

Association News

Seselj Freed: Human Rights Activities of the APSA

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Vojislav Seselj is a remarkable academician; at 27 he was the youngest Yugoslav to earn a Ph.D. degree. With advanced degrees in political science and sociology Seselj held the position, until 1984, of Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Political Science of Sarajevo University. For the last two years Seselj has been a principal in one of the international human rights cases monitored by the APSA's Committee on Professional Ethics, Rights and Freedoms. In March of this year, after serving 22 months of an eight year prison sentence for disseminating "hostile propaganda," Seselj was released from prison by Yugoslav authorities.

Professor Seselj came to the attention of the Committee on Professional Ethics, Rights and Freedoms in 1984. Reports of increased repression directed toward the Yugoslav intellectual community were confirmed by an "urgent action" request from Helsinki Watch, a human rights monitoring group. The APSA committee was able to respond on behalf of the Yugoslav political scientist because the scope of the Professional Ethics' Committee's mandate had been expanded in 1982 to include activities to protect the human rights and academic freedom of political scientists in other countries. Since 1982 the committee has worked on behalf of political scientists imprisoned in the Philippines, Ethiopia, Liberia, Pakistan, Argentina and Uruguay. The limited resources of the committee means that it considers only what appear

to be the most egregious cases of human rights violations. As a practical matter, the committee takes up no more than six international cases at a time. The standard applied by the members of the Ethics Committee is the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the two accompanying covenants. Once the committee learns of a possible case or receives a request for action from members of the Association, the case is cross checked with the Clearinghouse on Science and Human Rights of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. If necessary, the case will also be raised with Amnesty International, Helsinki Watch, and the Committee on Human Rights of the National Academy of Sciences. The committee follows a simple procedure in dealing with human rights cases: a letter of inquiry is sent to the appropriate authorities followed by subsequent letters if there is no change in the case. The committee can and does send delegations to embassies to speak on behalf of a human rights victim. The committee can also carry out site visits although it has not done this to date.

Alerted by Helsinki Watch, the APSA committee learned that Professor Seselj had already made himself well known to state authorities prior to 1984. In 1981 he publicized the fact that Brana Miljus, a member of the Sarajevo Central Committee, had falsely acquired his academic degree through plagiarism carefully documented by Seselj. For several years Professor Seselj was among a group of 200 to 300 intellectuals which met periodically to discuss the writings of one or more of the members of the group. It was in connection with these seminars of the self-styled "Free University of Belgrade" that Seselj ran afoul of the Yugoslav police.

On February 9, 1984, Professor Seselj

had his first encounter with the police. Seselj had made his way to the Sarajevo train station carrying with him several manuscripts of articles he hoped to discuss with colleagues in Belgrade. Occasionally jostled by the Americans and other foreigners who were crowding into the city to attend the Winter Olympic games, Seselj boarded the Belgrade train. Before the train left the station, four members of the Yugoslav secret police also boarded the train and forced their way into Seselj's compartment. The quartet carried Seselj off the train, careful not to leave behind any of the papers he carried with him. Professor Seselj was interrogated at police headquarters for 27 hours without being charged despite the fact that Yugoslav law requires an individual be charged with a crime after being detained for 24 hours.

As Professor Seselj was being interrogated at police headquarters, other police agents went to his apartment and university office. Files, published and unpublished articles and manuscripts, and research notes were stripped from both locations. It was among these materials that police uncovered the most "damaging evidence" of hostile activity. Among the papers carried off by the police was an unpublished manuscript proposing that the number of Yugoslav federated republics be reduced from six to four.

Seselj was released on February 10 only to be picked up ten days later for an additional five hours of interrogation. The most serious confrontation between Seselj and the police came on April 20. Police broke up a "seminar" in the apartment of Milovan Djilas, Yugoslavia's most famous intellectual dissident, and arrested 28 participants, though not Djilas. The arrest of the 28 has since come to mark the beginning of a new period of political repression. Although Professor Seselj was released three days later, again without being charged, he clearly was a marked person.

Plainclothes police detained Seselj on the street in Sarajevo on May 10; he was released but rearrested on May 15 and formally charged on May 21 with "hostile activity" under Article 114 of the

Yugoslav penal code. Under Article 114 verbal dissent is equated with "hostile propaganda," a criminal offense punishable by one to ten years in prison. Though it was reported that Seselj had slandered the late President Tito, he was primarily charged with "disseminating anti-socialist and nationalist ideas" as exemplified in the published and unpublished materials taken from his university office (Help and Action Newsletter, V.7, No. 32, September-October 1984, p. a2). Seselj was suspended from his university post. In response to this and his arrest, Professor Seselj went on a hunger strike for 40 days. Though weak from the lack of food Seselj appeared in court on July 9 to hear the presiding judge, Milorad Potparic, pass down a sentence of eight years in prison.

Made aware of Seselj's case the APSA Committee on Professional Ethics, Rights and Freedoms began a letter writing campaign. Directing letters to the President of Yugoslavia, Stane Dolane, and Yugoslavia's Ambassador to the United States, Mico Rakic, the committee members asked that Professor Seselj's academic freedom be respected and that he be immediately released from prison. The committee's efforts were repeated by other human rights advocacy groups around the world. In November the committee received the news that the Supreme Court of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina reduced Seselj's sentence to four years.

The APSA committee continued with the Seselj case into 1985 with more letters being sent to President Dolane and Ambassador Rakic. In addition, the committee pressed the case with Elliot Abrams, then Assistant Secretary of State, Human Rights Bureau; Richard Schifter, Chairman of the U.S. Delegation to the UN Human Rights Commission; Lynne Davidson, Staff Assistant, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; and James Montgomery, Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs.

In August 1985, Seselj's sentence was again reduced; this time to 22 months. Finally, in March of this year Professor Seselj was released from prison.

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It is impossible to know if the activities of the APSA committee had any direct effect on the outcome of the Sesejl case. From what we have learned from other cases, the Association's activities are noticed. The violators of academic freedom and human rights prefer the shadows and ignorance; whatever publicity and understanding the committee's efforts generate makes the oppressors' job that much harder.

(Note: Information in this article was gleaned from various reports but most especially from Helsinki Watch, "Urgent Action: Yugoslavia," May 23, 1984.) □

APSA International Human Rights Case Activity

Faculty members and students of political science faculties may learn of violations of academic freedom and human rights involving political scientists. The Committee on Professional Ethics, Rights and Freedoms encourages you to report this information to it so that it may investigate the case. In the past the Committee's human rights activities have been expanded by members of the profession reporting on the fates of colleagues and former students in their homelands. □

Foreign Students Attend 1986 APSA Meeting With Grant Support

Through funds provided by the Institute for International Education, several foreign graduate students studying political science in the U.S. were given grants to help pay their travel expenses to the 1986 Annual Meeting. Listed below are the recipients with their country of origin and current institution.

Hans-Georg Betz, West Germany; MIT.

Alasdair Olav Bowie, New Zealand; University of California.

Agber A. Dimha, Nigeria; Washington State University.

Howard Gold, Canada; Yale University.

Cheng-Tian Kuo, Taiwan; University of Chicago.

Tse-min Lin, Taiwan; University of Minnesota.

Samo A. Ofeish, Lebanon; University of Southern California.

Chan Wook Park, Korea; University of Iowa.

Sylvia Pinal-Calvillo, Mexico; University of Arizona.

Victoria Pinpin, Philippines; University of Hawaii.

Antonio Carlos Pojo do Rego, Brazil; New York State University.

Yann-huei Song, Taiwan; Kent State University.

Eswaran Sridharan, India; University of Pennsylvania.

Hyung Yang, Korea; University of Houston.

Emilio Zebadva, Mexico; Harvard University. □

APSA Awards Research Grants for 1986-87

The APSA Research Support Committee reviewed 56 applications for the 1986-87 Research Grant Awards. The committee was authorized to spend \$12,000 for the program. To be eligible for a grant, applicants must be APSA members and must either be a faculty member from a non-Ph.D.-granting college or university or be a political scientist not affiliated with an academic institution. Funds are used for research deemed to address a significant problem in political science.

The Selection Committee consisted of Elinor Ostrom, University of Indiana; Jeanne Nienaber Clarke, University of Arizona; Allan Kornberg, Duke University; Huey Perry, Southern University; Richard F. Winters, Dartmouth College; and Susanne Rudolph, University of Chicago.

Following are the recipients with their