Cultural Relations between Britain and Yugoslavia 1945-1961

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines British-Yugoslav cultural diplomacy during the early Cold War period. It is the first comprehensive study of cultural relations between these two countries in the period 1945 to 1961. It focuses on the cultural history of the Cold War, aiming to explore the interaction between politics and culture. Based on original archival materials, this thesis looks at how Britain and Yugoslavia used culture to gain recognition and influence, especially from the Yugoslav perspective. It documents the trials and errors of both sides in pursuing their respective diplomatic goals. This thesis sheds new light on Cold War cultural relations beyond superpower antagonism, and probes how and why exporting national culture mattered so much to both countries in this period.

Through cultural events organised by these two countries, we can see the increasing significance attached to culture and soft power in the Cold War, especially between countries that were ideologically different. For Yugoslavia, international recognition was very important in its effort to develop and maintain a neutral position between the East and the West after its split with the Soviet Union in 1948. It explored how to use cultural diplomacy to construct a positive image for the country. Its cultural diplomacy was influenced and shaped by both domestic and international politics. For Britain, wielding its cultural influence in a socialist country like Yugoslavia helped further its diplomatic goal of approaching Yugoslavia as a wedge in the socialist bloc.

The thesis offers a new perspective on bilateral cultural relations between these two relatively small countries, which aims to enrich the revisionist scholarship of Cold War history on the binary system of superpower antagonism. Contextualised in the Cold War cultural history, this thesis proves that the Iron Curtain was not impermeable and opened up opportunities to build new relations across the Cold War divide.

Extended abstract

This thesis examines British-Yugoslav cultural diplomacy during the early Cold War period. It is the first comprehensive study of cultural relations between these two countries in the period 1945 to 1961. It focuses on the cultural history of the Cold War, aiming to explore the interaction between politics and culture. Based on original archival materials, this thesis looks at how Britain and Yugoslavia used culture to gain recognition and influence, especially from the Yugoslav perspective. It documents the trials and errors of both sides in pursuing their respective diplomatic goals. This thesis sheds new light on Cold War cultural relations beyond superpower antagonism, and probes how and why exporting national culture mattered so much to both of these countries in this period.

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The thesis offers a new perspective on bilateral cultural relations between these two relatively small countries, which aims to enrich the revisionist scholarship of Cold War history on the binary system of superpower antagonism. Contextualised in the Cold War cultural history, this thesis proves that the Iron Curtain was not impermeable and opened up opportunities to build new relations across the Cold War divide. Using unpublished archival materials from both Yugoslav and British sources, the thesis provides a perspective to look at how cultural relations reflected their understanding of each other, which was sometimes misleading and prejudiced. This thesis also shows how people from both sides involved in the organisation of cultural events maintained different perspectives in advancing their cultural diplomatic goals, which reflected their divergent views on shifting political conditions. This thesis offers an in-depth look at Yugoslav cultural diplomacy by tracing its developments from its early propagandistic style to the later more nuanced strategy.

In particular this thesis studies the cultural diplomacy of Yugoslavia as a socialist country that aimed to keep its neutral position between the East and the West. Through secondary

sources which look at cultural diplomacy of the other countries, this thesis attempts to assess the uniqueness of Yugoslav case compared with its counterparts in the Soviet bloc and its relations with the West in general. The research on the cultural history of the Cold War provides the general background against which British and Yugoslav cultural diplomacy is situated and evaluated.

In addition to relevant secondary sources, the thesis draws on original, never-before-used archival materials from both the Yugoslav and British sides. The written documentation includes internal reports, meeting minutes, memoranda, correspondence, and press coverage. Visual materials are also integrated, such as photographs, exhibition posters and catalogues. These two categories of materials are used to provide a more complete and rounded picture of bilateral cultural relations through the examination of the purpose, process, outcome and reception of bilateral cultural events.

This dissertation consists of five chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. Each chapter discusses a different aspect of the cultural exchange between Britain and Yugoslavia, including early post-war cultural exchanges, the Youth Labour Actions, the work of the British Council, folk art and exhibitions. The chapters are arranged chronologically and document the continuity and discontinuity of British and Yugoslav cultural diplomacy, reflecting the search for mutual recognition, especially from the Yugoslav side.

The Introduction focuses on the historiography of Cold War culture which contextualises British-Yugoslav cultural relations. It emphasises the role played by culture to transcend the political divide of the Iron Curtain. Culture, as a significant part of a country's soft power, was used to win the hearts and minds of select foreign audiences against the backdrop of Cold War rivalry. To date British-Yugoslav cultural relations remain surprisingly under-studied and this dissertation aims to fill this gap. The Introduction also looks at the scholarship on Balkanism and the Western stereotype of the region. By emphasising the significance of culture in Cold War politics, it demonstrates how culture was used to advance certain political goals.

Chapter One provides a general overview of bilateral cultural exchanges during the early post-war years. It draws a picture of how these cultural activities planned and arranged by Yugoslavia were highly ideologically driven and propagandistic. Through the study of the 1948 Yugoslav Exhibition of Books, Folk Handicrafts and Photographs in London, the visit of British celebrities in Yugoslavia, as well as Yugoslav film screenings in Britain, it is evident that the Yugoslav government was still uncertain about how to properly conduct its cultural diplomacy. The focus of its cultural exchanges with Britain was on showcasing the victory and superiority of its socialist system. These activities contrasted with later more nuanced

arrangements of cultural events in Britain, in which heavy propagandistic messaging gradually faded.

Chapter Two focuses on the work of the British Council in Yugoslavia. This chapter traces the interaction between culture and politics, with a view toward the special role played by the Council in Britain's cultural diplomacy. It argues that the cultural work of the British Council could only partly facilitate Britain's political needs in Yugoslavia. However, the Council's staff at that time still believed that the long-term friendly atmosphere created by their efforts could yield significant results. The primary sources are mainly drawn from British Council reports and official correspondence.

Chapter Three explores British youth brigades working in Yugoslav Youth Voluntary Labour Actions (ORAs). It analyses how and why young British volunteers came to work in the reconstruction of Yugoslavia in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Through three chronologically arranged case studies, it examines the complexities and contradictions of the work of British youth brigades in Yugoslavia. This mobilisation of British youth was related to the post-war international reconstruction, idealism and international solidarity as well as the 'progressive, planning, internationalist, and humanitarian instincts' of the Attlee government at that time. This chapter will argue, however, that despite this idealistic narrative, problems always existed. This in turn reflected the gap in politics, ideology and values in both countries. However, the ORAs served as incipient attempts by the Yugoslav state to develop its cultural diplomacy. By endowing economic construction with cultural significance, the Yugoslav government strategically used these projects to burnish its image in Britain. The sources used for this chapter are mainly Yugoslav official reports and press coverage.

Chapter Four focuses on the visits of Yugoslav folk dance ensembles to Britain and Yugoslavia's participation in the Edinburgh Festival. By analysing these cultural activities, the chapter pieces together the image that Yugoslavia sought to project in Britain. With the help of press reports, I examine how this projected identity was received in Britain. This chapter argues that Yugoslav authorities lacked a clear plan for the country's cultural promotion in Britain. By presenting folk art traditions in the context of socialism, Yugoslavia aimed to build and publicise a unique Yugoslav national identity. Yet the effort was always misinterpreted by the British audience, reinforcing stereotypes of the Balkan region as being 'backward' and 'exotic'.

The last chapter turns to art exhibitions, revealing how Yugoslavia strategically combined narratives of cultural heritage and artistic modernism in its cultural diplomacy to Britain. The Folk Art Exhibition held in Britain in 1950 was distinct in that it emphasised the socialist

character of Yugoslav folk art, highlighting the application of handicrafts in contemporary society and their potential value in bilateral trade. Later, the opportunities to hold exhibitions in Britain were used by Yugoslavia to showcase its socialist modernity, well-developed political system, and supposedly open and free society. Yugoslav authorities attempted to accommodate pre-war modernism into collectivist ideals in the name of political legitimacy. This was manifest in four major artistic events: 'The Unknown Political Prisoner' international sculpture competition in 1953; the Henry Moore Exhibition held in Yugoslavia in 1955; and two major exhibitions of Yugoslav art in Britain: Modern Yugoslav Painting in 1956 and Contemporary Yugoslav Painting and Sculpture in 1961. Through these exhibitions, the Yugoslav government attempted to create its unique socialist modernism. These officially sponsored modernist art exhibitions made Yugoslavia stand out among the other communist countries in Europe. The main sources used here include exhibition catalogues, correspondence between governmental officials and press reports.

The Conclusion provides the story of bilateral cultural relations in the 1960s, as British-Yugoslav cultural relations entered a comparatively stable stage during this period. It also traces the recalibration of Yugoslavia's cultural diplomatic target countries, as Yugoslavia's strategic focus gradually switched to the Non-Aligned countries. In addition, with the increasing cultural influence from the US, American culture became popular inside Yugoslavia, which caused the decline of British-Yugoslav cultural exchanges.

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Introduction

In March 1953, Josip Broz Tito visited Britain.[1] It was a sensation because this was the first time the leader of Socialist Yugoslavia had visited a Western country. This was also his first visit abroad after Yugoslavia's break with Moscow in 1948. The communist leader of Yugoslavia successfully crossed the Iron Curtain and was now looking to the West for diplomatic and economic support. The visit took place against the background of warming relations between Yugoslavia and the West. The conflict between Belgrade and Moscow after the 1948 split could be exploited by the West to divide the Communist Bloc. From the British perspective, there was an opportunity to benefit economically through closer relations with Yugoslavia.[2] The series of internal Yugoslav policy changes were also welcomed by the British government as signs of liberalisation. From the Yugoslav perspective, as argued by Darko Bekić, Tito's visit to Britain carried great symbolic meaning in that the country was able to break political isolation by reintegrating itself into the international system.[3] Moreover, the visit was also significant for both Tito and his country. According to Samuel Foster, British public sentiment even during wartime was positive towards the figure of Tito. His 'active leadership and open appeals for British support in the liberation of his homeland, made him a popular symbol of anti-Fascist resistance'. Later with the start of the Cold War, Tito had effectively come to occupy 'the British geographical imaginary' as a representative of socialist Yugoslavia.[4] His significance was as much cultural as political in the state's appeal towards

[1] See Vladimir Petrović's article, 'Škola bontona: Ideološki uzroci protokolarnih i organizacionoh problema u pripremi posete Josipa Broza Tita Velikoj Britaniji 1953. Godine', *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju*, 1/3 (2002), pp.179–96

[2] See Beatrice Heuser, *Western 'Containment Policies' in the Cold War: The Yugoslav Case, 1948–53* (London, 1988), p.x, p.82.

[3] Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu: odnosi s velikim silama 1949–1955* (Zagreb, 1988), pp.345–427.

[4] Samuel Foster, *Yugoslavia in the British Imagination: Peace, War and Peasants before Tito* (London, 2021), p.151.

the outside world.[5] According to Katarina Spehnjak, the visit was designed sentimentally as a meeting of friends between Tito, a 'war hero', and Winston Churchill, 'one of the most prominent leaders of the anti-fascist coalition'. In addition, Tito's visit assumed further symbolic weight as it showed that 'one of the most influential world powers had received a leader of a small country'.[6]

During Tito's stay in UK, he not only held political meetings but also did some sightseeing. He enjoyed trips to the British Museum (See Figure I-1), the Tower of London (See Figure I-2), Windsor Castle, and Hampton Court Palace. He also watched the ballet at the Royal Opera House.[7] His trip represented the first step in building closer political relations between Yugoslavia and the West.



Figure I-1. Tito's Visit to British Museum, Photo Archive of Museum of Yugoslavia

[5] For Tito's role as a cultural symbol of Yugoslavia, see also *Tito in Africa: Picturing Solidarity,* ed. Radina Vučetić and Paul Betts (Belgrade, 2017).
[6] Katarina Spehnjak, 'Josip Broz Tito's Visit to Great Britain in 1953', *Review of Croatian History*, 1/1 (2005), pp.278–9.
[7] Andrew Harrison, 'A Cold War Visitor in London: Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia', https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cold-war-visitor-london-marshal-tito-yugoslavia/, (9 March 2022).



Figure I-2. Tito's Visit to the Tower of London, Photo Archive of Museum of Yugoslavia

Less well-known than the story of British–Yugoslav political rapprochement, however, was the ensuing development of cultural relations between the two countries, which were arguably just as important in the eyes of many contemporaries and have long been overlooked in Cold War historical studies. These bilateral cultural relations were in many ways exceptional. For example, Yugoslavia was one of only two communist countries in Europe where the British Council kept working during the 1950s. (The other was Poland.) The largest number of young people from a non-communist country who took part in voluntary reconstruction work in Yugoslavia just after the war also came from Britain. Yugoslavia was also the only communist country that participated in *The Unknown Political Prisoner* international sculpture competition held in London in 1953. These constituted only part of the story of British–Yugoslav cultural exchanges that took place during the Cold War, consolidated after Yugoslavia's rift with the Soviet Union in 1948.

Such bilateral exchanges were arguably undergirded by the special position Britain and Yugoslavia enjoyed in Cold War Europe. Britain's cultural politics in Europe were *sui generis* while it acted as a major ally of the United States. Yugoslavia found its neutral position in the

confrontation between the two blocs after its break from the USSR. Although the divergence in politics did exist between Britain and Yugoslavia, numerous documents show a surprising volume of cultural exchanges between the two nations, especially in the realms of education, music, films and the fine art.

Studying British–Yugoslav cultural relations enables us to challenge crude narratives of superpower rivalry in the Cold War. Europe was shaped by the Cold War bipolar conflict in many fields. The uncompromising ideological difference between two superpowers was reflected in their 'conceptions of the organisation of political, economic, and social life'.[8] The confrontation was not only reflected in geopolitical, military and economic competition, it also extended to social and cultural fields which in many ways deepened the division between the East and the West. Meanwhile, the intertwining of diverse dynamics marked the complexity of the Cold War. Culture thus carried the implications of both ideological strength and political messaging against such a background. Both the United States and the Soviet Union tended to use their respective cultural influence to 'win the hearts and minds' of people in Europe, with the aim of creating new cultural ties. The Soviets 'focused their cultural message on Russia's classical tradition, its music, paintings, history, and performing arts'.[9] For its satellite states in the East, the USSR required those People's Democracies to emulate its cultural model in creating a monolithic communist bloc utopia.

Yugoslavia was a different story. Generally, Yugoslavia's political relations with the West were improving after 1948 and it was receiving economic assistance from the West. Yugoslavia's role as a 'wedge' in the Communist Bloc was a significant dimension of the strategy of the West. Moreover, there was increasing attention to Yugoslavia's relations with the Soviet Union after Stalin's death in 1953. Political observers and various leftist parties in

[8] Nigel Gould-Davies, 'The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy', *Diplomatic History*, 27/2 (2003), p.195.
[9] Jessica Gienow-Hecht, 'Culture and the Cold War in Europe', in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Vol.1 Origins* (Cambridge 2010), p.404.

the West were also interested in Yugoslavia's special brand of socialism based on the system of workers' self-management.[10] All of these developments prompted new forms of cultural diplomacy.

In Cold War studies, cultural relations between Britain and Yugoslavia are treated as at most a side story or footnote compared to the relations between the two superpowers.[11] Casting attention toward this less-known diplomatic interface can help us to see how cultural diplomacy was practised by relatively smaller countries and how cultural exchanges served the foreign policy interests of Cold War politics and ideology.[12] Through this two-country perspective, we can see how cultural connections were forged across the East-West divide in Europe, showing both the uniqueness and commonality of bilateral cultural diplomacy.

The remainder of this introduction will discuss the political and cultural historiography of the Cold War, the historiography of British–Yugoslav cultural relations, and the purpose, sources and methodology of the proposed research, and will conclude by outlining the structure of the dissertation.

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[10] See Archives of Jugoslavia (AJ), F-507, IX, Komisija za međunarodne odnose i veze CK SKJ 1945-1990, Velika Britanija, 133/IX-36 (K10), Zabeleška o razgovoru druga Edvarda Kardelja sa pretstavnicima BBC-a Adamom i Clarkom, 26 May 1956.

[11] See Jessica Gienow-Hecht, 'Culture and the Cold War in Europe', pp. 398–419; Anne Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War, 1945–1955', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Vol.1 Origins*, pp.112–132; Svetozar Rajak, 'The Cold War in the Balkans, 1945–1956' in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Vol.1 Origins*, pp.198–220; Tony Shaw, 'The Politics of Cold War Culture', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 3/3 (2001), pp. 59-76; None of these research focus on British–Yugoslav bilateral cultural relations during the Cold War.

[12] For Britain's cultural diplomacy, see J. M. Lee, 'British Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War: 1946–61', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 9/1 (1998), pp.112–134; Sarah Davies, 'The Soft Power of Anglia: British Cold War Cultural Diplomacy in the USSR', *Contemporary British History*, 27/3 (2013), pp.297–323; James R. Vaughan, '"A Certain Idea of Britain": British Cultural Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1945–57', *Contemporary British History*, 19/2 (2005), pp.151–168. For Yugoslavia's cultural relations, see Miroslav Perišić, 'Yugoslavia: The 1950 Cultural and Ideological Revolution' in Svetozar Rajak, Konstantina E. Botsiou, Eirini Karamouzi and Evanthis Hatzivassiliou (eds), *The Balkans in the Cold War* (London, 2017), pp.285–305; Predrag J. Marković, *Beograd između istoka i zapada 1948–1965* (Belgrade, 1996); Miroslav Perišić, *Od Staljina ka Sartru: formiranje jugoslovenske inteligencije na evropskim univerzitetima 1945–1958* (Belgrade, 2012); Francesca Rolandi, 'A Filter for Western Cultural Products: The Influence of Italian Popular Culture on Yugoslavia, 1955–65', in Somon Mikkonen and Pia Koivunen (eds), *Beyond the Divide: Entangled Histories of Cold War Europe* (New York, 2015), pp.277–294.

Research Questions; Culture and Cold War Cultural Diplomacy

The main questions of this dissertation are: What motivations and influences shaped British–Yugoslav cultural relations between 1945 and 1961? How were cultural exchanges conducted between the two countries? How successful were these initiatives in terms of achieving their aims and goals?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to look at cultural diplomacy first. Culture in this research implies bilateral activities in the fine arts, music, literature, film, sports, education and technology and so on.

Nowadays, there is an increasing historiography on cultural diplomacy and the significance of culture during the Cold War era.[13] Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried define cultural diplomacy as 'a national policy designed to support the export of representative samples of that nation's culture in order to further the objectives of foreign policy'.[14] An instrumental view of cultural diplomacy similar to this (e.g., 'using the contacts made between different peoples in order to further the line of policy being taken in relations between governments') is relatively common.[15] Such instrumental views also underpinned much research on U.S. cultural diplomacy during the Cold War.[16] Walter L. Hixson persuasively conveys the significance of culture in U.S. foreign policy in this way: 'Through a

[13] See Ien Ang, Yudhishthir Raj Isar and Phillip Mar, 'Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest?', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 21/4 (2015), pp.365–381; Cadra Peterson McDaniel, *American-Soviet Cultural Diplomacy: The Bolshoi Ballet's American Premiere* (Lanham, 2015).

[14] Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried, 'The Model of Cultural Diplomacy: Power, Distance, and the Promise of Civil Society', in Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (eds), *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* (New York, 2010), p.13. For the study of cultural diplomacy, see also Charlotte Faucher, 'Cultural Diplomacy and International Cultural Relations in Twentieth-Century Europe', *Contemporary European History*, 25/2 (2016), pp.373–85.

[15] Lee, 'British Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War', p.113.

[16] See Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London, 2000); Greg Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists: Art, Literature, and American Cultural Diplomacy* (New York, 2015); Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca–Colonisation and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill, 1994); Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York, 2000); Alexander Stephan, *The Americanisation of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti–Americanism after 1945* (New York, 2006); *Reasserting America in the 1970s: U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Rebuilding of America's Image Abroad*, ed. Hallvard Notaker, Giles Scott-Smith and David J. Snyder (Manchester, 2016).

process of gradual cultural infiltration, Americans could begin to export the symbols, lifestyles, consumerism, and core values of their society.'[17] Cultural diplomacy could be expanded into 'the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding'.[18]

Thus, culture was considered an indispensable part of a country's soft power.[19] It is necessary and important to distinguish terms with different emphases used in this dissertation, such as 'propaganda', 'cultural diplomacy', 'public diplomacy' and 'soft power'. The line between these concepts is usually vague in light of the Cold War intertwining of politics, ideology, culture and social-economic issues. This is especially the case with the concepts of 'cultural diplomacy', 'public diplomacy' and 'soft power', since they are often used interchangeably in scholarship.[20]

The term 'propaganda' typically denotes communications of a confrontational, hard-hitting and combative nature. It is highly politicised and largely associated with 'denouncing the discourse of the other with obvious negative connotations'.[21] Forms of 'propaganda' usually include radio broadcasting, printing and dissemination of political and ideologically-oriented publications such as newsletters and journals and sundry efforts at psychological warfare.[22] In addition, lectures and film screening can sometimes also be propagandistic,

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[17] Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*: *Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945–1961* (Basingstoke, 1997), p.xii.
[18] M. Cummings, *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey* (Washington, 2003), p.1.
[19] Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, 2009).
[20] See Martina Topić and Cassandra Sciortino, 'Cultual Diplomacy and Cultural Imperialism: A Framework for the Analysis', in Martina Topić and Siniša Rrodin (eds), *Cultural Diplomacy or Cultural Imperialism* (Frankfurt, 2012), pp.9-48.
[21] Ibid.
[22] See Linda Risso, 'Radio Wars: Broadcasting in the Cold War' *Cold War History*, 13/2 (2013), pp.145–52; Richard H. Cummings, *Radio Free Europe's 'Crusade for Freedom': Rallying Americans behind Cold War Broadcasting, 1950–1960* (London, 2010); *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: A Collection of Studies and Documents*, ed. A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta (Budapest, 2010); Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (London, 1997); *Cold War Propaganda in the 1950s*, ed. Gary D. Rawnsley (London, 1999); Nicholas J. Schlosser, *Cold War on the Airwaves: The Radio Propaganda War against East Germany* (Urbana, 2017); Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence, 2006); Stephen Long, 'CIA–MI6 Psychological Warfare and the Subversion of Communist Albania in the Early Cold War, *Intelligence and National Security*, 35/6 (2020), pp.787–807.

depending on the context. In much historiography, meanwhile, 'cultural diplomacy' or 'public diplomacy' is essentially a euphemism for 'propaganda' under the guise of more moderate activities, in that cultural exchanges during this period were usually aimed at image building and national branding with a political imperative and confrontational character.[23]

In this dissertation, propaganda is understood as information about political and ideological issues closely related to a country's foreign and domestic politics, typically ideologically driven, but not necessarily restricted to those issues. Social and economic themes can also be significant components of propaganda. By contrast, 'cultural diplomacy' is generally less overtly politicised, referring to diverse cultural elements used to build up positive national images, influence foreign public opinion, and create long-term affirmative attitudes. Although its ultimate goal is usually to serve state foreign policy, 'cultural diplomacy' is generally more independent, flexible, and diverse, and less confrontational than propaganda. However, they can overlap, as noted in this dissertation when discussing certain cultural diplomatic activities in the early post-war years.

U.S. and Soviet cultural influences in the realm of soft power are central to Cold War cultural studies. Kathleen Starck makes a strong connection between cultural policies and the political purposes behind them as she concludes that 'Cold War cultural products were directed at proving superiority over the enemy, at demonstrating the evilness of the other side. . . .'[24] Following this propaganda-oriented perspective, David Caute discusses the cultural confrontation between the USSR and the United States. He also looks into their cultural policies in their respective spheres of influence.[25] In addition to traditional subjects of Cold War culture such as music, dance, exhibitions and films, recent scholarship has explored the role of

[23] See Introduction, in Cyril Cordoba, *China-Swiss Relations during the Cold War, 1949-1989: Between Soft Power and Propaganda* (London, 2022).
[24] *Between Fear and Freedom: Cultural Representations of the Cold War*, ed. Kathleen Starck (Newcastle, 2010), pp.2–3.
[25] David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford, 2003).

modernist architecture and design in the cultural Cold War, especially from a Western perspective.[26]

In more recent research, however, some studies have begun to explore cultural relations outside the framework of confrontation. For example, Somon Mikkonen and Pia Koivunen argue that even though Europe was divided, the Iron Curtain was porous and there were increasing transnational connections.[27] Cross-bloc cultural links were never cut off. They note a revival of international attitudes emphasising 'cooperation and shared goals' in Cold War cultural practices in contrast to interstate tensions.[28]

The transnational approach encompasses both official and non-official exchanges involving actors from government and non-governmental organisations as well as individuals. Cultural relations here are not considered as simply mirroring diplomatic relations or pure cultural confrontation. Rather, this approach attaches more importance to society, intellectual creativity and people that passed through the Iron Curtain. Thus Sari Autio-Sarrasmo and Katalin Miklóssy suggest a new paradigm of 'multileveled-multipolar interaction' that stresses exchange instead of confrontation and the transfer of cultural achievements despite the division in Europe. They also challenge the bipolar focus of Cold War historiography by looking at multipolar actors, which include not only the states but also international organisations and individuals.[29]

Much of this newer literature highlights the role of individuals in trans-border exchanges. Marsha Siefert, for example, introduces the concept of the 'willing interpreter', a person who

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[26] Vladimir Kulić, 'Introduction' in Vladimir Kulić, Timothy Parker and Monica Penick (eds), *Sanctioning Modernism: Architecture and the Making of Postwar Identities* (Austin, 2014), p.9. See also *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia*, ed. Martino Stierli and Vladimir Kulić (New York, 2018); Jane C. Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies* (New York, 2010); Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis, 2010).

[27] A similar argument was also raised by Beatrice Scutaru in 'French-Romanian Academic Exchanges in the 1960s', in *Beyond the Divide*, pp.121-137.

[28] Somon Mikkonen and Pia Koivunen, 'Introduction' in *Beyond the Divide*, pp.1–10.

[29] Sari Autio-Sarasmo and Katalin Miklóssy, 'Introduction: The Cold War from a New Perspective', in Sari Autio-Sarasmo and Katalin Miklóssy (eds), *Reaccessing Cold War Europe* (London, 2011), pp.1–15.

is 'willing to listen to the language of the other, to understand the culture of the other, in order to move toward common ground'.[30] Patryk Babiracki elaborates in detail how these 'willing interpreters' or cultural practitioners attempted (often in vain) to consolidate Soviet culture in Poland.[31] In her study of cultural diplomacy, Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht underlines the autonomy of cultural diplomacy practitioners. Rather than treating culture as inevitably subservient to foreign policy, Hecht emphasises the 'sustained two-way cultural dialogue and exchange' in cultural diplomacy.[32] This is in accordance with the cultural relations that this research analyses, in that cultural exchange is a process of mutual learning and influence.

The aforementioned studies show that Cold War culture was not only about propaganda or psychological warfare. The purpose of cultural exchange could sometimes be as simple as curiosity, mutual understanding or national pride. As early as January 1948, for instance, the editor of the British Camera Press company, T. L. Blau, stated that 'there is a continuous and considerable demand for Yugoslav photographs, not news pictures but series of photographs which give an up-to-date and true illustration of life and people in the country'.[33] It shows that the British public was curious and wished to learn more about socialist Yugoslavia. Such trans-border contacts were regular across the Iron Curtain in Eastern Europe after 1956.[34] Even though politics closely intertwined with culture during the Cold War period, specific case studies prove that bilateral or transnational cultural exchanges could go beyond ideological

[30] Marsha Siefert, 'Meeting at a Far Meridian: U.S.–Soviet Cultural Diplomacy on Film in the Early Cold War', in Patryk Babiracki, Kenyon Zimmer and Michael David-Fox (eds), *Cold War Crossings: International Travel and Exchange across the Soviet Bloc, 1940s-1960s* (College Station, 2014), p.169.
[31] Patryk Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland: Culture and the Making of Stalin's New Empire, 1943–1957* (Chapel Hill, 2015).
[32] Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, 'The Moddel of Cultural Diplomacy: Power Distance, and the Promise of Civil Society', in Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (eds), *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* (New York, 2010), p.22.
[33] Diplomatic Archives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia (DAMFARS), Telegram from Editor of Camera Press to the Director of Foreign Press Department Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 January 1948.
[34] Theodora K. Dragostinova, *The Cold War from the Margins: A Small Socialist State on the Global Cultural Scene* (Ithaca, 2021), p.7.

confrontation.[35] Although many of the cultural activities that will be studied here were either launched or sponsored by governments, cultural products did not always straightforwardly represent and conform to the state's aims.

Cultural diplomacy looked less politically oriented on the surface compared with the traditional diplomatic strategy and it targeted a broader public. Unlike with high political diplomacy, the practitioners of cultural exchange were not restricted to elite diplomats and governmental officials. They could be common 'cultural workers' such as musicians, writers, artists and students. They could drive changes in the social and cultural atmosphere by offering cultural products. Moreover, the goal of cultural diplomacy of the government and authorities was not monolithic. Interests and aims often varied among groups and individuals. That said, the broader message created through the lens of cultural diplomacy generally corresponded to the country's main foreign policy objectives.

British–Yugoslav Cultural Relations from Interwar to Cold War

Before discussing British-Yugoslav cultural relations during the Cold War, it is necessary to look back at the interwar years to see how cultural relations were formed, shaped and developed as background to the Cold War milieu.

The interwar period witnessed the modernisation process of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in terms of political, social, economic, and cultural development. In the cultural sphere, Western societies were taken as the cultural paradigm for emulation and influence, representing the country's integration into 'European civilisation'. Belgrade was the cultural centre of the

[35] See Marianne Rostgaard, 'Challenging Old Cold War Stereotypes: The Case of Danish-Polish Youth Exchange and the European Détente, 1965–75', in *Beyond the Divide*, pp.44–62; Katalin Miklóssy, 'New Advantages of Old Kinship Ties: Finnish-Hungarian interactions in the 1970s', in Sari Autio-Sarasmo and Katalin Miklóssy (eds), *Reaccessing Cold War Europe* (London, 2011), pp.138–56; Beatrice Scutaru, 'French-Romanian Academic Exchanges in the 1960s', in *Beyond the Divide*, pp.121–37; Anikó Macher, 'Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy 1957–1963: Echoes of Western Cultural Activity in a Communist Country', in *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, pp.75–108.

Balkans, and many cultural institutions were founded during this period to promote Yugoslav cultural identity.[36]

According to historian Pređa J. Marković, cultural influences coming from different countries shaped the cultural scene in interwar Belgrade. Literature and painting were mostly influenced by France, with strong Czech inflections in music and Russian influence on ballet and opera.[37] There were also art exhibitions from France, Germany and Italy at the time.[38] Ranka Gašić has highlighted the strong French cultural influence throughout the interwar period due to political reasons (Yugoslavia's membership in the Little Entente) and the educational background of Belgrade intellectual elites.[39] Perišić confirms such a view, arguing that 'French cultural influence in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and especially in Serbia, was the most widespread of all foreign cultural influences', one that particularly attracted young people and intellectuals and was expressed through 'science, art, literature, education, then through the way of life, manners and fashion in the narrower closed circles of urban areas'.[40]

Gašić also notes increasing British influence and closer cultural contacts after 1934. This was partly due to the political connections with and military support from Britain during the First World War. Many Yugoslav students were educated in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s and there were also strong personal links between politicians and influential elites.[41] But she also acknowledges the limits of British influence in the country. Unlike Germany, which enjoyed wide and long-standing influences due to its geographical proximity to Yugoslavia,

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[36] Ranka Gašić, *Beograd u hodu ka Evropi: kulturni uticaji Britanije i Nemačke na beogradsku elitu 1918-1941* (Belgrade, 2005), p.8.
[37] Predrag J. Marković, *Beograd i Evropa 1918-1941: Evropski uticaji na process modernizacije Beograda* (Beograd, 1992), pp.220-221. For French influence in literature, this was especially the case with the surrealist movement in Belgrade during the interwar period. Hristić's *The Legend of Ohrid* contained strong elements of impressionism. And there was expressionism in Konjović's *Koštana*. Both musical works were performed at the Edinburgh Festival in the early 1950s, showing the continued trace of modernism even in the post-war socialist period.
[38] Marković, *Beograd i Evropa 1918-1941*, p.174.
[39] Gašić, *Beograd u hodu ka Evropi*, p.8.
[40] Perišić, *Od Staljina ka Sartru*, p.30.
[41] Gašić, *Beograd u hodu ka Evropi,* p.8.

Britain's role 'more or less remained in a limited circle of public workers, politicians and intellectuals'. Britain was considered significant in the sense of broader international relations rather than in the cultural sphere despite being a friendly country, mainly because of its geographical distance. During the 1930s, many political circles in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia regarded Britain 'as the last defence against Nazism'.[42] In the late 1930s, political tensions among Western European countries extended to cultural competition in the region. In 1936, an office of the British Council opened in Yugoslavia.[43] In the same year, the German Academy in Munich formed the Committee for the Southeast. It mainly 'organised language courses in Yugoslavia, initiated the establishment of German schools and influenced the selection of lecturers for the German language at the Department of German Studies in Belgrade'.[44] These could be regarded as a primary form of cultural diplomacy coming through the official channels of foreign governments.

Yugoslavia's cultural policy during the interwar period, according to historian Ljubodrag Dimić, 'was not clearly defined, or planned for the long-term, nor was it consistent in its measures and actions, which meant that foreign cultural influence and with it ideological propaganda and political will could easily penetrate the cultural and social life of the Kingdom, and occupied an important place in it.'[45] The interwar period therefore witnessed various complex dynamics that shaped Yugoslav cultural ties with Western Europe as well as its own cultural development and modernisation. 'Cultural influence depended on economic ties…traditional attachment and orientation toward certain world centres of education, culture and intellectual life, such as Paris, Vienna, Budapest, Prague, Munich, Berlin and Moscow.'[46]

[42] Gašić, *Beograd u hodu ka Evropi*, p.10. The author also mentioned the admiration of British social and political system, as an exemplary for Yugoslavia as a nascent state.
[43] Ibid, p.19.
[44] Ibid, p.18. The German Academy in Munich was an institution that had primacy in Germany for cultural propaganda in the southeast.
[45] Ljubodrag Dimić, *Agitprop kultura: agitpropovska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji 1945-1952* (Belgrade, 1988), p.162.
[46] Ibid.

Relations with Britain were different. One Yugoslav government report accurately described why these relations were kept at arm's length:

> The relations between Yugoslavia and England were always good, correct, but they were never intimate. There were no conflicts, no friction, but there were no connections and friendship pacts either. This resulted from the very character of English foreign policy and especially the principles that policy adhered to in relation to Europe.[47]

Nevertheless, during the 1930s, Britain's significance grew in the eyes of interwar Yugoslav's regime given increasing political tension in Europe. Britain was also intensifying its political influence through cultural institutions and other channels within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This dynamic continued after 1945 and into the early Cold War period.

From the British perspective, I will explore changing British perceptions of Yugoslavia from before the Yugoslav–Soviet rupture to the formation of Non-Aligned Movement in 1961. How did political changes influence cultural relations? I will study both official attitudes (through the policy of the British Council) and the general audience reaction to the cultural exchanges with Yugoslavia. From the Yugoslav perspective, the motivations to establish closer cultural relations with Britain are noteworthy. One key question needs to be answered. Did the Yugoslav government consider such relations as an opportunity to show its superiority in socialism compared to the Soviet model, as well as to show the openness and uniqueness of its road to socialism?

Before its split with Soviet Union in 1948, Yugoslavia's new 'sphere of culture' was organised according to the Soviet cultural model.[48] Its cultural policy was highly centralised and the Communist Party's departments of Agitation and Propaganda (Agitprop) maintained tight control of cultural production across the country in line with the standard doctrine of

[47] AJ, F-836 KMJ I-3-a/5, elaborati o odnosima Jugoslavije sa evropskim zemljama i SAD izmedju dva rata, undated.
[48] Goran Miloradović, *Lepota pod nadzorom:sovjetski kulturni uticaji u Jugoslaviji 1945-1955* (Belgrade, 2012), p.141; see also Dimić, *Agitprop kultura*, p.164.

Socialist Realism.[49] The state made all decisions on the activity of culture and dealt with all issues of cultural development and cultural policy (including its goals, methods, instruments and finance). The departments of Agitprop played 'the first-class role in the formation of a new cultural policy and the direction of the entire ideological and cultural sphere'. Existing in all party cells, their activities took place through mass organisations such as People's Front, trade unions, youth and women's organisations and so on to ensure party control in culture and ideology.[50] The aim of the Agitprop work was to cultivate the consciousness of communist ideology of the entire nation and build the spirit of the socialist 'new man'.

In the hierarchy of the cultural and ideological field, the Department for Agitation and Propaganda at the Central Committee of the Communist Party was at the highest level and played the most important role 'in the field of the entire spiritual sphere' and has the final decision-making power in wider area where there were 'no boundaries between culture, ideology, education, agitation'.[51]

During this period, most of Yugoslavia's cultural exchanges were conducted with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe's People's Democracies. Cultural links with the West were mainly forged through local communists or leftists, yet on the official level cultural relations with Western governments were scarce. Whereas cultural activities from the West were usually regarded as political propaganda and suspected of hidden political motives (See Chapter 2 British Council's work), cultural connections made with European communists and left fellow travellers supposedly showcased the spirit of Leftist Internationalism.

[49] Vladimir Kulić, Maroje Mrduljaš and Wolfgang Thaler, *Modernism in Between: The Mediatory architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia* (Berlin, 2012), p.33.
[50] Doknić, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije 1946–1963*, p.69; p.72.
[51] Ibid, p.70. Agitprop had three sectors responsible for different working contents: sector of agitation and press; sector within the party government in charge of culture (the party schools and education of Marxist-Leninist education); cultural sector (film, literature, fine arts). There were also other state Agitprop institutions such as TANJUG, Ministry of Education, Radio Belgrade and so on.

Yugoslavia's connection with the European Left can be traced back to the interwar period. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia had a lively left-wing intellectual culture in the cities of Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. Despite the government repression of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1921, publications promoting European 'radical political and aesthetic ideas and intellectual networks that reached from Paris to Prague to Petrograd' continued to circulate.[52] Leftist literature and left-wing intelligentsia were directly inspired by ideals in Soviet and German literature.[53] The left-wing magazine *New Literature* 'systematically tried to introduce the domestic public to writers who raised social issues and advocated internationalism'.[54] Many intelligentsia, artists and writers under the influence of modernism were also left-leaning and participated in the Yugoslav liberation movement during the war, later becoming party cultural elites active in the cultural field, especially after 1950.[55] In addition, the Spanish Civil War strengthened Leftist Internationalism, as 'Tito…and many other leading political, military and diplomatic figures in communist Yugoslavia, had either fought on the republican side in Spain or had been involved in organising the participation, showing the internationalist position of the Yugoslav volunteers'.[56]

These leftist connections were deepened during the Second World War and continued after the Communist government of Yugoslavia was established. For instance, with help and financial support from Swedish leftists, the Association of Yugoslavs in Sweden 'Free Yugoslavia' with headquarters in Stockholm was formed in January 1944. The Swedish communist paper *Ny Dag* reported on its founding meeting. Members were mainly Yugoslav fugitives (the majority of them partisans who fled from the Nazi concentration camp in Norway)

[52] James M. Robertson, 'Literature, Revolution, and National Aesthetics on the Interwar Yugoslav Left', *Nationalities Papers*, 46/2 (2018), p.301.
[53] Marković, *Beograd i Evropa 1918*-1941, pp.220-221
[54] Ibid., p.172.
[55] See Kulić, Mrduljaš and Thaler, *Modernism in Between*; Marković, *Beograd i Evropa 1918-1941*
[56] Vjeran Pavlaković, 'The Spanish Civil war and the Yugoslav Successor States', *Contemporary European History*, 29/3 (2020), pp.279-280.

in Sweden. In cooperation with the Norwegian Association and the Danish Association, the task of 'Free Yugoslavia' was to 'connect with ideologically programmatically related organisations in Sweden'. Several publications including *Informacioni list*, *Aktivista* and a journal for cultural issues, *Novi Svet*, were printed.[57] The relations made between 'Free Yugoslavia' and Swedish left-wing parties 'laid the foundations of Yugoslav-Swedish relations after 1945'.[58] Such relations with the Left were also reflected in later Youth Labour Actions when many Scandinavian youth volunteers came to participate in the railway construction.[59] There were other forms of cultural cooperation with Western European leftists such as French communists, which were conducted through communist organisations similar to the British Yugoslav Association (BYA) and other channels.

The Cominform Resolution, which marked Yugoslavia's split with the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc, was a turning point in Yugoslavia's state policy. After the Cominform Resolution, French communist newspapers wrote negatively about Yugoslavia.[60] 'During the second half of August 1948, the communist press in France stepped up its campaign against the leadership of the Communist Party. The organ KPF *Humanité* was in the lead.'[61] Relations with the Italian Communist Party were also severed due to the Resolution and were only re-established in the middle of the 1950s.[62] The subsequent propaganda war with both the USSR and the Eastern Bloc challenged the legitimacy of Yugoslav Communist Party and its rule.

Due to the deterioration of relations with Soviet-led Communist Parties, the Yugoslav side sought opportunities to resume relations with the European non-Communist left. The Yugoslav

[57] Goran Latinović, 'Jugoslovensko-švedski odnosi 1941-1945', *Istoija 20. veka*, 33/1 (2015), pp.56-57.
[58] Ibid, p.60.
[59] For the experience of young leftists who participated in the Youth Labour Actions in the summers of 1946-1948, see Tea Sindbaek Andersen, 'Youth Brigadiers at the Railway-Personal Perspectives on Tito's Yugoslavia in the Making', in Óscar J. Martín García and Rósa Magnúsdóttir (eds), *Machineries of Persuasion: European Soft Power and Public Diplomacy during the Cold War* (Munich, Vienna 2019), pp.105-120.
[60] Perišić, *Od Staljina ka Sartru*, p.136.
[61] Ibid, p.138.
[62] Saša Mišić, 'Renewal of Relations Between the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and the Italian Communist Party 1955-1956', *Tokovi istorije*, 2 (2013), pp.121-145.

Communist Party aimed to revive the international labour movement and the political mission of solidarity. At the same time, West European left-wing parties were generally interested in Yugoslavia's creation of workers' self-management as a viable form of socialism. Workers' self-management was Yugoslavia's iteration of its 'own road to Socialism' which departed from the standard Soviet version. Here was a 'withering away' of state policy, whose core concept was 'decentralisation'.[63] The main editor of the French news magazine *France Observateur* captured the fascination among Western left-wing intellectuals towards Yugoslavia, 'especially the concrete experience of workers' self-determination'.[64] New contacts were made with British Labourites and French socialists and the Social Democratic Party in West Germany; of these, the British Labour Party was the most important.[65] On the one hand, this was because the Labour Party was Europe's largest social democratic party at that time and was in power to shape British foreign policy. On the other, building contact with the Labour Party also set up the base for further connections with other social democratic parties in Europe.[66] There was also increasing cooperation with other socialist parties in Western Europe, including those in Belgium, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Additionally, attempts were made to establish contacts with socialist parties beyond Europe, such as those in Asia and Africa.[67] During this period, pursuing political contact and cultural connections represented a lifeline for Yugoslavia's post-Cominform policy.

[63] Fred Warner Neal, *Titoism in Action: The Reforms in Yugoslavia after 1948* (Berkeley, 1958), p.8.
[64] AJ, F-507 IX, Komisija za međunarodne odnose i veze CK SKJ 1945-1990, Francuska, 30/V-99 (K12), Zabeleška o razgovoru Milovada Pešića sa Gilles Martinet-om, glavnim urednikom "France-Observateur"-a, 12 March 1957.
[65] See Aleksandar V. Miletić, '"Unrealised Nordic Dream". Milovan Đilas and the Scandinavian Socialists', *Tokovi istorije*, 3 (2015), pp.89-106; See also Natalija Dimić, 'In Search of an Authentic Position: The First Phase of Political and Ideological Cooperation between Yugoslavia and the West European Left, 1948-1953', Acta Histriae, 27/1 (2019), pp.55–74.
[66] Vladimir Unkovski-Kirica, 'The Yugoslav Communists' Special Relationship with the British Labour Party 1950-1956', *Cold War History*, 14/1 (2014), p.25.
[67] AJ, F-507 IX, Komisija za međunarodne odnose i veze CK SKJ 1945-1990, S/a-40, *Zapisnik sa sastanka Komisije za međunarodne veze SSRNJ održanog 17 maja 1956.*

In addition to making close contacts with the European Left, Yugoslavia's cultural exchanges with Western countries expanded after 1948.[68] Efforts were made to 'integrate its cultural and art creativity into general artistic and spiritual trends [in Europe]'. In order to do so, more active cultural exchanges were sought with the West through literature, theatre performance, introduction of foreign films and foreign guest performances. During 1950 and 1952, for example, 'Yugoslavia participated in 160 scientific congresses and gatherings, [while] 22 exhibitions were organised abroad. Yugoslavia participated in 7 international exhibitions, [and] 6 exhibitions of foreign artists were organised'.[69]

In the domestic cultural field, meanwhile, there were visible changes in cultural policy after 1948. Socialist Realism was abandoned and the Department of Agitprop was formally abolished in 1952. The U-turn in Yugoslavia's policies also reflected its changing cultural relations with the West. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) believed it was necessary to enhance Yugoslavia's international reputation by changing Western perceptions of Yugoslavia. Culture was regarded by the Yugoslav government from 1950 as 'the advance guard and an integral part of its foreign policy'.[70]

With the opening to Western culture, more freedom was given to cultural creativity and a 'modernist paradigm of abstract art' became 'the official state art'.[71] The idea of 'Yugoslav exceptionalism' was promoted by government as Yugoslavia enjoyed 'a specific identity in which elements from both opposite Cold War blocs coexisted'.[72] As Rolandi has argued, 'popular culture is shown to have been a tool of legitimisation for Socialist Yugoslavia and a good medium for delivering an image of openness and modernity abroad'.[73] According to Dean

[68] See Marković, *Beograd između istoka i zapada 1948–1965*; Perišić, *Od Staljina ka Sartru*.
[69] Dimić, *Agitprop kultura*, pp. 261-262.
[70] Perišić, 'Yugoslavia: The 1950 Cultural and Ideological Revolution', p.293; p.298.
[71] Ana Janevski, *As Soon As I Open My Eyes I See a Film: Experiments in the Art of Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s* (Warsaw, 2010), p.16.
[72] Rolandi, 'A Filter for Western Cultural Products', p.281.
[73] Ibid., pp.277–8.

Vuletic, 'Yugoslavia's museums, cinemas, concert halls and bookshops opened their doors to cultural imports from the West'.[74] Yugoslav state cultural institutions changed their attitude to Western popular music by lending support to the organisation of jazz concerts across the country in the early 1950s.[75] 'Jazz musicians - such as Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, and Louis Armstrong - were received with standing ovations'.[76] In the art world, an exhibition of 'Contemporary Art in the USA' organised by the Museum of Modern Art in New York was opened in Belgrade in 1956.[77] The photographic exhibition 'The Family of Man' (also organised by MoMA), 'attracted its largest audience not in Paris or London, but in Belgrade in 1957'.[78] Although such cultural development always had to comply with perceived socialist values, Yugoslavia's cultural openness after 1948 provided a platform for Western culture to spread and thrive, opening up its reception much earlier than elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

That said, it is important to recall that the cultural diplomacy strategy between Yugoslavia and Eastern Bloc countries shared some similarities, especially in the early post-war period when all of them were imitating the Soviet cultural model. Poland, arguably the closest to Yugoslavia in the Eastern Bloc (especially after 1956) in terms of its openness to Western cultural developments, pursued some similar strategies to Yugoslavia during the Cold War years. Michał Wenderski, for example, has explored cultural relations between Poland and the Netherlands during the early post-war years when political hostility grew between the East and the West. [79] The forms and methods of bilateral cultural exchange were similar to those

[74] Sabina Mihelj, 'The Dreamworld of New Yugoslav Culture and the Logic of Cold War Binaries', in Giles Scott-Smith and Peter Romijn (eds), *Divided Dreamworlds? The Cultural Cold War in East and West* (Amsterdam, 2012), p.98.
[75] Dean Vuletic, 'The Socialist Star: Yugoslavia, Cold War Politics and the Eurovision Song Contest', in Ivan Raykoff and Robert Deam Tobin (eds), *A Song for Europe: Popular Music and Politics in the Eurovision Song Contest* (Aldershot, 2007), pp.83–97.
[76] Marković, *Beograd između istoka i zapada1948-1965,* p.471.
[77] This exhibition introduced Abstract Expressionism to Europe. *Savremena umetnost u SAD* (1956), in Kulić, Mrduljaš and Thaler, *Modernism in Between*, p.39.
[78] "276,000 Yugoslavs See "Family of Man' Photos", *The New York Times* (February 26, 1957) in Kulić, Mrduljaš and Thaler, *Modernism in Between*, pp.38-9.
[79] By looking at bilateral cultural diplomacy and communist authorities' maneuverer of soft power, he attempted to disentangle the relations between politics and culture during the turmoil period. See Michał Wenderski, 'Art

between Yugoslavia and Britain during the same period, focusing on creating relations through friendly figures (usually leftists) and friendship societies, promoting folk art, publishing books and staging musical events.[80] However, after the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform, the divergence grew in their respective cultural policies, as artistic development and cultural diplomacy towards the West stagnated in Poland during high Stalinism.

This was also the case with other People's Democracies. The cultural exchanges with the West from the Eastern Bloc in general became more popular only after Stalin's death in 1953. Taking Poland as an example again, before 1954, the Polish folk ensemble Mazowsze toured only in their communist ally countries in order to strengthen socialist fraternity. After 1954, it started to tour the West so as to 'represent and popularise the cultural achievements of the "new" Poland'. Its tour to France in October 1954 marked an uptick in cultural exchanges between the two hostile nations.[81]

For Yugoslavia, however, as art historian Vladimir Kulić points out, the period after 1948 was crucial, since 'the resultant flourishing of modernist culture became a signifier of cultural freedom and, consequently, of Yugoslavia's "break with Russia" and its distinction from other socialist states.' Such a cultural break was promoted in Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy towards Britain and the West. Although modernism started to be acceptable again elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc during the 1960s, by then Yugoslavia's cultural policy had already shifted from maintaining independence to playing a leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement.[82] So

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versus Politics: Polish-Dutch International Cultural Relationships at the Outset of the Cold Warr (1947-50)', *Cold War History*, 22/1 (2022), pp.103-121.

[80] For the use of music in Polish cultural diplomacy, see J. Mackenzie Pierce, 'Global Chopin: The 1949 Centenary and Polish Internationalism during the Early Cold War', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 75/3 (2022), pp.487-545. Other works see Igor Czernecki, 'An Intellectual Offensive: The Ford Foundation and the Destalinisation of the Polish Social Sciences', *Cold War History*, 13/3 (2013), pp.289-310; Keith Hatschek, 'The Impact of American Jazz Diplomacy in Poland During the Cold War Era', *Jazz Perspective*, 4/3 (2010), pp.253-300; Yale Richmond, 'The Polish Connection', *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park, 2021), pp.200-204.

[81] Berenika Szymanski-Düll, '"A tour to the West could bring a lot of trouble…"-The Mazowsze State Folk song and Dance Ensemble during the First Period of the Cold War', in Christopher B. Balme and Berenika Szymanski-Düll (eds), *Theatre, Globalisation and the Cold War* (Cham, 2017), p.189; p.194.

[82] Kulić, Mrduljaš and Thaler, *Modernism in Between*, p.33.

although there was more freedom in the Eastern Bloc for cultural manoeuvre with the West by the mid-1960s, it took place much later and with less flexibility in comparison with Yugoslavia.

Britain played a significant role in Cold War cultural development in Europe. A profusion of literature analyses Britain's cultural policy with the focus on winning the hearts and minds of people in other countries. The increasing amount of research about British cultural policy encompasses a number of cultural components, such as education, religion, consumerism, cinema, sport, fine art and music.[83] However, the majority of the literature on British cultural relations with other countries focuses on British propaganda, which emphasises the anti-Communist nature of its foreign cultural policy. Most of these studies, furthermore, have focused on the Soviet Union.[84]

Yet direct propaganda constituted only one form of British foreign policy in the Cold War, which also included more open-ended cultural exchanges with other countries. The line between cultural exchange and propaganda in British cultural policy was discernible when comparing its direct anti-communist propaganda and the more neutral promotion of British culture. The latter can be categorised as cultural diplomacy. The British Council was entrusted by the British government to take primary responsibility for its cultural diplomacy. The Council's role was to 'make British life and thought more widely known abroad, to encourage the study of the English language, and to render available abroad current British contributions to literature, science, or the fine arts'.[85] This thesis will look at British foreign cultural relations from a cultural diplomacy perspective and highlight the early post-war work of the British Council in Yugoslavia.

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[83] Tony Shaw, 'Introduction: Britain and the Cultural Cold War', *Contemporary British History*, 19/2 (2005), pp.109–15.

[84] See John Jenks, *British Propaganda and News Media in the Cold War* (Edinburgh, 2022); Andrew Defty, *Co-ordinating Cold War Propaganda: British and American Liaison in Anti-communist Propaganda, 1950–1951* (Salford, 2002); Andrew Defty, *Britain, America, and Anti-communist Propaganda, 1945–53: The Information Research Department* (London, 2004); Lowell Schwartz, *Political Warfare against the Kremlin: U.S. and British Propaganda Policy at the Beginning of the Cold War* (Basingstoke, 2009).

[85] Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, 3rd ed. (London, 1969), p.94.

Up until now, little has been written about cultural relations between these two countries. Andrew Wood mentions the significance of the British Council in 'promoting British-Yugoslav cultural and scientific ties'.[86] Čedomir Štrbac has written about the visit of members of the British Labour Party to Yugoslavia in 1950, designed to inform the British public about the real situation in Yugoslavia.[87] Fred Singleton has studied the work of the British youth brigades in Yugoslavia on the construction of Šamac-Sarajevo Railway, the highway of 'Brotherhood and Unity', and the rebuilding of the city Skopje after the earthquake in 1963.[88] But these works only discuss certain specific cultural events, providing fragments in the broader picture of bilateral cultural relations. This thesis attempts to look at British–Yugoslav cultural relations from a more comprehensive view, tracing the changes and developments over time.

Although propaganda between the two countries always existed, the more neutral cultural exchanges continuously developed, especially from the 1950s. Those cultural exchanges encompassed education, music, fine arts, cinema and dance. For example, theatre, as a highly representational art form, played a significant role in the 'ideological struggle' in the context of the Cold War.[89] After the Cominform Resolution, the repertoire of Yugoslav theatre became 'richer and more diverse'. For example, 'plays by Shakespeare [and] H. Miller were given more space, [and] the dominance of Soviet dramatic literature was softened to some extent.'[90] It was in this context that the Royal Shakespeare Company toured Yugoslavia and gave a performance of Peter Brook's *Titus Andronicus* in 1957.[91] The cast included the famous British actors

[86] Andrew Wood, 'Relations between Britain and Yugoslavia', in Petar Kačavenda (ed), *Jugoslovenski-britanski odnosi* (Belgrade, 1988), pp.317–29.
[87] Čedomir Štrbac, 'Members of the British Labour Party in Yugoslavia in 1950', in *Jugoslovenski-britanski odnosi*, pp.331–44.
[88] Fred Singleton, 'British Youth Brigades in Yugoslavia', in *Jugoslovenski-britanski odnosi*, pp.345–58.
[89] Christopher B. Balme and Berenika Szymanski-Düll, 'Introduction', in Christopher B. Balme and Berenika Szymanski-Düll (eds), *Theatre, Globalisation and the Cold War* (Cham, 2017), p.3.
[90] Dimić, *Agitprop kultura*, p.260.
[91] The theatrical performance was part of the Company's European tour and performed at the National Theatre in Belgrade (2-5 June) and Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb (7-8 June) after in Paris and Venice. It travelled to Vienna and Warsaw afterwards. https://collections.shakespeare.org.uk/search/rsc-performances/tit195705, (1 October 2023).

Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. Many Party cultural workers and even Tito and his wife Jovanka came to the performance.[92]



Figure I-3 Tito in conversation with Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh and the British ambassador 1957, Photo Archive of Museum of Yugoslavia

In 1972, meanwhile, Peter Brook's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* toured across Eastern Europe in Belgrade, Budapest, Bucharest, Sofia, Zagreb and Warsaw, courtesy of the British Council.[93] While the same tour to the West was a considered commercial venture, its Eastern counterpart was seen as a cultural-political mission. Peter Brook's theatrical works were seen by large audiences across Europe during the Cold War period and his theorical book *The Empty Space* helped draw in a 'modernist philosophy' to theatre. Even though he was not extensively discussed within 'a framework defined by Cold War tensions', his works functioned as 'a locus of intercultural encounter'. [94]

[92] The audience includes Party cultural ideologue Edvard Kardelj and his wife and other high rank cultural workers such as Marija Vilfan.
[93] 'As part of the same tour, the company also performed the production in Berlin, Munich, Paris, Venice, Milan, Hamburg, Cologne and Oslo; See 'Itinerary for the Royal Shakespeare Company', FCO 32/149, The National Archives (TNA), London.' Zoltán Imre, 'Peter Brook's *Midsummer Night's Dream*' in Eastern Europe (1972)', in Christopher B. Balme and Berenika Szymanski-Düll (eds), *Theatre, Globalisation and the Cold War*, p.123.
[94] Balme and Szymanski-Düll, 'Introduction', p.7.

Due to the limited space of this research, an exhaustive analysis of all cultural fields is not possible.[95] Whilst touching lightly on the topics of films and literature during the early post-war period, for example, I will focus instead on the at first sight 'unremarkable' story of the Youth Labour Actions in order to present an easily overlooked element in these bilateral cultural relations. The Youth Labour Actions took place in the framework of post-war socialist reconstruction and was often understood as a social-economic event rather than a cultural activity. Nevertheless, its domestic and international cultural role should not be underestimated. Such youth voluntary work on the one hand was closely related to the communist ideology of educating socialist 'new men' from their youth, which would help consolidate communist rule as well as cultivate supporters of the regime. On the other, Youth Labour Actions were under the international spotlight for building up Yugoslavia's international image and nation-branding. They also became the subject of art, film, and literature consumed in Britain. Therefore, in spite of their economic function in the First Five Year plan for post-war Socialist Yugoslavia, they were also an indispensable part for Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy. Subsequent chapters, however, will deal with more 'traditional' forms of cultural exchange such as dance and the plastic arts.

British Perceptions and Cultural Stereotypes of Yugoslavia and the Balkan

In 1951, the Yugoslav ambassador Jože Brilej emphasised the necessity for Yugoslavia 'to build its reputation in Britain based on achievements in science and the arts' because 'the prevailing perception . . . continued to be that Yugoslavia was a country of primitive culture'.[96] The perception of Yugoslavia as 'backward' and 'uncultured' was common across British society. This is closely related to another theme of this thesis, which is the stereotypical

[95] For the theatre studies during the Cold War, see John Elsom, *Cold War Theatre* (London, 1992); Bruce McConachie, *American Theatre in the Culture of the Cold War: Producing and Contesting Containment, 1947-1962* (Iowa City, 2003).
[96] Perišić, 'Yugoslavia', pp.298–99; p.301.

perception and representation of Yugoslavia and the Balkan region in Britain. Larry Wolff has traced the invention of Eastern Europe as Western Europe's 'complementary other half' back to the eighteenth century, the Age of Enlightenment. By emphasising civilisation in Western Europe, Eastern Europe was associated with backwardness and even barbarism.[97] Depictions of the Balkans, meanwhile, were often involved in the crude framework of centre and periphery or from a developmental perspective of distinguishing modernity and tradition. This was closely related to the depiction of the region as the European 'other', the opposite of civilised Western Europe. An 'enduring genre' of British Balkan travel books put their focus on quaintness, 'otherness', underdeveloped infrastructure, poverty and a similar 'orientalist idiom'.[98] Southeast Europe was thus regarded as existing 'in a perpetual state of "under-modernity"'.[99]

In *Inventing Ruritania,* Vesna Goldsworthy has explored 'British "narrative colonisation"' of the Balkans through the region's representation in British literature.[100] In the conference of preparing the Exhibition of Yugoslav Folk Art, the Yugoslav official again mentioned the stereotype in Britain that they '[were] appreciated mostly as fighters and warriors'.[101] This could be related to the depiction of the Balkan region in the early twentieth century when there were numerous nationalist uprisings and the romanticism in the interwar period travelogues such as the famous *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* written by Rebecca West. Andrew Hammond analysed such evolution of the discourse of the Balkan in the British literature and travelogue.[102] Using case studies, Hywel Dix discusses how Eastern Europe was historically

[97] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994), p.4.
[98] John K. Walton, 'Preface: Some Context for Yugoslav Tourism History', in Hannes Grandits and Karin Taylor (eds), *Yugoslavia's Sunny Side: A History of Tourism in Socialism (1950s–1980s)* (Budapest, 2010), pp.xiv–xv.
[99] Eugene Michail, *The British and the Balkans: Forming Images of Foreign Lands, 1900–1950* (London, 2011), p. 131; Foster, *Yugoslavia in the British Imagination*, p.142.
[100] Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (London, 2013).
[101] AJ, F317-88-126, *Izložba Jugoslovenske Narodne Umetnosti, Stenografske beleške sa konferencije pretstavnika Ministarstva za nauku i kulturu FNRJ i pretstavnika etnografskih muzeja, primenjene umetnosti i drugih*, 21 and 22 February 1949 in Belgrade, p.10.
[102] Andrew Hammond, *British Literature and the Balkans: Themes and Contexts* (Amsterdam, 2010).

conceptualised in the Western literature.[103] Samuel Foster highlighted the interactions between the representation of the South Slavic peasant and the British domestic context of social transitions and how it influenced British perceptions of Yugoslavia.[104] Most of the literature emphasised peasant folklore as the character of the country's culture. As Foster noted, the 'West hailed the peasant as the source of Yugoslav artistic creativity and spontaneity'.[105] Even the more 'serious' travel writing still characterised the Balkans 'as the Volksmuseum of Europe'.[106]

But these literary depictions were sometimes even paradoxical. In her analysis of the concept of 'Balkanism', Maria Todorova has noted the distinction between enthusiasm for the regional folklore in the West and the disdain for the local primitive and pre-industrial peasant society.[107] The former represented an 'orientalist' appreciation of such cultural tradition whereas the latter implied the superiority in economic and development in the West. But such emphasis on Yugoslav peasant folk culture endured. Even in the promotion of Yugoslavia as the ideal tourist destination for British middle class during the 1930s, there was 'an exhaustive list of romantic cultural selling-points—including the "picturesque costumes and interesting customs" of the local peasantry'.[108] Moreover, the end of the First World War had caused an increase of 'publications featuring translated peasant folk poetry, songs and stories'.[109]

During the interwar period, 'until the appearance of Nazi Germany, a prevailing sense of non-commitment defined British regional policy, reflecting wider public ambivalence'.[110] In

[103] Hywel Dix, 'On Balkanism and Orientalism: Undifferentiated Patterns of Perception in Literary and Critical Representations of Eastern Europe', *Textual Practice*, 29/5 (2015), pp.973–991.
[104] Foster, *Yugoslavia in the British Imagination*. See also Michail, *The British and the Balkans*.
[105] Foster, *Yugoslavia in the British Imagination*, p.132.
[106] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford, 2009), p.63.
[107] Maria Todorova, 'The Balkans: From Discovery to Invention', *Slavic Review*, 53/2 (1994), pp.453–82.
[108] A. Vidakovič, 'Jugoslavia', in Eugene Fodor (ed), *1938 in Europe: Aldor's Entertaining Travel Annual* (London, 1938), pp.1293–4; 'Where Shopping is Easy on the Purse', *South Slav Herald* (January–February 1939), p.5; in Foster, *Yugoslavia in the British Imagination,* p.129.
[109] Ibid, p.131.
[110] Dragan Bakić, *Britain and Interwar Danubian Europe: Foreign Policy and Security Challenges, 1919–1936* (London, 2017), pp.177–81, in Foster, *Yugoslavia in the British Imagination*, p.124.

terms of culture, Yugoslavia's post-World War I reality of political stagnation and its poor economic situation, which contrasted sharply with the wartime propaganda, had caused 'British cultural disenchantment'. However, during the 1930s, there was a brief revival of public cultural and scientific interest in Yugoslavia in Britain, similar to the early twentieth century.[111] For those Britons who were interested in Yugoslavia, the period of 1920s and 1930s represented 'their introduction to the culture and politics of the South Slavic Balkans'.[112] However, tourism and literature 'remained the only medium for substantive cultural engagement between the wars', and the image of the region during the interwar period was formed more from such 'consumerist attitudes'.[113] The period also witnessed how the interwar Yugoslav state underwrote its 'agrarian national character' through promoting Yugoslavia as primarily 'a peasant country'.[114] Multi-ethnicity and a diverse folk culture began to stand in for a unique Yugoslav national character,[115] to the point that it was used by Yugoslav travel agency *Putnik* to attract foreign tourists.[116]

In this thesis, we can see how such a stereotype of Balkan and Yugoslav culture continued in the Cold War context. The essence of Yugoslavia's image seems to have hardly changed over time. Yugoslav cultural products were popular in Britain while at the same time could be easily dismissed as 'peasant', 'primitive', or 'exotic'. Yugoslav policymakers always had to face this problem when constructing their cultural diplomacy agenda towards Britain. It was difficult for them to persuade a British audience that the new culture of socialist Yugoslavia had transformed and was different from before. For instance, a Yugoslav art show held in Liverpool and Glasgow in 1939 presented visitors with 'ethnological displays of "national

[111] Foster, *Yugoslavia in the British Imagination*, p.123; pp.125–6.
[112] Ibid. p.136.
[113] Ibid, p.127; p.136.
[114] John B. Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (London, 2000), pp.54–6; in Foster, *Yugoslavia in the British Imagination*, p.133.
[115] Nora Fry Lavrin, *Jugoslav Scenes; Dry Points by Nora Lavrin* (London, 1935), p.11.
[116] Foster, *Yugoslavia in the British Imagination*, p.135.

costume", dances, and recitals of ballads and epic poetry described as symbolising Yugoslavia's "spiritual and temporal quintessence"'.[117] The content of the exhibition was similar to the Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition held in Britain in 1950 despite the fact that socialist ideology was added to the latter. Sometimes Yugoslav officials did not even realise certain 'selling points' of their cultural diplomacy towards Britain fell into the long-lasting stereotype of Yugoslavia and the Balkan region.

The Aims of British-Yugoslav Culture Exchange

In this thesis, I argue that British–Yugoslav cultural exchanges during this period were mainly about seeking and securing mutual recognition, as well as establishing a positive image in the eyes of their respective publics. As stated in the book *Searching for Cultural Diplomacy*, 'motivations of cultural diplomacy ranged from prospects of improved economic exports to cultural and political recognition around the world'.[118] British–Yugoslav cultural exchanges shared a similar character which emphasised cultural and political recognition by each other. Cultural recognition was a stepping stone for political recognition but also distinct from it. Even though cultural recognition was significant as part of a broader diplomatic strategy, it could also be purely about persuading the other about the excellence of their own culture, with the aim of winning appreciation and respect. For Yugoslavia, cultural recognition was meant to overcome its Balkan stereotype and prejudices about its communist regime as well as ideology. For Britain, cultural recognition was tantamount to a confirmation of its modernity and its position as a European cultural centre.

Cultural recognition in turn facilitated other goals. Culture could produce a feeling of affinity. According to the British diplomat Sir Anthony Parsons, such cultural affinity could

[117] Yugoslav Art Show in Liverpool and Glasgow', *South Slav Herald* (June 1939), p. 10; in Foster, *Yugoslavia in the British Imagination*, p.132.
[118] Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, 'The Model of Cultural Diplomacy', p.19.

influence the political efficacy of a country in the international community, like the United Nations.[119] Likewise, cultural recognition and affinity can also bring certain economic benefits such as the potential of increased trade and tourism revenue.[120]

The purposes of such recognition were different for Britain and Yugoslavia. In the case of Britain, such recognition was desirable in light of its shrinking influence in international politics, because its global empire was gradually disappearing and its influence was overshadowed by the two superpowers. For Yugoslavia, it was crucial to have such recognition from the West due to the imminent military threat and economic sanctions from the Socialist Bloc after its split with the USSR. Later, recognition from Britain and the West also strengthened its independence and in turn benefited its non-aligned policy. Cultural recognition served as a bridge to connect with Britain and the West.

This quest for mutual recognition was closely connected to the acknowledgement of political legitimacy. In this case, competition was not necessary because there was no need to surpass the other. Yugoslavia was neither the Soviet Union nor one of its satellite countries despite its communist regime, and thus represented a different and more open form of state socialism. According to historian Goran Miloradović, left-wing intellectuals in the West often considered Yugoslavia 'an example of a more successful and humane socialism than the one in the USSR itself'. Yugoslavia's cultural representation in the West and its embracing of Western culture contributed to making this positive image.[121]

For Britain, there was no specific cultural policy tailored for Yugoslavia. Culture served as a basis for extending British political influence in Yugoslavia and to keep Yugoslavia independent from the Soviet Union. The purpose was to make British culture more attractive

[119] Anthony Parsons, '"Vultures and Philistines": British Attitudes to Culture and Cultural Diplomacy', *International Affairs*, 61/1 (1984–5), p.7.
[120] During the 1950s, Yugoslavia became a mainstream destination of tourism. See Foster, *Yugoslavia in the British Imagination*, p.130.
[121] Miloradović, *Lepota pod* nadzorom, p.135.

than the Soviet alternative. To this end, Britain offered certain specific cultural products to Yugoslavia which focused on the concept of 'modernity'.[122]

For Yugoslavia, the purpose of the cultural exchanges with Britain was to secure its position between the East and the West, and not to antagonise Britain politically. Yugoslavia held a special place in the Cold War geography. The de-Stalinisation process was launched earlier compared to other People's Democracies in the Soviet sphere of influence. After 1948, Tito's republic increased its exchanges with the West, both economically and culturally. As noted by historian John Lampe, Yugoslavia during 1949 and 1953 'gradually integrated into the aid and trade networks of the U.S. and its Western European allies' facing the cut-off of the Soviet funds and invasion from its socialist counterparts.[123]

Britain played a major international role during the war and after. In 1947 Ernest Bevin still claimed great power status for Britain even if its influence was declining.[124] Although Britain was not a superpower like the United States and the USSR, it was an indispensable player in world affairs and could still wield power globally. Britain's political role in the Cold War has long been confirmed by diplomatic historians. During the late-1940s and 1950s, a 'containment' policy was launched by Britain before its official launch in the United States.[125] As David Reynolds has argued, although Britain was facing the rapid decline of its power from the mid-1950s, it still held a leading position in the military and economy of Western Europe. This was in sharp contrast to the political instability of the majority of other Western European countries, such as France. Britain's global influence also benefited from U.S. containment policy.[126] It played a significant role in solving the Trieste question with Yugoslavia during

[122] Here the concept of 'modernity' was included in different cultural domains such as technology, art, education, and so on.
[123] John Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.250–56.
[124] Brian Harrison, *Seeking a Role: The United Kingdom 1951–1970* (Oxford, 2015), p. 3.
[125] Shaw, 'Introduction: Britain and the Cultural Cold War', p.110.
[126] David Reynolds, *The Origins of the Cold War in Europe: International Perspectives* (New Haven, 1994), p.7.

1953 and 1954.[127] However, Britain still had to recalibrate its place in Europe and in the world in the face of decolonisation and the collapse of its Empire in the 1950s.[128]

It was necessary for Britain to keep its cultural foothold in a country like Yugoslavia due to the cultural vacuum left by Yugoslavia's rupture with Moscow in 1948. Unlike the overwhelming U.S. cultural presence in Yugoslavia in the 1960s, British cultural influence on Yugoslavia in the 1950s was more modest and only developed gradually.[129] However, its scope and impact should not be underestimated. The British Council worked energetically in Yugoslavia. Scientific and medical assistance from Britain, art and music exchanges, including a high-profile Henry Moore exhibition in three major cities (Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana) in 1955, scholarship funding projects organised by the British Council as well as the Council's reading rooms all in one way or another made British culture visible in Yugoslav society. Closer cultural relations also provided a chance for Britain's international economic development, especially in Eastern Europe.

The Yugoslav Communist Party (KPJ) attached great importance to burnishing its international reputation in the West.[130] Similar to its relations with Britain, Yugoslavia had various cultural exchanges with France. This was on the one hand related to the high reputation France enjoyed in art and culture.[131] On the other, as mentioned above, there was a strong French cultural influence from the interwar period in art and literature. Nevertheless, London still enjoyed a special position in Yugoslavia's cultural offensive in the West. As the Yugoslav ambassador to the UK put it in 1951, 'a presentation in Britain opens the doors to other Western

[127] Trieste question was the territorial dispute of Venezia Giulia between Yugoslavia and Italy. The free territory of Trieste and a provisional government was established in 1947 by peace treaty between the United Nations and Italy. The Territory was divided to Zone A and B, with the Allied Military Government and the Yugoslav People's Army administered respectively. Britain and the United States mediated in 1953 and 1954 to solve the territorial problem.
[128] Shaw, 'Introduction: Britain and the Cultural Cold War', pp.109–10.
[129] For the U.S. cultural influence on Yugoslavia, see Vučetić, *Coca-Cola Socialism*.
[130] Perišić, 'Yugoslavia: The 1950 Cultural and Ideological Revolution', p.293.
[131] See Perišić, *Od Staljina ka Sartru.*

countries'.[132] This was related to the reputation that Britain enjoyed in Europe and the West during and after the war. Many exiled European governments sought asylum in London during the war. Britain was never occupied and it helped defeat Nazi Germany and kept its democratic political system intact. Its economy was also in relatively good condition compared to other European countries. Brian Harrison argues that the UK 'retained ample prestige and goodwill in Europe'.[133] This made Britain an ideal destination for Yugoslavia's cultural offensive.

Therefore, the need to create a positive image in Britain emerged as a key component of Yugoslavia's cultural strategy. It shifted from a 'pre-1948 role model communist country' to its post-1948 Yugoslav 'own road to socialism' identity. Looking at the post-1948 policy of Yugoslavia specifically, its cultural diplomacy was in accordance with de-Stalinisation and the launching of 'self-management', which provided certain freedoms to civil society. This comparative liberalisation facilitated the development of a more lively and open Yugoslav society. In addition, those exchanges also helped Yugoslavia obtain useful experience and knowledge that helped construct its own socialist economy, which stood in stark contrast to the economic model of the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, bilateral cultural relations also presented problems. On the one hand, this was due to ideological differences such as the Yugoslav authorities' distrust of the British Council, or the suspicion of cultural exchanges as communist propaganda in Britain. There were also persistent British prejudices against Yugoslavia as 'backward' and culturally underdeveloped. On the other, these cultural exchanges were not symmetrical. The positions of the two countries were never parallel. Compared to Britain, Yugoslavia was more eager to build these cultural links in order to gain economic and military assistance.

[132] AJ, F-138, Report on Cultural Activities in 1951, in Perišić, 'Yugoslavia: The 1950 Cultural and Ideological Revolution', p.299.
[133] Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, p.10.

This thesis aims to understand how Britain and Yugoslavia conducted their cultural exchanges against a complex political background between 1945 and 1961. The dissertation emphasises the motivation, process and influence of British–Yugoslav cultural exchange activities. I argue that the cultural exchanges were a process of knowing each other better, establishing cultural links and promoting their respective self-images, whereas specific political aims were secondary.

Sources and Methodology

The endpoint of this research was chosen as 1961 because that year marked the formal launching of the Non-Aligned Movement and its first summit conference. This marked the turn of Yugoslavia's foreign policy away from Europe. On the one hand, Yugoslavia's interactions with non-aligned countries became increasingly frequent after 1961. On the other, U.S. culture became increasingly influential in Yugoslavia during the 1960s.[134] Both overshadowed bilateral relations between Britain and Yugoslavia.

The basic method used in this thesis is discourse analysis of primary and secondary sources. Case studies constitute the main part of the research. The majority of cultural events from the British side were organised by the British Council. The relevant materials (such as internal reports) in the British Council's documents are mainly used in Chapter 2 to analyse the evolution of the Council's work in Yugoslavia. These documents are housed in the UK National Archives (TNA) in Kew. In addition, the archival materials of the Foreign Office (especially from the cultural relations department) and Cabinet Papers such as the meeting minutes and memoranda in TNA were also consulted to understand the official cultural policies of the British government. British media reports about certain Yugoslav cultural events in Britain were sourced from the British Newspaper Archives in the British Library. Press reports

[134] See Vučetić, *Coca-Cola Socialism*.

on the British youth brigades were also found there. Concerning the Henry Moore exhibition in Yugoslavia, I consulted the relevant collections in the library of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, the Henry Moore Archive in Hertfordshire, and the Tate Archive in London. The Tate Archive and Henry Moore Institute Library in Leeds contain written documentation of the international sculpture competition 'The Unknown Political Prisoner'. In addition, visual documentation of Yugoslavia's participation at the Edinburgh Festival can be found at the National Library of Scotland.

For the Yugoslav perspective, the Archives of Yugoslavia (AJ) in Belgrade constitute the main source of materials for this research. There were several governmental departments responsible for cultural relations with Britain. Bilateral cultural exchanges such as youth brigades, art festivals, exhibitions, visits by cultural groups and education were under the administration of different departments in Yugoslav government. An exhaustive account of the materials related to those departments and organisations is not possible. But documents from significant departments such as the Yugoslav government's Council for Science and Culture, the Yugoslav Federal Commission for International Cultural Links, Yugoslav Association of Socialist Youth, the Yugoslav government's Cultural and Arts Committee and the files of the Ideology Committee of Yugoslav Communist Party have been consulted. They encompass detailed and comprehensive descriptions of Yugoslavia's cultural exchanges with Britain. The documents in the Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia (DAMFARS) were also used to analyse how cultural diplomacy was conducted in the broader context of the Cold War. The Serbian National Library was used to examine some Yugoslav press materials such as local newspapers and magazines. These include *Borba*, *Politika* and *Vjesnik*, which were the most significant newspapers in Yugoslavia at that time, and widely distributed magazines such as *NIN* and *Književne novine.* The archives of Museum of Modern Art and Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova in Ljubljana were also consulted.

I also made use of the Croatian State Archives and Bodleian Library at University of Oxford for additional materials.

The archival materials used in this research are diverse. In addition to official documents such as correspondence and internal reports, press coverage and commentaries all helped me better understand the theme of this research—the motivations for and implementation of cultural exchanges between Britain and Yugoslavia. The combination of the materials from different sources enables more comprehensive analyses of those cultural events against the broader backdrop of Cold War cultural history.

Structure

This dissertation consists of five chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. Each chapter discusses a different aspect of cultural exchange between Britain and Yugoslavia. The chapters are arranged chronologically.

Chapter 1 provides a general overview of bilateral cultural exchange during the early post-war years. It draws a picture of how these cultural activities planned and arranged by Yugoslavia were ideologically driven and propagandistic. Through the study of the 1948 Yugoslav Exhibition of Books, Folk Handicrafts and Photographs in London, the visit of British celebrities in Yugoslavia, as well as Yugoslav film screenings in Britain, it can be seen that the Yugoslav government was still exploring how to properly conduct its cultural diplomacy. The focus of its cultural exchanges with Britain was on showcasing the victory and superiority of its socialist system. These activities contrasted with later more nuanced arrangements of cultural events in Britain, in which the propagandistic characters gradually faded.

Chapter 2 focuses on the work of the British Council in Yugoslavia. This chapter traces the interaction between culture and politics and the special role played by the Council in

Britain's cultural diplomacy. It argues that the cultural work of the British Council could only partly facilitate Britain's political needs in Yugoslavia. However, the Council's staff at that time still believed that the long-term friendly atmosphere created by the work of the Council could secure significant results.[135] The sources are mainly drawn from British Council reports and official correspondence.

Chapter 3 explores British youth brigades working in Yugoslav Youth Voluntary Labour Actions (ORAs). It analyses how and why young British volunteers came to work in the reconstruction of Yugoslavia in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Through three chronologically arranged case studies, it probes the complexities and contradictions of the work of British youth brigades in Yugoslavia. This mobilisation of British youth was related to the post-war international reconstruction, idealism and international solidarity as well as the 'progressive, planning, internationalist, and humanitarian instincts' of the Attlee government at that time.[136] This chapter will show, however, that despite this idealistic narrative, problems and contradictions always existed. This in turn reflected the gap in politics, ideology and way of life in both countries. However, the ORAs served as incipient attempts by the Yugoslav state to develop its cultural diplomacy. Through transforming such economic construction and connecting it with related cultural activities, Yugoslav government strategically used it to propagate its image in Britain. The sources used for this chapter are mainly Yugoslav official reports and press coverage.

Chapter 4 focuses on the visits of Yugoslav folk ensembles to Britain and Yugoslavia's participation in the Edinburgh Festival. By analysing these cultural activities, the chapter pieces together the image that Yugoslavia hoped to project in Britain. With the help of press reports, I examine how this image was received in Britain. This chapter argues that Yugoslav authorities

[135] The National Archives (TNA): PRO: FO 953/1346/PG1932/1, Beeley to Eden, No. 85, 26 June 1952, in Vaughan, '"A Certain Idea of Britain"', p.164.
[136] Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, p.7.

had no clear plan for the country's cultural promotion in Britain. By presenting folk art traditions in the context of socialism, Yugoslavia aimed to build and showcase a unique Yugoslav national identity. But the effort was usually misinterpreted by the British audience, reinforcing stereotypes of the Balkan region as being 'backward' and 'exotic'.

The last chapter focuses on art exhibitions, showing how Yugoslavia strategically combined narratives of cultural heritage and artistic modernism in its cultural diplomacy to Britain. The Folk Art Exhibition held in Britain in 1950 was distinct in that it emphasised the socialist character of Yugoslav folk art, highlighting the application of handicrafts in contemporary society and their potential value in bilateral trade. Later, the opportunities to hold exhibitions in Britain were used by Yugoslavia to showcase its socialist modernity with its well-developed political system and supposedly open and free society. Yugoslav authorities attempted to integrate pre-war modernism with collectivist ideals in the name of political legitimacy.[137] This was incarnated in four major artistic events: 'The Unknown Political Prisoner' international sculpture competition in 1953; the Henry Moore Exhibition held in Yugoslavia in 1955; and two major exhibitions of Yugoslav art in Britain: Modern Yugoslav Painting in 1956 and Contemporary Yugoslav Painting and Sculpture in 1961. Through these exhibitions, the Yugoslav government attempted to create its unique socialist modernism in art. These officially sponsored modernist art exhibitions made Yugoslavia stand out among the other communist countries in Europe. The main sources used include exhibition catalogues, correspondence between governmental officials and press reports.

This project will be the first to systematically study British-Yugoslav cultural relations in the early Cold War. This research aims to provide a new understanding of how cultural diplomacy was implemented during this period through the prism of Britain and Yugoslavia.

[137] Hortensia Völckers and Alexander Farenholtz, 'Foreword', in Katia Baudin-Reneau and Tihomir Milovac (eds), *EXAT 51: Experimental Atelier 51* (Dortmund, 2017).

In addition, it sheds new light on the cultural politics of so-called middle powers like Yugoslavia and Britain. Finally, studying bilateral cultural relations will complement Cold War political history by highlighting the pivotal role of culture as a form of soft power.

Chapter 1. The Early Post-War Cultural Exchanges between Yugoslavia and Britain

The end of World War II marked the start of a new era. Europe, suffering from a devastating war, began its post-war rebuilding politically, economically and culturally. Compared to the first two dimensions, culture seemed to be less important. However, being closely interlinked with politics and ideology, culture was fundamental to the formation of the Cold War in Europe.

Culture was widely used by countries both in the East and the West to increase their own influence while weakening their competitors. For instance, because 'bourgeois' deviation was closely associated with Western culture in the Soviet Union, the cultural Cold War was a struggle to transmit values and ideas to the West and weaken its ideological grip, while simultaneously decreasing exposure to and influence from the West.[138] In the case of Poland, after the communists seized power at the beginning of 1947, the state started to slowly but steadily curtail Western influences in Polish cultural life.[139] Likewise, Yugoslav cultural policy before 1948 followed that of the Soviet Union. In the Soviet culture, Socialist Realism was propagated, focusing on three basic principles: the spirit of the people, the spirit of the working class and party mindedness.[140] High culture as well as popular culture such as folklore, which represented people and history, were both promoted.[141]

The imitation of the Soviet model was reflected in Yugoslavia's early post-war cultural diplomacy with Britain. However, things changed after Yugoslavia's rupture with Moscow in 1948. It started to deviate from the Soviet model and attempted to explore its 'own road to socialism' not only politically but also culturally. By 1953, when the rest of Eastern Europe

[138] Nigel Gould-Davies, 'The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy', *Diplomatic History*, 27/2 (2003), pp.193–214.
[139] Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland*, p.81.
[140] C. Vaughan James, *Soviet Socialist Realism: Origins and Theory* (London, 1973), in E. A. Rees, 'Introduction: The Sovietisation of Eastern Europe', in Balázs Apor, Péter Apor and E. A. Rees (eds), *The Sovietisation Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period*, p.6.
[141] Rees, 'Introduction: The Sovietisation of Eastern Europe', p.6.

was almost fully sovietised, the Yugoslav model of workers' self-management was already underway. In the meantime, relative freedom was bestowed in the cultural field which helped loosen the rigid ideological shackles on cultural production. In its foreign cultural policy, Yugoslavia attempted to create a unique cultural identity by combining traditional and contemporary culture. As argued in the introduction, Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy to Britain stayed consistent during the two decades after the war, which was motivated by the search for recognition. However, it differed in practice in important ways before and after the split with the USSR (as we will see in the following chapters).

As claimed by the historian Michael David-Fox, in the early years in the Soviet Union, there were 'major initiatives to showcase socialism triumphant' for foreign Communists and other domestic audiences.[142] Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy during the early post-war period had a similar character. In the first months after the liberation, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia's (FPRY)[143] Culture and Arts Committee stated that one of its working tasks was 'popularising [their] culture and art abroad with the aim of cultural affirmation of Yugoslavia'.[144] The use of 'highly ideologised aesthetical forms' in cultural products and activities in Yugoslavia's cultural policy agenda served to legitimise its socialist power.[145] Cultural exchanges with Britain during this period were basically ideologically driven.

In this chapter, I argue by establishing cultural contacts with Britain, Yugoslavia, as a young communist regime, aimed to project a positive image, influence Western public opinion, and demonstrate the superiority of the communist system. Through its cultural appeal to the potential audiences in Britain, the Yugoslav Communist Party proclaimed the legitimacy of the

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[142] Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford, 2013), p.1.
[143] *Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY)*, in Serbo-Croatian: *Federativna narodna republika jugoslavija*; later the name of the country changed to *Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY)*, in Serbo-Croation: *Socijalistička federativna republika Jugoslavija*.
[144] Archives of Jugoslavia (AJ), fas.316, fas.76, in Doknić, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije 1946–1963*, p.238.
[145] Gal Kirn, 'On the Specific (In)existence of the Partisan Film in Yugoslavia's People's Liberation Struggle', in Miranda Jakiša and Nikica Gilić (eds), *Partisans in Yugoslavia: Literature, Film and Visual Culture* (Bielefeld, 2015), p.204.

regime to both overseas and domestic audiences. This chapter will look at Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy from the following five aspects that characterised this short period from the end of the war to 1950: book exhibitions, cultural guest visits, music concerts and film screening. The last section discusses the influence of the Cominform Resolution on Yugoslavia's cultural policy in Britain.

I. Yugoslavia's Cultural Policy and Communist Ideology

It is important to emphasise that during this period, Yugoslavia's system for organising cultural relations with foreign countries was a novel development. The organisation of internal institutions, which was supposed to undertake the task of making international cultural links, was very much under construction. In a meeting of the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1947, it was suggested that 'a department should be formed within government's Culture and Arts Committee to deal with the issue of societies for cultural cooperation abroad'.[146]

Before 1948, Yugoslavia's foreign cultural contacts focused primarily on the Soviet Union and other People's Democracies in Eastern Europe. The government's Culture and Arts Committee stated in its early post-war plan that it aimed to 'introduce [their] peoples to the cultural heritage of foreign countries, especially fraternal countries'.[147] In 1946, the Committee agreed that 'one ballet, one theatrical performance, singer Davidov, violinist (David) Oistrakh and pianist Jeliha' were to come perform from the Soviet Union. Moreover, 'artists from Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Albania were invited'.[148] In the same meeting of the Ideological Commission of the Party Central Committee in 1947, it was

[146] AJ, F-507, Centralni komitet Saveza komunista Jugoslavije (Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia), Ideološka Komisija (the Ideological Commission), VIII, II/2-b-(4) (K-4), *Zapisnik sa sastanka Agitpropa: Propaganda za inostranstvo* (*Minutes of Agitprop Meeting: Propaganda for Foreign Countries*), 12 December 1947, p.1.
[147] AJ, F-316-76, in Doknić, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije*, p.238.
[148] Ibid.

suggested to publish a magazine about Hungarian culture in Yugoslavia to introduce historically important Hungarian personalities, musicians, painters that the Yugoslav people did not know about. A similar magazine dedicated to Bulgarian culture was also proposed to be launched. Meanwhile, Yugoslavia sent a large amount of literature to the USSR.[149]

The emphasis on 'communist identity' was common in Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy. As one of the People's Democracies established after World War II, Yugoslavia's political scene looked different from its counterparts in the Eastern Bloc. As stated in a British Foreign Office Minute in 1947, 'there [was] no opposition to the present [Yugoslav] Government, nor [were] there any prospects of such an opposition taking shape at least within a predictable future. The present communist regime in Yugoslavia is therefore not only unchallenged but seemingly unchallengeable'.[150] The generation of partisans who participated in the national liberation war oversaw Yugoslav politics.[151] Contrary to this homegrown communist control in Yugoslavia, the Communist Parties in Czechoslovakia and Hungary were not preponderant at the beginning of 1947. In Poland, Romania and Bulgaria, Communists 'had not yet succeeded by means of the security forces in entirely breaking up the opposition'.[152] In addition, Tito's role in Yugoslavia and the communist world should not be underestimated. According to British cultural authorities, he was the 'only really colourful personality in Eastern Europe' after Stalin.[153]

[149] The amount of literature sent to the USSR was not quantified in the document. But the document emphasised that the accurate records and a plan should be made. The potential institutions in the USSR to which Yugoslavia was to send books included Lenin State Library and Moscow Party institute (which possibly referred to the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute). See AJ, F-507, CK SKJ, *Ideološka Komisija* (the Ideological Commission), VIII, II/2-b-(4) (K-4), *Zapisnik sa sastanka Agitpropa: Propaganda za inostranstvo* (Minutes of Agitprop Meeting: Propaganda for Foreign Countries), 12 December 1947, p.2.
[150] The National Archives (TNA), *British Publicity and Cultural work in Eastern Europe*, Foreign Office Minute, 5 February 1947, FO953/4E, P198/198/950.
[151] Rees, 'Introduction: The Sovietisation of Eastern Europe', p.12.
[152] Ibid.
[153] TNA, *British Publicity and Cultural work in Eastern Europe*, Foreign Office Minute, 5 February 1947, FO953/4E, P198/198/950.

Yugoslavia enjoyed a high status inside the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) before its expulsion in 1948. The Cominform was established in September 1947 with its headquarters in Belgrade. The founding meeting was attended by the Yugoslav Communist Party's top officials Edvard Kardelj and Milovan Djilas. The second meeting of the Cominform was held in Yugoslavia in January 1948. These points demonstrate Yugoslavia's unique position in the socialist East. It was significant for both the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia that Yugoslavia acted as a role model for other People's Democracies. By showcasing the positive aspects of communism, Yugoslavia could inspire other communist parties to consolidate their control over the government and people. To align with its Soviet role model, Yugoslavia emphasised communist ideology in its cultural policy.

There were other reasons why ideological concern was so prevalent in Yugoslavia's cultural policy. Communist ideology closely interlinked with post-war reconstruction as well as Yugoslavia's modernisation projects. Its first Five Year Plan was initiated in 1947. Propagating Yugoslavia culturally was predicated on showing its efforts in building socialism and their socialist achievements. The purpose was to create an image of a newly established communist country that was developing and modernising in many ways. As stated in the 1947 meeting of the Ideological Commission, the building of the youth railway in Bosnia-Herzegovina was counted as the 'greatest merit' of that year and similar 'big and beautiful object and action' should be made to attract attention from abroad.[154]

This 'youth railway', officially known as the Šamac-Sarajevo railway, was built in 1947 by voluntary youth brigades from both inside and outside the country and became a symbol of

[154] AJ, F-507, *Centralni komitet Saveza komunista Jugoslavije* (Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia), *Ideološka Komisija* (the Ideological Commission), VIII, II/2-b-(4) (K-4), *Zapisnik sa sastanka Agitpropa: Propaganda za inostranstvo* (Minutes of Agitprop Meeting: Propaganda for Foreign Countries), 12 December 1947, p.1. The Šamac-Sarajevo Railway was the largest construction project of the first year of the first Five-Year Plan. See Diplomatic Archives of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Serbia (DAMFARS), F-29, 1947, Telegram from Assistant Director of Information Directorate at the FPRY Government Erih Kos to Department of Information of the MFA, 8 December 1947.

Yugoslav communism. The construction of the railway portrayed a resilient image of communist Yugoslavia, which despite the devastation of World War II, was now committed to reconstruction through the collective efforts of every Yugoslav. These positive attitudes and solidarity were seen as the fruits of communist ideology, supposedly demonstrating to the West and the entire world the progress of Yugoslavia's socialist system.[155] (The propagandistic effect of the railway will be analysed in detail in Chapter 3).

This omnipresent ideological component was evident in the editing of the booklet *Guide to Yugoslavia* in London. In 1948, the London branch of the Yugoslav travel agency *Putnik* prepared to publish a travel guide to Yugoslavia. However, the drafts of the guide were deemed incomplete and inaccurate by the Information Directorate of the Federal Government due to numerous significant 'political omissions'. The materials of the guide were criticised for not 'speaking about the revolutionary transformation of the country, the importance of the National Liberation Movement, the emergence of socialism in the country, and it [did] not even mention the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. . . . [T]he construction of the railway [was] barely mentioned, and there [were] no other words about the places under construction'.[156] Updates to the guide, compared to its pre-war version, were particularly emphasised to showcase Yugoslavia's development and advancements attributed to its communist character, at least in the mindset of the party echelons.

The emphasis on communist ideology in cultural work was significant both domestically and internationally. Domestically, the success of Yugoslav cultural propaganda could embolden the spirit of post-war reconstruction and inspire enthusiasm for state projects aimed at building a socialist utopia.[157] This, in turn, brought political legitimacy to the party.

[155] Such large scale of voluntary youth construction work was common in the socialist East during that time. See Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Hutta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949–56*, (Ithaca, 2013).
[156] DAMFARS, Telegram from the Directorate of Information of the FRPY Government to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 July 1948, No.418127.
[157] Similar to building the Šamac-Sarajevo Railway, many Yugoslavs (especially young people) voluntarily undertook the infrastructure construction work within the country.

Internationally, the socialist achievements could appeal to people in the West who were interested in communism and left-wing ideas, thereby benefiting the country in the cultural Cold War.

Yugoslav–British cultural contacts were partly motivated by the post-war peaceful atmosphere of creating a new world. For instance, volunteers from abroad working on Yugoslavia's youth railway showed the internationalism and friendship that had formed during the wartime alliance. The construction of the railway perfectly aligned with this post-war atmosphere of peace and solidarity.

Such a context provided the basis for the enthusiastic reception from Britain, especially among left-wing Britons, who were encouraged and inspired by the construction of the new Yugoslavia and other Eastern European countries. This trend originated from wartime propaganda of the Grand Alliance with the Soviet Union and other anti-fascist communist partisans. Wartime enthusiasm for the Red Army and the British public's sympathy toward the Soviet Union generated general interest in the USSR and other later communist countries. As early as 1942, British conductor Gaze Cooper of the Nottingham Symphony Orchestra arranged a performance of several Slavonic folk songs.[158] He had established musical contacts with Yugoslavia several years prior. His sympathy with Yugoslavia during the war fostered the establishment of a choir of Yugoslav patriots based in London. Cooper regularly went to London to instruct the singers, who informed him about many Yugoslav national folk songs. During the war, he also considered writing some Yugoslav symphonies and rhapsodies.[159]

Left-wing ideas were popular in post-war Britain, as evidenced by the tripling of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) membership during the war.[160] This interest and the

[158] It was not clear where the concert was held and what musical pieces had been played. It was likely that the concert was held in the Regent Hall in Nottingham by the Nottingham Symphony Orchestra on 14 June 1942. The repertoire included 'Slavonic Dances' and other classical musical pieces from Mendelssohn, Schubert and Wagner. See *Long Eaton Advertiser,* 13 June 1942, p.6.
[159] 'The International Language', *Nottingham Journal* [Nottingham], (17 August 1942), p.2.
[160] Joana Bullivant, *Alan Bush, Modern Music, and the Cold War* (Cambridge, 2017), p.137.

hope to create and develop a new culture of liberation flourished in post-war Britain. British left-wing activists sought to differentiate this new culture from the pre-war oppressive culture that had led to the war. The hope for 'cultural renewal and democratisation in post-war Britain' fuelled left-wing activism during that time and was 'shared and even directed' by the CPGB.[161] This atmosphere cultivated a romantic sentiment of solidarity between the British Left and Yugoslavia.

Arguably even closer relations were maintained with French and other Western European leftists in the cultural and social fields. Taking France, for instance, after the liberation, the work of the former 'Society of Friends of France' was renewed and renamed the 'Society for Cultural Cooperation Yugoslavia-France'. Its task was to 'work by all means to establish friendship and maintain the best possible cultural ties between two countries…through the Communist Party of France'. Consequently, many French Communist Party figures, as well as members of the Central Committee, visited Yugoslavia. French government officials regarded the society as an 'artificial organisation managed by communists' and held an unfriendly attitude toward it. After the Cominform Resolution, the Society's activities were completely shut down.[162]

The Yugoslav government also invited French left-wing intellectuals to attend embassy receptions and planned visits to Yugoslavia to build up the country's image. For instance, the French Communist writer Jean-Richard Bloch attended the First Congress of Yugoslav Writers held in Belgrade in November 1946, where he was received by Tito. After his return, he wrote a very long and informative report about the Congress and Yugoslavia.[163]

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[161] Bullivant, *Alan Bush*, p.115.
[162] AJ, F-507 IX, Komisija za međunarodne odnose i veze CK SKJ 1945-1990, Francuska, 30/V-78 (K12), *Propagandna delatnost Francusa u FNRJ*, 23 May 1953.
[163] Velimir D. Mladenović, 'Conscience Profonde de L'Histoire Jean-Richard Bloch-Un Épisode Yougoslave', *Kultura,* 170/171, pp.28-38.

Similar cultural activities arranged with leftists elsewhere in the West represented the approach that the Yugoslav government was taking in the early post-war years, when the Communists held high the flag of ideology. During this period, Yugoslav cultural policy aimed to use the affinity among the European Left to create new cultural ties for the new Yugoslavia.

The post-war left-wing climate in Britain boosted the curiosity of Britons to learn more about Yugoslavia. This curiosity was shared by both British youth, who chose to go to Yugoslavia and work on railway construction projects; and left-wing activists who visited and promoted Yugoslavia within Britain. At the same time, this trend helped the Yugoslav government market itself in Britain by inviting renowned British cultural celebrities to visit Yugoslavia or through other channels to make Yugoslav culture known in Britain. All British guest visits to the Eastern Bloc were based on signed bilateral cultural conventions, but the situation was different with Western countries. Cultural exchanges with the West were subject to the political scrutiny of Yugoslavia. As one Yugoslav cultural official claimed, 'we [would] strive to invite very good artists who, according to our political attitude, [were] suitable for coming to our country'.[164] The artistic quality was vetted by the Yugoslav Culture and Arts Committee, and it was equally important that guests from the West were politically and ideologically suitable. This principle was applied to several guest appearances from Britain, which will be discussed in the following section.

The first phase of bilateral cultural exchange was not impressive. Rome was not built in a day, but they were laying the bricks of cultural cooperation every day. The war destroyed the development of Yugoslav local culture, leaving the cultural infrastructure poorly equipped. This was reflected in the high illiteracy rate.[165] This newly born country needed to start from scratch in the realm of culture.

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[164] Radovan Popović, *Gosti socijalističke Jugoslavije*, Beograd, 1990, in Doknić, *Kulturna politika Jugoslavije,* p.238.

[165] 'In three years up to 1947 the number of illiterates in Yugoslavia had dropped by more than one million.' in DAMFARS, Press Association, Exhibition, 14 January 1948.

Despite the difficulties, the government considered cultural exchanges significant. Cultural contacts with Britain progressed through initiatives from the Yugoslav Embassy in London, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the federal government's Culture and Arts Committee. Assistance from other related governmental departments was sometimes also required.

London and Paris, as cultural centres of the West, were the focal points of Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy from the outset. As early as March 1946, only four months after Yugoslavia's establishment, the Culture and Arts Committee notified the Yugoslav embassies in Paris and London to provide information on cultural activities. The scope of this cultural work was broadly defined and included education and student exchange programmes, the exchange of prominent cultural and artistic figures and groups, the translation and publication of both domestic literature abroad and foreign literature in Yugoslavia, and the organisation of fine arts exhibitions and other cultural events.[166]

Responses from the London Embassy made clear that this was no easy task. There were no existing connections with any organisations in Britain for exchanging books and publications, although the embassy staff was willing to contact the British Museum to explore the possibility. Legal issues related to copyright had not been sorted out for the translation and publication of books in each other's territories. In education, there were only six British Council scholarships available to Yugoslav students. However, the biggest obstacle was the financial situation. Visits by artists and cultural workers, as well as holding exhibitions, all required financial support. Nevertheless, there were some opportunities. The embassy in London managed to print some stories in various English journals such as the *Slavonic*

[166] AJ, F-314-21-82, FPRY Government's Culture and Arts Committee, Relations with Great Britain 1946–1948, Telegram from the Culture and Arts Committee to Yugoslav Embassy in London, Paris and mission in Prague, 2 March 1946.

Review.[167] In addition, the International Music Association in London showed interest in renewing the connections between the UK and Yugoslavia that existed before the war.[168]

The Yugoslav Embassy in London continuously worked to strengthen its cultural presence in Britain, with support from the Culture and Arts Committee. The Committee played a crucial role in Yugoslavia's cultural activities. Cultural contacts with all the foreign countries needed to be under the purview of the Committee and controlled by the state.

There was one case that well illustrated the role of the Culture and Arts Committee. The magazine *International Review for Art Science and Literature* contacted the Yugoslav Embassy in London for the contact details of Yugoslav artists, scientists and writers to 'consult on some expert issues' with them. The MFA regarded it as a good opportunity to build connections and promote Yugoslavia, so it asked the Committee for help. The Culture and Arts Committee agreed to provide information while emphasising that such contact with foreign countries '[was] generally conducted only through the Committee or through the supreme institutions for individual professions'.[169] The same view was expressed by the Committee for Schools and Science. Although the Committee agreed to provide the journal with some 'scientific works in areas that the magazine is interested in, the Committee [couldn't] agree that the magazine directly correspond[ed] with the individuals without the inspection of the committee'.[170] Cultural contacts with foreign countries in the early post war years were strictly controlled, planned and directed by the state.

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[167] 'The Slavonic Review' refers to *The Slavonic and East European Review*. The journal was published since 1922 by the Modern Humanities Research Association and University College London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies. There were a number of articles about Yugoslavia in 1948, for instance, 'Education in Yugoslavia', 'Art in the Life of the Yugoslavs', 'Diaries from Yugoslav Liberation'.

[168] AJ, F-314-21-82, Telegram from the Yugoslav embassy in London to the Culture and Arts Committee, 30 April 1946.

[169] AJ, F-314-21-82, Telegram from the Culture and Arts Committee to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7 October 1946. Within the Yugoslav government, various institutions were responsible for different areas of policy. For instance, the Culture and Arts Committee handled all matters related to culture and art, while the Committee for School and Science addressed issues pertaining to education and science. There were specialised professional bodies, such as the film committee and the Writers' Association.

[170] AJ, F-315-54-129, Committee for Schools and Science at the FPRY Government, Relations with Great Britain 1946–1948, Telegram from the Committee for School and Science to the MFA, 25 November 1946.

Coordination between the embassy and the Committee was always important in Yugoslavia's cultural activities in Britain. All information on culture related issues had to be obtained from the Committee, including 'statistical data and the names of the representatives of certain cultural institutions, the names and biographies of Yugoslav artists, especially their work during and after the war'. To highlight cultural achievements under communist ideology, the data emphasised the contrast with the pre-war years, specifically, 'what was done after the liberation'.[171] This underscores the ideological focus of their cultural activities. An upward, developmental, and more progressive communist culture replaced the obsolete culture, distinguishing the country from its own past and the decadent West. This bolstered a unified socialist world under Soviet leadership and, most importantly, provided political legitimacy to the Yugoslav communist party.

Foreign public opinion about Yugoslav cultural achievements was regularly evaluated by the Culture and Arts Committee, which demanded 'regular and expeditious' reports, as well as British press coverage, on the reception of Yugoslav cultural activities.[172] The constant efforts of the Yugoslav Embassy to initiate cultural events were not always accepted by the central government due to financial or other restrictions. Nevertheless, by the end of 1946, the Embassy in London had successfully established cultural contact with 'the representatives of cultural life in England'.

With the rise of Cold War tensions from 1948 onwards, it became increasingly difficult to conduct propagandistic cultural work in Britain. There was concern within the Embassy that there wouldn't be favourable articles in British newspapers. It was also feared that local 'relatively advanced' magazines would bring fewer official publications from the embassy. The Embassy planned to cooperate with Czechoslovakia in issuing a new magazine called *New*

[171] AJ, F-314-21-82, Telegram from the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Culture and Arts Committee, 11 December 1946.
[172] DAMFARS, Telegram from the Culture and Arts Committee to the Yugoslav Embassy in London, July 1948.

Central European Observer, hoping it could reach a wider circle of readers, not only the left-wing and friends of Yugoslavia but also those with opposing views. Unfortunately, this proposal was aborted. The MFA directed the Embassy to focus all its efforts on facilitating the publications of the British Yugoslav Association (BYA), providing materials and necessary assistance.[173]

Much of Yugoslavia's cultural work in Britain was implemented and organised with the BYA, the organisation that had the closest ties with the Yugoslav Embassy in London. The BYA aimed to facilitate friendship between the two countries and served as the primary channel for Yugoslavia's cultural contact with Britain. Similar to other friendship societies with communist countries, most BYA members were either members of the CPGB or left-wing fellow travellers. The Executive Committee members and the Association's patrons included prestigious Britons, celebrities, and some Members of Parliament.

The BYA was one of the main organisations in Britain responsible for enrolling and organising brigades to go to Yugoslavia. Many young members of the BYA were also brigadists who travelled to Yugoslavia for reconstruction work. In addition to recruiting youth brigades, the BYA cooperated with the Yugoslav embassy to hold a series of lectures on Yugoslav politics, society, economy, culture and history. These lectures covered topics such as the Five-Year Plan, women and youth organisations in Yugoslavia, and the reconstruction of the country. The lectures were usually accompanied by the screening of related films, most of them documentaries. Occasionally, a small-scale exhibition would be held, such as the display of Yugoslav handicrafts and photographs organised by the Birmingham branch in October 1948. The aim was to acquaint the local population with Yugoslavia.[174]

[173] DAMFARS, Telegram from Franc Kos, Counsellor of Business Advisor of Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Information Office of the MFA, 27 March 1948, No.48571.
[174] DAMFARS, Telegram from Mirko Milutinović, Secretary of the Information Office at the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Information Office of the MFA, 22 October 1948.

The celebrations of the Day of the Republic of Yugoslavia on 29 November were held annually, and regular social dinners were common activities of the BYA. For instance, on 12 March and 23 April 1949, two social events were organised by the young members of the BYA, each attended by 150 people. Attendees included commanders and members of the British brigade who had previously worked in Yugoslavia. During the evenings, they sang Yugoslav songs and danced the traditional Kolo, which they had learned in Yugoslavia.[175]

The Association regularly published its official quarterly bulletin, *Yugoslavia Today and Tomorrow*, which provided information on all aspects of Yugoslavia. The articles and information were usually provided by the Culture and Arts Committee via the Embassy and focused on socialist achievements. For instance, in 1947, the materials provided by the Information Directorate at the Federal Government for *Yugoslavia Today and Tomorrow* focused on topics such as National Front of Yugoslavia, the Šamac-Sarajevo Youth Railway, supply in Yugoslavia, Yugoslavia's foreign trade relations, construction of residential buildings and ruined villages, improvement of farming, tourism, workers' resorts, social assistance, and physical education.[176]

There were also some other small bulletins and pamphlets for propagandistic purpose, targeting the general British public. These included *The Railway* edited by E. P. Thompson and *Women and the Family in the New Yugoslavia* (See Figure 1-1).[177] The small pamphlet edited by E. P. Thompson will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

[175] DAMFARS, Telegram from the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Directorate of Information FNRJ, 7 May 1949.
[176] DAMFARS, F-29, 1947, Telegram from Assistant Director of Information Directorate at the FPRY Government Erih Kos to Department of Information of the MFA, 8 December 1947.
[177] E. P Thompson was the member of the British brigade working on the construction of the Šamac-Sarajevo Railway in Yugoslavia in 1947. His involvement with Yugoslavia and the railway will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

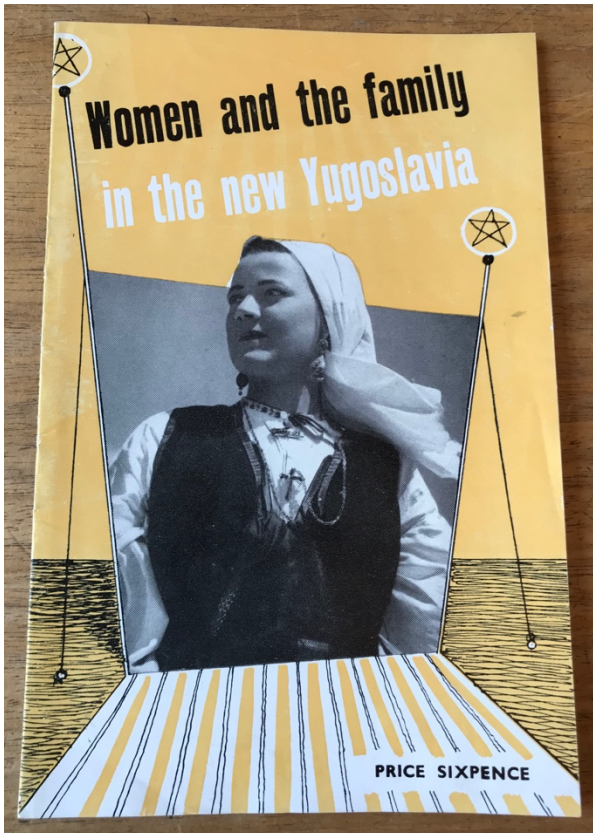


Figure 1-1. The cover of the British-Yugoslav Association publication: *Women and the Family in the New Yugoslavia* (London, 1947)

II. Yugoslav Exhibition of Books, Folk Handicrafts and Photographs in London 1948

During that time, the most significant cultural event was the Yugoslav Exhibition of Books, Folk Handicrafts and Photographs, mounted in London from 14 January to 1 February 1948. This exhibition was carefully planned to project the image that the Yugoslav government wished to present to Britain: the developmental and progressive character of Yugoslavia's socialism; an open and friendly country; the glorious and heroic partisan movement during the War; and the splendid traditional cultural heritage and solidarity of diverse ethnic groups within the country. All of these facets were considered by Yugoslavia to help raise the profile of socialist Yugoslavia and the communist party in Britain.

The book exhibition was proposed in May 1947 by the press attaché in London. Due to concerns about the language barrier, it was feared that exhibiting only Yugoslav books would be too dry. Therefore, photographs and graphs were included to give a full picture of the development of New Yugoslavia. This initiative coincided with the plan of *Jugoknjiga*, the state publishing house, to hold a book exhibition in London.

After obtaining consent from Belgrade, the priority of the Yugoslav Embassy was to find a suitable venue for the exhibition. There were many obstacles. Several attempts to secure the popular National Book League failed. According to the Embassy report, the League was unwilling to hold the book exhibition. The same response came from the British Council. Initially, there was a one-month delay before the British Council replied. When a Council official eventually came to gather more information about the exhibition, he expressed concerns that 'there was a fear that exhibiting books was just an excuse and it was probably political propaganda'.[178]

Twenty other galleries contacted by the Embassy were either fully occupied or unwilling to hold the exhibition due to similar political reasons or concerns about their reputation. The Society for Cultural Cooperation with the USSR offered their hall, but the Yugoslav ambassador was not amenable to this option, deeming the hall 'unknown and perhaps tricky for political reasons'.[179] It was clear that the ambassador wanted to soften the political colour of the exhibition by rejecting this offer. However, the proposal of such an exhibition still aroused suspicion, as noted by the British Council official. Given the increasing tension between the two blocs, an exhibition from a communist country could easily be seen as potential propaganda. Eventually, Yugoslavia managed to secure the Academy Cinema Hall, where the exhibition was finally held.

[178] DAMFARS, F-29, 1947, *Izvestaj o radu za mesec novembar 1947* (*Report on the work for November 1947*), Jelena Tucaković at Yugoslav Embassy in London.
[179] DAMFARS, F-29, 1947, Telegram from Ambassador Ljubo Leontić to the MFA, 10 November 1947.

This initiative was an ambitious and significant moment for Yugoslavia, as it involved holding a book exhibition in London, one of Europe's cultural centres. The Yugoslavs attached great importance to this event and considered it the best opportunity to promote their country. The purpose of the exhibition was to 'reflect the cultural and educational activity of Yugoslavia after the war'. In addition to publications, the exhibition featured handicrafts, photographs, and various graphs showcasing the country's development.

Various governmental departments were mobilised in the preparation work. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate of Information, Committee for Schools and Science, Culture and Arts Committee, *Jugoknjiga* (The Yugoslav Book)[180], *Putnik* (Yugoslav tourist office) and *Centrotextiles* were all committed to providing materials. The exhibition took place mainly under the auspices of *Jugoknjiga*, *Jugofolklore* and *Putnik*.[181] Other domestic cultural organisations, such as the military museum, also made contributions.[182] In the initial plan, the authorities planned to send 1,000 books and magazines to display in London through *Jugoknjiga* to present the post-war publishing industry of Yugoslavia.[183] These included classics and translated foreign literature. *Jugofolklore* provided copies of 'original embroidery and handicrafts in general and modern embroidery, lace, rugs, carvings, and jewellery, modelled on old motifs'. *Putnik* was responsible for providing pictures of Yugoslav landscapes.[184]

The arrangement of the books and publications exhibited reflected the ideological concerns of the Yugoslav organisers. On one list of publications, there were works of Lenin

[180] *Jugoknjiga* was the official state organisation in charge of the publication and the import and export of books in Yugoslavia.
[181] DAMFARS, F-29, 1947, Telegram from the Department of Information of the MFA to the Culture and Arts Committee, 15 January 1948.
[182] DAMFARS, List of facsimiles, brochures and photographs for the exhibition of Yugoslav books in London, in the telegram from Information Office of the MFA to the Directorate of the Military Museum, 17 January 1948, No.41325.
[183] The final number of the books exhibited was around 800.
[184] DAMFARS, F-29, 1947, Telegram from the Department for Information of the MFA to the Culture and Arts Committee, 15 January 1948.

and Stalin as well as books related to the Soviet Union and the October Revolution.[185] Some books provided by the Culture and Arts Committee were similarly propagandistic. These included the painting by famous Bosnian painter Ismet Mujeznović, *Najmladji za Slobodu* (The Youngest for Freedom); the pamphlet *Omladinska pruga* (Youth Railway) by Franjo Mraz, featuring sketches of the youth railway Brčko-Banovići; the book *Borba omladine Jugoslavije* (Fight of the Yugoslav Youth); and *Mi pamtimo* (We Remember) by artist Vanja Radauš, which dealt the theme of the partisans.[186] There were also publications about local youth brigades and some youth magazines.[187] These books reminded audiences of Yugoslavia's struggles during the War and how it achieved independence and liberation because of the partisans. In addition, works depicting the construction of post-war Yugoslavia again highlighted socialist achievements (see Figures 1-2, 1-3 and 1-4). These books were ideologically propagandistic, with implications of glorifying the Yugoslav Communist Party.

[185] DAMFARS, List of facsimiles, brochures and photographs for the exhibition of Yugoslav books in London, in the telegram from Information Office of MFA to the Directorate of the Military Museum, 17 January 1948, No.41325.
[186] AJ, F-314-21-82, Telegram from the Culture and Arts Committee to the MFA, 12 January 1948. Ismet Mujeznović mainly created paintings with Socialist Realist themes such as National Liberation Movement (NOB). Similar to Mujeznović, Franjo Mraz was a pre-war communist and worked in the cultural field in Croatia to guide the ideology of art. See Marijan Špoljar, 'Između umjetnosti i ideologije' (Between Art and Ideology), *Kolo*, 34, (2010). http://www.matica.hr/kolo/316/Izme%C4%91u%20umjetnosti%20i%20ideologije/, (9 March 2022).
[187] DAMFARS, Telegram from the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Information Office of the MFA, 5 March 1948; the youth publications and photos displayed on the exhibition included *Mladi Udarnik, Omladinski borac, Omladinska Borba, Omladinski list*.



Figure 1-2. The book cover of *Omladinska Pruga* by Franjo Mraz

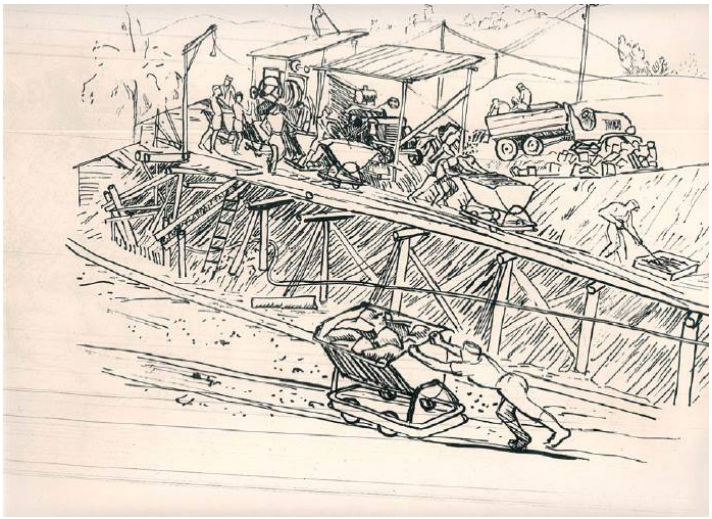


Figure 1-3. Drawing by Franjo Mraz: 'In front of the tunnel', in the book *Omladinska Pruga* (1946)[188]

[188] *Arhiv za likovne umjetnosti*/Arlikum HAZU, see https://www.facebook.com/Arhiv.za.likovne.umjetnosti/posts/2040890602851022/, (9 March 2022).



Figure 1-4. Reproduction of linocut created by Vanja Radauš in the book *Mi pamtimo* [189]

In addition, the Culture and Arts Committee sought to send books and magazines in minority languages in Yugoslavia, such as Albanian, Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian and Russian, to the exhibition.[190] The Committee contacted publishing houses of ethnic minorities in Yugoslavia to provide publications for the exhibition. These included Matica Slovenská for the magazine *Nas zivot*,[191] the Cultural Union of Romanians for *Litertateu Literara* and *Bukuria pionierilor*[192], 'Ruska Matka',[193] and the Hungarian Cultural Union. These were just some of the organisations that the Committee appealed to for exhibition materials. The intention was to introduce the British public to 'the publishing enterprises in Yugoslavia in the

[189] The book was published by *Nakladni zavod Hrvatske* in Zagreb 1945. It included reproductions of forty-six linocuts created by the artist Vanja Radauš during his stay with the partisans in 1943. His linocuts depicted the partisan life during the war. See 'Vanja Radauš: Mi Pamtimo' https://www.bibliofil.hr/hr/vanja-radaus-mi-pamtimo (24 October 2020).
[190] AJ, F-314-21-82, Telegram from the Culture and Arts Committee to the Chief Executive Committee of the Department of Education, 13 January 1948.
[191] The Matica Slovenská is a Slovakian scientific and cultural institution focusing on topics related to the Slovak nation. The institution mentioned here refers to the cultural organisation of ethnic Slovaks based in the town Bački Petrovec in Vojvodina Yugoslavia.
[192] *Kulturnog Saveza Rumuna* was the cultural organisation of ethnic Romanians in Vršac in the South Banat region of Vojvodina Yugoslavia.
[193] *Ruska Matka* was a cultural organisation of ethnic Rusyns based in a village called *Ruski Krstur* in Vojvodina. *Ruski Krstur* was the cultural centre of Rusyns in Serbia.

minority languages'.[194] By exhibiting publications of these ethnic minority groups, Yugoslavia aimed to demonstrate that multi-ethnic culture was protected and promoted in the country as part of its socialist culture.[195]

Figure 1-5 shows the initial design of the exhibition poster. The elements used portrayed an ideal image that the Yugoslavs aimed to convey. The framed sketches in the background show a construction scene depicting the building of the youth railway. The books, which were also the main theme of the exhibition, reflected the party's efforts in culture and education: for instance, combatting illiteracy and supporting the publishing industry. The book in the middle, *Gorski vijenac* (The Mountain Wreath), is an epic poem written by Peter II Petrović-Njegoš during 1846, centring on the theme of the Serb people's struggle for freedom and national awakening against Ottoman domination in Montenegro. It is considered a masterpiece in Serbian/Montenegrin literature, making it fitting to feature this book prominently in the poster. This classic work was first translated into English as early as 1930, and its main theme echoed the spirit of the national liberation movement led by the partisans during the War. The ribbon over the book resembled the national flag of Yugoslavia. The background, reminiscent of a traditional folk weaving pattern, resembles a tapestry. Through these diverse elements (cultural heritage and contemporary socialist achievements), a full picture of contemporary Yugoslav culture emerges: a country with historical heritage envisioning a future of a socialist utopia, thanks to the leadership of the communist party and the current regime.

[194] DAMFARS, F-29, 1947, *Predato na pisanje* (Submitted for writing), 27 December 1947.
[195] As written in the Constitution of FPRY Chapter III, Article 13: National minorities in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia enjoy the rights to and protection of their own cultural development and the free use of their own language.

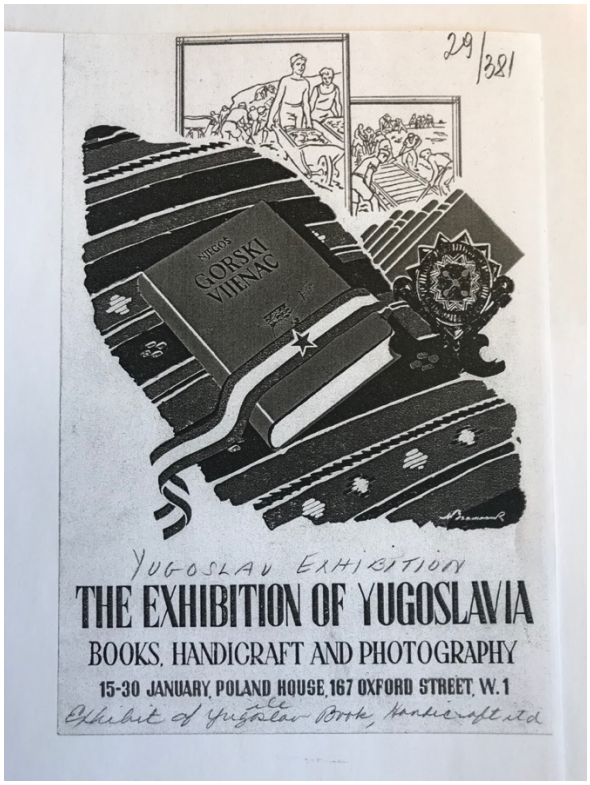


Figure 1-5. Initial design of the exhibition poster, (DAMFARS), F-29 (1947)

The photographs sent by the Committee were representative. Alongside idyllic scenery, they featured images of construction projects, national heroes, famous writers, and high-ranking communists, including the portrait of the Croatian poet Ivan Goran Kovačić and later Nobel Prize laureate Ivo Andrić.[196] Among them were photos depicting educational programmes of the National Liberation Movement, such as *Partizani u sumi citaju* (Partisans reading in the forest), *Zena na dobrovoljnom radu citaju* (Women on voluntary work reading), *Skola u sumi* (School in the forest), and two photos of the printing work of the partisans.[197] These photos aimed to show the British public the Yugoslav people's desire to obtain knowledge and the communist party's emphasis on education during the war. Ešref Badnjević, head of the Information Office of the MFA, commented that 'one of the greatest weapons of

[196] DAMFARS, F-29, 1947, *Natpis za fotografije* (*Caption for photos*).
[197] DAMFARS, Telegram from the MFA to the Information Office of the Yugoslav Embassy in London, 10 January 1948.

the partisan forces of Yugoslavia was the printed word—not only daily news, fine literature too was printed in the front line, however great the difficulties'.[198]

By looking at the exhibition's contents, a distinct ideological orientation becomes apparent. Under the rubric of the cultural development of new Yugoslavia, several themes were highlighted: the National Liberation Movement, post-war socialist construction, and the development of publishing and education. These themes collectively underscored the prominent role of the Yugoslav Communist Party. The exhibition reaffirmed and publicly asserted the legitimacy of the Communist Party in Yugoslavia.

To ensure the success of the exhibition, the MFA instructed the Yugoslav Embassy to advertise the event, primarily through left-wing social organisations, individual fellow travellers in Britain such as the British-Yugoslav Society and Trade Union, interested young people, students, and friendly artists. Press promotion was also pursued, especially in cultural and artistic magazines with established contacts.[199] Ešref Badnjević, as Tito's confidential associate, was dispatched to attend the London exhibition opening and remained there for ten days. A long-standing party member predating World War II, he held a senior position within the party. His responsibilities included liaising with individuals willing to propagate Yugoslav propaganda in Britain and visiting some institutions. To enhance the exhibition's prestige, the MFA recommended that the Embassy extend invitations to the diplomatic corps, distinguished personalities, and friends of Yugoslavia for the opening ceremony.[200]

The Yugoslavs considered the book exhibition a great success. It was opened by the Yugoslav ambassador Ljubo Leontić and mainly featured 800 books printed since the liberation.[201] In his opening speech, the ambassador emphasised the significant decrease in

[198] DAMFARS, Telegram from Ešref Badnjević at the MFA to the Military Museum, 20 March 1948, No.46836.
[199] DAMFARS, F-29, 1947, Telegram from the MFA to the Yugoslav Embassy in London, 31 December 1947, No.427476.
[200] DAMFARS, Telegram from Ešref Badnjević and Simić at the MFA to the Yugoslav Embassy in London, 6 January 1948.
[201] 'Yugoslav Book Exhibition', *The Scotsman* [Edinburgh], (15 January 1948).

illiteracy and the internationalist nature of Yugoslav cultural policy. According to him, during 1947, 450,000 illiterates in Yugoslavia learned to read and write, with a substantial number of books and periodicals published after the war.

> Craving for a lasting and much-needed peace, after centuries of struggles that have continually ravaged our country and hampered creative work on cultural development and fruitful cooperation with other happier nations, we are now seeking to make up for what we have been denied earlier in the centuries, which was not our fault. We embrace the cultural heritage of all advanced humanity.[202]

His speech emphasised the importance the new Yugoslav government placed on culture. There was also a clear element of internationalism. The aim of the exhibition was explained as 'to acquaint the peoples with valuable fruits of the cultural creativeness of great writers, artists and scientists without regard to the nation to which they belong'.[203] However, this did not mean that nationalism was unimportant. To attract a broad audience, emphasising the universality of human culture, to which Yugoslav culture contributed, aligned perfectly with communist internationalism.

The opening of the book exhibition met the expectations of the Yugoslav authorities, with attendees including members of the diplomatic corps such as the Soviet ambassador Georgy Zarubin, and the Belgian and the Nepalese ambassadors.[204] Additionally, members of the British Parliament and representatives from the fields of science, literature, art, and the press were present.[205] The renowned British literary and theatre critic Desmond MacCarthy also attended the ceremony and gave a speech as the president of the P.E.N. Club. He noted that 'before the war P.E.N. had sixty international centres, three of which were in Yugoslavia. He hoped the exhibition will result in Yugoslavia rejoining'.[206]

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[202] DAMFARS, 1947, F-29, Telegrafska agencija nove Jugoslavije (TANJUG) international news, *News about Yugoslavia*, 15 January 1948. TANJUG was the official state news agency in Yugoslavia.
[203] DAMFARS, Press Association, Exhibition, 14 January 1948.
[204] 'Her Social Journal', *The Tatler and Bystander* [London], (28 January 1948), p.13.
[205] 'Yugoslav Book Exhibition', *Diplomatic Bulletin* [London], (20 January 1948).
[206] DAMFARS, Press Association, Exhibition 2, 15 January 1948.

The outcome of the exhibition pleased Yugoslavia. Approximately 750 visitors attended on the first day.[207] Over the course of the exhibition, there were around 14,000 visitors, with an average of 500 to 1,300 daily visits. According to the Embassy's report, the visitors came from diverse backgrounds, including soldiers, youth, and book lovers (not only communists or left-wing fellow travellers). There were also school visits and organised visits of workers. The visitors allegedly showed great interest in almost everything, such as the youth work plans, tourism, and music. Although the Embassy might have exaggerated the situation, the photo taken from the exhibition (Figure 1-7) somewhat confirmed the numerous visits. Brochures and books about Yugoslavia in English sold very well, and several publishers advocated for the translation of Yugoslav books. [208]

[207] DAMFARS, Telegram from Yugoslav Ambassador Ljubo Leontić to the MFA, 20 January 1948.
[208] DAMFARS, *Izlozba Jugoslovensje knjige u Londonu* (14.I. do 1.II 1948) Exhibition of Yugoslav books in London (14 January–1 February 1948), telegram from Jelena Tucaković at the Information Office of the Yugoslav Embassy, to the Department of Information of the MFA, 7 February 1948; telegram from the MFA to the Culture and Arts Committee, 5 February 1948, No.42342.



Figure 1-6. Display of Yugoslav Book Exhibition (AJ), F-314-4-20



Figure 1-7. Yugoslav Book Exhibition (AJ), F-314-4-20

Outlets such as the *Times*, *Daily Worker*[209], *New Statesman and Nation*, and the news agency Press Association all reported on the exhibition. The British Council expressed interest in arranging the exhibition in other cities in Britain.[210] The overview from *New Statesman and*

[209] *The Daily Worker* was the official newspaper of CPGB.
[210] DAMFARS, Telegram from the MFA to the Committee for School and Science, 21 January 1948, No.41429.

Nation even reproduced data and figures on the government's efforts to decrease illiteracy and the opening of bookshops and publishing activity in Yugoslavia from 1944.[211] *The Scotsman* gave a detailed description of the exhibition:

> Colour and liveliness impress the visitor to the Yugoslav Book Exhibition. . . .The whole show is rich in interest. It is the aim of the exhibition to convey an impression of life in Yugoslavia, and a bright survey it presents. The work of a few modern artists is shown, together with examples of traditional crafts and embroidery. Photographs illustrate the natural beauties of a country which, it is hoped, holiday-makers from Britain will be able to enjoy when travel restrictions are lifted.[212]

This positive comment showed that interest in Yugoslavia was successfully aroused. Similar feedback was given by BBC commentator Douglas Cleverdon. On January 16, he delivered a lengthy lecture about the exhibition on London radio. In the programme, he highlighted Yugoslavia's efforts in the cultural cultivation of its people during and after the war. He also remarked on the popularity of modern literary works in Yugoslavia, especially those by contemporary Yugoslav poets. Cleverdon urged the audience not to miss the opportunity to visit this exhibition.[213]

In addition to the daily newspaper and radio, the illustrated journal *The Tatler and Bystanders* also mentioned Yugoslavia's exhibition. The column 'Jennifer's Diary', which chronicled the social life of the English upper classes, introduced this exhibition. The author, Betty Kenward, was amazed by both the development of Yugoslavia's publishing industry and the beauty of the Adriatic coast.[214] A similar view was found in *Diplomatic Bulletin*, which considered the exhibition as '[giving] the visitor an excellent impression of life in Yugoslavia'.[215] It can be concluded that this exhibition was a successful cultural offensive by Yugoslavia to expose the new country to the British public.

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[211] DAMFARS, Telegram from Ljubo Leontić, Yugoslav Ambassador to London to the MFA, 16 January 1948.
[212] 'Yugoslav Book Exhibition', *The Scotsman* [Edinburgh], (15 January 1948).
[213] AJ, F-314, Telegram from the Information Office of the MFA to the Culture and Arts Committee, 21 January 1948; DAMFARS, Telegram from Ljubo Leontić, Yugoslav Ambassador to London to the MFA, 17 January 1948; DAMFARS, 'Observation Post' by Douglas Cleverdon at the BBC broadcast, 16 January 1948.
[214] 'Her Social Journal', *The Tatler and Bystander* [London], (28 January 1948), p.13.
[215] 'Yugoslav Book Exhibition', *Diplomatic Bulletin* [London], (20 January 1948).

The report from the *New Statesman and Nation* noted that a large amount of British literature was translated into Serbo-Croatian compared to American literature. The exhibition also featured numerous Russian novels: '210 titles, with a total print of 2,237,000 copies, of which one-third were translations, mainly from English and Russian'.[216] Many translated works from English at the exhibition also merited attention, as they naturally brought the cultural distance closer. Interestingly for the Britons, the first book published in Yugoslavia after the liberation was a translation of *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding. Yugoslav Ambassador Leontić remarked that Robinson Crusoe was considered in Yugoslavia to be the most typically English figure in British fiction.[217] BBC commentator Douglas Cleverdon was also surprised to find that the translated English literary works included not only the classics such as Shakespeare or Dickens but also modern literature from authors such as John Galsworthy, J. B. Priestley, Somerset Maugham, E. M. Forster, A. J. Cronin and Virginia Woolf.[218]

At this time, translations of British literature were still far outstripped by those from the Soviet Union. An 1945 Agitprop document outlined Yugoslavia's translation policy. Particular attention was to be paid to Marxist-Leninist and literary classics as well as works by French materialists and classics in Western European and American literature.[219] According to a 1946 letter from Milovan Đilas, the focus should be on translating works from the Soviet bloc countries, while translations from English, American, and French literature should include

[216] Polycritic, 'A London Diary', *The New Statesman and Nation*, 35/880, (17 January 1948).
[217] DAMFARS, Press Association, Exhibition, 15 January 1948.
[218] DAMFARS, 'Observation Post' by Douglas Cleverdon at the BBC broadcast, 16 January 1948.
[219] This included works of François Rabelais, Honoré de Balzac, Stendhal, Guy de Maupassant, Charles Dickens, William m. Thackeray, Mark Twain, Heinrich Heine, Miguel de Cervantes, Émile Zola, see Maria Rita Leto, 'The Politics of Translation in Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1952', in Christopher Rundle, Anne Lange and Daniele Monticelli (eds), *Translation Under Communism* (Cham, 2022), p.185. There was also a *List of 'Books that we should immediately prohibit and prevent their further circulation'* (undated) which included over 150 domestic and foreign works, see Deniver Vukelić, 'Censorship in Yugoslavia between 1945 and 1952. Halfway between Stalin and West', PECOB's papers series, January 2012, https://bib.irb.hr/datoteka/570659.PPS_2012_19__Vukelic_Censorship.pdf, (10 October 2023).

'only the leading works of critical realism and combative romanticism, as well as the main texts of contemporary progressive writers'.[220]

In *The Bibliography of Translations published in Yugoslavia 1944-59 I-II*, translations from Russian accounted for 28% compared to 15% from English, 11% from French, 10% from German and 1.9% from Italian.[221] However, after the early 1950s, the number of translations of Western literature increased. Translation of foreign works in Yugoslavia was a form of both cultural and political engagement. Opening up the translation of Western literature led to 'the publication of a considerable number of texts of English and American literature that were still banned in the Soviet bloc,' which, in turn, fuelled the Yugoslav cultural scene.[222]

Nevertheless, the book exhibition at this stage provided an opportunity for the British public and press to discuss Yugoslavia and its culture. The paintings by Yugoslav artists, themed around youth railway, were mentioned in the press coverage alongside British painters who were on the railway in 1947.[223] However, there were also less favourable views. *The Times Literary Supplement* described the exhibition as 'drab', with its typographical style deemed 'nondescript'. The 'few illustrations shown [were] undistinguished', and there were few signs of creative freedom for the book designers. Additionally, 'the annotation of the few early books shown [was] not entirely free from the prevailing nationalistic hyperbole'.[224] Such criticism may seem condescending from today's perspective, but there were reasons for this impression. The Yugoslav publishing industry was still rudimentary compared to Britain's, and the great importance Yugoslavia attached to its traditional literature appeared overstated to the British.

[220] Leto, 'The Politics of Translation in Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1952', p.186.
[221] Ibid, p.188.
[222] Ibid, pp.176-177.
[223] 'Yugoslav Book Exhibition', *Diplomatic Bulletin* [London], (20 January 1948).
[224] 'Cultural Exports and Imports', *The Times Literary Supplement* [London], (24 January 1948), p.56.

Nevertheless, the majority of the press reports affirmed the development of culture within Yugoslavia. People were pleasantly surprised by the progress of Yugoslavia's publishing industry and its achievements in overcoming illiteracy.

Both sides hoped for more Yugoslav works to be translated and published in Britain. The diverse items in the exhibition also piqued the British public's interest in travelling to Yugoslavia and enjoying the Dalmatian coast once travel restrictions were lifted.[225] Except for the books that needed to be returned to Yugoslavia, most of the books were given to the British Museum library as a gift. It was believed this gift would effectively serve Yugoslav propaganda.[226]

The book exhibition boosted the confidence of the Yugoslavs. The Embassy believed there was 'a great opportunity for [their] propaganda in England'. Given the exhibition's exposure, the Embassy noted the British government's interest in the Five-Year Plan. The success also reassured both the Yugoslavs and the British that the planned fresco exhibition would be another triumph in Britain. As expressed by the curator of the Victoria and Albert Museum, such an ethnographic exhibition could be 'a discovery and a sensation for the English'. In addition, the Embassy proposed arranging an exhibition of Yugoslav folklore as the next step.[227]

The role the book exhibition played in Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy with the UK should not be underestimated. This exhibition sparked interest among the British public in post-war Yugoslavia, a country that had previously received little attention from the general public. As noted by a critic from the *Times Literature Supplement*, it was 'an area quite unfamiliar to

[225] 'Her Social Journal', *The Tatler and Bystander* [London], (28 January 1948), p.13; 'Cultural Exports and Imports', *The Times Literary Supplement* [London], (24 January 1948), p.56.
[226] DAMFARS, Telegram from Simić at the MFA to the Yugoslav Embassy in London, 5 February 1948, No.43182.
[227] DAMFARS, Telegram from Ešref Badnjević and Ljubo Leontić at the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the MFA, 19 January 1948; Izlozba Jugoslovensje knjige u Londonu (14.I do 1.II 1948) Exhibition of Yugoslav books in London (14 January–1 February 1948), telegram from Jelena Tucaković at the Information Office of the Yugoslav Embassy to the Department of Information of the MFA, 7 February 1948.

most Londoners'.[228] Through handicrafts, embroidery, and photographs showcasing natural beauty and society, Yugoslavia projected a positive image to the British public, despite essentially imitating the Soviet system.

The exhibition also opened up potential economic opportunities. The prospectus of the exhibition, listed the contact details of three state companies: *Jugoknjiga, Jugofolklore*, and *Putnik*, responsible for the import and export of publications, folk handicrafts and travel, respectively. The Yugoslav government hoped that the exhibition's propaganda would lead to economic cooperation in these fields. However, the major economic cooperation only became possible in the 1950s.

Even one year before the book exhibition, the Yugoslav Embassy had already began coordinating the publication of English translations of Yugoslav literature in the UK. Both the Embassy and the MFA recognised that there was 'very little or nothing' known about Yugoslav literature in England. Existing works such as *Smrt Smail-age Čengića* (The Death of Smail Aga), *Gorski Vijenac* (The Mountain Wreath), and the stories of Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić were traditional literary works from nineteenth-century Balkan authors and had largely been forgotten. Phyllis Mary Kemp, a CPGB member who had translated one of Tito's speeches, suggested translating some works that might interest British readers. The suggested list of literature included representatives of the traditional novel such as *Bakonja fra-Brne*[229], the work of Svetozar Marković, a Serbian political activist and literary critic, and the works of the contemporary writer Ivo Andrić.[230] This list highlighted different facets of the Yugoslav literary world: *Bakonja fra-Brne* tells a Dalmatian folk story of a Croatian young man,

[228] 'Cultural Exports and Imports', *The Times Literary Supplement* [London], (24 January 1948), p.56. Some Britons already showed their interest in the Balkans before the war, such as Rebecca West, who wrote the travelogue *Black Sheep and Grey Falcon*, depicting her six-week travel in Yugoslavia in 1937. However, the stereotypical impression of Yugoslavia in Britain was often associated with exoticism and orientalism.
[229] This was a novel written by the Serbian writer Simo Matavulj in 1892.
[230] AJ, F-314-4-20, Veze sa Velikom Britanijom (Relations with Great Britain), telegram from the MFA to the Culture and Arts Committee, 26 June 1947.

Marković's work was historically and politically oriented, while Andrić's works represented contemporary literature.

Kemp had close relations with the Yugoslav Embassy in mediating the publication of Yugoslav literature in Britain. After the 1948 exhibition, she raised the issue of publishing with Staples Press in Britain, a publishing house keen to translate some Yugoslav books. As Kemp noted in her letter to the Yugoslav Embassy, the publishing house was 'really interested in the idea that Yugoslav literature might provide something fresh. They [wished] to consider only traditional classics and not books with political or war themes'.[231]

Authors and books suggested included: Ivo Andric's *Na Drini Cuprija* (The Bridge over Drina; 1945) and *Godpodjica* (The Woman from Sarajevo; 1945); Prežihov Voranc's Jamnica (1946); Vladimir Nazor's short stories *Legende*[232] and *Kurir Loda* (Courier Loda; 1946); Borisav Stanković's *Necista Krv* (Impure Blood; 1910) and a number of miscellaneous short stories of various dates and kinds that could form a collected volume.[233]

It is unknown whether this proposal was ultimately realised, but the exhibition did raise the country's profile and marked a positive beginning for Yugoslavia's cultural work in Britain.

III. Guest Visits of British Cultural Personalities

Like other CPGB members, Kemp was very interested in Yugoslavia and its socialist construction. She travelled to Yugoslavia in 1947 and described her experience in a letter to her acquaintance, the famous British composer Alan Bush:

> Yugoslavia was like a dream—the kind of dream where everything is familiar and expected but somehow different from real life. For instance, I met people I used to know

[231] AJ, F-314-4-20, Veze sa Velikom Britanijom (Relations with Great Britain), telegram from P. M. Kemp to the Culture and Arts Committee, February 1948.
[232] Kemp did not mention whether this is exactly *Legende o drugu Titu* (Legends of Comrade Tito; 1946) written by Nazor. There is great possibility that she referred to this book.
[233] AJ, F-314-4-20, Veze sa Velikom Britanijom (Relations with Great Britain), telegram from P. M. Kemp to the Culture and Arts Committee, February 1948. All these works addressed the local historical themes of Yugoslav region, most of which were rendered in a realist style. Among them, Vladimir Nazor mainly wrote about World War II and the post-war reconstruction. See Maša Kolanović, 'Partisan Star Wars. Aesthetics of Ideology, Ideology of Aesthetics in Croatian Partisan Novels', in Jakiša and Gilič (eds), *Partisans in Yugoslavia*, p.97.

> before—little changed outwardly but subtly different in themselves. One thinks in imagination that a new society will be like this and like that—and so it was, but it wasn't easy to believe it could be real. On the frontier a militia man inspecting passports etc. said to me 'Well, you're home now—no more worries—settle down and sleep' and later on in fact I found I was enjoying a sense of security and freedom totally unaccustomed. I hadn't time to go and see a lot of concrete things but these were marvellous days.[234]

To Kemp, Yugoslavia seemed like the ideal communist society that she and other British communists longed for—secure and free.

But she was not the only Briton who found post-war Yugoslavia fascinating and uplifting. Many young people who came to do voluntary construction work in Yugoslavia shared a similar sentiment and thought highly of the country and the life of the local people. At that time, many communists and left-wing fellow travellers in Britain paid close attention to the newly established People's Democracies and the Soviet Union, with their interest spanning politics, culture, and society. In this context, curious Britons continued to seek opportunities to visit Yugoslavia and share their experiences back in Britain. The Yugoslav authorities were more than happy to receive such visitors, as they could propagate the socialist triumphs of Yugoslavia back home.

The famous British composer Alan Bush, was one of them. A member of the CPGB, Bush first wrote to the Yugoslav Embassy in December 1946, expressing his desire to visit Yugoslavia and hold concerts. The Embassy consulted the Culture and Arts Committee about the possibility.[235] In the follow-up letter, Bush proposed to stay for two to three weeks in Yugoslavia. He wished 'to come into personal contact with Yugoslav musicians, to visit Yugoslav music schools and to explore the possibility of exchanging music between Yugoslavia and England'.[236] He also wished to acquaint the Yugoslav audiences with English

[234] British Library (BL), Alan Bush Collections, Letter from Phyllis Kemp to Alan Bush, undated 1947, MS Music 461 Vol.136.
[235] AJ, F-314-21-82, Telegram from the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Culture and Arts Committee, 11 December 1946.
[236] AJ, F-314-21-82, Telegram from theYugoslav Embassy in London to the Culture and Arts Committee, 8 January 1947.

music through his tour, regarding music as an international language that helped build bilateral friendship.

At the beginning of 1947, Bush travelled to Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. His repertoire included orchestral, string orchestra, and chamber music by famous British composers such as Purcell, Boyce, Elgar, and Ireland. His own works, such as *Fantasia on Soviet Themes* and *Overture: Revolution*, were included as an 'ideological choice'.[237] Some of his other famous works, such as *English Suite* and *Dialectic*, were also part of the programme.[238]

Bush was a controversial figure in Britain due to his communist identity. He produced considerable works on the theories of workers' music and its practical applications. Active in the CPGB's cultural work related to music, he consistently engaged with cultural policies made by the Party. Bush sought to use music to contribute to the realisation of British socialism, attempting to create a new English musical culture that integrated the style of the Soviet Union. Since the mid-1940s, he struggled to blend musical modernism, communism, and British nationalism into his work. [239]

Bush's struggle, to some extent, parallelled Yugoslavia's post-war cultural development. With its focus on communist ideology, nation-building, and modernisation, Yugoslavia also endeavoured to create a new musical culture by drawing from its rich tradition of folklore music and dance. Communist ideology was a constant emphasis, as Yugoslavia aimed for its new music to reflect socialist reality and resonate with the masses, adhering to the Socialist Realism

[237] Nancy Bush, *Alan Bush: Music, Politics and Life* (London, 2000), p.179.
[238] (BL), Alan Bush Collections, 1947, A letter dated 24 October from Alan Bush to Polskie Radio detailed the concert plan for 18–25 November in Poland, which included John Ireland's *A London Overture* and *Mai Dun*, as well as Alan Bush's *Piers Plowman's Day*. A letter from Alan Bush to Professor Cedric Dover of Fiske University on 7 November mentioned the repertoire for the concert in Prague in October, which featured John Ireland's *These Things Shall be*, Khachaturian's *Song of Stalin*, and Bush's own symphonic Suite *Piers Plowman's Day*.
[239] Bullivant, *Alan Bush*, p.64; p.105; p.175; p.16.

aesthetic standard of the Soviet cultural model. Meanwhile, folk art became an indispensable part of Yugoslavia's new culture. (This will be fully discussed in Chapter 4.)

As a communist composer in the West, Bush's interest in Soviet and Central European music, his everlasting pursuit of modernism in composition, and his efforts to bring high aesthetic music closer to the public and the working class made him an ideal guest to be invited to new Yugoslavia.

Bush's vision for the cultural future of post-war Britain closely resembled the model of Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe. He believed that the wartime alliance would help bring about this outcome.[240] His tour of the Balkans reinforced his belief that 'the people [of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria] [were] well on the way to achieving the freedom from care and want which the British people have been fighting for throughout their history'.[241] Bush had a vivid recollection of his trip to Yugoslavia, noting that during a stopover at a railway station, Yugoslavs spontaneously engaged in folk dancing, and subsequently:

> I wish I could convey the happiness I felt during the two months I was away. Unless you have experienced it, it is difficult to imagine what it is like to see men and women creating societies where richer opportunities for all are unfolding every day, where greater material welfare is being made available to all, and where an uncomplicated but noble outlook informs a whole community.[242]

Bush regarded such a society embodying the 'cultural promises of socialism'.[243] To him, Yugoslavia seemed like a socialist paradise and a role model for human society. The Culture and Arts Committee was satisfied with the propagandistic effect achieved by Bush after his return to Britain from Yugoslavia:

> He developed in England a very lively activity to get the public to know and properly informed the public about cultural and political conditions in our country. Based on this activity, we consider Alan Bush a friend of the new Yugoslavia.[244]

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[240] Bullivant, *Alan Bush*, p.137.
[241] Alan Bush, 'A Musical Journey through the Balkans', *Changing Epoch 1* (1947), copy held in ABH, 22, in Bullivant, *Alan Bush*, p.137.
[242] Alan Bush, 'A Musician in Eastern Europe', in Bullivant, *Alan Bush*, p.149.
[243] Bullivant, *Alan* Bush, p.149.
[244] AJ, F-314-4-20, Telegram from the Culture and Arts Committee to the Ministry of Internal Affairs FNRJ Passport Department, 19 August 1947.

After returning to Britain, Bush made efforts to promote Yugoslav music, requesting the Yugoslav Embassy to provide more records of Yugoslav music to play in Britain. The Embassy agreed and sent him several Yugoslav compositions.[245] However, Bush's devotion to the Soviet model of communism likely influenced his attitude towards Yugoslavia after the split between the two countries. As a member of the BYA, he was nominated and elected to the Executive Committee in 1949, but for some unknown reasons, he declined to serve on the committee and eventually quit.[246]

Bush's visit was part of the Yugoslav government's visiting scheme in the early post-war years. Yugoslav authorities were concerned with both the foreign and domestic influence of cultural workers' visits from Britain and the West. An appropriate political inclination was inherently important. Most British cultural workers invited were either members of the CPGB or left-leaning and active in promoting those ideas. Artistic achievement was another significant factor, as professional reputation meant popularity among audiences. The Embassy and the MFA took both factors when arranging visits for suitable cultural figures.

British public intellectual J. B. Priestley was another good example. The Yugoslav charge d'affaires in London, Franc Kos, proposed hosting Priestley in Yugoslavia as early as 1947. Kos, a highly cultured individual with a vision for developing bilateral cultural relations, championed the idea of boosting Yugoslavis's image through cultural exchanges between the two countries. In his telegram to the Culture and Arts Committee, he emphasised the potential benefits of Priestley's, noting it could be 'very useful' for Yugoslavia, particularly if Priestley published positive articles about the country upon his return to England.[247] Kos also recommended staging Priestley's theatre pieces in Yugoslavia during his stay. The Committee

[245] DAMFARS, Telegram from the Culture and Arts Committee to the Yugoslav Embassy in London, July 1948.
[246] (BL), Alan Bush collections, Telegram from the British Yugoslav Association to Alan Bush, November 1949, MS Music 673.
[247] AJ, F-314-4-20, Telegram Frac Kos, Charge d'Affaires at the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Culture and Arts Committee, 11 January 1947.

accepted this proposal without hesitation and hoped Priestley 'could come to Yugoslavia when major works [were] under way on the construction of the Šamac-Sarajevo youth railway'. This would allow him to witness firsthand 'the efforts and enthusiasm [their] people were putting into the reconstruction of the country'.[248]

The enthusiasm from both the Yugoslav Embassy and the Culture and Arts Committee was related to the reputation Priestley enjoyed in England and the influence his writing could have on the British public. Priestley was a socialist and a prestigious writer in Britain. Yugoslav officials hoped that his writings on Yugoslavia would help promote the country's socialist achievements, showing that Yugoslavs were wholeheartedly devoted to reconstruction and determined to develop in every way under the rule of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.

IV. Yugoslav Music and Film in Britain

In addition to guest visits and special events such as the book exhibition, Yugoslav music served as a significant tool to raise British interest in Yugoslavia, particularly its folk music. In February 1948, influenced by the exhibition in London, the Yugoslav Embassy asked the MFA to send as many pieces of folk and partisan songs as possible because 'people [there] [were] very much looking for them'.[249]

After Yugoslavia's split with the Soviet Union in 1948, it sought to distinguish its musical creation from the Soviet model, asserting that 'it would be wrong to believe that their music is going to be uniform, conforming to the "rule"'.[250] In this context, the City of Birmingham Orchestra performed an *Eroica* Symphony at a concert of Yugoslav music at Central Hall in London. This concert, held to celebrate the Yugoslav National Day, featured a new symphony

[248] AJ, F-314-4-20, Telegram from the Culture and Arts Committee to the Yugoslav Embassy in London, 25 February 1947.
[249] DAMFARS, Telegram from the Information Office of the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Information Office of the MFA, 7 February 1948.
[250] 'Not So Cominform', *Nottingham Journal* [Nottingham], (24 November 1949), p.4.

by Stjepan Sulek, a young Croatian composer considered one of the best in Yugoslavia at that time. The symphony, themed around the war of national liberation, aimed to show the newly created work in Yugoslav music.

The concert also included works by two older Yugoslav composers, Hristić and Skerjanc. Hristić's contribution was the 'romantic folklore' music of the ballet *The Legend of Ohrid*, while Skerjan's was a 'slight impressionistic' piano concerto, performed by British pianist Kendall Taylor.[251] According to the *Birmingham Gazette,* Yugoslav ambassador Obrad Cicmil attended the concert with other Diplomatic Corps. The evening was described as featuring 'vigorous music, spirited playing, and enthusiastic applause'. Except for the piano concerto, few of the musical pieces had ever been played before in Britain.[252]

The critic from *The Times* praised Stjepan Sulek's modern composition, noting its distinction from the works of his elders in the programme. The symphony was regarded as 'a Dumka on the largest scale, yet a symphony and an engrossing piece of music'. Since Dumka is a music genre that incorporates folk music elements into formal classical music, the entire concert was characterised and described by the word 'Slavonic'.[253] The comments from *The Times* were neutral, and in fact, positive compared to the feedback from *The Observer*:

> Ballet pieces by Stevan Hristić showed some agreeable refinements: all the rest was rather crude though redeemed by ingenuousness or sincerity. Marjan Kozina's Scherzo was found most lacking in style, skill and shape. Skerjanc's Piano Concerto . . . has some good material and some good treatment but its movements do not make consistent wholes. . . . Stjepan Sulek's second Symphony would have been impressive if one had not expected it to be what a symphony should be—music in the first place. It was terrifyingly in earnest about things to which in the middle of London one could not get anywhere near.[254]

[251] 'Not So Cominform', *Nottingham Journal* [Nottingham], (24 November 1949), p.4. Kendall Taylor was a British pianist who contributed to the popularity of Yugoslav music in Britain. He also visited Yugoslavia several times and held concerts there.
[252] 'Which Anthem Comes First?', *Birmingham Daily Gazette* [Birmingham], (29 November 1949), p.5.
[253] 'Yugoslav Music: An "Eroica" Symphony', *The Times* [London], (29 November 1949), p.8.
[254] 'Two Concerts', *The Observer* [London], (11 December 1949), p.6.

The commentator from *The Observer* did not appreciate the concert or the chosen Yugoslav musical pieces, considering the works to be of subpar quality and some even unworthy of being called music. This reflects the stereotypical cultural hierarchy in Britain, which viewed Yugoslav culture as belonging to the inferior 'others'. Such prejudice persisted, as evidenced by similar evaluations of Yugoslavia's ballet at the Edinburgh Festival in 1950. (This will be analysed in detail in Chapter 4.) It is important to emphasise the dilemma Yugoslavia faced when promoting its folk art; this close-to-the-masses heritage was often unavoidably associated with 'exoticism' and 'backwardness' in the British context.

Despite the criticism, the concert did help Yugoslavia establish connections in the cultural field. The conductor of this concert, George Weldon, who was also the conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, paid a one-month visit to Yugoslavia in January 1950.[255]

Music played a significant role in building Yugoslavia's socialist culture and its cultural diplomacy towards Britain. Even though it wished to distinguish itself from its Eastern European counterparts, this implicit message was often ignored or missed by British and West audiences. The socialist character was difficult to discern in its folk-art cultural products. Nevertheless, the general appreciation of Yugoslav music remained lively, likely driven by curiosity about an unknown cultural world.

In addition to music, film was considered 'one of the best means' of Yugoslav propaganda in Britain. The screening of Yugoslav films in Britain was primarily organised by the Embassy through the BYA and other similar clubs, organisations and groups that were friendly towards and interested in Yugoslavia. Among these, the BYA played a major role in planning film showings. The Yugoslav government provided documentary films were to the BYA to accompany various lectures held there.[256]

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[255] 'Conductor's trip; Eastern Composers', Gloucestershire Echo [Cheltenham], (25 January 1950), p.4.
[256] DAMFARS, *Placement of our films in England*, in the telegram from the Information Office of the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Information Office of the MFA, 20 February 1948.

Like the book exhibition, the themes of these films varied from the building of the railway to national folk dance and the natural beauty of the country. In the early years after the war, in Yugoslav film production followed the pattern of Socialist Realism and essentially copied the Soviet model. The depiction of socialist reality became the main theme of these documentaries.

It was not easy to show Yugoslav films in Britain in the early post-war period. This was partly because the film industry in Yugoslavia was still in its infancy. By the beginning of 1948, there had been few outputs.[257] During the first five years after the war, only thirteen feature films were produced in Yugoslavia, almost all of them dealing with the theme of the partisan war or socialist construction.[258] But the main obstacle to showing Yugoslav films in Britain was financial. The tax on showing films in Britain was very high and there was also an import duty imposed. As a result, the mass release of Yugoslav films in public cinemas in Britain was rare.

The majority of the Yugoslav films shown were documentaries rather than commercial features. Documentaries were not as profitable as commercial films in Britain, but they had some propagandistic effect. The primary purpose of these documentaries was educational, as they were not made for entertainment; films intended solely for entertainment violated communist ideology. The documentary collection held by the Embassy in 1949 included '*Partisan Hospitals, Belgrade Universities, Music Life in Zagreb, Monument to the Red Army and Greek Children* and others'.[259]

The film *Omladinska Pruga* (Youth Railway) was shown multiple times during April and May 1948. It was screened for the International Youth Council audiences in both London and Glasgow, and the Derby County Youth Service also organised a showing. During its public

[257] DAMFARS, *Placement of our films in England*, in the telegram from the Information Office of the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Information Office of the MFA, 20 February 1948.
[258] Daniel J. Goulding, *Liberated Cinema. The Yugoslav Experience, 1945–2001* (Bloomington, 2002), pp.1–2.
[259] DAMFAS, Telegram from the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Directorate of Information, 21 May 1949.

showing at the Merseyside Unity Theatre in Liverpool, around 1,000 people attended. Afterward, the theatre wrote to the Embassy, expressing the general view: 'The subject of the film [was] of great importance. We want the film to help develop the interests in the struggle and achievement of the Yugoslav people.'[260]

During 1947 and 1948, Yugoslavia's foreign propaganda focused on its youth railway project, using it to appeal to foreign audiences. Newsreels were also widely used for propagandistic effect in Yugoslav foreign relations with other countries.[261] This type of film was extensively used by the Yugoslav Embassy in London, likely because newsreels appeared more neutral and objective in recording life in Yugoslavia.

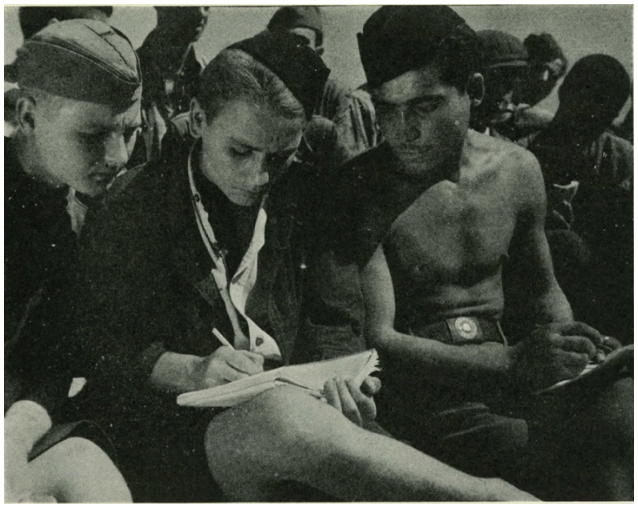


Figure 1-8. A scene in the film *Omladinska Pruga* (*Youth Railway*)[262]

Sometimes, the political orientation of Yugoslav films made them unpopular or even backfired in Britain. According to an Embassy report, films depicting people's celebration parades and demonstrations were viewed by the British as 'purely propagandistic', leading to

[260] DAMFARS, Telegram from Jelena Tucaković at the Information Office of the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Information Office of the MFA, 8 June 1948.
[261] Darko Tadic, 'Yugoslav Propaganda Film Early Works (1945–52)', *Journal of Film and Video*, 63/3 (2011), p.7.
[262] Marie Seton, 'Yugoslav Films-The First Two Years', *Sight and Sound*, 16/62 (1947), p.48.

reluctance from British cinemas and cultural institutions to show them. To address this issue, the Embassy requested films with less politically oriented content. It welcomed films that featured 'cultural and artistic life', 'daily life', and the 'construction' of Yugoslavia, considering them more useful for cultural diplomacy.

At the same time, the Embassy made efforts to show Yugoslav documentary films in 'various clubs, associations, events, meetings and lectures'. It also hoped to add Yugoslav films to British film libraries, ensuring that all interested parties could access them.[263]

On 24 March 1948, the BYA organised a presentation of several Yugoslav films at the British Royal Institute. Four films *Smotra mladosti* (Youth Parade)[264], *Spuzvari i korabljari* (Sponges and Corals)[265], *Briga o deci* (Child Care in Slovenia) and *Omladinska pruga* (Youth Railway) were screened to an audience of about 300 members and friends of the BYA, as well as officials from the Yugoslav Embassy in London.[266] Writing about the event for the BYA's promotional magazine *Yugoslavia Today and Tomorrow*, filmmaker Jack Chambers praised the 'energy and enthusiasm' of the films, in which the 'lesson of united effort [was] unconsciously demonstrated'—implicitly stressing the notion of 'collective achievements' under socialism.[267]

The first Yugoslav feature film shown in Britain was *Slavica*,[268] a typical wartime partisan story. Made in 1947 by Avala Film in Belgrade and directed by Vjekoslav Afrić, the film centres on the partisan theme, which became the central film genre in Yugoslavia. This theme

[263] DAMFARS, *Placement of our films in England*, in the telegram from the Information Office of the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Information Office of the MFA, 20 February 1948.
[264] This is a 'documentary showing the part played by Sports and Physical education in the life of the Yugoslav people'. See The British Film Institute Collections, 'Smotra Mladost', http://collections-search.bfi.org.uk/web/Details/ChoiceFilmWorks/150336307, (20 October 2020).
[265] It was a documentary about the Dalmatian Coast.
[266] DAMFARS, Telegram from Jelena Tucaković at the Information Office of the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Information Office of the MFA, 26 March 1948.
[267] Jack Chambers, 'Films Reviews' *Yugoslavia Today and Tomorrow*, Spring, 1948, pp.14–15.
[268] The film was about a group of Dalmatian fishermen who decided to unite and construct a fishing boat with the aid by factory workers. The launching ceremony was interrupted by a Nazi attack. The boat became the first vessel of the Yugoslav Navy, and the film chronicled its adventures.

was ideologically and politically significant as the national liberation movement and the partisans' history was the sources of the Yugoslav communist party and the regime's legitimacy.[269]

According to press reports, the film was well received after its screening in Yugoslavia. It was praised as 'our first native artistic film, shot in our country, about our lives, in our language, imagined and made thanks to the work of native artists, technicians and labourers'.[270] It held symbolic meaning for Yugoslav film and the nation itself.

The British journal *Sight and Sound* (published by the British Film Institute) commented on the filmmaking techniques and the actors' performance style in *Slavica*. Some episodes were considered 'over-theatrical', and the second half of the film was noted for lacking cohesion.[271] The article also quoted a domestic Yugoslavia review that criticised the film for being exaggerated and 'too crude an interpretation'.[272]

The Yugoslav Embassy organised the screening of *Slavica* for a British audience on 19 June 1948. Attendees included representatives of English companies, film experts, and officials from Eastern European embassies. The reception was positive. C. Jones, the organiser of the International Film Festival in Edinburgh, expressed interest in including the film in the festival that August. Other filmmakers also made positive comments, acknowledging the film's technical shortcomings as typical for a country that had just begun developing its film industry.[273]

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[269] Goulding, *Liberated Cinema*, p.7. See also Miranda Jakiša, 'Memory of a Past to Come: Yugoslavia's Partisan Film and Fashioning of Space', in Tanja Zimmermann (ed), *Balkan Memories. Media Constructions of National and Transnational History* (Bielefeld, 2012), pp.111–120.

[270] '[P]rvi naš domaći umetnički film, izrađen u našoj zemlji, sa temom iz naših života, na našem jeziku, zamišljen i ostvaren radom domaćih umetnika, tehničara i radnika'; 'Naš prvi domaći umetnički film "*Slavica*"', in (*Bioskop) 20. Oktobar,* 9 May 1947 (see the dossier on SLAVICA in the Jugoslavenska Kinoteka, Belgrade) (Translation TS), in Jakiša and Gilič (eds), *Partisans in Yugoslavia*, p.164.

[271] Seton, 'Yugoslav Films-The First Two Years', p.48.

[272] Ibid, p.49.

[273] DAMFARS, Telegram from Jelena Tucaković at the Information Office of the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Information Office of the MFA, 4 August 1948.

Slavica was screened again for members of the BYA on 29 July 1948. The reception was quite favourable, although Jack Chambers' review noted issues with the film, as did Seton's review in the journal of the British Film Institute. The quality was judged inconsistent: some scenes were good whereas others were not. The film did not achieve its goal of creating a strong epic. Problems with over-stylised acting and the lack of a 'consistent feeling for the drama of the story' were also mentioned.[274] The themes of the film or the implicit communist ideology it was meant to convey were scarcely discussed.

Despite the shortcomings mentioned in the reviews, the general feedback on *Slavica* was not bad. The affirmation from film critics provided a boost for the nascent Yugoslav film industry, benefiting both the country and the party. In addition, considering the target audiences of these film screenings, left-leaning Britons and members of the BYA were the ones most successfully receiving the ideological message from Yugoslavia.

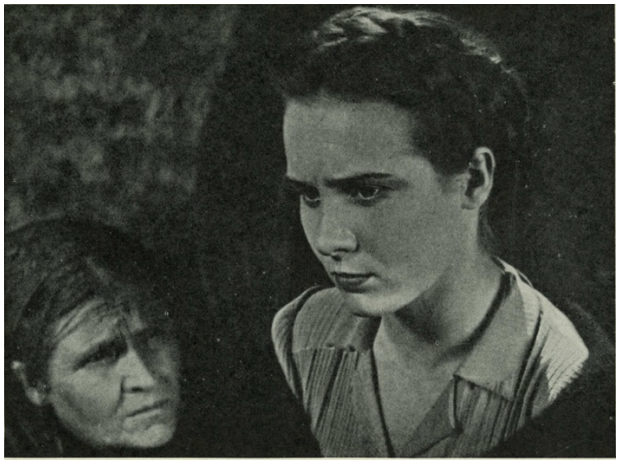


Figure 1-9. A scene in *Slavica*-The First Yugoslav Feature Film[275]

Yugoslavia was cautious in selecting films for British audiences, understanding that an unsuccessful showing could undermine its propagandistic objectives. On 12 July 1949, the

[274] Jack Chambers, 'This Film is Good but . . .', *Yugoslavia Today and Tomorrow*, Autumn, 1948, p.15.
[275] Seton, 'Yugoslav Films-The First Two Years', p.47.

Embassy arranged to screen three films: *Radna Zadruga* (Working Cooperatives), *Za bolju žetvu* (For Better Harvest), and *Narodne igre* (National Dance) in the British Parliament. However, these films did not arrive from Belgrade, and a documentary on the Adriatic Coast was substituted at the last minute. Ambassador Cicmil was unsatisfied, aware that this was not what the audience expected to watch. 'Members of the Parliament and other people [were] interested in the construction of Yugoslavia and [wanted] to see something more concrete of these successes,' he noted. He feared that those who attended the showing would get the impression that '[Yugoslavs] do not have anything from construction to show'. Cicmil believed that such ineffective propaganda efforts had a detrimental effect.[276]

The screening of Yugoslav films in Britain during this period marked just the beginning. Over time, more films were sent to film festivals and other events in Britain. Initially, these films targeted left-wing Britons interested in Yugoslavia or communism and were intended as propaganda to polish Yugoslavia's image. Like the book exhibition and other cultural initiatives, the ideological orientation of these film screenings was clear. Documentaries on reconstruction, everyday life in Yugoslavia, and the development of society and agriculture were major contemporary themes. Feature films dealing with partisan themes from the National Liberation Movement in World War II depicted Yugoslavia's past. Through official portrayals of its history and reality, the image of a modern Yugoslavia was crafted.

However, like other cultural activities in Britain, there was a risk that Yugoslav messages were either missed or misinterpreted.[277] Despite setbacks, Yugoslavia continued its efforts in cultural diplomacy, especially after its split with the Soviet Union in 1948, which made closer relations with Britain and the West more important. During the 1950s, Yugoslav foreign cultural policy evolved to adapt to the general cultural context in Britain and the international

[276] DAMFARS, Telegram from Yugoslav Ambassador Obrad Cicmil to the MFA, 24 July 1949.
[277] This was especially the case when showing Yugoslav folk art in Britain. This will be fully discussed in chapter 4.

arena. The strategy became more liberated and extensive, moving beyond purely propagandistic activities and appeals to left-wing fellow travellers.

V. The Repercussions of the Cominform Resolution of 1948

The Cominform Resolution in June 1948 marked a significant turning point for Yugoslavia in both its domestic and foreign policies. The country's former communist role model now became heretical in the socialist East, leading to a crisis in Yugoslav communist. orthodoxy. This sudden shift was reflected in Yugoslavia's cultural activities in Britain shortly after the Resolution. The period was characterised by intensive ideological propaganda and strained relations with British communists and left-wing organisations that had previously been close.

Following the Cominform Resolution, propaganda attacks from the People's Democracies and the USSR aimed at discrediting Yugoslav communists sprang up like mushrooms. It became urgent for Yugoslavia to defend and consolidate the legitimacy of its own brand of communism through cultural propaganda. The short period after the Cominform Resolution was marked by uncertainty and increasing political and ideological control over nearly all aspects of cultural life, a stark contrast to Yugoslavia's more liberal cultural policy of the 1950s.

There was an increasing political orientation in Yugoslavia's cultural work in Britain, with major contacts primarily being members of the CPGB or left-wing sympathisers. The Yugoslav Embassy in London received many propagandistic materials in different languages from the MFA regarding the Cominform Resolution, including the report made by Tito and the report of organisational work of Central Committee of Communist Party of Yugoslavia.[278] The Embassy also consulted with the Directorate of Information about the potential publication of

[278] DAMFARS, Telegram from Vrcan Srdjan at the Information Office of the MFA to the Press Attaché at the Yugoslav Embassy in London, 5 August 1948, No.422237.

brochures in English containing political propaganda articles. These included 'Edvard Kardelj's Speech on the 'People's Democracy in Yugoslavia; Relations between Socialist Countries' by Melentije Popović; 'The Principle of the Sovereignty of Nations in International Relations and the Workers' Movement' by Aleš Bebler and Milovan Djilas; and 'Lenin on Relations between Socialist Ideas'.[279] The Embassy believed it would be useful to include those propagandistic materials.

In the beginning of November 1949, the Yugoslav Embassy in Britain started to publish a new biweekly bulletin to complement the existing *Yugoslav Fortnightly*. The previous publication, which included articles, speeches and statements by Yugoslav leaders and government officials together with Tanjug's bulletin, were considered ineffective against Cominform propaganda. The new bulletin aimed to make articles 'short, closer and more acceptable' to the British public, rather than merely transmitting information from Yugoslavia. According to the Embassy, the bulletin would 'represent a battle sheet that would react to all the current events here, setting off the offensive blows to Cominform propaganda in England. This would make our propaganda in this field more effective'.[280] The Embassy also planned to publish a brochure explaining Greek issues.[281] This was related to the role played by Yugoslavia in Greek Civil War.

In addition to the increased volume of propagandistic publications, a highly politicised exhibition was held in London by the Yugoslav Embassy in the spring of 1949. This exhibition aimed to justify Yugoslavia's claim on Carinthia during the Conference of Deputy Foreign Ministers, which was being held in London at that time. The conference sought to resolve the territorial dispute between Yugoslavia and Austria over Carinthia to 'secure agreement to the

[279] DAMFARS, Telegram from Yugoslav Ambassador Obrad Cicmil to the MFA, 14 November 1949. The names mentioned here were all high-ranking members of Communist Party of Yugoslavia.
[280] DAMFARS, Telegram from the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the 3rd Regional Department of the MFA, 4 November 1949.
[281] DAMFARS, Telegram from the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Directorate of Information of the FNRJ, 7 November 1949.

text of the peace treaty with Austria'. Although the exhibition displayed 'the history and present life of the Slovene population of Carinthia', its primary purpose was political, to support Yugoslavia's territorial claim. According to the Yugoslav assistant press attaché, Jelena Tucaković, the objective of the exhibition was to inform the British people about the 'background of the Carinthian problem' and to compensate for 'insufficient information' in the British press.[282] It is difficult to gauge the exhibition's reception, as little press coverage or internal documentation has been found.

The Cominform Resolution did impede Yugoslavia's cultural work in Britain. The major British organisations and individuals that had cooperated with the Yugoslav Embassy in Britain were either related to the CPGB or left-wing oriented, such as the Young Communist League and some other trade unions. As a result, it became increasingly difficult for the Embassy to conduct its cultural work with these groups due to the CPGB's stance. The CPGB chose to side with the Soviet Union on the Cominform issue.

Charge d'Affaires Kos expressed the reluctance of the League for Democracy in Greece[283] to publish the travelogue *Medju Markosovim partizanima* (With Markos's Partisans), written by the famous Yugoslav communist writer and poet Oskar Davičo in 1947. The book detailed the author's experience with Greek partisans under the leadership of Markos Vafiadis. Despite the ongoing negotiation, the League's publisher deemed the book 'undesirable for the English audience'. However, Kos believed the refusal was due to the Cominform Resolution and the influence of the CPGB within the League.[284]

The Cominform incident placed the BYA in a difficult position, as most of its members were communists. Its stance and reaction to the Cominform issue were very important for

[282] DAMFARS, 'Slovene Carinthia Exhibition' by H.R., *Diplomatic Bulletin,* (1 March 1949); DAMFARS, the opening address made by Jelena Tucaković for the Slovene Carinthia Exhibition.
[283] The League for Democracy in Greece was an organisation in Britain and established in 1945. Its aim was to help the Greek leftists in the Greek Civil War during the 1940s.
[284] DAMFARS, Telegram from Kos, Charge d'Affaires at the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the MFA, 12 August 1948.

Yugoslavia's cultural engagement with Britain. The Yugoslav Embassy attached great importance to its relations with the BYA and wished to keep it functioning properly. They believed that the BYA should not be controlled by pro-Soviet British communists, as this would harm Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy and negatively affect its image in Britain. The Cominform Resolution and the ensuing Yugoslav–Soviet split divided the BYA, leading to some internal conflict. Some members sided with the Soviet Union, while others supported Yugoslavia. A few members remained neutral, refraining from taking a clear stance on the issue.

The resolution of the Executive Committee of the BYA in its session in August 1948 decided 'not to engage the Association in the discussion about the conflicts with the Cominform and that the aim of the Association was to strengthen and develop friendship between the British and Yugoslav people'.[285] However, this did not prevent the factional tension within the BYA due to differing political positions among its members. The CPGB members attempted to impose Cominform decisions on the BYA, which subsequently influenced some of its activities.

With the Embassy's efforts, the resolution proposed at the annual assembly of the BYA in 1949 decided to de-politicise the BYA in order to 'avoid all political subjects'. Each activity of the BYA was focused on 'deepening the friendship with Yugoslav people'. The Executive Committee also agreed that the discussion at the annual assembly would relate only to future policy, not the political conflict caused by the Cominform. Controversial terms were required to be changed in the resolution of the assembly and the Embassy was cautious to prevent communist members from attacking Yugoslavia at the meeting. The result was an eclectic solution: the pro-Soviet communist members of the Executive Committee of the BYA took a

[285] DAMFARS, Telegram from Yugoslav Ambassador Obrad Cicmil to the 3rd Regional Department regarding the Annual Assembly of the British Yugoslav Association, 22 February 1949.

stance that 'favoured the struggle of the Yugoslav peoples during the course of the war, as well as their efforts in post-war reconstruction and construction, avoiding mentioning any party or leadership'.[286]

The Cominform crisis within the BYA passed without paralysing its normal activities, and the work of the Association continued as usual. In the second part of the assembly, it was emphasised that the Association needed to 'organise various film performances of Yugoslav films, art exhibitions and social events in order to improve the material resources of the Association'. To achieve this purpose, a special committee was formed.[287] However, the negative influences could not be ignored. When the Yugoslav Embassy organised a film showing in the British Parliament, attendance from the Association was poor due to the attitude of the communist members of the Executive Committee of the BYA.[288]

The intensified ideological work was also reflected in Yugoslavia's guest visit programme. The selection of guests became more politically oriented, often depending on whether they could help Yugoslavia in its ideological conflict with the USSR rather than simply promoting the country in the UK. For instance, in 1950, when Yugoslav authorities considered inviting Priestley again to attend the writers meeting in Dubrovnik, their mindset changed from 1947. Priestley became 'the subject of greater interest' in 1950 due to his famous open letter to the Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg, in which Priestley openly criticised the Soviet Union.[289]

Other writers suggested by the ambassador for invitation included Kenneth Ingram, Compton Mackenzie, and Jack Lindsey. Each of them met certain ideological or political

[286] DAMFARS, Telegram from Yugoslav Ambassador Obrad Cicmil to the 3rd Regional Department regarding the Annual Assembly of the British Yugoslav Association, 11 February 1949.
[287] Ibid.
[288] DAMFARS, Telegram from Yugoslav Ambassador Obrad Cicmil to the MFA, 24 July 1949.
[289] Invited by Ilya Ehrenburg in an open letter to attend the World Peace Congress, J. B. Priestley responded with an 'Open Letter to a Russian Colleague' published in *The New Statesman and Nation*. In his reply, Priestley expressed his support for the 'World Peace Congress' but also wished that Russian writers would be more critical of their government. The Soviet response was serious. They decided to send Ehrenburg to London to address these concerns. See *The New Statesman and Nation*, V. 39, (22 April 1950), p.451; 'Mr. Priestley to Mr. Ehrenburg', *Truth*, (28 April 1950), p.4; DAMFARS, *Posete britanskih književnika Jugoslaviji* (The Visit of British Writers to Yugoslavia) in the telegram from Ambassador Jože Brilej to the MFA, 23 July 1950, No.415320.

expectations of the Yugoslav government. Kenneth Ingram was a member of the BYA and had verbally blamed the Soviet Union in the Cominform debate.[290] Similarly, Compton Mackenzie was a former patron and current member of the BYA and the president of the League for Democracy in Greece. Jack Lindsey was a CPGB member who had close relations with Yugoslavia before the Cominform Resolution. Although contact was broken at the end of 1948, the ambassador believed it should be resumed because Lindsey could influence others in progressive circles in Britain.[291] All the aforementioned authors were, to varying degrees, pro-Yugoslavia or could be leveraged to counter Soviet propagandistic attacks.

Yugoslavia's cultural work in Britain during the short period after the Cominform Resolution saw an increased focus on propaganda defending Yugoslavia's position against the Soviet Union. However, this situation did not last long, as a more diversified and less overtly propagandistic cultural policy was soon explored and implemented.

VI. Conclusion

Yugoslav cultural activities in Britain were still in their early stages during this period. Yugoslavia was exploring how to properly organise its cultural work in Britain. These activities focused on showcasing socialist achievements with the purpose of consolidating the party state by glorifying the past, celebrating the present, and envisioning the future. Through diverse cultural activities and exchanges, Yugoslavia was able to establish cultural connections within Britain and gain notice from the British public. During this period, the majority of cultural events were under the auspices of the BYA and similar left-wing organisations and groups. However, these close connections gradually faded due to the Cominform incident in 1948. The internationalism of the wartime alliance and post-war reconstruction disappeared with the onset

[290] Kenneth Ingram wrote several essays on Christianity and Communism with the intention to reconcile them.
[291] DAMFARS, *Posete britanskih književnika Jugoslaviji* (The Visit of British Writers to Yugoslavia) in the telegram from Ambassador Jože Brilej to the MFA, 23 July 1950, No.415320.

of the Cold War, catalysing a change in the direction of Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy practice.

Beginning in 1950, Yugoslavia's highly propagandistic cultural policy was replaced by a more neutral and subtle one, with a broader scope and increasingly diverse content. Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy also shifted from targeting narrowly focused left-wing audiences to the general British public. This will be seen in Chapters 4 and 5, when the country started to search for a unique cultural identity by combining its cultural heritage and cultural modernism in its cultural diplomacy towards Britain and the West. During the 1950s and early 1960s, there were increasing cultural exchanges with Britain, culminating with the Henry Moore exhibition in 1955 (see Chapter 5). However, the core of Yugoslavia's foreign cultural policy remained focused on being recognised as a model socialist state. Studying the early post-war Yugoslav cultural programmes helps us better understand the evolution of Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy and its complex texture. Similar to Yugoslavia's cultural activities in the UK, the British Council served as the cultural representative of Britain within Yugoslavia. Their work also experienced ebbs and flows, which will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 2. Can Culture Bridge the Political Gap? The British Council in Yugoslavia

While Yugoslavia was exploring its cultural diplomacy towards Britain in a highly propagandistic way during the early post-war period, the British Council, as the main institution responsible for Britain's overseas cultural work, was also striving to increase its cultural influence in Yugoslavia. The Council played a significant role in post-war British cultural diplomacy. Unlike Yugoslavia's highly propagandistic style of cultural work and lack of formal institutional arrangements, the British Council's work was assessed and adjusted according to the changing situation in Yugoslavia, guided by clear goals it wished to achieve. In this chapter, we will see how Britain wielded its soft power differently from Yugoslavia.

Several studies examine the international role of the British Council in Britain's cultural diplomacy across different periods.[292] The majority of this literature uses case studies of the Council's work in various countries. For instance, Alice Byrne analysed the role played by the Council in Britain's cultural propaganda toward the United States during and after World War II. She emphasised the propagandistic role of the Council and how internal competition from other governmental departments hindered its effectiveness in the United States.[293] Maria Hadjiathanasiou examined the Council's work in Cyprus between 1935 and 1955, arguing that the Council was ineffective in using its cultural offensive to attract a Cypriot audience and maintain its political influence to prevent decolonisation and the national independence of

[292] For the literature related to the British Council, see Philip M. Taylor, 'Cultural Diplomacy and the British Council: 1934–1939', *British Journal of International Studies*, 4/3 (1978), pp.244–65; Vaughan, '"A Certain Idea of Britain"', pp.151–68; Mark Hampton, 'Projecting Britishness to Hong Kong: the British Council and Hong Kong House, 1950s–1970s', *Historical Research*, 85/230 (2012), pp.691–709; *The British Council and Anglo-Greek Literary Interactions, 1945–1955*, ed. Peter Mackridge and David Ricks (London, 2018).

[293] Alice Byrne, 'The British Council and Cultural Propaganda in the United States, 1938–1945', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 11/3 (2013), pp.249–63. Here, cultural propaganda was understood similarly as cultural diplomacy which referred to 'techniques employed to shape opinion both at home and abroad' and was closely related to image building. Therefore, the author argued that the British Council's work from its inception was associated with the idea of 'cultural propaganda'.

Cyprus.[294] Diana J. Eastment addressed the development and retreat of the British Council in Europe from the end of the war to 1950. She noted that '[a]fter 1948 Germany and Yugoslavia were the Council's only areas of growth in Europe and substantial cuts were made elsewhere', confirming Yugoslavia's special position in the British Council's working plan.[295] These works detail the Council's role in raising Britain's prestige and influence, highlighting the flexibility and restrictions of the Council's efforts as well as its potential political agenda in target countries.

This chapter investigates the British Council's work in Yugoslavia from the end of World War II through the 1950s. It will be the first to elucidate the evolution of the Council's work in communist Yugoslavia and how this work was shaped by the Cold War. The motivations of the Council will be discussed, as well as how the Yugoslavs received its activities. This chapter will explore mutual trust and distrust and how cultural work between the two countries was interwoven with their respective diplomatic goals.

In this chapter, I argue that although the British Council helped Britain establish stable cultural relations with Yugoslavia, its political goals were more difficult to realise. The main sources used for this chapter are original unpublished documents, primarily reports and correspondence of the British Council, supplemented by British Foreign Office papers. The discussion will focus on Britain's political concerns and its interpretation of Yugoslav policy. These materials also have their limitations, as they tend to focus on institutional and bureaucratic concerns.

This chapter is divided into three sections: an introduction to the Council and its general working aims; the relationship between the Council and the communist countries in Europe;

[294] Maria Hadjiathanasiou, 'Colonial Rule, Cultural Relations and the British Council in Cyprus, 1935–55', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 46/6 (2018), pp.1096–1124.
[295] Diana Jane Eastment, 'The Policies and Position of the British Council from the Outbreak of War to 1950' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Leeds, 1982), p.258.

and the Council's work in Yugoslavia. This analysis aims to examine the British Council's efforts in a relatively small communist country that held a special position during the Cold War.

In the post-war era, Britain was repositioning itself in the international community to find a post-imperial place in the world. British power was gradually diminishing with the onset of decolonisation. Despite its continued influence in international affairs, Britain faced challenges in maintaining its status as a major global power.[296] The goal of preserving its global influence and indispensable role in Europe clashed with Soviet expansionism.[297] Britain's Cold War ideology also made it necessary to counter the 'red menace' from the Soviet Union. Consequently, Britain's foreign policy in Europe was based on working with the United States to keep Western Europe united, contain the threat of Soviet communism, and keep its major role in Europe.[298]

The use of soft power to increase its influence was a significant part of Britain's overseas strategy.[299] How Britain should project itself and culturally maintain 'the British Presence' was its overriding concern.[300] This aim also drove the British Council's work in foreign countries after the war. Competition in the cultural field from other countries—not only communist Soviet Union but also the United States and France—further spurred Britain's cultural diplomacy.[301] In this context, the British Council aimed to promote British culture as an alternative to 'two alien cultural forces, Russia and America, both of which threaten to overwhelm it [the European culture], one from hostility, the other from sheer exuberance'.[302]

Culture was closely intertwined with strong political engagement. For Britain's Cold War policy, the anti-communist campaign was always important. British officials believed that a

[296] *British Foreign Policy 1945–56*, ed. Michael Dockrill and John W. Young (Basingstoke, 1989).
[297] David Reynolds, 'Great Britain', in Reynolds, *The Origins of the Cold War in Europe*, pp.93–4.
[298] Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War, 1945–1955', pp.112–32.
[299] See Vaughan, '"A Certain Idea of Britain"', pp.151–168.
[300] Lee, 'British Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War', p.122.
[301] See The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1952–1953* (London, 1953); In *The British Council Yugoslavia Representative's Annual Reports*, there were special sections comparing cultural work of the United States, the Soviet Union, and France with Britain inside Yugoslavia.
[302] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1952–1953*, p.11.

better understanding of British culture, society and identity could be wielded as a diplomatic weapon to counter Soviet influence and the expansion of communism.[303] In 1946, Britain's ambassador in Baghdad asserted that there was no better substitute for 'the British ideal of moderation, toleration, social progress, and individual freedom' in countering the spread of Communism in Iraq because 'the Moslem religion [was] no barrier' to that.[304] Therefore, the task of presenting a new post-war Britain included cultural work in the West, where the countries shared the values of freedom and democracy. At the same time, promoting the Council's work in the Soviet bloc was even more significant given the authoritarian character of the communist regimes there.

Although Yugoslavia was never the geostrategic focus of Britain's diplomacy in Europe, the need for recognition remained a key British concern. Britain and other Western countries viewed Yugoslavia as the Soviet Union's staunchest partner before their split in 1948.[305] However, after the split, Yugoslavia played a special role in Europe and the world. The significance of Yugoslavia in Britain and its alliance strategy was increasing due to its defensive position in the eastern flank of Europe and its 'wedge' role in the Eastern Bloc.[306] The purpose of Britain's cultural diplomacy in Yugoslavia evolved from reducing Soviet influence to leveraging post-1948 Yugoslavia as a wedge in the Eastern Bloc. The British Council's work in Yugoslavia was directed toward achieving these diplomatic goals.

Yugoslavia in the early 1950s was also keen on rebuilding relations with the West concerning its economy and national security. Later, after the normalisation of its relations with the Soviet Union in 1955, it attempted to keep a balanced foreign policy between the East and

[303] The National Archives (TNA): Public Record Office, London, FO371/52459/E5857/5857/93, FO minute, 5 July 1946; in Vaughan, '"A Certain Idea of Britain"', p.3.
[304] Ibid.
[305] Beatrice Heuser, 'Yugoslavia in Western Cold War Policies, 1948–1953' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1987), p.26.
[306] Ibid.; Lorraine M. Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War* (University Party, 1997).

the West while focusing more on developing relations with the rising non-aligned countries.[307] As Alvin Rubinstein notes, 'Yugoslavia sought an association that was ideologically congenial and politically feasible. . . . [The] growing consciousness of common political, security, and economic interests intensified communication among [the unaligned nations].'[308]

Cultivating a better understanding of British culture in Yugoslavia was considered beneficial for Britain. It was expected that the Council's work could create Anglophile sentiment among the public, which would support British policy objectives. Tamara Kessel summarised the vision of British culture and the ideal image of the British nation that the Council wished to promote and portray during the interwar period. Through 'linguistic propaganda' (the teaching of English language) and other cultural events, certain 'venerated national-specific characteristics' such as 'the British system of government, justice, and social order' were emphasised. 'The Council held high an idea of Britishness as the defender of the basic tenets of European civilization.'[309] The Council's work in Yugoslavia was therefore expected to promote Britain as an inheritor of European civilisation, a modern state with a democratic tradition and splendid culture.

British officials contrasted British culture with the highly ideologically driven communist way of life in Yugoslavia. As Council representative A. L. P. Himbury stated in his report on visiting the Youth Railway, he 'could not help deploring the strong political cant which [was] given to every speech, concert or "cultural" activity and the constant emphasis on communist dogma'.[310] This reflected the different views on culture from the Yugoslav and British

[307] For Yugoslavia's foreign relations, see Svetozar Rajak, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the Early Cold War: Reconciliation, Comradeship, Confrontation, 1953–57* (London, 2011); Dennison I. Rusinow, *The Yugoslav Experiment 1948–1974* (London, 1977); Rajak, 'The Cold War in the Balkans', pp.198–220; John R. Lampe, 'Yugoslavia's Foreign Policy in Balkan Perspective: Tracking between the Superpowers and Non-Alignment', *East Central Europe*, 40/1–2 (2013), pp.97–113.
[308] Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World* (Princeton, 1970), p.37.
[309] Tamara Kessel, *Foreign Cultural Policy in the Interbellum: The Italian Dante Alighieri Society and the British Council Contesting the Mediterranean* (Amsterdam, 2016), pp.138–9.
[310] 'Report of Assistant Representative of the British Council in Yugoslavia Himbury of his recent visit to the Youth Railway', 24 September 1947, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.

perspectives. The British Council insisted on the apolitical character of culture, believing that British culture, as part of European civilisation, should be enjoyed by Yugoslav people despite political systemic differences. Conversely, the Yugoslav perspective was that culture was always part of ideological construction and should embody communist principles. Such contrasting views on culture could be seen throughout the British Council's work in Yugoslavia.

Stereotypes about Yugoslav culture (or Balkan culture in general) appeared from time to time in the Council's reports. Like many Britons, Council staff regarded Yugoslav culture as exotic and primitive. From their perspective, it would be a loss if Yugoslav audiences did not have a chance to learn about British culture, which they saw as a higher form of European civilisation that had evolved over time. The lack of knowledge about Yugoslavia caused problems for the Council's work.

I. The British Council as a Cultural Organisation

The British Council played a significant role in Britain's cultural relations with foreign countries. Established in 1934 on the initiative of the Foreign Office, it functioned as an independent cultural organisation. Initially, the Council's purpose and scope was vague, with no clear definition of its remit. Its function and organisation evolved through practice.[311] However, the early years between 1934 and 1936 were challenging for the British Council, as it struggled to survive due to financial constraints.[312]

The British Council initially survived through funding from the Treasury and related governmental subsidies. Although there was some financial support from industry and individuals, it was only marginal. Governmental support was not guaranteed, so the primary

[311] 'The British Council 1934–1955' by Harold Nicolson, in *The British Council 1934–1955, Twenty-First Anniversary Report* (London, 1955), p.7.
[312] Taylor, 'Cultural Diplomacy and the British Council: 1934–1939', p.263.

focus was on raising funds and ensuring the organisation functioned properly. Policy considerations were addressed later.[313]

In the beginning, the British Council's overseas work relied on the cooperation and auspices of the Foreign Office since it lacked local representatives due to financial limitations. The Council needed the assistance of local Foreign Office staff to carry out its cultural work.[314] Later as the Council's work became more established, it gained greater independence to avoid unnecessary suspicion and hostility in foreign countries due to its relations with the Foreign Office. Nonetheless, cooperation between the two always existed, as the British Council was an indispensable part of Britain's overseas cultural work.

The development of the British Council in the first few years after its establishment also highlighted the increasing significance attached to cultural diplomacy. It was believed that a better understanding of British culture would facilitate Britain's economic and political interests. However, Britain was not the only country engaging in overseas cultural activities. The French government increased its expenditures on cultural activities compared to wartime levels.[315] Although the U.S. State Department did not officially implement related cultural projects until 1938, numerous private organisations were already promoting U.S. culture, such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation.[316]

During the interwar period, the British Council's overseas work was implemented through the numerous Anglophile and Foreign-British Societies in various countries. There was no official representative policy at that time, and the Council's offices in these countries had not yet been established. The Council was still searching for effective ways to execute its work, usually cooperating with and funding local organisations. In the absence of such organisations,

[313] Taylor, 'Cultural Diplomacy and the British Council: 1934–1939', p.254.
[314] Ibid., pp.257–8.
[315] The Alliance Française was founded in Paris in 1883 to teach French as a second language.
[316] Taylor, 'Cultural Diplomacy and the British Council: 1934–1939', p.247; p.256.

it would sometimes work on establishing them. Later, the Council's overseas work focused on establishing British Institutes, which served as British cultural centres for teaching English.[317]

The Council's ostensible neutrality as a cultural organisation allowed it to maintain at least partial independence. It was not directly under government orders because it had its own executive committee and various departments that coordinated its policy. However, the Council had to consult the Foreign Office for suggestions because its work could influence bilateral diplomatic relations and serve the long-term goals of British foreign policy.

The British Council was firm in keeping its work separate from what it understood as propaganda and information work.[318] Even during World War II, it refused to be transformed into a 'propaganda machine' of the Ministry of Information. Instead, the British Council oversaw foreign cultural houses established in London with various nations to keep their national cultures alive and inform them of British culture, such as the Yugoslav House in London. The Council also maintained a close association with the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education, contributing to post-war cultural and educational work.[319]

This tradition continued after the war. According to the general policy outlined in the Drogheda Report, which reviewed the British government's information work, the British Council was listed as an 'operational agency' to assist government 'policy' departments but was not considered part of them.[320] The Council never undertook work similar to that of the Information Research Department of the Foreign Office. Information work and direct political propaganda were never the primary focus of the Council. Its independence from intelligence work enabled the Council to function in many places around the world after the war.

[317] Taylor, 'Cultural Diplomacy and the British Council: 1934–1939', pp.257–8.
[318] The Council understood its working remit as purely dealing with cultural issues which excludes direct political propaganda such as providing political periodicals, radio broadcasting or any intelligence work such as information collection.
[319] Nicolson, 'The British Council 1934–1955', p.22.
[320] The other two 'operational agencies' were the B.B.C. and the Central Office of Information, Ibid., p.25.

This non-political character was essential to the work of the British Council. It had a clear purpose: to provide knowledge about Britain and its way of life. The communication and interpretation of British culture abroad could be compromised if the Council was perceived merely as an 'instrument of governmental or departmental policy'.[321] While there were no direct political profits such as getting useful intelligence or immediately realising diplomatic goals, the long-term benefits were always present.

The Council believed its cultural work should be well-rounded. Music, arts, and literature were explicitly included. Scientific and technological knowledge, as well as the knowledge related to social norms, governmental administration, and medical development, were also part of the Council's cultural work. Altogether, they constituted 'a way of life'.[322] The teaching of English as a foreign language by the Council was also seen as the best way to understand and appreciate British culture through the effort to 'understand, read and speak the language'.[323] By propagating British culture and the British way of life, a certain affinity and recognition could be created, which would help to fulfil British diplomatic goals.

The Council's aim to foster mutual understanding was based on the idea of a shared community, common interests in the cultural sphere, and solving the common problems of their times.[324] Historian John Darwin has argued that this notion of a community of shared values was crucial to maintaining Britain's status as a third great power.[325] Such ideas of a shared community could facilitate the free circulation of ideas and cultural creations among countries. This concept was the driving force behind the Council's work behind the Iron Curtain to

[321] Nicolson, 'The British Council 1934–1955', p.27.
[322] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1950–1951* (London, 1951), p.1.
[323] Nicolson, 'The British Council 1934–1955', p.14.
[324] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1947–1948* (London, 1948), pp.11–12.
[325] John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge, 2009).

promote peace and cooperation in a divided Europe. This shared community was seen as a step toward peace after the war.[326]

Unlike psychological warfare, the work of the British Council was non-confrontational. Their activities included providing British magazines and periodicals in their reading rooms, showing British films, and other cultural initiatives. The ultimate goal was to create a favourable atmosphere for British policy. This approach seems to have been successful, as the work of the British Council was accepted and welcomed even among some countries behind the Iron Curtain immediately after World War II.[327]

The acceptance and welcoming of the Council in other countries were also due to the status that British culture enjoyed globally at that time. For instance, British medical advances and English literature were particularly appreciated in Yugoslavia after the war.[328] Later, with the rise of modern art, film and music, modern British culture gained a worldwide audience. The cultural development of many countries was heavily influenced by the war. Britain, which suffered relatively less from the war, had the opportunity, according to one British Council document, to 'hold a position of moral and cultural leadership in the world'.[329]

The work of the Council was both flexible and strategic. For instance, the activities of the Council varied in different countries and were adjusted according to local conditions and needs, as well as the political system.[330] The Council placed great importance on establishing personal contacts and relationships and tended to leverage the influence of key individuals to propagate

[326] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1949–1950* (London, 1950), pp.5–6.
[327] These countries included Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia.
[328] According to the documents in the DAMFARS, there were showings of British medical films in major cities in Yugoslavia after the war. The first book published in Yugoslavia after the liberation was a translation of *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding. In addition to the classic works by Shakespeare and Dickens, there were also translated modern literature from E. M. Forster, John Galsworthy and Virginia Woolf in Yugoslavia. Later in the 1950s, Henry Moore's works became a hit in Yugoslavia when his sculptures exhibited there.
[329] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1946–1947* (London, 1947), p.11.
[330] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1949–1950* (London, 1950), p.7.

British culture to local audiences. The Council's scholarships and bursaries for funding experts and students were in line with this goal.[331]

II. The British Council and the Communist Countries in Europe

The Council began to realise that culture and cultural exchanges after the war were not to be exclusively enjoyed by a small group of elites and the upper class. On the contrary, the main audience was the general public. The Council used British culture to win the hearts of the public of a foreign country. This was, in fact, the original form of public diplomacy. Although the Council did not formally belong to the British government, it still worked closely with the Foreign Office and indirectly assisted Britain in facilitating mutual understanding and image-building in the international community. This process was even more significant in communist countries, given their completely different political systems.

The Council's ostensibly apolitical character and independence from governmental departments made it possible to provide cultural activities as an alternative to the daily domestic communist propaganda in the Eastern Bloc. To this end it hoped to appeal to intellectuals and Anglophiles for whom the Council's work was significant. Additionally, news on cultural developments in Britain was also welcomed by non-elite local residents. This could be seen from the regular use of the Council's reading room by local Yugoslavs and the interest in Henry Moore's exhibition held in Yugoslavia. According to a 1955 report, the Council attached great importance to 'individuality' in its work. This respect for individuals and the emphasis on free thought were key for its work in communist countries in Europe.

The isolated character of the communist regimes and the closed nature of the Eastern Bloc in general prevented international exchanges, especially with the West. This made the work of the Council all the more valuable. It helped to provide people in communist countries with 'the

[331] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1949–1950* (London, 1950), pp.32–5.

mental opportunities and equipment which will enable them to think and judge for themselves' and 'develop their own minds in a congenial atmosphere'.[332]

In the Council's annual report for 1948–49, European countries were divided into four groups for the sake of the Council's work: Northwestern Europe, Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Germany-Austria. This categorisation was based on the 'different conditions prevailing in the various countries and the different methods which the Council adopts in them'. The Council assumed that the communist-controlled countries of Eastern Europe were, in general, politically and economically closely associated with the Soviet Union. However, it still believed that British culture and technical achievements could be attractive. According to the Council's report, conditions in these foreign countries shared a common pattern of local suspicion.[333] The communist regimes in that area were still consolidating their control in the late 1940s and they distrusted any influence from the West.

As David Caute notes, the virtual cultural Cold War forced these countries 'to prove their virtue, to demonstrate their spiritual superiority, to claim the high ground of 'progress', to win public support and admiration'.[334] It was seen as necessary to suppress the decadent Western cultural influence while promoting an advanced Soviet communist culture.

When the war ended in 1945, the British Council began its work in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia. Later in 1948, another Council office opened in Sofia. However, the Council did not succeed in resuming work in Romania, Albania, and the Soviet Union. The Romanian authorities refused to grant permission for the Council's activity. There were no diplomatic relations between the UK and Albania, making the work of the Council impossible there. As for the Soviet Union, it was not interested in cooperation with the UK in

[332] Nicolson, 'The British Council 1934–1955', p.30.
[333] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1948–1949* (London, 1949), pp.69–70.
[334] Caute, *The Dancer* Defects, p.3.

the cultural field. Its focus was on cultural exchanges with other People's Democracies to cultivate a unified communist culture shared by all of them.[335]

In the first several years after the war, the work of the British Council in communist-controlled countries followed a similar pattern. There were English lectures, the exchange of books and periodicals, the operation of British Council reading rooms and libraries, art exhibitions and musical exchanges, film showings, and a focus on technical, scientific and medical achievements. Activities included medical film screenings in surgical clinics, distribution of books and periodicals related to medical and scientific themes, and arranging visits of doctors to the UK. These visits were pivotal as many of these countries had suffered extensively from the devastation of the war, halting their scientific research. There was a desire to be exposed to the most updated scientific developments from Britain.

However, other cultural forms were not ignored. For example, there was an exhibition of British modern painting from the Tate Gallery in Poland during 1946 and 1947. Musicians Clarence Raybould and Kendall Taylor visited Yugoslavia and gave performances. The Sadler's Wells Ballet gave nine successful performances to full houses in Czechoslovakia, and there was a graphic arts exhibition in Budapest in 1947 and 1948.[336]

However, it was generally not easy for the British Council to work in communist countries because its work was subject to local governments and their policies. Strict limitations were placed on the interchange of persons and related cultural and educational activities.[337] Therefore, the Council's work in these countries was somewhat focused on inconspicuous and less suspicious daily work such as English language teaching and scientific developments, rather than a larger-scale cultural offensive. Despite the rigid attitude of the communist

[335] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1945–1946* (London, 1946), pp.7–13; The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1948–1949*, p.89.
[336] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1946–1947*, p.57; p.61; The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1947–1948*, pp.52, 56.
[337] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1948–1949*, p.89.

governments, there was wide interest from intellectuals and non-governmental institutions, and British art received much attention.[338]

Despite the general obstacles due to the oppositional political system, a Council report from 1950-51 noted that, 'in Poland and Hungary, and to a lesser extent in Bulgaria, the Council was amicably received and permitted to operate freely'.[339]

This relatively stable situation did not last long and gradually deteriorated due to the increasing Stalinisation in those communist-controlled European countries. With the establishment of the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties (Cominform thereafter) in 1947, the situation worsened. The British Council noticed the mounting administrative obstacles set up by the respective governments to circumscribe its activities. According to its annual report, the Council's work was confined 'as far as possible to the capital' and was discouraged 'to the point of voluntary withdrawal' if possible. In addition to the difficulty in granting visas and political accusations of spying, there was also police intimidation. Some local governments regarded the British Council as 'a spy organisation' because of its connections with the local British embassies. Although the situation in Czechoslovakia started well when Britain and Czechoslovakia concluded the cultural convention in June 1947, it deteriorated soon after the *coup d'état* in February 1948, when the Czech communist party seized power completely.[340]

Facing an unfriendly atmosphere, the Council still did not give up its mission, asserting that cultural work was necessary for individuals in communist countries. Therefore, the purpose of making British culture known remained the same in the Eastern Bloc as in the rest of Europe. The obstacles set up by the communist regimes were regarded by the Council as an 'act against peace and the abuse of culture for political ends'.[341] Nevertheless, the Council

[338] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1948–1949*, p.89.
[339] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1950–1951*, p.11.
[340] Ibid, pp.12–13.
[341] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1949–1950*, p.15.

decided not to 'be the first to break one of the few remaining links between eastern and western Europe'. Voluntary withdrawal would look like 'an admission of guilt' even though the Council had done nothing wrong.[342]

However, even this relative stability did not last long. Due to two personal allegations against the British Council in Hungary, the British Legation in Budapest was asked to close the Council and withdraw its staff in March 1950. In May 1950, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounced the work of the British Council and the BBC, demanding the Council's closure. By June 1950, the Bulgarian government followed suit, claiming that 'the Council had failed to strengthen cultural relations between the two countries'.[343] The only country in the Eastern Bloc where the British Council continued its work was Poland. Although its activities were under surveillance, there was no undue interference, and the attitude towards the Council was considered 'civilised' by its staff.

In contrast to the gloomy situation in most communist countries, there was a notable expansion of the Council's work in Yugoslavia in this period, owing to its improved political climate. This was particularly evident in the increased number of Yugoslav visitors to Britain.[344]

By the early 1950s, there was no British Council work behind the 'Iron Curtain', except in Poland. The boost in the British Council's work with the Soviet Union only took place after the death of Stalin in 1953 and with the de-Stalinisation process that Khrushchev initiated afterwards. In 1955, the British government invited the Council to establish the Soviet Relations Committee to 'develop cultural relations with the USSR and to provide a single official channel for this'.[345] The Soviet government accepted the Council's proposals to increase the exchange of visits, leading to a growth in activities between the British Council

[342] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1950–1951*, p.12.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Ibid., pp.13–14.
[345] Nicolson, 'The British Council 1934–1955', pp.37–9.

and the Soviet Union.[346] However, this process was soon interrupted by the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, causing a sharp decline in relations. Modest activities resumed in 1957.[347] This situation stood in stark contrast to the British Council's work in Yugoslavia, where activities had been developing for a long time.

Yugoslavia and Poland were the only two communist countries where the British Council worked without interruption since the Second World War. However, the scale of the Council's work in Poland was comparatively smaller than in Yugoslavia. It was only in 1958 that the first British orchestra arrived in Poland, receiving a tremendous reception.[348] In contrast, the Council's work in Yugoslavia expanded after its split with the Soviet Union in 1948. Despite this expansion, cooperation between Yugoslavia and the British Council was not always smooth sailing. Yugoslavia remained a communist party-state, leading to periodic fluctuations in the Council's mission there.

III． British Council in Yugoslavia: Can Culture Bridge the Political Gap?

Before World War II, the British Council worked in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The Council's work was associated with the local Anglo-American-Yugoslav Club and the Society of Friends of Great Britain, both pro-Britain organisations that cooperated with the Council in implementing cultural activities. Before the end of the 1939, the Council's cultural work was partly undertaken by the British Legation, consular staff, and the press attaché in Belgrade. A proposal to establish a Yugoslav–British Institute and send a Council representative was put forward in 1939, but the local authorities did not immediately agree to this proposal.

The situation in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was very complex at the end of 1939. The country was experiencing domestic tensions between Serbia and Croatia and faced the threat

[346] Nicolson, 'The British Council 1934–1955', pp.37–9.
[347] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1957–1958* (London, 1958), pp.15–16.
[348] Ibid, p.21.

of invasion by Germany and Italy. Consequently, Yugoslavia was cautious about giving permission to establishing a Yugoslav–British Institute. Any seemingly propagandistic move by the British might provoke retaliation by the Germans in Yugoslavia.[349]

The goal of such an Institute followed the Council's objective of creating and strengthening cultural relations between the two countries. Its activities included 'organising courses for the study of English language, British history, culture; the running of a British Library and the translation of books; providing knowledge of British life, informing the public of the scientific and artistic achievements of Britain through lectures, exhibitions, broadcasts, concerts, films, and theatrical performances; [and] cooperating with Anglophile societies and communities and organisations'.[350] English language teaching was considered the principal work of the Institute.

From the above description, the pre-war Council's work was not much different from the post-war version, involving English teaching, scholarship funding, and film showings. However, the purpose was different. The Institute aimed to highlight the British presence and counteract German and increasing Soviet Bolshevik propaganda. At that time, the Germans already planned the early opening of a German academy in Belgrade.[351] And a new Italian Institute was set to open in 1940. Therefore, the British Council did not want to delay establishing its own institute in Belgrade.[352] As the chairman of the Council expressed in his letter: 'go ahead immediately and interest anybody with the English classes and get our feet in before the German and Italian competition matures'.[353]

[349] 'Telegram from R. Campbell (The British Legation) to Lord Lloyd of Dolobran (Chairman of the British Council)', 16 October 1939, TNA, YUG/2/1, BW66/1.
[350] 'Rules of the Yugoslav–British Institute', TNA, BW66/1.
[351] 'Interview with Monsieur Subotić, Yugoslav Minister (Memorandum from Mr. Everett)', 8 November 1939, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/1; 'Telegram from Sir R. Campbell to Everett (The British Council)', 25 October 1939, TNA, YUG/2/1, BW66/1.
[352] 'Telegram from Campbell to the British Council', 12 February 1940, TNA, BW66/1.
[353] 'Memorandum from the Chairman to the Secretary-General', 1 November 1939, TNA, YUG/2/1, BW66/1.

The question of establishing a similar institute in Zagreb was also discussed by the British Legation and the Council.[354] However, when war broke out in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the British Council had to recall its staff from there.

Immediately after the war, in January 1945, the Council had already sent its representative, David Shillan, to Belgrade to reorganise future cultural and educational activities in Yugoslavia. The work of the British Council resumed in June 1945 after an interval of four years, with its office in Belgrade reopening in July of the same year. The Council's plan included training teachers of English and providing textbooks.[355] British Council staff member W. R. L. Wickham suggested that the focus of the Council's post-war work in Yugoslavia should be science and technology. He believed that 'pure' cultural work (such as music, arts and theatre) would not be implemented because the exchange of technology would be the priority between two countries.[356]

The problem with the Council's work in Yugoslavia at this stage was the complexity of Yugoslav domestic politics. The British government was trying to mediate between the exiled government in London and the communist authorities to form a united government in Belgrade. Whether the Council could work in Yugoslavia depended on the political outcome.

When the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was established under the rule of the Communist Party in 1945, a more urgent goal for Britain's cultural diplomacy in Yugoslavia appeared: to use Britain's cultural influence to reduce the influence of the Soviet Union. As stated in a Foreign Office report:

> We are anxious to do everything possible to counteract this prevailing Yugoslav tendency to look eastwards for everything and I think it is important that we should not neglect the

[354] 'Telegram to Ronald Campbell (The British Legation)', 7 February 1940, TNA, YUG/2/1, BW66/1.
[355] 'Mr. Shillan's journey to Belgrade', 2 January 1945, TNA, LC30/15/452, FO924/165; 'Telegram from Mr. Wickham (the British Council) to Miss Hedley (the Foreign Office)', 2 January 1945, TNA, LC72/15/452, FO924/165.
[356] 'Telegram from W. R. L. Wickham (the British Council) to H. M. Hedley (the Foreign Office)', 2 January 1945, TNA, LC72/15/452, FO924/165.

> opportunity of fostering British ideas and scientific knowledge among a class so important as the medical profession.[357]

Utilising scientific and technological knowledge, particularly in the medical field, was a powerful instrument for the Council's work in Yugoslavia. This focus was practical given the post-war devastation in the country. This orientation lasted a long time and was an indispensable part of the Council's work in post-war Yugoslavia from late 1940s to the 1950s.

Exchanges in the scientific and medical fields helped Yugoslavia tackle urgent problems caused by the war. Caring for the wounded, preventing the spread of disease, and overcoming the lack of agricultural products were all areas that could be improved by advanced technologies. This practical assistance was a key reason why Yugoslavia welcomed the Council's work. As a result, Britain, through providing such assistance, established its image as a modern and technologically advanced country in Europe.

The resumption of the Council's work in Yugoslavia faced several challenges. A notable example was the case of the first representative, David Shillan. Shillan claimed that a Yugoslav woman was his pre-war local secretary and smuggled her out of the country on a British Embassy aircraft from Belgrade to Trieste. When the Yugoslav authorities discovered this, it prompted serious protest, with the Yugoslav government considering it a breach of criminal law. This incident caused trouble for the Council's work in Yugoslavia and even for the British Embassy in Belgrade.[358]

The Shillan case had a negative influence on the Council's work in Yugoslavia, fostering suspicion of the Council and its activities. The British Embassy was compromised by Shillan's action. Even before this incident, Shillan's return to Yugoslavia had already been viewed with suspicion by local authorities. While working with the Special Operation Europe in Yugoslavia

[357] 'Minutes of the Foreign Office, Medical Situation in Yugoslavia', 2 October 1945, TNA, LC4302/15/452, FO924/165.
[358] 'Telegram from W. H. Montagu-Pollock (the Foreign Office) to A. J. S. White (the British Council)', 1 October 1945, TNA, LC4245/15/452, FO924/165.

in 1940 and 1941, he seemed to have contacts with the organisation of Mihailović and the Serb Agrarians, which later became rivals of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. In addition, the small class teaching method practiced by the Council due to lack of staff and venue was also viewed suspiciously by Yugoslav authorities, as it appeared that the Council was using its classes to hatch a conspiracy against the Yugoslav government. This led the OZNA (the Department of People's Protection) to believe that the British Council was a camouflage organisation that worked for Mihailović to overthrow the communist regime in Belgrade. This suspicion, along with the escape of several Mihailović agents around that time, further strained the situation for the Council.[359]

The Shillan case was a fatal mistake that exposed the Council's unfamiliarity and carelessness in dealing with Yugoslavia. The Council later realised that Shillan's pre-war connections in Yugoslavia would not help resume normal operations but rather aroused suspicion. Those Yugoslavs who were in close contact with the British Council typically disliked or opposed Tito's regime and were, therefore, not favoured by the Yugoslav government. Maintaining close relations with these individuals put the Council's work in a more difficult position.

The Shillan case brought the Council's work to a standstill, requiring the Foreign Office and the local British Embassy to repair the fallout. The appointment of new staff for the British Council also had to be deferred. In a Foreign Office minute addressed to William Montague-Pollock (head of the Cultural Relations Department of the Foreign Office), it was stated that Shillan's action would jeopardise the Council's work in the Eastern Bloc in general. The incident could be communicated to all the communist parties in that area, potentially harming the Council's work in Southeastern Europe.[360]

[359] 'Minute from British Ambassador Stevenson to Montague-Pollock (the Foreign Office)', 16 October 1945, TNA, LC5056/15/452, FO924/165.
[360] 'The Foreign Office Minute to Montague-Pollock', 15 October 1945, TNA, LC4479/15/452, FO924/165.

After the Shillan case, the selection of a new representative for the Council was approached with greater caution. The Council had several exchanges of correspondence with the Foreign Office discussing this issue and consulted Ambassador Stevenson to find a suitable person to direct Council work in Yugoslavia.[361]

a. Setting Foot in Yugoslavia: The Work before the 1948 Cominform Resolution

It was not easy for the Council to work in Yugoslavia due to both the lack of goods and materials and the challenges posed by the communist regime. The following years did not bring significant achievements for the Council. As aforementioned, the focus of the Council's work during the first year was on the medical and scientific fields. At the same time, lectures were held at the English Reading Room in Belgrade, later in Zagreb and Ljubljana. There was also a series of live presentations of recorded British music in Belgrade. Book presentations were made to a number of higher educational institutes, and there were a large number of inquiries from Yugoslavia for the translation rights of British books. Notably, J. B. Priestley's *Blackout in Gretley* was arranged to be translated for serialisation in *Borba*, the Communist Party's official newspaper.[362] This was likely due to the book's anti-Nazi spy theme and Priestley's left-wing ideas.[363]

From the second half of 1946, the situation worsened for the Council in Yugoslavia as the government grew closer to the Soviet Union and held an indifferent or even hostile attitude towards the West in general. Despite these challenges, the Council staff in Yugoslavia continued to seek new opportunities. In July 1946, the British Council arranged the opening of

[361] 'Telegram from Michael Grant (the British Council) to W. H. Montagu-Pollock', 2 October 1945, TNA, LC4432/15/452, FO924/165.
[362] The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1945–1946* (London, 1946), p.56.
[363] 'Telegram from the T. H. Hiley (the Assistant Regional Officer for Yugoslavia at the British Council) to H. M. Hedley (the Cultural Relations Department of the Foreign Office)', 29 October 1945, TNA, LC 5052/15/452, FO924/165, According to this telegram, Priestley's name was on George Orwell's list of people prepared in March 1949 for the Information Research Department (IRD). Those listed were considered having pro-communist leanings and therefore inappropriate to write for the IRD.

the Croatian office in Zagreb after a long delay.[364] Additionally, with the withdrawal of the British press officer from Macedonia in June 1946, it was thought that the Council could fill the vacancy of the British cultural presence.[365] According to a report by the Council's assistant representative Robinson in May 1946, Macedonia was underdeveloped in culture, but the local government was 'extremely enthusiastic about raising the cultural level. The authorities showed no sign of hostility to "Western Democracy".'[366] Subsequently, during a meeting between the British Consul in Skopje and the local Minister of Education, they discussed the provision of English teachers and the establishment of a British cultural centre. Although the minister was in favour of the idea, the decision ultimately rested with the Central Committee for Schools and Cultural Relations.[367]

While the Council's staff tried to leverage every opportunity within the respective republics given the federal character of Yugoslavia, they underestimated the power of the central government. The final decision always lay in Belgrade with the Culture and Arts Committee and the Committee for Education. Nevertheless, this proposal was still followed by the visit of the Council's representative, W. G. Tatham, to Skopje in order to evaluate whether it was worthwhile to start its work in the capital city of Macedonia. In his report, he did not hide his condescending attitude, considering Skopje to be 'backward and [having] had no opportunity until now of developing its own racial culture'. The city became a priority only because of its geographical position in the Balkans and its potential in countering Soviet cultural influence. He believed it would be of immense value if 'this part of the world realised that British Science, Medicine, Engineering as well as British culture in its narrower sense were

[364] 'Telegram from Amery to Johnstone', 22 July 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[365] 'Telegram from B. Ruthven-Murry (the Balkan Section of the Information Department of the Foreign Office) to Gummer', 7 June 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[366] 'Opportunity for the British Council Activity in Macedonia (Letter from A. L. Robinson to Johnstone)', 21 May 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[367] 'Letter from G. H. Burton (the British Consul) to the British Council assistant A. L. Robinson', 4 June 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.

things to be admired and superior to the culture of a certain great Eastern European people'.[368] The presence of the British Council could make Skopje, a strategically significant place, culturally 'Anglicised'. The cultivation of a pro-British sentiment among local people and the government, so it was argued, would benefit Britain politically in the long term.

The intelligentsia generally welcomed the British Council. At a small Council cocktail party, a quarter of the 60 or 70 attendees were Yugoslavs, invited to the Majestic Hotel to meet the Council's representative. 'The Yugoslavs were old-time professors, authors, journalists, opposed to the new regime and so heavily compromised already that a visit to the British whom they like can do them no harm.'[369]

The friendly and cooperative attitude had been evident since the Council began its work in Yugoslavia in 1945. The rector of Zagreb University felt that Great Britain should adopt a long-term policy of cultural and intellectual cooperation, focusing on the broadest diffusion of Western ideas. He offered his whole-hearted assistance. Similar views were expressed to the British press attaché Clissold by the director of the National Theatre, M. Tijardjević, and the head of the Croat Publishing House.[370]

It was clear to both the Foreign Office and the British Council that keeping the Council operating would not be an easy task. They had not established close cultural contacts with Yugoslav authorities, such as the Council for Science and Culture, and the Council was still unknown to the wider Yugoslav public. Furthermore, as long as the Yugoslav government '[took] their cue from Moscow, and until the USSR welcomed the British Council, its presence in Yugoslavia [would] be unwelcome to the Yugoslav authorities'.[371]

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[368] 'Representative's visit to Skopje (from W. G. Tatham, the British Council representative to Yugoslavia, to E. N. Gummer, the Regional officer for the Balkans)', 28 July 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[369] 'Report of the British Council by Ashton Gwatkin', June 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[370] 'Letter from the British Chancery to the Southern Department of the Foreign Office', 11 December 1945, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[371] 'Report of the British Council by Ashton Gwatkin', June 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.

The cooperation with the British Embassy also complicated the Council's work. According to Council staff, the Yugoslav authorities misunderstood the Council's role and often considered it an affiliation of the British Embassy. This misunderstanding deepened the suspicion and distrust of the Yugoslav government toward the Council, raising concerns that it might be conducting intelligence work under the guise of a cultural institution. Although the Council claimed to be non-political, it had to work close with the Embassy, particularly its press department, for support in English teaching and film provision. Fortnightly discussions of the Council's work with the ambassador were also part of its routine. To avoid misunderstanding caused by such cooperation and to prevent the Council from 'being so closely associated with political propaganda', it emphasised that its reading room was intended to provide purely cultural periodicals. [372]

Facing increasing difficulties, various ideas were raised on how to improve the Council's work in Yugoslavia. One suggestion was to hold an exhibition of Yugoslav paintings in London. Although this idea was negatively perceived by the regional official John Amery, who felt it was 'mostly unlikely that the general public would show any real interest', he believed that 'the encouragement of such Yugoslav activities in [Britain] [was] one of the best ways of making progress with [their] work in Yugoslavia'. [373] His comments reflected the condescending attitude of Council officials toward Yugoslav culture: they believed the attractiveness of British culture to Yugoslavs was far greater than the other way around. This kind of thinking was mentioned several times in internal correspondence among Council staff.

Outside the Council, the Foreign Office also played a role in facilitating the Council's cultural work in Yugoslavia. Ambassador Charles Peake was instructed by the Foreign Office to explain the work of the British Council during his meeting with Marshal Tito and to 'induce

[372] 'Policy (From Tatham to Gummer)', 9 July 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[373] 'Telegram from John Amery to Johnstone', 22 July 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.

him to make concrete proposals within the framework' of the Council's schemes.[374] Despite these efforts, some Council officials were concerned that if the work in Yugoslavia was not worthwhile, 'the sooner [they] stop it the better—both for the Council and the taxpayers'.[375]

It is clear that all the obstacles encountered by the Council in Yugoslavia were related to political issues. The work of the Council was subject to Yugoslav policy, and due to the deteriorating political situation, the Council's activities stagnated. In his report, the Council's representative, Tatham, made the following comments,

> The British Council has been able to perform a certain number of services to the Yugoslav people; but it has to contend always with initial suspicion in the matter of any new project, however patently innocent, and it has to be content with doing the services the Yugoslav Government wishes. The opposition is never direct; but schemes suggested by us, which are often welcomed at first, usually come to naught. . . . Furthermore, I feel fairly certain that purely cultural activities on any large scale will not be possible for some time. . . . Generous offers, directly made, are often suspect; and local pride can easily be offended. By suggestion the authorities should be encouraged to solicit our help.[376]

The comments not only reflected the obstacles that the Council faced in Yugoslavia but also revealed the Council's lack of sensitivity to the political situation. Just as they underestimated the decision-making power of the central government, they also underestimated the potential political pressures faced by Yugoslav cultural departments when dealing with the British Council.

There was little for the Council to undertake in Yugoslavia except attempting to secure cooperation from *Jugoslovenska Knjiga* for the subscription of British cultural periodicals.[377] This appeared to be the only promising avenue available at the time. The Yugoslav authorities' obstruction of all Council activities left the organisation in a precarious position. In a bid to

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[374] 'Telegram from the Secretary of State to Peake, Ambassador in Belgrade', 11 November 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[375] 'Letter from John Amery to Grant and Gummer', 26 September 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[376] 'Report by Mr. Tatham on Medical Activities for the British Council in Yugoslavia', 23 November 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[377] 'Copyright in Yugoslavia (Letter from D. J. Collihole at the Council Production Division to the Representative in Belgrade)', 2 December 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4; 'Letter from Tatham to Johnstone', 15 March 1947, TNA, No.30536, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.

alter their passive stance, the Council even explored the possibility of acquiring diplomatic status through discussions with the Embassy, hoping it would facilitate their work. This idea was eventually abandoned out of concern that it would complicate matters further.[378] This decision was pivotal for the Council, as while diplomatic status could have provided a temporary solution, it risked undermining the Council's stance of neutrality and its identity as a purely cultural institution, potentially leading to greater challenges in the future.

George Glutton, a member of the British Embassy staff, analysed in his telegram the reasons behind the rejection of the British Council's proposals in Yugoslavia:

> The internal authorities harbour grave suspicions of the activities of our consulates and the Embassy. . . . The position of foreign missions in this country is to a very large extent determined by a balance of a comparative enlightenment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Marshal Tito himself on the one hand and the incredible ignorance and primitive suspicion of the internal security authorities on the other.[379]

This explanation partly reflects the lack of inter-governmental coordination in Yugoslavia and the presence of hardliner Communist Party members within the Yugoslav government. However, it also highlights the perceived arrogance of the British Council staff, as evidenced by Glutton's evaluation of Yugoslav counterparts solely based on their willingness to support the Council's initiatives.

To enhance its influence in Yugoslavia, the Council proposed opening two more reading rooms in Sarajevo and Split. Sarajevo, as the capital of Bosnia and Hercegovina, and culturally rich Split on the Dalmatian coast were seen as crucial locations for expanding British influence across the republics. However, the proposal was rejected due to the Yugoslav government's dissatisfaction with Britain's stance on the 'cultural achievements of Yugoslav peoples' in the disputed territories of Giulia Venezia and Carinthia, where Britain sided with Italy and

[378] 'Letter from W. G. Tatham, the British Council Representative in Belgrade to John Amery at the European Division', 28 December 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[379] 'Telegram from George Glutton at the British Embassy to Ernest Bevin', 28 January 1947, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.

Austria.[380] The diplomatic affairs influenced cultural policies, tuning the establishment of cultural institutions into a pawn in a larger political game.

The cultural issues surrounding Slovene communities in disputed areas were superficially about cultural life but fundamentally rooted in the broader territorial disputes where Britain and Yugoslavia stood on opposing sides. Despite this geopolitical context, the Yugoslav authorities' lingering suspicion about the potential espionage by the British Council, persisted. This suspicion was not entirely unfounded, given the negative impact of the Shillan incident, the close cooperation with the Embassy, and the Council's unfamiliarity with local dynamics, all contributing to the current unfavourable situation for the Council.

A confidential report from the Council for the first four months of 1947 starkly illustrated the worsening situation. In January, the Yugoslav Embassy in London refused to grant visas for Council members.[381] The joint book exhibition opening with the British Embassy in Zagreb that same month 'might have' committed some 'technical breach' of a law, prompting Yugoslav authorities to demand the closure of the Council's Zagreb office. The educational authorities exhibited complete non-cooperation from the Council's perspective, despite efforts to conduct English lessons. These educational activities faced criticism as well; during a student meeting, a professor of English was allegedly attacked because he 'had encouraged certain students to go to the Council's library, listen to Council's lectures and attend their classes on the grounds that the British Council was the propaganda machine of the British Government, which was the enemy of Yugoslavia. This was the first official and semi-public attack made on the Council'. Moreover, the Council's offer to give help to the Ministry of Agriculture and to teaching establishments did not receive any cooperation.[382] According to

[380] 'Telegram from George Glutton at the British Embassy to Ernest Bevin', 28 January 1947, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[381] Ibid.
[382] 'Confidential Report Jan–May 1947 Yugoslavia', 1 June 1947, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.

the Council's internal reports, any proposal raised by the Council was regarded with grave suspicion, on the basis that there could be 'some sinister motive behind it'.[383]

Although there was a lot of frustration, some Council initiatives were considered worth continuing. These included medical and scientific projects and work by specialists in technology, agriculture, and surgery. It was hoped that people 'whose interests are of immediate, practical, and obvious value to reconstruction in Yugoslavia, and who may perhaps be expected to override political objections in their desire to improve their skill'.[384] Local university faculties ordered many scientific books and periodicals. The medical projects were warmly welcomed, and there was increasing demand for medical films. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs applied for assistance with English training.

In addition, a temporary visitor scheme was also encouraged. The visit of musician Clarence Raybould was a good example, as the Culture and Arts Committee provided full cooperation. Such visits helped establish direct contact with the public. Music, in turn, was considered a useful 'frill' because it contained no political meaning and would not be opposed by the authorities. The Council representative also wished to bring more British drama, exhibitions, and music to Yugoslavia as major cultural manifestations.[385] Over time, these forms of cultural activities gradually became the main forms of cultural exchange between the two countries due to the increasing demand for a more diverse cultural life in Yugoslavia.

An additional episode at the same time exposed the lack of understanding between London officials and local representatives. Photographs of the Council Library in Belgrade, intended for the Council's magazine, *Monthly Review*, were rejected because there were no people in them. The representative in Yugoslavia had sent these photos, but he was asked to send another photo taken with one or two people in the library. However, the representative knew the

[383] 'Telegram from John Amery to Gummer', 27 September 1946, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[384] 'Policy, Yugoslavia (from Mr. E. N. Gummer)', 3 April 1947, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.
[385] 'Confidential Report Jan–May 1947 Yugoslavia', 1 June 1947, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4; 'Letter from Tatham to Johnstone', 15 March 1947, TNA, No.30536, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.

difficulty of doing this in a communist country like Yugoslavia, where nearly all the users tried to hide their presence in an organisation run by the British. In Tatham's reply, he stated, 'I fear that our "customers" would walk out, if they were asked to pose and have a pictorial record of their attendance! I deliberately had it done empty.'[386]

Even so, the Council's representative remained convinced that its work in Yugoslavia was beneficial to Britain in the long term and that they should continue despite the difficulties. Tatham explained his reasons in his report. In his view, the Council provided 'an essential service' that 'neither Americans nor the French have been able to provide'. This work helped Yugoslavs, especially Anglophiles, keep up with Western developments. Like his colleagues in the Council, there was a condescending tone when he compared British culture with others. He believed British culture represented Western civilisation, which was not 'inferior to [the features] of the Russian civilisation' and that they should strive to influence as many people as possible through their work in Yugoslavia. [387]

The Council's work was also an indispensable part of the competition with the Soviet Union for the hearts and minds of the Yugoslav people. Its task was to showcase the splendour and attractiveness of British culture, which in turn outshone what the Soviet and the Eastern Bloc could offer. By emphasising the 'better' and 'more advanced' character of British culture, he confirmed that the winning spirit of the Yugoslav people could be the prerequisite to defeating the Soviet Union politically. Tatham was firm about the influence British culture could bring to Yugoslavia, no matter how big or small.

The Council's situation was frustrating in nearly all communist-controlled countries in Eastern Europe. Its ostensible neutrality and non-involvement in politics did not prevent the Council from acting as an emissary for British culture. Although there were only limited

[386] 'Monthly Review from Mary Whyle (The Assistant Regional Officer for the Director of Overseas Division C) to Tatham', 21 January 1947, TNA, YUG/8/5, BW66/5; 'Monthly Review from Tatham to the European Division', 3 February 1947, TNA, YUG/8/5, BW66/5.
[387] 'Confidential Report Jan–May 1947 Jugoslavia', 1 June 1947, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.

projects that could be implemented by the Council in Yugoslavia, its mere existence in the country was significant, regardless of its successful in spreading British culture.

Before 1950, interactions between Yugoslavia and other Western countries mainly focused on political issues. Cultural relations were usually treated as a corollary to Cold War politics and often regarded as political propaganda. A new emphasis on cultural diplomacy between Tito's Yugoslavia and the West only developed after its split with the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc.

Similar to the British Council, the U.S. and France also had reading rooms and libraries in Yugoslavia. The U.S. State Department's subordinate U.S. Information Service (USIS), was in charge of 'American propaganda' in Yugoslavia. It set up reading rooms and libraries in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Novi Sad. Through various methods such as distributing free books and newsletters, music records and films, translating books, and Voice of America broadcasting, American initiatives attracted public attention and made inroads into all aspects of Yugoslav society. For instance, in Belgrade alone, the American reading room had 4,000-5,000 books from 1948 to 1950. In 1951, this expanded to 11,000 volumes, and by 1953, it spiked to 25,000. The average number of daily visits to the reading room increased to 400-500 in 1953, double the amount from the 1951-1952 period.[388] With ever-closer relations between Yugoslavia and the U.S., the depth and breadth of 'American propaganda' steadily grew after 1950.

For France, there was a 'Salle d'information' consisting of a reading room and library in Belgrade. This later grew into an institute known as the French Cultural Centre. In Zagreb, another 'Institut Français' was in responsible for language teaching, the book trade, and microfilm services. Before the 1950s, 'French propaganda' through its institutes was deemed hostile towards the new People's Republic by the Yugoslav government. French

[388] AJ, 507, IX, Komisija za međunarodne odnose i veze CK SKJ 1945-1990, SAD, 109/VI-36 (K-5), *Američka propaganda u FNRJ*, 20 May 1953.

representatives were accused of supporting bourgeois enemies in conducting nefarious activities, leading to the expulsion of several French representatives from Yugoslavia and the closure of the French Institute in Ljubljana.

After 1950, 'French propaganda' changed its tone with the aim of 'achieving the influence they [the French] had before the war'. To this end, they took advantage of their library and book resources, film screenings, language courses, music playing, and broadcasting Radio Paris.[389] In 1951 the French ambassador in Yugoslavia mentioned an intention to strengthen cultural relations with Yugoslavia by proposing a list of French cultural figures who would visit the country.[390]

Other Western countries also made efforts to establish cultural presences in Yugoslavia. In 1950, there was a draft agreement for an Italian reading room in Belgrade and a Yugoslav reading room in Rome.[391] In 1955, the Austrian Ambassador requested the creation of an Austrian reading room in Zagreb.[392]

From the British perspective, its local British Council differed from its American and French counterparts as their reading rooms did not engage in visitor exchanges or lecture tours. In addition, the British viewed the American and French institutions as undertaking information work rather than focusing solely on cultural activities.[393]

Nevertheless, from the Yugoslav perspective, the British Council was perceived as conducting propaganda work 'in a skilled manner and set it up ostensibly independent of the embassy's diplomatic activity.' These Western institutions were all engaged in similar propagandistic work within Yugoslavia, aiming to influence local cultural educational

[389] AJ, F-507 IX, Komisija za međunarodne odnose i veze CK SKJ 1945-1990, Francuska, 30/V-78 (K-12), *Propagandna delatnost Francusa u FNRJ*, 23 May 1953.
[390] AJ, F-836, KMJ I-3-b/223, *Zabeleška o razgovoru pom. Ministra Vejvode sa francuskim ambasadorom Baudetom*, 4 October 1951, pp.4-5.
[391] AJ, F-836, KMJ, I-3-b/342 Zabeleška o razgovoru pom. Ministra inostranih poslova Mattesa sa g. Enrico Martino Poslanikom Italije, 28 August 1950.
[392] AJ, F-507, Komisija za međunarodne odnose i veze CK SKJ 1945-1990, IX, S/a-32, *Note to the meeting of the Committee for International Relations of the SSRNJ held on February 10, 1955*.
[393] 'The British Council Yugoslavia Representative's Annual Report', 1950–51, TNA, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.

workers.[394] Even though the Council positioned itself as apolitical, there was always an implicit political agenda at work. This apoliticism was integral to the British Council, whose guiding principle of political non-involvement defined its overseas work.

b. The Influence of the Cominform Resolution in 1948

The Cominform resolution to expel Yugoslavia from the organisation confused British Council staff. It was hard to forecast what the situation would be like under such circumstances. The immediate reaction of the British Council was pessimistic. In a report from August 1948, two months after the resolution, the representative warned London to be prepared for a more challenging time ahead:

> I think that the Council in Jugoslavia [*sic*] can look forward to a period of very considerable strain and disappointment, during which our resources of tact and good-will are likely to be stretched to breaking point and it seems likely that the long story of frustration and suspicion which has impeded and sometimes thwarted our efforts, over the past three years, will reach its zenith, during the next six months.[395]

Such concern was logical. Initially, Yugoslavia itself was in a bewildering situation and took some time to come to terms with the changed political landscape. The Council staff speculated that Yugoslavia's first reaction might be to tighten its control over cultural exchanges with Britain and the West to prove they were still 'good communists'. What prevailed, as noted by the Council's representative A. L. P. Himbury, was the unprecedented scale of 'red banners with hammer and sickle device[s]' over the streets of Belgrade and buildings 'plastered with gigantic pictures of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Tito'.[396] He also commented that the several years of work by the Council did not seem to have planted deep roots in Yugoslavia.[397]

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[394] AJ, F-836, KMJ, I-3-c/9 Informacija o formama i metodama anglo-američke propagande u Jugoslaviji, (1946/1947), p.4.
[395] 'Report from A. L. P. Himbury, the British Council Representative in Yugoslavia to the Overseas Division "C": Political Trends in Yugoslavia', 12 August 1948, TNA, p.4, YUG/2/9, BW66/12.
[396] Ibid.
[397] 'Telegram from Himbury, the British Council Representative in Yugoslavia to E. N. Gummer, the Assistant Director of the East Europe Department of the British Council in London', 25 October 1948, TNA, YUG/8/32, BW66/12.

This pessimistic feeling did not last long, however, and Himbury tried to seize the chance to develop closer relations with the Yugoslav authorities. In July 1948, the Council's representative wrote to the Culture and Arts Committee to invite Yugoslav composer L. M. Škerjanc to visit Britain for a concert of his music. He stated in his letter that he hoped this proposal was one step in the direction of 'organising cultural and artistic exchange on the basis of reciprocity'.[398] Yugoslavia agreed.

When autumn came in 1948, it was clear that the split between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, along with the Eastern Bloc, was definitive. There was no way for Yugoslavia to fix its relations with the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. The severance of diplomatic relations resulted in repercussions in the cultural field with Eastern Bloc countries.[399] This was regarded as a good opportunity for the British Council to expand its influence in Yugoslavia. Therefore, Himbury was 'determined to exploit the situation to the fullest possible extent'. He contacted the vice president of the Culture and Arts Committee, Erih Koš, and the president of the Committee for Education and Schools, Puniša Perović, and conducted long interviews with them.

It was surprising for the representative to learn that, after two and half years of working in Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav officials still knew so little about the character of the British Council and continued to associate it with the British Embassy. In his interview with Himbury, Perović emphasised that 'cultural relations between nations [couldn't] fail to be influenced by political factors'. Himbury replied by stressing that he 'deplored any situation whereby members of the human race could be denied access to the treasure-house of Western culture just because of a possibly transitory divergence of political opinion which, in any event, [he] regarded as belonging to an entirely different province'.[400] This was in line with the Council's

[398] AJ, F-314-4-20, 'Telegram from Himbury the representative of British Council to the Culture and Arts Committee', 30 July 1948.
[399] 'Telegram from Himbury to Gummer', 25 October 1948, TNA, YUG/8/32, BW66/12.
[400] Ibid.

mission of promoting values of the shared community and common interests in the cultural sphere and ensuring that cultural achievements could circulate freely around the world.

A thaw was under way. Small hints of improvement and a change in the official attitude towards the Council had been noticed since early autumn. For the first time, the Council started to have close contact with the Committee for Education and Schools.[401] In November 1948, the Committee for Art and Culture of Yugoslavia made its first specific request to the Council, asking them to invite one or more musicians from a provided list to visit Britain.[402] Before that, cultural exchanges were usually proposed by the British Council. Positive signs from the Yugoslav Embassy in London were also noticed by the Council. However, it was agreed within the British Council that they still needed to be cautious in their cultural work in Yugoslavia. According to E. N. Gummer, the assistant director of the East Europe Department of the British Council:

> Any undue pressure could so easily be taken by these naturally suspicious people as a sign that we were openly cashing in on their Cominform troubles, if not that we were already convinced they were headed for Western Union; which would be disastrous for our work, as well as incorrect. I feel we must still avoid giving the least suspicion of anything like a propaganda drive.[403]

Such caution was sensible, especially after the abrupt rupture between the two previously close communist countries. From the Yugoslav perspective, the country was struggling to survive in the face of the sudden hostile attitude from the Soviet Union and other People's Democracies. Negative propaganda calling for the overthrow of Tito, along with an economic blockade and later border skirmishes, alarmed the Yugoslav government. How they could survive between

[401] 'Telegram from E. N. Gummer, the Assistant Director of the East Europe Department of the British Council in London, to A. L. P. Himbury, the British Council representative in Yugoslavia: Council Work in Yugoslavia', 23 November 1948, YUG/740/2, BW66/12.
[402] 'Telegram from the Assistant Regional Officer for the Controller of Overseas Division "C" to Gummer: Belgrade's YUG/POL/1/2 of October 25th', 12 November 1948, TNA, YUG/8/32, BW66/12.
[403] 'Telegram from Gummer to Himbury: Council Work in Yugoslavia', 23 November 1948, TNA, YUG/740/2, BW66/12.

the two blocs was the main existential question. Any undue activity by the Council might have had an adverse effect.

The Council's staff also speculated about Yugoslavia's dilemma at this point. If Yugoslavia started to come close to Britain or the West in general, they thought it would be due to economic and political pressure rather than willingness. The most urgent concern for Yugoslavia was its security. In addition, there was little possibility that the Yugoslav government would share the values of British culture under its communist ideology. Yugoslavia had to keep its communist doctrine to prove that they were loyal students of Marxist-Leninism. The willingness to come closer to the West while retaining its socialist character was a key feature of Yugoslav policy in the early period after the Cominform resolution, but it also created an unstable working environment for the British Council.[404]

In order to keep a moderate presence in Yugoslavia and avoid arousing further suspicion, the Council's official recommended to maintain the line of artistic and medical exchanges. This approach was practical: 'The country need[ed] technical help and it [was] starved for the relief from drabness and drudgery which music and theatre can bring.'[405] Thus, the Council aimed to combine scientific work with art activities.

There were further contradictions in promoting the Council's work. The staff wanted to support the Yugoslav government's cultural initiatives in Britain in exchange for maximising their own work in Yugoslavia. On the one hand, the Yugoslav cultural attaché in London, Dr. Franc Kos, was considered by the Council staff to be unfamiliar with 'British taste' and did not know how to organise Yugoslav cultural events in London. On the other, the Council staff naturally thought Yugoslav culture inferior. The London controller, K. R. Johnston, believed Yugoslav culture had little to offer the British public given its level of development. Although

[404] 'Yugoslavia: Report by K. R. Johnston, the Controller Overseas "C" of the British Council', 11 February 1949, TNA, p.1, YUG/680/1, BW66/16.
[405] Ibid., p.3.

there was something worth promoting, the way the Yugoslav government organised cultural events only took advantage of 'a purely exotic interest'. He noted in his report:

> Such exhibitions would be attended only by political sympathisers and by a handful of pre-war devotees of the country.[406] Like so many countries of eastern Europe, the Yugoslavs are always apt to fall back on displays of picturesque peasant costume, which somehow do not 'travel' as well as they should, or on hopeful displays of contemporary art which are seldom up to the standards of even a second-rate London gallery.[407]

He believed it was worth introducing modern Yugoslav music to British audiences through performances by British musician Kendall Taylor and arranging an exhibition of mediaeval frescos from Yugoslavia as 'a truly remarkable artistic event'.[408] This interest in the frescos aligned with the later Yugoslav policy of promoting its cultural heritage in Britain.

In the annual report from April 1949 to March 1950, representative W. P. Jowett noted the implications of Yugoslavia's changing policy. As decentralisation started, regional authorities and respective governmental departments took on more responsibilities. Westerners were also permitted to travel inside the country. This general relaxation of the previously rigid policies by the Yugoslav government had a positive influence on the Council's activities. But the problems with the Council itself were still unresolved. The lack of staff and financial support continued to impede the Council's local work.[409]

The last months of 1948 and the year 1949 saw a gradual change in Yugoslavia's approach to cultural work with the British Council. The Council's efforts began to show success, with years of work finally paying dividends in the 1950s as bilateral cultural relations entered a new stage.

The British Council always had its long-term purpose in its work in Yugoslavia. In the first place, the goal was to reduce Soviet influence and to strengthen British culture there. This

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[406] Political sympathisers and pre-war devotees might refer to British Communist Party members, left-wing fellow travellers and others who were into Yugoslav issues.
[407] 'Yugoslavia: Report by K.R. Johnston, the Controller Overseas "C" of the British Council', 11 February 1949, TNA, pp.4-5, YUG/680/1, BW66/16.
[408] Ibid.
[409] 'Annual Report 1st April 1949–31st March 1950', TNA, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.

objective faced numerous obstacles and ultimately failed, a common issue in other communist countries at the time. However, the Soviet–Yugoslav split in June 1948 presented an opportunity for the Council to expand its work, despite Britain's lingering cautious attitude due to the uncertain situation.

Therefore, while 1948 marked a turning point in the British Council's work, the influence only became evident later in the 1950s, when the Council developed a new objective: bringing Yugoslavia to the West.

c. Squaring the Circle: The British Council in Yugoslavia in the 1950s

In the article 'Cultural Relations between Great Britain and Yugoslavia' published in the popular Yugoslav daily newspaper *Politika* on 21 February 1951, British–Yugoslav cultural relations were discussed in detail. Britain was praised for its promotion of cultural relations with foreign countries:

> Judged by the volume and organisation of cultural relations in the world at this time, Great Britain occupies the first place. This may be partly explained by the fact that England, among European countries, has at her disposal the most effective machinery for international, cultural and scientific cooperation. This machinery has established a widespread network of its representatives in its own and in a great number of other countries. The institution in question is the British Council.[410]

In other words, the Council was gaining its reputation and popularity in Yugoslavia. It was recognised as a prestigious organisation in executing transnational cultural exchanges. The article also expressed optimism about these bilateral cultural relations, noting that 'British–Yugoslav cultural cooperation will be the best way to contribute to mutual understanding'.[411]

The Council representative W. P. Jowett's report confirmed the positive changes in Yugoslavia's policy. The country longed to learn about the achievements of Western states and

[410] 'Kulturne veze između Velike Britanije i Jugoslavije' (Cultural relations between Great Britain and Yugoslavia), *Politika* (21 February 1951), p.3; The British Council, *Report of the British Council 1950–1951*, pp.7–8.
[411] Ibid.

desired ‘to make [its] achievements in artistic and professional fields better known abroad’. He considered Yugoslavia ‘a firm believer in cultural exchange’. The country had also joined UNESCO. Yugoslavia focused on industrialising its economy and thus sought ‘the experience of more advanced industrial communities’. Local people were also curious about the British way of life. Jowett attributed this interest partly to old Anglophile traditions and cooperation during the recent world war, as well as the appreciation of modern British society’s achievements. This included ‘nationalised industry and free enterprise, medical and technical achievements and [the British] educational system’.[412]

From 1950, Yugoslavia’s decentralisation made it possible for better cultural exchanges with Britain. The initiation of its own road to socialism brought changes to Yugoslav society. The government approved discussions of the shortcomings of state organisations and recommendations to improve their working efficiency. There could be constructive criticism, although without any rejection of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. Independent observers viewed this decentralisation policy as positive. One of Yugoslavia’s oldest leading communists described this process as part of the general ‘intellectual release’ of Yugoslavia. Despite a shortage of foreign exchange, Yugoslavia respected the freedom of reading, research, and radio listening. Newspapers featuring various opinions and events with worldwide opinions could be found in Yugoslavia, in sharp contrast to those in other Communist countries.[413]

The work of the Council benefited from the relaxation of restrictions in the domestic cultural field. With the process of decentralisation, there had been increasing contacts between the Council and various artistic, educational, and professional societies and groups.[414] Unlike before, when the Council’s staff had tried in vain to make contacts with the Yugoslav cultural authorities, there was now official interest shown by the Yugoslav authorities in different

[412] ‘The British Council Yugoslavia Representative’s Annual Report, 1950–51’, TNA, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.
[413] ‘Information Services: the British Council activities in Yugoslavia’, 23 June–18 July 1951, TNA, CAB 127/318.
[414] ‘The British Council Yugoslavia Representative’s Annual Report, 1950–51’, TNA, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.

aspects of British culture. These aspects included social, judicial, industrial, technical, and educational matters. Instead of reluctance to cooperate, the Yugoslav authorities started to be supportive of the cultural exchanges with Britain.

The Council's presence in Yugoslavia also brought practical benefits to Yugoslavia. It undertook effective cultural work for the public, including providing publications such as newspapers and magazines in the Council's reading room, which offered an alternative channel for information in Yugoslavia. In terms of ideology, it espoused Yugoslavia's concept of its 'own road to socialism' in contrast to other communist countries. Maintaining cultural relations with Britain helped Yugoslavia demonstrate its independent policy from the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, where the work of the Council was unwelcome. In this sense, Yugoslavia was comparatively freer and more open. Additionally, the Yugoslav authorities were also aware of the benefits of better cultural relations with Britain, as these could in turn facilitate bilateral political and economic relations.

In 1951, the independent American news organisation *Christian Science Monitor* published an article about the increasing cultural ties between Yugoslavia and the West. This improvement was seen as a key reform implemented fifteen months earlier by the Yugoslav government in its cultural and educational policy, which liberated the system from the Soviet model. The British Council and the Embassy were noted for having 'chalked up a record of non-political cultural achievement in Yugoslavia without a parallel in any Communist country since the Russian Revolution'. According to the article, the role played by Britain and the British Council was unique. No other country that could compare with Britain in terms of its cultural work in Yugoslavia:

> It is at present the British alone who, by the provision of scholarships and technical training in England and by bringing lectures and artist to Yugoslavia, are meeting this demand for cultural contacts denied the Yugoslavs during the years of their adherence to Moscow. . . . In this respect, the British enjoy an advantage over other missions in

> Belgrade in the existence of the British Council, a unique body well equipped to augment such cultural work.[415]

Between 1950 and 1953, cultural exchanges between Britain and Yugoslavia continued to focus on science, technology, medicine, industry, and agriculture. Development related to knowledge and information was disseminated through British Council programmes, including scholarships, guest lectures, and scientific documentary films. In addition to practical learning, the Council also provided abstract knowledge on the administration and organisation of governance and social services. The reason for these exchanges was practical: such knowledge and information could directly benefit the Yugoslav economy and facilitate trade and visits with Britain. Closer economic ties with Britain and the West made these exchanges necessary.[416]

The main audience of the British Council in Yugoslavia was still restricted to a small circle of people, including government civil servants, professionals in scientific fields like medicine, English teachers, the intelligentsia, and those in artistic fields.[417] Membership in the Council was increasing steadily, with more than half being university students. The remainder were largely individuals from medical or other professional backgrounds who sought to use the scientific and technical books available at the Council.[418]

The main content of the Council's work did not change much, but the scale expanded. The focus was more on scientific or technological achievements than on art or the humanities. However, the Council began to emphasise the arts and humanities as a key part of culture because British arts were highly regarded in Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav Concert Department requested tours by British conductors and orchestras. It was by t

[415] 'Information Services: the British Council activities in Yugoslavia, 23 June–18 July 1951', TNA, CAB 127/318.
[416] 'The British Council Yugoslavia Representative's Annual Report, 1952–53', TNA, p.2, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.
[417] 'The British Council Yugoslavia Representative's Annual Report, 1950–51', TNA, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.
[418] Ibid.

The Committee for Culture and Science repeatedly asked for a Turner exhibition in Yugoslavia. The National Theatre wished to host a British theatre or ballet company.[419] On the British side, the director of the Eastern and Central Europe Department of the British Council, L. W. Sayers, emphasised the necessity of arranging 'some more spectacular projects' in Yugoslavia, focusing on British art, music, or drama in addition to the 'day to day bread and butter work'.[420]

The main issue hindering these exchanges was financial constraints. Yugoslavia was unable to afford certain cultural activities, and the British Council was also experiencing budget cuts, which meant it could not cover the costs of major artistic events. The Council's representative also expressed concern about the difficulty of updating the books, journals, and films in the Council's library. With rapidly increasing usage, there was a need for the newest developments in science and technical area for the Yugoslav public.[421]

In 1953, the Yugoslav government established the Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign countries, a new department dedicated to deal with cultural issues with foreign countries. The supportive attitude of the Yugoslav government was now common. As the Council representative noted in his report:

> So long as we keep them informed of our work and get approval for new developments, we are encouraged to make direct contact with institutions throughout the country. This principle of minimum interference by the Government is repeated in the republics. . . . Where local administration is not well organised confusion and delays are bound to occur, but the system brings us into closer touch with the people who use our material and gives us more opportunities for explaining our aims and facilities.[422]

In August of that year, political relations between Britain and Yugoslavia grew tense due to the Trieste Crisis in October, during which Britain with the U.S. supported Italy's territorial claim

[419] 'The British Council Yugoslavia Representative's Annual Report, 1951–52; 1952–53', TNA, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.
[420] 'Memo of Yugoslavia Annual Report 1950/51', 11 May 1951, TNA, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.
[421] 'The British Council Yugoslavia Representative's Annual Report, 1951-52; 1952-53', TNA, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.
[422] 'The British Council Yugoslavia Representative's Annual Report, 1952-53', TNA, p.3, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.

on Giulia Venezia. Despite this, the work of the British Council was not disrupted by negative political influences. According to the British Embassy, 'the quality of the Council's work has been high and their record very good'. Unlike the Information Department of the British Embassy, the Council's neutrality helped curb suspicion and hostility from the Union of Communists.[423]

The Council also realised that Yugoslavia in the 1950s became a battlefield of cultural propaganda work.

Yugoslavia had ideological connections with the Eastern Bloc and increasingly close economic and material relations with the West. According to the local Council representative, it was becoming the 'cultural cockpit' of Europe. Council staff worried that Britain would lag behind, facing challenges from both the East and the West regarding major dramatic presentations in Belgrade from France, Austria, the United States, and the Soviet Union. The British Council was aware of the political costs of not organising many major events. For instance, sending only two pairs of dancers seemed inadequate compared to the efforts of other countries. There were no musical exchanges from 1954 to 1955, and in the fine arts, there was only one exhibition on Henry Moore (to be discussed in chapter 5). The Council recognised the need to strengthen the artistic part of their work in Yugoslavia, differing from the more practical or material aspects of cultural development, such as science and technology. The British Council's regional officer for South Europe, M. Glover, commented in the annual report from Belgrade 1954–55 that 'it [was] important that stress on technical subjects should not lead to a reduction in the humanities'.[424]

In addition, cultural exchanges with communist countries started to recover after the normalisation of relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR in 1955. British cultural events

[423] 'Telegram from the British Embassy in Belgrade to the the Western & Southern Department of the Foreign Office', 17 September 1954, TNA, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.
[424] 'Memo of Annual Report for 1954–55', 17 August 1955, TNA, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.

in Yugoslavia remained modest, while the Soviet Union and other People's Democracies tended to be competitive. For instance, the Hudozhestveny Theatre of Moscow was scheduled to visit Belgrade in May 1956, and the Czechoslovak Philharmonic orchestra had already visited and enjoyed great success.

In a telegram from Ambassador Frank Roberts to Foreign Minister Harold Macmillan, Roberts warned of the Soviet Union's cultural aggression. There were nine visits of top-ranking Russian musicians in the previous few months. The 'Beryozka' dancers toured Yugoslavia for more than five weeks.[425] There was also the regular publicity from a Soviet information bulletin. In addition, the Yugoslav press paid a great deal of attention to visits to the USSR by Yugoslav parliamentary and journalistic delegations.[426]

On the British side, there was little to compare in scale to these events, except for Henry Moore's exhibition during 1955 and 1956. Both the Council and local authorities recognised the challenges in arranging for top British or Western artists to visit Yugoslavia. From the perspective of the Council representative, the fees and flexibility of British artists were a problem that was not as severe with Eastern Bloc artists because they were 'state-controlled'.[427]

Although the daily activities of the Council were steadily developing, the Council representative believed there should not be a relaxation in organising major cultural events to boost Britain's reputation in Yugoslavia. He argued that such a major event should be 'first class' and held annually in Yugoslavia to counter the keen competition from Eastern Europe.

> A really successful operation such as [Henry Moore's exhibition and the visit of Stratford Memorial Theatre Company] can demolish for a time and at one swoop all suggestions that Britain is lagging behind in the cultural field. [Those] activities have immense prestige value and achieve widespread publicity in the kind of country where Culture, in this restricted sense, is taken extremely seriously, and where special veneration is accorded to the opera, ballet, theatre, music and the fine arts.[428]

[425] A beryozka dance is a traditional Russian folk dance.
[426] 'Telegram from British Ambassador Frank K. Roberts to Harold Macmillan, 25 August 1955, TNA, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.
[427] 'The British Council Yugoslavia Representative's Annual Report, 1955–56', TNA, p.2, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.
[428] Ibid; 'The British Council Yugoslavia Representative's Annual Report, 1956–57', TNA, p.2, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.

Major cultural events were given increasing importance by the Council in light of the immense influence they could have in Yugoslavia. They worked effectively to build Britain's cultural prestige in Yugoslavia.

The Council's work in Yugoslavia developed steadily, partly due to changes in Yugoslav policy and partly because of the Council's hard work. According to statistics, since 1948, 145 Yugoslavs visited Britain as Council Scholars and Bursars, and 360 as general visitors.[429] By the late 1950s, the work of the British Council entered a stable stage. At the same time, Yugoslavia's foreign cultural relations were also developing extensively, with increased cultural activities from both the East and the West and new cultural links being built with Far Eastern and Middle Eastern countries.[430]

III. Conclusion

The British Council was a significant cultural institution in Britain's cultural diplomacy. Its ostensible neutrality and apolitical promotional activity characterised its work in many countries, serving the long-term benefits of Britain's national interest by creating a favourable atmosphere for the country. In the 1950s, the Council emphasised British culture as part of a unique European culture. Although the Council's work in Eastern Europe was generally frustrating during the 1940s and 1950s, it managed to conduct its work in Yugoslavia successfully despite slow development and fluctuations.

Nevertheless, the cultural diplomacy implemented by the British Council could only be considered partially successful in Yugoslavia. First, the aim of reducing Soviet influence immediately after the war failed as the Council's work encountered many obstacles and even hostility. After 1948, British 'cultural offensives' to Yugoslavia aimed to attract the country to

[429] 'The British Council Yugoslavia Representative's Annual Report, 1959–60', TNA, pp.2–3, YUG/701/3, BW66/20.
[430] 'The British Council Yugoslavia Representative's Annual Report, 1960–61', TNA, p.1, YUG/701/3, BW66/20.

the West. The Council's work became part of the broader British cultural agenda to incorporate Yugoslavia into the West within a free-world alliance against the Soviets following its split with the USSR. It was hoped that Yugoslavia could act as a wedge to the Eastern Bloc, emphasising its independence and thereby thwarting the USSR.

This plan faced challenges with the normalisation of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in 1955. Bilateral cultural relations risked being overshadowed by the impressive cultural initiatives from the Soviet Union and other communist countries. However, the situation was more complex and dubious. Although there was a strong official opposition to Anglo-French intervention in Egypt and 'the official line of Yugoslav government was [. . .] consistent[ly] and irritating[ly] anti-British [. . .] concerning [British] foreign and colonial policies', there were also sympathisers within the country who supported Britain's activities.[431] Meanwhile, the Hungarian uprising and Poznań protest in 1956 cooled the warming relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. As a consequence, the work of the British Council entered a stable phase in the late 1950s despite the ebb and flow of international politics. According to the local Council representative, 'whether the [Yugoslav] political wind veer[ed] back towards the East or not, Anglo-Yugoslav cultural relations do seem now to be in a permanently healthy state'. Moreover, any deviation of Yugoslavia from the East was considered beneficial in the long run. [432]

Despite the seemingly stable Council work and bilateral cultural relations, the circle of Britain's foreign policy could not be squared. This was due to the discrepancy between Yugoslavia's and Britain's foreign policy objectives. Post-1948 Yugoslavia consistently sought a third way independent from both blocs in the international community. Learning from past experience, Yugoslavia was determined not to depend solely on either bloc. Britain's

[431] 'The British Council Yugoslavia Representative's Annual Report, 1956–57', TNA, p.1, YUG/701/3, BW66/13.
[432] Ibid.

efforts to incorporate Yugoslavia into the West was fundamentally incompatible with Yugoslavia's broader geopolitical goals. Yugoslavia's foreign policy centred on the Non-Aligned Movement, and its closer diplomatic relations with the vigorously growing developing world reinforced its confidence in pursuing a Third Way between the two blocs.

Cultural diplomacy by the British Council had its limitations and was unable to fully achieve Britain's political objectives. Nonetheless, the Council's ongoing cultural initiatives facilitated cultural development in Yugoslavia and strengthened bilateral cultural relations. Despite the ideological constraints of the political system, there was appreciation and recognition of British culture in Yugoslavia.

Bilateral cultural exchanges between Britain and Yugoslavia were not balanced. Unlike Yugoslavia, the British side always had an explicit plan for wielding its cultural diplomacy through the work of the British Council. During the early post-war period, the focus was more on the provision of practical scientific knowledge, such as medicine and reconstruction. Later, in the 1950s, there were more projects centred on British art, music, and similar fields. However, regardless of how the Council's working contents evolved, the implicitly condescending attitude towards Yugoslavia persisted among the Council staff.

Yugoslavia, on the other hand, could only implement its foreign cultural policy through exploration. Due to a lack of experience and knowledge about Britain, the focus of its work changed from time to time with different goals. As will be shown in the following chapter, the country began by highlighting its youth work actions during the early post-war period. The Yugoslav government believed that propaganda related to such developmental projects could reflect the uniqueness of Yugoslavia's socialist culture as well as its highly advanced political system. However, they would soon find it very difficult to persuade the British that Yugoslavia was a culturally advanced country through its communist-style propaganda.

Chapter 3. The Youth Voluntary Labour Actions and the British Youth Brigades in Yugoslavia 1947–1951

Both Britain and Yugoslavia sought to wield their influence through cultural initiatives during the early post-war period. As analysed in the previous chapter, the British Council undertook missionary work to promote British culture and increase the country's influence in Yugoslavia via numerous cultural activities. Likewise, socialist Yugoslavia initiated projects to make the country more visible. Among these early post-war cultural exchanges, Youth Labour Action (*Omladinska radna akcija* [ORA]) played a crucial role in Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy. It was used to attract the Left's young people and sympathisers in Britain and other countries in the West to promote the country.

The ORA mobilised both domestic and foreign youth, although the latter comprised only a relatively small number of participants. While similar initiatives took place in other People's Democracies, Yugoslavia's use of ORAs was distinctive. In this chapter, I will explore how Yugoslavia employed ORAs as a strategy to assert its soft power.

By inviting British youth to participate in the ORAs, Yugoslav authorities were able to promote Yugoslav culture from a grassroots, individual perspective, fostering Leftist internationalism through friendly and close relations between Yugoslav and foreign youth. In this sense, the ORAs were not merely about physical work or economic development; their ideological significance was central. ORA was closely linked with Yugoslavia's communist ideology and served as a cultural symbol of the communist value system. For instance, the ideal of the Stakhanovite, disciplined shock worker ('udarnik') was part of the character that a socialist 'new man' should possess.[433] Andrea Matošević has argued that those 'shock workers'

[433] The idea of shock work was based on the Russian Stakhanovite movement, which means that an individual worker could over-fulfill his production task by a large amount through hard work. For the use of shockwork and competition in Yugoslav communist ideology, see Carol S. Lilly, *Power and Persuasion: Ideology and Rhetoric in Communist Yugoslavia, 1944-1953* (New York, 2001), pp.118-120. The idea is similar to Luminita Gatejel's

became the 'embodiment of the dignity of the labour movement of the entire country', with the 'shock worker movement' being 'imbued with political significance' that had a lasting influence long after its popularity in the early postwar years faded.[434]

Unlike the British Council, whose remit was clearly defined, Yugoslav authorities arguably lacked a clearly articulated vision of the scope or aim of cultural diplomacy during the early Cold War years. Since the state identified Yugoslav culture very broadly, anything that could raise the cultural profile of the country was promoted. As a result, ORAs became a key testing ground for Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy, allowing the government to develop its soft power by transforming an economic project into a cultural vision for the country. This approach enabled the authorities to explore various ways of building the country's image.

The Soviet cultural influence was discernible in several aspects of the ORAs. For instance, the 'shock worker competition' was integral to the ORAs, with their educational and ideological value being heavily emphasised. At the same time, Yugoslavia kept pushing its political propaganda work abroad through publications, newsletters, and radio broadcasts. The engagement of British youth in the ORA projects provided a means for Yugoslavia to gradually develop and broaden its foreign cultural policy.

There is a rich historiography on the topic of international youth gatherings during the Cold War. Studying cross-border youth activities can help us better understand post-war politics, society, and culture. For many, youth represented an idealistic life stage; as historians Mischa Honeck and Gabriel Rosenberg write, 'young people were found to be politically and culturally impressionable and unburdened by the past'.[435] Young people were specially

research on the automobile production, in which she raises the connection between the symbolic meaning of cars and the different ideological system in the East and the West. See Luminita Gatejel, 'The Road to Socialism Paved with Good Intentions: Automobile Culture in the Soviet Union, Romania, and the GDR during Détente', in Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk and Thomas Lindenberger (eds), *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies* (New York, 2012), pp.152–71.

[434] Andrea Matošević, *Socijalizam s udarničkim licem-Etnografija radnog pregalaštva* (Zagreb, 2018), pp.12-13; See also Andrea Matošević, 'Mediators in the Making of the Socialist Man's New Nature During Youth Labour Actions in Yugoslavia. Utopia, Dialectics and Time', *Südost-Forschungen*, 76/1 (2017), pp.64–81.

[435] Mischa Honeck and Gabriel Rosenberg, 'Transnational Generations', *Diplomatic History*, 38/2 (2014), p.235.

targeted as potential cultural messengers during the Cold War, making their experiences of cultural exchange an important part of Cold War cultural history.

The majority of the literature on international youth activities from a cultural perspective focuses on the role of international youth organisations, conferences, and youth festivals in facilitating national governments' cultural diplomacy in Cold war politics. In particular, this literature has emphasised how international youth festivals became a kind of cultural battlefield for countries with differing ideological and political systems.[436] In general, these works approach the topic through the lens of the cultural Cold War, understood as a competition between the East and the West to promote their culture or life style in order to surpass 'the other'.

For instance, Pia Koivunen uses the 1957 Moscow World Festival of Youth as a case study to document how the Soviet Union took the opportunity to propagate a new post-Stalin image.[437] Margaret Peacock highlights how the Soviet Union attempted to generate a brand-new vision of communism after Stalin for both domestic and international audiences at the 1957 Festival.[438] Similar research includes the study of the American cultural offensive at the World Youth Festival in Helsinki in 1962 and the evolution of West German cultural diplomacy at the World Youth Festivals during the 1960s to attract Third World youth.[439]

[436] See Pia Koivunen, 'Overcoming Cold War Boundaries at the World Youth Festivals', in Sari Autio-Sarasmo and Katalin Miklóssy (eds), *Reasssessing Cold War Europe*, pp.175–92.
[437] See Pia Koivunen, 'The 1957 Moscow Youth Festival-Propagating a new, peaceful image of the Soviet Union', in Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (eds), *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, pp.46–65. Koivunen has also conducted similar research on how the 1957 Festival reflected changes in Soviet Union foreign policy. See Pia Koivunen, 'Friends, "Potential Friends," and Enemies: Reimagining Soviet Relations to the First, Second, and Third Worlds at the Moscow 1957 Youth Festival', in Patryk Babiracki and Austin Jersild (eds), *Socialist Internationalism in the Cold War: Exploring the Second World*, pp.219–47.
[438] Margaret Peacock, 'The Perils of Building Cold War Consensus at the 1957 Moscow World Festival of Youth and Students', *Cold War History*, 12/3 (2012), pp.515-535.
[439] See Joni Krekola and Simo Mikkonen, 'Backlash of the Free World: the US Presence at the World Youth Festival in Helsinki, 1962', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 36/2 (2011), pp.230-255; Quinn Slobodian, 'What Does Democracy Look Like? (And Why Would Anyone Want to Buy It?) Third Wolrd Demands and West German Responses at 1960s World Youth Festivals', in Vowinckel, Payk and Lindenberger (eds), *Cold War Cultures*, pp.254–75.

Andrea Chiriu tracks the Italian government's concerns about communist propaganda at the 1953 World Youth Festival in Bucharest.[440]

In addition to exploring the high politics of governments during this period, Pia Koivunen studies Finnish youth at the World Festival of Youth. She contends that the majority of the festival attendees were motivated by the idea of 'peace and friendship'.[441] The young people could have different agendas compared to the top organisers of these events. The competitive dimensions of propaganda were usually initiated from the perspective of high politics.

This chapter aims to demonstrate how Yugoslavia used its ORAs to promote its image and secure recognition of the country and its form of socialism. The chapter also explores how the purpose of Yugoslavia's ORAs evolved in response to changes in international politics. As part of Yugoslavia's early post-war cultural offensive, the ORAs were highly ideologically driven and had a strong propagandistic character. However, Yugoslavia's ORAs differed from international youth festivals in several ways.

The arrangement of foreign youth participation in Yugoslavia's ORAs had a less festive dimension and focused more on daily labour work and life of individual youth, which had a less 'performative' character compared to international festivals. Although sports events, dances, and campfires were routinely held at the ORAs, the primary method for familiarising British and foreign brigadists with the country was through educational programmes and outings to factories, cooperatives, and other sites.

The historiography on the international youth festivals is mainly viewed from the perspective of the cultural Cold War, with a strong confrontational theme. Cultural diplomacy was treated as derivative of superpower politics and influenced by the competition between the two camps, focusing on winning the hearts and minds of the public from the other side of the

[440] Andrea Chiriu, 'Summer 1953, Bucharest: The Third World Youth Congress and the Fourth World Youth Festival. The Italian Concerns', *Revista Română de Studii Eurasiatice*, 1/2 (2012), pp.105–18.
[441] Pia Koivunen, 'A Dream Come True': Finns Visiting the Lands of Socialism at the World Youth Festivals in the 1940s and 1950s', *Twentieth Century Communism* Issue 4 (2012), pp.133–59.

Iron Curtain. While in the case of Yugoslavia, as mentioned in the introduction, its cultural diplomacy towards Britain was mainly about recognition, both culturally and politically.

There were deep contradictions between the communist culture and ideology in Yugoslavia and the British culture that the British Council was keen to promote. An example of this comes from the British Council's representative, A. L. P. Himbury, following his visit to the construction site of the Šamac-Sarajevo railway. Himbury spent three days visiting different sites on the railway and meeting both officials and the young volunteers working there. His goal was to establish connections with officials and youth while promoting the work of the British Council. He was well aware of the suspicion and distrust of the Yugoslav authorities and hoped to use this opportunity to encourage more people to engage with the Council.

The inherent contradictions between the two cultures quickly became apparent. Himbury 'could not help deploring the strong political cant which [was] given to every speech, concert or "cultural" activity and the constant emphasis on communist dogma'.[442] In Yugoslavia, ideology permeated daily life and work. In a typical reconstruction project like the youth railway, it was common to see banners with slogans and the name of 'Comrade Tito'. This culture was what the most Yugoslavs were accustomed to as part of their daily lives. In contrast, liberal English culture and the highly ideologically driven communist way of life were poles apart.

The role of the ORAs in Yugoslavia's domestic policy is well established in scholarship. The majority of the literature on this topic adopts a domestic perspective, emphasising the significance of the ORAs in the ideological cultivation and mobilisation of Yugoslav Socialist youth as well as their political and economic functions.[443] This was a crucial part of

[442] 'Report of the Assistant Representative of the British Council in Yugoslavia Himbury of his recent visit to the Youth Railway', 24 September 1947, TNA, YUG/8/1, BW66/4.

[443] See Ivan Hofman, „Socijalističko takmičenje" na omladinskim radnim akcijama u Jugoslaviji 1946–1951 ("The Socialist Competition" at the Youth Working Actions in the Yugoslavia 1946–1951), *Istorija 20. Veka*, 2 (2014), pp.155–70; Dragan Popović, 'Youth Labor Action (*Omladinska radna akcija* [ORA]) as Ideological Holiday-Making', in Hannes Grandits and Karin Taylor (eds), *Yugoslavia's Sunny Side: A History of Tourism in*

Yugoslavia's ORAs and the main goal to be achieved. However, little has been done on the role of ORAs in Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy, especially with Britain. The ORAs were significant in setting up Yugoslavia's image abroad during the early post-war period. Tea Sindbæk Andersen studies the international volunteers at the ORAs and argues that the movement was a 'relatively successful instance of cultural diplomacy at the individual level', as evidenced by the positive feedback from her interviewees.[444] Similar positive feedback can also be seen in official reports from Yugoslavia.

The materials used in this chapter are mainly official reports of the People's Youth of Yugoslavia (PYY) in the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade. While it is necessary to approach these materials with some scepticism due to the ideological conditions under which they were written, they should not be dismissed as mere propaganda without value for researchers. These texts reflect the temporal situation of the Cold War and the texture of cultural issues at that time. The comments and evaluations of the British brigade from the PYY delegate reveal the mindset of Yugoslavia's communist ideology and highlight the differing perspectives of youth from both sides of the Iron Curtain. For instance, British youth thought it was unnecessary to arrive and leave work in formation, while the Yugoslav delegate believed it was related to the basic work discipline of the brigade. British youth insisted on arranging the brigade's issues in a democratic way (such as holding meetings and voting), which the PYY delegate viewed as excessive and bourgeois. These documents do not simply present an idealistic story but also show the tensions and conflicts that arose during the encounters between Yugoslav and British youth.

Socialism (Budapest, New York, 2010), pp.279–302; Sasa Vejzagic, 'The Importance of Youth Labour Actions in Socialist Yugoslavia (1948–1950): A Case Study of the Motorway "Brotherhood-Unity'. (Master thesis, Central European University, 2013).

[444] Tea Sindbæk Andersen, 'Youth Brigadiers at the Railway-Personal Perspectives on Tito's Yugoslavia in the Making', in Óscar J. Martín García and Rósa Magnúsdóttir (eds), *Machineries of Persuasion: European Soft Power and Public Diplomacy during the Cold War* (Munich, Vienna 2019), p.106.

Through the following case studies during different periods, this chapter highlights the changes brought about by the Cominform Resolution, examining both the strategies of Yugoslav authorities and the concerns of British youth. It is divided into three sections, each focusing on a case study of the Youth Labour Actions from the late 1940s to the early 1950s.

I. Background of the Omladinska Radna Akcija

The organisation of post-war Youth Labour Actions in the form of work brigades was not unique to socialist Yugoslavia. In the Eastern Bloc, where communist parties held power, this approach was commonly used to engage youth in national construction projects. Some projects were completed solely by domestic voluntary youth, but it was also common to invite foreign youth to participate. For instance, young delegates from various countries helped rebuild the devastated Czech village of Lidice and construct the new town of Litvinov in 1947 while attending the World Youth Festival in Prague. Similarly, young people travelled to Bulgaria, Poland, and Yugoslavia to take part in these efforts.[445] Participating in construction work became a trend in post-war socialist countries. Yugoslavia's Youth Labour Action evolved into a symbol of the country and its socialist ethos, playing a significant role in both its domestic policy and cultural diplomacy, especially in the early years after the war.

Early youth construction projects (from the late 1940s to early 1960s) mainly focused on the construction of railways, motorways, and industrial complexes.[446] Youth Labour Actions during the late 1940s were part of the broader developmental process of the entire country under the leadership of the communist party.[447] Yugoslavia initiated its first five-year plan (also the first one outside the Soviet Union) in 1947, focusing on developing industry.[448] This period

[445] 'Youth Rebuilds Lidice', *The Daily Worker*, (22 July 1947), p.3; 'World Youth Help Build Czech Town', *The Daily Worker*, (4 August 1947), p.3.
[446] Popović, 'Youth Labor Action (*Omladinska radna akcija* [ORA]) as Ideological Holiday-Making', p.288.
[447] Vejzagic, 'The Importance of Youth Labour Actions', p.30.
[448] Andersen, 'Youth Brigadiers at the Railway', p.108.

also marked the heyday of the Youth Labour Actions in Yugoslavia. The Brčko-Banovići railway in 1946 was the first major voluntary Youth Labour Action, and the construction of the 'Brotherhood-Unity' highway was the largest project at that time in terms of the number of participants and the scope of construction.[449] These infrastructure projects were mainly undertaken by local students, rural youngsters, and workers due to the need for a large workforce.[450] Foreign brigades also contributed to these projects.

The building projects were both economically and politically significant for the country, especially during the early post-war period. Practically, a great deal of labour was needed for reconstruction, as the whole country had been devastated by the war. Politically, the construction sites and the organised brigades provided a perfect venue for cultivating the socialist new man. The educational courses and programmes of the youth actions contributed to general education and combatting illiteracy.[451] Additionally, these projects were pivotal in popularising communist ideology and consolidating the party's rule. This concern became especially prominent after the Cominform Resolution incident, when the legitimacy of the Yugoslav communist party was challenged by its rupture with the Soviet Union.

The youth work actions also became a symbol of Yugoslav socialism. As part of Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy, they were extensively promoted abroad. These projects attracted many foreigners, including governmental officials, cultural workers, and celebrities, who came to visit the construction site. A. L. P. Himbury, the British Council assistant representative in Yugoslavia, visited the railway in 1947 and described his interest in the railway as follows：

> I was anxious to visit the Railway and to see things for myself . . . the idea of assembling a large number of young people, speaking different languages, with diverse national

[449] Dragosavac, p.11, in Vejzagic, 'The Importance of Youth Labour', p.30; Vejzagic, 'The Importance of Youth Labour', p.39.
[450] Popović, 'Youth Labor Action', p.290.
[451] Ibid., p.281.

> characteristics and eccentricities, and inspiring them with a common design is an attractive one.[452]

Labour MP John Mack described Yugoslavia as 'like a giant construction site where creative labour reigned supreme', noting that the people 'were carrying out one of the most fruitful experiments in democratic reconstruction'.[453] The editor of *The Daily Worker*, William Rust, wrote an extensive article on his experience Yugoslavia, highlighting the significance of youth voluntary work in both reconstruction and the education of the youth.[454] Yugoslav authorities also took the opportunity to invite interested foreign youth to participate in the construction projects, allowing them to experience Yugoslav socialism firsthand. Such initiatives were popular under the banner of early post-war international peace and friendship and were closely related to the rise and prosperity of communism and left-wing ideas in Europe.

It was against this background that the Youth Labour Actions became popular among European youth, leading many British youngsters to volunteer in Yugoslavia. The People's Youth of Yugoslavia (PYY), the youth organisation in Yugoslavia, arranged the work of the brigades.[455] They sent invitations to youth organisations in Britain, and asking them to help organise brigades. The youth committee of the British Yugoslav Association (BYA) and the National Union of Students (NUS) were the main organisations responsible for recruiting the brigadists in Britain. British brigadists were usually registered through the joint committee of these two organisations. In addition, the Youth Communist League (YCL) sometimes participated in the organisational work.

The slogan 'we are building the railway, the railway is building us' was a major part of the propaganda for the 1947 youth railway project Šamac-Sarajevo. The slogan reflected the

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[452] 'Report from Himbury, the Assistant Representative in Yugoslavia, on his recent visit to the Youth Railway', 24 September 1947, TNA, BW66/4, YUG/8/1.
[453] 'Labour MP Gives Facts on Balkans', *The Daily Worker* [London], (9 September 1947), p.3.
[454] William Rust, 'The People Rule in Yugoslavia', *The Daily Worker* [London], (13 September 1947), p.2; Another long article describing his journey in Montenegro and Croatia was published later on 15 September 1947.
[455] The People's Youth of Yugoslavia was responsible for all the youth affairs, especially the political and ideological work with youth in both urban and rural areas.

ideological goal of the railway building project—to cultivate the new socialist man. Several Youth Labour Actions were initiated in Yugoslavia as part of the post-war reconstruction and the five-year plan to develop the country. These actions were carried out by volunteers aged between 16 and 25, who formed youth brigades and worked at construction sites to build 'socialism'.

Youth Labour Actions in Yugoslavia lasted from the end of the Second World War until the 1980s, though their character evolved over time. The heyday of youth voluntary work was during the early years after the war. Key projects included the construction of the Brčko-Banovići railway (1946), the Šamac-Sarajevo railway (1947), the Doboj-Banja Luka Railway (1951), the 'Brotherhood-Unity' highway between Belgrade and Zagreb (1948–1949), and the construction of New Belgrade and the university town in Zagreb.

The government attached great importance to these actions not only for their economic benefits but also for their educational and propagandistic functions.[456] Through these work actions, youth were expected to become disciplined, dedicated, and supportive of socialist ideals and ideology, such as the spirit of the collective and brotherhood and unity. In addition, according to one historian, the youth voluntary actions were also seen as a useful tool in 'erasing disparities between social milieus—rich and poor, urban and rural, and diminishing cultural differences between Yugoslav ethnicities'.[457]

Participating in these labour actions was common for Yugoslav youth. Propaganda from the authorities made it a point of pride for them to participate in Youth Labour Actions, as it was seen as making contribution to the building of their country and its socialism. Foreign youth who came to work in Yugoslavia were usually idealistic and shared similar ideas of leftist internationalism. Many young Britons formed brigades and came to help with the building of

[456] For the propagandistic role of the Youth Labour Actions, see Carol S. Lilly, 'Problems of Persuasion: Communist Agitation and Propaganda in Post-war Yugoslavia, 1944–1948', *Slavic Review*, 53/2 (1994), p.403.
[457] Popović, 'Youth Labor Action', pp.281, 283; Vejzagic, 'The Importance of Youth Labour', p.14.

Yugoslavia during the late 1940s and early 1950s.[458] In addition to the British brigade, there were also brigades from neighbouring countries and the West, including Albania, Hungary, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, and France. According to the report, more than 400 British students and workers participated in the building of the youth railway in 1947.[459]

During the construction of the Šamac-Sarajevo railway in 1947, foreign volunteers were invited to work for three weeks in Yugoslavia, followed by a one-week holiday, as described in an article in the *Times Educational Supplement*. The author praised this initiative as it 'render[ed] the full fruition of the idea of the United Nations and the establishment of conditions for lasting peace'.[460] The Yugoslav government was aware of the propagandistic effect of both the construction projects and the role played by the foreign youth.[461]

British youth travelled through either Austria or Italy to work in Yugoslavia. Their motives were usually a combination of political concerns and curiosity about the country. When the Yugoslav delegate to the First British Brigade at the Belgrade-Zagreb highway asked several brigadists why they came to Yugoslavia, he found their answers generally overlapped:

> First, this was an extraordinary opportunity to visit Yugoslavia cheaply (trip, summer holiday). Then, people in England are interested in what life behind 'the Iron Curtain' looks like. They come to see how communist social and economic system looks like in practice, with the emphasis on planned economy. Besides, the British communist youth considered it their duty to come to Yugoslavia.[462]

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[458] The British brigades not only came to work in Yugoslavia. For instance, after two months of work in Yugoslavia in the summer of 1947, twenty-two young Britons continued to help with the construction at the key mountain pass at Hainboaz in Bulgaria. See 'British Girls in Sofia March Past', *The Daily Worker* [London], (10 September 1947), p.6.

[459] 'Youth and Yugoslavia-Work on the Šamac-Sarajevo Railway', *The Times Weekly Edition* [London], (29 October 1947), p.13.

[460] 'The Yugoslav Youth Railway-An Educational Enterprise', *The Times Educational Supplement* [London], (11 October 1947).

[461] In the 1947 meeting of the Ideological Commission of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the building of the youth railway in Bosnia-Herzegovina was counted as the 'greatest merit' of that year. It was stated that similar 'big and beautiful object and action' should be made to attract attention from abroad. See AJ, F-507*, Centralni komitet Saveza komunista Jugoslavije* (Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia), *Ideološka Komisija* (the Ideological Commission), VIII, II/2-b-(4) (K-4), *Zapisnik sa sastanka Agitpropa: Propaganda za inostranstvo* (Minutes of Agitprop Meeting: Propaganda for Foreign Countries), 12 December 1947, p.1.

[462] AJ, F-114-291, 'Yugoslav Association of Socialist Youth, Report of the 1st British Brigade', 9 July 1948.

Nevertheless, he was convinced that the first reason was the major motivation. According to the Yugoslav report of the Third British Brigade in 1951 on the Doboj-Banja Luka railway working site, 'whoever wanted to go to Yugoslavia paid 18 pounds and went'.[463] Furthermore, Yugoslavia was a place that many Britons knew little about. Interest in the country consisted of both tourist curiosity and a desire to understand its society, politics, economics, and culture.

At the same time, the political concerns of the British brigadists played a role that changed with time and international politics. The feeling of solidarity among the young communists was later replaced by suspicion of Yugoslav socialism due to the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform. This shift was reflected in the 1948 and 1949 brigades. By 1951, the majority of the youth who came to Yugoslavia were Labourites. They were mostly interested in the reforms initiated by the Yugoslav government and cultural aspects of the country, such as folk art. Political enthusiasm and idealism waned afterwards due to changes in international politics. When the PYY resumed the ORA in 1958, only two young English workers went to Yugoslavia to work in the international brigade. British youngsters were unwilling to spend their holidays doing labour in Yugoslavia once the ideological attractiveness disappeared.

The BYA and the NUS, responsible for the organising work in Britain, were both left-wing oriented. As mentioned in Chapter 1, most BYA members were communists, and the organisation maintained close contact with the Yugoslav Embassy in London. Because of this, the Foreign Office regarded it as an affiliate of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). The NUS, a national student organisation dedicated to domestic student issues, also maintained communication with foreign student organisations. Compared to the BYA, the NUS was more neutral because its members came from diverse backgrounds, although left-wing ideas were strong within the organisation at that time.[464]

[463] AJ, F-114-290, 'Dragan Marković: Report of the Delegate of the 3rd English Brigade', 1 September 1951.
[464] In the Foreign Office memo, concerns were raised that the NUS might slide into the control of its communist and left-wing members.

In addition to labour, the daily life of the British brigades consisted of lectures, discussions, and conferences. Topics covered Yugoslavia's socialism, such as social and economic systems, the five-year plan, the Peasant Work Cooperatives and so on. The opinions of the British brigadists about Yugoslavia were influenced by their respective political affiliations. Their political views also shaped their attitudes towards certain political issues, especially the Cominform Resolution. Despite the apparent political character of the projects, the voluntary labour actions still provided young Britons with an opportunity to satisfy their curiosity about the country and its new socialist system.

Before the Cominform Resolution in 1948, there was a trend for young CPGB members to participate in building projects in Yugoslavia. The construction of the Šamac-Sarajevo railway became a symbol of Yugoslavia's socialism, showcasing the Yugoslav Communist Party's commitment to development and modernisation. By gathering foreign youth brigades, the project also fostered international friendship. Like many international communist initiatives at the time, the youth railway was intended to show the world how ideological and political differences could be overcome through good will and internationalism.

However, reversal after the Soviet–Yugoslav split in 1948, there was a sudden reversal. The atmosphere of the projects grew tense, with mounting suspicion between Yugoslav authorities and British communist brigadists. This tension was evident in the construction of the 'Brotherhood and Unity' highway in 1948 and 1949. The situation only improved in 1951 when British Labourite youth came to work on the Doboj-Banja Luka Railway.

This chapter presents three case studies: the building of the Šamac-Sarajevo railway in 1947, the 'brotherhood-Unity' highway between Zagreb and Belgrade in 1948–49, and the Doboj-Banja Luka railway in 1951. These case studies reveal how the life and work experiences of the British youth brigades in Yugoslavia were influenced by the changing political climate during different periods.

II. Encounter: Šamac-Sarajevo Railway

The Šamac-Sarajevo railway was inaugurated on 16 November by Tito. It was 240 kilometres in length and was completed within seven months, thanks to the effort of voluntary youth groups from Yugoslavia and other countries.[465] Young people from Britain, France, Canada, and Australia helped to build the Youth Railway.[466] International brigades arrived in Yugoslavia during the summer, working for several weeks before travelling to the Dalmatian coast for a break as a reward.[467] Britain sent a total of ten brigades.[468] According to an internal report of the PYY, between 1 April and 15 November 1947, 471 English individuals coming to work on the Šamac-Sarajevo railway, accounting for 8% of the total participants. England also sent the largest number of youth to work in Yugoslavia compared to other Western countries. Among the. 471 young people, 112 were workers, 2 were peasants, and 357 were intellectuals and others.[469] This demonstrates the strong momentum of internationalism among young British students, who were the major participants in such international projects.

The majority of the British brigadists in 1947 were either young communists or leftists. Enthusiastic about the post-war peace, friendship, and internationalism propagated by the Soviets, they were idealistic and believed they could contribute to building a better world. Therefore, many participated in events such as the World Youth Festival and the volunteer brigades to strengthen international friendship and communication. Communists and leftists believed these large-scale gatherings could serve as a useful platform for youth around the

[465] *Information Bulletin*, World Federation of Democratic Youth, December 1947, TNA, FO 924/670, LC197/20/452.
[466] 'World Youth Help Build Czech Town', *The Daily Worker* [London], (4 August 1947), p.3.
[467] Andersen, 'Youth Brigadiers at the Railway', p.110.
[468] *Information Bulletin,* World Federation of Democratic Youth, January 1948, TNA, FO 924/671, LC679/20/452.
[469] AJ, F-114-127, '*Omladinska Pruga Šamac-Sarajevo* 1 April-15 November 1947, *Savezna Planska Komisija Državni Statistički Ured* (Federal Planning Submission State Statistical Office)'. Here, the PYY used the same classification system for the British brigade as it did domestically. The intellectuals presumably referred to the students.

world to 'learn from each other'. For instance, thirteen hundred Britons came to participate in the World Youth Festival in Prague in 1947.[470]

Curiosity about the country and the idea of having some fun motivated many British youth to come to Yugoslavia. As one member of the British Brigade later wrote in *The Times*, 'What most I had looked for, I suppose, and certainly my husband and I, was the chance to satisfy a natural curiosity about Yugoslavia.'[471] The organising secretary of the British Brigades at the Šamac-Sarajevo railway, Dorothy Sale, also described the intentions of the young British people who worked in Yugoslavia. According to Sale,

> Some people had come out of curiosity, some with a vague idea of doing some kind of social work, some to study the politics of the new Yugoslavia, some wanted a holiday with hard physical work, some just wanted a holiday, some came with all sorts of odd reasons 'to study the Yugoslav at home', or 'to observe the impact of the West on the East'.[472]

The prospect of entertainment in Yugoslavia caused some problems with work performance. This issue was raised by both Brigade Commander Edward P. Thompson, the future historian, and delegates of the PYY. Some brigadists thought more about their holiday than the hard physical work.[473]

The British brigadists were struck by many aspects of their experience in Yugoslavia. Upon arrival, they were immediately taken aback by the enthusiasm of the local youth for their reconstruction efforts. The dedication of the local brigades, who worked diligently to become shock workers and shock brigades, was surprising. Political slogans, banners featuring the hammer and sickle, and portraits of communist leaders were all new to the Britons.

Work on the railway proved challenging for the British youth, as it often involved heavy labour. While technically intensive work was undertaken by more skilled workers, most

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[470] 'Youth Festival', *The Daily Worker* [London], (15 August 1947), p.2.
[471] 'Youth Aids Yugoslavia—Work on the Šamac-Sarajevo Railway—Meeting of Volunteer Brigades', *The Times* [London], (22 October 1947), p.5. This curiosity might inherit from the previous interest in the Balkan region incurred by the related travelogues in the 20th Century.
[472] Dorothy Sale, 'The British', in Edward Thompson (ed.), *The Railway* (London, 1948), p.43.
[473] AJ, F-114-244, 'Letter from Edward P. Thompson to Bogdan', 10 March 1948.

international brigadists were assigned to physical work, such as 'digging or moving soil in wheelbarrows'.[474] In addition to the demanding work, they had to endure the summer heat in Bosnia, to which the majority of the British were not accustomed. As one brigadist noted,

> they lived in wooden huts and slept on straw palliasses. Getting up at 5 A.M., they worked for 8 hours until 1 pm with a break at 9 A.M.,. The food supplied was basic, with coffee or tea and a hunk of maize bread and a sticky sweet preserve for breakfast. Lunch might be a bowl of stew or some raw cabbage and a slice of Spam or similar tinned meat.[475]

The work of the British brigade was hampered by a lack of organisation. The brigadists were unfamiliar with the norms and tasks, finding it difficult to undertake the work efficiently. The constant changes in the composition of the brigade worsened the situation.[476] Moreover, it was also difficult for the brigadists to adapt to the collective way of life at the working site. As one brigadist wrote:

> As most of the brigade was ex-service and heartily tired of acting in a group, this meant at first that there was little organisation in evidence. People tended to be determinedly individual and drift off on their own private concerns. For a week or two, there was a distinct lack of cohesion and a general unhappy feeling of 'muddling through' in the good old British fashion.[477]

According to a Yugoslav report in September, the group spirit gradually improved, and work performance followed suit. 'The group that worked at the cavity in the cave in front of the tunnel constantly beat the norm. . . . The competition began to be well developed.'[478] The change, according to the Yugoslav delegate, could be attributed to the new people in the brigade, especially the newly elected commander—Edward P. Thompson. The PYY delegate to the brigade thought highly of Thompson and wrote in a report that Thompson had 'a clear line of

[474] Andersen, 'Youth Brigadiers at the Railway', p.110.
[475] 'Youth and Yugoslavia-Work on the Šamac-Sarajevo Railway', *The Times Weekly Edition* [London], (29 October 1947), p.13.
[476] AJ, F-114-290, 'Report of the British Brigade, Belgrade', 8 September 1947.
[477] 'Youth Aids Yugoslavia—Work on the Šamac-Sarajevo Railway—Meeting of Volunteer Brigades', *The Times* [London], (22 October 1947), p.5.
[478] AJ, F-114-290, 'Report of the British Brigade, Belgrade', 8 September 1947.

work'. The new main administrative brigadists led by him 'emphasised work performance at the site and achieved very good results in a short time'.[479]

Thompson himself was keen on building communist internationalism and friendship through this voluntary working project. He was enthusiastic about promoting socialist Yugoslavia in Britain and fostering mutual understanding and a sense of community between the people of the two countries. On the occasion of his departure from the Youth Railway, he sent a letter to all the builders:

> Be assured that when we leave your country we shall not betray the friendship we have made here. . . . It is therefore of very great importance that we should have come here, and that you should have greeted and received us as comrades. Every one of us is going home to tell his friends the truth about your country. We shall strive to change the foreign policy of the British Government, to pull down the flag of imperialism and to hoist the flag of friendship. We shall succeed in our struggle. Perhaps we shall not succeed this year, perhaps we shall not succeed next year either; but we shall succeed.[480]

Thompson took the brigade work seriously and regarded it as a valuable opportunity to 'seek inspiration and hope' from the socialist East. His experiences in Yugoslavia and other People's Democracies made him think about the development of communism in Britain. In a letter to a Yugoslav friend, he believed 'it was important to help the British people understand in human terms the problems of the new democracies and how they were being solved'.[481]

As promised in his farewell speech, Thompson made considerable efforts to promote summer work projects after returning to the UK. He edited and published a booklet named *The Railway: An Adventure in Construction* through the CBGP-sponsored BYA (See Figure 3-1).

[479] Ibid.
[480] Edward Thompson, Extract and Translation of an article in *Politika*, 14 September 1947, TNA, KV 2/4290
[481] AJ, F-114-244, 'The letter from Edward P. Thompson to Bogdan', 10 March 1948.

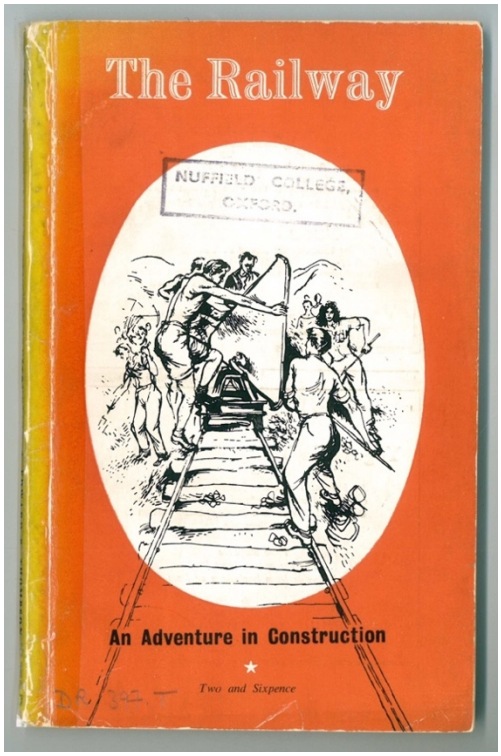


Figure 3-1. The book cover of *The Railway*

Thompson described the booklet as 'one of the first detailed (as opposed to general and theoretical) descriptions of an aspect of life in Yugoslavia prepared by British eye-witnesses'.[482] He emphasised the journalistic method adopted in the book. Even though he insisted that the booklet's main purpose was to inform more people about Yugoslavia, it still aroused suspicion from MI5, which had been monitoring the activities of the CPGB throughout the war, viewing it as communist propaganda.[483]

Reflecting Thompson's own membership in the CPGB, the narratives in the book were all provided by communist youth. The BYA, which published the book, was sponsored by the CPGB and had a close relationship with the Yugoslav Embassy. MI5 was not the only one in the country suspicious of the book. A *Sunday Times* correspondent described it as 'undisguised

[482] Ibid.
[483] Steve Parsons, 'British McCarthyism and the Intellectuals', in J. Fyrth ed., *Labour's Promised Land: Culture and Society in Labour Britain 1945–1951* (London, 1995), p.226.

and almost undiluted Communist propaganda'. This article, with its obvious anti-communist tone, warned that the BYA's sponsorship included members of Parliament.[484]

In a report from MI5, it was noted that Thompson's speech in Yugoslavia 'spoke completely in Communist style'. He promised that 'in England he would defend Yugoslavia of today against British reactionaries. It is therefore quite clear that all this delegation [youth brigades] will be very useful to the Yugoslav Embassy in London for their propaganda in Britain'.[485] Despite its obvious propagandistic character, *The Railway* did introduce the British public to an all-round picture of life and work in the camp from the perspective of a communist eyewitness.

In addition to the pamphlet, Thompson also gave advice on how to improve the organisation and discipline of future brigades. In his letter to his Yugoslav friend, he emphasised the importance of better organisation: 'So many people wish[ed] to see for themselves the new Yugoslavia, that many of them [saw] the work as of only second importance.'[486] He advised arranging a cheap travel scheme 'so that those who [were] not suited for work or have short holidays, could visit the country'.[487]

There was a reason why Thompson mentioned the organisational issues and the arrangements of the brigade. Although their experience in Yugoslavia was described in the booklet as a socialist paradise, the Yugoslavs apparently did not hold a positive opinion of their work performance. The PYY complained about the careless enrolment of brigadists from Britain: 'There were many hostile elements, provocateurs, and agents in it.'[488] Their work was bad, and they 'constantly insisted on occasionally leaving the Railway and travelling around

[484] 'More Strange Bedfellows', *The Sunday Times* [London], (2 May 1948); AJ, F-114-300, *Izveštaji inostrane štampe i radija* (*Reports from foreign press and radio 1941–48*).
[485] 'Spotted Dog Report received from Translation from French, 25 September 1947'. B2a/ACG 7 October 1947, TNA, KV2/4290.
[486] Ibid.
[487] AJ, F-114-244, 'Letter from Edward P. Thompson to Bogdan', 10 March 1948.
[488] AJ, F-114-290, 'Western countries'. In the PYY documents, it was not mentioned or discussed in detail what kind of provocative questions the brigadists had asked and how they had behaved.

the country'.[489] Furthermore, the brigadists were accused of not getting used to collective life and being unwilling to live a common life. There was also little control over individual personalities, and their independence and discipline were very weak.[490] Although the PYY delegate admitted in the report that the vast majority of brigadists came to the railway with a 'sincere intention to work and help', the outcome of the brigade's work was not that good.[491]

According to the reports written by the PYY delegate and the narratives of the brigadists, life at the camp was generally relaxing despite the hard physical work and strict collective discipline. Many aspects of camp life interested the brigadists. There was a series of organised lectures on topics such as the Five-Year Plan, the People's Youth of Yugoslavia, and Yugoslav cultural and educational policy.[492] These lectures were part of the educational projects of the railway, intended to teach foreign brigadists about socialist Yugoslavia.

For instance, the lecture on 'The New Type of Democracy' for the British brigade was considered a great success by the PYY delegate. The PYY delegate was satisfied that the brigadists 'tried to get as many favourable arguments as possible in terms of Yugoslavia and its democracy'.[493] There was also a lecture on the youth railway and its significance. The brigadists showed great interest in the topics 'New Democracy', 'Constitution', and 'People's Government'. Discussions about this lecture were successful. Meanwhile, there were also two general discussions about Yugoslavia held in the brigade.[494]

Additionally, various recreational activities were organised, including film-shows, chess competitions, sports events, and physical training. Orchestras and dramatic companies from

[489] AJ, F-114-290, 'Western countries'.
[490] Ibid.
[491] AJ, F-114-290, 'Report of British Brigade, Belgrade', 8 September 1947.
[492] 'Report from Himbury, the Assistant Representative in Yugoslavia, on his recent visit to the Youth Railway', 24 September 1947, TNA, BW66/4, YUG/8/1.
[493] AJ, F-114-290, 'Western countries'.
[494] AJ, F-114-290, 'Report of the British Brigade, Belgrade', 8 September 1947.

the cities visited the line, and the volunteers produced their own concerts, sketches, and plays.[495]

The diverse activities tended to create an atmosphere of communication and understanding among the young people from various countries. As one British brigadist remarked:

> We grew to like and appreciate the different nationalities for their differing and particular characteristics. The Yugoslav students were as earnest about their play as about their work. You had to be careful when inviting a Yugoslav to a friendly game of chess or you would find yourself engaged in an international tournament, but when they relaxed they sang and danced with the cheerful abandon of the rest.[496]

Another brigadist, Martin Eve, who was a communist as well as the choirmaster at the railway, once wrote: 'there were more things than work on the Youth Railway'.[497] In his eyes, the railway also provided an opportunity to cultivate friendship and informal cross-cultural communication among young people of different nations.

When brigadists returned from the railway, they often gave lectures on their impressions of Yugoslavia, spoke at press conferences, and wrote articles for newspapers.[498] Many of these articles appeared in the CPGB daily newspaper, *The Daily Worker*, which effusively praised the Youth Labour Actions and socialist Yugoslavia.[499] For instance, a short note written by a returned brigadist emphasised that they 'had never seen such liberty and democracy as they had seen there [in Yugoslavia]'.[500] The painter Paul Hogarth, a CPGB member, published an illustrated article in the National Coal Board trade union magazine *Coal* (See Figure 3-2), introducing the Šamac-Sarajevo railway to miners in Britain. In the article, he introduced the

[495] Edward Thompson, 'Omladinska Pruga', in *The Railway*, pp.22–23.
[496] 'Youth Aids Yugoslavia'.
[497] Martin Eve, 'Recreation', in *The Railway*, p.39.
[498] AJ, F-114-244, 'Youth Section of the British-Yugoslav Association'.
[499] The promotion of the Youth Labour Actions in *The Daily Worker* started in 1946 when the first youth railway was built between Brčko and Banovići in Yugoslavia.
[500] 'Youth Railway builders Leave', *The Daily Worker* [London], (14 August 1947), p.6.

general situation in Yugoslavia and how Bosnian miners and students from mining colleges contributed to the construction of the railway.[501]



Coal The N.C.B. Magazine, April 1948

MINERS HELP TO BUILD A RAILWAY

By PAUL HOGARTH

Yugoslavia's "Youth Railway," a new line connecting the iron and coalfields in the Bosna valley with the main industrial centres, has been built by 100,000 young people, including many miners. Paul Hogarth, a British artist, went to see the railway in course of construction and drew the men at work

The child of one of the Yugoslav miners

A Croat cutter who worked on the tunnel

There were scenes of feverish energy on the volunteer, stripped to the waist, toiled on at breakneck speed

One of the shock brigade of Belgrade mining students

COAL, April 1948

20

Figure 3-2. The article 'Miners Help to Build a Railway' written by Paul Hogarth in the magazine, *Coal*, April 1948

Interest in the country among some brigadists, especially communists, did not ebb afterwards. B. Champeney, a member of the CPGB at Bristol University, sent a letter in February 1948 to the Central Council of the PYY, requesting a regular subscription to the *Information Bulletin*, a PYY brochure circulated in England.[502] The PYY, keen to promote both itself and the country, accepted Champney's request and even offered to send more copies to his friends who were also interested in Yugoslavia.[503] Similarly, brigadist P. G. Myers asked for the booklet 'The Five-Year Plan of FNRJ' and other literature about industrial and agricultural issues.[504]

[501] AJ, F-114-300, Paul Hogarth, 'Miners Help to Build A Railway', *Coal*, April 1948.
[502] AJ, F-114-244, 'The Letter from B. Champeney to the Central Committee of PYY'.
[503] AJ, F-114-244, 'The Letter from the Central Committee of PYY to B. Champeney'.
[504] AJ, F-114-244, 'The Letter from P. Myers to the Central Committee of PYY'.

The BYA also organised social events after the brigadists returned from Yugoslavia. A reunion party in December 1947 was held for the brigadists who had worked on the Šamac-Sarajevo railway. Celebrities from Britain and staff from the Yugoslav Embassy in London were invited. The event featured selected performances from British concerts given on the railway, mass singing of Yugoslav songs, and an exhibition of drawings and photos of the youth railway.[505]

Despite these efforts by enthusiastic youth and the BYA to promote Yugoslavia in Britain, some Britons remained sceptical. Using Youth Labour Actions to promote Yugoslavia's image sometimes had the opposite effect. This scepticism was reflected in an article published in the Scottish newspaper *The Scotsman*:

> The minimum result on any healthy young folk who elect to spend a holiday this way must be to infuse in them the idea that the democratic Federal Republics of Yugoslavia are doing a great job. It is also a fair guess that, intermingled with the discussion groups and the lecture, goes a fair mixture of political indoctrination.[506]

The author of the article, Patrick Maitland, was suspicious of the project. He compared the construction work to paramilitary training of an international brigade intended to fight in Greece and reiterated that it was merely indoctrination.[507] His attitude may have been influenced by his political views as a conservative and his previous working experience. Maitland had been a special correspondent in the Balkans and Danubian area for *The Times* during 1939 and 1941. Later, he joined the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, where he ran the Yugoslav Department from 1943 to 1945.[508]

[505] AJ, F-114-244, 'British-Yugoslav Association'.
[506] Patrici Maitland, 'International "Youth Brigades"-New Phenomenon in Eastern Europe', *The Scotsman* [Edinburgh], (26 July 1947), p.7.
[507] 'Yugoslav Youth Brigade', *The Scotsman* [Edinburgh], (4 September 1947).
[508] See *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2008/dec/08/conservatives-lords-press-publishing (30 January 2020)

Similar distrust of the Yugoslav government was common. *The Scotsman* published letters from both supporters and opponents of such labour actions. Among these letters, Violet M. Henderson, a brigadist, held a completely opposite view:

> The suggestion that we were subjected to Communist indoctrination during our stay is quite false. We had lectures—arranged entirely by one of our own brigade—on Yugoslav literature, education, the Five-Year plan, the Partisan war against the Germans; we attended classes in Serbo-Croat, and we had many opportunities of becoming acquainted with Yugoslav culture through the concerts at which young Yugoslavs revealed to us the wealth of their folk songs and dances.[509]

However, another brigadist, C. M. Coles, disagreed and explicitly expressed strong distaste. He compared Yugoslav youth to the *Hitlerjugend* and likened the work in Yugoslavia to brainwashing. He condemned the forced labour camps and religious persecution in Yugoslavia and was suspicious of the freedom of speech and press as well as the non-democratic political system.[510]

In addition to the debate between supporters and opponents of Youth Labour Actions in Yugoslavia, some British journalists also reported on this construction project. The Šamac-Sarajevo railway became a symbol of socialist Yugoslavia.

[509] AJ, F-114-300, 'Youth Brigades in Yugoslavia', *The Scotsman* [Edinburgh], (1 September 1947).
[510] AJ, F-144-300, 'Yugoslav Youth Brigade-A memory of the Hitler Jugend', *The Scotsman* [Edinburgh], (3 September 1947).

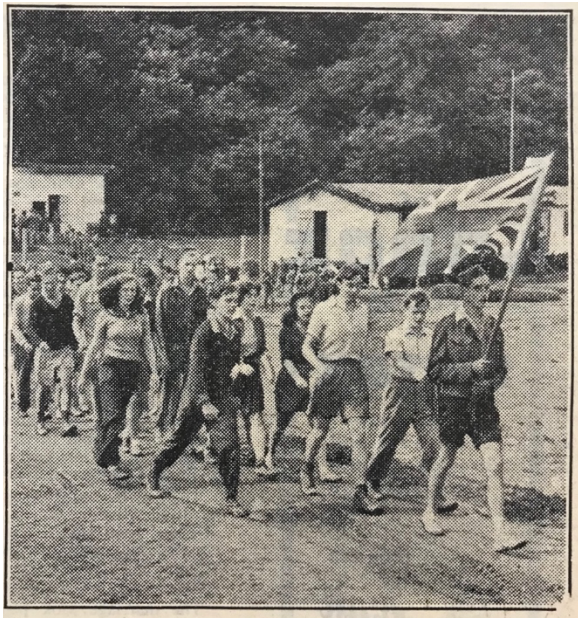


Figure 3-3. British students (of both sexes) participating in the work on the railway, on their way to attend a meeting of the foreign brigades, *The Times Weekly Edition* [London], 8 October 1947

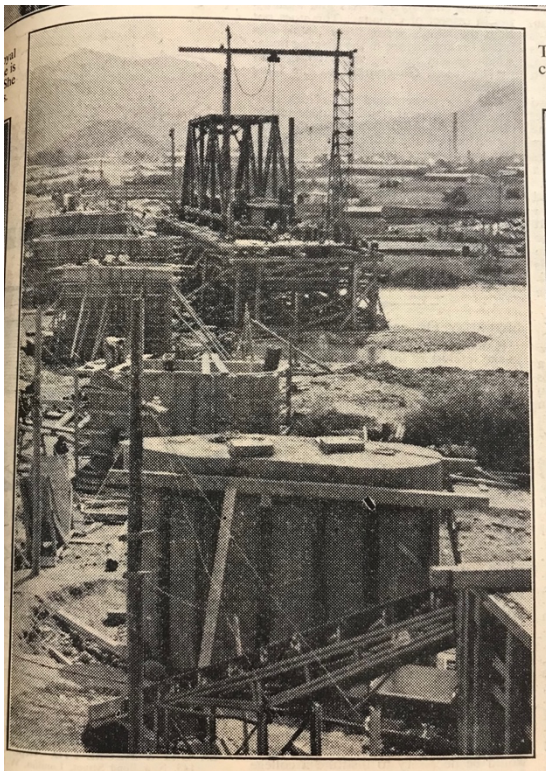


Figure 3-4. Building a bridge over the river Bosna, *The Times Weekly Edition* [London], 8 October 1947



Figure 3-5. Students at work in a cutting, *The Times Weekly Edition* [London], 8 October 1947



This picture gives some idea of the physical difficulties involved in the construction of the now famous youth railway in Yugoslavia. An article on the educational aspects of the enterprise appears on page 542.

Figure 3-6. The construction of the youth railway, *The Times Educational Supplement* [London], 11 October 1947

These photos from the *Times Weekly Edition* and the *Times Educational Supplement* (See Figures 3-3, 3-4, 3-5 and 3-6) captured the spirit of the youth railway construction that the

Yugoslav government intended to convey: the unceasing developmental momentum of the people and the country and the international friendship with enthusiastic young Britons.

Like these photos, the illustrations created by British artists complemented the narratives of the young brigadists (See Figures 3-7, 3-8, 3-9 and 3-10). The major themes of the artwork typically depicted the large-scale construction site and the figures of the young brigadists from diverse working backgrounds.



Figure 3-7. Drawing of men and women at work at the tunnel mouth, *The Daily Worker* [London], 29 October 1947, p.4



Figure 3-8. Harry Baines, 'A Girl volunteer', *The Daily Worker* [London], 29 October 1947, p.4.

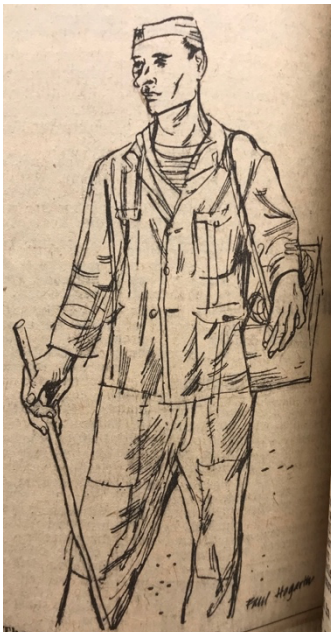


Figure 3-9. Paul Hogarth, 'The man who moves mountains: "Dynamiter"', *The Daily Worker* [London], 29 October 1947, p.4.



Figure 3-10. Ronald Searle, 'The British Brigade's camp from across the railway', *The Daily Worker* [London], 29 October 1947, p.4.

Some British artists, including the communist painter Percy Horton and three others (Paul Hogarth[511], Laurence Scarfe, and Ronald Searle), visited the railway. They later held an exhibition of their art depicting the railway and Yugoslavia at the Leicester Gallery in London in February 1948. There were sixty pieces exhibited, and the exhibition was opened by the Yugoslav ambassador. According to the report from the Yugoslav Embassy, the number of visitors was large, and the exhibition was very successful.[512]

The Yugoslav government attached great importance to the Šamac-Sarajevo railway. The participation of British brigades and other foreign youth drew international attention to such voluntary labour actions. The enthusiasm of British youth stemmed from the post-war atmosphere of the Grand Alliance with the Soviet Union as well as the wish to build a new world out of the destruction of World War II. For leftist youth, especially CPGB members, helping to build the railway during the summer fulfilled their wish to promote international friendship and cooperation. It was also a good opportunity to travel to an interesting place.

[511] Paul Hogarth was a communist. He was later disillusioned by the Eastern European oppression in the 1950s, in *Financial Times,* [London], (9 March 2013), p.15.
[512] DAMFARS, Jelena Tucaković, '*Izveštaj o radu za mesec*' (*Report of work for February*), the Information Office of the Yugoslav Embassy, 4 March 1948.

Inviting British youth, especial leftists, was a useful strategy to cultivate a friendly attitude towards Yugoslavia and its regime. The Šamac-Sarajevo railway embodied communist internationalism and became a symbol of Yugoslavia's communism and peaceful cooperation between the East and the West.

Working in Yugoslavia did increase British awareness of the country. This included both the left brigadists themselves and the general British public, who usually received information through press coverage. At this stage, the youth brigade programme was still exploratory. The real situation was far more complex than the ideal life pictured in Thompson's booklet, filled with contradictions and uncertainties. As historian Tea Sindbæk Andersen commented, 'their [the international brigadists] experiences in Yugoslavia did not leave an impression of a repressive dictatorship, but rather one of authentic public support for the development of a new form of socialist society'.[513]

The positive narratives of the young communists, however, were inevitably categorised as communist propaganda and viewed with suspicion by members of the British public. This was partly due to the nature of such collective physical work in a communist country during the rising Cold War. Although the Yugoslav authorities hoped that British brigadists would promote Yugoslavia upon their returned, they were still dissatisfied with the loose organisation and undisciplined behaviour of the British brigadists. The gap between the ideal depicted by the enthusiastic brigadists and the practical problems always existed. It is also worth noting that the actual contribution of the British brigade in terms of production was more symbolic than real, as the *Daily Worker* commented: 'The work they did mattered less than the spirit in which they came.'[514]

[513] Andersen, 'Youth Brigadiers at the Railway', p.119.
[514] 'Youth Festival', *The Daily Worker* [London], (15 August 1947), p.2.

Nevertheless, British youth brigades were paid 'the highest tribute'. Together with Danish youth, they were awarded 'special diplomas for their efforts in the construction of the line and the strengthening of friendship and solidarity with the PYY and the builders of the line from other countries'.[515]

III. The influence of International Politics: The 'Brotherhood-Unity' Belgrade-Zagreb Highway 1948–1949

The 'Brotherhood-Unity' highway was the biggest Five-Year Plan project for 1948–49.[516] British youth brigades continued to participate in construction work during the summers of 1948 and 1949. Although the nature of the work remained the same, the political atmosphere had drastically changed. In June 1948, Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform. The ensuing economic embargo from the people's democracies and the Soviet Union jeopardised most of its Five-Year Plan projects.[517]

The Cominform Resolution created a grave political atmosphere throughout the country, leading to intensive political work by the PYY towards the British brigade. Their focus shifted to 'changing the mind of the [British] brigadists' regarding the Cominform Resolution. The PYY cared about the impression and opinions of British youth.[518] Lectures and trips thus became part of the 'political work' and an opportunity for Yugoslavia to refute the Cominform accusations and prove its righteousness. Through these activities, Yugoslavia could show the brigadists the real situation in the country. In addition, the brigadists were also considered potential propagandists for Yugoslavia in Britain.

[515] The second students' brigade and the first and second British youth work groups were the ones that had been awarded the tribute. See 'British Youth Get Highest Tribute', *The Daily Worker* [London], (29 July 1947), p.3.
[516] Vejzagic, 'The Importance of Youth Labour Actions', p.8.
[517] VI Kongres KPJ, p. 54, in Vejzagic, 'The Importance of Youth Labour Actions', p.35
[518] AJ, F-114-291, 'The 3rd British Brigade "Tom Mann" Report from 23 July to 21 August'.

During the brigades' stay in Yugoslavia, there were regular reports on individual brigadists. PYY delegates evaluated their political inclinations, work performance, and the potential for establishing close ties with them. The youth activity, which was supposed to symbolise international friendship and cooperation, became completely politicised.

The Cominform Resolution was taken seriously by both Yugoslav authorities and British brigadists for significant reasons. As an international communist party organisation, the Cominform epitomised the authority and orthodoxy of communism under the Soviet Union. The choice of Belgrade as Cominform headquarters honoured the Yugoslav Communist Party and its brand of socialism. Yugoslav Communist Party was regarded as a role model for the rest of the bloc by other communist parties.

Therefore, when Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform, there was confusion among communists in European countries. On the one hand, it was necessary to respect the authority of the Soviet Union as the leader of the global communist movement. On the other hand, the sudden 'degeneration' of Yugoslavia, now labelled as a promoter of dangerous revisionism, was hard to accept for the majority of British communist brigadists. Therefore, visiting Yugoslavia allowed these brigadists to see for themselves whether the Cominform Resolution was justified.

In general, reports produced by Yugoslav delegates discussed work performance, cultural and educational activities, and the political situation inside the brigade, with special attention to the young communists. The delegate was often dissatisfied with the behaviour of their British comrades, citing their lack of collective spirit and bourgeois individualism. As the Yugoslav delegate (concerning the First British Brigade at the Belgrade-Zagreb highway) complained in the report:

> I have an impression that a majority of Communist Party of Great Britain members within our Brigade appeals to bourgeois freedoms, sometimes using them for their own

> interests. . . . Most of them (if not all) are timidly proud of 'their' democracy, i.e. bourgeois 'democracy'.[519]

Such complaints were understandable. The ideological education of Youth Labour Actions in Yugoslavia aimed to cultivate a new socialist spirit of collectivity and individual dedication to support socialist society. Individualism ran against Yugoslavia's socialist ideology and was supposed to be prevented.

In the summer of 1948, five British youth brigades came to work on the 'Brotherhood-Unity' highway from Zagreb to Belgrade, with the total number of British participants reaching 346. The majority of the participants were students, though there were also some workers. Most brigadists were members of the CPGB, BYA, NUS and YCL.[520] The work project in 1948 was still a gathering of British young leftists. Among the five brigades, the First and the Third brigades were typical.

i. The First British Brigade, July 1948

The First brigade consisted of sixty-three members: fifteen were CPGB members, ten were Labourites, two or three were Conservatives, and the rest did not belong to any party. They worked for fifteen days at the 60km point of the highway. According to the report, the First Brigade completed their work well, achieving an average of 100% of the norm with the highest performance reaching 247% over the norm.[521] The quality of their work was excellent.

Their trip to a summer student resort was eventful, although marred by poor organisation and arrangements. There were problems with transport, accommodation, the visiting plan, and even the supply of food. In Zagreb, they visited the old town, cathedral, St. Mark's Church, People's Theatre, the Ethnographic Museum, Natural History Museum, and Faculty of Technology. In Rijeka, they watched a show by pioneers from the nearby pioneer summer resort on the evening of 27 July, the day of the popular uprising in Croatia. The brigadists

[519] AJ, F-114-291, 'Report of the 1st British Brigade', 9 July 1948.
[520] AJ, F-114-291, 'The list of the English Working Brigade'.
[521] AJ, F-114-291, 'Report of the 1st British Brigade', 26 July 1948.

particularly enjoyed the pioneers' programme, which included a couple of ballets. According to the report, the trip was generally good.[522]

In addition, the majority of the brigade was impressed by the enthusiasm of Yugoslav youth and their expressions of loyalty to the Central Committee (of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia) and Tito.[523]

All brigadists showed great interest in Yugoslavia. In the beginning, they were mainly interested in news related to the Cominform Resolution.[524] However, as time passed, discussions shifted towards the general social and economic system of Yugoslavia.[525] While the brigadists expressed their liking of the Yugoslav way of life, they also noted that the standard of living was still backward compared to Britain.[526]

One report from the PYY delegate mentioned that the young brigadists were 'uninterested in political issues'. However, this likely did not reflect the real situation, as other reports indicated the opposite. Another report stated that 'political discussions were rather frequent, happening at any time and any place. The majority of brigadists were active participants'.[527]

Most of the brigadists were willing to see for themselves what the real situation was in Yugoslavia, especially those issues related to criticism from the Cominform.[528] During one trip to the village of Pećinci, five or six brigadists asked a peasant various questions, showing interest in everything. The Yugoslav delegate considered this way of getting to know Yugoslavia as 'direct propaganda', which he found to be the most effective and convincing for the British. This approach showed them in reality what they were interested in and things they

[522] AJ, F-114-291, 'Report of the travel of the 1st British Brigade from the 'Brotherhood-Unity' highway to the youth summer resort'.
[523] AJ, F-114-291, 'Report of the 1st British Brigade', 26 July 1948.
[524] AJ, F-114-291, 'Report of the 1st British Brigade', 6 July 1948.
[525] AJ, F-114-291, 'The work report from July 9th to 16th, 1948 of the 1st British Brigade', 16 July 1948.
[526] AJ, F-114-291, 'Report of the English Youth Brigade (1st) consisting of 59 members 25–30 July 1948'.
[527] AJ, F-114-291, 'The work report from July 9th to 16th, 1948 of the 1st British Brigade', 16 July 1948.
[528] Ibid.

had doubts about, unlike lectures and speeches, which were often dismissed as mere propaganda.[529]

Despite some suspicious brigadists, feedback from the majority of the brigade was generally positive. Brigade commander B. Jackson was highly respected as a 'firm and good organiser'. Nonetheless, the cleavage between young communists and Labourites was still noteworthy.[530] Two episodes illustrated this political divergence. One Labourite raised the issue of chanting slogans, arguing that 'chanting slogans was indecent, foolish and that there was no sense in an English Brigade following Yugoslav youth in that respect'.[531] Other Labourites and independent brigadists expressed the same attitude, while the communists disagreed. It was finally decided by voting that 'the slogans can be chanted on behalf of the Brigade, but the apolitical ones—where no parties, names of the leaders etc. would be chanted'.[532]

A similar issue arose several days later regarding which song to sing while hoisting and lowering the flag. Labourites and other brigadists proposed singing the English anthem 'God Save the King'. The communists preferred some other national workers' song. They compromised by singing the first stanza of the national anthem and one stanza of some workers' song.[533] These disagreements highlighted the essential political division within the brigade and how different political affiliates expressed their opinions on issues in Yugoslavia. However, it is noteworthy that these leftists ultimately reached an ideological compromise about the unity and common purpose of the whole brigade. This was likely because they wanted to leave a good impression of the British brigade as integrated and unified.

[529] AJ, F-114-291, 'Report of the 1st British Brigade', 26 July 1948.
[530] AJ, F-114-291, 'Report of the English Youth Brigade (1st) consisting of 59 members 25–30 July 1948'.
[531] AJ, F-114-291,' Report of the 1st British Brigade', 26 July 1948.
[532] Ibid.
[533] Ibid.

ii. The Third British Brigade, July 1948

Organised by the joint committee of the BYA and the NUS, the Third British brigade arrived at the working site on 25 July. It comprised a total of ninety brigadists, forty-one of whom were students, while the rest were workers. Half of the brigade were communists, with the other brigadists being Labourites, Conservatives and independent elements.[534]

In general, the brigadists wished to work hard to exceed the labour norms and they achieved good working results. Nevertheless, it was difficult for them to get used to the Yugoslav-style rhythm of working and living, which was shaped by a strong communist ideology of collectivity. As a result, the brigade was seen as lacking discipline by Yugoslav standards. According to the report of the PYY delegate, 'there is a complete anarchy', and the brigadists conducted 'trading and had petty-bourgeois manners'. The self-disciplined brigadists were in the minority. For instance, the brigade only arrived and left in formation during the first few days, ceasing to do so afterwards, claiming that 'forming a line is a waste of time'.[535]

In addition to complaints about discipline, the procedure of the brigade meetings was considered by the Yugoslavs as 'burdened with formalism and too much formal democracy', featuring 'endless discussions on some trifles'.[536] The following comments from Yugoslavs reflected the discrepancy: 'Our [Yugoslav] brigadists' schedule is filled for every minute through the entire day', unlike the British who were said to 'sleep all day long' and 'lead fruitless discussions'.[537] The individualism of the British brigade was seen as something to be avoided in the socialist education of the Yugoslav youth. The democratic principles upheld by the brigadists also seemed excessive in the eyes of young Yugoslav communists.

[534] AJ, F-114-291, 'The 3rd British Brigade "Tom Mann", Report from 23 July to 21 August'; F-114-291, Vozar Pavle, 'Report of the III British Brigade from 23 July to 31 July 1948', 31 July 1948.
[535] AJ, F-114-291, Vozar Pavle, 'Report of the III British Brigade from 23 July to 31 July 1948', 31 July 1948.
[536] AJ, F-114-291, 'The 3rd British Brigade "Tom Mann", Report from 23 July to 21 August'.
[537] AJ, F-114-291, Vozar Pavle, 'Report of the III British Brigade from 23 July to 31 July 1948', 31st July 1948.

Although the life and work of the Third Brigade did not look different from previous brigades, the political situation was markedly different. Despite their diverse motives of visiting Yugoslavia, they mainly came out of strong political backgrounds. This was particularly true of communist brigadists concerning the Cominform Resolution. Communist youth played a significant role in the political life as they made up the majority of the brigade. Questions related to the Cominform Resolution were always a heated topic. By the time the Third Brigade arrived, it had been a month since the Resolution, and unlike the First Brigade, whose members were still unclear about the situation, the communist brigadists of the Third Brigade 'arrived with somewhat shaped opinions' and were 'urged to take a combative stand regarding the Resolution, sometimes even going further than the Resolution itself'. The delegate noted there was 'ignorance regarding the state of affairs here [in Yugoslavia], along with a relatively good knowledge of the Cominform Resolution'.[538]

The attitude of the communist brigadists toward the Resolution aligned with that of the CPGB. Indoctrinated by communist ideology, they admired the efforts of the Yugoslav people in building socialism while remaining suspicious of the party leadership. They 'set the task of strengthening brotherhood and unity with [Yugoslav] youth despite the "sins" of [Yugoslav Communist] Party'.[539]

Therefore, for the PYY, it was a significant political task 'to assure communists in the brigade of the righteousness of [their] Party's policy and [their] leadership, avoiding a frontal collision'.[540] The strategy employed by Yugoslav delegates was to avoid direct discussion of the Resolution while focusing on the general situation in Yugoslavia. The Cominform Resolution was discussed 'only if it directly related to the lectures'.[541] According to one Yugoslav delegate, 'discussion on the Resolution was started only when [they] acquainted [the

[538] AJ, F-114-291, 'The 3rd British Brigade "Tom Mann", Report from 23 July to 21 August'.
[539] Ibid.
[540] Ibid.
[541] Ibid.

brigadists] with fundamental terms regarding rebuilding of the country [Yugoslavia] and the role of [their] Party'.[542] The PYY delegate believed that only with at least basic knowledge of the country could the communists in the brigade 'be assured of the incorrectness of the Resolution'. Another concern was to avoid direct discussion or lectures on the Resolution to maintain the unity of the brigade.[543]

On 4–5 August, there were lectures in the form of discussions of the economy of Yugoslavia and the Five-Year Plan. Two more lectures addressed agriculture and the creation of the People's Front by the Communist Party in pre-war Yugoslavia. Around thirty-five to forty brigadists attended these lectures.[544] The most effective way to persuade the brigadists was to combine lectures with related outings. For instance, the lecture on Yugoslav agriculture was followed by a trip to a working cooperative where the brigadists engaged in lengthy discussions on related issues. As confirmed by the Yugoslav delegate, the outings provided an opportunity for the brigadists to verify everything presented in the lectures. This allowed the brigadists to see for themselves that part of the Resolution was incorrect.[545]

The vacation after the labour stint provided an opportunity for the PYY to build on the success of the political work. The British brigadists could see the real situation for themselves. During the last days of their stay, the PYY delegate proactively engaged in political discussions with smaller groups within the brigade, particularly with the CPGB leadership of the brigade. They even discussed the Cominform Resolution point by point.[546]

Although political work was the priority, cultural activities were also organised to enrich recreational life and strengthen relations between young people for better propagandistic results.

[542] AJ, F-114-291, 'The III British Brigade, Report of the travel and rest of the Brigade from 15 August to 21 August 1948'.
[543] AJ, F-114-291, 'The 3rd British Brigade "Tom Mann", Report from 23 July to 21 August'.
[544] Ibid; 'The 3rd British Brigade, the report for the period from 7 August to 15 August'.
[545] AJ, F-114-291, 'The III British brigade, Report of the travel and rest of the Brigade from 15 August to 21 August 1948'.
[546] It was not mentioned in the report how they discussed the issue of the Cominform Resolution. Ibid.

The British brigade gave five successful performances, featuring a relatively good choir and ballet, at the festival in Ruma. Later, when a Belgrade student brigade visited the British brigade, both sides performed songs and dances. Additionally, two Soviet feature films, *Last Night*, *Volga Volga*, and one Yugoslav film, and *Slavica*, were shown, with about half of the brigade attending the screenings.[547] There was also a concert by the Maribor orchestra after the film *Slavica*. Both the concert and film were popular with the brigadists in attendance. But there was a problem in organising exchanges between artists, as no contact was established despite there being six artists in the British brigade.[548]

The Yugoslav authorities attached great importance to the propagandistic effect of the visual materials, especially photos. There was an incident involving the confiscation of all undeveloped films from the Third Brigade when they were about to cross the border and leave Yugoslavia. The PYY delegate especially mentioned this issue in a detailed report, raising concerns about the negative impact of such damaging treatment. He explained why this action was incorrect. On the one hand, photos were important propaganda material and represented the memories of the working brigade and Yugoslavia. Since the film was not developed and would not be sent back to the brigadists in the UK, a potential exhibition of photos prepared by the brigade was lost. On the other hand, he believed the moment of crossing the border was 'vital from a political point of view' because it could connect the brigadists even more to Yugoslavia. The confiscation could be exploited by reactionary elements in the brigade and hamper the image of Yugoslavia. He suggested that the films should have been developed in

[547] *Slavica* was the first feature film made by Socialist Yugoslavia after liberation. Although not mentioned, the two films *Last Night* and *Volga Volga* could be the Soviet films made in 1936 and 1938, respectively. It was not until the end of 1949 that Soviet films were completely abandoned and the sector for agitation and press at the Youth Labour Actions screened only domestic films. See 'Izveštaj o agitaciono-propagandnom radu u omladinskim radnim brigadama na autoputu u 1949. godini' (Report on the agitation-propaganda work in the youth labour brigades on the highway in 1949), in Vejzagic, 'The Importance of Youth Labour Actions', p.62.
[548] AJ, F-114-291, 'The 3rd British Brigade "Tom Mann", Report from 23 July to 21 August'.

advance and that the brigadists should have been informed beforehand that undeveloped films could not be taken out of the country.[549]

In the eyes of the Yugoslav delegates, political issues were more significant than cultural work. The attitude of the brigadists, especially the communist brigadists, towards the Cominform Resolution was always a primary focus. The Yugoslav delegate was satisfied that political success would be attained by challenging the Cominform Resolution as the brigadists were 'planning to arrange a discussion on the Resolution upon their return to London'.[550]

iii. The British Working Group in 1949

By 1949, fewer British youth were coming to Yugoslavia.[551] This could be attributed to the late call sent to Britain for organising the working brigade. The working group organised by the NUS resembled an ordinary excursion group rather than a working brigade.[552] The youth working group consisted of only sixteen brigadists. They arrived at the site on 12 August and started their post-work tour around Yugoslavia on 4 September. There were fourteen students and two workers, all organised by the NUS.[553]

The Yugoslav delegate responsible for the British working group divided the brigadists according to political affiliation. Like the previous brigades, the majority were communists who either agreed with the Cominform Resolution or were sympathisers. The non-communist members were regarded as 'not advanced', 'reactionary', or merely apolitical.[554] The fourteen

[549] AJ, F-114-291, 'The III British brigade, Report on the travel and the rest of the Brigade from 15 August to 21 August 1948'.
[550] Ibid.
[551] In the PYY internal document, it did not indicate the exact number of the British youth that came to work in 1949. One document showed that there was supposed to be 50 people. However, there were only documents of one British working group, consisting of 16 brigadists. See AJ, F-114-291.
[552] AJ, F-114-152, Alfred Sherman, 'Izvještaj Komandanta Britanske radne grupe' (Report of the Commander of the British Working Group), 24 August 1949.
[553] AJ, F-114-152, Luka Soldić, 'Izveštaj o učešću omladinskih radnih brigada i grupa iz inostranstva na izgradnji Autoputa "Bratstvo-Jedinstvo" u period od 26.06-09.09.1949' (Report of the participation of youth working brigades and groups from abroad on the construction of the "Brotherhood-Unity" Highway in the period from 26 June to 9 September 1949), 20 September 1949.
[554] Ibid; AJ, F-114-152, Dvornik Josip, 'Izveštaj o Britanskoj radnoj grupi za razdobile 17-23.08 1949' (Report of the British working group for distribution 17–23 August 1949).

students apparently did not behave satisfactorily because they harboured distinctive 'bourgeois individualism', whereas the two workers were seen as the only 'healthy elements' in the brigade.[555]

The brigade was provided with good accommodation and food because the PYY was concerned about the negative political fallout that might result from unsatisfactory basic conditions. It was not easy to arrange the supply of food and accommodation for foreign brigades because articles for daily use were very scarce in Yugoslavia and the economic conditions were deteriorating due to the economic embargo imposed by the Cominform countries.

In addition, there were fierce and relentless propagandistic attacks from the Soviet Union and other communist parties, especially in the Eastern Bloc. The influence of the Cominform Resolution over youth work also deepened. The Soviet-backed World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) treated the PYY in an unfriendly fashion, preventing its delegation from attending the World Youth Festival in Budapest in 1949. This also resulted in a decline in contact with foreign youth organisations, making it more difficult to invite foreign youth.

As a consequence, the political work of the foreign youth brigade was accordingly arranged and intensified, as these young people were regarded as eyewitnesses to Yugoslavia's socialism and potential propagandists back home. The brigadists themselves were also interested in the state of affairs in Yugoslavia—the construction of socialism, the issue of the peasantry and so on. Their special interest, however, was still the Cominform.[556]

Like before, showing the 'real situation in Yugoslavia' to the British brigade was emphasised throughout their stay. Lectures, discussions, visits, and trips were used to refute the accusations by the Cominform. Daily political information was introduced to the brigadists,

[555] Ibid.
[556] AJ, F-114-152, Branko Punišić, 'Izveštaj o radu u II Britanskoj Brigadi od 13–18 August 1949' (Report of the work in the II British Brigade 13–18 August 1949).

along with discussions on various aspects of life in Yugoslavia. Despite the desire and goodwill of the group members to work and make contributions to earn the title of 'shock brigade', their working performance was poor, and there was a lack of work discipline.[557]

From the perspective of the British brigadists, the arrangements made by the PYY to some extent corresponded to their wish 'to get to know more in detail about Yugoslavia and the communist party's politics'.[558] They also asked questions about the development of social and health conditions, music, and religion in Yugoslavia.[559]

Compared to previous years, there was an increase and intensification in the educational and cultural sections. Topics of the lectures were similar to those in 1948, including 'People's Youth of Yugoslavia', 'Yugoslav Agriculture', 'People's Liberation Struggle and the Role of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia', 'Socialist Construction in Yugoslavia', 'The People's Democracy'.[560] In addition, more lecture materials on the following topics were provided to the brigadists:

1. People's Youth of Yugoslavia
2. National Liberation War and the role of Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the creation of a new state.
3. People's Front of Yugoslavia and its role in the socialist construction of the country.
4. About trade unions of Yugoslavia—workers' legislation and insurance.
5. About the socialist transformation of the village.
6. Cultural issues of FNRJ.
7. The basis of foreign policy.
8. About the World Federation of Democratic Youth.
9. About the Cominform and defamatory campaign against the country.
10. What is people's democracy?[561]

[557] AJ, F-114-152, Dvornik Josip, 'Izveštaj o Britanskoj radnoj grupi za razdobile 17-23.08 1949' (Report of the British working group for distribution 17–23 August 1949).
[558] AJ, F-114-152, Luka Soldić, 'Izveštaj o učešću omladinskih radnih brigada i grupa iz inostranstva na izgradnji Autoputa "Bratstvo-Jedinstvo" u period od 26.06-09.09.1949' (Report of the participation of youth working brigades and groups from abroad on the construction of the 'Brotherhood-Unity' Highway in the period from 26 June to 9 September 1949), 20 September 1949.
[559] AJ, F-114-152, 'The report from the delegate Dvornik Josip to the Headquarters', Youth Working Brigade Highway Department of Foreign Brigades, 30 August 1949.
[560] Ibid; AJ, F-114-152, 'Materials for lectures for the English brigade on the Zagreb–Belgrade Highway in 1949'.
[561] Ibid.

Materials related to the Communist Party and People's Front were mainly excerpts from articles by Tito and other Communist Party leaders such as Kardelj and Djilas. Some political reports and regulations on Yugoslavia's socialism were also included. In general, these materials converted the educational programme into overt political propaganda.

There had been an obvious change in strategy. Previously, the PYY attempted to avoid direct discussion of the Cominform Resolution to keep the solidarity of the brigade and avoid conflict. Now, however, there were no restrictions. On the contrary, every opportunity was utilised to refute the claims made by the Cominform. In a report dated 30 August, the PYY delegate requested external lecturers to provide lectures on the topics of People's Democracy and the Cominform Resolution.[562]

During their stay, three films were screened: *On Our Own Land*, *This People Will Live (The Unconquered People)*, and *Slavica*. As part of the political work, these films were typical feature films produced immediately after the war in Yugoslavia. The plots focused on the partisan resistance against the fascists during the War. This kind of heroic narrative was common in Yugoslav feature films and was used to propagate communist ideology, praise the courage of the Yugoslav people, cultivate patriotic emotions, and strengthen the legitimacy of the party. The films held great interest among the British brigadists.

However, there was still a lack of diverse cultural and entertainment activities. The prominent writers, painters, and artists did not visit the highway to introduce the socialist cultural revolution to the foreign youth. Mutual visits, campfires, and events between foreign and local brigades were irregular.[563]

[562] AJ, F-114-152, 'The report from the delegate Dvornik Josip to the Headquarters', Youth Working Brigade Highway Department of Foreign Brigades, 30 August 1949.
[563] AJ, F-114-152, Luka Soldić, 'Izveštaj o učešću omladinskih radnih brigada i grupa iz inostranstva na izgradnji Autoputa "Bratstvo-Jedinstvo" u period od 26.06-09.09.1949' (Report of the participation of youth working brigades and groups from abroad on the construction of the 'Brotherhood-Unity' Highway in the period from 26 June to 9 September 1949)', 20 September 1949.

In field trips and recreational life, the number of organised visits increased, aiming to help the brigadists better understand 'Yugoslav socialism'. They visited a number of cooperatives, including the village workers' cooperative in Stari Mikanovci and a young peasant working cooperative in Paklenica. This trip was specifically organised for political purposes. The brigadists were impressed by the progress of the community and the cooperative's library.[564]

On 21 August, the group visited Belgrade and stayed there for three days.[565] This trip was politically significant in that it helped to change the brigadists' attitudes toward the Cominform issue, especially after seeing 'more or less the irregularities and harmfulness of the resolution and the correctness of the Yugoslav attitude'.[566]

During their holiday trip to Zagreb in September, they visited the *Rade Končar* factory, observed the progress of the factory, the working conditions, and the construction of workers' settlement. They watched a performance by *Jože Vlahović*, a youth folk culture and art society in Zagreb, visited working people in Opatija, and held a meeting with Raša miners in Istria. All these activities were arranged to showcase the efforts of the Yugoslav people in building socialism and countering the impact of the Cominform Resolution.

The educational programmes and outings followed the plan of the PYY delegate to showcase the situation in Yugoslavia step by step through lectures, discussions, and reading groups. Eventually, they would turn to the Cominform resolution and justify Yugoslavia's position.[567] With a foundation of theoretical work, the recreational activities at the working sites and visits to different places in Yugoslavia helped reinforce the brigadists' stance in the

[564] AJ, F-114-152, 'Report of the work with the British Brigade 1949 (no specific date)'.
[565] In Belgrade, British youth visited the railway settlement, the stadium, the film city, the pioneering city, new Belgrade, Kalemegdan, the Military Museum—a combination of socialist construction and cultural heritage sightseeing. According to the PYY delegate, this visit deeply impressed the brigadists and set up the ground for further political work, especially in terms of the Cominform question. See AJ, 114-152, Dvornik Josip, 'Izveštaj o Britanskoj radnoj grupi za razdobile 17-23.08 1949' (Report of the British working group for distribution 17–23 August 1949).
[566] Ibid.
[567] AJ, F-114-152, Dvornik Josip, 'Izveštaj o Britanskoj radnoj grupi za razdobile 17-23.08 1949' (Report of the British working group for distribution 17–23 August 1949).

conflict with the Cominform. The PYY delegate believed that they had shaken the British youth's belief in the correctness of the Cominform Resolution. In a statement made by the British youth before leaving Yugoslavia, they 'sincerely acknowledge[d] Yugoslavia's socialist construction' and were 'more or less deeply convinced in the orderliness of the Communist Party line'.[568]

From the perspective of the PYY, all aspects of the group's life in Yugoslavia could influence the success of the political work concerning the conflict with the Cominform. On the one hand, guaranteeing a higher standard of living for the British brigade was of political importance. On the other hand, it was necessary to cultivate a spirit of competition and hard work, as fulfilling the task was a symbol of political consciousness. However, from the Yugoslav perspective, work on these two aspects was unsatisfactory. Moreover, there was insufficient staff in charge of the issues of the foreign brigade, and the headquarters did not pay enough attention to these matters. The trips to other parts of Yugoslavia were not well organised. There was a lack of personnel for cultural work. Some questions related to the country could not be well explained without experts, such as 'the development of social and health conditions in Yugoslavia; music in Yugoslavia today and through history; the development of religious feelings'.[569]

The potential propagandistic effect of the brigade expected by Yugoslavia was not that visible. British press coverage was scarce. One article, written by a communist brigadist, H. Priest, described the trip as a 'nightmare' and accused the Yugoslav authorities of 'bad faith and graft'. He was disillusioned and resigned from the CPGB.[570] Even in the refutation of this

[568] Ibid.; AJ, F-114-152, Luka Soldić, 'Izveštaj o učešću omladinskih radnih brigada i grupa iz inostranstva na izgradnji Autoputa "Bratstvo-Jedinstvo" u period od 26.06-09.09.1949' (Report of the participation of youth working brigades and groups from abroad on the construction of the "Brotherhood-Unity" Highway in the period from 26 June to 9 September 1949), 20 September 1949; AJ, F-114-152, 'Report of the work with the British Brigade 1949 (no specific date)'.
[569] AJ, F-114-152, 'The report from the delegate Dvornik Josip to the Headquarters', Youth Working Brigade Highway Department of Foreign Brigades, 30 August 1949.
[570] 'Jugoslav Trip "Nightmare" to Communist', *Daily Telegraph* [London], (1 September 1948), p.5.

article, written by the leader of the brigade, J. B. Hasted, little was said about Yugoslavia's socialist achievements. However, the rough conditions and poor rations were mentioned.[571]

In 1949, a surprising news report (with illustrations) effectively capturing the essential messages that Yugoslavia wanted to communicate via its highway building: the aim of increasing unity between its ethnic groups (namely Serbian and Croatian in this case); the basic role of the project in educating the youth; the mobilization of internal resources in the face of the Cominform attack; and the significance of socialist construction. The appearance of this report, however, was probably due to an upcoming bilateral trade pact between Britain and Yugoslavia.[572] Therefore, the value of Yugoslavia as a potential trade partner needed to be publicised in Britain.

The Youth Labour Action of the 'Brotherhood-Unity' Highway in 1948–49 was politically significant for Yugoslavia, especially in light of the repercussions of the Cominform Resolution. The 'Brotherhood-Unity' highway project provided an opportunity for the Yugoslav Communist Party to elicit support from both domestic and foreign youth (in this case British youth).

IV. A Mitigated Scenario: Doboj-Banja Luka Railway in 1951

From 1949, the thaw began between Yugoslavia and countries in the West. Due to the economic recession caused by the blockade by the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, Yugoslavia was expecting economic and military aid from the West. In the spring of 1951, following the United States, Britain and France began the tripartite grant programme designed to cover Yugoslavia's anticipated balance-of-payments deficit in 1952.[573]

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[571] J.B. Hasted, 'Jugoslavia Visit', *Daily Telegraph* [London], (6 September 1948), p.4.
[572] 'Building an "Autobahn" for Marshal Tito: The Volunteer Work of Yugoslavia's Youth Brigades', *The Illustrated London News* [London], (15 October 1949), p.14.
[573] John C. Campell, *Tito's Separate Road* (New York, 1967), p.28; George W. Hoffman and F. W. Neal, *Yugoslavia and the New Communism*, (New York, 1962), p.348.

In terms of domestic policy, workers' self-management was planned and implemented to create an 'open economy of worker-run enterprises with minimal state interference'.[574] Workers' councils were formed in the enterprises, allowing workers to participate in the management of the enterprises.

In 1951, there were four British brigades working on the railway construction project. Compared to previous projects, the total number of the brigadists decreased to ninety-six.[575] Given the changed political situation, the British brigades at the construction of Doboj-Banja Luka Railway also took on a new look.

Unlike the previous brigades, which mainly consisted of communists, a large number of British brigadists in 1951 were members of the Labour youth organisation.[576] All but three members of the First British Brigade in 1951 were students and working-class members of the League of Labour Youth.[577] The members of the Second Brigade included Labourites and other elements that were 'mostly politically undecided and opposed to the Labour Party'.[578]

In general, however, the brigade was politically homogeneous with cordial internal relations. Most of the brigadists 'sympathise[d] with the Labour Party policy' and were supportive of the various reforms it initiated. They were not supporters of the idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat in Britain.[579] The Third Brigade was composed of some politically neutral individuals as well as Labourites and Conservatives.[580] A large number of

[574] Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, 'Workers' Self-Management in the "Yugoslav Road to Socialism": Market, Mobilisation and Political Conflict 1948–1962', (PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2011), p.24.
[575] AJ, F-114-290, 'Popis inostranih brigada, koje su bile na radu na izgradnji omladinske pruge u 1951 godini' (List of foreign brigades that were working on the construction of the youth railway in 1951).
[576] AJ, F-114-290, Jakša Bučević, 'Telegram from the Department for Foreign Brigades at the Headquaters to the Central Committee of Peoples Youth of Yugoslavia'.
[577] AJ, F-114-290, Sabo Viktor, 'Izvještaj o I. Engleskoj Brigadi "H. Laski"' (Report of the I English Brigade 'H. Laski'), 25 July 1951.
[578] AJ, F-114-290, Ilić Ante *i* Radoš Branko, 'Izvještaj II. Britanske Brigade' (Report of the II British Brigade), 25 July 1951.
[579] AJ, F-114-290, Radoš Branko *i* Ilić Ante, 'Izvještaj II. Engleske Brigade /Udarne/' (Report of the II English Brigade /shock brigade/), 6 August 1951.
[580] AJ, F-114-290, Dragan Marković, 'Izveštaj za III-ću englesku brigadu' (Report of the III-to-be English Brigade), 1 September 1951.

the brigadists in the first three British brigades were members of the Labour youth organisation. Some of them were very active and held discussions with the Yugoslav staff. They also brought with them to Yugoslavia many documents about the Labour Party and the development of the labour movement in England.[581]

In 1951 the tense atmosphere caused by the Cominform Resolution eased, creating a more relaxed environment for the British brigades both at the workplace and during their visits around Yugoslavia. The intensity of propagandistic political work also diminished. A prominent aspect of the brigades was the increased interest in cultural and social issues. Their discussions included topics such as Yugoslavia's political system, socialist society, and cultural issues. However, political questions still appeared regularly, focusing more on general knowledge of Yugoslavia rather than the Cominform conflict.

Inside the brigade, the brigadists held distinct views on certain issues of Yugoslav politics. The atmosphere of the brigade was friendly, as confirmed by the PYY delegate:

> In the basics, the members of the brigade are friendly towards Yugoslavia. . . .They came to learn about the work and life of the youth and people of Yugoslavia, to help with the work and to establish friendships and relationships, primarily with the youth.[582]

Unlike the programme for the 'Brotherhood and Unity' highway in 1949, the Yugoslavs decided not to 'force some official and rigid forms of propaganda' but to 'adjust everything according to the possibilities and interests of the brigadists'. In particular, the PYY organisers tried to avoid having official speakers interpret the general situation and problems in Yugoslavia. Instead, discussions were arranged directly between Yugoslav and foreign brigadists.[583] It was probably because official interpretations could be easily connected with

[581] AJ, F-114-290, Jakša Bučević, 'Telegram from the Department for Foreign Brigades at the Headquarters to the Central Committee of People's Youth of Yugoslavia'.
[521] AJ, F-114-290, 'Report of the 1st British Brigade "Harold Laski"', 13 August 1951.
[583] AJ, F-114-290, Jakša Bučević, 'Telegram from the Department for Foreign Brigades at the Headquarters to the Central Committee of People's Youth of Yugoslavia'.

the top–down indoctrination by the Yugoslav government rather than genuine conversations and exchanges between grassroots young people.

The arrangement of discussions with the brigade of Sarajevo University and the brigade of the Journalistic Diplomatic High School further facilitated mutual knowledge between British and Yugoslav youth. Besides these discussions, the educational and cultural activities conducted during the first brigades' spare time were considerable. Activities organised by the main staff of the brigade included lectures on the organisation of youth and students in Yugoslavia, history, and the workers' council. They visited a collective farm, factory, school, workers' flats and the town council.[584]

Particular focus was given to the new management of the economy—workers' self-management and the election system of Yugoslavia, as well as Yugoslav history, especially the history of the National Liberation War (NOB). The First Brigade also showed strong interest in Yugoslav folklore, especially the folk songs from the NOB period. The brigadists gathered several folk songs which they intended to popularise back home.[585] About thirteen brigadists visited a student recreational centre in Zaton near Dubrovnik.[586] The recreational centre and life there, especially the holiday free of charge, impressed the British brigadists. They were also keen to learn about the history of Dubrovnik and cultural monuments such as Diocletian's Palace in Split.[587]

The Second British Brigade stood out from all other British brigades. The PYY delegate praised it for its good work discipline and performance, noting that there were very few

[584] AJ, F-114-290, 'The 1st English Brigade'.
[585] AJ, F-114-290, 'Report of the 1st British Brigade "Harold Laski"', 13 August 1951.
[586] There were some youth recreational centres established around the memorials of the wartime heroes and battles. Their ideological function was to cultivate the socialist youth through creating a feeling of pilgrimage and spiritually interlinking the present-day youth with those in the partisans at the wartime. See Popović, 'Youth Labour Action', p.285.
[587] AJ, F-114-290, 'Report of the 1st British Brigade "Harold Laski"', 13 August 1951.

absences from work. The work of the Second British Brigade was among the best of the foreign brigades, and the brigade was proclaimed a 'shock brigade'.[588]

In addition to their work, the brigade did not have any particular political investment in most problems. Almost everyone wished to visit peasant work cooperatives and factories. There was persistent curiosity about the rift between Yugoslavia and the Cominform, but the brigadists were poorly informed about the causes and the relations between Yugoslavia and the people's democracies following the Cominform Resolution. This ignorance was also evident in their lack of knowledge about the cooperatives. According to the report, the brigadists were interested in the organisation and implementation of the cooperatives but mistakenly thought cooperatives in Yugoslavia were created in the same way as in the USSR in 1929.

The brigadists wanted to talk with workers and gather as much information about Yugoslavia as possible to bring back to Britain. They were also curious about other cultural issues in Yugoslavia, such as the system of education and social insurance. This interest was believed to stem more from a cultural than a political impulse, as the brigadists were not communists and were not prejudiced against Yugoslavia because of the Cominform Resolution.[589]

The delegate and headquarters of the railway sought to satisfy brigadists' interest in cooperatives by arranging a visit for the whole brigade to a peasant work cooperative (PWC) and a factory in Zenica. According to the report, the brigadists asked many detailed questions about both the PWC and the factory, including inquiries about 'the business system, the percentage and the conditions of mechanisation, the payment and rewarding system for the workers and wages, workers' councils and so on'.[590]

[588] AJ, F-114-290, 'Report of the British Brigade II', 25 July 1951.
[589] Ibid., AJ, F-114-290, 'Report of 2nd English brigade', August 1951.
[590] Ibid.

This interest in Yugoslav economic arrangements could be attributed to the Labourites' search for 'more humane and ideologically more acceptable patterns of industrial relations'.[591] They hoped that these economic arrangements, which were supposed to differentiate from the Soviet style, could offer improvements over the patterns found in the West.

Their interest in Yugoslavia was also shown in the lectures and discussions held within the brigade. During the visit of Todor Vujasinović, the minister of transport, a question-and-answer session was conducted with the Second British Brigade. In general, the questions of the brigadists could be divided into domestic issues and external political issues of Yugoslavia. For instance, they asked what attitude Yugoslavia would take on the issue of war and the difference between the Soviet and Yugoslav electoral systems, given Yugoslavia's much inheritance from the USSR. There were also questions about factory management, specifically concerning the workers' council, trade and finance system.[592]

The activities of the brigade reflected their interest in Yugoslavia. As the delegate confirmed in the report:

> They discuss and read a lot about Yugoslavia together. . . . Whenever they go to the village or to Doboj themselves, they talk to the villagers there. They are especially delighted with folklore, regarding it as a cultural tradition of the people. . . . We felt that this group was interested in economic, political, cultural and social issues.[593]

Like the Second Brigade, the majority of the Third Brigade wished to learn more about the socio-political situation in Yugoslavia and 'to find out and understand the essence of the [Yugoslav] social order'. However, most of them were either misinformed or knew little about Yugoslavia. For instance, the delegate complained that a number of brigadists were ignorant

[591] Marius J. Broekmeyer, 'Self-Management in Yugoslavia', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 431/1 (1977), p.134.
[592] The 'war' referred to the war with the neighbouring People's Democracies because of the tension at the border. See AJ, F-114-290, 'Report of 2nd English brigade', August 1951.
[593] Ibid.

of Yugoslav history and its general situation: 'They did not know that parts of Yugoslavia were under the rule of the Turks for more than 500 years.'[594]

In their discussions, the brigadists not only discussed the status quo of Yugoslavia, but also delved into general theoretical issues concerning the development of Yugoslav society, such as 'whether society must go to socialism with the dictatorship of the proletariat or not'. Regarding Yugoslavia's development, the majority of the brigadists agreed that 'the development of democracy and a higher standard life in Yugoslavia is only possible under the present regime considering the economic and cultural backwardness'.[595]

After learning more about Yugoslavia, many brigadists abandoned the assumption that the system in Yugoslavia was equal to or similar to 'the bureaucratic dictatorship' in the USSR. Nevertheless, they still believed that 'Western democracy is far higher in the development of democracy than in Yugoslavia' and 'the next stage in the development of Yugoslavia is the Western democracy'. They associated democracy with classical personal freedoms and found it difficult to understand how democracy could work with only one party. For the brigadists, it was taken for granted that a one-party system was not a real democracy.[596]

They also wanted to know more about how the election system works under a single party in Yugoslavia. For example, they wanted to know how candidates were appointed, who set lists of candidates, and what the responsibilities of the members of parliament were. In addition to questions related to domestic politics, they inquired about the position and influence of Tito in social life.[597]

In general, the British brigades in 1951 had a less political character than in previous years. Most of the brigadists were 'not interested in political problems and use[d] their free time for individual conversations and getting to know each other'. However, there were still problems

[594] AJ, F-114-290, Dragan Marković, 'The 3rd English Brigade', 1st September 1951.
[595] Ibid.
[596] Ibid.
[597] Ibid.

connecting the foreign brigades with the local ones. Since they did not work together, the arranged evening performances, campfires, and discussions only provided limited opportunities for communication. In addition, language remained a significant barrier for both sides.[598]

In 1951, the British brigadists were in a position to learn more about the country without the political push of the Cominform Resolution. The PYY also relaxed its political work to counter the influence of Cominform propaganda. The focus of the brigadists shifted more towards cultural issues and the new economic arrangements. According to an official report from the PYY, the list of lectures for the foreign brigade at the site of the Dobaj-Banja Luka railway included the following topics:

> Workers 'councils and our current economic measures
> Muslims and their customs
> Yugoslav literature
> History of Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia
> National questions
> Yugoslav art[599]

This was very different from the situation during the construction of the highway in 1948 and 1949, when the topics of lectures and discussions were much more politically oriented. The shift was due in part to changes in international politics, with Yugoslavia beginning to explore its own road to socialism. Additionally, the majority of the brigadists in 1951 were Labourites rather than members of the CPGB, making communist-style intensive political work unnecessary. The new task of the Yugoslav authorities during this period was to attract the attention of the Labourites to the newly launched workers' self-management as a unique creation within their socialist system.

[598] AJ, F-114-290, Jakša Bučević, 'Telegram from the Department for Foreign Brigades at the Headquarters of Doboj to the Department for relations with foreign countries at the Central Committee of People's Youth of Yugoslavia', 19 July 1951.
[599] AJ, F-114-290, Dragan Marković, 'The 3rd English Brigade', 1st September 1951.

It was also during this period that Yugoslavia initiated a closer relationship with the Labour Party. In 1950, a Labour Party delegation was invited to visit Yugoslavia. A Reuter's report on this event recounted 'Tito's desire to win sympathy for [h]is plan for an overall movement among anti-Cominform Left Wing movements all over the world'.[600] From that point, the Yugoslav Communist Party continued to cultivate 'relationships with Labour leaders and trade union, youth, cultural and intellectual links, and exchanges with the Labour movement'.[601]

With such momentum, in 1951, when Labourite youth came to work in Yugoslavia, the promotion of the country shifted to its newly created workers' self-management as the renovation of the socialist system. To strengthen relations, an article written by Connie Kirkby, a member of the Fourth Brigade, was published in *Youth Railway* (a publication of the international brigades at the site) that reassessed the rule of the Labour Party in Britain for the last six years.[602]

V. Conclusion

Frederick Bennett was the commander of the Fourth British brigade working on the Doboj-Banja Luka Railway in 1951. This was not his first time working in Yugoslavia. He had first came to work on the Šamac-Sarajevo railway in 1947 and continued to join brigades and work in Yugoslavia over the years. His articles on his experiences captured the spirit of the Youth Labour Actions during different periods in the early post-war years.[603]

[600] 'British Parties in Yugoslavia: An Anti-Cominform Left Wing Movement?', *Belfast News-Letter* [Belfast], (11 September 1950), p.4.
[601] Vladimir Unkovski-Korica, 'The Yugoslav Communists' Special Relationship with the British Labour Party 1950–1956', *Cold War History*, 14/1 (2014), p.25
[602] AJ, F-114-290, Connie Kirkby, 'Six Years of Labour Government in Britain', *Youth Railway* [Belgrade], (24 August 1951).
[603] AJ, F-114-291, Frederick Bennett: Memories from Yugoslav Working Actions.

As Bennett noted, the majority of British young people came to work in Yugoslavia out of curiosity, driven both by a natural touristic interest and an ideological pilgrimage to see a socialist country. This was especially the case in 1947, when most of the British brigadists were ideologically committed communists eager to contribute to peace work and help with the construction of socialism. They were enthusiastic about going to Yugoslavia and seized the opportunity of the multinational gathering to realise communist internationalism. For the Yugoslav authorities, it was a great opportunity to promote the country and establish a positive image in Britain and other countries as a communist country that was both friendly and development-oriented.

The situation suddenly changed after the Cominform Resolution in June 1948, when the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was deemed heretical by Cominform members, leading to tension with the CPGB. In late 1948 and 1949, most communist brigadists came to support the Cominform's statement. However, some brigadists harboured pre-existing suspicions and distrust of the Yugoslav Communist Party. As a result, their motives and behaviours were carefully scrutinised while staying in Yugoslavia. Mutual distrust and suspicion existed between the communist brigadists and the PYY, creating a more strained atmosphere than before.

Under such circumstances, Yugoslavia's goal was to make the British brigadists believe in the righteousness of its conflict with the Cominform. Therefore, the work with the brigade focused more on political issues. The educational and cultural work, along with the trips around Yugoslavia, were instrumental in facilitating the political work of the PYY.

Until 1951, when the composition of the brigades shifted from young communists to Labourites and Yugoslavia started to build closer relations with the West, the situation seemed to be back on track.

In general, the organisation of the brigades by Yugoslavia between 1947 and 1951 was relatively poor due to the country's underdevelopment. Food and accommodation were consistently challenging factors during the brigadists' travels amidst the country's disorder. In addition, the educational and cultural materials and programmes were inadequate and monotonous. The work performance was insignificant compared to the potential propagandistic role the brigadists could have played.

The reports from PYY delegates always emphasised the brigadists' political orientation or comportment, namely, how they reacted to certain political issues. Some daily frictions also highlighted the differences between the mindsets of the young people from Britain and Yugoslavia, for instance, the repeated emphasis on 'collectivism' and 'discipline' by the Yugoslav delegates and their dissatisfaction with British brigadists' 'individualism' and 'bourgeois' attitudes as well as other issues (e.g., chanting slogans and singing revolutionary songs). This reflected the different priorities of the two sides. The Yugoslavs always stressed political issues closely linked to communist ideology, whereas the British brigadists cared more about cultural issues and individualism.

The British youth brigades began working in Yugoslavia in the early post-war years, reaching their peak at the Šamac-Sarajevo railway in 1947 and facing their most challenging period during the construction of the 'Brotherhood and Unity' Highway in 1948 and 1949. Their involvement gradually declined after the Doboj-Banja Lika railway project in 1951. After 1952, Youth Labour Actions in Yugoslavia almost ceased due to being deemed economically unbeneficial, until their restoration by the Communist Party in 1958.[604] These Youth Labour Actions were 'closely related to all political, economic, social and ideological processes of the

[604] *VII Kongres Saveza Komunista Jugoslavije* [The Seventh Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia], (Belgrade: Kultura, 1958), p.71, in Vejzagic, 'The Importance of Youth Labour Actions', p.13.

time'.[605] To some extent, they facilitated mutual learning through lectures, discussions, trips, visits around Yugoslavia, and daily camp life.

The heyday of the Youth Labour Actions and the participation of international brigadists was from 1945 to 1952. During this period, these youth projects influenced the minds and hearts of British and foreign youth to some extent. At the same time, they provided a stage for Cold War politics to penetrate individual lives. Yugoslavia was seen as a special destination for building socialism, appealing to idealistic youth with its developmental momentum and the allure of a communist ideology absent in the capitalist West.[606]

At first glance, the building of youth railways may seem more like an economic and developmental issue than a cultural one. However, the construction of the voluntary youth railway served as a calling-card in many Yugoslav cultural events arranged with Britain, especially the 1947 Šamac-Sarajevo railway: it was featured, for instance, in a painting exhibition of British artists held in London in 1948; in social events organised by the British–Yugoslav Association; and in a film documentary about the railway. In addition, many cultural activities were organised for British brigades, such as introductions to Yugoslav folklore, outings to places of interest, campfires, choirs, and discussions between brigades.

Therefore, it is necessary to dig into these ORAs through a cultural lens. As its first cultural diplomacy practice, the ORAs targeted British leftist youth. The Yugoslav authorities hoped that the participation of British brigadists and related cultural events could enhance its image in the UK. During this early post-war period, Yugoslavia lacked a systematic cultural diplomacy arrangement, and the promotion of the ORAs had a strong propagandistic character.

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[605] Vejzagic, 'The Importance of Youth Labour Actions', p.15.

[606] This idea was similar to comments made by the historian Pia Koivunen on the Finns visiting the World Youth Festivals during the 1940s and 1950s: 'Socialism seemed to offer what was absent in the capitalist homeland: the feeling of collective solidarity, quickly advancing technical development, huge building projects, strong belief in a better future and, especially, concrete measures for making the socialist dream come true'. See Pia Koivunen, 'A dream come true': Finns visiting the lands of socialism at the World Youth Festivals in the 1940s and 1950s, p.22.

The ORAs functioned as a laboratory for Yugoslavia to develop its cultural diplomacy, gradually expanding its audience from British leftists to the general public. Through the ORAs, the Yugoslav authorities experimented with and refined their cultural offensive strategies towards Britain, learning how to leverage their cultural strengths effectively. Initially, these efforts were characterised by strong propagandistic events, which were later replaced by a more neutral approach that promoted both cultural heritage, such as folklore (see Chapter 4), and modern painting and sculpture at exhibitions (see Chapter 5).

However, as subsequent chapters will show, Yugoslavia's exploration in foreign cultural policy was not plain sailing. The goal of gaining recognition as a modern socialist country with a rich cultural heritage was hindered by persistent British stereotypes of Yugoslav 'backwardness'.

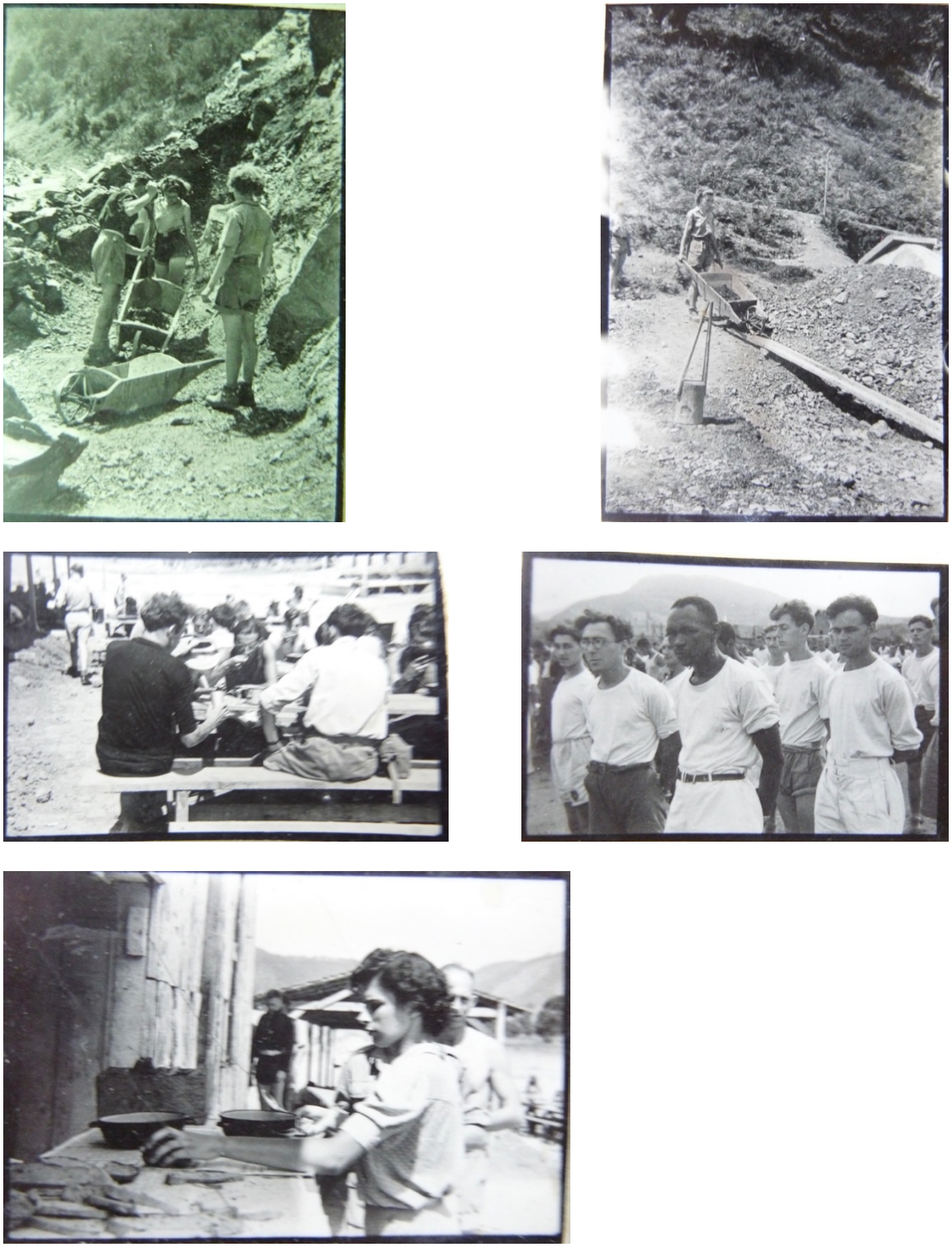


Figure 3-11. British delegates at Šamac-Sarajevo railway 1947, AJ 114-215

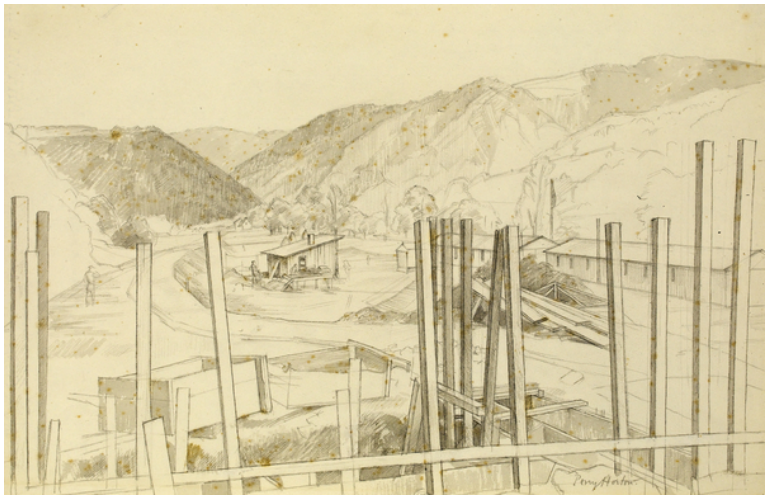


Figure 3-12. ‘Drawing of the working site, Yugoslavia’, 1947 (pencil on paper), by Percy Frederick Horton (1897-1970)/ Private Collection/ Bridgeman Images

Chapter 4. Yugoslav State Ensembles in Britain

As shown in the last chapter, there was strong interest among British youth in learning about socialist Yugoslavia. Their curiosity ranged from wanting to know more about life in the country to its history and culture. In their letters and reports, folklore was frequently mentioned as a fascinating element in Yugoslav culture.

Folklore held an exalted status not only in Yugoslavia but also in nearly all socialist countries at that time. It was considered 'the people's creative work', deeply embedded in the creativity of those who were building socialism and forming the foundation of socialist culture.[607] Across Eastern Europe, folk culture became a propagandistic tool wielded by socialist governments both domestically and internationally. Because folklore is usually connected with peasant culture and the common people, it was effectively used by the authorities to distance such culture from the elite or bourgeoisie, therefore linking traditional culture with contemporary socialism.[608]

In this context, folklore became representative of the nation and an indispensable part of socialist culture and ideology, manifesting as progressive, authentic people's art. It underpinned state socialism: as Sabina Mihelj and Reana Senjković put it, 'nationalist narratives and symbols, along with folkloric or "native" cultural traditions provided a rich and effective resource'.[609]

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[607] Izaly Zemtsovsky and Alma Kunanbaeva, 'Communism and Folklore' (unpublished paper), p.2, https://www.academia.edu/6967540/Communism_and_Folklore, (2 Ocotber 2020).

[608] See Jan Grill, 'Struggles for the Folk. Politics of Culture in Czechoslovak Ethnography, 1940s–1950s', *History and Anthropology*, 26/5 (2015), pp.619–38.

[609] Sabina Mihelj and Reana Senjković, 'Introduction: Socialist Popular Cultures between Folklore and Nationalism', *Folks Art-Croatian Journal of Ethnology and Folklore Research*, 47/1 (2010), p.112. See also David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931–1956* (Cambridge, 2003); Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton, 1984); Martin Mevius, *Agents of Moscow: The Hungarian Communist Party and the Origins of Socialist Patriotism, 1941–1953* (Oxford, 2005); Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945–1990* (Cambridge, 2009); Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley, 1995).

The promotion of folk culture became a trend in the socialist bloc with the ideology of being 'nationalist in form and socialist in content'. The nationalist dimension was symbiotic with the folk culture promoted by state socialism in the Eastern Bloc and Yugoslavia. It related to the nation-building process in the region, recasting the past 'as an object of great power politics' and 'a playground of imperial struggle'.[610] By emphasising the nationalist facet of folk culture, the Communist Party attempted to maintain its legitimacy and gain popular support. This nationalist trait was especially significant for Yugoslavia. As anthropologist Ana Dittmar stated, 'there was a political need to develop a pan-Yugoslav identity; one that would transcend ethnic group loyalties'.[611] This could also be seen from the official ideology of 'Brotherhood and Unity". Thus, folk culture became significant in nation-building and cultural identity. Although Yugoslav folk culture was often presented as a collection of diverse ethnic groups, it promoted ethnic equality in diversity and was founded on the idea of being 'South Slavs' under socialism. This search for unity was always a concern for a multi-ethnic country, and in this regard, Yugoslavia stood out from its socialist counterparts. For Yugoslav authorities, folklore was welcomed as an effective means to protect and promote Yugoslavia's traditions, something specifically 'Yugoslav' that distinguished it from other cultures.

However, there were also challenges in promoting folklore. One significant issue was the 'Balkanist' prejudices and stereotypes of the region, as discussed in the Introduction. Historian Maria Todorova summarises that 'Balkanisation' 'had become a synonym for reversion to the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian'.[612] This kind of discourse was common in

[610] Pavel Kolář, 'Communism in Eastern Europe', in Stephen A. Smith (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, (Oxford, 2013), p.204. Folklore researcher Philipp Herzog mentioned the use of folk dance by communist regimes to 'demonstrate appreciation of national culture and a close connection to the people in general'. See Philipp Herzog, '"National in Form and Socialist in Content" or rather "Socialist in Form and National in Content"?: The "Amateur Art System" and the Cultivation of "Folk Art" in Soviet Estonia', *Folks Art-Croatian Journal of Ethnology and Folklore Research (Narodna umjetnost-Hrvatski časopis za etnologiju i folkloristiku)*, 47/1 (2010), p.125.
[611] Ana M. Dittmar, 'Traditional Yugoslav Dance in a Changing Society' (PhD thesis, Rutgers University, 1984), p.10.
[612] Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, p.3.

British press coverage of performances by Yugoslav state ensembles. Although Yugoslav authorities attempted to showcase both modern ballet and folk dances, these performances were often perceived in Britain as primitive and naïve, reflecting Yugoslavia's supposed lack of creativity in dance. Such stereotypes were also evident in the contrasting attitudes of British critics toward Yugoslav ballet versus folklore. British critics assumed that the standard of art was defined by the West, and thus, the innovations of Yugoslav ballet were not seen as comparable to the creativity in modern Western dance.

Moreover, the narrative of modernisation in Communist ideology sometimes seemed to contradict the promotion of folk culture. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this contradiction was perpetuated in Yugoslavia's cultural policy in general and its cultural diplomacy towards Britain in particular. Traditional folk culture embodied rural society, often regarded as 'peasant culture' with connotations of being 'backward' and lacking modernity. Historian Pavel Kolář stressed that 'the communist project was part of East European societies' long-term endeavour to overcome their backwardness and to catch up with the West'.[613] The construction of the railway, workers' housing blocks, and the implementation of the Five-Year Plans were all integral to the socialist modernisation programme.

Despite the split between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, Yugoslav cultural policy shared similarities with other socialist countries. As will be noted in the next chapter, the question among Yugoslav cultural policymakers was how to properly combine traditional folklore with progressive socialism. Yugoslav authorities were perplexed about making appropriate cultural overtures toward Britain and faced divergent narratives. On the one hand, Yugoslavia had to use folk culture to attract a Western audience. As Dittmar stated, due to economic underdevelopment and proximity to the East, Yugoslav culture enjoyed 'an idealised

[613] Kolář, 'Communism in Eastern Europe', pp.203-219.

state of naturalness' and 'and exotic flair to their arts' that enraptured Western observers.[614] On the other hand, to distance itself from the former bourgeois Kingdom of Yugoslavia and to maintain the legitimacy of communist rule, it was necessary to emphasise the modern face of its socialist culture. Yugoslav officials sought an amalgamation of these two aspects of cultural policy. By combining modern elements with folk art, they attempted to marry traditional culture with the newly created socialist ideology, transforming it into a socialist national art. These two narratives were intrinsically contradictory and always existed in uneasy tension.

The use of folk art to build the nation and its cultural identity was reflected in Yugoslavia's cultural shows in Britain. In addition to the folk-art exhibition that toured Europe, folk dances and music were performed as part of Yugoslavia's cultural offerings to the West. During the 1950s, numerous ensembles and dancing groups visited Britain. The Belgrade Ballet participated in the Edinburgh Festival in 1951 and 1962, and folk music and dance ensembles frequently performed in Britain.

The motivation for promoting Yugoslav folk art in Britain stemmed from Britain's international status in Europe after the war. Achieving success in cultural promotion in Britain could open opportunities for Yugoslavia in other European countries. While most Western countries were still recovering from the devastating war, Britain sought to position itself as a cultural leader in Europe. To this end, it supported the Edinburgh International Festivals, the Festival of Britain in 1951, and welcomed various Yugoslav art troupes.

In this chapter, I will argue that Yugoslav authorities had no specific plan for the country's cultural promotion in Britain. The contradictions in its cultural policy impeded the progress of building a consistent ideal national image. Folk art, considered a people's art form, constituted a source of political legitimacy for the Communist Party and undergirded national unity, while modernisation was indispensable for its socialist ideology. By combining a folk art tradition

[614] Dittmar, 'Traditional Yugoslav Dance', p.138.

with socialist reality, Yugoslavia aimed to showcase a unique Yugoslav national identity. However, this effort was consistently misinterpreted by British audiences as 'backward' and exotic, thereby confirming the stereotype of the country.

Another paradox lies in Yugoslavia's success and failure in promoting its cultural image through dance. The accolades for its folk dance reflected a huge appetite for Yugoslav culture as being 'exotic' and 'oriental,' whereas Yugoslavia's attempt to prove itself as a fully-fledged contributor to modern 'culture' and 'civilisation' at the Edinburgh Festivals failed to overcome cultural prejudices surrounding 'backward' Balkan societies.

I. Edinburgh Festival

When the first Edinburgh Festival was held in 1947, Britain was still suffering from the aftermath of the war, such as economic austerity and rationing. The immediate post-war period was marked by cultural conservatism and conformity.[615] However, the plan to organise an international art festival was conceived in the post-war spirit of recovery, reconstruction, humanity, and internationalism. In addition, the Labour government after the war emphasised the role of culture and education in rebuilding British society.[616]

In this context, the idea of organising the Edinburgh International Festival emerged. Early festival documents noted that 'the general idea of such an international Arts Festival somewhere in Europe is in the air'. It was believed that pre-war European venues like Salzburg, Bayreuth, and Munich would be 'out of action' for some time due to the ravages of the Second World War.[617] Holding such a festival in Edinburgh could make it a 'cultural resort of Europe',

[615] Angela Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals: Culture and Society in Post-War Britain* (Edinburgh, 2014), p.45.
[616] Becky Conekin, *'The Autobiography of a Nation' The 1951 Festival of Britain* (Manchester, 2003), p.9.
[617] ECA, Early Festival Papers, EIFMD Report, summer 1945, in Angela Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals: Culture and Society in Post-War Britain*, p.4. According to historian Angela Bartie, the rise of the Edinburgh International Festival of Music and Drama reflected post-war cultural values which emphasised the 'spiritual refreshment, a way of reasserting moral values, of rebuilding relationships between nations, of shoring up European civilisation and of providing "welfare" in its broadest sense'. See Bartie, p.2.

thereby recalibrating its cultural position.[618] The Edinburgh Festival was distinguished by its internationalism and the variety of art forms on display. It focused on fine art, including recitals, concerts, opera, ballet, drama, without prioritising any particular artists or musicians. Works from different national backgrounds were welcomed.[619]

The festival also reflected certain characteristics of post-war British culture, such as reviving traditional culture and classical art. In the international context of the Cold War, the Edinburgh Festival acted as a channel through which countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain could communicate, share experiences, display cultural achievements, and cultivate empathy and mutual understanding despite their different political beliefs. Thus, the festival showcased several performances from the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries beginning in the 1960s.

Historian Lisa Jakelski noted that 'as planned and purposively coordinated series of events, festivals are invested with symbolic meaning. They are dense sites of relationships among people, objects, and ideas'.[620] The Edinburgh Festival provided a valuable opportunity for people and cultural goods from different cultural backgrounds to get to know each other. It was an ideal platform for Yugoslavia to display its cultural achievements.

By the time Yugoslavia first participated in 1951, the festival already enjoyed an international reputation. Historian Eileen Miller observed that the first three festivals were highly successful under their first director, Rudolf Bing, who brought the Edinburgh Festivals to the public and built a reputation.[621] When Ian Hunter took over as art director, maintaining the festival's leading position in the European art world became his main focus.[622] One of his

[618] Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals*, p.37.
[619] Ibid., p.5.
[620] Lisa Jakelski, *Making New Music in Cold War Poland: The Warsaw Autumn Festival, 1956–1968* (Berkeley, 2017), p.2.
[621] Eileen Miller, *The Edinburgh International Festival 1947*–1996 (Aldershot, 1996), p.21.
[622] Ibid.

strategies was to include outstanding performances from around the world. It was under these circumstances that Belgrade first engaged with the festival in the northern Scottish city.

Hunter had a vision and laid the foundations for the success of this cultural event. *The Scotsman* commented on his achievements, noting that he 'oversaw a period of great change for the festival, bringing in leading European companies to perform and coming up with a host of new ideas'.[623] In November 1950, Hunter wrote to the press attaché of the Yugoslav Embassy in London, inviting the Yugoslav National Ballet to give eight performances at the Empire Theatre as part of the International Festival in Edinburgh the following September.[624] The invitation probably came on the recommendation of Christopher Grier, music editor of *The Scotsman*, who had seen the ballet *The Legend of Ohrid* in Yugoslavia and thought it was 'first rate', and wanted to see it performed at the Festival despite some shortcomings.[625] In another letter, Hunter further articulated what they would prefer from Yugoslavia, namely something with traditional national characteristics such as Yugoslav folk dancing and Yugoslav ballet.[626]

There was a general interest in Yugoslavia's folk dance. In the same letter, Hunter distinguished Yugoslav ballet from its classical counterpart, emphasising that they preferred the Yugoslav version because other classical ballet troupes would also be performing at the Festival. Hunter considered Yugoslav ballet to be national in origin and indigenous to Yugoslavia, likely incorporating local folk elements or being based on national history, which set it apart from the classical ballet typically seen in the West.

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[623] 'Tributes for man dubbed "Mr Festival"', *The Scotsman*, (10 September 2003), https://www.scotsman.com/news/tributes-man-dubbed-mr-festival-2470548, (2 October 2021).
[624] AJ, F-559-109, Telegram from Ian Hunter, the Art Director of the Edinburgh Festival to the Press Counsellor of the Yugoslav Embassy in London, 16 November 1950.
[625] AJ, F-317-5-14, Telegram from Christopher Grier, the music editor of *The Scotsman*, to Aleksandar Sokorac, the Press Counsellor of the Yugoslav Embassy in London, 29 June 1950; AJ, F-317-5-4, Telegram from Ian Hunter, the Art Director/administrator of the Edinburgh Festival to Sokorac, the Press Counsellor of the Yugoslav Embassy in London, 16 November 1950.
[626] AJ, F-317-5-14, Telegram from Ian Hunter, the Art Director of the Edinburgh Festival to Aleksandar Sokorac, the Press Counsellor of the Yugoslav Embassy in London, 24 November 1950.

Therefore, it was not surprising that the initial programme proposed by the director of the Belgrade Opera of the National Theatre, Oskar Danon, featured a strong element of 'Yugoslavness' that fulfilled Hunter's expectations. Danon prioritised the four-act ballet *The Legend of Ohrid*, which Hunter had initially suggested. Composed by contemporary Yugoslav composer Stevan Hristić and based on a fairy tale, the choreography combined Yugoslav folklore and national dance. But it was still classical ballet. As early as 1950, the Yugoslav government had already considered performing *The Legend of Ohrid* on the international stage, especially in Britain. To facilitate this, the Yugoslav government planned to invite a manager from Sadler's Wells to study the ballet.[627]

Yugoslavia's prioritisation of *The Legend of Ohrid* was deliberate. From the Yugoslav perspective, it was a 'representative work of the ballet repertoire of the National Theatre' and held high artistic value in Yugoslav ballet art.[628] It was first performed at the National Theatre on December 29, 1947. The use of folk melodies was always emphasised. Macedonian folk music made up the majority of the music in this work.

According to an article in the Yugoslav art review magazine *Glas*, *The Legend of Ohrid* was the first Yugoslav ballet created after the War. The article did not hide its approval of the ballet and its symbolic meaning for Yugoslavia:

> Hristić [the composer of the ballet] started writing [the music] twenty years ago, and it is not a coincidence that he is only finishing now on the fertile soil of our free nation state. . . . He strives to complete the foundations of our national musical culture by S. Mokranjac, extending them to the field of instrumental and stage music, relying on the elements of our musical folklore. . . . *The Legend of Ohrid* reflected the dynamics of [Yugoslavia's] national revolution in the field of music culture.[629]

The author thought *The Legend of Ohrid* was revolutionary and different from previous ballets because it was completed in socialist Yugoslavia. The focus on national musical culture and

[627] AJ, F-317-86-120, *Plan rada odelenja sa naučne i kulturne veze sa inostranstvom za 1950 godinu* (Working plan of the department for scientific and cultural relations with foreign countries for 1950), p.6.
[628] AJ, F-559-113-246, 'Premijera "Ohridske legend"' (Premiere of *The Legend of Ohrid*), *Glas*, (7 December 1947).
[629] Ibid.

musical folklore emphasised tradition and nationalism. The composer Stevan Mokranjac, Hristić's teacher and a 'father figure of Serbian music', was 'an assiduous collector and analyst of folk music from Serbia and all the neighbouring Slav regions', integrating Serbian folksongs into his compositions.[630] By interlinking national culture, which merged the traditional past with a socialist present as a free nation-state, *The Legend of Ohrid* showcased Yugoslav national art characterised by Socialist Realism.

Another ballet, *The Ballad of a Medieval Love*, was also favoured by Danon. The theme of the ballet was taken from medieval Yugoslavia. What is noteworthy was the description Danon gave to the style of this ballet. He explained in his telegram to Hunter that *The Ballad of a Medieval Love* was a 'synthesis of classical and modern ballet without resting on national folklore'.[631] Therefore this ballet was supposed to embody the modern qualities of socialism, which were also new within Yugoslavia. The ballet premiered during the 1951 theatre season. In addition, the famous ballet *Romeo and Juliet* by Sergei Prokofiev was also planned for performance.[632]

The goals of Edinburgh and Belgrade meshed well in the programming. For Yugoslavia, performing at this famous international festival and fronting 'Yugoslavness' helped promote its cultural image. The themes of Yugoslav history and fairy tales, and the fusion of classical ballet dance with Yugoslav folk dances, all signified Yugoslav national culture. For the Festival's director, these specific Yugoslav works could draw more attention to the Festival, enhancing its reputation and visibility.

[630] Anne J. Sadie and Stanley Sadie, *Calling on the Composer: A Guide to European Composer Houses and Museums* (London, 2005), p.257.
[631] AJ, F-559-109, Telegram from Oskar Danon, the Director of the Belgrade Opera of the National Theatre, to Ian Hunter, the Art Director of the Edinburgh Festival, 7 January 1951.
[632] Ibid.

In 1951, the Belgrade Opera Ballet performed three Yugoslav ballets at the Edinburgh Festival: *The Legend of Ohrid, The Ballad of a Medieval Love* and *The Gingerbread Heart* (See Figure 4-1).



Figure 4-1. Yugoslav ballet performances at Edinburgh Festival 1951[633]

[633] Copyright the Estate of Paul Shilabeer, used with kind permission; Paul Shilabeer images courtesy of the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh International Festival Society, Dep.378, Acc.9139_4.

Apart from some chamber music concerts, none of the other people's democracies in Eastern Europe participated in the Festival, and certainly not with such a high-profile event.[634] The performances were welcomed by the audience and garnered numerous press reports from art critics in British newspapers. As Miller noted, 'the enchanting Yugoslav Ballet, with its fascinating amalgamation of folk-dance and classical choreography, received a rapturous reception from the Edinburgh audience, as did the Sadler's Wells Ballet'.[635] According to an internal report from the Yugoslav Council for Science and Culture, the British press 'made a nice statement about [their] ballet . . . *New Chronicle* says: The ballet is the best in its group work. The players reacted well at each point of the fairy tale and acted as a well-trained unit'.[636]

The Times published several articles on Yugoslavia's ballet that captured the ambiguities of its reception at Edinburgh. As one *Times* critic wrote:

> The Yugoslav Ballet from the Belgrade National Theatre . . . is attracting large audiences curious to discover on what lines the arts in Yugoslavia are reasserting themselves after the various vicissitudes which have isolated that country from the western world during recent years. The answer would seem to be on nationalist lines, if *The Legend of Ohrid*, chosen as the week's first production, is typical of post-war developments. This long, four-act ballet has far more in common with the Old Russian romantic school than with anything experimental now coming from England, France or America, but the choreographer . . . has attempted to infuse some very necessary new blood into the tradition by incorporating Yugoslav folk-dances. . . . The music . . . is likewise at its best when able to escape from romantic memories to a more virile contemporary idiom fertilised by Yugoslav folk material. . . . The entire company excelled itself in the ingeniously devised folk-dances, where unfamiliar steps and rhythms and bright national costumes were constantly diverting in spite of the slightly cramping stage.[637]

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[634] Few Eastern Bloc countries participated in the Edinburgh Festival until the 1960s, with their appearances primarily limited to small-scale musical concerts. There were Czech Nonet, a chamber ensemble that performed in 1947, and the Hungarian Quartet performed in 1948, 1950 and 1955. The Hungarian Quartet was famous for its performances of Beethoven's and Bartók's string quartets. Founded in Budapest in 1935, the quartet settled in the United States in 1950 and was not a state-sponsored ensemble. There is limited information about their performances at the Edinburgh Festival. Similarly, the Prague Trio performed works by Ravel, Smetana, Shostakovich, and Dvorak at the Festival in 1949. The Budapest Quartet, an American-based string quartet, also performed at the Festival in 1950. In 1963, however, the Hungarian State Opera and Ballet made its Festival debut. The Prague National Theatre Chorus and Orchestra gave its first concert in 1964. There was an exhibition of masterpieces of Czech Art in 1959, and the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra performed in 1962.
[635] Miller, p.26.
[636] AJ, F-317-89-127, *Gostovanje Jugoslovenskog Baleta u Edinburghu* (*Guest Performance of the Yugosalav Ballet in Edinburgh*).
[637], 'Edinburgh Festival-Yugoslav National Ballet', *The Times* [London], (6 September 1951), p.8.

Certain assumptions and a condescending attitude can be discerned in this excerpt. In the journalist's eyes, Yugoslav art belonged to 'the otherness'. It was not part of the Western culture that people were accustomed to, but rather an expression of Yugoslavia's own national culture. At stake was a fundamental divergence of culture between the West and the East against the backdrop of the Cold War. *The Legend of Ohrid*, lacking the 'experimental' character of modern ballet in the West, supposedly followed the 'Old Russian' pattern. It was probably classical but not in line what was trendy in the West. From his description, there seemed to be an asynchronous development in the art of the two countries. Whereas Britain and the West were modernising art through experimental approaches, the 'new blood' instilled into post-war Yugoslav ballet was its national folklore, which was attractive although to some extent outdated.

The other ballets followed the line of Yugoslav national music and dance. Although the feedback for these three ballets was generally positive, there were some complaints. An article in *The Times* commented that *The Gingerbread Heart* was 'too protracted, too diverse in style, too picture-post-card in décor, too tasteless'.[638] In a report from *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Ballad of Medieval Love* was described as 'a rather uninspiring ballet', 'as naively emphatic as a Leningrad Symphony' and with 'feeble scenario construction'. The commentator thought the ballet 'chiefly lacked artistic conviction'. *The Gingerbread Heart* was better regarded, although the key word related to the ballet was still 'folk', because the plot was 'a simple folk-like tale of two lovers' and the music was 'the vivid folky score'. Another critic wrote that 'most of the dancing was of popular origin'.[639] It seems the British critics could only perceive the folk element of the Yugoslav ballet while maintaining a condescending and arrogant attitude.

[638] 'The Edinburgh Festival-Closing Events', *The Times* [London], (10 September 1951), p.8.
[639] 'Yugoslav Ballet-Edinburgh Festival', *The Manchester Guardian*, (8 September 1951), p.3.

The performance of *The Legend of Ohrid* was still considered a success with audiences despite some unfavourable criticism. According to an internal report from the Council, which noted the popularity of the performance, 'in all of Yugoslavia's practice, [they] have not encountered this kind of audience reception yet'.[640] Yugoslav authorities considered the debut of a Yugoslav ballet at the Edinburgh Festival a significant cultural event. The Yugoslav ambassador to Britain, Jože Brilej, reviewed it in his annual report to Belgrade. He confirmed the success of the Belgrade Opera for its ballet performance and agreed that it 'generally left a favourable impression'. However, he also mentioned the harsh comments from some critics:

> [They dismissed] *The Ballad of Medieval Love* as a non-inventive, strained and naive thing without greater artistic value . . . emphasising technical shortcomings. Some newspapers in particular insisted that we did not even give ballet, but only well-stylised folklore (especially *The Gingerbread Heart*). Some correspondents went so far as to deny our ballet any value. Thus, reporting by the Dutch professional newspaper Elsevieres (which, however, was quite influential) made it impossible for us [Yugoslavia] to conclude contracts with the Netherlands and Belgium for ballet performances and to certain extent contributed to insufficient interest in the folk ensemble, implying that folklore ensembles and ballet are the same groups.[641]

Overall, Yugoslav ballet was viewed as a kind of 'folklorised' ballet by critics, which made it difficult to evaluate using the aesthetics of the classical ballet. For instance, an article written by the renowned British ballet art critic Richard Buckle in *The Observer* assessed Yugoslavia's ballet in this way:

> The company contains some fine dancers, character rather than classical, and appears to be groping its way towards a national style. So far results are praiseworthy, if not always aesthetically satisfying. . . . The second act (of *The Legend of Ohrid*)—the classical one-is the weakest. Into the other three, there have been crammed as many folk dances as possible. The Yugoslavs form into two circles on the slightest provocation, and though they dance with gaiety and vigour the untheatrical nature of their material is soon evident. . . . The scenery was vulgar and old-fashioned. . . . The Yugoslavs need to develop the classical side of their schooling. At the moment choreography and dancing are limited in scope.[642]

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[640] AJ, F-559-109, *Izveštaj o putu i učestvovanju beogradskog baleta u Edinburg* (The *report on the travel and participation of the Belgrade Ballet in Edinburgh*).
[641] This appeared in the Dutch newsweekly *Elsevier,* of which the first issue was published on 27 October 1945; DAMFARS, 1952, F-22, *Izveštaj o kulturnoj delatnosti u 1951 g.* (*The report on cultural activities in 1951*), Telegram from Jože Brilej, the Yugoslav Ambassador in London to the Commission for Culture and Science, 22 February 1952, No.42984.
[642] Richard Buckle, 'Ballet-Slavs and Spaniards'*, The Observer*, (9 September 1951), p.6.

This was far from what the organisers expected. Ideally, the ballet would have demonstrated the artistic creativity of the new Yugoslavia, portraying it as a modern socialist country with a strong connection to traditional folk culture. However, feedback from the international press called for a more classical style and training, rather than recognising the unique fusion of folk and classical elements.

Despite the adverse criticism, Brilej described the audience's reception as favourable and even enthusiastic. According to him, the majority of experts and spectators they spoke to had a different opinion from the press, affirming that the participation of the Yugoslav ballet was 'a good advertisement and made a good impression'. He believed this performance 'enhanced the continuity of [their] participation in the Edinburgh Festival, which today enjoys the reputation of one of the most significant international events of its kind'.[643]

For Brilej, the most important issue was the occurrence of such a guest performance at all, as it 'represented an important step forward in [their] penetration abroad'. Despite the 'appreciation of the artistic height' and the comparison with international standards, the performance signaled to the British public that Yugoslavia had its own interpretation of the ballet repertoire.[644]

It was jarring for the Yugoslavs to encounter adverse press criticism, especially because such criticism could impede further performances abroad. But it was some consolation that the performances were well received by the public. From Brilej's perspective, the very appearance of the Yugoslav ballet in Britain was remarkable. The presence of a Yugoslav ballet proved that Yugoslavia was not a culturally backward country and that there was vibrant cultural life. The emphasis on a 'Yugoslav made' ballet implicitly revealed a nationalist inflection.

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[643] DAMFARS, 1952, F-22, *The report on Cultural Activities in 1951* (*Izveštaj o kulturnoj delatnosti u 1951 g.),* telegram from Jože Brilej, the Yugoslav Ambassador in London to the Commission for Science and Culture, 22 February 1952, No.42984.
[644] Ibid.

In a basic sense, it could be regarded as a success because the British people got to know more about Yugoslavia as a socialist country and about Yugoslav art. In 1951, three years after the Soviet–Yugoslav split, performing at the Edinburgh Festival was a significant moment for Yugoslavia, boosting national confidence in its competition with the Soviet Union.

Aside from the reception of the performances, the experience of the Belgrade Ballet dancers was also noteworthy. According to an internal record made by the group leader (identity unknown), the Yugoslav dancers were placed in student dormitories while performing in Edinburgh. Although they were satisfied with the comfort and convenience, they were upset because it seemed that 'a large number of people evaluate[d] the value of the artist and the art group according to how they are accepted and placed. This modesty [of accommodation] was not appropriate'.[645] From this report, it is clear that as the national ballet of Yugoslavia, the group took great pride in its art. They worried that inappropriate accommodation arrangements would overshadow the value of their art.

The rehearsals, however, took place in a friendly atmosphere between the members of the Belgrade Ballet and the staff of the Empire Theatre in Edinburgh. Although they sometimes felt they were not treated seriously enough, almost 'as a group of students', the members of the Ballet were welcomed with enthusiasm. They received invitations to various banquets and tea parties. 'All of the prominent people of Edinburgh's cultural world wanted to get in touch with [them], talk to [them], inquiring about the opportunities in Yugoslavia. A big portion of the audience was waiting for the ballet members after the performance, asking for autographs and inviting them for dinner.'[646]

[645] AJ, F-559-109, *Izveštaj o putu i učestvovanju beogradskog baleta u Edinburg* (*The report on the travel and participation of the Belgrade Ballet in Edinburgh*). In 1951, the foreign art groups that participated in the Edinburgh Festival were all from the West, including the New York Philharmonic, the New Italian Quartet, the Vienna Academy Chamber Choir, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, and Paris Le Théâtre de L'Atelier.
[646] Ibid.

The Yugoslav artists also got the chance at the Edinburgh Festival to communicate with other artists from various national backgrounds. According to the report, foreign ballet dancers were satisfied with the direction of the Belgrade Ballet and the music production of their ballets. There were also suggestions that they should work more on improving their technique because there were 'many real talents' in the Yugoslav troupe.[647]

The debut of Yugoslavia at the Edinburgh Festival can be judged a success. Considering that there were only two dance troupes at the Festival in 1951, the performance of Yugoslavia's national ballet was a worthy undertaking. The other dance company that performed at the Festival was the famous Sadlers Wells Company. This helped pave the way for Yugoslavia's participation in future festivals. Meanwhile, the cultural authorities in Belgrade recognised the value of the Edinburgh Festival as an effective platform for promoting Yugoslavia's cultural image abroad. This was due to the great international reputation and popularity the Festival had gained in a short time. The programmes and performances were also carefully selected.[648]

Subsequent events seemed to prove the value of Yugoslavia's guest performance in Edinburgh. Several proposals and offers were received by Yugoslavia, inviting the ballet company to perform abroad. Yugoslavia also gained valuable experience in organising a performance at the Festival. Consequently, after a meeting of the Council for Science and Culture and a representative of the Belgrade Opera, it was decided to expand the ballet group, as well as its funding and programme.[649]

Moreover, the Belgrade Ballet's performance in Edinburgh was followed by a visit to Yugoslavia by the Festival's art director, Ian Hunter, in 1952. He was invited as the guest of

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[647] Ibid.

[648] AJ, F-559-113-246, '*Poseta g. Jan Huntera umetničkog direktora Edinburskog Festivala*' (*Visit of Mr. Ian Hunter, the art director of the Edinburgh Festival*), telegram from V. Novosel, the Head of the Department for Scientific and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries to Education, Science and Culture Council of the People's Republic of Slovenia, 27 February 1952.

[649] AJ, F-317-86-120, telegram from V. Novosel, the Head of the Department for Scientific and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries at the Council for Science and Culture FNRJ to the Yugoslav Legation in Belgium, 7 December 1951.

the Yugoslav National Committee for UNESCO. Hunter, who was friendly towards Yugoslavia, aimed to facilitate Yugoslav performances at the Edinburgh Festival. The Yugoslav government attached great importance to his visit because of his influential role in designing the Festival's programme. As Brilej wrote in his telegram: 'Our participation in the festival depends on him. He represents a valuable contact that should be further strengthened by this visit and which can produce results not only concerning the Edinburgh Festival, but also much more.'[650] He was interested in watching some classical and modern non-Yugoslav ballet, operas, and dramas and to hear concerts of singers and instruments. This would help him decide who to invite to participate in the Edinburgh Festival in 1953.[651]

Hunter's Yugoslav counterparts attached great importance to this visit. They hoped to use this opportunity to acquaint Hunter with Yugoslav artistic life, anticipating that he might invite some Yugoslav artistic groups or soloists to participate in the Edinburgh Festival in 1953.[652] As stated in the Commission's document, 'last year's [1951] performance of our ballet ensemble is still in vivid memories of artistic circles and the Edinburgh audience'.[653] To showcase the best of Yugoslav art to Hunter, the Department for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries provided a well-arranged programme.

In Belgrade, Hunter got the chance to meet the important cultural officials such as the secretary of the Yugoslav National Commission for UNESCO; the director of the National Theatre Milan Bogdanović; the director of the Opera Oskar Danon; and the theatre director Hugo Klajn. His schedule was filled with various cultural activities, including performances

[650] DAMFARS, 1952, F-23, No.44010, Telegram from ambassador Jože Brilej to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 February 1952.
[651] Ibid.; AJ, F-559-113-246, *Poseta g. Jan Huntera umetničkog direktora Edinburskog Festivala* (*Visit of Mr. Ian Hunter, the art director of the Edinburgh Festival*), telegram from V. Novosel, the Head of Department for Scientific and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries to Education, Science and Culture Council of People's Republic of Slovenia, 27 February 1952.
[652] AJ, F-559-109, *Dolazak g. Jana Huntera u našu zemlju* (*Arrival of Mr. Ian Hunter in our country*), telegram from Ivo Frol, the Assistant Minister of the Federal Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries to Yugoslav Embassy in London, 5 April 1952.
[653] AJ, F-559-109.

by the Dance Company of Serbia, the Yugoslav State Choir, the comedy *Dundo Maroje*, a rehearsal of *King Lear*, the opera *Faust*, and exhibitions at the Ethnographical Museum.[654]

Before Hunter arrived in Yugoslavia, the Department had already requested the Slovenian Council of Education, Science and Culture to send a proposal of possible options for opera, ballet, and drama that Hunter could see in Ljubljana. Interestingly, the Slovenian authorities were informed that folklore would not be considered for this festival.[655]

During his three-day visit to Ljubljana, Hunter attended a symphony concert conducted by Samo Hubad; saw the opera *Louisa*; visited a national and modern gallery; and attended a rehearsal for *Richard III* at the drama theatre. Although folklore was excluded, Hunter expressed a wish to see one amateur folk group. Therefore, a performance of the SKUD student group Tone Tomsić was organised. He also visited the music school, where the choral octet of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra performance for him. He attended a rehearsal of the orchestra's choir and the premiere of the ballet *Đavo na selu*.[656]

The actual reason for excluding a folk group from the Edinburgh Festival is not clear, but it was presumably influenced by Brilej's suggestion at the end of 1951 that Yugoslavia should not perform too much folk art in Britain.[657] Belgrade might have perceived a preference for a certain kind of programme in Edinburgh. The Festival was considered a modern international art festival in the West, with a repertoire full of orchestral concerts, opera, ballet, and classical drama, usually categorised as 'high art'. Sending folk ensembles did not seem to fit this repertoire.

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[654] AJ, F-559-109-241, Programme for Mr. and Mrs. Hunter during their visit in Belgrade from 31 March to 3 April.
[655] AJ, F-559-113-246, *Poseta g. Jan Huntera umetničkog direktora Edinburskog Festivala* (*Visit of Mr Ian Hunter, the art director of the Edinburgh Festival*), telegram from V. Novosel, the Head of the Department for Scientific and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries to Education, Science and Culture Council of People's Republic of Slovenia, 27 February 1952.
[656] AJ, F-317-86-120, Telegram from Maila Golob, Head of the Department for Relations with Foreign Countries of the Council for Education and Culture of the People's Republic of Slovenia, to the Department for Relations with Foreign Countries of the Council for Science and Culture FNRJ, 22 April 1952.
[657] DAMFARS, 1952, F-23, No. 41824, Telegram from Ambassador Jože Brilej to R. Čolaković, 14 December 1951.

Hunter's visit to Yugoslavia had a propagandistic effect. After returning to Britain, he wrote articles about his positive impressions of Yugoslavia. One article about Yugoslav art was broadcast by the BBC, where Hunter discussed Yugoslavia's ballet, theatre, film industry, and folk art. A similar article appeared in *The Scotsman*, in which he provided a general description of life in Yugoslavia. He noted the influence of the recent war on contemporary Yugoslav art, highlighting numerous works that dealt with the theme of the partisan struggle for liberation. Daily life in Yugoslavia was also discussed as well as the friendliness of the Yugoslav people.[658]

There was no dance performance from Yugoslavia at the Edinburgh Festival in 1953. Instead, an exhibition of medieval frescoes was mounted during the Festival. Although Yugoslavia didn't participate in the Festival every year, it attempted to make regular appearances. In 1958, the Zagreb Soloists' Ensemble performed at the Festival. In 1962, in keeping with the Festival's emphasis on Russian culture that year, the Belgrade Opera performed a series of Russian operas, including the British premieres of Prokofiev's *The Love of Three Oranges* and *The Gambler* and the Shostakovich version of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina*, as well as Borodin's *Prince Igor*. According to Miller, *Prince Igor* was 'an opera which everyone knew of, but few had actually seen'. Another opera was Massenet's *Don Quichotte*, which was rarely performed. All of the performances were in Serbo-Croatian. By including Belgrade Opera, the Festival Society was praised for 'presenting such an interesting and unhackneyed programme'.[659] This was probably because performances of Belgrade Opera were not common, and its style was different from what was usually seen in the West.

For the ballet in 1962, the Belgrade Opera Ballet gave three performances of Serbian ballet: *The Infanta's Birthday*, *The Miraculous Mandarin*, and *Koštana*. All three were choreographed

[658] AJ, F-559-109, 'Impressions of Yugoslavia-Life Hard and Dangerous: People Friendly Towards Britain', *The Scotsman*, (7 May 1952); *Art in Yugoslavia*, text copy of the BBC broadcast by Ian Hunter, 6 May 1952.
[659] Miller, pp.56-57.

by contemporary choreographer Dimitri Parlić. There was also an art exhibition at the National Gallery of Scotland with the theme of *Yugoslav Modern Primitives*.

Because the theme of the opera section for the Edinburgh Festival in 1962 was Russian works, the repertoire of Yugoslavia National Theatre was tailored accordingly. *The Times* introduced the Belgrade Opera as having a 'European reputation for their performances of Russian opera'. But the feedback from British commentators and critics was again not very positive. A commentator from *The Times* judged their singing techniques to be below those of British national companies, and the use of Serbo-Croatian language was regarded as 'snobbish and chauvinistic'. The opera *Prince Igor* in general did not reach the standard of the Festival, which should present the internationally best but not this Yugoslav one.[660] From the Yugoslav perspective, however, they were confident in presenting foreign works without concern for their quality compared to the West. The use of the Serbo-Croatian language could be seen as another way of expressing Yugoslav national pride.

Press coverage of the three ballet performances was similar to that of the opera, stressing technical shortcomings and claiming the choreography as 'innocent of character and individuality'. Such comments implied that critics found the performance mediocre. Although in 1962 the Belgrade Opera and Ballet presented a completely different repertoire compared to 1951, criticism about the standard of Yugoslav art groups remained constant—they did not meet the standard of an international festival like the one in Edinburgh.

Comments in *The Times* confirmed the enthusiasm of the Yugoslav performers, describing them as having an 'engaging eagerness to please', and suggesting that their performance would be 'unquestionably . . . pleasant enough to encounter in the midst of an Adriatic holiday'.[661] The comment on the indigenous Yugoslav ballet *Koštana* was particularly telling: it was (again)

[660] *The Times,* (21 August 1962), p.11.
[661] 'Yugoslav Dancers Eager to Please', *The Times*, (5 September 1962), p.13.

dismissed as a folklorist piece. The general impression of the Belgrade Ballet was again linked with exoticism and otherness.

The criticism of technique and choreography challenged the aesthetics and creativity of the state opera, which was supposed to represent Yugoslavia's cultural image. In addition, the emphasis on performers' eagerness to please and the Adriatic holiday revealed a supercilious attitude towards art from Yugoslavia. It was taken for granted that the standard for high art, such as ballet, was defined and evaluated by the West, which was seen as culturally more advanced. The Yugoslavs were eager for praise for their cultural achievements from Britain, a culturally leading country in the West.

When there was no Yugoslav art group performing at the Festival, the authorities sent musical experts to cultivate cultural exchanges. Ivan Vrkanović, a Croatian composer, was dispatched by the state to attend the Festival in 1954. According to his report, he enjoyed his twelve-day stay in the old Scottish city. He wrote that the Festival gave him the opportunity to 'meet with several pieces of contemporary European music literature, which are not performed in [their] country'. Thus, he had the chance to make himself 'fully aware of the contemporary European music creation'. In addition to hearing concerts, opera, and drama performances, he also connected with foreign musicians and journalists at the international club in Edinburgh. In his report, he noted that artists' interest in Yugoslavia was quite strong, even though they knew almost nothing about Yugoslav music. They tended to think that folklore and folk music were all that Yugoslavia had.[662]

This stereotype of Yugoslavia in British minds stemmed from a combination of factors. On the one hand, it was due to the Britons' lack of knowledge and prejudice about the region

[662] AJ, F-559-109, Telegram from Zagreb-based composer Ivan Brkanović to the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, 11 October 1954.

and the country. On the other hand, it was, to some extent, the result of Yugoslavia's folk art-focused cultural offensive, which reinforced this impression among the British people.

The second part of this chapter will examine in detail how folk dance and music dominated Yugoslavia's cultural narratives in Britain. The period from 1947 to 1959 was regarded as the early stage of the Edinburgh Festival. During this time, the foreign companies that performed at the Festival were mainly from Western Europe and were small in size.[663] However, Yugoslavia proactively got involved with the Festival to showcase its cultural achievements. But, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, a contradiction always existed in its artistic works when they were performed abroad.

Lacking a strategy to build an ideal cultural image that could connect tradition and modern development, Yugoslav cultural activities tended to fall into a dilemma. The newly created ballets and operas from socialist Yugoslavia did not convey the image of a culturally developed country because they did not 'reach the standard' of the West—at least according to Western critics. The use of folk elements to attract British audiences reinforced the stereotype of Yugoslavia as being both 'backward' and exotic. However, attending the Edinburgh Festival was still rewarding for Yugoslavia. It allowed more people to become acquainted with Yugoslav national art. For the Festival Society, inviting Yugoslavia to attend reflected the multiculturalism of the Festival, its openness, and its ambition to gain a leading position among international art festivals.

II. Folk Groups in Britain

Unlike the approach to the Edinburgh Festival, the Yugoslav government arranged for several folk ensembles to perform in Britain. The tours of Yugoslav folk ensembles thrived in

[663] Biyun Zhu, 'The Arts and International Relations: The Evolving Identity of the Edinburgh International Festival in the Cold War Era', *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*, 49/3 (2019), p.208.

the 1950s, with Britain becoming a favourite destination for promoting Yugoslav folklore. Various folk ensembles participated in the Llangollen Festival almost every year since 1950, and the reputation of Yugoslav folk ensembles was gradually established through their performances. [664]

Unlike preparing ballet and opera for the Edinburgh Festival, which emphasised the current cultural achievements of socialist Yugoslavia, the promotion of folklore drew attention to Yugoslav tradition. In time, folk art became an indispensable part of Yugoslavia's cultural offensive abroad. In 1950, when Yugoslavia initially planned to participate in the Edinburgh Festival, it even considered sending a representative folk group.[665] An internal report in 1950 confirmed that 'much work was done to introduce foreign people to Yugoslav folklore, medieval art and music'.[666]

In July 1950, the Croatian State Ensemble and the Macedonian State Ensemble participated in the Llangollen Festival. Folk troupes from seventeen countries competed at the festival. The folk dance 'Weightlifting Circle' from the Macedonian group was awarded the first prize, and the 'Posavina Dances' from the Croatian dance ensemble came in third. The Macedonian group enjoyed great success, achieving an unprecedented score of 100 percent.

According to *The Manchester Guardian,* ten Macedonian dancers with two musicians 'wore national costume of white serge breeches trimmed with black braid, danced to the music of the zurla and dupan'. Douglas Kennedy, the judge and the director of the English Folk Dance Society, commented on the performance as 'the magic of men's dance, authentic and primitive'.[667] The language in the comments illustrates the appreciation of the stereotypical

[664] The Llangollen Festival was an international musical festival established in 1947 in Wales to promote friendship and peace among nations. See the history of the festival at https://international-eisteddfod.co.uk/about-us/history/, (2 October 2021).
[665] AJ, F-317-86-120, *Kulturni dogadjaji od medjunarodnog značaja 1950 godina* (*Cultural Events of International Importance in 1950*).
[666] AJ 317-86-120, *Izveštaj o radu odeljenja za naučne i kulturne veze sa inostranstvom u 1950g.* (*Report on the Work of the Department for Scientific and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries in 1950*).
[667] 'Folk-Dancing at Eisteddfod: 100% for Macedonians', *The Manchester Guardian*, (6 July 1950), p.3.

exoticism of Yugoslav folk dances. Other awards weer also given to the Yugoslav singers and folk instrumental players. Two additional performances were put on during the festival.

According to an internal report of the Council for Science and Culture, the performances of Yugoslav folk ensembles aroused great interest in Llangollen. 'The success achieved at the festival had not only artistic but also political significance. The group was seen by 40,000 spectators.' After the festival, both groups went on a tour organised by an English cooperative organisation at various working centres in Wales. The final shows in London included a performance at the British-Yugoslav Friendship Society and another one at the Skala Theatre for Diplomatic Corps. All the performances were warmly welcomed by the audiences, and the tickets sold out beforehand.[668]

Following its initial success in Llangollen, the Macedonian ensemble was invited by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS) to perform at its annual New Year festival of folk dancing and allied arts in January 1951 (See Figure 4-2). The performance was a twenty-minute programme consisting of six Macedonian dances.[669]

[668] AJ 317-86-120, Report without Date, Section 2: Music and Folklore; Folklore Ensemble: Guest Tour in Great Britain.
[669] AJ 317-86-120, *Izveštaj o radu odeljenja za naučne i kulturne veze sa inostranstvom u 1950g.* (*Report on the Work of the Department for Scientific and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries in 1950*).



Figure 4-2. Photo of performances by Macedonian dancers in London in 1951 [670]

The report from *The Times* was very positive:

> The teams of male dancers from the Macedonian region of Yugoslavia provided more excitement than anything seen at these festivals except the Russian Cossacks of 1935 and possibly the Rumanian Calusari. They showed a form of the ancient chain dance, the Horo of immemorial antiquity (if Theseus and the Minotaur can be said to be immemorial), two Pyrrhic dances and the Teskoto, remarkable for the intensity produced by its slow balancing steps on one foot. . . . The musical accompaniment . . . cast a spell, primitive and potent, upon the spectator which was reinforced by the powerful ritual or drama of the dance.[671]

As the review notes, the dance programmes were filled with exoticism and were liked by the British audience. According to the Council report, the Macedonian groups were 'seen by 14,000 people and millions read and saw photos of it, as most notable newspapers . . . brought notices, reviews and pictures'. The director of the Llangollen Festival also invited the group to come again to the festival in Llangollen that year, believing that its participation could greatly raise the festival's reputation.[672]

The success of the Macedonian group was also confirmed by Maila Golob, a member of the Yugoslav Council for Science and Culture, who noted that the group attracted attention in

[670] Archives of the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, IM4026, Int/Mac/1951.
[671] 'Albert Hall, Folk Dance Festival', *The Times* [London], (6 January 1951), p.8.
[672] AJ 317-86-120, Report without Date, Section 2: Music and Folklore; Folklore Ensemble: Guest appearance at the Albert Hall in London, 6 January 1951.

London. Golob also expressed the need for changes in the folk ensembles' future overseas tours. According to her, the Macedonian ensemble's guest tour to London was done under very unfavourable material conditions. In order to perform in London, Yugoslavia had to bear the cost of the tour (which could be a large amount of money), though the EFDSS would be responsible for other costs such as accommodations. Golob thought they should no longer accept such invitations given the fame of Yugoslav folklore in Europe, where they were 'sought after as particularly interesting and attractive to the audience'.[673]

Despite material obstacles, Yugoslavia was also struggling to find an ideal folk dance group to perform in London. The EFDSS was looking for a small group of twenty people. At that time, there was no such professional troupe in Yugoslavia ready to perform on an international stage. In a meeting between representatives from the Council for Science and Culture and Yugoslav diplomats to Britain and the United States, London representative Šokorc suggested accepting the invitation despite these obstacles. He thought it was a great opportunity to propagate Yugoslav folklore to a potentially large audience (9,000) in Royal Albert Hall and through the subsequent commercial tour. Performing in London could boost the reputation of Yugoslav folklore, as evidenced by the success following the show and ongoing invitations from around the world. Šokorac also proposed forming a professional ensemble group that could tour all the important countries.[674]

In 1951, there were many guest tours of Yugoslav folklore ensemble in the UK, primarily undertaken by the Serbian State Ensemble. According to the government's plan, they were to participate in competitions at the Llangollen Festival, events at Royal Albert Hall, and the Festival of Britain. Tours were also arranged to various cities in Wales and England.

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[673] AJ 317-86-120, *Izveštaj rada za Januar 1951 Maila Golob, Sektor muzika i folklorni ansambl* (*Report on the Work for January 1951 by Maila Golob, section of Music and Folklore ensemble*).
[674] AJ 317-86-120, *Zabeleška sa sastanka po kulturim pitanjima 20 September 1950;* Iz saveta za nauku I kulturu prisutni: Vanda Novosel I Franc Drenovoc; vodjeni razgovori sa LJ. Dradićem (SAD) i S. Šokoracem (Engleska*).* (*Meeting Notes on Cultural Issues 20 September 1950;* Present from the Council for Science and Culture: Vanda Novosel and Franc Drenovoc; Discussions held with LJ. Dradic (USA) and S. Šokorac (England)).

A report in *The Manchester Guardian* titled 'Yugoslav Dancers Win First Prize at Eisteddfod' recorded the Serbian Ensemble's success at the Llangollen Festival. With folk music and dances of fifteen nations and an attendance of 25,356 spectators, the Yugoslav folk troupe once again won the first prize. The appreciation of Yugoslav folklore was clear in the article's narrative: 'the one mark knocked off for the performance of a group of dancers from Serbia representing the adjudicators' concession to the principle that perfection is not to be found here below'.[675] The Yugoslav dance group got nearly full marks from the judges, indicating the high quality and appreciation of its performance at the festival.

For its performance at the Royal Festival Hall in 1951, organised by the English Folk Dance Society as part of the Festival of Britain, Yugoslav dancers were described as 'magnificently trained, their dances were varied, spectacular, and often complicated, and their dress was superb'. Special attention was paid to the diversity of dances:

> It was perhaps the variety of their dances which was most impressive: the solemn and comic Warriors' Dance from the Albanian village of Rugovo, the Bachelors' Dance from the Banat, and the jigging, convivial, intricate steps from the villages of Slovenia, Serbia, and Macedonia were as changeful and as multi-coloured as a kaleidoscope and, incidentally, gave a vivid glimpse of the foreign influences, the Austro-Hungarian and the Turkish, which have been felt by this Slav nation.[676]

The composition of multi-ethnic groups of Yugoslavia and their cultural legacies was noted in the report. This was vital for promoting Yugoslav ethnic solidarity in communist ideology, which emphasised 'Brotherhood and Unity' among different ethnic groups.

The intensive guest performances in the UK helped build up the reputation of Yugoslav folklore. In this sense, Britain was an ideal destination as well as a starting point. It was mentioned several times in the report of the Council for Science and Culture that after these

[675] 'Yugoslav Dancers Win First Prize at Eisteddfod', *The Manchester Guardian*, (5 July 1951), p.5.
[676] 'Yugoslav and Spanish Dances', *The Manchester Guardian*, (5 September 1951), p.5.

performances in Britain, there would be greater publicity and new international opportunities for the folklore group.[677]

Unlike its ballet, to which certain modern elements were added and emphasised, the promotion of Yugoslav folklore stayed close to tradition. From the Yugoslav perspective, its folklore denoted nothing primitive or backward. On the contrary, folklore represented its cultural heritage and was a symbol of the Yugoslav nation. In order to better organise the ensemble group abroad, it was decided that the national ensembles from the People's Republic of Serbia, Croatia, and Macedonia would be mainly responsible for the guest performances abroad. The programmes of these three ensembles were diversified and encompassed dances and songs from various ethnographic areas of Yugoslavia. The diversity of its folklore was something Yugoslavia was proud of. The major concern was the attractiveness of its folklore, rather than the possible implicit degradation related to folklore culture in general. According to the report, 'the propaganda that is done through the display of our folk dances is very effective as it is massive and arouses great interest and sympathy for our country'. The importance attached to folklore was also reflected in organising the world tour of its Exhibition of Folk Art at that time (see Chapter 5). After the exhibition was held in Switzerland in 1949 and Britain in early 1950, plans were made to travel to Norway, Denmark, and Sweden during 1950.[678]

With its reputation solidified in Llangollen (having won two first prizes for its folklore group), Yugoslavia was invited by the Festival Committee to participate annually. To avoid repetition and refresh its appearance, the repertoire was updated almost every year. In planning the 1952 programme, the Festival organisers requested a non-professional folklore group to perform, believing that 'the spirit of folk competitions is suited only by an authentic and

[677] See AJ 317-86-120, *Meeting Notes on Cultural Issues 20 September 1950*; Present from the Council for Science and Culture: Vanda Novosel and Franc Drenovoc; Discussions held with LJ. Dradic (USA) and S. Šokorac (England); Report without Date, Section 2: Music and Folklore.
[678] AJ 317-86-120, Report without Date, Section 2: Music and Folklore.

original village group that performs dances and songs of its own end'. Therefore, in the proposal, Ambassador Brilej suggested sending either a group of Macedonian Rusalia or Bunjevci. It was expected that they could perform something new and compelling and thus maintain the great reputation of Yugoslav folklore. Another suggestion was to send a choir to perform folk and fighting songs.[679]

We know little about the details of the discussion inside the Council regarding the plan for 1952. Ultimately, the Serbian folklore ensemble was chosen to perform at Llangollen, and it won the first prize at the festival. One *Manchester Guardian* review extolled the performance for its '"tremendous dramatic power" for which the adjudicators had "nothing but praise"'.[680] In another article, written by the English humourist Paul Jennings in *The Observer,* the dance was described as 'sheer animal red-bloodedness. No one who saw it is likely to forget their tense sword dance, accompanied only by a terrifying drum, between two men who want the same girl'.[681] Even though the performance was impressive and received much praise, the depictions suggested certain pre-civilised primitiveness and exoticness in Western eyes.

In April 1952, the ambassador received a telegram from the renowned London theatre impresario Peter Daubeny. He wanted to invite the Yugoslav folklore ensemble for a four-week guest performance in one of the most famous London theatres. If the performance were successful in London, a two-month tour of England would follow afterwards. This event would be on a large scale and at the highest level compared to previous performances in Britain.[682]

Yugoslavia accepted the invitation, and its folklore ensemble performed at the Cambridge Theatre in 1952 under the title 'Slavonic Rhapsody'. The performance attracted many

[679] DAMFARS, 1952, F-23, No. 41824, *Predlog plana kulturno-umetnicke delatnosti u Britaniji za 1952 godinu* (*Proposal for the cultural and artistic activity plan in Britain for 1952*), telegram from Ambassador Jože Brilej to Rodoljub Colaković, President of the Council for Science and Culture of the FPRY, 13 December 1951.
[680] 'Lancashire's Exotic Note-Dancers at Eisteddfod', *The Manchester Guardian*, (10 July 1952), p.8.
[681] 'Music in the Valley', *The Observer*, (13 July 1952), p.8.
[682] DAMFARS, 1952, F-23, No.45483, Telegram from Ambassador Brilej to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4 April 1952.

theatregoers and was well-received according to press reports . Most reviews described the performance as full of colour and variety. *The Daily Telegraph* noted that 'each of the countries comprising the modern Yugoslavia makes its characteristic contribution in folk dance'.[683] Conductor Sir Malcolm Sargent described the dance as the best collection of folk dances he had ever seen, praising them as 'so gay, so primitive, so utterly unspoiled'.[684] An article in *The Manchester Guardian* affirmed that 'among European countries theirs [Yugoslavia's] is one of the richest in folk song and dances'.[685] Ballet art critic Richard Buckle wrote another article in *The Observer*. He also gave high praise for Yugoslav folk dance:

> Some people, I know, do not care for folk-dances; others do not believe they can be successfully adapted for stage performance. These Yugoslav dances certainly have been. The Yugoslav State Company at the Cambridge Theatre provided the most thrilling and varied entertainment. Thrilling because of the intricacy and virtuosity of the dances; because of the beauty of the girls and the vitality of the men, the haunting tunes, and rich, strange costumes. Varied because of the diverse races-Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Bosnians, Montenegrins and Macedonians-which make up modern Yugoslavia.[686]

Strikingly unlike his criticism of Yugoslav ballet at the Edinburgh Festival in 1951, Richard Buckle's comments on Yugoslav folk dance were very positive. While Yugoslav ballet was chided on grounds of both aesthetics and choreography, its folk dance was praised for 'intricacy and virtuosity'. This contrast confirmed the ambassador's perception that Yugoslavia was still considered culturally backward and only excelled in folk dance, not high art forms like ballet. Traditional folklore suited the cliched image of Yugoslavia as an exotic place in the Balkans. Yet, when it comes to modern Yugoslav ballet, its creativity was seen as a strange hybrid, overladen with folklore elements and lacking certain classical aesthetics. Nonetheless, the effort to build a Yugoslav identity was appreciated by the Britons—some press reports even mentioned the multi-ethnic groups within modern Yugoslavia.

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[683] *The Daily Telegraph*, (20 May 1952), in AJ, F-317-89-127.
[684] *Daily Express*, (20 May 1952), in AJ, F-317-89-127.
[685] *The Manchester Guardian*, (21 May 1952).
[686] Richard Buckle, 'Ballet', *The Observer,* (25 May 1952), p.6.

In 1953, Yugoslavia did not participate in the dance competition at Llangollen. Instead, they sent the Radio Belgrade folk-song choir to participate in the folk-song party competition. Again, it won first place.[687] Yugoslavia continued to attend the Llangollen International Festival throughout the 1950s. In 1956, the Yugoslav choir from Belgrade received the top score among the twenty-nine choirs in the folk-singing choral competition.[688] In 1958, the Yugoslav all-male choir *Komorni Moski Zbor Celje* from Slovenia won first prize for folk-singing.[689]

Organising guest tours of a folk ensemble in the UK was not easy for Yugoslavia. It incurred material costs and required laborious coordination and preparations within the government. Invitations were usually received through the Yugoslav Embassy in London and then sent to the Department for Scientific and Cultural Relations with the Foreign Countries, part of the Federal Council for Science and Culture, for consideration. Because all the materials travelled through the couriers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there were sometimes unavoidable delays that would either nullify the proposals or not allow sufficient time to consult professional sectors within the Council. Moreover, sometimes the relevant professional sectors lacked interest in participating abroad, dismissing the proposals as 'unplanned and unforeseen'.[690] Despite these challenges, Yugoslavia managed to arrange numerous guest tours of its folklore ensembles to Britain.

III. Conclusion

The creation of the Edinburgh International Festival immediately after the war represented Britain's ambition to become a vital cultural centre in Europe. Inviting Yugoslavia to perform

[687] 'English Folk-Dancers' Victory at Llangollen Eisteddfod', *The Manchester Guardian*, (9 July 1953), p.3.
[688] 'Llangollen Beats Record with 52,000 Visitors-Yugoslavs Win Folk Choir Contest', *The Manchester Guardian*, (12 July 1956), p.5.
[689] 'Rumanian Dancers and Yugoslav Singers Take First Prizes', *The Manchester Guardian*, (11 July 1957), p.5.
[690] AJ 317-86-120, *Izveštaj o radu odeljenja za naučne i kulturne veze sa inostranstvom u 1950g.* (*Report on the Work of the Department for Scientific and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries in 1950*).

at the Festival showed its openness and intention to include a diverse repertoire. The interest and enthusiasm for Yugoslavia's folklore in Britain also contributed to the debut of Yugoslav ballet at the Edinburgh Festival. For Yugoslavia, promoting folklore highlighted its national unity as well as its communist ideology, presenting folkloric song and dance as traditions of the 'people'. [691] Even though the British public reception of its ballets at the Edinburgh Festival did not meet Yugoslavia's expectations, the success of those performances and its folklore groups was still noteworthy.

Ambassador Brilej was keen on advancing Yugoslavia's cultural work in Britain. He not only developed a detailed plan for nearly all cultural fields but also tried to push it to the maximum. He wrote a letter to the president of the Council for Science and Culture, Rodoljub Colaković, to accompany a general work plan for cultural activities in Britain in 1952. In the letter, he reiterated the success of Yugoslav cultural work in 1951 with its ballet at the Edinburgh Festival and numerous performances by its ensembles in London. However, he noted that cultural relations could not keep pace with the evolution of political contacts:

> We are far behind in terms of introducing English to our cultural values, and this work has been quite one-sided so far. It came down mostly to our folk dances, ballet and vocal music. . . . You know for yourself that the vast majority of Englishmen still think of Yugoslavia as a Balkan uncultured country, which admittedly has a brave, belligerent people but was culturally backward; the ideas that we are guided by in the construction of our country may be right for the Yugoslavs but do not fit the cultured West etc.[692]

It was not the first time he pleaded to develop 'the most active cultural work' in Britain. According to him, this idea was also supported by high-ranking Communist Party members Edvard Kardelj and Milovan Đjilas when they discussed the issue in Paris. He insisted on presenting 'quality things' as the only useful way to promote Yugoslavia. As he already noticed, the ideology of socialist construction had limited attractiveness in Britain. The line he strongly suggested to take was in painting and sculpture. He clearly expressed this in the letter: 'I'm not

[691] Balme and Szymanski-Düll, 'Introduction', p.8.
[692] DAMFARS, 1952, F-23, No. 41824, Telegram from Ambassador Jože Brilej to R. Čolaković, 14 December 1951.

in favour of promoting folklore next year to give the impression that we have nothing else. That is why I am writing to you about one-sidedness so far.' He suggested changing the focus of the cultural work in order not to be overwhelmed by folk art events. To realise such a goal, he even suggested that Yugoslavia should accept some financial sacrifices. He noted that 'Yugoslavia [would] remain halfway in the work of securing [their] positions in England if [they] fail in terms of cultural affirmation of Yugoslavia'.[693]

Starting in the mid-1950s, Yugoslavia started to push forward its modern culture, holding modern art exhibitions abroad and participating in the 1958 World Exhibition in Brussels (to be discussed in Chapter 5). Despite this shift, folk art remained a strong element in Yugoslavia's cultural work, with constant invitations from the UK to perform. Additionally, Yugoslav folk groups needed to perform at the Llangollen Festival to maintain their overseas reputation. However, the tension between tradition and modernity always permeated Yugoslavia's foreign cultural policy as the state constantly struggled to find a balance between the two.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, Yugoslavs gave several guest performances in Britain, including modern ballet, opera, and folk dances. These exchanges aimed to showcase the modern face of Yugoslav culture while emphasising multi-ethnic folk art as part of the country's traditional heritage. But the results were not always as good as expected. The programmes featuring works completed under socialism received mixed reviews in the British press. As a consequence, the success of folk ensembles was a double-edged sword. While it brought significant exposure of Yugoslavia to Britain, it also reinforced the stereotypical image of Yugoslavia.

[693] DAMFARS, 1952, F-23, No. 41824, Telegram from Ambassador Jože Brilej to R. Čolaković, 14 December 1951.

Chapter 5. Pursuing Modernism: British–Yugoslav Art Exchanges, 1950s–1961

In addition to promoting ballet and folk dance on various occasions in Britain, art exhibitions constituted a significant part of Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy towards Britain. The same applied to Britain, as it attempted to use its modern artistic achievements to attract an audience in Yugoslavia. Art acted as a powerful tool for both countries. Bilateral art exchanges and exhibitions were usually conceived under the influence of politics. Artistic creations were not only about aesthetics; they also needed to be contextualised within diverse political and social backgrounds. Therefore, using artistic products to create certain images often formed part of a country's foreign cultural policy and served as an essential element of cultural diplomacy between Britain and Yugoslavia during the Cold War.

There is a well-developed historiography on the role of the visual arts in Cold War cultural politics. Considering culture and art as part of a country's soft power, foreign cultural policy is often deemed by historians as an extension of domestic politics and foreign policy. Manfred J. Holler and Barbara Klose-Ullmann emphasise that 'cultural policy became a weapon of the Cold War'. They contend that international politics were not only restricted to hard power competition, such as 'military potentials, geo-political advantages, and international alliances' during the Cold War, but also extended to the cultural field, specifically art.[694] They argue that the success of America's cultural offensive through art was connected with its domestic politics and foreign policy.[695] Promoting American art through funding contemporary art, such as Abstract Expressionism, was intended to showcase the freedom and liberty of American society

[694] Manfred J. Holler and Barbara Klose-Ullmann, 'Abstract Expressionism as a Weapon of the Cold War', in Jozef Bátora and Monika Mokre (eds), *Cultural and External Relations: Europe and Beyond* (Farnham, 2011), p.135.
[695] Holler and Klose-Ullmann, 'Abstract Expressionism as a Weapon of the Cold War', pp.119–135. Eva Cockcroft shares a similar view by analysing how Abstract Expressionism was used as a tool of American propaganda, in 'Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War', in Francis Frascina (ed), *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*.

abroad, especially behind the Iron Curtain. Art exhibitions, therefore, served specific political ends and were important in enhancing a country's image and influence. As historian Veronika Wolf notes regarding the political undertone of the Venice Biennale, the exhibition 'was strongly influenced by political pressures, each country's understanding of its own national cultural identity, and the desire of participating nation states to project an accurate image of themselves to the rest of the world'.[696]

In the case of Yugoslavia, art exhibitions were crucial in projecting Yugoslav national identity abroad from the beginning. Historian Nenad Makuljević contends that 'art became one of the important testimonies to the existence of the Yugoslav nation, as well as a means for spreading the idea of a Yugoslav state' as early as World War I. As a result, several exhibition projects were organised, such as Ivan Meštrović's exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1915 and joint exhibitions by Yugoslav artists in Lyon[s] in 1917 and Geneva in 1918.[697]

In 1947, the Commission of Culture and Art of the newly established socialist Yugoslavia maintained that art exhibitions were a significant form of cultural and political propaganda to foreign countries. According to government promoters, it was necessary to make these exhibitions 'at a decent level in order to achieve the maximum possible effect and to be a truly cultural manifestation'.[698] Historian Reuben Fowkes suggests that Yugoslavia's efforts in this area at least partly paid off, asserting that Yugoslavia's participation in the São Paulo Biennales in the 1950s helped 'establish a geo-political niche for Tito as leader of the Non-aligned movement'.[699]

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[696] Veronika Wolf, 'Czechoslovakia at the Venice Biennale in the 1950s, in Jerome Bazin, Pascal Dubourg Glatigny and Piotr Piotrowski (eds), *Art beyond Borders* (Budapest, New York, 2016), p.356.
[697] Nenad Makuljević, *Yugoslav Art and Culture: From the Art of a Nation to the Art of a Territory*, YU historija, http://yuhistorija.com/culture_religion_txt01.html, (20 September 2021).
[698] AJ, 559-106-236, Telegram from Secretary of the Culture and Arts Committee, Madjarić Vlado, to the Presidency of the FNRJ government, 24 February 1947.
[699] Reuben Fowkes, 'Croatia/Hungary: Socialist Realist Art Criticism at the Crossroads in the 1950s', *Third Text* 20/2 (2006), p.205.

Art historian Vladimir Kulić highlights the dichotomous approaches in Yugoslavia's official pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World Exposition, namely its promotion of both traditional folk culture and modernism in architecture.[700] This embrace of tradition and modernity was in line with Yugoslavia's policy after its split with the Soviet Union in 1948. Official support for socialist realist art was replaced by increasing freedom in artistic creation, as the Soviet party-state model for cultural development was rejected. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, 'a political opportunity to re-incorporate Yugoslav art into the European context' arose. Starting from the VIth Congress of the KPJ (1952), 'the party abandoned the administrative approach to art.'[701]

Modernist art developed in the Yugoslav art scene in alignment with the global modernist trend in art. Reuben Fowkes and Nancy Jachec document the role of modernism in conducting cultural diplomacy in Europe in the 1950s, noting that certain countries (such as Yugoslavia, Spain, and Italy) promoted modernism positively as a way of seeking 'international recognition'.[702] From the 1950s, the Yugoslav government increasingly showcased its modernist artworks to present a favourable image abroad. As modern art became mainstream, Nenad Makuljević argued that 'Yugoslavism (traditional element) in art was being slowly pushed into the background', while '[a]rtistic practice and theory were evolving within the framework of global modernist trends'.[703] Vladimir Kulić has likewise confirmed the development of modernism in art in Socialist Yugoslavia after its split with the Soviet Union, noting that 'high modernism in visual arts soon acquired broad acceptance, replacing Socialist Realism's demands for explicit ideological representation'. He explores how modernism in

[700] Vladimir Kulić, 'An Avant-Garde Architecture for an Avant-Garde Socialism: Yugoslavia at EXPO' 58', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 47/1 (2012), pp.161–184. In this article, Kulić noted that the pursuit of the artist was neglected and replaced by the superfluous state political goal. The architect Richter's reference to self-management in his avant-garde design of the pavilion was overly politicised as a sign of Yugoslavia's independence from the Soviet Union.
[701] Lidija Merenik, *Ideološki modeli: srpsko slikarstvo 1945-1968* (Belgrade, 2001), p.49; p.50.
[702] Reuben Fowkes and Nancy Jachec, 'Introduction: Art and Politics in the 1950s', *Third Text*, 20/2 (2006), p.130.
[703] Nenad Makuljević, *Yugoslav Art and Culture: From the Art of a Nation to the Art of a Territory*, *YU historija*, http://yuhistorija.com/culture_religion_txt01.html, (20 September 2021).

architecture was welcomed as it provided 'the immediately obvious signs of distinction from the Soviet bloc as an effective symbolic source of Yugoslavia's external legitimation'.[704] Kulić also notes that 'the desired frame of reference for Yugoslav architecture shifted in the early 1950s steadily to the West'.[705] Art historian Lidija Merenik argues that art during this period is 'the initiator of progressive processes': 'It is the ultimate sign of the accelerated modernisation of society, which, in turn, is the main signifier of change in Yugoslav foreign and, to some extent, internal policy.'[706]

Nevertheless, this modernist facet represented only one aspect of Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy. The promotion of Yugoslavia's traditional art, such as folk culture and cultural heritage, should not be ignored. Exhibiting traditional art not only helped to boost Yugoslavs' cultural confidence abroad but also stimulated curiosity about Yugoslavia overseas. Interest in its traditional art, such as religious cultural heritage, was large in Britain and the West in general. Authentic old icons were especially sought after by Israel, Britain, the German Democratic Republic, and the United States.[707] The initiative to organise the medieval fresco exhibition in Britain was spearheaded by the British side after its inaugural show in Paris.

The focus on traditional culture strengthened Yugoslavia's 'Brotherhood and Unity' ideology, which bound together different ethnic groups and republics, thereby helping to legitimise communist rule. Art historian Tanja Zimmermann observes that the use of Yugoslavia's traditional and primitive culture in the 1950s was a means to justify its ideological

[704] Vladimir Kulić, 'The Scope of Socialist Modernism, Architecture and State Representation in Postwar Yugoslavia', in *Sanctioning Modernism*, p.39. See also Kulić, Mrduljaš and Thaler, *Modernism in Between*.
[705] Vladimir Kulić, 'National, Supranational, International: New Belgrade and the Symbolic Construction of a Socialist Capital', *Nationalities Papers*, 41/1 (2013), p.44. In this article, he analysed the propagandistic role of New Belgrade's buildings in the 1950s and how they showcased the modernist momentum, as well as the recalibration of both Yugoslavia's foreign and domestic policies.
[706] Merenik, *Ideološki modeli*, p.16; see also Branislav Dimitrijević, *Potrošeni socijalizam: kultura, konzumerizam i društvena imaginacija u Jugoslaviji (1950-1974)* (Belgrade, 2016).
[707] AJ 559-84-189, *Stenografske beleške, Prvi sastanak odbora za likovnu umetnost pri komisiji za Kulturne veze sa inostranstvom*, 14 November 1960, p.11.

pursuit of socialism beyond the East and the West.[708] As discussed in the previous chapter, folklore was integral to the Yugoslav Communist Party's ideology of nation-building, aiming to forge a common national identity for Yugoslavia. In addition to traditional cultural heritage such as frescos and icons, 'folk tradition was regarded as the expression of the nation'.[709] Therefore, folk culture became an indispensable part of Yugoslavia's cultural offensive towards Britain.

This phenomenon was not unique to Yugoslavia; it was a common pursuit of the socialist East to appropriate folklore as the foundation of its post-war national culture and identity.[710] At the same time, the Yugoslav government was cautious in promoting traditional art to avoid reinforcing a stereotypical image of Yugoslavia in Britain as a country with only a colourful folk culture, lacking a thriving modern art world like the West.

Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy used different strategies when organising exhibitions abroad, usually positioning 'the most cutting-edge art' to the West whilst leaving 'the more conservative works' to be exhibited in the East (i.e., the Soviet Union).[711] This was because abstract art was the trend in the West at that time, while the socialist bloc officially adhered to Socialist Realism. This strategy showed how Yugoslav authorities recognised art modernism as an advanced international style.

In this chapter, I argue that during the 1950s the artistic exchanges between Britain and Yugoslavia helped Yugoslavia build an image of a modern, open, and progressive socialist country with a fertile cultural heritage. However, this does not imply that Britain was the only Western country with which Yugoslavia rebuilt cultural ties. In 1949, prominent French

[708] Tanja Zimmermann, 'The Visualisation of the Third Way in Tito's Yugoslavia', in Glatigny and Piotrowski, *Art beyond Borders,* pp.473–84.
[709] Jerome Bazin, Pascal Dubourg Glatigny and Piotr Piotrowski, 'Introduction: Geography of Internationalism', in Glatigny and Piotrowski, *Art beyond Borders*, p.19.
[710] See K. Jeżowska, 'Imagined Poland: Representations of the Nation State at the Exhibitions of Industry, Craft and Design, 1948–1974' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2018).
[711] Kulić, 'An Avant-Garde Architecture for an Avant-Garde Socialism', p.183.

intellectuals, including Jean Cassou– a member of the French Resistance during World War II and the first Director of the Musée nationale d'Art moderne in Paris–visited Yugoslavia. In the spring of 1950, an exhibition of recent French fine art was opened at the National Museum in Belgrade. In 1952, the 'Contemporary French Painting' exhibition was shown in Belgrade.[712] 'The Yugoslav environment was finally enabled, again by the will of political conditions, to get acquainted with the new artistic situation in the (Western) world, primarily in Europe.'[713] As historian Marković observed, there was a new 'synchronisation of the rhythm of holding international exhibitions in Belgrade and the currents of Yugoslav foreign policy'.[714]

Such a combination reflected Yugoslavia's cultural policies after the 1948 split with the Soviet Union. On the one hand, the promotion of modern art was in line with its domestic modernisation efforts, which outpaced those of its communist counterparts in other parts of Europe. Support of modern art as a means of reconnecting with the West signalled its distance from Socialist Realism, the dominant ideology in Soviet art. This was also part of the process by which Yugoslavia gradually returned to and accommodated the post-war cultural international system, which emphasised the universalism, freedom, and humanity. On the other hand, by promoting folk art that showcased the distinctiveness of Yugoslav culture, the Yugoslavs attempted nonetheless to show that Yugoslavia was not 'uncivilised' or backward.[715]

This combination of traditional and modern art narratives shaped its cultural exchanges with Britain. However, the reception of such exhibitions sometimes went astray, revealing a

[712] There was also a selection of Works of Dutch Painting in 1955; Contemporary Art of the USA in 1957; Contemporary Italian Art 1958. See Lidija Merenik, *Ideološki modeli: srpsko slikarstvo 1945-1968*, p.51.
[713] Ibid.
[714] Marković, *Beograd između istoka i zapada*, p.425.
[715] See AJ, F-559, Telegram from the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Council of Science and Culture, *Izveštaj o kulturnoj delatnosti u 1951 godine* (*The report on cultural activities in 1951*), 26 February 1952. It was mentioned that 'there is a tendency to depict Yugoslavia as a country of brave warriors, but backward, underdeveloped, poor and uncivilized at the same time'.

discrepancy between the perceptions and expectations of critics and general audiences in Britain and the cultural policymakers in Yugoslavia.

This chapter traces the evolution of visual art exchanges between Yugoslavia and Britain, focusing particularly on the Yugoslav perspective. It examines several Yugoslav exhibitions held in Britain and the reception of the Henry Moore Exhibition organised by the British Council in Yugoslavia in 1955. The chapter addresses how art exhibitions served as a tool to advance Yugoslavia's political agenda, present its national image, and build up its reputation in Britain, despite occasional setbacks.

Several case studies will be analysed, beginning with the Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition in London and Edinburgh in 1950. This will be followed by the international sculpture competition in 1953, 'The Unknown Political Prisoner', organised by the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, and its subsequent exhibition at the Tate Gallery. In 1955, the Henry Moore exhibition opened in four major cities in Yugoslavia. Following that were two significant exhibitions of Yugoslav art in Britain: 'Modern Yugoslav Painting' in 1956 and the larger 'Contemporary Yugoslav Painting and Sculpture' in 1961. These fine art exchanges with Britain illustrate the dichotomy of promoting both modern and traditional art abroad.

Studying art exhibitions between Britain and Yugoslavia can provide valuable insights into the Yugoslav government's cultural diplomacy. For Yugoslavia, exhibiting in Britain was an effective way to raise the profile of its contemporary art under socialism. In this context, art was not only related to the aesthetic concept and theory but also served as an indicator of its soft power. The promotion of Yugoslav modern art showcased its well-developed political system and comparatively open and free society, allowing artists and artisans the freedom to pursue modernism in art. Over time, the art exhibitions became increasingly oriented towards modernism. But it must be emphasised that the core of communism remained untouched. The promotion of modernism in art, alongside Yugoslav traditional art, successfully conveyed a

message to Britain and the world: Yugoslavia was a socialist country that had achieved much on its own road to socialism, projecting a progressive image that outshone both the socialist East and the capitalist West.

I. Showcasing Cultural Heritage: Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition in Britain in 1950

> The peoples of Yugoslavia are building socialism in their liberated homeland; and one of their tasks in the building of socialism is the preservation of their cultural heritage. The traditional crafts . . . represent artistic expression applied to the commodities of the home, and they have their origin in the creative impulse to beautify the practical appliances of everyday life.
> ——*The Introduction of Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition Catalogue* in London 1950[716]

Just after the split with Moscow, folklore was chosen by the Yugoslav government to display the new face of Yugoslav socialism.[717] Showing cultural heritage abroad was always a key part of Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy. This approach was driven by two main factors: the limited resources available for contemporary art in the country, especially in the early 1950s, and the recognition of Yugoslav traditional art as a great symbol of national identity. As Milenko Filipović, the curator at the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade, remarked in 1949 during the preparation for the folk-art exhibition, such exhibitions carried symbolic domestic significance. They were 'primarily intended to teach and raise self-awareness' among Yugoslavs considering the fact that Yugoslav people suffered from an inferiority complex.[718] The task was to invent a common Yugoslav identity and cultural heritage that all peoples within this newly established socialist country could share.[719]

Yugoslav cultural officials highly valued the country's artistic legacies. Yugoslav cultural heritage was indeed very popular among foreign audiences and professionals, especially

[716] *Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition Catalogue* (London, 1950).
[717] Marina Cvetković, 'Displaying National Culture in Antinationalist Times: The Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade under socialism', in Vintilă Mihăilescu, Ilia Iliev and Slobodan Naumović (eds), *Studying Peoples in the People's Democracies II: Socialist Era Anthropology in South-East Europe*, pp.293–4.
[718] Ibid, pp.11–12.
[719] Ibid, p.12.

influenced by the romantic imagination about the Balkans from nineteenth-century travelogues and fiction. During the early 1950s, major exhibitions held in the West could be categorised into two types: medieval frescos and Yugoslav folk art. After years of preparation, an exhibition of Yugoslav medieval art opened in Paris in 1951, which aroused much interest among the French public. Later in 1953, this exhibition was held at the Tate Gallery in London and the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh. The exhibition included 'works of wall paintings and small sculptures from about thirty churches throughout Yugoslavia'. According to historian Branka Doknić, these fresco paintings from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were exhibited in the West because a proposal to organise an exhibition of contemporary art was rejected by the Ministry of Culture. The explanation given was that Yugoslavia still had 'only a limited number of representative works of art'. Yugoslav authorities considered medieval frescos as a precious cultural heritage that represented the artistic and religious legacy of the Yugoslav nation. Considering the high art historical value and the great publicity surrounding these exhibitions when exhibited abroad, such medieval fresco exhibitions later became a fixed feature in Yugoslavia's overseas exhibition repertoire. [720]

In addition to showing medieval cultural heritage, another strategic approach taken by the Yugoslav government towards the West was to highlight its folk art, especially during the period of 1949–52.[721] As early as 1946, Yugoslavia held a folk costume exhibition together with a book exhibition in London. Later, in 1950, a major exhibition of Yugoslav folk art was held in London and Edinburgh, and it was also mounted in other European countries. Yugoslavia was aware of the allure of its folk art among Western audiences. Similar initiatives were taken in the fields of music and dance, with Yugoslav state ensembles touring Europe and performing diverse folk dances, as analysed in detail in Chapter 4. Distinguished ethnologists

[720] Doknić, *Kulturna Politika Jugoslavije 1946–1963*, p.90.
[721] Ibid., p.90.

and representatives of ethnographic museums from all six Yugoslav republics were invited to create the concept of this exhibition.[722]

Balancing its socialist character was not an easy task. Organisers had to find a middle ground between traditional folk culture and the rhetoric of modernity in socialist culture. Folk crafts usually have an ethnographic character, evoking images of museum objects mostly connected with outdated methods of production. This was not acceptable to the organisers, as the exhibition was designed to front the achievements of socialism.

As argued by historian György Péteri, the project of socialism needed to emphasise the 'autonomous, exceptional and superior nature of socialist society in comparison to and distinction from capitalism'.[723] This was a concern for Yugoslav officials when designing such a folk-art project. The folk-art exhibition in Britain lasted from 20 January to 16 February in London and 1 February to 28 February in Edinburgh in 1950. It consisted of original handicrafts of Yugoslav folk art from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, showing a total of 1,400 items. Initially ethnographically oriented, the exhibition later included and highlighted more elements of applied art. The Yugoslav government considered this exhibition one of the most representative displays of the country's culture.[724] London was one of the first foreign cities to host this exhibition. After Britain, it travelled to other countries such as Norway, Sweden, France, Belgian, Holland, the United States, and Italy.[725]

The organisers of the folk-art exhibition aimed to emphasise two key points: the uniqueness of national cultural heritage for the Yugoslav nation-state and the revival of folk art as a pillar of socialist culture (through national dance and musical performances and mass

[722] Cvetković, 'Displaying National Culture in Antinationalist Times', pp.293–4.
[723] György Péteri, 'Sites of Convergence: The USSR and Communist Eastern Europe at International Fairs Abroad and at Home', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 47/1 (2012), p.4.
[724] AJ-317-88- 126, Telegram from Vanda Novosel, Head of the Department for Scientific and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries under Yugoslavia Government's Council for Science and Culture, to the Yugoslav Legation in Rome, 26 June 1951.
[725] AJ-559-8-19, *Kulturne Veze Likovna Umetnost 1951, I Naše učešće na međunarodnim Izložbama* (*Cultural Relations Fine Arts 1951, I Our participation in international exhibitions*).

production). In the preparatory meeting for the exhibition held in Belgrade in February 1949, discussions revealed a strong nationalist tone. One participant, Gošić, while acknowledging the regional similarity in folk styles in the Adriatic area, emphasised the Yugoslav variation as an 'inherent development of their own style' and its contribution to creating that specific style. He cited the example of lace, expressing frustration that 'in all textbooks all Mediterranean lace was called Italian lace or to a lesser extent, Spanish or French'. He felt that Yugoslav cultural creativity and heritage had been 'stolen'. The folk-art exhibition provided an opportunity to show 'Yugoslavia's share in its creation and its present value'.[726] He also stressed the importance of interpreting folk art properly and that the exhibition should reflect the value of Yugoslav folk art:

> We will not say that our folk art is another world in Europe, but rather that it is a contribution to the general cultural creativity and a strong dynamic share in that cultural creativity and that artistic expression. That contribution is all our folk give to the present.[727]

By saying this, he intended to diminish the exotic colour and stereotypical treatment of Yugoslav traditional culture and sought to integrate Yugoslav folk art as part of the general European civilisation, highlighting its cultural value and history.

However, there were also challenges with the exhibition. Folk art from certain regions was strategically significant in asserting Yugoslavia's national style. Gošić continued to mention in the meeting that while Macedonian art was well represented, little was shown from the Pannonian Plain and the Littoral area. He believed it was important to identify the Yugoslav character of its folk art, especially when compared with neighbouring countries. He used the example of the Slovene Littoral:

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[726] AJ-317- 88-126, *Izložba Jugoslovenske Narodne Umetnosti, Stenografske beleške sa konferencije pretstavnika Ministarstva za nauku i kulturu FNRJ i pretstavnika etnografskih muzeja, primenjene umetnosti i drugih* (*Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition, Stenographic notes from the conference of representatives from the Ministry of Science and Culture of the FPRY and representatives from ethnographic museums, applied arts, and others*), 21 and 22 February 1949 in Belgrade, p.3.
[727] Ibid., p.4.

> And it is in *Primorje* that we have to fight a cultural battle with Italy. We know that our Littoral is rich in colours and style. Our style began to give its voice in the 15th century, and we need, and we should, to say that we have our own, we will not say that it is Italian, that we do not have our own. We have one branch and Italy another. This exhibition does not show that.[728]

From his point of view, it was natural to highlight Macedonian folklore because of its uniqueness. However, Gošić argued that they should not ignore other areas just because their folk art (such as lace and embroidery) resembled Italian folk art and did not seem unique enough for Yugoslavia. On the contrary, he believed that showing those objects was a 'battle' with Italy. It was necessary to include them in the folk-art exhibition so they would 'stand out'. He emphasised that the exhibition should cover all cultural areas: the cultivated Primorska, the more medieval-oriented Dinaric and Macedonia, as well as the agricultural Pannonian Plain, to provide a comprehensive folkloric picture of the country.[729]

Another closely related issue in selecting regional folk art was maintaining a balance among the republics. The federal character of socialist Yugoslavia and its ideological watchword of 'Brotherhood and Unity' implied equality among the republics and all the people. This principle was fundamental to Yugoslav nation- and identity-building. It also characterised the folk-art exhibition, which was supposed to show the artistic creations of all the peoples living within the country. As one participant, Braniš, expressed in the preparatory meeting, 'we cannot go abroad with an exhibition featuring Croatia, Bosnia but [only] a bit [of] Slovenia. It certainly needs to be completed'.[730] The theme of keeping balance among the republics was always a focal point in discussions when organising exhibitions abroad.

The issue of balance arose again while the exhibition was on display in Stockholm. There were two choices for curating this exhibition: either to divide the exhibits by republic or by theme. The Embassy officials preferred the latter because the republics from which those

[728] Ibid., p.6.
[729] Ibid., pp.6–7.
[730] Ibid, p.33.

exhibits originated could be included in the inscriptions.[731] This question of balance reappeared later when organising a contemporary art exhibition in Britain in 1961.

Promotion of its folk art was always a part of Yugoslav government's cultural policy. In Yugoslavia, there were officially organised seminars studying folklore and folk-art festivals, such as the one in Opatija. Outside the country, guest performances by Yugoslav state ensembles and the participation of folklore groups at art festivals increased the exposure of Yugoslav folk art, showcasing the vividness and liveliness of its cultural heritage. National dance performances were regarded by ethnographers as an effective and up-to-date application of traditional folk-art culture for contemporary society.

Folk art, including traditional national costumes and embroidery, was not only to be aesthetically beautiful but also to have a functional role in socialist society. When the folk-art exhibition was organised in 1949, party ideology was still emphasised everywhere, especially among the party echelons. Despite the split with the Soviet Union, orthodox Marxist-Leninist ideology was strictly followed, focusing on building a socialist way of production and culture. The process of designing this exhibition reflected the obsession with socialist ideology among the Yugoslav party echelon at that time. In order to raise the ideological profile of the exhibition and increase foreign trade, applied arts such as pottery, woodcarving, and weaving were emphasised because they were practical daily-use items rather than pure artisan objects.

This exhibition was designed to depart from general ethnographic displays and Yugoslavia's previous folk exhibitions. It was intended to reflect the character of contemporary socialist Yugoslavia. As the chairman of the preparatory meeting emphasised,

> We have to speak at every step about Yugoslavia as a new Yugoslavia, as a country of socialism, as a country that builds socialism. Therefore, in particular, under the

[731] AJ-317-88-126, *Otpravnik poslova poslanstva FNRJ u stokholmu-Savetu za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ* (*Telegram from Charge d'Affaires of the FNRY Legation in Stockholm to the Council for Science and Culture of the FNRJ Government*), 30 July 1951, in Arhiv Jugoslavije, *Kulturna politika jugoslavije 1945–1952* (Belgrade, 2009), pp.493–4.

> circumstances, the exhibition comes and I don't think we should proceed from the setting that this exhibition should be an ethnographic exhibition.[732]

Braniš confirmed the need to showcase applied art and handicrafts in terms of their potential commercial value as trade products.

> We need to show with our ethnography what we have created so far, how strong we are and how we can compete abroad. . . . We must show that these exhibits are not only propaganda, but also serve our trade. We who have gone abroad know that all the enemy voices that speak about us are silent as soon as we come to what we are producing today with our wealth.[733]

In other words, the purpose of this exhibition was to demonstrate the success of the socialist system in Yugoslavia. It attempted to link folk culture with current economic production, believing that folk products manufactured in a socialist economy could attract foreign consumption, thereby boosting foreign trade and showcasing socialist economic achievements. This exhibition also played a role in refuting the Eastern Bloc's efforts to tarnish the image of socialist Yugoslavia. Ethnographic and folk art would be appreciated by the audience, but could not directly contribute to the country's economy. Therefore, it was necessary to combine folk art with agricultural or peasant products that could be traded to generate foreign exchange. Applied artisan crafts would be an ideal combination of past and present, showing Yugoslavia's splendid cultural legacy and contemporary socialism. Various ideas were raised to better interweave these two elements. Gušić thought they could arrange these two parts of the exhibition in parallel, for instance, inserting the lace exhibits where they would display their folk costumes. Additional exhibits introducing grain machinery, workshops, [socialist] women, wages, and working conditions in socialist Yugoslavia were also to be included.[734]

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[732] AJ-317- 88-126, *Izložba Jugoslovenske Narodne Umetnosti, Stenografske beleške sa konferencije pretstavnika Ministarstva za nauku i kulturu FNRJ i pretstavnika etnografskih muzeja, primenjene umetnosti i drugih*, 21 and 22 February 1949 in Belgrade, pp.18–19.
[733] Ibid, pp.19–20.
[734] Ibid., p.34.

Transferring cultural traditions to a socialist present meant adding new ideological content to folk art.[735] The task was not to 'show museum objects', which might imply that Yugoslavia was stuck in outdated cultural traditions. Instead, they wanted to promote 'real handicrafts involved with the applied folk-art sector', such as those produced by state-run cooperatives. As Gušić said during the meeting:

> We certainly need to keep in mind that our handicrafts should be the ones we want to implement through our lives, it must be produced in the socialist economy, in a cooperative society. We only want to transfer our handicrafts to the current setting. We should connect original works, ethnographic, museum objects with today's production [in order] to show how we are shifting our heritage to the socialist economy. They would give us socialist form and socialist contents.[736]

The connections with socialist ideology were motivated by political concerns. As the chairman expressed during the preparatory meeting, it was necessary to show through the exhibition that 'Yugoslavia [was] a country that buil[t] socialism', for instance, by showing lace production in the cooperatives and the current situation of the lace producing workers.[737]

However, merging the seemingly contradictory concepts of ethnographic heritage and modern socialist society was not an easy task. The exhibition of ethnographic items was supposed to avoid reinforcing stereotypes that some folk costumes and products were still part of daily life in socialist Yugoslavia. In a socialist society, traditional relations of production were abolished, and new ones were set up. Gušić reiterated during the meeting that 'we cannot stay in the fact that our woman embroiders and weaves with such energy as before . . . and [she is] in no way wearing 20 dresses, because the woman should work as a worker. If we continue this peasant production, it would directly collide with our [current way of] production, and we cannot allow that ethnography either'.[738] Nevertheless, the exhibition was still supposed to show the base of the old patterns and ethnography.[739]

[735] Ibid., p.34, said by Braniš.
[736] Ibid., pp.39–40.
[737] Ibid., pp.40–41.
[738] Ibid., p.21.
[739] Ibid., p.28.

The preparatory meeting did not provide a detailed plan on what kind of handicrafts should be exhibited as an ideal reflection of Yugoslav socialism and its potential trading products. Instead, the discussion was general and conceptual and the line between pure ethnography and applied handicrafts was vague. This ambiguity could also be seen in the exhibition catalogue for Britain in 1950 (see pictures below).

Despite the difficulties encountered and the exhibition's shortcomings, it still represented a strong cultural offensive by Yugoslavia abroad. Milenko Filipović, the curator at the Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade, stressed its propagandistic function:

> It is good that the exhibition will go abroad. . . . We are appreciated mostly as fighters and warriors, and it is very convenient to insert something else from time to time, to show that we are not only skilled in handling weapons, but that we succeeded at the same time as we fought to create in the cultural field. We don't have to be ashamed of mockery.[740]

This exhibition was significant for promoting the new socialist Yugoslavia. Filipović also suggested including more propagandistic materials such as texts and brochures about the exhibits and Yugoslav history, as these were necessary for future trade relations.

While Yugoslavia meticulously discussed and planned this folk-art exhibition, there was little press coverage of its debut in Britain in 1950. The Yugoslav government regarded the exhibition as a symbolic event. Its opening in Edinburgh was announced by the Yugoslav ambassador, Obrad Cicmil. *The Scotsman* reported on the event, noting the beauty of Yugoslav traditional handicrafts such as costumes, embroideries, ornaments, carpets and, vases. The ambassador emphasised how this exhibition could help people in Britain become 'acquainted with the traditional arts and crafts of the peoples of Yugoslavia' and with 'some small part of their cultural achievements in their peaceful development'.[741] With little reporting on the

[740] AJ-317- 88-126, *Izložba Jugoslovenske Narodne Umetnosti, Stenografske beleške sa konferencije pretstavnika Ministarstva za nauku i kulturu FNRJ i pretstavnika etnografskih muzeja, primenjene umetnosti i drugih*, 21 and 22 Feb. 1949 in Belgrade, p.10.
[741] 'Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition', *The Scotsman*, (1 February 1950), p.5.

exhibition, it is hard to tell whether it was successful in Britain. But it looks meagre compared to the subsequent media interest in its folk-dance groups.

There was more detailed feedback from Scandinavian countries in 1951. In the absence of more coverage in the British press, we can speculate that this to some extent reflected the general reception of the folk-art exhibition in the West. The review from local audiences was simple and positive. According to the Legation in Stockholm, this exhibition surprised the audience, leading them to appreciate the beauty of Yugoslavia and express a desire to travel there. Embassy officials ascribed such a reaction to the fact that little was known about Yugoslav folk culture in Scandinavia.[742]

Yugoslavia, as a small country, was almost invisible in the eyes of the public in the Occident, despite the stereotypes of the Balkans as being exotic and oriental. Fillipović had described them as being associated with warriors or fighters. Perhaps it was difficult for a Western audience to understand the alternative ideological political message that the Yugoslav government wished to convey. Nevertheless, the exhibition was still instrumental in informing Western Europeans about the country and constituted 'a lively propaganda for tourism', serving as a basis for further cultural offensives.[743]

The problem of being 'too museum-like and a little tiring' was also mooted by the staff. This concern was not groundless, especially when looking at the photos of the exhibition scene and the catalogue in London.

[742] AJ-317-88-126, *Otpravnik poslova poslanstva FNRJ u stokholmu-Savetu za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ, 30 July 1951*, in Arhiv Jugoslavije, *Kulturna politika jugoslavije 1945–1952* (Belgrade, 2009), p.493.
[743] Ibid., pp.493–4.



Figure 5-1. Display of Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition (venue unknown), AJ-317-88-126



Figure 5-2. View of Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition (venue unknown), AJ-317-88-126



Figure 5-3. The Cover of the Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition Catalogue in UK



Figure 5-4. Left. A woman in costume from the neighbourhood of Split; Right: The 'Kolo' Dance in Skopska Crna Gora (Macedonia), in 1950 Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition Catalogue in UK



Figure 5-5. Left: A carved wooden door from Serbia; Right: Herdsman's wooden drinking beakers from various parts of the country, in 1950 Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition Catalogue in UK

As evident in the illustrations (See Figures 5-1, 5-2, 5-3, 5-4 and 5-5), the exhibition remained highly ethnographic. The items displayed could hardly be connected to potential commercial products. The introduction in the British catalogue read more like an encyclopaedic entry on the folklore of various regions in Yugoslavia. There was little trace of the contemporary applications of those artisan handicrafts, except for a brief mention of the *Zadruga*, the cooperative. The *Zadruga* was introduced as an achievement of social development to 'ensure the peasant community a division of labour and high-quality domestic products'.[744] This could be why the Yugoslav Legation in Stockholm emphasised the contemporary application of Yugoslavia's rich cultural heritage in its letter about how to improve the exhibition.[745]

Even though the exhibition had little resonance in Britain and there was tension between the plan and the outcome, the show was a milestone in Yugoslavia's cultural policy. The folk-

[744] *Yugoslav Folk Art Exhibition Catalogue*, (London, 1950), p.vi.
[745] AJ-317-88-126, *Otpravnik poslova poslanstva FNRJ u stokholmu-Savetu za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ, 30 July 1951*, in Arhiv Jugoslavije, *Kulturna politika jugoslavije 1945–1952* (Belgrade, 2009), pp.493–4.

art exhibition laid the foundation for a significant aspect of Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy, namely its diverse cultural heritage.

II. Modernism in Art in the Eastern Bloc and Yugoslavia

The famous Yugoslav writer Miroslav Krleža described the cultural development in Yugoslavia in 1952 as follows:

> How could we describe our reality if what is currently going on here happens nowhere else in the world, if everything here is infused with synchronous circles of six centuries: what emerges between the baroque, Morlachia[n], Turkish and Austrian small-towns—within the framework of a dramatic struggle with the Kremlin for internationalist principles of Leninism—are the contours of the twenty-second century![746]

For Krleža, the momentum of contemporary Yugoslav culture was dynamic and forward-looking. From his point of view, diverse cultural, regional, and historical traditions mingled and developed along Yugoslavia's own road to socialism, which was distinguished from both Soviet dogmatism and decadent Western capitalism. Yugoslavia's cultural development was marching towards the future, to an ideal socialist world that the Yugoslav people aspired to build.

With the rapid development of art in Yugoslavia in the 1950s, modern art gradually became more important than folk art in the country's cultural offensive on the international stage. Embracing modernism in art broadcast a message to the world that Yugoslavia was launching modernisation in all fields, not only in the economy. Showcasing both traditional and modern art in its cultural diplomacy reflected Yugoslavia's own road to socialism. It could, on the one hand, debunk the stereotype in the West that Yugoslavia lagged behind in cultural development. On the other hand, it could refute the ideological attacks of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, consolidating communist rule in the country.

[746] Miroslav Krleža, 'Govor na Kongresu književnika u Ljubljani 1952' ('Speech at the Writers' Congress in Ljubljana 1952'), in the introductory lecture to architect Vjenceslav Richter in Constructing Utopia summer school August 2018.

The blend of cultural heritage and modernism could be seen in Yugoslavia's art exchanges with Britain. Despite the exhibition of Yugoslav folk art and medieval frescos in the early 1950s, appreciation of modern art became increasingly noticeable in the state's official attitude. Freedom of artistic creation was granted as long as it did not touch communist rule. Unlike its socialist counterparts in the East, where modernism did not come to the fore until the late 1950s, Yugoslavia started to support modernism in the early 1950s.[747]

In the case of Yugoslavia, modernism in art and design was promoted as 'a general symbol of social, cultural, and economic progress and as a socialist aesthetic'. Yugoslavia's promotion of modernism in art was in accordance with art historian Piotr Juszkiewicz's definition of Socialist Modernism as a 'pragmatic approach of the communist regimes to modern art…for its public relations and propaganda value'. Socialist Modernism can thus be seen as a special kind of post-war Modernism that developed under communist systems and ideologies in Eastern Europe. In stressing an ethos of 'the autonomy of the artwork, freedom of creation, and universal meanings', it opposed Socialist Realism, 'which was associated with communist ideology and propaganda'. In practice it tilted in 'favour of the cultural and democratic values of the West against Stalinist totalitarianism' in art.[748]

The late 1950s and early 1960s was a significant period for the Eastern Bloc, marked by political and cultural de-Stalinisation and increasing liberalisation in the region. This relaxed political atmosphere also spurred economic and social modernisation. The catch-all modernity

[747] In June 1951 and May 1952, party plenums of the Central Party Committee were held at which the right to 'ideological diversity' and to 'encourage free, conscious, political and social activity of citizens' was reaffirmed. In 1952, The liberal frameworks of Yugoslav culture in the following period were created. The liberalisation of cultural policy was continued by the decisions of the VII Congress in 1958. Doknić, *Kulturna Politika Jugoslavije 1946–1963*, p.91.

[748] See Piotr Juszkiewicz, 'Socialist Modernism', in *Oxford Art Online* (2012), https://www-oxfordartonline-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/groveart/display/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7002228690, (18 September 2023).

therefore gave rise to growing discussion about appropriate expressions in all fields of visual and material culture.[749]

The de-Stalinisation process was accompanied by a thaw in international relations. The principle of peaceful coexistence was embraced to mitigate the confrontational atmosphere of the Cold War. Certain liberalisation took place in Stalinist-style economies as the state focused on modernisation and addressing the urgent daily demands of ordinary people.[750] A change in Soviet cultural politics was also inaugurated, marked by a relaxation in cultural development following the relaxation of political control. The Soviet Union's foreign cultural policy changed as well, attempting to attain 'world cultural leadership in line with the Soviet Union's geopolitical role'.[751] Cultural exchanges with the West gradually recovered and were taken as part of the Soviet 'cultural offensive'.[752] National culture was also promoted internationally.

Following this trend, relative liberalisation in the cultural sphere gradually emerged in the Eastern Bloc, though the process varied across different countries. In the field of art, the socialist realist style tapered off gradually. In late 1950s Poland, the autonomy of art was emphasised to counter its role in social indoctrination. As David Crowley and Susan Reid observed, '[m]odernism in art and architecture was quickly endorsed, in effect becoming an "official style" . . . and used as evidence of a new liberalism that was central to Poland's self-representation as a modern, tolerant polity, both at home and abroad'.[753] The revival of Czech modernist art started in private studios in 1960, whereas in Romania, the de-Stalinisation of culture was only launched in 1965.[754] Susan E. Reid suggests that modern art exhibitions within the Eastern Bloc might have facilitated cultural de-Stalinisation. Increased contact with foreign

[749] David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, 'Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe', in David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (eds), *Style and Socialism* (Oxford, 2000), p.3.
[750] Crowley and Reid, 'Style and Socialism', p.6.
[751] Susan E. Reid, '(Socialist) Realism Unbound: The Effects of International Encounters on Soviet Art Practice and Discourse in the Khrushchev Thaw', in Glatigny and Piotrowski, *Art beyond Borders*, p.270.
[752] Ibid.
[753] Ibid., p.9.
[754] Piotr Piotrowski, 'Modernism and Socialist Culture: Polish Art in the Late 1950s', in *Style and Socialism*, p.133.

culture not only benefited the public and party echelons aesthetically but also inspired new domestic developments.[755]

Overall, the modernist style was emphasised in several countries, and there was a trend toward reviving abstract art. Abstract art, as a counterpart to realism, was often associated with being 'autonomous and free'. The revival of modernism also underscored a 'commitment' to modern civilisation as a universal artistic value in terms of progress and freedom. Therefore, abstract art was seen as a manifestation of freedom in general.[756] Some Soviet artists who favoured modernism shared a similar view, linking modern art with the general modernisation of the country. By emphasising the universal character of 'the experience of scientific-technological modernity' that encompassed both the East and the West, 'a common "contemporary" or modern style, as the period style of the twentieth century', was palpable across the Cold War divide.[757]

This perspective corresponded with the advocates of Abstract Expressionism, who stressed freedom of artistic creation throughout American society.[758] As Holler and Klose-Ulmann noted, 'Abstract Expressionism during the 1950s became increasingly popular in Europe'.[759] The first exhibition featuring numerous Abstract Expressionist works in Europe

[755] Susan E. Reid, 'The Exhibition *Art of Socialist Countries*, Moscow 1958–9, and the Contemporary Style of Painting', in *Style and Socialism*, p.124.
[756] Piotrowski, 'Modernism and Socialist Culture', p.143; A. Wojciechowski, 'Sztuka zaangażowana,' *Przegląd Artystyczny*, no.1 (1959), in 'Modernism and Socialist Culture: Polish Art in the late 1950s' in *Style and Socialism*, p.134.
[757] Reid, 'The Exhibition Art of Socialist Countries, Moscow 1958–9', p.104.
[758] One of the most renowned promoters of Abstract Expressionism in the United States was the director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Alfred Barr. See Patricia Hills, '"Truth, Freedom, Perfection" Alfred Barr's *What is Modern Painting?* as Cold War Rhetoric', in Greg Barnhisel and Catherine Turner (eds) *Pressing the Fight: Print, Propaganda, and the Cold War* (Amherst, 2010), pp.251-275.
[759] Holler and Klose-Ullmann, 'Abstract Expressionism as a Weapon of the Cold War', p.131.

was in 1955–56.[760] In the context of art in the Eastern Bloc, the pursuit of abstract art also marked 'the renewal of the broken contact with the art in the West'.[761]

In the case of Yugoslavia, after its rupture with Moscow in 1948, the art scene changed radically. As one historian commented, 'as cultural officials sought alternatives to the Soviet doctrine of Socialist Realism, they turned to interwar modernist theories of artistic individualism and by the early 1950s cultural production had become the privileged site of individual creative autonomy'.[762] The annual congress of the Association of Croatian Artists (ULUH) in 1950 marked one of the first attempts in Yugoslav art circles to publicly condemn Socialist Realist art. Historian Radina Vučetić contends that two major events signalled Yugoslavia's break with Socialist Realism: the Exhibition of Recent French Art in spring 1950 and an exhibition of the works of Mića Popović in autumn 1950. Most researchers believe that Petar Lubarda's exhibition in May 1951 inaugurated a new start in Yugoslavia's art.[763] The appearance of the group EXAT 51 in Zagreb is also considered a milestone in Yugoslavia's break with Socialist Realism.[764] Miroslav Krleža, the famous Yugoslav writer, gave a speech at the Third Yugoslav Writers' Congress in 1952 in Ljubljana titled 'On Freedom of Speech'. This marked the end of the official cultural policy of Socialist Realism that had been imposed by the Soviet Union since the end of the war and the start of a new cultural policy of Yugoslavia.[765] In the meantime, People's Democracies in the Eastern Bloc were still sticking

[760] Robert Burstow, 'The Limits of Modernist Art as a 'Weapon of the Cold War': Reassessing the Unknown Patron of the Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner', in *Oxford Art Journal,* 20/1 (1997), p.69; *Modern Art in the United States: A Selection from the Collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York* was exhibited at several European during 1955–6, including the Tate Gallery in London from January to February 1956.
[761] Piotr Bernatowicz, 'Picasso behind the Iron Curtain: From the History of the Postwar Reception of Pablo Picasso in East-Central Europe', in Glatigny and Piotrowski, *Art beyond Borders*, p.164.
[762] James M. Robertson, 'Navigating the Postwar Liberal Order: Autonomy, Creativity and Modernism in Socialist Yugoslavia', *Modern Intellectual History*, 17/2 (2020), p.386.
[763] J. Denegri, *Pedesete: teme srpske umetnosti* (Novi Sad, 1993), pp.31–67; Merenik, *Ideološki modeli,* pp.14–16; Dimić, *Agitprop*, p.259, in Vučetić, *Coca Cola Socialism*, p.145; Doknić, *Kulturna Politika Jugoslavije 1946–1963*.
[764] Vučetić, *Coca Cola Socialism*, p.146.
[765] Doknić, *Kulturna Politika Jugoslavije 1946–1963*, pp.91–2.

to Stalinism in their national exhibitions, official art journals, and congress of artists unions.[766] Thus, the renunciation of Socialist Realism in Yugoslavia occurred earlier than in any other country in Eastern Europe.

In the 1950s, the Yugoslav government sought to create a unique Yugoslav socialist culture distinct from the Stalinist model. 'The leader of Yugoslavia aimed to establish a separate national identity, which he tried to legitimise, for instance, by means of an aesthetics based on the collectivist ideals of pre-war modernism (in the art field).' [767] With the implementation of self-management, artists enjoyed almost complete freedom to pursue their creativity.

As early as 1950, Yugoslav cultural authorities realised the significance of connecting their artists with the international art scene. It was in the working plan for Science and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries for the year 1950 that 'in order to introduce [their] artists to foreign painting and sculpture, it is necessary to send some of [their] fine artists to big and significant foreign exhibitions of classical fine arts [value], to visit museums and galleries abroad'.[768]

Meanwhile, the change of attitude among Yugoslav authorities towards Western art could be observed in their interest in organising an exhibition of original paintings by British artists in 1951, called *From Hogarth to Turner*. It meant that such a bourgeois formalist genre was no longer officially castigated. This marked a departure from earlier policies, when such form of art and various pre-war avant-gardes were condemned as superficial and lacking any educational function to transform society.[769]

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[766] Fowkes, 'Croatia/Hungary', p.201.
[767] Foreword, in *EXAT 51*, ed. Katia Baudin-Reneau (Dortmund, 2017).
[768] AJ, F-559- 8-19, *Plan Rada odeljenja za naučne i kulturne veze sa inostranstvom za 1950 godinu* (*Plan of Work for the Department for Scientific and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries for the Year 1950*), in *Materijali Komisije za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom 1953 god.* (*Materials of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries 1953*).
[769] Bazin, Glatigny and Piotrowski, 'Introduction', p.13.

Changes were also observable within the Yugoslav domestic art world. In the manifesto of the art group EXAT 51, declared at the plenary session of the Association of Artists of Applied Arts of Croatia in 1951, it stated that

> [The EXAT 51] holds the opinion that the methods of work and the principles in the area of non-figurative, i.e. abstract art, are not a reflection of decadent aspirations, but, rather, sees an opportunity to develop and enrich the area of visual communications in our country by studying these methods and principles.[770]

This marked the change in the cultural sphere, where the abstract style was no longer unacceptable and denounced. On the contrary, it marked a new exploration of socialist modernism in Yugoslavia. In the same year, the group held their first exhibition in Croatia. With the rejection of Socialist Realism, Yugoslavia began participating in foreign and international art events. In 1952, a telegram from the Federal Council of Science and Culture to the Yugoslav ambassador in London stated that Yugoslavia was 'ready to participate in exhibitions of individual associations and organisations with smaller number of works'.[771]

Its first participation in the Venice Biennale was in 1950, at a time when none of the other communist countries participated. In 1952, Poland joined.[772] Only after Stalin's death in 1953 did Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Poland participate in the 1954 Venice Biennale.[773] Hungary began to take part in 1958.[774] Exhibitions organised by modernists themselves also occurred in Eastern Europe as part of the cultural thaw after Stalin's death. The Yugoslav government supported such modernist trends in the 1950s and actively facilitated these exhibitions both domestically and abroad.

The presence of an avant-garde in the art scene of Yugoslavia was unique compared to other communist countries. As Vučetić explains, 'By the mid-1950s, modernism and the avant-

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[770] EXAT 51, pp.30–1.
[771] AJ 317-97-144, *Naše izložbe u inostranstvu izložbe u V. Britaniji* (*Our exhibitions Abroad: Exhibitions in Great Britain*), telegram from R. Čolaković, President of the Council for Science and Culture, to Jože Brilej, Yugoslavia's Ambassador in London, 9 January 1952.
[772] Wolf, 'Czechoslovakia at the Venice Biennale in the 1950s', p.350.
[773] Ibid.
[774] Fowkes, 'Croatia/Hungary', p.205.

garde were on the rise in Yugoslavia, and in the 1960s they were regular fixtures in museums and galleries . . . and in art journals.'[775] The situation in Poland was relatively better than that in other Eastern Bloc countries. When Poland became more liberal in 1956, Tadeusz Kantor started to advocate the break of Polish art from Socialist Realism. In 1961, an exhibition featuring Kantor and fourteen other non-objective Polish painters was held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.[776] Although Soviet artists and the public had already been exposed to both historical and contemporary international art, the 'development of contemporary Western art on Russian soil' began at the World Festival of Youth and Students in 1957.[777] In the case of Bulgaria, in the 1960s, there were still published texts that criticised abstract art. Abstract in form and style was considered 'decadent', 'reactionary' and 'hostile' to communist ideology.[778] For Czechoslovakia, the first abstract painting (by Jan Kotík) was displayed in the Czechoslovak pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1964. The 1957 solo exhibition of his works inside Czechoslovakia was one of the first exhibitions of nonfigurative art since 1948.[779]

In the case of Yugoslavia, Vučetić adds that,

> when one takes a broad view of the attitude toward the visual arts in Yugoslavia after the break with socialist realism, especially in the 1960s, it is apparent that the Yugoslav government had no objections in terms of form; what is more, it was favourably disposed toward a wide variety of modern forms, but only as long as the essence, or content, of these works of art did not contradict official, Party-line dogma.[780]

For instance, at the Graphic Arts Biennial in Ljubljana in 1963, American Pop artist Robert Rauschenberg won first prize. This was the first time he received an international honour, even predating his award at the Venice Biennale in 1964. Later, in 1965, a solo exhibition of his

[775] Vučetić, *Coca Cola Socialism*, pp.140–1.
[776] Cockcroft, 'Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War', p.153.
[777] A. Zhigalov, "Izmeneniia v khudozhestvennom soznanii na neofitsial'noi stene 1970-kh godov," in *Khudozhestvennaia zhizn' Rossii 1970-kh godov kak sistemnoe tseloe, ed. N. M. Zorkaia* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2001), 209; in Glatigny and Piotrowski, *Art beyond Borders*, p.284.
[778] Atanas Stoykov, *Sled zanika na abstrakcionizma* (Sofia: Bulgarian Communist Party, 1970), 93; in Irina Genova, 'The Graphic Arts Biennials in the 1950s and 1960s: The Slim 'Cut' in the Iron Curtain—The Bulgarian Case', in Glatigny and Piotrowski, *Art beyond Borders*, p.324.
[779] Wolf, 'Czechoslovakia at the Venice Biennale in the 1950s', p.354.
[780] Vučetić, *Coca Cola Socialism*, p.166.

work was held in Ljubljana.[781] The political dividends of modernising Yugoslav art were also visible in 'win[ning] political points with the West'.[782]

Yugoslav art played an important role in establishing its unique socialist brand internationally. Nenad Makujević emphasised the dominant trend of modernism in Yugoslav art and how it contributed to building its image as belonging 'to more culturally developed countries'. Showing Yugoslav modern art at international exhibitions sharply contrasted with the Socialist Realist style led by the Soviet Union.[783] Vučetić notes the synchronism of art development and Yugoslavia's foreign policy when it showed openness to the West. She suggests that 'by accepting abstract painting and pop art, Yugoslavia was agreeing to become a part of the Western referential system, although only as far as art was concerned'.[784]

However, I argue that despite pursuing modernism, the Yugoslav avant-garde artists were not aiming to imitate Western modernism. On the contrary, they believed they were creating a modernist style that was specifically socialist, distinguishing Yugoslav modernist art from Western modernism. This pursuit of unique modernism was part of the nation-building process for Yugoslav artists. Through artistic creation, they were helping Yugoslavia build a socialist utopia. This process of searching for a unique self-expression and national identity in Yugoslav modern art mirrored its 'own road to socialism' in politics, which accentuated its independence and detachment from both the East and the West.

[781] Genova, 'The Graphic Arts Biennials', p.327.
[782] Vučetić, *Coca Cola Socialism*, p.166.
[783] Nenad Makuljević, *Yugoslav Art and Culture: From the Art of a Nation to the Art of a Territory*, *YU historija*, http://yuhistorija.com/culture_religion_txt01.html.
[784] Vučetić, *Coca Cola Socialism*, p.167

III. Transition: 'The Unknown Political Prisoner' International Sculpture Competition

As artistic creations gradually freed themselves from the shackles of Socialist Realism, modern art in Yugoslavia flourished in the 1950s. Many events marked the new course in Yugoslav art. In the liberating atmosphere of Yugoslavia's domestic art scene, an international sculpture competition took place in 1953 in London. Organising an international sculpture competition through the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) was the prelude to the project of setting up a larger monument.

This competition also served to enhance the leading cultural role of Britain in the international art scene. According to the internal document:

> The Institute of Contemporary Arts is convinced that much of the world still looks to England for cultural leadership. This will not long continue unless progressive steps are taken to ensure such leadership. . . . We believe that the Institute of Contemporary Arts can make a tremendous contribution by growing into the kind of institution that presents to the public an opportunity to see and learn, not only what England and the Commonwealth is interested in and creating, but also what other nations in our brotherhood of mankind are doing.[785]

A competition like this could help consolidate the prestige Britain enjoyed in international culture, thereby increasing its cultural influence and soft power. The model the ICA tried to emulate was the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. The international sculpture competition provided an opportunity for the ICA to affirm its goal. By bringing art from all over the world, it could enhance the status of both the ICA and London. The composition of the Central Committee was diverse, including officers from the Tate, the British Council, and MoMA.[786]

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[785] Henry Moore Institute Archive (HMIA), 1998/26, Papers of A. J. T. Kloman related to the 'Unknown Political Prisoner' international sculpture competition organised by the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Draft, 4 June 1951, KLO/A2/1.

[786] HMIA, 1998/26, Papers of A. J. T. Kloman related to the 'Unknown Political Prisoner' international sculpture competition organised by the Institute of Contemporary Arts; The Committee consisted of John Rothenstein, Herbert Read, Peter Gregory, Roland Penrose, Henry Moore, and Anthony Kloman.

The exhibition of prize-winning works at the Tate Gallery attracted much attention both in Britain and internationally. The idea of organising this competition could be traced back to 1951. The event took place under the flag of internationalism and the universally shared values of human freedom and liberty. According to Herbert Read, the well-known English art critic and contemporary president of the Institute of Contemporary Arts,

> The intention in suggesting such a theme ('The Unknown Political Prisoner') was to pay tribute to those individuals who, in many countries and in diverse political situations, had dared to offer their liberty and their lives for the cause of human freedom. Our complex civilisation has found its crisis in the contradiction that exists between individual concepts of truth and duty and totalitarian concepts of uniformity and blind obedience. Everywhere the human conscience has been in revolt against inhuman tyrannies. [787]

The competition thus seemed to pay tribute to the universal values of humanism and freedom. The theme also corresponded to the post-war desire to memorialise those who sacrificed their lives in the war against fascism. However, the undertone of the Cold War narrative could also be seen there. 'Human freedom' was emphasised as a shared value in the West, whereas the 'totalitarian concepts of uniformity and blind obedience' were implicitly treated as the hallmark of the communist East. Nevertheless, when the project was announced in 1952, it received attention from all over the world. Artists were intrigued by the idea, resulting in a total of 3,500 applications from fifty-seven countries. This was the first time such a large-scale contemporary sculpture competition had been held internationally 'without the limitation of national or political boundaries'. [788] Countries with a large number of applications had to organise preliminary contests to choose their representatives. [789] However, since the launch of this sculpture competition, controversy surrounding it never ceased, and it was far from apolitical.

Even though this competition was not supposed to have any ideological prejudice or political commitment, it was more than just an artistic event. As shown in Read's comments,

[787] Tate Gallery Archives (TGA), TG92/98/1, Herbert Read (president of the Institute of Contemporary Arts) 'Foreword' in the catalogue of the International Sculpture Competition—The Unknown Political Prisoner.
[788] Ibid., 'Introduction'.
[789] Ibid.

the competition was implicitly anti-communist. The project initiator, A. J. T. Kloman, had close relationships with members of the intelligentsia in the United States who opposed the totalitarian system of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. The anonymous American donor (later revealed to be John H. Whitney), who provided funding for the competition, had connections with the U.S. State Department. According to internal documents, the 'financial backers' of the competition insisted on the title being 'The Unknown Political Prisoner' instead of 'The Unknown Hero of Liberty' or 'The Unknown Victim of Political Oppression', as suggested by the ICA Central Committee.[790]

In general, British press coverage paid little attention to the mysterious funding source or the competition's political implications, except for the CPGB newspaper *Daily Worker*, which deplored the competition as 'an expression of Anglo-American imperialism in the arts' and 'an American attempt to embroil sculptors in the cold war'.[791]

The offer from the mayor of West Berlin, Ernst Reuter, to display the monument there strengthened the political dimension of this competition. Reuter stated that 'Berlin has been an outpost of the democratic world, a city where people from west and east can meet, inform each other, pluck up courage and gain new strength for their hard struggle against tyranny'.[792] Some sculptors, such as Emmanuel Auricoste and Alberto Giacometti in France, sensed the potential political implications of the competition's theme and declined to participate. Consequently, there was no participation from the Soviet Union and other countries behind the Iron Curtain. The ICA's effort to include a Soviet judge also failed.[793] One entry was received from Hungary,

[790] Axel Lapp, 'The International Sculpture Competition on the Theme of the Unknown Political Prisoner, London 1951–1953' (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1998), p.112.
[791] 'The Queerest Cold War . . .' *The Daily Worker*, (15 January 1953); 'Angry Yank', *The Daily Worker*, (25 March 1953), in Lapp, 'The International Sculpture Competition', p.167.
[792] Letter: Ernst Reuter to Anthony Kloman, 21.2.1953: Anthony Kloman Papers, in Lapp, 'The International Sculpture Competition', p.177.
[793] The initiative to invite the Soviet art historian Professor Vladimir S. Kemenov was abolished due to the rejection from the Soviet side. The effort to recruit an alternative from Eastern Europe (Poland or Czechoslovakia) also failed, in Lapp, 'The International Sculpture Competition', pp.123–5.

but it did not advance to the final competition and was not included in the exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1953, ostensibly due to its poor artistic quality.[794]

Then what motivated Yugoslavia to participate in such an art event? On 27 November 1951, Aleksandar Sokorac, the press attaché of the Yugoslav Embassy in London, informed the Federal Council of Science and Art about the ICA's invitation to Yugoslavia. The invitation sought to engage sculptural organisations, societies, schools, and individual sculptors directly.[795] The telegram was sent to the Yugoslav Embassy by A. J. T. Kloman, the director of the Planning Board and the proponent of the competition.[796]

The Yugoslav authorities' response indicates that their reservations about participation were primarily related to aesthetic and financial concerns rather than political ones. In a telegram to the Yugoslav ambassador in London, R. Čolaković, the president of the Council for Science and Culture, expressed doubts about the competitiveness of Yugoslav sculptors due to the prevailing 'abstract tendencies' in the West. He also highlighted that participation would be contingent on cost.[797]

Yugoslav officials were aware that their style would probably go against the grain of modernist art trends in the West. Even though Socialist Realism had already been abandoned, 'public sculpture was still expected to be figurative, realist and uplifting'. This reflected Yugoslavia's communist ideology and the unity of the country, with national liberation in its past and utopian communism in its future.[798] In addition, financial difficulties existed,

[794] Axel Lapp, 'Memories of a Monument: The Competition for a Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner, London 1953—a Discussion of the Powers of Sculpture that Never Existed', in Wessel Reinink and Jeroen Stumpel (eds), *Memory and Oblivion: Proceedings of the XXIXth International Congress of the History of Art held in Amsterdam, 1–7 September 1996* (Dordrecht, 1999).
[795] AJ 317-97-144, Telegram from Aleksandar Sokorac to V. Novosel, 27 November 1951.
[796] He was also the programme director of the ICA at that time.
[797] AJ 317-97-144, *Naše izložbe u inostranstvu izložbe u V. Britaniji* (Our exhibitions Abroad: Exhibitions in Great Britain), telegram from R. Čolaković, President of the Council for Science and Culture, to Jože Brilej, Yugoslavia's Ambassador in London, 9 January 1952.
[798] Fowkes, 'Croatia/Hungary', p.203.

necessitating cost reductions. Čolaković did not mention anything related to the politicised theme.

In the end, the only submission from Yugoslavia was a maquette by the Slovenian sculptor Karel Putrih. It received little attention in the press, and during the competition and exhibition, sculptures from larger and artistically renowned Western countries, such as Italy, were in the spotlight. In one of the few mentions of Yugoslavia's participation, the British art critic M. Wróblewski made no attempt to disguise his unfriendly tone: 'From the totalitarian countries inclined to the West, from Spain and Yugoslavia, only two artists have entered their designs—probably privately and in secret.' [799] However, Wróblewski did not know that Putrih's participation was not only fully known to the Yugoslav government but also officially endorsed by it.

Initially, there were forty-seven candidates with sculptural works in Yugoslavia, with the plan to select three maquettes through a national competition. This national competition was to be organised by the Union of Fine Artists, whose jury would make the final selection.[800]

The Yugoslav government understood the potential of such an international competition to raise Yugoslavia's profile. In a letter to potential participants in December 1952, it stressed 'the importance of the competition and . . . the interest that we have in this competition to be well represented, both in view of the reputation it enjoys in the world and in view of the situation so close to us'.[801]

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[799] HMIA, 1998/26, Papers of A. J. T. Kloman related to the 'Unknown Political Prisoner' international sculpture competition organised by the Institute of Contemporary Arts, M. Wróblewski *Art and Political Prisoners*, KLO/C2/1.

[800] TGA, TGA 955/1/12/256 6/39, International Sculpture Competition 'The Unknown Political Prisoner' by A. J. T. Kloman of the Institute of Contemporary Arts; TG92/98/1, International Sculpture Competition 'The Unknown Political Prisoner', Report to date 31 October 1952; AJ 559-78-110, *Konkurs za spomenik nezannom političkom zatvoreniku, Zamenik načelnika Odeljenja za naučne i kulturne veze sa inostranstvom Djordjević Savezu likovnih umetnika jugoslavije* (*Competition for the Monument of the Unknown Political Prisoner, Deputy Head of the Department for Scientific and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries Djordjevic to the Union of Fine Artists of Yugoslavia*), 25 September 1952.

[801] AJ 559-78-110, letter to Kosta Angeli Radovani, Antun Avgustinčić, Boris Kalin, Toma Rosandić, Franc Kršinić, Karel Putrih, and Ivan Radaus, 9 December 1952.

We do not know how many Yugoslav sculptors were considered in the pre-selection process, but ultimately, only the entry from Karel Putrih was sent to the ICA. He won a £25 prize for the competition, which was the lowest-level prize for all the maquettes short-listed to be exhibited at the Tate Gallery.[802] Although there is no existing picture of his work, it was described by the art critic of *The Manchester Guardian* as 'white nudes, back to back'.[803] It must be emphasised that his works were usually rendered in a realist style rather than being abstract (See Figures 5-6 and 5-7).[804]

It is still unclear why the Yugoslav government gave the green light to this competition, given that the officials were aware that contemporary Yugoslav sculpture would not fit in well with the style that the ICA and the Western art world were promoting at that time.



Figure 5-6. 'Women with Bow', sculpture by Karel Putrih 1952/1953 (MG+MSUM)

[802] TGA, TGA 955/1/12/256 23/39, Names of 68 Winners of £25 Each; Lapp, 'The International Sculpture Competition', p.122.
[803] TGA, TG92/98/1, the copy of exhibition catalogue annotated by Stephen Bone, art critic of the Manchester Guardian.
[804] For the artistic style of Putrih, see Emmanuel Bénézit, Benezit *Dictionary of Artists* (New York, 2011), https://www.oxfordartonline.com/benezit/search?siteToSearch=benezit&q=Karel+putrih&searchBtn=Search&isQuickSearch=true, (5 October 2021)



Figure 5-7. 'Echo', sulpture by Karel Putrih 1954 (MG+MSUM)

It is ironic that the aesthetic of Putrih's submission attracted one of the few positive mentions in the British press. The exhibition at the Tate caused a furore among the press, public, and art critics, who criticised the prize-winning works for being non-figurative and lacking meaning for such a humanistic theme. Art critic Stephen Bone sharply commented in an article, without hiding his distaste for the artworks on display:

> With very few exceptions the exhibits fall into two classes: architectural abstractions and images of horror. The architectural abstractions were designed to express such general notions as a small thing resisting a large one, imprisonment as opposed to liberty, and so on. . . . The second large class into which the exhibits fell was that of the horror image. . . . There is nothing much to say of this kind of horror except that it fails by a denial of human dignity. Bernard Heiliger, of Germany, Rik Poot, of Belgium, and Karel Putrih, of Yugoslavia, in various ways rose a little above mere horror.[805]

On the whole, however, Yugoslavia's participation in this international competition was a drop in the bucket. It was completely overwhelmed by works from the West that celebrated the modernist trend of abstraction.

[805] *The Manchester Guardian*, (24 March 1953), p.5.

Even though it is difficult to know exactly what propelled Yugoslavia to participate in this competition, some explanations are possible. From limited archival documents, it is clear that political concerns were not an obstacle. On the contrary, the universal humanist theme of the competition served as a bridge, connecting Yugoslavia not only with countries in the West but also around the world. Apart from financial difficulties and concerns about a discordant artistic style, nothing political prevented its participation.

The competition also provided an opportunity for Yugoslavia to improve its image. This was the biggest international sculpture competition after the war, and the organising British institute enjoyed a high reputation. Meanwhile, the international jury, which included Henry Moore and other well-known artists and critics, was prestigious. If sculptural work from Yugoslavia could succeed in such a competition, it would boost Yugoslavia not only in Britain but also on the international stage.

Yugoslavia's participation represented its effort to break through the Iron Curtain and make connections with the European and international cultural scene. By showing its contemporary art achievements under self-management, it celebrated the artistic autonomy that Yugoslav artists enjoyed compared to their counterparts in the socialist East. It also demonstrated Yugoslavia's effort to integrate culturally into the post-war liberal international system led by the West, harmonising its socialist ideological concepts with the norms of post-war liberalism.[806]

This marked its inauguration in the international art scene and reflected a gradual liberalisation in art and artistic exchanges with foreign countries. It also signified a transitional period during which Yugoslav authorities were exploring what kind of artistic works should be exhibited overseas. Their art needed to fit communist ideology while also capturing the most up-to-date trends in the international artistic scene.

[806] See Robertson, 'Navigating the Postwar Liberal Order', pp.385–412.

IV. The Henry Moore Exhibition in Yugoslavia in 1955

Following the ICA's sculptural competition and the continuing liberalisation of the domestic art world, the Commission of Art and Culture contacted the British Council and expressed its wish to hold a Henry Moore exhibition in Yugoslavia in 1953.[807] The Commission had been planning a major British fine art exhibition for some time. In April 1954, the cultural counsellor of the Yugoslav Embassy in London discussed arranging such an exhibition with Kenneth Johnstone. The Commission of Art and Culture in Yugoslavia suggested either classical painting, such as the exhibition *From Hogarth to Turner* organised by the British Council, or contemporary British painting or sculpture, particularly by Henry Moore. The Fine Arts Committee under the British Council discussed the issue and decided to exhibit Henry Moore's works in Yugoslavia in 1955.[808]

During the 1950s, Henry Moore became a key representative of modern British art. As early as 1946, he held a retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 1948, he won the international award for sculptor at the Venice Biennale. His success at the Biennale led to an exhibition tour in Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Germany in 1950, organised by the British Council in response to requests from leading museums in these countries. In 1953, Moore received the accolade for foreign sculptor in 1953 at the São Paulo Biennale. According to Henry Roland, a renowned art dealer, 'Moore was not only a great sculptor. He became a real ambassador for this country'.[809]

There was a good reason that Moore was regarded as a cultural ambassador of Britain at that time. Closely connected with the internationalist art critic Herbert Read and the British

[807] AJ, F559-8-19, Britanija 1953.
[808] TGA, TGA9712/2/120, Telegram from L. Somerville, Director of the Fine Arts Department of the British Council to Mr. Pašić at the Yugoslav Embassy in London, 13 May 1954; Extract from the Draft Minutes of the 58th Meeting of the Fine Arts Committee of the British Council held on 4 May 1954.
[809] Henry Roland, *Behind the Facade: Recollections of an Art Dealer* (England, 1988), p.65.

Council, Moore's sculptural works were promoted as representing the efforts of British artists to explore post-war modernism in art. This concept of modernism was instrumental in Britain's post-war cultural policy to establish its reputation as a cultural centre. Modernism was seemingly 'value-free' and was made synonymous with progressive liberal opinion, post-war internationalism, and universalism, which the British Council always insisted on.[810] His success in the international arena, in turn, brought him increasing exhibition opportunities in Europe and later around the world. Moore was also regarded as the founder of a new school of British modern sculpture. As Yugoslav sculptor Kosta Angeli-Radovani commented, 'The UK has no major sculptural tradition and has emerged suddenly with Henry Moore to the forefront of contemporary plastic competition, after a century of silence'.[811] Likewise, the prizewinning British sculptor of the *Unknown Political Prisoner*, Reg Butler, spoke about Moore being 'really the grandfather of the present generation of young sculptors working in this country'.[812]

As early as 1951, the British Council in London offered the Yugoslav government the opportunity to hold an exhibition of Henry Moore's works in Yugoslavia. It suggested the exhibition be held in at least two cities (Belgrade and Zagreb) from April to the first half of June in 1952.[813] However, the Yugoslav government turned down this invitation.[814] From the Council's perspective, it was more useful to start with exhibitions of classical British art, such as paintings of William Turner. If not Turner, 'masters of British painting of the same era' were also acceptable. The Yugoslav Embassy in London therefore negotiated with the British Council.[815]

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[810] For the promotion of British sculptures abroad, see Henry Meyric Hughes, 'The Promotion and Reception of British Sculpture Abroad, 1948–1960: Herbert Read, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, and the 'Young British Sculptors'', *British Art Studies*, Issue 3, (July 2016), https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/issues/issue-index/issue-3/1945-1960, (17 May 2020).
[811] Kosta Angeli-Radovani, 'Njegovo djelo ima za nas poseban smisao', *Vjesnik u sredu*, (2 March 1955).
[812] *The Western Daily Press & Bristol Mirror*, (4 February 1955).
[813] AJ, 317-97-144, Telegram from Michael Glover (Head of the Science and Culture Department of the British Council) to Vanda Novosel, 31 October 1951.
[814] AJ, 317-97-144, No. 12619, Telegram from V. Novosel to M. Glover, 25 November 1951.
[815] AJ, 317-97-144, *Naše izložbe u inostranstvu izložbe u V. Britaniji* (*Our exhibitions Abroad: Exhibitions in Great Britain*), telegram from R. Čolaković, President of the Council for Science and Culture to Jože Brilej,

It is not difficult to understand why the Yugoslav government preferred to have classical British art exhibitions rather than the works of Henry Moore at that time. As noted above, since the early 1950s, Yugoslav art had broken free from Socialist Realism, and Yugoslav artists had started to make extensive art explorations within the framework of self-management. However, the mindset of party echelons was still old-fashioned, and ideological control was tight. Branka Doknić has asserted that 'while international cooperation encouraged unhindered cooperation with Western countries, at the same time, the party meetings of city committees discussed the harmful influence of Western art'.[816] Party officials did not immediately adjust their ideological aesthetic standard from Socialist Realism to modernism. The same applied to the Yugoslav masses. As expressed by the British Council representative in Belgrade, in general, fine art in the 1950s Yugoslavia was still enjoyed exclusively by a 'discriminating few'. Compared to the modernist style of Henry Moore's sculptures, a soft turn to classic formalism might be easier to accept and understand for the masses, and therefore would be a safer and better choice, while at the same time being more representative of classical British art.

It was a sign of how much the situation had changed by the mid-1950s when the Commission of Art and Culture asked to mount a contemporary British art exhibition in Yugoslavia, specifically mentioning Henry Moore. It was in the interest of the British Council and Britain's cultural diplomacy to accept this proposal and show Henry Moore's works in Yugoslavia. According to the British Council representative in Belgrade,

> Henry Moore is caviar to the general, as I have discovered by hanging a reproduction of one of his drawings in my office, and the Yugoslavs are proudly building a classless society in which 'the general' will set the tone for all. Nevertheless he has an immense snob value here as elsewhere, and there will always be the discriminating few who will really appreciate the importance of the occasion. He has also the great advantage, as far as this country is concerned, of being the son of a miner. Nobody has called him a bourgeois artist yet.[817]

Yugoslavia's ambassador in London, 9 January 1952. In the telegram, it was said '. . . nastojite da dobijemo izložbu nekog od majstora britanskog slikarstva iste epohe'.

[816] Doknić, *Kulturna Politika Jugoslavije 1946–1963*, p.91.

[817] TGA, TGA9712/2/120, Telegram from C. T. Middleton, Assistant Representative of the British Council in Belgrade, to the Fine Arts Department of the British Council, 29 May 1954.

In a socialist country like Yugoslavia, where Western art was rarely seen after the war, Henry Moore's works were like an exotic luxury, especially for the common people.[818] Beyond the aesthetic appeal, the prestige that Moore enjoyed ensured the success of his exhibition in Yugoslavia. His proletarian background was emphasised to better suit the socialist reality of a country ruled by the Communist Party. This aspect of his background was highlighted in several press articles to align his works with communist ideology, therefore building closer connections between him and the working class in Yugoslavia.[819]

Henry Moore's exhibition in Belgrade was held at the Cvijeta Zuzorić Art Pavilion in 1955. The exhibition featured thirty-five sculptures and forty drawings (life drawings and preparatory drawings for sculptures). A group of works depicting miners and mining drawings (See Figure 5-8) was arranged specifically for Yugoslavia, as these drawings described the life of working class and would be 'of special interest to the Yugoslavs'. The pieces on display spanned the years from 1927 to 1954.[820] This exhibition was originally planned to tour three cities in Yugoslavia, but due to its great popularity, an additional display was requested in Skopje. The number of the visitors in Belgrade exceeded 16,000.

The exhibition had a grand official opening in Belgrade, with speeches from Marko Ristić, president of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, and British Ambassador Frank Roberts. Ristić described the exhibition as 'an important event in the rapprochement of the cultures of [their] two countries'.[821] The large attendance at the opening underscored the popularity of 'the work of this eminent representative of modern sculpture'.

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[818] There was an exhibition of modern French art in 1952.
[819] TGA, TGA9712/2/120, In an article in *Republika* on 29 March 1955, it wrote '*On je rođen 1898 u siromašnoj rudarskoj porodici. I njegovi pretci još dva pokoljenja unazad bili su rudari*.' (He was born in 1898 in a poor mining family. And his ancestors, two more generations back, were miners.); the similar description also appeared in a cutting from Skoplje on 14 April 1955.
[820] TGA, TGA9712/2/118, Draft Press Handout for the Henry Moore Exhibition in Yugoslavia by the Press Officer of the Fine Arts Department of the British Council, 24 February 1955, GB/641/85.
[821] TGA, TGA9712/2/120, Telegram from the British Embassy in Belgrade to the Southern Department of the Foreign Office, 26 July 1955.

According to the Yugoslav daily newspaper *Politika*, 'seldom has the Art Pavilion been filled with so many interested people as last night'.[822]

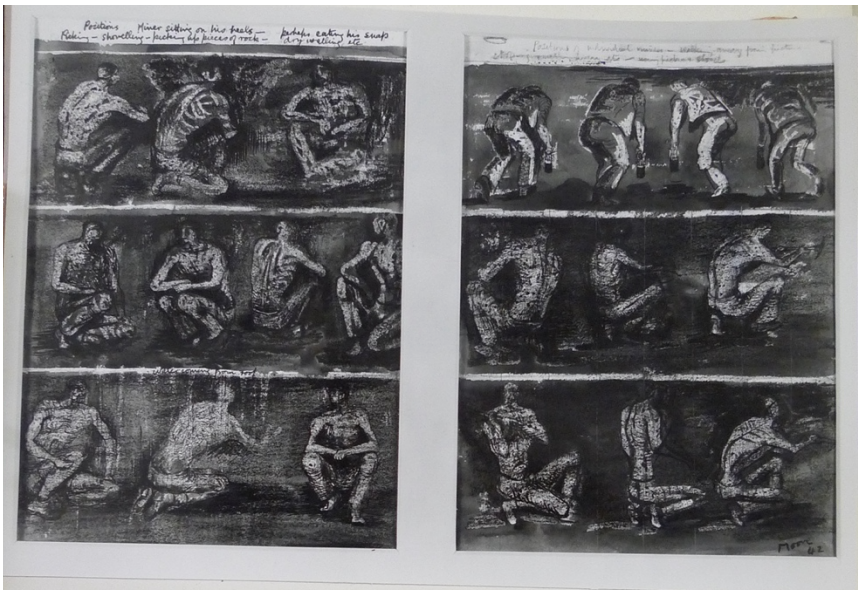


Figure 5-8. Henry Moore, 'Studies of Miners working' (Two pages from sketch book) 1942[823]

Henry Moore's exhibition generated a great deal of press coverage, with many referring to him as 'the foremost European sculptor'. Radio devoted more than one programme to discussing Moore's sculptures, and the British Council office was approached frequently for information about him by people 'wishing to lecture or write articles on his work'.[824] Although Moore's modernist style was not entirely new to the Yugoslav audience, it was completely different from the Socialist Realist style of painting and other artworks that people had been accustomed to.

However, opinions on Henry Moore's works varied, not only among art professionals but also the general public. Some visitors, particularly those without a professional background in art, found Moore's works puzzling, using words like 'strange', 'degenerate', and 'shallow' to

[822] TGA, TGA9712/2/120, 'Umetnost koja izaziva poštovanje' (An Art which Inspires Respect), *Politika,* (30 March 1955), p.6.
[823] TGA, TGA9712/2/121, Henry Moore Exhibition: Switzerland and Yugoslavia 1955: Illustrations. GB/641/85q.
[824] TGA, TGA9712/2/118, Telegram from L. Somerville, Director of the Fine Arts Department of the British Council to Kenneth Clark, Chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain, 20 September 1955, GB/641/85c.

describe them. In a published visitors' survey titled 'What is your opinion of Henry Moore' in *Vjesnik,* one art historian remarked that the audience should try to understand the ideas behind those art works while acknowledging that the art might seem 'more or less strange to [them]'. One student commented that Moore's works lacked 'substance' and were 'difficult to understand'. [825] The following caricature (See Figure 5-9) published in the Belgrade-based humorous-satirical magazine *Jež* reflected the novelty of Henry Moore's works to the Yugoslav public.[826]



Figure 5-9. The Caricature of Henry Moore Exhibition in Yugoslav magazine *Jež*

In this caricature, two men stand in front of Moore's abstract sculpture of a reclining woman, looking confused. The conversation written there can be translated as 'How do you like the woman'? 'I don't know. She is not my type'. Although Moore's non-figurative sculpture might have been too avant-garde for some museumgoers, the exhibition of a renowned contemporary sculptor from the West, along with the heated discussions in newspapers and magazines about

[825] TGA, TGA9712/2/122, 'Šta mislite o kiparu Henry Moore-u: Anketa u izložbenoj dvorani' (What do you think of sculptor Henry Moore: Survey in the exhibition hall), *Vjesnik*, (9 March 1955). Among the interviewees, there were art critics, artists, composer, writer and architect student. Despite the general interest and favourable comments from art professionals, a number of people expressed the difficulty to understand Henry Moore's artwork.
[826] TGA, TGA9712/2/121, the press cut from the local magazine *Jež*, undated.

his works, captivated both the highbrow and the general public. This allowed them to fulfil their quest for a free and vibrant cultural life under state socialism. The Yugoslav government's endorsement of such an art exhibition conveyed that the new socialist Yugoslavia was culturally eclectic, open, and liberal. Under these circumstances, people had access to the most modern European art.

While Moore's works were exhibited in Zagreb, the number of visitors reached a record 12,000.[827] In Skopje, nearly 5,000 visitors attended.[828] In total, 45,000 people visited the exhibition.[829] According to the British Council representative, 'the Henry Moore Exhibition has had a greater press coverage than any other recent foreign cultural manifestation—including the Theatre Populaire of Paris and the Burgtheater of Vienna'.[830]

Even the official Yugoslav party newspaper *Borba* published a long article titled 'The Guest from the Island' on 29 March 1955, introducing Henry Moore and his artistic creativity.[831] A short article in the Belgrade newspaper *Večernje Novosti* commented on the significance of this exhibition for British-Yugoslav bilateral cultural relations: 'This exhibition . . . represents the most significant action in the field of cultural relations between England and Yugoslavia in mutual acquaintance, which began with the exhibition of our frescoes in Edinburgh and London.'[832]

Henry Moore himself paid a visit to Yugoslavia as the guest of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, staying from 20 March to 2 April, 1955.[833] Moore

[827] TGA, TGA9712/2/118, Telegram from L. Somerville, Director of the Fine Arts Department of the British Council to Kenneth Clark, Chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain, 20 September 1955, GB/641/85c.
[828] Ibid.
[829] Ibid.
[830] TGA, TGA9712/2/118, Telegram from L. Somerville, Director of the Fine Arts Department of the British Council to the Controller of Arts & Science Division and Overseas "C" and the Director of the Lectures Department, 27 June 1955, GB/641/85c.
[831] TGA, TGA9712/2/120.
[832] TGA, TGA9712/2/122, *Večernje Novosti*, (25 March 1955), 'Ova izložba . . . pretstavlja najznačajniju akciju na polju ostvarivanja kulturnih veza između engleske i Jugoslavije u međusobnog upoznavanja, što je započelo izložbom naših fresaka u Edingurgu u londonu'.
[833] TGA, TGA9712/2/118, Draft Press Handout for the Henry Moore Exhibition in Yugoslavia by the Press Officer of the Fine Arts Department of the British Council, 24 February 1955, GB/641/85.

often joined his exhibition tours when possible and would visit local art professionals' studios and art schools.[834] In Zagreb, he visited local museums and galleries, as well as the working studios of well-known Yugoslav artists such as Vojin Bakić, Kosta Angeli-Radovani, and Krsto Hegedušić. He also went to see the exhibition of the painter Zlatko Price.[835] In Belgrade, he visited the ateliers of the sculptor Toma Rosandić, Mila Milunović, and Petar Lubarda, Predrag Peđa Milosavljević, and Risto Stijović.[836] These renowned Yugoslav artists represented contemporary Yugoslav art and had a deep influence in advancing the development of modernism in Yugoslavia, as seen in the Yugoslav modern art exhibitions in Britain in 1956 and 1961.

Moore received a warm welcome and, according to him, 'he personally was treated as something like "a cross between royalty and a film star"'.[837] He was interviewed by all the major Yugoslav newspapers, and 'no similar visit by a foreigner or group [had] been given such sustained publicity. *Politika* for example called Moore "one of the greatest artists of the day" and pointed out "the great interest of the many visitors to the exhibition from expert critics to the ordinary public"'.[838]

Moore's exhibition in Yugoslavia was the most representative display of British art in the country after the war. The British Council was aware of the value of Moore's visit for boosting the reputation of both the Council and British art in general. Beyond reputational benefits, the cultural Cold War added an ideological dimension to the exhibition, aiming to win over the hearts and minds of the people, 'with Moore emerging in public perceptions as a champion of

[834] Hughes, 'The Promotion and Reception of British Sculpture Abroad', https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/issues/issue-index/issue-3/1945-1960, (22 September 2021).
[835] TGA, TGA9712/2/122, 'Većeslav Holjevac primio Henri Mura' (Većeslav Holjevac received Henry Moore), *Politika*, (25 March 1955), p.7.
[836] 'Puna Sloboda umetničkog izraza' (Full Freedom of Artistic Expression), *Politika*, (3 April 1955).
[837] TGA, TGA9712/2/118, Letter of thanks to Henry Moore (telegram from L. Somerville, Director of the Fine Arts Department of the British Council to the Controller of Arts & Science Division), 13 May 1955, GB/641/85.
[838] TGA, TGA9712/2/118, Telegram from L. Somerville, Director of the Fine Arts Department of the British Council to Kenneth Clark, Chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain, 20 September 1955, GB/641/85c.

freedom, (social) democracy, and human rights'.[839] Moore's charisma, marked by his sincere and modest personality, was appreciated by almost all the people he encountered.[840] He skilfully played the role of a cultural diplomat, emphasising his longstanding interest in Yugoslavia dating back to the First World War. He expressed his wish to see the creation of a new life in Yugoslavia.[841]

In interviews with various local Yugoslav media, Moore expressed more than once that he was impressed by the works of Yugoslav artists and was interested in knowing more about Yugoslav art. He told a correspondent from *NIN* that he observed 'a huge vitality' and 'one insoluble energy' in Yugoslav artists and its history.[842] The British Embassy staff noticed that the local press highlighted Moore's praise for the diversity and free expression of Yugoslav art. In an interview-style article in *Politika*, Moore was quoted as saying:

> I was most impressed by the diversity of their individual styles, which proves the existence of full freedom of expression in individual creation. . . . Petar Lubarda best refuted the various voices that were spreading in the West at the time that there was directed art in your country.[843]

It is understandable why such a topic garnered significant attention from the press. The endorsement from a renowned Western artist like Henry Moore validated the claim of artistic freedom and vitality under Yugoslav socialism—not just in art, but for society as a whole. Moore acted as a messenger, transmitting this information to audiences both within Yugoslavia and back in Britain and the broader West.

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[839] Hughes, 'The Promotion and Reception of British Sculpture Abroad', https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/issues/issue-index/issue-3/1945-1960, (22 September 2021). This was especially the case with the cultural Cold War in Central Europe such as Germany and Austria of the 1950s.
[840] Ibid.
[841] For instance, in the interviews with the newspaper *Politika,* 'Henri Mur u Zagrebu' (Henry Moore in Zagreb), *Politika*, (21 March 1955); 'Engleski vajar Henri Mur doputovao u Zagreb' (English sculptor Henry Moore arrived in Zagreb), *Borba*; and 'Henri Mur u Zagrebu' (Henry Moore in Zagreb), *Večernje Novosti*, (21 March 1955), in TGA, TGA9712/2/122.
[842] TGA, TGA9712/2/122, 'Unapred pozdravljam beogradsku publiku i umetnike-Izjavio je za čitaoce NIN-a Henri Mur' (Henry Moore Greets the Belgrade Audience and Artists in Advance—He Said to *NIN* Readers), *NIN*, (27 March 1955), p.7.
[843] 'Puna Sloboda umetničkog izraza', *Politika*, (3 April 1955).

Commentary on Moore's exhibition by Yugoslav artists and art critics was generally favourable, though not without discord. Some criticism came from conservative traditionalists who adhered to Socialist Realist dogma. The debate centred on the relationship between figurative and abstract art, as well as humanism versus dehumanisation.[844] Art historian Lidija Merenik noted, 'the importance of the human figure in socialist realist painting is a priority…The deformation of the character (figure) was, in accordance with all totalitarian rhetoric, not only harshly criticised but also considered "perverse"'.[845] The National Museum in Belgrade rejected Moore's work as a donation, regarding it as 'decadent'.[846] Despite the debate and controversy, Moore's exhibition profoundly influenced local Yugoslav art and artists, such as the famous sculptor Olga Jančić, pushing forward further liberation of the art world in Yugoslavia.[847]

The Henry Moore exhibition played an important role in the cultural diplomacy of both countries'. Through Moore's exhibition, British art modernism was well promoted. 'The contrast with post-war "realistic" Soviet art was noted in favour of Britain's modern outlook.'[848] Moore's prestige in the international art scene helped Britain consolidate its role in the art world and wield influence in the cultural competition with other countries vying for Yugoslavia's attention. The British Embassy official believed 'it [was] all the more important to keep [their] end up in this field in view of the cultural activities in this country [Yugoslavia]

[844] Želimir Koščević, 'Henry Moore's Exhibition in Yugoslavia, 1955', *British Art Studies*, Issue 3 (July 2016), https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/issues/issue-index/issue-3/moore-belgrade, (22 September 2021).
[845] Merenik, *Ideološki modeli*, p.30.
[846] Miodrag B. Protić, Nojeva Barka (Noah's Ark), p.447, in Želimir Koščević, 'Henry Moore's Exhibition in Yugoslavia, 1955', *British Art Studies*, Issue 3 (July 2016).
[847] Reuben Fowkes confirms that Henry Moore's exhibition was significant for the development of Croatian art. See Fowkes, 'Croatia/Hungary', p.205; Nenad Makujević considers Henry Moore's exhibition in Belgrade 'one of the most important ones . . . which marked a turning-point in Yugoslavia's artistic life'. See Nenad Makuljević, *Yugoslav Art and Culture: From the Art of a Nation to the Art of a Territory*, *YU historija*, http://yuhistorija.com/culture_religion_txt01.html, (22 September 2021).
[848] TGA, TGA9712/2/120, Telegram from the British Embassy in Belgrade to the Southern Department of the Foreign Office, 26 July 1955.

not only of their friends the Americans and the French but also of the Soviet Union and the Satellites'.[849]

The Henry Moore exhibition in Yugoslavia and his visit reflected a gradually liberalising art world in the country and marked the official affirmation of abstract art and cultural modernism. Subsequently, the Yugoslav government stepped up its art exchanges with Britain, especially in contemporary British art. This move aligned with the broader liberalisation of Yugoslav society in the 1950s. Although Henry Moore's exhibition was not specially tailored for Yugoslavia, it became a cultural sensation in the country and a successful event in British cultural diplomacy. From the Yugoslav perspective, hosting Henry Moore's exhibition indirectly benefited the country by creating an image of modernity and freedom. It conveyed the message that Yugoslavia welcomed the most up-to-date Western modern art. In addition to this liberal posture, the Yugoslav public was longing to see what art was like in the West after years of exposure to Soviet-style Socialist Realism.



Figure 5-10. View of Henry Moore Exhibition in Ljubljana 1955 (Photo curtesy of Moderna Galerija Ljubljana)

[849] TGA, TGA9712/2/120, Telegram from the British Embassy in Belgrade to the Southern Department of the Foreign Office, 26 July 1955.



Figure 5-11. View of Henry Moore Exhibition in Ljubljana 1955 (Photo curtesy of Moderna Galerija Ljubljana)



Figure 5-12. View of Henry Moore Exhibition in Ljubljana 1955 (Photo curtesy of Moderna Galerija Ljubljana)



Figure 5-13. Henry Moore Exhibition in Ljubljana 1955 (Photo courtesy of Moderna Galerija Ljubljana)

V. From 1956 to 1961: From Realism to Abstraction

According to the first meeting of the Board of Fine Arts under the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries in 1960, art exhibitions were categorised into three types: 'exhibitions that were part of cultural cooperation agreements; exhibitions of an international character which were sent abroad for a whole decade and achieved success (the fresco exhibition) and the exhibitions that the Commission intended even years before to organise in order to realise part of its cultural policy'.[850]

Since 1952, Yugoslav artists have held solo exhibitions abroad. These artists typically had close relationships with foreign countries before the Second World War and had spent many

[850] AJ 559-84-189, *Stenografske beleške, Prvi sastanak odbora za likovnu umetnost pri komisiji za Kulturne veze sa inostranstvom*, 14 Novembar 1960, p.8.

years living outside Yugoslavia. They were already connected internationally and had established galleries for their exhibitions. Notable among them were Marko Čelebonovićand Predrag Milosavljević, who had both exhibited twice in Paris after the war.[851] Zlatko Prica organised his own exhibition in India in 1952. During his stay in the United States with state funding, Edo Murtić organised an exhibition in 1952 with Vilko Šeferov and led a larger group of Croatian artists exhibiting their work in the United States that same year.[852] These artists, recognised representatives of Yugoslav art, also had their works included in the exhibitions in Britain in 1956 and 1961.

In 1953, the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries noticed a new opportunity in Yugoslavia. With increasing freedom, more artists began leaving the country to seek affirmation abroad through their own initiatives, without the Commission's assistance. According to the Commission, the artists were eager to 'expand their knowledge abroad and enter into international cultural and artistic relations. . . . None of these personally organised exhibitions remained unnoticed. They have certainly had greater and sometimes extraordinary success'.[853]

As early as 1952, Yugoslav Ambassador Jože Brilej proposed hosting an exhibition of Yugoslav painting and sculpture from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries at the Tate Gallery, free of charge. However, the proposal was rejected due to the potential high costs and uncertainty about its success. Instead, another exhibition of contemporary Yugoslav painting was suggested in 1953. Brilej was keen to promote Yugoslavia culturally. In his 1951 report, he pleaded for organising cultural activities in Britain to alter the stereotype that Yugoslavia

[851] Čelebonović's two paintings were included in the 1956 exhibition in Britain: *Landscape at Sveti Stefan, Montenegro* (1954) and *Girl in Croat National Costume* (1952); Milosavljević's two paintings were also included: *Earthquake at Dubrovnik* (1953) and *The Reader* (1953).
[852] AJ, F-559-8-19*, Izvršenje plana izložbi u godini 1953* (*Execution of the Exhibition Plan for the Year 1953*).
[853] Ibid.

was ‘a country of brave warriors, but backward, underdeveloped, poor and uncivilised’.[854] He was dissatisfied with the decision not to hold such an exhibition, especially when compared with the efforts of their Polish counterparts:

> A few weeks ago, the Poles had an exhibition of modern painting and sculpture in London, which was very successful and now travels all over England. We mention only as an example that over 50 English newspapers wrote about that exhibition. . . . For the last 30 years there has not been a single Yugoslav or collective or individual exhibition with the exception of a folklore exhibition two years ago. . . . Expert people who have seen the Polish exhibition, who know both our and English painting, are convinced of the success of one such exhibition of ours, which would be of great importance to us, as it would be easier for the English public to understand that our struggle for independence not only means fighting for the basics of life but also defending our political and cultural heritage.[855]

He continued to emphasise that the cost of such an exhibition would be relatively small compared to the folk-art exhibition in 1951. According Brilej, there was intense competition in the cultural sphere in Britain, and the Yugoslav government needed to devote more attention to its cultural diplomacy to avoid lagging behind in cultural centres in the West, such as Britain and France.

In a 1955 document titled ‘Cultural relations with England’ (*Kulturne veze sa Engleskom*), Yugoslavia noted the waning development of cultural cooperation with the British Council and Britain in general. It was described as ‘especially hard’ and ‘more difficult than other countries’ to arrange cultural events in Britain.[856] The major concern was usually related to a lack of funding, as organising cultural events in the UK was costly due to transportation expenses and the exchange rate. Yugoslavia’s caution could also be attributed to concerns about reception in Britain.

In January 1956, the Yugoslav Embassy in London wrote to the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries to propose an exhibition of major modern Yugoslav paintings

[854] AJ, F-559, Telegram from the Yugoslav Embassy in London to the Council of Science and Culture, *Izveštaj o kulturnoj delatnosti u 1951 godine* (*Report on Cultural Activities for the Year 1951*), 26 February 1952.
[855] DAMFARS, 1952, F-23, No. 41824, Telegram from Ambassador Brilej to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 January 1952.
[856] AJ, F559-46-102, *Kulturne veze sa Engleskom*, 1955.

in several British cities such as Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and Leeds.[857] The embassy was also exploring the possibility of holding a smaller supplementary exhibition in London with the Institute of Contemporary Art. It asked the Commission to provide a concrete proposal on the appropriate painters and works to present, namely the best works of modern Yugoslav painters. The press attaché mentioned certain artists who should be included without question, such as Miro Milunović, Predrag Milosavljević, and Petar Lubarda. The works of Marino Tartaglia were especially noted, as the president of the Arts Council of Great Britain, Philip James, had praised his work.[858]

The Commission agreed to organise an exhibition featuring its collection of '60 paintings of modern Yugoslav painting'. This collection had already been exhibited in various cities such as Athens, Istanbul, Damascus, Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria. It was also held in the West in France and Germany.[859] The finalised exhibition, with minimal changes, took place in Leicester, Manchester, Edinburgh, Newport, and Coventry.

Ivo Frol, the secretary of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, expressed in the preface of the exhibition catalogue that the exhibition aimed to showcase the various tendencies in the contemporary Yugoslav art scene, resulting from an open and free creative atmosphere in the country:

> Painting in Yugoslavia today is very much alive and prolific, rich both in inspiration and variety of style. This diversity in aim and achievement allied to the creative vigour revealed by the works themselves, is proof that there is a healthy artistic life in Yugoslavia, that self-expression in art is free, and that every approach to the understanding and accomplishment of artists throughout the world is open to a Yugoslav painter.[860]

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[857] The Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (*Komisija za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom*), was the organisation formed from the previous Council for Science and Culture FNRJ (*Savet za nauku i kulturu FNRJ*) and the Ministry of Science and Culture of the FNRJ government (*Ministarstvo za nauku i kulturu vlade FNRJ*).
[858] AJ, F-559-87-195, Telegram from the London Embassy to the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, 10 January 1956.
[859] AJ, F-559-87-195, Telegram from Ivo Frol, Secretary of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, to Najdan Pašić at the Yugoslav Embassy in London, 13 February 1956 and 7 June 1956.
[860] Ivo Frol, preface to the catalogue of *Modern Yugoslav Painting*, The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1956.

In order to show the most up-to-date art trends in Yugoslavia, nearly all the paintings exhibited were created after 1950, with the exception of one landscape painting by Anton Motika from 1947 and a few others with unclear dates. As the director of the National Museum of Belgrade, Momcilo Stevanović, wrote in the catalogue, this exhibition 'has been formed with a taste which can include all the tendencies which [were] to be found in Yugoslavia today, realist, abstract, revivals of surrealism or simply, as is most often the case, a highly individualist expressionist painting'. According to Stevanović, the purpose of this exhibition was to 'awaken curiosity among strangers about [their] country which helps to create an understanding among peoples and thereby leads to closer cooperation'.[861]

The emphasis on the diverse art styles present in Yugoslavia could be seen in the paintings. There was *Battle of Kosovo* by Petar Lubarda (See Figure 5-14) and *Langoustes* by Miro Milunović (See Figure 5-15), both of which were abstract in orientation. An impressionist style could be seen in *The Reader* by Predrag Milosavljević (See Figure 5-16). None of the exhibited paintings were created in the Socialist Realist style. In the introduction of the exhibition catalogue, without directly mentioning Socialist Realism, the 'reversion to realism and subject painting' was described as a failure to 'bring about . . . the expected results . . . and the majority [of the works] were little better than illustration'.[862]

[861] Momcilo Stevanović, Introduction to the catalogue of *Modern Yugoslav Painting*, The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1956. Such internationalism was confirmed by art historian Branislav Dimitrijević, 'the tendency of the cultural policy of SFRY was to somehow recuperate the universalist, humanist and trans-national essence of Western modernist art', see Branislav Dimitrijević, '"Iron Curtain Raiser"—An Exhibition of American Modern Art in Belgrade and its relation to "Socialist Modernism" and "Socialist Consumerism" in SFR Yugoslavia in the 1950s' (unpublished paper), p.13, https://www.academia.edu/5937324/_Iron_Curtain_Raiser_An_Exhibition_of_American_Modern_Art_in_Belgrade_and_its_relation_to_Socialist_Modernism_and_Socialist_Consumerism_in_SFR_Yugoslavia_in_the_1950s, (20 September 2021).

[862] Stevanović, Introduction to the catalogue of *Modern Yugoslav Painting*, p.9.



Figure 5-14. ‘The Battle of Kosovo’, painting by Petar Lubarda (1953)



Figure 5-15. ‘Langoustes’ painting by Milo Milunović (1952)



Figure 5-16. 'The Reader', painting by Predrag Milosavljević (1953)

According to the art director of the Arts Council, the exhibition enjoyed great interest wherever it was shown in England.[863] However, there were few British press reports or critical reviews in Britain. The local Coventry newspaper reported the opening of the event briefly, without reviewing the contents or reception. In contrast, *The Manchester Guardian* provided a much more detailed report with critical comments on Yugoslav art. According to the correspondent,

> The exhibition . . . is a piece of cultural propaganda, but should not be any the less welcome for that. . . . The freedom appears real enough, the health (at least if we measure it by quality) in future prospect rather than in present reality. . . . What is, however, disappointing is the quality of the works themselves. There is no painter here who immediately strikes a visitor as a personality of European stature.[864]

[863] Victoria and Albert Museum Archives (VAMA), Telegram from Phillip James, Director of Art at the Arts Council of Great Britain, to Press Counsellor Najdan Pasić at the Yugoslav Embassy, 30 April 1957, ACGB/121/1171. According to the statistics from the Art Department of the Arts Council, the attendance figures for the exhibition were 6,431 in Manchester, 3,412 in Edinburgh, 2,888 in Newport, and 4,533 in Coventry, in the telegram from Joanna Drew of the Art Department to N. Pasic of the Yugoslav Embassy, 29 April 1957, ACGB/121/1171, VAMA.

[864] A. C. S., '*Modern Yugoslav Painting*—Manchester Exhibition', *The Manchester Guardian*, (1 December 1956), p.12; The journalist from *The Manchester Guardian* accordingly commented on the statement in the exhibition catalogue that the paintings were intended to show that 'there is a healthy artistic life in Yugoslavia, that self-expression in art is free', in *Modern Yugoslav Painting*, The Arts Council of Great Britain, p.9.

Although its achievements and artistic freedom were affirmed in the comment, an exhibition from socialist Yugoslavia was unavoidably regarded as propaganda. The passage also betrays the critic's sense of Western cultural superiority as a judge of what counted as 'European stature'. Yugoslavia was still the European 'other'. Western influences were discernible in the artwork, though some were more apparent than others. Meanwhile, the article did not pull punches, pointing out Yugoslavia's special position politically and culturally, but not in a positive way. Yugoslavia's position was described as being 'placed uncomfortably between the Soviet and the Western worlds, and quite belonging to neither'.[865]

However, the development of modernist style in Yugoslav art continued to drew increasing attention from the West. For instance, an exhibition of works by Ivan Generalić and Krsto Hegedušić was organised in 1959 at the request of Belgium.[866] In 1960, the works of Ivan Picelj, Alexander Srnec, and Vojin Bakić were exhibited in London. Their modern style was discernible, as seen in the Constructivist tradition of Picelj and Srnec's paintings, and in Bakić's abstract sculpture.[867]

In 1959, the Board of Fine Arts was formed under the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.[868] This development was related to the increasing number of artistic exchanges between Yugoslavia and the rest of the world, reflecting the Yugoslav government's growing emphasis on organising artistic events both at home and abroad.

Another art offensive was initiated in 1959 by the Yugoslav ambassador in London. He contacted Kenneth Clark, chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain, and John Rothenstein, director of the Tate Gallery, both of whom expressed interest in holding an exhibition of Yugoslav art at the Tate Gallery in 1961. Kenneth Clark supported the idea in his internal

[865] A. C. S., '*Modern Yugoslav Painting*—Manchester Exhibition', *The Manchester Guardian*, 1 December 1956, p.12.
[866] AJ 559-84-189, *Stenografske beleške, Prvi sastanak odbora za likovnu umetnost pri komisiji za Kulturne veze sa inostranstvom*, 14 November 1960, p.14.
[867] 'Glimpse of Yugoslav Art To-day,' *The Times,* (17 February 1960), p.13.
[868] AJ 559-84-189, *Izvod iz godišnjeg izveštaja, Likovna Saradnja*, p.4.

correspondence, affirming the value of modern Yugoslav art and believing 'it would be better than the Swiss and a great deal better than the Czech'. He suggested this exhibition would be quite successful considering its national character.[869] This was not an unfounded statement. According to the Yugoslav ambassador in London, one of the main British art historians explained why he would support a Yugoslav art exhibition:

> First and foremost, because you became famous at the biennial according to everything we have heard here, and because we think that art is worth it, that you are a communist country, that for us, you have a number of interesting aspects, that's why I think at this moment there is no more interesting European country than Yugoslavia.[870]

By 1960, some Yugoslav artists, such as Petar Lubarda, had already established their international reputations. As a communist country pursuing its own socialism with increasing freedom, Yugoslavia made outstanding artistic achievements. All of this attracted much attention in Britain and the West. The comments reflected the British art world's interest in Yugoslav art. The Yugoslav ambassador further affirmed this interest:

> This is because they see it [the potential of holding an exhibition] in a London ambience . . . from [the perspective] of the London audience and British critics. As gallerists, as traders, related to this or that, [they] are interested in it seriously, commercially. . . . The exhibition should in a way be an introduction and a test of their opinion about the quality of our people [artists]. They follow things, they want to check it all out.[871]

A contemporary Yugoslav painting and sculpture exhibition in 1961 was curated by Zoran Kržišnik, director of Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana, and organised in Britain by the Arts Council. This exhibition, along with the subsequent modern painting exhibition at the Musée de l'Art Moderne in Paris, was regarded as being of 'first-class importance' in the internal report of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.[872] It was a significant

[869] VAMA, Minute from Kenneth Clark, Chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain, to Gabriel White, Director of Art, 12 November 1959, ACGB/121/1173.
[870] AJ 559-84-189, *Stenografske beleške, Prvi sastanak odbora za likovnu umetnost pri komisiji za Kulturne veze sa inostranstvom*, 14 November 1960, pp.80–5.
[871] Ibid, pp.86–88.
[872] Ibid., p.4.

event showcasing modernism in Yugoslav art. The exhibition was discussed at the first meeting of the Board of Fine Arts under the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

The Yugoslav ambassador to the UK, Ivo Vejvoda, also participated. He expressed his views on Yugoslavia's foreign cultural policy and its relation to the exhibition. He believed that three areas (the West, the East, and the neutral countries) should be taken into account when making exhibition plans. However, the West was the most important destination to achieve its cultural diplomatic goal at that moment.

> We in the West are actually fighting for some kind of affirmation of a nation, which has a cultural history, which has its own culture that did not come only after this revolution and war, but which is long and about which the West knows little or nothing.[873]

From his point of view, it was in the West that artistic manifestations had the greatest political significance. Therefore, the exhibition at the Tate Gallery was regarded as the most important representation of Yugoslav fine art in the UK. According to Vejvoda, the exhibition venue itself already reflected a certain recognition of Yugoslav achievements in the fine arts, as even some culturally prestigious Western countries had not had the opportunity to exhibit there. And the gallery maintained strict aesthetic standards for choosing exhibitions.

Regarding what should be showcased in Britain, the chairman of the Board, Marij Pregelj, who was also a painter, believed the exhibits should have a character that reflected the art in Yugoslavia as well as be 'professionally important in the world'.[874] He emphasied the quality of the exhibits, stating that they should meet the international standard of art.

The timespan and style of the potential exhibitions were the foci of the discussion, and these two questions were closely connected. According to Vejvoda, the British were interested in 'contemporary, that is, current . . . what Yugoslavia was creating today'. He sought to provide a 'cross-section of works, to show the development' and believed 'it would be best to

[873] AJ 559-84-189, *Stenografske beleške, Prvi sastanak odbora za likovnu umetnost pri komisiji za Kulturne veze sa inostranstvom*, 14 November 1960, pp.31-2
[874] Ibid., p.25.

come up with an exhibition that would present Yugoslav art from the 1950s'. However, the chairman was concerned that 'the most modern directions in art' from the past ten years would be exclusively limited to abstract art, which could only partially reflect the art scene of Yugoslavia.[875]

Before the exhibition in 1961, the assistant director of art at the Arts Council visited Yugoslavia and saw the work of contemporary artists first-hand. Later, when discussing the contents of the exhibition in February 1961, the director of art at the Arts Council expressed the will to include certain Yugoslav artists. The painters included were: Mladen Srbinović, Gabrijel Stupica, Krsto Hegedušić, Petar Lubarda, Marij Pregelj, Edo Murtić, Miodrag Protić, Janez Bernik, Zlatko Prica and Stane Kregar. The sculptors were Olga Jančić (See Figure 5-17), Drago Tršar, Vojin Bakić and Dušan Džamonja (See Figure 5-18).[876] These were all renowned names in the contemporary Yugoslav art world.

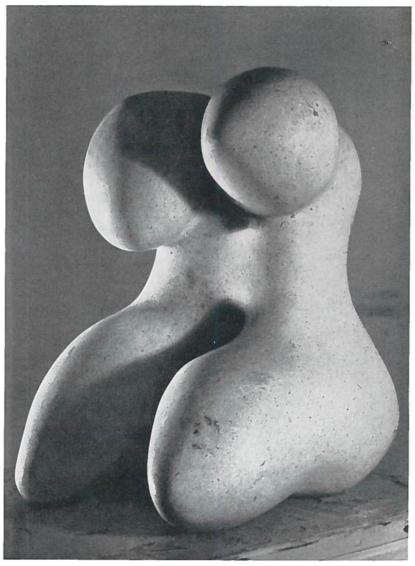


Figure 5-17. 'Love of Shapes', sculpture by Olga Jančić (1959)

[875] AJ 559-84-189, *Stenografske beleške, Prvi sastanak odbora za likovnu umetnost pri komisiji za Kulturne veze sa inostranstvom*, 14 November 1960, pp.86–88.
[876] VAMA, Telegram from the Director of Art at the Arts Council of Great Britain to Zoran Kržišnik, Director of Moderna Galerija, 28 February 1961, ACGB/121/1173.



Figure 5-18. ‘Metal Sculpture 14’ by Dušan Dzamonja (1960)



Figure 5-19. ‘New Shift in the Mine’, sculpture by Stojan Batič 1960

In the end, it is not surprising that nearly all the exhibits broadcast an abstract style. The style of this exhibition was very different from the 1956 show. The exhibits represented bolder creations, with 70% being abstract paintings, which were rather good in quality according to

the assistant director of the Arts Council.[877] It was no coincidental that the entire exhibition leaned more towards 'non-figurative creation' rather than being a cross-section exhibition. As early as the Venice Biennial in 1954, abstract art began officially representing Yugoslavia.[878]

On the one hand, abstract art served as a propaganda instrument for Yugoslavia, aligning with the modern artistic tendencies in the West at that time. The convergence of various art styles meant that the whole exhibition embodied the 'international expressive language of modern European art'. On the other hand, such arrangements were also for the 'homogeneity' of the exhibition, as these artworks were introduced to an audience unfamiliar with modern Yugoslav art.[879] The unified style helped to better illustrate Yugoslavia's contemporary artistic achievements.

The free social atmosphere for art in Yugoslavia was again highlighted.

> [The exhibition] is designed to illustrate present lines of development in these spheres in Yugoslavia. Modern Yugoslav painting has been attracting increasing attention since the war not only because Yugoslavia allows complete freedom of expression to artists but also because a number of these are comparable with the leading figures of their generation in western countries. . . . The present exhibition represents the best work of the younger artists.

The names of Edo Murtić (See Figure 5-20), Kregar and Janez Bernik (See Figure 5-21) were mentioned as distinguished abstract painters.[880]

[877] VAMA, Telegram from David Thomas, Assistant Director of Art at the Arts Council of Great Britain, to Gabriel White, Director of Art, 1 March 1961, ACGB/121/1173.
[878] Bojana Pejić, 'socijalist Modernism and the Aftermath', http://www.institute.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Bojana-Pejić-Sosialist-Modernism-and-the-Aftermath_Serbia.pdf, (25 October 2021).
[879] Zoran Kržišnik, Introduction to the exhibition catalogue, *Contemporary Yugoslav Paintings and Sculpture*, The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1961.
[880] VAMA, *Contemporary Yugoslav Paintings and Sculpture*, ACGB/121/1173, 25 April 1961.



Figure 5-20. ‘Red and Brown’, painting by Edo Murtić (Picture Courtesy of Tate Gallery)



Figure 5-21. ‘Evening in the Quarry’, painting by Janez Bernik (Picture Courtesy of Tate Gallery)



Figure 5-22. 'Brown Picture', painting by Ferdinand Kulmer (Picture Courtesy of Tate Gallery)

Advertisements for the exhibition were placed in major newspapers such as *The Times, Daily Telegraph, Listener, New Statesman, Sunday Times, Sunday Telegraph,* and *The Observer.*[881] The press conference for the 1961 exhibition was attended by journalists from major newspapers and magazines, and much attention was paid to the exhibition.[882] It was displayed at the Tate Gallery during April and May of 1961 and then in Coventry, Hull and Brighton.[883] The exhibition consisted of eighty-four paintings and twenty-seven sculptures. The sculptures were carefully selected, as the ambassador specifically mentioned this point, considering Britain a 'sculptural superpower'.[884] It turned out that these sculptures were highly regarded by British art critics.

Although the Yugoslavs attached great importance to this modernist exhibition, there was an imbalance in its reception. The British felt 'a bit blasé' about holding such an exhibition.[885]

[881] VAMA, Telegram from the Classified Advertisement Department of Arthur S. Dixon Limited to the Arts Council, 24 April 1961, ACGB/121/1173.
[882] AJ 559-84-189, *Stenografske beleške, Sastanak odbora za likovnu umetnost komisije za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom održan 22. juna 1961. godine.*
[883] Coventry was likely chosen because it had been a twin city to Belgrade since 1957. The other two cities were probably selected because their galleries had no clashing schedules with the Yugoslav exhibition.
[884] AJ 559-84-189, *Stenografske beleške, Prvi sastanak odbora za likovnu umetnost pri komisiji za Kulturne veze sa inostranstvom*, 14 November 1960, pp.80–5.
[885] VAMA, Telegram from David Thomas, Assistant Director of Art of the Arts Council of Great Britain, to Gabriel White, Director of Art, 1 March 1961, ACGB/121/1173.

There were a number of exhibitions that shared similar characters from other Western countries. Nevertheless, according to David Thomas, the assistant director of art at the Tate Gallery, the exhibition was 'well received in the press' and 'made a very good impression', though it was not 'as crowded as some of [their] more popular exhibitions'.[886]

The feedback was quite positive, judging from the major newspaper articles. A few well-known English critics viewed the exhibition favourably. Some Yugoslav artistic personalities appeared on British TV shows, with four or five being recorded directly in the field and in the studios. Review articles in *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian* featured coverage accompanied by photos of the artworks. The BBC also reported on the event.

Nevertheless, Kržišnik later complained at the meeting of the Board of Fine Arts that 'some articles only appeared in some newspapers about historical, political and other principles, but not about the exhibition. [he] can't understand how these people did not understand that [their] exhibition [was] something completely different', meaning that its artistic modernist facet was again neglected. The chairman of the Board of Fine Arts also pointed out that Yugoslav newspapers provided no coverage of the exhibition.[887] As a result, the Yugoslav public had little information about the Yugoslav cultural offensive in Britain.

During the exhibition in 1961, four artworks were purchased by the Tate Gallery.[888] The sale of the artworks went well, and over one third of the objects on display were sold. Individual art objects were also sought after by British curators in future years with some concrete proposals to be exhibited. Certain names were highlighted, such as Srbinović, Mihalić,

[886] VAMA, Telegram from David Thomas, Assistant Director of Art at the Arts Council, to Stefka Cobelj, Secretariat of Education and Culture of Yugoslavia, 12 May 1961, ACGB/121/1173.
[887] AJ 559-84-189*, Stenografske beleške, Stenografske beleške, Sastanak odbora za likovnu umetnost komisije za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom održan 22. juna 1961. godine*.
[888] VAMA, Telegram from the Tate Gallery to Gabriel White, Director of Art at the Arts Council of Great Britain, 26 June 1961, ACGB/121/1173. Three paintings and one sculpture were purchased by the Tate. They were *Evening in the Quarry* by Janez Bernik; *Brown Picture* by Ferdinand Kulmer (See Figure 5-22); *Red and Brown* by Edo Murtić; *Metal Sculpture 14* by Dušan Džamonja. All four of these works exemplified Abstract Expressionism.

Džamonja, Jevrić and so on.[889] Later, in 1962, small-scale exhibitions were shown at the Drian Galleries in London featuring the works of the younger generation of Yugoslav artists: Desa Pantelić, Zoran Mandić, Olga Janvrić, and Maximilien Herzele.[890]

The exhibition was a milestone in the presentation of Yugoslav contemporary art abroad, and the experience gained from it guided future exhibiting activities. According to Kržišnik, 'Yugoslavia . . . experiences the best success after a series of exhibitions that were organised in Britain'.[891] He was confident that there was great interest in Yugoslav art and improved communication between the two countries, especially in painting. Such success indicated much potential for Yugoslavia to further build its reputation in the West.[892]

The show marked a new convergence of modernist art in Yugoslavia and the West. By 1961, abstract art was not only popular in Yugoslav art circles but was also approved by the government and promoted as representative of the country. The exhibition of Contemporary Yugoslav Painting and Sculpture served as a steppingstone in Yugoslavia's fine art approach, arousing interest among prestigious art professionals. This would benefit the future of Yugoslavia's cultural activities internationally, as negotiations were already underway for the exhibition to travel to Italy, Switzerland, and Austria. Through this exhibition, Yugoslavia re-established its presence in the European art world. According to internal documents, the exhibition '[showed] [their] parallel effort that in the countries of Europe, which have the opportunity to see the art of a large number of countries, Yugoslavia presents a large selection of works of art and justifies the reputation of a country that enriches contemporary art aspirations in the world'.[893]

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[889] AJ 559-84-189, *Stenografske beleške, Stenografske beleške, Sastanak odbora za likovnu umetnost komisije za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom održan 22. juna 1961. godine.*
[890] 'Work of Yugoslav Artists', *The Times,* (28 April 1962), p.4.
[891] AJ 559-84-189, *Stenografske beleške, Stenografske beleške, Sastanak odbora za likovnu umetnost komisije za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom održan 22. juna 1961. godine*.
[892] Ibid.
[893] AJ 559-84-189, *Odbor za likovne umetnosti pri Komisiji za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom, održaće u 21 Novembra 1961: Informativni materijal o problemima koji će se na sastanku razmatrati* (The Board of Fine Arts

VI. Conclusion: Still 'Socialist' Yugoslavia: The Combination of Traditional and Modern art

The process of Yugoslavia's artistic exchanges with Britain evolved over time. The structure and agenda of art exhibitions reflected Yugoslavia's changing cultural diplomacy. As asserted by art historian Nevenka Stankovic, the promotion of art modernism in Yugoslavia reflected how the state set visual arts as part of its political agenda. It symbolised the pursuit of progress and modernity, 'the prerogative of an ever-promising future and gave a marginal nation proof of belonging to the "modern world"'.[894] This was also a process for Yugoslavia to culturally reintegrate into the international art scene and politically declare its identity in the international arena. With this, socialist Yugoslavia stepped out of the shadow of the USSR, not only politically but also culturally. Its impact was profound and long-lasting, as evidenced by the popularity of Herbert Read's work and art theory in Yugoslav cultural life.[895]

The pursuit of modernism in art and the promotion of traditional heritage together showed the different facets of Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy, with the purpose of building its image in Britain in particular and the West in general, but with different emphases at different times. The folk-art exhibition in Britain in 1950 was ideologically designed, similar to the previous experience of holding small-scale folk-art exhibitions, but with more emphasis on the application of its folk art in contemporary society to avoid the impression of being outdated. The narrative of traditional art and cultural heritage was gradually replaced and overshadowed

within the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries will hold a meeting on November 21, 1961. Informational materials on the problems to be discussed at the meeting).

[894] Nevenka Stankovic, 'The Case of Exploited Modernism: How Yugoslav Communists used the Idea of Modern Art to Promote Political Agendas', *Third Text*, 20/2 (2006), pp.151–9.

[895] As early as 1957, Read's book *Art Now: An Introduction to the Theory of Modern Painting and Sculpture* was translated as *Umjetnost danas* and published by Mladost in Zagreb. Later in 1959, a translated version of his book *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*, titled *O prirodi poezije i prirodi kritike*, was published in Belgrade. The following years saw a wide dissemination of his works in Yugoslavia. In 1965, the translated version of Herbert Read's *Icon and Idea* was published in Zagreb. His small pamphlet written on the British abstract painter Ben Nicholson was also included in the project *Mala umetnička enciklopedija* and published the same year.

by the more up-to-date art modernism, which was in parallel with political, economic and social liberalisation.

Yugoslavia's cultural foreign policy also experienced a transitional period when the authorities were still uncertain about officially promoting modernism, especially abstract art. This was probably because modernism in art was often associated with being 'pro-Western, pro-"freedom"', raising concerns that such inclinations might compromise its socialist character.

Nevertheless, as seen in Chapter 4, Yugoslav folk art maintained strong momentum in Britain. Traditional heritage and modern art were combined to form Yugoslavia's anti-Soviet cultural identity, which was reflected in its cultural diplomacy towards Britain. This approach evolved over time, though certain issues persisted. As art historian Bojana Pejić commented, it was the problem of 'Yugoslavia's geo-cultural "being", namely the issue of [external] influences, the problem of catching-up and the desperate quest for an "original" cultural identity, for artistic uniqueness, and local authenticity'.[896]

[896] Bojana Pejić, 'Socialist Modernism and the Aftermath', Institute for Contemporary Art in Zagreb collection, p.5, http://www.institute.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Bojana-Pejić-Sosialist-Modernism-and-the-Aftermath_Serbia.pdf, (22 September 2021).

Conclusion

The cultural exchanges between Britain and Yugoslavia during the researched period illustrated the soft power aspirations of both Britain and socialist Yugoslavia. For Yugoslavia, these initiatives could also be regarded as image building or nation branding for a socialist state that had just broken away from the Soviet orbit. The exchanges represented an exploration of cultural diplomacy by both Britain and Yugoslavia, using culture to secure their respective goals and search for mutual recognition.

However, these exchanges were asymmetrical, especially concerning the Yugoslav cultural agenda. In this early stage, Yugoslavia lacked a systematic plan and vision for bilateral cultural relations, which brought problems in its cultural exchanges with Britain and hindering Yugoslavia from achieving its goals. Its cultural policy towards Britain was influenced by a mix of domestic and international politics. Domestically, there was always a need to consolidate its multi-national state and communist rule. Internationally, the 1948 Tito–Stalin split was the turning point for Yugoslavia to recalibrate its foreign cultural policy. This shift was reflected in its cultural relations with Britain. During the 1950s, unlike the earlier situation when the British Council's staff tried—always in vain—to make contact with Yugoslav cultural authorities, there was now official interest shown by the Yugoslav authorities in different aspects of British culture, including the social, judicial, industrial, technical, and educational realms. Despite initial reluctance to cooperate, Yugoslav authorities started to support cultural exchanges with Britain.

Yugoslavia's early cultural offensives in the late 1940s and early 1950s were ideology-driven and propagandistic. Through post-war reconstruction, Yugoslav authorities intended to present Yugoslavia's socialist vision to the British public. However, this strategy attracted only certain groups of Britons, namely British communists and left-wing fellow travellers. The switch of focus to its national folk culture and modern art, however, complicated its cultural

programme. The effort to integrate into the Western cultural/art world was not always successful, as Yugoslavia's modern art was not modern enough for some British critics. The promotion of folk art posed the risk of reinforcing stereotypes of the country and the Balkans in general as backward and exotic. Yugoslav cultural officials never found a way to overcome these obstacles. One of the most important tasks of Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy—showing how it was distinct from the Eastern Bloc—ultimately proved ineffective. Its socialist vision was easily dismissed as merely Communist propaganda. The promotion of folklore became synonymous with the Soviet system and the Eastern Bloc in general, which included Yugoslavia in the Western imagination. Despite the fact that little was known about Yugoslavia by the British people, most of them still tended to believe that socialist states were indistinguishable.

Nevertheless, through its explorations in cultural diplomacy, the Yugoslav government successfully integrated cultural initiatives with economic and political objectives. Its cultural exchanges with Britain helped Yugoslavia gain experience in cultural diplomacy with foreign countries. Yugoslavia began to realise the significance of culture in building its national image and promoting the country.

Such a cultural offensive gained new momentum in the 1960s, although its target countries changed. Since the launch of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade in 1961, Yugoslavia's diplomatic focus began to be geared more towards its member countries, which shared a common goal of being independent of superpower influence in the Cold War.[897] The blossoming of the Non-Aligned Movement and closer diplomatic relations brought increasing

[897] As Fidel Castro expressed in his speech at UN as chairman of the Non-Aligned Countries, the 'original principles and fundamental nature of the Non-Aligned Policy [was] the struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, apartheid, racism, including Zionism, and any form of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony, as well as the struggle against the policies of big powers or blocs'. See *Text of Speech by Cuban President Fidel Castro to the 34th UN General Assembly'*, Latin American Network Information Centre, https://web.archive.org/web/20140111084626/http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1979/19791012.html, (29 September 2022).

cultural exchanges among the member countries. Between 1967 and 1975, cultural agreements were signed with more than twenty-five Non-Aligned member states.[898] The main channel for strengthening cultural relations was through art exhibitions. Yugoslav artists actively participated at international biennales and triennials such as the Alexandria Biennale and São Paulo Biennale in the Global South. In addition, the Ljubljana Biennale, established in 1955, provided a platform for Non-Aligned countries to exhibit their art. Its purpose was to promote 'Yugoslavia's role in the internationalisation of modern art, inclusiveness, cultural cooperation, and peaceful co-existence'.[899] Yugoslav authorities understood the power of culture in creating transnational solidarity and socialist internationalism.

In its cultural exchanges with Non-Aligned Countries, the main line of showing both traditional and modern art continued. In the meeting of the Board of Fine Arts of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries in 1961, the proposal to organise an exhibition of Yugoslav frescos in South American countries was raised, in addition to Yugoslavia's participation in São Paulo Biennale. According to Vučinić, the secretary of the board, Yugoslavia was interested in holding its fresco exhibition because 'it was important for them at the given moment for their cultural affirmation', especially since the Biennale at São Paulo was mainly focused on modern art.[900] Yugoslav officials wanted to use this opportunity to explore more possibilities for presenting their traditional frescos in Latin American countries. Therefore, not only could Yugoslav modern art be known through the Biennale, but also its traditional art.

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[898] Bojana Videkanić, 'Nonaligned Modernism: Yugoslav Culture, Nonaligned Cultural Diplomacy, and Transnational Solidarity', *Nationalities Papers* 49/3 (2021), p.508; See also Teja Merhar, 'International Collaboration in Culture between Yugoslavia and the Countries of the Non-Aligned Movement', in *Southern Constellations. The Poetics of the Non-Aligned* [Exhibition Catalogue], https://www.academia.edu/44241312/Southern_Constellations_International_Collaborations_in_Culture_between_Yugoslavia_and_the_Countries_of_the_Non_Aligned_Movement, (29 September 2022).
[899] Videkanić, 'Nonaligned Modernism', p.513.
[900] AJ, 559-84-189, *Stenografske beleške, Sastanak odbora za likovnu umetnost komisije za kulturne veze sa inostranstvom održan, 22 juna 1961. godine*, p.17.

Through its cultural diplomacy with Non-Aligned Countries, Yugoslavia successfully created an image of promoting international solidarity that transcended the political divide of the Cold War bipolar system. The reconstruction of the city of Skopje after the earthquake in 1963 represented another attempt in Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy. The Skopje project effectively reflected the socialist internationalism and modernism propagated by Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia's increasing prestige in the international community enabled a positive response to its reconstruction from other countries and the United Nations. Experts from both the West and the East, as well as the developing world, participated in the planning and design of the city's rebuilding. Yugoslavia's engagement with the Global South through the Non-Aligned Movement, along with its emphasis on the UN system, helped transform this developmental project into valuable exercise in cultural diplomacy. Growing cultural exchanges with Non-Aligned countries during the 1960s and 1970s marked a strategic shift in Yugoslavia's foreign policy.

Meanwhile, in the 1960s, American culture began to exert a new influence on socialist Yugoslavia. Its art, music, film, popular culture, and consumerism not only altered the cultural scene but also had a deeper impact on Yugoslav society.[901] With increasing cultural connections with the Global South and the U.S. from the 1960s onward, Yugoslavia's cultural diplomacy evolved accordingly.

During the 1950s, Yugoslav authorities were still exploring how to culturally interact with Britain, a representative of the capitalist West. The various attempts made by Yugoslavia effectively illustrated its experimentation in wielding cultural diplomacy. These efforts also demonstrated how cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings, often pre-dating the Cold War period, could complicate this process. Although this exploration could not be regarded as fully successful in its purpose, results and effects, it was still a significant episode of Cold War

[901] See Vučetić, *Coca Cola Socialism*; Dimitrijević, *Potrošeni socijalizam*.

cultural diplomacy. Yugoslavia's cultural offensives in Britain were an important part of its strategy to integrate into the post-war international system from the 1950s.[902] Yugoslavia's experience with Britain also set the stage for further cultural exchanges with other countries, especially the Non-Aligned members states and the U.S..

Choosing Britain as a target of cultural diplomacy during this period reflected Yugoslavia's post-war political priorities. This choice was related to the political position that Britain enjoyed during the Cold War. Britain not only acted as a coordinator between the two superpowers in Europe but also took a lead role in European issues and held a powerful status in international politics. From the perspective of long-term cultural influence, London was not the most influential Western metropolis for Yugoslavia compared to Paris or Vienna in the broader history of the 20th century. However, it became a significant target of cultural promotion for Tito's Yugoslavia in the period addressed in this dissertation. Cooperation with Britain was beneficial politically and economically in the long term.

For Britain, the British Council gained valuable experience in navigating the new post-war cultural landscape through its work in Yugoslavia. The cultural events organised by these two countries demonstrate how both Britain and Yugoslavia used culture to gain recognition and influence, especially from the Yugoslav perspective. For Yugoslavia, international recognition was crucial in its effort to develop and maintain a neutral position between the East and the West after its split with the Soviet Union in 1948. For Britain, wielding cultural influence in a socialist country like Yugoslavia helped further its diplomatic goal of approaching Yugoslavia as a wedge in the socialist bloc and maintaining cultural hegemony in the bipolar post-war order.

This thesis analyses the increasing significance attached to culture and soft power in the Cold War, especially between countries with ideological differences. It shows the importance

[902] See Robertson, 'Navigating the Postwar Liberal Order', pp.385-412

of looking beyond binary superpower antagonisms. By focusing on bilateral cultural relations between two relatively small countries in the Cold War, we can gain new perspectives on how and why exporting national cultures mattered so much in this period. In the end, the story of British-Yugoslav cultural exchanges proves that the Iron Curtain was not impermeable and opened up opportunities to build new, albeit imperfect, relations across the Cold War divide.

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