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FROM INTEGRAL YUGOSLAVISM TO BROTHERHOOD AND UNITY. ATTEMPTS TO BUILD THE YUGOSLAV IDENTITY OF THE YOUTH

Abstract: *The article will analyze the methods used by the authorities, both in the first and second Yugoslavia, to “shape” generations of young people. Special focus is placed on the period of the dictatorship of King Aleksandar (1929–1935), i.e. on the period of early and developed socialism (1945–1965). While the term “youth” refers to individuals aged 14–27 years, the article primarily considers young people as a social group rather than merely an age category. Sources from the Archives of Yugoslavia and relevant periodicals and literature were used.*

Keywords: youth, dictatorship of King Aleksandar, ideology of integral Yugoslavism, brotherhood and unity

The importance of building a common identity in newly created states, whether national or multinational, is well known. Even though the youth were “targets of reformers and revolutionaries” as early as the 19th century, only the First World War fully brought the youth to the political stage.¹ Experienced war atrocities influenced the creation of “generational consciousness.” The delineation of youth as a distinct sociopolitical group and the expansion of voting rights by lowering the age limit² encouraged political elites to start addressing young people more. Authoritarian and undemocratic regimes tried to mobilize the youth and, through various models of indoctrination, ensure the support of these generations. The Kingdom and socialist Yugoslavia were no exception. “Loyal” youth was already being created in schools and through various formal and informal organizations. The Sokol movement, the youth of the Yugoslav Radical

¹ Andrew Donson, *Youth in the Fatherless Land: War Pedagogy, Nationalism, and Authority in Germany, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 2-3.

² Felix Krawatzek, *Youth in Regime Crisis. Comparative Perspectives from Russia to Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5.

Union, the Union of Pioneers and the Socialist Youth League of Yugoslavia represented only some of the organizations through which, more or less successfully, attempts were made to influence young people.

The complex political and economic circumstances in which both Yugoslav states found themselves after the First and Second World War influenced the ruling elites to try, each in their own way, to resolve ongoing ethnic conflicts, consolidate the regime and ensure the permanence of the (newly created) state through an attempt to create a common identity of young people. Although these were completely different ideologies – integral Yugoslavism, i.e. brotherhood and unity, as well as an entirely different approach to upbringing, education and formation of “Yugoslav” generations of youth, certain similarities are still apparent. The aim of this article is to show what methods the authorities, both in the first and second Yugoslavia, used to “shape” generations of young people and create a sense of community and belonging, primarily to the current regime, and secondarily to the state. In order to shed light on the aspirations of the political elites in the best way, the paper will place a special focus on the period of the dictatorship of King Aleksandar (1929-1935), i.e. on the period of early and mature socialism (1945-1965). Special attention will be devoted to imposing the ideology of integral Yugoslavism in schools and its connection with the Sokol movement; the (excessive) expectations of party officials from generations that grew up in peacetime and constant comparisons of war and post-war generations; ideological education in schools and the organization of (economically unprofitable)³ federal work actions because of their “most pronounced revolutionary continuity.”⁴

An attempt to create the first Yugoslav generation

“The deterioration of the parliament was so deep that it encroached on its vitality, and a major surgical operation was necessary to avoid complete collapse.”⁵ The report of Kennard, the British ambassador in Belgrade, from early January 1929 summarized, in just one sentence, all the complexity of the state crisis that marked the first decade of the existence of the Kingdom of SCS. The persistent insistence on centralism, coupled with a refusal to consider arguments for a federalist order on one hand, and fiery rhetoric that saw the causes of all problems exclusively in “Serbian hegemony”, on the other, prevented any con-

³ Архив Југославије (АЈ), 114, Савез социјалистичке омладине Југославије, 381, Извештај о раду Народне омладине Србије у 1952. години

⁴ АЈ, 507, СК СКЈ, Централни комитет Савеза комуниста Југославије), I / VIII – K1 / 1.

⁵ АЈ, 371, Foreign Office (FO), 389-13706.

structive work. State and parliamentary boycotts and obstruction, fierce conflicts of deputies that culminated in June 1928 and constant strengthening of the king's power led to dictatorship, as the only "solution" to overcome the growing national conflicts. The seriousness of the crisis and the political implications of the possible collapse of the Kingdom of SCS led even the London Times to declare in December 1928 that "Yugoslavia needs a Mussolini, Pilsudski or Primo de Rivera, who would put politicians in their place and give the country what it needs."⁶ The bloodshed in the Parliament further deepened the existing chasm, misunderstanding and intolerance in the relations between Serbs and Croats. Unprepared for reorganization on a federalist basis, surrounded by a group of court radicals and democrats, as well as a few Croatian and Slovenian politicians, the king tried to unite the "three-named people" into one tribe after ten years of living together and build a strong (one)national state capable of opposing external enemies. The Kingdom thus stepped into a dictatorship that would only deepen the state crisis, erode the idea of Yugoslavism and lead to the complete and tragic defeat of King Aleksandar – political and personal.⁷

With the division into banovinas and the renaming of the state to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in October 1929, there was a shift from compromise unitarism to Yugoslav integralism.⁸ By rejecting Pašić's idea of retaining tribal names in the name of the state, it was necessary to highlight the unitary form of government, but also the compactness of its content – i.e. the unity of its constituent people.⁹ National names and national symbols were outlawed,¹⁰ and the Royal address, delivered by King Aleksandar at the opening of the joint session of the National Assembly and the Senate in January 1932, showed that the past of the South Slavs, since their migration to the Balkans, was being reinterpreted. Namely, in front of the newly elected deputies and senators, the king spoke about the history of the "Yugoslav people", stressing that, despite centuries of suffering, "the thought of inter-tribal brotherhood and Yugoslav community was never extinguished... but lived forever in the ethnic elements of Yugoslav unity and the clairvoyant consciousness of the best sons of our people."¹¹

⁶ Cited in its entirety according to: Hrvoje Matković, *Povijest Hrvatske seljačke stranke* (Zagreb: Naklada PIP Pavličić, 1999), 280.

⁷ Ivana Dobrivojević, *Državna represija u doba diktature kralja Aleksandra 1929-1935* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2006), 43.

⁸ Љубодраг Димић, *Историја српске државности. Србија у Југославији* (Нови Сад: САНУ, огранак у Новом Саду 2001), 140.

⁹ Лаза Костић, *Коментар Устава Краљевине Југославије од 3. септембра 1931* (Београд: Геца Кон, 1934), 2.

¹⁰ I. Dobrivojević, *op. cit.* 114.

¹¹ „Престона беседа Њ. В. Краља“, *Време*, 19.1.1932.

To facilitate a departure from the parliamentary period, the regime sought to relay the on “new Yugoslav youth”—one “not steeped in partisanship, tribal, or religious hatred”. This new generation was to become the foundation and main strength of the regime, as only a “new man” could truly embody Yugoslav nationalism.”¹² However, the attempt to create the first Yugoslav generation was an ambitious and difficult task. The developed national consciousness of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, as well as the socio-economic structure of Yugoslav society, hindered a greater influence, both formal and informal, on young men and women, despite all the regime’s efforts to impose the ideology of Yugoslavism. Through the school system and Sokol societies, only a portion of the youth could be reached. However, even in these cases, the influence of the environment, banned political parties, and Roman Catholic clergy was much stronger. Neglecting the political and economic conditions, the regime harbored a certain hope that the administrative reorganization could mechanically mark the beginning of the resolution of political and ethnic problems. This thesis is also supported by the statement of Prime Minister Petar Živković that the new name of the Kingdom and the administrative division into banovinas represent “a complete and synthetic solution to our national problem.”¹³ However, in a country where unitarism had been one of the main generators of a deep state crisis for a decade, the rejection of all national peculiarities and imposing the integral Yugoslavism represented a utopia that, in the long run, could not reconcile the accumulated political contradictions or preserve the state.

The ideology of national and state unity, which was established by the January 6th proclamation and strengthened by the division of the state into banovinas, received its full expression only in the Declaration adopted at the session of the Ministerial Council on 4 July 1930. The citizens’ commitment to Yugoslavism became an obligation. Petar Živković asserted that cooperation with the regime was a “civic duty” for every individual, emphasizing that the state required everyone to be active. He stated that “those who are not active declare that they are against the current state of affairs.”¹⁴ The Sokol Movement of Kingdom of Yugoslavia, founded in December 1929, instead of national Sokol societies, was supposed to “with its integral and national character... cover all similar tribal and religious organizations

¹² Љубодраг Димић, „Држава, интегрално југословенство и култура“, *Књижевност*, 1-2-3, 1994, 189.

¹³ Report of the President of the Ministerial Council, General Petar R. Živković, to H.E. the King on the work of the royal government in 1929 dated 31 December 1929; Љубодраг Димић, Никола Жутић, Благоје Исаиловић, *Записници са седница Министарског савета краљевине Југославије 1929-1931* (Београд: Службени лист СРЈ и Архив Југославије, 2002), 124.

¹⁴ Љ . Димић, „Држава, интегрално југословенство и култура“, 189.

prior to that time.” The development and expansion of Sokol societies became “part of the state policy program” which had to be “implemented without delay.”¹⁵ Everyone – pupils, students, teachers and other government officials – enrolled in Sokol, voluntarily or not, so in 1934 the organization had over 300,000 members.¹⁶ Since most young men and women completed their education quickly, often by the fourth grade or even earlier, the Sokol societies served not only as a significant tool for spreading the ideology of integral Yugoslavism,¹⁷ but also for providing military training. Exercises with elements of military training were of particular importance in the Sokol companies, and long-standing members of the Sokol had the right to shorten their military service by three months.¹⁸ The establishment of the Ministry of Physical Education of the People testified to the importance placed on sports and fitness for building a unified nation, as well as for the physical preparation of young men for a possible war. The organized policy of physical education, according to Minister Lavoslav Hanžek, was aimed at educating new generations in the spirit of “full national unity, in the conviction of the inevitability of indivisible national and state life, in the awareness of responsibility for safeguarding national heritage and... state independence.”¹⁹ However, equating the regime with the state and imposing the ideology of integral Yugoslavism through gymnastics and sports produced a counter-effect. State interference in all spheres of life became resented, and too many Sokol activities and the omnipresence of the organization in society led to certain fatigue and apathy. Moreover, many residents of Yugoslavia joined Sokol out of pure opportunism, trying to preserve the positions they had or to gain some benefit. They barely participated in Sokol exercises, preferring to spend their free time wandering the city or playing cards and pool instead. However, at public events they appeared in the Sokol uniform and stood in the front rows,²⁰ thus demonstrating their loyalty to the regime.

In creating a new Yugoslav generation, teachers and schools bore a significant burden and responsibility. Plans included adopting several educational

¹⁵ „Значајна седница Министарског савета. Претрес опште политичке ситуације. Подвлачење југословенске националне и државне политике“, *Политика*, 5. 7. 1930.

¹⁶ Pieter Troch, „Interwar Yugoslav state-building and the changing social position of the Sokol gymnastics movement“, *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 26:1, (2019), 64.

¹⁷ Nikola Žutić, *Sokoli. Ideologija u fizičkoj kulturi Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1929-1941* (Beograd: Anprotrade, 1991) 49–51.

¹⁸ Nikola Žutić, „Militarizacija fizičke kulture u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji“, *Istorija 20. veka*, 1-2, (1988), 112-113. -113.

¹⁹ *Zasedanje Senata od 29. 3. 1933, Stenografske beleške Senata* (Beograd: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Jugoslavije, 1933) 189.

²⁰ P. Troch, „Interwar Yugoslav state-building“, 75.

laws and creating state textbooks to be used across the entire country. “Primary education’s goal is not merely to spread literacy,” said Boža Maksimović, the Minister of Education, during a session of the Ministerial Council, “but, even more importantly, to foster national education.”²¹ The ideologization of education received its full expression in the *Law on Public Schools* (1929), which, in its first article, defined schools as institutions tasked with educating students in the spirit of “state and national unity and religious tolerance,” with the aim of shaping them into “moral, loyal, and active members” of society.²² At all levels of education, teaching was supposed to be conducted “in the Yugoslav national spirit with the cult of the youth for national history and culture, and their deep faith in the progressive future of Yugoslavia.”²³ Professors and teachers, as “carriers of the state idea”²⁴ had to meet the stated requirements with their “characteristics and qualifications.”²⁵ Special emphasis was placed on the national group of subjects, the teaching of history was ideologized, and the terms “Yugoslavs” and “Yugoslavism” were used whenever and wherever possible. Moments from the past that united the South Slavic peoples were emphasized, stereotypes about the common characteristics of Yugoslavs were placed in textbooks, and great attention was paid to the Karađorđević dynasty and the affirmation of the state idea.²⁶ Students studied both alphabets equally; in Slovenia, a quarter of the texts in reading books were to be printed in Serbo-Croatian. The spirit of Yugoslavism was promoted through literature and geography classes, and bannovinas were intended to become the primary regional area of identification.²⁷ The goal of “civic education” was clear – it was necessary to train young people to “think and act as the needs of the state demand.”²⁸ Even the teaching of music

²¹ Presentation of Božidar Maksimović, Minister of Education at the 6th session of the Ministerial Council on 14 March 1929, Љ. Димић, Н. Жутић, Б. Исailовић, *op. cit.*, 35.

²² Љубодраг Димић, *Културна политика у Краљевини Југославији 1918–1941* (Београд: Стубови културе, 1997), т. 2, 123.

²³ „Значајна седница Министарског савета. Претрес опште политичке ситуације. Подвлачење југословенске националне и државне политике“, *Политика*, 5. 7. 1930.

²⁴ Presentation of Božidar Maksimović, Minister of Education at the 6th session of the Ministerial Council on 14 March 1929, Љ. Димић, Н. Жутић, Б. Исailовић, *op. cit.*, 35.

²⁵ „Значајна седница Министарског савета. Претрес опште политичке ситуације. Подвлачење југословенске националне и државне политике“, *Политика*, 5. 7. 1930.

²⁶ Љ. Димић, *Културна политика*, т. 2, 136–139.

²⁷ Pieter Troch, „Yugoslavism between the world wars: indecisive nation building“, *Nationalities Papers*, vol 38, no 2, (March 2010), 235.

²⁸ “Говор Алојзија Павлича у Народној скупштини, XXVI редовни састанак од 5. марта 1934“, *Стенографске белешке Народне скупштине* (Београд: Државна штампарија Краљевине Југославије, 1934), 410.

was ideologized, and the repertoire for student choirs was composed exclusively of songs from the list provided by the Ministry.²⁹ A special role in “national education” was assigned to school celebrations, particularly St. Sava's Day, “especially in regions that had been exposed to foreign influence during the long period of oppression.” Since Saint Sava celebrations were not organized in all schools, particularly in regions with predominantly Roman Catholic or Muslim populations, the Ministry of Education emphasized that “teachers' efforts in this regard will be considered when evaluating their overall performance, both within and outside of school.”³⁰

In the educational system imbued with ideology, teachers were declared “the builders of the youth soul” who played a key role in the formation of the Yugoslav mentality. From the assembly rostrum, it was proclaimed that in peacetime, teachers were “what officers and standard bearers were to us in war.”³¹ Journal “Jugoslav” went a step further, claiming that the future of the Kingdom depends on teachers and their work.³² The role of schools and teachers in society, their significance in promoting the ideology of integral Yugoslavism, and the repression they faced were also highlighted by General Đorđe Arandžević's proposal in mid-1932. He advocated for “senior public officials to occasionally attend history and geography classes in secondary schools and colleges to observe how the children are learning and to ensure that the professor's lecture on the unity, greatness, power, and future of Yugoslavia is genuinely heartfelt.”³³

However, the attempt to create a Yugoslav nation was met with resistance, especially in regions west of the Sava and Danube river. The Sokol of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia ultimately failed. Most members of the Croatian Sokol chose not to join the new organization. Some became passive, while others engaged with voluntary fire brigades or singing societies,³⁴ thereby expressing their resistance to the Yugoslav Sokol. Roman Catholic clergy, especially after the episcopal pastoral letter,³⁵ urged believers not to join the Sokol organization in their sermons.

²⁹ Љ. Димић, *Културна политика*, т. 1, 262.

³⁰ АЈ, 66, Миистарство просвете Краљевине Југославије, поверљива архива, 62-161, пов. бр 261 од 21. 2. 1929.

³¹ “Говор посланика Гаврила Милошевића, XXVI редовни састанак од 1. 3. 1934”, *Стенографске белешке Народне скупштине*, (Београд: Државна штампарија Краљевине Југославије, 1934), 227.

³² Т. Н. Николић, „Учитељство и југословенство“, *Југословен*, фебруар 1932, 205.

³³ Вони архив (ВА), Пописник 17, Војска Краљевине Југославије, 24-3-74.

³⁴ Christian Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs. National Identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 147.

³⁵ „Католички епископат о соколству Краљевине Југославије“, *Политика*, 16.1.1933.

“Not a single child must be a member of the Sokol,” said religious teacher Pavle Pašiček, because “God, the pope and the bishop command the school, and then comes the king and his laws.”³⁶ Individual school supervisors also worked against the Sokol organization, so the teachers complained to the Ministry that because of their Sokol's work, they were given lower ratings.³⁷ The failure of the new educational policy was obvious. Not only did the Sokol movement have almost no foothold in the Croatian regions, but the students' level of knowledge about the king, the dynasty, and the common state was also insufficient. An inspection of 11 elementary schools in the Našice County (1934) showed that in 9 educational institutions, schoolchildren did not know who and from which dynasty the king was. The first of December, the most important national holiday, was celebrated in only three schools, out of a total of 40 in the mentioned county, but the students “had no idea” about its significance. If there were pictures of King Aleksandar in the schools, they were often “found without frames, torn, dirty, simple, and ugly, making them a source of embarrassment.” The inspection also found that the students did not know anything about national history and that they “consider Croats to be a separate nation.”³⁸

The fact that local surroundings had a greater influence on shaping young people's consciousness than textbook content was evident in a school assignment by Danijel Vilenica, a fifth-grade student from Šibenik. His assignment included the following statement: “There are two peoples living in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia: the Serbs and Croats. The Serbs hold all the power and oppress Croatia like a colony. There are Serb ministers in the government who can't even sign their names, but their words are final. Serbs view educated Croats as idiots. We had a leader, Stjepan Radić, who protected our peasants. The Serbs lured him to Belgrade and killed him. Serbs are jealous that we Croats have smarter people than them and that is why they beat them. After that, they imprisoned Maček, then Predavec came to his place, and the Serbs shot him as well. We Croats cannot stand this slavery.” Vilenica was expelled from school as punishment, and a police investigation was launched against him.³⁹ The authorities reacted nervously to such and similar incidents, and an investigation was conducted in the Department of State Protection

³⁶ AJ, 63, Министарство правде Краљевине Југославије, 33/1933.

³⁷ AJ, 63-24, пов. бр 2523/33 од 21. 12. 1933, поверљива архива.

³⁸ AJ, 66-11-31, пов. бр. 3904 од 30. 1. 1934. The fact that this case was not an isolated is evidenced by the speech of МР Milan Stijić at the parliamentary session in March 1934. See: „XXVI редовни састанак од 5.3.1934“, *Стенографске белешке Народне скупштине* (Београд: Државна штампарија Краљевине Југославије, 1934), 427.

³⁹ AJ, 63-22, поверљива архива.

against children if the school supervisors discovered that they had in any way damaged or defaced the image of the king or crown prince.⁴⁰ The case of ten-year-old Zlatko Zanini, who was expelled from all secondary, vocational, and civil schools for piercing the eyes of the king, queen, and princes on a postcard and then “displaying the damaged postcard prominently in the classroom for all students to see”, illustrated that this was not merely a formality.⁴¹ The authorities' determination to use all available means to suppress activities deemed anti-Yugoslav is also illustrated by an order from Milan Srškić, the Minister of Internal Affairs. For political purposes, he exploited a provision of the Financial Law to recommend the closure of several schools “in the interest of savings.” Given that in certain areas, high school students were politically active and involved in protests, he ordered the closure of schools in those regions. Namely, it was expected that the threat of closing schools would influence parents to do everything to prevent their children from participating in actions against the regime.⁴²

The fear of the Serbian political parties that the dictatorship would compromise the idea of national and state unity in the regions outside the former Serbia⁴³ proved to be justified. Although a part of the population had some sympathy for the Yugoslav ideology, the methods used to impose it were widely resented.⁴⁴ Although it would not have been possible to create a Yugoslav generation of youth in just six years, even under optimal conditions, the results achieved were inconsistent with the efforts made. While the king and a small group of his political allies viewed Yugoslavia as the only solution to stabilize political conditions and overcome the state crisis, many dissatisfied individuals across the country—particularly in the Sava Banovina—equated the new ideology with “Serbian hegemony” and the denial of national peculiarities. The idea of Yugoslavism was thus compromised, and the Yugoslav idea was dragged “into the maelstrom of internal politics” and “equated with a particular regime, namely a personal regime.”⁴⁵ The political system envisioned by King Aleksandar failed to outlive its creator. Six years after the introduction of the dictatorship, the Kingdom found itself in a political crisis as severe, if not more severe, than the one before January 6. Separatist movements flourished, the Croatian

⁴⁰ AJ, 66-15-38, пов. бр. 991 од 7. 11. 1935, (поверљива архива). See also: AJ, 66-11-31, пов. бр. 25972 од 26. 6. 1933, поверљива архива.

⁴¹ AJ, 74, Двор Краљевине Југославије, 12-23.

⁴² AJ, 14, Министарство унутрашњих послова Краљевине Југославије, 26-68, unregistered, undated (probably from the late 1931 or early 1932).

⁴³ Todor Stojkov, *Opozicija u vreme šestojanuarske diktature* (Beograd: Prosveta, 1969, 1969), 89.

⁴⁴ AJ, ФО, 371-400-16827, Извештај британског посланика у Београду од 12. 2. 1933.

⁴⁵ С. Јовановић, *Југословенска мисао у прошлости и будућности* (Београд: Слобода, 1939), 7.

population began to turn not only against the regime, but also against the state, Yugoslavism was resented, and the YNP disintegrated by itself.

Yugoslavism in new conditions. Creation of socialist generations of youth

“We are continuing the revolution in a different form and history will judge this as a true revolution,” said Milovan Đilas in May 1952 at a meeting held in the Central Committee of the National Youth of Yugoslavia. The position that armed struggle is a “precondition” for complete social transformation,⁴⁶ obliged the Yugoslav authorities to create a generation of new, socialist youth. Just as in the interwar period, it was believed that only young people could and should be the guarantors of the new regime's stability and the main drivers of socialist modernization. The doctrine of the Communist Party, but also the experience of interwar Yugoslavia, the collapse of ideology of integral Yugoslavism and the fact that World War II was also a civil war on the territory of Yugoslavia prompted leaders to focus less on building some kind of unified Yugoslav nation and more on building a ‘socialist man’⁴⁷ and Yugoslav unity.

Under socialism, “Yugoslavism” acquired a completely new meaning. “We in Yugoslavia are not creating borders that would divide and mean the creation of new states,” Tito said in Bela Crkva in July 1945, “but we are making divisions only to resolve the national question, which was not solved in the old Yugoslavia, and to allow the peoples to fully develop and achieve cultural and political equality. This is to be done in such a way that no one imposes pressure on others, while at the same time, their development and progress have a positive impact on the other peoples, on the peoples of the other federal units. And we all together are Yugoslavs.”⁴⁸ However, although the Yugoslavism of the Communist Party was ideologically completely different from integral Yugoslavism, “it was equally centralized and even less democratic” than the Yugoslavism developed in the 1930s. Until the early 1960s, the national question was considered resolved⁴⁹

⁴⁶ AJ, 114-58, Стенографске белешке са састанка одржаног 12. 5. 1952 у ЦК НОЈ по питању неких проблема у раду Народне омладине.

⁴⁷ Ivana Dobrivojević Tomić, „From Peasants to Builders of Socialism: The Mobilisation of Young Workers in Socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1965)“, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 7, (2022), 1150.

⁴⁸ Josip Broz Tito's speech in Bela Crkva on 7 July 1945. Quoted in its entirety according to: Dejan Jović, *Jugoslavija. Država koja je odumrla. Uspón, kriza i pad Kardeljeve Jugoslavije 1974–1990* (Zagreb: Prometej, 2003), 150.

⁴⁹ Dejan Jović, „Yugoslavism and Yugoslav Communism: From Tito to Kardelj“, u: *Yugoslavism. Histories of a Failed Idea 1918–1992*, urednik Dejan Đokić (London: Hurst & Company, 2003), 164, 166–167.

and documents reported that an increasing number of girls and young men “primarily identified as Yugoslavs.”⁵⁰ Although the ideology of brotherhood and unity was initially employed to overcome the national intolerance manifested during World War II, strengthen the unity of the Yugoslav peoples, and create a state of reconciliation,⁵¹ a partial departure from this ideology occurred over time. Increasingly, people began talking about “Yugoslav socialist patriotism,”⁵² a term first introduced by Milovan Đilas at the Fifth Congress of the KPJ in 1948.⁵³ While the idea of a “Yugoslav nation” was rejected at the Seventh Congress in 1958, where “Yugoslav patriotism” was defined as a “supplement to democratic national consciousness,” the belief that Yugoslav identity was more “progressive” than national identity became more widespread among the youth, particularly in urban areas. This shift caused dissatisfaction and criticism among party leaders.⁵⁴ The evolution of views on the national question continued through the 1960s and 1970s. The concept of brotherhood and unity was gradually replaced by socialist Yugoslavism, and later by the concept of the unity of peoples and ethnic groups. The fall of Ranković and the rise of Kardelj marked the “actual (though not yet ritual) abandonment of the concept of brotherhood and unity and the ethnic Yugoslav identity.” This shift also signaled the defeat of Tito's vision that in the new Yugoslavia it would be possible to create a “Yugoslav socialist community in which national peculiarities would be irrelevant” and that, with the progress of the socialist system, these peculiarities would eventually fade away.⁵⁵

Recognizing that the future of socialism and socialist Yugoslavia depended on the successful education of new generations, party leaders and youth leaders took a proactive stance very early on, rejecting spontaneous and automatic socialist education.⁵⁶ Education was put into the service of ideological (re)education, in ac-

⁵⁰ AJ, 114–72, О раду на васпитању омладине у духу југословенства (1955, probably). Similar results were obtained in a survey conducted by the Yugoslav youth newspaper *Mladost* in the 26 largest cities (1959), in which 3,331 participants aged 18–25 answered the question: “Do you feel primarily Yugoslav, or Macedonian, Slovenian, etc.” Predrag J. Marković, „Odnos Partije i Tita prema jugoslovenskom i nacionalnom identitetu“, u: *Identitet: Srbi i/ili Jugosloveni*, urednici: Svetlana Ljuboja, Predrag Marković, Laslo Sekelj, Mirjana Vasović (Beograd: Institut za evropske studije, 2001), 20.

⁵¹ I. Dobrivojević Tomić, *op. cit.*, 1150.

⁵² D. Jović, “Yugoslavism and Yugoslav Communism, 166.

⁵³ Tomaž Ivešič, „The Yugoslav National Idea Under Socialism: What Happens When a Soft Nation-Building Project Is Abandoned?“, *Nationalities Papers*, 1, (2021), 145.

⁵⁴ P. J. Marković, *op. cit.*, 20.

⁵⁵ D. Jović, *Jugoslavija. Država koja je odumrla*, 135.

⁵⁶ AJ, 114-72, The role and tasks of the Youth Association in developing the activities and social responsibility of young people in self-management.

cordance with the understanding that it was possible to spread Marxist-Leninist ideology “even through an alphabet book.”⁵⁷ From elementary school to university,⁵⁸ teaching was more or less ideologized, depending on whether it concerned social or natural sciences. The national group of subjects – history, literature and geography – gained special importance in the affirmation of the new system of values and the development of Yugoslav patriotism. The fact that in some schools, lessons about the Slavs were immediately followed by discussions on the Second World War highlights both ideological blindness and the pressures placed on teachers, especially during the early post-war years.⁵⁹ In order to strengthen the ideological work, in the 1952/1953 school year, primary and secondary school students, in most of the Yugoslav republics, received a new subject – social and moral education. Since textbooks and curricula were not prepared in a timely manner,⁶⁰ teachers used these classes mainly to solve ongoing problems. Students also showed little enthusiasm, referring to it as “socialist religious studies” and teasing each other by saying, “You’re as boring as a moral education class.”⁶¹

Although the curricula varied from republic to republic, during the 1950s and 1960s, students were expected to receive education about Yugoslavia as a “state and economic entity,” as well as about the most significant events and figures from the history and culture of the South Slav peoples. Even though the tendency to emphasize republican particularities emerged very early in the curriculum, school excursions and organized correspondence with students from other republics aimed to connect and bring together young people from different parts of the country.⁶² The new socialist school was tasked with educating a “person rich in inner life” who “loves his country,” “respects other nations,” and “thinks and acts boldly and courageously.”⁶³ It was necessary to develop “the creative attitude of young people towards

⁵⁷ AJ, 114-58, Kulturno-prosvjetno savetovanje sekretara glavnih odbora Narodne omladine Jugoslavije. Prvi sastanak održan 20. jula 1946. Stenoграфске белешке. Излагање Вицка Распора.

⁵⁸ Dragomir Bondžić, *Beogradski Univerzitet 1944–1952* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2003), 210–212.

⁵⁹ Sanja Petrović Todosijević, *Otećemo svetlost bučnom vodopadu. Reforma osnovnoškolskog sistema u Srbiji 1944–1959* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2018), 282.

⁶⁰ „Морално васпитање у школама“, *Борба*, 17. 1. 1953.

⁶¹ AJ, 114-59, Стенографске белешке са саветовања одржаног у Централном комитету Народне оmlадине Југославије 18. 1. 1957. по питању друштвеног управљања у школама, друштвено-моралног одгоја и неким економским проблемима ученика.

⁶² AJ, 114-72, О раду на васпитању оmlадине у духу југословенства (1955, probably).

⁶³ Branko Petranović, Ranko Končar, Radomir Radonjić, *Sednice Centralnog komiteta KPJ (1948–1952)*, (Beograd: Komunist 1985), 295.

their future vocation and work in general”, “educate the youth for participation in the social life of the country” and “self-management bodies”, develop the spirit of brotherhood and unity, internationalism and international solidarity.⁶⁴ Both inside and outside school, every opportunity was used for educational and ideological work with young people. Lectures were supposed to represent only one aspect of education since students had to actively participate in the “everyday movements of society” – in their class, school and commune.⁶⁵ However, a verbal survey conducted by associates of the Yugoslav Institute for the Study of School and Educational Issues revealed that the educational goals of the new socialist school were not always sufficiently known to some teachers and principals.⁶⁶

The forms and methods of developing socialist consciousness and fostering the “spirit of revolution” were more or less subtle, depending on the skill of teachers or youth activists. Children's and youth literature and press,⁶⁷ work actions, marches and camps,⁶⁸ compulsory military service, companies and courses for literacy and advance training were abundantly used to shape and form new socialist generations. During organized excursions, trips, and vacations, young Yugoslavs visited not only cultural and historical monuments but also major construction sites and the “grand edifices of socialist architecture.”⁶⁹ Rather than taking a factual approach to studying WWII and the revolutionary changes that followed, youth leaders emphasized 'embracing the revolution as a class process,' believing that only this perspective held the desired educational significance.⁷⁰ The aim of the educational and ideological work was straightforward: to prepare and “mobilize” girls and boys for socio-political engagement, thereby shaping “generations of self-managers” who would carry forward the revolution by strengthening and improving self-management.⁷¹ However, despite all efforts, ne-

⁶⁴ Igor Duda, *Stvaranje socijalističkog čoveka. Hrvatsko društvo i ideologija jugoslovenskog socijalizma*, (Zagreb: Srednja Europa 2017), 7.

⁶⁵ AJ, 114-353, Могућности спровођења идејно-политичког образовања у организацији Народне омладине у основној школи.

⁶⁶ AJ, 142/2, Социјалистички савез радног народа Југославије, 228, Неки проблеми школовања и васпитања омладине (1965)

⁶⁷ AJ, 114-73, Општи поглед на физиономију садашњих генерација омладине.

⁶⁸ Nikola Baković, *Brotherhood on the Move. Ritual Mobilities in the Second Yugoslavia* (Zagreb: Srednja Evropa, 2023), 146–148.

⁶⁹ AJ, 114-123, Стање и проблеми развоја омладинског туризма.

⁷⁰ AJ, 114-379, О неким васпитним појавама код омладине. Материјал за III пленум ЦК Народне омладине Србије (децембар 1962).

⁷¹ AJ, 114-72, Улога и задаци Савеза омладине у развијању активности и друштвене одговорности у самоуправљању.

ither the education system nor the youth organization managed to include all cohorts of youth in their activities. At the sessions, it was critically assessed that the influence “on the broad mass of youth is insufficient, unsystematic, sporadic” and that “as such it is unsatisfactory.”⁷² Moreover, the greater or lesser ideologization of almost all content in some cases caused a counter-effect, leading to fatigue and lack of interest in political lectures among the youth.⁷³ Although popular culture, Western, especially American, films and the illustrated press had long been blamed for “decadence”, “educational neglect” and insufficient social engagement of the youth,⁷⁴ a much greater concern, from the Party’s point of view, was the activity of the Roman Catholic Church, especially in Croatia, Herzegovina and Slovenia. Religiosity among the population remained strong, with young people attending religious classes⁷⁵ and masses. Priests sought to engage the youth by organizing entertainment and leisure activities. Free excursions,⁷⁶ football matches and choir sections⁷⁷ were organized; motorbikes were purchased,⁷⁸ cinema projectors acquired, and in some places within the church, there was also a well-stocked children’s library.⁷⁹ Although the activity of the clergy was not aimed against the state,⁸⁰ the spread of religiosity and the gathering of young men and women around the Roman Catholic Church made it difficult, and sometimes impossible, for them to fully accept and adopt the socialist model of education.

Expectations from the post-war generations of youth were high. In addition to “respecting and admiring” the revolutionary activities of the wartime

⁷² AJ, 114-349, Стенографски записник са састанка о политичком стању и идејним проблемима омладине у Хрватској одржан 12. 9. 1959.

⁷³ AJ, 114-60, Стенографске белешке са састанка одржаног у ЦК НОЈ 5. 5. 1958. у вези са обиласком неких организација Народне омладине.

⁷⁴ AJ, 114-99, Негативан утицај филма на омладину (1959); AJ, 114-71, Стенографске белешке са седнице Комисије за културно-забавни живот и друштвену активност омладине (1964).

⁷⁵ AJ, 114-71, Утицај религије на васпитање омладине (1959).

⁷⁶ AJ, 114-71, Однос Народне омладине према активности верских заједница и утицају религије на омладину (1961).

⁷⁷ AJ, 114-353, Систематски материјал о катехизацији и деловању појединих верских заједница и односу наших политичких фактора према њиховој активности (1960).

⁷⁸ AJ, 114-71, Стенографске белешке ЦК Народне омладине Југославије о утицају религије на васпитање омладине одржан 24.3. 1959.

⁷⁹ AJ, 114-381, Извештај екипе ЦК Народне омладине Југославије о обиласку организације Народне омладине у срезovima Бачка Топола, Кикинда, Зрењанин и Нови Сад од 17. 11. 1959.

⁸⁰ AJ, 114-353, Систематски материјал о катехизацији и деловању појединих верских заједница и односу наших политичких фактора према њиховој активности (1960).

generations, young people born in peacetime were expected to be aware 'that the revolution was not over,' but that it continued 'through the struggle to build socialism.'⁸¹ Acquiring knowledge and developing a "responsible attitude towards work" has become the basic political task of the youth organization, but also of every individual. The capabilities and ambitions of young men and women were ignored, and the unrealistic demands placed on the first generation of socialist youth were fully expressed in the slogan: "Good young man – good student."⁸² Admirable success in school was not, however, the only criterion for evaluating the character of the socialist youth. The political disinterest and lack of involvement of young people were not easily forgiven, and reports often stated it was possible to read that an honor student who does not participate in social life "did not deserve" to be called an honor student.⁸³ The popularity of "extremely weak" and undisciplined students who excelled in football or boxing particularly concerned party officials. As a result, there were proposals to deny them membership in city sports clubs, because they "had a negative influence on other students."⁸⁴ However, the highest level of mistrust was expressed towards high school students from the middle class, who were found to underestimate and disparage the work of the youth organization and its activists, thereby creating an "atmosphere of passivity and resistance to organized work at school" among their peers.⁸⁵

Despite the traditional classification into "high school," "student," "labor," and "rural" youth, which was a mandatory part of official reports, it appeared that in everyday life, the fact that Yugoslav youth did not constitute a homogeneous group in terms of social or regional affiliation was often overlooked. Although it was impossible to discuss certain characteristics of the generations of young people aged 14 to 25 without a representative sociological analysis, studies, analyses, and reports from the League of Communists, the People's Youth, and the Socialist League often compared the peacetime generations with those who had fought in the war. Tito also believed that "the situation with the youth was not rosy."⁸⁶ Educational workers and pedagogues spoke in a similar vein, and the press was also excessively critical. Arbitrary and generalized evaluations were re-

⁸¹ I. Dobrivojević Tomić, *op. cit.* 1150.

⁸² AJ, 114-61, Савез омладине и заједнице ученика у борби за побољшање резултата и односа омладине према раду и школама (6-7.1.1964).

⁸³ AJ, 114-99, Средњошколско саветовање од 11-12. 9. 1959.

⁸⁴ AJ, 114-61, Савез омладине и заједнице ученика у борби за побољшање резултата и односа омладине према раду и школама (6-7.1.1964).

⁸⁵ AJ, 114-72, Материјал о неким проблемима омладине.

⁸⁶ AJ, КПР II-3-a-1/ 12, Излагање Тита на VI Пленуму ЦК СКЈ одржаном 13-14. 3. 1956.

duced to claims that the young people “lacked the revolutionary spirit and combativeness” that characterized the youth during the war. Harsh condemnations claiming that young girls and young men “no longer have ideals in life,” “are sinking further into hopelessness,” “easily succumb to cheap entertainment, the influence of trivial literature, and imitation of Western heroes,” and “display a frivolous attitude toward work” and their obligations, “not even remotely resembling” the war and post-war generations were frequently expressed.⁸⁷ The press added fuel to the fire by focusing excessively on petty excesses and juvenile crime. This created an atmosphere in which many party and youth leaders felt their primary duty was “to save the youth from bad influences.”⁸⁸

Although the comparison of pre-war and post-war generations of young people eventually faded, it became clear that even with advanced modernization in the 1960s, certain attitudes and opinions about the youth remained unchanged. The press wrote extensively about the profile of the young generation based on hastily conducted surveys.⁸⁹ Judgments about young men and women were formed from immediate impressions,⁹⁰ while work actions were glorified and participation in them was presented as both a fundamental duty and the primary contribution of young people.⁹¹ Moreover, the war and the war experience that defined the pre-war generations contributed to widening the generation gap, as adults almost universally assumed that everything had been much more difficult for them in 1941.⁹² Therefore, some citizens were even ready to call the police for the “smallest excesses” among young people. Teachers fared no better, as their lack of understanding of the new interests of the youth led them to make “angry” judgments about the entire generation.⁹³

The authorities could be partially satisfied with the results of the school system in the formation and education of generations of youth in a socialist spirit.

⁸⁷ AJ, 114-72, О неким проблемима васпитања омладине.

⁸⁸ AJ, 114-73, Општи поглед на физиономију садашњих генерација омладине.

⁸⁹ AJ, 114-345, Стенографски записник са VI конгреса НО Хрватске (26. 2. 1962); Реферат Срећка Бијелића

⁹⁰ AJ, 114-61, Стенографске белешке са састанка групе за омладину одржаног 20. 6. 1964. Излагање Српка Булића.

⁹¹ AJ, 114-61, Стенографске белешке о проблемима омладине и штампе одржаног 20. 1. 1964. излагање Веље Томановића.

⁹² AJ, 114-93, Записник са опћинског саветовања о ангажирању омладине у решавању производно-економских питања одржаног дне 6. маја 1963. у просторијама Сав. омладине Југославије опћинског комитета „Максимиr“, Загреб, Шварцова 18. Излагање Душка Војводића.

⁹³ AJ, 114-379, Нека питања васпитања младих и заадаци Народне омладине. Уводна реч за ИИИ пленум ЦК Народне омладине Србије (1963).

Education became more accessible, and the number of young people enrolling in classes increased. However, in underdeveloped rural regions and among primary school-aged children, particularly in the early 1960s, there were many illiterates.⁹⁴ The concerning trend of girls not enrolling in school,⁹⁵ along with widespread cases of dropping out before completing the eighth grade,⁹⁶ contributed to an unsatisfactory average educational level among young people. Moreover, even those young men and women who wanted to continue their education did not always have the opportunity, given that the network of secondary schools in the poorest republics was insufficiently developed.⁹⁷ Despite the ideologization and politicization of teaching content, the disinterest of a part of young men and women in political events was striking. Many students in the final grades of secondary schools in Novi Sad did not know what the Cominform Resolution was. Their peers, the fifth-grade students of the Teacher Training School, were not any better informed. Some believed that the Belgrade Declaration had been signed by Nikola Pašić before World War I, while others thought that the president of the USSR was Stalin and the president of China was Ho Chi Minh (1959).⁹⁸ A similar degree of lack of information, and the (un)success of ideological and educational work with young people, was revealed by data obtained on the basis of several insufficiently representative, but still indicative, surveys conducted among JNA recruits. As many as 27% of the young men could not state the name of the joint state, while 40% were unfamiliar with the number of republics, the duration of the Second World War on the territory of Yugoslavia, and the names of the presidents of the republican assemblies (1955).⁹⁹ The data of the Directorate for Moral and Political Education collected through surveys (1957, 1958, 1959) and interviews with over 900 recruits (1959) confirmed that a significant part of the

⁹⁴ AJ, 114-337, Савез омладине и друге организације које окупљају омладину (Материјал са састанка групе која ради на изучавању питања и проблема из области односа Савеза комуниста и других друштвено – политичких организација), 2. 11. 1964.

⁹⁵ AJ, 114-123; Информација. Саветовање о школовању, запошљавању и друштвеној активности женске омладине (1962).

⁹⁶ AJ, 114-71, Образовање, стручно оспособљавање и васпитање омладине.

⁹⁷ AJ, 114-337, Савез омладине и друге организације које окупљају омладину (Материјал са састанка групе која ради на изучавању питања и проблема из области односа Савеза комуниста и других друштвено – политичких организација), 2. 11. 1964.

⁹⁸ AJ, 114-381, Извештај екипе ЦК Народне омладине Југославије о обиласку организације Народне омладине у срезovima Бачка Топола, Кикинда, Зрењанин и Нови Сад од 17. 11. 1959.

⁹⁹ AJ, 114-112, Нека питања из рада на морално-политичком васпитању и просвећивању војника у ЈНА.

young men who had joined the army did not have even the most basic knowledge about social organization, the political orientation of Yugoslavia and the role of LCY or Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia in society. The extent of ignorance was best reflected in the claims that the country was occupied in 1941 by “Ustashas and Chetniks”, “Turks”, “Montenegrins” and “Macedonians”, that is, that the Yugoslav social order is “feudal” and “manufacture-based.”¹⁰⁰ However, precisely because of the level of general knowledge, and in some cases also poor literacy, as well as lack of knowledge of the Serbo-Croatian language, the Army was often the first place where many were “systematically introduced to the new Yugoslavia.”¹⁰¹

Tito's 1956 assessment that the process of “merging all our nationalities into one monolithic whole on the basis of socialist construction... has stagnated in recent years,” and his observation that the school system, instead of promoting such development, was actually reinforcing national feelings and aspirations¹⁰² confirms that he harbored significant hopes for “some kind of fusion of the Yugoslav people” well into the late 1950s.¹⁰³ The development of the school system, however, took a different direction. After the initial efforts to create similar republican curricula based on unified Yugoslav principles, this idea was gradually abandoned, and each republic began formulating its own programs, leading to an increase in differences between the curricula.¹⁰⁴ Although, on the basis of conducted surveys, it was concluded that high school students “view reality positively” and hold Josip Broz Tito in the highest regard as a personality (1964), research in primary schools revealed that Yugoslav consciousness—understood as an awareness of belonging to socialist Yugoslavia—was developing much more slowly than national consciousness which was already well-established by the age of fifteen. The aforementioned survey, which was carried out by a group of psychologists from the faculties of Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana at the request of the Council for the Education of Children of Yugoslavia, showed that elementary school students still didn't have sufficient knowledge about Yugoslavia. The lack of knowledge about other republics and peoples was most evident in the fact that

¹⁰⁰ AJ, 114-112, Политичко васпитање омладинаца у ЈНА и сарадња јединица ЈНА и организације НОЈ-а (мај 1959).

¹⁰¹ AJ, 114-112, Нека питања из рада на морално-политичком васпитању и просвећивању војника у ЈНА.

¹⁰² AJ, 837, КПП II-2/105, Пријем представника матураната средњих школа из Београда (12. 07. 1956).

¹⁰³ P. J. Marković, *op. cit.*, 40.

¹⁰⁴ AJ, 142/II-228, Неки проблеми школовања и васпитања омладине (1965).

many students did not distinguish between national and regional affiliations, with some believing that the inhabitants of Šumadija and Bosnians were nations.¹⁰⁵ The reasons for this situation were somewhat similar to those that prevailed in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The teaching of national subjects, such as history and literature, was primarily oriented towards studying content important for the past and culture of a particular nation, while similar processes that marked the development of other regions were generally superficially studied or overlooked.¹⁰⁶ The fact that students frequently encountered minor or major difficulties when compelled to continue their education in a different republic supports the argument that the differences in school programs were fundamental rather than merely symbolic, and these differences were evident as early as the 1950s.¹⁰⁷ The absence of standardized textbooks, curricula, and guidelines for interpreting certain events hindered the development of a shared sense of belonging.¹⁰⁸ It thus turned out that neither radical primary school reform, nor radical political and economic changes, nor technical and technological progress could completely overcome certain limitations of the educational system and ensure the unhindered formation of the Yugoslav socialist consciousness. The issues that became apparent in the 1950s were further exacerbated in the 1960s. Despite initial disapproval, Kardelj's assertion that 'our federation cannot be a framework for a new Yugoslav nation' (1962) eventually prevailed. This shift in political thinking, coupled with the adoption of Kardelj's concept during the constitutional debate (1967-1974) and the move away from the ideology of brotherhood and unity, led to defining Yugoslavia as 'primarily an ideological, not an ethnic project,' ultimately contributing to the gradual weakening of the state.¹⁰⁹

Work actions: a training ground for spreading brotherhood and unity and developing the “cult of work”

“The preparatory material for the Third Plenary session of the Central Committee of the People’s Youth of Serbia stated that it was “of essential importance for work education” “to affirm the culture of work through the concrete

¹⁰⁵ AJ, 114-61, Улога школе у марксистичком образовању и васпитању ученика (12. 5. 1964).

¹⁰⁶ AJ, 114-72, О актуелним задацима СОЈ у социјалистичком васпитању младе генерације. AJ, 114-104, Извод из стенографских белешки саветовања на тему развијања југословенског социјалистичког патриотизма одржаног 14. 6. 1963 у Савету за васпитање и бригу о децу СР Србије.

¹⁰⁸ AJ, 114-72, О актуелним задацима СОЈ у социјалистичком васпитању младе генерације.

¹⁰⁹ D. Jović, „Yugoslavism and Yugoslav Communism“, 158, 168–171.

work process” and “to develop a positive attitude towards work and work obligations.” The glorification of physical effort and dedication led to the creation of a new “work culture,” which had to be based on “an engaged attitude,” “creative interest,” “curiosity for new discoveries,” and “love for the profession.”¹¹⁰ This definition of work and its importance effectively sublimated all the aspirations of the Yugoslav party leadership in the socialist education of young people. Work represented a logical continuation of the revolution and the struggle to build socialism, so the creation of the cult of work in the first post-war years, apart from practical, also had its ideological justification. The chronic shortage of labor force, caused by the rapid pace of socialist construction, the low professional level of workers, poor organization and weak mechanization of production, was compensated by youth work. Miodrag Protić vividly described the atmosphere of urgency in which a new society and a whole new world were being created: “Work actions, the Brčko-Banovići railway, shock-workers, Stakhanovite workers, orchestrated rhythm... Painters at the construction sites and sites of revolution. Writers. Krleža on the railway, Andrić in the mine! The ideology of collective work.”¹¹¹

The benefit of engaging young people was obvious at first glance – people were working for free, and the actions represented an ideal opportunity to develop a “socialist attitude towards work” among girls and boys.¹¹² However, their cohesive function was far more important. The joint physical effort was supposed to develop the collective spirit and create a feeling of common belonging and solidarity. Connecting young men and women from different regions and different social strata, creating, even temporarily, a shared identity that could help overcome existing differences, was what, according to the party's belief, made the work actions” a school of socialist education.”¹¹³ The organization of youth brigades, therefore, began immediately after the liberation. Young people from all parts of Yugoslavia, either voluntarily or forcibly, were engaged in the most important work – harvesting corn, sowing, cutting wood and repairing destroyed buildings and railways. High school students were also sent to work, and from the beginning of the first work action (1946) until the temporary cessation of their organization (1952), young men and women built 11 railroads, a highway and a large number of factories and hydropower plants. According to official data, in seven years, just over a million young people were employed on construction sites

¹¹⁰ AJ, 114-379, О неким васпитним појавама код омладине. Материјал за III пленум ЦК Народне омладине Србије (децембар 1962).

¹¹¹ Миодраг Б. Протић, *Нојева барка* (Београд: Српска књижевна задруга, 1992), 276–277.

¹¹² I. Dobrivojević Tomić, *op. cit.*, 1152–1153.

¹¹³ AJ, 114-124, Васпитни утицај добровољног физичког рада омладине.

throughout Yugoslavia, working an average of two months each. The great enthusiasm, present in the first months of the reconstruction of the country, began to wane, leading many to participate in the actions either reluctantly or under constraint. The need to abandon family and regular duties and the hard physical work and poor living conditions in the brigades, as well as rumors that the work was actually a form of military training, after which they would be sent to war, deterred young people from this 'voluntary' work. Moreover, although it was frequently emphasized that the benefits of work actions 'cannot be measured only in terms of dinars' but also in their 'moral and educational importance' for 'shaping the image of our socialist youth,' it became evident that the mass mobilization of youth often led to substandard quality of the work performed.¹¹⁴

The collapse of the economic policy embodied in the First Five-Year Plan, along with the partial denationalization of the economy and the liberalization of society led to the temporary suspension of organizing work actions (1952). The economic turnaround (1955) the relative consolidation of financial conditions in the country and the adoption of the Second Five-Year Plan (1957), which was supposed to correct the anomalies created in the period 1947-1957,¹¹⁵ contributed the revival of the old idea of organizing work actions. At the Sixth Plenary session (March 1956), greater involvement in "political activation of youth" was requested¹¹⁶ and it was stated that since the abolition of work actions, no "other forms" suitable for engaging with youth had been found.¹¹⁷ Just a few months later, at a meeting with representatives of Belgrade high school graduates, Tito reiterated that it was necessary to start organizing work actions as soon as possible. "The economic component of work actions is not as important as the moral-political one," he stated, emphasizing that the vacuum left by their abolition led to a certain 'distancing of the youth,' as there was no opportunity for them to be 'educated together.'¹¹⁸

Although economists frequently and openly warned that the cost of youth work surpassed its worth, due to the lower skill and productivity levels of young men and women compared to professional workers, the authorities did not

¹¹⁴ I. Dobrivojević Tomić, *op. cit.*, 1152–1153.

¹¹⁵ Branko Horvat, *Privredni sistem i ekonomska politika Jugoslavije. Problemi, teorije, ostvarenja, propusti* (Beograd: Insitut ekonomskih nauka, 1970), 29.

¹¹⁶ AJ, ЦК СКЈ, I/VII -k1/15, Реферат Тита о Народној омладини поднет на VII конгресу 22. 4. 1958.

¹¹⁷ AJ, ЦК СКЈ, II/14; Стенографске белешке са VI пленума ЦК СКЈ одржаног 13–14. 3. 1956.

¹¹⁸ AJ, 837, КПР II–2/105, Пријем представника матураната средњих школа из Београда (12. 07. 1956).

abandon the organization of actions. The fact that abandoning the Soviet economic and social blueprint did not mean forsaking the importance of work and the social engagement of youth was confirmed by Tito's speech at the rally in Novo Mesto, held to mark the opening of a highway section in November 1958. 'Such facilities, highways and others,' he pointed out, 'are important for our socialist country, both for economic and other reasons. But it is also crucial that these developments help shape new men, that they understand and grasp the meaning of brotherhood and unity, the significance of our socialist country, and the character of our new people.'¹¹⁹ The slogans: "We build the railway, the railway builds us" and "Tito, the Party, the Youth, Work action" effectively emphasized the importance of youth work and ideological shaping of the consciousness of young men and women. The educational effects of work actions, such as fostering brotherhood and unity, facilitating interactions among young people from different regions, developing work habits, and bringing the benefits of modern life closer to youth from underdeveloped rural areas, were among the positive aspects frequently and enthusiastically highlighted.

When a youth work action was launched in 1958, the first since 1952, to build a section of the Brotherhood and Unity Highway, political and social circumstances were different in many ways. The enterprises had a final say as regards construction, while the involvement of young people represented a kind of guarantee that the work would progress at the desired rate, since the unskilled workers who had come from villages tended to leave work sites and go home to cultivate fields at peak harvest times. However, even in changed social circumstances, old habits and practices proved difficult to eradicate. Even in the early 1960s, the brigades were organized according to the semi-military principle, with many elements of militarism.¹²⁰ Although the cultural and entertainment content became more varied and numerous, lectures, discussions, organized listening to radio shows, and press reading remained important aspect of everyday life in the brigades.¹²¹ Moreover, in 1962, the participants in work action received a preliminary draft of the Constitution as a gift.¹²²

Ideological-political work was organized according to the minimum program drawn up by the Central Committee of the People's Youth of Yugoslavia for

¹¹⁹ „Морамо уложити све своје снаге да остваримо што можемо за садашње и будуће генерације“, *Борба*, 24. 11. 1958.

¹²⁰ I. Dobrivojević Tomić, *op. cit.*, 1158–1159.

¹²¹ AJ, 114-124, Идеолошко-политички рад и друштвено-забавне активности на овогодишњој Савезној омладинској радној акцији.

¹²² AJ, 114-184, Изградња ауто-пута од Параћина до Осипаонице у 1962. години.

federal actions. Lectures were most often organized, and the programs intended for young people from the countryside differed from those designed for city dwellers. Village brigades covered six mandatory topics, and high school and student brigades covered three. Each brigade also received a special program from the county or district committee that addressed the specific issues of the area from which the young men and women came. Finally, if needed, the Headquarters, that is, the leadership in the settlement, could choose another topic that needed to be addressed.¹²³ Young people were given basic knowledge about the socio-political situation in the country, the foreign policy of Yugoslavia, the tasks of the People's Youth and the League of Communists, self-management, the perspective of agriculture, and the like.¹²⁴ The emphasis on the ideological and educational aspects at the expense of the economic ones became evident, and it was even publicly acknowledged that simple physical labor could not provide educational benefits.¹²⁵ Neglecting the economic profitability of youth work actions also led to radical proposals. At one meeting, it was suggested that youth should be employed in highway construction even if it meant that companies might forego using mechanization in certain situations.

Open pressures on young people, such as those prevalent throughout Yugoslavia until 1952, had nearly disappeared. In some villages, young people were still 'persuaded' to participate in actions through threats, parents opposed their children going to socialist construction sites, and youth under the age of 17 were sent to work. However, the majority participated in actions voluntarily. Motives for joining the youth work actions varied. Some young people did so out of enthusiasm or a desire for companionship and more relaxed behaviour, others from a desire for social recognition, while many hoped to undertake training and find a job in industry. Although the official reports regularly analyzed 'negative phenomena' amongst young people, such as petty theft, intoxication, looser relationships between boys and girls, the emergence of prostitution and illegal fleeing across the border, local authorities would often send young people already found guilty of such things to the work brigades for ideological education. However, the educational effect and the possibility of resocialization were not the only motives for sending problematic youth to working actions.¹²⁶ Sometimes the path of least resistance was followed, so individuals whose behavior troubled the police and

¹²³ AJ, 114-124, Нека актуелна питања у вези са организовањем омладинских радних акција.

¹²⁴ AJ, 114-124, Идеолошко-политички рад и друштвено-забавне активности на овогодишњој Савезној омладинској радној акцији.

¹²⁵ AJ, 114-125, Стенографске белешке са саветовања ЦК Савеза омладине Југославије о радним акцијама одржаног 20. 3. 1965.

¹²⁶ I. Dobrivojević Tomić, *op. cit.*, 1159–1160.

were relocated from their hometowns by local authorities were deliberately removed from the areas where they caused problems, even if only temporarily.¹²⁷

By the mid-1960s, it was evident that young men and women, especially students and rural youth, were losing interest in work actions. Even the People's Youth, as an organizer, became relatively weary, leading to more frequent, hasty, and last-minute organization of work actions. However, the methods of agitation for participation remained unchanged over the years. Young people were promised more than could be delivered, and posters advertising courses for waiters, cobblers, barbers, and sausage makers were put up around the counties.¹²⁸ The press also played its part, publishing photographs of 'brigade girls' in swimwear along with the calls for actions.¹²⁹ The reduced role of the Federation in general investment¹³⁰ and the unregulated relationships between investors, contractors, and working youth further complicated the situation. Many companies involved in construction sought to exploit the involvement of young people as a means to push through investment plans and acquire unnecessary equipment. Moreover, the youth leaders were not satisfied with the educational effect of the actions either, stating that the results of ideological and political work are sometimes "of a dubious nature."¹³¹

After the construction of sections of the Brotherhood and Unity Highway, the work on the Adriatic Highway, and the reconstruction of Skopje, it became clear that a period of respite was necessary. This shift in focus was evident in the Resolution of the VIII Congress, which emphasized that future work actions should be "developed in accordance with socio-economic circumstances."¹³² The increasingly pronounced destatization of the economic system, coupled with persistent financial difficulties that remained unresolved even after an extensively prepared economic reform, led to growing skepticism about the relevance of work actions. Although these viewpoints were not dominant, they fostered an environment where ideas "about the need for a more decisive shift" and the explo-

¹²⁷ Reana Senjković, *Svaki dan pobjeda: kultura omladinskih radnih akcija* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2016), 182–183.

¹²⁸ AJ, 114-124, Како су организоване радне акције у Југославији.

¹²⁹ AJ, 114-125, Савез омладине и актуелна питања радних акција.

¹³⁰ AJ, 114-125, Стенографске белешке са саветовања ЦК Савеза омладине Југославије о омладинским радним акцијама (20. 3. 1965).

¹³¹ AJ, КПП, II-3-д-2/27, Информација о проблему организовања омладинских радних акција (17. 3. 1965).

¹³² AJ, 114-124, Забелешка о неким питањима у вези са даљим организовањем омладинских радних акција (15. 1. 1965).

ration of “more flexible forms of work gathering” increasingly resonated.¹³³ The fact that the construction of the Adriatic Highway section from Kolašin to Bijelo Polje (1964) exceeded the budget by as much as 30% undoubtedly influenced the Federal Executive Council's decision to inform the Yugoslav Youth League that “there were no conditions” for organizing federal work actions (1965, 1966).¹³⁴ However, by the second half of 1967, it became clear that this was merely a short-term respite rather than a complete abandonment of the belief in the educational benefits of voluntary work. The announcement of the five-year Yugoslav action New Belgrade in 1968, which aimed to demonstrate that volunteering was not as costly 'as people usually believed',¹³⁵ indicated that the organization of youth brigades would not be abandoned.¹³⁶ A few months later, at the VIII Congress of the Youth League of Yugoslavia, Tito advocated for further development of the “useful long-standing tradition of work actions.”¹³⁷ This gave a new impetus to work actions, which were massively organized throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Despite significant political changes and the deepening internal crisis, work actions “remained a solid ideological concept and one of the most important tools in the ideological construction of Yugoslav youth” until the collapse of the state.¹³⁸

* * *

Attempts to create Yugoslav generations of youth—first on an ethnic and national basis, and later on an ideological and supranational basis—defined nearly sixty years of the Yugoslav state's existence. Economic underdevelopment, inadequate education and low population mobility during the inter-war period prevented the South Slavic peoples from getting to know each other and developing a unified Yugoslav identity. The repressive measures that imposed integral Yugoslavism created a counter-effect, additionally strengthened the already built national consciousness and complicated the already complex political situation.

¹³³ AJ, 114-125, Савез омладине и актуелна питања радних акција.

¹³⁴ „Молба за добровољни рад“, *Борба*, 20. 9. 1966.

¹³⁵ „Омладина поново у Новом Београду. Шта ће градити бригаде“, *Борба*, 23. 9. 1967.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ „Самоуправљање омогућава активније учешће и већи допринос младих целокупном друштвеном животу. Govor председника Јосипа Броза Тита делегатима омладинског конгреса“, *Борба*, 11.2.1968.

¹³⁸ Dragan Popović, „Youth Labour Action (Omladinska radna akcija, ORA) as Ideological Holiday-Making“, u: Hannes Grandits & Karin Taylor, *Yugoslavia's Sunny Side. A History of Tourism in Socialism (1950s 1980s)* (Budapest, Central European University Press: 2010), 299.

The creation of a common identity of young people in socialist Yugoslavia was somewhat more successful. The education system, the mass media, popular culture, but also work actions and the increasingly popular summer holidays organized by the Youth Travel Association managed to influence the formation of the first generations of Yugoslav youth, of course in a civic rather than an ethnic sense. As it turned out, the collapse of the state also led to an almost complete dissolution of the common identity among young people. Nevertheless, traces of the former Yugoslav identity, especially in popular culture, have survived and remain visible thirty years after the country's disintegration.