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INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY OF YUGOSLAVIA

With the construction of the Yugoslav *self management socialist system* everything is gradually changing — associated work, man and his interests are becoming the main social factors instead of the state. In the cultural sphere what this has actually meant is that artists, art and cultural organisations and institutions have become the decisive factors of the entire process of *intellectual production* and thereby in the sphere of foreign cultural relations as well. As provided for by the Constitution, all organisations and institutions have now become completely independent social factors which decide on all matters concerning their existence and activities without any outside interference. Artists and all cultural and scientific organisations and institutions have become independent creators of overall policy, ranging from repertoire to income and salaries. For this they need no-one's approval. They are not even obliged to inform anyone on when, how and with whom they will establish international cultural or scientific relations. This is now completely their competence and responsibility, part of their regular activities. All territorial units, from the basic — the commune, through the republics to the Federation, are in the same position.

The independence of the direct protagonists of cultural, educational and scientific cooperation has resulted in the complete decentralization of Yugoslavia's foreign cultural relations. However, from the very beginning this has carried the danger of segmentation of foreign cultural exchange. The practical question that arose was how to ensure a joint, coordinated foreign policy given a system of complete independence of all cultural factors and their right to enter into international contacts and develop cooperation as suits them best. A solution was found in

accord with the principles of self-management: the task of harmonisation was entrusted to the plan, i.e. the joint long-term policy of Yugoslavia in the sphere of international cultural and scientific cooperation. All organisations and institutions in the cultural and scientific sphere, as well as all territorial units in Yugoslavia, have their own long-term plans of international cooperation and exchange. The plans are made independently in accordance with their specific needs their material and creative potentialities. On the basis of those plans of independent protagonists of foreign cultural exchange, the republics and provinces draft their outline programmes of foreign cultural cooperation which then serve to form a Yugoslav programme.

Yugoslavia's cultural policy should and must rely on the needs and potentialities of the direct protagonists and the needs of national cultures of the nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia, but it is at the same time an expression of the need for the international cultural and scientific assertion of Yugoslavia as a whole. Based on the well-known principles of Yugoslavia's foreign policy — equitable international cooperation with all who so desire, non-interference in the internal affairs of others and non-alignment, — Yugoslavia's foreign cultural policy is so designed as to ensure the presence of the culture and art of all the nations and nationalities of Yugoslavia in the world and at the same time to make the best achievements of other cultures accessible to the peoples of Yugoslavia.

By pursuing these two goals, what are known as general Yugoslav interests in the sphere of international cultural policy are secured in practice. Obviously those interests cannot be nor are they anything abstract, but are intimately connected with the quite definite need for Yugoslavia's presence at certain international cultural events or the need for the assertion of individual national cultures or the cultures of the nationalities.

Yugoslavia is a multi-national community in which there are several national cultures. Many people think that this complicates the situation in Yugoslavia, that this is almost a misfortune for Yugoslavia. The Yugoslavs are, quite on the contrary, convinced that this reflects the wealth, variety and scope of Yugoslavia's contemporary culture. Yugoslav culture is in fact composed of the cultures of individual nations and nationalities and only as such does it exist. In other words, there is no abstract Yugoslav culture, but only the culture of the nations and nationalities which have for centuries been living on Yugoslav soil.

On the other hand, international cultural manifestation of any Yugoslav nation or nationality is necessarily of general Yugoslav meaning and significance. This is not only due to *misunderstanding* or lack of specific knowledge on the part of foreigners about which nations and nationalities live in Yugoslavia, but above all to the fact that the cultural activities of all the nations and nationalities are set in a definite Yugoslav cultural environment and necessarily bear the stamp of Yugoslavia's social and cultural atmosphere. Just because of this unbreakable link between the national and the general Yugoslav, definite positions had to be taken on the role of national cultures in the making of a general Yugoslav international cultural policy. A clear attitude was adopted in this respect: all the nations and nationalities in Yugoslavia, being full-fledged subjects of the Yugoslav community, are interested in and entitled to concern themselves with the international assertion of their own cultures. How and when individual Yugoslav national cultures will present themselves to the world is completely up to them to decide. The role of the federation and federal organs is purely to create the necessary preconditions and equal opportunities for their international assertion.

In practice, Yugoslavia's cultural policy necessarily came up against factual differences in the degree of development of individual national cultures, in their material and creative funds, in the degree of international recognition and in their organisational abilities and experience in the process of international cultural assertion.

Yugoslavia participates in a variety of international cultural events. Who will participate and with what in those events to which Yugoslavia is invited, is a matter considered and agreed upon jointly. The necessary facilities for and organisation of such agreements does exist. They were developed and proved effective long before the Constitution formulated them in 1961. In this particular case, the Constitutional amendments only sanctioned what had already existed in practice.

Finally, all these initial principles had to be applied in concrete form in the material component of international cultural policy. In other words, one of the most important questions of the de-etatized and decentralized international cultural policy was how to finance these activities?

In this case too, a clear attitude was adopted: the subjects of this sphere of activity must finance their own activities. They do not receive

any special-purpose funds, but must set aside part of their regular resources for this purpose. So as to avoid confusion over various explanations about *superior state interests* it was further stated that no-one in the Yugoslav community has the right to take over an obligation which would present a financial burden for someone else.

Therefore, there is no centralized policy or centralized financing of foreign cultural cooperation. However, as a rule, several subjects have a common interest in many individual projects. Those projects are financed jointly by them in proportion to their representation. The best example of this is the major Yugoslav art exhibition in France, called "Art on Yugoslav Soil from Prehistoric Times to This Day" organized in the first half of 1971. Naturally all branches of art and of all the nations and nationalities, regions and republics, were interested in this exhibition — Yugoslavia's most important cultural manifestation abroad to date. They participated in its designing and financing in proportion to their representation.

The question of deciding where to place one's interest is a rather complex and interesting process. Thus for example, it emerged that though the direct vehicles of cultural cooperation — museums, galleries, universities, cultural organisations, institutions, etc. — are very interested in learning about the culture and art of new nations in Africa and Asia, in practice they opt for developing contacts with European and neighbouring countries. Traditional ties, distance and the resulting expense of any cultural event in the under-developed countries, certainly play a part here. On the other hand, Yugoslavia as a non-aligned country is indeed interested in her culture, science and technology making their presence felt in the newly liberated countries. What is more, the non-aligned countries are Yugoslavia's natural allies for they are brought together by similar historical experiences in the struggle for freedom and unhindered development and by their struggle for independence and equitable international cooperation. On the other hand on the basis of their own experience, the Yugoslavs are very well acquainted with the difficulties the newly-liberated countries are coming up against in the struggle for international recognition of their cultural values. All this prompted Yugoslavia to adopt a position whereby it would develop as much as possible educational, cultural and technical cooperation just with the under-developed, non-aligned countries. For this reason, the federation has been investing financial resources in this cooperation (of cour-

se, mobilizing at the same time the resources of the actual protagonists who are interested in participating in that cooperation).

The organisational structure of organs implementing this policy must correspond to such a system and principles of international cultural cooperation. In the first place, it is up to each organisation and socio-political community to decide on the kind of service or organ of international cultural exchange that it will have. There are no fixed patterns for this. True, there are republican commissions for foreign cultural ties in all the republics but the organisational and administrative set-up of those bodies or organs differ considerably. However, they all have the same function — to analyze the successes and shortcomings of international cooperation on the basis of evidence offered by the republican commission and to guide the cultural activities of republics accordingly, but only in global and general terms. The Republican commissions may also be the actual organizers of either their own events abroad or some foreign events in this country.

There is also a federal organisation for foreign cultural relations — until recently the Federal Commission for Foreign Cultural Ties, which dealt with international cooperation in the sphere of education and culture, now the Federal Institute for International Scientific, Educational-Cultural and Technical Cooperation. The role of this organ is strictly defined: The Federal Commission for Cultural Ties, that is the Federal Institute is a federal coordination organ, the place where Yugoslavia's international cooperation is dovetailed and coordinated. The organisation has no other authorisations of a subordinate nature. Naturally, as a federal organ, it concludes on Yugoslavia's behalf certain documents, primarily two-year programmes of cultural cooperation with individual countries, and concerns itself with Yugoslavia's participation in major international events. However, its primary and particular task is to increase opportunities for *direct* cooperation between organisations and institutions in Yugoslavia and similar organisations in the world, to be the mediator and protagonist of the kind of direct cooperation through which the actual needs and potentialities of interested parties can most easily come to expression.

The role of republican organisations for foreign cultural cooperation is essentially the same. Their activities must particularly be directed towards informing the direct vehicles of the opportunities for cultural cooperation with

other countries and towards finding better ways of bringing interested domestic and foreign partners together. What, when and what next is not, nor should be the concern of republican or federal organs for foreign cultural exchange. That is the affair of the direct vehicles of cultural exchange.

What were we out to achieve and what have we achieved?

First and foremost, complete freedom of action in this significant and at the same time delicate sphere of activity. There is no federal or republican centre, no matter how wise it may be, that could replace the creativity and initiative of free men in hundreds of organisations and institutions throughout Yugoslavia. That is why from the very introduction of this new policy efforts were made to eliminate a dormant attitude which had already become a habit among artists, cultural and scientific workers who left to others, in practice it was the state, to worry about their international recognition. After a certain period of adjustment everything went well.

On the basis of my personal and many year long experience I think that I can say that this goal has been accomplished. Yugoslav creators, artists, cultural and scientific workers, students and post-graduates, attend numerous international events and gatherings, fairs and exhibitions, without literally anyone in Yugoslavia knowing, except on special occasions how they got there. No-one is even trying to control this diversified traffic. Even if somebody wanted to do so, he would find it impossible unless the self-management set-up of the Yugoslav society was abolished first.

Secondly, we have always wanted Yugoslavia to have a continuous long-term cultural policy in respect to all the regions of the world and all countries with which she develops one or other form of cooperation. I must say that this has only partly been achieved. True, with many countries Yugoslavia does conclude two-year programmes of cultural cooperation formulating global policy and anticipating the most important undertakings — particularly those which require long preparation and considerable material means. However, there are still quite a number of countries, and even entire regions where the culture, science and art of Yugoslavia are practically unknown. A great deal has yet to be done to change this.

Another question that arises is how to plan foreign cultural exchange. Experience has shown

that even two-year programmes are too short and that this kind of global planning should be carried out for a far longer period of time. Cultural cooperation planning is anyway becoming almost a generally adopted practice in the world. Even countries which for years put forth the thesis that such planning was unnecessary if societies are open and there is free mutual circulation of cultures, are going in for it. This theory was certainly to a certain extent a reaction against the system of planning as the exclusive medium of international cultural exchange of a given country with the world, or rather against the situation when one can culturally "peep" into a country only and exclusively on the basis of an inter-state agreement. However, let me point out straight away that even this widely publicized democracy and freedom of cultural exchange is in the case of some of the preachers of free circulation and critics of the closing in by others, only a poorly disguised system of "record-keeping" and so-called state guidance. Rejecting therefore both the attacks against and the defenses of the planning of cultural cooperation, it can be said that, on condition that it is conceived as democratic agreement among directly interested parties, such planning has great advantages. It makes possible timely and adequate preparation of major cultural projects and events and their successful execution as well the avoiding of regular "financial trouble" which seems to be an inevitable companion of such undertakings and a permanent feature of international cultural exchange in general. (In this respect there seems to be no difference between socialism and capitalism except in cases when foreign cultural exchange is a direct function of current foreign policy needs.)

It is essential therefore that apart from this kind of planning, possibilities should be afforded for free cultural traffic and for the direct vehicles, or to be still more precise, anyone who so desires, to be able at any time to establish the international contact that he needs and for which he has the means. On those terms, the existence of global plans does not in any way impair the freedom of artistic and cultural exchange.

Thirdly, we have always wanted to keep ourselves informed on what is actually happening in world culture and what our cultural organisations, institutions and creators dispose of and what they plan to do to join in the process of world cultural integration. This is indispensable mainly so that the society as a whole should have insight into what is actually happening and to be able to plan its own activities accordingly. In a system in which the

"left hand" does not know what the "right" one is doing various anomalies occur. And besides, such cultural exchange is also extremely expensive.

However, as a society, we still have not achieved this by far. Naturally there is always the danger of administrative decisions in culture, which in its turn tends towards bureaucratism (though administrative decision-making is not the cause but only the consequence and external reflection of bureaucratism). However those people who feel that a self-management society such as the Yugoslav needs no records, are wrong. Without proper recording of facts there can be no analysis, and without analyses there can be no good forecasting or planning. Yugoslavia has recorded several failures in practice in her international cultural exchange due to the very lack of good and proper information, analyses or records of what is actually happening in world culture, of how and when Yugoslavia participated in individual manifestations and of what others have or are preparing for world international cultural exchange. This kind of "cultural espionage" is desirable and fruitful for competition in humanism can be nothing but a noble deed.

Fourthly, we have always wanted to be represented in the world by really the highest quality and best achievements of our culture and science and to see in our country the best of what other nations and cultures have to offer. I think that we are really still far from this goal. There is no denying that in Yugoslavia's post-war development, a great deal has been created and many achievements of our cultural and scientific workers have been seen by the world either at home or at international cultural and scientific gatherings. Special merit is due to those cultural undertakings which showed that Yugoslavia was not just a medium developed Balkan country but also a region where significant cultural and scientific achievements have been made, a region where many cultures met and were raised to a higher level. Let us just mention the exhibition of copies of fresco paintings which revealed to many people in Paris in the fifties the wealth of old Yugoslav culture, or again in Paris twenty years later, the monumental exhibition "Art on Yugoslav Soil from Prehistoric Times to the Present Day" which was even for the world of scientists a rediscovery of Yugoslavia. Many other very significant undertakings could be mentioned which in each period of Yugoslav contemporary history described more eloquently than words or anything else, the spirit of history and creativity of the Yugoslav peoples. However it must likewise be said that we have "shipped" abroad much trash and rubbish.

At this point we come across the problem of evaluating cultural values which is anyway a very complicated one and particularly so in international cultural exchange, and even more so in a multi-national country such as Yugoslavia in which national cultures and individual spheres of culture and art are at different levels of development.

When speaking of the presentation of foreign cultural events in Yugoslavia, it could be briefly described in the following way: Yugoslavia is a country where really high-quality works of world culture and art can be seen (unfortunately on a far smaller scale than we would desire), but also a country on whose cultural market practically all the trash of world cultural production can be bought. From an optimist's point of view, this too in a way confirms the openness of the Yugoslav society, a society without censorship, a society of open frontiers and no visas.

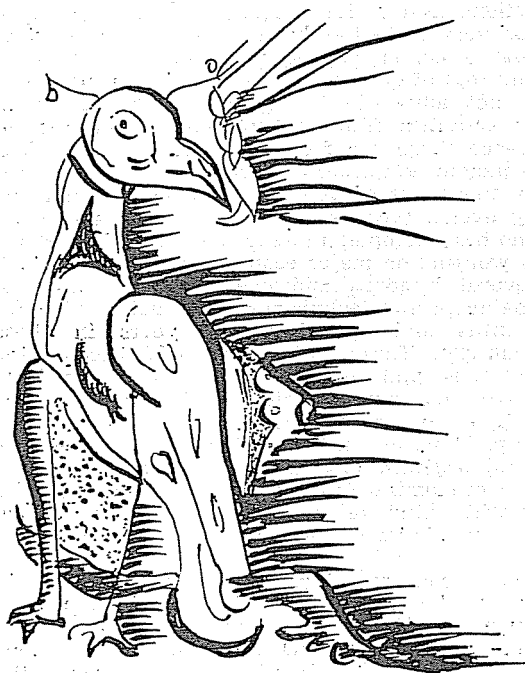
Fifthly, we have always wanted not to have our cultural actions abroad *hanging up in the air* but to be an integral part Yugoslavia's continued presence and her economic-political impact. What we have in mind is the need of coordinated and synchronized political, economic actions in individual countries and regions. So far very little has been done and achieved in that direction. Namely experience — our own and that of other peoples — has taught us that it is not advisable to separate economic events or activities from cultural ones. Thus for instance there are frequent instances of various economic exhibitions abroad, which are toured by thousands of people, not being accompanied by even a very small cultural programme. Or another example; in some countries Yugoslavia is working on major economic projects in which several hundred and even thousand workers, engineers and technicians participate, living for months and sometimes for years in those countries. These collectives could become the initiators and protagonists of various cultural drives and events which would certainly contribute to better understanding and friendship. However in this sphere up to now cultural organisations showed a lack of initiative and economists failed to realize the possibilities of this kind of synchronized activity which could have various positive effects.

The period in which Yugoslavia was mainly known by her folklore belongs to the past. Yugoslav culture has joined contemporary currents of world cultural integration. It has opened its doors to creative contacts with the cultures of other peoples. The world has become

acquainted with us — and we have become acquainted with the world. We have also recorded some good results. Our literature has its Nobel prize winner, our cartoons an Oscar of the American Academy, our visual arts have practically reached the top of artistic creativity in the world, our theatre artists and musicians have been awarded numerous tokens of international recognition and can be seen on stages throughout the world, and our scientific workers are reputed and respected in the world. Nonetheless all this is just a good beginning. For fresh creative and geographic thrusts forward much constant and patient effort, good will and enthusiasm is needed. And a good knowledge of history and contemporary trends of various cultures. And a good, efficient and practical organisation. And certain material means.

What Yugoslav international cultural policy wishes to achieve in the future is a still better knowledge of the history, culture, art and spirit of other nations and the opportunity for them to learn about us so that we should live in peace, competing and taking pride in our cultural achievements instead of in military parades.

(Translated by OLGA BAMBIC)



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