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Culture and Entertainment under the Collaborationist Regime in Serbia in WWII

Abstract: *Based on numerous contemporary newspaper articles and relevant historiographical literature, the article analyzes the cultural and entertainment policy of the Serbian collaborationist authorities during the German occupation in WWII.*

Key Words: Serbia, culture, collaboration, entertainment, film

In modern world, the lines dividing culture, ideology and politics are rather blur. Equally blur is the line separating culture from entertainment, especially if culture is understood in a narrower sense of high-culture and entertainment as popular or mass culture.¹ In a totalitarian society culture and entertainment have some functions they do not have in a democratic societies, and Serbian society between April 1941 and October 1944 was a society under enemy occupation and at the same time, thanks to the ideological drift of the collaborationist government, a totalitarian society in the making.² The leading intellectuals of the regime were not only interested in running the society, but also in changing it. Thus, they had revamped the school system and curricula in order to re-educate the young in the spirit of extreme nationalism, anti-communism, anti-Semitism, modesty, obedience and sacrifice.³ Apart from the

¹ Cf. Janjetović, Zoran, *Od Internacionale do komercijale: Popularna kultura u Jugoslaviji 1945–1991*, Beograd, 2001, pp. 17–18.

² Stojanović, Aleksandar, *Ideje, politički projekti i praksa vlade Milana Nedića*, Beograd, 2015. (hereafter: Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*)

³ On education and the ideology it conveyed cf. Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, pp. 274–285; Borković, Milan, *Kontrarevolucija u Srbiji: Kvislinška uprava 1941–1944*, Vol 2, Beograd,

official means, such as schools, they wanted to influence broader masses through a number of unofficial, but nevertheless very influential channels. These channels were potentially even more influential, since they were not perceived as official, i.e. their consumers presupposed that the institutions and media creating and disseminating culture enjoyed certain autonomy. As we shall see, this was not the case – except partly in the field of theater.⁴

Together with politics and morality culture had been the field that came most under fire of right-wing intellectuals – even some decade and a half before the German invasion, and even years before the victory of National-Socialist “revolution”. Indeed, as much as politics, culture was the field that absorbed most (to be sure nefarious) foreign influences. Minister of education, Velibor Jonić, his right-hand man Vladimir Velmar Janković, and others fulminated already in late 1920s against decadent Western influences, copying of foreign models, militated for a completely original Yugoslav culture under strong Serbian influence.⁵

Yugoslav defeat at war in April 1941 and the speedy disintegration of the common state gave fresh wind into the sails of the right-wing intellectuals who tended to see only putrefaction all around them.⁶ For them the German occupation, although painful in itself, was at the same time the opportunity to reform the society and its culture.

1979, pp. 74–94; Škodrić, Ljubinka, “Prosvetni radnici u ideologiji vlade Milana Nedića 1941–1944”, *Istorijski zbornik*, 1, 2011; Idem, “Ideološka načela prosvetne politike vlade Milana Nedića”, in: *Srbi i rat u Jugoslaviji 1941. godine*, Beograd, 2014, p. 507; Idem, “Nedićev Dečji Grad” u Obilježju kod Kruševca”, *Župski zbornik*, 5, 2010; Škodrić, Ljubinka and Bondžić, Dragomir, “Stvaranje idealnog tipa srpskog mladića i srpske devojke”: prosvetna politika u kolaboracionističkoj štampi 1941–1944, in: Stojanović, Aleksandar (ed.), *Kolaboracionistička štampa u Srbiji 1941–1944*, Beograd, 2015 (hereafter: Škodrić, Lj., Bondžić, D., “Stvaranje idealnog tipa...”); Kerkez, Slobodan Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike u Nedićevoj Srbiji*, Niš, 2008 (hereafter: Kerkez, S. Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*); Nikolova, Maja, *Zavod za prinudno vaspitanje omladine u Smederevskoj Palanci 1942–1944*, Beograd, 2010.

⁴ Danilo Kilibarda assessed that German influence had been even stronger in culture than in education. Kilibarda, Danilo, *Prosvetno-kulturna politika u Srbiji za vreme Drugog svetskog rata* (PhD mscr., Beograd, 1984, p. 132; [hereafter: Kilibarda, D., *Prosvetno-kulturna...*]) Kerkez also thinks German influence was dominant in culture. (Kerkez, S. Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, pp. 5, 186.)

⁵ Velmar-Janković, Vladimir, “Duhovna kriza današnjice”, pp. 49–57; “Revizija osnovnih književno-istorijskih stavova”, pp. 73–78; “Država i umetnička politika”, pp. 80–85; “Između sadašnjosti i budućnosti – glose o ništavilu “izama”, pp. 89–97; “Književne revizije”, pp. 102, 105; “Između prošlosti i budućnosti: književnost, kultura i politika”, pp. 134–137 – all in: Velmar-Janković, Vladimir, *Ogledi o književnosti i nacionalnom duhu/Igrači na žici*, Beograd, 2006; Idem, *Pogled s Kalemegdana: Ogled o beogradskom čoveku*, Beograd, 1991, pp. 131, 133–139; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, p. 144; Milosavljević, Olivera, “Stare vrednosti za novo vreme. (Svetislav Stefanović nekad i sad)” (hereafter: Milosavljević, O., “Stare vrednosti...”), *Sociologija*, 4, 52, 2010, p. 413; Subotić, Dragan, *Organska misao Srba u XIX i XX veku: Sociološke i politikološke ideje Milosava Vasiljevića*, Vol. 2, Beograd, 1999, pp. 393–394. (hereafter: Subotić, D., *Organska misao...*)

⁶ “Da se ne zaboravlja”, *Obnova*, June 6, 1942.

Some authors, communist and not, have perceived Serbian culture under German occupation as a simple attempt at export of Nazi culture to Serbia.⁷ This view is untenable. It grossly downplays the role of Serbian collaborationist intellectuals in designing and running Serbian cultural transformation.⁸ It is true that there were parallels between German culture under the Nazis and Serbian culture under German occupation, as well as German influences, but a very strong home-grown element in the latter must not be overseen. The Germans gave some of the tacks for cultural policy, but by no means all. It can be said that their say was decisive in organizational matters while the content of cultural activities was mostly left to the Serbian authorities. Furthermore, the Serbian collaborationist ideologues already shared few values with the Nazis, so that it was not difficult for them to bring their activities into harmony with German wishes. It can safely be said: had there been no Serbian right-wing intellectuals who collaborated with the Germans, maybe there could have been an attempt at export of Nazi culture – provided the Nazis wanted to export *any* culture to a conquered land in the first place.⁹ As it was, the collaborationist intellectuals did not shield Serbian culture from Nazi influences, but rather transformed them and included them in their own version of reformed Serbian culture. In that way, maybe without being aware of it, they did exactly what their predecessors had done quite consciously and for what right-wing intellectuals had criticized them so vehemently: they transferred foreign influences into Serbian culture they wanted to keep so pure and so original.¹⁰

The urge to do so was stronger in those cultural forms that attracted most people at that time. The most massively enjoyed form of entertainment was popular music. Unlike films, it did not depend on expensive infrastructure. It was omnipresent – not just on the radio or in concert halls, but in coffee-houses in towns and villages, at weddings, private parties and on the street. Parallel with the actions aimed at removing

⁷ Kilibarda, D., *Prosvetno-kulturna...*, pp. 27–30.

⁸ Stojanović does not deny the importance of the role played by the Germans, but correctly thinks the prime creators of cultural policy were Serbian collaborationists. (Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, p. 198.)

⁹ Indeed, East European Slavic countries were certainly not earmarked for export of Nazi Kultur, or for development of any kind of culture whatsoever. (Cf. Fest, Joachim, *Hitler: Eine Biographie*, Frankfurt/M, Wien, Berlin, 1973, pp. 933–934.)

¹⁰ Most ideas of the Serbian collaborationist intellectuals were taken over from abroad: some from France and Czarist Russia, and some from Germany and Italy. (Cf. Subotić, Vol. 1-2; Milosavljević, O., “Stare vrednosti...”; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, pp. 198–226; Dragosavljević, Vasilije, “Ideološki uticaji evropskog fašizma na JNP Zbor [1934–1940]”, in: Janjetović, Zoran (ed.), *Istorijska tribina: Istraživanja mladih saradnika*, Beograd, 2013; Janjetović, Zoran, “Dimitrije Ljotić – ein antieuropäischer Europäer unter jugoslawischen Politikern“, in: Hepner, Harald (ed.), *Attraktionen und Irritationen: Europa und sein Südosten im langen 19. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt a. M., 2018.) It is a wonder Serbian right-wing intellectuals could believe they could invent something original and purely Serbian in a Europe that has become intellectually “globalized” ever since adoption of Christianity. All they did was adapting basic foreign ideas to Serbian circumstances.

the Gypsies from the streets and public life, the Ministry of Education launched the initiative to purge Serbian folk songs from Gypsy influences. As Vladimir Velmar-Janković put it: “During the past 20 years, the coffee-house and its Gypsies wreaked terrible devastation on our national music. Those songs, such as they were “fostered” in pubs, in a disfigured form infested also our homes and our youth, even cultural institutions, such as the radio – that is a sad proof how successful we had been in forgetting and abandoning our own selves.” The Musical Academy was given the task of “purging our folk songs from this “murky Gypsy-pub alluvium” and making them appropriate for being expressed by modern musical means, i.e. the task of adapting them with preservation of their original purity.¹¹ It was no wonder that at the same time Gypsies as such were also denigrated in the press as robbers and dirty nomads who stole children in order to mutilate them and use them for begging. An action was demanded against them,¹² and it soon followed in form of mass shootings of Gypsies, together with Jewish and Serbian hostages.¹³ Thus purge of the national heritage went hand in hand with ethnic cleansing, i.e. the Serbian collaborationists used Nazi animosity toward the Gypsies to save Serbian lives (by substituting Serbian hostages by Roma), to diminish (if not completely eliminate) a socially and ethnically undesirable group and “purge” segments of national culture from unwelcome foreign influence at the same time. While the initiative to purge the streets and ghettos rested with the German authorities, Serbian gendarmes were the main responsible for actual

¹¹ Ž.Č., “Ministarstvo prosvete pokreće pitanje izdavanje velikog rečnika srpskog jezika i standardizovanja naše narodne pesme”, *Obnova*, August 31, 1941. The Gypsies were accused of transferring new corrupt songs to villages and of ousting the good old ones. (Nikolić, Kosta, *Strah i nada u u Srbiji 1941–1944: Svakodnevni život pod okupacijom*, Beograd, 2002, p. 182 [hereafter: Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*])

¹² V.P., “Cigani na selu i u varoši”, *Obnova*, August 15, 1941; V.P. “Cigani pljačkaš” i, *Obnova*, September 22, 1941.

¹³ Pisari, Milovan, *Stradanje Roma u Srbiji za vreme holokausta*, Beograd, 2014, pp. 65–67, 85–95, 107 (hereafter: Pisari, M., *Stradanje Roma...*); Radanović, Milan, *Kazna i zločin: Snage kolaboracije u Srbiji i odgovornost za ratne zločine (1941–1944) i vojni gubici (1944–1945)*, Beograd, 2015, pp. 290, 297–298. However, extermination of the Gypsies was not a Nazi top priority which made possible for part of sedentary Gypsies to be set free from concentration camps in early 1942. (Pisari, M., *Stradanje Roma...*, pp. 67, 120; Acković, Dragoljub, *Romi u Beogradu*, Beograd, 2009, pp. 243–248.) The policy of the Serbian collaborationists toward the Gypsies was equally undecided as that of the Germans: the Ministry of the Interior appraised its subaltern organs of the order of the Commander in Serbia concerning exemption of sedentary Gypsies from measures aimed against the Jews and Gypsies (Božović, Branislav, *Beograd pod komesarском upravom 1941*, Beograd, 1998, p. 261. [hereafter: Božović, B., *Beograd pod komesarском...*]; Majdanac, Boro, *Pozorište u okupiranoj Srbiji: Pozorišna politika u Srbiji 1941–1944*, Beograd, 2011, p. 40 [hereafter: Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*], but the Serbian authorities, like the Germans, continued rounding them up and sending them to be shot as hostages. Božović, Branislav, *Stradanje Jevreja u okupiranom Beogradu 1941–1944*, Beograd, 2012, pp. 19–23. (hereafter: Božović, B., *Stradanje Jevreja...*)

rounding up of the Gypsies.¹⁴ Meanwhile the cultural establishment was engaged in purging the musical heritage.¹⁵

Thus from May 1942 a discussion started in the press about how Serbian folk (i.e. peasant) music had been neglected and distorted by town musicians. The need to further it was stressed by eminent musical experts, such as Prof. Josip Slaven-ski, Kosta Manojlović, Stevan Hristić and Svetomir Nastasijević.¹⁶ The Ministry of Education ordered every pub to have a band, but under supervision of special cultural inspectors.¹⁷ Dual goals of this measure were plain to see: on one hand, coffee-house music had to be controlled and purified, just as the names of pubs were changed from foreign or unusual to “national” ones. At the same time, an illusion of normal life had to be created – although there was a curfew that is incompatible with normal pub life in the Balkans. A public contest of coffee-house bands organized by the Belgrade Radio in August 1944 also had the aim of improving the quality of coffee-house music,¹⁸ and of creating an illusion of normalcy amid the situation that was growing increasingly abnormal – even by the wartime standards. In fact, the example of the lowest but most popular kind of popular music showed, how difficult it was for cultural policy-makers: they had to do the splits and reform the national culture by purging it of everything they deemed alien and degenerate, and at the same time to create an illusion of a normal life ordinary people missed so much.

However, pub music has never been perceived as pinnacle of culture anywhere. The possibility of influencing music in general were limited anyway, since it was the Germans who controlled the radio. Thus it was them who decided not only what was going to be played, but also for how long. The Germans were well aware of the importance of the radio, even in an underdeveloped country such as Serbia. Under the new name: Soldatensender Belgrad (Soldiers’ Radio Belgrade) the Belgrade radio station returned on air only five days after Yugoslavia’s capitulation. It was subordinated to the Propaganda Department for the South-East in Serbia under Major Dr Julius Lippert.¹⁹ In the beginning its main task was propaganda for German soldiers in the Balkans and in North Africa. As for the locals,

¹⁴ Pisari, M., *Stradanje Roma...*, pp. 100–101, 114, 145–148, 150.

¹⁵ Despite these efforts we hear about a “unstrung Gypsy trio” playing at Belgrade’s main concert hall, the Kolarac’s Popular University in 1943. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 167.)

¹⁶ Manojlović, Olga, “Kulturni život Beograda u vreme nemačke okupacije 1941–1944 u svetlu pisanja beogradske štampe”, *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju*, 1, 1, 1994, p. 88. (hereafter: Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”)

¹⁷ Kilibarda, D., *Prosvetno-kulturna...*, p. 139; Petranović, Branko, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939–1945*, Beograd, 1992, p. 500. (hereafter: Petranović, B., *Srbija u Drugom...*)

¹⁸ Mraović, Marijana T, *Propaganda vlade Milana Nedića (1941–1944)* (Ph.D. Mscr.), Beograd, 2015, pp. 353–354. (hereafter: Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*)

¹⁹ Petranović, B., *Srbija u Drugom...*, p. 500; Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 341; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 30; Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...” , p. 88.

the military commander in Serbia, General Förster prescribed already on May 27, 1941 which stations were allowed to be listened to. The list included all German radio-stations (including Belgrade and Zemun) and some from the countries allied with the Third Reich.²⁰ Serbian programs started in June 1941.²¹ On the Belgrade Radio the collaborationists got two hours a day for news and propaganda. At first these two hours were divided into several slots, but since May 25, 1942 they were lumped together into two hours of continuous program in Serbian.²² A year after the beginning of occupation the Belgrade Radio Station had six orchestras, serving both German and Serbian needs. Symphonic concerts were regularly aired. So were opera and choir singing. The choir had over hundred Serbian and somewhat smaller number of foreign songs on its repertoire. It sang songs by Serbian composers, such as Hristić, Nastasijević, Mokranjac, Binički, Bajić, Bošnjaković, Cvejić, Lestički and others.²³ In keeping with the newly set racial and cultural standards, “Gypsy” music was banished from the radio.²⁴ To be sure, German works and German guests were very often on program.²⁵ They had a double function of entertaining German soldiers in Serbia and in the region, and of bringing closer German culture, and particularly the most apolitical and the most international of arts, music, to Serbian listeners. In fact, one of the main propaganda tasks of the Belgrade Radio Station (as well as of the press) was to acquaint the listeners with connections of Serbian and German cultures. That was one of the salient features of the collaborationist cultural policy in general and of course it was encouraged by the Germans.²⁶ Radio

²⁰ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 343.

²¹ Božović, B., *Beograd pod komesarskom...*, p. 127; Kreso, Muharem, *Njemačka okupaciona uprava u Beogradu 1941–1944. (sa osvrtom na centralne okupacione komande i ustanove za Srbiju, Jugoslaviju i Balkan)*, Beograd, 1979, p. 133. (hereafter: Kreso, M., *Njemačka okupaciona uprava...*) ; Marković, Vasilije, *Teatri okupirane prestonice 1941–1944*, Beograd, 1998, p. 133. (hereafter: Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*) Marković writes Serbian program started already in late May 1941.

²² Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 88; Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 343.

²³ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 345–346. Members of the big and the chamber orchestras were made up mainly of musicians of the National Theater. (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 133–134; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 36.) According to Majdanac, the Belgrade Radio Station and the Serbian National Theater (SNT) signed a contract on December 25, 1941 under which the radio orchestra played in the SNT. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 47.)

²⁴ Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 134. So were the Gypsies who were lumped together with the Jew and subject to the same restrictive measures. (Pisari, M., *Stradanje Roma...*, p. 42; Božović, Božović, B., *Stradanje Jevreja...*, p. 20; Manošek, Valter, *Holokaust u Srbiji: Vojno okupaciona politika i uništavanje Jevreja 1941–1942*, Beograd, 2007, p. 47; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 28.)

²⁵ Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 214.

²⁶ The Third Reich intensified its soft propaganda in Serbia already before the war by founding the German Scientific Institute in Belgrade in February 1941. It was a branch of the Munich Academy of Sciences and was headed by famous Slavists, Gerhard Gesemann and Alois Schmaus. It had three

lessons of German language that were much publicized in the press served that purpose too.²⁷

However, the radio had an even more important role in reshaping Serbian national culture and in propaganda. In a totalitarian regime, the line dividing the two was pretty thin. To be sure, broadcasting of news and speeches by collaborationist officials was pure propaganda, but that was only part of the program in Serbian. Furthermore, for all we know its effectiveness was doubtful.²⁸ In late 1942 the station organized a show in which Serbian writers read their works and discussed them with prominent cultural workers. The idea was supported by Svetislav Stefanović, Milan Kašanin, Todor Manojlović and others.²⁹ From November 1942 a new show, “The Belgrade Radio presents” was launched with the wish to acquaint the auditorium with artists taking part in Serbian programs of the station. The proceeds went to the Serbian Red Cross. The radio broadcasted also shows from various Belgrade venues in which popular artists featured. Loudspeakers were installed down-town Belgrade so as to bring the radio also to the people who had no radio-sets at home or were on the street at the moment.³⁰ In late May 1943 changes were introduced into the Serbian program. Broadcasting of Serbian folk songs began as well as weekly political comments.³¹ For those in the know, these were subtle signs that the war was not going well for the Germans. Introduction of a film show on the radio in cooperation with Belgrade cinemas in late June 1943 and broadcasting of popular variety

sections: scientific, section for teaching of German language and for students’ exchange. It published books, organized German language courses, lectures, literary evenings, discussions etc. and had a library of some 15.000 books. (M.M., “Nemački naučni institut pored šest objavljenih kurseva otvara još dva”, *Novo vreme* [henceforth: *NV*], June 8–10, 1941.) According to Kerkez, its main goal was to prove that the foundations of the culture in the Balkans were laid by the Germanic tribes. (Kerkez, Slobodan Đ, *Društvo Srbije u Drugom svetskom ratu 1941–1945*, Niš, 2004, p. 431. [hereafter: Kerkez, S. Đ, *Društvo Srbije...*]; Idem, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike*, p. 189.) However, Kerkez quotes as his source only articles in the collaborationist press and one document from Nedić’s holding in the Military Archives in Belgrade. Thus the institution and its activities deserve a more thorough study.

²⁷ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 347.

²⁸ No popularity or credibility polls could be taken under the given circumstances, but there are testimonies in contemporary documents that the masses did not buy the regime propaganda (be it from the radio, the press or live speeches of dignitaries) – it was simply too much at variance with the reality people could see and experience on daily basis. (Cf. Milićević, Nataša and Nikodijević, Dušan (eds.), *Svakodnevni život pod okupacijom 1941–1944: Iskustvo jednog Beograđanina*, Beograd, 2011, pp. 316, 330, 344, 529, 612. [hereafter: Milićević, N., Nikodijević, D., (eds.), *Svakodnevni život...*]) Concerning the Belgrade Radio, the collaborationists were aware that, being in German hands, it lacked credibility among the populace. Therefore they strove to have the Germans hand them over the radio station, but the German authorities prized that means of not just local propaganda too much to give it up. (Matić, Milan B, *Štampa u Srbiji u Drugom svetskom ratu 1941–1944* [Ph.D. Msc.], Belgrade, 1990, pp. 8–9.)

²⁹ Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 88; Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 347; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 157.

³⁰ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 348.

³¹ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 348–349.

shows “Motley Afternoon” held at the Kolarac Popular University, introduction of special shows for the POWs and the SVC³² were basically the sign of the same phenomenon: the war was beginning to be total, wartime economic measures of the Reich had been introduced in March 1943 and the generally bleaker situation for the Germans and the collaborationist authorities required more entertaining programs. The ordinance on mandatory listening to the Belgrade Radio in public places, issued in June 1943, was basically the other side of the same coin: the deteriorating situation on the frontlines demanded a stronger doses of propaganda too.³³ Propaganda lectures were also held and original folk music was promoted.³⁴ Further deterioration of the German situation brought about another show for the POWs in late August 1944.³⁵ School-children were also treated to a series of radio lectures that dealt with the school system, national tradition, popular poetry, religion, national history and the like.³⁶ It was an addition to nationalist cultural and educational propaganda they had been exposed to at school.³⁷

If radio was firmly in German hands and served directly more their than Serbian needs, the theater was the field where the collaborationist authorities could develop their cultural ideas much more freely – but under the watchful eyes of German officials. The men who wanted to spearhead the reform of theater were pretty much the same people who were behind the educational reform: Prime Minister Milan Nedić himself, Velmar-Janković, Jonić, the head of the Department for Popular Education, Dr. Branimir Maleš and Dr. Radosav Marković, as well as expert clerks in charge of theater, films and music at the Ministry of Education.³⁸ In mid-August 1941 the Ministry of Education suffered a heavy blow regarding theater, because National Theaters in Belgrade and in Niš (the second largest town in Serbia) were taken away from its charge and put under supervision of the Propaganda Department of the Presidency of the Council of Commissaries (as the caretaker government was called

³² Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 349–350.

³³ “Uredba o obaveznom prenošenju i slušanju radio emisija po javnim lokalima”, *Službene novine*, June 4, 1943; VA NA, k. 19, f. 2, d. 23, 25, 26, 33; Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 349; Milosavljević, Olivera, *Potisnuta istina. Kolaboracija u Srbiji 1941–1944*, Beograd, 2006, p. 307. (hereafter: Milosavljević, O., *Potisnuta istina...*) Listening to news in Serbian and other informative shows was made obligatory. Silence was to reign in pubs during that time and customers were not to be served while the program lasted.

³⁴ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 350. Broadcasting folk music had started already in September 1942. (Ibid., p. 351.)

³⁵ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 351.

³⁶ Vojčić, Dragoslav, “Školstvo u okupiranoj Srbiji tokom Drugog svetskog rata”, *Nastava i vaspitanje*, 2, 22, 1973, p. 237; Škodrić, Ljubinka, “Prosvetni radnici u ideologiji vlade Milana Nedića 1941–1944”, *Istorijski zbornik*, 1, 2011, p. 156; Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 352.

³⁷ Although also mandatory, these lectures could reach only a limited number of pupils due to small number of radios, poorly developed electric grid and lack of power even in places it did exist.

³⁸ Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 29–30.

until September 1941).³⁹ In 1943 supervision of other theaters was also taken away from the Ministry and entrusted to the Department of State Propaganda.⁴⁰ This galled the ambitious Jonić and he strove to regain supervision of theaters. The same year he launched an offensive with that aim, accusing the Serbian National Theater that it had not fulfilled its educational goals, that its German repertoire had been bad, that the opera and the ballet had declined, that folklore had been neglected etc. Other theaters were allegedly even worse: commercial and not conducive to national renewal. However this attempt failed.⁴¹ No doubt, it was at least in part, driven by personal ambition because the attack was aimed against the main executive of the theatrical reform, Jovan Popović, the manager of the National Theater and head of the of the Department of Theatrical Performances with the Department of State Propaganda.⁴² It clearly proved how important theater was as means of *propaganda*.⁴³

To be sure, it was *cultural propaganda*, i.e. it also had to do with culture.⁴⁴ In the eyes of the collaborationist intellectuals the pre-war theater also suffered from the same vices as culture in general: it was shallow, commercialized, un-national, modernist, leftist and subject to ever changing fashions.⁴⁵ In their plan of general national renewal, theater had a pride of place, probably second only to school.⁴⁶

³⁹ Škodrić, Ljubinka, *Ministarstvo prosvete i vera u Srbiji 1941–1944: Sudbina institucije pod okupacijom*, Beograd, 2009, p. 71 (hereafter: Škodrić, Lj., *Ministarstvo prosvete...*); Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 28, 45, 171; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, p. 267. This was done on German model. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 171.)

⁴⁰ Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 262; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, p. 267.

⁴¹ Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 262, 461–467; Škodrić, Lj., *Ministarstvo prosvete...*, p. 71; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 167–179.

⁴² Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 167–179.

⁴³ Kerkez, S. Đ., *Društvo Srbije...*, p. 437; Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 262. This was affirmed in January 1944 when the Serbian National Theater was exempted from the supervision of the Section of Theatrical Performances and put directly under the Chief of the Department of State Propaganda. Popović was relieved of his post. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 180.)

⁴⁴ Jonić tended to view every kind of government activity as propaganda. Theater was no exception. (Škodrić, Lj., *Ministarstvo prosvete...*, p. 137; Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 262.)

⁴⁵ Trajković, Nikola, “Razmišljanja o srpskoj drami”, *Srpska scena*, June 20, 1942; “Srpsko narodno pozorište”, *Naša borba* (hereafter: *NB*), June 21, 1942; “Beseda upravnika Srpskog narodnog pozorišta”, *Srpska scena*, July 1, 1942; Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 80; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 30–31, 34–36, 56–57, 60, 83; Milosavljević, O., *Potisnuta istina...*, pp. 235–238; Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 160, 193; Kerkez, S. Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, pp. 198–199, 202–205; Idem, *Društvo*, pp. 435–443, 447–448. Svetomir Nastasijević went even further: he accused the Jews of having imposed schlock on all forms of art in order to erase national and Christian cultural characteristics and create an international culture, with the final aim of creating a world Jewish empire. (Kerkez, S. Đ., *Društvo Srbije...*, p. 443.)

⁴⁶ “Beseda upravnika Srpskog narodnog pozorišta”, *Srpska scena*, July 1, 1942; Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 204, 206; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 57–58; Kerkez, S. Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, pp. 198, 200–201; Manojlović Pintar, Olga, “Delusion and Amnesia: Ideology and Culture in Nedić’s Serbi”a, in: Ramet, Sabrina (ed.), *Serbia and the Serbs in World War*

In the hands of collaborationist cultural reformists, it was supposed to become the instrument of educating and uplifting the masses: nationally and morally.⁴⁷ For their part, the German authorities had their own interest in theater. Just like the radio, it was to entertain their soldiers (especially by concerts, operas and ballets)⁴⁸ and to be a show-case of German culture – thanks to performance of German works and visits by German artists.⁴⁹ Both the Serbian and the German authorities had a joint interest in entertaining the populace and creating the image of normal life.⁵⁰ Actors needed their daily bread and were willing to play under the most difficult circumstances⁵¹

Two, New York, 2011, p. 99. (hereafter: Manojlović Pintar, O., “Delusion and Amnesia...”); Petranović, B., *Srbija u Drugom...*, pp. 500–501. The main proponent of national renewal through theater was Jovan Popović, (who was soon made manager of the most important theater in the country, the Serbian National Theater in Belgrade). He accused the National Theater (that had not featured the word “Serbian” in its name before the German occupation! – Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 200) of having been a “factory of cheap laugh” and of staging leftist plays “that threatened to destroy the importance of the theater as an educational institution that actually had the aim to ennoble the artistic taste of the audience”. He denigrated the repertoire of the leading national theater as poisonous for the main theater-goers, young intellectuals. As the new manager, he set out to rectify this. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 31; Kerkez, S. Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 211.)

⁴⁷ Kerkez, S. Đ., *Društvo Srbije...*, pp. 437–438, 444, 448; Idem, *Prosvetno-kulturne prilike*, p. 198; Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 79; Petranović, B., *Srbija u Drugom...*, p. 500; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 35–36, 56–57, 131, 221; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, pp. 271–272. In the stilted words of Jovan Popović: “Today, as Serbia treads the honest path of renewal and when our whole cultural life has to undergo rebirth and revision of true national values, the theater must also find its real expression in the spirit of that incipient renewal, because it is in the interest of our national honor and of honor of our cultural life.” (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 28.) Đorđe Perić said on the occasion of reopening of the National Theater that theater was “the strongest and the most intimate instrument of laying firm foundations of healthy national and cultural life.” (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 204.) Ironically, the man saddled with the task of reforming the National Theater, the lawyer Jovan Popović, had made his name as actor in roles of lovers and comedians in drawing-room comedies. (Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 79; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 346) Together with being the manager of the (Serbian) National Theater, he was the head of the Section of Theatrical Performances with the Department of State Propaganda, i.e. in one capacity he was his own supervisor in another. (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 270.)

⁴⁸ Kerkez, S. Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 213; Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 210, 266. Wehrmacht soldiers had precedence when buying tickets for the Serbian National Theater and they were entitled to 50% discount. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 434.)

⁴⁹ “Gostovanje Hamburškog pozorišta u Beogradu”, *Srpska scena*, June 1, 1942; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 87, 93, 214, 603; Kerkez, S. Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, pp. 210, 221–222; Idem, *Društvo*, pp. 449, 459; Milosavljević, O., *Potisnuta istina...*, p. 231.

⁵⁰ Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 144.

⁵¹ Until the end of 1941 unemployed actors were a problem – partly caused by the influx of refugee actors from other Yugoslav territories. The Association of Actors wanted to find them jobs with the help from Jonić and Velmar-Janković. Some new theaters were set up in order to accommodate them. (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 138, 140, 156; Kreso, M., *Njemačka okupaciona uprava...*, pp. 133–134.)

– for which some of them would pay dearly after the communist take-over.⁵² The people for their part had a strong desire to get away from bleak, and even tragic and dangerous everyday life.⁵³ The result was that there were never so many theaters in Serbia⁵⁴ and never were they so full.⁵⁵

But how did renewal of Serbian theater look like in practice? The German authorities in Belgrade showed great interest in reopening of the National Theater.⁵⁶ This was also the wish of the collaborationist authorities since it was supposed to be the beacon of whole theatrical life in the country.⁵⁷ For the Germans, it was to be a place for soldiers' entertainment,⁵⁸ a sign of benevolence toward the conquered population and a useful instrument of propaganda.⁵⁹ The opera and the ballet of the National Theater resumed working in summer and drama in September 1941.⁶⁰ It took more than a year

⁵² Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 261, 262–264, 267–279; Petranović, B., *Srbija u Drugom...*, p. 505; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, pp. 273–274; Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 409. Some 150 artists were sacked from the National Theater alone after the communists came to power. (Kerkez, S. Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 224; Petranović, B., *Srbija u Drugom...*, p. 505.)

⁵³ Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 194, 199, 350, 427, 438, 467; Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 81; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 428–430, 577–579; Milićević, Nataša and Nikodijević, Dušan, “Svakodnevni život u okupiranom Beogradu”, in: Milićević, N., Nikodijević, D., (eds.), *Svakodnevni život...*, p. 52. According to an article in the *Obnova* of February 10, 1942 the Belgrade audience liked all kinds of plays: drawing-room comedies, folksy pieces, profound dramas as well as the well-known musical dramas and operas. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 429.)

⁵⁴ Kerkez, S. Đ., *Društvo Srbije...*, pp. 140, 445; Idem, *Prosvetno-kulturne prilike*, p. 207; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 604. For a full overview cf. Majdanac, *passim*.

⁵⁵ Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 194, 212, 215, 277, 321, 325, 329, 334, 349–350, 370; Milićević, N., Nikodijević, D., (eds.), *Svakodnevni život...*, p. 52; Petranović, B., *Srbija u Drugom...*, p. 504; Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 82; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 72, 103, 117, 396, 428–429, 480, 577–578, 603–604; Milićević, N., Nikodijević, D., (eds.), *Svakodnevni život...*, p. 533; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, pp. 148–149.

⁵⁶ Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 148.

⁵⁷ Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 158, 160.

⁵⁸ Shows for German soldiers were the only that were held at normal show-time. (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 158.)

⁵⁹ Part of the propaganda were visits by German artists and actors. The Ministry of Education supported these visits, as well as visits of Serbian artists in Germany, in the wish to prove the German-Serbian friendship. (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 195.) Another obvious means of propaganda were German concerts in the National Theater and the Radio whose proceeds went to the Serbian Red Cross. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 91; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, pp. 153–154.)

⁶⁰ Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 148, 150, 152, 156, 158, 162; Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 80; Kreso, p. 133. Kreso's claim the Germans were interested in restoring cultural life because of the uprising and for propaganda purposes (Kreso, M., *Njemačka okupaciona uprava...*, p. 134) is correct only in its second part.

before its main building could be restored.⁶¹ Meanwhile the Theater operated in its auxiliary building and at the Kolarac's Popular University. The repertoire was partly determined by these facts, but also by the fact that the theater worked also for German needs – particularly through musical programs.⁶² The slightest changes could be introduced in the repertoire of the opera and the ballet. These had to remain predominantly foreign because the Serbs did not have such a long and rich tradition in these genres.⁶³ Nevertheless, efforts were made during the war to have more Serbian opera and ballet works on stage and particularly to include into plays adaptations of Serbian folk music and dances, which went down extremely well with the audience. To this end, additional musicians and dancers were employed.⁶⁴ According to some cultural ideologues, the new Serbian ballet had to develop from folk dancing.⁶⁵

The drama was the actual touchstone of theatrical reform. The drama repertoire, not only of the National Theater, was the thing which right-wing intellectuals had criticized most. Under the new circumstances, the drama repertoire of the National Theater had to be “national” and to set the standards for smaller theaters in Belgrade and in the province.⁶⁶ According to the wishes of the new powers-that-be the repertoire was made more “national”, but not completely Serbian.⁶⁷ Approximately less than two thirds of plays were Serbian, more than one third foreign – not necessarily Ger-

⁶¹ The regime press made much hubbub about the restoration of the main building. It was pointed out that the stage would be enlarged and equipped with the most modern theatrical gadgets. German help in restoration of the Theater they themselves had damaged, was also emphasized. (Kerkez, S. Đ, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 208–209.)

⁶² During the 1941/42 season the National Theater staged 26 works, ten out of that number musical ones. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 51–53.)

⁶³ Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 43. The Association of Yugoslav Drama Authors complained in 1930 that 90% of opera repertoire in Yugoslavia was foreign. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 17.) The first ballet to be put on stage during WWII was “In the Morava Valley” by S. Nastasijević. By a happy coincidence (or not?), that was the first Serbian ballet on the stage of the National Theater in its history. (Kerkez, S. Đ, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 216.) Within the musical repertoire German music had its rightful place (Kerkez, S. Đ, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 214–215; Idem, *Društvo*, p. 450), although under German occupation this fact had a political meaning too.

⁶⁴ Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 211, 364.

⁶⁵ Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 207–208.

⁶⁶ Petranović, B., *Srbija u Drugom...*, pp. 504–505; Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 163, 177; Kerkez, S. Đ., *Društvo Srbije...*, pp. 436–437; Idem, *Prosvetno-kulturne prilike*, p. 202; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, p. 271. Nevertheless, the first drama performance was *Elga* by contemporary German author Gerhard Hauptmann. (Kerkez, S. Đ, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 208.)

⁶⁷ In their attempt at making a long-term plan of reforms (the “Serbian Cultural/Civic Plan”) the collaborationist intellectuals made a “standard Serbian theater repertoire”, i.e. a list of plays every Serb should be acquainted with. It contained the basic Serbian classics of theater literature and Vladimir Velmar-Janković was very much involved in its making. (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 454–460; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, p. 354.)

man.⁶⁸ Provincial and itinerant theaters (state owned and others) tended to follow the tack of the National Theater. However, their repertoire was even more “national” and folksy than that of the central Belgrade theater. Therefore their repertoires were often almost completely Serbian.⁶⁹ This had to do with narrower provincial circumstances and needs of traveling theaters that did not allow expensive décor and costumes, but also with the local audience that was not so refined as theater-goers in the capital and whose taste was rather for the native and the well-known. Furthermore, as a rule they had no opera and no ballet, which automatically eliminated a substantial portion of foreign works from the repertoire. Thus the “national” tack in them was a virtue out of necessity. They played Serbian classic and some modern plays – preferably those that depicted the idealized rural past.⁷⁰ The same was true, even in a larger degree of numerous village amateur theaters that mushroomed throughout the country with the support of the Ministry of Education.⁷¹ Amateur and children’s theaters abounded also in small towns and in Belgrade itself.⁷²

⁶⁸ Volk, Petar, *Pozorišni život u Srbiji 1835–1944*, Beograd, 1992, p. 275; Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 210; Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 80; Kerkez, S. Đ, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 215; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 603. During the first season under occupation the National Theater had on its repertoire 89 Serbian, 51 German, 29 French, 5 Italian, 2 Spanish and 4 Hungarian shows. In Belgrade there were 1.041 Serbian and 625 foreign plays in 1941. The proportion varied with different theaters. (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 252; Kerkez, S. Đ, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 215–216; Idem, *Društvo*, pp. 451–452; Manojlović Pintar, O., “Delusion and Amnesia...”, p. 99.) The Serbian National theater had 9 Serbian, 9 German, 4 French and one Italian plays on the repertoire in the season 1942/43. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 397–398.) In 1944 the ratio between Serbian and foreign plays in Belgrade was 868:607. (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 346.) Due to the liberation of Belgrade in October 1944 it is impossible to determine if the changing numbers and ratios would have become a trend.

⁶⁹ Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 106, 108, 110–115, 233–234, 239–240; Kerkez, S. Đ, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 218–220; Idem, *Društvo*, pp. 455–457; Đorđević, Bojan, *Srpska kultura pod okupacijom*, Beograd, 2008, pp. 47, 49, 54. (hereafter: Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*); Petranović, B., *Srbija u Drugom...*, pp. 504–505. The exception to a degree were state-owned regional theaters. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 219, 224.)

⁷⁰ The dictator of Serbian theater, Jovan Popović saw exactly in this provincial and old-fashioned repertoire the source of renewal of the Serbian theater and its liberation from corrupt, alienating modernist influences. (Kerkez, S. Đ, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 202–203.)

⁷¹ Petranović, B., *Srbija u Drugom...*, p. 503. According to some data, there were 134 village theaters at some point. (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 195.) Majdanac mentions 118 village theaters in mid-1942. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 132.) During the whole 1941–1944 period not less than 228 village theaters were recorded. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 246.) Amateur theaters were actually much more numerous than professional ones. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 122–133, 138–140, 144–145, 240–244.)

⁷² Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 171–177, 196, 231; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 240–243; Đordjević, pp. 44–45. In late June 1942 Jonić forbade the school-children to take part in theatrical associations – allegedly not to waste the time they needed for learning – although four months later regular mandatory shows (*posela*) in which only pupils featured, were imposed. (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 174, 234, 248–249.)

However, probably the most interesting theatrical phenomenon were numerous Belgrade theaters. Some of them had higher artistic aspirations, but the majority were profit oriented theaters that catered to the popular need of entertainment. They often played shorter peaces interlaced with singing and dancing. Some of them were banned because their repertoires were deemed below the minimum standards set by the authorities.⁷³ The problem for the Ministry of Education was that it was only partly in charge of theaters. What made quality control more difficult was abolition of the “trash-tax” that had been paid on all but the most cultivated shows in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.⁷⁴ On the other hand, people needed entertainment and an escape from reality. This explains how some contemporary plays, now completely forgotten could become huge hits.⁷⁵ Many a serious actor had part-time jobs in these theaters.⁷⁶ Such theaters played under all conditions: when Allied bombings made life in the center of Belgrade dangerous, they moved to the periphery, sometimes playing out of doors.⁷⁷ This kind of theaters had its opposite number in cabarets and variety shows whose work was regulated by the ordnance of the Military Commander in Serbia of May 21, 1941. As with theaters, the Jews and the Gypsies could not work in them and plays by Jewish and Gypsy authors were forbidden.⁷⁸

Among numerous theaters, one deserves special mention because of its avowed ideological mission. It was the theater of the Serbian Union of Work (SUW, Srbozar), Nedić’s apology for trade unions. The institution was founded in February 1942 to take care of industrial workers. One of the things that were meant to show the difference between the old liberal order and the new order of national solidarity was caring for cultural needs of the working class. At the same time, that was one of the ways to wean the workers from Marxism and win them over for the “national community.”⁷⁹

⁷³ Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp.118–122, 152–154, 161–167, 174–175, 228–233; Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 164–171, 212–219, 222–230, 269–284, 375–382; Kerkez, S. Đ., *Društvo Srbije...*, p. 454; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, pp. 267–271; Manojlović Pintar, O., “Delusion and Amnesia...”, p. 100; Milićević, N., Nikodijević, D., (eds.), *Svakodnevni život...*, p. 52; Petranović, B., *Srbija u Drugom...*, p. 502; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 151.

⁷⁴ Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 157; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, p. 268.

⁷⁵ The play *A Minute After 12* by Mića Dimitrijević played by Humor Center (Centrala za humor) attracted 150.000 viewers in 1943. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 231, 606–607; Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 274–277; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, p. 270.)

⁷⁶ Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, p. 88.

⁷⁷ Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 318, 323, 329,

⁷⁸ Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, 28, 306; Kerkez, S. Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 190–191; Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 137.

⁷⁹ “Osnivanje Srpske zajednice rada”, *NV*, February 21, 1942; “Novi zadaci srpske privrede”, *Obnova*, May 28, 1942; “Srpski radnik juče i danas”, *Obnova*, June 17, 1942; “Vi ste oni koji uzdižu Srbiju i daju joj snage”, rekao je general Nedić radnicima”, *Obnova*, September 19, 1942; “Šta je učinjeno”, *Obnova*, September 25, 1942; “Rad i obnova Srbije”, *Srpski radnik*, 2,1, 1943; Z.P., “Novi

With this aim, good actors from state and regional theaters were taken over and (even though requisites were lacking) one of the best Belgrade theaters was created. Needless to say, the repertoire of the Srbozar Theater was predominantly Serbian, but not so much as one would expect:⁸⁰ it was made up of national and historical works, social comedies and foreign plays about the working class. Since the SUW was a state-sponsored organization, the tickets for its theater were 75% cheaper than for normal theaters. All this made this theater a considerable success.⁸¹ It experienced changes of personnel and was eventually reorganized into two troops: one catered for Serbian workers in Germany with entertaining and national program, and the other played folksy pieces and stage adaptations of folk customs.⁸² In 1943 it also set up local branch theaters in provincial places.⁸³ The Srbozar also wanted to encourage the development of ideologically correct drama literature and organized a contest with this aim.⁸⁴ The Drama Section of the compulsory youth labor service, the NSRS was also set up as a political project. It had its own orchestra, occasional ballet-dancers and a choir. Its program was predominantly Serbian, but it seems its chief achievement was to save some young intellectuals from mandatory labor.⁸⁵

If we compare what actually went on in the Serbian theater during WWII with the intentions of the ruling intellectuals, we must observe two things. On the one hand, never had there been so many theaters in Serbia before. On the other, the quantity failed to produce the quality. This does not mean there were no good plays. Although most theaters and most plays were of lighter, entertaining kind, there were serious achievements too, but the theater failed to produce the quality collaborationist cultural politicians had hoped for. They did get a more national(ist) theater than before, barren of experiments⁸⁶ and close to the people, but not the spiritual renaiss-

put vaspitanja”, *Srpski radnik*, 3,1, 1943; “Putevi društvene obnove”, *NV*, July 23, 1943; “Saradnja radnika i poslodavaca”, *Srpski radnik*, 1, 2, 1944; “Nacionalno vaspitanje i socijalno staranje za naše radnike”, *NV*, February 18, 1944.

⁸⁰ Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, 117–118, 225–226; Kilibarda, D., *Prosvetno-kulturna...*, p. 140. Out of 34 plays, 22 were Serbian – 12 of them popular pieces with singing, and 11 comedies. (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 373.)

⁸¹ M.Sk., “100.000 radnika na kulturnim priredbama”, *NV*, December 9, 1942; Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 219–222.

⁸² Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, pp. 321–323.

⁸³ Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, 181, 227.

⁸⁴ The works had to be “permeated with Serbian view of life and work”, and their basis had to be “topics from old Serbian cooperative life”. Furthermore, they had to have “a social and educational aim.” (Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 298.)

⁸⁵ Marković, V., *Teatri okupirane prestonice...*, p. 385; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, p. 377; Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 243–244; Stefanović, Mladen, *Zbor Dimitrija Ljotića 1934–1945*, Beograd, 1984, p. 214.

⁸⁶ In Belgrade the Artistic Theater strove to maintain an experimental reading of dramatist literature, but was eventually closed down in January 1943 although the share of Serbian authors on its repertoire had been larger than that of the National Theater. Their premises were given over to the

sance they had dreamed of:⁸⁷ the control of the collaborationist authorities was too weak to impose the proclaimed standards. The Germans for their part were happy to have their soldiers entertained by German and Serbian artists and musicians, and to make sure the Serbs also had their fun so as not to make troubles for them. And the people? They desperately needed something to make their tragic lives a bit brighter. In other words, this means that, as in other spheres, the German interests had precedence over the wishes of the Serbian collaborators. The difference was that in the case of theater it happened more spontaneously, not so much thanks to what had been imposed from above, but more due to the needs of the actors to earn their daily bread and the people to forget.

An important field of culture, closely linked with theater is literature. Because of that, and because some of the leading collaborationists were literati themselves, it was to be expected that reform of literature would have an important place in their overall plans for rejuvenation of the Serbian nation. However, as in other fields, the collaborationist intellectuals saw the inter-war period as the time of decadence in literature too.⁸⁸ According to them during that time the Serbian literature succumbed to alien and nefarious modern influences from the West. This meant complete rejection of modernism and Yugoslavism that were allegedly meant to disorient the Serbian people.⁸⁹ This entailed denigration not only of modernist authors, but of their fore-runners such as the venerable idol of the pre-WWI pro-Yugoslav generation, Jovan Skerlić.⁹⁰ To be sure, the adherents of the influential extreme right-wing movement the Zbor were most vociferous in strafing modern literature, linking it (not completely unjustifiably) with communism.⁹¹ For these reasons the Department of Literature and Arts of the Ministry of Education set out to revise literary and artistic heritage and to redirect creativity to the “new ways”.⁹²

commercial and entertaining Center for Humor. (Majdanac, B., *Pozorište u okupiranoj...*, pp. 96–101; Volk, pp. 483–484.)

⁸⁷ In 1941 Velmar-Janković wanted the Serbian theater to become “the most cherished expression of spiritual strivings that are incarnated in theatrical and national creation”. (Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, p. 271.)

⁸⁸ Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 158. Velmar-Janković accused the literature of the inter-war Yugoslavia of being escapist and books of being just ornament in rich men’s drawing-rooms. (Velmar-Janković, Vladimir, “Mogućnosti našeg književnog stvaranja”, *Obnova*, May 27, 1942. Cf. also Kovačević, Damjan, “Dan srpske knjige”, *NV*, February 27, 1942.)

⁸⁹ Kerkez, S. Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 200; Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, pp. 72–74, 81–84. Former Yugoslavs and modernists such as Svetozar Stefanović and Velibor Jonić were among the detractors. (Cf. Stevanović, Svetislav, “Mogućnosti našeg književnog stvaralaštva”, *Obnova*, June 23, 1942.)

⁹⁰ Škodrić, Lj., Bondžić, D., “Stvaranje idealnog tipa...”, p. 227. Dimitrije Najdanović denigrated the Serbian proto-socialist Svetozar Marković as Skerlić’s precursor and accused his literary critique of being “destructive”. (Kilibarda, D., *Prosvetno-kulturna...*, p. 136.)

⁹¹ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, p. 83.

⁹² Kilibarda, D., *Prosvetno-kulturna...*, 135.

The “new ways” meant “reinvention of tradition” in the field of literature too. The new literature was meant to be suckled from the sources of the Serbian Medieval literature on one hand, and to deal with the quaint world of the idealized village of yore on the other. The old literature was to be reissued, researched and publicized for edification of young generations.⁹³ The good thing at that is that several important studies of Medieval works by serious scholars appeared.⁹⁴ The new literature was to be above all national(ist).⁹⁵ Since the collaborationist thinkers equated terms “national” and “modern”, the new literature was to be in keeping with current nationalist ideas in Germany.⁹⁶ The German example was to be emulated, complete with burning of books.⁹⁷ The modern nationalist literature had to clear the confused political, social, artistic and other terms. This means, it had to be national, in the spirit of realism, renewal and in the tradition of the founder of the Serbian autocephalous Church, St. Sava (*svetosavlje*) and patriarchal values.⁹⁸

This was easier said than done. Firstly no national literature can produce miracles in just three and half years. Secondly, a literature needs freedom to produce decent works over longer period of time. Thirdly, most of Serbia’s prominent writers abstained from collaborationist efforts to create a new literature or were far away. Among those who counted as top-notch Serbian authors of the time, only several were willing to collaborate. One of them was Milan Kašanin, art and literary historian and writer, who remained active in running the Museum of Prince Paul and writing and publishing on art.⁹⁹ The wave of nostalgia for the Middle Ages (partly created by himself) was favorable for his activities. Desanka Maksimović who became prominent during the inter-war period, continued to publish, but only books for children.¹⁰⁰ Todor Manojlović, a modernist poet and art critic published articles and poems and held occasional lectures.¹⁰¹ The poet Svetislav Stefanović had openly

⁹³ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, pp. 161–165. Praising of the Middle Ages is typical of more or less all European nationalisms, but here it had an additional function of denigrating Skerlić even further. (Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, p. 159.)

⁹⁴ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, p. 165, 168.

⁹⁵ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, pp. 73–74, 78.

⁹⁶ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, pp. 75–76.

⁹⁷ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, p. 76; “Ugledajmo se na Nemce: jedan predlog preispitivanju pojmova o knjigama za narod”, *Obnova*, November 17, 1941; V. “Potreba kontrole knjižarskog tržišta”, *Obnova*, November 20, 1941. J. Marić demanded that communist works that had allegedly still been displayed in book-store windows be burned. (J. Marić, “Uništite dubre!”, *NB*, May 24, 1942.)

⁹⁸ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, p. 80.

⁹⁹ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, pp. 90–91; Ćirković, Simo C, *Ko je ko u Nedićevoj Srbiji 1941–1944: Leksikon ličnosti: Slika jedne zabranjene epohe*, Beograd, 2009, pp. 258–259. (hereafter: Ćirković, S. C, *Ko je ko...*)

¹⁰⁰ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, p. 94; Ćirković, S. C, *Ko je ko...*, pp. 304–305. After WWII she would publish a touching poem A Bloody Fairy-Tale, about the massacre in Kragujevac on October 21, 1941.

¹⁰¹ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, pp. 94–96; Ćirković, S. C, *Ko je ko...*, pp. 307–308.

embraced fascist ideology already before WWII. During the war he was very active, especially as propagandist. He was the head of the appointed management of the Serbian Book Cooperative (SBC). As such he strove to influence the development of the Serbian literature by favoring certain authors and suppressing others.¹⁰² During his watch, the SBC bought 72 manuscripts, but published only 12 books – not all of them literary. Probably the most important were two anthologies of Serbian lyrics that were meant to set the new literary canon.¹⁰³ The poet and Shakespeare translator Sima Pandurović was also more active as propagandist and member of the SBC administration than as a poet.¹⁰⁴

The short story that marked the development of the Serbian literature between the world wars, all but died under the collaborationist regime.¹⁰⁵ The leading weekly of the regime, the *Srpski narod*, was the only institution trying to revive it. The new literature was to be the arch-conservative version of the traditional prose dealing with peasants and their attachment to the soil and their social and moral problems, a Serbian version of *Blood and Soil* (*Blut und Boden*, *Blubo*) literature. Together with propaganda speeches it was deemed the best way to influence the morality and behavior of the masses. They had to be restored so as to match those of the “good old times”.¹⁰⁶ The best examples of such literature were delivered by Dragutin Ilić-Jejo, a pre-war conservative author of novels, short stories and dramas whose work never ranked among the pinnacles of the Serbian literature. He had the ambition to deal with problems of Serbian peasants, but during the occupation his art was additionally restricted by the desire to please the high-priests of the collaborationist culture. He won the first prize at the short-story contest the leading collaborationist newspaper the *Srpski narod* organized in 1943 with the didactic folksy story *Death of a Serbian Farmer*; preaching patriarchal mores. Although written in the style that wanted to emulate that of the 19th classic Laza Lazarević, Ilić-Jejo never had the talent to come nowhere close to the master.¹⁰⁷ Ilić-Jejo and Laza Lazarević were models of Dušan

¹⁰² Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, pp. 118–122; Trgovčević, Ljubinka, *Istorija Srpske književne zadruge*, Beograd, 1992, pp. 77–100. (Trgovčević, Lj., *Istorija Srpske književne zadruge...*); Grba, Milan, “Svetislav Stefanović: Prilog za biografiju”, *Zbornik istorijskih muzeja Srbije*, 27, 1993, pp. 79–82; Puzić, Predrag, *Lomača za Sensa: Zločin i kazna Svetislava Stefanovića*, Sremski Karlovci, 2003, pp. 27–39. (hereafter: Puzić, P., *Lomača za Sensa...*); Ćirković, S. C, *Ko je ko...*, p. 463; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 158.

¹⁰³ Puzić, P., *Lomača za Sensa...*, pp. 29–30; Trgovčević, Lj., *Istorija Srpske književne zadruge...*, pp. 94; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 158.

¹⁰⁴ Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, pp. 255–256, 333; Ćirković, S. C, *Ko je ko...*, p. 390; [sr/Wikipedia.org/sr/Sima_Pandurovic](http://sr.wikipedia.org/sr/Sima_Pandurovic), accessed June 28, 2015.

¹⁰⁵ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, p. 128.

¹⁰⁶ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, pp. 129–130.

¹⁰⁷ Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, pp. 265–266; Idem, “Naša kulturna orijentacija”: nacionalna kulturna politika vlade Milana Nedića i pitanje “preobražaja” na stranicama kolaboracionističke štampe”, in: Stojanović, Aleksandar (ed.), *Kolaboracionistička štampa u Srbiji 1941–1944*, Beograd,

Đurić, who won the second prize at the above mentioned contest. He also wrote stories about the peasants from his native banks of the Drina. They too idealized country life and mores of old but due to his smaller talent they were even more kitsch than Jejo's.¹⁰⁸ Not more successful were Bosiljka Pavković, a refugee teacher from Lika in Croatia, the basically town writer Nikola Trajković, mariner-cum-journalist Mladen St. Đuričić, and poets Veljko Sušić and Veselin Filipović.¹⁰⁹ Thus the attempt of the collaborationist cultural politicians to redirect the Serbian literature backwards so as to make it appeal to the peasants whom they wanted to cajole into accepting the New Order was a flop beyond compare among their endeavors. What appeared in the press would be practically worthless even in a less developed literature. Small wonder that the dwarfs of the regime-sponsored literature soon vanished into oblivion once they got into the shadow of Serbian literary giants that would rise after WWII.¹¹⁰

The only literature that flourished in Serbia during the wartime, was political propaganda literature.¹¹¹ Since it falls neither into the category of literature in the real meaning of the word, nor in that of culture, only efforts at publishing books that were meant to shape the culture will be mentioned here. The main publishing house was Jugoistok A.D. (South-East Inc.) that was the collaborationist incarnation of Geca Kon's publishing house.¹¹² After the lawful owner, one of the pillars of cultural life

2015, p. 210; Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, pp. 130–132; Ćirković, S. C., *Ko je ko...*, pp. 211–212; Kilibarda, D., *Prosvetno-kulturna...*, 137; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 159.

¹⁰⁸ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, pp. 132–134; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, pp. 266–267; Idem, “Naša duhovna orijentacija”, pp. 211–212.

¹⁰⁹ Kilibarda, D., *Prosvetno-kulturna...*, p. 137; Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, pp. 135–137; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, p. 264; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 159.

¹¹⁰ Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, pp. 137–138. The Serbian literature would reach its maturity only after WWII with a legion of great novelists, some of whom (Ivo Andrić, Danilo Kiš, Milorad Pavić) become renowned around the world. Having failed to spur the living luminaries to collaborate, the powers-that-be recruited the dead classical authors for their cause. Thus Gojko Tabaković expounded that Laza Lazarević and Janko Veselinović opposed individualism in their works. (Tabaković, Gojko, “Laza Lazarević i Janko Veselinović protiv individualističkog shvatanja”, *NB*, August 16, 1942.) Others tried to portray Jovan Sterija Popović, Đura Jakšić and Jovan Jovanović Zmaj as anti-Semites by using couple of quotations unfavorable for the Jews. (Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, p. 87.) Foreign classics such as Dostoyevsky and Dickens were also used for the same goal. (Gerun, Branko, “Dostojevski o Jevrejima”, *NB*, July 26, 1942; Milićević, Aleksandar, “Tip Jevrejina kroz prizmu velikog engleskog romanopisca”, *NB*, January 4, 1942; *Ibid.*, II, *NB*, January 18, 1942.) Interestingly enough in two large articles Milićević uses Uriah Heep from David Copperfield as an example of a typical wicked Jew (although Dickens never identifies him as such!) and not the real villain, Fagin from *Oliver Twist*, who is identified as a Jew. Strangely, Gustav Freytag's *Debit and Credit* and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* were not mentioned in this context. In Freytag's case, the reason might have been the fact that in his novel a bad Jew is opposed by a good one.

¹¹¹ Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 85; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 152.

¹¹² Geca Kon was a Hungarian Jew who opened a book-store in Belgrade in 1901. Four years later he went into publishing too. During WWI he was imprisoned in the concentration camp in Hungary for publishing a patriotic calendar in 1915. After WWI his business thrived and he became owner of one of

in Serbia had been arrested, his books-store and publishing house were put under commissary management. In 1942 they were sold to the Jugoistok publishing house that had churned out German propaganda books since 1937. While Geca Kon had been accused by right-wing intellectuals of poisoning Serbian culture by leftist works and pornography,¹¹³ the Jugoistok set out to supply the Serbian reading public with politically and ideologically correct works – nationalist and pro-German. Like its predecessor it had several editions¹¹⁴ but due to the wartime lack of paper and short time it could not compete with yearly production of Geca Kon. Another old and established publishing house that had been harnessed to the interests of the regime was the Serbian Book Cooperative. It was to be more peasants-oriented and revise the history of Serbian literature,¹¹⁵ but eventually its results were meager.¹¹⁶

the largest publishing houses in Yugoslavia. He supported development of Serbian literature and poor Serbian writers, but also published works (literature, science, philosophy) by many foreign authors of different ideological persuasion. He was murdered by the Nazis in 1941. (Cf. Starčević, Velimir, *Knjiga o Geci Konu*, Beograd, 1992; Köstner, Christina, “Das Schicksal des Belgrader Verlags Geca Kon“, *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Buchforschung in Österreich*, 1, 2005. [hereafter: Köstner, C., “Das Schicksal des Belgrader...“]; Ćirković, S. C., *Ko je ko...*, p. 268.) Without mentioning Kon by name, Velmar-Janković averred publishing houses in Yugoslavia worked in the interest of various “internationals“ without being hindered by the government. (Velmar-Janković, Vladimir, “Mogućnosti našeg književnog stvaranja” *Obnova*, May 27, 1942.) M. Skrbić mentioned him, together with other publishing houses (predominantly from Zagreb!) and berated him for publishing Marx’s *Capital*. (Skrbić, M., “Od pornografije do Marksa, od školskih klupa do šumskih razbojništava”, *NB*, January 4, 1942.) Geca Kon had been accused by anti-Semites of spreading communism already before WWII, and in typical anti-Semitic fashion, in the same breath of being an dishonest capitalist. (Koljanin, Milan, *Jevreji i antisemitizam u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1919–1941*, Beograd 2008, pp. 407–408.)

¹¹³ Kon’s critics conveniently forgot that he also published works of the extreme right-wing thinker Milosav Vasiljević and that he was great importer of German books. (Köstner, C., “Das Schicksal des Belgrader...“, pp. 14–15; Subotić, D., *Organska misao...*, I, p. 70.)

¹¹⁴ Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 85; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 152.” *Za zdravu nacionalnu knjigu*”, *NB*, December 28, 1941; “Izdavačka delatnost u Srbiji”, *Obnova*, August 6, 1942. The article accused the Jews of having systematically poisoned the Serbian people with worthless, destructive and un-national literature. Because of that, allegedly, the interest of the people in reading disappeared. Dr. Đ. Sl. [probably Đoko Slijepčević] fulminated against leftist literature published by the Nolit. According to him, communist books were 20% cheaper than other books. (Dr. Sl. Đ., “Levičarska literature”, *Obnova*, September 8, 1942.) The blame for spreading communist propaganda was put on Nolit’s books in other articles. (P. S., “Kako su stvarani komunistički banditi kod nas”, *Obnova*, May 20, 1942; “Jedan od podviga”, *Obnova*, October 12, 1943.) Other publishing houses accused of publishing communist literature in Jewish interest were Kosmos, Plejada, Minerva and Binoza. (Skrbić, M., “Od pornografije do Marksa, od školskih klupa do šumskih razbojništava”, *NB*, January 4, 1942; “Od jutros u Garašaninovoj ulici”, *Obnova*, September 2, 1942.)

¹¹⁵ J. B., “Nova uprava Srpske književne zadruge”, *Srpska scena*, July 1, 1942. The new management professed to rectify injustices committed against certain authors during the inter-war period (- including some of their own number.) Cf. also Milosavljević, O., *Potisnuta istina...*, pp. 239–240.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Trgovčević, Lj., *Istorija Srpske književne zadruge...*, pp. 75–100; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, 250–262; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 158.

Despite all these difficulties, (part of the) people liked to read. There are testimonies that people read much and that books sold extremely well. However, these were not only new books, but it seems rather the old, pre-war editions. For that reason a number of antiquarian book-stores sprang up in Belgrade.¹¹⁷ Understandably, a large number of German books was imported – some 250.000 copies during the first two years of occupation.¹¹⁸ According to the newspapers' report, people from all walks of life bought books, but fiction was the least in demand. Allegedly 20.000 copies of Hitler's "Mein Kampf" were sold.¹¹⁹ Part of the books was certainly sold to German soldiers and officials, but part was probably consumed by the locals since tradition of importing and reading German books among educated Serbs went way back to 19th century.¹²⁰

However, the most popular entertainment, especially with the young, was cinema. This was so already before WWII.¹²¹ The repertoire was made up mostly of second-rate American, Hungarian, German and Austrian films.¹²² Domestic movie production in Yugoslavia was negligible due to lack of capital, know-how and not least opposition of the films-importing lobby. The few that were made imitated Western models. Furthermore, none of them was made in Serbia.¹²³ Soon after the

¹¹⁷ "Izdavačka delatnost u Srbiji", *Obnova*, August 6, 1942; "Kroz knjižarske izloge", *Obnova*, May 15, 1943. According to the author of the first article that was because people could finally get good, healthy books. However, another journalist claimed all sorts of "unhealthy" books were sold at antiquarian book-stores. (V., "Potreba kontrole knjižarskog tržišta", *Obnova*, November 20, 1941.)

¹¹⁸ "Kroz knjižarske izloge", *Obnova*, May 15, 1943; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, 197; Đorđević, B., *Srpska kultura...*, p. 75; Milosavljević, O., *Potisnuta istina...*, p. 48.

¹¹⁹ "Kroz knjižarske izloge", *Obnova*, May 15, 1943.

¹²⁰ According to German sources, Geca Kon also derived substantial portion of his profits from import of German books. (Köstner, C., "Das Schicksal des Belgrader...", p. 15.) German manuals, technical and medical books and works on history of arts sold well even before WWII when French books dominated the market. ("Kroz knjižarske izloge", *Obnova*, May 15, 1943.)

¹²¹ Zupan, Zdravko, *Vek stripa u Srbiji*, Pančevo, 2007, p. 24. In 1939 Belgrade cinemas had 15.000 seats. (Simić, Bojan, *In the Spirit of National Ideology. Organization of State Propaganda in Eastern and Southeastern Europe in the 1930s: Comparative Perspectives on Poland, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria*, Beograd, 2013 p. 177. [hereafter: Simić, B., *In the Spirit...*]) To be sure, the number of seats in the province legged far behind that. In Belgrade itself, the number of seats was also smaller under German occupation (11.800) due to destruction of several cinemas in the April bombings in 1941. (Koljanin, Milan, "Filmska propaganda – uvod u holocaust", *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju*, 1, 7, 2000, p. 46. (hereafter: Koljanin, M., "Filmska propaganda..."); Mraović, M. T., *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 708.)

¹²² Simić, B., *In the Spirit...*, p. 177.

¹²³ Volk, Petar, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma*, Beograd, 1986, pp. 76, 89; Goulding, Daniel J, *Jugoslavensko filmsko iskustvo 1945.–2001. – oslobođeni film*, Zagreb 2004, pp. 1–2; Calic, Marie-Janin, *Geschichte Jugoslaweins im 20. Jahrhundert*, Bonn 2010, pp. 111–112. To be sure, under the occupation the blame for lack of Serbian cinematographic industry was put on the Jews, who allegedly had precluded its development. (Kotur, Krstivoje, "Negativni uticaj na naše kulturno stvaranje: Uloga jevrejstva u našoj filmskoj industriji: Zašto domaći film nije do danas mogao da uspe", *Obnova*, August 28, 1941; Mraović, M. T., *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 713.)

occupation, the German Commander in Serbia issued the Ordinance on Functioning of Movie-Theaters and Leasing of Films on May 25, 1941.¹²⁴ The first cinema in Belgrade opened already on April 28, 1941. As could be expected, it catered for German soldiers. The first cinema for the locals opened on May 5, 1941.¹²⁵ Foreign names of movie theaters were changed to Serbian,¹²⁶ as part of the campaign of “nationalization” of names of streets, restaurants, and hotels.¹²⁷

At first the only film distributing company that was allowed to continue working was Tesla Film Inc., the German company that had imported German films already before the war. Cinemas could rent films only from this company hidden behind the name of the great Serbian inventor.¹²⁸ In August 1941 another such company was founded Jugoistok-Film (South-East Film), but to all intents it was a branch of the German film giant UFA. Soon it became the greatest film importer and distributor in the occupied Serbia.¹²⁹ Out of several smaller importing companies, the Union Film was created with Đorđe S. Savić as owner. The company specialized in importing French, Italian and Spanish films. The Dunav Film, set up in December 1942 wanted to specialize in importing Italian movies, but the German authorities limited this competition to German films by installing a German at its helm.¹³⁰

Films fulfilled several goals in wartime Serbia. The first one was obvious: entertainment. In normal times, that is the goal of most films. Since people, even under occupation, need entertainment, cinemas continued to cater to that need. Most films shown in Serbia were, of course, German. During the occupation 281 German, 61 Hungarian, 39 Italian, 15 Czech, 14 French, 8 Spanish, 3 Swedish, 3 Finnish, 1 Norwegian, 1 Danish, 1 Japanese and 1 American film played in Serbian cinemas.¹³¹ Although the vast majority of films came from enemy countries, the Serbian viewers flocked to movie theaters.¹³² Their main fare were light and entertaining German musicals (such as “Chords of Love”), comedies, adventure films about Africa (“No

¹²⁴ The Ordinance was valid retroactively from May 1, 1941. (Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 693.)

¹²⁵ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 705. German soldiers and persons accompanying them had 50% discount on cinema tickets. (Milosavljević, O., *Potismuta istina...*, p. 52.)

¹²⁶ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 706.

¹²⁷ These arch-national names must have looked bitterly ironic beside German language signs, plaques and fingerposts.

¹²⁸ Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 154; Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 693, 698.

¹²⁹ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 698–699.

¹³⁰ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 699.

¹³¹ Koljanin, M., “Filmska propaganda...”, p. 43; Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 708; Kerkez, S. Đ, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 235; Idem, *Društvo*, p. 475, 478. The only American film was Disney’s Snow-white – since it was made after a German fairy-tale. (Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 705–706.) Other American films were berated as degenerated and amoral. (Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, pp. 154, 156.)

¹³² Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 704, 707; Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 87. Miličević, N., Nikodijević, D., (eds.), *Svakodnevní život...*, pp. 52, 284, 366, 388, 421,

Return”, “Victor over Death”) historical spectacles (“Catherine II”) and fantasies (“Baron Münchhausen”, “The Golden City”), although some distinctly propagandized films (“I want to live”, “Her great Sacrifice”) were also among the box-office hits.¹³³ Especially the young were regular cinema-goers¹³⁴ – which did not go down well with some patriots.¹³⁵ Apart from spreading German “soft power” feature films were used for some hard sell of propaganda messages. This concerned above else anti-Semitic films such as “Süß the Jew”, “Rothschild” and “The Eternal Jew”. The first two were shown with much hullabaloo in the press. Veit Harlan’s “Süß the Jew”, although inspired by historical events in Wuerttemberg in 18th century, was used to stir anti-Semitic sentiments – at first in the Third Reich (in 1940)¹³⁶ and then in occupied Serbia¹³⁷ (and elsewhere). Milan Koljanin deems the Belgrade premiere coincided on purpose with the first mass shootings of hostages (August 1941) and its reruns in September and November of the same year with further actions against the Jews – shootings and rounding up of Jewish women and children.¹³⁸ Even if the timing was a coincidence, the fact is that the film, as well as others of that kind, was a direct function of the holocaust. “Rothschild” played for the first time in January 1942 and served the double purpose of denigrating both the Jews and the British. It had three re-runs during 1942.¹³⁹ The documentary movie “The Eternal Jew” played for just three days in just one cinema in August 1942 without press coverage. After

426, 533; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 101. By 1943 there were 8 million cinema-goers in Serbia. (Koljanin, M., “Filmska propaganda...”, p. 47.)

¹³³ Koljanin, M., “Filmska propaganda...”, pp. 46–47; Manojlović, O., “Kulturni život Beograda...”, p. 87; Mraović, M. T., *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 707–708; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 155; Kerkez, S. Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, pp. 236–239; Kilibarda, D., *Prosvetno-kulturna...*, p. 142. “The Golden City” was seen by 108.000 viewers. The taste of cinema-goers in the post-war Yugoslavia was no different: people overwhelmingly preferred light and entertaining films to high-brow artistic works with a message. (Janjetović, pp. 179, 182–183, 188–189, 209–212.)

¹³⁴ Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 101. This is normal cinema behavior even in peace-time. (Janjetović, *Od internacionale...*, pp. 189, 210–211, 213; *Beograd: Sociološka studija*, Beograd 1977, pp. 249–250.)

¹³⁵ Milićević, N., Nikodijević, D., (eds.), *Svakodnevni život...*, pp. 363, 366, 388, 421, 533.

¹³⁶ Reich’s propaganda minister, Goebbels bankrolled the film with 2 million Reichsmarks. It was to show how the Jews (here personified by high-class usurer Joseph Süß-Oppenheimer) with dirty tricks exploited the Christians. Although it was based on Lion Foichtwanger’s novel, it bore no resemblance to it. After it was shown in Germany, violence against the Jews and their institutions ensued. The film was to awake understanding for harsh anti-Semitic measures of the Nazi regime. (Bedürftig, Friedmann, *Drites Reich und Zweiter Weltkrieg: Das Lexikon*, München, Zürich 2004, pp. 253–254. [hereafter: Bedürftig, F., *Drites Reich...*]) According to an article in the *Obnova*, the film was based not on Foichtwanger’s novel but on one by J.R. George – that was translated and published in Serbia too in 1943. (“Najnovija izdanja “Prosvetne zajednice”, *Obnova*, December 3, 1943.)

¹³⁷ Mihailović, Vas, “Jevrejini Zis”, *NB*, August 16, 1942.

¹³⁸ Koljanin, M., “Filmska propaganda...”, p. 45; Mraović, M. T., *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 714.

¹³⁹ Koljanin, M., “Filmska propaganda...”, pp. 45–46; Mraović, M. T., *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 715; “Bitka kod Vaterloa i Ročildil”, *NV*, January 18, 1942.

that anti-Semitic feature films disappeared from the repertoire – probably because the “Jewish question” had been “solved” in Serbia by that time.¹⁴⁰ However, anti-Semitism remained part and parcel of propaganda news-reels shown in all cinemas before feature films.¹⁴¹

News-reels were made under the name UFA Magazine. They published news from all over Europe. The seat of the UFA branch office for South-Eastern Europe was in Vienna. German news-reels were dubbed in local languages there, including Serbian. Since late 1942 when a branch of Film Reportage of the German Film Chamber was set up in Belgrade, the UFA news-reels got footages made in Serbia too. Events from cultural and everyday-life, official ceremonies, struggle against the communists and other events were filmed.¹⁴² In late 1943 Serbian news-reels “The New Serbia” hit the cinemas. They followed the main propaganda tack set by the Germans.¹⁴³

The Ministry of Education launched showing of educational films at the Kolarac Popular University. The films came from the archives of the University and most of them dealt with biology, medicine, hygiene and geography. Some of them were shown in branches of the Kolarac Popular University in Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Valjevo and Niš. The Ministry of Education made efforts to show these films to villagers and to make enough copies of such films for school-children.¹⁴⁴ The Serbian Union of Work was also engaged in showing movies to workers – albeit not necessarily educational ones.¹⁴⁵

Films could have a special role as means of propaganda even when they were not made as propaganda films or news-reels. Thus much ado was made in the collaborationist press over the first subtitles in Cyrillic alphabet. The former Yugoslav censorship and yet again the “Zagreb Jews” who represented importers of American, British and French film companies were blamed for lack of them during the inter-war period. They were also accused of corrupting the language of translations, opening thus the way for editions of the (leftist publishing house) Nolit¹⁴⁶ and the parlance of Tito’s government.

¹⁴⁰ Koljanin, M., “Filmska propaganda...”, p. 46.

¹⁴¹ Koljanin, M., “Filmska propaganda...”, p. 47.

¹⁴² Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 697–698.

¹⁴³ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 703–704; Kerkez, S. Đ, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 237; Kilibarda, D., *Prosvetno-kulturna...*, 142. Marijana Mraović has established a direct link and temporal coincidence between coverage of certain events and topics in the press and in news-reels, which testifies to well coordinated propaganda. (Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 699.)

¹⁴⁴ Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 708–710; Stojanović, A., *Ideje, politički projekti...*, 272.

¹⁴⁵ “Uspех radničkih bioskopskih pretstava u Beogradu”, *NB*, June 27, 1942; “Bioskopske pretstave za radnike”, *NV*, September 6, 1942; Sk, M, “100.000 radnika na kulturnim priredbama”, *Obnova*, December 9, 1942; “Bioskopske pretstave za radnike na obaveznom radu”, *Obnova*, December 13, 1943; Mraović, M. T, *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 712; Kerkez, S. Đ., *Društvo Srbije...*, p. 476; Kilibarda, D., *Prosvetno-kulturna...*, p. 141. Some of the feature films shown by the Serbian Union of Work had a distinct propagandist flavor.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. *supra*.

A regime journalist complained: “Did the Serbs have to wait for the Germans to come as occupiers to Serbia to get their own language and alphabet in cinema?”¹⁴⁷

Equally great public attention was devoted to the first Serbian feature films. The first one, “The King of Air” was made during 1930s and shown for the first time on January 6, 1942. It contained five stunts of the famous acrobat Dragoljub Aleksić. The authorities were glad that he gave part of the profit for “Winter Help”¹⁴⁸ In spring of 1942 Aleksić was allowed to embark on a more ambitious project: the feature film called “Innocence Without Protection”. It was hailed as the first film in Serbian, interlaced with folk music and dances. As such it fitted perfectly the prevailing nationalist atmosphere. It was released early in 1943. Critics praised the technical part of the project, but were critical of the artistic one. Nevertheless, since the film was the first Serbian ever, it still managed to attract some 60.000 viewers.¹⁴⁹ Stevan Mišković, the cameraman who worked with Aleksić, opened his own atelier in spring 1943 and started making short animated propaganda films, three to five minutes long. In them he praised German war effort and ideology. He would join seven of them into Weekly Surveys that were regularly shown in cinemas before feature films.¹⁵⁰

It can be said that films fulfilled but incompletely the function German and Serbian propagandists had allotted them. Firstly, movies were not present everywhere. Their showing was confined to Belgrade and larger towns. People who did go to the movies were primarily interested in having fun. This was proven by the kind of films that had most viewers. On the other hand there are clear signs that most of the people did not buy propaganda – from the newspapers or films – when it contradicted reality, other sources of information and sometimes their wishes. Thus, one can safely presume that German film propaganda increasingly lost its effectiveness with German military and political set-backs that could not remain hidden from the populace. Sadly, the most valuable films – the educational ones – could reach the smallest number of viewers. Finally, making movies is a rather costly sport. The collaborationist authorities did not have the resources to launch their own film production for promoting

¹⁴⁷ Mraović, M. T., *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 716–717; Kerkez, S. Đ., *Društvo Srbije...*, p. 477. Velibor Jonić, Tanasije Dinić and Dr. Đorđe Perić were present at the premiere of the first film with Cyrillic subtitles in January 1944. Vladimir Velmar-Janković was one of the two speakers on the occasion.

¹⁴⁸ A charity scheme on German model and with the same name. (In Germany it was organized in 1931 and kidnapped by the Nazis in 1933. It was used for propaganda goals – for furthering “national community” and solidarity – whereas the recipients had to be politically and racially “correct”. Bedürftig, F., *Drites Reich...*, pp. 537–538; Grunberger, Richard, *The 12-year Reich: A Social History of Nazi Germany 1933–1945*, New York, 1972, pp. 29, 86–87, 122, 208; Taylor, James and Shaw, Warren, *A Dictionary of the Third Reich*, London, Glasgow, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland, 1988, pp. 380.)

¹⁴⁹ Mraović, M. T., *Propaganda vlade...*, pp. 700–702; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, pp. 155–156; Kerkez, S. Đ., *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 237. The author was indicted for collaboration after the war, but luckily acquitted in 1946.

¹⁵⁰ Mraović, M. T., *Propaganda vlade...*, p. 703.

their nationalist values – even though they had been freed from obstructions on part of the importing lobby of the “Zagreb Jews”.

Finally another field of culture deserves brief mention in this survey: art. Brief not because art is not important in general, but because it was not of primary importance either for the Germans or the collaborationist authorities. It did have its significance and tasks within the plan of general renewal of national values, similar to those of other fields of cultural activity. Art, just like literature or theater, was to instill the correct ideological values into the people, whereas only the chosen were to be artists, since art was considered “divine revelation.”¹⁵¹ Stilted words were meant to hide propagandist intentions. The pre-war art was seen as degenerated as other branches of culture.¹⁵² Allegedly, the “Jewish press” encouraged and popularized modernist art that most people did not understand. Some branches of painting, such as large compositions and portraits as well as the “Serbian-Byzantine” painting that allegedly should have been the basis of Serbian art, were completely neglected. Public monuments were commissioned not from the best, but from those with good connections in certain cliques. Artistic youth was not given sufficient training and directed towards looking for a national style in art. Instead of copying frescoes at monasteries, they had trodden down dangerous artistic and political paths, as a critic put it.¹⁵³ Like other intellectuals, Serbian artist had allegedly brought degenerated art from Paris with the aid of the Jews and Free Masons.¹⁵⁴ The Serbian policeman number one and Head of the Administration of the City of Belgrade Dragi Jovanović, agreed expertly with this in his speech on occasion of opening of the first art exhibition at the Belgrade fortress, Kalemegdan, in June 1942. He said art should not be commerce any longer. According to him, real art liberated, relaxed, purified, reestablished disturbed harmony and balance needed for normal life. Art had to be national first and through that quality part of general humanity. The newer Serbian art [i.e. from the inter-war period] did not have its style, whereas the older one [i.e. Medieval] had had.¹⁵⁵ The new art, like all culture, had to be distinctly Serbian.¹⁵⁶ In other words, nationalism was order of the day in art as in all other spheres. However, most exhibitions during the occupation were not artistic but political:¹⁵⁷ their aims were to spread ideological propaganda.

Despite that, the regime had interest in opening museums. To be sure, they were not the places that attracted huge crowds of visitors but the powers-that-be needed

¹⁵¹ Kilibarda, D., *Prosvetno-kulturna...*, p. 138.

¹⁵² “Dva napisa g. Svetomira Nastasijevića”, *Srpska scena*, January 16, 1942; Milačić, I, “Modernomanija”, *NB*, June 7, 1942; Milosavljević, O., *Potisnuta istina...*, pp. 203, 233.

¹⁵³ Nastasijević, Živorad, “Križa naše likovne umetnosti”, *NB*, June 21, 1942.

¹⁵⁴ Majsner, Josif P, “Naša umetnost na strmeni propasti”, *NB*, November 16, 1941.

¹⁵⁵ “Prva posleratna smotra naše likovne umetnosti”, *NB*, June 22, 1942.

¹⁵⁶ R., “Saobražavanje stvarnosti”, *NB*, November 7, 1941.

¹⁵⁷ For a list cf. Petranović, B., *Srbija u Drugom...*, p. 500.

them for two reasons. Firstly, they belonged to the general picture of normalcy the authorities strove to create. Secondly, they were also meant to serve educational purposes, i.e. they also had the task of raising national consciousness. The Ministry of Education demanded that every seat of a district had its museum so as to educate the youth in the traditions of the past – especially of the Middle Ages. Thus museums functioned in Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Jagodina and Kruševac, as well as several museums in Belgrade (Prince Paul's Museum, Military Museum, the Museum of King Peter I the Liberator, Church Museum, Ethnographical Museum and the Museum of the Serbian Land).¹⁵⁸

The collaborationist vision of culture was determined by their main ideological tenets: culture, like the society from which it had sprang up and which it served, was decadent, foreign and alienated from the people. It had to be purged and brought into harmony with the new values that were founded on time-tested traditions. The Germans for their part saw culture through much more utilitarian lens. For them it was means of entertaining both their own soldiers and conquered civilian population and of exporting their culture as “soft power” of the Reich. This presupposed imposing rabid anti-Semitism in cultural matters (by eliminating Jewish works and cultural workers and by denigrating the Jews through films, plays and printed materials), insisting on good and long German-Serbian cultural relations and the benefits Serbian culture derived from these contacts. All cultural activities were aimed at strengthening Serbian nationalism under German control – as an antidote to communism that, according to the collaborationist cultural politicians, had sank deep roots in the Serbian society. At the same time it was an opportunity for German film-makers and film-importers, musicians, actors and authors to make money in Serbia. Serbian actors, singers and musicians also had to live. Thus constructed, cultural life in Serbia had to depart from the visions of the leading collaborationists. Insignificant humorous plays predominated on theater stages (without the Ministry of Education being able to influence their repertoire more decisively), commercial entertaining films (all of them foreign) reigned supreme in cinemas, whereas literature experienced unprecedented decline: people who did read, read mostly old, pre-war books. The new literature was barren, the music and art showed but weak signs of adapting to the new times. Last but not least: most people did not care about culture because they were hungry and were too busy trying to survive.¹⁵⁹ In the best of cases, most of them just wanted entertainment and oblivion.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Kerkez, S. Đ, *Obrazovno-kulturne prilike...*, p. 240; Idem, *Društvo*, p. 479.

¹⁵⁹ Milićević, N., Nikodijević, D., (eds.), *Svakodnevni život...*, pp. 220, 340. General scarcity was so great that sometimes Nedić himself was without bread for more than a month. (Kreso, M., *Njemačka okupaciona uprava...*, pp. 117, 185.)

¹⁶⁰ This was shown also by mass attendance of sports events, especially football matches. Here again the young were the most numerous spectators. (Milićević, N., Nikodijević, D., (eds.), *Svakodnevni život...*, pp. 91, 273, 533; Nikolić, K., *Strah i nada...*, p. 103.)

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Резиме

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Култура и забава под колаборационистичким режимом у Другом светском рату

Колаборационистички режим је у сфери културе нашао област у којој је уживао највећу слободу акције. Иако су немачки окупатори одређивали главне оквири културне политике, колаборационистички интелектуалци су искористили период окупације да у дело спроведу своје десничарске идеје о томе како треба препородити српску културу коју су они већ двадесетак година оцрњивали као „декадентну“ и „анационалну“. У складу с тим, упоредо са прогоном Цигана, приступило се „пречишћавању“ кафанских песама. У књижевности се тежило новом литерарном канону – како у погледу избора идеолошки „подобних“ аутора, тако и тема и начина обраде. Форсирани су архаизирајући квази-реалистички стил и тематика у којој је идеализован живот на селу. Због краткоће времена и малог броја писаца вољних да сарађују са властима, резултати су били више него мршави. На пољу филма прављени су пропагандни документарни, али и два играна филма који су такође коришћени у пропагандне сврхе. Главнину биоскопског репертоара су чинила (лакша) страна дела, пре свега немачка, италијанска, мађарска итд. Прави цват је доживело позориште, али углавном мимо воље и задатих смерница власти: радило се о томе да је глумцима требао посао, а народу разонода и заборав. Може се рећи да се целокупна колаборационистичка културна политика у пракси сводила на пропаганду и стварање привида нормалности.

Кључне речи: Србија, култура, колаборација, забава, филм