

**Ulrike Schult, Zwischen Stechuhr und Selbstverwaltung.
Eine Mikrogeschichte sozialer Konflikte in der
jugoslawischen Fahrzeugindustrie 1965–1985**

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Ulrike Schult, *Zwischen Stechuhr und Selbstverwaltung. Eine Mikrogeschichte sozialer Konflikte in der jugoslawischen Fahrzeugindustrie 1965–1985*

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After the break with Stalin, Yugoslavia embarked on a road which led from the proclamation of the slogan “Factories to the workers!” to its realization. Workers’ self-management thereby acquired a central place in the economic, political and ideological conception of what was known as “the Yugoslav socialist model” and became one of its three pillars, alongside the politics of non-alignment and the concept of the “brotherhood and unity” (*bratstvo-jedinstvo*) of all Yugoslav peoples. Much has been written on workers’ self-management. In the SFRY, many activities were geared primarily to the further theoretical development and legitimization of the Yugoslav model, as well as to demonstrating its successes. However, there were also attempts to reconsider the Yugoslav system from a more critical standpoint, mainly undertaken by Marxist philosophers, sociologists and economists. Yugoslav self-management attracted attention outside of the country’s borders as well. In the West, many academics, university departments and research institutes committed themselves to thorough analysis of the Yugoslav model; such research was obviously linked to the Cold War interests of Western governments. The “Yugoslav experiment” also appealed to various leftist movements and parties who were disappointed with and disillusioned by developments in the USSR. Both tendencies were evident in West Germany.

The disintegration of Yugoslavia and the bloody wars of the 1990s brought a shift in the scholarly, political and mediatic engagement with

Yugoslavia. Attention was now focused on examining and understanding the roots of national, ethnic and religious conflicts in the Balkans. There was also an interest in issues related to the Second World War in Southeastern Europe and their relation to the civil war in Yugoslavia. Yugoslav socialism remained out of the spotlight. Yet while the Yugoslav socialist experiment went bankrupt, the ideas of workers' self-management and of the democratization of the workplace remain topical (as does the question of the democratization of international relations, which was one of the core principles of non-alignment). Against this backdrop, research on Yugoslav socialism deserves attention. Although there is a plethora of works on self-management in the SFRY, little contemporary research aims at a critical, historical and objective reexamination and reevaluation of self-management's successes and faults. There are even fewer studies that shed light on the everyday practice of self-management in the SFRY, like Ulrike Schult's book, which focuses on two vehicle factories, *Zavodi Crvena Zastava* (ZCZ) in Kragujevac (Serbia) and *Tovarna avtomobilov i motorjev* (TAM) in Maribor (Slovenia).

Zwischen Stechuhr und Selbstverwaltung. Eine Mikrogeschichte sozialer Konflikte in der jugoslawischen Fahrzeugindustrie 1965–1985 was published in 2017 as part of the *Studien zur Geschichte, Kultur und Gesellschaft Südosteuropas* book series. It was initially written as a Ph. D. dissertation, under the supervision of Professor Joachim von Puttkamer, and submitted to the Faculty of Philosophy of the Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena (Department of East-European History) in 2016.

The study is based on a variety of published and unpublished sources as well as on extensive secondary literature. The author conducted her research in the archives of Belgrade, Ljubljana, Maribor and Kragujevac, namely in the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia and the Archives of Serbia, but she also went through previously under- or unresearched documents of ZCZ, held in Kragujevac, and of TAM, kept in archives in Maribor. Although the author consulted the archival materials of

trade unions, youth organizations, various industries and the League of Communists held in the Archives of Slovenia and Serbia, a look into the holdings of the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade might have provided her with a more comprehensive and Yugoslavia-wide perspective, given the fact that the framework of her study was the Yugoslav federation and not the federal republics. However, despite this “open question,” a great amount of archival research and effort has been done by the author in preparing this book.

The research covers the period between 1965 and 1985, i. e. between the economic reforms of 1965 and the crises of the mid-1980s. In the introductory chapters, the author elaborates on the early phase of the development and implementation of self-management in Yugoslavia; her research then focuses on a later, developed phase of Yugoslav self-management. The two decades covered in the monograph are the most challenging for a scholar dealing with the history of Yugoslav socialism. This period was marked by an intensified opening of Yugoslavia towards the world market. It was a period when factories and companies gained greater autonomy and the Yugoslav leadership was first confronted with a negative growth rate, as well as with massive student demonstrations, rising nationalisms, political unrest and the oil crisis. These years were marked by purges within the party, the further federalization of party and state, and the death of Josip Broz Tito. These and many other events and developments, both outside and within Yugoslavia, affected the situation of the workers, as did the party and state leadership’s reactions. The author therefore takes them into consideration and includes them both in her analysis and in the explanatory parts of her study.

As the title of the book suggests, the research focuses on the question of the real extent of workers’ self-management, the relation between workers’ rights and the power of factory directors and managers, and the discrepancy between the proclaimed ideals and the practice of self-management. As stated in various proclamations, speeches and regulations, the aim of self-management in Yugoslavia was to overcome

traditional hierarchies and power relations within enterprises and find a solution to social conflicts both in the factories and in society. However, like other socialist systems in 20th century Europe, the Yugoslav model failed to accomplish this goal.

In her analysis of the social conflicts in Yugoslavia, Ulrike Schult advocates a micro-historical approach, focusing mainly on the two mentioned factories. While not losing sight of the historical, socioeconomic and cultural differences between the two Yugoslav republics, she does take these two case studies as representative of a single Yugoslav situation. In order to find a common denominator for her cases, she employs the method of comparative analysis. Oftentimes, and based on the available secondary literature, she compares Yugoslavia with other East European countries, and then underlines (dis-)similarities, i. e. the uniqueness of the Yugoslav case. When analyzing the social conflicts in Yugoslavia as evident in the two enterprises, the author focuses primarily on three elements. First, she examines the formal and official methods employed by Yugoslav workers in their struggle to assert their interests. She then analyses the informal methods employed by workers, such as strikes and minor forms of disobedience. Finally, she addresses the issue of social, educational and gender inequalities among workers. In other words, she questions the existence of “class solidarity” in Yugoslavia.

Although Ulrike Schult has decided to take a micro-historical approach, she does not neglect developments on the macro level. On the contrary, throughout her book she steadily and successfully integrates both levels of analysis. She examines the attitude of the party and state leadership towards workers’ initiatives, the influence workers were able to exercise on politics, the influence of economic difficulties and crisis on workers’ conditions and on the presence (or absence) of solidarity among them, the relationship between federalization and particularization, and so on. In socialist Yugoslavia, the relation between the state/party leadership and workers became salient after the break between Tito and Stalin. Self-management became the core of the “Yu-

goslav road to socialism,” its symbol and the essence of Yugoslavia’s self-conception. In other words, the legitimacy of the Yugoslav system and its leadership relied strongly on the conditions workers found themselves in and on the level of their identification with the system.

By analyzing the attitude of Yugoslav workers towards the state and party leadership, as well as the reactions of the Yugoslav rulers to concrete workers’ acts and initiatives, Ulrike Schult attempts to elucidate the matter of workers’ loyalty towards the state and the system. She addresses one of the central issues and “open questions” of the Yugoslav socialist system, namely the question of party and state legitimacy in Yugoslavia, thereby interweaving the micro and macro levels of analysis once again. Although Yugoslav socialism was more participative than the socialisms of other Eastern European countries and workers had more chances to make their voice heard, the author concludes that the Yugoslav self-management model failed to resolve social conflicts and create the conditions for the emergence of a solidary working class. Many proclaimed aims remained unrealized political slogans. Ulrike Schult concludes that by the mid-1980s at the latest, Yugoslav socialism, with its emphasis on self-management, had lost legitimacy even among those who were supposed to be the agents of self-management, the workers.

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