

# BULLETIN OF SLOVENE ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY

# 1984 1

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— In the introductory note the editor of the Bulletin explains the principal orientations of the magazine for the year 1984. In his opinion the Bulletin will remain at the same level as last year because of the lack of funds for the realization of the four thematic volumes that the editorial staff has been planning for a long time. In the following year the editorial staff will remain the same.

— The Bulletin is also publishing the discussion from the 1<sup>st</sup> Joint Congress of Yugoslav Ethnologists and Folklorists which was held in Rogaška Slatina, Slovenia, from October 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>. A brief summary of the discussion is also published in the Bulletin (in English).

— The congress was opened by the president of the Association of Folklorists' Societies of Yugoslavia, Marko Terseglav. His speech is published, too. We are publishing other speeches as well: by dr. Slavko Kremenšek, the president of the Association of Ethnologists' Societies of Yugoslavia, by dr. Matjaž Kmecl, the secretary of culture in the government of SR Slovenia, as well as salutatory speeches of the hosts.

— After the discussion, the section Polemics brings Marko Terseglav's impressions of the congressional debate. He pauses at the thoughts of some of the participants in the debate who wanted to blame the organizer of the congress, the Slovene Ethnologic Society, also for the faults it had not committed. The author rejected all such hints.

— The history of Ethnology in Pictures brings a detail from the 1<sup>st</sup> Joint Congress of Yugoslav Ethnologists and Folklorists. All other pictures in this issue of the Bulletin were taken at this congress.

## SOME PROBLEMS OF THE FIRST JOINT CONGRESS OF YUGOSLAV ETHNOLOGISTS AND FOLKLORISTS

The Association of Music Folklorists of Yugoslavia with its sections in each republic was founded in 1952. The Slovene section invited to cooperation also other folklorists, which led to the creation of the Folkloristic Society of Slovenia. The year 1955 was characterized by more activity in the Yugoslav folklorist community and the Association of Folklorists' Societies of Yugoslavia was established; still nowadays it unites all folkloristic societies in the Republic. Every year the Association holds a congress and a general meeting and has held 30 of them so far.

In 1957 Yugoslav ethnologists founded the Ethnological Society of Yugoslavia with its branches in each republic. Since its very establishment, the Slovene Ethnographic Society has been striving for a merger of both associations or at least of both societies (the Folkloristic and the Ethnological one) in each republic; however, all these endeavours proved a failure and the associations kept on holding separate congresses although some ethnologists took part also in folklorists' congresses and were also members of the Folkloristic Society. On the other hand, there were also some folklorists who attended ethnological congresses and were members of the Ethnological Society.

Such an absurd situation met with resistance in Slovenia where in 1975 both societies merged into a new and uniform Slovene Ethnological Society which again raised the question of the fusion of both Yugoslav associations and of joint congresses of ethnologists and folklorists. However, the resistance from the societies in other republics and from both associations was so strong that they remained separated. On the other hand, the Slovene Ethnological Society is a member of both the Ethnologists' Association of Yugoslavia and Folklorists' Association of Yugoslavia. In 1983 it was the turn of the Slovene Ethnological Society to organize the 30<sup>th</sup> Congress of Yugoslav Folklorists and also the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress of Yugoslav Ethnologists. This external circumstance and a long standing desire of the Slovene Ethnological Society accounted for the fact that the 1<sup>st</sup> Joint Congress of Yugoslav ethnologists and folklorists was held in Rogaška Slatina, Slovenia, from October 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> 1983 with the following plenary and sectional themes:

Plenary themes:

1. Ethnological and folkloristic representation of Kozjansko (the region where the congress was held)

2. Tendencies in the post-war Yugoslav ethnology and folkloristics

(Reporters — two from each republic /an ethnologist and a folklorist/ presented the development of the lines in their respective republics, their theoretical orientation and aims as well as concrete problems).

3. Tracing the oldest cultural heritage

Titles of sectional themes:



1. *Problems of applicability of ethnology and folkloristics in the contemporary Yugoslav society* (In connection with this reporters spoke about general problems of applicable ethnology, about ethnology and tourism, and about problems of ethnological museology).

2. *Ethnological and folkloristic study of towns*

3. *Section on oral tradition and*

4. *Ethnomusicological section*

At the congress there was also a round-table discussion about *ethnos and nation as an ethnological problem*.

Reports had been printed already before the congress so that participants in the discussion were able to dedicate more time to the discussion of individual problems. In this issue of the *Bulletin* we are publishing the whole discussion in a slightly abridged version. We would also like to familiarize foreign readers with the main thoughts and the principal points of the said discussion; therefore we are publishing certain parts of the discussion in this *Bulletin*.

1<sup>st</sup> plenary theme: *Kozjansko*

From the reports that had been published and from the professional excursion, participants in the discussion were able to conclude that *Kozjansko* is an area very rich in ethnological and art history monuments but, at the same time, economically the most backward region in Slovenia. The economic factor also slows down the cultural development of *Kozjansko*, i.e. this region has not sufficient financial resources for restoration of cultural monuments. Participants in the discussion considered the possibilities for the region's integration into the cultural offer and the preservation of its ethnological monuments in spite of its economic backwardness. The point in question was how these monuments were regarded by ethnologists and folklorists and what suggestions these two disciplines could offer as to the reconstruction of *Kozjansko*. Most participants shared the opinion that in *Kozjansko* cultural life had to be restored as well, that open-air museums that would fit into the settlements and the countryside should be set up and that this was but a question of contents. In the opinion of the participants in the discussion the *ethno-park* should be alive, it should be inhabited by people that would revive old traditional trades by which they could also make their living. Thus renewed cultural monuments and museums should be able to support themselves economically. "Revitalized" traditional villages or localities with renewed and "revitalized" feudal castles could be touristically attractive and therefore also economically justified. In *Kozjansko* there are castles that are nowadays decaying, yet they could be repaired to house museums or libraries or cultural centres.

Some participants in the discussion stressed that *Kozjansko* is a region known in the history for its peasant revolts and that there could be arranged a centre or a collection of Slovene feudal culture into which a high, elite feudal culture with castles and religious monuments (churches) could be incorporated; in this way the revived culture and work of the class of bandsmen could be presented. Such a collection should be conceived as a living museum where, beside traditional folk culture, also the high culture of castle-life could be reanimated. There were suggestions that in individual towns located at the foot of the castles (*Podsreda*, *Podčetrtek*) certain traditional trades and souvenir-making should be restored as well as traditional wine-cellars and guest-houses with traditional cuisine, whereas in the rural hinterland the possibilities for the development of country tourism should be exploited. Now there are only larger towns that are economically developed; their main source of income is health-resort tourism (*Rogaška Slatina*, *Podčetrtek*). On account of cultural attractions and restored tradition, tourism could spread also to passive localities rich in cultural monuments. Some participants in the discussion suggested that in reconstructed castles summer courses of certain traditional trades (pottery, etc.) or also ethnological summer courses could be organized. The whole landscape with the open-air museum could serve as a study model where the realization of ethnological visions would be made possible and would also be economically profitable.

In spite of different suggestions regarding the museum, everybody present shared the opinion that any open-air museum should be kept alive, for otherwise it would not make any sense. As a negative example of an open-air museum most of them mentioned *Kumrovec* — *Tito's* birthplace which is now a skansen. The village has been neatly restored, yet there are no inhabitants, no life in it. Instead it has become a dead and expensive monument.

This theme was concluded by the thought that it was necessary to gather various opinions about *Kozjansko*, i.e. its cultural heritage and revitalization and communicate them to the region's leading politicians. At the same time ethnological work in *Kozjansko* should be carried on and intensified in order to acquire an as much as possible detailed image of the traditional and everyday culture of this region. The attention of those who are directly concerned with tourism should be called to those ethnological and folklore elements that could be commercially or otherwise used in the tourist offer and also to the representation of towns and the countryside.

2<sup>nd</sup> plenary theme: *Tendencies in the post-war Yugoslav ethnology and folkloristics*

Like the reports, the discussion was also very ununiform, for every participant saw the problems of the post-war Yugoslav ethnology and folkloristics elsewhere or they referred to minor problems. Some of them considered important the problem of the lack of cadres in ethnological and folkloristic institutions, certain others found the biggest problem to be the closedness of the lines within the republics, and still others felt that the main problem lay in an ununiform professional terminology or in the lack of theoretical publications in the lines. There were also some critics of the orientation of ethnology and folkloristics in the past, while certain others defended it. But it was common to all of them that they managed but partially and vaguely to indicate the future tasks of ethnology and folkloristics as well as their objectives. Certain participants of the congress saw the whole problem in the Yugoslav narrowness which so far has not taken into account foreign ethnological theory, while still others thought that Yugoslav ethnology and folkloristics needed no foreign theories at all since every researcher should start from his own, i.e. Yugoslav, material and use it as the base on which to build his own theory. The material, therefore, dictates the theory. Such opinions were again the cause of new reactions that mentioned smallness, provincialism and absurdity in Yugoslav ethnology. However, in spite of that, the



participants in the discussion unanimously deemed that ethnology in individual republics was on a different level of development and that links between the republical centres were too weak, reflecting in the lack of terminological uniformity which is already becoming disturbing. This is also reflected in theory and methodology where the differences appear not only between ethnology and folkloristics, but also within these two disciplines. Everybody shared the opinion that this was not quite so bad since contrasting opinions and differeng views only paved the way for the science out of passivity, but that it was not good if these differences bore the label of exclusiveness, infallibility, etc., and thus led to the creation of individual "schools" within the republics which are not capable of a professional dialogue. And, according to a general opinion expressed at the congress, it is a constructive dialogue that is badly needed today if we want to successfully solve the tasks of ethnology and folkloristics. The incapacity of a constructive dialogue was in certain cases demonstrated by refusals of further co-operation (joint congresses) between ethnologists and folklorists and by the defense of old methods of work in specialized sections where mainly personal methods and perceptions are prevalent. Most of them saw benefit in such "stock-taking" or "balancing" of the lines and agreed that such meetings should be held also in the future in order to solve some of the indicated problems. At the end, the participants of the congress lay special emphasis on the following problems and points of view: 1. The subject of ethnology should be re-examined, for the notion of "people" from the old ethnology can no longer be the exclusive area of research of ethnologists and folklorists because the society is divided into strata and so there is not only one social stratum (e.g. the rural one). 2. In the opinion of some of the participants in the discussion ethnology can today no longer limit itself only to the research of "simple" folks, i.e. of the lower strata of the society. 3. The notion of tradition should also be defined with accuracy, for it should no longer be conceived as a certain historical period but as a process in which every generation sees its cultural past and tries to define it. 4. Some favoured the strengthening of those ethnological and folkloristic explorations that explain living ethnic processes and interethnic relations in Yugoslavia. 5. Some thought that ethnology and folkloristics should pay attention to those characteristics from which these two disciplines would understand the consistent development and identity of a people.

Finally there was an almost unanimously passed resolution that one of the future and eternal objectives of ethnology and folkloristics was the research of the everyday way of life. Everyday life was the objective of traditional ethnology and is becoming also the objective of modern ethnology with the tendency to remain so also in the future. Some saw in this a great opportunity of today's and future ethnology.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> plenary theme: Tracing the oldest cultural heritage

At previous congresses this theme made it possible for folklorists to represent their smaller but important discoveries in the field of traditional, past folk culture. This was also a traditional theme of folkloristic congresses and was therefore made part of the program of the joint congress but was not adequately specified. This is why only 27 different reports on this theme were presented at the congress, ranging from oral tradition to material culture. In the material of all these reports it was, however, impossible to find a common topic for discussion. Some participants in the discussion considered that these differences and incomprehension of the theme were the result of the misunderstanding of the line, thus they were again in favour of a reinterpretation of its subject and objectives. In this regard some of them stressed the importance of the history of folkloristics which should be discussed more thoroughly.

#### Work and discussion in sections.

### Section 1: Problems of applicability of ethnology and folkloristics in contemporary Yugoslav society

Participants in the discussion first analyzed concrete examples of applicable ethnology (in tourism, town-planning, cultural societies etc.) today. They all agreed that there were numerous tasks that ethnology and folkloristics could not manage to deal with, which is also the heritage from the past because in the past ethnology was too orientated towards the "splendid isolation", passing the society and its needs. It did not take into account the reality and every-day life, but riveted its attention to rarities in folk culture.

Further discussion showed that it was not only the past that was liable, but the fact that today there are no trained cadres that would be capable of working in the field of applicable ethnology and that, besides this, various posts in societies and tourism are occupied by non-ethnologists. Today pupils in elementary and secondary schools learn nothing about ethnology, and chairs of ethnology at universities offer students no information about aplicable ethnology, i.e. they do not train them for practical work.

The conclusion of the discussion about applicable ethnology ran that all Yugoslav ethnologists and folklorists should agree on methodological starting points of applicable ethnology and should pay special attention to the training of cadres. A problem that remains to be analyzed is also the integration of ethnology into school programs.

### Section 2: Applicable ethnology

Most remarks were directed to ethnology of the past that paid too little attention to problems of urban ethnology. This still occurs today, and therefore there is fear and distrust towards urban ethnology among most ethnologists. Some reject it as a methodological deviation, still others replace it by the research of contemporary subjects, and the majority of ethnologists and folklorists reject urban ethnology because of its non-ethnological elements, i.e. because of the sociological aspect of researches. As a matter of fact, this opinion has already been disproved in the discussion, but models of traditional thinking have remained.

Some participants in the discussion found it a positive fact that urban ethnology could be a subject of discussion at the congress, which points to certain changes in the ethnologists' and folklorists' mode of thinking. In spite of some still very strong oppositions to urban culture, these discussions no longer reveal so much doubt whether urban ethnology should be talked about or not, but discuss methodological problems instead. In the course of the discussion there



emerged various opinions on how to carry on an ethnological research of towns. One of the suggested possibilities was that ethnologists should choose a smaller group out of town communities that would represent a whole. That group could then be studied monographically, according to the principle of old ethnological monographs. A choice of groups according to the network principle (family-, kinship-, professional- and other groups). Some thought that one should depart from the individual towards the group and explore the way of life of these groups, etc. The majority, however, thought that in ethnological explorations of towns one should not overlook smaller groups, for they can greatly influence the whole town and the system as well as the life of the town in the whole.

Macro research projects of towns should not be taken into consideration by ethnologists. They should be done by sociologists. The purpose of ethnological researches of urban settlements should be to enable ethnologists to demonstrate what is the place of the contemporary man in relation to the past, the present and the future. Ethnology of urban centres should remain a qualitative analysis of cultural contents, for this is exactly what makes ethnology different from sociology and other sociological disciplines. In spite of this, however, a large group of ethnologists still fear the "sociologization" of ethnology. This is why urban ethnology in Yugoslavia will progress only slowly and in the centres where it has been dealt with so far.

### Section 3: Oral tradition

It was mainly folklorists who took part in this section, for they traditionally discuss folk- and oral tradition at their congresses. This time the discussion ran about the relation between oral and written literature and about differences that appear in terminology and methodology, i.e. in views about where the limits of oral tradition are, what is traditional folk literature and what belongs to this kind of literature, what importance it being given to popular or trivial literature, etc.

Traditional and actual research methods were also discussed. Here some reached the conclusion that the most widely used oral tradition research method had been the comparative method which had caused more damage than good.

A rather hot debate was held about terminology, i.e. the term "oral tradition" which some participants considered a very vague one because in oral tradition there are several levels and categories that vary in the choice of poetic language and images.

The discussion also ran about the specific poetics of folk tradition according to which a certain kind of literature has a general folk character, while according to some other opinions this is not true. Especially younger participants no longer wanted to differentiate between folk or oral tradition and between popular, mass, trivial literature, which met with the resistance of most explorers of folk literature.

### Section 4: Ethnomusicological and ethnochoreological section

Like in some other sections and plenary themes, also in this case the discussion was rather disrupted because the section had no uniform work title, so that each report meant a separate theme. The discussion ran much in the same way and was conceived so that each reporter pointed to essential problems as he saw them himself, which was followed by a discussion about the problems presented. For ethnomusicologists the problem of transcription of tunes from tapes is of special importance, especially in cases of more complicated rhythms, tunes, etc. This is why ethnomusicologists paid special attention to the problem of transcribing and individuality in transcriptions. The discussion then ran about some oldest folk musical instruments. As an antipole there developed a debate about a more recent, the so-called newly-composed folk music, which is, according to some participants in the debate, only a banalization of folk music. Still others defended its existence as at least a subject of research because this so-called new folk music is a fact of today's life, regardless of whether it belongs to the sphere of ethnomusicology or not. The debate then proceeded to the interlacing of the elements of folk and artistic music, about some regional characteristics of folk music or about elements of certain music traditions. The discussion also inevitably touched the comparative aspect, the question of different kinds of folk music of different ethnic groups in Yugoslavia and their mutual influences. And finally, as subjects of the discussion appeared also new musical elements in traditional folk music, new singing groups that imitate traditional music, etc. In spite of the heterogenous matters, after a day-long discussion participants in the congress managed to formulate and solve some burning problems of the line.

Marko Terseglav