

# Open Research Repository

## Phenomenology and existentialism in dialogue with Marxist humanism in Yugoslavia in the 1950s and 1960s

Item Type	Journal article
Authors	Blagojević, Una
DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s11212-022-09513-x">10.1007/s11212-022-09513-x</a>
Publisher	Springer
Rights	CC BY 4.0
Download date	2024-10-12 18:51:16
Item License	<a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/</a>
Link to Item	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14018/13814">http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14018/13814</a>



# Phenomenology and existentialism in dialogue with Marxist humanism in Yugoslavia in the 1950s and 1960s

Una Blagojević<sup>1</sup>

Accepted: 5 September 2022  
© The Author(s) 2022

## Abstract

The paper looks at how Marxist humanists around the Yugoslav philosophical journal *Praxis* engaged with existentialist and phenomenological categories. After presenting the early 1950s critiques of existentialism in Yugoslavia, the paper considers how the categories used by the representatives of existentialism (and phenomenology) were interpreted and incorporated by Yugoslav Marxist humanists in the 1960s.

**Keywords** Marxism · Existentialism · Phenomenology · Yugoslavia · Marxist humanism

In 1953, Boris Žihelr, the Slovenian philosopher and Communist Party ideologue, reflected on the role of existentialist literature in Yugoslavia. He lamented that the literary works of the contemporary existentialists—in particular, Jean-Paul Sartre and his circle of friends (Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and others)—were viewed by the Yugoslavian readership “as the highest achievements of the contemporary literature, and as examples that ought to be followed” (Žihelr 1953, p. 323). Coupled with Sartre’s expressed support for the Soviet Union in his essay “The Communists and Peace,”<sup>1</sup> many communists were persuaded that he was indeed a “fellow traveler.” Žihelr rejected this and countered that existentialism proper, along with its adherents, unavoidably perpetuated bourgeois philosophy.

Žihelr’s article was published in the Yugoslav political magazine *Nova misao* [New Thought], which, as historian Nick Miller writes, “helped define both the literature and politics of the era” (Miller 2007, p. 70). Founded by Milovan Đilas in 1953, the journal gave a creative voice to the “struggle of opinion” that was proclaimed by the Yugoslav Communist Party in the wake of the 1948 Tito–Stalin split (Miller 2007, p. 70). More importantly Đilas himself, alongside Edvard Kardelj and Žihelr, formed

---

<sup>1</sup> See Sartre (1952).

---

✉ U. Blagojević  
[blagojevic\\_una@phd.ceu.edu](mailto:blagojevic_una@phd.ceu.edu)

<sup>1</sup> Central European University, Vienna, Austria

the inner circle of the Yugoslav Communist Party in the 1930s and held important positions during and after the Second World War. After the Tito–Stalin split, Đilas, Kardelj, and Zihelr participated in the critique of Stalinism and engaged in crucial debates on Yugoslavian self-managing socialism. The Yugoslav leadership argued that self-managing socialism was a humanist type of socialism that radically distinguished Yugoslavia from the bureaucratic socialism of the Soviet Union (Jović 2011). In practice, this meant the adoption of the Law on Workers’ Self-Government, which Tito defined at the National Assembly of the FNRJ in 1950 as “the act of handing over the factory to the workers,” the introduction of social property, as well as the “distance of the party from the ruling machine” (Bing 2019, p. 5 (Bilandžić 1985, pp. 171–172 quoted in Bing)).

Several members within the Yugoslavian literary community echoed their support for these humanist expansions. During the Congress of Yugoslav Writers in 1952, Miroslav Krleža, an important Yugoslav and Croatian writer, gave a lecture entitled “On the freedom of speech.” His talk symbolized a new approach to cultural politics in Yugoslavia, announcing an official break with the Soviet model of culture. During this period, Milovan Đilas published a series of articles (1953–1954) calling for further democratization, “envisioning a new democratic mass politics which transcended ethnic divisions” in Yugoslavia (Trenscényi et al. 2018, p. 12). These pronouncements had an impact due to the relatively “open ideological situation in Yugoslavia, in the early 1950s, when the freedom of cultural creativity was formally embraced in official theory, and to a limited extent, encouraged in practice as well,” as the author of *Praxis: Marxist Criticism and Dissent in Socialist Yugoslavia* (1977), Gerson Sher, explained. Such cultural contributions greatly influenced the development of Marxist philosophy in Yugoslavia, and more specifically, its cultivation of a Marxist humanism (Sher 1977, pp. 262–263).<sup>2</sup>

The emergence of this anti-Stalinist and critical stream of thought in East-Central Europe has been linked with the processes of de-Stalinization and the recognition of “national roads to socialism” in socialist countries during the period after Nikita Khrushchev’s ‘Secret Speech’ of 1956.<sup>3</sup> Marxist humanism was seen as a counterpoint to the Stalinist approach to Marxism–Leninism, and as such aimed to reintroduce a concept of man (and more importantly, man as the main actor of history), alienation, and freedom into Marxist theory (Trenscényi et al. 2018, p. 371). Due to Yugoslavia’s comparatively early split with the Soviet Union, the development of Marxist humanism paralleled the development of the ideological and institutional infrastructure of Titoism.

Simultaneously, Yugoslavia’s “turn” to the West (in the political sphere, but also culturally and scientifically), that “signaled Yugoslavia’s intention to find a new way to improve its cultural and scientific life through fostering unlimited cultural and political cooperation worldwide, particularly with the West,” reflected also in the field

<sup>2</sup>For example, one of the most important laws in post-1948 Yugoslavia was the Law on Self-management (1950), which expressed the Yugoslav Communist Party’s dedication to socialist humanism. The newly established self-management was supposed to be a practice through which humans would outgrow their alienation and their reduction to a mere means, which was understood to be the main characteristic of labor in capitalist societies. On Marxist humanism in Yugoslavia and in East Central Europe, see Sher 1977, Stefanov 2013.

<sup>3</sup>On entanglements between nationalism and communism see Marinov and Vezekov 2014, Kopeček 2019.

of philosophy (Perišić 2017, p. 285). This opening accelerated the engagement with the contemporary philosophical schools of existentialism and phenomenology. One of the most essential movements in Yugoslav Marxist thought during this period was the “rediscovery” of the humanistic aspect of Marxism, which stemmed from Hegel’s category of alienation (or self-estrangement) found in the early works of Karl Marx. Coupled with Sartre’s treatment of humanism as a central category in his essay “Existentialism is a Humanism” (1946), this return to the category of alienation and its humanistic trajectory was at the same time a point of constant negotiation within the Yugoslav intellectual elite.

The younger generation of Marxist humanist philosophers and sociologists established the journal *Praxis*, and its affiliated Korčula Summer School, which became two internationally important platforms for dialogue between “West” and “East” and, more specifically, between existentialism, phenomenology, and Marxism. The common humanistic tropes found in the mentioned streams of thought—man, history, and alienation—were incorporated into a Marxist framework in various ways.

Given this background, this article looks at the 1950s engagement with existentialism and phenomenology in Yugoslavia by framing it as essential in shaping the Marxist humanist discourse of the 1960s. While attention has mainly been paid to Marxist humanists around the journal *Praxis* in the 1960s, this article aims to present a more nuanced understanding of the narrative of existentialist entanglements with Marxism in Yugoslavia by introducing some encounters with existentialism in the early 1950s.<sup>4</sup> Thus, by looking at some examples during the 1950s—a crucial period in which different interpretations of Marxism–Leninism in Yugoslavia started to emerge and coexist—this paper argues for the need to uncover early Marxist debates in Yugoslavia to better understand the plurality of philosophical approaches, as well as their later syntheses. While this article focuses on specific intellectuals, the goal is to illustrate the existing discourses and debates in Yugoslavia that shaped the reception of existentialism.

This essay does not, however, represent the comprehensive exchange between existentialism and phenomenology in Yugoslavia. Instead, it primarily focuses on a group of intellectuals that became the most important representatives of Yugoslav Marxist humanism both at home and abroad. Furthermore, the paper does not specifically focus on the major figures of Western existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger (or their mentor, the “father” of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl); rather, it considers how the categories used by these representatives were interpreted and analyzed by Yugoslav Marxist humanists.

## The historiographic background: de-Stalinization and dissidence

The historiographic background of this article concerns debates on the different approaches to the issue of “Stalinization” in East-Central Europe, but also studies examining the existence of phenomenology and existentialism in East-Central Europe and

<sup>4</sup>The philosophical journal *Praxis* was established in 1964 by intellectuals at the Philosophical Faculty in Zagreb; they were soon joined by their colleagues from Belgrade. Alongside *Praxis*, the Korčula Summer School was an international and physical space for encounters between intellectuals during the Cold War.

their influence on dissident movements in these countries (see Tismaneanu 2009). More recent literature has started to question the previous studies of Stalinism in East-Central Europe, asking whether the period of Stalinism was as uniform and monolithic as asserted by the post-1989 literature. In asking the question of whether the process of Stalinization was identical in different countries in Central Europe, John Connelly in *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945–1956* analyzes the extent to which separate national traditions continued to exist throughout the Stalinist period in Central Europe, creating different contexts for politics and social experiences. From his perspective, different contexts mattered as he argues that: “The soundness of the socialist edifice depended on its foundations” (Connelly 2000, p. 3). Similarly, in his study *The Nation Should Come First: Marxism and Historiography in East-Central Europe*, Maciej Górny stresses continuity in socialist countries: national historiographic production in Poland and Czechoslovakia, he explains, had clear ties with its antecedents in the interwar period. This was partly an issue of legitimation: communists looked to national culture and national history as areas to build support for their legitimacy. Seen from this perspective, Marxist approaches to national historiography looked for national-historical events which could be understood as examples of the nation’s long-term progressive traditions. As Adela Hîncu succinctly states in her introduction in *Social Sciences in the Other Europe since 1945*: “new perspectives on the postwar period further destabilized the monolithic view of an all-encompassing transformation imposed on passive actors from the outside, to emphasize processes of negotiation, transfer, compromise, and adaptation in political, economic, social, and cultural areas” (Hîncu 2018, p. 5).

Such shifts in literature, alongside a move away from the totalitarian Cold War paradigm, are reflected in the historiography of dissident movements in East-Central Europe (Falk 2011, p. 322ff). Recent literature points out a close connection between the Czechoslovak dissident movement and the Polish Solidarity movement that aimed to develop an original model of democracy with phenomenological intellectual traditions (Ciżewska-Martyńska 2021, p. 1). For example, Michael D. Gubser’s *The Far Reaches: Phenomenology, Ethics and Social Renewal in Central Europe* reconstructs the history of Central European phenomenology by showing that while some of the main figures of dissident movements in Central Europe—Václav Havel, Jacek Kuron, and Milan Kundera—employed phenomenology only fragmentarily, the impact of phenomenology, “however understood, galvanized thinkers and activists concerned with their modern age” (Gubser 2014, p. 21). As Gubser explains, the dissident period in Central Europe was a public effort aimed at realizing a goal essentially embedded in the phenomenological tradition: “the ethical reform of society” (Gubser 2014, p. 21). For Gubser, the Central European roots of phenomenology and its humanist orientation, dating back to Edmund Husserl’s *Crisis of European Sciences*, aided the Czechoslovak dissidents in formulating a critique of late modernity and a “framework for renewing human autonomy and community” (Gubser 2014, p. 23).

Furthermore, Aviezer Tucker in *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patočka to Havel* examines the phenomenological roots of Charter 77, mainly developed by the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka, convincingly showing the convergence between politics and existentialist philosophy. Tucker also discusses the work

of Patočka's student, Václav Havel, focusing on Havel's discussions of "everydayness" found in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, which Havel saw as applicable to everyday life in communist Czechoslovakia (Tucker 1990, p. 65). Tucker shows how the humanistic philosophies of Patočka and Havel were mobilizing in their "promotion of a just society" where people could, through their sacrifice, live authentic lives (Tucker 2000, p. 178). Thus, the main goal of these more recent studies was to reevaluate phenomenology and to show how these philosophical systems can have an emancipatory role in society, leading not to apoliticism or acceptance of power, but promoting social and ethical concerns.

In Yugoslavia, the notions of Stalinization, de-Stalinization, and dissidence had different, but not unambiguous meanings.<sup>5</sup> The communists in Yugoslavia came to power by their collective efforts and depended neither on local allies nor foreign help. Moreover, due to a disagreement with the Soviet Union over practical issues of regional policy, Yugoslavia was expelled from Cominform in June 1948, and the Yugoslav communist leadership was charged with conducting nationalist policy (Banac 1988; Skilling 1959). Furthermore, when discussing dissidence in Yugoslavia, the historiography had often emphasized that it was at the crux of nationalism and democracy where "the drama of the Yugoslav dissident movement took place" (Đorđević 1998, p. 18).

Few studies discuss existentialism and phenomenology in socialist Yugoslavia. One important contribution that outlines the debates on existentialism that existed in postwar Yugoslavia is Branislav Jakovljević's *Alienation Effects: Performance and Self-Management in Yugoslavia 1945–1991*. Jakovljević points out the multiplicity of philosophical systems in the period of the Yugoslavs' initial critique of Stalinism (that is, after 1948), that temporally overlapped with the "arrival of existentialism, which challenged both Marxist dialect [dialectical materialism] in philosophy and socialist realism in culture" (Jakovljević 2016, p. 85). Furthermore, Jakovljević highlights that the entry of existentialism also coincided with the "first serious ideological rift within Yugoslav leadership," followed by the public critique of the Yugoslav system by the high Party official Milovan Đilas (Jakovljević 2016, p. 85). In addition, Dean Komel, in his article "The Influence of Heidegger's Thought on the Development of Philosophy in Ex-Yugoslav Countries," follows the reception of Martin Heidegger in the postwar period, paying particular attention to Vanja Sutlić, one of the members of the *Praxis* circle. For Komel, just like in the interwar period, the phenomenological and existentialist philosophy offered a possible way of "overcoming the crisis of humanity" (Komel 2018, p. 646). By excavating the earlier engagement with phenomenological and existentialist traditions in 1950s Yugoslavia, this paper wishes to foreground the Yugoslav Marxists humanists' engagement with these philosophies in the 1950s and to contribute to this body of literature that aims to rethink the significance of phenomenology in European intellectual history.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>For example, Svetozar Stojanović, a member of the *Praxis* circle from Belgrade, argued that the Yugoslav socialist system was a form of "Stalinist Anti-Stalinism," see in Stojanović 2009.

<sup>6</sup>The reception of Martin Heidegger in Yugoslavia has often been linked to the 1950s. Yet as early as 1942, Kruno Pandžić, who studied with Heidegger at the University of Freiburg in 1938–1939, published his dissertation *Problem istine u filozofiji Martina Heideggera*. After the WWII, Danilo Pejović translated Heidegger's *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (the late 1950s) while Miladin Životić wrote *Hajdegerovo sh-*

## Marxism(s) in Yugoslavia after 1948: philosophical fronts

In the field of Marxist philosophy, the period after the Tito–Stalin split of 1948 was characterized as a period of considerable confusion and an intense search on the part of Yugoslav Marxist philosophers and sociologists “for theoretical justification and practical guidelines to fill the intellectual void left by Stalinism” (Gruenwald 1983, p. 62). The search for a new articulation of Marxist thought and practice—and, linked to that, a new articulation of the character of Yugoslav socialist society—stood at the forefront of these challenges (Golubović 1991; Sher 1977). The early 1950s was marked by intense debates on the meaning of philosophy, philosophy’s importance for socialist society vis-à-vis Marxism, and how philosophy should be taught at schools and universities across Yugoslavia. In addition, the “struggle of opinion” and polemics proliferated in the attempts to move away from the Soviet model of socialism (see Bošković 2011; Petranović 1982). The interest in phenomenology in postwar Yugoslavia reemerged precisely in this context of the 1950s, which was marked by a tendency to establish the autonomy of philosophy as a discipline (Šuvaković and Erjavec 2009, p. 103). As a part of these debates, philosophers, teachers, and university professors were invited to discuss different philosophical questions in order to arrive at the best possible solutions (Editorial 1953, p. 29). For that reason, it is important to highlight the continuities in terms of discourses and intellectuals who, from different positions of authority, critically engaged with the existing interpretations of Marxism in Yugoslavia in the 1950s. In the 1960s, the context for many of these intellectuals changed. A new generation of thinkers, mentored and influenced by the discussions in the 1950s, gathered around the critical, “avant-garde” *Praxis* journal and dominated the intellectual scene.

The philosopher Dušan Nedeljković is one of the few Marxist intellectuals from the interwar period who taught Marxist philosophy in socialist Yugoslavia. During the interwar period, after studying in Paris, he taught philosophy at the University of Skopje and served as the main editor of the journal *Contributions for Philosophy and Ethnopsychology*. Concurrently, he translated a part of Hegel’s *Logic* and provided a thorough Leninist commentary on it. Even in the 1980s, Nedeljković was considered to be one of the few philosophers in the country who correctly translated Hegel’s notion of *Aufheben*: as “overcoming” (*prevazilaženje*), and not “to abolish” (*ukinuti*). In postwar Yugoslavia, as one of the only Marxist professors, he assumed various important roles, and especially in the post-Tito–Stalin context, promoted the view that philosophy was supposed to help in the building of a new society by providing an ideological justification for the party line.

In the period between 1945 and 1947, Nedeljković was the president of the State Commission for the Establishment of the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators. From 1945 until the end of 1953, he was a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, where from 1947 to 1949 he served as its rector (Marić 2016, p. 72). He was mainly responsible for the revival of the Serbian Philosophical Society in 1951, which was founded by philosopher Branislav Petronijević in 1938. During the First

---

*vatanje bića i bitno mišljenje* [Heidegger’s understanding of being and important thought] (1970). Slovenian philosopher Dušan Pirjevec, who also sometimes published in *Praxis*, was an important representative of existentialism and phenomenology in the Slovenian context. On Krno Pandžić, see Komel 2016.

Philosophical Congress of the People's Republic of Serbia in 1951, he critiqued and rejected the "bourgeois idealist, mystical, racist, mechanical, and reactionary" philosophy of "old Yugoslavia" (Nedeljković 1952, p. 16). In his lecture, Nedeljković also stressed the distinguished character of Yugoslav philosophy by comparing it to philosophy in the West and the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup> In Yugoslavia, he maintained, philosophy was facing a radically novel set of problems. The political and historical stakes were high, as he claimed that

While the defeated and destroyed fascist countries Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary, and today, the guberniyas of Moscow, are rattling with their weapons, hoarding troops, and exerting thousands of trespassers on our borders, our people, in peace, think their thought [*naš narod mirno misli svoju misao*], bringing all philosophers in Belgrade, which will wisely and militantly say their word to monopolistic adventurers of East and West, a word of independence, socialist democracy and freedom. (Nedeljković 1952, p. 51)

For Nedeljković, philosophy was at the forefront of the ideological battle against both the bureaucratic Soviet Union and the bourgeois West. However, in 1953, Milovan Đilas attacked Nedeljković's lecture, *Naša filozofija u borbi za socijalizam* [Our philosophy in the fight for socialism], given at the First Congress of Philosophers in the People's Republic of Serbia (1951), accusing him of Serbian nationalism (Đilas 1953, p. 37). Most likely because of this attack, he was removed from his position at the University of Belgrade, yet Nedeljković continued to write and publish as a member of the Ethnological Institute at the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in Belgrade. By 1953, not only had Nedeljković been dethroned from his position of authority when it came to Marxist philosophy in Yugoslavia, he was also regarded as a dogmatic Stalinist by the new generation of philosophers and sociologists gathered around the journal *Praxis* (*Praxis* Editorial 1973).

His contemporary, Zagorka Mičić, is considered the first representative of phenomenology in Serbia (Šajković 1982; Prole 2019). She spent the early 1930s in Freiburg studying phenomenology under Edmund Husserl, becoming part of an inner circle of his students there at the time, including Jan Patočka, Eugen Fink, Roman Ingarden, Ludwig Landgrebe, and Fritz Kaufmann (Prole 2020, p. 204). Her dissertation about Husserl's philosophy was published as a book in 1937, and Eugen Fink, a phenomenologist who would later be in close contact with the *Praxis* philosophers in the 1960s, wrote its foreword.<sup>8</sup> For Mičić, it was significant that Husserl linked scientific knowledge, which he considered to be also a philosophical knowledge, with the problems of human life (Mičić 1973, p. 144). She saw the importance of Husserl in his approach to philosophy as a science that highlights "the responsible application of knowledge in humanity," as opposed to viewing them as two separate claims (Mičić 1973, p. 144). From 1954 until 1972, she taught philosophy at the University

<sup>7</sup>Dušan Nedeljković's assistant, Mihailo Marković (a future member of the *Praxis* circle) presented a critique of Soviet Marxism in a paper: *Revizija filozofskih osnova marksizma u Sovjetskom Savezu* [Revision of the philosophical basis of Marxism in the Soviet Union], published later by Srpsko filozofsko društvo in 1952.

<sup>8</sup>It should be noted that as an intermediary, Eugen Fink was, "at least in part, also responsible for the first analytical reception of Heidegger's thought in Yugoslavia" (Kornel 2018, p. 646).



of Skopje. During this period, she also adopted Marxism, approaching it as a “critique of all that exists,”<sup>9</sup> and as a philosophy that ought to be open to other philosophical ideas and streams.

At the beginning of 1952, Dušan Nedeljković presented controversial lectures (“Contradictions and Fronts of Contemporary Philosophy”) at the People’s University Kolarac in Belgrade. Discussing the limits of the classics of Marxism—Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Vladimir Illich Lenin—these lectures were one the first instances of the critical rethinking of Marxism–Leninism in postwar Yugoslavia. More importantly, Nedeljković’s lectures triggered critical public responses from other intellectuals, including Zagorka Mičić, who opened the criticism of Nedeljković’s lectures in the literary journal *Književne novine* [Literary papers]. Mičić was joined by other Marxist intellectuals, Vuko Pavićević and Ivan Laća, who also publicly polemized with Nedeljković in the same journal. This public debate should be placed within the general context of rethinking the role of philosophy vis-à-vis Marxism–Leninism in Yugoslavia, which continued to be a prominent theme among philosophers in the 1960s. In the 1950s, however, these conversations primarily aimed to establish a philosophical approach to Marxism that radically differed from that of the Soviet Union. After 1948, the Soviet approach to Marxism–Leninism was labeled as *informbirovština* (signifying the fact that it was directed by the Cominform) and vulgar materialism. As a response to such a distorted interpretation of Marxism–Leninism, Yugoslav party intellectuals such as Ivan Ribar—who was, at the time, the Chairman of the Presidium of the National Assembly—argued for the importance of morality in Lenin’s writings and rejected the “*informbirovština*” approach, which argued that there could be no ethics in Marxism (Ribar 1953, p. 15).

In his lectures, Nedeljković’s critique of the classics implied the Yugoslav philosopher’s authority to reframe the existing interpretations in Marxism–Leninism, but also to establish a specific Yugoslav understanding of Marxist thought. Instead of consulting the previously studied interpretations, his role was to assess the long-standing debates on materialism and idealism. Yet, from Mičić’s perspective, his elaboration of a dialectical relationship between materialism and idealism turned out to be unintelligible. Nedeljković’s interpretation of this relationship was paraphrased by Mičić: “idealism is one-sided, but materialism is limited, and their struggle is necessary as allows the development of philosophy” (Mičić 1952, p. 7). She maintained that this argument was inconsistent and insufficient, especially since, as she highlighted, she had to “pass through a long internal resistance” to accepting Marxist philosophy until she finally grasped the “high science and principality of the philosophical conceptions of Marxism stipulated by the classics” (Mičić 1952, p. 7). As such, Nedeljković’s arguments made her wonder whether his view could even be understood as Marxist. While she admitted that there were still not enough systematic and scientific studies of Marxist philosophy, its bases were “clearly established, as well as its path and direction of its development” (Mičić 1952, p. 7). What was implied in this debate was

<sup>9</sup>“Critique of everything that exists” became the main motto of the *Praxis* philosophers in the 1960s. In the first edition of the journal *Praxis*, the editorial expressed their rationale as follows: “We want a philosophical journal in that sense according to which philosophy is the thought of the revolution, “ruthless criticism of all that exists,” a humanist vision of the real human world and an inspirational force for revolutionary activity” (Editorial *Praxis*, 1964, p. 4).

concern over the limits of critical deconstruction of Marxism–Leninism, as well as the insufficiently developed philosophical language to explain such critical moves.

What Mičić criticized in Nedeljković’s work were the “incredible oscillations in his positions, and the insufficient consistency and firmness of his positions” (Mičić 1952, p. 7). Furthermore, she saw his critique of economism as unpersuasive and simply a way of stressing the importance and autonomy of philosophy. Nedeljković followed Lenin’s critique of economism that emphasized the importance of consciousness for the development of the workers’ movement. This position was later more widely adopted by other Yugoslav Marxist intellectuals, most prominently by Ilija Kosanović in his *Dijalektički materijalizam: uvod u osnovna pitanja marksizma* [Dialectical materialism: an introduction to the basic questions of Marxism] (1956). It could be said, however, that Mičić did not disapprove of Nedeljković’s critical approaches to Marxism–Leninism, as much as she urged him to clearly (and more critically) elaborate the type of dialectics he had in mind.

Yet, at the beginning of the 1950s, Mičić warned that “there is no Marxism, there is no Marxist science about development of society, there is no historical materialism, unless the economic factor is a decisive one, if not the only one” (Mičić 1952, p. 7). We could suggest that Mičić, as a phenomenologist who adopted a Marxist perspective, did not reject Nedeljković’s critique of economism, but argued for a more specified approach to it, one that would not introduce another version of “unphilosophical” claims reminiscent of Stalinist approaches to Marxism. Thus, the general criticism of Mičić was that Nedeljković’s lectures led to Hegelian mysticism and that they did not form clear philosophical positions and directions for Yugoslav philosophers. This is further supported by her remark stressing that her criticism of Nedeljković was not malicious but that it came from her genuine wish to put in practice a public “struggle of opinion” in philosophy.

While neither phenomenology nor Husserl were mentioned in this confrontation, it should be noted that this polemic introduced a wider debate concerning the rethinking of Marxist philosophy in Yugoslavia.<sup>10</sup> It is also not by chance that the debate was opened by a phenomenologist, Mičić, who argued for a more “scientific” and rigorous approach to Marxist philosophy and theory—and, we could add, one that would not appear ideological and dogmatic. In addition, this confrontation hints at the existence of different interpretations of Marxism–Leninism in Yugoslavia in the early 1950s, among the generation of the interwar philosophers. While looking beyond the Stalinist interpretations, both Nedeljković and Mičić argued for the need to expand the already acquired approaches to Marxism in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the confrontation between Nedeljković and Mičić, which became one of the first open critical approaches to what was previously viewed as a correct interpretation of Marxism–Leninism, help us embed the 1960s turn towards the categories of existentialism and phenomenology in a long-term perspective. At the same time, it ought to be highlighted that this turn was not uniform, and that existentialism and phenomenology simply offered a conceptual toolbox for the Yugoslav intellectuals.

In the early 1960s, Nedeljković’s assistant Mihailo Marković, alongside his colleagues and friends, formed the so-called *Praxis* circle. They stood for a more radical

<sup>10</sup>Similar debates occurred in sociology in Yugoslavia and beyond. For an overview of these debates, see Voříšek 2008, Supek 1966.

approach to Marxism, declaring *praxis* to be a central category of Marx's philosophy. As a result, the "dualism of matter and mind, object and subject, was superseded by showing how these categories can be derived from the notion of practice" (Marković and Petrović 1979, p. xxi). Marxist philosophy, according to Marxist humanists, was neither to be a handmaiden to the state with a clearly defined system, nor "genuine grounding for all time" (Pašić 1964, p. 7). Rather, according to them, philosophy ought to be a critical tool for clarifying concepts, especially when "socialism" was used as a common concept to describe Yugoslav socialism, Chinese socialism, and Soviet socialism alike. Above all, the main objective of Marxism was to be socially engaged and its primary goal was to demystify, through its criticism (and self-criticism) of all aspects of human life. To paraphrase Ljubomir Tadić from *Praxis*, philosophy was to be used as a critique—just as Marxism was to be a critical theory, and not a dogma—that would assist in dealing with the various social, cultural, and political crises.

Yugoslav philosophers, along with their colleagues from abroad who also combined Marxism and phenomenology, gathered in Sarajevo in 1967.<sup>11</sup> The participants included philosopher Vladimir Filipović (one of the founders of the Croatian Philosophical Society), Zagorka Mičić, but also the philosophers Kostas Axelos, Eugen Fink, Ludwig Landgrebe, and others. The participants agreed that one of the converging points of Marxism and phenomenology was their interest in solving the issues that were brought about by a specific moment in history (Simeunović 1967, p. 1184). At the same time, their methods of approaching these issues differed.

That is, Marxism differed from phenomenology insofar as phenomenology did not start with a prime cause of everything that exists, but rather questioned how this prime cause is constituted (Simeunović 1967, p. 1184). As Eugen Fink noted at the meeting, the existence of a "being" was not simply given (as in Hegel), but it was constituted in the very process of life (Simeunović 1967, p. 1185). At the same time, in its constitution of "being," phenomenology came close to the position of Marxist philosophy, as "being" was also not given but was constituted through human praxis (Simeunović 1967, p. 1185). Ante Pažanin, who completed his doctorate in Cologne in 1962 under the mentorship of Ludwig Landgrebe, emphasized that phenomenology and Marxism were the most significant contemporary philosophical streams, while Hegel's philosophy was a medium through which they engaged in productive dialogue (Simeunović 1967, p. 1187). What connected Hegel, Marx, and Husserl was the "progress of world history," although the phases of this history were differently expressed and articulated in their philosophies (Simeunović 1967, p. 1187).

Another important aspect of the phenomenological approach that was highlighted during this gathering was the conception of time and history. Critical thinking, as one of the participants argued, could not be satisfied with a linear understanding of time. Thus, Heideggerian and Husserlian conceptions of time—that is, time seen as "the possibility of man that is coming in the future"—could best accommodate critical Marxist thinking. While Marx argued in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* that "Communism is the riddle of history solved and it knows itself to be

<sup>11</sup>In 1967, *Praxis* had its own special section on "Phenomenology and Marxism," see, Landgrebe 1967, Axelos 1967, Prohić 1967.

this solution,” the critical Marxist humanists clarified this statement, stressing that real history cannot be planned nor calculated. In addition, as they maintained during the Bled Conference in 1961, there are no laws of nature that govern history. Instead, history is made by active people who create history in the given circumstances by creating themselves (Petrović 1967, p. 80).

## Existentialism in Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1950s: critiques and controversies

In the period immediately after 1948, existentialist philosophy was labeled as “bourgeois,” “decadent,” and “nihilistic,” despite its growing popularity (Komel 2018, p. 647). As previously mentioned, Boris Zihlerl vehemently polemicized against existentialist philosophy. For Zihlerl, Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* was an “eclectic kasha” based on the main principles taken from Søren Kierkegaard, Henri Bergson, Edmund Husserl, and pragmatism (Zihlerl 1953, p. 333). Existentialist philosophy was a philosophy of “irrationalism that denied any legitimacy [*zakonitost*] in nature and society” (Zihlerl 1953, p. 333). Zihlerl emphasized that historically, existentialism had always emerged during periods of deep crisis and destruction: in the period after the French Revolution, the First World War, the October Revolution, and after the Second World War. Neither crisis nor destruction—at least from his perspective—could characterize the contemporaneous situation of socialist Yugoslavia (Zihlerl 1953, p. 331). Another of Zihlerl’s problems with existentialism was Sartre’s focus on subjectivity, which disclosed his idealist underpinnings (Zihlerl 1953, p. 327–328).

Furthermore, the philosophical problem that existentialists presented as novel—the idea that existence came before essence—was, for Zihlerl, a general theme in the history of philosophy. Zihlerl argued that this problem was already found in Plato and Hegel, but also in Lenin (Zihlerl 1953, p. 326). He reminded readers that it was in *Materialism and Empiro-criticism* where Lenin claimed that “one cannot reject the objectivity of the general in the particular, essence in existence” (Zihlerl 1953, p. 326). Nevertheless, in showing this, Zihlerl did not reject this philosophical problem itself, but aimed to refute the existentialist monopoly over the claim.

The critique of existentialism in the 1950s did not only come from high-ranking party members, but also from the intellectuals who would eventually form the core of the self-described ‘avant-garde Marxists’ of the 1960s *Praxis* circle. Emphasizing the fact that existentialism initially appeared in the West, Rudi Supek—who spent the late 1930s studying at the Sorbonne, and was close friends with the French–Romanian Marxist theoretician Lucien Goldmann—wrote in 1951 that “an existentialist is a typical bourgeois individualist” (Supek 1950, p. 20). He welcomed Sartre’s adoption of Marxist social critique, yet he accused Sartre of denying the critique’s materialist basis. Furthermore, Supek criticized Sartre’s novels that portrayed a member of the Party to be “a man denied his own freedoms... denied his personal life, who was alienated from his humanity” (Supek 1950, p. 21). Supek’s claim was that existentialism mystified the very possibility of humanism and socialism by insisting that every kind of determinism is destructive (Supek 1950, p. 24). In the early 1950s,

when Yugoslav Marxist philosophers relied mainly on the works of “early” Marx,<sup>12</sup> existentialism appeared as an absurd, nihilistic, and inimical philosophical system that could not offer anything to radical Marxist thought.

Despite some similarities, existentialist dialectics, as Supek argued, were not as rewarding as Hegelian dialectics. In contrast, there was nothing positive in existentialist dialectics, as they led to a “complete emptiness of life” (Supek 1950, p. 78). In his effort to shatter any possible attractions to existentialism one might have, Supek quoted French Marxist Henri Lefebvre, who “himself was once an existentialist,” yet claimed:

the existentialist demagogy and mystifications uncover a type of wild recklessness—a complete Hitlerite climate wrapped skilfully in dark cynicism. Heideggerian existentialism, especially, represents the view of a lone adventurer— isolated in his consciousness. . . (Supek 1950, p. 109)

Inverting Sartre’s well-known essay “Existentialism is a Humanism,” in which Sartre stressed the individual’s responsibility and ability to move beyond given conditions, Supek claimed that “Existentialism is not humanism, it is far from any kind of humanism” (Supek 1950). Instead, existentialism was a dangerous philosophical system—in Supek’s words, “a double-edged sword” (Supek 1950, p. 109).<sup>13</sup>

While it was already problematic that the Yugoslav public had access to French existentialists’ novels and Heidegger’s philosophy, a major controversy occurred once existentialist ideas permeated the official narrative of the partisan struggle during World War Two. Slovenian novelist Edvard Kocbek, who had written about similarities between Marxism and Christian Socialists during the interwar years and had participated as a partisan in World War Two, published a book influenced by existentialism. *Strah in pogum* [Fear and Courage], published in 1951 by the state publishing house *Državna založba Slovenije*, generated a controversy that went beyond Slovenian intellectual circles. At the time, Kocbek had already entered numerous conflicts with the leading communists due to his Christian Socialist positions, and had no real political power (Gabrič 2020). Yet, the publication of the book introduced “a broad and open public discussion around a whole chain of problems that concerned not just the Slovenian, but also the entire Yugoslav literary world and public” (Fajfar 1952, p. 2). The novel’s narrative followed the internal struggles of the partisan commissars who were “fighting against their consciousness and against the external course of events,” representing the contentious approach to the partisan movement (Fajfar 1952, p. 8). According to Tone Fajfar, a former partisan commissar who wrote a review published by *Književne novine* in 1952, the book “distorted the truthfulness of the partisan struggle,” and introduced a “strange philosophy that was expressed by

<sup>12</sup>*Rani radovi: Marks i Engels* [Early Works: Marx and Engels] were published in Yugoslavia in 1953 by *Kultura* in Zagreb, and the preface was written by Predrag Vranicki, Zagreb-based philosopher and a core member of the *Praxis* circle.

<sup>13</sup>It should be noted that Supek was an editor of the short-lived journal *Pogledi* (1952–1955), which has been seen as a precursor of *Praxis*. More importantly, as Robert Đidara argues, it is precisely in this journal that one should trace the beginnings of the new critical intellectual current that characterized *Praxis* (Đidara 2018). In this paper, I suggest the need to look at other instances of critical engagements with Marxism–Leninism.

the thoughts and words of the book's heroes" (Fajfar 1952, p. 8). The book further blurred the lines between "life and death, the struggle for liberation and man's destiny in it, hate and love, vice and virtue," and according to Fajfar, falsified "the historical truthfulness of our partisan struggle, its moral value and transformative force" (Fajfar 1952, p. 8). The controversy around the reception of Kocbek's book was one example of the wider debate around existentialism in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, it overlapped with the leading communists' perceptions that a young generation of intellectuals was rejecting the ideological guidelines of the ruling Party (Gabrič 2019, p. 46).

## Dialogues with existentialism and Marxism in the 1960s: man, alienation, history

In the immediate postwar period, the first group of Yugoslav students to finish their education in Paris had gone to France as early as December 1945 (Perišić 2012). Miroslav Perišić shows in his study *Od Staljina ka Sartru: Formiranje jugoslovenske inteligencije na evropskim univerzitetima 1945–1958* [From Stalin to Sartre: Forming the Yugoslav Intelligentsia at European Universities, 1945–1958] that the majority of students who went abroad were born in 1922 and 1923, a generation old enough to fight in the People's Liberation War. After 1948, the readiness of the Yugoslav political elite to (re)establish cultural and scientific cooperation with the West—through scholarships such as the German Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung, the American Ford Foundation or Fulbright Program, and others—further opened possibilities for Yugoslav intellectuals to establish a platform such as the journal *Praxis* and its Korčula Summer School.

These experiences helped to inform the international perspective of Yugoslav philosophical and sociological work in the postwar period, especially around the mid-1950s and 1960s. Yugoslav scholarly journals often represented various "journals from abroad," mainly those from France, Germany, Britain, and America, but also from the Soviet Union. In addition, they surveyed the history of philosophy in England, Germany, and France, as well as the USSR, and the works of Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre were translated and discussed in the 1950s.<sup>14</sup>

The controversy between Heidegger and Sartre on the question of humanism and existentialism was well known among the Yugoslav intellectuals. The Slovenian literary historian Janko Kos<sup>15</sup> elaborated on the anthropocentric perspective of Heidegger's philosophy stipulated in his *Being and Time*, and more clearly in his *Letter on Humanism*, in which Heidegger responded to Sartre's "Existentialism is a Humanism" (Kos 1968, p. 1091). Kos argued that Heidegger's own philosophical thinking had a greater right to describe itself as "humanism." However, as Kos explained, Heidegger renounced this title in order not to be "stuck in the world of metaphysics and voluntaristic subjectivism" (Kos 1968, p. 1092). At the same time, Kos interpreted

<sup>14</sup>Furthermore, the journal *Praxis* published in its first number detailed analyses of Jean-Paul Sartre's oeuvre, see Pejović 1964.

<sup>15</sup>Although Kos never belonged to the *Praxis* circle, he was an important figure among the Slovenian intellectuals, especially as a contributor and a member of the editorship of the critical journal *Beseda* in the 1950s. For a detailed discussion of the Slovenian context and *Beseda*, see Gabrič 2019.

Heidegger's attempt to move beyond the metaphysical tradition as a failure, as Heidegger remained "firmly locked into the mental frameworks of his anthropocentrism" (Kos 1968, p. 1093). For Kos, this was a general issue of European humanism that harked back to anthropocentrism, and Kos concluded that "as long as philosophical thought remains within the bounds of anthropocentrism, it remains haunted by the crisis of humanism and the rise of nihilistic sentiment, even though it still strives to rise above both" (Kos 1968, p. 1093).

Marxist humanist philosophers often operated within existentialist categories that expressed "a general acknowledgment of man's homelessness and alienation in the world" (Švacov 1966, p. 196). These categories included "alienation" found in Marx, "nothingness" in Sartre, and "forgetfulness of being" in Heidegger. Philosopher Gajo Petrović, a core member of the *Praxis* circle, explained the meaning of Yugoslav Marxism to the English-speaking public in his *Marx in the Mid-Twentieth Century: A Yugoslav Philosopher Considers Karl Marx's Writings* (1967). There, he highlighted that Yugoslav Marxism followed the "real" Marx, that is, the "young" Marx's writings, in which the theory of alienation is not just its central theme, "it is also the guiding idea of all his "later" works" (Petrović 1967, p. 32). From this perspective, Marxist thought became the fight against "self-alienation, dehumanization, and exploitation" (Petrović 1967, p. 32).

The critique of Stalinism that commenced in the early 1950s through a "return" to Marx and Lenin (especially Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*), expanded in the 1960s, and philosophers associated with *Praxis* placed the critique's focus on the liberation of man, instead of on the definitions of matter and mind (Petrović 1967, p. 23). Moreover, they moved beyond dialectical materialism, regarding this method to be an expression of Stalinist–Marxist philosophy. According to Petrović, Yugoslav scholars had moved beyond the divisions in philosophy and thus had managed to pose some important questions (Petrović 1967, p. 21). The pressing issues that occupied Marxist humanists in Yugoslavia (and beyond) included the questions of man, man's alienation, and man's relation to history.

The existentialist philosophy, concerned with humanistic problems, entered a dialogue with Marxism around these crucial points. For Zagorka Golubović, a Belgrade-based sociologist affiliated with the journal *Praxis*, it was beyond doubt that "man" was the fundamental "object of Marxist analysis and interests" (Golubović 1963, p. 8). From her perspective, it was Marx who prepared the ground for solving the problems of the "modern man" and for the development of the contemporary theory of personality in the 1950s and 1960s. More importantly for Golubović, Marx's principle of historicity ensured a historical continuity that granted the existence of an individual man as a social being (Golubović 1963, p. 8). To Golubović, the disregard of the centrality of "man" in Marxist philosophy was a consequence of the misunderstandings of Marxist dialectical thought about man as a historical phenomenon. Danilo Pejović, her colleague from *Praxis*, stressed this point by underlying Sartre's understanding of existentialism "as an appendix to Marxism which ossified in dogmatism, and in studying only collective problems, forgot about the man" (Pejović 1964, p. 79). Existentialist philosophy, therefore, returned "man" to Marxism.

Golubović and her *Praxis* colleagues did not uncritically adopt the existentialist category of man. One of the problems they saw in Sartre's existentialism was its

ahistorical approach to man. At the same time, Golubović argued that by taking a man as the subject of their analyses, the existentialist also managed to unearth some vital issues that were invisible from the perspective of “a man in general” (Golubović 1963, p. 12). Such critical dialogue with existentialism created the possibility of a theoretical framework in which it was possible to approach the individuality and subjectivity of man within Marxist thought.

Simultaneously, the category of alienation could also be derived from Karl Marx himself. According to Predrag Vranicki, the theory of alienation also “carries within itself a fundamental preoccupation of Marxism: humanism” (Vranicki 1964, p. 252). While alienation allows for a much deeper understanding of the historical process of the liberation of man, the very phenomenon of alienation, as Vranicki acknowledged, “is very complex and not studied enough” (Vranicki 1964, p. 252). For the existentialist, as Gajo Petrović explained, alienation is a permanent “structural aspect of man’s existence,” and thus a man is always alienated (Petrović 1967). From that perspective, therefore, the expectation that man will one day live authentically was an illusion.

Philosophers around the journal *Praxis* argued that political revolution was not enough to guarantee the liberation of man and remove all forms of alienation. On the contrary, they applied the concept of alienation not only to capitalism but to socialism as well. Instead of eliminating man’s alienation, they argued, socialism introduced a new, more perfidious kind of alienation. These philosophers criticized Marxist theoreticians of socialism who believed that alienation is incompatible with socialism, since “socialism is by nature immune from such deformations” (Vranicki 1964, p. 252). Yet, as Vranicki and his colleagues from *Praxis* argued, the historical experience showed otherwise: “what is needed is to create a permanent social relation which would lead towards a continuous liberation of man and the creation of a new historical personality” (Vranicki 1964, p. 231). For that reason, it was important to acknowledge that socialism maintained different forms of alienation from those that existed in capitalism. Socialism could not simply abolish different shapes of alienation as they permeated all types of institutions and relations (state, class, party, nation, bureaucracy, religion, commodity production, the market, and so on) (Vranicki 1964, p. 231). At the same time, for Vranicki and his *Praxis* colleagues and friends, the notion that alienation is an inevitable condition of man in modern society (even in socialism) was not to be simply accepted, because a radical transformation of society, from their perspective, was possible. One necessary step in this transformation was framing the problem of alienation as a central issue of socialism (Petrović 1967, p. 232). Ignoring the existence of alienation in socialist systems would, according to Petrović, move socialism away from being a movement towards human liberation (Petrović 1967, p. 232).

While *Praxis* philosophers recognized the differences between the notion of alienation in Marxism and existentialism, they argued that both versions were united by the same idea: “alienation expresses the way of existence of man and his historical reality” (Golubović 1966, p. 269). Or differently, as Golubović explains, there is a difference between Martin Heidegger’s understanding of alienation as a structural moment of being, whose “thrownness” in the world is the unavoidable source of man’s inauthenticity, and Marx’s claim that the appearance of alienation is tied



to historical conditions of social development, which allows a partial realization of human nature and carries in itself both the elements of alienation and de-alienation (Golubović 1966, p. 269). At the same time, she agreed that this difference is not as “great as it has often been emphasized,” and that the ideas of alienation and inauthenticity do not exclude each other (Golubović 1966, p. 270). Golubović thus interpreted alienation “not as just a condition of being alienated, but... at the same time a possible historical way of man’s realization” (Golubović 1966, p. 270).

## Toward a conclusion: varieties of humanism

Mihailo Marković, a *Praxis* philosopher from Belgrade, reflected on the apparent growth of humanist theories and movements in the mid-1960s. He claimed that the emergence of humanism has often been a “symptom of an increased readiness to resist various alienated social forces such as church, market, state, ideology, and technology” (Marković 1969, p. 606). Marković described the use of humanism as a shield against social structures and institutions that had historically “degraded or belittled man,” hinting at the Yugoslav political system itself (Marković 1969, p. 606). For Marković, the stakes behind the need for humanist theories were not insignificant. As he explained, “the recent universal surge of humanist literature can be accounted for only by the deeply rooted anxieties of a generation which had to survive not only the Nazi atrocities but also the Stalinist purges and now brutal slaughtering in Vietnam” (Marković 1969, p. 606). At the same time, the precise definition of humanism was, for Marković, open-ended. Humanism did not entail a defined, predetermined program of action that had specific goals and ends. Instead, Marković approached humanism as an interchangeable concept, one that adapts its form and shape according to some specific philosophical current. Such a claim implied that Marxist humanism was just one among many philosophical systems that employed humanist concepts and approaches.

Much like Polish and Czechoslovak dissidents such as Jan Patočka, Karol Wojtyła, and Václav Havel, who “saw in phenomenology a tocsin for depersonalized modern societies, calling their fellow citizens toward fuller humanity,” the Yugoslav Marxist humanist intellectuals used the features of existentialism and phenomenology to reflect on their socialist societies (Gubser 2014, p. 3). Indeed, as Gubser illustrates, the critique of modern society was already present at phenomenology’s foundation in fin-de-siècle and interwar Germany, and post-World War Two dissidents saw themselves as furthering a tradition that retained the best of modern European culture and thought. In the context of Yugoslavia, however, the demand for fuller humanity could also lead to its opposite. One of the most telling examples of an intellectual who integrated nationalist rhetoric within a Marxist humanist frame was Mihailo Markovic, though such tendencies were common among intellectuals in the 1980s. The convergences between Marxist humanist political projects and nationalism materialized in other socialist countries as well. During the post-Stalinist period in Bulgaria, as Zhivka Valiavicharska shows, the rise of humanism opened the discursive and political conditions for the rise of ethnonationalism (Valiavicharska 2021, p. 19).

To fully grasp the different aspects of Marxist humanist discourse in Yugoslavia, it is necessary to further explore the growing presence of existentialism and phenomenology with respect to the notion of humanism in their analyses of Yugoslav socialist society, its critique, and the solutions they offered. While this article attempted to show how Marxist humanists could benefit from the theoretical toolbox offered by existentialists and phenomenologists—one that, consequently, allowed them to further develop and broaden not only their critique of Stalinism but also their critique of Yugoslav socialism—the question of whether this conjunction could also be a reason for some of them turning to ethnonationalism in the 1980s warrants further inquiry.

**Funding** Open access funding provided by Central European University Private University. No funding.

## Declarations

**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

**Open Access** This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

## References

- Axelos, Kostas. 1967. Od logosa do logistike [From logos to logistics]. *Praxis Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 5–6(4): 731–740.
- Banac, Ivo. 1988. *With Stalin against Tito: cominformist splits in Yugoslav communism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Bilandžić, Dušan. 1985. *Historija Socijalističke federativne republike Jugoslavije. Glavni procesi 1918–1985*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga.
- Bing, Albert. 2019. Socialist self-management between politics and economy. *Acta Histriae* 27(1): 1–35.
- Bošković, Dušan. 2011. Intelektualci u vlasti: društveni obrasci u formativnim godinama druge Jugoslavije [Intellectuals in power: social models in the formative years of second Yugoslavia]. *Filozofija i društvo* 2(22): 121–135.
- Ciżewska-Martyńska, Elżbieta. 2021. Interpretative frames, phenomenology, and the question of the republican character of Polish and Czech dissident movements of the 1970s and 1980s. *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 10(20): 1–25.
- Connelly, John. 2000. *Captive University: the sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish higher education, 1945–1956*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Dilas, Milovan. 1953. Dvostruka “filozofska” uloga profesora Nedeljkovića [The double “philosophical” role of professor Nedeljkovića]. *Nova misao* 1: 37–67.
- Đorđević, Mirko. 1998. Disidenti — bekstvo iz utopije [Dissidents — an Escape from Utopia]. *Republika* 179–180: 17–22.
- Editorial. 1953. Diskusija o nastavi filozofije [Discussion about teaching philosophy]. *Filozofski pregled: časopis srpskog filozofskog društva* 1: 28–30.
- Editorial. 1964. Čemu Praxis? [Why Praxis?]. *Praxis Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje*. 1(1): 3–6.
- Editorial. 1973. Mala enciklopedija “dijalektičko-materijalističkog” nacionalizma [Small Encyclopedia of Dialectical Materialist Nationalism]. *Praxis. Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 5–6 (10): 759–762.

- Fajfar, Tone. 1952. *Edvard Kocbek, Strah in pogum* [Edvard Kocbek. Fear and Courage]. *Književne novine* 47(5): 2–8.
- Falk, Barbara J. 2011. Resistance and dissent in Central and Eastern Europe: An emerging historiography. *East European Politics and Societies* 25(2): 318–360.
- Gabrič, Aleš. 2019. The younger generation's magazines in the eyes of the Communist ideologues. *Review of Croatian History* 15(1): 35–61.
- Gabrič, Aleš. 2020. A decade of compulsory silence: censorship of Edvard Kocbek's literature after his forced retirement. *Bibliotekarz Podlaski* 46(1): 75–96.
- Golubović, Zagorka. 1963. Smisao Marksovog humanizma [The meaning of Marx's humanism]. *Gledišta* 1(6): 7–17.
- Golubović, Zagorka. 1966. U čemu je smisao otuđenja [What is the meaning of alienation]. *Praxis Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 2(3): 268–274.
- Golubović, Zagorka. 1991. Yugoslav society and 'socialism': the present-day crisis of the Yugoslav system and the possibilities for evolution. In *Crisis and reform in Eastern Europe*, eds. Ferenc Fehér and Andrew Arato, 393–454. New Brunswick: Transaction publishers.
- Gruenwald, Oskar. 1983. *The Yugoslav search for man: Marxist humanism in contemporary Yugoslavia*. South Hadley: J.F. Bergin Publishers, Inc.
- Gubser, Michael D. 2014. *The far reaches: Phenomenology, ethics, and social renewal in Central Europe*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Híncu, Adela. 2018. Introduction: "Peripheral Observations" and their observers. In *Social sciences in the other Europe since 1945*, eds. Adela Híncu and Victor Karady, Budapest: Past Inc., 1–25. Budapest: Central European University.
- Jakovljević, Branislav. 2016. *Alienation effects: Performance and self-management in Yugoslavia, 1945–91*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
- Jović, Dejan. 2011. *Yugoslavia: a state that withered away*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.
- Komel, Dean. 2016. Vladimir Kruno fra Pandžić: med Heideggerjem in Vebrom. Pozabljena generacija filozofov [Vladimir Kruno fra Pandžić: between Heidegger and Weber. A forgotten generation of philosophers]. In *Zbornik razprav s simpozija "O življenju in delu doktorandov Franceta Vebra"*, ed. Marko Uršič, 299–309. Ljubljana: Znanstvena založba Filozofske Fakultete.
- Komel, Dean. 2018. The influence of Heidegger's thought on the development of philosophy in ex-Yugoslav countries. *Human Studies* 41: 643–660.
- Kopeček, Michal. 2019. Czech communist intellectuals and the "National Road to Socialism:" Zdeněk Nejedlý and Karel Kosík, 1945–1968. In *Ideological storms: intellectuals, dictators, and the totalitarian temptation*, eds. Vladimir Tismaneanu and Bogdan C. Iacob, 345–389. Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Kos, Janko. 1968. Heidegger in Slovenci [Heidegger and Slovenians]. *Sodobnost* 11(16): 1082–1103.
- Landgrebe, Ludwig. 1967. Fenomenološka analiza vremena i pitanje o subjektu istorije [Phenomenological analysis of time and the question about the subject of history]. *Praxis Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 5–6(4): 722–730.
- Marić, Ilija. 2016. Prva naša posleratna kritika klasika marksizma. O ciklusu predavanja Dušana Nedeljkovića na Kolarčevom narodnom univerzitetu početkom 1952 [Our first post-war critique of the classics of Marxism. On the lectures by Dušan Nedeljković at the Kolarac Peoples' University at the Beginning of 1952]. *Глас: Одељење друштвених наука* 32: 71–98.
- Marinov, Tchavdar, and Alexander Vezhenkov. 2014. Communism and nationalism in the Balkans: marriage of convenience or mutual attraction? In *Entangled histories of the Balkans*, eds. Diana Mishkova and Rumén Daskalov. Vol. 2 of *Transfers of political ideologies and institutions*, Leiden: Brill.
- Marković, Mihailo. 1969. Basic characteristics of Marxist humanism. *Praxis. A Philosophical journal* 3–4 (5): 606–615.
- Marković, Mihailo, and Gajo Petrović, eds. 1979. *Praxis: Yugoslav essays in the philosophy and methodology of the social sciences*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Vofšek, Michael. 2008. Regime and sociology: a comparative history of sociology in postwar Europe with qualitative comparative analysis. *Social Science History* 8: 85–113.
- Supek, Rudi. 1966. *Sociologija i socijalizam [Sociology and socialism]*. Zagreb: Znanje.
- Mičić, Zagorka. 1952. Razmišljanja o nekim filozofskim pitanjima povodom predavanja dr. Dušana Nedeljkovića [Thoughts on some philosophical questions concerning the. *Lectures of Dr. Dušan Nedeljković*. *Književne novine V*: 7.
- Mičić, Zagorka. 1973. Sećanja na susrete sa Huserlom [Memoirs of meeting with Husserl]. *Književna kritika* 2(4): 135–144.

- Miller, Nick. 2007. *The (non)conformists: culture, politics, and nationalism in a Serbian intellectual circle, 1944–1991*. Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Nedeljković, Dušan. 1952. *Naša filozofija u borbi za socijalizam [Our philosophy in a fight for socialism]*. Beograd: Srpsko Filozofsko Društvo.
- Pašić, Najdan. 1964. Prvi naučni skup Marks i suvremenost: povodom 145-godišnjice rođena i 80-godišnjice smrti Karla Marksa. Deo 1 [First scientific gathering Marx and contemporary world. 145th anniversary of birth and 80th anniversary of death of Karl Marx. Part 1] Beograd: Institut za izučavanje radničkog pokreta. Institut društvenih nauka.
- Petranović, Branko. 1982. Okviri glavnih tokova društvenih promena u Jugoslaviji, 1949–1950 [An outline of the main direction of social change in Yugoslavia in 1949–1950]. *Prispevki za novije zgodovino* 1–2(22): 232–236.
- Pejović, Danilo. 1964. Jean-Paul Sartre. *Praxis Filozofski časopis Jugoslovensko izdanje* 1: 66–82.
- Perišić, Miroslav. 2012. *Od Staljina ka Sartru: Formiranje jugoslovenske elite na Zapadu 1945–1958* [From Stalin to Sartre: Forming of the Yugoslav Intelligentsia on the European universities, 1945–1958]. Beograd: Zавод за udбенике.
- Perišić, Miroslav. 2017. Yugoslavia: The 1950 cultural and ideological revolution. In *The Balkans in the Cold War*, eds. Svetozar Rajak et al., 285–305. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Petrović, Gajo. 1967. *Marx in the mid-twentieth century: a Yugoslav philosopher considers Karl Marx's Writings*. New York: Anchor, Double Day.
- Prole, Dragan. 2019. Recepcija fenomenologije u međuratnoj Jugoslaviji [Reception of phenomenology in the interwar Yugoslavia]. In *Tradicije nastave filozofije* [Traditions of teaching philosophy], ed. D. Prole, 9–30. Novi Sad: Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Novom Sadu.
- Prohić, Kasim. 1967. Edmund Husserl—mislilac krize [Edmund Husserl—thinker of crisis]. *Praxis Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* 5–6(4): 741–748.
- Prole, Dragan. 2020. The beginnings of phenomenology in Yugoslavia: Zagorka Mičić on Husserl's method. In *Early phenomenology in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. W. Plotka and P. Eldridge, 203–216. New York: Springer.
- Ribar, Veljko. 1953. K pitanju o moralno-politickim snagama savremenog društva [Towards a question of morally-political forces in the contemporary world]. *Filozofski pregled: časopis srpskog filozofskog društva* 1: 15–18.
- Đidara, Robert. 2018. The praxis school: genesis, influence, consequences. Doctoral Thesis, Zagreb.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1952. Les communistes et la paix [Communists and peace]. *Les Temps Modernes* 81: 84–85.
- Šajković, Radmila. 1982. Zagorka Mičić – povodom stogodišnjice rođenja [Zagorka Mičić – 100th anniversary]. *Theoria* 1–4: 17–26.
- Sher, Gerson. 1977. *Praxis: Marxist criticism and dissent in socialist Yugoslavia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Simeunović, Vojin. 1967. Marksizam i fenomenologija [Marxism and phenomenology]. *Gledišta* 8–9(8): 1183–1188.
- Skilling, H. Gordon. 1959. Communism: national or international? *International Journal* 1(15): 36–48.
- Stefanov, Nenad. 2013. “Message in the Bottle”: Yugoslav praxis philosophy, critical theory of society and the transfer of ideas between East and West. In *Entangled protest: transnational approaches to the history of dissent in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. R. Brier, 109–128. Osanbrück: Fibre Verlag.
- Stojanović, Svetozar. 2009. Varieties of stalinism in light of the Yugoslav case. In *Stalinism revisited: the establishment of communist regimes in East-Central Europe*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu, 387–400. Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Supek, Rudi. 1950. *Egzistencijalizam i dekadencija* [Existentialism and decadence]. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska.
- Šuvaković, Miško, and Aleš Erjavec, eds. 2009. *Figure u pokretu. Savremena zapadna estetika, filozofija, i teorija umetnosti* [Figures on the move. Contemporary Western aesthetics, philosophy, and art theory]. Beograd: Atoča.
- Švacov, Vladan. 1966. Slika svijeta i moderna drama [The image of the world and a modern drama]. *Praxis Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje* no(2): 191–201.
- Tismaneanu, Vladimir. 2009. *Stalinism revisited: The establishment of communist regimes in East-Central Europe*. Budapest: CEU Press.
- Trencényi, Balázs, Mihal Kopeček, Monika Baar, Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčić, and Maria Falina. 2018. *A history of modern political thought in East Central Europe*, 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Tucker, Aviezer. 1990. Václav Havel's heideggerianism. *Telos* 85: 63–78.
- Tucker, Aviezer. 2000. *The philosophy and politics of Czech dissidence from Patočka to Havel*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Valiavicharska, Zhivka. 2021. *Restless history: political imaginaries and their discontents in post-Stalinist Bulgaria*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Vranicki, Predrag. 1964. Socijalizam i problem alijenacije [Socialism and the problem of alienation]. In *Smisao i perspektive socijalizma* [Meaning and perspectives of socialism], eds. Danilo Pejović and Gajo Petrović, 248–262. Zagreb: Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo.
- Ziherl, Boris. 1953. Egzistencijalizam i njegovi društveni koreni [Existentialism and its social roots]. *Nova misao* 2(I): 323–361.

**Publisher's Note** Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.