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ERRONEOUS DEVELOPMENT OF CROATIAN STUDIES IN GERMANY

Written by Mario Grčević

In November 2005, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia — through the mediation of the Croatian Embassy in Berlin — received a note in the German language proposing that “on the island of Hvar, a summer academy for qualified Croatian Studies graduates from Germany” be founded. This idea came from a German Department of Slavic Literature.¹ The proposal is signed by the current Head of Department and her retired predecessor. Although this summer school of theirs is intended for tertiary students enrolled in Croatian Studies in Germany, the subject itself is inexistent at German universities. Accordingly, the German students of Croatian Studies mentioned in the proposal do not, in fact, exist.² The signatories chose to ignore the above as if the factual state of affairs is completely different. At the same time, however, they are absolutely determined to have the Croatian party fully finance the academy. They do not offer anything in return, although the German party is to assume the responsibility of deciding who would or would not attend the school. In other words, Croatia would be paying, while Germany would be choosing the attendees. The signatories have even requested that a mutual agreement be signed so as to affirm their rights. Instead of clarifying what Croatia would gain if their ideas were realised, they explain that “scientific work should be accompanied by positive thinking” and lecture us about which locations would be suitable and which unsuitable for the academy.

We already have a school in Croatia somewhat similar to the academy in question here. Its official Internet site writes the following:

“The Zagreb *Slavic School* of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb was founded in 1972. Its goal is to encourage and promote knowledge of the Croatian language, literature and culture beyond the borders of the Republic of Croatia, first and foremost amongst foreign students of *Croatian Studies*, and then amongst scientists and teaching staff (professors, docents, assistants) at universities and scientific institutes.” (italics by M. G., the author of this text)

Wherever the text says “Slavic School” it should, in fact, say “School of Croatian Studies”, and wherever it says “Croatian Studies” it should, in fact, say “Slavic Studies” instead, since those enrolled in the School are mainly students of Slavic Studies and not Croatian Studies. Such confusion cannot be found in the names of a single similar school for foreign students of Slavic Studies.

In contrast to the one in Zagreb, the school in question (i.e. the one on the island of Hvar) would, in all probability, be called “School of Croatian Studies” and not “School of Slavic Studies”. Strictly speaking, its curriculum would not really meet the requirements of Croatian Studies, since its students would also attend papers in Political Science, Geography, Law, Architecture, etc. A number of the teaching staff would not even have to know and speak Croatian.

In other words, Croatia could soon house two similar summer schools, which would — each in its own way — promote Croatian Studies in the world. One is a school of Croatian Studies though is called Slavic, probably for reasons of preserving the tradition of Yugoslavian times when Croatian Studies were simply not allowed to be called exactly that, i.e. Croatian Studies. The other would probably be called School of Croatian Studies, though only nominally, since all the papers not dealing with the Croatian language would, in fact, be taught by those who cannot speak any Croatian.

If we assume that the signatories of the aforementioned document truly care about the betterment of Croatian Studies at German universities, why don't they institute Croatian Studies as a subject at their universities then? Not only is it the case that they do not have and offer Croatian Studies as a subject, but — sadly enough — not one single seminar or lecture was dedicated to Croatian literature in the winter term of the academic year 2005 — 2006 (although there were seminars and lectures on other national Slavic literatures). If nothing else were possible, one would expect that the Croatian language be called its proper name, at least at the Croatian Instructorship.³ But this is not the case, since all the courses of the Croatian language

also bear “and Serbian” in their titles as if it were the name of some language. Yet, the guides of these “Croatian and Serbian” courses mention only Croatian. The reason for this is that these guides are written by the Croatian instructor, and — since she cannot decide upon the names of her teaching units — she is “instructed” to include the term “and Serbian” in the course names themselves. Although the instructor claims that she teaches only Croatian, the teaching staff Internet page lists her as being in charge of “Croatian/Serbian”. Thus, at the Instructorship of the Department of Slavic Studies — all the while wishing to found an academy on Hvar for the needs of German Croatian Studies graduates — the Croatian language *must* also be called “and Serbian” or “/Serbian”. Their instructor also works in an evening school, where she teaches “Croatian” (“Kroatisch”). Foreign-language instructors teaching “Croatian” at evening schools rather frequently teach “Serbo-Croatian” at universities or “Croatian and/or Serbian”. One must think of the reasons for why this is so, i.e. why and how numerous Croatian instructors managed to earn the Croatian language the status of an officially recognised language at evening schools in Germany. It must have been a difficult task. It would be interesting to learn whether the founders of the summer academy on Hvar ever tried to achieve the same at German universities.

The same question should also be answered by Croatia's leading professional institutions that send their instructors to foreign universities. What have they done so far for the Croatian language to be recognised at German universities the way it is (thanks to the initiative of some individuals) at German evening schools? Have they ever attempted to encourage German Slavists to finally put an end to “Serbo-Croatian Studies” and institute Croatian Studies wherever possible? It even seems that they have not responded appropriately to the fact that their staff — as foreign-language instructors — hold courses in Croatian under “Serbo-Croatian” and similar names. They could have reacted by publicly protesting, and — upon the arrival of new instructors — could have written a letter to the Head of Department politely requesting that the decision concerning the names of their teaching units be left to the instructors themselves, i.e. that Serbian (even Bosnian lately!) not be insisted upon against the instructors' will. Croatian universities are tied by contracts to German universities, thus enabling domestic Croatian Studies experts to —

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¹ This idea has not been supported by the Department of Slavic Linguistics of the same University, with which the Department of Slavic Literature constitutes a whole.

² If, by any chance, “Croatian Studies” are mentioned in university course guides “Serbian Studies” immediately follow. This is just a new name for “Serbo-Croatian” and certainly not Croatian Studies.

³ The Instructorship in question is under the Department of Literature and not under the Department of Linguistics.

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→ Berlin

The [editorial] title of the article in question is "Croatian Studies Face Crisis at German Universities. Croatian Studies Students Write Graduation Papers and Master's Theses in — German", pp. 62-63. The principal teaching language at German universities is German, so it should not be surprising that graduation papers, master's theses and doctoral dissertations are written in German, even when they deal with other languages. University regulations at numerous universities expressly state that all final papers be written in German. Thus, this is not an indicator of any crises of Croatian Studies at German universities.

⁵ That is, there are 12000 officially registered Croats in Berlin. According to some data, the actual Croatian population of Berlin is, in fact, larger by 3-4 thousand (editorial note).



at tertiary level — alert the other party to the issue. Any such reaction would mean a great deal to the instructors who are forced to cope with unpleasant and awkward situations while abroad. Moreover, any such reaction would no longer imply that Croatian Studies experts at home silently agree with what goes on in Germany. In the aforemen-

tioned letter, the authors could help themselves by quoting a number of recent German course books on Slavic Studies and numerous scientific publications, since in these the Croatian language is always given its proper name and is thought of as a single and separate language.

again on Croatian soil. The ideas of both parties concerning the ideal constitution of Slavic Studies in Germany are harmful for Slavic Studies in Germany in several respects. In the *Vjesnik* daily of 6th/7th August 2005⁴, Davorka Popadić-Schleicher claims that only 80 students are enrolled in the Department of Southern-Slavic Studies of the Humboldt Univer-

Despite the relatively good conditions of recent Slavic literature in Germany, some believe that "Serbo-Croatian" should be cherished at tertiary level. This would allegedly preserve Slavic Studies as a universal discipline. These individuals cannot always be easily distinguished from those who still live in the hope that the Yugoslavian or Serbo-Croatian winds of the past might blow

seriously organised Croatian Studies than for senior undergraduates and graduates of various "Serbo-Croatian" forms of study tainted with rather vague and ideologically coloured ideas.

The meeting was held on 16th and 17th July 2005. The response was obviously good, particularly by Croatian (and Serbian!?) instructors, mostly owing to the fact that their travel and accommodation expenses were borne by Croatia's state budget. The signatories of the Hvar academy idea appeal to this meeting since it was at this meeting that someone gave the initiative for the academy. However — as I have already stated — for Slavic Studies in Germany instituting Croatian Studies in Germany would be much more useful than conceiving of ways in which to establish German Croatian Studies in Croatia with Croatian money while — at the same time — obstructing the development of Croatian Studies at German universities.

seriously organised Croatian Studies than for senior undergraduates and graduates of various "Serbo-Croatian" forms of study tainted with rather vague and ideologically coloured ideas.

If we take a closer look at the above as well as some other factors, the amount of energy invested in preventing the development of Croatian Studies in Germany is indeed frightening. The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia has — at least twice — offered some form of financial help to some Slavic departments in Germany with the aim to institute proper Croatian Studies. None of the offers were accepted, although all departments of Slavic Studies in Germany have been experiencing serious financial difficulty. The avalanche of problems started approximately fifteen years ago when the adopted German financial policy reduced subsidies for all Slavic departments and institutes in Germany. For the Baden-Württemberg County, for example, "Landesrechnungshof" recommended a Slavic reduction from five tertiary study units to one or two at most. In the last few years this initiative has resulted in the closing down of certain departments of Slavic Studied and/or a considerable reduction in their scope.

The author of the *Vjesnik* article also mentions the latest Croatian attempts to help Slavic Studies in Germany improve this current state. This initiative came from the Croatian Embassy in Berlin. On 13th May 2005 the Embassy called a meeting inviting those involved in the work of the various departments of Slavic Studies in Germany, and all those who are interested and would like to partake in the discussion and analysis of "the current state of Croatian or Slavic Studies in Germany, with the aim to identify and help solve the specific problems we face on a daily basis."

city (which Hungarian Studies are also forced into) in Berlin. This number is rather small, particularly considering the fact that there are 12000 Croats in Berlin.⁵ This lack of interest is easy to understand — Croats in Germany never liked German departments of "Southern-Slavic" Studies where they cannot study Croatian but rather various forms of "Serbo-Croatian". Why would they today need a diploma as proof of having graduated in some alleged "Southern-Slavic Studies", "Serbo-Croatian Studies" or some "and or" language and not in Croatian Studies? And as far as the labour market is concerned, it is obvious that there is more room for senior undergraduates and graduates in

The ASSOCIATION OF TERTIARY TEACHERS OF SLAVIC STUDIES OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY is the sole organisation that can speak in the name of Slavic Studies in Germany, particularly the way in which the signatories of the Hvar academy idea do. Between 4th and 6th October 2005 they co-organised the *Ninth German Days of Slavists*⁶ in Munich, sponsored by the Bavarian Ministry of Science, Research and Arts. S. Kordić's paper summary — bearing the title "Language and Nationalism in Croatia" — was published in the Days' Book of Summaries without any commentary. Amongst other things, it writes:

"An aggressive national purism is observable in Croatia at the moment — the kind that utilises language censorship. Owing to this language censorship, the media are fairly chaotic. The rules and regulations guiding language censorship are amateurish, subjective and chauvinistic. There are neither any criteria nor is language censorship systematic. No rules can be set for the words censored. Any word or expression can, in fact, be subject to censorship. A single doubt is sufficient for censorship to be exercised, particularly if the origin of certain words is judged to be either Serbian, Russian, Old-Church-Slavic, Slavic, Turkish, German, English, Romanic, international or colloquial. The blacklist of language censors is directed against general language use. Language in Croatia truly suffers due to ideologically forced interventions — it is made deficient while losing all its expressive potential. All the while, language censorship has, in fact, no purpose whatsoever — the Croatian nation came into being some 80 years ago, and the Croatian national state 14 years ago. In other words, all that is achievable by a national movement has already been achieved — without an exclusive Croatian language. This is, of course, of no concern to the censors, nor are they interested in the fact that language censorship simply cannot be aligned with the fundamental principles of a democratic state. The current state of linguistic affairs in Croatia demonstrates that the rationalistic demands of democracy constantly clash with the myth of a nation which is charged with emotions."⁷

The quoted Serbo-Croatian Studies expert is, in fact, a Croatian Studies expert of Croatian origin. Soon she might also become a member of the planned German committee deciding upon the Hvar summer academy. She will — almost certainly — also be joined by those who facilitated the official publication of her quoted text.⁸ Such scientists may soon be influencing the affairs

of domestic Croatian Studies. What might, in fact, open all doors for them is the intention to internationally review (even) Croatian Studies projects applying for grants with the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia. As far as international reviewing is concerned, Croatian science most certainly belongs in Europe. Yet currently, international reviews are, unfortunately, reasonable only when scientific disciplines such as Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology are at issue. In "national" disciplines, particularly in Croatian Studies, international reviewing could easily become a sinister step towards the unconditional surrender to foreign "Serbo-Croatian Studies".

An adequate solution to the problems of Croatian Studies in Germany will be found only once the ideologically coloured attitudes of Slavic Studies in Germany — that both Croatian instructorships and Croatian instructors' tertiary study units *must* also be given the Serbian name — change.⁹ The final step in this process was already described by Leopold Auburger a few years ago. Although he is the most distinguished German expert in Croatian Studies, he was not invited to the aforementioned meeting in Berlin. Auburger writes:

"A satisfactory solution to this problem might, in fact, be found if Croatian Studies in Germany were represented comprehensively — in terms of both research and teaching — at least at one or — better yet — two universities. At some other two or even three universities both lectures and research should be conducted on a number of relevant Croatian Studies' topics in accord with the corresponding topics of other represented individual philologies of particular Slavic languages. This would, in fact, be the first and the most essential step of Slavic Studies in Germany, with which it could demonstrate that it accepts Croatian Studies as it is — namely, as a separate and highly developed Slavic philology of a great and old tradition."¹⁰

This, in fact, describes the goal that should be aspired to by both German Slavic Studies and those in Croatia who care about the betterment of Croatian Studies in Germany.

If the ranks of Slavic Studies in Germany remain unready and unwilling to solve the current problems, the Republic of Croatia will have to take it upon itself to deal with a number of these issues on higher state levels and in accord with the Contract on Cultural Partnership between Croatia and Germany. A number of principal political-legal issues will have to be considered,

such as the extent to which the imposition of terms such as "Serbo-Croatian" or "Croatian and/or Serbian" as the proper name(s) of the Croatian language on language instructors is tolerable. At the same time, Croatian professional institutions — together with all those who are acquainted with the state of Slavic Studies (and "Serbo-Croatian Studies") in Germany — will have to be seeking further possibilities and options with the aim to carry out the set out plan.

If the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports estimates that — besides the Dubrovnik Croatian Studies School — we need yet another similar Croatian Studies school, then it should be founded and the work of both schools coordinated. Germany is Croatia's important economic partner and a friend. The prospects for the development of rich and varied tertiary Croatian Studies are rather good. This is why the doors of the new summer school should truly be widely open to German-speaking students. However, it must not become an exclusively German Croatian Studies school. Outside the German-speaking regions there are already foreign Croatian Studies, whose students deserve equal treatment. It is due to this and a number of other reasons that German experts in Slavic Studies cannot act as the juristic person in founding the school. The new Hvar summer school must not become an extraterritorial branch of Germany's ("Serbo-Croatian") tertiary education system financed by Croatia. II

⁶ From the previous, i.e. 7th symposium, cf. my text "The Croatian Language and the 7th German Days of Slavists in Bamberg", in *Jezik* 45, Vol. 2, 1997, p. 76-80.

⁷ A translation from German of "Sprachen und Nationalismus in Kroatien", in *Programm 9. Deutscher Slavistentag, Verlag Otto Sagner, Munich 2005*, p. 106 (http://www.slavistentag2005.lmu.de/sw_8.html).

⁸ The ISBN page lists the Bavarian Minister of Science as a sponsor. The credited organiser — besides the Association of Tertiary Teachers of Slavic Studies of the Federal Republic of Germany — is the Association of German Teachers of Russian. The Munich Institute of Slavic Philology is listed as both the publisher and technical organiser of her booklet. A separate page credits — with acknowledgements — the following institutions: the Bavarian Ministry of Science, Research and Arts, the Munich University Alumni, the publisher Otto Sagner from Munich, and the Faculty of Linguistics and Literature.

⁹ Cf. my "On the Croatian Language and Croatian Studies in Contemporary Slavic Studies in Germany. A Contribution to the Discussion on the Constitution of Slavic Studies in Germany" in *Filologija* 35, Zagreb 2000, pp. 65-83; "On Serbo-Croatism in Contemporary German Slavic Studies", *Jezik* 48, Vol. 5, 2001, pp. 182-192. Leopold Auburger devoted his book to Serbo-Croatism and its relationship to the Croatian language: *Die kroatische Sprache und der Serbokroatismus*, Ulm/Donau 1999.

¹⁰ Leopold Auburger, "The Development of Croatian Studies and Its Confrontation with the Serbo-Croatian Conceptions of Southern-Slavic Studies in Germany", in *Filologija* 35, Zagreb 2000, pp. 1-23, p. 19.