

“Folklore diplomacy”—the role of musical folklore in Yugoslavia’s foreign policy 1949–1971

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Our cultural-propaganda activity should affirm the culture of our country in the European framework, and even beyond it, and through various forms popularize our socialist country, the cultural heritage of our peoples, our new art, cultural life and the artistic development in our country. In our cultural propaganda, we should actively participate in the general ideological fight at the cultural front. In that fight, Yugoslavia should take the same position and role as it did in the general revolutionary fight.¹

When it became clear in 1949 that the breakup with the Cominform was final and that, due to the blockade imposed by its former allies, the survival of the country was called into question, the top echelon of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia concluded that the only way out was to turn to its ideological nemesis—the liberal capitalist West, spearheaded by the United States of America. The US was determined to use “the Yugoslav schism,” and in 1950 the two countries concluded several arrangements which helped Yugoslavia out of its isolation and created conditions for the country to initiate an independent and ambitious foreign policy, which holds in its foundation the authentic Yugoslav revolution.²

However, in order to pursue an active foreign policy, certain means are needed. Sometimes this includes the capital at the disposal of a certain country and other times the strength of its army. In the case of socialist Yugoslavia, which

¹ The Archives of Yugoslavia [Arhiv Jugoslavije (AJ)], The FPRY Government’s Council for Science and Culture [Komitet za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ] (317), box no. 86, archival unit 120, Goals and tasks of cultural propaganda of the FPRY, 1949, Belgrade; Branka Doknić, Milić F. Petrović, Ivan Hofman (Eds.), *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije 1945–1952*. Zbornik dokumenata II [Cultural policies of Yugoslavia 1945–1952. Collection of Documents II] (Belgrade: Arhiv Jugoslavije, 2009), 436.

² Dragan Bogetić, *Jugoslavija i Zapad 1952–1955: jugoslovensko približavanje NATO-u* [Yugoslavia and the West 1952–1955: Yugoslav rapprochement with NATO] (Belgrade: Službeni list SR), 2000; Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u Hladnom ratu* [Yugoslavia in the Cold War] (Zagreb: Globus, 1988); Bojan Dimitrijević, “Jugoslavija i NATO 1951–1958, skica intenzivnih vojnih odnosa [Yugoslavia and NATO 1951–1958, a sketch of the dynamic military relations],” in *Spoljna politika Jugoslavije 1950–1961, zbornik radova*, edited by Slobodan Selinić (Belgrade, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2008), 255–274.

was burdened by inherited poverty and had not recuperated from the destruction of the WWII, it was culture. In March 1950, Yugoslavia presented itself with an exhibition of medieval art of Yugoslav peoples in Paris. Distinguished artists, such as Petar Lubarda, started intensively exhibiting their work at the Venice Biennale and other prestigious manifestations. The works of two leading authors of this era—Ivo Andrić and Miroslav Krleža—were systematically translated into many languages and marketed abroad, while the comedy *Dundo Maroje* (Uncle Maroye) by Marin Držić and the ballet *Ohridska legenda* (The Legend of Ohrid) by Stevan Hristić were performed at the Edinburgh Festival and on other great stages.³

Regardless of how good it was, Yugoslav elite art still lagged behind the works of great European nations and cultures. However, what they did not have was the authentic musical folklore of Yugoslav peoples. Folk music, purified of the deleterious impact of class society and foreign cultures, was viewed by Marxist musicology as one of the foundations of musical art in socialism.⁴ Therefore, Yugoslav ethnomusicologists had the task of participating in the formation of professional ensembles which would raise the musical folklore of its peoples to a higher artistic level and present it to the world. This was the reason why the National Folk Song and Dance Ensemble of the People's Republic of Serbia—later simply named “Kolo”—was established in 1948, followed by the foundation of the National Folk Dance Ensemble of the People's Republic of Croatia (“Lado”) and the National Ensemble for Folk Dances and Songs of the People's Republic of Macedonia (“Tanec”) in 1949.⁵ These three ensembles and several high-quality amateur ones initiated in 1950 a series of tours abroad, and thanks to them musical folklore became one of the most important instruments in Yugoslav foreign policy. On the following pages, the characteristic performances of these ensembles, which clearly demonstrate their foreign policy role, will be presented. The chronological framework (1949–1971) encompasses the period during which cultural cooperation and exchange between Yugoslavia and foreign countries was within the jurisdiction of the federal administration.⁶

³ Miroslav Perišić, “Veliki zaokret 1950: Jugoslavija u traganju za vlastitim putem. Kultura – oslonac, prethodnica i sastavni deo spoljne politike [The great turn of 1950: Yugoslavia in the search for its own path. Culture – the basis, precedent and integral part of foreign policy],” in *Pisati istoriju Jugoslavije: videnje srpskog faktora*, edited by Mile Bjelajac (Belgrade, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2007), 237–279.

⁴ Ivan Hofman, “Pod stegom Partije. Muzika socijalističkog realizma – primeri SSSR i Jugoslavije [Under the Party's pressure. The music of socialist realism—the examples of the USSR and Yugoslavia],” *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 1–3 (2005): 41–65.

⁵ See web pages: <http://kolo.rs/>, <https://www.lado.hr/> and <http://www.tanec.com.mk/> (accessed July 27, 2019). The ensembles got their current names in 1955, so they could be easily distinguished abroad. The names Kolo, Lado and Tanec are used in this paper for the same practical reasons.

⁶ Originally via the Department for International Scientific and Cultural Links of the Ministry of Science and Culture of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) Government (1949–1950),

The *Teškoto oro* (The Hard One) as a herald of Yugoslav diplomacy

The musical folklore of Yugoslav peoples was first officially presented abroad in 1950. A combined ensemble consisting of the members of Kolo and Lado (a total of 150 people) toured Switzerland in the spring, performing in Zurich, Basel, Lausanne and Geneva. The tour was seen as a success from the propaganda and political point of view. The audience was thrilled by what it saw, and the ensemble received invitations to perform in Switzerland again the following year. However, the organization of the tour was deemed poor. The ensemble was given poor-quality halls, and the money earned from the concerts was spent on renting venues.⁷

The annual International Eisteddfod festival was first held in the Welsh town of Llangollen in July 1947. Based on the traditions of the Welsh *eisteddfodau*—competitions in Celtic poetry, music and dance—the festival was an international competition of amateur folk dance ensembles and choirs, which gained the reputation of one of the most prestigious festivals in the world in quite a short amount of time.⁸ Encouraged by the success of the tour in Switzerland, the FPRY Council for Science and Culture decided to send a combined ensemble of Tanec and Lado (a total of around 60 people) to Llangollen in 1950. The Macedonian section of the ensemble performed an impressive dance *Teškoto* (the Hard One) and won first prize. *Fruła* (Tin whistle) players took second place, while the Croatian part of the ensemble won third place performing their own folk songs and dances. The representatives of the International Folk Music Council, headquartered in London, watched the performances. It was then that the connections were made that led to Yugoslavia hosting the congress of this organization in Opatija in September 1951, along with an accompanying festival of selected domestic ensembles.⁹ After

the same department at the Council for Science and Culture of the FPRY Government (1950–1953), and later via the Commission for International Cultural Links as an independent administrative body (named the Federal Commission for International Cultural Links in 1965). The Federal Commission was abolished at the end of 1971 with the reorganization of the federal administration within a set of measures whose goal was to decentralize (confederate) the Yugoslav federation. The administrative bodies of the republics and provinces of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) took over the most important jobs regarding the organization of cultural cooperation and exchange with foreign countries. See Ivan Hofman, “Savezna komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom 1953–1971 (1946–1971). Ustanova i njena arhivska građa [The Federal Commission for International Cultural Links 1953–1971 (1946–1971). The institution and its archival material],” *Arhivistika*: <http://www.arhivistika.edu.rs/clanci/sredivanje-i-obrađa-arhivske-grade/>.

⁷ AJ, 317-86-120, Report on the work of the Department for International Scientific and Cultural Links in 1950, 1950, Belgrade; Doknić, Petrović, Hofman, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije*, 448.

⁸ On the festival in Llangollen, see <https://international-eisteddfod.co.uk/> (accessed July 27, 2019).

⁹ Ivan Hofman, “Uloga muzičkog folkloru u spoljnoj politici socijalističke Jugoslavije 1950–1952 [The role of musical folklore in the foreign policy of the socialist Yugoslavia 1950–1952],” in *Spoljna politika Jugoslavije 1950–1961*, 437–456.

Llangollen, the joint ensemble held several concerts in Wales, mostly in front of representatives of the working class, and it even held a concert in London.¹⁰

Following the success in Llangollen, Yugoslav ensembles were invited to new tours in Great Britain. In January 1951, Tanec appeared at the prestigious Royal Albert Hall, performing a predominantly Macedonian program: the Hard One, the Diggers' Dance, the Dance from Berat, the Boys' Dance and the Bandits' Dance. The Kolo ensemble performed in Austria in March the same year, "without financial expenses on our side," and then competed in Llangollen, winning first prizes in three categories: dance, song and music. The audience was thrilled, but the critics found fault in the fact that the ensemble, even though professional, competed in an amateur festival.¹¹ After Llangollen, Kolo performed at the London Royal Festival Hall and with the mediation of a manager of questionable reputation, J. de Blik, it also performed in the Netherlands.¹²

In 1952, the three professional ensembles and the Ivo Lola Ribar Academic Cultural Artistic Society from Belgrade, as one of the leading amateur ensembles, had noteworthy performances in the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Greece, on the Free Territory of Trieste and in Scandinavian countries.¹³ Finally, in July 1953, Yugoslav folk dance once again triumphed in Llangollen. This time, a mixed group consisting of about 15 dancers and musicians from Belgrade and Subotica performed. Despite the small number of dancers, the group managed to win the category of folk dances, performing the powerful Warrior Dance of Rugovo (from the Kosovo and Metohija Region) and the Bunjevac Dance. It is interesting that the main competitor of the Yugoslav ensemble was the ensemble of Ukrainian emigrants.¹⁴

The available sources on the first performances of folk dance ensembles abroad, whether they include correspondence on organizational issues or reports after returning from tours, rarely reflect on the little man, i.e. the ordinary member of the ensemble. But those were young people who, almost certainly, had never had the chance to go abroad before. We suppose that they, as most young Yugoslavs of that generation, believed in the idea of socialism; they believed that they were building a better and more just world than the one they remembered from their childhood,

¹⁰ AJ, 317-86-120, Report on the work of the Department for International Scientific and Cultural Links in 1950, 1950, Belgrade; Doknić, Petrović, Hofman, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije*, 448.

¹¹ AJ, 317-86-120, Annual report of the Department for International Scientific and Cultural Links for 1951. November 19, 1951, Belgrade; Doknić, Petrović, Hofman, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije*, 452.

¹² On Kolo's tour and disputes with the manager see the aforementioned paper by Hofman.

¹³ AJ, 317-86-120, Annual report of the Department for International Scientific and Cultural Links for 1952, 1952, Belgrade; Doknić, Petrović, Hofman, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije*, 459.

¹⁴ AJ, Federal Commission for International Cultural Links [Savezna komisija za međunarodne kulturne veze] (559), box No. 122, archival unit 259, Report on the performance of the mixed folk dance group in Llangollen 1953.

from the time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia or WWII. What was their encounter with Western Europe like? Did they fall under the spell of the world on the other side of the Iron Curtain, or did they just see confirmation that the construction of socialism was the only right path they should follow? We have an example at our disposal of how individuals fell under the spell of the capitalist world.

The Oro Folk Dance Ensemble of the People's Republic of Montenegro spent the summer of 1954 touring France. The tour was almost a routine: performances, applause, favorable reviews, journey by train from one place to another. However, it was noted that the members of Oro were less interested in the cultural monuments of the places they were visiting going to stores. That is, until the moment when a group of "six brazen men" from the ensemble were caught shoplifting at a watchmaker's shop in Saint-Nazaire. A scandal erupted and local newspapers wrote about it immediately. The perpetrators were apprehended, but the Yugoslav Embassy made sure they were set free and the entire case was covered up.¹⁵

And with what program did the three professional ensembles present themselves to foreign audiences? We have seen that Tanec presented Macedonian folk dance in the United Kingdom, which is understandable, because Macedonians were only formally recognized as a nation in 1945, although they have a rich, versatile and attractive folk musical tradition. Around 1950, Kolo's program was as follows: the Banat Dance accompanied by a tambura orchestra, Folk Dances from Montenegro, the Warrior Dance of Rugovo, Folk Dances from the Skopje Region, the Dance from the Island of Krk, Folk Dances from Serbia, the Men's Dance, the Dance from Debar (western Macedonia), the Bunjevac Men's Dance, the Tin Whistle Duet—Serbian Folk Melodies, Folk Dances from Prizren, the Glamoč Dance, Slovene Folk Songs accompanied by the accordion, the Men's Show-Off Dance from Banat, and Folk Dances from Slavonia and Posavina.¹⁶ The presented program was considerably Yugoslav, and it was based on the conviction that Kolo represented Yugoslavia as a whole, not just Serbia as its republic of origin and the Serbian people. Up until then, Lado, depending on the circumstances, performed three programs, each with a different character. The first program aimed at being purely Croatian: the Ladar Folk Song from central Croatia, the Istrian folk song *The Vine Bore Fruit*, and the *Balun* Dance, the Slavonia Dance with tambura, Two Bosnian Folk Songs, the Dance from the Island of Krk, the Vrlika Dance, St. George's Day Folk Song from Brezovica, the Bunjevac Men's Dance, the Slavonia Harvest Song, Two Dances from Pokupsko, the Slavonia Men's Folk Song, the Dalmatian dance and song *Lindó*, and Posavina Dances. The second and third programs had a more generally Yugoslav character. Along with the aforementioned Croatian dances and songs, they included

¹⁵ AJ, 559-122-260, Report from the tour of the Oro Folk Dance Ensemble of the People's Republic of Montenegro in France from August 4 to September 6, 1954, October 15, 1954, Cetinje.

¹⁶ AJ, 559-122-259, The program of the Kolo ensemble on tours 1950–1952.

Macedonian folk dances (the Bride's Dance, the Tinsmith's Dance, the Women's Dance and the *Running Dance*), the Bosnian Women's Folk Song and Dance, Two Slovene Folk Songs and the Serbian dances *Moravac* and *Čačak*.¹⁷

Who is encouraging chauvinism
and who is adhering to the so-called socialist relations?

When the three professional ensembles were not yet well-known on the international scene and the Western European audience was just getting to know Yugoslav musical folklore, Lado, Tanec and Kolo cooperated and went on tours together as mixed groups. International recognition followed: victories in Llangollen and invitations from various managers to go on new and attractive tours. Earnings from concerts were becoming an increasingly important issue when arranging tours. The three ensembles started to feel as though they were competing with each other, and sometimes they would perform in the same countries and cities at almost the same time. It was noticeable that part of the Western European audience was inundated by Yugoslav folk dance, while in certain countries "where political reasons require closer cultural ties" none of the three ensembles performed. Ultimately, all three professional ensembles perceived tours of amateur ensembles as a disturbance because, according to Kolo director Olga Skovran, they copied the program of the professional ones, but performed it at an artistically lower level. This damaged the reputation and undermined the price of professional ensembles.¹⁸

At the beginning of 1956, a serious conflict erupted between Kolo and Lado because of an appealing tour in the Federal Republic of Germany. Both ensembles wanted the tour and the earnings for themselves, so they hired local managers who fought for their clients quite unscrupulously. The situation that ensued encouraged Lado director Ivo Kirigin to write a lengthy letter to the authorities in which he complained about the attitude of the state toward his ensemble. He accused Jugokonzert and its director Veljko Bijedić of systematically neglecting the Croatian ensemble, whereas the other two ensembles had the support of the authorities. He even listed several examples. In late 1954, Jugokonzert conducted negotiations on Lado's tour in the US and Canada and Kolo's tour in Latin America. However, allegedly with no explanation, the Commission for International Cultural Links gave the North American tour to Kolo. According to Kirigin, Jugokonzert faked negotiations with a Bulgarian concert agency on Lado's tour in Bulgaria, only for Tanec to go on the tour in the end (October–December 1955). Lado prepared for a tour in Palermo in February 1956, but for reasons unknown, was not granted

¹⁷ AJ, 559-122-259, The program of the Lado ensemble on tours 1950–1952.

¹⁸ AJ, 559-122-260, Note from the meeting at the Commission for International Cultural Links with the representatives of Jugokonzert and state folk dance ensembles, March 7, 1953.

the Italian visas. It just so happened that, at roughly the same time, the Ivo Lola Ribar ensemble performed in Palermo. “We can’t help but get the impression that someone from the Yugoslav side is directly or indirectly to blame that Lado didn’t get to perform in Italy.”

Kirigin also found it disputable that Kolo had a lavish brochure, whereas there were allegedly no funds to print even a regular one for Lado. He complained about the words used in Tanec’s brochure, which said: “sponsored by the Macedonian state, in cooperation with the Yugoslav Government,” and about a short text from newspaper *Borba*, which Jugokonzert had attached with the propaganda material for the Macedonian ensemble. It supposedly said that Tanec had surpassed the other two state ensembles with its performance in Ljubljana. He claimed that this was why foreign managers were neglecting Lado. Kirigin concludes the letter, which is reminiscent of entries in a complaints book of a hotel, stressing that the attitude of “the authorities’ side” encouraged chauvinistic interpretations in the Croatian public. He believed that this was due to someone’s petty individual interests. However, he did place himself in the role of a defender of the so-called socialist relations.¹⁹

A similar letter was written in 1966 by Branko Bekić, who took over as Kolo director after Olga Skovran retired. He claimed that his ensemble had not had the financial or moral support of the Federal Commission for International Cultural Links for seven years (1960–1966). Allegedly, the state neglected the best Yugoslav professional folk dance ensemble (one brochure from that period literally says: *Kolo: Leading Folklore Group of Yugoslavia*), and favored not just the other two professional ensembles, but also certain amateur ones. Furthermore, he claimed that there had been cases where certain foreign countries requested Kolo to perform, but the state sent a different ensemble.²⁰

Dušan Vejnović, assistant to the president of the Federal Commission for International Cultural Links,²¹ answered Bekić’s letter. The Commission assisted financially the tours of folk dance ensembles before as a medium Yugoslavia’s political propaganda. However, performances of folk dance ensembles abroad had become so frequent and the ensembles themselves so wanted that it concluded there was no need to allocate funds to large ensembles which had established cooperation with foreign managers and were arranging tours on their own. Vejnović explained that the Federal Commission had limited itself to helping where “political needs so require.” That is why the Commission bore the costs of the tour of the Kočo

¹⁹ AJ, 559-126-267, Letter by Ivo Kirigin, The relations of the Lado ensemble with other ensembles and Jugokonzert, March 14, 1956.

²⁰ AJ, 559-125-266, Kolo director Branko Bekić on the claims that it is favored over other ensembles, June 27, 1966.

²¹ In 1965, the Commission for International Cultural Links was reorganized, and the adjective “federal” was added to the name.

Racin ensemble from Skopje in Bursa, because it recognized the political need of a more intense cultural exchange between Yugoslavia and Turkey. The Turks requested Tanec, and Tanec turned to the Federal Commission with a request for funds for that purpose. However, the Commission rejected Tanec, choosing the lesser-known, but still high-quality amateur ensemble. Vejnović concluded that the Federal Commission would not finance the tours of folk dance ensembles, “except where the Federation is exceptionally interested.”²²

Kolo vs. Turist-Express—Lado vs. the United American Croats

Well-known American manager Sol Hurok took notice of Yugoslav musical folklore during the first tours of the three professional ensembles and offered in 1952 to organize Kolo’s tour in the US and Canada. The estimated costs of one such tour were enormous, and since he was not willing to pay for the transport across the Atlantic Ocean, negotiations stopped. Two years later, when an offer of a smaller manager arrived, the Belgrade-based company Turist-Express got involved in the negotiations and offered to organize the tour in an attempt to break into the American market. Hurok returned to the game and after long negotiations, Kolo went on a three-month North American tour at the end of 1956. The success of the ensemble was great: according to the report by Olga Skovran, the ensemble traveled about 43,000 kilometers and held 56 concerts in 43 American and Canadian cities. However, the success of the tour was overshadowed by a fierce clash between Kolo and Turist-Express. And what was the clash about? Money, of course. As the representative of Kolo, Turist-Express concluded an agreement with Hurok, which involved covering the costs of the ensemble’s participation in a TV show and paying the daily wages of all the members of the ensemble for all 13 weeks of the tour. Just before they went on the tour, it turned out that the TV show would not be recorded “for political reasons,” which meant that this would not be a cost. Therefore, Kolo decided to take four other much needed members of the ensemble on the tour, presuming that the issue of their daily wages would be solved on the fly. During the ensemble’s stay in the US, Hurok decided to cut the tour down from 13 to 11 weeks due to Christmas holidays, and he agreed that the amount earmarked for the daily wages would remain the same. This opened the possibility of paying the daily wages of the four men who had been included in the tour just before the start. However, Turist-Express, which managed the money for the entire project, refused to do so. A dispute ensued in which Kolo members “fought only for [...] the rights of the working man to be paid legally for his work,” and not be “a means of achieving [someone’s] profit,” but there was no result. Turist-Express kept the

²² AJ, 559-125-266, Assistant to the president of the Federal Commission for International Cultural Links Dušan Vejnović to Kolo director Branko Bekić, September 29, 1966.

money, and upon their return to Belgrade, the members of the ensemble who had been paid shared their earnings with the colleagues who had not.²³ Sources do not reveal what happened next, nor whether the case went to court.

The Lado ensemble had a completely different experience in the US, and its tour was directed mostly toward Croat expatriates in America. According to the Zagreb-based Croatian Heritage Foundation, Croatian expatriates in the United States were dissatisfied because folk dance ensembles from Croatia did not tour in their towns. The Foundation tried to explain the reasons for that to the expatriates and wrote a letter for their newsletter *Zajedničar*. In the letter, it stated that Lado was a professional ensemble, and thus arranged its tours independently, with the mediation of local managers. Since Hurok's agency sustained a loss when Kolo toured the US, it refused to fund the Croatian ensemble. On the other hand, the choir of the Branko Krsmanović Academic Cultural Artistic Society from Belgrade performed in the US twice in a short period of time because its manager made a profit off its first appearance and decided to try it again. A rich expatriate from Pittsburgh tried to help Lado, but negotiations fell through because the ensemble wanted members to be paid daily wages, which the man could not secure.²⁴

The tour was, nonetheless, held in 1967. It lasted for three weeks and covered Los Angeles and New York. The concerts earned “the admiration of the lovers and connoisseurs of folk dance,” but the financial effect was quite poor. Lado performed on an open stage in cold autumn conditions, which affected the performers' health, as well as the attendance. Croatian expatriates, who had originally openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that their homeland had not sent Croatian ensembles, did not show enough interest to attend the concerts. Ultimately, the concerts also ostensibly felt the boycott of the US audience resulting from the stance of the SFRY toward the Middle East—Yugoslavia supported the Arab coalition in the Six-Day War and severed diplomatic ties with Israel. This boycott was particularly prominent in New York, where the Jewish population is substantial.

Ustasha emigrants tried to use Lado's tour for their own propaganda. The association the United American Croats from New York handed out a leaflet with a drawn map of Croatia, which included the entire territory of the Socialist Republic of Croatia and the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Srem, Bačka and the Montenegrin seaside, with an apt text saying that Croatian folk dance showed that Croats were a special nation with great tradition. Therefore, it was only natural that Croats sought the right to self-determination, which had been proclaimed by US President Woodrow Wilson half a century earlier and confirmed by the Atlantic Charter of the United Nations. The Croatian nation had all the essential

²³ AJ, 559-125-266, Statement of Kolo director Olga Skovran regarding the dispute with the company Turist-Express on the tour in America, January 14, 1957, Belgrade.

²⁴ AJ, 559-126-267, Letter of the Croatian Heritage Foundation, January 24, 1966.

preconditions to build an independent state: a long history, a rich and diverse culture, and an industrial base for swift economic development. The conclusion of the leaflet pleased the American ear—the United American Croats were asking for a national state in which democracy and social justice would prevail.²⁵

During the tour, several members of the ensemble inquired about the possibility of remaining in the US, and one of them asked for political asylum and remained there. Allegedly, he had prepared for this even before embarking on the tour.²⁶

From the Kremlin to the imperial palace in Beijing

The mending of relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR after Stalin's death and the meetings between Josip Broz Tito and Nikita Khrushchev in May and June 1955 was reflected in tours of Yugoslav professional folk dance ensembles.²⁷ Kolo spent almost four and a half months (August–November 1955) on tour in two of the world's leading socialist countries, the USSR and the People's Republic of China, while it also visited Burma, which continued to play a significant role in Yugoslavia's foreign policy at a time when the future non-alignment policy started taking shape.

The first part of the tour was held in the USSR. In Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and Riga, Kolo held a total of large-scale 20 concerts. Most of the shows were held on large summer stages—in Riga, Kolo performed in front of 30,000 people, while in Moscow, it performed in front of 12,000 people. The ensemble performed at the Bolshoi Theatre in front of high representatives of the Soviet Communist Party, which also included Vyacheslav Molotov and Anastas Mikoyan as the most prominent spectators. Outside of grand stages, Kolo also performed in certain factories. Its director Skovran underscored the cordial reception and the services of the host, as well as the enthusiasm shown by the audience.²⁸

From the USSR, Kolo went to China. In an effort to mark the sixth anniversary of winning in the revolution and establishing the Republic, the Government of the People's Republic of China invited various cultural delegations and ensembles as guests throughout 1955. The ensembles that were invited included, among others, the Beryozka dance troupe from the USSR, the ensemble of the Polish People's Army, the ensemble of the Albanian Army, ensembles from Japan, Burma, Vietnam, India, Korea, Mongolia, etc. The Chinese government spared no expense

²⁵ AJ, 559-126-267, Leaflet "Croatian National Folklore" by the United American Croats association.

²⁶ AJ, 559-126-267, The final report from the tour of the Lado ensemble to the US, November 18, 1967.

²⁷ On the normalization of relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR, see Dragan Bogetić, *Nova strategija jugoslovenske spoljne politike 1956–1961* [The new strategy of Yugoslav foreign policy 1956–1961] (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2006).

²⁸ AJ, 559-125-266, Report by Olga Skovran on Kolo's tour in the USSR, China and Burma, February 6, 1956.

in promoting itself: it paid for the trip to the Chinese border and back for most of the ensembles, and offered them to stay in the country for as long as they liked. That is how the ensemble of the Bulgarian Army spent six months in China, and it even had a special train at its disposal.

According to FPRY Ambassador Vladimir Popović, the Chinese government had the intention of giving Kolo's tour an almost exclusively political character, presenting the ensemble's presence as a return of Yugoslavia to the "side of peace and democracy led by the USSR." However, the Yugoslav side did not accept that, and wanted to reduce the tour to the level of a simple cultural exchange.

The ensemble received a warm welcome in Beijing. Various state officials, representatives of the cultural and public life, members of the Chinese state folk dance ensemble and numerous citizens attended the event. A festive dinner was organized for the guests, and Vice President of the Republic Zhou Enlai received the ensemble the following day. Three concerts were held in China's capital, and the audience rewarded each with warm applause. However, as Ambassador Popović noted, considering that the representatives of the Chinese Communist Party and the state administration were present in the audience, the applause was directed mostly at the political speeches, rather than the artistic program.

From Beijing, Kolo headed to the provinces. It performed a number of shows in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Shenyang and Anshan. The Chinese were quite hospitable toward Yugoslavs. The members of the ensemble were put in the best hotels and provided with special food. Their management had a car at their disposal in every place, and the ensemble traveled through the country by a special train. All members of the ensemble received monetary compensation and gifts, and when they left China, the hosts exchanged their remaining yuans to dollars. Kolo attended the performances of Chinese ensembles, and it gave special performances at certain factories and schools. A domestic film crew followed the ensemble and made a documentary about it. Ambassador Popović claimed that he did not have the slightest idea of how much this tour cost the Chinese (it was evident that they spared no expense, taking into consideration the political benefit of this tour). Because of the special treatment of the ensemble, the FPRY Embassy organized a reception for 500 guests from the political, public and art echelons of China. Even the Vice President of the Republic, Zhou Enlai, attended the reception.

Kolo spent two months in China. It put on 22 shows, which were, according to Popović, attended by around 190,000 people. The Chinese press wrote about the ensemble and Yugoslavia extensively in that time. The audience watched the shows with enthusiasm, often requesting an encore. Once, the members of Kolo paid the hosts back for their generosity by singing a few appropriate songs about Mao Zedong in Chinese, which won further appreciation from the audience. The Ambassador commended the behavior of the ensemble, which "left quite a good impression on

all the Chinese people with whom they came into contact with their nice, friendly, free personal stance and behavior, and their correct political response.”²⁹

Kolo members were clearly well prepared and trained on how to behave in politically delicate situations like their tour in the USSR and China, i.e. countries whose party bureaucracies were not willing to accept Yugoslavia’s independent path to socialism. However, according to Skovran, during the tour, they traveled 50,000 kilometers and spent 45 days on a train, while also handling the hot and humid monsoon climate of Burma. Naturally, this led to weakened discipline and certain incidents. The details are unknown, but the director of the ensemble was particularly dissatisfied with the behavior of a Radio Belgrade reporter, who allegedly interfered with her work on several occasions.³⁰

The Branko Krsmanović Song and Dance Ensemble followed in Kolo’s footsteps. They went to China in November and December 1957. Representatives of the Yugoslav and Chinese youth arranged the tour, and it was agreed that the Chinese government would bear the costs of the transport of people and equipment via airplane to China and back, as well as all the costs incurred in the country. The management of the ensemble defined the character of the tour before their departure. Through concerts, they were meant to present the results of the building of socialism in Yugoslavia and show how the academic youth was contributing to the progress of its socialist homeland. The ensemble was greeted in Beijing by representatives of Chinese youth and student organizations, who took good care of it throughout the tour. Between performances, members of the ensemble were taken to organized visits to universities, factories and various cultural establishments. They even had the chance to admire the famous Great Wall of China.³¹

The warrior dance of Rugovo “against” the Cossacks

When we look at the tours of Yugoslav folk dance ensembles abroad, it is evident that they were far more frequent in Western countries or non-aligned countries than in the countries of the Warsaw Pact. The exchange of ensembles between the Yugoslavia and Bulgaria was present to a certain extent, while tours in the USSR were rare, which was largely a result of the ups and downs in the relations between the two countries with diverging views on how to build socialism. After the reconciliation initiated by Nikita Khrushchev in 1955, which brought about

²⁹ AJ, 559-125-266, Classified report by FPRY Ambassador to China Vladimir Popović, November 10, 1955.

³⁰ AJ, 559-125-266, Report by Olga Skovran on Kolo’s tour in the USSR, China and Burma, February 6, 1956.

³¹ AJ, 559-126-269, Report on the tour of the Branko Krsmanović Song and Dance Ensemble in China, April 10, 1958.

the aforementioned tour of Kolo that same year, and after a few years of good relations and cooperation, a new chill followed, caused by the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968.

The tour of the Shota Folk Dance Ensemble of Kosovo in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in July 1971 can be viewed as an expression of a new improvement in relations. The tour was realized based on the stipulations of the SFRY–USSR Cultural Cooperation Program. According to the report, Shota was the first Yugoslav folk dance ensemble that performed in Ukraine. The troupe performed in western Ukrainian cities of Mukachevo, Chernivtsi, Vinnytsia, Kamianets-Podilskyi, Khmelnytskyi, Ternopil and in Kiev. The program encompassed folk dances of different ethnic groups from the Kosovo and Metohija region, including: the Warrior Dance of Rugovo, the Albanian Dance, Albanian Dances from Gjakova, the Albanian dance *Shota*, Albanian dances from Metohija *Dukagjini*, Albanian Folk Songs, Serbian Kosovar Folk Songs, the Folk Dance Suite from Serbia, Old City Songs and Dances from Prizren, Montenegrin Songs and Dances, Turkish Songs and Dances and Gipsy Songs and Dances.³²

From Port Said to Casablanca

Ever since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the Middle East has been a region of latent conflicts and the intertwining of local interests with the interests of great forces. After Jewish settlers to Palestine declared the state of Israel in 1948, that area became the center of a series of wars between the Jewish state and the surrounding Arab states, as well as protracted civil wars, such as the one in Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s. Yugoslavia was one of the first states to recognize Israel and establish diplomatic relations with the country. However, out of all the states in the Middle East, Yugoslavia had the closest cooperation with Egypt, especially after the king was dethroned and the republic established in 1952.³³ Since then, Yugoslav universities received numerous Egyptian scholarship holders, large companies organized internships for numerous Egyptian engineers and qualified workers, and Yugoslav experts of various profiles were hired in the Egyptian economy, healthcare and education.³⁴

Yugoslav folk dance ensembles actively participated in the cultural cooperation and exchange with Egypt. In January 1958, Lado toured Cairo, Alexandria, Ismailia and some other smaller towns in the Nile Delta. It held 30 concerts and,

³² AJ, 559-125-265, Report on the tour of the Shota Folk Dance Ensemble of Kosovo in the USSR, September 6, 1971.

³³ Bogetić, *Nova strategija*, 165–168; Aleksandar Životić, “Jugoslavija i Bliski Istok (1945–1956) [Yugoslavia and the Middle East (1945–1956)],” in *Spoljna politika Jugoslavije 1950–1961*, 483–496.

³⁴ AJ, 559-209-430, Scholarship holders and residents from the United Arab Republic; AJ, Bureau for International Technical Cooperation [Zavod za međunarodnu tehničku saradnju] (208), records currently being processed.

according to the report of the Yugoslav Information Centre in Cairo, the success of Lado was all the greater, considering that the Egyptian scene had been inundated by the performances of folk dance ensembles from the Warsaw Pact for the previous few years, and that their respective states had covered most of the expenses.

The tour in Egypt was based on commercial grounds, without the financial participation of the two states. Lado hired a local manager, who owned a night club. As such, he was not fit for the job and nearly went bankrupt. He could not, or would not, print the program of the performance, he was not sure whether he would be able to secure the hall of the Cairo Opera House as the most representative one in the country and, once he realized he was facing bankruptcy, he refused to pay for the ensemble's return to Yugoslavia, although this was included in the contract. So, the members of Lado were not certain for a few days when and how they would return home. FPRY Ambassador Josip Đerđa intervened, securing the money and taking care of the organization of the tour.

Despite these problems, the tour was a success in terms of political propaganda. Reportedly, the enthusiasm the audience with the performances of the troupe turned into a "true manifestation dedicated to Yugoslavia." In this regard, the report on the tour particularly stresses the success achieved among Egyptian workers in the industrial center Mahalla. However, there is one detail that the Egyptian public did not particularly like: at that same time, Kolo toured Israel and the Yugoslav media covered that tour more than Lado's tour in Egypt.³⁵

The success of Lado paved the way for other Yugoslav ensembles. At the beginning of 1964, the Ivo Lola Ribar troupe performed in Egypt as part of an international folklore festival. Lola's score in the competition was below what had been expected, but the work of the ensemble once the festival was over was more important for Yugoslavia's foreign policy than the outcome of the competition itself. The ensemble held a series of concerts in Alexandria, Port Said, Aswan and some smaller places. It performed at several youth camps, sports centers and factories, presenting its abridged program; it performed for the Yugoslav Embassy staff and members of the Yugoslav People's Army on a UN peacekeeping mission on Mount Sinai. The host tried to be accommodating to the Yugoslavs in every way. During the festival, Lola and the other ensembles were placed in luxury hotels and ate first-class food. In the second part of the tour, the accommodation and food were significantly less luxurious, but the hosts remained cordial and accommodating, which the members of Lola appreciated greatly.³⁶

The Maghreb was another region that had been in the focus of Yugoslav foreign policy since the mid-1950s. The Yugoslav government actively helped

³⁵ AJ, 559-126-267, Report of the Yugoslav Information Centre in Cairo, February 10, 1958.

³⁶ AJ, 559-126-270, Report on the tour of ACAS Lola in Egypt, April 2, 1964, Belgrade.

Tunisia and Morocco in the first years after they gained independence from France, as well as the armed fight of Algerians against French occupation.³⁷

A fundamental part of Yugoslav diplomacy directed toward the Maghreb was Kolo's tour in Morocco and Tunisia at the beginning of 1959. The ensemble performed 19 concerts in Casablanca, Rabat, Fez, Marrakesh and Tangier, and 7 concerts in the city of Tunis. The program was versatile, encompassing folk dances from all parts of Yugoslavia. According to Olga Skovran, the tour was successful from the artistic point of view, but attendance was low. The tickets for the shows were too expensive for the average citizens of Morocco and Tunisia. The Italian tour manager's reasoning for the price was that the organization costs were excessively high. Therefore, to the obvious disappointment of the director of the ensemble, members of the French community were prevalent in the audience in these countries. However, not even they attended the concerts as expected: many boycotted them due to Yugoslavia's active participation in the Algerian War of Independence. That is why the Kolo director proposed that the Yugoslav state subsidize future tours in poor, newly liberated countries, so that professional ensembles would not have to charge the full price of tickets (which was mostly in the interest of managers). The political propaganda effect of the tour was most important, even at the cost of lower earnings.³⁸

A herald of economic delegations

The tour of the Ivo Lola Ribar ensemble in India and Afghanistan in February and March 1967 differs from the tours presented above because its main goal was not ideological or political, that is, its goal was not typical propaganda about Yugoslav culture. Instead, it was expected that it would encourage economic cooperation of Yugoslavia especially with India, but also with other countries through which the ensemble passed. That is why the tour received not only the usual funding from the Federal Commission for International Cultural Links, but also from the India division of the Yugoslav Chamber of Commerce, the Ivan Milutinović company from Belgrade, which specialized in building ports and similar structures on water, and foreign trade company Intertrade from Ljubljana.

From Belgrade to Bombay, the ensemble crossed thousands of kilometers by train and plane, traveling through Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. It performed a total of 40 concerts (10 were held in Afghanistan and 19 in India). During the two-hour program, only six dancing couples performed dances from different regions of Yugoslavia (the program was more or less copied from Kolo, with the Warrior Dance of Rugovo and the Glamoč

³⁷ Srđan Miletić, "Jugoslavija i zemlje Magreba 1956–1958 [Yugoslavia and the Maghreb countries 1956–1958]," in *Spoljna politika Jugoslavije 1950–1961*, 497–512.

³⁸ AJ, 559-125-266, Report by Olga Skovran on Kolo's tour in Morocco and Tunisia, March 10, 1959.

Dance as the main hits). Members of the ensemble had to get used to drastic climate changes in quite short amounts of time. They performed for several days in Kabul, at an altitude of over 1,500 meters, only to fly to the seaside city of Bombay, where they were greeted by a temperature of 30 degrees Celsius and high humidity. The government of Afghanistan paid great attention to its guests because they were the first Yugoslav performing artists to visit the country. The prime minister, together with several ministers and two members of the royal family, watched the performances in Kabul. In India, heads of cabinets and general secretaries of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other important ministries attended the concerts.

In the report on the tour, the management of the ensemble stressed the significance of cultural exchange “for the introduction of a more direct and cordial atmosphere in economic and business relations between the countries.” It was for those reasons that Lola extended its stay in India for another week, performing for Indian workers at various factories. The extension was paid by Indian companies and the Yugoslav Consulate General in Bombay. With regard to these additional concerts, special pamphlets were printed with information about Yugoslav companies and other business information.³⁹

The Rashomon effect in Santiago de Chile

Latin America was the subject of interest of Yugoslav diplomacy already before WWII, mostly due to the large diaspora of Yugoslav, predominantly Croatian, expatriates in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, but also due to the aspiration to establish economic cooperation with these countries.⁴⁰ In the beginning, socialist Yugoslavia was also mainly interested in its expatriates,⁴¹ but as of the late 1950s, the continent also became important due to the expansion of the Non-Aligned Movement.⁴²

Since musical folklore proved to be a successful instrument of Yugoslav diplomacy, a meeting was held between the representatives of the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, the Commission for International Cultural Links and Jugokonzert at the beginning of 1959. They discussed sending one of the three professional

³⁹ AJ, 559-126-270, Report of the leaders of the journey of the Folk Dance and Song Ensemble Lola across Asian countries (with special addenda), April 1967, Belgrade.

⁴⁰ Predrag Krejić, “Priznanje Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca od strane država Južne i Centralne Amerike [The acknowledgement of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes by the states of South and Central America],” *Arhiv* 1-2 (2006): 81-91.

⁴¹ AJ, The FPRY Government's Committee for Schools and Science [Komitet za obrazovanje i nauku vlade FNRJ] (315), box No. 3, archival unit 10, Minority schools of the FPRY abroad; AJ, 315-27-63, Yugoslav minority schools in Chile.

⁴² Vidosava Eraković, “Titova ‘američka turneja’ 1963. godine – poseta Brazilu, Čileu, Boliviji, Peru i Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama [Tito's “American tour” in 1963—visit to Brasil, Chile, Bolivia, Peru and the US],” *Arhiv* 1-2 (2015): 168-181.

ensembles on a long tour in Latin America. All three ensembles were interested, but the considerable travel expenses for 45 passengers and about 1,500 kilograms of luggage presented a problem. Lado was selected and the spring of 1960 was suggested for a three-month tour. The ensemble would have six evening shows and one matinee a week. The Commission for International Cultural Links and Jugokonzert would bear the travel expenses from Yugoslavia to Latin America, while local managers would cover all the costs in Latin American countries. It was decided that the tour would encompass Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and possibly Venezuela. The first show would be held in Rio de Janeiro on April 2, 1960. It was decided that the earnings from the performances would be used to cover the expenses of their return, and what was left would become pocket money.⁴³

A plan may seem feasible when discussed in an office, but reality usually requires adaptation. The management of Lado wanted to take over the organization of the tour itself. It contacted the country's biggest shipping company Jugolinija, and this was the response: the journey by cargo ship would last 22–30 days in one direction and would depend on the number of ports where the ship would have to dock to load and unload goods. Therefore, the starting date of the tour could not be specified. Apart from that, a long journey on a ship with insufficient movement would affect the fitness level of the dancers. Ultimately, it turned out that Jugolinija did not even have a ship with more than 12 beds, nor did it have the option of adding the necessary beds for the 45 passengers that were to go on the tour. They considered traveling by a foreign ship. There was even a Genoa–Buenos Aires line, which took 14–15 days, but it was much more expensive than Jugolinija. As for the option of flying: the Putnik agency could secure an aircraft from Zagreb to Buenos Aires, but it wanted to be paid in dollars, because JAT Airways had to cover the expenses of fuel and the stay of the flight crew abroad.⁴⁴

In the months that followed, the problems regarding the organization of the tour grew so much that it was becoming uncertain whether it would take place at all. In early May 1960, Laza Jakšić of Jugokonzert went to Santiago de Chile to arrange the details with local concert agencies. He was one of the people included in the aforementioned letter by Ivo Kirigin from 1956. This meant that the latent conflict between Lado and Jugokonzert over the alleged neglect of the Croatian ensemble spread to Latin America.

According to Yugoslav Ambassador to Chile Ljuba Faust, Jakšić came to Santiago unprepared, without any knowledge of foreign languages (allegedly, he knew some German). On the way, he tried to carry out what he said was an order

⁴³ AJ, 559-126-267, The meeting of the representatives of the SSFA, CICL and Jugokonzert regarding the tour of a folk dance ensemble in Latin America, January 30, 1959.

⁴⁴ AJ, 559-126-267, Recapitulation of the travel expenses of the Lado ensemble for South America, 1960.

from Belgrade to include Cuba and Venezuela in Lado's schedule, which was politically desirable but difficult to achieve due to the distance of the countries from Chile and the high costs. Supposedly, he behaved quite unprofessionally during the negotiations with the Chilean manager. He put the embassy in an unpleasant position, because he had not brought enough money with him, thus disgracing the country. "At the hotel where he stayed, Jakšić begged them to lower the prices, and once they did, he allegedly could not pay even that significantly reduced price."⁴⁵

The report by Jakšić paints a different picture of these events. Before going on the journey, he went to Zagreb to consult with the management of the ensemble. After a three-day journey, he was greeted at the Santiago de Chile airport by a reputable expatriate Danilo Matulić, who worked part-time at the Yugoslav Embassy. Matulić placed him in the best hotel, whose co-owner was an expatriate from Zagreb. The very next day, Ambassador Faust received Jakšić and initiated the conversation cordially, remembering him as an actor in the ZAVNOH theatre during the war, but changed his tone immediately and cut to the chase: the Embassy refused to cooperate with Jugokonzert because of numerous misunderstandings in their previous cooperation. Moreover, he considered the arrival of the representative of the agency undesirable. Nonetheless, Jakšić asked to be put in touch with the local manager Merlet, recommended by the Embassy. Faust asked Jakšić, most likely in a raised voice, whether he knew Spanish. Since he said he did not, Faust referred him to the aforementioned expatriate Matulić, adding that Jakšić himself should take care of paying for his services. When Jakšić responded that he had started his journey across the ocean with only 200 dollars, which was the amount Belgrade had approved, the ambassador was flabbergasted. He said that this was highly unprofessional and that he "wanted nothing to do with the whole thing," wishing Jakšić good luck in his further work. "This first reception at the Embassy looked like a genuine burial of the III order."

Matulić accepted the role of mediator and Jakšić met with Merlet soon. Jakšić, who invoked his many years of managerial experience, concluded that the Chilean was a dilettante "without a penny to his name," with no experience or specific profession. Jakšić's doubt in Merlet was supported by the case of the London Festival Ballet. The Ballet had performed in Santiago a while back and had been left without its earnings from the performance because the local manager ran away with the entire amount of \$12,000. The question that arose was how such a man had been entrusted with the complex activities of organizing the tour? Merlet was supposedly a friend of a ballet master from Santiago, who had seen Lado perform two years earlier in Zagreb, which gave him the idea to earn some money by organizing the tour. To do that, he made a deal with Capdevilla from Buenos Aires, who was known as a collector of theatre program ads and could organize the tour along the Atlantic

⁴⁵ AJ, 559-126-267, Report of FPRY Ambassador to Santiago de Chile Ljuba Faust on the meeting with Jugokonzert's representative Laza Jakšić, May 24, 1960.

coast, while Merlet would cover the Pacific coast. Jakšić turned to the aforementioned ballet master for advice. The man was surprised that the Yugoslav side put their trust in Merlet, who did not have a particularly good reputation in Santiago, and Jakšić responded that the Yugoslav Embassy had recommended him. We can only imagine how confused Jakšić must have been, when he once again turned to Ambassador Faust, only to see Faust react strongly to the remark that Merlet had been chosen following his advice. Faust said he was washing his hands of everything and that Jakšić should not count on the Embassy's help. Jakšić's mission thus failed and Lado's tour was postponed. In the conclusion of the report, Jakšić puts part of the responsibility for the failure of negotiations on the Branko Krsmanović folk dance ensemble, which performed the act of unfair competition, visiting Mexico and Venezuela at the same time. Allegedly, members of the Krsmanović ensemble spread rumors that their ensemble was the best and that Lado was bad, which supports the aforementioned allegations of the director of the Croatian ensemble.⁴⁶

Lado's tour in Latin American countries was still held, but only in late 1962. The troupe went on the tour abruptly, because the Commission for International Cultural Links requested that the money allocated for the tour be spent by the end of the year, or returned to the budget. The tour included Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. During the 40 days they spent on the continent, the ensemble held 45 concerts. In fact, 38 concerts had initially been planned, but due to poor attendance and, consequently, low earnings, the members of the ensemble had to push themselves and do extra shows to make sure they were able to pay for the return airplane tickets. Poor organization of the tour, left in the hands of local managers, led to low attendance at the concerts. The date of the tour was also poorly selected because November and December are summer months in the Southern Hemisphere, and it is hot and humid, so the concert season is on a break.⁴⁷

Their tour in Uruguay was deemed a huge missed chance. Organizing the tour in the last minute did not give the Embassy enough time to properly promote it, so Lado performed in half-empty venues. The earnings were slim and the members of the ensemble had to give up their allowance. During one of the concerts, an Ustasha emigrant threw from the gallery a bunch of leaflets protesting "the use of Croatian cultural heritage for Yugoslav and communist purposes." The right-wing newsletter *El Dia* accused the management of the theatre Solis in Montevideo of enabling communist propaganda in Uruguay. The show in Argentina also fared poorly, without much notice.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ AJ, 559-126-267, Report by Jugokonzert representative Laza Jakšić on the negotiations in Santiago de Chile, 1960, Belgrade.

⁴⁷ AJ, 559-126-267, Report on Lado's tour in Latin America, February 8, 1963.

⁴⁸ AJ, 559-126-267, Report on Lado's tour in Uruguay, December 20, 1962.

After performing in Uruguay and Argentina, Lado went on to Chile. The Yugoslav diaspora in the country, mostly consisting of Croats from Dalmatia, took over the financing of the tour. If Merlet, as the choice of the Embassy, proved to be a bad solution, the choice of the expatriates was no better. They hired the owner of a local circus, who did his job quite poorly. Consequently, the earnings from the shows were not particularly good. Despite everything, it was deemed that the political propaganda effect of the tour was significant, among Yugoslav (Croatian) expatriates as well as other Chileans. However, what marked Lado's tour in Chile was a member of the ensemble fleeing and requesting political asylum from the Chilean authorities. His motives are unknown, and it is also unknown whether he had any relatives in Chile or not. We suppose that he, as many other asylum seekers, went on a search for a better life than the one he had in his homeland.⁴⁹

Tanec discovers Africa

Not many Yugoslavs could boast about going to Africa before 1950. One of the rare people who could, who even left a valuable written testimony of his travels through the French and British territories in Western Africa at the end of 1929, was writer and diplomat Rastko Petrović.⁵⁰ At the end of the 1950s, in line with Yugoslavia's strategic course of presenting itself as the leader of the so-called Non-Aligned Countries—countries that remained outside the division in the two dominant and opposing ideological and political blocks—scholarship holders from newly independent African states or members of liberation movements from territories that remained under the administration of colonial powers started coming to universities and vocational schools in the FPRY. This was the first time most Yugoslav citizens had the chance to meet Africans in person. They did not know much about them, but they often held a prejudiced opinion. Also, many African scholarship holders did not manage to adjust to the Yugoslav environment well, and came into conflict with it. Despite all these obstacles, Africa was becoming increasingly present in Yugoslav everyday life, while Yugoslav experts of various profiles, mostly engineers, qualified artisans and medical workers were also spending more and more time in young African countries, building their infrastructure.⁵¹

Just like with Lola's tour in India, folk dance played the role of a herald of economic delegations in the case of Tanec's tour in West African countries. The two-month tour took place in early 1968 and was organized by the Federal

⁴⁹ AJ, 559-126-267, Report of the FPRY Embassy on Lado's tour in Chile, January 8, 1963.

⁵⁰ Rastko Petrović, *Afrika* (Novi Sad: Solaris, 2008).

⁵¹ AJ, 559-177-367 Classified records on scholarships and scholarship holders (1951-1962); AJ, 559-177-368, Classified records on scholarships and scholarship holders (1963-1966); AJ, 208, records currently being processed.

Commission for International Cultural Links and the Jugoagent transport company from Belgrade. It included Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Ghana, Congo, and a special concert held in Lagos, Nigeria, which was arranged on the spot. A total of 32 concerts were performed, attended by over 50,000 people, with regular presence of top state officials of every country at the premiere. The core of Tanec's program was Macedonian folk dance, but selected numbers from the folklore of other peoples of Yugoslavia were also performed.⁵² Available sources speak mostly about the shows in Senegal and Guinea, so we will focus on those, naturally.

The Macedonian troupe went to Senegal in February 1968. The Embassy went to great lengths with respect to promoting the performance: a one-hour show about Yugoslav folk dance and about the ensemble was broadcast on national radio and two articles with photographs were published in newspapers with high circulation. The first concert was held on February 5. Several ministers and more than half of the diplomatic corps attended it. The 1,100-seat hall was quite full on the two nights. The response of the audience was positive. The Senegalese particularly enjoyed the melodies and dances in which they could sense the presence of Arabic or even their own motifs. The male part of the ensemble drew more attention of the audience, because the choreography they performed was more striking than the one performed by women. The costumes left a strong impression on the audience. Due to the climate, which the Europeans did not immediately get used to, their voices occasionally sounded weaker. Still, they drew a nice applause, especially a duet of soloists. The piece that left the biggest impression on the hosts was the Shopi Dance, and what left the biggest impression on all Yugoslavs was the gesture of the Senegalese Culture Minister and poet Jean Briere, who wrote a poem dedicated to Tanec.

Several shows for a wide audience were held in the next few days in Dakar and other parts of the country. Performances outside the Senegalese capital were poorly organized, partly due to the mistakes of the hosts and partly due to the limitations of their poverty. In one city, Tanec performed on a basketball court, which was the most that the local authorities could provide. However, at the same time, the authorities made a serious mistake of not providing water to the members of the ensemble until four hours after their arrival. The tour of the Macedonian ensemble in Senegal served as good reason for the Yugoslav Ambassador to once again open the issue of creating a program of cultural cooperation between the two countries, shifting the responsibility to the hosts and the sluggishness of their administration.⁵³

⁵² AJ, 559-126-268, Tanec National Ensemble for Folk Dances and Songs of Macedonia – Skopje, Tour in West Africa (from January 30 to March 10, 1968). Program.

⁵³ AJ, 559-126-268, Report of the SFRY Embassy on Tanec's tour in Senegal, February 20, 1968.

From Senegal, Tanec went on to Guinea, where it held five concerts in the capital Conakry and another five in other parts of the country, all in front of large audiences. One of the concert was performed in a place called Kalé, where Yugoslav companies were building a hydropower plant, and another was held at a hospital treating the fighters of the liberation movement from Portuguese Guinea. The ensemble was welcomed well and rose to the occasion everywhere it went. However, the attitude of director Toma Leov toward the hosts cast a certain shadow on the tour. According to the report of the Embassy in Conakry, the hosts complained that Leov was not willing to understand the objective circumstances in which the people of Guinea lived and that he even showed a certain degree of intolerance toward them as Africans. Allegedly, he had unrealistic demands regarding the level of comfort available and did not show respect toward local customs and the attention that the people of Guinea paid him. Even some officials of the Yugoslav Embassy noticed that some of these complaints were founded.⁵⁴

Musical folklore—an instrument of Yugoslav foreign policy

When in 1949 the top of the Yugoslav Communist Party and the state discussed the need to radically change the country's foreign policy course, this brought up the question of which means to apply in this endeavor. What was it that Yugoslavia could offer to the economically developed West, when its traditionally poorly developed and war-devastated economy was stagnating because of the conflict with the Cominform and the isolation imposed by the USSR and “the people's democracies?” Lacking capital and lacking goods to export, what remained were the products of the culture of its peoples.

After 1949, culture became Yugoslavia's main export product, i.e. the main instrument of its foreign policy. Systematically and in an organized manner, through the Commission for International Cultural Links, diplomatic and consular missions and other state institutions, Yugoslavia marketed its art, which included works from times past, but purified of ideologically undesirable layers, as well as modern ones, all aimed at presenting Yugoslavia as a country building a humane socialist society—completely opposite to the Stalinist one—based on original Marxism and its own revolutionary experience. Musical folklore played a notable role within foreign policy envisaged in such a way, but it would be naïve to conclude that, for example, the Hard One or the Warrior Dance of Rugovo persuaded NATO members to offer aid to the heretic Communist Party and its state. Help from the US came when Washington concluded that the conflict between the two Communist Parties, which had been smoldering practically since the end of WWII, had become irreconcilable and that a serious crack was evident in the

⁵⁴ AJ, 559-126-268, Report of the SFRY Embassy in Guinea on Tanec's tour, March 19, 1968.

previously firm Communist Bloc. Now, let us imagine a concert of a Yugoslav folk dance troupe in Great Britain, for example, and pick a random spectator and look into their mind. Perhaps they had some ideas about Yugoslavia before; perhaps they knew nothing about the country and its peoples (which does not mean they had no opinion on them, and opinions mixed with a lack of knowledge usually produce prejudice and stereotypes). While watching the concert, they might be mesmerized by the powerful choreography, exotic costumes and the enthusiasm of the young dancers (who were trying to present this enthusiasm as an expression of joy over the construction of the new socialist homeland). If they were a bit more educated, they would search for literature to learn more about the country of the ensemble and its wondrous dances, which could make them develop some affection toward the country. Therefore, the performances of folk dance ensembles in Western countries in the first half of the 1950s had a predominantly political purpose, because they could impact the public opinion, and from there influence the policies of governments toward Yugoslavia in a favorable manner.

The performances in the USSR and “people’s democracies,” starting from the second half of the 1950s, also had a political purpose. They represented a gesture of goodwill and reconciliation, but they were also a way of proving that the Yugoslav path of socialism was equal to the Soviet or the Chinese one, and that the peoples of Yugoslavia were successfully building this, as it was believed, technologically advanced and just society. So, the performances of the folk dance ensembles and other cultural and artistic societies had the aim of highlighting the independence of the Yugoslav Communist Party (the League of Communists of Yugoslavia as of 1952) and the state from the USSR and the Warsaw Pact, as well as underscoring the unalienable right of a socialist country to choose its own path toward the shared goal of communism.

Performances in Non-Aligned countries had a political and economic dimension. After WWII, the colonial empires of the traditional European forces started falling apart, and new national states started emerging on the vast territories of Asia and Africa. In their first years of formal independence, they were still dependent on former metropolises and wandered, searching for their path. They were facing two conflicting military/political and ideological blocs—NATO and the Warsaw Pact—which were interested in drawing them toward themselves. However, in the mid-1950s an alternative appeared outside the two blocs, which would later grow into the Non-Aligned Movement. The diplomacy of Yugoslavia, led by Josip Broz Tito, which initiated the policy of equidistance—i.e. maneuvering between the two blocs and using their oppositions after the death of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin—saw an opportunity to tie these newly formed states to itself and present itself as their leader. This is the reason for numerous performances of folk dance troupes and other cultural and artistic groups in Egypt and other countries of the Middle East,

the Maghreb countries, India, Burma and other countries of the Far East, as well as countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. Part of the funding needed for traveling to these far-away and exotic countries was secured by Yugoslav construction, foreign trade and other companies that hoped to develop lucrative businesses there. Therefore, the Hard One, the Warrior Dance of Rugovo, the Glamoč Dance and other dances were performed to create a good atmosphere before the negotiations of various economic delegations, which would build the infrastructure of many countries in Africa and Asia after the conclusion of favorable contracts.

The performances in Latin American countries were mostly meant for Yugoslav expatriates, who needed to be persuaded of the idea of a socialist and federal Yugoslavia, and separated from the strong propaganda activities of the Ustasha emigrant groups. Of course, Yugoslav diplomacy did not neglect the economic and political aspect of these tours.

The folk dance ensembles themselves recognized their interest in tours, because performances on the international scene would bring in sometimes less, sometimes more money. That is also where the envy and the conflicts between the managements of the three professional ensembles or the misunderstandings with Jugokonzert and the Commission for International Cultural Links originate. When it comes to the ordinary members, the mere fact that they could see the world while performing folk dances meant a lot to them and certain individuals, lured by what they saw (and many of them saw only what suited them), decided to give up on the construction of the socialist country imposed on them and seek political asylum in the country where they toured.

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