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## ***Foreign Students in Croatia during the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century - the Example of the Faculty of Metallurgy in Sisak***

*Tuji študenti na Hrvaškem v drugi polovici 20. stoletja - primer Metalurške fakultete v Sisku*

### **Abstract**

The migration and the arrival of foreign workers or students in Croatia, as well as in most of the EU, remains a controversial issue. According to the author's opinion, the consideration of the impact of the local environment into which such individuals arrive is often still lacking, while on the other hand, the discussion often centres on the impact they have on the local community and space. Therefore, this paper, which adopts a historical perspective and examines students who came to the Metallurgical Faculty in Sisak from Non-Aligned Movement countries in the second half of the 20th century aims to draw attention to this and related issues. After a brief introduction and historical context, the paper presents foreign students using archival material, with a special emphasis on the challenges and problems faced by the students of that time. To at least approximately gain insight into the public perception of foreign students, the paper analyses the periodicals of the researched period, specifically the daily newspaper Jedinstvo, and briefly reflects on the local community's memories of foreign students.

### **Izvleček**

Migracije in prihod tujih delavcev ali študentov na Hrvaško, pa tudi v večino držav EU, je še vedno zelo aktualna tema. Po avtorjevem mnenju še vedno premalo upošteva vpliv lokalnega okolja, v katerega prihajajo, po drugi strani pa se razprave pogosto osredotočajo na vpliv, ki ga imajo sami na lokalno skupnost in prostor. Zato je namen prispevka, da se s pomočjo zgodovinske perspektive loti vprašanja, ki obravnava študente, ki so prišli na Metalurško fakulteto v Sisku iz držav gibanja neuvrščenih, in opozori na ta problem. Po kratkem uvodu in zgodovinskem kontekstu so tuji študenti v prispevku predstavljeni s pomočjo arhivskega gradiva, s posebnim poudarkom na izzivih in težavah, s katerimi so se takrat soočali. Da bi vsaj približno dobili vpogled v javno mnenje o tujih študentih, članek analizira periodiko iz raziskovanega obdobja, zlasti dnevnik Jedinstvo, in na kratko odstira spomine lokalne skupnosti na tuje študente.

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**Ključne besede:** tuji študenti, Hrvatska, Sisak, Fakulteta za metalurgijo

## Introduction

With Croatia's accession to the European Union in 2013, the Croatian educational space opened up to students from EU Member States, allowing them to study under the same conditions as those from Croatia. However, other students, those referred to as "third-country students", can also study in Croatia,<sup>1</sup> but they must enrol through separate quotas and cover their own tuition fees. Foreign students can come to Croatia through Erasmus mobility or the Study in Croatia programme.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 2023/2024 academic year, one of the portals that tracks issues related to the lives of students in Croatia published an analysis based on data they obtained, revealing that there are very few foreign students in Croatia who did not come through Erasmus mobility, which is a relatively short-term programme. For example, only 128 foreign students enrolled at Croatia's largest university, the University of Zagreb, for the 2023/2024 academic year, compared to 11,080 domestic students. The greatest interest in studying in English was shown at the Faculty of Medicine, where 350 candidates from around the world applied for 95 available spots. However, there are universities that have almost no foreign students, such as the University of Zadar, which has just seven, and the University of Slavonski Brod, which has none.<sup>2</sup> These statistics are surprising, since the number of students from Croatia is decreasing every year due to the declining number of high school graduates, and internationalisation is often mentioned as a priority for Croatian universities. This trend is not only present in Croatia but also across Europe. For example, a well-known economic journal published an article titled "How to Attract and Retain Foreign Students", stating that the UK aims to have 600,000 foreign students by 2030, considering it beneficial for the economy.<sup>3</sup> As for the countries of origin, excluding EU Member States, most foreign students in Croatia come from neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Israel.<sup>4</sup> In conclusion, it is worth noting that during the first seven months of last year (2023), only 315 foreign nationals with

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1 <https://gov.hr/hr/studiranje-za-strane-drzavljanke-u-rh/1078?lang=hr> accessed on: 11.9.2024

2 <https://www.srednja.hr/faks/domacih-studenata-je-sve-manje-provjerili-smo-koliko-ima-stranih-na-sveucilistima-u-hrvatskoj/> accessed on: 11.9.2024.

3 <https://lidermedia.hr/biznis-i-politika/strani-studenti-kako-ih-namamiti-i-zadržati-149540> accessed on: 11.9.2024.

4 <https://www.novolist.hr/novosti/hrvatska/broj-stranih-studenata-u-hrvatskoj-porastao-za-20-posto-e-vo-zbog-kojih-fakulteta-najvise-dolaze/> accessed on: 11.9.2024.

university degrees were employed in Croatia.<sup>5</sup> Certain events, such as Welcome Week and Erasmus Days, are organised for foreign students, but a systematic approach to this issue is still lacking.

Therefore, this paper aims to encourage comprehensive consideration of this issue, by revisiting the not-so-distant past when a small Croatian town, Sisak, became home to a relatively large number of foreign students. It questions the impact of the environment on incoming students then, and opens the discussion on the progress made on this issue over the past 40 years.

It is worth noting that some studies on foreign students have already been conducted, primarily based on experiences in Western countries such as the USA, UK, and Canada,<sup>6</sup> while studies of this kind in other countries, including those that were once part of the Eastern Bloc, are still lacking. This should not be surprising, given that foreign students appeared much earlier in the West, according to some authors even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, although it should be kept in mind that students migrated to some of the oldest universities in Europe as early as the Middle Ages.<sup>7</sup>

### Sisak as the Host

"Foreigners", "Blacks", "Arabs" – these are all terms you might hear in conversation with residents of Sisak when discussing students who, until recently, came to the Faculty of Metallurgy, the city's sole faculty, from Non-Aligned Movement countries. Sisak is a city in central Croatia, approximately 60 kilometres from the capital, Zagreb, with a moderately warm and rainy climate. Situated at the confluence of three rivers, the average humidity in Sisak is around 80%, and winters are milder while summers are cooler. According to cloud counting criteria, Sisak is a mostly cloudy city, with frequent fog during autumn and winter, averaging about 82 foggy days per year.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that most foreign students arrived in a completely different environment from that in their homelands.

After World War II, the rapidly growing economy of Sisak faced a chronic shortage of educated professionals, particularly in metallurgy, where there was a deficit of about 300 engineers by the late 1950s. In response, Željezara, one of the city's largest industrial giants, initiated the establishment of an institution

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5 <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/stranah-studenata-u-hrvatskoj-trecina-je-na-medicini-najvise-u-splitu-pa-rijeci-i-zagrebu-1704508> accessed on: 11.9.2024.

6 Emmanuel E. Akanwa, International Students in Western Developed Countries: History, Challenges, and Prospects, *Journal of International Students*, vol. 5, 2015, n. 3, p 271.

7 Ibid., 272.-273.

8 Mirela Slukan Altić, *Historical Atlas of Cities – Sisak - 2nd Edition*, Zagreb: Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar and State Archives in Sisak, 2012, p 12.

in Sisak to educate such professionals in 1958.<sup>9</sup> In 1960, a law was passed stating that the Technological Faculty in Zagreb would establish the Department of Metallurgy and the Technological Department for Oil Production.<sup>10</sup> Sisak would receive these departments through the restructuring of the Technological Faculty three years later.<sup>11</sup>

The first generation of students began their studies in the academic year 1960/61,<sup>12</sup> with 89 students enrolled,<sup>13</sup> 22 of whom graduated in 1964/65.<sup>14</sup> The departments often faced funding problems, despite partial funding being secured at the level of the republic,<sup>15</sup> they always relied on support from "economic entities", as mentioned in the text "Who Will Fund the Faculty?"<sup>16</sup> It is no surprise that industry played a crucial role in funding educational programmes, as it was precisely where such professionals were most needed, with nearly 50% of Sisak's workforce in that period employed in the "industry and mining" sector, making it the most powerful sector capable of supporting educational institutions.<sup>17</sup>

With the reorganisation of the Faculty of Technology in 1974, the existing departments were abolished and the Basic Organisation of Associated Labour (OOUR) Metallurgical Engineering was established as one of the OOURs of the Faculty of Technology.<sup>18</sup> Four years later, OOUR together with the Institute of Metallurgy separated from the Faculty of Technology and formed a Work Organisation that became an integral part of the Self-Management Organisation of Labor (SOUR) of the Željezara Sisak (Sisak Steelworks).<sup>19</sup> In 1979, the Metallurgical Faculty was founded, which would become an independent member of the University of Zagreb,<sup>20</sup> although it continued to have dual affiliation with both the steelworks and university. It formally became an independent scientific and educational institution on June 1, 1991.<sup>21</sup>

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9 Darko Maljković, Development of Higher Education and Organized Scientific Research in Sisak, *Radovi Leksikografskog zavoda "Miroslav Krleža"*, no. 3, 1993, p 133.

10 Darko Maljković (ed.), *University of Zagreb – Faculty of Metallurgy: 40 Years (1960-2000)*, Sisak: Faculty of Metallurgy, 2000, p 13.

11 Mirko Gojić, *Fifty Years of Metallurgy Studies*, Sisak: Faculty of Metallurgy Sisak, 2010, p 19.

12 Darko Maljković (ed.), *University of Zagreb – Faculty of Metallurgy: 40 Years (1960-2000)*, Sisak: Faculty of Metallurgy, 2000, p 15.

13 Mirko Gojić, *Fifty Years of Metallurgy Studies*, Sisak: Faculty of Metallurgy Sisak, 2010, p 17.

14 Darko Maljković (ed.), *University of Zagreb – Faculty of Metallurgy: 40 Years (1960-2000)*, Sisak: Faculty of Metallurgy, 2000, p 24.

15 Hrvoje Klasić, *Croatian Spring in Sisak*, Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2006, p 18.

16 Tko će financirati fakultet? (*Who Will Fund the Faculty?*), *Jedinstvo*, March 16, 1967, issue no. 711, p 5.

17 Hrvoje Klasić, *Croatian Spring in Sisak*, Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2006, p 16.

18 Mirko Gojić, *Fifty Years of Metallurgy Studies*, Sisak: Faculty of Metallurgy Sisak, 2010, p 20.

19 Ibid., p 21.

20 Ibid., p 22.

21 Darko Maljković (ed.), *University of Zagreb – Faculty of Metallurgy: 40 Years (1960-2000)*, p 18.

According to the older literature, specifically the only article that mentions them, foreign students initially comprised about 5% of the total number of attendees at the Department and later at the Faculty of Metallurgy. Despite this percentage and the fact that their presence was noticed by the citizens of Sisak, their existence in the city and at the Faculty remained almost unnoticed. Among these 5% of foreign students, the majority were from Syria, Jordan, and Iraq.<sup>22</sup> It is surprising, therefore, that to this day there is not a single relevant study that at least partially addresses this topic, and so research must rely almost entirely on archival sources.

### Foreign Students in Sisak<sup>23</sup>

#### *Who were the foreign students in Sisak?*

With regard to the countries which these students came from, and as noted above, these were mainly Syria, Jordan, and Iraq, with Syria leading significantly. Specifically, the number of students from Syria, over 20 of them, is almost equal to the total number from other countries combined, with Jordan in second place with 12. In addition to these three countries, there was one student each from Sudan, Lebanon, and India. Particularly interesting are the details concerning the student from India, where someone accidentally or intentionally enrolled him under "Yugoslav" citizenship, while his birth certificate states he is "Pakistani". This example illustrates one of the issues that can arise when studying this group of foreign students.

Speaking of citizenship and nationality, these two are usually the same, but there are several examples where differences exist. Apart from the student from India, another example is a student from Iraq who identified as "Muslim". Two students from Syria identified as "Kurdish", although the dominant ethnicity for this group is "Arab". Several other students identified as Arabs, but it is interesting to note that they came from three different countries – Iraq, Syria, and Jordan.

One of the data points that can be systematically tracked is the age of the students. By analysing their dates of birth, it can be observed that foreign

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22 Darko Maljković, Development of Higher Education and Organized Scientific Research in Sisak, *Radovi Leksikografskog zavoda "Miroslav Krleža"*, no. 3, 1993, p 136.

23 All the information provided in this chapter is derived from archival documents housed at the Faculty of Metallurgy, specifically from the Registry Book of the Faculty of Metallurgy in Sisak, covering entries from number 3 to number 7. Due to restrictions on the use of these materials and in accordance with personal data protection regulations, as stated and agreed upon by the author, it is not possible to reference any document in more specific detail. It is also important to note that student records are not consistently filled out; they range from being fully completed to entirely empty, which complicates the effort to follow a clear and consistent narrative. For these reasons, all results are presented in a summarised and descriptive manner, rather than individually.



students arrived as already "established" individuals, often in their late 20s or even during their 30s, with most being part of the post-war generation born in the period 1946-1949. Following them are those born in the 1950s, with only one student, the previously mentioned Indian, who was significantly older than the average, since he was born in 1939. Besides age, information about the parents of foreign students is well documented. It can be concluded that in all these cases their fathers were responsible for financially supporting the family, as their mothers were invariably homemakers. Fathers' incomes varied, but mostly they were retired men who had held prominent positions during their working lives. For example, one student's father was noted as a "retired colonel", while another's was a "retired director", and there is one father who was still working as a physician.

The funding of these students varied considerably, but two main sources can be observed: family support and various forms of scholarships or financial aid from their native governments. Financial assistance from the family primarily comes from the students' parents, specifically their fathers, while a smaller portion comes from other close family members, like brothers. An interesting case involves a student submitting a document in Arabic, later translated, stating that a family member will cover the cost of their education. Scholarships and state aid are of diverse types. For instance, there is a record of a scholarship from the Ministry of Education of Pakistan disbursed through the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries of Yugoslavia. The Jordanian Engineering Society requests confirmation that a student has graduated, but it is unclear from the documentation whether the student received a scholarship from them. In the same student's file, there is a letter from the Office of the Cultural Advisor of the Iraqi Embassy claiming that they will provide a scholarship. Thanks to these details it is possible to ascertain the cost of education. For example, one student from Iraq sought financial support from their embassy for medical treatment, noting that one semester costs 45,000 "new dinars". Only one student's records indicate funding through a loan, but further details are not known.

As previously mentioned, all the students who came to Sisak were at an age where it was expected they had already reached a certain level of education. The majority arrived having completed secondary education, which they subsequently had recognised throughout Yugoslavia. For instance, several students provided certificates from the Education Centre in Sarajevo confirming recognition of their secondary school diplomas, often equating them with a high school programme. A smaller number of students had completed higher education programmes, for which their home embassies issued certificates. For example, the Embassy of Pakistan authenticated the statements and diplomas of a student who had previously completed undergraduate studies there.

Before starting their studies, all the students had to pass an exam in the Serbo-Croatian language, which was held at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb.

A certificate of completion from this course was evidently a requirement for admission to the Faculty of Metallurgy, as it is found in almost every student's file. Despite these certificates, documents filled out by the students themselves indicate that their command of the Latin script was often weak, their handwriting messy, and at times inaccurate. Therefore, it raises the question of how proficient the students actually were in terms of communication and interaction with the local population.

### *Challenges and problems of foreign Students*

Students faced various challenges, including frequently changing universities within Yugoslavia. A significant number of students at the Faculty of Metallurgy transferred from other faculties, such as the Technical Faculty in Novi Sad or Bor. However, most students continued their studies in Sisak after initially starting at the Faculty of Technology in Zagreb, which was logical since these were essentially part of the same institution.

Upon arriving in Sisak, students almost all lived in private accommodation. It is not surprising that there was no organised accommodation then, as this is still the case today. Although this is not explicitly detailed in the files, conversations with Faculty members reveal that students lived in rented rooms, often within the apartments and houses of some of the locals in Sisak, for whom this arrangement provided a reliable and steady income.

When discussing students' stay in Sisak, it is important to note that many of them wanted to extend this after completing their studies. They often attempted to do so by applying for an additional year of study without any student rights, solely to prolong their time in Sisak. The reasons for this vary, but in several cases the issue of military service arises, and one student explicitly requested approval for an additional year to avoid going to the "front".

In the students' files there is also some medical documentation, which they often use to justify requests for extending their studies, re-enrolment, or postponement of exams. Based on the medical findings and discharge letters they submitted, it is clear that their major concerns were respiratory illnesses. They predominantly suffered from pneumonia, bronchitis, and similar conditions. In one case, a student from Sudan was even prescribed a "change of climate" as therapy by a doctor.

Student grades could be tracked through two main avenues: first, through exam registration forms, which are largely preserved in the archives, and second, through grade transcripts that culminate in an average grade. It can therefore be determined that the foreign students had an average grade in the "middle range", which is around 3 out of 5, with some slightly higher and some slightly lower. However, it is equally clear that they often encountered obstacles in their studies, as evidenced by a significant number of commission exams where they were compelled to take a particular exam four or even five times.

*Academic success and future career for foreign students*

Speaking of student grades, an interesting letter from the Iraqi Embassy in 1972 queries the Faculty, seeking an explanation as to how a specific student enrolled in the first year of studies for the fifth time. The Faculty responded that he had only enrolled in studies in Sisak for the first time that year, having previously studied in Novi Sad.

The majority of students attained the status of engineers, i.e., they graduated. A smaller number obtained a master's degree, and only a few went on to earn a doctoral degree. On the other hand, a large number of students dropped out or transferred to other studies, resulting in their records remaining somewhat sparse. It is worth noting that today, the City Library of Sisak preserves graduate, master's, and doctoral theses of students transferred from the Technical Library of Željezara, which now serve as a valuable source for studying the scientific and professional activities of the Faculty.

Only a small number of students worked during their studies, mainly within Željezara, in the steelworks and casting jobs, all on temporary contracts. The Faculty of Metallurgy, and its predecessors, did not only collaborate extensively with Non-Aligned Movement countries, which are the focus of this study, but also had very fruitful collaborations with European institutions. For instance, noteworthy is the cooperation with the Mining Academy in Freiberg, Germany, where 12 engineers received training, and two collaborations resulted in doctoral dissertations.<sup>24</sup>

**Foreign Students in the Press**

The daily newspaper *Jedinstvo* from Sisak, which is effectively the best chronicle of events in Sisak over the years, simply does not recognise foreign students in Sisak as a subject of interest. There are almost no articles or photographs about them, not even occasional mentions. Articles about Africa and distant countries were limited to texts such as "African Magic", which announced the performance of around 30 dancers from Senegal.

The only mention of foreign students in the press was during the Forum on Iraq, organised by the National Union of Iraqi Students and led by Asad Ahmed, a student at the Faculty of Metallurgy. Here Ahmed spoke about the history and interesting aspects of Iraq, accompanied by an exhibition of 200 photographs.

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<sup>24</sup> Darko Maljković (ed.), *University of Zagreb – Faculty of Metallurgy: 40 Years (1960-2000)*, Sisak: Faculty of Metallurgy, 2000, p 47.





*African Magic, Jedinstvo, August 13, 1981.*

The text also mentions that there were some 700 Iraqi students studying in Yugoslavia, indicating that such collaborations will continue.<sup>25</sup>

With regard to articles on students and the University in general, it seems that interest in publishing such texts practically decreased from year to year. While in the 1960s, during the formation of the first departments, newspaper columns were often filled with news about equipping and launching these, accompanied by open criticism. However, over time this interest gradually waned, and articles addressing educational issues mostly focused on student and pupil financing problems and the increasingly common issue of unemployment.

<sup>25</sup> "Forum on Iraq", *Jedinstvo*, 21.5.1987, p 2.



*Forum on Iraq, Jedinstvo, 21.5.1987, p 2.*

One of the few articles that touches on the activities of the Faculty primarily as an educational institution is the one that covered the first awarding of the Master's of Technical Sciences, where 10 master's degrees in metallurgy were awarded. Among those who received them was Ahmed Syed Ejaz, whose file remains at the Faculty of Metallurgy to this day.<sup>26</sup>

The steelworks in Sisak, like many other large organisations, had its own newspaper, *Vjesnik Željezare*. However, this did not dedicate space to foreign students, either, and even wrote quite briefly and infrequently about the

<sup>26</sup> "The first graduation ceremony for the Master's of Technical Sciences", *Jedinstvo*, 10.3.1988., p 8.





Novi magistri tehničkih znanosti s lijeva na desno: Ahmed Syed Ejaz, Želimir Čulig, Milica Kesić-Racan, Stoja Rešković, Marijan Golja, Radana Dmitrović i Faruk Unkić

## Prva promocija magistara tehničkih znanosti

SISAK – Prvi put u Sisku je promovirano 10 magistara tehničkih znanosti iz područja metalurgije.

Na prigodnoj svečanosti, održanoj u prostorijama fakulteta, u skladu s tradicionalnim protokolom magistrima tehničkih znanosti proglašeni su: Radana Dmitrović, Milica Kesić-Racan, Stoja Rešković, Želimir Čulig, Ahmed Syed Ejaz, Irfan Čamili, Alija Bulja, Shita Agim, Marijan Golja i Faruk Unkić.

Zvanje diplomiranog inženjera metalurgije stekli su Dušan Čurčića, Ljiljana Radanović, Zvonko Đopar,

Radojka Borojević, Milan Stojić, Miloš Bjelajac, Jovan Čurčića, Marina Kopriva, Zoran Novaković, Aida Salihović, Milka Sisan, Mladenka Troškot, Tihana Marjanović, Marijanka Kramarić i Ivo Mišura, a inženjera metalurgije Senka Filipović, Marija Božičević, Zlatko Božičević, Miljenko Stokić, Milan Sredić i Stjepan Galović.

Pored prof. dr. Darka Maljkovića dekana fakulteta, promotori su bili i prof. dr. Josip Črnko i prof. dr. Dušavka Ugarković.

B. Savić

*The first graduation ceremony of Master's of Technical Sciences, Jedinstvo, 10.3.1988., p 8.*

Faculty's work, with articles mostly focusing on the integration of "experts into production processes". The newspaper paid much more attention to cultural and sports events in the town and factory, as well as critical reflections on working conditions and progress.

For comparison, in Slovenia there was a newspaper called *Glas Afrike* (Voice of Africa), published by the Union of African Students. Although the newspaper was essentially just a collection of various texts, resembling a bulletin rather than a professional newspaper, it indeed served as the voice of foreign students. Moreover, all the texts were in Slovenian, indicating they were intended for Slovenian readership. This is further supported by sentences in the texts

such as "Africa is a unity of 50 countries with different cultural mentalities",<sup>27</sup> aimed at familiarising Slovenians with Africa. However, the newspaper also expressed firm political and social views held by African students, referring to the regime in Rhodesia, for example, as racist and vengeful. Towards the end of the newspaper, there were even advertisements featuring logos of prominent Slovenian companies like Bank of Ljubljana, underscoring the integration of the newspaper and the Union of African Students into everyday life.

### **Foreign Students in the Memories of the People of Sisak**

Foreign students constituted a significant proportion of the total number of students at the Faculty of Metallurgy in Sisak, occasionally making rare appearances in the public life of the city. But how are they remembered by the people of Sisak?

Talking to older residents who could at least partially recall them gives the impression that they did not leave a deep mark in collective memory. The most common responses centred around them being noticed due to their race when they went out in the city, but there were no specific memories apart from the fact that they always stuck together in tight-knit groups. One student developed a very friendly relationship with the local handball club, often accompanying Sisak's handball players to tournaments. He even taught them the basics of Arabic script, which remains in my interlocutor's memory to this day.

Another story involving foreign students revolves around a romantic relationship one had with a girl from Sisak. Out of this a girl was born, who, due to her different skin colour, experienced quite a bit of adversity in her hometown, which actually forced her mother to leave Sisak and move away. Her subsequent fate is unknown.

Unfortunately, the memory of foreign students in Sisak has almost completely faded, and there are no visible traces of their presence. As a result, conducting any systematic research on the culture of memory related to them has become impossible.

### **Instead of a Conclusion...**

The research revealed that the foreign students in question arrived in a land vastly different from their home countries, facing a series of challenges and difficulties, including health issues. Moreover, there was no systematic support in place to address these problems. Language barriers and other misunderstandings

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<sup>27</sup> *Glas Afrike*, March 1979, p 3.

frequently occurred, further complicating their studies and leading to varied levels of academic success. In the end, the students were not integrated into the public life of Sisak, and apart from a few exceptions there was almost no media coverage about them.

This brief exploration has offered initial insights into the issues surrounding foreign students in Sisak, and indeed in Croatia as a whole, but it is by no means definitive. I believe that for a city the size of Sisak it is significant that students from all over the world went there, enriching their knowledge and contributing to both the Faculty and the city itself, at least in terms of enabling people to become familiar with something different, something most in Croatia did not encounter every day. On the other hand, it is clear that these students faced a range of challenges and issues, many of which often went unrecognised and thus unaddressed.

This study should serve as a catalyst for further exploration of this topic, expanding our understanding of history, because at present the students from Non-Aligned countries, much like their origins, remain an "un-aligned" and insufficiently recognised part of Croatia's educational history, as well as its microhistory with regard to Sisak.

Lastly, it should be noted that the issue of foreign students and migrants in general is still neglected, and in the future it is important not only to draw attention to how they impact the community but also to open the discussion on how the community and environment impact them.

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