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**CULTURAL POLICIES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN  
SOCIALIST MACEDONIA:  
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MACEDONIAN STATE**

**Abstract:** In the socialist period, until 1991, the Vardar part of Macedonia was part of the Yugoslav federation; hence, both general policy and cultural policy were implemented under Belgrade's leadership and relied entirely on the ideology inherent for the Yugoslav system. Of course, Macedonia developed within that framework as a republic with certain powers, and could, to some extent, organize its own political and cultural life, but within the framework of Yugoslav politics. It is noteworthy that when trying to research the literature on the cultural policy, there are almost no papers that refer only to Macedonia, only papers that refer to the entire territory of Yugoslavia. It can also be noted that all that exists in the literature mainly concerns positivism regarding the politics and cultural policy of Yugoslavia, but also negative criticism of capitalist countries and their policies.

**Keywords:** Yugoslavia, Macedonia, socialism, politics, heritage.

The cultural policy of the federal Yugoslavia was based on the socialist anti-fascist revolution and later on the self-management policy that was characteristic of the Yugoslav socialist society. Thus, the leading thinkers in the area of general politics are the generally accepted leftist authors: Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov – Lenin. The Yugoslav authors, supporters of socialism, Edvard Kardelj, Boris Majer, Branko Prnjat, and others, followed their ideas. According to these authors, socialist culture is among the essential factors that allow penetration of socialist and humanist ideas in the world. They say it helps to unite the humanistic wave of world cultures and aims to bring all socialist nations closer together. In the case of Yugoslavia, the socialist culture aimed to strengthen cooperation and brotherly relations between peoples and nationalities in the country. Vera Tomic, (Tomić 1969: 57), a cultural and cultural policy researcher in socialist Yugoslavia, stresses that "for our people, the culture is a

value of particular importance that enables us to show the world our life force and our specific ideas." Even in these early Yugoslav forms of cultural policy-making, we can see that the national ideas of the Yugoslav people, rather than of Yugoslavia as a whole, are emphasized. Of course, with the adoption of the new SFRY Constitution of 1974, the republics' independence from the central government was further emphasized, and the national ideas of the people of Yugoslavia were given greater freedom and expression of national attitudes, which ultimately led to the complete dissolution of the Yugoslav state.

According to Branko Prnjat, (Prnjat 1979: 136-138), the socialist state, through its victory in the socialist revolution, had a significant and irreplaceable role in the cultural transformation of society. This involved the process of creating the political, economic, institutional, and other preconditions for socialist cultural transformation while defining the main directions of the cultural policy. Without such a role of the socialist state, it is inevitable that neither the cultural nor the economic transformation of society could be imagined. According to Prnjat, the aspiration of the state to take full control of all cultural processes is not at all a goal, but part of the effort to complete, frame and stabilize a system. Accordingly, Prnjat emphasized that the state cultural policy was necessary to define its demands on cultural heritage and cultural creation and represented an element to strengthen the system. At the same time, this had to lead to the suppression and restriction of ones, and the maximization of some other functions in the field of culture. In this way, the state cultural policy has built such instruments of influence, action, and direction of culture that have provided a much more stable and much more lasting direction of a particular cultural orientation, maximally supported by the economic, political, and ideological measures of the state. However, what is of particular interest to this topic is how the cultural values and their financing were organized in Yugoslavia, from 1945 until its dissolution as a state. We can say that at that time, the Macedonian society, along with the Yugoslav community, went through several stages of cultural organization and financing (Zlatar 2001: 61):

- until 1950: Soviet administrative-etatistic management and ideology of socialist enlightenment and communist vanguardism;
- 1950 - 1975: stage decentralization of culture and openness to Western cultural influences; a conflict between federal and republican funding in stances;
- 1975 - 1990: introduction of a self-governing model of association in culture and finance, in which the main form of organizing and financing cultural activities is the so-called self-management interest community (SIZ), which is organized from local to national level; in essence, this is no different from budget financing because both ways are the result of coercion and enumeration, and not the free exchange of goods.

Until about 1950, Soviet administrative-etatistic management or some Yugoslavian form of this etatistic model (Prnjat 1979: 141) of cultural policy was ap-

plied. It was characterized by a high concentration of decision-making power in solving specific tasks concerning the socialist cultural construction of the country. Above all, it is about strengthening the material base for the culture, development of the institutions in the field of culture, raising the general educational level of the population, and so on. Namely, the socialist state and the state authorities possessed great economic and political power, thus retaining the power over each particular social activity, including culture. That power encompassed decision-making opportunities about economic, institutional, programmatic, human resources, and other elements of cultural development and merged with ideological and political criteria for the valuation of culture. The strengthening of state power over culture has contributed to the strengthening of state ideology and state cultural policy. State ideology in the field of culture was manifested in the demands for the creation of such culture that would fit the interests of the state, and that was the path to the creation of state culture.

In the years that followed, after 1948, and especially after 1950, as a result of the poor relations of former Federal Yugoslavia with the Soviet Union, the country slowly departed from the etatistic model, which resembled the Soviet Union model, and approached and opened up to the Western cultural influences. However, the main feature of this period is the conflict between the federal and republican leaderships. Both persistently endeavored to finance the culture, which was undoubtedly a cause for the changes and the shaping of the culture and its financing.

Self-management, from today's point of view, is seen as the beginning of the breakup of Yugoslavia, but at the time of the new SFRY Constitution of 1974 (Jović 2003: 15), it meant decentralization of the Yugoslav society, thus decentralization of the cultural policy. It was also seen as an essential condition for a democratization of the country, expansion of the social bases for decision making, an increase of the cultural initiatives, and creation of the cultural entities. Thus, the Socialist Republic of Macedonia within the Yugoslav society was given the opportunity to act more independently in the field of cultural policy-making. However, the main driving principles for the creation of cultural policy in Yugoslavia were those of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, and the principles of cultural policy were defined in the Program of the Union of Communists of Yugoslavia (Пръват 1987: 16). The cultural policy of the self-management society, above all, was directed to the creation of all those material and moral conditions, which enabled the fulfillment of creativity in all areas of social life, as well as its more adequate, social, and moral stimulation.

In the late 1980s, the phenomenon of "pseudo-markets" (Zlataar 2001: 61-62): appeared in the former Yugoslav system. The political system was not ready neither to leave the decision-making to the self-management arrangements nor to establish free-market relations. In certain fields, some forms of independent association emerged, which only seemed to function market-based.

When discussing today's culture in the 1980s, the elements of the financial and structural organization are often bypassed as less important, and the processes of the release of ideology and free intercultural exchanges are empha-

sized. The cultural elite of the 1980s were left-winged liberals and civil intellectuals who did not carry the burden of belonging to the national movement in the 1970s. The professional level of cultural production was quite high, and the financial support of the culture thanks to the state-run banknotes printing and the inflation, was ostensibly satisfactory (Zlatar 2001: 62). It was in such circumstances that the Yugoslav culture, as well as the individual republican cultures (and in that sense the Macedonian one), saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the socialist or communist bloc. After losing the supranational ideology, after losing the common supranational state, after losing the common Yugoslav cultural space, the former Yugoslav republics have turned even further, towards building independent nation-states and creating own values and ideas for specific new national cultural policies, which broadly exposed a variety of nationalisms, leading to military clashes in some of the republics.

Although the general attitudes in cultural policy-making came from Belgrade and the republican policies were adapted to them; however, the People's Republic of Macedonia needed to supplement what the Balkan countries had accomplished in the past fifty or a hundred years - building nation-states. After all, in the years when other Balkan countries worked on policies to define and consolidate their national identity, the territory of Macedonia within the Ottoman Empire was heavily influenced by neighboring propaganda activities. The established Balkan states had built capacities for this activity and worked with great success in the Ottoman Turkish territories in the Balkans. National narratives in the Balkan states began to develop as early as the 19th century and contained the conception of the nation as one of the essential categories of the state. The idea went into the direction of building a 'nation-state,' and thus, they actively contributed to the development of national ideas, first within their borders, and then abroad. In almost each of the Balkan states, Macedonia was an important element that was considered an integral part of it. Soon, taking advantage of the opportunities, the Balkan allies seized Macedonia from Turkey and divided it into unequal parts i.e., they set arbitrary boundaries throughout Macedonia, without taking into account the ethnic identity of its inhabitants (Језерник 2002: 34). Later, the Vardar part of Macedonia was given a chance to form its own state within the FNR Yugoslavia. It is precise because of these socio-historical circumstances that it can be said that within the Yugoslav federation, Macedonia has been given a unique opportunity to supplement some of its lost years and to work intensively on defining the Macedonian national identity, while "catching up" with its neighbors, opposing their policy.

In the period from 1944 to 1991, for example, when the Vardar part of Macedonia was part of the Federation, past events were not only celebrated because of their national character but also represented steps in a process believed to lead to the future. The inclusion of Ilinden in the Macedonian national narrative was significant even though it did not fully support the idea of Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav. However, according to Keith Brown (Браун, 2010: 8), politicians, together with historians and artists, gave the heroes of Ilinden the role of predecessors of the Pan-Yugoslav Partisan movement (1941-1944). Thus the Krushevo

Republic within federal Yugoslavia was celebrated not only as Macedonian, but also as a socialist, but at the same time as a Yugoslav while emphasizing the egalitarian ideas of its leaders. During the Yugoslav period, this tendency was reflected in the construction of grandiose monuments, which were intended to magnify the Macedonian national struggle, but also the struggle against the enslavers and abusers of the poor working class. Moreover, in this way, this narrative was very successfully incorporated in the building of the Macedonian national identity. The monument "Ilinden" or "Makedonium" in Krusevo, where both "Ilindens" celebrated - the one from 1903 and the one from 1944, is particularly important here. It was officially opened on August 2, 1974, on the 30th anniversary of the ASNOM meeting and the 71st anniversary of the Ilinden Uprising (Брайн, 2010: 8). From today's point of view, the narratives of Ilinden and the Krushevo Republic would not be complete if the main protagonist of the Macedonian revolutionary movement was not included. Although he was not an active player and participant in the Ilinden Uprising, he is still considered one of the most admired revolutionaries of that period in all parts of Macedonia - Goce Delchev.

Immediately after the end of the Second World War and right after the formation of the Macedonian state within the Yugoslav federation, it was arranged by the authorities of the People's Republic of Macedonia and the People's Republic of Bulgaria.<sup>1</sup> To relocate the relics of this revolutionary from Sofia to Skopje (1946).<sup>2</sup> This was also a fulfillment of the Testament, written in Bulgarian, on the urn with the relics kept until then in the premises of the Ilinden organization in the Macedonian Home in Sofia: "We pray to the generations that follow, the sacred bones to be buried in the capital of the independent Macedonian state. August 1923, Ilinden". Also, it was agreed that the valuable documentation, library collection, and one particularly crucial ethnographic collection, which were the property of the recently closed Macedonian Scientific Institute in Sofia (1947), would be transferred from Sofia to Skopje. Later on, they represented the basis

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1 These agreements preceded the official talks between the FPR Yugoslavia and PR Bulgaria in Bled. The Bled talks that took place in July and August 1947 were only the "crown" of good co-operation when it opened the way for the creation of a Balkan federation. More on this in: (Peranović 1988: 191).

2 "Today, October 7, 1946 in Sofia, in the presence of the representatives of the People's Republic of Macedonia, Kiril Petrushev, Minister of Labor of the People's Republic of Macedonia, Dime Bojanovski-Dize, Minister of Trade and the President of the People's Front of Skopje, Lazar Tanev on one side and on the other side the Action Committee for the handover of the relics of Goce Delchev, led by the President Stefan Avramov, the Vice-President Mihail Samtrakalev, the Secretary Gjorgji Abadzhev and the members Lika Chopova Jurukova, Hristo Midanov, R. Spasenov and M. Trajkov, we have signed this protocol for the following: We, the signed proxies of the People's Republic of Macedonia have received from the President of the Ilinden Organization in Bulgaria, Stefan Avramov and the Governing Body of the same organization, the relics, kept since August 2, 1923 to this day, of the first Apostol of the Macedonian liberation movement and our first teacher Goce Delchev, to place them in his eternal resting place, built in Skopje, to be guarded by the descendants of Free Macedonia... ". - The contents of the Protocol on the Takeover of the Relics of Goce Delchev, signed on 7 October 1946, by the representatives of the new people's Government of the People's Republic of Macedonia and the Ilinden Organization of Sofia (Димитриевски 2019).

for the formation of some of the institutions of the People's Republic of Macedonia that had a national designation, namely the National and University Library "St. Clement of Ohrid" and the Ethnological Museum in Skopje.<sup>3</sup>

The character and the work of Goce Delchev, among others, soon became the cornerstone upon which the Macedonian state was built. His relics, which were placed in the church of St. Spas in Skopje, have become significant Macedonian national-political relics. Namely, during the transfer of the relics from Sofia to Skopje and their (re)burial, viewed from the point of view of the anthropology, elements of a social drama (Микулић 2009: 93), organized by the young Macedonian state, are noticeable.<sup>4</sup> Also, the space of the church in Skopje was already a reference point for religious ceremonies. In the past, the believers have, through various practices, already constituted this space as sacred (Eliade 2003: 75). With the adoption of the relics of Goce Delchev the sacralization of the space of the church St. Spas was significantly strengthened. It is especially visible through the revolutionary activity of Goce Delchev everywhere in ethnographic Macedonia. His activity was glorified and equated with the liberation of the country. He was known among the people as the Macedonian First Apostle, and hence his bones were sacred to the Macedonians, as stated in the above-mentioned "Testament." What is even more significant is that the relics were brought where they were supposed to be, in Macedonia - the land he fought for. If we follow the paradigms of Eliade (Eliade 2003: 75-76), the fact that the relics of Goce Delchev are in Macedonia, its entire territory can be considered as a space that is sacred, orderly, safe and familiar, but is surrounded by the non-sacred, alien and insecure space, governed by policies of aspirational ideas and ambitions - ideas that the politics of federal Yugoslavia have successfully instilled, especially after the exclusion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform (from Communist Information Bureau) in 1948 (Peranović 1988: 200-201). The orderly or cosmized world at the

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3 The List of Books from the Library of the Macedonian Scientific Institute in Sofia, handed over by the Liquidation Commission of the Institute of Representatives of the People's Republic of Macedonia, according to the Act of 28.05.1947, has been preserved. According to Bulgarian sources, the List contains 3966 titles, recorded in 57 pages. Also, 1351 ethnographic museum objects that were packed in 5 chests and handed over to the People's Republic of Macedonia were recorded on 16 pages by the same Liquidation Commission of the Institute (Документи, 2010).

4 Special arrangements were made for the relocation of the relics to Skopje. A sarcophagus was made in carving by the Macedonian artist Nestor Aleksiev and a special delegation was selected with an exclusive squad for the relocation of the relics, led by General Kiril Mihajlovski - Gruica. In Gruica's, memoirs, the official ceremony began in Sofia. The bones, accompanied by some 2,000 Macedonians, left the Bulgarian capital. The sarcophagus passed through Pirin Macedonia, and the people along the way paid their last respects to Goce. Gruica stated: "On the way between Simitli and Petrich in a village where the population was of Kukush, male and female, old and young, festively dressed - they lay on the ground when the gun-carriage passed by them" (Mihajlovski, 1971: 6-7). The Macedonian flag newspaper read: "A moving manifestation of a nation, which was always united in its ideals and remained faithful to Goce Delchev to the end... The dead Goce united with his free people in their free state..." (Macedonian flag, 1946: 3).

territory where the relics were placed is considered “our world,” while the category of the unholy, the untidy, and the chaotic is referred to as “the other world” (Eliade 2003: 75-76). Such policies of Yugoslavia, following its exclusion from the Cominform, were primarily directed towards the People's Republic of Bulgaria, which had already begun to change its policy towards the Macedonians in Pirin Macedonia completely.

The national cultural policies in the People's Republic of Macedonia continued in the following period. A number of national institutions were established. Of course, although, to some extent, a “mild” form of nationalism has been tolerated and supported, it should be emphasized, however, that many things related to the Macedonian national politics were suppressed and censored by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. And by the Communist Party of Macedonia. The model of linking the leftist heritage of the Ilinden period with the ideas of the World War 2 era led to the exaltation of the Ilinden Uprising and the revolutionary struggle of that period, led by Goce Delchev, on a national level and enabled the more intensive construction of Macedonian national politics in the period that followed.

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