

# NEWSLETTER

CENTRE FOR CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH OF SOCIALISM  
CENTAR ZA KULTUROLOŠKA I POVIJESNA ISTRAŽIVANJA SOCIJALIZMA

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## Milica Popović on (post-)Yugoslav deserters

Centar za kulturološka i  
povijesna istraživanja  
socijalizma  
poziva vas na predavanje

srijeda, 12. studenog 2025.  
16.00 sati  
Filozofski fakultet  
Negrijeva 6, Pula  
dv. 221 (1. kat, lijevo krilo)



**Milica Popović**  
Austrijska akademija znanosti, Beč

**Tišina odbijanja: (ne)zaborav  
dezertera iz jugoslavenskih ratova**

On 12 November, during her two-week research stay in Pula, CKPIS hosted a guest lecture by our Visting Fellow Dr Milica Popović, Senior Postdoctoral Researcher at the Institute of Culture Studies (IKW), Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna. The lecture was based on the preliminary results of her research project *The Silence of Saying No: (Un)Remembering Deserters from the Yugoslav Wars*, funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), 2024–2027. Witnesses of the events under study, history students and faculty members had the pleasure of following Milica Popović's careful unveiling of the various layers of her research, its theoretical background, and personal accounts. Find out more in the interview published in this issue of the Newsletter!

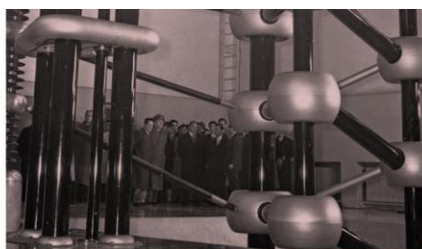


PROJECT IN CONVERSATION: (Un)Remembering Deserters & Milica Popović (pp. 8-10)

# Marko Miljković on the Yugoslav nuclear programme

Centar za kulturološka i  
povijesna istraživanja  
socijalizma  
poziva vas na predavanje

četvrtak, 27. studenog 2025.  
13.00 sati  
Filozofski fakultet  
Negrijeva 6, Pula  
dv. 255 (1. kat)



**Marko Miljković**  
Institut ekonomskih nauka, Beograd  
**Država, znanost i ideologija:  
jugoslavenski socijalizam kroz prizmu  
nuklearnog programa**

On 27 November, CKPIS had the great pleasure of hosting another guest lecture this month, this time by Dr Marko Miljković, a historian and Research Associate at the Institute of Economic Sciences in Belgrade. His topic was the Yugoslav nuclear programme in the 1950s and 1960s. In the context of the early Cold War, the break with Stalin, and the skilful balancing between

East and West, the nuclear programme represented a combination of vision, deception and political hazard: from industrial espionage and secret negotiations with superpowers to the ambitions of scientists convinced of progress. Following the path from enthusiasm to destruction, from laboratories in Vinča, Zagreb and Ljubljana to closed sessions of the state summit, Miljković demonstrated how this forgotten project illuminates the specific logic of Yugoslav socialism and its modernisation and security aspirations. The lecture was based on his recent book *Titova atomska bomba: jugoslavenski nuklearni program 1948–1970* (Srednja Europa, Zagreb, 2025), as well as his dissertation *Tito's Proliferation Puzzle: The Yugoslav Nuclear Program, 1948–1970* (CEU, 2021).

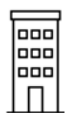


LOOK FOR CKPIS.UNIPU ON INSTAGRAM



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**HOUSING.YU**  
by Antun Dulibić

## Exploring housing in socialist Croatia



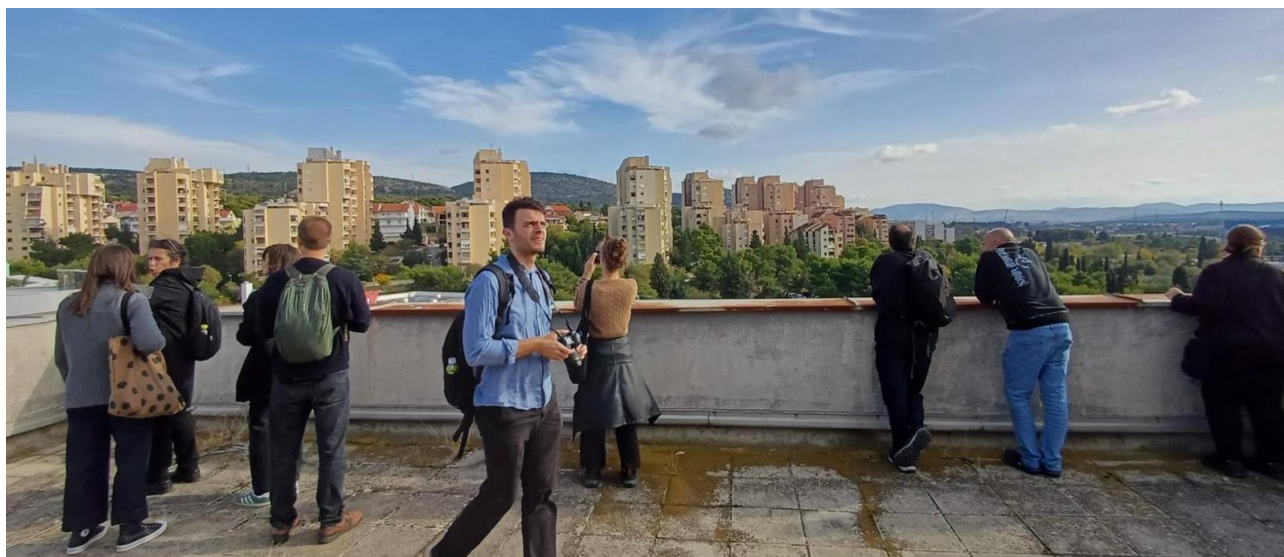
This November, the Housing.Yu research team – accompanied by Centre member Igor Duda and external associate Antun Dulibić – set out on a six-day study trip across Croatia to explore, document, and analyse mass housing estates in their historical and contemporary contexts. The first leg of the journey unfolded in Osijek, Borovo, and Slavonski Brod, where the team examined the region's long and complex relationship with mass housing, stretching from early interwar experiments to large-scale post-war urban transformations. Rich archival material, on-site observations, and discussions with local experts provided a textured understanding of

how these neighbourhoods shaped everyday life across decades.

The second half of the trip brought the team to Dalmatia for a four-day guided tour that combined field visits with public conversations with living contemporaries. In Zadar, Šibenik, and Split, the researchers met with architects and urbanists Nikola Bašić, Gustav Červar, Dinko Kovačić, Eduard Katičić, and Tonko Mladina. Their first-hand accounts offer insight into the design intentions, construction processes, and social ambitions behind some of the country's most prolific housing estates such as Split-3.



The Housing.Yu team strongly believes that such encounters – where lived expertise meets the examined past – are essential for producing meaningful, well-grounded scholarship. By connecting historical analysis with voices of those directly involved, the project continues to enrich its understanding of mass housing and its lasting impact on communities across the region.





## CONFERENCES AND CFP

### **Communism for Young People. Passing on the Recent Past in Central and Eastern Europe, Bucharest, 28-29 May 2026**

More than 35 years after its fall, Communism remains a frame of reference for the memory cultures of countries in Central and Eastern Europe and still plays an important role in the political, social, and cultural life of those countries. Politics have tried to fashion these memory cultures through commemorative and compensatory laws, monuments, memorials, and museums, textbooks and school curricula. The European laws and politics and/or the pro-Russian discourse added a new dimension to the ways of remembering the Communist/Soviet past in these countries. ([Read more](#))

**Application deadline: 5 April 2026**

### **"Homecomings" and Internal Migrations in the History and Present of Central and Southeastern Europe, Koper, 11-12 June 2026**

The regions of Central and Southeastern Europe have traditionally been regarded as areas of outmigration. This is hardly surprising, given the magnitude and continuity of population outflows since the late nineteenth century, which continue to shape many places in the region today. As a result, long-distance emigration – much like the forcible population transfers following the world wars – profoundly influenced nation-building processes across the region and steered migration scholarship toward the movements of ethnic kin abroad. Yet migration has often been circular, non-linear, and multidirectional. Migrants not only travelled abroad to improve their circumstances at home; many also sought opportunities within their own states. ([Read more](#))

**Application deadline: 31 December 2025**

### **CfA: "The Past Reimagined: Media and Memory in Post-Communist Countries", East European Politics and Societies**

This thematic cluster invites contributions that critically examine how traditional and social media outlets in post-communist states in Central and Eastern Europe engage with, reinterpret, and often mythologize the past. This topic is important for democratic cohesion in post-communist countries today, as fragmented memory ecologies potentially undermine historical literacy and facilitate populist politics (Szostak and Mihelj, 2017; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015). While scholars have studied the interaction of media and memory in post-communism, this thematic cluster seeks to capture the latest developments in a field, the positive re-evaluation of communism brought about by the democratic backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the rise of populist influencers, journalists and media owners who promote a nostalgic post-memory of past times. ([Read more](#))

**Application deadline: 3 December 2025**

**Failure as governance in the post-socialist contexts, Uppsala, 13-14 August 2026**

In former socialist spaces, failure can be understood on at least three levels: the regime itself, drawing on Winston Churchill's claim that "socialism is the philosophy of failure" (Ssorin-Chaikov, 2016); regions and places; as well as individuals. For instance, some studies have examined how Soviet-era ruins and unfinished infrastructures might function as devices for naming otherness, or how entire regions are reproduced as lagging and deficient through postSoviet decolonising efforts. Meanwhile, others highlight how neoliberal Western institutions recast socialist-era actors as deficient or frame issues like unemployment or difficulties adapting to the labour market as personal failures, producing new social hierarchies, exclusions, and experiences of dispossession. ([Read more](#))

Application deadline: 19 December 2025

**IOS-Jahrestagung 2026: From Contested Pasts to (In)Secure Futures – Politics in East and Southeast Europe, Regensburg, 22-24 April 2026**

The 13th IOS Annual Conference marks the official launch of the newly established Department of Politics at the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS) in Regensburg. Conceived as an inaugural event, the conference aims to introduce and discuss the department's emerging research agenda and to foster dialogue with scholars whose work resonates with our focus on political institutions, actors, and processes in East and Southeast Europe. The Department of Politics investigates how political orders in Eastern Europe are constituted, contested and transformed through the interaction of local institutions, governance and law with regional and global dynamics. ([Read more](#))

Application deadline: 15 December 2025

**Communist Regimes and the World Economy Since the 1970s (9th Hermann Weber Conference), Regensburg, 22-23 April 2027**

Communist regimes of various kinds were committed to overcoming capitalism, but they operated in the context of a dynamically changing (capitalist) global economy. This was particularly true for the period from the early 1970s to the collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe and the USSR between 1989 and 1991. The aim of this conference is to take a comparative look at the consequences of this tension and the connection between the transformation of the global economy and that of the state socialist countries. The organizers are particularly interested in the question of how the different forms of communist systems—from the Soviet to the Chinese and Yugoslavian to the Cuban models—shaped their respective interactions with the global economy. ([Read more](#))

Application deadline: 24 February 2026

### **Transition and Renewal: Progressive Utopias and Leftist Reorientation, 1970s–1990s, Copenhagen, 12-14 May 2027**

The pervasive sense of ongoing economic, political and everyday crises in contemporary Western societies has prompted attempts at reorientation within the political left. While the Left has traditionally drawn its legitimacy from the promise of progress, the visions of the contemporary Left today seem largely informed by and rooted in the past. What has become of the labour movement's once-radiant future? To contextualise the transformation of the European Left's visions of the future, it is worthwhile examining the long 1970s. The focus of the conference encompasses the entire spectrum of the left, including left-liberal currents, social democracy, trade unions, communism and the radical left. As well as Western European countries, reorientation processes within state socialism are also considered. ([Read more](#))

**Application deadline: 15 January 2026**



## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Martin Schulze Wessel, Darina Volf (eds.), *hanging Times, Persisting Legacies: The Uneven Development of East-Central Europe since 1989* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2025)**

This volume aims to contribute to the historicization of the post-1989 transformation period in East-Central Europe by addressing the temporality of transformation from a predominantly historical perspective, but also in dialogue with the social sciences. It focuses on the four countries that form the core of East-Central Europe – Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary – but broadens the perspective by including more general comparisons within the region as well as insightful case studies from other countries that share some important characteristics with the narrowly defined East-Central Europe, but that, at the same time are able to shed some light on certain specific features of each case. ([Read more](#))

### **Boris Mosковић, „Umro je drug Tito“. *Jugoslavija između jednog vođe i kolektivnog rukovodstva* (1977-1982) (Srednja Europa, Zagreb 2025)**

Autor se u knjizi fokusira na dva osnovna pitanja – prvo je kako se jugoslavenska politička elita pripremala za Titovu smrt, i drugo, na koji je način vladala prve dvije godine nakon njegove smrti? Većina tekstova koji se bave kasnom socijalističkom Jugoslavijom tvrdoglavo se koncentriraju samo na trenutak kada je 4. svibnja 1980. Josip Broz Tito, u dobi od nepunih osamdeset i osam godina, preminuo u ljubljanskoj bolnici. Obavezno je postalo i spominjanje njegova spektakularnog sprovoda na kojem su bila brojna strana izaslanstva. Stoga ne čudi što većina autora upravo te događaje uzima kao prirodnu prekretnicu prema kojoj zatim koncipira cjelokupnu interpretaciju posljednjeg razdoblja postojanja SFRJ. ([Read more](#))





## POSITIONS, GRANTS AND STIPENDS

### **Doctoral Programme in History and Civilization, European University Institute, Florence**

The Department of History and Civilisation offers a distinctive four-year PhD programme of transnational and comparative European history supported by a uniquely international and multicultural faculty. In the first and second years, doctoral researchers study historiographical and methodological issues and focus on an in-depth exploration of selected central themes of European history. In the third and fourth years, researchers focus on their individual research and are invited to present the results of their work at seminars and workshops. ([read more](#))

Application deadline: 15 January 2026

### **Doctoral Programme in Political and Social Sciences, European University Institute, Florence**

The researchers study the important issues of our time that social science can uniquely address, with PhD opportunities across politics and comparative politics, political theory, international relations, and sociology. The active faculty and a strong cohort of PhD researchers and post-doctoral scholars create a stimulating environment for study. By covering key fields across the political and social sciences within one department, the Department enables cross-disciplinary research conversations to take place, meaning ideas and research findings are easily shared and discussed further. ([read more](#))

Application deadline: 15 January 2026

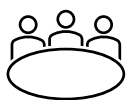
### **Edith Saurer Research Grants 2026**

The Edith Saurer Fund awards research grants to outstanding domestic and foreign postdoctoral scholars whose current work specifically addresses issues of social inequality from the perspectives of gender, class and culture. Particular attention is paid to projects that deal with Europe from the early modern period to the 20th century and pursue comparative and transnational approaches. ESF grants are one-off, project-based and are only awarded to projects that are not yet completed.. ([read more](#))

Application deadline: 31 December 2025



LOOK FOR CKPIS-UNIPU ON YOUTUBE



## PROJECT IN CONVERSATION

by Tina Filipović

### The Silence of Saying No: (Un)Remembering Deserters from the Yugoslav Wars ([read more](#))

This research is funded in whole by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), no. 10.55776/ESP8588624. The project lasts from December 1, 2024 to November 30, 2027.



*The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia crumbled in violent wars in the 1990s that led to the loss of over 140,000 lives, and unfathomable consequences for the (post-)Yugoslav societies. The political elites, needing to legitimize the wars, resorted to different forms of nationalist mobilization and imposed ethnocentric narratives. However, media and nongovernmental reports have noted thousands of cases of desertion, draft evasion and draft resistance. Men sought refuge in neighbouring countries or avoided participation in the wars in numerous other ways. Conscientious objection was not recognized by law at the time and/or not implemented, and the wartime regimes responded with (show) trials, threats, torture, and forced mobilizations. Many European countries, however, did not accept requests for asylum from deserters and war resisters from the (post-)Yugoslav space, despite their continuous calls for the wars to end. Today, acts of antiwar, but also anti-ethnonational, resistance during and after the Yugoslav wars are included in, or excluded from, official memory politics of the (post-)Yugoslav states in accordance with the ideological aims of*

*contemporary political struggles: through its epitomizing as an ultimate ethical act, or by purposefully forcing it into oblivion.*

*CKPIS being one of the partner institutions in this project, we spoke with Milica Popović, Project Leader and Senior Postdoctoral Researcher at the Institute of Culture Studies at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna.*

**Your project examines the reverse side of warfare, a perspective often overlooked by scholars, especially within post-Yugoslav historiographies. What led you to focus on this particular topic? Do deserters offer unique insights into war and society that are often absent from conventional military histories?**

I believe we all research “where it hurts”; I am suspicious of a scientific endeavour which does not come from deep passion for understanding the world, and thus providing avenues for changing it. Growing up in Belgrade, during the 1990s, I was surrounded by people who rejected to be part of the war machine, in many different ways. Along the way, I realized that majority of those men were not by default pacifists, nor antimilitarist activists, nor did they wish to become one. The most usual trope “It is not my war” was charged by many different meanings, for as many different cases there were. I wanted to understand what it meant to those people, and what influenced making such a, most often very difficult, decision. I was also curious to understand why in the societies where the so-called reconciliation with the past approach was imposed – even if needed, there was an



almost total silence on the fact that the war was not the choice of majority.

Looking from a global perspective, the focus, or sometimes we could even say, an obsession, with the victimization and the roles of victims and perpetrators, prepares the ground for future violence; seeded in grievances, and centralization of trauma for group identities. Resistance, which has a much bigger potential for hope and thus positive outlook on the future, remains intentionally forgotten. Deserters can show us that agency remains in the darkest of times, but also remind us that the wars are led by the few – thus leaving the space for resistance and more compassion and solidarity.

**How do you approach the issue of avoiding participation in war from a theoretical point of view? Is it possible to classify deserters in any meaningful way?**

Starting from a true research gap, a research question with only few academic works on the topic, I decided to take the path of critical grounded theory. I am in the data collection phase, and without hypotheses – just trying to embrace what the field tells me. I perceive this project as a starting point for research which will continue in many years to come.

The “deserter” in my project encompasses all different ways of avoiding the participation in the Yugoslav wars, far beyond the military and legal definition of a deserter. Through archival research and qualitative interviews, I will attempt to make a categorization of the, indeed enormous, diversity of cases – if such proves to be fruitful, which I am still unsure of. Creativity of resistance does not change the outcome – people were doing their best

according to their means, their class, their positionality, their cultural capital, the support they had within their closer and wider environments; but the result was the same – they did not participate in the wars.



Milica Popović

**An important but rather challenging aspect of this project is not only framing the voices of deserters, but also collecting their stories that are often deeply personal and emotional. How simple is to find interlocutors willing to share their memories regarding different war resistance experiences across former belligerent space?**

Easier than expected, more difficult than expected. Finding the interlocutors is closely

connected to the current geo-political realities in which we live in. Serbia, otherwise the country in which the majority of “deserters” came from, is currently shook by yearlong student protests against the authoritarian government of Aleksandar Vučić, the warmongering radical from the 1990s, making it difficult to change people’s focus onto any other topic – and rightly so. It is also making people more suspicious of my research, questioning if this is the government’s move. On the other side, the European context of militarization and preparation for the next war, the genocide in Palestine and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, made many feel that the topics of antimilitarism and desertion are more urgent than ever.

And in the end, all untold stories yearn to be told – one important task of science is to provide that space and through that space, influence the hegemonic discourses.

**Having you here with us on a visiting fellowship makes me curious about your relationship with CKPIS. Have these connections been useful in your academic work? Would you recommend spending time in Pula to your peers, and if so, why?**

CKPIS is the main culprit for me enrolling in a PhD programme. After finishing my master in 2012 in Paris, I was unsure about continuing my academic journey and in 2013, the first *Socialism on the Bench* conference took place. I came and I was mesmerized by the energy, the knowledge and new perspectives of the latest generation of researchers on Yugoslavia in the (post)Yugoslav space. So, Pula has a special place in my heart, and especially CKPIS. Throughout the years working on my thesis,

CKPIS was one place I would turn to – reading the work of the members, coming to conferences, presenting my work and receiving most useful feedback. Igor Duda’s work on the Pioneers’ associations provided the historical context much needed for my work on the generation of the last pioneers, and my forthcoming book *The Last Pioneers: Deconstructing Yugonostalgia and (post-)Yugoslavism* (expected in 2026 by Central European University Press/Amsterdam University Press) would have never happened if there wasn’t for CKPIS.



Lecture in Pula, November 2025

Once I had a chance to write my own first research project, it only made sense to make CKPIS one of the partners and I applied for the fellowship as soon as I heard about it. I believe the new wave of (post)Yugoslav research was truly pioneered by CKPIS. Beyond having a chance to spend some time in the beautiful town of Pula, rarely will researchers of socialism and Yugoslavia find a more welcoming environment and inspiring colleagues to work with. So the recommendation is the least I could say. Apply!

**NEWSLETTER**

<https://www.unipu.hr/ckpis/en/newsletter>