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THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF YUGOSLAVIA AND THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE DURING THE SOCIALIST REGIME (1950–1990)
International Scientific Symposium held in Zagreb, 18–19 September 2025

The symposium took place on 18 and 19 September 2025 at the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography in Zagreb. It opened at 9 a.m., with remarks by Bruno Kračić, Director General, and Filip Hameršak, Director of the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography; Josip Mihaljević, Deputy Director of the Croatian Institute of History; and Christian Voss and Dino Mujadžević, co-leaders of the research project *The Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia: Between Yugoslav and Sub-Yugoslav Nation-Building(s) (1955–90)*, jointly carried out by the Humboldt University of Berlin and Croatian Institute of History. The central topic was the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*, published by the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia's Lexicographical Institute (from 1962 the Yugoslav Institute of Lexicography). Its first edition appeared in eight volumes between 1955 and 1971, while work on the second edition (1980–90) stopped after the sixth volume due to the collapse of Yugoslavia. The encyclopaedia had a central editorial board and otherwise followed a federal structure, with six republican editorial boards and two specialised boards (for military and party material), or, in the case of the second edition, six republican editorial boards, two provincial boards, and three specialised ones (the Editorial Board for Common Entries was added to the earlier two).

Miroslav Krleža was the project's driving force, and its main purpose was to assemble knowledge on the peoples and territories of Yugoslavia and present it to the wider world. Krleža framed the encyclopaedia's mission as »the gathering of all

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essential elements into a single synthesis that will not be a cult of romantic phrases, but an objective and truthful presentation of facts«. The first edition cultivated a strongly authorial approach, especially in larger synthetic, macro-encyclopaedic entries, with many articles adopting an essayistic tone that placed some of them among the finest achievements of Yugoslav essay writing.

The symposium addressed two closely linked themes. Firstly, it examined the making of the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*, the content of both editions, and the encyclopaedia's role in internal Yugoslav debates—particularly its early and persistent advocacy of a federal and increasingly decentralised state. Within this first theme, the presentations also opened space to reconsider Miroslav Krleža's role in the project, especially given that his creative contribution—above all to the first edition—was so substantial that the encyclopaedia can, to a large extent, be regarded as part of his authorial oeuvre. Secondly, the symposium explored the wider landscape of knowledge production in socialist Croatia and Yugoslavia, with emphasis on the intellectuals and scholars who contributed to or were influenced by the project.

The first day began with a panel devoted to the representation of cultural and historical heritage in the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. Pavle Bonča (The Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, Zagreb) opened the session with a presentation on the treatment of medieval visual heritage, examining how medieval art in the region of modern Yugoslavia was presented within the encyclopaedic project. He argued that visual heritage served as a tool of legitimation for the new state—proof, in Krleža's words, that South Slavic civilisation was not a ruin of a »long-sunken Atlantis« but a creative and artistically gifted culture. He also highlighted notable regional disparities. The corpus shows, for instance, an exceptionally high presence of medieval Orthodox monasteries, treated both individually and within larger units, while some sites considered much more culturally significant were left aside. Thus, the entry *Pula* contains no section on cultural monuments, and, while the Bay of Kotor receives two separate articles—on art and archaeology—the major Croatian regions of Istria and Dalmatia do not receive comparable treatment. A similar pattern of disbalance appears beyond Yugoslavia's borders: the encyclopaedia includes entries on *Baroque* (Croatian: *barok*) and *Gothic* (*gotika*), but those on *Romanesque* (*romanika*) and *Renaissance* (*renesansa*) are entirely absent.

Rudolf Barišić (Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb), long engaged in research on the Bosnian Franciscans, analysed how they were represented in the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. His findings suggest that the key criterion for inclusion—and for the length of individual entries—was the Franciscans' relationship to the Illyrian movement, seen as a precursor to the Yugoslav idea. He also noted that several figures who, in his view, were of greater historical importance do not appear in the encyclopaedia at all.

The panel's third paper, by Davor Dukić (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb), addressed the representation of Dubrovnik literature in the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. He first quantified the number of lines devoted to the Dubrovnik literature and then discussed how Dubrovnik was positioned within the broader framework of Yugoslav literature. In light of recent decades of intellectual and especially political disputes between Croatia and Serbia over the corpus's literary affiliation, it is striking that Dukić found no indicators suggesting its classification within Serbian literature. On the contrary, Dubrovnik—its republic as well as its literary tradition—is consistently and exclusively situated within the Croatian literary circle.

The final lecture, delivered by Dino Mujadžević (Croatian Institute of History, Slavonski Brod), examined the treatment of the Ottoman legacy in the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. A key phrase from the lecture's title—»Almost an appreciation«—vividly captures the essence of encyclopaedia's treatment of the Ottoman past. The re-evaluation of the Ottoman period is most evident in entries concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, which the author links to the increasing political autonomy and strengthened position of these regions after 1966. For this reason, the trend is far more pronounced in the second edition of encyclopaedia. Across the six published volumes of second edition, topics related to Ottoman history and culture are generally assessed in a favourable light, though a persistent caution remains: the entrenched anti-Ottoman historical narrative endures, framing the period of Ottoman rule as one of decline and subjugation for the Yugoslav peoples.

The second series of presentations opened with a lecture by Stjepan Matković (Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb), a specialist in the Party of the Right tradition, who examined this important strand of Croatian political history within the framework of the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. His analysis of the article corpus—reflecting, as expected, both then-prevailing and still influential historiographical interpretations of the Party of the Right's role in the national movement—highlighted the significance of Miroslav Krleža's own influence. Krleža's authority, he argued, played a decisive role in ensuring particular attention being given to Eugen Kvaternik's and Ante Starčević's social critique, with Starčević presented as a leading advocate of liberal-democratic principles in nineteenth-century Croatia. Given the particular character of Party of the Right's politics, it is unsurprising that the analysed corpus clearly underscores the anti-Yugoslav component of the movement's original ideology.

The next contribution, delivered by Filip Hameršak (The Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, Zagreb) and titled »Military-Historical Themes in the First Edition of the Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia with Regard to the Nullified Entry

by Vladimir Kalečak», offered a different angle on the encyclopaedia's development by considering not only the entries that were included but also those that were ultimately left out. Kalečak, who wrote on military subjects from within his own military background—having served since the Austro-Hungarian period and, intriguingly, in the units of the Independent State of Croatia (further: ISC) until his retirement in March 1944—was highly active in the creation of the Belgrade's *Military Encyclopaedia*, and several of his articles found their way into the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. Hameršak focused in particular on the entry *Yugoslavs: Participation in Wars* (Croatian: *jugoslaveni – učešća u ratovima*), which, despite passing through all levels of editorial review, including Krleža's comments, was never published. Thanks to the preserved materials—drafts, notes, and even Krleža's marginalia—the shaping of this encyclopaedic entry can be traced in detail.

The concluding lecture, by Tea Rogić Musa (The Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, Zagreb), returned to the repeatedly emphasised role of Miroslav Krleža in shaping the narrative framework of the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. She examined the (implicit) echoes of what she calls Krleža's »most important literary manifesto« of the interwar period, the essay *The Croatian Literary Lie* (Croatian: *Hrvatska književna laž*), published in 1919. Working through an exemplary corpus of 38 relevant entries, Rogić Musa argued that this text indeed contains the germ of Krleža's programme for systematising knowledge on national literature—a programme that, under his influence, was realised in the encyclopaedia's entries on Croatian literature.

The third panel turned its attention to figures who, whether due to the authorities of the time or the dominant research interests of the era, had found themselves at the margins. Josip Mihaljević (Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb) opened the session with a presentation on how dissidents of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia were represented in the encyclopaedic editions, showing how political shifts shaped their treatment. In his focus were the three most prominent dissidents—Andrija Hebrang, Milovan Đilas, and Aleksandar Ranković—each of whom fell out of favour with the central communist leadership at different moments, under different circumstances, and, crucially, after varying periods of political ascent and decline.

The next two contributions formed complementary parts of a single whole, addressing Miroslav Krleža and the Institute more broadly as a kind of refuge for individuals otherwise deemed politically unsuitable. Focusing on the period between 1950 and 1972, Dino Staničić (The Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, Zagreb) examined the Institute as a *refugium peccatorum*, shaped in no small measure by Krleža's influence. Although the best-known—and historiographically most analysed—case is that of Mate Ujević, who, despite the stigma of having edi-

ted the first *Croatian Encyclopaedia* during the ISC period, found a place at the Institute under Krleža's protection, Staničić broadened the lens to include a wider array of lesser-known figures. He traced the biographies of individuals who fell into disfavour not only because of their activities during the ISC era but also due to conflicts with (and within) prevailing political and cultural currents, as well as those implicated in the events of the Croatian Spring of 1971.

Building on this, Ivan Samardžija (The Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, Zagreb) focused on a polemic published in 1952 in the party newspaper *Naprijed*, in which an anonymous author—believed to be M. Joka—publicly criticised Krleža and the Institute for employing politically unsuitable individuals. The aim of the criticism, expressed only two years after the Institute's founding and seven after the end of World War II, was directed at Krleža's collaborators with links to the ISC. Krleža responded in the same publication later that year, defending both the individuals in question and the Institute's mission.

The final presentation shifted the focus from political to cultural marginalisation. Karla Lončar and Ana Šeparović (The Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, Zagreb) examined the representation of Croatian women artists in the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. Despite the formal legal equality of the period, the corpus of entries in the first edition shows a strikingly low level of inclusion, with the women who were included typically receiving short treatments lacking the depth and analytical richness afforded to their male counterparts. Although one might expect greater representation in the changed circumstances of the 1980s—marked by the emergence of the second wave of feminism in Croatia—the authors' analysis shows that broader cultural and social shifts were not reflected on pages of the encyclopaedia's second edition; despite some advances, women artists remained underrepresented.

The first day concluded with presentations focused on the second half of the twentieth century. Vlatka Dugački (The Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, Zagreb) addressed »Cultural and Educational Relations between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in the Socialist Period« from the perspective of the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. Her analysis revealed a kind of diplomatic pragmatism: despite the deep historical ties between the two countries, the Cold War political divide meant that the encyclopaedic entries largely limited themselves to affirming interstate cooperation, leaving aside the challenges and problems faced by the Czechoslovak minority in Yugoslavia.

Goran Arčabić (Zagreb City Museum, Zagreb) then examined »Interpretations of the Period of Command Economy and Central Planning in Socialist Yugoslavia (1947–1952) in the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*«. The initial work on the encyclopaedia coincided with Yugoslavia's distancing from the Soviet model, a shift

that greatly influenced the country's economic system. After Yugoslavia adopted self-management in 1953, Arčabić argued—through an analysis of selected relevant entries—that a certain dogmatic interpretive layer was built into the encyclopaedic articles, presenting the transition to the new model as an empirically grounded response to the recognised limitations of the earlier system.

Vladimir Geiger and Martina Grahek Ravenčić (Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb) examined human losses on the territory of the ISC during World War II. While most entries in the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia* deal with military and combat casualties in clashes between Axis forces and Yugoslav Partisans, the authors also highlighted the often-overlooked treatment of civilian suffering. Their analysis shows that the encyclopaedia sought to present Partisan losses as substantial—as they indeed were—yet frequently refrained from quantifying them, omitting precise casualty figures. In the case of what the authors themselves call the »most sensitive topics«, concerning Ustasha and Chetnik crimes against civilians, the encyclopaedia not only emphasised these atrocities but in certain instances also tended toward numerical overstatement. This was illustrated through the entry on the Jasenovac concentration camp. At the same time, the authors found no indication of the other side of the story: no reference to the treatment of captured enemy soldiers by Partisans, nor to civilian victims of Partisan actions. They concluded that the encyclopaedia's overall treatment of wartime casualties was thus shaped by several factors—the state of research at the time, the background and outlook of its contributors (of whom some had themselves served as Partisans or later as officers of the Yugoslav People's Army), and, above all, the prevailing communist ideology of the period, which by its very nature allowed little room for any alternative approach.

In the final lecture by Christian Voss (Department of Slavic and Hungarian Studies, Humboldt University of Berlin), the distinctive features and significance of the Albanian edition—what he refers to as its »selling points«—were explored. In 1984 and 1987, the first two volumes of the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia* were also published in Albanian, before the dissolution of the state halted further work. Owing to differences between the Albanian and Slavic alphabets, entries that appear (or would have appeared) only in later volumes of the Slavic versions surfaced earlier in the Albanian one. Voss highlighted the example of *German–Yugoslav Relations* (Croatian: *Njemačko-jugoslavenski odnosi*), which appears under *gj-* in the Albanian edition, whereas in the South Slavic versions it would have been found under *nj-*. The article also illustrates Yugoslavia's foreign-policy orientation and its imprint on the encyclopaedia: it discusses relations with West Germany exclusively, omitting any reference to the Soviet-controlled German Democratic Republic.

The second day opened with a lecture by Darja Kerec (Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana), who provided a broad overview of how Slovenian history is treated in the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. She focused in particular on the entries authored by the Slovenian historian and priest S. Mikuž, and on a comparison between the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia* and the *Encyclopaedia of Slovenia*, whose publication began in 1987, on the eve of socialist Yugoslavia's dissolution.

Ivana Crljenko (Department of Teacher Education Studies in Gospić, University of Zadar) then turned to one of the essential components of any comprehensive encyclopaedia or lexicon: geographical content. In the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*, this includes not only standard geographical entries or sections within larger articles—describing regions, landforms, and related features—but also texts from other fields that inevitably intersect with geography. Economic articles, for example, necessarily address the interdependence of economy and geography. Crljenko connected her detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis with the broader context of knowledge production in socialist Yugoslavia, as well as with the construction of national and provincial identities during that period.

The third presentation, by Amir Duranović (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo), again centred on one of the federation's constituent units, examining the *separat* on the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina published in 1983 as the stand-alone offprint of entry from second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. Duranović situated this text within the wider debates of the time concerning the achievements of Bosnian historiography as well as the promotion of narratives highlighting the successful development of the republic within socialist Yugoslavia.

The final lecture of this panel maintained the regional focus. Naum Trajanovski (Faculty of Sociology, University of Warsaw) traced the development of Macedonian sociology between 1945 and the 1970s, a period marked by the creation of a distinct Macedonian state within socialist Yugoslavia. Science, education, and publishing all played crucial roles in this process, while the structure of the new state placed scholars before the challenge of balancing national and class-based frameworks. This tension was especially visible in sociology, which, under socialism, was calibrated in ways fundamentally different from its pre-war form. Trajanovski illustrated this through several developmental phases leading up to the early 1970s.

The concluding panel of the symposium opened with a lecture by Branimir Janković (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb), who shifted attention away from the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia* to what he himself terms an alternative national encyclopaedic project: the *Encyclopaedia of Croatian History and Culture* (Croatian: *Enciklopedija hrvatske povijesti i kulture*), published in 1980. The very fact that a distinctly Croatian encyclopaedia appeared in the same

period as the Yugoslav one raises the question of whether this reflected dissatisfaction within the Croatian scholarly community regarding the treatment of Croatian history and culture. Shortly after its publication, the volume was withdrawn due to the controversial article on the Jasenovac concentration camp and the number of victims—a topic that, as we see, remains sensitive some fifty years later. While, as the author notes, the *Encyclopaedia of Croatian History and Culture* does not reveal a strong rejection of the supranational project of the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*, its overall content nevertheless departs in certain respects from official socialist ideology, particularly regarding national questions.

Turning from intra-Yugoslav to extra-Yugoslav perspectives, Piotr Mirocha (Institute of Slavonic Studies, Jagiellonian University in Kraków) analysed the discourse on Europe within the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. Using corpus-based tools such as collocation analysis, he examined the connotations of *Europe* (Croatian: *Europa*) and the *West* (Croatian: *Zapad*) in the first edition. Although the encyclopaedia was primarily intended to present the unity of identity and history among the Yugoslav peoples, it nonetheless positioned the Yugoslav space clearly within Europe and the imaginary geography of the world. By analysing the occurrence and frequency of terms associated with *Europe*, and grouping them into several semantic categories, Mirocha demonstrated and quantified the declining use of the possessive pronoun *our* (Croatian: *naš/naša*) in connection with these terms.

In their joint presentation, Gregor Pobežin and Petra Testen Koren (Institute of Cultural History, Scientific Research Centre of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana) addressed the extent to which knowledge production in the socialist period (1950–1990) was subordinated—sometimes forcibly—to politics. They compared the treatment of individuals included in the *Slovenian Biographical Lexicon* (published since 1925) with their treatment in the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. Since the two projects ran in parallel (the *Biographical Lexicon* until 1991, the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia* until 1971, and again 1980–1990), the authors also examined the extent to which contributors to one project were simultaneously involved in the other.

The conference concluded with a lecture by Sabina Ferhadbegović (Institute for Contemporary History, University of Vienna) on »Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity in the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*«, offering an innovative insight into how a society emerging from a traumatic wartime experience—such as that of the Yugoslav people—confronts memory and represents genocidal crimes. Ferhadbegović showed that the term *genocide* (Croatian: *genocid*) was avoided in the encyclopaedia, replaced by *mass killing* (Croatian: *pokolj*), a choice she described as »genocide without genocide«. The *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia* consistently promoted a so-called monster narrative, in which local Yugoslav collaborators were at times por-

trayed as more brutal than the Nazi Germans. Strikingly, the Holocaust is absent as a conceptual category, and atrocities committed in Balkan concentration camps are reframed as symbols of resistance and anti-fascist unity.

The symposium closed on a strong and affirmative note. Over two days it brought together a wide range of perspectives, covering subjects from medieval cultural heritage to late-socialist knowledge production and the political, regional, and disciplinary dynamics that shaped the *Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia*. Participants expressed a clear readiness to pursue similar projects in the future. Several researchers—and, importantly, a number of institutions—signalled their interest in collaborating on forthcoming initiatives, whether tied to other editions of the Institute or directed toward broader questions such as the continuities and discontinuities between Krleža's encyclopaedia and earlier encyclopaedic undertakings, including the one associated with Mate Ujević.

A thematic volume featuring selected papers from the symposium was also announced. With this momentum in mind, one can only hope that by the Institute's eightieth anniversary in five years' time—if not sooner—there will be an opportunity to convene again for a gathering of comparable scope and ambition.