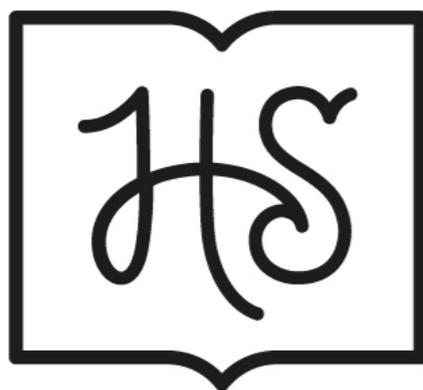


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Contents

EDITORIAL Tomáš KASPER Markéta PÁNKOVÁ	1
Schule und Geheimdienst in der DDR. Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung. Ulrich WIEGMANN	3
Transformation of Philosophy from Marxism to Theology in the educational system of Yugoslavia: The Case of Montenegro. Vucina ZORIC	19
<i>Today, as I become a Pioneer ...: education in the spirit of socialism</i> Štefka BATINIĆ, Igor RADEKA, Snježana ŠUŠNJARA	29
Von der bürgerlich-liberalen Pädagogik des 19. Jahrhunderts zur totalitär verfassten sozialistischen Staatspädagogik der 1950er Jahre – Aspekte der erziehungswissenschaftlichen Disziplingeschichte in Ungarn. András NÉMETH	42
Pädagogische Wissenschaft in einer (modernen) Fürsorgediktatur – das Beispiel DDR. Sonja HÄDER	55
RESEARCH RESULTS: Die Behandlung des revolutionären Neuanfangs als Legitimationsfigur im Staatsbürgerkundeunterricht der DDR. May JEHLE	77
BOOK REVIEW: The <i>Dizionario Biografico dell'Educazione (1800-2000)</i> between the retrieval of community identity and memory and the restoration of the historical and educational studies. Luigiaurelio POMANTE	97

REPORT: 101
Between Tradition and Future Challenges: The Study of Pedagogy in Central and South-East Europe – report on the symposium.

Edvard PROTNER

REPORT: 104
The VII Scientific Conference of the SEPHE and the V Iberian-American Symposium of the RIDPHE (San Sebastián, June 28-July 1, 2016).

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Today, as I become a Pioneer ...: education in the spirit of socialism

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ABSTRACT

Today, as I become a Pioneer ...: education in the spirit of socialism

Today, as I become a Pioneer . . . was the opening line of the Pioneer pledge given during the induction ceremony for new members of the Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia, a mass membership children's organisation in former Yugoslavia popularly known as "Tito's Pioneers". The members of the Pioneer organisation were children between seven and fourteen, organised into various Pioneer collectives that consisted of Pioneer squadrons as basic structural units. Pioneer membership induction ritual, performed in the first grade of elementary school, was a specific form of social and political initiation. Over the course of four decades, the Pioneers' Union structure, activities, goals and missions were being adapted to social changes, always remaining within the given ideological frame. The purpose of Pioneer rituals, symbols, papers, activities, celebrations and events was to *construct* "the notion of a Yugoslav child", a future active member of socialist society. Teachers, as well as professionals specially trained to work with Pioneers, had an important role in achieving this mission. In this paper we explore and analyse the creation of a new, Pioneer tradition during the first post-war decade in Yugoslavia and its existence until the end of the 1980s, with a particular emphasis on the activity of the Union of Pioneers in Croatia and the Union of Pioneers in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Introduction

Totalitarian societies generally expect the system of education to act as a major transformational force that will facilitate the development of the new man in the social order they have proclaimed. Socialist education in the “Second Yugoslavia”, after World War II, was also based on this expectation. The school system had a decisive role in achieving the expected results; however, it was not considered to be sufficient. The school system was complemented by numerous other social factors, particularly by social-political organisations. The Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia was of particular relevance for issues related to young people.

This paper describes the establishment of the Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia as a mass children’s organisation that aimed to envelop the entire school population between the ages of seven and fifteen, and the creation of a new tradition with the purpose of influencing the education of young generations in socialist Yugoslavia. The emphasis is placed on the attempts to bring about the idea of creating a “new socialist man” and on the mechanisms of its realisation within the framework of a children’s organisation.

Establishing of the Pioneer organisation

The Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia was established at the First Congress of the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia held in Bihać between 27 and 29 December 1942, less than a year before the founding of “Second Yugoslavia” in Jajce on 29 November 1943. Several studies and articles on the activities of the Pioneer organisation during the war were published in pedagogy and history magazines in the two decades following the war, while the “courageous acts of young Pioneers” (Martić 1957) were described in numerous tales, short stories and children’s novels. Reconstruction of events from the then recent past often developed into a construction of the desirable perception of Pioneers as self-reliant and daring boys and girls who used to “report on the approaching enemy, inform the authorities about suspicious persons, distribute leaflets, inform people about important events, perform sabotage etc.” (Ogrizović 1957, p. 23). This kind of perception was also (re)constructed on the basis of agitprop Partisan printed materials aimed at the youngest population, such as the *Pionir* paper, which was mimeographed and distributed in areas controlled by the Partisans. The paper contained battle cries and patriotic statements penned by the Pioneers themselves, such as:

We feel enormous love for our suffering and oppressed homeland. We love our dear liberators – our heroic army and we shall do anything to help them as much as possible (Pionir 1943, cited in Ogrizović 1957, p. 23)

During the war, older Pioneers used to engage in battle themselves. Boško Buha (1926-1943), who joined the Partisan forces when he was fifteen, became the People’s Hero and an icon of a young Partisan fighter. Younger Pioneers participated in campaigns for collecting food, fruit, clothes and other essentials. The League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia, or SKOJ, was primarily responsible for working with the Pioneers. As early as 1942, the regional SKOJ

Committee for Croatia issued guidelines on ways of imbuing education with the fighting spirit (Ogrizović 1977, pp. 30-31). Fighting spirit could also be found in working with the Pioneers in El Shatt, a complex of refugee camps in the desert on the Egyptian peninsula of Sinai. Around 28,000 Dalmatian refugees emigrated there at the beginning of 1944. Educational and cultural activities were provided for 5,586 children-Pioneers living in five bases of the camp at the beginning of 1945 (Klisura 1980, p. 93), and three issues of *Naš pionir* (*Our Pioneer*) paper were published during 1944.

The founding of the Pioneer organisation in the midst of World War II and the participation of Pioneers in various forms of the liberation war have been highlighted by authors as a rare instance in a country fighting for freedom and a basis for new beginnings in the field of education and the “raising of children in the spirit of brotherhood and unity, comradeship and collective consciousness” (Ogrizović 1977, p. 187).

To become and to be a Pioneer – the making of a new tradition

When the war ended, the Pioneer organisation in the new state was systematically developed and the important role of the Pioneers during the war was methodically emphasized, creating a myth later used to construct the concept of peacetime childhood. According to the Statute of the Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia (1946), the main goal of the Union was to “support the creation of a joyous and satisfying life for children, guaranteed by our Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia” and to “teach its members to love their country, the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, above all else; to respect and love equally all of its peoples; and to be dedicated creators and faithful guardians of its freedom and independence in the future. The Union encourages the Pioneers to nurture our nation’s spirit of chivalry and freedom and brings them up on the sacred traditions of our past, particularly the traditions of the People’s Liberation War” (Statute 1946, p. 8). The Statute regulates the operation of the Pioneer organisation – from its organisational structure, to new membership procedures, to Pioneers’ responsibilities and iconography.

In the organisational sense, the Union of Pioneers resembled a military structure. The basic unit of the Union was a Pioneer squadron, which included all Pioneers within one school. The Pioneers in one classroom comprised a troop, which was further divided into squads headed by squad leaders. The headquarters of a Pioneer squadron consisted of troop leaders and it was in charge of supervising the squadron’s activities. The Union of Pioneers divided into Junior Pioneers (7 to 11) and Pioneers (11 to 14). Although the Statute stipulated that children who wish to become members of the Pioneer organisation should approach the squadron headquarters themselves and request to be accepted as members, the membership procedure became automatic and was performed in the first grade of elementary school as part of the Republic Day celebrations on 29 November. On that occasion, the Pioneers gave a

pledge, or their Pioneer's promise. In 1963, new regulations were introduced for accepting new members into the organisation and the text of the pledge¹³ was modernised:

*Today, as I become a Pioneer,
I give my Pioneer's promise:*

*That I shall study and work diligently,
respect my parents and my seniors¹⁴
and be a loyal and honest friend,
who keeps the given word;*

*that I shall follow the example of the best Pioneers,
value the glorious deeds of the partisans
and progressive people of this world
who value freedom and peace;*

*that I shall love my country,
self-managing socialist Yugoslavia,¹⁵
and all of its brotherly peoples
and build a new life
full of joy and happiness.*

The reform of the Union of Pioneers began in the 1950s after a letter from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia dated 8 July 1950 and signed by Milovan Đilas. The letter identified weaknesses and faults in the previous activity of the Pioneer organisation, such as stereotyping, arduous work, obtrusive political activity and excessive military mind-set and discipline. Instead, the letter appealed for a wider range and more diverse forms of education, for the fulfilment of children's need for play and fun and the creation of an organisation that would include various children's activities that contribute to suitable and versatile human development (Letter of the Central Committee CPY 1951). The recommendations for the reform of the Union stalled its growth and activity, and the crisis was overcome after another letter in 1956 (Duda 2013, p. 83).

A more flexible organisation of the Union did not imply flexibility in terms of membership. Mass membership was insisted upon, as well as the inclusion of all elementary school pupils,¹⁶ since "membership and activity in the Pioneer organisation is one of the imperative conditions for future achievements in our self-managing socialist community" (Paravina 1973, p. 16). Following the proclaimed Yugoslav model of self-management as a specific way

¹³Until 1963, the Pioneers were giving a pledge with the following words: *I pledge in front of the Pioneer flag and my Pioneer comrades to study and live as a faithful son of my country, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. I pledge to treasure the brotherhood and unity of our peoples, the freedom and independence of our homeland, won by the blood of her best sons. For the homeland with Tito – onward!* (Statute 1946, p. 14)

¹⁴After 1974: "respect parents and teachers".

¹⁵The words "self-managing socialist Yugoslavia" were added in 1974.

¹⁶According to data published in the Pioneer's Booklet, which the Pioneers received after 1978, the Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia had 3 million members organised in 12,500 Pioneer squadrons (HŠM A 4696)

of social development, the Pioneer organisation was also a certain kind of experiment and an attempt to build a characteristic and unique Yugoslav children's organisation. Its recognisability was meant to be further supported by the Pioneer symbols: the red scarf and the blue hat with a Pioneer's badge, and a red flag. The red triangular scarf symbolised the red proletarian flag. Tying of the scarf around the neck was symbolic of a Pioneer's ties with the community of Yugoslav children. White shirts and dark blue skirts were part of the formal Pioneer uniform for girls and white shirts and dark blue trousers for boys. The Pioneer badge was shaped as a waving red flag with the silhouettes of a Pioneer boy and girl and the words of the formal Pioneer greeting: *For the homeland with Tito – onward!* An everyday Pioneer greeting was: *Hello!* (Za bolji rad Saveza Pionira 1964).

The formal acceptance into the Pioneer organisation had to be carefully prepared as an event that would be remembered for life and that was important for the whole community because “the celebration of becoming a member of the Pioneer organisation marks a symbolic entry of the child into our social life, a moment after which the child is considered to be part of our social collective, a moment when it formally enters, by means of its children's organisation, into the area of social rights and responsibilities and the area of collective work and communal living based on the principles of self-management” (Paravina 1974, p. 13). The preparations included working with the future Pioneers – they had to be introduced to the Pioneer organisation, learn the words of the pledge and acquire Pioneer knowledge and skills, such as various social games, Pioneer and partisan songs and occasional verses, Pioneer greetings and similar. The second part of the preparations included the organisation of the ceremony itself – lists of future Pioneers, acquisition of Pioneer symbols, ceremony programme and flowchart, and decoration of the premises.

Indeed, the effect of an “event to remember” was achieved. The Pioneer induction ceremony remained etched in the memory of most people who grew up in socialist Yugoslavia. From the present perspective, and with a temporal distance and an experience of transition, the event is often described with an amount of irony, as a parade that was more important than its cause and contents. For the seven-year-olds it really was a parade, a show, a festivity where they would get a juice and a sandwich and where some of them appeared in front of an audience for the first time in their life.

After the pledge I recite an appropriate poem with some other children. Standing on the edge of the stage, I bow clumsily to the audience, dropping my hat on the floor of the auditorium. There is laughter in the hall as I, a newly fledged hatless Pioneer, leave the stage ashamed. (Piškorec 2006, p. 471)

What I most clearly remember of my Pioneer membership ceremony are small sandwiches and fruit juice we were given. (Leksikon yu-mitologije)

The ritual of Pioneer induction ceremony was a kind of an initiation into society that “preferred and fostered collectivism as a social norm” (Erdei 2006, p. 206) and thus wanted to strengthen the collective and socialist spirit of young generations. In the 60s and 70s – the so-called golden age of socialism – when the organisation stepped away from the military mind-

set characteristic of the immediate post-war period, it offered a modernised normative framework for growing up, which contained the inevitable ideological charge as well as universally accepted educational values such as industrious study and conscientious work, respect for parents and elders, friendship, freedom, peace and similar. In the collective consciousness, the notion of “being a Pioneer” was reduced to an aesthetic dimension, to the ritual itself and an occasional staged appearance of Pioneers, such as welcoming ceremonies for comrade Tito.

It was usually on 29 November, the Day of the Republic, or some other national holiday. I remember, as a kid, standing in the second row among Tito’s Pioneers. Wearing blue hats with a red star and red scarves tied around the necks, we eagerly waved the small paper Party flags, shouting “Long live Tito! Tito! The Party!” as black limousines passed by us. There was another slogan we used to shout on such occasions, looking at our teacher to give us a cue; “Brotherhood-unity! Brotherhood-unity!” we shouted our heads off. Those words were a puzzle to me. There was nothing more natural than wish Tito a long life, since not only streets, schools and hospitals, but also towns and cities were named after him, “the greatest son of our peoples”. But the slogans about brotherhood and unity sounded a bit too abstract. (Drakulić 2001, p. 111).

Slogans had an important role in imposing the communist¹⁷ ideology and nurturing a personality cult. They were constituent part of school decorations, especially on festive occasions. The slogans like “Death to fascism – freedom to the people!”, “Tito, the Party, the Youth, the action!”, “We are all Tito!”, “We belong to Tito, Tito belongs to us!”, “Brotherhood-unity!” were shouted by children, too, without understanding their meaning or significance. Children’s songs intended for special occasions, more appropriate for young age, had a stronger effect on Pioneers and had another important function – creation of a joyful atmosphere, of happiness and pride to be living in such a wonderful country. The guidelines for accepting new members into the Union of Pioneers always had a supplement with appropriate texts and rhymes intended for the “delight of the Pioneers” written by famous children’s authors from all parts of Yugoslavia and usually containing motifs of Pioneers, the homeland and Tito. *Little Pioneers* – one of the best known Pioneer songs, and probably difficult to find in new textbooks for working with the Pioneers because of its militant tone, became a national children’s song and has remained the song most commonly associated with the Pioneers:

*Little Pioneers,
we are a proper army.
Like the green grass,
we grow daily.*

¹⁷According to the post-war ideology of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, socialist society was a transitory stage between the class capitalist society, which is being left behind, and the communist society, which has yet to be attained and which is classless and based on equality. Socialism is thus seen as a class society governed by the working classes who will facilitate the transition from the class capitalism to classless communism.

*Death to fascism,
freedom to the people.
My mum will call me
her little Pioneer.*

In spite of continuous efforts – based on political decisions and “comrade Tito’s thoughts on education” – which prominent experts invested in their work with the Pioneers, in late socialism the “little Pioneers” started turning into an “army of consumers” (Erdei 2006). Distancing from the rigid structure and attempts to create a “truly children’s organisation” that had started in the 50s, contributed to the weakening of the ideological character of the Pioneer organisation and to the creation of its “hybridity” (Erdei 2006, p. 235.), which became particularly prominent in the decade following Tito’s death when the process of transition and the collapse of Yugoslavia could already be discerned. It is interesting to note that, for instance, only 16% of young people in Croatia wanted to join the League of Communists in 1986 (Jakovina 2006, p. 174), although they had all experienced the “joys of being a Pioneer”.

Education in the spirit of socialism

During the first five post-war years, before the reform of the Pioneer organisation in 1950, the work with Pioneers concentrated on “ideological and political education”. To that end, the Pioneers were expected to keep their weekly political diary (newspaper clippings, drawings, photographs) about all relevant events and anniversaries that occurred in a particular week, which was later to be turned into a yearly political album. They attended organised Pioneer afternoons and discussed historical dates, such as 22 January – Lenin’s Day, 15 February – Matija Gubec Day, 6 April – attack on Yugoslavia, 25 May – Marshal Tito’s Birthday, 21 June – attack on USSR or 22 December – Stalin’s Birthday. The Pioneers also had to be familiar with the Five-year National Economy Development Plan and the economic backwardness of pre-war Yugoslavia, and convinced of the impossibility of planned economy in Western Europe where the government was not in the hands of the people. (HŠM A 3365)

After the political distancing from the USSR in 1949 and the Central Committee’s letter about the necessary reform of the Pioneer organisation, emphasis was given to the extracurricular character and mass membership of the Union of Pioneers, which “complemented the comprehensive education pupils received in the school and, alongside the family upbringing, constituted a unique system of educating children in FPRY” (HŠM A 3365). Education of the new man was supposed to exist in the spirit of “socialist ethics”, which presumed harmony between words and actions even at children’s age. Therefore, it should not have happened that “children fail to do what they had vowed to do and nobody questions them about it afterwards” (Franković 1950, p. 28). This criticism referred to those who followed ideology at school but still continued to attend church services or catechism (*Ibid.*). Hence, the extracurricular forms of working with children, if “properly” structured, had an important role in the proclaimed education of the new man who would actively participate in the creation of

the new socialist society. They were supposed to be more flexible, more suitable and closer to children, but at the same time controlled and conducted by trusted staff.

Proper structuring of extracurricular education is an important social issue in this country. Its task is to bring together as large a mass of children as possible and to correctly develop their individual abilities, satisfy various justified aspirations and generally structure their free time in cultural terms. Extracurricular education must account for the political and moral education of children. (HŠM A 3157)

An increasing amount of children's everyday life was transferred to the sphere of the Pioneer organisation – Pioneer celebrations, Pioneer playgrounds, Pioneer games, Pioneer magazines¹⁸ and similar – which on the one hand implied a universality and omnipresence of ideology in all areas of life, and on the other a weakening of its intensity and influence. Events related exclusively to ideology were manifestations such as the Pioneer Relay of Youth, a relay race run in honour of Tito's birthday, or the Day of Youth¹⁹, celebrated on 25 May. That was the largest and most massive event organised by the Union of Pioneers – an “original and unique” greeting to Tito for his birthday. The first Pioneer Relay of Youth was organised in 1953, aiming to stimulate affection for comrade Tito and the homeland (Paravina 1954), which was, alongside other educational potential it displayed, sufficient for it to become a traditional event. Each Pioneer squadron used to make its own baton and write their greetings to comrade Tito, which would then be taken from place to place during the month of May, while the main baton would be delivered to Tito in Belgrade on 25 May. The purpose of Tito's “communication” with the Pioneers was the creation of the personality cult. Tito was telling the Pioneers to study and work hard, to respect the achievements of the Peoples' Liberation War, to support brotherhood and unity among the nationalities and minorities of Yugoslavia, and to continue developing the socialism (Paravina 1965, *Tito nam je rekao* 1980). The Pioneers' messages expressed gratitude, love and pride:

We are grateful to you for everything you have done for our people and especially for us the youngest ones.

You, comrade Tito, are the sun of our freedom!

We know that you love us and we love you, too!

We the Pioneers see you as the father of our dear homeland.

You are our bright role model that teaches us to be daring, courageous, hardworking and above all loving and loyal to our socialist country.

(Paravina 1965, pp. 76-78)

Tito's messages to the Pioneers were used as a source of guidelines for the operation of the Pioneer organisation. Collected in a book *Tito nam je rekao* (1980), they show clear connection with the activity and features of the Pioneer organisation, such as: mass

¹⁸These included *Pionir* and *Radost* in Croatia and *Vesela sveska* and *Male novine* in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¹⁹According to Tito's wishes, from 1956 onwards his birthday was celebrated as the Day of Youth (Haramina 1980, p. 98)

membership²⁰, organisation of free time²¹, socialist spirit²², preservation of revolutionary traditions and spreading of brotherhood and unity among the nations²³, indoctrination and control by the Party²⁴. A conversation Tito had with the Pioneers in 1958, when he commended Belgrade Pioneers for paying a visit to his birthplace before wishing him a happy birthday, gave rise to another traditional Pioneer activity – Pioneers of Yugoslavia paying a visit to Tito’s birthplace – which, from 1959 onwards, included chosen Pioneers from all Yugoslav republics (*24. pohod pionira Jugoslavije* 1981).

Over time, a number of experts in the area of working with the Pioneers came into prominence.²⁵ These were mostly members of the Union of Pioneers’ Council operating within the Union of Associations “Naša djeca” (*Our Children*) established in 1950 with the goal of creating the conditions, in terms of staffing, organisation and funds, for “our children to have a fulfilling, culturally rich and happy childhood” (*Pioniri zemlje naše* 1962, p. 72). The Council for education and protection of children, established in 1953, had the same function in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As for schools, one or more teachers were usually in charge of running the Pioneer organisation. Pioneer leaders were trained in seminars, courses and consultation sessions, while their ethical, humanist, moral, political and professional traits were to guarantee the Pioneers would receive Marxist education in keeping with the communist ideology (Blažević 1974, p. 51).

Apart from the mentioned Pioneer activities and festivities – the Pioneer induction ceremony, the Day of Youth celebrations, visits to Tito’s birthplace – the “manufacturing” of joy and the impression of a happy childhood was also to be supported by Pioneer excursions and camping trips, celebrations of the Children’s Happiness Day (New Year’s Day), Pioneer games, *cheerful Pioneer meetings*, walks along Partisan trails and various other appropriate festivities at which the Pioneers could sing and recite battle and patriotic songs, perform plays and demonstrate their achievements in various fields. Such festivities were held in Pioneer homes and schools. However, the Pioneers were also expected to display traits of solidarity, humanism and dignity – for instance, by collecting classroom materials for Pioneers in Vietnam or those in African freedom fighting movements (Ogrizović 1979, p. 10), or by dignified behaviour during difficult moments in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Banja Luka in 1969 (Skrinjar-Tvrz 1970, p. 15). The very word *PIONEER* came to be

²⁰“Your Pioneer organisation does not have any political characteristic and all our children should be Pioneers” (*Tito nam je rekao* 1980, p. 10).

²¹“... it is very important for you to be part of Pioneer organisations and spend a lot of time together in your free time, when you are not studying” (*Ibid.*, p. 10).

²²“I want our youth and our children to be educated in the new socialist spirit ...” (*Ibid.*, p. 21).

²³“I wish the children from all our socialist republics would work closely together in preserving our revolutionary tradition, as well as in all other activities. I am referring to revisiting of Partisan trails, Pioneer games and various other celebrations and festivities that contribute to children’s interaction and bonding. The development of such activities could be significantly supported by the children’s press.” (*Ibid.*, p. 28).

²⁴“Those who are not socialists, who promote foreign ideas and views, cannot be educators. We must not allow spreading of bourgeois thinking, bourgeois interpretation of heritage and tradition and infiltration of foreign influences. The League of Communists must take this issue seriously as our country’s future depends on it.” (*Ibid.*, p. 54).

²⁵Emil Paravina was particularly prominent in Croatia and Muhamed Muradbegović in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

regarded as an acronym for desirable personality traits – Persevering, Industrious, Open-minded, Noble, Earnest, Enlightened and Reliable.

The Pioneer organisation functioned on the mixture of universally accepted and universally acceptable moral norms and political-ideological indoctrination, balancing between the declared “true children’s organisation” and the recruited political progeny. The concept of finding one’s own way was characteristic of the state of Yugoslavia itself. The declared distancing on the level of the state, from both East and West, could also be discerned in the management of the Pioneer organisation:

We are familiar with the way children’s organisations are run in the East and the West, so we are certain neither the concept of centralised state leadership nor the system of independent private clubs without distinctive governance would be suitable for us. We therefore need to keep developing our own specific model of a children’s organisation, experimenting under existing conditions and shaping new forms on the basis of those experiments. That is to say, we need to keep adding to and modernising the components of the Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia (Paravina 1973, p. 16).

The concept of the Pioneer organisation changed at the beginning of the 1980s when a classroom community (pupils in one class) became also a Pioneer community, whose programme was part of both the teaching programme and the Pioneer organisation programme. One hour per week was reserved for issues concerning the running of the Pioneer community, such as organising the activities defined by the programme. There was a number of principles teachers were to follow when designing the programme and carrying out educational tasks, such as the principle of work, action and creativity, the principle of self-managing organisation and activity, the principle of Marxism-based educational tasks and methodology, the principle of autonomy, cooperation and collective action and responsibility, the principle of play, interest and experience, and so on. (*Pionirska zajednica* 1983, p. 73)

Having come back under the auspices of the school, the Pioneer organisation lost the spirit it managed to grow during the decades when it was, or aimed to be, the leading creator of children’s free time activities. The attempt to control private lives of the youngest population and thus achieve desired educational goals and make them loyal citizens of the socialist Yugoslavia resulted in some positive effects. As Duda states, “the Union of Pioneers had indeed designed a range of entertainment programmes in the fifties many of which were not socialist in nature, except being shaped by a socialist motive, a motive that spread the idea of modernisation and thus enabled thousands of pupils, especially those in smaller towns and less educated milieus, to pursue art, engineering and sports, which were areas not accessible to them outside of the Union of Pioneers and the Association “Naša djeca”” (Duda 2013, p. 98).

In the eighties – in the decade following Tito’s death – the given ideological framework began to shake, as well as the state that created it. The notions of “self-managing socialist education and ideology as part of the growth of young generations” (Car 1984, p. 10) and “strengthening of socialist self-managing ideology in children’s education” (Palčok 1986, p. 22) still had an important role in programmatic materials and public appearances of educational authority

representatives, but they were at the same time a reflection of fear about that kind of education being threatened. During the decade of decadent socialism of the 1980s, marked by the economic crisis, the growth of various alternative movements and popular culture, the collapse of values and rituals used in shaping of the new socialist man was only a matter of time. However, no one could really know that the “little Pioneers” would actually turn into a proper army at the beginning of the 1990s.

Conclusion

Like the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia during tertiary education (whose membership comprised whole generations of young people when they left the Pioneers at fourteen), the Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia was, during primary education of youth, the major ideological basis in the process of shaping the socialist man and developing Yugoslavian patriotism. That state-wide project did not recognise borders between formal and informal education, or between family, school and social life. Everyone was expected to work toward the same goal of educating the new Yugoslavian man of socialist orientation in accordance with the declared ideology of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Under these circumstances, the post-war development of pedagogy in Yugoslavia was guided by non-pedagogical social conditions. Pedagogy and education were subordinated to undemocratic ideological requests of a single-party state.

In terms of the Pioneer organisation, these requests were mostly expressed on the manifest, or the ceremonial level – by participating in bank holiday celebrations and the (lifelong) President’s birthday celebrations, fostering the personality cult, taking part in Pioneer marches following the “paths of the revolution”, organising school performances and similar. There was, however, another, more humane, component of the Pioneer organisation, particularly after its formative period in the 1950s, which included an organised kind of social care of children in the form of their creative use of free time, socialising and celebrations. The four-decade existence of the Union of Pioneers, as an encompassing children’s organisation, can nevertheless be seen as a more or less subtle (depending on the period) form of indoctrination, of which parents had been, naturally, more aware than the children. Its consequences, or discrepancies between the ambition and the actual influence on the education of young generations, are difficult to discuss. The “Pioneer duties” were an inseparable part of childhood and growing up in the socialist Yugoslavia, although not their key and defining element.

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