

**Politics and Culture in Croatian Higher Education:  
A Comparative Perspective on Educational Reform**

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*Editor's Note:* Dr. Maximillian Reichard is an historian by training, a Croatian by birth, and a community college person by conviction. Fulbright grants to Yugoslavia in 1990 and 1991 provided a unique opportunity for a practicing community college educator with language skills and cultural sensitivity to study the emergence of a postsecondary institution in Yugoslavia like the community college in many ways, the *visa scola*. The interplay among education, social change, culture, and politics is underscored by the reality that Yugoslavia has broken into several warring factions after this research was conducted. A unique perspective on community college issues--literacy training, technical education, economic development, and place in traditional higher education--is presented here in the context of another nation and another culture. It represents a rich opportunity to gain another perspective on our own institution and our work.

The English word "education" has to be translated by two words in Croatian,<sup>1</sup> *obrazovanje* and *odgoj*. Although translators often translate the word *odgoj* as "education" and *obrazovanje* as "training," that is imprecise. *Obrazovanje* is schooling, formal education that includes training.<sup>2</sup> *Odgoj* is moral education, personal and social development; it is the Jesuit concept of "formation" (to use, for example, the Society of Jesus term for its preparation of young men for the Order); in a broad sense, "rearing." It is schooling as it relates to personal and social development. However, where Americans use the word "education" a Croat must use *obrazovanje i odgoj*. This is not just a semantic issue. It points to the problems of translating a culture. More importantly, it suggests a concept of education in Croatia that predates the Yugoslav state founded in 1918.

In the United States there has been a great deal of ambivalence about the role of schools in personal and social development. Beginning with the influential writings of John Dewey, until the present there has been a continuous

dialogue by American educators and citizens about moral education. In all that time little consensus has been achieved about such education except for transitory agreements on some vague democratic values. Even the heat of the anti-communist crusade after World War II could not forge an American consensus about a curriculum that addresses personal and social development.<sup>3</sup>

In Croatia, on the other hand, the approach to moral education, to personal and social development, *odgoj*, has been much more direct; in the study of pedagogy it has been presented as a sub-discipline. More importantly it is tied to a sense of common community and national culture. The main function of education was, as a physician in Zagreb put it, "to pass on the traditions of the culture from generation to generation"; although this duty belongs primarily to the family, schools must assure such education for society as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

Croats believe that they have maintained their sense of nation and of Croatian national culture in spite of 45 years of extreme pressures from a totalitarian regime. Croats not only resisted the Yugoslav, socialist definition of *odgoj* but successfully defended and maintained their own concept of moral education. The last 45 years of Communist Party rule, of ideological efforts to co-opt the concept of *odgoj*, did not undermine that concept, Croats argue, as they have traditionally understood it. I heard this directly from Croats of all walks of life--rich and poor, educated and uneducated, cosmopolitan and provincial, young and old.<sup>5</sup> The rest of our discussion of educational reforms, particularly in postsecondary and higher education, is informed by this argument about Croatian culture.

### **The Ideological Background: The Yugoslav Experiment**

Post World War II Yugoslavia was a society developed under Marxist assumptions about how to build new societies and a new people. From 1945 until 1990 those assumptions were seldom seriously challenged by Yugo-Slavs. Yugoslavia was governed by Marxist ideology; one party, the Communist Party, made and carried out policy. From the first Constitution of 1946 until the last in 1974, the direction of the new Yugoslavia was clear. The country was constructed as a multinational federation of six republics and two autonomous provinces, following a combination of historical, ethnic, and administrative rationales. More importantly, the Communist Party was the basis of **Yugo** (south) Slav nationalism, a nationalism rooted in a heroic myth of the War (WWII) as a victory of the people over the forces of

fascism. That "revolutionary" struggle, the civil war inside of Yugoslavia from 1941-1945, became a paradigm for the potential of rebuilding Yugoslav society, for building what Tito called a "new man."<sup>6</sup> Tito became the hero of heroes. Adored by many Yugo-Slavs, lionized by world leaders in the East and the West, Tito was the indispensable man in Yugoslavia for 40 years--or so it seemed until his death in 1980.

The post-war Yugoslav Marxist state and its leader, Tito, captured the imagination of even anti-Marxist Western leaders and scholars. The "Yugoslav Experiment" became a catchphrase for a new kind of communism, for the possibility of co-existence between East and West. Until the late 1980s critics within Yugoslavia and critics outside Yugoslavia were silenced by an assumption that the experiment had to be given a chance, that without it nationalist forces would balkanize the Balkans, and that with the proper encouragement from the West, Yugoslavia could develop into a healthy participatory and democratic society.<sup>7</sup>

As late as April of 1990, in a speech in Zagreb, Dennison Rusinow, author of *The Yugoslav Experiment*, emphasized how much more "liberal" Yugoslav *politics* was than in other Eastern European countries, but he ignored how much the *culture*, particularly in Croatia and Slovenia, was oriented toward the West. Ultimately, culture was more powerful than politics. Without the politics of Tito, the iron hand hidden inside a velvet glove, the experiment failed. It failed not because Western politics was more powerful but because Western cultural values were deeply embedded in Slovenia, Croatia, and the major cities.

In the pantheon of revolutionary heroes Tito stood alone. Technically, however, he was *primus inter pares*. He was first among about a 1000 of his equals, the revolutionary elite that created a much larger Communist elite, the "New Class." Tito was a superb politician in both domestic and international relations. For most of his rule (1945-1980), he controlled the various political factions within the Party as well as the cultural contradictions and national conflicts that in 1990-1991 brought an end to the Yugoslav experiment.

Two of Tito's co-revolutionaries, Edvard Kardelj and Milovan Djilas, contributed some novel social reform ideas to Marxist theory based on their wartime experiences, but to accomplish their purposes, to build a "new social order," the first postwar generation of Yugoslav leaders was firmly committed to a one-party system. As Djilas recalled: "The

democratic alternative was more than dismissed; it was annihilated."<sup>8</sup> Djilas eventually went on in the early 50s to defend what he calls "a democratic pluralism" in politics and government; he was suppressed in 1953 and later expelled from the Party and jailed. From jail he began writing books that 30 years ago clearly outlined the contradictions between the ideals of building the perfect society and the realities of power.<sup>9</sup>

In Croatia in the late 60s and early 70s a nationalist communism developed. It was branded as "counterrevolutionary" inside Yugoslavia and ignored in the West as a reactionary-extremist threat to the Yugoslav experiment, but the demand for civil and economic autonomy grew to such an extent in Croatia that Tito felt compelled to act in the "Croatian Spring" of 1971, dismissing the Croatian Communist Party leadership and jailing a number of Croatian nationalists and intellectuals.<sup>10</sup> With that event, for the next 20 years Croatian nationalism became the focus of concerns about the integrity of Yugoslavia.

The "Yugoslav Experiment" was intended to overcome the traditional ethnic and national conflicts through the common efforts of workers and students, professors, and peasants. Yugoslavs accomplished so much between 1945 and 1965 in taking a post-feudal, semi-literate society to modernity, that by the early 60s the Yugoslavs were competing with the Japanese and Italians in their standard of living. How much of that was real economic development and how much it was based on Western capital in the form of loans is now debated, but the Yugoslavs were going in their own direction and apparently succeeding much better than any of their "socialist brethren" in Eastern Europe. They believed that their revolution had created a special brand of socialism. Indeed, it seems the revolutionary/war experience had been a formative paradigm in creating a radical socialist ideology, with ideals of a communitarian democracy. Yugoslavs were open to the West and to a market economy because they believed that they were creating a social and economic system in which everyone participated equally.

But can you have the best of both worlds? Early in the "Yugoslav Experiment," one American observer, John Kenneth Galbraith, found a sharp contrast in the drab economic and social life of Poland and the vitality of Yugoslavia's society and economy. In 1958 he remarked on how Western and market oriented Yugoslavs seemed to be. "It is immediately evident that this is a far less egalitarian society [than Poland],"<sup>11</sup> Galbraith concluded. He may have meant to

compliment the Yugoslavs on their "experiment," but for Party ideologues like Edvard Kardelj who wished to build a genuine "socialist democracy of workers," Galbraith's observation was a reminder that they needed to tighten their controls over a system that was still too traditional, still too elitist, still in need of conversion from bourgeois practices. How to do this? A clear answer was reform of education. Improved literacy and a new, secular concept of Yugoslav nationhood had to be taught in the schools. The schools should focus on the goals of global socialism whose instrument would be the new Yugoslav state. More importantly, the schools themselves must be models of social democracy in both their structure and functions.<sup>12</sup>

### **Reforming Education**

The story of educational reform in Croatia and the other republics is one full of irony--an irony that provides a dramatic tension to the Yugoslav Experiment. The purpose of educational reform was to rid the system of its elitist traditions. This was to be done through a social and political system of self-management in which workers and teachers, homemakers and administrators, as well as students would work together for the good of their school, local community, and larger society. Education was to be treated as a "socialist social project,"<sup>13</sup> but even Yugoslavia's brand of socialism demanded "centralization [within each republic] of the educational system with respect to its organization, decision-making, and financing."<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile a system of self-management encouraged local councils of "workers" to pursue their own purposes. As one Communist theoretician, Rodoljub bolakovia, complained during the 1950's debates about higher education reforms:

We thought that these councils, particularly the faculty councils, would improve the tie between higher education and practice, that our curriculum plans would be realized. [But] little of this coming together has happened.<sup>15</sup>

A number of years later, following the death of Tito and faced with economic collapse, the president of the League of Communists (the Party), Du-an Dragosavac, demonstrated the despair over the forced experiment, with an orthodoxy that had few supporters and no consensus:

We have invested too much in too many things. Too many of our farmers have been attracted to the city, too many of our students to the humanities. We have to suppress the idea

of becoming a "gentleman." I think it will take ten years to restructure our society.<sup>16</sup>

Both bolakovia and Dragosavac expressed the Party distrust of higher education, of university professors, of traditional higher learning because like Tito they were uncomfortable with academic "gentlemen" and they feared that the traditional liberal arts would challenge and undermine their efforts.

That is not to say that little was accomplished through educational reform. On the contrary, however much it is necessary to rewrite its history under Tito's brand of communism, Yugoslavia made remarkable advances in educational and career opportunities. After World War II there was a massive effort to educate all the people in Yugoslavia. Initially the emphasis was on eradicating illiteracy, providing universal (elementary) education, and skill training for economic, especially industrial development. "The great worry after the war was that so many workers were illiterate."<sup>17</sup> The new Yugoslav state attacked this problem at both the adult education level and at the elementary school level. The more concern there was about literacy, the more schools were built; the more schools were built the more concern there was about literacy. The results were extraordinary for a country that before the war was semi-feudal and rural, and, indeed, largely illiterate.

In 1939 at least three quarters of workers were involved in agriculture, forestry, or fishing. Between the wars the problems of economic development were aggravated by the regional differences that existed when the Yugoslav state was formed in 1918. For example, Slovenia (in the northwest) had a 92% literacy rate, while in Kosovo (the southeast) the literacy rate was 5% percent. After World War I efforts were made to deal with the problems of illiteracy. Although sporadic and often dependent on private organizations, the battles against illiteracy during the decade of the 1920s resulted in significant improvements in literacy rates. Nevertheless, at the outbreak of World War II only about half the population was literate. Yugoslavia was an undeveloped country.<sup>18</sup>

In Yugoslavia's first five-year plan, 1947-1951, the emphasis was on "de-colonizing" the economy and creating an industrial revolution on multiple fronts that would make Yugoslavia truly independent economically.<sup>19</sup> The Party elite brought to this task the same determination and energy they

had put forward in their successful political revolution. The results were remarkable.

From 1950 to 1970 the annual growth in personal income was 7% annually. The main force was rapid industrialization, growing at an annual rate of 11%; this growth allowed the absorption of 1 million agricultural workers into industry. In the same period, national income rose from US-\$160 to US-\$750 per person. This was growth comparable to Western Europe and Japan. To meet the demands offered by this economic growth, the educational system expanded rapidly. Compared to 1939, in 1970 there was a 79% higher attendance in elementary schools, 188% in secondary schools, and 641% higher attendance in higher education. Taking the population of the traditional school age group (5-24) as a whole, enrollments rose from 33.4% of that population in 1950 to 55.8% of that population in 1965. In addition by 1965 more than half a million adult learners were part-time students in higher education.<sup>20</sup>

All the education reform movements--1945, 1954, 1958, 1960, 1974--were based, however, on the hegemonic power of President Tito and the ideology of Yugoslavia's Communist Party elite.<sup>21</sup> In the early 50s, Edvard Kardelj and Milovan Djilas helped to develop the idea of socialist democracy and convinced Tito of its usefulness. Kardelj, enthusiastically blending classic Marxist writings and *partizan* war experiences, spent the rest of his public life as the chief proponent of "democratic socialist, social relations."<sup>22</sup> Councils of workers were to be involved in self-management of their enterprises--whether those enterprises were factories or schools. But, as Djilas would point out in the 1960s, behind these "democratic councils" was the Party apparatus, the secret police, and ultimately the Army.<sup>23</sup> The purpose of education reforms, then, was less a concern with improving education than with making schools, teachers, and students conform to the needs of the Yugoslav Experiment.

Since for the early communist planners, education was thought to be a key to their experiments in ideological and institutional change, a historical analysis of education reform in Yugoslavia allows us to explore the relationship between politics and culture and the planning and development of an education system. In this analysis the focus is the development of *Vi-e škole* (higher schools) in Croatia.

### **The *Vi-a škole***

To develop a skilled, technical workforce the Yugoslavs developed their own type of community college--the

*vi-a -kola* (veesha shkola)--which the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education chose to compare in 1980 to the American system of "open-access higher education."<sup>24</sup> *Vi-a Skola* (plural, *vi-e skole*) literally means "higher school" and from its beginning it was by definition a postsecondary school. The *vi-a skola* and the American community college have some parallels. Both are primarily a post-World War II phenomenon, but both have an interesting history that stretches back to the 19th century. Both are associated with certain social and political goals in their origins and development, and both are developed in association with the word "democracy"--although in neither is the concept clear. One major difference is that no matter how small an American junior college, or technical institute, or, later, a comprehensive community college was, it always had more than one field of study. *Vi-e skole* were

organized around one field or discipline: a school for training teachers for elementary grades in the 19th century; another for developing mid-management level personnel for business in the early 20th century; after World War II, a *vi-a skola* was closely tied to the industry for which it was preparing students, it might have ties with a *fakultet* (discipline or college at a university) and it might be closely connected to secondary schools that had a curriculum in that occupational program. For example, the *Vi-a @kola Rade Konaar* opened in Zagreb to train electro-mechanical technicians for the *Rade Konaar* factories; it was closely tied to an older, secondary technical school and to a research institute made up of university faculty.<sup>25</sup> Clearly and emphatically the *vi-e skole* were designed for tertiary education and terminal, occupational degrees.

One important difference between American community colleges and *vi-e skole* is that while the American community college has faced some serious crises in the last 20 years, it has not only survived, it is thriving. The same cannot be said of *vi-e -kole* in Yugoslavia, or more particularly in Croatia, where they have all but disappeared.

My inquiry focuses on the development of *vi-e skole* in the Republic of Croatia. Since there was no federal Yugoslav education ministry, each republic controlled its own education system. In general, Croatia could serve as an example of the educational structures in each republic; however, in the study of this institution, the *vi-a -kola*, I wish to investigate how the peculiar national, cultural, and political experiences of Croats influenced its development

and decline in Croatia--with very different results in, for example, Serbia where a system of *vi-e skole* thrives under the centralized control of the education ministry in Belgrade. Before we go on to the developments in Croatia, it may be worthwhile to look briefly at the Serb schools.

Why does a system of *vi-e skole* continue to thrive in Serbia? One reason is that *vi-e skole* were organized differently in Serbia than in Croatia. There is a centralized administration of the 60 Serb institutions--something that never existed in Croatia. No other schools or *fakultets* (colleges constituting a university)<sup>26</sup> in Yugoslavia have such coordination or control. The Serb *vi-e skole* have a central office and a headquarters for the Association of *vi-e skole* in Belgrade. The Association "influences" curricula, appointment of faculty, new programs, and standards for all programs. From interviews with the president of the Association and with faculty members both of the Belgrade Academy for Teachers and of Belgrade University in June 1990, it appeared clear that the Serbian government and Serbian educational leaders were committed to the *vi-e skole*.<sup>27</sup> They spoke disparagingly of the evolution of Croatian *vi-e skole* into *fakultets* associated with the universities, while they spoke proudly of the independence and rigor of their schools, the upgrading of *vi-e skole* faculty through formal and informal connections with Belgrade University faculty, and their intention of building a "research institute" for faculty teaching in *vi-e skole*. Some of this was national pride--the Serb-Croat conflict was beginning to heat up--and some of it reflects the defensiveness of *vi-e skole* faculty about their status in the system of higher education. Nevertheless, there was an ideological difference in the development of *vi-e skole* in Serbia and Croatia; it may be one key to the historical relationship between politics, culture, and education.

The leading contemporary pedagogue of the Serbian educational system, Professor Nikola Potkonjak, makes it clear that these schools exist primarily for the purpose of economic and social development of Yugoslav society and not to meet the need of individuals. Not all Serb educators agree with him; however, I believe the views of Potkonjak were dominant in Serb education because they reflected communist party ideology and party emphasis on education as a tool for building a new consciousness, "a new man," a Yugoslav man, whose prime interests would be the material welfare of the Yugoslav people as a whole, not his or her

own region or national group. The development of *vi-e skole* "perfectly corresponded to public policy," although what party ideology demanded and what the people valued were not necessarily consistent as long as that one party had all the power.<sup>28</sup>

Croatia, on the other hand, in rejecting a centralist communist ideology and policy, in demanding control of its destiny as a separate nation and people, may have rejected the *vi-e skole* because they were perceived to be tools of centralization, tools of a social policy that undermined traditional Croatian educational values, tools of a "Yugoslavism" that threatened Croatian national culture.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps that proposition can be analyzed best in historical perspective, for the development of its educational system has been highly important to Croatian national identity since mid-19th century.

### **The Beginnings of Higher Education**

From the mid-19th century, like many nations, Croatia looked to a national university to represent and promote its culture and values.<sup>30</sup> The idea of organizing a university was first introduced in the Croatian parliament in 1861. This effort, among others, was part of the flowering of Croatian cultural nationalism in the mid-19th century. More significantly, it was part of a South Slav nationalism, of a belief that the future for Croats as a nation was to join with other South Slavs and create a counter-culture, perhaps an independent country, which would be free of foreign political and cultural dominance.<sup>31</sup>

The Austrian or Central European university was the model for curriculum, admissions, matriculation, and for defining the roles of the professorate. This was understandable: until World War I the Kingdom of Croatia was a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; Vienna was the political and cultural capital. The imperial universities in Vienna, Prague, and Budapest dominated the intellectual and academic life of Zagreb and Croatia. Not only the political dominance, but the cultural dominance of Vienna and Budapest was resented and sometimes resisted by Croatian nationalists.

The 1861 proposal for a "Yugoslav" university was an anti-Austrian gesture. Croats were struggling for an educational system that reflected and supported Croatian culture. That included the teaching of the "mother-tongue" in schools, a wish thwarted during the period of Austrian neo-absolutism (1848-1860).<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps like Communist ideologues two generations later, some Croatian nationalists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries turned to nontraditional postsecondary institutions to promote and develop their vision of a unique society. Because there were few traditions to serve as barriers to *vi-e -kole* and no entrenched interest group whom they threatened, already in the 1840s the Croatian parliament had developed an overall plan for a system of education that included *vi-e tehnicke -kole* (higher technical schools).<sup>33</sup>

During the period 1880-1910 a number of *vi-e -kole* were developed that were clearly intended to satisfy a need for postsecondary education; they were just as clearly not part of the university. One type was developed exclusively for providing postsecondary education for women. Between 1868 and 1874 three *Vi-e Djevojcke @kole* (schools for young girls) opened in Zagreb and two other Croatian cities. Initially, the curriculum was that of a finishing school for young women; however, already in the 1880s there were public debates about the purpose of this education. Since the main place of these girls was to be in the home, why did they need higher education for their domestic roles? By 1910 there were 14 such schools with 4,400 students and the realities of modern life required two definite tracks: the traditional homemaker curriculum as well as a commercial-industrial track.<sup>34</sup>

A number of other *vi-e -kole* were organized or reorganized. The intention was to develop and provide leaders--in technology, business, education and the arts--who could compete with people trained in Austria and Hungary. These higher schools were independent but they were generally connected to secondary schools; literally because of available physical facilities; programmatically because staff, curriculum, and students were shared by secondary and postsecondary programs. At the same time there was also some expression of the need to connect these *vi-e -kole* with university programs, particularly in the area of teacher training. For, to achieve their nationalist goals for the elementary system of education, particularly the teaching of Croatian history and literature, it was necessary for Croatians to change teacher training programs.

At the turn of the century there was an attempt to reform education at all levels. The argument most often used in the public press appealed to Croatian national self-interest. The most heated debates were the ones surrounding the *Vi-a Trgovacka @kola* (higher commercial school or

business school). These postsecondary business schools had been separated from secondary schools in the 1880s. Now they were being promoted as necessary if Croatia was to be competitive in the Western marketplace. One newspaper in 1908 clearly defined their purpose in the Croatian system of education:

This gentle independence is reaching its potential...that we intensively educate for the modern world of business ...not only in the education of the soul, but in the technical-commercial-management virtues which are evidently necessary to achieve material well-being...."[in English] *to teach men to be men and to help them to become masters of their vocation.* "If we achieve this goal, then our development will naturally occur soon, when we donot just train clerks, but business leaders, who will lift our commerce and bless our land.<sup>35</sup>

The intention was to promote a system of postsecondary education that would respond to the practicalities of commercial/industrial society. The reform here is using education as a tool for economic development. The sense of urgency and necessity comes from fears that without business leaders and skilled technicians of its own, Croatia cannot hope to establish its independence from the larger Austro-Hungarian Empire. The university might be losing the best and brightest minds to Vienna, Prague, and Budapest, but the *vi-e -kole* could eliminate the need to import technicians and businessmen from outside the Kingdom of Croatia. The push for the development of these schools was related to socio-economic developments, particularly rapid pre-war urbanization of traditional Croatian cities. Like most cities in the Western world, Croatian cities looked to commercial-industrial development in the pursuit of their happiness.<sup>36</sup>

Clearly, however, early 20th century Croatian society saw a relationship between nationalism and postsecondary education. In 1907, during a whirlwind of educational reforms, the National Extension University of the city of Zagreb was founded. Whether we call this an extension university, or adult education, or continuing education, the stated purpose of the Extension University was "cultural education for the [adult] masses." The latent purpose of its founder, a professor at the University of Zagreb, was political: that Croatians learn more about the "political [and] cultural...problems of the modern era"; that Croatians become aware of "their power and their potential" as a

people.<sup>37</sup> The support it received then was due not only to its manifest function that was modelled on the English extension university, but to its more latent function. The Croatian public patronized this nontraditional institution because it satisfied their national cultural needs in a way the traditional university, oriented as it was to Germanic culture, could not.

After World War II the City University became the Workers' National University, "*Mo-a Pijade*"--named after a war hero and close associate of Tito's. Its purposes were still political. Now, however, the emphasis was on programs that dealt with Marxist philosophy, socialist self-management, civil defense, and general education. Widespread rejection by the Croatian people is evidence that they saw it only as one more machine of Party propaganda. Its purposes were no more political after World War II in promoting a Marxist version of Yugoslavism than when it was first organized in 1907 to promote Croatian culture but its founding and early success was based on Croatian culture. On the other hand, the widespread public rejection in recent times of the reorganized Marxist "*Mo-a Pijade*" extension university might have been evidence of that which may seem obvious today: that national culture was more powerful than any imposed political ideology.

After World War I Yugo-Slavs created the multinational state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (by 1929 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). For one generation under the Kingdom and for two generations under Tito and the Communist Party the dominant theme in this Yugoslav state has been the conflict between individual national forces and the forces of centralization.

It was primarily a Croat-Serb conflict. Serbs brought to the unified state a tradition of active independence and sovereignty and therefore they assumed that Yugoslavism meant a greater Serbia. Croats brought to the union a tradition of cultural and intellectual resistance to "foreign" domination and therefore demanded autonomy within a unified Yugo-Slav state. All institutions were permeated by these differences in national cultures and politics, none more critically than schools. With that thought in mind let us observe what happened to the *Vi-e @kole* after World War II. <sup>38</sup>

#### **The *Vise @kole* After WW II**

In the early postwar years, 1945-1960, basic education was emphasized: eradication of illiteracy, mandatory universal elementary education, and technical skills. During

the next 15 years, 1960-1975, these basic changes were accelerated; the particular emphasis was on secondary and higher education. There were important structural changes. The most obvious was the explosion of higher education through liberal admissions policies, significant financial aid in the form of both scholarships and loans, and so on. Perhaps even more significant were the variety of new programs of study, the development of new kinds of postsecondary institutions, and--most striking--the availability of higher education in every city of any size.<sup>39</sup>

For the *Vi-e škole* this was the period of great development--following a series of reforms from 1954 to 1960. Both secondary and postsecondary vocational-technical schools were opened on a large, widespread scale and with an innovative twist of tying them financially, programmatically, and administratively to major industrial or commercial enterprises--even providing links between staffs of industrial firms and of schools. "This was an original development, both for industry and for the educational system."<sup>40</sup>

At the end of World War II there were only two *vi-e škole* in Croatia with less than 500 students. Ten years later there were 13 with almost 1,600 students. Two years later both numbers had more than doubled and by 1962 they had doubled again: 46 schools with more than 7,000 students (constituting 39% of all students in higher education). At the beginning of the 1970s there was still the same number of schools with a student population at 18,000 (45% were part-time students). At the end of the 1970s the number of schools was beginning to drop and, although the total number of students increased, the number of full-time students decreased. By 1988, there were only six *vise škole* left in Croatia with fewer than 1,000 full-time students.<sup>41</sup> What happened?

First of all, these schools met a need as perceived by policy makers throughout Yugoslavia. For a comparative perspective we can look at Sheila Slaughter's argument that the expansion of education in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s was part of a broader expansion of the functions of the centralized state in dictating social policy.<sup>42</sup> She argues that in the United States there was a backlash in the 1970s that, for a time, threatened the future of community colleges. Community colleges, however, have not declined much less disappeared. In Croatia *vi-e škole* rapidly disappeared.

Some Croatian critics blame the decline of *vi-e skole* on their continuing dependence and ties to secondary education, but perhaps they served the purpose for which they were intended at the time: to provide a quick and relatively easy means of giving adults a postsecondary vocational-technical education; and, for peasants who were being encouraged to leave their farms, the *vi-e skole* were a promise of a better life.

There are two pieces of data that are suggestive of what happened. In 1952, before there were any major attempts to develop *vi-e skole* much beyond what they were between the two World Wars, most (56%) students in these schools were traditional age (19-23) and they only made up 13% of the total enrollments in postsecondary education. By 1960 they constituted 22% of the student population, but now 71% were over 24 years of age. It seems that between 1958 and 1965 there was a big push for adult education, education for the workers. By the mid 1960s that population was used up and all these new schools were now being filled once again with 19-23 year-olds (71% in 1966). Indeed a higher proportion of students in postsecondary education were attending *vi-e skole* in 1965-1966 than were attending universities.<sup>43</sup> Yugoslavia's economy was hitting its peak, good jobs were plentiful with the skills that could be acquired in these schools, and the schools perfectly fit the ideology of the new man, the working man, the non-elite, non-university, but "educated" man.

By the end of the 1960s a backlash was beginning in Croatia--a backlash against centralized control, control from Belgrade, from Serbia. Student riots at Zagreb University in 1968 were fired up by Croatian nationalist sentiments. The *vi-e -kole* were associated with an alien ideology whereas the university seemed to be supportive of nationalist sentiments and responsive to demands for the preservation of Croatian culture. University leaders openly attacked the integrity of *vi-e -kole* and all nontraditional education that attempted to level differences among people. Ironically, in the mid-70s these university leaders get support from Communist Party ideology and Party leaders in Croatia.

### **The 1974 Reforms**

The key to understanding the Communist idea of reforming education and its eventual failure in Croatia is the Tenth Party Congress and the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution. Although there were many educational reforms that began with the Communist Revolution at the end of World War II, the

1974 reforms are the most recent and the final attempt to put the Yugoslav Communist ideology into social practice.

Indeed, the educational changes of the last 15 years in Croatia came as a direct result of the Tenth Party Congress in 1974. Because they are associated with a leading young Communist and the minister for education in Croatia in the mid-70s, they are commonly called the @uvar Reforms after @tipe @uvar. @uvar, a lawyer, a professor of Sociology at Zagreb University, and a leader of the Communist Party in Croatia, was, until the 1990 political upheavals, a member of the collective presidency of Yugoslavia.

In a 1977 book, School and Factory, @uvar argues that the Marxist criticism of the capitalist factory system applies to the development of school systems.<sup>44</sup> The school system feeds the factory system: workers learn discipline and get know-how; qualifications are established; and research furthers the ends of industry. Schools give workers the belief that through education they can create a career and thereby "shed the skin of the 'ordinary' worker."<sup>45</sup> The result was a crisis in higher education in the Western World, Yugoslavia included. School was a means of avoiding the factory and until the factory is transformed we cannot transform socialist education, which has an essential relationship to the factory.<sup>46</sup>

As minister of education in Croatia, @uvar attempted to transform Croatian education without transforming the economic system or realistically assessing the availability of resources for his education reforms. The major objects of the reforms were secondary and tertiary education. Distinctions in secondary curricula between university preparation and occupational training were to be eliminated; distinctions between *vi-e -kole* and the parallel *fakultet* in universities were to be eliminated as well. Students were to work in industry, at least part of the time. Education, then, was to be homogenized so that "class distinctions" between student and worker could be eliminated. Critics today argue that @uvar undermined both the quality of traditional education and vocational-technical education at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. A whole generation of students was uneducated and poorly trained, people in Croatia would say over and over again. The *vi-e -kole*, with almost no exceptions, lost their identity as independent institutions in the system of higher education: either they accommodated themselves to the demands of the more dominant university *fakultets*--including the pressure

of scholarly credentials, research, and publications for faculty--or they disappeared altogether.<sup>47</sup>

Early on many educational leaders hoped that the 1974 reforms would result in an educating community that would be democratic in nature: that is, a self-governing society of lifelong learners. The problem was defining the terms "democratic" and "community." In the 1970s idealist reformers assumed that able and competent people would be chosen, somehow, through a democratic system, to provide leadership for the community of student-workers.<sup>48</sup> In retrospect we can see that Communist Party ideology defined who was able and competent and therefore the Party controlled what appeared to be self-governing institutions.

If North Americans have overemphasized individual freedom at the expense of community in building their society, the Yugoslav reforms remind us that we can emphasize community and efficiency to the extent that institutions become repressive of individual freedom and corrupt their own effectiveness. To their credit, many Croat educators came to realize this by the late 1980s, showing both professional and political courage in publicly questioning not only the @uvar reforms, but their own earlier ideals.

Some leaders in education realized that the problem was the profession of education itself; reforms were being carried out by politicians and that

Professional educators and the educational sciences stepped on the [reform] scene only "when the deed had been done." [They were] called upon to justify the changes already implemented [by politicians].<sup>49</sup>

One solution proposed for the problems of the educational system was more and better research on higher education, better funding of educational research, and an emphasis on a methodology of reform that would take into account what educational reformers and researchers are doing in other places. So, rather than rejecting the communitarian ideals of the 1974 reforms, some professional educators argued that there was a need for education to be analyzed as part of the larger society. Planning and research by professionals was essential to constructing a good system of education, but education cannot be separated from life and work.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed the 1974 reforms were the fulfillment of the Communist Revolution's ideals for the "Yugoslav Experiment." The guiding principle of the 1974 reform, for all levels

including higher education, was that education had be an "active factor in the development of a new society, new social relations, and the personal potential of all citizens." The principle was not at all different from 1945 or 1958--except in the determination to force democratic reform on all levels of education and in all republics. The results were corrosive and corruptive; during a period of eight months in Croatia I could find no one who would speak in favor of the reforms. It is little wonder that in the crack up of the Party's hegemony in 1989 and 1990, the first institutions to feel the effects were the schools and universities, as people demanded the overthrow of the @uvar reforms.

The 1974 reforms and the reactions to them reveal the ongoing conflict between culture and politics in any attempt at school reform. Indeed that conflict has a longer history in Croatia than does the Communist Party.

The @uvar reforms, in their origins, were intended to impose liberation on people from the top down; they were intended to recreate the connection between school and factory. @uvar wanted to raise the level of all students by eliminating social and economic distinctions, and like critics of American community colleges today (concerned that vocational-technical schools and community colleges perpetuate racial and economic differences of opportunity) many leaders in Croatian higher education supported @uvar because of their concern that neither *vi-e -kole* not universities were addressing the problems of elitism and class discrimination.

The 1974 @uvar reforms were a last ditch effort to preserve the ideals of the revolution by eliminating all differences and distinctions in the educational system. They were a disaster because planners failed to take into consideration that even a totalitarian state is limited by the power of a national culture. As one university professor said to me, "we would teach one thing during the day to our students, and something very different at home in the evening to our children." That is, a public *obrazovanje* (education) conformed to the public policy of Yugoslavism, but a private *odgoj* (formation) based on traditional Croatian values, often including the Catholic faith, maintained Croat national culture.

*Vi-e -kole* responded to the demands of their society and culture. If the movements for and against *vi-e -kole* were, as they appear to have been, trenchantly and clearly related to Croatian national values over the last century,

then it is likely that *vi-e -kole* will, phoenix-like, rise from their own ashes as a new politics finds value in such education for the Croat nation.

## References

Croatian is the language of the Croats, a people who in 1991 declared their republic's independence from the multinational state of Yugoslavia. The concept of a Croatian nation, as Croats believe, which has existed for 1000 years is difficult for Americans to comprehend unless it is understood that "nation" means a community of people and a culture. The country of Yugoslavia no longer exists; by 1992, 60 countries had recognized the sovereignty of Croatia and Slovenia. In this paper "Yugoslavia" refers to the whole country, 1918-1991; "Yugo-Slavs" (South-Slavs) refers to all the nations of the former country. The Serbs, the largest nation, are attempting to maintain a rump Yugoslav state.

There is a possibility, yet to be explored, that Croatian socialists did mean "training" in the sense that modern sociology uses the term "socialization."

A good recent discussion of the varieties and diversities in American affective education is James A. Beane, *Affect in the Curriculum Toward Democracy, Dignity and Diversity*, (New York: Columbia Teacher's College Press, 1990).

Interviews with Ladislav Krapac and Dunja Machiedo-Krapac (Zagreb, June and August 1990).

My research includes extensive interviews with political and civic leaders, educational administrators, professors and researchers, as well as a variety of citizens. The interviews, done from January to August of 1990 and in May and June of 1991, were held primarily in Zagreb (Croatia), but include interviews in Belgrade (Serbia) and Ljubljana (Slovenia); these are the three traditional centers of higher education for the South Slavs.

Quote from a speech that President Tito made in 1958 to a meeting of the 6th Congress of the National Youth of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, "Omladini Ima Puno

Pravo Da Od Nas Zahtijeva Da Joj Posvetimo Js Vecu Brigu," Skolske Novine: IX (Zagreb, 3 I January 1958).

See for example, B.D. Denitch, *The Legitimation of a Revolution: The Yugoslav Case* (New Haven: Yale Press, 1976); D. Rusinow, *The Yugoslav Experiment, 1948-1974* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1977); A. Carter, *Democratic Reform in Yugoslavia: The Changing Role of Party* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1982); S. L. Burg, *Conflict and Cohesion in Socialist Yugoslavia: Political Decision Making Since 1966* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1983. Burg, perhaps because his study is completed after Tito's death, is the least sanguine or romantic about the Yugoslav experiment. Although Rusinow concludes his book on a cynical note, he is rooting for the "experiment."

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Milovan Djilas, *The Unperfect Society: Beyond the New Class* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1969), pp. 3-19.

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Rodoljub Colakovic, "Prijudlog Dekllaracije o Sistemu Obruzovanja i Odoja," ["A Suggestion Concerning the Proclaimed Education Reforms"] *Skolske Novine* (5 April 1957): 2.

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Petogodisnji Plan: Razvitka Narodne Privradne Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavij...1947-1951 (Beograd: Borba, 1947, see speeches of Marshal Tito and Andrija Hebrang), pp.5-12.

BEZDANOV, S. *Financing Of Education In Yugoslavia* (Paris: UNESCO, 1975), 8-13. The official source on Yugoslav education gives a higher percent of growth in attendance of schools from 1939 to 1970 (99%, 255% and 1055% respectively), but is considered to be less reliable; see *Pedagoska Enciklopedija* (Zagreb: Skolska knjiga, 1989), v. I, pp. 312-372. The use of 1938-39 school year as a base is valid for several reasons: (a) until 1947 it is the only reliable information; (b) almost two million people (10 percent of the population) died in Yugoslavia between 1941 and 1945; (c) the schools system during the War and after

was in shambles.

A former member of the inner circle, vice president of Yugoslavia and a member of the Central Committee of the Party, Milovan Djilas has documented his own voyage through that power elite in two books, *The New Class* (1957) and *The Unperfect Society* (1969).

Edvard Kardelj, *Four Factors in the Development of Socialist Social Relations: Speech at the 5th Congress of the Socialist Alliance of Working People, April 19, 1960* (Belgrade, 1960), especially pp.26 ff. Kardelj was a member of the Central Committee. He was the chief ideologue of the Party and heir apparent to Tito from the expulsion of Djilas until his own death in 1979, a year before Tito.

M. Djilas, *The Unperfect Society*, pp. 220-228; see also, Rusinow, *Yugoslav Experiment*, pp. 53-57.

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College" is a good translation for "fakultet" if size and administrative functions are the determinants; however, in terms of curriculum and discipline, fakultets are more like large departments in American higher education. Indeed, in the most recent (1991) proposals for reform of higher education, the idea of departments has been included. The reference to 60 schools in Serbia includes Serbia proper and the (formerly) autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina.

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