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**Report of the project carried out in Open Society Archives in frames of the Visegrad Fellowship (1-February 1-29, 2024): *Mihajlo Mihajlov and Others: the Way to Support Democratic Solutions against Communist Regime in Yugoslavia in 1980's***

**Short description of the topic**

In the realm of political opposition in Yugoslavia, researchers have so far been primarily interested in the activities of Milovan Đilas, a highly-rank party functionary who opposed authoritarian practices in Yugoslavia in the 1950s and spent eight years in prison. In fact after release from prison, Đilas was no longer actively involved in political initiatives. Instead, the most important figure became Mihajlo Mihajlov, a literary, philosophical scholar from a Russian émigré family, whose initiatives for the mid-1960s onward were perceived by Josip Broz-Tito as the challenge to the regime.

Mihajlo Mihajlov was an academic, interested in Russian literature, twice put into trial and imprisoned due to his independent activity. After leaving the country for the United States in 1978, his passport was revoked, and he returned to Yugoslavia for the first time in the early 1990s. Mihajlov enjoyed significant recognition among opposition circles in Yugoslavia. In exile, he worked in the Russian section of Radio Free Europe, and delivered numerous lectures at the American and European universities.

Although the aforementioned Milovan Đilas decisively withdrew from contestation activities, he continued to play an important role among opposition-oriented circles through his numerous contacts in the West and in Yugoslavia itself. Since Mihajlov's release in 1970, the friendship between the two most important dissidents dates back.

It is worth mentioning that a protest movement for radical regime change emerged among Yugoslav students in 1968, while decade later most of those people were involved in establishing Free University and the petition movement. The essence of these activities inspired in many elements by Polish opposition activities (primarily Solidarity movement) were developed on the turn of 1970s/1980s. At the same time Mihajlov, together with Yugoslavian émigrés, established CADDY Bulletin (Committee to Aid Democratic Dissents in Yugoslavia), whose purpose was to document human rights violations, as well as to urge

Western countries to change their policies toward Yugoslavia. Mihajlo Mihajlov and Ruško Matulić, as well as London-based émigrés like Vane Ivanović, indicated that they understood the treatment of Yugoslavia as an important ally of the US and a counterweight to the USSR but tried to draw attention on the human rights abuses in Yugoslavia and need to support democratic dissidents. Group of intellectuals gathered around CADDY expressed their high concern over political situation in Yugoslavia in post-Tito period. They claimed that political class produced in the Tito's period would ask Soviets for help in order to maintain their position. In their magazine CADDY Bulletin dominant topics were covering human rights violation in Yugoslavia. Authors tried to draw Western attention to the existence of opposition appealing for firm moral support for Yugoslav dissidents and condemning repressions due to political, religious views of those repressed. Writing on Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four Mihajlov claimed that [...], „democracy hardly represents the triumph of good[...] democracy represents only the possibility, almost entirely absent in totalitarian countries of combatting evil”<sup>1</sup>.

CADDY was closely associated with organization called Democracy International, representing strive for the democratic solutions in the universal sense. Mihajlov found that the questions of democracy and totalitarianism were of universal matter and figured out that united fighters against non freedom would challenge all (leftist or rightist) dictatorships. His fellows in Democracy International were widely known Russian dissident Pavel Litvinov (prior to emigration he was imprisoned due to his activities such as protest against Warsaw Pact invasion on Czechoslovakia in 1968) or Hungarian emigre Istvan Csicsery Ronay.

### **The most important fonds of OSA**

As the most significant fonds for research of dissidence in Yugoslavia some should be indicated:

300-10 RFE/RL Collection, Balkan Section, Yugoslav subject files and biographical files

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<sup>1</sup> OSA-HU 205-4-80, box 9, Mihajlo Mihajlov, *On Orwell's Prophecies*, „The Pluralist”

300-120-6-8 Western Press, biographical files

205 Records of the Open Media Research Institute, Information Services Department

318 Records of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights

301 Records of Index on Censorship

422 Records of the Foundation for the Support of European Intellectuals

During my research stay at the OSA, surveying democratic opposition in Serbia/Yugoslavia I found numerous sources significant for the project. I was working on the personal files of those who were involved in dissident activities. Aforementioned documents are gathered in fonds 300-10-4, 300-10-5 and 300-120, (Records of RFE/RL Research Institute, Balkan Section, Yugoslav Biographical Files and Western Press, Biographical Files) comprising their personal works, the most important articles, publications, books. One's can find countless press articles (from abroad and Yugoslavia itself) about particular individual involved in the democratic opposition. In case of political prisoners, strikes and social protests I would like also to underline materials of the Western press covering political unrests in Yugoslavia that can be found in the fond 300-120-5 (country files).

In case of this project it was also important to look through fond of Records of Index on Censorship (HU OSA 301-0-3) comprising correspondence of the Yugoslav dissidents and Western press articles on the human rights in Yugoslavia, political repression etc.. Of the great importance were documents gathered in fond 205 (Open Media Research Institute) with personal reference to human rights activists in Serbia and abroad.

The great significance of the OSA is that it gathers press articles (from journals and dailies over the world) that relate to some individuals, groups, events. In case of the given project it was the case of the „Process of the 6” in Serbia, when leading human rights activists were put on trial on April 1984. In the same fond one can find informations about political arrests, Amnesty International Reports (Records of RFE/RL Research Institute, Balkan Section, Yugoslav Subject Files-HU OSA 300-10-2, boxes 113, 21, 27).

For the purpose of my research of the utter importance is the Yugoslavia background information (HU OSA fond 300) where we can easily find documents referring to e.g.

political situation, cultural life in Yugoslavia, comprising both domestic and foreign press materials. One can easily find important press materials, RFE/RL analyses, general information (usually based on press information, press agencies) that were given to RFE/RL employees. Fond 300-10-2 (boxes 84-85) presents for example wide range of materials relating to activity, ideological matters in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Such issues cannot be omitted in research on the anticommunist movement.

Fond 422 (Records of the Foundation for the Support of European Intellectuals) provides information about Western help to Yugoslavia in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's. Unless it turned out that people like Djilas and Mihajlov were not embraced by this kind of support, it is visible that only few intellectuals, generally not closed with dissidence (Jože Javoršek) obtained possibility to work abroad, fellowships in the Western universities. Comparing help for Yugoslavia with Eastern and Central European support (first of all Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, not so often USSR) we can conclude, that Yugoslav opposition was not focused so much on the international factors as they searched changes of the regime without putting into question communist rule.

### **Significance of OSA sources for the project**

OSA provided a wide range of press information gathered in one place, unique personal documents of individuals and some correspondence that was intercepted by censorship office in Yugoslavia. Collecting such materials together with sources gathered in the archives in the post-Yugoslav states (Belgrade, Zagreb) made a significant improvement in my research by broadening perspective on the problem of the democratic activities in emigration and Yugoslavia.

Papers gathered in the OSA depicts also Mihajlo Mihajlov's great significance among political emigres from Central and Eastern Europe. His activity can be followed by articles in the Russian political emigree journals and in memoirs of Soviet dissidents (eg. Andrei Sakharov) that are available in OSA collections.

### **Further research problems:**

-US policy towards Yugoslavia in the 1980s in terms of the dissidents' activity

-Contacts with Soviet dissidents and mutual inspirations

-What kind of support Mihajlov brought to Yugoslav fellows

-Financial support of democratic dissidents in Serbia/Yugoslavia