

Visegrad Scholarship at Open Society Archives

Recipient final report

Introduction

This report summarizes the activities and outcomes of the Visegrad research scholarship I had held at the Open Society Archives during July 2012. The working title of my research project was “Education policy in communist / socialist Yugoslavia”. The objective of my research at OSA was to look at the holdings that could provide additional insight into the social and political dynamics of the period between 1965 and 1980, which comprised the development and implementation of the most comprehensive education reform in former Yugoslavia, known as “vocation-oriented education”. The idea was that this aspect of policymaking during socialism should be understood as part of the broader reforms aimed at preventing the collapse of the Yugoslav federation, and thus should be seen in the broader historical context, rather than just “written off” as an example of bureaucratically burdensome policies commonly associated with Yugoslav socialism.

Research

Given the topic and focus of the project, my research at OSA was primarily directed to the Records of the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, specifically the Balkan section: Albanian and Yugoslav files (HU-OSA-300-10), which combine clippings from the international and local press with longer (analytical) RFE/RL research reports. Within these, I focused on the Yugoslav Subject Files I, which cover the period 1943-1994, and II, which cover the period 1951-1985. In the first case, of specific interest were materials filed under Education (300-10-2-136), Intellectuals (300-10-2-209), Marxism: Education and Maspok (300-10-2-263), Students (300-10-2-424, -425, -426), University (300-10-2-464, -465), and in the second, those filed under Education (300-10-3-25). Besides these, I looked at the records of the Open Media Research Institute, Yugoslav Subject Files (205-4-80), specifically Social Issues: Education (205-4-80-42, -43).

Research findings

The survey of the documents revealed a wealth of material highly relevant and useful for the understanding of the social dynamics underlying the transformation of education in the former Yugoslavia, and especially the relationship of the reforms with the student protests in Serbia (1968) and Croatia (1971-1972). Although, of course, the clippings from domestic press rarely state this openly, the drive to align the structure and content of education more closely to the ideological tenets of state socialism is a clearly discernible motive throughout the period, and most prominently displayed after the protests in Serbia and Croatia. The varieties and forms of criticism levied against student movements and activists in the local media, and the almost unequivocal identification of the “uncontrolled” expansion of education (access to universities) as the source of student unrest, were also highly indicative for the understanding of the underlying links between these events and the education reform. On the other hand, both the excellent analytical reports of RFE/RL research staff and the clippings from international (Western) press clearly indicate that the student movements were perceived as a source of potent (perhaps even destructive) criticism of Yugoslav socialism both in the country and abroad; this can also, in turn, explain why the regime at the time sought to address what was thought to be the underlying causes of student unrest in a variety of ways, ranging from repressive measures to overarching political reforms, which came to include the reform of education.

Outcomes

The results of the research were used in the book I had been working on in the past year, with the working title “From class to identity: the politics of education reforms in former Yugoslavia”; the manuscript has been submitted to the Central European University Press and the decision is expected in September 2012. The draft of the chapter which most frequently utilizes the material from the research at OSA is attached. In addition, the material will be utilized in the paper with the preliminary title “Vocationalizing unrest: education, conflict, and class reproduction in Socialist Yugoslavia”, which has been accepted for presentation at the workshop “Bringing class back in: the dynamics of social change in (post) Yugoslavia”, organized by the Centre for Southeast European Studies of the University of Graz, to be held in Croatia in December 2012. This paper will be published either as part of a conference

proceedings or as a separate paper in a peer-reviewed journal. Finally, the findings of the research will be presented in a talk for the staff at OSA and the CEU community in September 2012.

Conclusions

The Visegrad fellowship that enabled my research in the Open Society Archives was highly relevant and very useful, both for the research project I am currently working on, and for the development of my research interests more generally. I had an opportunity to engage in first-hand, in-depth exploration of unique archival resources, which not only contributed to the knowledge on the subject I was interested in, but also allowed me to approach the issues from an angle distinct from, but complementary to, the analysis of policies and interviews with actors I normally engage in. Given the historical dimension of the research topic, this approach enabled me to obtain data that I would have otherwise not have had access to, or, alternatively, would have had to engage in a lengthy research in the archives scattered across former Yugoslavia. Besides the “user-friendliness” of the archival holdings, I was able to rely on the help from extremely kind and cooperative OSA staff, starting with my supervisor, Prof. Istvan Rev, with whom I had an inspiring conversation, Ms. Katalin Gadoros, who ensured administrative issues flowed more than smoothly, as well as the archivists who helped in the processing of my requests. Being able to attend presentations of other Visegrad fund scholars also provided a great opportunity to get acquainted with the work of colleagues and peers. In sum, the Visegrad scholarship at Open Society Archives has been a very interesting, useful and pleasurable experience, which, I believe, will be highly beneficial for my research.

Budapest, 14 August 2012.

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Chapter 2. Vocationalizing education: Conflict, cohesion and dissent in Socialist Yugoslavia

Introduction

To this day, vocation-oriented education¹ remains probably the most ambitious education reform ever to be introduced in the countries of former Yugoslavia. Implemented from 1975, but prepared for at least a decade before that, the reform aimed to substantially transform the “face” of education systems across the Yugoslav federation. It was comprehensive, involving education institutions at all levels – primary, secondary, and tertiary (higher), as well as adult education. It altered the structure of the education system, abolishing the difference between more general secondary education, usually leading to the university, and that of the vocational type, which lead to the labor market. Last but not least, it was revolutionary, attempting to reverse the reproduction of social inequalities that persisted despite the official proclamation of a classless society after the World War II.

2.1. Vocation for education and education for vocation

The reform formed a part of a greater political project, which culminated in the adoption of the 1974 Constitution of the Social Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. The Constitution substantially transformed the structure of the federation. It divested a great portion of decision-making powers to the six constituent republics, and gave autonomous status to the two provinces, Vojvodina and Kosovo, of the biggest republic, Serbia. The change was precipitated by a similar reorganization of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), the highest political organ, which also distributed power to the republics and provinces, reflecting “the growing importance of the nationality factor in

¹ The reform, known as “usmereno obrazovanje” (Serbo-Croatian) or “usmereno izobrazevanje” (Slovenian), was variously translated as “vocational education”, “directed education”, “career-oriented” or “career-directed” education. In this text, the first solution is given preference, but in order to distinguish it from vocational education, which refers to job training or secondary schooling job preparation, the reform is referred to as vocation-oriented education (VOE) reform.

both Yugoslav society as a whole and party decision making in particular” (Burg, 1983, p. 34).

The vocation-oriented education reform presented the first major overhaul of education in the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. Prior to the reform, some changes had been implemented shortly after the end of the war, mostly in curricula: “bourgeois” elements, including religion, were banned from schools and replaced with the ideology of dialectical materialism; the teaching process was modernized in terms of involving new technologies and more teacher–pupil interaction. However, the structure of the education system had essentially been inherited from the pre-war Kingdom of Yugoslavia. What did change substantially, however, was the intake: in the years after WWII, Yugoslav education underwent rapid massification. In 1973, there were already almost a million students in secondary education (EP, 20 January 1975). The percentage of highly educated population was lower, but still expanded impressively: from 1.301 in 1954, the number of university graduates in 1965 had reached almost 14.000 (La Documentation Francaise, 1968, p. 18). At the time, students in higher education institutions constituted 0.85% of total population, compared to the 0.65% in Switzerland, 0.6% in France, or 0.45% in Italy (UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, in *ibid*, p.19).

It became evident that governing such an enlarged system would require substantial changes. Some of these changes were already precipitated in the self-management reform, which, at least formally, transported the regulation of education from the federation to the level of municipalities and specific institutions. Institutions or schools themselves were transformed into self-managed interest communities (SMICs), governed by councils, which included the representatives of the local workers’ councils, politicians and parents (Resolution on the development of education on the bases of self-management, 1970). Simultaneously, financing for education underwent a significant transformation: between 1968 and 1974 not less than *eleven* laws and regulations were adopted, first introducing specific funds for education within the federal budget, and then quantitative and qualitative criteria for the financing of particular institutions (Bogavac, 1985).

The early phase of reform, thus, addressed primarily the governance and structure of the education system. The questions about the ideological and social bases of education appeared a bit later, with the publication “The struggle of the League of Communists for the socialist orientation and active participation of the young generation in the development of the self-managed socialist society” (LCY, 1972), as well as in different documents constituting the Platform for the preparation of positions and decisions of the 10th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY, 1973) and the Basis of the ideational platform for the self-managed socialist transformation of education and training in SFRY (Djurisic, 1974).

From the very beginning, it was clear that VOE was seen not just as (possibly long-overdue) solution to the problems in education, but as an integral and highly important aspect of the overall transformation of political and social institutions that sustained Yugoslav socialism. In the preparatory document for the 10th Congress of the LCY, Djurisic writes: “Social changes going on in our country on the basis of the implementation of the constitutional amendments from 1971 and the new Constitution, represent a turning point in the direction of the implementation of the fundamental principles of the organization of the self-managed socialist society and a big step from the normative to the real (...) the changes in the material basis of our society lead to education becoming the central strategic point of the development of our society as a whole” (1973, p. 3).

The Resolution on the tasks of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in the socialist self-management transformation of education, which formed a part of the Resolutions of the Tenth Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, was adopted in 1974. Given the leading role of the League of Communists in defining public policy in Yugoslavia, this represented sufficient political vetting of the concept. The Law on Vocational Education was adopted later in the same year. The implementation of the reform began in the academic year 1975/6 in Croatia and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina; it was agreed that the full implementation in all republics and autonomous

provinces would begin by the academic year 1979/80. In short, it seemed like the stage for the reform was ready.

However, this turned out not to be the case. The reform was bureaucratically complex, creating pronounced differences in the level and speed of implementation across republics. Almost until September 1975, it was openly questioned whether the reform should be postponed; the media were full of stories of “hot summer”, alluding to the intensive political work needed to push forward the reform before the official start of the school year. Although hardly anyone dared question the ideological basis of the reform, reactions from the society were predominantly negative. Teachers criticized it, as they felt that it was “imposed from above”, and that they had not been given sufficient time to prepare for its implementation; parents disputed it, as it severely constrained their choice of schools in which they could enroll children; and students hated it, because it, despite the claim to the contrary, additionally burdened the already heavy curricula. To this day, many educational professionals simply claim that the vocation-oriented education reform literally “destroyed education”.

Although the negative sentiments related to the VOE reform could, at least in part, be attributed to its association with the legacy of communism as a whole, it still merits asking why the reform was pursued so stubbornly. Despite frequent proclamations of politicians and administrators that the reform would start yielding positive results once it is “fully implemented”, vocation-oriented education, with all of its problems, remained in place in a relatively unchanged form literally until the breakup of Yugoslavia (in fact, in some cases it was repealed only by the laws of the newly established independent states).

Analyses of Soviet-type education systems tend to attribute the overall lack of flexibility of education policies to the totalitarian nature of the regimes in question (e.g. Ewing, 2002; David-Fox and Peteri eds, 2000; Dunstan, ed., 1992; Fitzpatrick, 1979). However, this argument would not be valid in the Yugoslav case. The break between Tito and Stalin after the resolution of the Communist International in 1948 meant that Yugoslavia was free to pursue its own path of socialist development, which included non-alignment,

workers' self-management, and in general a higher degree of civil freedoms than in the Soviet Union or its satellites. Keen on maintaining good relations with the West, the regime in Yugoslavia was willing to show openness and flexibility, especially in the matters related to education and culture. This suggests that there might have been reasons other than ideological rigidity both for the introduction of the VOE reform and for adherence to it despite all its problems (cf. Zgaga, 2007, p. 68).

This chapter sets out to analyze the introduction of vocation-oriented education in Yugoslavia as a specific instance of public policy. It begins with the time in which cracks in the structure of the federation became evident, and ends with the time when comprehensive education reform was abandoned in order to give way to various nationalist policies at the eve of Yugoslavia's dissolution. The chapter aims to show how policies developed at the federal level attempted to "capture" and transform what the political actors of the day perceived as the key social tensions and cleavages in the given period of real socialism. In line with the premises introduced in the opening chapter, these tensions are not seen as *immanent*, but as *socially created*. Thus, education policies are understood not only (nor primarily) as rational instruments for the solution of objectively existing problems, but also (and rather) as elements in the construction of social reality.

The analysis will first look at the discourse of the VOE reform, in order to understand the problem (or problems) that the reform identified and attempted to solve. It will then look at how successful it was in this sense, and at possible reasons for its failure. After this, the analysis will attempt to identify the deeper structural causes and tensions that prompted the VOE reform, in the context of social and class divisions, manifested through eruptions of popular discontent that started challenging the very premises of the Yugoslav federation. Finally, it will show how the policies that attempted to address these tensions, including education, ultimately created the context that exacerbated the existing social divisions and contributed to the conflict that ended the former Yugoslavia.

2.1.1. The reform

The seeds of the reform were sown in a number of documents which formed the core of the overall reform of the federation, in particular the Resolutions of the 10th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (1973) and the Basis of the ideational platform for the self-managed socialist transformation of education and training in SFRY (Djurisic, 1974). The task of designing the reform itself was entrusted to Stipe Suvar, at the time the Secretary for Education, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Croatia. Suvar was a relatively young politician who had risen to prominence after the purges of the Croatian League of Communists that followed the Croatian Spring – a fact that, as we shall see later, is not irrelevant for the understanding of his role in the reform. He described the theoretical and ideological framework and rationale of the reform in his book aptly titled “School and factory” (Suvar, 1977).

The reform documents clearly envisaged the reform as the most important turning point in the history of Yugoslav education. Suvar writes: “If we want to see the transformation of education and training as an unavoidable part of the ongoing socialist revolution, and conceptually base it on the Marxist critique of the class society of exploitation, then its final implementation should be seen in the abolishment of all forms and causes of the class division within the society” (1977, p. VII). In other words, what the VOE reform set out to do was nothing less than to transform the fabric of the society itself, placing it back on the “true” path of socialist development.

Within this context, the rationale for the reform was constructed as a mixture of the general criticism of the existing state of things and of socialist development, with the specific critique leveled at the characteristics and performance of the education system. In the ensuing part, we will briefly analyze the most prominent elements of this worldview.

Education and the Marxist personality

One of the most relevant tasks of education was socialization of new generations into norms of thinking and behavior deemed “appropriate” for a wholesome socialist “personality”. In the preparatory document for the Resolutions of the 10th Congress, Djurisc writes: “the self-managed society requires, thus, a versatile developed personality, capable not only of comprehending and understanding social processes, but also of undertaking an active creative function in the development of these processes and in their management in the increasingly complex conditions of life and labor” (1973, p. 10). The Resolutions further transformed this analysis into the conclusion that “the entire socialist education and training of both young people and adults, which is continuous, must be organized in a way that represents a substantial contribution to the free, versatile developed socialist personality, and constitutes a necessary factor in the development of socialist self-managed social relations and the productive forces in the society” (LCY, 1974, p. 204).

Education and economy

Possibly the most significant was the economic role of education. Education was seen as essential in preparing for work and the active participation in the labor force, which, in Marxist terms, represented the fundamental element of social reproduction and development. Djurisc, for instance, writes: “Concerning the influence of education on the overall societal development, we should primarily emphasize the economic function of education, which in the past has been most often neglected in favor of its cultural and humanist function (...) Studying and emphasizing the economic function of education is of special importance to us because of the efforts to develop our society and increase social and individual living standard as soon as possible” (1973, p.4).

Of course, connecting education to economic development is not a particularly exceptional policy goal. However, the words “as soon as possible” betray a sense of urgency that is understandable only in the context of the economic trends that were emerging at the time. By the beginning of the 1970s, Yugoslavia had begun to show signs of economic decline. Reforms implemented in the 1960s, which ushered in a limited form

of market socialism as a remedy to the stagnating economy, did not produce the expected outcomes. The period between 1966 and 1968 saw a severe recession: in 1968, unemployment figures stood at 7.2%, but it is likely that they underestimated by at least 3% (as well as calculated on the basis of employed in public service/actively looking for employment, which hardly represented the real situation; cf. Woodward, 1995, p.197). This represented a serious problem, not only in economic, but also (and more importantly) in social and political terms. Socialist Yugoslavia centered community life around labor: to be unemployed meant being “excluded from full membership in society...a loss of full citizenship rights, a second-class status, a disenfranchisement” (Woodward, 1995, p.4). The end of unemployment was therefore “a minimal condition – *sine qua non* – of socialist society” (ibid, p.3). Although, curiously, there was no popular protest in the first years of the recession – something Woodward calls a “policy paradox” (ibid, p.11) – a storm was brewing on the horizon.

Education, thus, was invested with the hope to reverse these trends by boosting employment and economic growth. Bezdanov writes: “Although the Resolutions of the 10th Congress on education were being ‘written’ for long years, only now have the conditions and adequate social and ideal-political climate been created that will allow to conduct radical changes in this aspect of social policy. The new concept of the system and policies for education and training cannot wait for the ‘better times’ – it’s not a proposal or construction for the future, but a program of changes that need to be implemented immediately” (Bezdanov, 1975, p. 65).

Education and the labor market

In order to achieve economic growth, the education system had to adapt to the needs of the economy. It was argued that education in its existing form did not sufficiently prepare students to successfully enter the world of work, i.e. the labor market, and apply the knowledge and skills attained in their professions. Djuricic writes: “Efficiency and productivity of the work in education is unsatisfactory and below the average social productivity in other spheres. The main causes of this phenomenon should be sought in

the separation of education from other spheres of labor and from their needs (...) Insufficient efficiency of education manifests itself in a myriad ways: from the 'production' of inadequate human resources in terms of profession, knowledge and skills, to the high percentage of dropout, repetition and extension of the learning periods" (1973, p. 35).

Specific attention was directed to what was perceived as the failure of education to instruct young people in polytechnics, which, it was argued, also prevented their direct integration in life, practice, self-management and productive labor. The system was described as "static" and "hermetically isolated from the changes in the outside world" (Bogavac, 1980, p. 300), especially the swift changes in modes of production, science and technology.

The sources of this failure were found in the structure of the education system, which, according to its critics, entailed a "dualism" by separating the education for work from more general education leading to university studies. This dualism was first and foremost located in the structure of secondary education, which included two types of schools: vocational and technical, which focused on practical and applicable knowledge and prepared their students for direct entry into the labor market; and general gymnasiums, from which students moved into further (mostly university) education.

Djurisic summarizes this critique: "Thus, within our education system, after elementary education, there exist, broadly, two unequal paths: one automatically predisposes young people for tertiary or higher education, and the other is a 'short path', preparing them for immediate employment in different spheres of labor (primarily in production), giving them little (but formal) chance to continue onto tertiary education. The first path consists of gymnasiums and some vocational schools, while the second are workers' and industry schools. Such a system had led to a situation in which certain social strata are reproducing themselves, their structures and their socio-economic positions, and with this their social power" (1973, p. 36).

Education and class

Obviously, there was another dimension to the “dualism” between education for further education and education for a profession. Although Djuricic argues that “emphasizing the social and class component does not mean favoring one category of population over another but, on the contrary, ensuring equal conditions in education for all citizens, exclusively according to their intellect and will” (1973, p. 36), in the same text he further narrows down his critique by saying: “The opportunity for overcoming class and social differentiation is diminished, and, objectively, a basis for the reproduction of intelligentsia outside the strata of workers has been created, as well as a basis for the monopolization of certain forms and levels of education, and through this the key positions in the society, which is increasingly realizing the importance of education for development” (ibid.).

Thus, the problem was not only in the early streaming within secondary education; it was also that – according to these analyses – it was preventing access to the levels of education that were seen as the sites of the “reproduction of intelligentsia” – in other words, universities. Main sites of this problem were gymnasiums (“classical gymnasiums”): in the media, their reform was described as the “neutralization of the main field of social inequalities” (Borba, 4 December 1973).

Resolutions of the 10th Congress stated clearly: “Overall organization, forms and content of VOE should be organized in the way which would allow learners to transfer immediately from different levels of VOE to work in different professions (...) all levels and forms of education after elementary school should allow both the inclusion in the labor process and into further permanent education. No school or form of education should be allowed to prepare young people exclusively for university studies” (LCY, 1974, p. 213).

Thus, one of the main objectives of the reform was to stop the reproduction of social inequalities through education. The reproduction, it was claimed, was primarily taking

place through the “dualism” of classical and vocation-oriented secondary education. This was also contributing to the low productivity of education and the low employability of graduates in the labor market. The Resolutions summarized: “The League of Communists reminds educational institutions of their obligation to contribute to the overcoming of contradictions between intellectual and physical labor, to develop awareness of equality and connections between our nations and nationalities, brotherhood and unity, Yugoslav socialist patriotism, readiness and responsibility for the active defense of our country, to raise in the spirit of humanism, internationalism and cooperation of all progressive forces in the world that fight for the victory of socialism and communism (...)” (1974, p. 205)

and recommended that all concerned actors:

(...) ensure that Marxism, as the ideology of the LCY and the scientific basis for the development of socialist self-managed society, is the ideational basis for the entire field of education and training; that young people and adults are enabled to work and develop a creative relationship towards labor; (...) to create, through the comprehensive reform of the system of education and training, conditions to improve the efficiency of education, improvement of the structure of education institutions, faster eradication of illiteracy, elementary education for the active population and overall improvement of educational attainment; contribute to the readiness and competence of the young people and adults for general defense and social self-protection; [and to] contribute to the decrease in the influence of social and other inequalities on the conditions and outcomes of education, as well as to the overall reduction of social inequalities (1974, p. 206).

Education and decentralization

The decentralization of governance, already begun under the self-management transformation in the early 1960s, was continued with the aim to further separate the education institutions from the direct controls of the central state authorities (cf. Djuricic, 1973, pp. 4-11; LCY, 1974, p. 200). Reforms in the funding system were already

instituted, transferring the level of the distribution of funds from the federation to the republics (ibid, p.18, p.200). Schools were reorganized into the basic units of associated labor (BOALs)², which were to be closely connected with their social and economic environments, especially the productive facilities. BOALs in education were further integrated into the self-managed interest communities (SMICs)³. On the primary and pre-school level, the principle of organization was primarily territorial, which meant that schools and organizations from one municipality would be integrated in a SMIC; on the secondary level, the principle of organization was both territorial and professional, meaning that schools were integrated with the production units from the same or surrounding municipality that shared the same professional “orientation”.

Organization of education on the basis of the territorial (geographical) principle meant that parents were not anymore free to choose the preferred school for their children, but were rather expected to enroll them into the one closest to the place where they lived. Besides the vague hope that this could also contribute to the breaking of social stratification between those who attended gymnasiums and those who attended secondary vocational schools, the basic idea was that this would contribute to the stronger integration between education and production.

Education and production

Education and production sectors were supposed to closely inform each other in a process of perpetual adjustment: the production sector would define what kind of skills and knowledge it requires, and the education sector would provide workers with a

² The Resolutions described BOALS as: “a functional whole that is capable of performing an overarching program of education, training and/or research, which can be valorized and used as the basis of acquiring income, as well as for the self-management of associated laborers” (LCY, 1974, p.203)

³ “Self-managed interest communities are organized around a certain or a number of closely related educational programs or activities. SMICs must include the equal representation, through delegates, of the working people in the fields of education and training, and the working people in those fields and communities that have a direct interest in particular programs or activities in education and training. Decision-making in SMICs is based on programs of development, on the financial means that have been delegated by the working people, and on the basis of self-management. SMICs are responsible for their work to the workers in BOALs and other working people. SMICs and their BOALs are integrated in pre-school and elementary education on the basis of territory, and in secondary education on the basis of profession” (LCY, 1974, pp. 203-204).

corresponding set of skills. The idea was that this would reduce, if not completely abolish, the perceived mismatch between the knowledge and skills transmitted through the education system and the needs and demands of the labor market, thus both lowering unemployment and reducing the costs of labor transition. Suvar elaborated: “The organization of associated labor for material production or a social activity must be the source of the reform of education. How? By saying: we need people with these professional skills and those social skills; we ask those of you in education institutions to build, develop, educate and train such people, and we will provide funding. This is the exchange of labor with mutual accountability” (1977, p. 112).

The idea presumed substantial structural changes in secondary education. The difference between gymnasiums, vocational, technical and industry schools was abolished, introducing a unified secondary education system, which involved five stages. The first stage, known as “joint foundations” (*zajednicke osnove*), was to be common and mandatory for all students in secondary education. Common foundations contained a mixture of the general education in social and natural sciences that was to provide students with a sufficient basis should they choose to continue education. After two years of secondary education, curricula became diversified according to profession; thus, students could get shorter or longer training for a specific vocation, or choose to go directly into the labor market. Secondary education programs that offered classical knowledge were reduced. The majority of education programs and institutions were structured so as to prepare for specific professions or “vocations” (profiles); thus, education for a profession became obligatory. Students who continued professional training in schools were able to go into work after one or two years, depending on the chosen profiles, or into further education – universities or higher vocational schools.

The intention was to abolish the separation of these two paths: students who opted for entering the labor market after short cycles of secondary education could still return to secondary or go into tertiary education after having spent some time in productive labor. Suvar argued: “The point of the introduction of the joint foundations for vocational education is to give to all young people an equal start for different forms of further

education. The joint foundations, now comprising the first two years of secondary school, should provide, for the young generation entering vocational education, not just a satisfactory but also an equal education and culture, thus providing the basics for maximum mobility later in life, and securing selection according to capabilities, and not according to inherited circumstances” (1977, p. 118).

Education and the value of labor

One of the aspects of this objective was, also, to change the social perception of the relative value of professions. Suvar criticized what he saw as persistent higher valuing of “intellectual” professions and corresponding consistent devalorization of workers, i.e. professions related to production: “At the bottom of our social consciousness, the peasants still hope their children would obtain a job ‘fit for a gentleman’, while workers want to escape their positions as well. Ambitions formed in the old social conditions are passed on to the children. This represents a form of social pathology” (Suvar, in an interview, 29 October 1977).

By providing everyone (regardless of whether they wanted it or not) with “hands-on” experience in production, he argued, the students would come to see the process of production differently, and thus would be more motivated to go into productive professions; this would stop the “population pressure” on higher education which, the education policy makers felt, was overburdening the sector and contributing to low productivity and high unemployment. This is why the reform contained both the aspects of training (for, or on, the job) and education in the broader, philosophical sense: it entailed the learning of practical skills and streamlining of students towards future profession, but also an emphasis on education in Marxism through theory and practice, the combination of which was intended to give the students a better insight into the history, struggles and present-day needs of the working class, which, it was argued, they would or should all aspire to belong to. Suvar summarized the essence of the reform:

The key question is whether education contributes to renewal and reproduction of class differences, or whether it diminishes and abolishes them...Even today, we still judge young people in accordance to who their ancestors are, and not who they themselves are or who they could be...We pay attention to who were his grandmother, grandfather, father. This shows that the class conflict in the socialist revolution has retained a form of division, also on the basis of social background. Some families were on the side of the revolution; some families were on the side of the counterrevolution. And because our public education is not strong enough to stop the reactionary upbringing in the family, there are high chances such a family will produce a reactionary offspring, or at least a *petit bourgeois*. (1977, p. 92)

And concludes: “The class function of education, in our society, unlike in the societies of exploitation, is or should be not to help people escape the working class, but to enable them to belong to it” (ibid: 93).

2.1.2. Power and failure

The VOE reform was intended to transform fundamentally the relationships between education and labor in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It was designed to rectify some of the inequalities that persisted despite the official socialist proclamation of a “classless” society. The efforts to change the organization of the educational system and link it more systematically to the labor market were, in fact, mechanisms for broad social changes. How successful were they?

On the level of implementation, despite strong ambition and forceful argumentation, the reform faced a number of serious problems. Many educators and experts who worked on the reform criticized the speed with which it was introduced, as well as the lack of preparation and prior ensuring of the existence of the necessary prerequisites for its successful functioning (Milenovic, 1985). Teachers and unions repeatedly stated that they

needed more time to prepare for the implementation of the new curricula and educational plans; some of them were even hinting that the reform was “forced”.

A related claim concerned the unequal speed of implementation among different republics: although the new concept of education was implemented in the Republic of Croatia and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina from 1975/6, its integration into the education systems of other republics and provinces developed at an uneven pace. This, it was claimed, also created additional pressure on those who were “lagging behind” to increase the speed of the reform, without paying attention to the practical aspects of its implementation (Milenovic, 1985).

A more serious critique concerned the extent to which the reform managed to establish the links between education and the productive sector. The concept of the reform assumed that the larger part of training “for the profession” would be carried out in enterprises and production units, thus giving young people first-hand experience of practical work in their chosen profiles (cf. “Suvarice na probi”, 29 October 1977). However, it seems as if the industry did not fully embrace this idea; the acceptance and integration of secondary education students into the production sector appeared to be of varying degree and quality, leading to relatively poor preparedness of secondary school graduates to go into production (Milenovic, 1985, p. 623). Similarly, the production sector, with some exceptions, did not really show the incentive in terms of participating in the management of education or education-labor SMICs. Milenovic offers some possible interpretations of the failure of successful integration: “Burdened with traditional habits and concepts concerning qualified labor and the models of their education, production, or at least some of its parts, was not ready to accept the young generation that had received higher levels of general education, and was supposed to be prepared for the direct inclusion into the work process through the education/work apprenticeship (...) In the increasingly difficult [economic] conditions, the units of associated labor failed to provide a realistic planning of human resources and educational needs, which had a negative effect on the development of the network of schools for VOE” (1985, p. 615).

The failure of functional integration of education and work cannot, however, be attributed only to bad planning or the lack of willingness from the part of the productive sector. What the creators of the education reform failed to predict, and many critics dared mention only quietly, was that in the period that overlapped with the introduction and the initial implementation of the education reform in SFRY, the economy was in steep decline. Production outputs stopped rising, and growing unemployment – already a consistent trend since the 1960s – reached a record high (Woodward, 1995). In such a situation, the expectation that the economy would be ready or willing to integrate thousands of new job seekers was simply unrealistic. Two elements are particularly striking. One, data show that the growth of unemployment was particularly pronounced in two categories of population: those dubbed “first entrants” into the labor market (thus, fresh graduates); and those with post-primary education (it should be noted that the category “higher education” at the time included everyone with completed secondary education and higher). Two, points in time when both groups experienced sharp increase in unemployment overlap with the period of preparation of the education reform (1968-1970) and with the period when the first graduates of the VOE reform reached the labor market (1979).

The evidence, thus, seems to suggest that not only did the reform not succeed in establishing better functional integration between education and work, but also might have contributed to their actual mismatch. Neither the Yugoslav government nor specialists in education and labor markets actually examined the nuances of unemployment in Yugoslavia: in a socialist country, which had previously been committed to full employment, admitting to the existence of a structural mismatch between education and work would have been a serious source of political tension. This, in turn, made the acquiring of any deeper understanding of the real rate of employment of VOE graduates rather difficult. A passage from Woodward illustrates the absence of systematic following of the data: “Little attention was given to the faster rate of growth in unemployment, the disproportionately high numbers among women, youth, and unskilled workers, and the shift over time from frictional to deeply structural causes, whereas it became ritual to acknowledge the very high rates in the southern and eastern parts of the

country as if there were nothing to explain. Explanations for unemployment came largely from economists (...) but the subject never attracted political analysts.” (1995, p.194).

Even from within such a chaotic landscape, it is possible to deduce that VOE was not succeeding in creating more employment opportunities for graduates. Perhaps, then, the fact that most secondary school students attempted to pursue further education instead of going into work can be, in part, attributed to this lack of successful mechanisms of education-to-work transition. As early as 1976/77, the number of students who opted for the classical-type education which represented the easiest path to university, was as high as 30% (“Putevima borbe...”). The gymnasium remained the most popular choice of secondary education graduates; in the ensuing years, its attraction continued growing, up to the point in which over 70% opted for continuing general education (NIN, 16 August 1981; Milenovic, 1985). This led Milenovic to conclude: “Evaluation after common foundations [first two years of secondary education] shows that students most frequently opted for continuing general education (70%), continuing vocational education (30%), while no one chose short cycles for direct integration into work. Since professional education did not determine the choice of future profession, in practice it proved to be dysfunctional” (1985, p. 619). Milenovic was, in fact, stating that the majority of secondary school graduates opted for continuing education at universities and higher vocational schools, instead of going into work; this was happening regardless of, or despite, the “vocationalized” secondary education. In short, the reform had failed at another of its chief objectives: the transformation of social valorization of intellectual over manual labor.

At least from the standpoint of implementation, then, the VOE reform appears to have been a failure. It did not succeed in increasing employment; it failed to provide for the functional integration of education and labor industries, and, possibly, contributed to the deepening of the mismatch between the knowledge transmitted through education and skills required by the labor market. It increased the pressure on universities, thus both obviously failing to make the productive professions more attractive to secondary education graduates, *and* generating more potential unemployment. In terms of

administration and governance, it represented a bureaucratic conundrum (very little guidelines for implementation were ever issued; no new funding was provided for the equipment to upgrade work-oriented training) – that earned it the reputation of being one of the least popular reforms in former Yugoslavia. Students, teachers, parents, academics and administrators alike complained about its negative impact both on the organization and quality of education, claiming the VOE reform virtually “destroyed” education.

One way of looking at the VOE reform is to see it as the “proof” for the inferiority of long-term planning, as opposed to flexibility and adaptation. In this view, vocational education failed because it could not offer a timely response to the changes in the economy, which resulted in the widening gap between education and the needs of the labor market, generating further unemployment. Although there are a number of criticisms that could be leveled against this concept of the market as a “fitness test”, the explanation in itself is probably at least partially true; vocational education failed to generate the ambitious results it had promised to, because the standards were set too high, especially in the context of the changing social conditions. However, it still does not tell us anything about why the reform was invested with such high hopes.

2.1.3. Vocational education reform – a policy paradox?

Vocational education was the major educational reform initiative of the era. It captured considerable attention of the government, educators and the general public. It attempted to substantially transform the reproduction of social inequalities in what should have been a classless society, amidst economic difficulties and deep tensions within the federal republic. VOE was also highly bureaucratic, and seen as a something between a limited success and an outright failure almost from its inception. And yet, policymakers and politicians at the time stubbornly adhered to it for almost 20 years, even as it was obviously failing to achieve its objectives.

Are we dealing with a policy paradox? Stone writes: “Politicians always have at least two goals. First is a policy goal – whatever program or proposal they would like to see

accomplished or defeated, whatever problem they would like to see solved. Perhaps more important, though, is a political goal. Politicians always want to preserve their power, or gain enough power, to be able to accomplish their policy goals” (2002, p.2).

The first part of this chapter dealt with the policy goals of the VOE reform. It concluded that the reform, for the most part, failed at fulfilling its objectives in the domain of policy. The ensuing part will try to assess what could have been its political goal. This means looking beyond the level of implementation, to the political and historical context of the reform (cf. Zgaga, 2007), and asking: what were the factors and reasons that drove the VOE reform? Why did it occur at that particular moment in time, in such a political constellation, and with such specific ends? Why did it remain in place despite not fulfilling its stated goals and objectives?

The following part of the text will take a step back and reexamine the historical and political context of the introduction of the VOE, not only in terms of the beginning of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, but also in terms of the preceding process of state-building and societal (re)construction that followed World War II. The chapter will specifically look at the social conflicts that occurred in this period – including the student and mass movements that characterized the late 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s in Yugoslavia – and ask how these events and the deeper tensions influenced the public policies at the time. In this context, it will show how vocation-oriented education represented just the “tip of the iceberg” in the context of overall policy reforms that attempted to salvage the Yugoslav federation but, ultimately, contributed to its demise.

2.2. 1968-1971: dissent and non-cohesion in Socialist Yugoslavia

The structural tensions that began to chip away at the core of the Yugoslav federation found their expression in the social movements and unrests that happened between 1968 and 1971. Three of these had a direct connection to institutions of education, in particular the universities. The reforms of education that happened after this period, thus, cannot be

understood outside of the dynamics of the student and popular movements that substantially challenged the fabric of the Yugoslav society.

The first movement was predominantly liberal, reaching its culmination in the student protest and consequent occupation of the main building of the University of Belgrade in June 1968, though its political consequences reverberated until 1975 and beyond. The second event, which also happened in 1968, was a protest of the Albanian students in Kosovo, who demanded the establishment of a separate University of Prishtina that would be more open to Albanian language, literature and history. Finally, the last event, taking place in 1970-71 in Croatia and known as mass movement (“Maspok”) or the “Croatian spring”, represented a nationalist mobilization that, although dealt with rather sharply and swiftly by the federal summit, constituted a large part of the motivation for the constitutional reform and transformation of the federation that took place in and after 1974. All three movements represented succinct expressions of the tensions and contradictions already immanent in education and the broader social structure; and, thus, all three are relevant for the understanding of the education reform that took place in the same period.

2.2.1. Liberal uprising: University of Belgrade

Between 1966 and 1968, students and professors at Yugoslav universities frequently wrote letters and staged demonstrations to express support to student movements across the globe. In 1966, students of the University of Belgrade protested against the U.S. invasion of Vietnam and expressed solidarity with the people of Vietnam. However, when they attempted to go out in a protest march, they were stopped by the police, resulting in a series of skirmishes that included the police entering the building of the University, which prompted sharp criticism from both students and intellectuals since it was taken to represent a violation of university autonomy (Arsic and Markovic, 1985, p. 32). The protests that followed the incident, however, already expanded the scope of student critique by targeting both the police as an institution and Yugoslavia’s foreign policy, in particular towards the U.S. (ibid, p. 33). In 1967, a group of students wrote a

letter of support to the students and professors in Warsaw; this was the first time, however, that such action had a more “grassroots” nature, since it wasn’t initiated by the leadership of the University committee of the League of Communists (ibid:58). In May 1968, during the student demonstrations in France, Belgrade students wrote a letter to the Rector of the Sorbonne, criticizing his decision to lock the gates of the Nanterre campus. This possibly contributed to their increasingly critical attitude towards all hierarchical structures – including the state, the police and the university itself.

The first serious clashes between the students and the police in Belgrade happened on June 2, 1968, following a seemingly random incident between students from the campus dormitories and voluntary workers stationed nearby. The reaction of the police, which applied excessive force after arriving at the scene and seriously hurt a student, turned out to be the spark that was needed to ignite a much stronger flame. In the aftermath of the skirmish, the students formed an Action committee, demanding the immediate release of all apprehended students, repairs to all that had been wounded, and protection for the autonomy of the university. The next morning, a student march departed towards downtown Belgrade. Students carried pictures of President Tito, and shouted slogans such as “Tito, Party”, “Do we have a Constitution?”, “We want employment”, and “Down with socialist bourgeoisie”. Before reaching the bridge they encountered a police cordon, which attempted to prevent them from continuing the march. A standoff ensued, during which a delegation of governmental officials arrived; however – before or, according to some sources, during negotiations – the police attacked the students, using tear gas, batons and, at some point, firing weapons. The results were rather stunning – nobody was killed but many students, including women, were severely injured. That very night, the Action committee issued a statement that summarized the positions and requests of the students.

One of the chief objectives of the statement was to dispel what students felt was a “negative” and “conceited” portrayal of the events in the media (Arsic and Markovic, 1985, p. 78). They openly criticized the “lies” in the news by Tanjug (the state news

agency) and Belgrade newspapers, and demanded that their editors resign. But they also tried to make clear what it was that they were protesting against. Their resolution reads:

(1) We find the main problem to be the emergence of social inequalities. With this in view, we demand: a consistent distribution based on labor (...) and demand that the social structure of student body reflects the composition of our society (...) (2) The great number of unemployed is also a source of our rage. Thus we demand the abolishment of part-time work and support to young experts to prevent them from going abroad; (3) The existence of strong bureaucratic forces in our society demands: the democratization of all social and political organizations, particularly the League of Communists; democratization of all media and the forming of public opinion; and freedom of assembly and protest...(4) Students are particularly embittered by conditions in our universities, and thus we demand the improvement of material conditions; equal participation of students in all fora where important questions are being resolved, especially if they pertain to students; we protest the emergence of clans and monopolies in certain departments; we demand the full and democratic appointment of all teaching staff; and we demand the free enrolment of students (Action committee of protesters and the covenant of students in Residence halls, June 3 1968, in Arsic and Markovic, 1985, p.80).

The Council of the University of Belgrade, at an afternoon session on the same day, decided to respond to the “brutal treatment by the police” with a 7-day strike. However, on June 4, the police again entered the halls of the Academy of Arts in Belgrade, beating students. The students responded to this by the “occupation” of the University, where they decided to stay until their demands are met (ibid, pp. 84-85). The University of Belgrade was renamed “Red University Karl Marx” and students started wearing badges that portrayed a red pointer arrow in a blue circle, jokingly relating that the red referred to themselves (presumably, in the sense of pointing the way for social transformation) and the blue to the color of the police uniforms surrounding them.

The containment of the students by the police was not only symbolic: on June 4, 1968, the Secretariat for Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia issued a decree forbidding demonstrations or other events in all public spaces, effectively limiting the students to universities. The reactions of the public, however, were more positive: letters of support coming from factories, as well as from other university centers. On June 5, students and professors from the University of Zagreb convened, but mutual differences lead them to issue two separate support letters – reminiscent of the divisions in the Croatian intelligentsia that would also be reflected in the Croatian Spring two years later. Students at the University of Ljubljana, already protesting against the housing conditions, sent a message of support on June 6. In Sarajevo, the head of the Secretariat for Internal Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina pre-emptively signed a decree almost identical to the one in Belgrade, citing the situation in Belgrade as the reason to ban all public gatherings, effective immediately (Arsic and Markovic, 1985, pp. 98-103). In defiance of the decree, the students organized a protest march and also clashed with the police. The governing structure at the University of Sarajevo, however, criticized these events as “illegal” attempts to solve issues outside of existing political structures (ibid: 105-106).

From the very beginning, it was obvious that the student protest did not relate only to the concerns related to their immediate environment or universities, but had a much broader social dimension. For one, it addressed the problem of social inequalities, emphasizing the growth of the “red bourgeoisie”, the privileged bureaucratic social stratum that was expanding in a society where privileged elites were not supposed to exist; quite ahead of their time, the students understood egalitarian education as one where the student body would reflect the diversity of the entire population. The protest emphasized dire unemployment and clearly stated that the lack of work prospects was creating frustration among the young educated people. The second part of the Action-political program of Belgrade students, focusing primarily on issues of higher education, asked for the following: “(1) Undertake immediately the reform of education system, and adapt it to the needs of our economic, cultural and self-management development; (2) Implement the constitutionally guaranteed rights to equal education of all young people; (3) Adopt a law on university autonomy” (Arsic and Markovic, 1985, p.107).

It is not difficult to see that the student protest, at that moment, represented the most radical critique leveled against the communist regime in Yugoslavia to date. Besides criticizing the lack of objectivity in the media coverage of student demonstrations, affirming the role of universities in the development of critical thinking, demanding more student participation and university autonomy – all of which would have been rather radical demands as it were – it “spilled over” the walls of the University literally and metaphorically, extending to issues such as economic reform, democratic control of government, freedom of expression and assembly, social inequalities and the role of education in their reproduction. Thus, it represented not only an unwelcome, and certainly problematic, expression of dissent and conflict in a supposedly well-functioning society; it was also a direct threat to the supremacy of the regime.

It comes as no surprise, then, that the government made every attempt to suppress and subvert the student protests as quickly as possible. Besides banning public demonstrations and cracking down on students physically, it also banned student newspapers – most famously, the paper of the students of the University of Belgrade, *Student* – and even required that students remove the pictures of Marx and Tito from the walls and poles around university buildings and dormitories (ibid, p. 115). Rumors about the lack of unity between students began spreading; students denied them while calling for the release of all apprehended students, apologies from the press and investigation into violent incidents (ibid, p.111). Finally, a joint meeting of the Presidency and the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the LCY was called on June 9.

This was a definite sign that the regime took the events unfolding in the preceding days very seriously. After the meeting, President Tito addressed the nation in a televised speech, now widely acknowledged as having put an end to the student protests. In it, Tito displayed possibly unprecedented political genius: instead of directly attacking or downplaying the students, as the police, media and other politicians had done in the previous days, he addressed them directly and transformed their demands into a justification for the reform that would follow. However, at the same time, and not even

too implicitly, he indicated who would be held culpable for the student unrests and where the revenge would strike. The way that the speech assigns culpability and intricately weaves these threats into a policy direction deserves to be quoted at length:

When we say that student demonstrations went ahead of us, there is a question of whether there is a political background to this, whether someone is trying to hijack the political initiative we have started, in order to profit politically. I cannot get into this now. But I do say one thing, it is high time to remove the slowness, which has become prominent in solving different problems, and insufficient unity among the leading people in implementing these solutions (...). Economic and social reforms right now call for much *more efficient measures* and *much quicker solutions* to problems, so that people could be given a perspective despite the existing difficulties (...).

When it comes to solving problems in education, for instance, we have been going around in circles for years. Until this day, we have not been able to resolve this issue. *Especially in higher education*. The employment of young university graduates with professional qualifications is another question (...). In view of these latest events, student demonstrations, I want to state my opinion...I think that the revolt of young people occurred spontaneously. But, slowly, as these demonstrations developed and passed from the streets to lecture halls at the university, *they were infiltrated by elements that are foreign to us and not in socialist positions (...), who are against the economic reform*. Now, we are working on directions that will be published tomorrow or in a couple of days. Then, it will be clear to everybody what we concluded in this session. It will also be clear that we take full responsibility for its implementation. And *those among us who may not agree with it*, who may depart from these decisions and express their own views, instead of supporting the implementation of our decisions – *those will not have a place among us*". (ibid, pp. 118-119, emphasis J.B.).

Tito's speech introduced a number of ideas. First, the emphasis is obviously on higher education, identified as the site of "problems". Secondly, while describing the student revolt as "spontaneous", he argued that it had become "infiltrated" from the outside, by people who are against both socialism *and* the policies of the government, such as the economic reform. Third, he announced the ensuing reform, and explicitly said that the regime, from then onwards, would become significantly less tolerant towards those who disagree with it.

Tito also decidedly denied the connection of the Belgrade protests with other student demonstrations happening in Europe at the time: "Some seem to think that what happened is the reflection of the events in France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, etc. This is not true. It is not. It is a reflection of our own weaknesses, which have accumulated and which we must start dealing with" (ibid, p. 121).

The combination of recognition and self-criticism present in Tito's speech proved sufficient for students to end the protest. They gladly accepted his words and chose to interpret them as acknowledgment that their demands were just and well-founded, and as a promise that the League and Tito himself will see that they are addressed. In another speech delivered soon afterwards, however, Tito again reflected on student protests and made a much clearer indication of what was going to follow:

You are aware, comrades, that there have been different attempts by various personalities. Those that we had to deal with in universities even before the student revolt have appeared. They are *certain professors, some philosophers, different Praxis members, and other dogmatists*, including those who made different deformations in the State security. All of that is somehow united today. Of course, they all work for themselves, but they are all united in an attempt to create a sort of chaos where they can manipulate. We must respond with decisive resistance, with a decisive "no". Now, *they are announcing a movement at the university. It's not coming from students, it's coming from people who want to create seeds of a pluralist political system (...)* They go even further: *they negate*

the working class as the main factor and pillar in the society. According to them, some wise guys, some technocrats should stand on a pedestal and run things (...). Is that really happening today in our country, is it possible that such people with such ideas are allowed to express them publicly, and we are still observing it peacefully? They don't even belong where they are now [applause]. *Should such people be allowed to educate our children at universities and in schools? They don't belong there!* [loud applause and cheering]. (Josip Broz Tito, in Arsic and Markovic 1988, pp. 132-133).

If students listened to Tito's words carefully, they probably would have been able to foresee the consequences of the protest; perhaps many of them did. Besides the reforms mentioned in the speech, which translated into the education reform, the other part of the response of the regime was much more direct and brutal: it began with accusations against, and culminated in 1975 with the expulsion of, the Praxis Marxist philosophers from the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade.

Who were the "certain professors, some philosophers, different Praxis members" of Tito's speech? The name "Praxis Marxists" commonly refers to a group of Yugoslav intellectuals that became associated with the Korcula summer school of philosophy and gathered around (and published in) the journal *Praxis* (Sher, 1977). Though far from being ideologically uniform, most of the intellectuals associated with the group subscribed to a form of Marxist philosophy and critique probably closest to the Frankfurt school. They defined their role as the *critique of all existing conditions* and strove to establish a more basic, "purer" form of Marxist theory. Although some of them were active before WWII and participated in the discussions that shaped the political development of the Party and later League of Communists in the first years after the war, the "school" reached its height in the 1960s. The authors associated with *Praxis* were published and widely read both in and outside of Yugoslavia (the journal had an English language edition). The Korcula seminars attracted the *crème de la crème* of continental philosophy at the time: for instance, the 1968 session was attended by the likes of Ernst Bloch, Herbert Marcuse and Agnes Heller (Sher, 1977, p.189).

It wasn't (only) their international popularity that brought the Praxis group under the lens of the Tito regime, however: it was their writings. From mid-1960s onwards, some of the writers associated with the group started publishing articles that were increasingly critical of Yugoslav socialism, including criticisms of self-management and market economy. From the standpoint of "true" or original Marxism, they openly criticized market liberalism in the Yugoslav society, which they thought led to commodity fetishism. However, this does not mean they favored centrally planned Soviet-type economies. Sher writes: "The extent of the *Praxis* Marxists' opposition to the market system is in fact matched only by their mistrust of the state-controlled economy of the Soviet model insofar as both, in their view, tend to deprive the producers of control over the products of their labor and especially over surplus value. What the Praxis Marxists would seem to advocate, instead, is a mixed system of market and plan on the basis of workers' self-management – a system, however, in which neither market nor plan would have the alienating consequences they have in existing societies" (Sher, 1977, p. 168).

Deep mistrust towards the forces of the market is also evident from the writing of some of the prominent names associated with the group. For instance, Stojanovic wrote: "As long as it exists, the market will try to impose itself over society as the supreme regulator and criterion of human relations...The market reacts mainly to the existing level of demand and creates artificial and even harmful demands. It thus comes into conflict with the mission of the socialist community, which seeks to humanize existing need and develop new, human needs...without rational control of economic tendencies by the associated producers, socialism in Marx's sense is out of the question" (Stojanovic, quoted in Sher, 1977, p. 170).

However, "rational planning" did not mean top-down, imposed planning but entailed a humanistic notion of rationality, which, in Sher's words, "may differ substantially from what a federal planning official or a local managerial specialist may see as being 'rational' from a purely economic standpoint" (1977, pp. 169-170). Thus, their emphasis was on bottom-up, decentralized, inclusive decision-making processes, in a sense a "true

self-management” – sometimes described as “democratic socialism” (e.g. Crocker, 1983). This probably contributed to Tito’s accusation that they were “creating seeds of a pluralist political system”, via support to democratic decision-making, but also of “negating the working class as the main factor and pillar in the society”, via criticizing the existing structure of self-management (cf. Sher, 1977, pp. 187-188). Of course, the biggest liability of the *Praxis* writings was the critique of the market mechanisms. In Yugoslavia, at the time experiencing the negative consequences attributable to the introduction of the market, its open criticism was bound to provoke more than raised eyebrows from the ruling class.

Although *Praxis* was never an official group and the journal gathered varying amounts of contributors at different moments in time, some of the more prominent names associated with the movement were teaching at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade in 1968. They included Svetozar Stojanovic, Mihajlo Markovic, Ljuba Tadic, Zagorka Golubovic, Miladin Zivotic, Dragoljub Micunovic, Trivo Indjic and Nebojsa Popov. After Tito’s speeches hinted at the involvement of a “group of professors” from the Faculty of Philosophy in, presumably, inciting the students to protest, these eight became the objects of lengthy proceedings whose objective was to discredit their “moral and political fitness” but, also, to introduce firmer ideological control over the places of intellectual production in the country.

The backlash began with the closing down of the League of Communists’ branches at the Departments of Philosophy and Sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Belgrade, with the explanation that “a certain number of communists in the branches at the Departments of Philosophy and Sociology have expressed ideological views and political behavior that is in open confrontation with the ideo-political line and principles of the LCY” (Popov, 1987, p.15). Between 1968 and 1970, there was sustained pressure on the structures and committees of the Faculty of Philosophy to investigate the “moral and political fitness” of the said professors. Although the Dean of the Faculty could not refuse these orders, the initial conclusions of the Faculty-appointed commission were positive. During 1972 and 1973 the pressure on the departments and the Faculty of

Philosophy continued, including an attempt to prevent the renewal of the contract for the assistant professor Indjic, but failed (ibid, p. 33). In 1974 a similar initiative came from the top of the University itself – again meeting resistance both from the Dean and student organizations. The regime, then, decided on a different strategy.

In 1974, the Yugoslav Student Union was closed, and thus the students in Yugoslavia lost the opportunity to speak “in one voice”. Later in the same year, the Law on Higher Education was amended so as to allow for direct intervention of the Parliament of Serbia at the University “in case of grave threat to public interest”. The Law left the definition of what the “public interest” and thus also threat to it may be largely undefined, specifying only that “professors whose activities have contributed to the endangering of this interest can be but ‘at disposal’” (Popov, 1987, pp.159-160). “Being put at disposal” effectively meant they were forbidden to work in their previous posts and would have to await transfer to another institution (after some time, most of them were relocated into the newly-founded Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory).

What was the crime of these Praxis philosophers? Although they were teaching at the time of the 1968 protests, and thus probably provided the inspiration for at least some of the students who organized and participated in them, it would be a very far cry to hold this specific group of professors and teaching assistants accountable for the unrests. After all, it wasn't only the Faculty of Philosophy that participated in the demonstrations – many other schools, including, for instance, the School of Arts and the School of Civil Engineering, were equally involved. Thus, it seems like it was not necessarily the fact of students protesting, as the combination of their public visibility and ideas critical of the existing order, that were perceived as a threat. Tito, in his speech, even equated the Praxis Marxists with “...those who made different deformations in the State Security. All of that is somehow united today. Of course, they all work for themselves, but they are all united in an attempt to create a sort of chaos where they can manipulate”. Given the way that he had dealt with the possible contenders for political power in the State Security in 1966 (by “purging” one of his closest associates, Aleksandar Rankovic) this did not bode well for the Praxis philosophers.

It comes as no surprise that, from the standpoint of the regime, it was necessary to ensure that the “problematic” professors were removed from the university. However, it was also necessary to ensure events such as the 1968 protests would not happen again. Inevitably, this pointed to the need for making changes in the education system. However, before that, the regime had to face two other waves of popular unrest: one in Kosovo, and the other in Croatia.

2.2.2. Ethnic mobilization: University of Prishtina

The protest that happened later in the same year – 1968 – in Prishtina, the capital city of the Serbia’s southern province of Kosovo, had a decisively different tone from the one in Belgrade. The tensions between the Albanian and Serb population in the province had been teeming for some time. Albanians, which made a large majority of the province’s population, spoke a language that was substantially different from the Serbo-Croatian spoken by the predominantly Serb minority. The Albanian community was tightly knit and, for the most part, kept a traditional way of life, contributing to the distance between the two ethnic groups (cf. Ramet, 1992a, pp. 188-189). Albanians did not particularly like having been forcefully included in the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and many of them fought on the side of the occupying forces in World War II (cf. Denitch, 1994). After the end of WWII, some of them formed separatist organizations that the Communist regime eventually dealt with (cf. Ramet, 1992a, p. 187). After this, systematic efforts were made both to integrate Kosovo Albanians into the Yugoslav political system, and to develop Kosovo, which was by far the least developed part of the country. Large proportions of federal aid went to the province, eventually creating resentment from the other, more developed republics.

When demonstrations broke out in 1968, it appeared that the policies aimed at development and integration did not succeed. The Albanians protested what they thought was a systematic repression and violation of their rights, and demanded broader political, cultural and linguistic rights, as well as a right to secede from Yugoslavia, or republican

status for the province. The protests spread to at least nine cities, including Prishtina in Kosovo and Tetovo, in Macedonia. The official toll was one death, at least forty persons injured, many more arrested, and substantial damage to property; the unofficial data put the number of deaths up to five (Prifti, 1978, p. 222).

A specific part of the protest was related to education: “A major demand of the demonstrators, most of whom were students, intellectuals, and professionals, concerned language rights. They called for the establishment of a ‘national’ university in Pristina, in which all instruction would be in the Albanian language. The demonstrators also called for language equality in matters of public administration, meaning that the Albanian could be used, alongside Serbo-Croatian, in all legal documents and other pertinent government communications” (ibid.).

Although Prifti frames the issue primarily in terms of language, the political dimension was more complex. In 1968, there were already higher education institutions in Prishtina that had some instruction in the Albanian language, but they officially were part of the University of Belgrade. Demanding a “national” university in Prishtina, then, concerned not only the right to higher education in the mother tongue, but had a symbolic value in strengthening the Albanian political identity in terms of providing the space for the education of Albanian-speaking intellectual and political elites.

Despite the initial brutal repression, this time the Tito regime actually accepted most of the protesters’ demands, the right to secession notwithstanding. Ramet writes:

The federal government was not prepared to indulge in the partition of Serbia; nevertheless, ameliorative measures had to be taken. The demand for republican status was flatly turned down. Both Kosovo and Vojvodina, however, were granted some of the prerogatives of republics, and the modifier “socialist” was appended to their official designations. In December, in another concession to the Albanians, Kosovo-Metohija was redesignated simply Kosovo, dropping the purely Serbian “Metohija”, and the Kosovars were also given permission to fly

the Albanian flag alongside the Yugoslav (...) Finally, there followed the creation of an independent University of Pristina in 1969 and the rapid Albanianization of both faculty and student body in what had hitherto been a branch of the University of Belgrade (1992a, p.191).

The University of Prishtina was officially established in 1969 and began operating as an independent institution in 1970. This was probably the precedent that established a pattern in the formulation of claims to rights to education based on specific cultural and social identities in the former Yugoslavia. What it certainly did establish was a closer link between the Kosovo Albanian intellectual elites and their counterparts in Albania. Todorovich and Dragnich write that “Belgrade could not provide either Albanian teachers nor Albanian textbooks...Tirana was more than glad to oblige. In ten years (1971-1981) it sent to Kosovo 240 university teachers, together with textbooks written in the Albanian literary language” (1984, p. 164).

Although, to a certain extent, this was primarily circumstantial – given the relatively marginalized status of Albanians in pre-WWII Yugoslavia, as well as in the immediate aftermath of the war, it was not a surprise that there were little Albanian-speaking intellectuals, as well as books in Albanian – it also pointed to a tendency in the treatment of identity-based claims by the central government: legal and administrative recognition, but very little support for the development of the content of these separate identities within the institutional frameworks. Whether this was a reflection of the general hostility towards anything resembling nationalism by the political top, or a reflection of the more general pattern of majority-minority relations (cf. Ramet 1992a, p. 189), is a separate question. However, the accommodation of ethnic Albanian political claims by the opening of the University of Prishtina certainly established a path dependency. It showed that demands could be accommodated, as long as they were not challenging the structure of the political power. However, the liberal and nationalist movements – both of which, albeit from different perspectives, aimed to transform the very premises of the regime – were dealt with in a very different manner.

2.2.3. Nationalist awakening: University of Zagreb

The third protest that probably contributed to the creation of the atmosphere and conditions that enabled the political changes that ushered in the education reform had the tone of nationalist awakening, however, intersected with certain liberal tendencies. It happened in Croatia in 1970 and 1971, and earned the nickname “Croatian Spring” or “mass movement” (MASPOK).

The origins of the “Croatian Spring” can be traced to the specific position of Croatian Communists after the WWII. In the immediate aftermath of the war, Croatian Communists, lead by Andrija Hebrang, preferred a loose federation and were afraid of the potential dominance of Serbia in Yugoslavia. The general liberalization, especially the market reforms introduced in the second half of the 1960s, also provided the backdrop for the amplification of the voices that argued for the “exceptional” status of Croatia within SFRY and supported its self-rule.

The top of the leadership of the League of Communists of Croatia at the time – Savka Dabcevic-Kucar, Mika Tripalo, and Pero Pirker – were supportive of further reforms, and introduced the discussion of the reappropriation of a “loose federal model during the 10th session of the League of Communists of Croatia (LCC) (Irvine, 2008, p. 153). Rusinow writes extensively about this particular historical moment: “In the later 1960s, a group of younger, ‘progressive’ Communist leaders came to power in Croatia...on a platform of further decentralization, democratization, and economic liberalism. Such a platform was seen and welcomed as consistent with Croatia’s long-term aspirations for a fairer deal in the Yugoslav federation (...) In seeking wider support in this political struggle for decentralized power, the Croatian new guard began to play with Croatian national sentiment, historically the easiest and surest way of arousing mass enthusiasm” (Rusinow, 2008, pp. 110-111).

To many people in Croatia, this was a clear and sufficient sign that nationalist sentiments were not “off the table” any more. The main lines of argumentation combined economic

with cultural (and religious) grievances. On the economic front, the argument was that Croatia had been contributing disproportionately to the federal budget (mostly through tourism remittances), while the majority of the funds were being redistributed to the underdeveloped parts of Yugoslavia such as Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro. On the cultural front, the argument was that Croatian cultural and national identity was being unduly repressed by the politics of the LCY. In 1967, 100 prominent Croatian intellectuals signed the Memorandum of the Matica Hrvatska that demanded that Croatian language be recognized as a separate and equal official language of the federation (at the time, the language was called Serbo-Croatian). Not surprisingly, many of these grievances transferred to questions of education. Irvine writes: “During the months after the tenth LCC plenum, LCC liberals repeatedly expressed their dissatisfaction with the ‘incorrect’ history being taught in the schools. In response to what they claimed was a biased and discriminatory program of study, LCC liberals proposed an educational plan for elementary and middle school aimed at the ‘Croatization’ of instruction. Under this plan, 75 percent of instruction in history and literature would be required to treat Croatian topics. For many supporters of the Croatian Spring, increasing instruction in Croatian history and culture was essential to the success of the Croatian national movement” (2008, p.157).

Despite the fact that these proposals focused on primary and secondary, and not tertiary education, the universities played a very prominent, if not decisive, role in the Croatian Spring. It began in December 1970, when the first ever elections for the student vice-rector – a post created at the time to address student concerns related to university governance that largely surfaced as a consequence of the protests in 1968 – were held at the University of Zagreb. Surprisingly, instead of the ‘official’ candidate of the Party, elections were won by Ivan Zvonimir Cicak, a person who was “problematic” from a number of perspectives: he was not a Party member, and was an open patriot and practicing Catholic (cf. Rusinow, 2008, p.167). Earlier, he had abandoned membership in the official students’ union due to self-confessed “extreme nationalist views” (Kesar, Bilbija and Stefanovic eds., 1990, p. 631). The official students’ representatives tried to dispute the election results, but Cicak was supported by growing numbers of students

and, even more importantly, by the Rector of the University of Zagreb who announced within days that the elections were legitimate. In April 1971, the conflict between student groups during the elections for the Executive committee of the Zagreb students' union ended in further strengthening the positions of the right-leaning students, again with the support of the Rector (*ibid.*, pp. 657-658).

During the spring of 1971, student politics at the University of Zagreb stopped being a matter of drawn-out discussions reserved for party cadres-in-training, and started attracting unprecedented student numbers, as well as substantial attention from the public. The student movement fitted the general mood in Croatia and articulated well the ideological positions from which the mass movement was born. Although it did maintain its critique within the framework of socialism and communism, this is where most of its similarities with the Belgrade student movement three years earlier stopped. The Croatian student movement openly endorsed a nationalist agenda, putting forward the claims for the rights of people in Croatia. It initially supported constitutional reforms and argued for the substantial transformation of the principles of economic and political distribution within the Federation. Its critique of higher education chimed with this framework, focusing less on equality between social strata and more on equality (or fairer distribution) among republics:

If this people and this country invest into our education in order to get the needed experts, do we not have the right to publicly state in front of other working people what we are fighting for and will continue to fight for in the future? Do we not have the right to say what we think is not right, is wrong, who is slowing down our development? (...) The Student Union should fight against the false understanding of socialism as a conflictless society, against this bastard theory that, on the basis of the international character of the working class, negates its national character; against the attitudes that reject the market and monetary exchange of goods (...) Thus, however, does not mean any autonomy or syndicalism as the interests of students are no different than the interests of the working class and of the entire society (The inaugural speech of the newly-elected

president of the Zagreb Student Union, Drazen Budisa, in Kesar, Bilbija and Stefanovic eds., 1990, p.661).

Thus, although safely “sandwiched” between avowals of loyalty to the positions of the League of Communists of Croatia and identification with the interests of the working class, the ideological makeup of the Croatian students’ protest diverged significantly from that in Belgrade. First of all, it admits the role of conflicts in socialism – which, up to that moment, was considered almost a blasphemy. It hints that the conflicts emanate from the suppression of the “national” element in the struggle of the working class, but also affirms the market economy that the Praxis philosophers and protesters in Belgrade strongly criticized. It shares the nationalist sentiment with the protest in Prishtina (indeed, as Rusinow notes, students from Kosovo studying in Zagreb played a relatively significant role in the developments; cf. Rusinow, 2008, p.169); however, it goes beyond claims for rights based on particular linguistic or ethnic identity into criticizing the very structure and principles of distribution within the Federation.

This is a relatively important difference, and one that will also be reflected in the ensuing developments and political strategies in Croatia and Kosovo, respectively. Namely, whereas Kosovar protesters were mostly interested in the education and linguistic rights of Kosovo Albanians, and the political position of Kosovo within (or outside of) the federation, the protesters in Croatia questioned the distribution of power between *all* constituent republics, and thus the very make-up of the federation itself. This difference in attitudes can be explained by the fact that Kosovo was receiving a lion’s share of the Yugoslav income, redistributed through federal aid – exactly what the Croatian movement was bringing into question. Thus, the two protests – in Prishtina and in Zagreb – had little more in common other than the broadly nationalist framework; in effect, their political goals were quite divergent.

Irvine similarly argues that the key drivers of the Croatian Spring cannot be found either in the economic grievances or in the nationalist tendencies, but rather in the questioning of the structure of the federation: “(...) Croatian Communists’ promotion of political

reforms (...) was neither merely a response to short-term developments nor an outburst of pent-up national resentment; it was, rather, also a resumption of the struggle over different views of the federal order (and the distribution of power among the national groups it signified (...)) The clash over competing concepts of the federal order, inherited from the Partisan period, was a defining feature of the Croatian Spring and the period of reform leading up to it” (Irvine, 2008, pp.152-153).

The student protest in Croatia ended at the peak of the crisis – just as it was starting to appear that it was gaining additional power. During the summer of 1971, the atmosphere remained dynamic and tense: the Croatian students’ union entered into conflict with other student unions in Yugoslavia. On November 22, 1971, the Croatian university movement announced that the University of Zagreb would be going on strike until a new foreign currency regime was installed. The issue of foreign currency was one of the most sensitive points related to redistribution between republics in the Yugoslav federation; massive revenues from tourism made Croatia the biggest attractor of foreign currency in Yugoslavia, but the closed foreign currency market forced it to trade these revenues with other republics at a rate that was not particularly favorable. Thus, the university movement now openly departed from an agenda related to education and became directly involved in matters pertaining to the structure of the Federation, leading some Croatian media to qualify the protest as anti-constitutional (Kesar, Bilbija and Stefanovic eds., 1990, p.807).

On November 24, students decided to extend the strike to other universities in Croatia. Teaching activities at universities had come to a complete halt: within days, an estimated 30.000 Croatian students were on strike (Rusinow, 2008, pp. 219-220; Ramet, 1992a, p.129). The response of the leadership of the League of Communists in Croatia, however, was rather mixed. While stating that they agree with the problems related to the foreign currency regime, they sharply criticized the strike action. Different authors speculate whether this was a genuine disapproval or awareness of the impending “showdown” (cf. Ramet, 1992a, p.129; Rusinow, 2008, pp. 220-221). Although other media and leaders showed support to the students, the decision was finally reached to stop the strike by

December 3. Of course, as Rusinow had put it, by that date it had ceased to matter any more (2008, p.221): Tito had convened a meeting in Karadjordjevo that would end the movement in Croatia.

On December 1, 1971, the Croatian LCC leadership had been summoned to Tito's hunting lodge in Karadjordjevo, to a joint session of the presidiums of LCC and LCY. There they were scolded and told straightforwardly that their politics were now substantially departing from the party line, for which they would have to bear consequences. As a matter of fact, none of them were dismissed on the spot; this would have represented a serious violation of Party rules and order. Instead, they were told to "deal" with the problems in their own republic, starting with the nationalist movement headed by Matica Hrvatska which, it was felt, was getting "out of control". On the afternoon of December 2, Tito came on the national radio to read the statement that made public the conclusions reached in the two meetings – with the LCC and of the LCY. After a couple of days, necessary in order to create the illusion of a "popular demand" for their withdrawal, the LCC "triumvirate" – Dabcevic-Kucar, Tripalo and Pirker – officially resigned from their positions (Rusinow, 2008, p. 106). Students at the University of Zagreb, who were planning public protests against this decision, were arrested. The "mass movement" had come to an end, and the purges began.

2.3. From Spring to Fall

Authors analyzing the aftermath of the Croatian Spring have been more or less unanimous in qualifying it as the largest and most comprehensive purge of the Yugoslav Communists to date. Rusinow writes:

By mid-January [1972], at least three hundred resignations or dismissals of party or state officials at all levels have been reported in the press, and the total list was undoubtedly much larger. Spasmodic arrests on charges ranging from 'hostile propaganda' to conspiring to overthrow the constitution or the socialist system continued throughout the spring (...) A few minor figures, again often students,

have been tried and sentenced (...) Five months after the process began, the majority of the Croats, second most numerous and important of Yugoslavia's nationalities, were still in a state of shock, bitterly resentful, unwilling to believe the 'truths' they were told about the genuinely popular leaders they had lost (2008, pp.106-107).

Ramet reminds of the scope of the backlash:

In the aftermath of the crisis, literally tens of thousands of members were expelled from the party, most for failure to toe the party line (...) altogether two to three thousand persons were imprisoned for political reasons in Croatia in the wake of the fall of Tripalo and Dabcevic-Kucar; thousands more were held administratively (without formal charges) for two to three months (...) Wayward student publications in other republics were also 'cleansed': the editors of *Student* (Serbia), *Bota e Re* (Kosovo), and a Macedonian student paper were replaced, and the editor of the Ljubljana student paper, *Tribuna*, was reprimanded (...) The backlash continued through 1973, reaching a climax in October and November with the continued purge of writers, filmmakers, university professors, and former liberal leaders (1992a, p.131).

The purges created a repressed, "sullen" nationalism in Croatia – from that moment onwards, the republic was notably withdrawn in Yugoslav politics, and would only regain its confidence with the sharpening of the crisis in Yugoslavia at the end of the 1980s, after Franjo Tudjman, one of the intellectuals tried and convicted in the Karadjordjevo aftermath, was elected as President and the road was clear to secession and the ensuing conflict in Yugoslavia (cf. Irvine, 2008, p.168). Indeed, Croatian Spring and the related crises in Yugoslavia are often seen as the precursors to the breakup.

Most scholars seem to agree that the purges that followed the Karadjordjevo meeting resulted in the removal from politics of a substantial number of young, agile and fresh cadres, who were replaced by older, inflexible apparatchiks whose only asset was that

they were loyal to the Central Committee of the LCY. Irvine summarizes these arguments:

In what sense was the Croatian Spring the beginning of the end of Yugoslavia? The usual answer to this question has been that the Croatian Spring resulted in the removal of the most energetic, capable, leaders in Yugoslavia. In the case of Serbia, they were also leaders most resistant to the forces of nationalism. Their removal and replacement by mediocre obedient leaders who lacked legitimacy robbed Yugoslavia of the good leadership it desperately needed to solve the pressing economic and political problems that had contributed to the Croatian Spring in the first place. Good leadership was especially important after Tito's death, when there was no longer an ultimate arbiter to resolve conflicts among national groups and prevent paralysis of the political system. Instead, the second- or third- rate leaders put in place by Tito himself were left to steer the country through the extraordinarily difficult period after his departure from the scene in 1980" (2008, pp.168-169).

As can be concluded from the quotations above, the purges were not limited to Croatia or the Croatian League of Communists. Besides the Praxis Marxists from the University of Belgrade, they included – or, at least, targeted – every single person or ideological stream that appeared to represent a challenge to the established order. Denitch writes:

Despite the claims to the contrary by Croatian nationalist publicists, Tito's crackdown in 1972 was by no means limited to the Croats who were flirting with nationalism and liberalism. Tito, always in search of a repressive 'symmetry' in the treatment of the potentially contentious leaderships of various Yugoslav republics, also cracked down and removed the very popular liberal reformist Communist leaders of Serbia, Slovenia, and Macedonia. That effectively removed the brightest and the best of the young postrevolutionary generation of Yugoslav leaders, a group that had a history of working together and were, at least at the time, almost immune to nationalist intolerance towards each other (...) They

probably represented the last leadership that could have assured an orderly and democratic transition to democracy (1994, pp.55-56).

The role that the deposed politicians could have played in the development of Yugoslavia will always remain on the level of speculation. It is certain that, besides or independently of the role of leaders in the decades leading to Yugoslavia's breakup, a number of structural factors inevitably contributed to this outcome (cf. Irvine, 2008, p.169). Although some of these factors significantly pre-date the crises described above, some of them were substantially reinforced, and perhaps – at least partially – created by the responses to the protests.

Next, we will examine how the reactions to the waves of protest were reflected in and integrated into the policies to transform the Federation – including those related to education; and how, together with the structural factors, they may have contributed to Yugoslavia's demise.

To begin with, the purges following the protests in Belgrade and in Zagreb created an atmosphere of terrifying silence in which any opinion that diverged (or threatened to diverge) from the strict party line was forbidden and punished. As opposed to the relatively open and liberal atmosphere that preceded the protests, the period after 1972 can be seen as one in which Yugoslavia was transformed into a near-totalitarian state, before it dissolved. Denitch writes:

One thing, however, did remain irreducible and unnegotiable, both in practice and theory, until the end and the collapse of the league [of Communists] as a Yugoslav-wide organization in 1988. That was the league's unwillingness to compete in anything resembling free elections or even, for that matter, to compete ideologically against any organized group that would politically or ideologically counterpoise itself to the Communists. It would, further, not tolerate competition from a group that accepted most of the postulates of Yugoslav politics. It did not really matter whether the group was nationalist, liberal-democratic, or even (albeit

critically) Marxist. The last type of group was most threatening. The 1971 crackdown against nationalism and liberalism was conducted in the name of the unity of the LCY and its continued monopoly on effective power” (1994, pp. 57-58).

This represents the gist of the regime’s reactions to the movements between 1968 and 1974. In the atmosphere of a staggering economy and growing unemployment, any dissent coming from within – especially if it aspired to challenge the principles of economic distribution within the federation, as the Croatian Spring did, or, even worse, the very idea of market economy, as some of the *Praxis* Marxists did – was seen as potential threat to the all-encompassing power of the League. Although, from a political philosophy perspective, it may appear curious that the regime approached the “extermination” of both nationalists and Marxists with equal zeal, in the Yugoslav political context it actually made perfect sense: despite their inner differences and contradictions, these movements threatened to subvert the existing order.

The overall transformation of education that took place between 1971 and 1975 can be understood as the attempt of the regime to stifle all movements that had the potential to challenge the status quo. Purges of critically-minded professors, censorship or banning of student newspapers and prosecution of student leaders were one part of the “solution”: The other part of the solution was to provide routes to quick and stable employment; this is why VOE reform focused on short cycles, applicable skills, and stimulated school-to-work transition. The third part was to ensure that inculcation into the “proper” form of Marxism would happen early enough, so that even those who went to university would be immune to influence of the “wrong” interpretations of Marxism – essentially, those that may depart from the League lines. The insistence on “Marxist upbringing” in the documents that described and characterized the VOE reform, can, then, be understood from this perspective. It wasn’t just Marxism as the general political philosophy that the regime wanted to see more strongly inserted into the pupils’ minds: it was the “correct” form of Marxism and of the interpretation of reality, as opposed to the supposedly “dangerous” interpretations championed, among others, by the Praxis philosophers.

However, rather than just stifling critical dissent and introducing an ideologically uniform curriculum, the reforms introduced in reaction to the protests had more important consequences. For instance, one of the things in which the reactions were exceptional was how they had treated the ethnic Albanian mobilization in 1968. Although the protesters were repressed with not less brutality than in other parts of Yugoslavia, their demands were treated differently – in effect, they resulted in the opening of an independent university in Prishtina (though not, as we could see, in any substantial support to integrate it into the overall Yugoslav intellectual climate). This hints at an important precedent, which will later be reflected in the way Slobodan Milosevic approached the dissolution of Yugoslavia: even nationalist political claims (or rather, those based on belonging to an ethnic and linguistic group, in the case of Kosovo Albanians) were more acceptable than those that questioned the structure of the federation and the supreme power of the League. Thus, the regime was willing to respond to the requests of the Kosovo Albanians as long as they did not include secession or the republican status for the province; consequences or outcomes for educational or social integration were for long-term development, at the time, seen as far less relevant than the preservation of the status quo, which represented the regime's most immediate concern.

In effect, what the reactions to the protests managed to do was to establish ethnic nationalism as a legitimate rallying point, while repressing all other avenues for expression of political differences. The Constitution of 1974, which was largely drafted as a response to the crisis in which the Federation was perceived to be, effectively embodied this principle. This was the cost of responding to the needs and conflicts that surfaced during the crises: economic and political decentralization – willingly or not – opened the door for nationalist mobilization as the primary expression of political sentiments.

Denitch writes: “The economic and political settlement enshrined in the constitution of 1974 had almost completely solved the original economic and political grievances against supposed excessive centralism, control on the part of Belgrade, and domination of Serbia

within the Federation...The constitution of 1974 practically gave each republic and province a veto over any legislation that might affect it negatively. The result was an almost complete paralysis of the federal system when economic and political crises arose during the 1980s (...) Most foreign experts have also argued that Yugoslavia was far *too decentralized* by the 1974 constitution, making difficult economic and political decisions all but impossible to make, at least legally” (1994, pp. 104-105); furthermore, he traces this process to the very conflict during the breakup of Yugoslavia:

Thus a causal link began to unfold. The choice of decentralization rather than democratization in the early 1970s was at the root of the process. Albanian self-assertion in the Province of Kosovo led to Milosevic’s awakening of the Serbian nationalist populist genie in the mid-1980s. The fear-ridden reaction of the leaders of the other republics to Serbian bullying tactics had encouraged the reactive growth of varying nationalisms in Slovenia, Croatia, and even among the Bosnian Muslims and in Macedonia. This in turn provoked predictable fears of the minorities about the increasing nationalism of the major national groups in their own republics. There were no instruments at the federal center that could have effectively mediated between the republics. The fat was well and truly in the fire. (1994, p. 61).

Whether the Constitution of 1974 was *really* the factor that decisively tipped Yugoslavia in the direction of violent disintegration, of course, will always remain an open question. Dimitrijevic says that it has earned such a bad reputation, even among those who have never read it, that “it is not surprising that no one claims to have been its author” (Dimitrijevic, 2000, p. 399). He also emphasizes that the 1974 Constitution cannot be viewed in isolation from the political challenges in the 1960s, nor from the (already mentioned) amendments in 1971. However, it certainly did two things: on the one hand, it complicated collective decision making to the point at which became effectively impossible: “After another series of empty public debates the new constitution was promulgated on 21 February 1974. It was an unusual, enormously long (406 articles), verbose and confused text, leaving the reader with the inescapable impression that its

purpose was rather to hide than to reveal...Mystification was intensified by the new jargon which was difficult to comprehend in the original Yugoslav versions, and almost impossible to translate. The old dogmatic Communist tendency to rename in order to change here reached new heights” (Dimitrijevic, 2000, p.403).

On the other hand, it established republican (which quickly became conflated with ethnic or national) representation as the most likely and legitimate venue for the expression of political interests and the construction of political identities:

The principal message was that, in spite of class oratory, the federal state was based on national arrangement, where even nations not originally considered to be the ‘titular nations’ of Yugoslavia came to play a full role. The Slavic Moslems, principally inhabiting Bosnia-Hercegovina, had been promoted into a fully fledged Yugoslav people under a religious name in 1971, which was not only a misnomer for the non-religious majority among them, but proved later to have dreadful consequences. Others, like the most numerous Albanians and Hungarians, obtained a better status under another new euphemism for national minorities, *narodnost*, meaningless in Serbo-Croat and poorly translated into English as ‘nationality’ (...) the republics were referred to as states, based on the ‘sovereignty of the people’ and ‘...communities of the working people and citizens, and of nations and nationalities having equal rights’. This was a clear indication of a drift to a confederate structure of the Yugoslav federation (ibid, pp. 405-406).

However, confederalism did not provide for more democracy or flexibility in decision- and policy-making. The “consociational” arrangements in Yugoslavia were never formalized, and with the demise of the party there were no institutional mechanisms to establish democratic consociationalism (cf. Schoepflin, 1993, p. 192). The only thing the 1974 reform of the Federation managed to do, effectively, was to provide a framework conducive to the subsequent dissolution.

2.4. VOE reform: solution or palliative education?

The reforms of education that happened after, and parallel to, the introduction of the 1974 Constitution must be understood in the broader context of the political reforms that sprung up in the first half of the 1970s. Their purpose was to “save” the Federation by addressing the conflicts and tensions expressed in the social movements between 1968 and 1971, while simultaneously striving to maintain the Communist power base – both in the vague sense in which the working class was seen as the base of the regime power, and in the sense of fighting challenges to the regime’s bureaucratic ruling apparatus. The repressive measures (purges of the “ideologically unfit” among the ranks of the League of Communists), administrative and legal reforms (the decentralization of decision-making in the Federation and its embodiment in the 1974 Constitution) were intended to directly address the manifestations of the tensions in the Yugoslav Federation. Educational reform, on the other hand, can be seen as a more pro-active, long-term measure: it did not only address the consequences of the crisis that were manifested in the student protests, but also aimed at treating the causes and preventing future upsurges of discontent.

One part of these measures was relatively straightforward. Removing the “problematic” Praxis philosophers from the University of Belgrade, and then purging the liberal leaders in the Serbian and Croatian Leagues of Communists, meant that the students would be left without both “sources of inspiration” for the critique of society and politicians to potentially rally behind in cases of broader political, including nationalist, mobilization. Closing down the branches of the LC at the “problematic” departments and prosecuting student leaders also meant that the university was going to become an increasingly depoliticized institution, and student organizing again separated from the world of serious (or “real”) politics, reserved for the loyal party cadres. Increased censorship of publishing and writing that also happened at the time assured that there would be little interruptions of the silence about these matters, in universities or outside.

The development and implementation of vocational education, on the other hand, tried to address the longer-term, deeper and structural causes of the unrests. Its emphasis on vocational education and training was aimed at tackling the endemic unemployment, which had become one of the main sources of discontent, especially among university graduates and first-time entrants into the labor market. The “vocation-oriented” programs and degrees in secondary education were intended to provide secondary education graduates with skills and incentives to go directly into labor, instead of into higher education where they, from the perspective of the policymakers, were getting largely inapplicable skills. Policymakers thought that unemployment was the chief trigger of discontent; thus, providing employment – any sort of employment – was accordingly seen as a remedy for the objective sources of this discontent.

This intention was also behind the narrative of the “revalorization” of productive work: more incentives for early labor market insertion were expected to reduce the attractiveness of university education for secondary-school students, and thus make sure more of them steer clear of these sites of reproduction of social discontent. Structural measures, such as the abolishment of the general, gymnasium-type secondary education, which until the time represented the main path to university education, were introduced to support and further stimulate the orientation of students towards “productive” professions.

Of course, attempts to reduce the attractiveness of university education did not have to do only with (un)employment prospects. The heritage of the 1968-1971 backlash was strongly reflected in the discourse of the education reform that increasingly identified *all* universities as (a) sites of social reproduction and (b) sites of creation of dissent, what the regime termed “anti-social” discourses (be they liberalism, nationalism, forms of Marxism etc.). The first “accusation” was largely a matter of perception. Due to rapid massification and affirmative action measures explicitly aimed at stimulating those from peasant or worker backgrounds to enter university, the structure of the student population in the latter part of the 1960s did manage to shift from a highly exclusive, elitist institution that the university was before the WWII, to a community that was slightly

more diverse (if still dominated by the descendants of the white-collar workers). Thus, whether university education was really (and substantially) reproducing social inequalities could have been a matter of some debate; if it were indeed the key problem, it would have likely resulted in more measures aimed at the integration of otherwise excluded or marginalized groups into higher education, such as scholarships, subsidies etc. But the VOE reform did not entail any of these.

The problem with social reproduction, thus, has to be seen in conjunction with the latter “accusation”, that of university education being responsible for the “seduction” of youth into false, “anti-social” values. This meant that anybody who went to university was potentially at danger of becoming a dissenter from the official credo of the LCY – even if they came from the “good”, working or peasant classes: indeed, many of the student leaders in the protests came from rather modest backgrounds.

What the communist system in fact faced was a paradox: the institution that should have been contributing to social development and progress, especially of the working class – the university – was in fact not only reproducing social inequalities but also sowing the seeds of discontent among its students and the broader population. Trained within the Marxist assumption about the “innateness” of shared interests among all those belonging to a certain class, the architects of the education system could not accept the possibility that, indeed, working people, whose interests the party was supposed to represent, could themselves be against the political decisions of the League of Communists. The only way that they could explain the criticism of the official policies of the LCY expressed in the student protests was that students were being “misled” by someone else, equally assuming the guise of an “internal enemy” and “foreign agent”. This explains why Tito equated in his speech the former chief of the secret police Rankovic, deposed in 1966, and the Praxis Marxist philosophers from the University of Belgrade (the two groups could not have been further apart politically): all of them were seen as enemies of the state, because they were challenging the prevailing dogma.

What followed logically from the above premises, then, was that intellectuals and university professors must have a reason – a class-based interest – to teach students the opinions adversarial to the regime and “incite” them to protest. The answer was obvious: universities are sanctuaries for the remains of bourgeoisie, which most – if not all – professors belong to. Suvar explained the way he saw the role of education in the reproduction of class inequalities: “*Homo faber* and *homo sapiens* are socially separated, alienated, opposed in the existence of different classes; and the primary purpose of education is to perpetuate these divisions...it has, in fact, been developed as a specific ritual which selects a small proportion of the population for the social elites, and places them on a pedestal which is inaccessible for the vast majority of the population” (Suvar, 1977, p. 89)

The objective of the reform, then, became to not only stop the class reproduction at university, but also – and rather – to stop the university, or, at least, disable it as a site of generating social discontent. This framework gives a new meaning to the staunchly anti-intellectualist reform discourse: “The class function of education in our society, then, should be expressed in it being used not to flee from the basic productive [workers] class, but to remain in it (...) Because, the goal of the socialist reform of education could be summarized as – abolishing the intelligentsia!” (Suvar, 1977, p. 93, p.97).

2.5. Conclusions

The vocational education policy of the Yugoslav federation in 1974 was not exclusively directed at generating employment or at boosting the economy. Its primary driver was ideological rather than economic: what was at stake was the redefinition of the very concept of education and the promotion of productive labor, both as a value and as opposition to “pure” intellectual inquiry. The objective was not so much to allow for a quicker transition from education to work, as to keep young people occupied and properly instructed in technical and vocational skills, all the while making sure their only ideological education was wrapped in the previously approved form of acceptable, non-critical Marxism. The objective was to strip the universities, which were seen as centers of social discontent, of the critical power to challenge the existing order, and to transform

them instead into institutions for the education of the (small) numbers of those who could afford to engage in non-productive labor.

The success and impact of the VOE reform must, then, also be judged from this perspective. Although it has already been pointed out that the reform failed at convincing young people that going into work is a better option than going to university, its performance was substantially different when it came to its political goals. Namely, the reform – in combination with other repressive measures, including “purges” at the University of Belgrade – did manage to effectively depoliticize the universities and stifle expressions of student discontent for quite a long time. In fact, the first student protests after 1975 in Serbia took place only in 1991/2, in response to the regime’s growing militarization and the exacerbation of the conflict in former Yugoslavia. Another four years passed until a massive mobilization of students would happen after the disputed elections in 1996/1997. The repressive Universities Act adopted in Serbia in 1998 would set motion to another wave of protests, and their final culmination with the toppling of the Milosevic regime in Belgrade in 2000 – 25 years after the introduction of VOE.

However, the most important (and, very likely, unintended) consequence of the educational reform was that it fixed once and for all the same principle embodied in the 1974 Constitution – namely, “atomization” of social and political life within the constituent units of the Federation. Vocationalization of education meant that secondary schools were tied to the enterprises and factories that were in their geographical proximity, and thus the exchange between education and labor was happening in increasingly atomized units.

In practice, this meant that pupils and students went to school in the places where they grew up, and most likely ended up working – or at least looking for a job – in the same place where they attended school. Those that went to university also chose the universities in the same republic, and most proximate to them; this also meant that they were likely to work – or, again, look for employment – in the same republic and region that they were from. This meant that the qualified workforce was becoming less and less

mobile within the Federation. The only mobile workers at the time were either low- or unqualified *gästarbeiter* who, trying to avoid unemployment, sought work in the West (primarily in Germany and Austria); and workers of the same profile temporarily employed in Slovenia, the Yugoslav “West”⁴. People still traveled for holidays; but the closer integration of education and labor units also meant that they were increasingly unlikely to travel either for education or for work. With the establishment of the University of Prishtina in 1969, Kosovo Albanian intellectuals also got the chance to be educated in an increasingly divided environment.

This was not only the case with the middle classes, but also with political elites:

Following the more routinized path of education, career, and political service, the second-generation leaders tend to develop within the framework of republics and localities rather than within a statewide arena...The problem is further accentuated by the absence of statewide educational institutions, which means that the development of the new intelligentsia takes place primarily within the individual republics. The effect of decentralization in this respect is to reinforce the localist rather than the universal character of the new leadership since political careers are also generally limited by the frontiers of a single republic. The experiences of other multinational polities point out the serious problem posed by the development of a fragmented state leadership within a society where power aggregation tends to take place increasingly on geographic lines (Denitch, 1976, pp. 20-21).

As can be discerned from the developments leading up to the breakup of former Yugoslavia, the geographic or republican lines soon became equated with the ethnic: it was not the welfare of citizens of Croatia but of Croatians that was at stake, and not the welfare of the citizens of Serbia but that of Serbs: “As the system continued to decay – that is, as the original ideological cement holding the party cadres together continued to

⁴ Primarily of Bosnian, Montenegrin or Serbian origin, these workers and their families were in great numbers ‘erased’ from the list of residents after Slovenia declared independence; the act continues to create controversy in the otherwise relatively ethnically homogenous Slovenia.

crumble – the leaders of the republics increasingly began to present the interests of their power base, their own republics, against the center. This was a sure road to local popularity. As time went on leaders of the LCY in the republics, particularly after Tito’s death in 1980, even more directly and openly represented the desires and interests of their own republics. A symbiosis of Communist and localist nationalist politics thus evolved” (Denitch, 1994, pp. 59-60). The fragmentation of political expression became only the pretext for the repression of the dominant ethnic group over minorities or, in cases where a clear ethnic majority did not exist – as in Bosnia – for the ethnic cleansing which strove to achieve both the political and biological dominance of one ethnic group. What could safely be said in conclusion is that vocational education contributed to the further “atomization” of republics, and thus to the equalization of territorial and ethnic identities.

However, it was not only the ethnic cleavages that the education reform managed to reinforce. Its obvious attack on the remains of the bourgeoisie and the values it held dear was bound to backfire – in some cases, such as the reintroduction of religious education and the growth of the influence of the Catholic church in Croatia (cf. Perica, 2004), during the very process of dissolution; in other cases, such as with similar developments in Serbia, only after the conflicts were over and the country set on the path of transition. Its overt insistence on reversing the reproduction of class inequalities, and the related attack on the intelligentsia, almost automatically delegitimized any criticism of this social stratum once Yugoslavia began to crumble. It comes as no surprise, then, that in many cases it was the dissident intellectuals who carried the torches of nationalist “flame” during the processes of dissolution. Their opposition to the Communist regime justified their ideas and political actions in its aftermath. Those who weren’t on the nationalist side equally found their political identity in the opposition to the remains of the regime. In Serbia, for instance, these intellectuals would come to form the gist of the “second Serbia”, a cultural-class stratum that opposed Milosevic, and still constitutes one of the major division blocks in the society.

These social and political dynamics will be the subject of the next chapter. The chapter will focus on the development of education policy in one of former Yugoslav republics,

Serbia, after the wars for the dissolution of Yugoslavia. It will show how the processes started during the VOE reform – including fragmentation, ethnic mobilization and social divisions – continued to dominate the public sphere and to play a role in the formulation of education policies.