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Kitchen without the debate: The Yugoslav exhibition of consumer goods in Moscow, 1960*

Abstract: The Yugoslav exhibition of consumer goods in Moscow was the first of its kind organized by Yugoslavia in a communist country. It opened its door to the public on May 25, 1960, amidst the super-heated international political environment after the American U-2 spy plane was shot down over the Soviet Union. Following the colossal propaganda success of the 1959 U.S. National Exhibition in Moscow, the Yugoslavs managed to deliver yet another propaganda blow to the Soviet prestige, showcasing that even socialism outside the Soviet bloc and in close collaboration with the United States was not only possible but also better.

Keywords: Yugoslav-Soviet relations, exhibition, propaganda, soft power, consumer goods

The first Yugoslav exhibition of consumer goods in Moscow, and the first of its kind organized by Yugoslavia in a communist country, opened its door to the public on May 25, 1960.¹ It was held during the “Khrushchev’s Berlin crisis” of 1958-63, as one of the most significant Cold War confrontations which

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1 National Archives of India (NAI), Transfer list 244, Ministry of External Affairs, Historical Division (Research and Intelligence Section), 1950–1972, 6(59)-R&I/60 – Reports (other than Annual) from Belgrade, Yugoslavia (in further reference NAI, TL 244 MEA, Historical Division (R&I), 1950–1972. 6(59)-R&I/60). The report of the Ambassador of India in Belgrade to the Foreign Secretary of India’s Ministry of External Affairs for the month of May 1960, June 4, 1960.

eventually produced a super-heated atmosphere between the two superpowers.² Despite the initial and mutual optimism and enthusiasm for a diplomatic solution to the conflict, following the Khrushchev's 1959 visit to the United States and President Eisenhower at Camp David, the so-called "spirit of Camp David," this extended political crisis over the future of Berlin "acquired a new sharpness" in the spring of 1960, after the American U-2 intelligence plane was shot down inside the Soviet Union. This incident led to a collapse of the Paris summit (U.S. President Eisenhower, British Prime Minister Macmillan, French President de Gaulle, and Soviet Prime Minister Khrushchev), eventually initiating yet another period of heightened political and military tensions between the two superpowers.³

Another important context was the relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Soon after Stalin's death in 1953, both Tito and Khrushchev wanted a political reconciliation between the two countries. The subsequent momentous meetings between two leaders in Belgrade and Moscow, in 1955 and 1956, respectively, enabled the complete restoration of relations between the two countries and within the entire Soviet bloc. However, this honeymoon period proved to be rather brittle and short-lived, as the Yugoslav involvement and responses to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, Tito's "readiness to resist Soviet domination," and continuous ideological disagreements between Belgrade and Moscow clearly and quickly revealed. Throughout the late 1950s, relations between the two countries followed a zig-zag pattern. This could have led to another complete split had it not been for the Sino-Soviet fallout in early 1960, which eventually brought Tito and Khrushchev back together.⁴ This new period of stable relations between Belgrade and Moscow was particularly

2 McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 359. I accept Bundy's chronology of the crisis, starting with the Khrushchev's attempt for a forced peace treaty between the allies and Germany in the autumn of 1958, which aimed at redefining the status of West Berlin, and ending with the signing of the Limited Test Ban Treaty in 1963, as one of the first steps toward the Détente. Other authors focus on the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, or the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, as the final stages of the crisis. See also: Richard D. Williamson, *First Steps toward Détente: American Diplomacy in the Berlin Crisis, 1958–1963*, (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2012); *The Berlin Wall Crisis: Perspectives on Cold War Alliances*, eds. John P.S. Gearson, Kori Schake, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Jack M. Schick, *The Berlin Crisis, 1958–1962*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971).

3 Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, 359–361.

4 John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 267–271; Dragan Bogetić, *Nova strategija spoljne politike Jugoslavije, 1956–1961*, (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2006), 184–232.

evident in the economic sphere. With all the obstacles of a heavily controlled market, the Yugoslav trade with the Soviet bloc started to expand after 1960, reaching its historical peak in 1965, at 42 percent of the entire Yugoslav foreign trade value.⁵

The final context to observe was the aftermath of the famous Kitchen Debate between Khrushchev and U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon at the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow. This was the most significant U.S. Cold War exhibition and a propaganda victory against the Soviet Union that was prepared as a specific response to the Soviet National Exhibition held in New York earlier that year. Even though it was designed as a gesture of goodwill between the two superpowers, it eventually became one of the most significant Cold War battlegrounds. It displayed dazzling model homes and kitchens, computers, automobiles, toys, fashion, and other consumer goods, aimed at representing the high living standard in the United States and the country's productive capabilities. The latter was particularly significant as most U.S. companies that participated with their home appliances at the exhibition were also Pentagon contractors. Those shiny chrome appliances in the American kitchen "were threatening as well as alluring", signaling the country's significant destructive capabilities in case of a war.⁶

All these overlapping motives and contexts are crucial for understanding the main intentions behind organizing the Yugoslav exhibition of consumer goods in Moscow, less than a year after the successful U.S. National Exhibition, which was triumphant in representing the high living standard of liberal capitalism. Riding on a wave of this American propaganda victory, the Yugoslavs used their exhibition as a specific follow-up, which had a task of representing the Yugoslav version of a socialist consumer paradise, showing to the wanting population behind the Iron Curtain that the amenities of capitalism could be cultivated in a socialist country, thus potentially planting the seed of discord among the Soviet people. Even though Yugoslavia had only limited potential to organize such an exhibition, having minimal experience in this field of propaganda, and especially concerning the availability of the necessary variety of consumer goods, it eventually managed to succeed, despite all the ob-

5 Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 270–271.

6 Robert H. Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty: Exhibiting American Culture Abroad in the 1950s*, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 208; Radina Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2012), 357–358. Exhibitions in Moscow and New York were based on the 1958 agreement between USSR and USA on cultural cooperation, dedicated to demonstrating and exchanging developments in science, technology, and culture.

stacles raised by the Soviet side. It seems that the hunger for diversity in these items among the Soviet population was too great, and the ability or willingness of the Soviet industry to comply with these demands limited.

International exhibitions as places of national propaganda

Since 1851 and the world's first international industrial exhibition held in London, the great world powers (initially Great Britain and France) established the practice of organizing regular international exhibitions, formally serving the purpose of promoting the nation's economic development and its industrial products. However, from the start, these exhibitions were based on the national principle and with separate pavilions for each of the participant nations, turning them primarily into essential sites for cultural and political propaganda. This was particularly visible in periods of great international turmoil and political crises.⁷ Displaying the technological advances and their effects on society was a powerful tool of cultural and political propaganda, legitimizing the official policies, ideology, and a right for regional or world dominance.

Following the existing pattern, national exhibitions became one of the many important battlegrounds of the Cold War, in which belligerent superpowers fought for the hearts and minds of the people. Presented in numbers, by 1960, the United States of America organized 97 exhibitions in 29 countries, visited by more than 60 million people.⁸ The Soviet Union could boast a similar presence at international trade fairs, with 68 shows held in 22 countries from 1946 to 1956.⁹ This concept of propaganda was inextricably connected with the parallel process of expansion of consumerism in the world, which achieved its peak during the 1950s and 1960s. Officials in Washington quickly realized the propaganda potential of international trade fairs and exhibitions, exporting consumerism as the "American way of life" across the globe, and es-

7 John W. Stamper, „The Galerie des Machines of the 1889 Paris World's Fair”, *Technology and Culture* 2/1989, 330–332; James D. Herbert, „The View of Trocadéro: The Real Subject of the Exposition Internationale, Paris, 1937”, *Assemblage* 26/1995, 94–112; Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, 356. For example, the Paris World Exhibition of 1889 (*Exposition Universelle*) was organized to celebrate the French Revolution's centenary and promote French superiority over the rival countries (Great Britain and Germany). One of the important symbols of this superiority was the Eiffel Tower, built for the purpose. Similarly, on the Paris World Exhibition of 1937, the most striking image and symbols were the confronted Nazi German and the Soviet pavilions, eerily anticipating the bitter struggle between these nations in the Second World War.

8 Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty*, 15.

9 Lewis Siegelbaum, „The Sputnik Goes to Brussels: The Exhibition of the Soviet Technological Wonder”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 1/2012, 122.

pecially to countries behind the Iron Curtain, promoting the United States as a superpower and leader of the free world and liberal economy.¹⁰ According to Haddow, in the early 1950s, U.S. officials entertained the idea that creating “a global consumer economy on the U.S. model was the only effective way of preserving civilization from the clutches of Communist tyranny”¹¹. As mentioned earlier, the 1959 U.S. National Exhibition in Moscow was the pinnacle of these propaganda efforts. Even today, many scientists consider that it was precisely the success of this project and subsequent expansion of consumerism in the world that significantly contributed to the collapse of communism in 1989.¹²

Yugoslavia can hardly be compared to the United States or the Soviet Union. However, understanding the importance and the general need for similar propaganda projects and successes was indisputable. This was to a certain extent achieved with the Pavilion of Yugoslavia at EXPO '58 in Brussels, which was “an attempt to internationally showcase the specific brand of socialism” developed in Yugoslavia a decade after the split with the Soviet Union. Even though the exhibition was “a relative disappointment, failing to engage the visitors in an attractive and well-rounded experience,” the pavilion building itself was an architectural masterpiece of Yugoslav socialist modernism, which in combination with the selection of artworks displayed inside, “virtually embodied Yugoslavia’s new and reformed version of socialism.”¹³

Transferring the American way of life to socialist Yugoslavia

After the Tito-Stalin split in 1948, Yugoslavia was left politically and economically isolated by the Soviet boycott. Cooperation with the USA and the West soon became necessary for the stability of both the country’s economy and the political regime. On the other hand, the reversal of Yugoslav and U.S. policies towards each other was far from sudden, with a full year passing before both countries were ready for any cooperation. Nevertheless, by the ear-

10 Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty*, 11–15; Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, 351. The instrumentalization of international trade fairs as an alternative and effective way of cultural exchange and propaganda in the USA can be traced to 1954, when President Eisenhower’s administration allowed the budgeted funding of such manifestations abroad. The central government institutions involved in this project were the State Department, the Department of Commerce, the United States Information Agency (USIA), and other technical-assistance agencies, including the CIA.

11 Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty*, 2.

12 Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, 353.

13 Vladimir Kulić, „An Avant-Garde Architecture for an Avant-Garde Socialism: Yugoslavia at EXPO '58”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 1/2012, 161–163.

ly 1950s, Yugoslavia embarked on a series of political and economic reforms to maintain its independence and alternative ‘road to communism.’ These reforms were based on the socialist type of market economy and were financially and politically heavily supported by the United States. With the Cold War already ‘heating up’ by that period, supporting Yugoslavia’s economic and political independence became one of the most important policies of the U.S. strategy of creating a rift in the Soviet bloc, showing the remaining Soviet satellites a ‘road sign’ to follow.¹⁴

Accepting the U.S. economic and military aid during the 1950s also meant accepting, or at least ‘leaving the door open’ for the establishment and rise of the consumer society in Yugoslavia, based on the American model and within the American strategy of cultural and political propaganda. One of the most important forums for this kind of influence in Yugoslavia was the annual Zagreb Fair, where the Yugoslavs could see the achievements of capitalism, especially since 1955 when the United States started organizing exhibitions at the Zagreb Fair. The most influential among American exhibitions in the following decade was the 1957 “Supermarket USA” exhibition, with a working model of the supermarket as its centerpiece. Even though the first Yugoslav supermarket was actually opened a few months earlier, in December 1956, in the small town of Ivanec (Croatia), the 1957 American exhibition was “the most spectacular” of the American production of 1957, and the effort was not in vain; soon after the exhibition, the Yugoslav federal government (*Savezno izvršno veće* – SIV) announced the plan for the opening of 60 similar supermarkets across the country and starting in 1958, supermarkets mushroomed all over Yugoslavia, even before than in neighboring ‘capitalist’ Austria or Italy.¹⁵

14 John R. Lampe, Russell O. Prickett, Ljubiša S. Adamović, *Yugoslav-American economic relations since World War II*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 13–14; 25; Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, 50–51. The direct American aid to Yugoslavia peaked in 1953, and the more complex cooperation was established only in the 1960s. However, all the mechanisms for this cooperation were in place by 1953.

15 Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty*, 64; Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, 364–367; Zrinka Miljan, Josip Mihaljević, „Ivanec kao eksperimentalna lokacija jugoslavenske samoposlužne trgovine“, *Radovi-Zavod za hrvatsku povijest* 48/2016, 361–367. According to Miljan and Mihaljević, the first Yugoslav supermarket was opened on the independent initiative of a couple of two ambitious and foresighted ‘socialist managers’, Andrija Sever, the director of the trading company “Ivanečki magazin”, and Stjepan Putarek, the commercial manager. On the other hand, they were introduced to the concept of the supermarket by the American businesspersons who held lectures in Zagreb in 1954. The second supermarket was opened in Zagreb in December 1957, the third in Belgrade in April 1958, and by 1975, there were 3,475 supermarkets in the country. More about the 1957 “Supermarket USA” exhibition in Zagreb in Tvrtko Jakovina, „Narodni kapitalizam protiv narodnih demokracija. Američki

Although this was only one of the many aspects of the American cultural propaganda in Yugoslavia during the Cold War, accepting certain traits of the ‘American way of life’ was an essential part of the Yugoslav policy of distancing itself from the Soviet bloc and maintaining its independence.¹⁶ Therefore, soon after the introduction of the supermarket, during the Seventh Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (*Savez komunista Jugoslavije* – SKJ) in April 1958, consumerism was introduced as an important component of the official Program of the SKJ, which emphasized that “the basic task of the socialist economic policy” should be “a constant improvement of the material and cultural conditions of life and work of working people”.¹⁷ However, even if Yugoslav officials were open to implementing the American model of consumerism, the question remains how effective and feasible was the introduction of even a tiny part of the ‘American way of life’ into the socialist system, and how effective this type of Yugoslav propaganda would be on the Soviet soil, notwithstanding the significant political points gained on the West by doing so. Whatever the answer might be, it is crucial to understand how Yugoslav officials wanted to present the country to the Soviet audience and the Eastern bloc.

The Yugoslav Exhibition of Consumer Goods in Moscow

The first Yugoslav exhibition of consumer goods in Moscow was on display from May 25 until June 19, 1960.¹⁸ The show was organized by the Yu-

super-market na Zagrebačkom velesajmu 1957. godine”, *Zbornik Mire Kolar Dimitrijević*, ur. Damir Agičić, (Zagreb: FF Press, 2003), 469–479.

- 16 For the extensive and in-depth analysis of different aspects of the American cultural propaganda in Yugoslavia until the 1970s, please refer to Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*.
- 17 *Program Saveza komunista Jugoslavije. Prihvaćen na Sedmom kongresu Saveza komunista Jugoslavije (22–26. travnja 1958. u Ljubljani*, (Sisak: GRO Joža Rožnaković, 1984). Quoted in Igor Duda, *U potrazi za blagostanjem. O povijesti dokolice i potrošačkog društva u Hrvatskoj 1950–ih i 1960–ih*, (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2005), 46–47.
- 18 „First Yugoslav Exhibit in Moscow,” *The Current Digest of the Russian Press* 20/1960, 35, accessed on March 2, 2022, (<http://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/13817936>). The opening date of the Yugoslav exhibition was also the date of Tito’s birthday, which was celebrated in Yugoslavia since the end of the war. However, in 1957, the official name was changed to Day of Youth. Although the overlap seems to be accidental, as the date was chosen exclusively in relation to the closing date of the Finish exhibition (May 22), held at the same place, the Yugoslav side did request an additional day for final preparations, thus pushing the opening date from May 24 to May 25, Tito’s birthday. Therefore, this should be accounted for as yet another aspect of the Yugoslav propaganda, regardless of the dry formality found in the documents. *Diplomatski arhiv Ministarstva spoljnih poslova Republike Srbije* [Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Serbia], *Politička arhiva* [Political Archive], 1960, folder 127, SSSR [USSR], file 46773 (in

goslav Federal Chamber of Foreign Trade and the Soviet Chamber of Commerce and Industry on more than 3,500 m² of open and closed space in the Gorky Central Park. The exhibition presented close to 5,000 items by 228 Yugoslav manufacturing and 68 export companies to more than 500,000 visitors.¹⁹ Compared to the U.S. National Exhibition in Moscow held less than a year before, which attracted the attention of roughly 2.7 million visitors, it can be argued that, at least in these terms, the Yugoslav exhibition was quite a triumph.²⁰ The official estimate in Yugoslavia was that “this exhibition achieved extraordinary political and propaganda success, represented an unusually successful political manifestation, and made all propaganda fabrications about the backwardness of our [Yugoslav] economy and development in general collapse like a house of cards.”²¹ However, for an accurate estimate of the eventual achievements, official Yugoslav aims for this exhibition must be analyzed in depth.

In the final exhibition report of the Yugoslav Federal Chamber of Foreign Trade (*Savezna spoljnotrgovinska komora*), it is stated that besides the promotion of the consumer goods in which Yugoslavia had “substantial capabilities,” the main goal was for the Soviet visitors “to attain the image of overall Yugoslav economy and ultimately of the inner life in Yugoslavia.”²² An ambitious and difficult task, to say the least, as the Yugoslav consumer goods at the time could hardly satisfy consumers even within the country, who grabbed any opportunity to go shopping in the West. According to Luthar, these were both the consequences of the rapidly emerging middle-class and a practice that constituted it as an identity. Luxury goods acquired through shopping trips, usually to Trieste, which included a variety of informal economic practices as well as smuggling, were all nested into a semi-public sphere indirectly supported by the almighty SKJ and the state apparatus who gladly turned a blind eye on

further reference DA MSPRS, PA, 1960, f. 127, SSSR, file 46773). Jugoslovenska izložba robe široke potrošnje u Moskvi, March 8, 1960; Jovana Karaulić, „Slet kao kulturalna izvedba jugoslovenstva: javne politike i upravljanje” (PhD dissertation, Univerzitet umetnosti u Beogradu, 2020), 137–147.

- 19 Arhiv Jugoslavije [Archive of Yugoslavia], collection 130, Savezno izvršno veće [Federal Executive Council], box 629, archival unit no. 1039 (in further reference AJ, 130–629–1039). Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.
- 20 Susan E. Reid, „Who Will Beat Whom?”, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4/2008, 857.
- 21 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.
- 22 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

such activities hoping to contain potential dissatisfaction and at the same time legitimize the regime.²³

Starting with the already established practices in the country, the Yugoslav Federal Secretariat for Foreign Affairs developed more detailed plans that undoubtedly aimed to score a propaganda victory for Yugoslavia. Their first concern was to emphasize the achieved level of economic cooperation between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union and to carefully craft the country's image in the eyes and minds of the audience in Moscow, which was in line with the renewed political cooperation between the two countries, but also with the U.S. strategy employed in Yugoslavia. In order to combine these somewhat conflicting interests and simultaneously emphasize the Yugoslav independence and achievements, the general advice was to use "moderate language" in presenting the Western economic support, immediate post-war support of the Soviet advisors, and explaining the specificities of the Yugoslav state-system.²⁴ In other words, life in Yugoslavia was in effect portrayed through the consumer goods as a socialist haven of consumerism, an ideal mix of both worlds, being socialist in essence, and enjoying the achievements of the affluent capitalist societies, without adhering to either bloc. The final concept of the exhibition was developed by the "special Board of the exhibition," which included representatives of the Yugoslav Federal Chamber of Foreign Trade, Federal State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, Committee for Foreign Trade, Federal Industrial Chamber, Secretariat for Information of the Federal Executive Council, and the Tourist Association of Yugoslavia. The exhibition concept design was entrusted to the architect Zdravko Gmajner from Zagreb, Croatia.²⁵

Unsurprisingly, maintaining such a delicate balance was hard to achieve. The close Yugoslav relations with the United States were unavoidably emphasized by the fact that the Yugoslav exhibition was, to the greatest possible extent, a copy of the U.S. National Exhibition from a previous year. Already at the entrance to the Gorky Park, there was "a great column, 40 meters high with a neon inscription 'FPR Yugoslavia' [Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia]," which was "visible in the evening from great distances, almost from every part

23 Breda Luthar, „Shame, Desire and Longing for the West: A Case Study of Consumption”, *Remembering Utopia: The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia*, eds. Breda Luthar, Maruša Pušnik, (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2010), 347–361, 370–372.

24 DA MSPRS, PA, 1960, f. 127, SSSR, file 46773. Jugoslovenska izložba robe široke potrošnje u Moskvi, March 8, 1960.

25 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

of Moscow.” In addition to that, the exhibition showcased a model of a kitchen, living room, study room, and bedroom, which all portrayed a “cozy and modern living environment,” followed by a range of bicycles, motorcycles, automobiles, fashion clothing, sportswear and sports equipment, various electronic devices, “luxurious leather accessories,” canned foods, fruits and beverages, and ending with luxurious items of knitted and leather clothing.²⁶ Similarities with the U.S. National Exhibition were evident not only in the choice of the items on display but also in the exhibition’s structure. Great emphasis was put on the living standard of an ‘average’ Yugoslav worker who could enjoy all the amenities of modern life, such as television, modern kitchen appliances, and automobiles, much like their counterparts in the United States. At the same time, Yugoslav officials went even a little bit overboard by displaying as one of the centerpieces of the exhibition not one but two “modern kitchens with all of the electric appliances,” evidently evoking the famous Kitchen Debate, the unusual verbal exchange between Khrushchev and Nixon less than a year earlier, which happened in front of the futuristic model of a fully robotized American kitchen. The entire impromptu conversation between two statespersons focused on the quality and availability of American consumer goods. While Nixon wanted to emphasize that “any steel worker could buy such a house,” Khrushchev accepted the U.S. supremacy in the field yet insisted that “in another seven years we will be on the same level as America,” and that “when we catch you up, in passing you by, we will wave to you.”²⁷ Having a benefit of hindsight, in this symbolic ‘picking of the wound’ of the former ally and role model, Yugoslavia wanted or minimally could not avoid emphasizing its close cooperation with the United States, both as a symbol of the successes of the Yugoslav economy, and a reminder of the political support it enjoyed by the Soviet adversary.

Presenting Yugoslavia in this way was a significant departure from the existing practices in the country. Only two years earlier, the Yugoslav national pavilion at the EXPO ’58 in Brussels, the first world’s fair after the Second World War, was based to a great extent on the Soviet model, with emphasis on exhibits such as scaled models or photographs of giant hydro-plant turbines, deep drilling machines, modern high-pressure steam boilers, and similar machinery, two-dimensional panels with political slogans and statistics, or “mineral specimens in attractive display cases.” The only important thing for such an exhibition that was “conspicuously absent (...) were any consumer prod-

26 Ibid.

27 Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty*, 215–217.

ucts.”²⁸ Even though there was an idea that it was important to present the high living standard in Yugoslavia in the context of its specific road to communism and because other countries also insisted on that concept, behind closed doors, Yugoslav officials in charge of the organization of this exhibition openly confessed that they had basically no idea how to do it.²⁹ Lacking practical knowledge in presenting the living standard of its population and far behind the Soviet industrial capabilities, Yugoslavia ended up being presented as a country rich in ores and minerals, industrially underdeveloped, yet optimistic and with grand plans for the future.³⁰

Patterson explains that even though the Yugoslav budding advertising industry was inspired by American and Western experiences, the country’s “advertising practices” in the late 1950s and early 1960s were, “neither fully Eastern nor fully Western”. Moreover, advertising specialists started the establishment of professional associations in 1957, while the first comprehensive theoretical literature and textbooks based on Western models and literature were published only in 1958/59.³¹ Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that the only, albeit a very significant departure from the Soviet model at the EXPO ’58, was visible in the aforementioned modernist architecture of the pavilion and its Gallery of Contemporary Art, in which Yugoslav modernist artworks were presented “as potent visual signifiers of the country’s distinction from the Soviet bloc.”³²

This kind of exhibition in Moscow would have most likely been a great embarrassment for Yugoslavia and would have failed to achieve the designed goals. However, much like at the EXPO ’58 in Brussels, where the Yugoslav ex-

28 AJ, collection 56, Generalni komesarijat jugoslovenske sekcije opšte međunarodne izložbe u Briselu 1958 [General commissariat of the Yugoslav section of the Universal International Exhibition in Brussels 1958], folder 25, the photo archive of the Yugoslav pavilion (in further reference AJ, 56–25); Kulić, „An Avant-Garde Architecture for an Avant-Garde Socialism: Yugoslavia at EXPO ’58”, 174–176.

29 AJ, 56–8. Stenographic notes of the advisory board for the Economic Section of the International Exhibition in Brussels 1958 (August 6, 1956), 7.

30 AJ, 56–8. Stenographic notes of the advisory board for the Economic Section of the International Exhibition in Brussels 1958 (December 12, 1956), 7; AJ, 56–25 (photo archive of the Yugoslav pavilion).

31 Patrick Hyder Patterson, *Bought & Sold: Living and Losing the Good Life in Socialist Yugoslavia*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), 70, 75, 80. These books were: Josip Sudar, *Ekonomska propaganda u teoriji i praksi*, (Zagreb: Informator, 1958) and Dušan Mrvoš, *Propaganda reklama publicitet: teorija i praksa*, (Beograd; Zagreb; Sarajevo; Skopje; Split; Rijeka: Zavod za ekonomsku propagandu i publicitet “OZEHA”, 1959).

32 Kulić, „An Avant-Garde Architecture for an Avant-Garde Socialism: Yugoslavia at EXPO ’58”, 166–167.

hibition was “blessed with enlightened visions and efficient decisions” despite many problems and inexperience,³³ it seems that the organizers of the Yugoslav exhibition of consumer goods were quite aware of these problems and decided to copy the model of the 1959 U.S. National Exhibition in Moscow. Focusing on consumer goods was obviously more helpful in emphasizing the Yugoslav departure from the Soviet bloc than modernist art and architecture. The American side could also be more than satisfied since Yugoslav acceptance to reform on principles of the market economy was in line with their foreign policy in Yugoslavia since 1948; supporting the pro-Western evolution of Yugoslavia while at the same time allowing it to remain socialist and using it as a specific road sign for other countries behind the Iron Curtain to follow.³⁴ The only side in this triangle that could be dissatisfied was the Soviet.

The reaction of the Soviet authorities

Hosting the Yugoslav exhibition of consumer goods in Moscow by the Soviet government at first glance seems a little bit controversial, especially because the Soviet Chamber of Commerce and Industry fully agreed on the concept of the exhibition.³⁵ However, the Soviet authorities were self-confident enough to allow the U.S. National Exhibition in 1959, which was comparatively and potentially much more dangerous for the international and internal prestige of the Soviet Union.³⁶ Expecting that the Yugoslav exhibition would be able to compete or to come even close to the American was far from realistic, especially since after visiting the American exhibition, Soviet citizens already had a ‘measuring stick’ to compare and judge the quality of the Yugoslav consumer goods. Therefore, it seems that the Soviet side was expecting Yugoslav embarrassment rather than a potential propaganda victory.

Soviets may have been confident enough that the Yugoslav exhibition was not a great threat to their prestige, yet this did not stop them from conducting several covert and open acts of sabotage and counterpropaganda. Ac-

33 Ibid, 163.

34 Vučetić, *Koka-kola socijalizam*, 51.

35 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

36 Susan E. Reid, „Who Will Beat Whom?“, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4/2008, 860–865. The Soviet side was aware of the potential dangers of organizing an American exhibition on the Soviet soil. Still, it was also ready to accept the risk being self-confident after the great success of the Soviet exhibition in Brussels in 1958 and expecting the much more positive effects of the reciprocal Soviet exhibition in New York on political, economic and propaganda level.

ording to the report of the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow, all foreign exhibitions in the Soviet capital that year were parried by their own or exhibitions from the Soviet bloc countries. The counterpart of the Yugoslav exhibition was the highly advertised Czechoslovakian exhibition of consumer goods, which was opened on May 3, 1960.³⁷ Essential for understanding the Soviet strategy in organizing these exhibitions was the Khrushchev's speech at the opening of the Czechoslovakian exhibition, in which he stressed that the adversaries of socialism tried "to conceal from the peoples the mighty changes that have taken place in the socialist countries" in order to weaken the effects of this development "on the minds and hearts of ordinary people."³⁸ This was a great introduction to the speech of the Czechoslovakian president Antonin Novotny who focused on the rise of the production of consumer goods and the population's personal consumption in Czechoslovakia, presented with the number of TV sets, refrigerators, and washing machines per capita, arguing that in culture, education and welfare services socialist countries have "far outstripped the developed capitalist countries."³⁹ On the other hand, Khrushchev could not let slip the opportunity to embarrass the Czechoslovakians somewhat by remarking that they did not bring enough exhibits and that the quality of their textile and shoes was poor.⁴⁰ In this ancient *divide et impera* strategy, Khrushchev clearly attempted to prepare the audience for the Yugoslav exhibition while emphasizing the Czechoslovakian position in the Soviet bloc hierarchy.

Subtle acts of obstruction were organized by the Soviet side already during the installation of the Yugoslav pavilion, several months before the official opening. The Yugoslav side estimated that the Soviet authorities were deliberately delaying the allocation of the qualified workers to the team of 19 Yugoslav engineers and specialized workers who came to Moscow with the task of erecting the Yugoslav pavilion, and only "after prolonged insisting" did they comply to Yugoslav demands, "yet this remained a burning problem right to the end."⁴¹ The Soviets also introduced small but continuous changes in the lay-

37 DA MSPRS, PA, 1960, f. 127, SSSR, file 413475. Telegram jugoslovenske ambasade u Moskvi, br. 304, May 17, 1960.

38 „We are proud of the achievements of fraternal Czechoslovakia-Formal opening in Moscow of the 'Czechoslovakia 1960' exhibition”, *The Current Digest of the Russian Press* 18/1960, 30–32, accessed on March 12, 2022, (<https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/13817405>).

39 Ibid.

40 DA MSPRS, PA, 1960, f. 127, SSSR, file 413475. Telegram jugoslovenske ambasade u Moskvi, br. 304, May 17, 1960.

41 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

out of the Yugoslav exhibition. Combined with the delay in the allocation of workers, there was a real chance that the necessary construction work would not be finished in time for the opening.⁴²

The opening ceremony on May 25th was attended by more than 1,000 Soviet guests and officials. Later in the afternoon, more than 500 hundred of them came to the banquet in the Yugoslav Embassy, thus inevitably contributing to the celebration of Tito's birthday.⁴³ Among them were several ministers, "almost all of the Soviet economy executives," and high-ranking Party officials, which somewhat adequately corresponded to the ranks of the officials sent by the Yugoslav government.⁴⁴ However, it was duly noted that the First Deputy Premiers Kosygin and Mikoyan were not present, even though they had been officially invited.⁴⁵ In the context of the Soviet strategy, it is important to note that at the opening ceremony of the Czechoslovakian exhibition on May 3, the honorary guest was the Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev.⁴⁶ These subtle messages were preceded by a more direct article published in the Soviet newspaper *Komunist*, only a day before the opening of the Yugoslav exhibition, which directly criticized Yugoslav "revisionism" and accused Yugoslavia of "aiding and abetting imperialism and the enemies of socialism." Tito was also personally attacked for his official statement of May 17, in which he appealed to the Big Four not to allow the U-2 incident to stand in the way of negotiations, which was "evidently regarded as equating the Americans with

42 DA MSPRS, PA, 1960, f. 127, SSSR, file 49804. I Izveštaj o radovima na uređenju jugoslovenskog paviljona u Moskvi, April 13, 1960.

43 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

44 Ibid. From the Soviet side, among the most prominent officials present were Yekaterina Furtseva, Minister of Culture, Alexander Zasyadko, Deputy Premier, Dimitry Zotov, Deputy President of The State Planning Committee (Gosplan), Nikolai Patolichev, Minister of Foreign Trade of the USSR, and Nikolai Firyubin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. On the Yugoslav side, the most important officials were Avdo Humo, member of the Federal Executive Council; Ilija Tepavac, member of the Executive Council of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and member of the Executive Board of the Federal Chamber of Foreign Trade; Rade Kušić, director of the "Jugoexport" company and member of the Executive Board of the Federal Chamber of Foreign Trade, and Petar Miljević, Deputy Chief of the State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs.

45 DA MSPRS, PA, 1960, f. 127, SSSR, file 414386. Telegram jugoslovenske ambasade u Moskvi, br. 332, May 25, 1960.

46 „We are proud of the achievements of fraternal Czechoslovakia-Formal opening in Moscow of the 'Czechoslovakia 1960' exhibition”, *The Current Digest of the Russian Press* 18/1960, 30–32, accessed on March 12, 2022, (<https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/13817405>).

the Russians and belittling the serious nature of the offense and just indignation it roused in the Soviet Union.”⁴⁷

Despite these attacks in a politically charged situation amidst one of the Cold War crises and the general understanding among the Yugoslav officials that the Czechoslovakian exhibition was organized with “much bigger pretensions” and “with the purpose to overshadow” the Yugoslav exhibition, they were quite happy that “the opposite happened” and that the Soviet public much better accepted the display of Yugoslav consumer goods.⁴⁸ The fact that the visitors of the Yugoslav exhibition were ready to queue for several hours in “more than 1 km” long lines and in the scorching sun gives some credit to these Yugoslav claims.⁴⁹ Once again, the Soviet administration reacted promptly by organizing a boycott of the Yugoslav exhibition through the Communist Party sections and restriction of ticket distribution. After six days of long lines in front of the Yugoslav pavilion, in the following days, they suddenly disappeared, and the situation remained the same until the end of the exhibition.⁵⁰ One of the mechanisms was that the tickets bought by factories were not distributed to the workers, thus leaving ticket offices without tickets to sell and the Yugoslav pavilion without visitors. Only a quick reaction of the Yugoslav officials in Moscow, who printed additional 300,000 tickets, saved the exhibition from possible ridicule in the Soviet media.⁵¹

To further dilute the success and popularity of the Yugoslav exhibition among the Soviet people, Soviet authorities used the press. Except for a very brief article announcing the opening of the Yugoslav exhibition, published in *Izvestia* on May 15⁵², only one more article was published in *Literaturnaya gazeta* on May 28, in which it was sarcastically noted that even though “it is hard to find objects that do not please the eye [...] it is impossible to find an item that would cause a visitor to exclaim in surprise” since all of these consumer products were already seen at the Czechoslovakian exhibition.⁵³ A significant part

47 NAI, TL 244 MEA, Historical Division (R&I), 1950–1972. 6(59)-R&I/60). The report of the Ambassador of India in Belgrade to the Foreign Secretary of India’s Ministry of External Affairs for the month of May 1960, June 4, 1960.

48 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 „First Yugoslav Exhibit in Moscow,” *The Current Digest of the Russian Press* 20/1960, 35, accessed on March 2, 2022, (<http://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/13817936>).

53 V. Kamanin, „This is attractive,” *The Current Digest of the Russian Press* 27/1960, 17, accessed on February 21, 2022, (<https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/13817086>).

of this article was devoted to the books of Russian classics displayed in the Yugoslav pavilion, even though the author struggled to understand how books can be related to consumer goods. Considering that this article was published only three days after the opening of the exhibition, it becomes clear that the main goal was to discourage Soviet citizens from visiting. After all, the works of Lenin, Pushkin, and Dostoyevsky were already abundantly available to Soviet citizens.

Among the visitors, there was also a small number of infiltrated provocateurs and Yugoslav emigrants who were posing embarrassing questions to guides in the Yugoslav pavilion to “create the impression that the exhibition does not present the true situation” concerning the living standard in Yugoslavia, yet the reaction of the majority of visitors to these provocations was extremely adverse.⁵⁴ Needless to say that the same scenario and the same response of the public developed a year before at the American National Exhibition.⁵⁵ In fact, whatever the Soviet authorities did to contain its population from visiting the Yugoslav exhibition, the final number of more than 500,000 visitors clearly shows that the hunger for consumer goods of the average Soviet citizen was greater. The Yugoslavs were satisfied with the fact that Yugoslav consumer goods proved to be very interesting to the Soviet people and that “visiting the exhibition in many ways acquires the character of a political manifestation of interest in our country.” So much so that the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow suggested that “our press should be generally reserved” regarding the exhibition’s success and let it “speak for itself.”⁵⁶

Putting the Soviet Union on high heels

The Yugoslav exhibition clearly made an impact and aroused great interest among the citizens of Moscow. Still, even though Yugoslavs boasted that they had “substantial capabilities” in producing consumer goods and that the exhibited items were of “outstanding quality,” it is interesting to analyze what kind of items they actually had to present.⁵⁷ Yugoslavia was a true ‘newcomer’ to consumerism, and even though the American model was readily available

54 AJ, 130-629-1039, „Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

55 Ralph K. White, „Soviet Reaction to Our Moscow Exhibit: Voting Machines and Comment Box,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 23 4/1959-1960, 462.

56 DA MSPRS, PA, 1960, f. 127, SSSR, file 414504. Telegram jugoslovenske ambasade u Moskvi, br. 336, May 27, 1960.

57 AJ, 130-629-1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

for analysis and copying, the fact remains that Yugoslavia achieved some tangible results in the development of light industry only in the second half of the 1950s. This resulted from tremendous pressure from the United States and other Western partners who predominantly allowed credit lines to produce consumer goods.⁵⁸ Therefore, despite the ambitious plan to organize a successful exhibition of consumer goods modeled on the American experience, this was a tough act to follow for the Yugoslavs.

Problems started already in Yugoslavia when the Federal Chamber of Foreign Trade, the main organizer of the exhibition, began collecting items from different Yugoslav companies to be displayed in the exhibition. Protected by the state intervention from bankruptcy and other negative impacts of the market economy, “many companies” did not understand “the commercial interest” of the exhibition and actually “avoided participating” in this project. Only after a great effort from the organizers and after a “series of meetings for each group of items” have they managed to collect consumer goods of adequate quality and in sufficient numbers.⁵⁹ Reluctant to participate in the exhibition, managers and executives of most Yugoslav companies had even less interest in taking an active role in the marketing and propaganda of their products when they eventually arrived in Moscow. This was actually quite a common problem in the emerging Yugoslav consumer society, where managers often considered marketing “more as a matter of prestige than as a function of any real need to sell something”.⁶⁰ In fact, one of the managers was “persuaded” by the Federal Chamber of Foreign Trade executives to go back home because of his frivolous behavior, while some of them, like representatives of the motor industry, did not even bother to come to Moscow.⁶¹ This is particularly surprising since automobiles were voted the second most exciting item on display by Soviet visitors at the American exhibition a year before.⁶² Even though Yugoslav automobiles were far from comparable to American, the genuine desire of the Soviet public for these products was unquestionable. Therefore, it is surprising that they were left without the proper attention of the representatives of the Yugoslav motor industry, who did not even print informative leaflets in the Russian

58 Lampe, Russell, Adamović, *Yugoslav-American economic relations since World War II*, 44.

59 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

60 Patterson, *Bought & Sold*, 53.

61 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960..

62 Ralph K. White, „Soviet Reaction to Our Moscow Exhibit: Voting Machines and Comment Box,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 23 4/1959–1960, 463–464.

language for potential business partners.⁶³ However, executives of some of the most prominent Yugoslav companies were professional enough and managed to conclude several lucrative business deals, even though the overall image of Yugoslav managers and businesspersons was far from bright.

Structuring an exhibition on the American model was difficult enough but filling the space with quality consumer products was possibly even harder for the Yugoslavs. Here too, automobiles give a telling example. Soviet visitors to the American exhibition were impressed by automobiles as one of the most luxurious items on display. In general, they were impressed with products of great size and high quality.⁶⁴ Both models of Yugoslav passenger automobiles were on display in Moscow (*Zastava 600D and 1100*), yet it seems that they did not attract much attention. They were generally considered too expensive, and there were comments that the driving position of the *Zastava 600D*, the Yugoslav ‘people’s car’ – *fića*, was awkward and the seat too small. The conclusion was that the Soviet Union also produced small automobiles, so they were not that interested in purchasing Yugoslav models.⁶⁵ Furthermore, they were poorly built. A report from a similar Yugoslav exhibition held in Brno (Czechoslovakia) in 1961 gives a striking image. Yugoslav automobiles suffered from the uneven paint job, which was even chipped in some areas. At the same time, “the gap between the headlight and the body panel on one vehicle was wide enough for visitors to put their fingers through it.”⁶⁶ Considering the already mentioned reluctance of the Yugoslav motor industry representatives to participate in the exhibition in Moscow, it would be difficult to imagine that the quality of the exhibited cars was drastically better.

The other problem for the Yugoslavs was that the variety of products offered by Americans was challenging to follow. Nevertheless, it is striking how Yugoslav officials tried to remain within the American model. For example, they presented the X-ray machine instead of the complex heart-lung machine. Instead of the IBM computer, which was answering the visitors’ pre-determined questions about the United States, the Yugoslavs presented their

63 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

64 White, „Soviet Reaction to Our Moscow Exhibit: Voting Machines and Comment Box”, 464.

65 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

66 Marko Miljković, „Making automobiles in Yugoslavia: Fiat Technology in the Crvena Zastava Factory, 1954–1962,” *The Journal of Transport History* 1/2017, 22.

calculators.⁶⁷ The latter example is particularly interesting as it speaks volumes about the reach of the American influence or the willingness and capabilities of Yugoslavia to adopt it. By 1960, Yugoslavia developed the CER-10 [*Cifarski Elektronski Računar* – Digital Electronic Computer] as the first Yugoslav electronic computer. However, even though the CER-10 put the country “on the short list of only five European nations capable to independently produce electronic computers (Great Britain, France, Germany, Poland, and the Soviet Union),” it was almost exclusively used by the Yugoslav secret police UDB (*Uprava državne bezbednosti* – Directorate for State Security) and kept a secret, while Yugoslav companies were purchasing American and other commercial computers for their needs.⁶⁸

The Yugoslav exhibition also instigated some unexpected and interesting, albeit limited, debate about abstract art, as a specific introduction to the famous Khrushchev’s rant on the topic, the Manege Affair of 1962.⁶⁹ The experience Yugoslavia gained at the EXPO ’58 in Brussels was obviously not forgotten, and although official reports do not mention the artwork presented at the Yugoslav pavilion in Moscow, the official Book of Impressions reveals that the Soviet citizens had been provoked on this issue as well. One visitor who could be counted in the ranks of provocateurs wrote that “it is a pity that modern and cozy furniture are spoiled by objects of abstract art which are not decorating them in any way – odd vases and ugly paintings.” Another was more direct in saying that “we do not acknowledge abstraction and condemn it as bourgeois ideology,” to which somebody responded that “the one who wrote this is rude and does not know what abstraction is,” with similar comments following.⁷⁰ The Yugoslav organizers were obviously well acquainted with the official position of the Soviet authorities regarding abstract art and, with some international recognition in the field, obviously used the opportunity and experience to annoy further and provoke their hosts while promoting the country as a socialist haven of artistic freedom as well.

67 Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty*, 219–220; AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19. VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

68 Marko Miljković, „CER Computers as Weapons of Mass Disruption: The Yugoslav Computer Industry in the 1960s,” *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 2/2017, 99–123.

69 “Khrushchev on Modern Art,” *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History*, accessed on April 16, 2022, <https://soviethistory.msu.edu/1961-2/khrushchev-on-the-arts/khrushchev-on-the-arts-texts/khrushchev-on-modern-art/>.

70 DA MSPRS, PA, 1960, f. 127, SSSR, file 414770. Iz knjige utisaka Jugoslovenske izložbe robe široke potrošnje u Moskvi 1960. god., May 31, 1960.

Finally, those 500,000 visitors did come to see something, probably more mundane items. Part of the consumer paradise Yugoslavia could offer to the wanting Soviet citizens were shoes, textiles, and fashion clothing in dazzling modern colors. This becomes evident by listing the types of consumer goods on display in the Yugoslav pavilion. It seems that almost half of the items could fall into these categories.⁷¹ Even the sarcastic author of one of the few newspapers reports on the Yugoslav exhibition seemed to be most impressed by these items and their colors, calling them “undoubtedly attractive and tasteful.”⁷² Indeed, among several trade arrangements signed between Yugoslav and Soviet companies, the most lucrative was purchasing “200,000 pairs of shoes from two Yugoslav factories,” an item obviously desperately desired by the Soviet citizens, probably in the same way the Yugoslavs craved for Italian shoes.⁷³

Nevertheless, too much fashion and the American way of life were as problematic for the Soviet authorities as abstract art was, and they did not waste any time in expressing their complaints that the heels on Yugoslav stiletto shoes of 7-10 centimeters were too high and that 4.5-7 centimeters would be much better, while the molds for the shoes were also too narrow.⁷⁴ Here too, the comparison with the 1959 U.S. National Exhibition is striking, considering that the American fashion models were deliberately chosen to appear “unnaturally thin in comparison with ‘their plump Russian counterparts,’” up to Pat Nixon, who “never looked better contrasted with the grandmotherly Soviet matrons,” Mmes. Mikoyan, Khrushchev, and Kozlov, “who outweighed her by about hundred pounds each.”⁷⁵

Conclusion

Based on the American model and organized during one of the difficult Cold War crises, the first Yugoslav exhibition of consumer goods in Moscow and across the Iron Curtain gained importance that otherwise it might not

71 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25.V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

72 V. Kamanin, „This is attractive,” *The Current Digest of the Russian Press* 27/1960, 17, accessed on February 21, 2022, (<https://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/13817086>).

73 NAI, TL 244 MEA, Historical Division (R&I), 1950–1972. 6(59)-R&I/60). The report of the Ambassador of India in Belgrade to the Foreign Secretary of India’s Ministry of External Affairs for the month of May 1960, June 4, 1960; DA MSPRS, PA, 1960, f. 127, SSSR, file 414770. Iz knjige utisaka Jugoslovenske izložbe robe široke potrošnje u Moskvi 1960. god., May 31, 1960.

74 AJ, 130–629–1039, Jugoslovenska izložba robe za široku potrošnju u Moskvi koja je održana od 25. V do 19.VI 1960., July 20, 1960.

75 Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty*, 210–211.

have. In the heated atmosphere, Yugoslavia tried to accentuate its independent position and successes in the process of “refashioning the dictatorship of the proletariat as a shopper’s paradise”.⁷⁶ It was also an important opportunity to prove to the United States its readiness to send across the Iron Curtain messages of freedom, liberty, and prosperity in times and places the Americans could not or did not want to reach on their own.

At the same time, the Soviets suffered another propaganda defeat in the same field and on the same topics as during the 1959 U.S. National Exhibition in Moscow. Although the Yugoslav propaganda successes and damages made to the Soviet prestige fall way short in comparison, the last thing the Soviets needed was for Yugoslavia to ‘rub their nose’ and further capture the attention of the Soviet audience by flashing consumerism. Moreover, the Soviets had failed to use the exhibition of Czechoslovakia, as one of the most developed Soviet bloc countries, in attempting to present that even with all the American credit lines, technical and other support, people in Yugoslavia were not enjoying higher living standard than people in Eastern Europe.

Finally, both the Soviet and Yugoslav plans were too ambitious. The Yugoslavs did enjoy a higher living standard than countries behind the Iron Curtain, although only in very limited categories. An apparent variety of stiletto shoes and fashion clothing showed that Yugoslavia was only in the early phase of its industrial development and modernization. The response of the Soviet audience also indicates that this slight difference did, in fact, mean a lot to the ordinary people and was enough to tip the scales toward Yugoslavia and American consumerism. In this epic battle for the hearts and minds of the people, Khrushchev’s own words seem to have been prophetic: “You cannot put theory into your soup or Marxism into your clothes. If, after forty years of communism, a person cannot have a glass of milk or a pair of shoes, he will not believe that communism is a good thing, no matter what you tell him”.⁷⁷

Summary

The first Yugoslav exhibition of consumer goods in Moscow opened its doors to the Soviet public on May 25, 1960. It was held during the “Khrushchev’s Berlin crisis” of 1958-63, as one of the most significant periods of Cold War confrontations. This was also a new period of stable relations between Bel-

76 Patterson, *Bought & Sold*, 55.

77 Marvin Harris, *Theories of Culture in Postmodern Times*, (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, c1999), 175.

grade and Moscow, particularly in the economic sphere. Held less than a year after the successful U.S. National Exhibition, which was triumphant in representing the high living standard of liberal capitalism, the Yugoslav exhibition of consumer goods eventually became a specific follow-up to the American propaganda success, having a task of representing the Yugoslav version of a socialist consumer paradise. Showing to the wanting population behind the Iron Curtain that the amenities of capitalism could be cultivated in a socialist country, the exhibition was equally successful in planting the seed of discord within the Soviet population. Even though Yugoslavia had only limited potential to organize such an exhibition, especially concerning the availability of the necessary variety of consumer goods, it eventually managed to succeed, despite all the obstacles created by the Soviet side. It seems that the hunger for any diversity in these items among the Soviet population was simply too great, and the ability or willingness of the Soviet industry to comply with these demands of its population was limited.

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Резиме

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КУХИЊА БЕЗ „КУХИЊСКЕ ДЕБАТЕ“: ЈУГОСЛОВЕНСКА ИЗЛОЖБА РОБЕ ШИРОКЕ ПОТРОШЊЕ У МОСКВИ 1960.

Апстракт: Југословенска изложба робе широке потрошње у Москви била је прва оваква изложба коју је Југославија организовала у комунистичкој земљи. Отворена је за посетиоце 25. маја 1960. године, усред тешке међународне политичке кризе која се развила непосредно после обарања америчког У-2 шпијунског авиона изнад Совјетског Савеза. Ослањајући се на пропагандни успех Америчке националне изложбе у Москви 1959. године, Југословени су успели да постигну још један пропагандни поен на рачун совјетског престижа, приказујући да је социјализам ван совјетског блока, у блиској сарадњи са Сједињеним Америчким Државама, био не само могућ, већ и бољи.

Кључне речи: Југословенско-совјетски односи, изложба, пропаганда, „мека моћ“, роба широке потрошње

Прва југословенска изложба робе широке потрошње у Москви отворила је врата за совјетску јавност 25. маја 1960. године. Одржана је у време Хрушчовљеве берлинске кризе 1958–1963, једног од најопаснијих и најсложенијих периода хладноратовских конфронтација. Ово је, такође, био и период обновљених стабилних односа Београда и Москве, што је посебно било видљиво у сфери економске сарадње. Одржана мање од годину дана након успешне Америчке националне изложбе, која је остварила пропагандни тријумф представљајући високи животни стандард америчког либералног капитализма, Југословенска изложба робе широке потрошње представљала је специфичан наставак овог америчког пропагандног успеха, са првенственим задатком да представи југословенску верзију социјалистичког потрошачког раја. Показујући жељном становништву иза Гвоздене завесе да се благодети капитализма могу култивисати и у социјалистичкој земљи, изложба је била подједнако успешна и у сејању семена раздора међу совјетским становништвом. Иако је Југославија имала ограничене могућности да организује такву изложбу, посебно у погледу доступности неопходне робе широке потрошње, изложба је на крају успела у својим основним циљевима, упркос

свим препрекама које је стварала совјетска страна. Стиче се утисак да је глад за било каквом разноврсношћу у овим предметима међу совјетским становништвом била једноставно превелика, а способност или спремност совјетске индустрије да се повинује захтевима сопственог становништва у једнакој мери ограничена.