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SOME REFLECTIONS ON CULTURAL PLURALISM IN YUGOSLAVIA*

The Yugoslav society is built on self-management relations and on the equality of all the nations and nationalities. It is precisely these relations which permanently unite our community, which is not only multinational but also multilingual. All the most important legal acts derive from the principles of national and cultural pluralism. Equality itself also expresses itself through education, instruction and in culture, by way of the activity of various institutions, publishing activities, mass media, etc. It is expressed above all through education, in which the relation to individual languages is reflected to the greatest extent. It is precisely the right to the mother tongue which paves the way to the right to one's own culture, not only in the sense of its existence but also through creative cooperation in the course of one's development.

Modern nations strive for the affirmation and defence of national and cultural identity. Nationalities are recognised through their cultural forms. The whole of culture is firmly linked with its collective experience of a collective historical past, although it does not have equal significance in all eras and with all nations. Such is also the case in Yugoslavia. Edvard Kardelj wrote: "A different historical past has given a different degree of economic development to individual parts of Yugoslavia and, with this, also differences in the general social and cultural level". These differences have not altered substantially in the decades since the National Liberation War, so that it is impossible to reduce the culture of Yugoslavia to a single general model, although both its origin and development must be traced in the framework of a united multinational self-management society and on the basis of new, productive social forms and economic and historical development; it is the reflection of the collective experiences. It would be very difficult to enumerate all the many factors which define individual cultures, linked as they are to a specific environment, conditions and situations (e.g. cultural background, tradition, language; models, styles). National cultures cannot be integrated into such a monolithic culture without losing some of their own characteristics in the process. The cultures of the Yugoslav nations and nationalities have developed over the centuries in different socio-economic environments; they have existed in different cultural spheres and hence achieved different levels of development, which have been more or less in correspondence with the coexistent demands of national politics and of the country. Thus the meaning and role that culture plays in different nations and nationalities is also specific. It is also necessary to take into account here the interaction with the culture of the central society.

* Original: Slovene

However, all these differences are diminishing. In every nationality there are elements, creations and discoveries of the cumulative cultural developments that make themselves felt directly and indirectly in books, films, theatre, music, art, and scientific achievements of the authors, members of a particular nation/nationality. But this cultural cooperation as a creative conflict with the existing world (national culture) as well as with that other world (the culture of other nations) makes possible the formation of new structures. Such a new structure should also be a culture of "equality in diversity," with a respect for particularities, in which individual cultures interconnect, intertwine and permeate one another, thus creating a kind of dialogue with the existing particularities, traditions and differences. Equality in diversity also includes cultural pluralism, which, of course, also opens up the question of relations between the parts and the whole, the question of the political and cultural association of the multinational community. We cannot deny the differences existing in Yugoslavia in the understanding of culture/cultures and in the practice of the individual republics and provinces. In other words, cultural pluralism means the right to a free development of all the cultures; to their openness and reciprocal permeation, as national culture is not a reservation in which the processes of creativity are pumped dry. There is a constant critical dialogue between the cultures, in which not only does a certain culture establish itself which at the same time influences other cultures, but also the existing cultural influences of the different nations/ethnic groups give rise to changes in the development of culture in general and in society as a whole. And changes in culture are urgently needed, since a culture is only alive when it is in the state of constant change and development (neither is cultural tradition static). This is not forced paracultural (external) change but culture's own need for development and change, since it is only in this way that it avoids negating itself and does not become removed from its historical essence.

We can look at the differences between cultures as, on the one hand, creating the favourable possibility for the enrichment and development of each national culture separately, and, on the other hand, as maintaining the possibility of generating a new structure, as already mentioned - the culture of the "equality in diversity," - as a unifying element interlinking the Yugoslav nations and nationalities. Such a culture is not achieved overnight but demands planned education by which we not only ensure the basic cultural information which we have from each other but, through cultural awareness, also slowly diminish the existing differences. This new culture, in the sense of numerous cultures made up of individual cultures having different relations to tradition, different cultural backgrounds, historical pasts, a greater or smaller sensitivity to questions of language, special problems in their development which cannot be generalised, and following their own paths and forms in the creation of the collective cultural interests of the Yugoslav nations and nationalities, does not exclude the unified Yugoslav cultural policies which issue from uniform cultural criteria with a clearly defined direction but flexible enough to encompass "differences which create unity," with an understanding of a new, progressive and creative culture with clearly defined

correlations of cultural creativity of the nations and nationalities. Such a culture, which stimulates and supplements a mutual understanding of other cultures, can be considered a priceless link which perpetually interconnects our nations and nationalities, without regard to the actual state of mutual relations at any given time.