

# Summary

Socialist Yugoslavia was a Stalinist totalitarian state, which was incorporated within the political and security system of the western countries in the beginning of 1950-ies. This fact helped Yugoslavia to create an image about its polity as „socialism with a human face“, an „alternative“ to the Soviet system. Thus, in the context of conflict between the two military and political blocs during the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Yugoslavia had a role of a wedge, which broke into the ideological and political monolith of the Warsaw pact. Yugoslav international policy in the beginning of 1950-ies led to the phenomenon of „dualism“ in its culture, with interlaced influences of both East and the West.

According to Stalinist apprehension, culture in Yugoslavia was considered „weapon“ in the struggle between two irreconcilable worlds, while the “front” was created between representatives of the “old regime” and adherents of “new relations”. During the first post-war decade, Soviet cultural influence in Yugoslavia was most intensively shown through the Society for cultural relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR. This society had its representatives in every city and town, it developed high circulation publishing, distributed Soviet literature, organized lectures and celebrations as well as the Russian language school. From the Soviet side, the cooperation was established by Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (VOKS), which was at the same time engaged in political, diplomatic and intelligence activities.

Another channel through which Yugoslavia was influenced by the Soviet Union, were both the party and the state institutions of the two states. It was primarily Agitprop (Agitation and propaganda section) of the Central Committee of Communist Party of Yugoslavia, whose function was later conveyed to the Commission for ideology and propaganda in Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Some of its activities were transferred in 1953 to the Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, which was established by the Yugoslav government.

The mechanism of subjugation by organized and systematic indoctrination through the sphere of culture and education, was becoming less obvious and more acceptable by the people. Popular culture had the most important role, so the communists invested the most in film and other visual forms of communication, in public events and manifestations, somewhat less in written word and music, and the least in the arts with smaller audience, which required knowledge, cultural habits and high intellectual involvement of the viewer, such as theatre, opera or ballet.

Social and political mechanism of supervision of culture was simple and efficient. At first, ideologists and leaders announced expectations of the

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party and the limits of the allowed content. Later, critics and editors held culture in that proscribed frame. Possible exceptions from the allowed content were dealt by both official and unofficial censorship, ideological commissions, art councils, controlled „public opinion“ and, if the prior was not sufficient – the law enforcement. True danger for the order was not hidden within different esthetical forms, but within possible alternative ideological contents, hidden behind those forms.

Tailoring culture to suit the needs of the party was done by methods previously developed in the USSR, with its supreme form – so-called Zdanovism, or Stalinism in culture. The concept of “ideological” or “party” art was enforced through the institutions and organizations which were supposed to provide conditions for activities in culture. However, their real aim was selection, modelling and control of the creative intelligentsia. Both in Yugoslavia and the USSR, one could be engaged in arts only through institutions and associations, which were under party state control. Each cultural product had to meet at least minimum of ideological and political requirements and to represent in some important aspect the “official art” – i. e. “totalitarian art”. Otherwise, one would be censored and removed from the public.

From the beginning of 1950-ies, Zdanovism in Yugoslavia was not openly favoured, yet all aspects of social life, including culture, were still under party control. The same mechanism remained in use, but in more flexible and hidden manner. In this respect, Yugoslavia was neither different from the USSR, nor there was a crucial difference in the relations of Communist party of Yugoslavia / League of Communist of Yugoslavia (KPJ/SKJ) to the culture, before or after the break with Soviets in 1948. Tito and the older party cadre were main agents of Stalinists views on culture and the most persistent keepers of the party’s monopoly on thought.

Superiority of the centralistic concept of culture management prevailed during only a few years of socialist Yugoslavia, and faded away during the 1950-ies. The final result was establishment of political and cultural centres in all republics and autonomus provinces, which were building separate identities within common state, thus gradually crumbling its unity. Along with disappearance of the Cold War context in Europe, the pressure from abroad to keep Yugoslavia also disappeared. Yugoslavia was unseamed along the seams of national, political and cultural differences.

Relations towards culture, cherished by KPJ/SKJ, left long-term consequences in the society. Different restrictions and ideological selection of themes and forms of expression, consistent imposition of ideologically affirmed actions, favouring narrow circle of reliable authors, as well as permanent threat to various sanctions, had led to a slowdown in many fields of art. In socialist Yugoslavia, artist was often deprived of information about processes in the field of art abroad. Even when some of these information were available, they were previously selected and distorted by ideological filters. The result of such a development was a society without clear criteria,

liable to various influences, disoriented, frustrated and inconsistent.

In those rare cases, when an individual managed to overcome all these obstacles, he would begin with difficult and uncertain adjustment process of its own expression to the new trends in the international arena and the fight against provincialism, rigidity, indifference and misunderstanding of the environment. In such circumstances, attempts to catch up with the developed world, often ended up as helpless and clumsy imitations, being more significant as a document of the time in which they were made, then as a genuine artistic contribution.

Final result of „cultural experiment“ in socialist Yugoslavia was a defeat of the concept of the “official art“ and failure to establish authentic domestic alternative to foreign influence on the culture. Events and processes which marked the first post-war decade decisively conditioned further development of culture in Yugoslavia and remained more or less embedded in cultural patterns of the nations on its former territory. These nations, traumatised by the 20<sup>th</sup> century history, mutilated by forcible means of changing consciousness and „acceleration“ of social, economic and cultural development, burdened by the past and frightened by the future, continue to search for, each in its own way, the paths that other, not very different nations, had already crossed by far smaller sacrifice.

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