

Defying the Iron Curtain: Émigré journals and their attempts to confront the post-war reality

Final Report

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Project Background

My doctoral project examines the ways in which émigré journals addressed their home societies behind the Iron Curtain. The focus of the project is placed upon the most prominent Polish, Czechoslovak and Yugoslav democratic centre-left émigré journals in the postwar period including their legacies in the post-socialist transition. The journals in question are: *Kultura*, edited by Jerzy Gierdoyc, in the case of Czechoslovakia - *Svědectví*, edited by Pavel Tigrid, whereas for Yugoslavia, *Naša reč* edited by Desimir Tošić. Despite their differences, *Kultura*, *Svědectví*, and *Naša reč*, rejected the dogmatic anti-communism of their émigré counterparts and questioned the idea of ‘reversing clocks’ to the pre-war reality. Published predominantly in Paris and London, distributed among émigré communities across the globe, and smuggled to their home societies, the journals in question played a prominent role in the development of their national cultures and alternative political trajectories.

Cultural Flows across the Iron Curtain

Records of the Foundation for the Support of European Intellectuals contained materials concerning the Book Distribution Program, Grant Files for short-stay research program, and conference on Events in Poland [1982]. Those materials, alongside the records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights: Czechoslovakia '88 Symposium together and Thematic Reports on Cultural Symposium: Budapest [1985] helped me to recreate one of the cultural streams in the 80's which constituted an alternative public sphere between Western and Eastern Europe. Particularly helpful were the lists of participants in those initiatives which allowed me to recreate an informal network of intellectuals exchanging their ideas from both West and East.

From a research perspective, the much broader list of individuals who were invited, but did not participate was even more relevant– it allowed me to overcome the constraints of official publications listing only those who were present. By discovering a much broader group of individuals, who albeit not participating, belonged to the same intellectual milieu, as reflected in their private correspondence with conference organisers. This discovery made me establish a much broader research perspective, and identify a more elusive nexus.

What is more, the conference agenda, alongside detailed information about discussions and seminar contributions allowed me to see circulation of ideas between Western intellectuals, local dissidents, and émigrés. Rather than being single-sided (coming from West to East), I was able to observe that this circulation was multi-faceted, since it included contributions from local dissidents, where emigres could be seen as somewhere in between their ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ counterparts. My understanding of those cultural flows within the sphere of cultural

production outside the borders of home society was further enhanced by analysing the book distribution programme. Namely, analysing which books from Western cultural production were requested by scholars from the Eastern Europe and which of those books were published by émigré groups in question.

Those dynamics were further developed by grants for short stay research – I analysed the profile of research summaries submitted by scholars. Equally important was the analysis of external recommendations within the selection process. There were instances, especially when it came to applications coming from Poland, where it were the Polish emigres who suggested scholars from their home country to come for a short research period.

Contextual and Conceptual findings

Apart from focusing on my primary research area concerned with cultural flows across the Iron Curtain, I identified a number of helpful sources, which for the brevity of this document, will be summarised as contextual and conceptual findings.

Contextual findings

The documents of 'Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Polish unit and Czechoslovak unit were particularly helpful with their bio file collections. They contain dedicated sections for editors-in-chief of both Kultura and Svědectví – Jerzy Giedroyc and Pavel Tigrid. An extensive media monitoring allowed me to complement my previous findings concerned with public appearances of those groups in the local regime press.

More importantly, it allowed me to collect a significant number of public appearances of those emigres in Western Europe (mainly in the French and German press) providing a greater understanding of how those groups were perceived abroad and how they confronted the dogmatic portrayal in a local regime press. RFE press monitoring activities greatly facilitated this process, which otherwise would have required much more time, given my limited language comprehension of both German and French.

In turn, situation reports drafted by Yugoslav Unit helped me to identify a broader list of Yugoslav emigre groups. To be sure, a number of propositions made by RFE researchers necessitates cross-checking with other repositories, however from a perspective of my inquiry, a simple identification of a much broader framework of emigre groups opened new research possibilities for me.

Conceptual

Open Society Archives constitute a vibrant Intellectual community. I greatly benefited from a number of conversations I had with OSA's researchers, librarians and other Visegrad scholars. Those conversations helped me to advance my conceptual approach and pointed me towards new sources and literature. Amongst them 'Transatlantic Central Europe: Contesting Geography and Redefining Culture beyond the nation' by Jessie Labov was particularly helpful in addressing conceptual challenges related to the role that intellectuals played in the Central and Eastern Europe, the prevalence of essay as a form for émigré journals, and the novel

approach towards geographical footprint of cross-border circulation of texts and ideas. What is more, OSA staff facilitated a meeting with Jessie Labov, for which I am particularly grateful to Katalin Dobo. Moreover, exchanges with Istvan Rev helped me to perceive intellectual legacies not only in a structural - long durée perspective, but also in contingent developments – such as the legacy of the French Revolution within the context of Polish Roundtable Talks in 89’.

Finally, I always welcomed research presentations of other Visegrad scholars, among them the work of Marko Milosev ‘From Dissidents to Criminals - Legality and Politics in Yugoslavia 1980-2000’ portraying the limits of understanding of Yugoslav political developments and the complexity of the term ‘dissident’ in terms of the context of Yugoslav politics in the 80s.

Appendix

HU OSA 422 Records of the Foundation for the Support of European Intellectuals

422-2 Records of Activities

422-2-1 Grant Files

422-2-2 Correspondence

422-2-3 Conferences

422-2-4 Book Distribution Program

Hu Osa 318-0-6 Records of The International Helsinki Federation For Human Rights: Project Files

318-0-6:15 Czechoslovakia '88 Symposium

HU OSA 318-0-8 Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights: Publications

318-0-8:33 Thematic Reports: Countries: Hungary: Cultural Symposium: Budapest

Hu Osa 300-50-15 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Polish Unit: Biographical Files

300-50-15:9 Giedroyć, Jerzy, 1968 - 1994

Hu Osa 300-30-19 Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Czechoslovak Unit

300-30-19:118 Tigrid, Pavel, 1972 - 1993

Records Of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Situation Reports

300-8-47 Situation Reports Yugoslavia

Transatlantic Central Europe: contesting geography and redefining culture beyond the nation
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