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EXCHANGING THE "PROGRESSIVE EXPERIENCES" IN A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: NATIONALITY, ECONOMY AND FEDERALISM IN YUGOSLAVIA AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN THE 1960S

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the transnational aspects of the exchanges of experiences (in nationality policies, economy, and federalization) between the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak intellectual elites. By drawing parallels between the two cases, a striking resemblance can be seen. While Slovak intellectual elites used Yugoslavia as a role model to solve the Czechoslovak national question, the latter also served as one of the models for the economic reform of Ota Šik and for the federal transformation of the Czechoslovak state under Zdeněk Mlynář's watch.

Keywords: Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, National question, Socialism, Federalism

SCAMBIARE "L'ESPERIENZA PROGRESSISTA" NELLA PROSPETTIVA TRANSNAZIONALE: NAZIONALITÀ, ECONOMIA E FEDERALISMO IN JUGOSLAVIA E CECOSLOVACCHIA NEGLI ANNI SESSANTA

SINTESI

Il presente contributo è incentrato sugli aspetti transnazionali degli scambi intorno alle esperienze (nella politica nazionale, nell'economia e nella federalizzazione) tra le élite intellettuali jugoslave e cecoslovacche. Tracciando dei parallelismi tra i due casi, ci si rende conto di notevoli assomiglianze. Difatti l'élite intellettuale slovacca utilizzava la Jugoslavia come modello per risolvere la questione nazionale cecoslovacca, inoltre la Jugoslavia era considerata come modello per la riforma economica di Ota Šik e la trasformazione in chiave federalistica dello stato cecoslovacco sotto Zdeněk Mlynář'.

Parole chiave: Jugoslavia, Cecoslovacchia, questione nazionale, socialismo, federalismo

INTRODUCTION[1]

Czechoslovakia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (after 1929 Kingdom of Yugoslavia) were established in 1918 on the ruins of old Europe. During the interwar period both states tried to solve the national question, by relying on a denial of national specifics and with the construction of new larger national identifications.[2] As it was noted by a Slovak historian Vladimír Bakoš, the founding father of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, "did not consider the Slovak question as a question of distinct Slovak [national] identity" (Bakoš, 1999, 61). Hence, Slovaks were considered as a branch of a single Czechoslovak nation that spoke the Czechoslovak language, as it was written in the constitution (Bakke, 1999, 179–239). Similarly, King Aleksandar Karađorđević had the idea of "integral Yugoslavism," which recognized only one Yugoslav nation, consisted of three "tribes" [pleme]: Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Dugandžija, 1985, 30). Although integral Yugoslavism (Nielsen, 2014; Troch, 2015) had many different versions, all of them expected Slovenes to gradually abandon their cultural and linguistic specificity (Dolenc, 2010, 98–99), like Slovaks in Masaryk's Czechoslovakia.

Both states also experienced a similar faith during the WWII. Their neighbors took and annexed the territories they wanted, while a Nazi puppet state was created in Slovakia as well as in Croatia. Another similarity can be seen in an authentic popular support towards the communist regime in both countries. However, there were also differences in the number of war casualties and economic consequences, which hit Yugoslavia harder (Judt, 2005, 18–22). The main difference, which also dictated the post-WWII developments, lies in the success of the Yugoslav communists to carry out a socialist revolution and to take power during the war (Vodušek Starič, 2006), and in connection to this in their legitimation of power at home and abroad. Whereas Czechoslovakia after 1948 remained in the Soviet sphere, Yugoslavia had not, a fact that makes the 1960s an insightful point to examine these two multinational states. What a parallel reading of sources suggests is an exchange between elites concerned with the intersection of nationality, economy and federalism, a theme of obvious relevance for multi-ethnic states as well as for diverse political communities.

The historical comparisons between the both countries have been in focus of many Slovenian and Czech historians in the last twenty years. Although, most of them focused on the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire or the interwar period (Sovilj, 2016; Klabjan, 2007; Kregar, 2007; Gašparič et al., 2010). On the post-WWII period, some interesting works were published by Czech historians

1 I am grateful to the reviewers for their comments and corrections that improved this manuscript. I would like to thank Pavel Kolář, Oskar Mulej and Andrej Milivojević for reading and commenting the first version of this paper. Many thanks also to Boris Mosković for his help.

2 I am using identification and not identity. For distinction see: Brubaker, 2004.

on the youth working brigades (Sovilj, 2008), cultural cooperation prior to the Tito-Stalin split (Sovilj, 2012), and the aftermath of those relations focusing specially on the Yugoslav emigres in Czechoslovakia (Vojtěchovský, 2012). Only some historians focused on the 1960s in connection with the history of tourism (Tchoukarine, 2015) or urban studies (Kladnik, 2010). On the fateful year of 1968, the research of diplomatic and political relations between the both countries were in the focus of some historians from the territory of former Yugoslavia (Jakovina, 2011; Dimić, 2005) and Czech historians as well (Pelikán, 2008a; 2008b). This article is building on the existing research, focusing on the three fields (nationality, federalism, and economy) of special importance to the multi-national states, in order to research the intellectual and practical exchange of "progressive experiences" between two socialist societies (and beyond) in a transnational perspective (Ther, 2009, 205). The research clearly suggests that the Yugoslav or the Czechoslovak national history "is a result of transnational exchanges" (Conrad, 2009, 53).

THE YUGOSLAV REFORMS IN THE 1960s: THE CHAMBER OF NATIONALITIES

In Yugoslavia a nation-building process took place from 1945 until the early 1960s (Grandits, 2008), which was accelerated after the 1948 Tito-Stalin split for the sake of unity. Although socialist Yugoslavism was not clearly defined in the 1950s, it was promoted in different fields: culture (1956 debate about the Yugoslav criterium), language policies (1954 Novi Sad agreement regarding the Serbo-Croatian language), censuses (in 1953 a category of a "Yugoslav – nationally undetermined" appeared), public discourse, and in the 1953 constitutional changes (Ivešić, 2016).

In the first half of the 1960s, the Yugoslav national identification was abandoned, although this was not a preordained outcome at the time, as in the case of the Czechoslovak socialist identification. Firstly, there was a great opposition against Yugoslavism, manifested in the 1961–62 debate between Dobrica Ćosić and Dušan Pirjevec (Gabrič, 1995, 45–47; Miller, 2007, 95–98; Shoup, 1968, 197–198). Secondly, the conflict between the "conservative" and "liberal" current regarding the Yugoslav economic difficulties, lead at the beginning to the isolation of Edvard Kardelj, chief ideologist of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (*Savez komunista Jugoslavije* – LCY) and the leading expert on the national question. When Kardelj was "saved" from isolation by Slovenian communists, this experience manifested in Kardelj's personal shift; he moved away from the idea of a Yugoslav socialist nation towards the defense of the republics. In the latter the fear of losing national rights stimulated nationalism (Haug, 2012, 181–182). Socialist Yugoslavism, as a national identification, was finally abandoned first in the 1963 constitutional debate and for good in Tito's speech at the VIII. Congress of LCY in 1964 (Haug, 2012, 181; Rusinow, 1977, 167).

Out of many Yugoslav reforms from the 1960s, the reform of the Federal Assembly (*Savezna skupština*) with the Chamber of Nationalities (*Vijeće naroda*), is most relevant from the perspective of the Czechoslovak case. The Chamber played an outsized role in nationality issues and gave a new dimension to Yugoslav federalism. The Chamber of Nationalities appeared already in the 1946 constitution as a chamber protector of the national equality, with vast powers inside the Yugoslav federal system, which was copied from the Stalin's 1936 constitution (The Constitution of the USSR, 1936). Nevertheless, after the 1948 Tito-Stalin split, the Chamber of Nationalities was abolished as a separate chamber under the 1953 Constitutional law. It operated from that point on as a semi-autonomous part of the Federal Council without power or authority. Edvard Kardelj, main writer of the constitutional law, elaborated that the guarantees for national equality could be found in the roots of the Yugoslav self-management system and that the Chamber was hence, no longer needed (Ivešić, 2016, 54–56; Režek, 1998, 153).

The 1963 Constitution reversed these changes. However, the Chamber of Nationalities remained dysfunctional since it was obligated to meet only when the constitution changed (Haug, 2012, 182). In January 1966, Bosnian communists were very unhappy with the distribution of loans for the underdeveloped regions, which resulted in a petition initiative for a meeting of the Chamber of Nationalities. The session needed to be petitioned by the majority, 10 MPs, or if the initiative came from the Assembly's president (The Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1963, article 190). Hence, a precedent occurred, which echoed loudly, not only in the Federal Assembly but also inside LCY (Vjesnik, 29. 12. 1965; Oslobođenje, 29. 1. 1966). All claims, that existed before 1966 that the Chamber was not working because there were no problems, became suspicious; it was evident that there was a need for an operational Chamber of Nationalities and that maybe the need existed also before the 1963 constitution. The Chamber needed to be reformed on the national-territorial principle.

The first constitutional amendments (I.–VI.) were passed in April 1967, changing the authority of the Chamber of Nationalities. From then on, it was mandatory for the Chamber to discuss the proposal of the societal plan, the state's budget, and proposals for federal laws. With the initiative of five of its members or the initiative of the Federal Assembly's president, it could discuss all matters that were important for the equality of republics and provinces and the equality of nations and nationalities. Each republic had ten delegates, while each province could appoint five (Haug, 2012, 203; Žagar, 2010, 236).

Despite the amendments, the position of the national minorities inside the Chamber remained vague, as well as the Chamber's principle that was based on a political-territorial principle and not a national one. Around half a million Hungarians had only two delegates in the Chamber, while around one million Albanians had less than five, which meant that none of the two largest minorities were able to petition on their initiative the Chamber's session.[3]

3 AJ-507, XXIII A, box 2, folder 1/2, Sednica KMMO 25. 4. 1967, 132 and 139.

In the next wave of amendments in 1968, the Chamber was also defined as the first chamber of the Federal People's Assembly. With its 140 members (20 from each republic and ten from each province) the Chamber became the largest in the Assembly, having 20 members more than the Federal Council (Haug, 2012, 204–205; Žagar, 2010, 236). Hence, since 1968 the national principle prevailed inside the Yugoslav Federal People's Assembly. This led toward the enforcement of the "old" national identifications, which filled the vacuum that was left after the abandonment of the Yugoslav melting pot. Therefore, it is no coincidence that several national revivals gain momentum in the 1960s (Slovenian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Muslim in Bosnia and Herzegovina).

YUGOSLAV TRANSNATIONAL PROGRESSIVE EXPERIENCES

In the federal LCY Central Committee's (*Centralni komitet* – CC) Commission for Interethnic and Interrepublican Relations (*Komisija za međunacionalne i međurepubličke odnose* – KMMO)[4] records, from the second half of the 1960s, Czechoslovakia was mentioned several times as a country where political dispute regarding interethnic relations was worse than in Yugoslavia. Although this "worse" was never specified. This showed the Yugoslav communists that even in a more developed country the conflict of an interethnic character remained.[5]

The Yugoslav leadership became actively interested in Czechoslovakia already in 1965 when LCY launched their economic reform. By the end of 1965, a Yugoslav study group was sent to Czechoslovakia, where they visited the CC of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (*Komunistická strana Československa* – KSČ), factories, and several institutions. They were mostly interested in the economic reform which started one year before the Yugoslav. The delegation was overwhelmed with Czechoslovakia since the population had "more intellectuals than peasants", as it was stated by Ivan Lač, the president of the CC LCY's Commission for Information, who lead the delegation. Both sides agreed that they would continue to "exchange experiences and to get to know each other's viewpoints and achievements" (Komunist, 18. 2. 1966).

At the highest level, a more intense relationship started in 1967, when Oldřich Černík, at the time vice-president of the Czechoslovak government, visited Yugoslavia in late May, and after the Czechoslovak president Antonín Novotný visited Yugoslavia in September 1967. Although the Czechoslovak leadership was known by their skepticism toward the non-aligned movement and the self-management system, the Yugoslav analysts predicted that the reason behind these visits was

4 The Federal KMMO was established in 1965. KMMO was a special Commission of the LCY's CC and it was not regarded as a special LCY's body. It was as all other commissions were, a "subsidiary" body that was needed for the sake of contributing to the larger understanding and research of a given topic.

5 AJ-507, XXIII A, box 1, folder 8, Sednica KMMO 10. 11. 1966, 21; Ibid., box 2, folder 2, Sednica KMMO 25. 4. 1967, 107.

the Czechoslovak interest for Yugoslav solutions. Especially they were interested in self-management and the role of the Party and the Socialist Alliance of the Working People (resembled to the National Front in Czechoslovakia) inside of the state and the socialist system (Dimić, 2005, 209–213). The contacts also existed on the lower levels, in diplomacy, and as it will be seen later, the scientific-expert fields (history, sociology, and law). The contacts remained strong also during the Prague spring, when Yugoslav leadership endorsed the Czechoslovak reforms, also with Tito's visit in August 1968, just days before the intervention of the Warsaw Pact (Pelikán, 2008a; 2008b).

Other countries in which Yugoslav leadership had interest included Italy, Switzerland and Belgium. Italy was of interest to Yugoslav communists, since Italy had a special investment bank for the underdeveloped regions, which could serve as a model for Yugoslavia. Also, the core of the problem – the underdeveloped South – gave room for comparison, providing several parallels but also differences.[6] Switzerland was interesting because of a very effective bilingual administration for the Italian-speaking group in the southern cantons of Switzerland, which could also be used in Yugoslavia for minorities.[7] Belgium was mentioned several times during the KMMO meetings, because of the Walloon-Flemish conflict, which was in the eyes of the Yugoslav communists a conflict of (non)equal and democratic relations between the two groups.[8]

On the other end of the spectrum were non-European countries interested in Yugoslavia's solutions. In the federal KMMO's material, it is often mentioned that Yugoslavia needed to show the correct way to develop interethnic relations for the emerged countries in Africa and Asia. Yugoslav weakness (the national question) was seen here as an advantage, the Yugoslav leadership understood the developed post-colonial world and the national question, which helped them in supporting the right side and not making mistakes.[9]

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF THE SLOVAKS

The Czechoslovak historically specific tragedy of 1938–1945 is well known (Rychlík, 2012, 153–200), even the period of the second Czecho-Slovak Republic (Ward, 2013, 161–201). For this paper couple of facts are important: the establishment of a Slovak Communist Party (*Komunistická strana Slovenska* – KSS) in 1939, the 1944 Slovak National Uprising organized by an anti-fascist National Front where communists and their allies dominated, and the establishment of the Slovak National Council in 1944 (Myant, 2008, 41–46).

6 AJ-507, XXIII A, box 2, folder 1/2, Sednica KMMO 25. 4. 1967, 62; AJ-507, XXIII A, box 1, folder 9, Sednica KMMO 2. 12. 1966, 88.

7 AJ-507, A-CK SKJ; VIII, II/2-b, box K-17, folder 212, Sednica KMMO 5. 6. 1965, 20.

8 AJ-507, A-CK SKJ; VIII, II/2-b, box K-17, folder 214, Sednica KMMO 8. 4. 1966, 77.

9 AJ-507, XXIII A, box 10, folder 10, Sednica KMMO 16. 12. 1966, 88.

Negotiations between the Edvard Beneš's government in London and Moscow's Czechoslovak communist leadership (lead by Klement Gottwald) took place in Moscow, in March 1945. During the talks, passionate arguments were put forward when they discussed the composition of the government and the Czecho-Slovak relations. Georgie Dimitrov, in charge of the Comintern, argued for a symmetrical agreement, in which Czechs and Slovaks would have their separate governments and one federal government. Due to the tactics used by Stalin, some concessions had to be made on the communist side in order not to scare Beneš's followers. Hence, Gottwald persuaded Slovak Communists to take one step back and agree that the final decision upon the formation of the State would be given into the hands of the people, which would elect Czech and Slovak representatives to the parliament. The new government, with a strong but not full domination of communists, took office in Košice in April 1945 (Myant, 2008, 46–50). Nevertheless, the Košice program "adumbrated a program of national equality, with the Slovak Republic to enjoy full right of autonomy in the liberated Republic" (Bosák, 1991, 77).

As in other countries that turned socialist at least until 1948 (Mevius, 2005; Sygkelos, 2011), the Czechoslovak communists started to speak the language of "the nation". The expulsion of ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia was a good opportunity. Gottwald (Czechoslovak PM after 1946) could not help himself not to use Czech historical memory and the anti-German stand in his speeches. In one of them, he used the example of the 1620 defeat at the White Mountain stating: "You must prepare for the final retribution of White Mountain […] We will expel for good all descendants of the alien nobility" (Mevius, 2005, 115). However, it must be stated that this "alien nobility" came to Bohemia in late Middle Ages.

A significant shift also happened in the policy towards Slovakia after the power was seized by the KSČ with a *coup d'état* in 1948. KSS was dissolved as an independent party and became part of KSČ, while the Slovak CC was fully subordinated to the CC KSČ. This shift was upgraded with the new constitution, which changed the "Slovak veto." Since 1946 the status of Slovakia could have been enacted only if the majority of elected Slovak MPs were present, but with the 1948 constitution the overall three-fifths majority was enough for the acceptance of amendments. Furthermore, central leadership also had a right to abolish Slovak organs if that would be necessary. The subordination inside of the communist ranks went so far that Slovak communists could not appoint even the editors of their newspapers (Leff, 1988, 100–101, 107).

However, the centralized rule was supported among many Slovak communists, especially those that shared the power in Prague. Those that opposed these policies, like Vlado Clementis, Gustáv Husák and Ladislav Novomeský (the last two were also the leaders of the 1944 national uprising), were accused of Slovak bourgeois nationalism in the early 1950s and were either executed or imprisoned for several years. Even if the Slovaks remained a separate na-

tion, any agitation for a "distinct Slovak political identity was ruled out." Edita Bosák, historian specialized in Central and Eastern Europe, argued that "this was a far more ruthless subjugation of Slovaks to the Czechs than anything under the much-criticized [interwar] republic" (Bosák, 1991, 78). In Yugoslavia, no such subjugation existed.

In the first post-war years, the communist intellectuals argued that the Czech "national character" needed a revision – the re-orientation from the "Central Europe" towards Eastern, Slavic, and socialist world (Abrams, 2005). When power was monopolized in 1948 a revision of the national history was done to legitimize the regime (Kopeček, 2001).

However, during the late 1950s and 1960s some Czech and Slovak intellectuals were preoccupied – as Michal Kopeček noticed – by the notion to "restructure the Czechoslovakist idea into a 'national political society' project based on autonomous development of two distinct nations connected, however, by the principles of the Czechoslovak statehood and socialist patriotism" (Kopeček, 2012, 131). This attitude changed in the 1960s when socialist patriotism and Czechoslovak statehood would produce a new socialist Czechoslovak nation. This presumption was anemic and shortly renounced since it was based on the theory that Slovaks would leave their national sentiments in favor of socialist patriotism (Kemp, 1999, 124–125; Kopeček, 2012, 129–135; Leff, 1988, 146).

The agenda of a socialist Czechoslovak nation was embodied in the actions taken by Antonín Novotný, who became the Czechoslovak Communist Party general secretary after Gottwald's death in 1953 and was after 1957 also Czechoslovak president. Slovaks identified Novotný with the 1960 constitution, which weakened Slovak institutions even further, as it was argued by Krejcí and Machonin: "The Board of Commissioners [executive body of the Slovak National Council, *Zbor povereníkov* in Slovak] was abolished, and the Slovak National Council was turned into the local branch of the state National Assembly. It also lost control over the regional Councils. The three regional Councils in Slovakia (those for Western, Central and Eastern Slovakia) became more important than the central administration in Bratislava" (Krejcí & Machonin, 1998, 46). In the eyes of the Slovaks, Novotný was also considered as the main apologist of the socialist Czechoslovak nation. After the new constitution was passed in 1960 Novotný reportedly stated at the meeting with the Slovak National Council: "We were one nation and will be again" (Brown, 2008, 473)!

As in the case of Yugoslavia, where the pressure for socialist Yugoslavism received response from those who defended their national rights (most eagerly Slovenes in the late 1950s and early 1960s), so was the case with the Slovaks against socialist Czechoslovakism and the centralized regime ruining Slovak institutions that were won during the 1944/1945 period. This defense was supported by the bad economic situation and slow de-Stalinization (Leff, 1988, 119).

THE REVIVAL OF THE SLOVAK NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Regarding the gradual Slovak national revival, the year 1963 tends to be seen as a turning point. Firstly, a generational shift occurred inside the KSS. Hardliners, Karol Bacílek and Pavol David, were expelled, and the new leader of the Party became Aleksander Dubček. Between them, there was more than twenty-year age gap. Dubček, born in 1921, spent most of his childhood in the Soviet Union and returned to Czechoslovakia only in 1938. During the WWII Dubček was an active member of the anti-fascist resistance and was gaining carrier positions step by step after the war. In the 1950s he also finished a five-year study at the Moscow Political College. Hence, he was an educated reliable cadre. After this change at the top, Slovak representatives started to promote Slovak national identification carefully, hence, opposing the narrative of *zbližovanie* (convergence) coming from the Prague center. In 1963, a big celebration was organized to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the most important Slovak cultural institution, *Matica slovenská*. In 1964, Slovaks celebrated 20-years of the National Uprising (Brown, 2008, 474), and a year later the Slovaks commemorated the 150th anniversary of the birth of Ľudovít Štúr, the leader of the Slovak national revival in the mid-19th century (Krejcí & Machonin, 1998, 46).

Secondly, de-Stalinization was realizing with the rehabilitation of victims of the Stalinist purges from the beginning of the 1950s. The so-called Barnabite Commission was established in April 1963 to research the accusations of the Slovak bourgeois nationalism from the early 1950s (McDermott & Pinerová, 2015, 115). The accusations were found to be unjust and Husák was sent free.

Finally, the response to the shameful status of Slovakia started to be visible in the intellectual circles, but also from below, from the masses. In 1963, Slovak historian Miloš Gosirovský submitted his article titled, "On Some Questions Concerning Czech-Slovak Relations in the Policy of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia*,"* to be published in a magazine called *Nová mysl* (*New Mind*) and caused something of a sensation seen in the Ćosić-Pirjevec exchange in Yugoslavia. Although the latter was public, Gosirovský's article was until 1968 not published, however, widely read as a samizdat (Rychlík, 2012, 439). The article was also sent to the Czechoslovak and Slovak CC. In the article, Gosirovský advocated for the federal solution of the Slovak status. Slovaks, Gosirovský argued, were the only Slavic nation, and the only one in the socialist camp, that did not have their national organizations within their compact ethnic territory (Rychlík, 2012, 438–439). Hence, he advocated for the return of the Košice program, which he called the "Magna Carta of the Slovak nation" (Brown, 2010, 110).

Gosirovský's text was an important stimulation for the response from below. Unsigned Slovak communists wrote a letter on 18th of June 1963 to the CC KSČ asking what happened to the Košice program and why the Slovak nation did not have "political, economic and cultural rights to which it was entitled." A day later the Soviet consulate in Bratislava received a letter asking them for help in the

establishment of equality between Czechs and Slovaks, which was envisioned already in the Košice program. The letter even included Dimitrov's symmetrical idea of the representational organs as a justification for the federation. Another letter was sent in October 1963 to Dubček by Slovak employees in the state apparatus and KSS. They asked Dubček, why the national question was settled in the West but not in the East and why Slovaks were going for work in the Czech lands where they were creating income for Czechs. Interestingly, they called for decentralization of the administration in the economy by using the example of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia (Brown, 2010, 106–115).

YUGOSLAVIA AS AN EXAMPLE FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

It was in this precise period, 1964–1966, that the Czechoslovak communists started to get interested in the Yugoslav state and socialist system. The Czechoslovak economy was, during the first half of the 1960s, in a significant crisis. The economic reform that was prepared in 1964, was based on the theoretical analysis and in some parts from the outside influence of the Polish model and Yugoslav experiences. Even in the years that followed, "the Yugoslav concepts of self-management preceded all the Czechoslovak examinations and served as an impulse to many of them" (Kusin, 2002, 90). Or, as Skilling pointed out, "The Soviet system was no longer treated as the only viable model and its defects during the Stalinist period were sharply criticized. Even more startling, the Yugoslav pattern was openly and sympathetically studied" (Skilling, 1976, 146). At least from 1961 onwards, unofficial discussions existed among a group of Communist intellectuals (Klement Lukeš, Eduard Novák, Jaroslav Opat, Jiří Pelikán, etc.) about the possibilities to use some of the Yugoslav self-management system solutions. The Party punished them with a degradation of their working place and in some cases expulsion from the Party since they tried to "imitate the Yugoslav model" (Kusin, 2002, 115). In 1968, those expelled were admitted back to the Party for a short time. After the Prague spring this group of intellectuals cooperated in the circle surrounding the journal *Listy* – published in Rome by the Czechoslovak socialist opposition and edited by Jiří Pelikán (Formanová et al., 1999).

This enthusiasm for the Yugoslav system can also be seen in the works written by two legal scholars Michal Lakatoš (Lakatoš, 1966, 102–104) and Zděnek Mlynář (Mlynář, 1964, 147–150). As Skilling noticed, both "expressed considerable sympathy with the Yugoslav multi-chamber system as an appropriate way of guaranteeing adequate group representation" (Skilling, 1976, 148). Mlynář's enthusiasm regarding Yugoslavia can also be visible in the fact that he wrote a preface to the Czech version of Edvard Kardelj's book (Kardelj, 1966).

However, Mlynář was not always so open toward the Yugoslav socialism. He finished his Law degree in Moscow in 1956, where he was Mikhail Gorbachev's classmate and a Ph. D. in the late 1950s in Prague on the political doctrine of

Niccolò Machiavelli. At that time, Mlynář was attacking Czechoslovak Marxist revisionists and all that had unorthodox views (Dufková & Rákosník, 2014, 97). He was also critical toward the Yugoslav revisionism in the light of the 1958 new LCY program, "which allegedly strove to emancipate the state from the Communist Party whereas Mlynář believed that the role of the masses and the Party vis-à-vis the state should be reinforced" (Kusin, 2002, 106–107). Years after the Prague spring, Mlynář admitted that by criticizing the Yugoslav regime he was only standing on the KSČ's line. He had sympathies for the Yugoslav regime when he read Kardelj's analysis of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and decided to learn Serbo-Croatian (Mlynář, 1985, 47, 70).

Slovak intellectuals were also very much interested in Yugoslav solutions. In 1965, during the meeting of the CC LCY's KMMO, Koča Jončič, a legal expert specializing in national minorities and a collaborator of the Institute of Social Sciences (Institut društvenih nauka – IDN), pointed out that they had some contact with Slovaks:

> *We have for two years now a tendency among, I presume, progressive people from Slovakia, which in their struggle for a different regulation* [of the status] *of Slovakia inside Czechoslovakia – are often using our solutions or are leaning on our solutions. We have discussed this and decided that we will not allow being a cover, but we must be careful not to disable the usage of progressive experiences.*[10]

Many contacts with Slovaks took place through the Institute of Social Sciences in Belgrade, where sociologists and historians were regular visiting fellows.[11] Among them, Jaroslav Opat mentioned above (punished by the Czechoslovak Party in 1961 for trying to imitate the Yugoslav model) researched self-management system for the whole of September 1967 as an IDN's visiting fellow.[12]

PREPARING REFORMS AND THE PRAGUE SPRING

The period 1964–1966 was significant also for another reason; it was the period when the reforming communists believed, as it was noted by the Czech historian Vítězslav Sommer, "that it was necessary to formulate socialist policy on the solid ground of scientific research" (Sommer, 2016, 185). The foundations for the Prague spring's reforms (democratization, federalization and economic reform) were rooted in the mid-1960s, with the work of the four research teams established under the roof of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences: economic

10 AJ-507, A-CK SKJ; VIII, II/2-b-, box K-17, folder 212, Sednica KMMO 5. 6. 1965, p. 33.

11 In the IDN's internal newspaper called *Informacije* [Information] (after 1967 *Informativni bilten*) from 1966 to 1968 one can find numerous visiting fellows from Slovakia but also from the Czech lands. *Informacije* was an IDN's periodical publication that was issued four times per year. It consists of articles, reports from conferences, IDN researchers' activities and reports about visiting fellows.

12 Informativni bilten Instituta društvenih nauka, year 1967, no. 3, p. 62.

research team lead by Ota Šik, modernization team dealing with the scientific and technical revolution lead by Radovan Richta, sociological lead by Pavel Machonin, and the political research group for the development of the political system and democracy in socialist society lead by Zděnek Mlynář (Dufková & Rákosník, 2014, 94). However, there were also other research groups (military, history) that were active (Sommer, 2016, 186–87), but their results not so important. Šik, Richta, and Mlynář were also some of the leading writers of the KSČ Action program in April 1968 (Mlynář, 1985, 107). For this paper, with the focus on nationality, economy and federalism, Šik's and Mlynář's case need more elaboration.

Ota Šik

Ota Šik spent most of his time during WWII in a concentration camp at Mauthausen, where he also met Novotný. This acquaintance helped him in the years that followed. He was teaching economy at different universities and became a correspondent member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in the early 1960s. In 1962 he became a member of the CC KSČ and the director of the Economic Institute at the Academy's guidance. At first, Šik worked in the CC on the ideological questions and was transferred to economic problems in 1964, when he also started preparing the above-mentioned economic reform (Zeman, 1969, 91).

Šik's reform could be shortly summarized with his articulation as a third way between socialism and capitalism (Šik, 1972). His vision was a regulated market system where companies would control the production. Nevertheless, as Skilling argued, "these measures did not, of course, mean the abandonment of central planning, still less of socialism, but sought to combine planning and other indirect central controls of the economy with a greater development of the market relations, including the use of profit as an incentive" (Skilling, 1976, 59). With a more significant role of the workers' councils in the factories, many elements of the Yugoslav self-management system can be traced in the reform. As mentioned above, the Yugoslav system served as one of the possible role models. This was especially visible on the eve of the Prague spring, when hundreds of working councils emerged, and by some estimations more than 80 % of workers participated in the elections (Samary, 2019, 181).

Šik was not successful since the reform hit a wall constructed by the old system. Against the reform were the conservative Party apparatchiks that did not want to lose control over the economy, while the reform was supported by economists on the lower levels, managers that wanted to operate more freely and some members of the state apparatus which realized that there was no other option for the ill economy. Nevertheless, Šik understood well that without the changes in the political system, his reform could not be fully implemented (Skilling, 1976, 62–63). Hence, Šik played a very active role in changing the political climate.

During the KSČ's Party Congress in 1967, Šik called upon the political changes – to fight against conservatives. However, there was no support to his proposal, but in many ways Šik's initiative was a starting point of a gradual change that happened by the end of 1967, when public and internal dissatisfaction merged. The public was outraged by the brutal suppression of the Strahov student protests in October 1967, while at the same time a clash inside the KSČ's CC became visible. During the CC's October meeting, Dubček raged against the documents prepared for the plenum, since they were different than those that were approved by the Presidium. He also opened the question of the bad Czech-Slovak relations. Novotný defended himself with sharp criticism of Slovak nationalism. In return, this angered other Slovaks in the CC as well as some other Czech members, since the situation resembled to the early 1950s Husák purge. CC's was split in half, while those opposing Novotný also criticized the fact of him being the general secretary of the Party and the state's president. After the plenum, Novotný visited the Soviet Union. Since he did not talk with Brezhnev there, he invited the Soviet leader to Prague. Hooping to strengthen his position the opposite happened. Brezhnev met with several CC members but not with the whole CC. Not giving his support, a road towards the attacks on Novotný was opened (Nikodym, 2013, 48; Skilling, 1976, 156).

Brezhnev elaborated his decision after he returned home. Novotný's double function remembered him of Stalin (the concentration of power), while he was also shocked by the inadequate treatment of the Slovak question:

> *Novotný himself is to blame for the legally ambiguous status of Slovakia; no one knows whether it is a federal republic and it has no capital city. In short, for years he had been sweeping the entire issue under the carpet. What is more, at the plenary session he accused Dubček of nationalism. Dubček is a totally honest person, but the situation angered him, and other Slovak participants were infuriated as well, and all this produced an undesirable atmosphere* (Brown, 2008, 468).

As for Šik, it seems that he saw in the Slovak leadership an ally that he needed to put through his economic reform. Since he was critical toward the Slovak question already in 1963 (powerlessness of the Slovak national organs to oversee the Slovak economy)[13] he did not have problems with merging his reform with the one on federalism. Now, the time was right for Šik to start an attack on Novotný.

During the December 1967 CC KSČ plenum, Šik openly attacked Novotný for his concentration of power and demanded his resignation as the KSČ's general secretary. This finally happened in January 1968 when Dubček took Novotný 's position (Skilling, 1976, 169–177). Later, Šik was appointed the minister of economy and as the government's vice-president. He was also the author of the economic part of the April 1968 KSČ's Action program. During the Warsaw Pact invasion, Šik was on holidays in Pula in Croatia. At the Adriatic coast, the

13 In 1968 Slovak National Council controlled only 0.2 percent of the Slovakia's GDP (Brown, 2010, 104, 286).

Czechoslovak minister of the foreign affairs Jiří Hájek and Dubček's wife with their children were also spending their holidays (Jakovina, 2011). Thus, one can conclude that the Soviet invasion was not anticipated. Nevertheless, Šik remained in Croatia until October 1968 and then moved to Switzerland, never returning to his homeland again.

Zděnek Mlynář

Mlynář's research team was the last that started working out of four groups mentioned. His team was organized only in 1967 by the Czechoslovak Academy and placed under the roof of the Institute of State and Law. Their task was to prepare their recommendations for the reform of the political system, which would be presented only at the next KSČ congress in 1970 (Stokes, 1996, 122; Voříšek, 2009, 218).

From March until September 1967, the team had four meetings, enough to decide to create a reform (Dufková & Rákosník, 2014, 103). Nevertheless, this reform had nothing to do with the liberal democracy as it was known in the West. As it will be argued later, the democratization process was meant only for the reformation of the National Front.

Regarding federalism, the crucial meeting came in March 1968 in Smolenice in Slovakia. Although prior to the meeting Mlynář had not yet included the federal idea into his recommendations for the reform, he was struck by the papers presented and quickly realized that he downplayed the importance of the federation advocated by the Slovaks. This should not be a surprise, since a public opinion poll from April 1968 showed that only half of the Czech population agreed with the federal idea, compared with 80 % in Slovakia (Piekalkiewicz, 1972, 110–111). The meeting in Smolenice was also attended by Gustav Husák, now fully rehabilitated also by the Party. As Brown summarized it, presenters argued in their papers that

> *liberalization and federalization were logically interconnected. Federalization, therefore, warranted serious consideration and inclusion in wider discussions of democratization.* […] *By the end of the second day* [of the meeting]*, Mlynář had adopted* [overnight] *the view that a new constitutional arrangement of Czech-Slovak relations – a federation – belonged among the core tasks of the contemporary reform movement and had to be pursued in earnest* (Brown, 2008, 477–478).

DEMOCRATIZATION AND FEDERALIZATION

In this way, the democratization and federalization, but also the economic reform, became the critical components of the reforms. A couple of days after the Smolenice meeting, on 15th of March 1968, the Slovak National Council issued a proclamation for a federation, for which they received 550 letters of support in the next three months (Brown, 2009, 139, 146). When in April 1968 the KSČ Action

program was written by several authors (among them Šik, Richta, and Mlynář), central reforms (democratization, federalization and economic reform) were included on the findings of the above-mentioned research groups.[14] Although, there were also doubtful views regarding the federalization inside of the group that wrote the program (Skilling, 2000, 58).

The Action program envisioned a democratization process, which would, however, be limited under the umbrella of the National Front. Divergent views could be gathered and articulated, but there would be no other political parties outside of the Front. This limitation was explicit also in the Mlynář's text from May 1968, where his usage of the terms "pluralist system" and "pluralist society" can be misleading to some,[15] since the reform would assert the political hegemony of the Party. Even in his later years, Mlynář was admitting that the reform of 1968 "implied censorship, suppression of open political opposition and personal repressions against radical intellectuals" (Voříšek, 2009, 244). It would have been a closed, limited, and controlled reform, without the smell of a revolution. As Tito told Dubček in August 1968, when he visited Prague, democracy should not be allowed for those that were against socialism (Dimić, 2005, 231). However, some intellectuals (including the public) wanted more, and they thought that the reform wing of the Party would not let them down.[16]

There were bigger problems with the federalization of the state, since no concrete plans existed, "unless we count ad hoc recommendations and Mlynář's wild idea of a corporativist parliament with five chambers of May 1968" (Voříšek, 2009, 244). Voříšek's (maybe exaggerated) label of Mlynář's "wild idea" can be explained by the fact that since no plans existed, Mlynář looked for ideas in the Yugoslav parliamentary system, which – as was already elaborated – he knew very well. The Yugoslav constitution from 1963 defined five chambers[17] of the Federal People's Assembly, plus the Chamber of Nationalities making six chambers in total (The Constitution of the SFRY, 1963, article 165).

One thing was clear from the start, Slovaks wanted a federation based on the principle of symmetry. The latter was explained for the public in April 1968 by a Slovak philosopher Július Strinka:

> *We can speak about symmetry at that time when both state-forming nations are, in the full sense of the word, independent and able, this means that each nation is in and of itself master on its own territory, and in accord with this is, naturally, also fully equipped with appropriate power organs and institutions, legislative,*

14 OSA, 300-8-3-1951OSA, The Czechoslovak Action Program', 26 April 1968.

15 See Mlynar's text Towards a Democratic Political organization of Society in: Stokes, 1996, 123–125.

16 As an example, see the famous Two Thousand Words text by Ludvík Vaculík in: Stokes, 1996, 126–130.

17 The Federal Chamber, the Economic Chamber, the Chamber of Education and Culture, the Chamber of Social Welfare and Health, and the Organizational-Political Chamber.

> *administrative, judicial, cultural, etc. The organs of one nation are, simply put, the mirror image of organs of the second nation, in this they are in a relationship of symmetry* (Brown, 2009, 145).

Also, in the case of the symmetry principle, only Yugoslavia could have served as a role model. In the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation lacked their national organs, while there was no special Russian Communist Party beside the one of the Bolsheviks. On the contrary, in Yugoslavia, each republic had their organs, while federal organs also existed and, since 1948, all republics had their own independent Communist Party within the federal one, perfect example of the symmetry principle.

A special committee was formed in spring 1968 whose goal was to prepare the new constitution. Gustav Husák, since April 1968 also vice-president of the Czechoslovak government, had a leading role inside the committee as the loudest advocator for a federation (Rychlík, 2012, 477; Skilling, 1976, 280). However, problems occurred at the beginning of summer 1968, when an initiative for a third federal unit came from the representatives of Moravia and Silesia, two Czech historical regions, which were different from Bohemia in geography, history, and the economy as it was argued. They wanted a referendum. However, Slovaks refused to hear anything other than a dual-federal state, since only the latter was able to solve the national question, while an additional entity would be a continuation of the Czech *majorizácie* now in the radio 2:1 (Brown, 2008, 488–489; Pithart, 1990, 67).

Although the Committee for the constitutional changes decided already in July 1968 that the "Czechoslovak federation would be founded on parallel Slovak and Czech national-state entities, with sovereignty originating from the two national republics" (Brown, 2009, 147), the pressure for a third entity remained present.

In October 1968, just days before the new constitutional law was accepted, the representatives of Moravia and Silesia wrote a petition to the Czechoslovak president Ludvík Svoboda, who replaced Novotný at this position in late March 1968. The letter proposed a third unit of the federation or alternatively recommended that the Moravia-Silesia unit could become an autonomous province of the Czech Republic. The Moravian representatives claimed that this would not be unusual, since also in the Socialist Republic of Serbia, there were two autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo-Metohija, a dramatic instance of using a Yugoslav solution to their demands. They also submitted 71.000 signatures that were "spontaneously" collected (Žatkuliak, 1996, 301).

In July 1968 the constitutional committee had a tough choice between three proposals of how the new Federal Assembly would have been constructed. There were two opposite proposals, however both were based on a unicameral Assembly, one arguing for the seats to be apportioned on the basis of national parity, rather than proportionally (proposed by the Presidium of the Slovak National Council), and the other arguing for allotment based on the population (proposed by

Czech scholars Zdeněk Jičínský and Jiří Grospič). The latter would also include a Slovak veto on all constitutional changes, but in other cases (budget, economy) Czechs could still pass laws without Slovaks. The third option (on which the accepted constitutional law was later based), was Slovak National Council's second alternative based on a bicameral Federal Assembly. "The House of the people would base representation on population, upholding the principle of proportional representation, while the House of Nations would have national delegations of equal size. Both chambers would operate according to majority rule, but bills would require majority support in both houses, and from both halves of the House of Nations" (Brown, 2009, 147). This solution resembled a lot to the Yugoslav system, where the Chamber of Nationalities had equal delegates from each of the republics, while the Federal Council was based on the population.

The timeline they have envisioned dictated the passing of the new constitutional law on the 28th of October 1968, to mark the 50-year anniversary of the Czechoslovak state. Although the invasion of the Warsaw pact in August 1968[18] put down the reform ideas connected with democratization, economy, etc., the federal plan survived, and the timeline was reached in October 1968, although the constitutional law was enforced by January 1969. Nevertheless, the federation did not function very well, since it was one thing to declare a federation and pass constitutional law in a few months, although it was not finished, and another to realize what was envisioned. Furthermore, it that federation was undemocratic. Formally, there were two equal symmetrical parts in the Czechoslovak state, but the reform of the Czechoslovak Party never happened, and it remained profoundly asymmetrical, a notable contrast to the "polycentric" party in Yugoslavia (Brown, 2008, 491).

CONCLUSIONS

Many Czechs saw the federation as a Slovak betrayal and a cost that was paid during the suppression of the democratic reforms by the Soviets. One can perhaps agree with this sentiment, if it is looked upon the problem from the Czech view. However, it would be valuable also to have a look from the Slovak side. The socialist Czechoslovak regime of the 1950s, like the interwar Czechoslovak state, looked upon Slovak national sentiments as a transitory phenomenon which would fade away after the merging of the two nations. As Leff pointed out: "This was the basis on which both regimes [the interwar and the socialist] took the gamble of ignoring or suppressing its spokesmen" (Leff, 1988, 233). In 1968 the game of gambling was over, but the debt that was paid by the Czechs was (too) high. Post-Prague spring period, the normalization, was with purges in the Bohemian lands

18 One of the reasons for the intervention was the belief that in Czechoslovakia they wanted to introduce a Yugoslav type of socialism. This was denied by Tito also the in New York Times in May 1968. See: Jakovina, 2011, 400; Pelikán, 2008a, 125; Skilling, 1976, 703.

much more severe for Czechs than in Slovakia, where the federal idea triumphed. The latter was also the only idea of the 1968 KSČ's Action program that was realized. On the other hand, more turbulent times followed also in Yugoslavia with the Kosovo protests in late 1968 and the Croatian spring in 1971, including the purges that came along. Both countries, it seems, learned too little from each other. An observation that goes some way in justifying a closer study of the interconnections between the regimes and the missed opportunities to take seriously the experiences of the two federations in building new socialist national identifications, the Slovene and Slovak national revival that came consequently and the changes of the economic and constitutional systems.

IZMENJAVA "PROGRESIVNIH IZKUŠENJ" V TRANSNACIONALNI PERSPEKTIVI: NACIONALNOST, EKONOMIJA IN FEDERALIZEM V JUGOSLAVIJI IN ČEHOSLOVAŠKI V ŠESTDESETIH LETIH

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POVZETEK

Med Jugoslavijo in Čehoslovaško obstaja precej vzporednic. Obe sta nastali na ruševinah stare Evrope in v obdobju med obema svetovnima vojnama je v obeh državah potekal intenziven projekt nacionalne izgradnje. V obeh državah se je slednji nadaljeval tudi v obdobju po drugi svetovni vojni. V Jugoslaviji je bila ideja o socialistični jugoslovanski naciji zavržena v začetku šestdesetih zaradi prevelikega odpora, predvsem s strani Slovencev, medtem ko se je podobno zgodilo tudi v primeru Čehoslovaške z odporom Slovakov. V Jugoslaviji sredi šestdesetih potekajo silne reforme med katerimi je za primerjavo s Čehoslovaško najpomembnejša preobrazba Sveta narodov v Zvezni ljudski skupščini kot najpomembnejši dom skupščine. Jugoslovanske rešitve so spremljali ter analizirali Slovaki kakor tudi Čehi. Šestdeseta leta se kažejo kot obdobje intenzivne izmenjave »progresivnih izkušenj« na področju politike do nacionalnega, ekonomije ter federacije. V zadnjih dveh primerih je na Čehoslovaškem Jugoslavija služila kot vzgled. To je še posebej vidno v prizadevanjih glavnega čehoslovaškega ekonomista Ote Šika, ki je skrbel za ekonomsko reformo in s tem iskanje tretje poti med trdim socializmom ter kapitalizmom ter Zdeněka Mlynářa, ki je poskrbel za federativno rešitev čehoslovaškega nacionalnega vprašanja. Vrhunec teh prizadevanj doseže praška pomlad ter sprejetje nove federativne čehoslovaške ustave v oktobru 1968.

Ključne besede: Jugoslavija, Čehoslovaška, nacionalno vprašanje, socializem, federalizem

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