Adventures in the Marketplace: Yugoslav travel writing and tourism in the 1950s-1960s

Wendy Bracewell

Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism (). Ed. Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press., 2006), pp.248-265.

What did it mean to be a Yugoslav tourist in the 1950s and 60s? Access to the wide world after years of war and political isolationism? Encounters with ideological difference? 'Getting to know cultural monuments and enjoying the natural beauties of a sun-drenched country',[1] as suggested in one of the first Yugoslav-published foreign guidebooks? All of these experiences played their part, but one theme runs through discussions of travel abroad in this period. As much as anything else, Yugoslav tourism seemed to be about shopping.

Memories of travel abroad are made of this. Lijerka Damjanov-Pintar's account of her first trip to London in 1955 is typical in its loving recollections:

> I felt everything, and even tried things here and there. One whole hall was stuffed with coats. There must have been several thousand. In another hall hundreds of hats scattered on tables with mirrors. […] I sold some of my things: a ring, a bracelet, two little pieces of Herend porcelain. I bought a winter coat, then I went to Harrods for some beautiful fabric for an evening gown, a handbag, shoes, gloves and other trifles. […] When I unpacked everything at home, the whole family gathered round and wondered at the quantity and admired the quality. So I decided that next year I would repeat my travels.'[2]

Damjanov-Pintar remembers her shopping travels as subversive of the Yugoslav comrades' values. In contrast, contributors to a current web-based compendium of Yugoslav popular culture record memories of shopping trips to Trieste and elsewhere as an aspect of everyday life, an occasion for Yugo-nostalgia.[3] These contrasting evaluations are nothing new. In the 1950s Milovan Djilas denounced Yugoslavia's 'new class' of party functionaries who abused the privilege of travel to acquire foreign luxuries unavailable to the average worker; the press also criticized such 'state tourism'.[4] But even the private tourist was open to criticism. When a magazine article asked in 1964 'why do we travel abroad?' the answer focused on illicit economic activity: the student trying to make his stipend last, the souvenir hunter intent on impressing friends, the petty speculator buying women's scarves in Italy.[5] On the other hand, the first guidebooks to Western countries included explicit advice on where and how to shop. The 1956 *Guide to*

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[1] Faik Mehanović, *Vodič kroz Italiju* (Belgrade: Sedma sila, 1956).

[2] Ljerka Damjanov-Pintar, *Putovanja i ogovaranja: Šest pasoša i jedna putovnica* (Zagreb: Znanje, 1996).

[3] Published at http://www.leksikon-yu-mitologije.net/.

[4] Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Praeger, 1957); 'Državni turizam', *NIN*, 1 June 1952.

[5] 'Zašto putujemo u inostranstvo?', *NIN*, 9 May 1964.

Italy cited above observed that Trieste had few significant sights and therefore concentrated on the Triestine department stores, with notes on their prices (fixed, not open to haggling).[6] Yugoslav tourists shopped, and on coming home some of them published travel accounts, describing glittering window displays and advertisements as well as ancient monuments and picturesque villages.

Freedom to travel and a flourishing consumer culture have been singled out as epitomizing Yugoslavia's status as a peculiar hybrid, something between East and West, the result of Yugoslavia's separate road to communism. After Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform in 1948 and a short-lived experiment with accelerated industrialization and collectivization, Tito's regime embarked in the early 1950s on a series of reforms, including moves away from central planning towards 'market socialism' and a consumer orientation; decentralization under the label of 'workers' self-management'; and openness to the West.[7] Yugoslavia came to seem very different from the other states of the Soviet bloc.

Still, travel restrictions in other socialist countries were gradually relaxed and their citizens, too, tasted the pleasures of tourist consumption.[8] An issue of *Cultural Studies* edited by Anna Wessely put 'shopping tourism' – leisure travel combined with purposive economic activity – at the centre of research on the popular experience of East European socialism. The contributors argued that shopping tourism (and socialist consumerism in general) was not a matter of popular resistance but was tolerated and even encouraged by the state, describing the practice as contributing to a tacit social contract that maintained socialism in power, less through the use of terror than by trading consumer goods against popular political acquiescence.[9]

Was it different in Yugoslavia? There, open borders and access to material comforts were supposed to have conferred an unparalleled popular legitimacy on its socialist system. In her 1993 post-mortem on Yugoslavia, *Balkan Express*, Slavenka Drakulić saw Yugoslav passports and surplus income as something that set the country apart from the rest of the Eastern bloc, contributing to a lively sense of Yugoslav superiority. 'Millions and millions of people crossed the border every year just to savour the West and to buy something, perhaps as a mere gesture. But this freedom, a feeling that you are free to go if you want to, was very important to us.' Still, the unspoken political contract she identifies is essentially the same: 'We traded our freedom for a pair of Italian shoes'.[10]

The Belgrade historian Predrag Marković, one of the first to discuss the interplay between Yugoslav politics and mass culture, has a rather different view. His pioneering study of Belgrade from 1948 to 1965 details the eager consumption of holidays abroad, foreign fashions, movies and other consumer goods. He concludes that the ordinary citizen would always opt for 'Western' values, but only in culture and standard of living.

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[6] Mehanović, *Vodič*.
[7] Dennison Rusinow, *The Yugoslav Experiment, 1948-1974* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1978); John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[8] See the essay by Anne Gorsuch in this collection.
[9] Anna Wessley, 'Travelling People, Travelling Objects', *Cultural Studies* 16 (1), 2002: 3-15.
[10] Slavenka Drakulić, *The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1993), 135-36.

The Yugoslav version of the good life meant that, paradoxically, Yugoslavia's citizens *resisted* any serious political or economic reforms, assuming they could have it all at no extra cost. Yugoslavia's synthesis of East and West thus combined a desire for Western products with a lasting popular suspicion of market forces, risk and social differentiation.[11] Patrick Patterson's study of Yugoslav consumer culture through the prism of the advertising industry points out that the most consumer-oriented of the socialist states also saw the most lively critique of consumerism. The *Praxis* circle, for example, saw shopping trips to Trieste as evidence of the market reformers' choice of the comfortable life over the (socialist) good life.[12]

Yugoslav tourism cannot, of course, be reduced to the issue of consumerism. Varying experiences in different parts of the country; long-standing patterns of travel to neighbouring states; changing political or economic circumstances; individual opportunities, backgrounds, needs or fantasies – all these could contribute to very different expectations of travel abroad. But the contrasting assessments of Yugoslav shopping trips indicate that tourism was an important site for the discussion of socialist consumption. Travel writing was one place where this debate appeared. As well as describing the wonders of the world to the post-war generation, Yugoslav travel accounts of the 1950s and 1960s deal at length with issues of shopping tourism. They persistently pose the question of what is good tourism, and good consumption? What should be the relationship between needs, desires and goods in a socialist Yugoslavia positioned between East and West?

It would be deceptive to claim that such travel writing can tell us in any straight-forward way about the Yugoslav tourist's experience. Though access to the press widened dramatically over the second half of the twentieth century, in the 1950s and 1960s most Yugoslav travel accounts were published by journalists, professional writers and academics. The authors varied in their relationship to Party authority, but there is no doubt that they constituted a social and intellectual elite. While the Yugslav press was more open than that of other socialist countries, there were limits to what could be published, even in travel writing. Even so, travel writing has much to say about the meanings attributed to tourism in the Yugoslavia of the 1950s-60s and after.[13]

Yugoslav tourism and socialist leisure

From the early 1950s the official line promoted Yugoslav non-aligned, self-managing socialism as different from – and superior to – both Western capitalism and Soviet-bloc socialism. Market-oriented socialism was meant to improve life for the

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[11] Predrag J. Marković, *Beograd između istoka i zapada 1948-1965* (Belgrade, 1996).
[12] Patrick Patterson, 'The New Class: Consumer Culture under Socialism and the Unmaking of the Yugoslav Dream, 1945-1991' (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2001).
[13] For approaches to tourism through literature, see James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature and the Ways to 'Culture', 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Mary Baine Campbell, 'Travel Writing and its Theory' in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: CUP, 2002). See also the special issue on Balkan travel writing edited by Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, *Journeys: The International Journal of Travel and Travel Writing*, 6/1 (2005).

individual Yugoslav citizen: 'standard of living' was the last in the list of priorities in the 1948 five-year plan; but had moved up to the first rank in the 1964 plan.[14] Even before the reforms, Yugoslavia's leaders had stressed leisure as the state's reward for the worker's labour. The vacation, and in particular the holiday involving travel, was rapidly proletarianized after the war. The numbers of 'domestic tourists' spending their vacations away from home, mostly through their union or place of work, nearly doubled between 1938 and 1948 (from 720,000 to 1,493,000), and rose by 1962 to around 4 million.[15] Such paid leisure was important in legitimating Yugoslav socialism: the worker was better off than under the old regime, and better off than in the capitalist West – where leisure was depicted as the prerogative of the idle rich. Domestic leisure travel within Yugoslavia also had a patriotic and ideological role, with holidays seen as contributing to 'brotherhood and unity' by building personal ties between hosts and guests in different republics.[16]

Travel abroad was more problematic, as it invited the tourist to make comparisons. Official anxieties about unrestricted travel were initially reflected in a strictly controlled regime of passports, exit visas and hard currency allowances. Nonetheless, the political climate after 1953 included steps to open Yugoslavia's borders, first to tourism and later to economic migration.[17] From the late 1950s travel abroad became easier for the average Yugoslav. *Putnik*, nationalized after the war as the state travel agency and responsible for domestic tourism, once again began to organize excursions abroad, available not just through the workplace but to private tourist groups and even individuals. The passport and visa regime for leisure travel was relaxed and the numbers taking out a passport soared. The government's sense of confidence was manifested by abandoning overt surveillance of Yugoslav tourists abroad.

Yugoslav travellers repaid this confidence: they went abroad, and they came straight back home again. The possession of a Yugoslav passport offered unparalleled access to both East and West since, by the early seventies, Yugoslavs required no visa to travel in most European countries. Between 1959 and 1963, the number of those leaving Yugoslavia tripled, with most travelling in Western Europe, fewer in the Bloc countries or overseas.[18] These were not all holiday-makers: growing numbers of Yugoslavs travelled to work temporarily as labourers in Western Europe. The numbers of border crossings also point to a flourishing cross-border traffic. Still, while some studies attempt to differentiate between travel for economic purposes and tourism proper, the distinction is difficult to maintain.[19] Economic migrants and small-scale speculators did not travel with their eyes closed: they brought back with them intangible impressions as well as suitcases full of soap powder or cigarette lighters. Conversely, Yugoslav tourists had to fund their

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[14] Marković, *Beograd*, p. 291.
[15] Miodrag Zečević *Investicije i razvoj turizma u Jugoslaviji* (Belgrade: Institut za spoljnu trgovinu, 1973), pp. 149-55. On Croatian tourism, see Igor Duda, *U potrazi za blagostanjem: o povijesti dokolice i potrošačkog društva u Hrvatskoj 1950-ih i 1960-ih* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2005).
[16] E.g. Ljubo Babić, 'Jugoslavija kao turistička zemlja', *Turizam* 6/1 (June 1954): 2-5. See also the essays in this collection by Vari and Moranda on 'nation-building' travels.
[17] William Zimmerman, *Open borders, nonalignment, and the political evolution of Yugoslavia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 75-83.
[18] Zimmerman, p. 80; Zečević, *Investicije*, p. 155.
[19] Cf. Wessely, pp.11-12.

trips abroad as well they might – often by selling or bartering what goods they could carry. While travel abroad had become an accepted way for Yugoslavs to spend their leisure by the early sixties, spending their savings was made difficult by restrictions on the currency that could be taken out of the country and by customs regulations on their return.[20] Travellers predictably tried to evade these restrictions by smuggling extra funds out, and their purchases in. Alenka Švab labels this small-scale smuggling a 'national sport' and notes the relative lenience of the authorities, but jokes over the ruses of returning tourists and the stupidity of customs officials also suggest frustration with spending limits.[21]

At the same time, however, spending was what foreign tourists were expected to do. From the early fifties, Yugoslavia became a tourist destination for Westerners, compensating for the loss of Czech and Hungarian tourism after 1948. Initially this seems to have been a matter of chance rather than calculation, the unintended result of the devaluation of the dinar in 1952 (making Yugoslavia into an inexpensive holiday) and the simultaneous liberalization of the visa regime. Western tourists were courted both as a source of hard currency and because of the opportunity to cultivate Yugoslavia's image abroad. How to attract and cater for them became a theme in Yugoslav economic debate, with the need to entice such visitors to spend their money liberally constantly reiterated. Between 1950 and 1965 their numbers trebled.[22]

Tourists with typewriters

At the same time as leisure travel became available to a much wider proportion of the population, travel writing in Yugoslavia burgeoned, taking on a new populist emphasis – though this is not necessarily directly correlated with the democratization of travel. The connections are slightly more complex.

'Literary' travels had been a relatively prestigious genre in interwar Yugoslav literature. Writers who had distinguished themselves in other forms also turned their hands to travel writing, to critical acclaim. Travel writing was a vehicle for cultural critique or the philosophical essay, as well as for the lyrical evocation of atmosphere. Such writings justified themselves through the authors' display of sensibility and style, and were aimed at an educated reading public that shared the cultural horizons of the writers. Travel writing in this vein persisted, especially after the end of the brief hegemony of Yugoslav socialist realism in literature. But travel writing was also recruited into the project of building socialism. From the mid-forties there was a new emphasis on travel writing as socially-engaged reportage. The immediate post-war focus was on Yugoslav domestic travel, with an entire sub-genre depicting the creative leisure of youth groups or voluntary

[20] In 1960, travellers could take $30 out of the country; 'Više deviza za putovanja', *Ekonomska politika*, 27 Feb. 1960: 213-14. The limits placed on imports were directly aimed at border traffic and shopping tourism, and were justified by the need to protect domestic industry and limit 'luxuries'. *Zbirka carinskih propisa* (Belgrade: Službeni list, 1964, vol. 2).

[21] Alenka Švab, 'Consuming Western Image of Well-being: Shopping Tourism in Socialist Slovenia', *Cultural Studies* 16 (1), 2002: 63-79.

[22] John Allcock, 'Yugoslavia' in *Tourism and economic development in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, edited by Derek R. Hall (London: Belhaven Press, 1991), pp. 239-40; Derek Hall, 'Evolutionary pattern of tourism development in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union', ibid., p. 92.

work groups building roads or railways, as well as the collective pleasures of vacations at the seaside or the mountain resort. These travels of the late forties and fifties often followed a national 'key', with a section devoted to each republic, following the spirit – if not necessarily the model – of Soviet travel guides.[23] Accounts of Soviet pilgrimages and 'fraternal' travels were dedicated to the achievements of socialism (with Yugoslavia's distinctive contribution marked by descriptions of the universal acclamation for Tito). Travels in the capitalist West were initially limited to political journalism. But from the early 1950s there is a growing focus on Western Europe and the rest of the world in Yugoslav travels.

These works of travel reportage invited the reader into the world of politics, and particularly politics from the perspective of the 'ordinary citizen'. Fadil Hadžić's introduction to an anthology of Yugoslav travels, *Journey around the world*, sums up the premises of such writing: it is defined against the 'false poetry' of literary travel writing, which cannot reveal 'that which takes place behind the scenes of some pleasing foreign landscape or city panorama'. Instead, the Yugoslav travel writer avoids 'operatic snapshots of palms and cathedrals, descriptions of starry nights and the azure blue of far seas' for an analysis of 'world events through the words and eyes of the ordinary people encountered in all the countries of all the continents – sharing the same wishes and the same cries for peace and the same protests: against those whose only perspective on the world is that of the war between the blocs'.[24] The distinction was artificial: socially-engaged journalists still indulged in the occasional starry sky, even in Hadžić's anthology, while 'literary' travel accounts were by no means devoid of political comment. But as well as making non-alignment a principle of Yugoslav travel writing, Hadžić's remarks did indicate a new interest in the ordinary and everyday. Travel reportage sat easily alongside the commentary in daily newspapers such as *Politika*, as well as in the weekly magazines devoted to news and culture such as *NIN*, but these also began to carry more subjective and digressive accounts of travel and tourism.

These accounts were still usually written by professional writers and journalists in the fifties and sixties. As well as making the 'ordinary man' an object of travel reportage, many of these authors also adopted the persona of the Yugoslav tourist. Writing as a tourist meant renouncing the claims to expertise of the well-travelled and well-connected correspondent (even if the writer was in fact under commission from a paper or travelled with the intention of working up travel notes for publication), but this stance conferred a different sort of authority, that of everyday experience. These travel accounts offered the writer an opportunity to explore – and to comment on – the experience of mass tourism that was increasingly available to Yugoslav citizens in reality, and not just through the vicarious pleasures of armchair travel.

Accounts of shopping and consumption play a notable part in these writings. What a tourist might want to acquire; how to shop – and how to pay; what you can and can't get, both abroad and at home; dealing with scarcity or abundance, choice or its absence; tipping; the attitudes of shop assistants; confronting Yugoslav customs on your

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[23] E.g. Mihailo Lalić, *Usput zapisano* (Belgrade: Novo pokoljenje, 195), and Ratimir Stefanović, *Zapisi iz naših planina* (Belgrade: Novo pokolenje, 1951).
[24] Fadil Hadžić (ed.), *Put oko svijeta* (Zagreb, 1962), p. 6.

return – all are subjects that are treated repeatedly, not to say obsessively. While a concern with consumption might be expected as aspect of travels in the West, it was also an important focus of 'socialist fraternal travels'; and it had a long after-life in descriptions of travel to both east and west.

Tourist or Camel?

Representative examples of 'tourist travels' can be found in the works of two Belgrade authors, Vasa Popović and Slobodan Petković, who present their adventures in tourism in a light-hearted manner, as something novel yet not completely unfamiliar to readers. Their position as professional writers and as men is typical. (The style employed by women travel writers such as Nada Marinković or Neda Erceg is more impersonal and their subject matter less populist, perhaps in reaction to stereotypes of women writers.) The Belgrade base gives these authors a shared frame of reference but there are pertinent differences between their accounts, due in large part to the changes that had taken place between the publication of Popović's first stories in the early fifties and Petković's book in 1963.

Vasa Popović was a journalist for the newspaper *Politika* and the weekly *NIN*. His travel accounts were first published as periodical articles in the 1950s and then promptly collected in two volumes of travel sketches: *A trickster's travels* (1954) and *Hats off to travel* (1959). Their popularity is indicated by the fact that these sketches were then republished in a third collection in 1980: *Tales from the wide world*.[25] The title of his first volume – the travels of a *šeret*, a trickster or joker – gives some idea of his authorial persona and approach. Popović writes in his author's note that he's always described as a humorist, but concludes: 'you decide!'

Popović recounts his experiences in Vienna, Paris, Rome, and Prague as typical of 'our circumstances', but at the same time, he makes it clear that he is travelling in order to write: he's a journalist first and a tourist second. He has a little fun with this in discussing his plans: 'I'll have a nice excursion, it's good for the head and for the digestion, and I'll come back with some stories and, maybe, with some material (*štof*), since I'm one of our guys – a traveller abroad with average desires…'[26] 'Material' here is a pun: both material for stories and material as textiles, the stereotypical purchase of the Yugoslav tourist abroad. And his tales are full of such *štof*: tourism and shopping are all mixed up together.

> Maybe because of the Church of St Stephen and Schönbrunn and the cigarette lighters and the nylon goods – I was excited about my trip. And why not? People talk about the Louvre, and about Sartre at first hand (they say the existentialist girls wear green make-up), about La Scala in Milan, and American architecture and some come back wearing Montgomery jackets and striped socks and they give their friends ballpoint pens and combs and compact mirrors…[27]

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[25] Vasa Popović, *Šeretska putovanja: od Srema do Pariza* (Subotica: Minerva, 1954; 2nd ed. 1957); *Šešir dole — putovanju* (Belgrade: Rad, 1959); *Priče iz belog sveta* (Zagreb: Znanje, 1980).
[26] *Šeretska putovanja*, p. 140.
[27] Ibid., p. 149.

His first excursion in search of material – a visit to Vienna on an organized excursion – turns out to be almost entirely about shopping or perhaps 'something in our society that might once have been called petty-bourgeois snobbery'.[28] He is one of forty travellers, of whom 35 are shoppers, two are engineers, two are 'real tourists but only interested in sport' and one journalist who is ambivalent about his own motives: seeing the sights, gathering material or – doing some shopping himself. He describes the techniques of shopping-tourism: smuggling out 'one whole kilometre of sausage casing, and bottles of rakija to be offered in the shops on the elegant Mariahilferstrasse – *Gut Morgen, srpska šljivovica kaufen…Ich bin Jugoslavija*';[29] the wildfire rumours among the tourists of things that are to be had better or cheaper than at home and the frenzies of shopping (to the point that one embarrassed excursionist is prompted to remark to the astonished Austrians, 'we do have umbrellas too!');[30] the compulsion to spend 'every schilling on a Viennese comb or a Viennese pocket-mirror so my wife or some other *drugarica* can boast "look what I have, excellent quality, we don't have these … It's from Vienna".'[31] All this is described with a mixture of empathy and condemnation, and with such detail that it could be read as a primer in how to shop. The piece is called 'Vienna pocket-mirror' – a mirror that reflects Yugoslav social values as much as it does the face of Vienna.

The same themes continue through his travels to Paris, Brussels and Switzerland. Consumer desire is constantly set in contrast to cultural enrichment in Popović's accounts. It intrudes even in the course of sightseeing and museum-going, to comic effect. In Paris Popović finds himself in the Louvre, in front of the Mona Lisa: 'I stand and at first I just gaze, and then I wonder: is she smiling with her eyes or with her lips? And then I look at the dress she was wearing when she smiled that famous smile … and my eyes ask: is that taffeta synthetic, or is it real silk?'[32] Popović's humour has a caustic sting. It is directed at himself, but even more so at his compatriots and his society, exposing the gap between socialist principles (especially ones that are loudly proclaimed) and actual behaviour.

Slobodan Petković was also a journalist, and author of a series of minor novels. In his travel book *Tourist or camel?* Petković travels as a tourist, not in order to write but – at least ostensibly – writing to fund his excursion to Italy.[33] His account is full of the details of Yugoslav tourism, treated as tongue-in-cheek epic: making up your mind to go; jousting with travel agents to acquire the tickets; the experience of travel on the train to Rome (what do you bring to eat?); dealing with hotels, with guides, with sore feet, with stingy companions. His tale is less critical of the materialism of Yugoslav tourists than are Popović's sketches, but he is equally concerned with tourist consumption, with chapters entitled 'Acquisitions' and 'Toboggan of Desires'. He describes in exasperated detail his relatives' commissions (including a length of silk dress fabric 'the precise colour of the sea where the sandy shore gives way to deeper water, not green but not blue either') and elaborates on the desire to bring home a memento of the journey ('the

[28] Ibid., p. 150.
[29] Ibid., p. 149.
[30] Ibid., p. 153.
[31] Ibid., p. 152.
[32] *Šeretska putovanja*, p. 171.
[33] Slobodan Petković, *Turist ili kamila?* (Subotica: Minerva, 1963).

covetous dream of autos, Vespas, typewriters or radios; the more modest of textiles; the most modest are satisfied with leather goods, socks, pocket hankies or lighters – but dreamers of such extreme modesty don't exist').[34] He is particularly vivid in recounting the frenzy that overtakes the tourists when they are let loose in their first Italian city – the 'Comanche war cries with which our tourists fall onto the Italian shops'; the purchases of elaborately-dressed Italian dolls in response to a rumour that these were amazingly cheap and could be resold at a profit in Belgrade commission shops; the mechanics of sales; and Italian street markets where everyone understands Serbian – especially the numbers.

Here, too, shopping is presented as the opposite of sight-seeing. His female companions beg Petković to take them to the Coliseum, but their progress is endlessly delayed by the enticements of the shop windows, and culture is eventually abandoned for pink and yellow shantung silk. The women don't hide their preference for shopping, but Petković is equally susceptible. He pokes fun at the Yugoslav tourist by embodying all their foibles and appetites in his own person, his greedy desire demonstrated in the way he gobbles up, one after another, the cakes his neighbour has made for the train journey to Rome, concocting a new and more tenuous justification for each helping. Published nearly ten years after than Popović's first book, and after a number of consumer-oriented reforms in Yugoslavia, *Tourist or camel?* is still ambivalent about whether one should travel to consume culture or to consume goods, but presents the desires that overwhelm the Yugoslav tourist abroad as something normal and ordinary. The only limits the Yugoslav tourist recognizes are those of the pocketbook. Petković's critique is less about snobbery and social differentiation than frivolity and lack of self-restraint. The problem posed in the title is resolved by Petković's claim that a tourist is exactly like a camel: stubborn, enduring and able to live off all that it has consumed and stored for the times of scarcity that might lie ahead.

Tourism and shopping as a problem of representation

Why the preoccupation with these issues? The simple answer is that shopping is what Yugoslav tourists did. Post-war Yugoslavia was characterized by an economy of shortage and only slowly abandoned socialist asceticism and heavy industry for an orientation to the market and the production of consumer goods. Its citizens could not satisfy their requirements at home and as soon as the government permitted travel, they used the excuse of tourism as a way of acquiring the things they wanted. Even with the reorientation of the economy, they still hungered for Western goods. This travel writing reflects their experiences and attitudes. There's clearly some truth in such an explanation – but at the same time it's not enough. Why these particular preoccupations (with snobbery, with frivolous consumerism, with the gender of shopping, with the tension between shopping and sightseeing), treated in these specific ways? Travel writing, like other textual representations of the world, is not so straightforward.[35]

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[34] Ibid., p. 159.

[35] Similarly, Patrick Patterson discusses the surprising *silence* about consumerism in Soviet-bloc travel accounts of Yugoslavia, 'Dangerous Liaisons: Soviet-Bloc Tourists and the Temptations of the Yugoslav Good Life in the 1960s and 1970s', forthcoming in *The Business of Tourism* (University of Pennsylvania Press).

Another possibility is that these texts served the party line. Tibor Dessewffy has described the juxtaposition of the 'Tourist' and the 'Speculator' in the Hungarian press as an attempt by the Kádár regime to teach its citizens how to think and feel 'properly' in foreign countries.[36] Humorous sketches criticizing social 'deviations' were a standard form of moral-political education in Yugoslavia, and in some ways these travel accounts follow this format. But at the same time, it's hard to see them as written to order. Popović's jokes about snobbery constitute a critique of the economic reforms that encouraged such behaviour, though his self-deprecating irony softens this. Criticism of the deficiencies of Yugoslav socialism wasn't impossible – but the fate of some of those who challenged the one-party monopoly of power (like Djilas) or attacked the precepts of self-management (like the *Praxis* Marxists) suggested a degree of caution, as did the absence of censorship prior to publication and the arbitrary nature of repression. The shopping adventures of Yugoslav tourists may have been intrinsically funny, but the writer's humour also served as a self-defensive strategy.

A different approach might consider the relations between social and political change and travel writing. Mass tourism abroad was a new phenomenon in Yugoslavia, and clearly a source of some anxiety – for those who wanted to travel as well as for officials worrying about the consequences. This is how the younger writer Momo Kapor remembered Vasa Popović's travel accounts at the beginning of the 1980s, analysing their attraction:

> Why did readers of my generation await with such impatience the tales of this writer in the Saturday editions of *NIN*? A whole study could be written (probably one day it will be written) of a poor little country which had long been closed to the world, alone with its troubles and with the constant sense that everyone threatened it and no one liked it. Outside there was the Wide World, and at that time in the early fifties only a few lucky people could travel and touch it with their own fingers. We were afraid of disappearing into it if by some miracle we ever had the chance of seeing it, and words like *metro, skyscraper, boulevard, aerodrome, calvados, existentialists* evoked a provincial confusion in our minds, so that we gathered around the first returnees from abroad and asked, how do they live out there? […] We asked them how they had managed to get on there, how they kept themselves from getting lost in that foreign world, on foreign railway stations, how they got bread, or water, and was it expensive, and afterwards we went to bed with our heads full of exciting adventures, wondering how we would cope, and travel enticed us and a quiet yearning brought us close to tears. Our brave Srem *šeret,* Vasa Popović travelled in our stead then, and every Saturday he told us about his experiences, and told us that the Wide World was in fact the same as it was at home, that their language wasn't important if you could smile and point your finger at a bottle, a woman, a street, a house, a bed or a slice of bread, that everywhere people suffer from toothache in the same painful way, that those foreign waiters of theirs aren't by any means gentlemen and that they'll accept a drink if a guest offers it to them – in a word, Vasa Popović dispelled our fears.[37]

But the didacticism of these travel accounts was not limited to practical matters. The authors are also writing, less reassuringly, about what socialist tourism *ought* to be (self-

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[36] 'Speculators and Travellers: The Political Construction of the Tourist in the Kádár Regime', *Cultural Studies* 16 (1), 2002: 44-62.

[37] Introduction, *Priče iz belog sveta* (Zagreb: Znanje, 1980), pp. 6-7.

improvement through exposure to the world; relaxation as the worker's reward; building bridges among fellow travellers and between nations); and what the Yugoslav tourist's experience actually *is*.

In some ways the ironic claims by these two writers to be more shoppers than sightseers bear a resemblance to the traveller *vs.* tourist dichotomy discussed by James Buzard in his analysis of British and American accounts of travel through the nineteenth century. He points to the 'anti-tourist' strategy, the claim to social distinction through sensitivity to culture: '*I* am a traveller and an individual; *he* is a tourist and a passive member of the common herd'; and he locates this in the desire to reinforce social distinctions in the face of the democratization of leisure. These two writers also differentiate between the individual and the collective, but value them differently. Popović, in particular, is suspicious of the individualism displayed by tourist-shoppers, with their desire to distinguish themselves from their fellows through the material advantage or social status attached to their purchases. The antithesis is between sightseeing as a cultural activity that contributes to the collective (good) and shopping as speculative consumerism aimed at distinguishing the individual (bad). This is reminiscent of the Soviet understanding of tourism as a collective social good.[38] But it is not the only possibility; older valuations also retained their weight. The Zagreb writer Milan Selaković, for example, is startled out of his musings on the aesthetic impact and cultural significance of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence by hearing the sound of Croatian 'from the brightly painted lips of two flabbergasted girls: Look, Milena, what's that then?' He has his revenge by telling them what he assumes they want to hear: 'That is the biggest department store in Florence, like our Na-Ma in Zagreb!' 'I kept quiet, maliciously, about the real, very popular Italian stores, Standa and Upim'.[39] The sensitive, educated individual *traveller* could still claim a social and intellectual advantage in contrast to the uncultured or inexperienced *tourist* (however un-socialist such manoeuvrings may seem). And the traveller could make this distinction with reference to consumption, whether the *faux pas* of one's compatriots, the indiscriminate appetites of the American tourist, or the tasteless and hypocritical spending-sprees of Soviet officials abroad.

When Milan Selaković noticed Croatian girls in Florence, he immediately thought 'shopping'. Popović and Petković also associate consumerism with women, and with the 'feminine' vices of vanity, frivolity and luxury. But both also make a point of showing *men* as in thrall to fashion and the world of things. Items such as cigarette lighters and Vespas feature prominently in their lists of Western consumer desirables. Women may distract their male companions from the correct path in these tales (echoing Djilas's condemnation of the bourgeois wives of Party officials) but the men follow along happily in their new Montgomery jackets. The moral is clear: how much more potent is Western-style consumerism when it can seduce even our menfolk? One thing the socialist tourist cannot do, however, is be seduced by the sex on display in the West. Deliberately seeking out temptation in order to resist it – at least in writing – became a cliché of socialist travel writing, showing just where the line had to be drawn against capitalist consumerism. (As

[38] See both Diane Koenker 'Travel to Work, Travel to Play: On Russian Tourism, Travel and Leisure' & Anne Gorsuch, '"There's No Place Like Home" Soviet Tourism in Late Stalinism', in *Slavic Review* 62, no. 4 (Winter 2003).

[39] *Rodinova katedrala* (Zagreb: Znanje, 1984), p. 75 (written 1959-60).

a result, frank accounts of Western brothels, in deliberate contrast to these prudish morality tales, became a way of elaborating a rebellious, masculine identity for some Yugoslav writers of the 1980s.)[40]

These texts reflect and contribute to wider debates of the period: how to balance between satisfying basic needs and stimulating consumer desires; how to chose between centralized planning and a consumer-driven market; how to nurture both the collective and the individual. Tourism to the capitalist West highlighted these questions. An article from 1961 in a pro-market journal, *Ekonomska politika*, made some of the same points: 'People ought to see the things they read about in their school textbooks: old basilicas, pigeons on ancient squares, masterpieces from the brushes and chisels of the world's old masters, and even the tumult of a foreign world in which a man can lose himself and then ... long for home'. But 'our tourist wave hasn't gathered itself in order to break over historic monuments and the other relics of human creativity, but in order to peddle and barter, to buy and sell, to hawk abroad fresh meat, salami, butter and cigarettes, *rakija* and *gibanica* and similar folkloric products, and to bring back plastic raincoats, bouclé twin sets and skirts made of Terylene'. Tourism like this damaged society rather than contributing to it. It wasn't just the hard currency that was being wasted abroad on such frivolous purchases, the article argued; the Yugoslav image abroad should also be taken into consideration. *Ekonomska politika* thought that the problem should be solved by making bouclé twin sets at home and perhaps even importing luxury goods officially.[41]

But the journal ignored an issue that the authors of our travel accounts pinpointed. How could reforms reconcile individual consumer desires with a commitment to socialist collectivism and equality? How were limits to be placed on desire? The official position was that stimlating consumer demand was necessary and even desirable, as it was this that drove production and encouraged (at least in theory) disciplined work and productivity. Marxist critiques of self-managing socialism by the *Praxis* theorists pointed to the contradiction between universal ideals and the essentially private and selfish interests of the market principle. The predictable consequences of the principle of consumer sovereignty would be corruption, the accumulation of wealth and social differentiation. Popović's vignette of the Viennese pocket mirror reflecting Yugoslav snobbery reinforced these arguments, suggesting that egalitarianism had little chance when set against consumer desire.

Petković's travel account explored the ways that desire could out-run need. Purchases like textiles 'the precise colour of the sea between the sandy shore and deeper water' were not just about warmth and decency: they were vehicles for fantasy, for caprice, prestige, sex, fun. The infinite transformations of the self that could be imagined through potential purchases were thoroughly described. Petković details a drawn-out negotiation over the exact Italian scooter that would be right for him. Even though he had only 8 lire in his pocket, he could still quibble over whether a 'Super-luxury' or a 'Super-sport' model, a 'Hercules' or a 'Wings' would suit. And with impunity: the shopkeeper reacted to his discovery that Petković was wasting his time by slapping his assistant

[40] See Wendy Bracewell, 'New Men, Old Europe: Being a Man in Balkan Travel Writing', *Journeys,* 6/1 (2005): 115-46.
[41] 'Tekstilni turizam', *Ekonomska politika,* 7 Jan. 1961.

('from this the reader can clearly see the high level of deference shown to the shopper in the capitalist countries…').[42] Even window-shopping had its satisfactions for the tourist who couldn't afford to bring home the things he admired. Petković's descriptions of the tourist-speculators nursing and baby-talking to the Italian dolls they planned to sell at a profit use tourism to make a similar point. These tales hinted at the same contradictions that other critics were to pursue: how far would the irrational, even frivolous desires of the consumer be allowed to shape the priorities of a market-oriented socialism?

Yugoslav shopping tourism between East and West

Consumption not just a matter of debate within Yugoslav society; it was also one of the distinctions between Yugoslavia and the capitalist West on the one hand, and the Soviet bloc on the other. In describing their adventures in shopping Yugoslav travellers positioned their society with reference to East and West. The capitalist world is the world of goods and of wealth (it hardly needs saying). But, and again it hardly needs saying, Western capitalism had its social price. Vasa Popović in Vienna contrasted Western abundance with Yugoslav scarcity, but also qualified the contrast – abundance, yes, but these were mostly unnecessary trifles or morally dubious goods:

> Abroad, abroad. Abroad there's everything: lighters and trinkets, compact mirrors, silk corsets, refrigerators, half-naked women in the bars and half-clad women on the corners; colourful ties and coats made by foreign firms … and all cheaper.[43]

The association of capitalism and prostitution is constant: everything has its price under capitalism. But so nicely offered:

> On the Place Pigalle, a man can't look at anything without it being offered to him immediately! Everything is there, with a 'help yourself'! And when I turned away with a 'no, thanks, miss!' she just pursed up her lips and said politely, 'you're welcome, sir!' Paris is marvellous! But us, we're uncultured bumpkins, we'll never learn such nice manners.[44]

This is clearly ironic – but capitalism's politeness could be unnerving. Petković's story of tormenting a shopkeeper with no intention of actually making a purchase is repeated endlessly, with variants, in the travel accounts of the period. It is used as a device for self-criticism, with explicit comparisons to the surliness of the Yugoslav waiter or shopkeeper. But Popović, in 1954, linked service with servility and brought it all back home: the smile on the lips of the Paris doorman is pleasant, but it's also 'classical and exemplary, and precisely because it is classical and exemplary, it reminds me from a distance of the inhibited and unemancipated smile of our Gypsy *primaš* when he approaches a tipsy guest with his violin'.[45] But he also saw that the smile made the guest happier to pay, and to pay extra. This would be picked up and elaborated at length in other works: how was Yugoslavia to become a destination that could attract the Western tourist and the tourist

[42] Petković, p. 196.
[43] *Šeretska putovanja*, p. 149.
[44] Ibid., p. 217.
[45] Ibid., p. 202.

dollar – and at the same time retain its dignity? How could you sell yourself without selling out?

If the West was the world of goods, the Eastern Bloc was, equally predictably, the world of scarcity, shortage, queues. It was emphatically not a tourist destination for Yugoslav travellers. Aleksandar Tišma, in his 1963 account of a visit to Poland and Hungary, calls this 'travel in the wrong direction', undertaken by accident rather than by tourist design.[46] Nonetheless, writers did produce accounts of Bloc travels (often literary pilgrimages, or more overtly political tours). Even when the main point lies elsewhere, travel writers comment on consumption, since it was on this level that the difference between political claims and social realities could best be measured, whether the claims were of Yugoslav superiority or of Soviet achievement.[47] Travel accounts of the Soviet Union, especially, dwell on the cost, quality and availability of consumer goods. Even when travellers describe relative abundance in the late 50s and 1960s, this tends to be recounted against the background of earlier scarcity, as though this is the norm and any change is only temporary. Frane Barbieri's account of the Soviet Union, *Report from Red Square* (1964), is typical in its account of GUM as almost phantasmagorical in its array of consumer goods, which he describes Soviet citizens as buying as though they expect the whole array to vanish in a puff of smoke.[48] In 1959, Vasa Popović was already making fun of this stereotype of Bloc deprivation and Yugoslav wealth when he describes travel as a chance to rid yourself of prejudices. For example,

> you assume that you will sell your suitcase in Prague for a good price, and that for the money you'll be able to pick up a tea service of that famous pre-war Czech porcelain. But it's an obvious example of a prejudice! Because, when you stroll through Prague and look at the window displays, and judge for yourself, it turns out that what you'd *really* like is to buy a Czech suitcase.[49]

But he then undercuts this with descriptions of sordid private enterprise (being pressed to buy cheap porcelain – in his hero Švejk's tavern, to add to the insult) or by the difficulties of finding festive fare at Christmas-time (the Czechs have bourgeois holidays but no geese).

While Yugoslav travels to the West use shopping tourism as a means to evaluate both capitalism and the ambiguities of Yugoslav market socialism, socialist fraternal travel allows Yugoslav writers to see themselves as the West to the Soviet bloc's East. Political and economic cardinal points were relative, when it came to tourism. The poet Desanka Maksimović underlined the point in the middle of a volume of travels in both directions, when she described her desire to go to Paris: 'the *real* West, not the sort of West that we represent in the eyes of those coming from Siberia, say, or Azerbaijan, or from Bulgaria'.[50]

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[46] *Drugde* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1969), p. 51.
[47] E.g. Saša Vereš, *Moskovski dnevnik* (Zagreb: Zora, 1966); Zlatko Tomičić, *U zemlji Samovoj* (Zagreb: Zora, 1966); Matko Peić, *Jesen u Poljskoj* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1969).
[48] *Report sa Crvenog trga* (Zagreb: Epoha, 1964); on GUM see also Nada Marinković, *Smisao i ljubav* (Zagreb: Seljačka sloga, 1956).
[49] *Šešir dole – putovanju*, p. 6.
[50] *Praznici. Putovanja* (Belgrade: Slovo ljubve, 1972) .

Shopping tropes

After the economic reforms of 1965 fewer accounts focused on the problems of tourist shopping. Consumerism was becoming the norm for the average Yugoslav. True, the gap between Western products and the things you could buy at home was never quite bridged. Yugoslavs shared an insatiable desire for things Western with their relatively more deprived bloc cousins (hence the continuing attraction of destinations like Trieste). Still, Yugoslavia *was* different in being able to take its access to these consumer pleasures for granted. But it was different, too, in its citizens' active support for the political and ideological compromises entailed by 'market socialism' – at least while the money held out.

In the atmosphere of economic and political crisis of the late 1980s, travel writing provided a way of re-evaluating such attitudes. A 1987 account by the Novi Sad writer Milica Mićić-Dimovska, entitled *Austro-Hungarian Travel Prospectus*, illustrates the durability of shopping tropes.[51] She describes a bus journey from Novi Sad to Vienna, Bratislava and Budapest, organized by secondary-school teachers intent on selling contraband Vegeta (Yugoslavia's legendary MSG-laced soup powder) and buying scarce goods. In many ways the excursion is a rewriting of Popović's 1955 trip to Vienna (the contrast between leisure tourism and black-market travel; the humiliations of being poor in the midst of plenty; the feverish search for bargains; the way that a whole foreign infrastructure exists to service the Yugoslav desire for cheap goods – carried out in Serbian), but all this is given added force by the way this inverts recent understandings of the normal:

> Exactly ten years ago my husband and I were in Vienna as real tourists, we changed our dinars in a bank. Is it really possible, I think to myself, that then I could have been sitting in the Mozart-Café, eating Mozart-Kugel and drinking coffee with whipped cream?[52]

And the journey to Bratislava reverses the stereotypes of Yugoslav travel writing even more disturbingly. Mićić-Dimovska's shame (trying to flog her Vegeta to Czech housewives who avert their faces; squabbling over sheets and salamis that are better and cheaper than Yugoslav ones; the Czech customs officials' disdain) depends heavily on inverting stereotypes of Yugoslav consumer superiority in comparison to the socialist East. And it's underlined by a scene in which she looks down on a Soviet pleasure craft on the Danube, and the tourists 'look back at us, with our noise and clamour, loaded down with our packages and bundles. [...] Russians, I thought. Travelling without any hurry. They have a visitors' programme, a programme that doesn't include black-market trafficking'.[53] The Yugoslav world has turned up-side down.

East/West polarities aren't the only things challenged here. So are new Yugoslav social values. Mićić-Dimovska begins her black-market tale with a confession: 'Resilience and resourcefulness – lately these virtues have been exciting me, making me unhealthily enthusiastic, leading me into recklessness and loss of self-respect'.[54] She struggles to

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[51] In Milica Mićić-Dimovska, *Putopisi* (Vranje: Književna zajednica Borisav Stanković, 1999).
[52] Mićić-Dimovska, pp. 15-16.
[53] Ibid., p. 41.
[54] Ibid., p. 7.

reconcile the new imperatives of individual enterprise (or 'hucksterism') with remembered dignity and collective pride – just as the excursionists insist on at least a little sight-seeing, 'on covering their customs evasion with a veneer of tourism'.[55] For Mićić-Dimovska, the struggle for survival means that Yugoslavs now 'care nothing for our reputations, nor for our country's reputation […] we have so far lost faith in any common values, in our nation, in our homeland, that we look only to ourselves, think only of our own interests in the narrowest sense'.[56]

A single text, however vivid, cannot tell us how far the freedom to travel and to shop legitimated Yugoslav socialism. Mićić-Dimovska's journal does suggest that the tourist account retained its utility in exploring the relations between travel, shopping, social values and a specifically Yugoslav ideal of the 'good life', while drawing on older patterns that had been established in post-war writing. Travel writings such as these engage with – and reveal – wider assumptions, expectations and anxieties. As such, they can tell us perhaps more than they intended to, in this case about the halting, complicated development of ideas about tourism and socialist consumerism, and about the ways at least some Yugoslavs used travel to position themselves and their society between East and West, the promises of socialism and the beguilements of Western-style capitalism.

[55] Ibid., p. 20.
[56] Ibid., p. 32.