

The Secrets of Titograd in 1989: On Entanglements and Fragile Networks between the Intellectuals of West Germany and Socialist Yugoslavia

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In the autumn of 1989, Mihailo Marković, a renowned Yugoslav theoretician and prominent *Praxis*-philosopher, stated in “Nedeljne Informativne Novine – NIN” (a respected nationwide weekly from Belgrade) that the most remarkable change in that year happened in Montenegro, more far-reaching than all the other processes in Eastern Europe. In Montenegro “the peaceful turnover” continued without comparable nationalistic impacts and showed that Montenegro together with Serbia (within Yugoslavia since the “anti-bureaucrat revolution” of 1988) was in a process of thorough democratization (MARKOVIĆ 1989).

Two years later, in spring 1991, the same magazine hosted a number of prominent and influential Serbian historians in a round-table discussion to analyze the “disastrous situation”. Actually, the perceived disaster was not at all the war in Yugoslavia, but the negative image of Serbia in the western public. The historians who were participating wondered how their former allies (France and Britain) could be so easily trapped and cheated by the Germans and the Vatican. How could they opt for the wrong side, labeling the Serbian government as the aggressor in the war? Did not the French and English public see that the Serbian people were fighting against the German “Drang nach Osten” in general, against the rebirth of fascism in Croatia and in particular against the threat of a Muslim fundamentalist domination in Bosnia? (The notion Islamist was not yet in use). The historians remained bewildered and shrugged their shoulders. Some saw the causes of such a lack of understanding by the French and the British as resting in the Serbian leadership, still perceived as communist by the Western public, and thereby casting a bad light on the authentic liberal aspirations of the Serbian people (*Round Table NIN* 1991).

What had happened to cause these philosophers and historians to radically change and narrow their perceptions such that they could not understand the critique of Serbian nationalism by their Western colleagues? The former were scholars who were in regular contact with their colleagues from abroad. They collaborated with international journals, participated in conferences and, moreover, they came from a country with seemingly greater possibilities for interrelationships with people and institutions in Western societies. How was it possible that those historians and intellectuals, who had already become crucial actors at the time of the “anti-bureaucratic revolution” in 1988, now developed a very particular nation-centered perspective on political processes? In their view, the fall of the Berlin Wall was not important when compared to epoch-making changes in Titograd. Or was it that ultimately these international entanglements did not play a role in the self-understanding of such intellectuals at all?

In order to deal with this question, it is helpful to use a transnational approach which focuses on these transfers and entanglements and distancing. As is well known,

such “negative” processes as “distancing” are conceptualized as an integral part of European history in a transnational perspective (PATEL 2010).

This article deals with networks in the process of developing rather than with established networks. More precisely, it deals with *fragile* networks. Finally, it poses the question whether the networks actually failed. At the same time this approach shares the basic presuppositions posed in the introduction to this volume, namely, that taking up the discussion of networks in a transnational perspective helps to conceptualize the history of ideas or the practice of intellectuals as societal actors beyond a national framework. This also allows us to examine the development and exchange of theoretical terminology beyond the limiting frame of the national domain and to highlight the driving forces or motivations of the actors in the entanglements that are examined (ARNDT & HÄBERLEN et al. 2011).

Furthermore, it is important to note the potential ambivalence of the term “transfers of ideas”. Bearing in mind the crucial discussion about the potential of a *Histoire Croisée*, a strictly comparative approach of national states seems to be problematic, for it can by stressing their differences reproduce the concept of closed entities (ZIMMERMANN & WERNER 2002: 607–636). At the same time, the notion of transfers of ideas also involves the danger that it is understood as a transfer between substantially different cultural contexts, in this case, those between Western Europe and the Balkans. To avoid this danger, I am centering not on a concept of culture as referring to distinct units, but rather as based on societal experience. By referring to the category of societal experience, it is possible to identify differences – particularly in the era of Cold War – with regard to the respective societal organization without essentializing the actors as being inseparable from what some from a culturalist perspective allege to be a distinct “intellectual national culture.”

Thus my contribution focuses on actors and their ways of institutionalizing contacts and exchanges. This brief overview of the Journal *Praxis* and the *Praxis* summer school, as well as the contacts of Belgrade historians with German scholars, will be conceptualized as a history of the “Transfers of Ideas” and as a history of relations between West and East. In order to avoid an essentialist understanding of transfers between “different cultures,” I will center on notions and concepts. With that, it is important to stress that adjustment and modification to particular contexts is an integral part of analyzing the transfers of ideas.¹ Another possibility for avoiding an essentialist view of “national cultures” and “mentalities” is to follow the development and the meaning of institutions within a scientific praxis as well as the limits and possibilities of autonomous research. Here the relationship of intellectuals to scientific institutions and their varying importance concerning transnational exchange are of particular importance.

First, the contacts and exchanges between historians from Belgrade and those from Germany will be brought into the foreground, particularly centering on the

1 “Transfer of culture is a part of transnational history of society, when: protagonists and institutions can be named and documented and if it is possible to analyze particular processes of transfer with a clear account of necessities, interests and societal functions” (OSTERHAMMEL 2001: 477).

ways contacts were maintained from Second World War up to the 1970s. Bearing in mind the crucial importance of the Rankean view of history, this chapter examines when and why contacts were kept, and then for what reasons they were abandoned.

The following section centers on attempts by German and Belgrade philosophers to contact one another and engage in exchanges characterized by the fact that in the 1960s they were functioning outside the walls of official institutions. Moreover, the Belgrade philosophers understood themselves explicitly as critics of the political establishment. Thus this chapter centers on the possibilities of and limits to creating alternative networks – beyond state administered learned institutions, obstinately following their own conception of contacts and exchange. The last section compares both kinds of contact and communication with colleagues from abroad, examining what elements mostly influenced and shaped the ways of either exchange or distancing.

Historians – shared paradigms of national history beyond East and West

Historians in the Balkan societies and also in Serbia can look back on a long history of interrelations between Serbian and German-speaking scholars. Even though some conceive a national consciousness to be expressed in a historiography, actually a national historiography serving as the basis of national master-narratives – as contradictory as it may appear – is in fact the result of transnational transfers of ideas. A transnational approach reveals that all of these nationalist narratives are interrelated, since they tended to borrow from each other and then adapted these borrowings to different contexts. A history of transfers was initiated beginning with the “discovery” of the “Serbian people” and “the Serbian Revolution” by the 19th century historian Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) as mediated by the Serbian Vuk Karadžić (1787–1864), who provided Ranke with the necessary material and offered as well his interpretations of the development through an ongoing correspondence. Needless to say, the German universities had constitutive role in the development of a Serbian intellectual elite – and the German speaking universities such as those in Vienna were the starting point for careers such as that of the Serbian geographer Jovan Cvijić (1865–1927), who besides all other scientific merits could be considered as the archetype of a nationally conscious scholar. He was convinced that in his research on “the people” he would discover the crucial characteristics of a supposed national character – and give this knowledge back to “his people” (Cvijić 1965; cf. ČOLOVIĆ 1992: 71–80). However contradictory this might appear, the attempts to establish and realize the ideas of national uniqueness were all too often characterized by quite the opposite, arising through the transfers and exchanges of ideas with Western and Central Europe and, of course, their modified application.

Serbian historiography owed much to the German concept of historiography in the teleological blueprint of the steady development of a national spirit coming to its definitive fulfillment in the national state. The tendency among historians, not only from Serbia but also from other Balkan countries, to model themselves on Western nationalist ideologies mirrors a process that the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has addressed in a different context. From a post-colonial perspective, Chakrabarty analyzes the relationship between the Western (European) nationalist narratives and those developing in the rest of the world, using the concept of “historicism” to de-

scribe that relationship. Without going into detail concerning the origins and previous usages of the term, Chakrabarty describes historicism as a model perceiving a progressive development over time, a kind of a confluence of Hegelian and Rankean conceptions of a philosophy of history that eventually evolved into a general perception of development over time. “It was a mode of thinking about history,” Chakrabarty writes, “in which one assumed that any object under investigation retained a degree of unity of conception throughout its existence and attained a full expression through a process of development in secular historical time” (CHAKRABARTY 2008: 89). Historicism, as a concept of thought, suggests that a society’s evolution followed certain predetermined stages of development whose sequence could not be altered. “What I called Historicism”, Chakrabarty explains, “intersects with the discipline of history, and provincializing Europe is a critique of both: history (the discipline) and historicism. The object of my critique was a certain kind of imagination of the past where history and historicism colluded in sustaining the dominance of a hyper-real Europe (that is, a theory of modernity in which some people claim to have become modern before others and use this claim to justify their domination of those they consider less evolved.)” (CHAKRABARTY 2008: 89). Chakrabarty shaped the term historicism by describing contradictions and ambivalences of a process that became both a project of emancipation and a deterministic model of evolutionary development. Ever since the establishment of the Serbian national state, and in the period after the establishment of scientific institutions in the first half of the 20th century in particular, historians in Serbia have shared a basic understanding of conceptions in scholarship and society of a determined national evolution. The latter was briefly addressed above by referring to the term historicism: the self-imposed task of the protagonists of the national state was to eliminate all elements of the “outlived” Ottoman society. This way the historians in the tradition of Jovan Cvijić adopted the Hegelian/Rankean model of historicism: they saw themselves on the right side of the *Weltgeist*, legitimating their power over those who in their eyes were not yet developed, and were rather backward. Taking on a pointed form, this view was manifested in the relationship towards Muslims in the Balkans, particularly Albanians, where harsh domination was justified in a colonial manner (PEZO 2013). It becomes clear that some Balkan historians were not only objects of historicist Western projections, but they themselves adopted the concept of historicism in order to justify their rule. Furthermore, such concepts developed in steady contact – at least during the period of academic training – with scholars and scholarly institutions in the German speaking milieu.²

In order to better understand the conditions of entanglements between historians from Belgrade and Germany in the period under discussion in this chapter, it is a necessary precondition to briefly focus on the “prehistory” of those scholars from Germany during the Second World War, which predominately influenced their modes of contacts and exchanges with Yugoslavs in the 1960s and 1970s.

2 Not only Cvijić was in the discipline of geography oriented on Penk and Ratzel. Renowned and influential historians of the pre state socialist Yugoslavia as Živan Živanović studied in Berlin and Jena, or like Vladimir Čorović studied in Vienna, where Konstantin Jireček was his mentor (TRGOVČEVIĆ 2003).

The Second World War and the occupation of Yugoslavia by national socialist Germany did not completely alter the continuation of such academic transfers of concepts. Indeed, during the war some of the historians kept in contact with their German colleagues such as Alois Schmaus³ even under the severe conditions of German occupation. Schmaus had maintained close ties since the 1920s with Belgrade and the academic public in the city (HAUSMANN 2001: 161). These contacts intensified during the German occupation of Yugoslavia. At the beginning of World War II, the Nazis established the so called “*Deutsche Wissenschaftliche Institute*” (German Scientific Institutes, hereinafter DWI) in places they deemed important for spreading the influence of German scientific culture (HAUSMANN 2001: 23–24). One of these institutes was opened in Belgrade shortly before the attack of Nazi Germany on Yugoslavia in 1941. It existed until the end of the occupation in 1944 (HAUSMANN 2001: 167–169). Gerhard Gesemann was posted as its director (HAUSMANN 2001: 167), but Alois Schmaus obviously played a key role with regard to the contacts with those Serbian scholars who had not left Belgrade. Schmaus held the position of an assistant director and coordinated the activities of the Belgrade DWI (HAUSMANN 2001: 162). He also established a series of publications from this institute (namely, *Schriften des Deutschen Wissenschaftlichen Instituts in Belgrad*), where, among others, a contribution of the prominent Serbian ethnologist Veselin Čajkanović was published (HAUSMANN 2001: 177).⁴ Under the severe conditions of occupation and with tense ambivalence over collaboration, cooperation, and resistance, Schmaus pretended in his reports that the DWI in Belgrade was initiating a “rich cultural activity”. Even when the German occupiers were already retreating, in December 1944 he was ordered to Vienna to search for reliable Serbian cadres for a restoration of German rule in the Balkans in the near future. His reports were quite optimistic in this regard – within this topic it is important to note that he stressed that particularly the elder generation of scholars would remain attached to Germany, while younger representatives of the nationalist current would be lost to German influence and oriented rather towards England because of certain mistakes during the occupation.⁵ Indeed, this elder generation in particular continued cooperation with scholars like Schmaus after the war. In his memoirs, Medaković, one of the representatives of the above mentioned younger historians even praised Schmaus and his efforts to save what could be saved from the other ignorant German officials in Serbia (MEDAKOVIĆ 1993). He described Schmaus as a person who entirely understood the tragic fate of the Serbian people and tried to help where it was possible. The emergence of such remembrances needs

3 From 1928, Alois Schmaus was a lecturer for German Language (HAUSMANN 2001).

4 Also the single textbook up to today for Serbian Language of Alois Schmaus was for the first time published within this series (HAUSMANN 2001: 177).

5 Schmaus pointed out in his report: “Bei der akademischen Intelligenz gibt es zwei Schichten, die eine, die noch in Deutschland studiert hat, und an unsere Kultur gebunden ist, und die andere Schicht, die anglophil eingestellt ist. Ein größerer Teil der jüngeren Intellektuellen wird wahrscheinlich in einem uns nicht genehmen Sinne beeinflusst werden. Es gibt aber auch sehr viele Elemente der Mihajlović Bewegung, auf die wir rechnen können. Universität war von unzuverlässigen Elementen gesäubert. Durch Nichteröffnung der Universität sind uns viele Chancen verloren gegangen” (HAUSMANN 2001: 182).

to be seen in the context of a new political atmosphere in Yugoslavia at the end of the 1980s, a time when traditional nationalist concepts reemerged in the public sphere. A main aim of such historians such as Medaković was the positive reevaluation of collaboration – and thus also the contacts to representatives of the national socialist occupation regime. First of all, they functioned to exculpate and rehabilitate the collaborationist regime of Milan Nedić and his fellows (RISTOVIĆ 2001). In this context Schmaus was pointed out as one of those whose sincere aims were fundamentally misunderstood by the new communist rulers. From the perspective of such historians, Schmaus shared their own knowledge of the distinctiveness of the history of the Serbian people, i.e. this particular concept of the national master-narrative. However, Schmaus, who was even more successful in his career after 1945, remained a key figure in maintaining contacts to Serbian scholars as will be elucidated in what follows.

Although Yugoslavia witnessed a profound political change after 1945, namely, the establishment of a new kind of rule which controlled all spheres of political action and ideology, the classic current of historiography was not immediately affected by this rupture. Research has shown that despite the aspiration of the communist party to dominate the sphere of scientific discourses, national historiography in universities and academies remained a hard nut to crack for the comrades. This was not just the case with its theoretical concepts, but the staff also demonstrated continuity with pre-war times. The alleged repression of Serbian historiography – a topic that *ex post facto* became crucial for nationalist historians⁶ – became manifest in occasional attacks from party journals. Nevertheless, nationally oriented historians maintained their influence in the key research institutions (STEFANOV 2011). Therefore, more conservatively minded pre-war historians prevailed at the Historical Institute (Istorijski Institut) in the 1950s and 1960s. At least the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (Savez Komunističke Jugoslavije – SKJ) abandoned the attempt to impose a fundamental turn in ideology, theory, and methods within the old institutions and instead sought to intensify efforts at establishing new institutes with “reliable” historians.

As soon as the Südost-Institute and its journal *Südost-Forschungen* were reestablished in Germany (1952), the older generation of Serbian colleagues was at the ready with their contributions (HÖSCH 2004). Historians like Nikola Radojčić (ĆIRKOVIĆ 1964: 158–159), Đorđe Radojčić (*Enciklopedija* 1997: 605–606) and the protagonist of national historiography from the younger generation Dejan Medaković, can be mentioned. They were all members of the Serbian Academy. During the 1950s, when only a decade had passed since the end of the national socialist occupation of Yugoslavia, these historians did not hesitate to reestablish (through the journal *Südost-Forschungen*) ties to German scholars who had played a dubious role during occupation, as seen in the example of Schmaus. Also there were no ideological hindrances to cooperation. Most of these historians did not share the official communist view on

6 It was argued, that under communist rule a “bourgeois historiography” in the pre-war tradition was suppressed, that historians had to subordinate their research and concepts under the “laws” of dialectical materialism. Research however has shown that there was manoeuvring-space to keep the traditional concepts of a national centered historiography also under condition of state socialism.

the victorious resistance and on collaborators being criminals and morally inept persons. For those historians, their cooperation with the journal *Südost-Forschungen* was something that was absolutely without question. They were deeply convinced in the function of history as a national master-narrative, based on unequivocal scientific research. In this way, old ties from the pre-war era were formative for research and the conceptualization of history even in a time that was often perceived as a complete rupture (“Stunde Null”). It is even more remarkable that such continuities of a nationally centered history could overcome as well new barriers like the “iron curtain”. For the Yugoslav/Serbian part, this had a stabilizing effect. For at least two decades, such a concept of history – besides all the challenges – remained dominant in the societal contexts in Yugoslavia and West Germany that are examined here.

Actually, the prominent example of *Südost-Forschungen* illustrates in detail what contacts meant in that period. It is important to keep in mind the shared concept of historicism in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the “peaceful coexistence” of scholars from all possible backgrounds from East and West with the backdrop of the Cold War as will be shown. The editorial board of *Südost-Forschungen* was proud of that, noting that the only criteria for a contribution were “scientific quality” and holding “to strictly scientific criteria”. It is remarkable that there was no explicit ideological antagonism in this grouping of authors from Germany, Yugoslavia, the Soviet-Bloc, Greece, and particularly the authors exiled from the new countries which adopted state socialism.

Most Serbian authors during the 1950s and 1960s shared the foundational premises of the uniqueness and distinctiveness of national history in the sense of German historicism (IGGERS & POWELL 1990). In this common approach a contradiction appears: Uniqueness as a general feature of the nation in a historical perspective contains necessarily the need to define the distinctive space of the nation. As Ivan Čolović has pointed out, the “spiritual national space” corresponds to the practical demands of political elites for territorial expansion (ČOLOVIĆ 2011). Thus this shared concept of historicism (as it was developed along the lines of Chakrabarty in the beginning of this article), produces a competition between the single concepts of national history and space which is of course not limited to the sphere of discourse. In the 1950s and 1960s, most of the German scholars from this field did not call into question the mentioned historicist approach and its inherent contradictions. It was rather a question of individual preference as to which of the master-narratives in the Balkans (Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek, etc.) was their favorite one – but without putting national history under critical scrutiny. This was something that gained relevance as well in the historical discipline during the 1980s.

The consequence of such indifference towards the inherent contradictions, or better, the self-evidence of historiography as primarily a national business, required a particularly delicate finesse with international contacts, especially at huge conferences which attained the quality of a meeting of diplomats: the criteria of critique were aimed not at methodological or theoretical presuppositions, but whether they were right or wrong from the perspective of “one’s own country” or from those of the preferred master-narrative. This contradiction of transfers and entanglements in the sphere of historiography, limited as it was to exclusivist national master-narra-

tives, is best illustrated by the establishment of the *Association Internationale d'études du Sud-Est Européen* (AIESEE) in 1963 in Bucharest, under the umbrella of UNESCO (HÖSCH 2005: 107–119). AIESEE was an exceptional enterprise which tried to establish scientific exchange (beyond the boundaries of the Cold War) within the Balkans in its complex constellations and with its different ideological cleavages, for example, among Albania, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Bulgaria. Even more, AIESEE also involved scholars from Central and Western Europe. German scholars participated in an institutionalized way: the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, hereinafter DFG) initiated the Working Group South Eastern Europe (Arbeitskreis Südosteuropa) which functioned as the national committee from Western Germany at the AIESEE conferences. Once again Alois Schmaus emerged as a protagonist of exchange with the colleagues from southeastern Europe. He institutionalized the working group in the frame of DFG (HÖSCH 2005). Those ties were strengthened in the following years when particularly Klaus Detlev Grothusen promoted further collaboration with scholars from the Balkans (HÖSCH 2005). Thus orientation towards exchange became an integral part of scholarly work in West Germany.

But exchange, as alluded to, did not imply a critical questioning of the assumptions and convictions which were fundamental to the concept of national historiographies. It was rather something that was mentioned by Rudi Supek (above) as a critique of such types of conferences: the presentation of “national achievements”. As Leopold Kretzenbacher noted in a retrospective on the AIESEE in Sofia, “tact and diplomatic skills” were needed in order to avoid fruitless polemics, for example, on the issue of Macedonia and its history (KRETZENBACHER 1966). The preparation of such congresses did not seem different from political summits in the Cold War era. In his memoirs, Dimitrije Đorđević described how he met with Nikolai Todorov before the congress in order to exchange papers and review if there might be something offensive that could perhaps produce conflicts at the conference between the Yugoslav and the Bulgarian delegation. They exchanged and discussed each other’s papers. As Đorđević recalled, Todorov even wanted Đorđević to indicate in writing that he had found nothing offensive in his presentation (ĐORĐEVIĆ 2000). Nevertheless, a conflict broke out on the conference concerning the term “Bulgarian lands” used by the historians from Sofia for what is nowadays Macedonia (ĐORĐEVIĆ 2000).

Thus the function of such conferences was less to produce entanglements in a theoretical and methodological perspective, but rather primarily to follow the state of the historiographical art in the different societies. It becomes obvious here that at most we are observing fragile networks here, seriously lacking a reflexive dimension, by which is meant a mutual examination or questioning of the theoretical premises of the scholarly work.⁷ It has to be stressed that the networks of historians were not fragile in a precarious sense of being permanently threatened in their establishment.

7 Outside the institutional frame in the Yugoslav/Serbian case there were also personal contacts and friendships with German colleagues, who were not formalized outside the personal sphere. Thus it was possible for Đorđević to undertake an extensive visit to German Universities where chairs existed that were in one or the other way connected with South-eastern Europe.

The gaps in understanding were systematically inherent in the hermetic national history that the majority of historians were practicing in the countries espousing state socialism. At the same time these fragile networks gradually ceased when a new generation increasingly came to the fore during the 1970s. From that time onward, such networks have been replaced by individual and occasional contacts, particularly in the case of Yugoslavia where restraints were not that limiting. Such individual contacts also focused on distinctive topics, situated in the sphere of social history and other approaches beyond the national master-narrative.

Obstinate Ways of Entanglement: Praxis Philosophy and Critical Theory

Seen in the light of the above explanations, the connection between the German Critical Theory of Society and the Yugoslav philosophy of the *Praxis*-circle, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is not arbitrarily constructed a posteriori, nor inspired by the present boom in approaches that focus on entanglements and transfers. Rather, the channel for this connection was already in practice and the Yugoslavian debates were discernible in Western Germany in the 1970s. Actually this was the period of the highest level of awareness of the Yugoslavian way of self-management in general and this theoretical current in particular. As the weekly *Der Spiegel* emphasized:

“The Orthodox Left encountered a virus in the Journal *Praxis*, which they had diagnosed in the shape of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School: the rebellion against their Diamat (dialectic materialism), which allows philosophy to be only a reflection of real relationships [...]. In contrast to Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, however, the *Praxis*-Philosophers in fact developed their critique of capitalism and socialism in a socialist country [...]. Many of them, like Supek and Vranicki, were part of the Yugoslav Resistance movement and had suffered after the war – as Gajo Petrović expressed it – ‘under the impression of external force in the name of prospective liberty’” (*Der Spiegel* 10/1970: 170–174).⁸

Five years later, looking back, the weekly resumed: “It was the merit of the *Praxis*-Circle that Yugoslavia became a Mecca of democratic socialism for the New Left throughout the world. It seemed to prove that socialism and freedom could indeed be compatible” (*Der Spiegel* 6/1975: 81).⁹

The medium which was transporting such new insight in Yugoslavia, obviously arousing curiosity among Western intellectuals, was the philosophical journal *Praxis*. In 1964 the first issue of the journal appeared. One year later the publication of a parallel international edition began, containing mostly translations in English, French, and German of the articles in the Yugoslav edition (PETROVIĆ 1973: 745–758). They made up to 70 to 80 per cent of the texts, accompanied also by translated

8 Interview, “Diese Welt muss überschritten werden”. Interview with the members of the Editorial Board of the Yugoslav Journal “Praxis” Gajo Petrovic und Milan Kangrga (*Der Spiegel* 10/1970: 170–174).

9 Interview with Ernst Bloch about the stroke against the Yugoslav Journal “Praxis”: “Jugoslawien nagelt die Flagge an den Mast” (*Der Spiegel* 6/1975: 81).

contributions from other Yugoslav journals such as *Naše Teme* (Zagreb), *Gledišta* (Belgrade), *Pregled* (Sarajevo) (PETROVIĆ 1973: 747).

In the Journal – published by the Croatian Philosophical Society – there first appeared the theoretical blueprints of the “Zagreb School”, namely by Milan Kangrga (SEKULIĆ 1993: 807–810), Gajo Petrović, Rudi Supek (VRANICKI 1993: 807–810) and Predrag Vranicki.¹⁰ Soon a joint Yugoslav editorial board was established mostly composed of theoreticians from Zagreb and Belgrade, among them Zagorka Golubović (GOLUBOVIĆ 2013), Ljubomir Tadić (DRAGOVIĆ 2003: 185) and Mihailo Marković (JAKŠIĆ 2010). From then onwards, the journal *Praxis* was published by the Yugoslav Philosophical Society.

The orientation towards a reading public and the inclusion of discussions from outside Yugoslavia was a genuine element of this theoretical orientation. In the perceptions of the members of the editorial board, critique and emancipation were components of a common universal process. The aim to critically define societal contradictions in Yugoslavia was actually settled by means of a broader discussion of those very notions from a universal perspective.

As Petrović pointed out, “the aim of the International Edition is not the ‘representation’ of Yugoslav thought abroad, but the stimulation of international philosophical collaboration in the debate on the decisive questions of our time. (...) This way, we represent Yugoslav philosophy as participants in global happenings, and not as a national specialty satisfying the needs of an eccentric view from outside” (PETROVIĆ 1973: 751).

The editorial board of the International Edition of the Journal (which began publishing in 1965) gathered in addition to the editors of the Yugoslav edition, colleagues from abroad and documented an interest in relationships beyond the limits of East and West. Nearly all relevant intellectuals who were interested in Marxist philosophy beyond Stalinist dogmatism were on that board: from Herbert Marcuse to Jürgen Habermas, Lucien Goldmann, and later also Zygmunt Baumann.

The *Praxis*-Philosophy summer school on the Adriatic island of Korčula, initiated in 1964, expressed such a need for a discussion that crossed the borders of the Cold War. The summer school did not remain within the bonds of academic routine, or as Supek formulated it: “instead of academic instruction in questions of education in a narrow sense, Korčula grew to be a societal happening, an origin of action and thought, going far beyond its formal limits” (SUPEK 1973: 563–574). This was inherent to the “principles” of the summer school, as Supek called it. The self-understanding of the participants became evident as “deeply engaged persons, and not as disciplined functionaries” (SUPEK 1973: 565). The openness towards different Marxist and other theoretical orientations, and also to “new ideas” that emerged both in Western and Eastern Europe was essential for this kind of self-understanding (SUPEK 1973: 569). This also resulted in the decision to invite individual intellectuals, and not national (read: state) delegations, as was customary at official congresses. Thus Supek explained the fact that during the ten years the summer school took place, there were

10 His main opus was translated in German and had several editions: Predrag VRANICKI: *Geschichte des Marxismus*, 2. vol. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp 1974 (First Edition).

participants from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Hungary, but not a single philosopher from Bulgaria or the Soviet Union joined the meetings on the Adriatic island (SUPEK 1973: 569). The latter nations preferred to send delegations, and not individual persons, to represent the “newest achievements” in the field of philosophy in their countries – so they did not attend the summer school on Korčula.

Ways of Establishing Contacts and Exchange

In the following I will briefly focus on a prominent theoretician of *Praxis*, namely Gajo Petrović (1927–1993), in order to explain what were at the time the various ways of coming into contact with intellectuals abroad and how entanglements developed. Soon after the end of the World War II, Gajo Petrović (having been a participant in the liberation movement and being a prospective student of philosophy) went to study for two years in the Soviet Union. Petrović received a grant to study in Leningrad and Moscow beginning in 1946 and then returning in 1948 when relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union seriously deteriorated. His correspondence and later published articles about his experiences in the Soviet Union and about the meaning and place of philosophy within that society reveal a distanced view of the Soviet understanding of philosophy (PETROVIĆ 2001: 2). Up to this point, Petrović had had an intensive experience of the Soviet way of life and thinking, but he then intensified his contacts to Western scholars. In 1957, his contacts were established by an invitation and a research grant for one year in Great Britain where he became acquainted with analytical philosophy. In 1961 he received a grant from the Ford Foundation, enabling him to establish close ties to American scholars and particularly to Erich Fromm, which also meant the beginning of a life-long friendship with the latter (PETROVIĆ 2001: 5). His contacts with intellectuals in West Germany were established and intensified through several grants from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation particularly in the 1970s (PETROVIĆ 2001: 7).

Besides these avenues that permitted one to maintain and extend contacts through grants, other encounters of Yugoslav and Western philosophers were very often initiated consciously through reviews. Robert C. Tucker, an American expert on Soviet ideology as well as Marxism, describes how he got into contact with the *Praxis*-circle, attracted by the idea of a Yugoslav journal dealing with global issues. With curiosity, he took to reading the journal: “To my great surprise, when I opened the edition of 1965 I found on its pages a review of my book “Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx”, published in 1961 [...]. I was surprised by the friendly although not uncritical approach of Petrović towards my book”. The result was that he made personal acquaintance with him at the next opportunity: “As I intellectually already knew Gajo Petrović through this review in *Praxis* 1965, I got to know him personally the next year, when we both participated on a conference at Notre Dame University in the US” (TUCKER 2001: 27). This is how Robert C. Tucker introduces his story of an intellectual friendship, which in the way it was established, was typical for the whole *Praxis*-circle.

These personal contacts were accompanied by a general growing interest in critical theory. It was particularly the influence of the early concepts of critical theory from Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, and Max Horkheimer (ABROMEIT 2011), which increasingly gained importance at the beginning of the 1960s in Yugoslavia

(PETROVIĆ 1986: 61). The interest in this kind of theory was not limited to a small circle of intellectuals.¹¹ The philosophers around *Praxis* initiated the translation and publication of significant works written in the Serbo-Croatian language. From 1965 on, predominantly the books of Herbert Marcuse were published, beginning with “Eros and Civilization”. Demonstrating somehow a propitious timing, *The One-dimensional Man* was published in June 1968 in the USA. A more intensive discussion of Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* developed during the 1970s in Yugoslavia (ČAČINOVIĆ-PUHOVSKI 1973: 253–270).

In a preliminary retrospect, in 1982, Gajo Petrović defined the relationship between the different representatives of critical theory as asymmetrical.

“Within this view at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, the Frankfurt School was also discovered to be the older sister who was missed at the beginning. It was an admirable elder sister with manifold talents, who had already seen and understood some important problems which were only recently noticed by the younger one, and who had reached many meaningful insights before any considerable time passed. The Zagreb Philosophers needed to expend great effort to achieve these insights themselves. The fascination was decidedly great, comparable only to that which accompanied the discovery of Ernst Bloch at the end of the 1950s. From this point on, the Frankfurt School remained for the Zagreb *Praxis* Philosophers (and naturally for other philosophers from Yugoslavia) a permanent source of instruction and inspiration” (PETROVIĆ 1986: 68).

The image of “the two sisters” which Gajo Petrović used here alludes to an identification of a common point of departure: a critical revision of classical Marxism. At the same time, it also hints at the different paths to achieve that aim. In a different historical and societal constellation in comparison with the German context, Heideggerian and Husserlian concepts received another meaning in socialist Yugoslavia than in Weimar Germany:

“The older sister observed the theoretical attempts by the younger one with more sympathy than appreciation. She observed with affectionate concern the repetition of errors of her own youth (particularly the so-called error of the young Marcuse). Thus sometimes the Zagreb Philosophy of *Praxis* was viewed as a phenomenological variant of Marxism, sometimes as a Heidegger-izing of Marx, and sometimes also as an anthropocentric philosophy, which by pretending a de-Stalinization, threw overboard essential positions of Marxism” (PETROVIĆ 1986: 68).

Thus the reasons for this asymmetry could be found first of all in the different perceptions of philosophy: in contrast to the adherents of critical theory, Petrović and others still held to the notion of philosophy as a system. Critical theory on the other

11 “Generally it must be stated that the ‘Frankfurt School’ pushed open doors. This connection of Marxism and Psychoanalysis brought us new insights”. Interview with Alija Hodžić, “Die Interpretation allein ist schon ein Ereignis” (KANZLEITER/STOJAKOVIĆ 2008: 60).

hand, particularly as conceptualized by Horkheimer in the 1930s, departing from their critique of “traditional theory,” rejected the idea of a system of ideas free of contradictions, dealing with phenomena exclusively within the sphere of thought (ABROMEIT 2011).

At first glance it may appear as a contradiction, but to a certain extent this difference was also a result of a shared approach, a point of departure for reflection on the relationship between theory and extra-theoretical experience. As Detlev Claussen emphasizes, the crucial points of critical theory by Horkheimer and Adorno are the systematic importance of extra-theoretical impulse from societal experience. In contrast to traditional theory, which was dealing with problems within the immanence of academic scholarship, critical theory is driven by the question of the possibility of emancipation of the individual from multifaceted oppression affecting the living conditions as well as the modes of self-consciousness (heteronomy) (CLAUSSEN 1995: 7–22). This also characterizes the formation of *Praxis* philosophy centering on the term “revolution”, aiming to change those conditions which hinder the promised emancipation of individuals under the conditions of state socialism (PETROVIĆ 1978). Petrović and others postulated the necessity of the autonomy of philosophy in order to establish first of all the possibility of autonomous thinking and to protect the concepts of Praxis from the interference of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, as well as to point out the difference to Marxism-Leninism as legitimating the current power structures. Thus the insistence was on the relevance of the autonomy of philosophical thinking derived from the experience of the power-relations in state socialism. As paradoxical as it may seem, the difference in their perception and understanding of philosophy was rooted in their shared valuation of the extra-theoretical experience. The different conditions in western societies and those of state-socialism produced different ways to keep up the idea or aim of emancipation. Also in general, Gajo Petrović spoke in his conclusion of a “critical appropriation” beyond “the named differences” (PETROVIĆ 1978: 88).

Finally, Petrović presented his retrospect at a meeting in Germany, organized by Albrecht Wellmer and Axel Honneth. Thus, despite all differences with regard to the theoretical approach, contacts with the representatives of a current of critical theory were maintained as well after the abolishment of the journal *Praxis*. The fact that the differences could be named showed that there was a basis for common understanding. It was a precondition for detecting the differences within both concepts in order to continue the discussions. Contacts continued as well beyond the existence of the summer school.¹²

Beyond its orientation towards the classical phenomenological tradition, which of course was not shared by all *Praxis*-members, increasingly in the 1970s the circle around *Praxis* criticized political and social developments in Yugoslavia. Suspicions and pressure coming from the Yugoslav communists were present from the very beginning. At first they were tamed by the great prestige that *Praxis* enjoyed internationally. And this was visible in the prominent guests of the summer school such as Herbert Marcuse, Ernst Bloch, and others, as well as in the public attention received

12 Those contacts were continued within the frame of the official Dubrovnik meetings.

in western magazines, and finally in the numerous letters of solidarity to the editors and the protest to the Yugoslav leadership when the journal was shut down. But this was the case only until criticism by the *Praxis*-circle started becoming increasingly sharper and more and more open. In 1974, both, the journal and the summer school were shut down by the Yugoslav government. The Belgrade colleagues involved in the journal *Praxis* were expelled from Belgrade University in 1975. This was the end of an institutionalized form of a critique of the society.

The relationship of intellectuals towards power and institutions as a way to understand fragile networks

Thus a two-part conclusion might easily be drawn: on one hand, philosophers and sociologists creating exchanges on a shared common basis, but stressing the *differen-tia specifica* in their joint approach towards a critique of society from a universal perspective. On the other hand, there were historians sharing a common approach in a historical understanding of a national past, but at the same time not reflecting on its legitimizing function. The latter kind of exchange seemed to be limited to the prevention of open polemics about the single variations of the master-narratives.

Naturally such a conclusion remains simplistic: One need only think of Mihailo Marković, who was mentioned in the beginning of this chapter and who saw in 1989 the *Weltgeist* at work only in Montenegro. To make it a little bit more complex: in the 1970s Mihailo Marković in particular and his colleagues from Belgrade tried to intensify their exchange with Western scholars. After the shutting down of the journal *Praxis* and being removed from the university, it was of existential importance to maintain their ties to philosophers in the United States and Europe.

Marković even went further: at the beginning of the 1980s, he was the one to revive *Praxis* as a new journal named *Praxis International*. This venture was opposed by a great number of his colleagues from Zagreb, who sought to fundamentally re-think the category “Praxis” as a philosophical concept. For the Belgrade intellectual circle, *Praxis International* was a rare opportunity to institutionalize contacts to the scientific public particularly at an international level, as they no longer had access to Belgrade University. Eventually *Praxis International* was established in 1981.¹³ The editors were Mihailo Marković, Richard J. Bernstein and Ferenc Feher. The newly launched journal developed into a forum where American and Western European left wing intellectuals together with their colleagues from Eastern Europe and particularly Yugoslavia tried to elaborate concepts according to the questions put forward in the inaugural editorial.

How can one explain the shift towards nationalism by critical intellectuals such as Mihajlo Marković in the 1990s? Particularly if one considers that he pushed the project *Praxis International* energetically against all the reservations from his Yugoslav

13 From the Editorial of this new venture: „Praxis International, a journal that will seek to carry on the spirit and work of the Yugoslav journal Praxis in the new historical conditions of the 1980’s, and on a larger international scale, in all those countries where progressive intellectuals and independent critical Marxists share similar aspirations and commitments“. (1) “The 1970’s have brought into focus a number of issues that were not adequately discussed in Praxis” (4).

colleagues? Because of the shortage of space, I will limit myself to some suggestions concerning the impact and the limitations of theoretical transfers by intellectuals in Yugoslavia, be they historians, sociologists, or philosophers.

Firstly, it is important to see that all these intellectuals gathered around *Praxis* were far from being a homogenous group in terms of their theoretical approaches. In contrast to Gajo Petrović, Mihailo Marković did not understand the philosophical term *Praxis* (after which the journal was named) as an epistemological category, but over time more and more as a concrete perspective for establishing a just and egalitarian socialist collective. The latter can be seen as in continuity with his views since the 1960s, evolving eventually from 1989 onward into the replacement of socialist with a nationalist terminology, but keeping the egalitarian collective as a goal. Marković also differed from a great part of his Belgrade colleagues from the *Praxis* context in his conviction that the universalism as inherent in critical thought and the national as something particularistic could be reconciled with each other (JAKŠIĆ 2010).

Such differences became explicit in various polemics among the intellectuals gathered formerly around the *Praxis*-circle, criticizing Marković and others for their nationalist turn beginning in 1987. It is not by chance that a change involving the editors of *Praxis International* took place in 1986. The former editors were replaced by Seyla Benhabib and Svetozar Stojanović, who also abandoned the previous orientation to “Humanist Marxism” and replaced it with a discussion of the new theoretical challenges coming from post-modern philosophy, as well as the emerging interest in the term “Civil Society”. *Praxis International* lost its importance for Marković. Exactly from that time on, he maintained a presence in the Serbian public by writing texts and giving interviews in prominent journals and news magazines in conformity with the new leadership of the party under Slobodan Milošević. Beginning in 1989 he was in charge of the ideological reorientation of the former Serbian League of Communists which had been transformed into the Socialist Party of Serbia.

Secondly, it is important to keep in mind that intellectual circles/milieus in socialist Yugoslavia were formed less around scientific disciplines and were even less closed as entities. Here it was a fluidity of ideas and mobility between political fronts that was more characteristic, as well as permanently changing boundaries of loyalty and criticism towards party rule. For instance, the above mentioned historians claimed afterwards that they had been suppressed by the Yugoslav government because of their critical attitude – however, there was no record of such dissident activity. Particularly in the second half of 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, a heterogeneous opposition emerged in the public sphere, particularly in Belgrade, representing intellectuals and scholars from all possible ideological origins. The common denominator was quite abstract: general dissatisfaction with the development of Yugoslavia. It was not until the second half of the 1980s that the differences within this very colorful coalition were articulated.

Thirdly, and of particular importance, is that on the surface these differences could be explained by pointing out the different attitudes towards nation and nationalism. But such differentiation implies a more general and fundamental question about the relationship of intellectuals towards society and power, which is of crucial importance for our topic of networks and exchange. One intellectual school refused to follow the new ethno-nationalist movement which was rising at that time, whereas

many historians or philosophers like Mihailo Marković became spokesmen for a “nationally awakened people”. The polemics among both groups on the relationship to nationalism also affected their relationship towards contacts and entanglements in a transnational/international dimension. It becomes clear that neither the tradition of the particular discipline, nor the attitude towards nationalism is sufficient to explain modes of contacts and exchange: “enlightened” philosophers, as well as nationalist historians, showed similar patterns of maintaining and then suddenly cutting contacts.

What seems to be crucial overall is the self-understanding of the scholars mentioned with regard to their societal position: did they perceive themselves as persons trying to save the possibility of autonomous thinking under the conditions of authoritarian rule? Or on the other hand, did they perceive themselves as important representatives of the national collective striving to promote the (yet) unaccepted truth of national history to the internal public as well as to the scientific public abroad? This question concerning the relationship of intellectuals towards autonomous intellectual practice in (the former) Yugoslavia could be identified as the driving force behind the practice of international networks.

In the second case, the transnational transfer of ideas is initiated nearly autonomously, while in the first case, the protagonists of national or socialist collectives relied rather on established institutions.

The attitude towards the possibility of acting as an autonomous intellectual implies a particular relationship towards the existing power structures. As the example of the editors of *Praxis* shows, the state apparatus could be used in a counteracting direction. Functionaries, and not only at lower levels, could be persuaded to support something about which they actually were quite skeptical. In the case of the historians, existing institutions were not used in order to undermine them for a critical purpose and thus gain autonomy. The existing institutions were even more gladly accepted by the historians in order to gain more authority in the view of the state-functionaries and to be acknowledged from the outside as truly official representatives of the nation. Many nationalist historians, while choosing the pose of dissident, took posts without hesitation in official state socialist institutions, not trying to develop alternative ones (such as that seen in the example of the summer school of Korčula). Here, contact and exchange did not move beyond the institutional limits. In contrast to Gajo Petrović and his friends’ worldview, from such a perspective, the power of the state or a powerful state were not to be questioned. The question was whether it fit the collectivist outlook. Categories such as “state”, “nation”, “national community”, “authority” were not subjected to critical scrutiny. That this could also easily have been the case with those involved in the *Praxis*-circle is shown (among others) in the example of Marković.

Thus it becomes clear, that the preparedness to create transnational networks depended on two aspects which were connected with the orientation of intellectuals within the Yugoslav society: firstly, their understanding of the position and tasks of an intellectual and, secondly, the relationship of the intellectuals towards the existing power structures. Regardless of affiliation with different scientific disciplines, two general modes of practice became visible: on the one hand, the interest in maintaining the possibility of autonomous thinking and acting, and on the other, the necessity of

being accepted as spokesmen for the national and socialist collective. While in the first case transnational networks were a self-understood necessity, in the second case it was primarily a question as to the extent that such contacts or networks could serve the goal of gaining the position as the representative of the national collective. If transnational contacts did not contribute to acquiring such a position within the national domain, they lost their importance for such intellectuals. It could be said that networks in this perspective were fragile, because the approach towards constructing and maintaining networks (as seen in the examples of the historians or Mihailo Marković) was highly instrumental; the possibility of cutting the relations off was permanently present. The opposite is true for the other current: for the *Praxis*-philosophers it was an inherent necessity of their theoretical approach to develop an exchange with colleagues from abroad. Such a kind of theory was based on a universalist concept for a critique of society. Here fragility was caused by the state functionaries trying to control and limit such exchanges – until they eventually prohibited them in 1974. Mihailo Marković showed that the quest for impact could at first be directed towards such an international forum like *Praxis* – only until he realized that the *Weltgeist* was actually at work exclusively in Montenegro.

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