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“BIG WIDE WORLD” IN YUGOSLAVIA: SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON CULTURAL TRANSFER TO SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA*

Abstract: The paper discusses the hybrid cultural model of Yugoslav socialism, also defined as the *third way*. This model distinguished the socialism of Yugoslavia and that of other countries of the Eastern bloc during the Cold War era. It emerged after the political break with the Soviet Union in 1948, but developed gradually during the 1950s. Western models (American, French, British, Italian and Swedish) came during this cultural transfer. This happened in the field of education since 1958. The transfer also included the Americanisation of culture and the rise of consumerist society, another process that began in the late 1950s. Opening up in the field of art also began in the 1950s with Western exhibitions in Yugoslavia, and Yugoslav artists started to exhibit their works in the West in the 1960s. Since its opening in 1965, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade was under strong American cultural influence, and similar tendencies were present in theatre performances in the 1960s. American films dominated cinemas in Belgrade and other cities since the early 1950s, and jazz became very popular in the same period. Fashion magazines promoting Western fashion also appeared in the 1950s, but Western fashion became dominant somewhat later. Although the American cultural model became dominant, the Soviet one never vanished. Western impulses were also heavily present through the Italian influence in the fields of fashion, car industry and popular culture.

Keywords: Cultural transfer, socialist Yugoslavia, Americanisation, Westernisation, Cold War

The period of socialist Yugoslavia represents a specific cultural hybrid in all fields of social activity. The new Yugoslav society began its formation according to the Soviet model, but very soon, a new, autochthonous social structure model was established – socialist self-management – which would mark the whole existence of socialist Yugoslavia. Changes in the Communist Party policies in the domain of culture began somewhat later than the political changes of 1948. During that period, besides the presence of realism, the modernist concept was introduced into the cultural space, which undoubtedly had to do with Western cultural influence.¹ From the 1950s, cultural influences became manifold and complex, and by the end of the 1950s, the influence of Western cultural models became evidently present and gradually formed an integral part of the

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1 Goran Miloradović, *Lepota pod nadzorom: Sovjetski kulturni uticaji u Jugoslaviji 1945–1955* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju 2012), 15.

cultural model of socialist Yugoslavia. So, this hybrid model, also defined as the *third way*, was one of the peculiarities that created the distinction between the socialism of Yugoslavia and that of other countries of the Eastern bloc during the Cold War era.

In this paper, I shall try to identify certain fields of social activity in the post-war Yugoslav society where Western influences were remarkably present. Apart from popular culture and consumerism, which are our primary associations with the West, the general reform of the educational system at the end of the 1950s, study visits of university professors and scientists to Western universities, fine art, and socialist architecture all contain a strong influence of Western cultural models. According to the place and role that Western cultural transfer had in Yugoslav society, these influences could be included in the cultural concept defined as a *Struktureme* by the historian Wolfgang Schmale.²

Reform of the Yugoslav Educational System

Western models played a prominent role in the large-scale reform of the Yugoslav educational system in 1958. The first steps were made at the beginning of the 1950s through UNESCO (the UN organisation responsible for international educational and cultural cooperation). Pedagogical science in Yugoslavia, even after the political split with the countries of the Eastern bloc, couldn't quite manage to break from Soviet influence in research methodology. It was still present in pedagogical research during the 1950s: "...Yugoslav pedagogy until 1952 hadn't managed to free itself of the strong influence of Soviet pedagogy, which is defined by Stalinism, statism and dogmatism in the period from 1936 up to 1958."³ During the 1950s, leading Yugoslav pedagogues tried to use various policies of compromise to design a specific pedagogical model that rejected Soviet science but retained and appropriated Marxist pedagogy, which was seen as completely autochthonous and distinct from Soviet pedagogical science. The Marxist pedagogical model was presented as a common ground for Eastern and Western educational policies. During that period, a significant number of Yugoslav experts, through UNESCO, were sent on study

- 2 "The most important differentiation between *Struktureme* and *Kultureme* is that *Struktureme* possess an identity-potentiality, whilst *Kultureme* have an identity essence... *Struktureme* refer to ideal and material cultural artefacts which have an identity-potentiality but are without an identity essence."; Wolfgang Schmale, "Processes of Europeanization", *European History on Line (EGO)* (December 2010), 2, 7.
- 3 Sanja Petrović Todosijević, *Otećemo svetlost bučnom vodopadu. Reforma osnovnoškolskog sistema u Srbiji 1944–1959* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2018), 78.

leaves to Western European countries and the USA. Since the mid-1950s (1956), UNESCO experts from the Pedagogy Institute of Geneva began visiting Yugoslavia to help work on the educational system reform. The role and significance of UNESCO in the educational reform in Yugoslavia was highlighted by Rodoljub Čolaković in his speech at the Second Session of the Federal Executive Council on 25th June 1958.⁴ One of the key issues when investigating the socialist educational reform is the matter of the standards and models under which the reform was implemented. Along with the complex Yugoslav pedagogical heritage, Yugoslav experts leaned on models of the countries that had successfully created modern systems of mandatory education in accordance with the most up-to-date principles of child-rearing and education. Therefore, the Yugoslav reform also sought and found its models in the educational systems of England, France, the United States of America, Canada, and Sweden.⁵ Yugoslav experts were especially impressed by the example of the English school reform of 1944. It was the English experience that provided the highly inclusive model of an educational system intended for all and not reserved only for members of the highest social classes and wealthy citizens. The French school system was very familiar to Yugoslav socialist pedagogues because it cultivated the ideas of the French Revolution and advocated the availability of education to the widest strata of the population. The American model was very convenient because of its federal administration and work on overcoming regional differences and establishing a common educational system. The Swedish model was recognised as socialist because it insisted on the education of adults and on continuous education.⁶ All these segments of various reforms became parts of the general Yugoslav school reform of 1958, which inherited prolonged primary school education and a remarkable degree of integration of all levels of the mandatory educational system into a unique school system as its most significant legacy, which was accomplished based on the examples of the French and Swedish school reforms.

During the same period, in the late 1950s, Western influences began to intensify at Yugoslav universities as well. Changes in foreign policy in 1948 were followed by new turns in the domain of cultural, educational, and scientific policies. The obvious turn to the West in these social spheres

4 Ibid, 83.

5 Ibid, 84.

6 Sanja Petrović Todosijević, “Socijalizam u školskoj klupi i oko nje. Dometi reforme osnovnoškolskog sistema u Jugoslaviji 1949–1958”, in Chiara Bonfiglioli, Boris Koroman (eds.), *Socijalizam izgradnja i razgradnja. Zbornik odabranih radova sa Drugog međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa Socijalizam na klupi* (Zagreb, Pula: Srednja Europa, Sveučilište Jura Dobrile, 2017), 61–64.

was defined in 1949 and officially adopted in 1952, at the Sixth Congress of CPY/LCY.⁷ The first international study programs came from the British Council and French Government scholarships.⁸ According to reports delivered by faculties to universities for the 1957/58 school year, we see that, on the Yugoslav level, 27.5% of teaching staff took advantage of study trips abroad, and at the University of Belgrade the percentage was even higher, reaching 34.5%. Most study trips, both on the federal level and within the University of Belgrade, were made to France, West Germany, and Austria. Visits to these countries made up 49% of all study trips.⁹

Americanisation and Consumerism

The global influence of Western values, embodied in Americanisation, was succinctly defined by Eric Hobsbawm in his monograph *Fractured Times: Culture and Society in the Twentieth Century*: “the purely local vogue for western myth was magnified and internationalised by means of the global influence of American popular culture, the most original and creative in the industrial and urban world, and the mass media that carried it and which the USA dominated”¹⁰. The same process was noticed in the Yugoslav example by historian Radina Vučetić in her book *Coca-Cola Socialism: Americanisation of Yugoslav Popular Culture in the Sixties*. Croatian historian Igor Duda, in his book *Pronađeno blagostanje: svakodnevni život i potrošačka kultura u Hrvatskoj 1970-ih i 1980-ih (Welfare Found: Everyday Life and Consumer Culture in Croatia in the 1970s and 1980s)*, presented the processes of modernisation of everyday life with examples of the influence of Western popular culture and economy. The phenomenon of consumerist society, which socialist Yugoslavia was gradually becoming since the end of the 1950s, was explored by Ildiko Erdei in his monograph *Čekajući Ikea: od tačkica do ikeizacije (Waiting for Ikea: from Coupons to Ikeasation)* and Branislav Dimitrijević in his book *Potrošeni socijalizam: Kultura, konzumerizam i društvena imaginacija u Jugoslaviji (1950–1974) (Spent Socialism: Culture, Consumerism and Social Imagination in Yugoslavia (1950–1974))*. A significant contribution to

7 Dragomir Bondžić, *Misao bez pasoša. Međunarodna saradnja Beogradskog univerziteta 1945–1960* (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2011), 33.

8 Branka Doknić, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije 1946–1963* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2013), 245.

9 Dragomir Bondžić, op. cit., p. 153–156; For more details on Yugoslav students at international universities see Miroslav Perišić, *Od Staljina ka Sartru. Formiranje Jugoslovenske inteligencije na evropskim univerzitetima 1945–1958* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2008), 396–410.

10 Eric Hobsbawm, *Fractured Times: Culture and Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New Press, 2013), 298.



*“A letter from the USA. What is it an American Woman?
She is ‘a little emperor’, head at home’, for the family and
for her husband”, Politika Bazar, No. 2, 01.01.1965.*

Courtesy of Politika Bazar.

research in the field of cultural transfers, although limited to Belgrade, is Predrag Marković's monograph *Beograd između Istoka i Zapada 1948–1965* (*Belgrade between the East and West 1948–1965*). In her book *Dvadeset četiri hiljade poljubaca: Uticaj italijanske popularne kulture u Jugoslaviji* (1955–1965) (*Twenty-four thousand kisses: The Influence of Italian Popular Culture in Yugoslavia (1955–1965)*), Francesca Rolandi discusses the influences of Italian popular culture. Italian influence, with a special focus on the Adriatic coast, was also in the focus of Anita Buhin's research presented in the book *Yugoslav Socialism “Flavoured with Sea, Flavoured with Salt”, Mediterraneanization of Yugoslav Popular Culture in the 1950s and 1960s under Italian Influence*. The phenomenon of Western cultural influence was also successfully presented at the exhibition *They Never Had It Better, Modernization of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia*, held in 2014 at the Museum of the History of Yugoslavia in Belgrade.

One of the characteristics of Americanisation in socialist Yugoslavia was the phenomenon of the consumerist society. The first recognizable

features of mass consumerism in Yugoslavia emerged in the late 1950s. This starting point, at the political and ideological level, can be placed in 1958 when the Programme of the Communist League of Yugoslavia recommended more intensive development of the retail network and better supply of consumers with goods.¹¹ Symbolically, it was the moment when the song *Mala djevojčica* (*Little Girl*), better known as *Tata, kupi mi auto* (*Daddy, Buy Me a Car*) won the first prize at a festival of popular music in Opatija. The little girl's wishes mentioned in these lyrics – bicycle, scooter, doll with a pram, cakes, candy and oranges and window shopping – heralded the consumer revolution in the 1960s.¹²

Although we have chosen 1958 as the initial turning point of the Yugoslav society to the Western market, Predrag Marković argues that, as early as 1956, there was an increase in the purchasing of home appliances. He connects that with favourable loans and beneficial foreign policy arrangements with West Germany.¹³ According to a questionnaire about the desires of Yugoslavs from 1958, 37% of respondents declared that they had radio sets, 8% electric stoves, 5% vacuum cleaners, 3% refrigerators, 3% gramophones, 2% water heaters, 1% scooters, and 0.5% cars. The desires of Yugoslavs, judging by their priorities, maybe Yugoslav women primarily, were somewhat different. Namely, 23% of them wanted to have refrigerators, 21% electric stoves, 19% vacuum cleaners, 19% radio sets, 11% water heaters, 6% gramophones, 18% scooters, and 16% cars.¹⁴ The television set, as a status symbol, appears somewhat later. All mentioned appliances were made by the local industry, but mainly in cooperation with Western European and American manufacturers. Igor Duda brings information for Croatia in the period from 1962 to 1990, according to which the citizens of that republic owned as many refrigerators and freezers as the French and Italians, while the percentage of those who had colour TV sets at home was slightly lower than in Western countries.¹⁵ Francesca Rolandi provides information from 1954 from the customs in Rijeka, according to which that border crossing recorded, in the form of presents, a remittance of 654 radio sets, 254 sewing machines, 31 electric stoves, 38 washers, 41 refrigerators, 20 bicycles, and 4 cars.¹⁶ In the early 1970s, the market even offered dishwashers. The Rade

11 Igor Duda, *Pronađeno blagostanje: svakodnevni život i potrošačka kultura u Hrvatskoj 1970-ih i 1980-ih* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2010), 92.

12 Ildiko Erdei, *Čekajući Ikeu: od tačkica do ikeizacije* (Belgrade: Evoluta, 2018), 69.

13 Predrag Marković, *Beograd između Istoka i Zapada 1948–1965* (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1996), 315.

14 Ibid.

15 Igor Duda, op. cit., 150–151.

16 Frančeska Rolandi, *Dvadeset četiri hiljade poljubaca. Uticaj italijanske popularne kulture u Jugoslaviji (1955–1965)* (Belgrade: Geopoetika, 2022), 174.



An advertisement promoting clothes made of "the finest Australian wool". The ad is from 1957.

Končar factory produced them under a licence of the Italian manufacturer Zanussi, while Sloboda from Čačak used the German technology of the Bosch brand. Those products were very expensive and relatively inaccessible to average citizens. Yugoslavs had to set aside four average monthly salaries to buy a dishwasher.¹⁷ At the beginning of the 1980s, in the shops of Yugoslav cities, the first microwave ovens also appeared with a completely Western concept of advertising.

One of the most important moments in the history of the car industry in Yugoslavia was certainly the beginning of cooperation between the Italian factory FIAT (Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino) and Crvena Zastava, the car factory in Kragujevac, on 12th August 1954.¹⁸ That agreement defined the concession of the FIAT car licence to the

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 174; Igor Duda, op. cit., 165.

¹⁸ The agreement between FIAT and Crvena Zastava had been made before the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and FPRY on October 5, 1954, which officially ended the Trieste crisis. Ranka Gašić, "Jugoslovenski Detroit". *Automobilska industrija u Kragujevcu 1953–1991*. (Belgrade: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2017), 27.



Ad for the famous “fića” – FIAT “600” (Seicento). The ad is from 1957.

Yugoslav factory. It should be stressed that the Italian factory itself technologically leaned on the American car industry. This trade agreement was symbolically valuable because it was the first between a capitalist company and a socialist country.¹⁹ The first model produced in the Kragujevac factory was FIAT “600” (Seicento), later colloquially known in Yugoslavia as *fića*. The *fića* was marketed in 1956 and, as early as 1957, the state started to give loans for purchasing this car.²⁰ Marković concludes that 1958 was the turning point when small, practical Italian and German models replaced the previously dominant American cars on Yugoslav roads. Owning a car was no longer exclusively a privilege of the highest party leadership, and it became increasingly accessible to civilians, albeit still to its wealthier parts.²¹ Crvena Zastava continued to manufacture FIAT models, including Zastava 101 and Zastava 1300.

19 Frančeska Rolandi, op. cit., 170.

20 Predrag Marković, op. cit., 305.

21 Ibid, 306; In 1954, there were only 11,290 private cars in Yugoslavia, which in fact meant that there was one car per 15,000 inhabitants. The interest of FIAT was obvious; Ranka Gašić, op. cit., 28.

Besides the car factory in Kragujevac, in the 1970s, new factories were established in Yugoslavia, also with foreign partners from the West. In 1969, in Sarajevo, TAS (Tovrnica automobila Sarajevo) began to operate, and its partners were the German car companies Volkswagen and Audi; Litostroj in Ljubljana worked with the French Renault, while Industrija motornih vozila in Novo Mesto cooperated first with BLCM (British Leyland Motor Corporation) and later became the main partner of Renault.²² Regardless of the diversity of the car brands on offer, about 70% of the car market was occupied by Crvena Zastava with its Italian models.

From the mid-1950s, Yugoslavs gradually²³ began the phase of microprocesses of cultural transfers.²⁴ Besides home appliances and cars, a multitude of various products imported from Western Europe and the USA became parts of everyday life. Nestle, Milka, Tommy, Eurocrem chocolate spread, Plazma biscuits, Tuborg beer, Marlboro cigarettes, Converse and Nike sneakers, Nivea and Labello cosmetic products, Old Spice, Pino Silvestre perfumes, Levi's and Lee Cooper blue jeans were some of the Western brands available in Yugoslavia.²⁵ From 1967/1968, besides the imported versions, Yugoslavs could enjoy locally produced Pepsi and Coca-Cola, both of which started to be manufactured in those years under American licenses in factories in Belgrade and Zagreb.²⁶ These products were available to the citizens of Yugoslavia in the first supermarkets, which started opening in 1956. The first one was in the Croatian town of Ivanec, and it opened only six years after the first European department store in the UK, then in Zagreb next year and in Belgrade in 1958.²⁷ Supermarkets were absolutely designed according to the American model. Goods of foreign origin could also be purchased in commission shops in cities. American influence was also present in introducing modern ways of merchandise payment. Yugoslavs

22 Igor Duda, op. cit., 213.

23 At the beginning of 1956, reflecting state decisions on raising the population's standard of living, the import of consumer goods almost tripled. There was import of textiles, agricultural tools, sewing machines and tropical fruit. Predrag Marković, op. cit., 313.

24 "Minor processes of Europeanization emerge in conjunction with a large number of cultural transfers, which hone a number of cultural assets through transfer, enabling them to fit into a number of different contexts. Many objects, concepts, recipes, drinks, pieces of furniture etc. constituting everyday European life are the results of such processes." Wolfgang Schmale, op. cit., 2.

25 Igor Duda, op. cit., 105; Frančeska Rolandi, op. cit., 175–176.

26 Ibid, 106.

27 Ana Panić (ed.), *They Never Had it Better? Modernization in Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Belgrade: Museum of Yugoslav History, 2014), 61–62.

could even shop using credit cards, Diners Club from 1968 and American Express from 1972.²⁸ We presume that this means of shopping wasn't widespread among citizens, but the information given by Igor Duda shows a significant increase in the purchasing power of Yugoslavs: "... the average purchasing power at the end of the 1960s was approximately doubled compared to the pre-war period, and by 1978, it was additionally fixed at the highest level in the history of Yugoslavia."²⁹ As the standard of living was rising, Yugoslavs were becoming less staunch proletarians and more and more members of the Western consumer society, in many ways distinctive, living on the border connecting and separating the polarised Cold War world. Branislav Dimitrijević highlights a certain paradox in which Yugoslav society and state found themselves at the end of the 1980s: "Socialist production couldn't support capitalist consumption, while capitalist consumption less and less took an interest in the results of socialistic production."³⁰

Side by side with the rise of consumer society, Yugoslav cultural policies gradually took shape and developed, this time almost completely devoid of Soviet influence, and the until then omnipresent term *socialist realism* gradually began to disappear. One of the indicators of that strategic turn is reflected in the books by foreign authors selected for translation into Serbo-Croatian. In the first post-war years, in Yugoslav periodicals, columns we regularly published about "all the abhorrent features of Western culture... The anti-enemy among Western writers was naturally Sartre."³¹ From the autumn of 1949, after the Third Plenum of CC of CPY, there was an obvious turn in the Yugoslav press, and the critical attitude towards Western literature was less and less present, especially towards modernist writers of the interwar period. The Zagreb publishing house *Žora* had the bravest publishing plan. At the beginning of the 1950s, it published *The Stranger* by Albert Camus and then Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea. For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway was printed in Novi Sad. The novel *The Old Man and the Sea* came out in Zagreb the same year when the original was published. In 1954, Kafka's collected works were printed; the modernist Virginia Woolf was the most widely published among English authors.³²

28 Ibid, 62.

29 Igor Duda, "Svakodnevni život u obije jugoslavenske države, Hvatanje koraka sa Evropom", in Sonja Biserko (ed.), *Jugoslavija u istorijskoj perspektivi* (Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, 2017), 380.

30 Branislav Dimitrijević, *Potrošeni socijalizam, Kultura konzumerizma i društvena imaginacija u Jugoslaviji (1950–1974)* (Belgrade: Fabrika knjiga, 2016), 148.

31 Predrag Marković, op. cit., 393.

32 Ibid, 386–388.

Western Impact on Yugoslav Art

At the same time, there were also dynamic events on the art scene. Modernist contents from Western Europe and the USA become components of Yugoslav artistic practice. Marković posits that one of the crucial events, at the beginning of that modernising process, was an exhibition of new French art held in Belgrade in the spring of 1950. At that exhibition, Yugoslavs could see, for the first time after the war, works by Chagall, Derain, Matisse, Toulouse-Lautrec, Picasso and others.³³ Throughout the 1950s, visiting exhibitions from the West were plentiful. In 1952, an exhibition of contemporary French painting was staged in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Skopje. Then, in 1953, the exhibition of Henry Moore, the British sculptor, in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana represented a first-class event that marked the whole year. In 1956, an exhibition of modern art of the USA visited Belgrade.³⁴ The same year, an exhibition of Italian art was organized in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana, and in 1963, an exhibition of Italian industrial design was held in Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Sarajevo.³⁵ In the early 1960s, Yugoslav culture and art started to be presented in Western Europe and America. Thus, in 1961, Ivo Andrić won the Nobel Prize for Literature, and in 1962, Dušan Vukotić's *Surogat* ("Ersatz") won an Oscar for Best Animated Short Film. In the first half of the 1960s, a great exhibition of Yugoslav art was presented in London, and then in Paris, Rome, Stockholm, and Athens.³⁶ Yugoslav artists also showcased their works in the USA at an exhibition named *Yugoslavia; modern tendencies*, first staged in Washington D.C. and afterwards at galleries in five American states.³⁷ As Vučetić notes in her monograph about the Americanisation of popular Yugoslav culture, the *Washington Post* wrote that "artists in Yugoslavia enjoy an atmosphere of freedom and experimentation, quite atypical for countries behind the Iron Curtain."³⁸ She also highlights several artistic events she sees as crucial in the process of the Americanisation of Yugoslav art and culture, explaining that this cultural policy of the USA was part of a much wider Cold War programme of staging international exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The aim of this programme was the promotion of American art abroad.³⁹

33 Ibid, 421.

34 Ana Panić, op. cit., 70.

35 Frančeska Rolandi, op cit., 57–58.

36 Predrag Marković, op. cit., 427.

37 Radina Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam. Amerikanizacija jugoslovenske popularne kulture šezdesetih godina XX veka* (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2012), 248.

38 Ibid.

39 Vučetić lists these exhibitions: Contemporary Art of the USA (1956), Contemporary American Art (1961), American Abstract Watercolour (1964), The Exhi-

The 1960s also saw the establishment of new cultural-artistic institutions. One of the most important was certainly the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. The Museum officially opened in 1965, and American influence was directly present from the very beginning. The credit for that belongs to the manager-founder of the Museum of Contemporary Art, the painter and art critic Miodrag B. Popović. In the early 1960s, he spent a year in America, where he became acquainted with the work of various museums throughout the USA.⁴⁰ Vučetić states that: “Besides the contemporary art that made up the permanent collection of MCA, another fact is of crucial significance for studying the phenomenon of Americanisation: the permanent collection of this museum was modelled after the Museum of Modern Art in New York, designed by the famous art historian Alfred Barr.”⁴¹

One year after the opening of MCA, the reconstructed National Museum in Belgrade also opened. The same year, 1966, this museum hosted an exhibition of the famous Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh. The exhibition elicited incredibly high interest among the general public.⁴² Visiting that cultural event was a matter of prestige. People waited for hours in a queue in front of the National Museum to see the exhibition, and it attracted in two months more than 30,000 visitors in Belgrade.⁴³

In the 1960s, the Yugoslav theatre scene experienced a transformation under the influence of primarily American playwrights and the American avant-garde and experimental theatre. The BITEF theatre festival and the local production of the rock musical *Hair* were the most important signs of the new avant-garde turn in Yugoslav theatre.⁴⁴ Founded in 1967, BITEF became one of the most important symbols of Yugoslav culture. The first art director of the festival, Jovan Ćirilov, described its pioneering beginnings as new tendencies “full of screaming, anger and rebellion, expressed in slogans, gesture, swear words, and nudity.”⁴⁵ The beginnings

bition of American Graphic Art (1965), American Pop-art (1966), Contemporary American and English Graphics (1968), The Exhibition of American Posters (1968), New Direction: Figure 1963–1968; Ibid, 240–241.

40 Miodrag B. Protić, *Nojeva barka, Pogled s kraja veka, Vol. 1 (1965–1995)* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1996), 520–525.

41 Radina Vučetić, op. cit., 234.

42 This information is very interesting, and it is a good indicator of the substantial changes in creating the Yugoslav cultural policy. Predrag Marković mentions that in the immediate post-war period “...among the classics of Western art, Van Gogh was the most loathed.” Predrag Marković, op. cit., 419.

43 Ana Panić (ed.), op. cit., 71.

44 Radina Vučetić, op. cit., 260.

45 Jovan Ćirilov, “Muke s avangardom”, *Scena: časopis za pozorišnu umetnost*, No. 1 (2002), 24.

of BITEF are inextricably associated with the Yugoslav premiere of the pacifist musical *Hair*. The Belgrade premiere of *Hair*, at Atelje 212, was held only one year after the New York, Paris, London and Munich premieres.⁴⁶ Branislav Dimitrijević interprets the 1969 premiere of *Hair* as an event that signalled the pacification of the students' rebellion because it was held on the first anniversary of the students' protests in 1968. "The performance of the play, instead of the forbidden celebration of the anniversary of the June protests of 1968, which would have sparked a debate on political freedoms, was another confirmation of the initiated process of the *culturalisation of politics*."⁴⁷ The essence of the avant-garde and the countercultural values it symbolises were condemned by the socialist state. Vučetić claims, not disputing the premise about the pacification of the student rebellion, that the visit of the Atelje 212 ensemble to New York in the summer of 1968 played an important part in the decision to stage *Hair* in Belgrade. On that occasion, Mira Trailović and Jovan Ćirilov saw *Hair* on Broadway and decided they wanted to bring this musical to the Yugoslav audience.⁴⁸ The Belgrade premiere was on 19th May 1969, and the press reported that "the space in front of Atelje 212 looked like a scene out of New York and Hollywood films."⁴⁹ Very soon after the premiere, as early as 20th June 1969, the co-authors of *Hair*, James Rado and Gerome Ragni, saw the musical in the Belgrade theatre, and the American press reported that "the authors of *Hair*, singled out the Belgrade version of *Hair* as their favourite and the most spontaneous among the international productions of the musical."⁵⁰

All of the above-mentioned examples of Western cultural influences in the sphere of art and culture belong to elite art and reached relatively few Yugoslav citizens. After 1948, mass or popular culture was also, to a significant degree, defined by Western formats, contents and values. The conflict with the Cominform countries had opened space for importing films from the West. A symbolically important moment was Tito's speech delivered on 10th September 1949 at the Third Congress of the People's Front, when he concluded that no Yugoslav film had ever been shown in the Soviet Union – neither a feature film nor a documentary. In practical terms, the turn came as early as 1950, when no Soviet film was bought.⁵¹ American films appeared in the repertoire, but the early 1950s were marked by Italian neorealist films, such as *Rome, Open City* (Roma città ap-

46 Radina Vučetić, op. cit., 267.

47 Branislav Dimitrijević, op. cit., 70.

48 Radina Vučetić, op. cit., 269.

49 Ibid, 270.

50 Ibid, 274.

51 Predrag Marković, op. cit., 442–443.

erta) and *Bicycle Thieves* (Ladri di biciclette).⁵² Italian cinema also indirectly influenced the development of Yugoslav cinematography because young Yugoslav directors received scholarships to study at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome. One of the first scholarship holders was Veljko Bulajić.⁵³ American film gradually gained primacy in the mid-1950s. The key moment happened in 1952, when an IMG (Information Media Guarantee) was signed between FPRY and USA. This agreement meant that American books, records, and films could be bought in dinars, at very low prices. This contract increased the number of American films in 1956 to 107 from just 26 in 1951.⁵⁴ The Belgrade premiere of the *Bathing Beauty* at the “Dvadeseti oktobar” cinema in 1951 symbolically marked the beginning of American film domination in Yugoslavia. According to Predrag Marković’s research, 332,000 Belgrade citizens saw this film. “Then, in 1951, Belgrade had 426,000 inhabitants, so it seems that 79% Belgraders saw the film, and if we take away children under 7 years of age, the percentage increases to as much as 86–87%. That figure shows that the film had to have a significantly wider audience than high school youth, even taking into account that some adolescents saw the film several times.”⁵⁵

Western popular culture, embodied in popular music, represents one of the most significant factors in the Europeanisation of socialist Yugoslavia. Agitprop⁵⁶ notably contributed to this phenomenon in June 1949 when it concluded that it shouldn’t insist on the popularisation of mass and Soviet music: “It shouldn’t be forbidden, but not promoted either.”⁵⁷ Italian popular music symbolises the beginnings of cultural cooperation and influences on Yugoslav popular culture. Interestingly, Francesca Rolandi speculates that travelling funfairs, or carnivals, were the first to introduce Italian music to Yugoslavs.⁵⁸ But what immediately makes us think of Italian popular music is the Sanremo Music Festival, which provided the model for popular music festivals throughout

52 Frančeska Rolandi, op. cit., 129.

53 Ibid, 130.

54 Predrag Marković, op. cit., 144–145; Radina Vučetić, op. cit., 89.

55 Predrag Marković, op. cit., 450.

56 Agitprop was a party body in charge of creating and monitoring cultural, artistic, educational, scientific, and media policies. It was established immediately after the end of the war and designed completely according to the Soviet model. After 1948, the function of Agitprop was taken over by the Commission for Ideological-Political Work, an organ of CC of LCY. For more details about Agitprop see: Ljubodrag Dimić, *Agitprop kultura. Agitpropovska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji: 1945–1952* (Belgrade: Rad 1988).

57 Predrag Marković, op. cit., 466.

58 Frančeska Rolandi, op. cit., 107.

Yugoslavia. One of the most famous among these local versions was the Opatija Festival, established in 1958 and designed as a federal-level event. Later, republic-level festivals followed: Adriatic Melodies in Split (1961), Belgrade Spring (1962), Slovenian Songs, a festival of Slovenian popular music and others.⁵⁹ Yugoslavs cheered for their representatives at the Eurovision Song Contest from 1961. Yugoslavia was the first and only socialist country that took part in this contest until the country's disintegration in 1991.⁶⁰

Except for popular music, in the 1950s, jazz gradually returned to the Yugoslav scene. As a testament to the popularity of jazz music in Yugoslavia, an annual report of the American embassy stressed in the mid-1950s: “Probably the most obvious sign of Western influence in Yugoslav radio is the surprisingly huge space dedicated to American jazz music.”⁶¹ The greatest jazz musicians in the world performed in Yugoslavia: Dizzy Gillespie in 1956, the Glenn Miller Orchestra toured Yugoslavia in 1957, Louis Armstrong in 1959 and Ella Fitzgerald in 1965. Yugoslav jazz is an illustrative example that reveals how the concept of cultural transmitters works.⁶² Keeping jazz culture contributed to the establishment of many Yugoslav jazz orchestras, which in the second half of the 1950s went on a tour of East European countries. The first tour of the Belgrade jazz orchestra in the Soviet Union in 1961 was very successful. “Thousands of people came to hear jazz, until then banned, even if it was mediated by Yugoslavs.”⁶³ In that way, Yugoslav jazz musicians, as cultural mediators, represented American culture in countries east of “the iron curtain”,

59 Anita Buhin, *Yugoslav Socialism: “Flavoured with Sea, Flavoured with Salt”* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2022), 60–62.

60 Miloš Tirnanić, *Pesma Evrovizije kao politički poligon*, MA Thesis, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, September 2021, p. 34.

61 Predrag Marković, op. cit., 471.

62 The Cultural Transfer Approach represents an “agent-centered approach” of cultural relations and circulations which takes into account different types of actors considered and conceptualized as cultural ‘brokers and mediators’, sometimes also defined as ‘passeurs culturels’, as ‘intermédiaires culturels’ or as cultural transmitters. Actors can represent individual persons acting as intercultural mediators (like translators, teachers of foreign languages and cultures, tourist guides), but also forms of media (like correspondents or reporters working for media in other countries) and cultural institutions being part of the cultural diplomacy system...” Steen Bille Jørgensen, Hans Jürgen Lüsebrink “Introduction: Reforming the Cultural Transfer Approach”, in Steen Bille Jørgensen, Hans Jürgen Lüsebrink (eds.), *Cultural Transfer Reconsidered: Transnational Perspectives, Transnational Processes, Scandinavian and Postcolonial Challenges* (Leiden, Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2021), 3–4.

63 Predrag Marković, op. cit., 472.

creating a peculiar transnational artistic process embodied in the Yugoslav “third way” in a bipolar world.

While jazz gradually ceased to be the music of rebellion and revolt and became part of elite culture, rock and roll, as a new popular music genre, arrived from the USA and Great Britain and gradually became the dominant phenomenon of popular (counter-)culture. The first news about rock and roll appeared in the Yugoslav press in 1956, when *MLN* and *Borba*, the party newsletter, published critical texts, describing “the unusual effect that Elvis Presley’s music has on listeners.”⁶⁴ In the early 1960s, rock and roll was more and more present in the Yugoslav public. Thus, in 1960, the Jugoton record label released single records with Elvis Presley’s hits. The second half of the 1960s was marked by British rock, with the global popularity of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. In 1961, the Beatles’ single “Love Me Do” was played on Yugoslav radio only one month after its London premiere.⁶⁵ Vučetić reports that, by 1965, there were 88 registered rock bands just in Belgrade.⁶⁶ A very important moment in the history of Yugoslav rock was the first Gitarijada music festival, held in Belgrade in 1966.⁶⁷ The reports on this event in the Yugoslav press were far from flattering. *Politika* published a very critical article in which the West and Western influences were disparagingly described by the author as “The big wide world”.⁶⁸ As a direct consequence of the popularity of rock music, the first disco clubs began to open in Yugoslav towns. In Belgrade, those were Euridika in 1961 and the Dancing Hall of Dom omladine, the local youth centre; in Zagreb, rock and roll dances were organised at the Šalata stadium; in Sarajevo, in the Skenderija sport centre, in Ljubljana, in Študentski dom and in Tivoli hall.⁶⁹ For those who couldn’t access disco clubs or wanted to enjoy rock music at home, records were distributed in Yugoslavia.⁷⁰ Vinyl records were usually borrowed from the American Library, which was the hub and symbol of the American cultural policy in Yugoslavia. Specialised music magazines, of which *Džuboks* [*Jukebox*] (1966–1969) was the first magazine in the com-

64 Ibid, 472–473.

65 Radina Vučetić, “Rokenrol na zapadu istoka – slučaj Džuboks”, *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju*, No. 1–3 (2006), 73.

66 The most popular were Siluete, Elipse, Crni biseri, Zlatni dečaci, Panteri...; Ibid, 74.

67 Predrag Marković, op. cit., 475.

68 Radina Vučetić, *Koka-Kola socijalizam...*, 210.

69 Ibid, 199.

70 Having noticed the extent of the influence of American rock music in Yugoslavia, the USA decided that the IMG programme would include discographical material as well as films. So, only in that first year, via the American Library in Belgrade, vinyl records in the value of 40,000 dollars were imported. Ibid, 200.

munist world dedicated exclusively to rock and roll, heavily contributed to the popularisation of this music genre. Vučetić reports that the entire print run of the first issue of *Džuboks*, 100,000 copies in total, was sold in approximately twenty days.⁷¹ Music magazines allowed Western popular culture to conquer a part of private lives of young Yugoslavs: “Their idols were no longer only heroes from the national-liberation war, but also stars such as Mick Jagger.”⁷² However, their texts, precisely in *Džuboks*, rarely included any subversive content, and even the students protests of 1968 were glossed over.⁷³ Similarly, the lyrics of Yugoslav rock bands didn’t invite social criticism or call for revolutionary changes, unlike their Western models, whose social undertones made rock and roll counterculture. Božilović argues that Yugoslav rock was a subculture in its relationship to the dominant cultural concepts, but that, in its essence, it wasn’t counterculture.⁷⁴ Marković posits that Yugoslav popular music, like jazz, played the role of cultural transmitter towards the countries of the Eastern Bloc.⁷⁵ However, in the 1970s and 1980s, the Yugoslav youth had an opportunity to see some of the greatest rock stars, like Deep Purple, the Rolling Stones and Tina Turner, perform live.⁷⁶

Westernisation of Yugoslav Fashion

After the official break with the Soviet cultural model⁷⁷, in 1952, the cover page of the fashion magazine *Ukus* (Taste) featured a picture of a female model wearing an evening dress, hat and white gloves. The *Žena danas* (*Woman Today*) magazine published the crocheting pattern for a Chanel suit.⁷⁸ The ideal of beauty typical of socialist realism was quickly abandoned. Interviews with women from the Soviet Union were replaced by interviews with public figures such as the British model Jean Donnay.⁷⁹ In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, high-quality, modern

71 Ibid., 206.

72 Radia Vučetić, “Rokenrol na zapadu istoka – slučaj Džuboks” ..., 87.

73 Nikola Božilović, “Sociologija jugoslovenskog rokenrola šezdesetih: subverzija, moralna panika, cenzura”, *Žbornik radova Akademije umetnosti*, No. 8 (2020), 209.

74 Ibid., 208.

75 Predrag Marković, op. cit., 476.

76 Branko Rosić, “Painter from Piccadilly: Britis-Serbian Pop Culture/Rock Music Encounters”, *Belgrade English language and literature studies: BELLS90: proceedings*, Vol. 2 (2020), 399.

77 For more on the Soviet influence on Yugoslav fashion see Danijela Velimirović, “Novi izgled za ‘novu ženu’: uobličavanje ‘proleterskog ukusa’ (1945–1951)”, *Etnoantropološki problemi*, Vol. 7, No. 4, (2012), 935–955.

78 Ana Panić (ed.), op. cit., 64.

79 Branislav Dimitrijević, op. cit., 85.



*“Nina Ricci for Claudia Cardinale”, Politika Bazar, No. 6,
01.03.1965. Courtesy of Politika Bazar.*

clothes appeared in Yugoslavia. The clothing retailer Beko purchased a licence to manufacture clothes by the British Lee Cooper corporation, while Varteks got the license from the world's most famous manufacturer of jeans, the American company Levi Strauss. Besides jeans, the people in Yugoslavia grew increasingly fond of English coats.⁸⁰ Yugoslav haute couture (high fashion) designers, such as Aleksandar Joksimović and Mirjana Marić, were heavily influenced by Western luxury fashion houses: Chanel, Dior, Pierre Cardin, and Balenciaga. The first International Fashion Fair was organized in 1958 at the Belgrade Fair and by 1959 Dior, Lanvin and Balenciaga were already participating in it. The fashion historian Stefan Žarić concluded: “More importantly, this demonstrates that Serbian fashion of the late 1940s and through the 1950s followed the inception of Christian Dior's New look in 1947, as, according to Milford-Cottam, Dior became the designer linked with the curvaceous silhouette that swept away the boxy shoulders and skimpy shirts of the war years worldwide. Tailored skirt suits, coats, blouse and skirt ensembles, full skirts in lightweight cotton, straight-cut cardigan suits simultaneously intro-

80 Ana Panić (ed.), op. cit., 65.

duced by Chanel, Dior and Balenciaga, leather handbags, neat gloves, modest hats and cocktail dresses as emblematic fashion iconography of the decade based on Milford-Cottam's observations were present in Yugoslav fashion as well.”⁸¹ But the only Serbian designer who actively took part in the Western fashion world and directly shaped haute couture in the 1960s and 1970s, as a kind of cultural transmitter, was Bernat Klein (1922–2014)⁸². He created textiles that popped and introduced something new by reinventing traditional tweed. With designers like Coco Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent, Nina Ricci, Guy Laroche, and Pierre Cardin and the fashion houses Dior and Balenciaga using his fabrics in their couture collections, Klein was directly involved in creating a fashion trend that ruled the second half of the 20th-century, also finding its way to Serbia: the tweed suit.⁸³

Concluding Remarks

Western influences in socialist Yugoslavia were present from the beginning of the 1950s. In time, they became more complex and permeated almost all segments of society. Although the Soviet influence never vanished, Yugoslavia was nonetheless heavily enveloped in the global process of Americanisation; influences from neighbouring Italy, especially in the modernisation of everyday life and the domain of popular culture, were inseparable parts of Yugoslav post-war society. Yugoslavs listened to rock music, wore jeans, drank Coca-Cola, drove cars made under licenses from Western countries, visited exhibitions of great artists of Western culture, and watched Hollywood films and Broadway plays... Some of these experiences were transferred to the countries of the Eastern Bloc and, as cultural transmitters, they confirmed the concept of the Yugoslav “third way” and “different socialism”.

As we can conclude, Western influences on Yugoslav socialist society were dynamic, multidimensional and ubiquitous. But I would like to end this paper with a symbolic quotation from Branko Rosić's paper *Painter from Piccadilly*: “Vivien Goldman, whom we knew from the pictures with Johnny Rotten, came to Belgrade with the idea of writing about the punk and New Wave scene in Yugoslavia. They took a photo of me beside the Lenin statue at the Student's Cultural Centre. I was confused, and only

81 Stefan Žarić, “The Problem of the Historization of 20th Century Serbian Fashion 1920–1980”, *Istorija 20. veka*, No. 1 (2022), 9.

82 Born to an Orthodox Jewish family called Klein, he left the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1940 for Israel and in 1945 moved to the UK, where he remained until his death in 2014.

83 Stefan Žarić, op. cit., 12–13.

later did I release that it was interesting for journalists to target one punk rocker next to the leader of the October Revolution”.⁸⁴

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⁸⁴ Branko Rosić, op. cit., 401.

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