of Marxist Humanism was unapologetic in its critique of Stalinism. From the position of Marxist Humanists, Stalinism in the USSR completely stifled the autonomy of local branches of social organization (Milić, 1965, 119). What seemed to be the worst mistake of

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1 The founding members of the journal were Zagreb-based philosophers Milan Kangrga, Gajo Petrović, Rudi Supek, Branko Bošnjak, Danko Grlić, and Predrag Vranicki.



Stalinism was the failure to realize that the political revolution was not an end in itself. That is, socialist societies ought to create permanent and revolutionizing social relations which would lead toward a constant, continuous liberation of man (Vranicki, 1965, 251). These conclusions were primarily drawn from their readings of the “young” Karl Marx – that is, the early works of Marx leading through the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. In addition, the *Praxis* philosophers held the common theoretical position that there was no epistemic break in Marx’s philosophy. Instead of a discontinuity between a “‘young Marx’, preoccupied with Hegel, humanism, and in particular with human alienation, and a ‘mature Marx’, whose concern was to elaborate a strictly scientific view of social life,” they maintained that there is a continuity that ties all of Marx’s work together (Sher, 1977, 32). As Ivan Svitak, a Czechoslovak Marxist Humanist explained, there was less of an exclusive focus on the “young” Marx for those around *Praxis*, than a conviction that “limiting the Marxist philosophy of man to the works of the young Marx would misrepresent Marx’s humanism” (Svitak, 1965, 20). Thus, the “scientific” socialism Marx had developed in his later work was seen as emerging precisely from his own humanist preoccupations. To Marxist Humanists, self-managing socialism was seen as the intended result of Marx’s system rather than Stalinist bureaucracy.

This sentiment was made clear by Predrag Vranicki, *Praxis* philosopher at the University of Zagreb:

*This conception [of self-management], as we have seen, emerges from the specifically Marxian interpretation of history: man, the alienation of man in modern society, and the overcoming of that alienation and of the entire bourgeois society by socialist development. The conception of workers’ and social self-government is the logical and necessary consequence of conceiving man as a historical being of practice (Horvat, 1975, 464).*

Thus, the editors of *Praxis* were convinced that an authentic and humanist socialism – whose development was hindered by the dogmatic, Stalinist interpretation of Marxism – was viable in the future. In the article *Čemu Praxis? [Why Praxis?]* they acknowledged that their contemporaneous world was “still a world of economic exploitations, national inequality, political unfreedom, spiritual emptiness, a world of pauperism, hunger, hatred, war, and fear” (Petrović, 1964, 2). For that reason, their intellectual engagement with Marxism and a persistent critical approach to the contemporary world would shed light on the roots of these problems and ultimately help to solve them. One way in which these problems expressed themselves was through the combined problems of European integration and the internationalization of socialism.

### ***Praxis* and European Integration: Rudi Supek at the European Seminars**

In order to grasp the general dynamics of the intellectuals’ discussions about self-management, it is useful to frame these issues in the more general context of European integration and the internationalization of socialism that began in the mid-1960s.

Members of the *Praxis* circle, including other foreign contributors to the journal and participants at Korčula, participated in seminars and discussions imagined and organized as platforms to think about the unity of the European continent. More specifically, the Institute of European Community for University Studies (which was an organ of the European Economic Community) conducted a series of seminars in university centers that were dedicated to the problems of European integration in political, economic, and cultural aspects.<sup>2</sup> These seminars invited presenters with different ideological views: for instance, the sub-theme *The Opening of European Marxism* at the first summit in Munich was introduced by Lucio Lombardo-Radice, professor at the Sapienza University in Rome as well as a leading member of the Italian Communist Party. The seminar in Grenoble, which took place from 25–28 January 1967, entitled *The Presence of Europe in the World*, contained a particularly relevant sub-theme *The Future of the European Community and Eastern Europe*, discussed by intellectuals, politicians, and economists, who came from Poland, Czechoslovakia, France, and Yugoslavia (Supek, 1967a, 240). Fittingly, the seminars attracted large numbers of students, packing the events with visitors.

The same year, Rudi Supek – a Croatian sociologist and one of the founders of *Praxis* – received another letter of invitation to attend the European Seminar that was to take place at the University of Cambridge in April 1967. The letter expressed the goal of the organizers:

*Dear Sir, the Committee of Student European Associations of Great Britain has much pleasure in announcing its Seventh Annual European Seminar. The programme will be of great significance to all thinking people interested in the future of Europe. Broadly speaking, the Seminar will cover the economic and social life of Europe and one aim of the conference will be the reduction of tension in Europe through improved mutual understanding.*<sup>3</sup>

Summarizing the most important points from the various European seminars he participated in, Supek noted that the question of European integration was not only a practical political question (including economic and technological issues), “*but it is first and foremost a question of a spiritual unity*” (Supek, 1967b, 381). He argued that it was self-explanatory that the socialist idea is an intrinsic part of common European values (Supek, 1967b, 381). Hence, he highlighted that the integration of Europe would not presuppose moving away from socialist systems – in other words, the joining of Europe must not in any way “*disturb the normal processes of social progress of some countries*” (Supek, 1967b, 381). The exchange of opinion between intellectuals, as well as between public and political individuals stemming from different ideological back-

2 By the time Supek wrote the article *Yugoslavs at the European seminar*, there were three seminars, first in Great Britain in Brighton, second in Munich (West Germany) and third in Grenoble (France). Supek and his colleague Ljubomir Tadić attended the last two.

3 HR-HDA-1780, Rudi Supek Correspondence, April 1967.

grounds, showed a common concern about European integration. As such, these discussions prompted further awareness about the number of dominating problems, issues, and conceptions “*which Europeans ought to reckon with in order to create European unity*” (Supek, 1967a, 241).

Rudi Supek expressed that, in 1967, the conditions for dialogue between intellectuals of socialist and nonsocialist countries were generally perceived “*as never being better*” (Supek, 1967b, 373). The reason for this, Supek explained, was that on the one hand socialist countries began to reject dogmatic Marxism-Leninism after Stalin’s death in 1953. On the other, socialist thought gained presence and strength in Western countries (Supek, 1967b, 373). Disregarding the ideological differences between capitalist and socialist countries, Supek maintained that “*there is an emergence of one, still not clearly defined, feeling of European solidarity which is getting stronger and stronger*” (Supek, 1967b, 378).

Supek’s contemporaneous interpretation, as well as the example of these seminars, gives us one way to historicize the fact that so many intellectuals were able to discuss the same topic, even if they came from different intellectual positions and social contexts. It is fair to argue that only a global and international dialogue was seen as being able to help find the solutions for the contradictions of Marxism as well as socialism in practice. Contacts were sought out, and dialogue seemed to be the necessary solution to these problems. Umberto Cerroni, an Italian jurist who wrote extensively on Marxist thought as well as legal matters in the USSR, wrote a review of *Praxis* expressing the need and importance for such a journal “*in the moment in which socialism needs an integral mobilization of its intellectual sources*” (Cerroni, 1967, 435).<sup>4</sup> While the intellectual thrusts behind developing and perfecting self-managing socialism found their most critical and dynamic forum in *Praxis* during the latter half of the 1960s, the Korčula Summer School was the physical place to test these ideas among other intellectuals. The 1967 Summer School is a case in point when it comes to developing refined ideas of self-managing socialism.

#### KORČULA 1967 AND APPROACHES TO SELF-MANAGEMENT

While the intellectuals publishing in the journal *Praxis* and participating at the Korčula Summer School shared a common point of departure – that is, a critical, undogmatic Marxism – this essay suggests that the particular analyses and understandings of various concepts diverged between these intellectuals once they were related to real and concrete practices. The possibilities of the implementation of an idea like self-management is a case in point. Clearly, encounters at the Korčula Summer School in 1967 were not without misunderstandings and disagreements. These dif-

4 The text was originally published in *Rinascita, Settimanale fondato da Palmiro Togliatti*, 31 March 1967. *Rinascita* was an Italian political and cultural magazine founded by leader of the Italian Communist Party, Palmiro Togliatti, and consequently main the media outlet of his party.

ferences in thought and conceptual plurality were understood as a need to elaborate, clarify, and supply Marxist philosophy with other concepts. The dialogue among the Left in 1967 – “*which encompassed Marxists from capitalist and socialist countries*” – disclosed controversies, yet these misunderstandings showed that the dialogue was becoming more international, intensive, and also more critical. At least, this is how Predrag Vranicki saw it. Between 14–16 September 1967, Vranicki attended a colloquium on the topic *The Critique of Political Economy Today*, organized at the Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt am Main. The meeting made it clear that some Marxists from socialist countries were “*more concerned with perfecting the already existing conditions,*” thereby acting and thinking only “*within étatistic and technocratic frameworks,*” while more radical attendees promoted anti-étatistic conceptions that they conceived as possible only through the realization of self-management (Vranicki, 1968, 212–213). To Vranicki, it was obvious that those speaking of self-management recognized the importance of Yugoslav experiences and Yugoslav conceptions of workers’ self-management.

A month earlier at the Korčula Summer School, the intellectuals engaged with the similar topics. The overarching theme was *Creativity and Reification* discussed through the following sub-themes: 1) *freedom and planning*; 2) *bureaucracy, technocracy and individual freedoms*; 3) *the workers’ movement and self-management*; and 4) *cultural creation and social organizations*. Participants who presented their papers included Ágnes Heller from Budapest, Robert Tucker from Princeton, Serge Mallet from Paris, and others. Specifically, I engage with the presentations given by Svetozar Stojanović, Ernest Mandel, and Arnold Künzli. Their presentations evaluated the notion of self-management from different perspectives. At the same time, their presentations provide insight into the controversial and difficult aspects of Marxist thought with which they constantly dealt – to name one, the importance of “the material” in a philosophical system. All three presenters assumed that their role as intellectuals provided an orientation to deal critically with real-life problems. Each argued that their theoretical observations are not abstract reflections, but rather that they express the “*conclusions of the real possibilities and tendencies*” of self-management in their respective societies (Stojanović, 1967, 685). It could be argued that the majority of participants at Korčula were convinced that their critical and humanist thought ought to be concrete rather than abstract, that is, self-reflexive toward the existing historical moment (Sutlić, 1967, 612). Their positions fall nicely within the very aim of the journal *Praxis* as well as the summer school, which adds to the intellectuals’ understanding of their own role in contributing to the solutions of the contradictions of the modern world.

Svetozar Stojanović explicated that real socialism cannot exist without social self-management and social property (Stojanović, 1967, 680). One could argue that this was a shared idea among these intellectuals gathered at Korčula. Stojanović and other critical Marxists, mainly from the East, shared the opinion that a system based on state property and state management of production as well as social life, cannot rightly call itself “socialist” (Stojanović, 1967, 680).

Instead, it is an étatist kind of socialism or a system that Stojanović called the “modern class system” differing little from capitalism. Still in 1967, Stojanović remarked that it was an “*unfortunate case that many Marxists, even after Stalin’s death, are still convinced that the communist and socialist society can genuinely be built and developed only around an all-powerful state*” (Stojanović, 1967, 681). In contrast to such a conception of an unprecedented role of the state, Stojanović was convinced that self-management was the only kind of socialism that could bring about a genuine transition from capitalism to communism through socialism. Not all participants would agree with this idea, as they would require Stojanović to qualify his idea of what constituted self-management. The questions often raised could be formulated as: What should the economic background be in order for self-management to actually function? Can self-management be implemented in scarce societies? Does the material background of a country dictate the successful implementation of self-management (Stojanović, 1967)?

These types of questions emerged in one case from Rudi Supek’s review of a book by French ecologist and political theorist André Gorz entitled *Difficult Socialism*, published in 1966. Supek emphasized Gorz’s argument that self-management – referring to the Yugoslav case – cannot exist in resource-scarce societies, since distribution cannot be democratic and so the intervention of a planned economy is unavoidable (Supek, 1967c, 839). Gorz argued that in circumstances of low technological development and resource scarcity, which still defined Yugoslavia, self-management is liable to failure. Gorz’s rationale was that workers would soon become aware that their material needs could not be satisfied, and thus they would either stay active in self-management – to some extent becoming technocrats – or they would lose interest in self-management and become passive in its development (Supek, 1967c, 838).

While aware of Gorz’s analysis, Stojanović had fifteen years of experience in Yugoslav socialism, which showed to him that the practice of self-management was no longer a matter of theoretical speculation. By 1967, self-managing socialism had rather become something concrete and practicable, with certain techniques and particular constraints. From his perspective, Yugoslavia could rightly serve as a laboratory where one might critically analyze the aspects of this practice, and so extract theoretical generalizations. Stojanović found it problematic that George Lichtheim, the German-born intellectual historian of Marxism, argued that the idea of workers’ self-management was a “syndicalist utopia.” Stojanović added in his presentation that Lichtheim never mentioned the Yugoslav experience (Stojanović, 1967, 682).

The main contentions of Stojanović’s presentation centered on the demystification of two misconceptions about self-management. The first opposed self-management to étatism, while the second equated self-management with the decentralization of the state. To him, both have detrimental consequences. It is evasive to simply contrast self-management to étatism, because one cannot then delineate between larger and smaller scales of self-management. Stojanović adopted the position of the *Praxis* philosophers’ general critique of the functioning of self-management in Yugoslavia: that is, the practice of self-management disclosed the tendency that some self-managing

groups engage in exploitation and so threaten the potential of Yugoslav social unity. The potential result of this is a disintegrated and atomized working class that begins to show egoism, particularism, and concurrency. Linked to that is the second misunderstanding: self-management as complete decentralization of the state (Stojanović, 1967, 683–684). Stojanović addressed this issue from his Yugoslav perspective, implicitly referring to Edvard Kardelj's conception of the withering away of the state as based on economic self-management understood as political decentralization. In Stojanović's view, such a definition of self-management ultimately leads to the fragmentation of society. Therefore, it is naïve to believe that only decentralization can lead from economic étatism to a self-managing integration of society (Stojanović, 1967, 683–684). Hence the economy in a socialist society cannot solely be based on the market: it ought to be coordinated, directed, and planned. Socialist society, Stojanović explained, differs both from the alienated state as well as the anarchistic market. Or put differently, the socialist community is a wider and more important concept for self-managing socialism. In this view, self-management is a necessary but not sufficient condition of such a community (Stojanović, 1967b, 688).

And while implicitly answering the criticisms concerning material interests, Stojanović argued that one could not speak of the path into socialist community from the perspective of utopian communisms, and so the transition into socialism cannot be thought of without relying on interests, including the material ones (Stojanović, 1967, 688). However, as will become clear, the acknowledgement of material interests would be found problematic by other participants.

The second speaker at the Korčula Summer School, Ernest Mandel, presented a paper entitled *Freedom and Planning in Capitalism and Socialism*. Mandel's argument was that socialism needs economic planning because that is its main condition for achieving personal freedom for all individuals. Economic planning in socialism gives freedom to individuals "to such a degree that was never possible in the most bourgeois society" (Mandel, 1967a, 697). That is, one could add here that to Mandel, planning in socialism was important. He defines planning in the most general sense – that is, the conscious combination and allocation of economic supplies with an aim to achieve some predetermined goals (Mandel, 1967a, 693). A few months before this presentation, Mandel published an essay entitled *Yugoslav Economic Theory*, where he argued for central planning. There Mandel maintained that "in practice Yugoslav self-management is a combination of workers' self-management, extensive use of market mechanisms and tight political monopoly of power by the Communist League of Yugoslavia" (Mandel, 1967b, 40). This combination, to Mandel, has its positive side – greater workers' initiative, but also a negative side – increasing social inequality, increasing abdication of central planning. In the presentation at Korčula, Mandel, rethought the antithesis between the notions of "freedom" and "planning" (Mandel, 1967b, 693). Mandel confirmed that freedom and planning are not necessarily in opposition to one another (cf. Samary, 1997).<sup>5</sup>

5 Catherine Samary, a participant of 1968 in Paris and a lecturer at the Université Paris-Dauphine, disuses in detail the theoretical positions of Ernst Mandel as well the theory of state capitalism.

It should be emphasized that unlike Stojanović, Mandel did not differentiate between a “type” or “kind” of socialism he had in mind while discussing the matter of planning and freedom. In his presentation, Mandel did not use the notion of “étatisme”. Instead he simply compares socialism with capitalism through the notions of freedom and planning. Coming from the Western context, Mandel focused on the meaning of planning in capitalist countries, arguing that planning and individual freedom cannot be reconciled in that context. Simply put, the reforms taken in Western countries do not give workers any veto rights over questions that relate to the organization of the production process. Neo-capitalist planning for the reform of the structure of companies is characterized by the fact that these reforms do not give workers any right of veto in questions of the organization of the production process (Mandel, 1967a, 696).

While reflecting on the contemporaneous situation in the West, Mandel argued that the classic Marxist critique of bourgeois democracies was “consciously or unconsciously” accepted by public opinion in the West (Mandel, 1967a, 696). His argument was buttressed by a brief conceptual history. The usage of the word “ghetto”, Mandel explained, was historically understood as an institution which, during the Middle Ages as well as the Nazi period, lawfully and administratively coerced Jewish minorities within a small bounded space within a city (Mandel, 1967a, 696). In 1967, Mandel argued, “*today we use the word to describe the living conditions of American Blacks, which are formally and legally free to live wherever they please*” (Mandel, 1967a, 696). Mandel here did not speak about the idea of freedom in the abstract but ties it to a concrete example. His specific understanding of freedom is crucial here.

Mandel maintained that the high material living standard of the workers in industrialized capitalist countries (which he referred to as imperialist) barely made the workers “free” (Mandel, 1967a, 695). Freedom, to Mandel, cannot be linked with an advanced living standard based on material goods. The worker in the West is not “free” despite the fact that capitalist countries gave him basic social insurance – although Mandel conceded that social welfare is an important step toward the achievement of freedom. However, this is not enough, since a higher standard of living in the political conditions of the West only brought about, in his words, “*new forms of alienation and unfreedom*” (Mandel, 1967a, 696). Mandel, unlike Stojanović, insisted that Marx’s idea of “the kingdom of freedom” can only be developed and reached outside of the sphere of material production – although, he contended, advances in material production do provide a basis for this kingdom of freedom (Mandel, 1967a, 706).

In contrast to Mandel, Arnold Künzli, while endorsing the very idea of self-managing socialism, raised the following issue. In his presentation entitled *Self-Management in the Ghetto*, Künzli asked: “*Can one speak of a genuine workers’ movement in the parliamentary-democratic part of the so-called West?*” The answer to this question – perhaps the decisive question for the future of self-management – depends greatly on the manner in which we define the workers’ movement, and what it constitutes (Künzli, 1968, 4).

To answer this question, Künzli historicized the notion of the workers’ movement and so argued that in its classical political conception, in the West at least,

such a movement does not exist. Namely, two aspects of workers' movement were non-existent in the then-contemporaneous West: firstly, the dominated and exploited proletariat plotting the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist relations; secondly, the unavoidable class solidarity and international solidarity of the workers (Künzli, 1968, 4–5).

From a position that he describes as “radical realism,” Künzli argued that the values which characterize Western parliamentary democracies – such as individual liberties – are cherished by the working class. And so Künzli argued that the fundamentals of Marxist philosophy, that predicted the sharpening of the class struggle, failed in that sense. He quoted Herbert Marcuse who had “*many years ago already assessed the possibility that in the foreseeable future of today's Communist Party outside of the Soviet realm – and maybe even within – could become the inheritors of the traditional social-democratic parties*” (Künzli, 1968, 5).<sup>6</sup> In addition, the notion of alienation in the West had long been jettisoned by real, concrete historical developments. That is, the more productive the worker, the more he could purchase and consume – not less. Künzli's conclusion was that the alienation of labor in capitalist economies had lost its radical, Marxian character. Künzli claimed:

*Whoever in the so-called West today philosophizes about the notion of alienation [...] that person has a distorted consciousness. The worker is not in any existential crisis: he might even get himself a car, and a vacation on the Adriatic. He is secure from anything and everything. The state and his employer give him guarantees for his pension and other benefits* (Künzli, 1968, 9).

Similarly to Stojanović and Mandel, Künzli's argument is not a mere philosophical and abstract rumination, but is supported by the most immediate example – that is, the example of the chemical workers in Basel who were the best-paid workers in Switzerland and beyond. Yet the study, as Künzli argued, showed that despite a five-working-day law, the workers still worked on Saturdays as taxi drivers to make extra income, leaving Sunday as their only day off (Künzli, 1968, 11).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

These above presentations, although I take them as paradigmatic examples of the difficulty that existed in the context of the intellectual exchanges, are just an aspect of a more complex discussion of self-management that took place in the journal *Praxis* and the Korčula Summer School. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest that, while they aspired to develop a universal theory of self-management, these intellectuals approached the problematics of self-management from their own particular perspectives. More precisely, participants often spoke from their own social contexts, using the phrases such as “the Western world,” the “Eastern wor-

6 Künzli quoted Herbert Marcuse's *Die Gesellschaftslehre des sowjetischen Marxismus*.



ld,” and the “Yugoslav experience,” thereby emphasizing the embedded character of their conceptual thinking. An illustrative figure of this multiplicity of interpretations is Dušan Pirjevec, former Slovene partisan and Marxist philosopher, who opened his presentation at the summer school in 1967 with the words: “*I speak from my own personal experience*” (Pirjevec, 1968, 82). He explicitly pointed at the difference between the role of intellectuals in Western Europe and America, and in Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia. This position was representative of the various approaches to the topic of self-management, since these were often dependent upon the participants’ presuppositions. It is precisely this plurality of interpretations that informed their analysis of the “functioning” or “malfunctioning” of self-management as both ideal and practice.

In addition to their intellectual backgrounds, it is fair to say that the participants’ respective experiences of living and working in different cultural, political, and economic contexts were decisive factors that colored their conceptual thinking about the problems of socialism in general. By ignoring the importance of context, Marxist political thinking would appear as an isolated entity, unchanging across all time and space. Supek’s correspondence demonstrates how this supposed universality is constantly contested – not only within Europe, but also beyond. A telling example is a letter written by Harold W. Cruse – an academic, author of *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967), and member of the Communist Party USA – who, while expressing that the discussions at the Korčula Summer School made him arrive at new conclusions concerning the radical movement in the United States, nevertheless added that:

*I am afraid that Europeans have not an adequate enough background on the subject of blacks in the U.S. [...] From the American point of view, I believe that much of European Marxism is still wedded to many fixed categories which are rather irrelevant in the United States.*<sup>7</sup>

Clearly, the questions that emerge from the problem of race as an important category in the thinking of African-American radicals was not part of the primary conceptual universe of the European socialist movement. When informing Supek about the subject of his paper to be presented at the upcoming Korčula Summer School, Cruse wrote in 1973 that the topic would focus on “*a number of pertinent issues which are not so well understood by the European socialist movement, e.g. the [compound] problem of race, class, and socialism.*”<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, as this overall essay made clear, these thinkers aspired to universal discussions. Furthermore, the intellectuals at Korčula aspired to the idea, which was captured by Henri Lefebvre in 1966, that Marxist thought is the starting point for the understanding of their contemporaneous world. At the same time, the

7 HR-HDA-1780, Rudi Supek Correspondence, November 1971.

8 HR-HDA-1780, Rudi Supek Correspondence, 1973.

basic concepts of Marxist thought had to be “*elaborated, refined, and complemented by other concepts where necessary*” (Lefebvre, 1982, 341–342). The intellectuals at Korčula saw precisely this task as an important and fruitful element in their historical present. Tihomir Zvonko’s statement given during the final general discussion at the Korčula Summer School in 1967 verbalized the central issue during this session, and it pointed toward the perceived need to clarify the concepts, similarly expressed by Lefebvre:

*We all speak about freedom, but what do we mean by freedom? What we first have to do is clear up and clarify these concepts, because we all, in some way, spoke about the path into the future as the path into freedom. But we do not even know what freedom is. And, consequently, that means that we do not really know what we want. Thus, our aims and goals are put into question, that is, our status. And from there we cannot step any step ahead (Zvonko, 1968, 92).*

Yet, in the context prior to the crises of 1968, this critical plurality of voices was deemed positive, and pointed toward a need to work out new theoretical conceptions that could solve the issues that emerged during the practice of self-managing socialism in Yugoslavia. Socialism, and specifically self-managing socialism as an alternative to Western parliamentary democracies and Soviet type of socialism, was seen as possible. The questions of the meaning of socialism itself were, however, not yet debated. Nenad Stefanov suggests dividing the history of the journal and the summer school in three different phases: the first, from 1963–1968, was characterized by “humanist Marxism” from a Yugoslav perspective. However, 1968 showed the “limits of a humanist socialism” and consequently a more skeptical outlook emerged concerning the possibility of transforming socialism. Thus, the very meaning of socialism started to dominate the summer school’s discussions until the school’s closure in 1974 (Stefanov, 2013, 119).

Svetozar Stojanović argued that prior to the Prague Spring, Yugoslavia had a “monopoly” over the socialist avant-garde in Europe. That was showed by the intense dialogues and interest of foreign intellectuals who were coming to Korčula (Stojanović, 1969, 195). Yet the prospect of reform socialism was stopped by the Soviet-led invasion of the country in August 1968, and not because of their wish for anti-socialist national self-determination. Rather, the internal revolutionary changes occurring in Czechoslovakia were perceived as the gravest danger to bureaucratic socialism and Soviet domination of the region.

These events and experiments resulted in an acceleration of differentiation within the communist movement. Stojanović claimed:

*Obviously today under the same name – communist – there are hidden very different, even diametrically opposed parties. Some of them do not even deserve to be called communist in Marx’s sense of the word. The adequate name for them is étatist parties (Stojanović, 1969, 195).*

The critique of self-managing socialism in Yugoslavia was based on the problem of idealizing commodity production as well as market relations which were understood as allowing the recognition of monetary value to become the main value of society. As Mandel warned in 1967, “*the purist of individual enrichment becomes the universal ideal of all members of the community,*” and as a consequence this triggers “*competition in all fields of social behavior, at the expense of solidarity and cooperation*” (Mandel, 1967b, 49). Yet, while the *Praxis* philosophers were convinced that a real socialism can only be of a self-managing type, after 1968 they became more critical towards the contradictions in Yugoslav society and the “*new risks and threats connected with the newly emerging nationalism in Yugoslav society*” (Stefanov, 2013, 119).

After the trauma of 1968, the divergences that were latently present in the discussions at Korčula became more visible and polarized – the meaning of socialism itself became more strongly divergent. In the words of János Kis, György Bence, and György Márkus in the post-1968 period, critical Marxists from the “East” and “West” still expressed themselves in the terminology of socialism. Yet, they had:

[D]iametrically opposed ideas toward the realization of socialism. That is, one side insisted that socialism cannot be realized without adherence to the principle of tolerance and the continuous operation of the institutions of representative democracy, while the other unmasked tolerance as a form of manipulative repression and demonstrated that representative democracy is merely the mask of what in fact are anti-democratic mechanisms. One side stressed the need for differentiated pay scales, while the other demanded that wage categories be done away with (Kis, 1972).<sup>9</sup>

Gerson S. Sher has pointed out that in the period after 1968, the attendance of Marxists from other countries of Eastern Europe at Korčula “*dropped sharply, but this was more than compensated for by increased participation of Yugoslavs, Western Europeans, and Americans, including increasing numbers of students*” (Sher, 1977, 55). Yet what also seemed to have changed was not only the decreased attendance of intellectuals from Eastern Europe, but also the very nature of the discussion at the Korčula Summer School. After the collapse of the Paris protests, the appeasement of student demands in Yugoslavia, the stark political failures in Poland, and ultimately the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, revolutionary prospects across Europe dramatically diminished. From the perspective of international Marxist Humanism, intellectual positions became more rigid and thus not open to the negotiation they had been before.

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MEDNARODNI FILOZOFSKI PROBLEM SAMOUPRAVNEGA  
SOCIALIZMA: PRIMER *PRAXIS**Una BLAGOJEVIĆ*

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**POVZETEK**

Članek se osredotoča na samoupravni socializem kot alternativo tako kapitalizmu kot sovjetskemu tipu socializma na način, da sledi razpravam o samoupravljanju kot laboratoriju intelektualnih zamisli. Za študijo primera jemlje jugoslovansko filozofsko revijo *Praxis* in z njo povezano korčulsko poletno šolo kot mesto virtualnega in resničnega, ki je združevalo intelektualce in delovalo kot posredniška točka, prek katere so lahko akterji iz različnih intelektualnih in političnih okolij izmenjevali razmišljanja o prihodnosti socializma. Uporabljena metoda je intelektualna zgodovina, ki upošteva politično-zgodovinsko kontekstualizacijo diskusij iz leta 1967 kot povoda razprav in dogodkov leta 1968, ki so pomenili hkrati vrhunec upanja in poraz socializma. Namen pričujoče analize je predstaviti različne pristope h konceptu samoupravnega socializma in osvetliti težave, povezane z njegovim konceptualnim razvojem. Iz analize izhaja, da so obravnavani intelektualci skušali razviti univerzalno teorijo samoupravljanja, a so se k temu fenomenu približevali predvsem na podlagi njihovih lastnih kulturnih, ekonomskih in socialnih kontekstov, tako da so fraze kot so »zahodni svet«, »vzhodni svet« ali »jugoslovanska izkušnja« še vedno ostale vgrajene v njihovo konceptualno razmišljanje. Ugotovimo lahko celo, da je pluralnost interpretacij bistveno vplivala na njihovo analizo (ne)delovanja samoupravljanja tako v smislu idealne konstrukcije kot njegove praktične izvedbe. Na filozofsko opredeljevanje, kaj je in kaj ni socializem, kar je sicer stopilo v ospredje šele v kasnejšem obdobju korčulske šole, pa so ključno vplivali poraz reformnega socializma na Češkoslovaškem in tudi kontradikcije v razvoju jugoslovanskega socializma.

*Ključne besede: samoupravljanje, Praxis, Jugoslavija, intelektualci, marksistični humanizem*

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