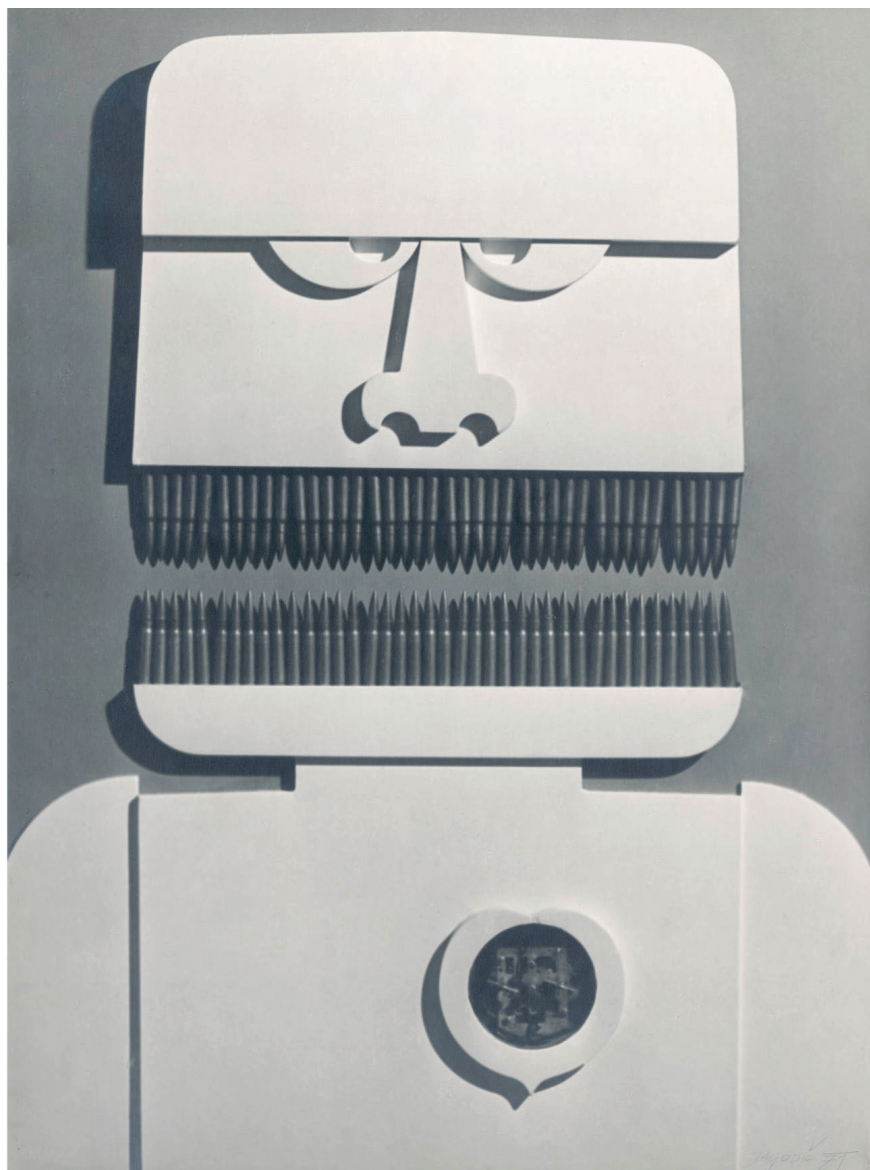


Peace Policies and Practices in Yugoslavia and Beyond



PEACE, UNCONDITIONAL!

Edited by
Sanja Petrović Todosijević and Martin Pogačar

PEACE

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UNCONDITIONAL!



Institute for Recent History of Serbia
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in Yugoslavia and Beyond

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Sanja Petrović Todosijević and Martin Pogačar

Belgrade, Ljubljana
2025

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Sanja Petrović Todosijević*



Stane Jagodič, *Love Your Neighbour*, photomontage, 1977

International Children's Friendship Meeting, 1976–1988. Social Organisation of Children in Socialist Yugoslavia and Education for Peace**

Abstract The paper explores the history of a Yugoslav international children's camp named the International Children's Friendship Meeting (Međunarodni susret prijateljstva dece, MSPD) (1976–1988), aiming to trace the role of the social organisation of children in the implementation of socialist Yugoslavia's overall international cooperation. It also highlights the role of Yugoslav children's camps in the official education and child rearing policy, which, building on the ideas of antifascism, coexistence, internationalism and solidarity among peoples, promoted socialist peace education. The paper is largely based on reports from thirteen Yugoslav international children's camps, drawing attention to the practices of building peace education in the interwar period, the importance of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the influence of the Yugoslav Pioneer Camp Sutjeska and the Children's International Summer Village (CISV) on MSPD and its development by analysing all aspects of the organisation and implementation of the programme.

Keywords Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia, Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia, Pioneer Camp Sutjeska, Children's International Summer Village, internationalism, solidarity, peace education, children's camp

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*Woods, oh woods, to you we are indebted,
For in you freedom was born.
In you we won freedom
For all small and real peoples.*

Partisan song from Međumurje

Education for peace

An international children's camp named the International Meeting of Children's Friendship (1976–1988)¹ was the central international activity of the Yugoslav Pioneer Organisation (Savez pionira Jugoslavije),² a part of the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia (Savez organizacija za vaspitanje i brigu o deci Jugoslavije).³ Hosting the International Children's Friendship Meeting was an element of Yugoslavia's overall international cooperation, implemented primarily through the relevant ministry and other government agencies that dealt with foreign affairs, as well as through mass social organisations that brought together all members of Yugoslav society, including the youngest. During the 1970s, fostering international children's friendship by organising various activities at isolated natural spots was seen as an important aspect of promoting international understanding and cooperation within Yugoslavia and beyond.

While as many as 190 peace organisations existed in Europe alone before the First World War,⁴ the end of this conflict in 1918 saw an intensification of the debate on education as an important aspect of peace activism. The crisis that preceded the outbreak of the Great War substantially contributed to the initiation of numerous discussions about the role of the school system in mobilising European societies for war. The International League for New Education was founded as early as 1921, only three years after the First World War ended. The recognition of the need for a new and different pedagogy was already apparent at its First (or Founding) Congress, attended, among others, by John Dewey, Jean

Piaget and Maria Montessori.⁵ The “new school”, or the school that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was to be “a school full of life”. The beginning of the Second World War delayed the debates on reforming the ossified school systems that had belonged to the “edifice of 19th-century civilisation”.⁶

The educational situation in the newly established Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca) was concerning. Upon the creation of the Yugoslav state, 37 different state-level and province-level laws and decrees regulating the sphere of education were in force.⁷ The educational institutions of the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia, paralysed by the political crisis and subsequent introduction of the royal dictatorship (1929), could not respond to the many challenges of unifying and reforming the school system, despite some attempts to that effect. The ideas advocated by the supporters of the Movement for Working Schools, which envisioned schools as life and work communities, got a chance to be implemented in the People's School Act of 1929,⁸ an isolated attempt to reform the Kingdom's educational system.

The political crisis had pushed the dialogue from “the institutions” to the margins – specifically, the part of the social margins dominated by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, KPJ). The KPJ did very well in the elections for the Constitutional Assembly of the Kingdom of SCS. A few months later, in December 1920, the Kingdom's Government passed a decree titled *Obznana* (Proclamation) banning the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which continued to operate as an illegal political organisation until the Second World War reached Yugoslavia (1941). Outlawing the KPJ included a wholesale ban on printing the Party's publications, including the first communist children's magazine, *Budućnost*. Temporarily suspended, the *Budućnost* journal continued to be printed from 1923 to 1928 with the motto: “Children of workers in all countries, embrace each other”.⁹

From 1923 to 1928, as well as later, the “restored” *Budućnost* played a significant role in promoting dialogue on the new Yugoslav school system. The argumentation that emerged was primarily influenced by the founder of *Budućnost*, Dragutin Vladislavljević (1875–1938), a doctor, communist and prominent member of the Serbian Social Democrat Party (Srpska socijaldemokratska partija), and then by the views of Serbian and Yugoslav Surrealists led by Aleksandar Vučo (1897–1985) and Dušan Matić (1898–1980), who took

1 The name of the camp partially changed in the thirteen years during which the event was organised.

2 The Yugoslav Pioneer Organisation was founded on 27 December 1942, on the sidelines of the First Session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in the Bosnian town of Bihać (26–27 November 1942).

3 The Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia was established in 1952 in Zagreb as the Council of Societies for the Care of the Children and Youth of Yugoslavia. The Council served as the umbrella organisation for all children's organisations in Yugoslavia, including the Pioneer Organisation; Sađa Petrović Todosićević, *Oteđemo svetlost bućnom vadođu*. *Reforma osnovnoškolskog sistema u Srbiji 1944–1959* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2018), 335.

4 Petra Svolišak, “The War to End All Wars: A Broken Promise of Peace,” in *Peace, Unconditional! Peace Policies and Practices in Yugoslavia and Beyond*, eds. Sanja Petrović Todosićević, Martin Pogaćar (Belgrade, Ljubljana: Institute for Recent History of Serbia, Založba ZRC, 2025), 63–79.

5 Ivana Momčilović, “Slobodne teritorije fikcije: politički potencijal utopije,” in *Nepredvidiva prošlost budućnosti. O političkom potencijalu utopije* ed. Ivana Momčilović (Beograd: Edicija Jugoslavija, 2024), 68.

6 Petrović Todosićević, *Oteđemo svetlost bućnom vadođu*, 64.

7 Momčilo Isić, *Osnovno školstvo u Srbiji 1918–1941*, I (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2005), 37.

8 Aleksandra V. Ilić Rajković, “*Radna škola u Srbiji (1888–1940)*” (doktorska teza Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu, 2013), 117–357.

9 Biljana Andonovska, “Uvod u Šetnju kroz budućnost,” in *Nepredvidiva prošlost budućnosti. O političkom potencijalu utopije*, ed. Ivana Momčilović (Beograd: Edicija Jugoslavija, 2024), 112.

their cues from the numerous discussions under the auspices of the International League for New Education and even the renowned Scottish educator Alexander Neill (1883–1973), who, in 1921 near Dresden, Germany, founded Summerhill, the first school to espouse radical ideas of self-governance.¹⁰

Around the same time, those “radical” and “self-governance” ideals prominently featured on the pages of children’s periodicals and literature in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In 1924, Dragutin Vladislavljević published, under the pen name Mala Zora (Little Zora),¹¹ the novel *Šetnja kroz budućnost* (A Walk Through the Future), the earliest example of children’s radical literature in Serbia and Yugoslavia and a unique example of children’s socially utopian science fiction in the early 20th century. The novel, featuring a character named Little Zora who is the daughter of a proletarian worker, is set in 2024 at a futuristic school. The school, situated in a natural setting and with minimal walls, prominently displays the message: “Do not interfere in our games with your demands or your instructions but leave us alone so that we can think for ourselves”.¹²

Vladislavljević’s effort to demystify authoritarian child-rearing practices, which demean, mistreat and exploit children, continued to resonate in subsequent years despite his expulsion from the Party in 1925. In 1931, the *Politika* daily’s Children’s Supplement published a novel by Aleksandar Vučo and Dušan Matić, the leading representatives of Serbian and Yugoslav Surrealism and sympathisers of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, titled *Podvig družine Pet petlića* (The Quest of the Five Crakes’ Fellowship), the second offering of children’s radical literature in the Yugoslav space.¹³ Recent research by Aleksandar Matković has drawn attention to a forgotten manuscript by Edvard Kardelj (1910–1979), who penned the first children’s novel on economic history in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, titled *Putovanje kroz vreme* (A Journey Through Time, 1934). Like Vladislavljević’s Little Zora, Kardelj’s young protagonist, Štefan, falls asleep and dreams of travelling through time to witness all economic systems from the primordial community to capitalism.¹⁴

Utopian fiction, a literary genre that tackled many questions about the future, played an important role in attracting the youth to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Faith in a better future became a prominent political motif for the generations born after 1918, their childhood overshadowed by the tragic aftermath of the Great War and

the economic and political crisis that culminated in the introduction of the Crown’s dictatorship. In addition, faith in a better future was contrasted with “faith” in the archaic past “offered” through the official educational system.

The regime change in Yugoslavia after 1945 and the communists’ rise to power presented an opportunity for building a socialist society, including a socialist school system. The Fifth Congress of the KPJ (July 1948) was the first postwar party congress to formulate far-reaching conclusions about Yugoslavia’s cultural policy, which, at the time, included the country’s educational and childcare policies. The findings of the Fifth Congress of the KPJ provided a framework for defining new guidelines for the educational and child-rearing policy, officially inaugurated in Milovan Đilas’s report *Problems of the School System in the Struggle for Socialism in Our Country*, parts of which were incorporated into the Resolution of the Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the KPJ (December 1949). The ultimate objective of this “new” policy of education and child-rearing was to be the “construction of socialism”. The “construction of socialism” required a “bold socialist man”, one “with broad and diverse views, to whom bureaucratism and cookie-cutter thoughts were alien”. This “new” boldness, to which “bureaucratism and cookie-cutter thoughts were alien”, was to be achieved by way of “socialist” upbringing, stemming both from the school system and beyond it – from the “streets”.¹⁵ The “call” to take the educational and child-rearing policy out of schools into public spaces, doing away with conventionality and bureaucratism and achieving boldness and freedom, provided the framework for not only a large-scale reform of the entire school system in Yugoslavia but also for establishing a new childhood policy. Practical work on reforming the educational system began on 22 May 1953 when the People’s Assembly of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ) passed the Resolution on Education and the Tasks of the Commission for the Reform of General-Education Schooling.¹⁶ The General Education Act, which went into force on 1 September 1958, introduced a unified, country-wide system of education and childcare in Yugoslavia forty years after the country’s founding.¹⁷ Among other things, the General Education Act enshrined the principle of opening schools and other educational and childcare institutions to society to increase efficacy and advance educational and child-rearing objectives. The Act stipulated that the school system was to be open toward the family and various social and economic organisations, associations, etc., thereby positioning schools to contribute to the cultural development of their milieus.¹⁸

Multiple factors contributed to taking the official educational and child-rearing policy out to the streets, into new housing blocks, the complex system of pioneer centres,

10 Momčilović, “Slobodne teritorije fikcije: politički potencijal utopije”, 68.

11 Биљана Андоновска, “Будућност (без) Будућности: Први комунистички књижевни часопис за децу у Краљевини СХС,” у *Часописи за децу: југословенско наслеђе (1918–1991)*, ур. Тијана Тропин, Станислава Бараћ (Београд: Институт за књижевност и уметност, 2019), 20.

12 Little Zora, “A Walk Through the Future,” in *The unpredictable past of the future: The political potential of utopia* (Belgrade: Edicija Jugoslavija, 2024), 176.

13 Momčilović, “Slobodne teritorije fikcije: politički potencijal utopije,” 37.

14 Aleksandar Matković, “A Tale of A Journey Through Time: On the Forgotten Children’s Book on Capitalism in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and its Place in the Life of Edvard Kardelj,” *Tokovi istorije* 2 (2025): 73–108.

15 Петровић Тодосијевић, *Отећемо светлост бучном водопаду*, 50.

16 Ibid., 49.

17 Ibid., 98.

18 Ranko Simović, *Politika obrazovanja i njena realizacija u SR Srbiji* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1990), 59–60.

children's summer and winter resorts and the numerous camps that began to be organised in Yugoslavia in the early 1950s. Before we look into some of the key ones, we would do well to answer the following question: Did the utopian ideas of Little Zora, outlined in the forgotten novel *A Walk Through the Future*, find their place in the new Yugoslav school? Thirty years later, could every Yugoslav child say:

I finally grasped what happens at this school, which they do not call school but... what is it...a place where children themselves are allowed to make what they know and know how to make, and where adult comrades only come to observe what the children enjoy doing and what each individual child is capable of doing.¹⁹

From the early 1920s to the early 1950s, the Yugoslav communists had traversed a long and by no means easy path. From an avant-garde and banned political organisation, they became the mainstream and the ruling political party, which also represented the only source of political authority in the country. The influence of the Belgrade Surrealist circle on defining Yugoslavia's postwar culture for children, as well as educational policy, seen as part of the broader cultural policy until the early 1950s,²⁰ was remarkably significant. Aleksandar Vučo, one of the authors of the novel *Podvig družine Pet petlića* (The Quest of the Five Crakes' Fellowship), was the leading representative of the Surrealist scene in postwar Yugoslav children's culture. According to the research conducted by the authorial-curatorial team of the exhibition *Aktivitet: 100 Years of Surrealism*,²¹ Aleksandar Vučo served as the president of the Cinematography Committee of the FNRJ Government from 1945 to 1949. Owing to Vučo's contacts with the Czechoslovakian animation artist Stanislav Shultz, the director Vera Jocić had an opportunity to attend Shultz's animation course. Upon her return to Yugoslavia, Vera Jocić co-wrote the screenplay for (with Ljubiša Jocić) and directed the animated and puppet film *Pionir i dvojka* (The Pioneer and the Bad Mark, 1947), which was shown at the Venice Film Festival and awarded the Golden Lion in the best short film category. Aleksandar Vučo was a member of the editorial team of the first and, until the mid-1960s, leading pioneer (children's) magazine, eponymously named *Pionir*.²² Vučo received recognition for his contribution to children's and youth culture when he was appointed to the fifteen-member School Reform Commission, established by the FNRJ People's Assembly on 22 May 1953.²³

19 Little Zora, "A Walk Through the Future," 179.

20 Historian Ljubodrag Dimić argues that the agitprop phase of cultural policy in Serbia ended in 1952. For more, see: Ljubodrag Dimić, *Agitprop kultura. Agitpropaska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji 1945–1952* (Beograd: Rad, 1988).

21 Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade (from 19 October 2024 to 24 February 2025). The exhibition was conceptualised and curated by Sanja Bahun. The curatorial team also included Aleksandra Mirčić, Una Popović and Žaklina Ratković; "Aktivitet: 100 godina nadrealizma," last modified 8 May 2025. <https://msub.org.rs/exhibition/aktivitet-100-godina-nadrealizma/>

22 Петровић Тодосијевић, *Отећемо светлост бучном водопаду*, 180.

23 Ibid., 69.

Education for all

Yugoslavia's integration into the international community through the United Nations remained the country's foreign policy course throughout the socialist period. As historian Jovan Čavoški notes, for Yugoslavia, the United Nations, as a newly formed international organisation (1945), represented the main arena where the voice of "small peoples" could make itself heard. Two developments contributed to this view: Yugoslavia's emancipation from the USSR (1948) and the wave of decolonisation that swept Asia, the Near East and Africa, leading to the appearance of numerous new states and liberation movements at every negotiating table, including in the global peace-building process.²⁴ As shown by the research of historian Natalija Dimić Lompar, Yugoslavia, especially after its split from the USSR, made efforts to, through various initiatives and fora, define its foreign policy in the context of promoting world peace while adhering to the following principles: equality of peoples, right to sovereignty and independence, right to decolonisation, providing economic assistance to developing countries, settling disputes by peaceful means and strengthening the UN.²⁵

The founding of UNESCO (1946) shortly after the end of the Second World War represented the continuation of the struggle for the "new school", envisioned as an important tool in preventing war and ensuring peace. In the ravaged and polarised international community, the new "social contract" – on the topic of *For whom and what kind of upbringing and education?*²⁶ – was to rest on two fundamental principles: antifascism and coexistence. Yugoslavia's active membership in the UN and partnership with agencies focused on protecting the interests of children, as not only one of the largest social groups but also one of the most central to peacebuilding, was Yugoslavia's long-term orientation throughout the socialist period. Yugoslavia signed a cooperation agreement with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) as early as 1947 and with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1950, mere months after the top leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia passed the decision on building a modern educational system in Yugoslavia.

UNESCO was an important meeting place for representatives of official state institutions and numerous public (social) workers focused on children and educational policies. Through the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia and the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia, many Yugoslav public workers had an opportunity to get acquainted with the methods and working styles of

24 Jovan Čavoški, "Yugoslavia, Formation of the Asian-African Group and Issues of Peace in the United Nations (1950–1953)," in *Peace, Unconditional!*, 265–287.

25 Natalija Dimić Lompar, "Entering the Cold War 'Struggle for Peace': Yugoslavia and the International Forum for Peace, 1951–1954," in *Peace, Unconditional!*, 233–263.

26 Митра Митровић, "Које и како васпитање и образовање," *Савремена школа* 1 (1946): 13–16.

their colleagues from other parts of Europe and the world. Thus, in 1955, contact was established between the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia and the Children's International Summer Village (CISV), a children's camp founded by the American psychologist Doris Twitchell Allen (1901–2002).²⁷ The first village was held in 1951 in Glendale, Ohio, USA.²⁸ The Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia's cooperation with CISV would prove decisive for establishing children's camps in Yugoslavia.

In the first years after the Second World War, Doris Twitchell Allen, a follower of Jacob Levy Moreno (1889–1974), the founder of psychodrama and group psychotherapy, which rests on the principles of spontaneity, creativity and “genuine encounters”, i.e. authentic connections between individuals,²⁹ developed the concept of an organisation that would encourage inter-cultural understanding and friendship as an essential step toward world peace. In her work, Allen developed several types of tools in the fields of psychology and education, including her project *Social Learning in Schools Through Psychodrama*. Her two most notable contributions are the Children's International Summer Village (CISV) and the International School to School Experience (ISSE) (1971).³⁰ Through UNESCO, the distinguished American psychologist, who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, promoted the establishment of similar models through regional, national or local initiatives. This concept materialised in Yugoslavia in 1976 when the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia, through the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia, founded one of the most significant international children's camps in Europe and globally.

The International Meeting of Children's Friendship (1976–1988) was the most important international children's camp in socialist Yugoslavia, whose concept was directly influenced by the Pioneer Camp Sutjeska (1958–1989)³¹ and the model provided by the Children's International Summer Village. The first Pioneer Camp Sutjeska was organised in 1958 in the People's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at Tjentište, where a memorial ossuary was built the same year to house the remains of 3301 fighters killed in the Battle of Sutjeska (1943), one of the largest battles in the Second World War waged in the Yugoslav theatre. The construction of the Memorial Complex on the fifteenth anniversary of the famed battle marked the beginning of transforming the Sutjeska National Park into one

of the major memorial parks commemorating the Partisan struggle.³² The idea behind establishing a pioneer (or children's) camp at a memorial site honouring the Partisans' sacrifice and heroism in the fight for a different and better world was highlighted in a speech of the President of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. Unveiling the Sutjeska memorial ossuary (1958), Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) said:

The present and coming generations ought to constantly take inspiration from the virtues of the young men and women who fought and died a hero's death, honour their sacrifice, safeguard the revolutionary legacy and develop the ideals for which hundreds of thousands of NOR [Narodnooslobodilački rat, People's Liberation War] combatants fell.³³

By 1958, those “ideals for which hundreds of thousands of NOR combatants fell”, emphasised in the speech of the Yugoslav Partisans' wartime leader, had been defined in socialist Yugoslavia's official educational and child-rearing policy, including the concept of Yugoslav children's camps – a “brainchild” of the decades-long and dynamic social dialogue on the future of education. This social dialogue, as noted above, had unfolded on the margins of various socio-political systems, in official Yugoslav institutions and under the auspices of international organisations that had, ever since the League of Nations era, sought a model for the “new school” as an avenue to alleviate societal tensions and prevent outbursts of aggression.

International Children's Friendship Meeting: Organisation

In the early years, the significance of Sutjeska as a desirable symbol-model was apparent in the official names of the Meeting, with the first and third international meetings named the International Camp of Children's Friendship Sutjeska (Pula, 1976)³⁴ and the Third International Camp Sutjeska '78 (Dolenjske Toplice, 1978).³⁵ With the growth of the international camp, Sutjeska was dropped from the name as early as 1979. Groups of children from various countries, mostly socialist ones, had been visiting Yugoslavia before 1976 as the republic-

27 Archives of Yugoslavia (AJ), Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia (637), 94.

28 Extensive documentation on the connections and cooperation between the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav Pioneer Organisation, and the Children's International Summer Village from the mid-1950s to the late 1980s has been preserved in the Archives of Yugoslavia, within the collection titled Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia. AJ, 637, 94.

29 “Michigan Psychodrama Center,” last modified 28 May 2025. <https://www.michiganpsychodramacenter.com/jacob-levy-moreno-and-psychodrama/>.

30 “CISV Founder, Dr. Doris Twitchell Allen,” last modified May 28, 2025. <https://cisv.org/about-us/our-story/our-founder/>.

31 Igor Duda, *Danas kada postajem pionir. Detinjstvo i ideologija jugoslovenskog socijalizma* (Zagreb-Pula: Srednja Europa, Sveučilište Jurja Dobriće u Puli, 2015), 269.

32 Hajke Karge, *Sećanje u kamenu – Okamenjeno sećanje?* (Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2014), 141–159.

33 AJ, 637, 95, International Children's Friendship Camp Sutjeska – Pula, 1976.

34 AJ, 637, 95, International Children's Friendship Camp Sutjeska – Pula, 1976.

35 AJ, 637, 95, Report by Viljem Petelin, Camp Commander, on the Third International Camp Sutjeska '78, 1978.

and province-level organisations of the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia “accepted some groups” into the Sutjeska pioneer camps.³⁶ Historian Igor Duda similarly notes that the Pioneer Camp Sutjeska – a camp primarily intended for bringing together Yugoslav children (ten from each republic) – “sometimes” hosted guests from “children’s organisations from abroad”.³⁷ The decision to organise a unified international camp in Yugoslavia was made at a meeting of the respective councils of the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia and the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia, convened to coordinate the programme of international activities for 1976 and overcome the practice of individual exchanges of pioneer delegates from Yugoslavia and “pioneers and children from other socialist countries”.³⁸ The establishment of an international children’s camp in Yugoslavia in 1976 was directly tied to the intensifying international engagement of the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia and the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia. This growing international activity contributed to the increased presence of groups of children from Yugoslavia at international camps within the Children’s International Summer Village from the early 1970s onward.³⁹

As Yugoslavia’s capital city, the seat of the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia and a major international air travel hub, Belgrade (Socialist Republic of Serbia) hosted the camp as many as four times (1977,⁴⁰ 1981,⁴¹ 1982,⁴² 1986⁴³). The International Children’s Friendship

Meeting was held twice at two locations: in Dolenjske Toplice, SR Slovenia (1978,⁴⁴ 1987⁴⁵) and Futog, Socialist Autonomous Province (SAP) of Vojvodina (1979,⁴⁶ 1988⁴⁷). SR Croatia twice hosted the Meeting, in Pula (1976)⁴⁸ and Zagreb (1985),⁴⁹ and one each was held in SR Macedonia (Ohrid, 1980)⁵⁰, SR Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tjentište, 1981),⁵¹ SR Montenegro (Sutomore, 1983)⁵² and SAP Kosovo (Dečani, 1984).⁵³ On 11 October 1978, the Presidency of the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia passed a decision to always hold the International Children’s Friendship Meeting “in the same place, possibly the Pioneer Complex Košutnjak in Belgrade”, starting from 1979.⁵⁴ However, this decision was never implemented in practice.



Yugoslav cities and venues hosting the International Children’s Friendship Meeting 1976–1988. Author: Jelena Rafailović.⁵⁵

36 AJ, 637, 95, Report by the Presidency of the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia on the Plans for Organising the Fourth International Children’s Friendship Camp in Belgrade from 1–21 July 1979, October 1978.

37 Duda, *Danas kada postajem pionir*, 193.

38 AJ, 637, 95, International Children’s Friendship Camp Sutjeska – Pula, 1976.

39 Camps organised within the Children’s International Summer Village (CISV) in which children from Yugoslavia participated through the Yugoslav Pioneer Organisation: Egypt (1962); Belgium (1973, children from Indija / SAP Vojvodina); The Netherlands (1976, children from Belgrade, Rakovica / SR Serbia); Belgium (1976, children from Belgrade / SR Serbia); Italy (1979); Denmark (1979, children from Belgrade / SR Serbia); Sweden (1979, children from Smederevo / SR Serbia); Sweden (1980, children from Nikšić / SR Montenegro); West Germany (1980, children from Loznica / SR Serbia); USA (1981, children from Tuzla / SR Bosnia and Herzegovina); West Germany (1981, children from Skopje / SR Macedonia); Sweden (1981, children from Subotica / SAP Vojvodina); Norway (1982, children from Obrenovac / SR Serbia); Italy (1983, children from Veles / SR Macedonia); The Netherlands (1983, children from Doboj / SR Bosnia and Herzegovina); Denmark (1984, children from Dubrovnik / SR Croatia); Turkey (1985, children from Prizren / SAP Kosovo); England (1985, children from Sarajevo / SR Bosnia and Herzegovina); France (1986, children from Bor / SR Serbia); Denmark (1986, children from Koper / SR Slovenia); Denmark (1987, children from Kragujevac / SR Serbia); Sweden (1988, children from Belgrade / SR Serbia); West Germany (1988, children from Bitola / SR Macedonia); Belgium (1988, children from Apatin / SAP Vojvodina); AJ, 637, 94.

40 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Organisation and Activities of the International Children’s Friendship Camp – Šuplja Stena near Avala, 1977.

41 The Sixth International Children’s Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia was held in Belgrade (from 1 to 6 July 1981) and at Tjentište (from 6 to 21 July, 1981); AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children’s Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981.

42 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 7th International Children’s Friendship Meeting Held in Yugoslavia, Belgrade, November 1982.

43 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Tenth International Children’s Friendship Meeting YUGOSLAVIA 85 – Zagreb, September 1985.

44 AJ, 637, 95, Report by Viljem Petelin, Camp Commander, on the Third International Camp Sutjeska ’78, 1978.

45 AJ, 637, 95, XII International Children’s Friendship Camp (basic information)

46 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Activities of the Fourth International Children’s Friendship Camp, 1979.

47 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 13th International Meeting of Children’s Friendship of the World held in 1988 in SAP Vojvodina.

48 AJ, 637, 95, International Children’s Friendship Camp Sutjeska – Pula, 1976.

49 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Tenth International Children’s Friendship Meeting YUGOSLAVIA 85 – Zagreb, September 1985.

50 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Fifth International Children’s Friendship Camp, Skopje, September 1980.

51 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children’s Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 20, 1981.

52 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Activities of the International Children’s Friendship Camp – Sutomore, 1983.

53 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children’s Friendship Meeting “Dečani ’84” of the Association for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of SAP Kosovo, Priština, December 1984.

54 AJ, 637, 95, Report by the Presidency of the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia on the Plans for Organising the Fourth International Children’s Friendship Camp in Belgrade from 1 to 21 July 1979, October 1978.

55 For the creation of maps in this work, open-source software was used: Palladio, developed by the Stanford University Humanities + Design Lab, available at: <https://hdlab.stanford.edu/palladio/>, and QGIS, developed by the QGIS Development Team, QGIS Geographic Information System, Open Source Geospatial Foundation Project, available at: <https://qgis.org>.

Reflecting the CISV guidelines, from 1976 to 1981, MSPD in Yugoslavia lasted three weeks.⁵⁶ When the number of delegations and, by extension, camp participants began to grow in the early 1980s, the first logistical and financial problems emerged. Consequently, from 1982 to 1988, the International Children's Friendship Meeting became a two-week programme,⁵⁷ a period considered insufficient for the children to get to know each other and strike up firmer friendships.

The International Children's Friendship Meeting was held under the auspices of its founders: the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia and the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia. Organisational matters were entrusted to the Organising Committee and the Meeting Task Force. The Organising Committee was to have support from all relevant political and social actors in setting up the international children's camp, including a range of state institutions, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (Savez komunista Jugoslavije), public organisations and various economic actors. The Meeting Task Force, which was in charge of managing the logistics and conceptualising the camp programme, included experts from various professional backgrounds. In other words, the organisation of the International Children's Friendship Meeting in Yugoslavia rested on two key principles: the integrity of the state and the expertise of the staff working with the children. In the period discussed in this paper, the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia was headed by Dušan Ičević (1933),⁵⁸ Herma Kraus Delpin (1920–2002),⁵⁹ Fana Kočovska Cvetković (1927–2004),⁶⁰ Zora Tomić (1929–2021)⁶¹ and Ljubinka Trgovčević (1948–2022).⁶² From 1976 to 1988, numerous public servants, serving on various organising committees and task forces, significantly contributed to the development of MSPD, with their efforts helping establish it as one of the foremost international children's camps in Europe and globally. The structure of MSPD task forces, in particular, reflected the aspiration to affirm children's involvement in society not only through the membership of youngsters in the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia but also through its connections to other public organisations, such as the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia (Socijalistički savez radnog naroda Jugoslavije, SSRNJ), Union of War Veterans of

the People's Liberation Wars (Savez udruženja boraca Narodno-oslobodilačkog rata, SUBNOR), Mountaineering Association of Yugoslavia (Savez gorana Jugoslavije), the film production studio Narodna tehnika, the Red Cross and others.⁶³

International Children's Friendship Meeting: Ideology

In the broadest sense, the concept of all international camps held in Yugoslavia from 1976 to 1988 reflected the country's foreign policy of non-alignment. Analysis of the reports on the International Children's Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia suggests that non-alignment was understood as a policy that encourages "international understanding and cooperation". "Education for peace" through "developing children's friendship" was seen as an "element of strengthening international understanding and cooperation"⁶⁴ and the ultimate objective of hosting international camps in Yugoslavia. Also, the "presence of a large number of children" was an opportunity to promote, as the reports highlighted, "our political system of socialist self-government and the values underpinning our community of equal nations and ethnic groups". International children's camps were seen as an "opportunity to promote Yugoslavia's independent and non-aligned foreign policy and peaceful active coexistence among the world's nations".⁶⁵

Developing children's friendship as an element that enhances international relations and cooperation was encouraged by fostering feelings of solidarity and internationalism. Efforts to strengthen solidarity and internationalism had featured prominently in Yugoslavia's official educational and child-rearing policy even before 1976 and, in particular, from 1961 onward, when, following the Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade, Yugoslavia became one of the leading countries of a new group of nations and peoples, many of which were fighting for freedom and independence on a broad anti-colonial front. The Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia had a prominent role in the Coordinating Committee for Assisting Liberation Movements and Victims of Aggression, which was part of the Federal Conference of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Yugoslavia. Solidarity with liberation movements and victims of aggression was an important segment of the "internationalist upbringing of the youth" in Yugoslavia. The objective was to engage all members of society, including the youngest, in international affairs at a time when Yugoslavia sought to establish itself as a reputable partner in international relations. The interest of children in the conditions and events in other parts of the world was manifested through various solidarity initiatives. Solidarity Week,⁶⁶

56 From 6 to 28 July 1976 (Pula); from 30 June to 21 July 1977 (Belgrade); from 1 to 22 July 1978 (Dolenjske Toplice); from 1 to 21 July 1979 (Futog); from 1 to 20 July 1980 (Ohrid); AJ, 637, 95.

57 From 1 to 15 July 1982 (Belgrade); from 1 to 15 July 1983 (Sutomore); from 1 to 15 July 1984 (Dečani); from 1 to 15 August 1985 (Zagreb); from 15 to 29 July 1987 (Dolenjske Toplice); from 1 to 15 July 1988 (Futog); AJ, 637, 95.

58 AJ, 637, 95, Report by Viljem Petelin, Camp Commander, on the Third International Camp Sutjeska '78, 1978.

59 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from July 1 to 6 and from 20 July 1981.

60 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Meeting "Dečani '84" of the Association for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of SAP Kosovo, Priština, December 1984.

61 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Tenth International Children's Friendship Meeting YUGOSLAVIA 85 – Zagreb, September 1985.

62 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 13th International Meeting of Children's Friendship of the World held in SAP Vojvodina.

63 AJ, 637, 95.

64 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Organisation and Activities of the International Children's Friendship Camp – Šuplja Stena near Avala, 1977.

65 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 13th International Meeting of Children's Friendship of the World held in 1988 in SAP Vojvodina.

66 In the sources, it is also referred to as Pioneer Solidarity Week and Children's Solidarity Week.

an initiative that spanned from the early 1960s to the 1980s, was the most widespread effort of the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia to promote “internationalist upbringing of children” and “peace education”.⁶⁷ The aim of MSPD was to further promote solidarity as a fundamental aspect of “internationalist upbringing” in Yugoslavia.

Over a period of thirteen years, approximately 2000 children and educators from Yugoslavia and various countries attended the International Children's Friendship Meeting in Yugoslavia. Of these participants, over 1000 were children from abroad, while about 700 were from Yugoslavia.⁶⁸ Each international group was generally accompanied by an educator, with minor exceptions. The Yugoslav contingent comprised children from all republics and both autonomous provinces of Yugoslavia, with each group from a particular republic or province similarly led by one educator. Foreign groups typically included five girls and boys, whereas each Yugoslav republic and province was represented by three to five children of both genders, with some deviations.⁶⁹ Reflecting the principles of the Children's International Summer Villages (CISV), the international camp in Yugoslavia was inclusive of both genders, ensuring equal representation within each group, and catered to children aged 11 to 13.⁷⁰

Through the International Children's Friendship Meeting, from 1976 to 1988, Yugoslavia hosted children from at least⁷¹ thirty-five countries and liberation movements⁷²: East Germany (GDR), Finland, France, Italy, Cuba, Poland, Romania, the USA, the USSR, Egypt, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Algeria, Angola, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO),⁷³ Norway, Spain, Chile, Greece, West Germany (FRG), Sweden,

⁶⁷ Sanja Petrović Todosijević, “Najveće blago svakog naroda su njegova deca. Međunarodno umrežavanje Saveza pionira Jugoslavije kao dela Saveza organizacija za vaspitanje i brigu o deci Jugoslavije,” in *Kulturni transfer Evropa – Srbija u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji* ed. Marina Simić, Ivana Pantelić (Beograd, Fakultet političkih nauka, Institut za evropske studije, 2024), 130.

⁶⁸ AJ, 637, 95.

⁶⁹ The first significant organisational problem occurred in 1981 when the Republic Conference of the Association of Organisations for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina shortened the duration of the camp at Tjentište (from 6 to 21 July) shortly before the camp was to begin. At the camp in Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav group consisted of an equal number of children from each Yugoslav republic and province. This rule was particularly violated at Tjentište because the Yugoslav group included five children from each Yugoslav republic and province (35 children), except for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which delegated 235 children. The Yugoslav group was, therefore, almost three times larger (270 children) than the combined group from all other countries, consisting of children from eighteen countries (94 children); AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981.

⁷⁰ The International Children's Friendship Meeting at Tjentište (1981) was attended by 45 children of inappropriate age; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981.

⁷¹ According to the available reports, the data on the guest countries at the International Children's Friendship Meeting in Zagreb in 1985 is incomplete. Similarly, according to the available reports, there is no data for the guest countries at the meetings held in Belgrade (1986) and Dolenjske Toplice (1987); AJ, 637, 95.

⁷² AJ, 637, 95.

⁷³ The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is a political and military organisation that represents the Palestinian people. It was established in 1964 with the aim of achieving the Palestinians' right to self-determination and the formation of an independent Palestinian state. For a long time, it led the armed struggle against Israel and today plays an important role in peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine, as well as in the international representation of the Palestinians.

the POLISARIO movement (Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro),⁷⁴ Syria, Belgium, India, Iraq, Great Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, Tanzania, the SWAPO movement (South West Africa People's Organisation),⁷⁵ North Korea, Guinea, Zambia.



Foreign countries and liberation movements at the International Children's Friendship Meeting, 1976–1988.

⁷⁴ The Polisario Front (Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro) is a liberation movement fighting for the independence of Western Sahara, a territory in northwest Africa disputed between the Polisario Front and Morocco. It was founded in 1973 in Spain, while Western Sahara was still a Spanish colony.

⁷⁵ SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) is a political party and former liberation movement in Namibia. It was founded in 1960 with the aim of fighting against apartheid and South African colonial rule over the then territory of South West Africa (now Namibia). SWAPO led the armed struggle for the country's independence, which Namibia achieved in 1990. After independence, SWAPO became the ruling party in Namibia and has remained the dominant political force in the country to this day.

The number of children's groups from abroad consistently grew from 1976 to 1988, with minor fluctuations.⁷⁶ It was at its lowest (8) during the 1977 camp in Belgrade and reached its highest at the camp in Zagreb (23 or 24) in 1985. Over those thirteen years, children from European countries made up more than half of all international camp participants. At the first International Children's Friendship Meeting (Pula, 1976), seven out of nine foreign groups were from Europe. This distribution began to shift partially from the meeting at Tjentište (1981), with an increasing presence of delegations from Africa.

As previously mentioned, the decision to organise an international camp in Yugoslavia aimed to expand the network of foreign children's groups visiting the country. In addition to children from socialist and capitalist countries, who had been visiting Yugoslavia on organised trips prior to 1976, primarily through the mediation of communist or social democrat parties, the initiative also sought to host other groups of children. Invitations to foreign organisations to attend the international camp in Yugoslavia were extended by the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia and the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia. The growth of Yugoslav children's circle of friends depended on the international contacts and cooperation fostered by these associations. The network of international contacts of Yugoslav children's organisations reflected Yugoslavia's foreign policy direction, as well as the professionalism of public workers employed at both Yugoslav associations. Owing to the International Children's Friendship Meeting, the international network of Yugoslav children's friends expanded to include children from capitalist countries who were not necessarily tied to social democrat or communist organisations.

The presence of children's groups from European countries that can be said to have had a capitalist social system began growing substantially from the 1979 camp in Futog. From the early 1980s, the number of children's groups that visited Yugoslavia from

capitalist and socialist countries was even and steady. Still, the growing presence of foreign children's groups in Yugoslavia suggests that, even in the 1980s, the Yugoslav children's organisations had the most intense contact with children's organisations from Finland,⁷⁷ Poland,⁷⁸ the USSR,⁷⁹ Hungary,⁸⁰ Italy⁸¹ and East Germany,⁸² i.e. socialist and capitalist countries with a long-standing social-democrat tradition or a strong communist party.

Groups of children from non-aligned countries attended the International Children's Friendship Meeting in Yugoslavia from its very beginnings in 1977.⁸³ The most frequently visiting children's groups from non-aligned countries at the international camp in Yugoslavia came from Algeria,⁸⁴ Cuba⁸⁵ and Angola.⁸⁶ Apart from groups of children from non-aligned countries, the International Children's Friendship Meeting hosted children representing three liberation movements (PLO, POLISARIO, SWAPO) with which Yugoslavia cooperated closely. The presence of children from war-torn areas, who usually came to Yugoslavia from refugee camps, had a dual role: exemplifying a "living" struggle for freedom and independence while also strengthening feelings of solidarity among all children.

The unitary Yugoslav contingent comprised boys and girls from all Yugoslav republics and provinces. The children were selected through the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia and other children's organisations, cultural and artistic societies, youth cultural centres and the like. The group convened a few days in advance to prepare a collective performance. The international children's camp in Yugoslavia played an important role in providing opportunities for Yugoslav children from different regions to meet each other. From 1976 to 1988, groups of children from more than 52 Yugoslav cities and towns attended the camp.⁸⁷

76 In Pula in 1976, nine countries participated: the GDR (East Germany), Finland, France, Italy, Cuba, Poland, Romania, the US and the USSR. In Belgrade in 1977, eight countries were represented: Egypt, Finland, the USA, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and the USSR. In Dolenjske Toplice, ten countries took part: Algeria, Angola, Finland, Italy, Cuba, Hungary, the PLO, Poland, Romania and the USSR. In Futog in 1979, sixteen countries participated: Poland, Italy, the USSR, Hungary, Romania, Angola, the GDR, Norway, Czechoslovakia, the PLO, Finland, Spain, Chile, Bulgaria, Cuba and Algeria. In Ohrid in 1980, eighteen countries were present: Algeria, Bulgaria, Greece, the GDR, Italy, Cuba, the PLO, Poland, Romania, the USSR, the FRG (West Germany), Hungary, Finland, France, Czechoslovakia, Chile, Sweden and Spain. At Tjentište in 1981, representatives from eighteen countries attended: Algeria, Bulgaria, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, Italy, Cuba, Hungary, the GDR, the PLO, the Polisario Front, Poland, Romania, the USSR, the FRG, Syria and Sweden. In Belgrade in 1982, sixteen countries participated: Angola, Belgium, Chile, Finland, France, India, Iraq, Italy, Hungary, the GDR, Norway, Poland, Romania, the USA, the USSR and Sweden. In Sutomore in 1983, seventeen countries were present: Italy, the GDR, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, the USSR, Syria, the United Kingdom, Algeria, Finland, Cuba, Angola, the USA, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Chile and the Polisario Front. In Dečani in 1984, twenty countries participated: Angola, Algeria, Belgium, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Iraq, Italy, Finland, Cuba, Hungary, the GDR, Norway, Poland, the Polisario Front, Romania, the USA, the USSR and Tanzania. In Zagreb in 1985, twenty-three or twenty-four countries took part, including the PLO, SWAPO, the Polisario Front, Algeria, Angola, Poland, North Korea, and sixteen or seventeen others. In Futog in 1988, nineteen countries participated: Bulgaria, Guinea, Denmark, Italy, India, North Korea, Hungary, Cuba, the GDR, Poland, Romania, the USSR, Finland, Spain, Zambia, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Algeria and Angola; AJ, 637, 95.

77 Present at the International Children's Friendship Meeting (1976–1984, 1988); AJ, 637, 95.

78 Present at the International Children's Friendship Meeting (1976–1984, 1988); AJ, 637, 95.

79 Present at the International Children's Friendship Meeting (1976–1984, 1988); AJ, 637, 95.

80 Present at the International Children's Friendship Meeting (1976–1984, 1988); AJ, 637, 95.

81 Present at the International Children's Friendship Meeting (1976, 1978–1984, 1988); AJ, 637, 95.

82 Present at the International Children's Friendship Meeting (1976, 1978–1984, 1988); AJ, 637, 95.

83 A children's group from Egypt participated in the International Children's Friendship Meeting in Belgrade in 1977; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Organisation and Activities of the International Children's Friendship Camp – Šuplja Stena near Avala, 1977.

84 Present at the International Children's Friendship Meeting (1978–1981, 1983–1985, 1988); AJ, 637, 95.

85 Present at the International Children's Friendship Meeting (1976, 1978–1981, 1983–1984, 1988); AJ, 637, 95.

86 Present at the International Children's Friendship Meeting (1978–1979, 1982–1985, 1988); AJ, 637, 95.

87 Belgrade (1977, 1984), Smederevska Palanka (1978, 1980), Bor (1979), Niš (1981), Kraljevo (1985), Kladovo (1988), Bačko Gradište (1977), Ada (1978), Vrbas (1979), Kikinda (1980), Bečej (1981), Novi Sad (1983), Sremska Mitrovica (1984), Bačka Palanka (1985), Zrenjanin (1988), Priština (1977, 1981), Đakovica (1978, 1988), Prizren (1979), Orahovac (1980), Peć (1983), Vučitrn (1984), Titova Mitrovica (1985), Metlika (1977), Ljubljana (1978, 1980, 1984, 1985), Kočevje (1979), Celje (1981), Radenac (1983), Zagreb (1977, 1978), Varaždin (1979, 1983), Karlovac (1980), Novska (1981), Našice (1984), Pula (1985), Prijedor (1976), Bijeljina (1977), Jajce (1978), Drvar (1979), Mostar (1980), Bihać (1983), Sarajevo (1984), Modriča (1985), Brčko (1988), Titograd (1977, 1978, 1983, 1988), Nikšić (1980, 1981, 1985), Tuzla (1984), Skopje (1977, 1978, 1980), Titov Veles (1979, 1980), Bitola (1980, 1985), Kavadarci (1981), Štip (1983), Kumanovo (1984), Prilep (1988); AJ, 637, 95.



Children from Yugoslavia at the International Children's Friendship Meeting 1976–1988.

International Children's Friendship Meeting: Identity

Building on the guidelines of the Children's International Summer Village and the experience of organising the Pioneer Camp Sutjeska, the International Children's Friendship Meeting strengthened togetherness through its organisation and programme activities. Both of those identity-building levers played dual roles: firstly, fostering awareness of the active role of every individual, including youngsters, in the community-building process, and secondly, "liberating" children and directing them toward various interests. Starting from the idea of the active role of children, as equal members of the socialist community, the MSPD organisation was to rest on the participants' self-organisation or self-governance. The rules for children's self-organisation at the camp partially changed over time. Self-organisation was based on the idea of forming a "pioneer detachment" in the "place of the pioneers' organised stay". Reports on the MSPD organised in Belgrade (1982) reveal how the self-organisation of all camp participants worked. Children's self-governance rested on the autonomy of the Camp Assembly, which included all children attending the camp. Concurrently, all camp participants were members of the MSPD Detachment. The Detachment leadership, consisting of the detachment commander, detachment deputy

commander, a person responsible for sports activities, a person responsible for cultural activities and a person responsible for hygiene, was elected at the Assembly. The Detachment was divided into four companies, each with a five-member leadership team mirroring the structure of the Detachment management. The Detachment convened every morning and evening during the raising and lowering of the camp flag. During these morning and evening meetings of the Detachment members, programme activities for the current and following day were announced. The leaderships of the Detachment and companies were elected twice a week to allow as many children as possible to have their turn in leadership positions.⁸⁸ Due to the large number of Detachment and company members at Tjentište (1981), the companies were divided into two squads, each jointly headed by a child from Yugoslavia and an international guest.⁸⁹

Besides self-governance, fostering togetherness among children's collectives involved having children stay in nationally mixed rooms and following a structured timetable, with each day starting and ending with joint activities. Another way of encouraging togetherness was communication at various levels, including communication in Serbo-Croatian⁹⁰ and several foreign languages,⁹¹ in contrast to the Children's International Summer Village, which required the exclusive use of English.

The children's identification with MSPD symbols was meant to play a prominent role in fostering an individual's connection to the camp. While, strictly speaking, the camp aimed to promote connections among the children, in a broader sense, the idea was to foster a connection between the children and the host country, which was one of the reasons why children from different and mutually remote parts of Yugoslavia attended the camp as one unified group. Still, the Yugoslav international children's camp never developed a distinctive visual identity or adopted an anthem, although the matter of the camp's symbols and anthem resurfaced year after year, especially after the Tjentište MSPD. A report on this camp stated: "The anthem, flag and coat of arms of the international camp in Yugoslavia should be determined by the [Pioneer] Association of Yugoslavia, regardless of the hosting republic or province. This could be achieved through an all-Yugoslav competition to avoid

88 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 7th International Children's Friendship Meeting Held in Yugoslavia, Belgrade, November 1982.

89 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981.

90 According to the Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1974, there was no single official language at the federal level. Instead, each republic and autonomous province had the right to determine its own official languages. However, in practice, and within federal state institutions, the Serbo-Croatian / Croato-Serbian language was most commonly used. This language utilised both the Latin and Cyrillic scripts equally; AJ, 637, 95.

91 Pula (1976) – Russian, English; Belgrade (1977) – Russian, English; Dolenjske Toplice (1978) – English, French, German, Spanish, Russian; Futog (1979) – English, Russian, French, Romanian, Spanish, Hungarian, German; Ohrid (1980) – English, Russian, French, German; Tjentište (1981) – German, English, Russian, and Arabic; Šuplja stena (1982) – English, Russian, French; Dečani (1984) – French, English, Russian, Arabic; Zagreb (1985) – English, Russian, German, French, Spanish, and Arabic; Dolenjske Toplice (1987) – English, Russian, Arabic, French, Spanish; Futog (1988) – English, Russian, French, Spanish, German; AJ, 637, 95.

every republic- and province-level association defining a new anthem, flag, emblems and other camp insignia each year”.⁹²

Programme activities contributed the most to developing children’s friendships and strengthening the collective identity of the camp participants. The programme consisted of several elements, including touring “natural beauty spots” and “cultural and historical monuments” and getting acquainted with “the people, their work and life”. Various sports and cultural activities, as well as rest and leisure, were other important segments of the educational work aimed at implementing “socialist upbringing for peace”.

A “natural” or “green” setting as the site of the “new social contract” was seen as conducive to free and open dialogue in a safe environment. Reflecting the CISV principles, international children’s camps were to be held at remote locations because children found it easier to connect with nature and “the life of the people” away from big cities. By the mid-1970s, the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia, the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia and their republic- and province-level branches had an elaborate network of facilities all over Yugoslavia for providing accommodation for children in such spots.⁹³

Spending time in nature was meant to recall the life and struggle of the Partisans during the Second World War. The International Children’s Friendship Meeting organised several expeditions, including the pioneer expedition to Fruška Gora to mark Veterans Day on 4 July 1980,⁹⁴ the expedition to Krekova to visit the monument commemorating the fallen Partisan commander Sava Kovačević (1981), and the expedition to Borovno with the memorial to the Foča Youth Brigade, many of whose members died during the retreat in the Battle of Sutjeska to ensure safe passage for the Supreme Command of the Partisan Army and its commander Josip Broz Tito (1981).⁹⁵ Members of the Mountaineering Association often visited the international children’s camp in Yugoslavia. One of their key roles at MSPD⁹⁶ was to show children from various parts of the world that nature could be conducive to restoring “severed ties” and redefining personal relationships. Picking flowers and vegetables, making flower wreaths and salads and tree planting were typical activities at the international children’s camp in Yugoslavia.⁹⁷ Love of nature and the outdoors was

encouraged by organising day trips, such as the visits to the Tisa Dam near Novi Bečej (1979),⁹⁸ the “Nikola Nežlobinski” Museum of Biology in Struga (1980),⁹⁹ the mineral water spring on the Bistrica River, the Marble Cave and the Rugovska Gorge (1984).¹⁰⁰

Visits to cultural and historical sites aimed to, on one hand, familiarise the camp participants with the rich and diverse heritage of the Yugoslav space and, on the other, to present all Yugoslav citizens as the successors of the liberation traditions from the Second World War and earlier periods. Camp attendees primarily had an opportunity to get acquainted with the broader area of the Yugoslav republic or province hosting the Meeting. In addition to the cities where the camps were held, during those thirteen years, the participants visited many smaller towns in Yugoslavia.¹⁰¹

Learning about Yugoslavia’s history mostly involved getting acquainted with the country’s antifascist tradition, envisaged as the main source of identity and patriotism of not only Yugoslav children but also those from other parts of Europe and the world. It was crucial to promote the struggle for freedom as the supreme ideal, particularly for the youths representing various rebelling nations and liberation movements. The tradition of antifascism was conveyed through several means: commemorating significant dates, visiting museums and memorials, discussions with the participants and heroes of the Second World War, screening films and mass singing performances.

As the camp was usually held in July, the participants staged various programmes to commemorate Veterans Day (4 July),¹⁰² Uprising Day of the People of Serbia (7 July),¹⁰³

92 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children’s Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981.

93 Children’s Recreational Center Puntizela (Pula, 1976), Children’s Resort Šuplja Stena near Avala (Belgrade, 1977, 1982), Elementary School Baza 20 (Dolenjske Toplice, 1978), School Center Dr. Siniša Stanković (Futog, 1979), Pioneer Resort Sutjeska (Ohrid, 1980), Student Dormitory Jelica Milovanović (Belgrade, 1981), Facilities of the Sutjeska National Park (Tjentište, 1981), Red Cross Building in Sutomore (Sutomore, 1983), Children’s Resort Pišat e Dečani (Dečani, 1982), Secondary Agricultural School (Futog, 1988); AJ, 637, 95.

94 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Fifth International Children’s Friendship Camp, Skopje, September 1980.

95 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children’s Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981.

96 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Organisation and Activities of the International Children’s Friendship Camp – Šuplja Stena near Avala, 1977; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 7th International Children’s Friendship Meeting Held in Yugoslavia, Belgrade, November 1982.

97 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Activities of the Fourth International Children’s Friendship Camp, 1979; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Fifth International Children’s Friendship Camp, Skopje, September 1980.

98 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Activities of the Fourth International Children’s Friendship Camp, 1979

99 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Fifth International Children’s Friendship Camp, Skopje, September 1980.

100 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children’s Friendship Meeting “Dečani ’84” of the Association for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of SAP Kosovo, Priština, December 1984.

101 Kragujevac, Gornji Milanovac, Đerdap (1977); Novo Mesto, Dobro Polje, Kumrovec, Stubice, Brežice, Kostanjevica na Krki, Ljubljana, Koper, Portorož, Postojna, Kranj, Bled, Bohinj, Vogel, Fažana (1978); Iriški Venac, Novi Sad, Novi Bečej, Kumane, Čelarevo, Subotica, Palić, Sremska Mitrovica, Ležimir, Vrbas (1979); Struga, Bitola (1980); Dubrovnik, Tar, Sarajevo, Foča (1981); Herceg Novi, Kotor, Budva, Cetinje, Lovćen, Titograd, Lake Skadar, Virpazar (1983); Dečani, Priština, Prizren, Peć (1984); Koprivnica, Petrova Gora, Plitvice, Šibenik, Zadar, Titova Korenica (1985); Šid (1988); AJ, 637, 95.

102 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Organisation and Activities of the International Children’s Friendship Camp – Šuplja Stena near Avala, 1977; AJ, 637, 95, Report by Viljem Petelin, Camp Commander, on the Third International Camp Sutjeska ’78, 1978; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Activities of the Fourth International Children’s Friendship Camp, 1979; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Fifth International Children’s Friendship Camp, Skopje, September 1980; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 7th International Children’s Friendship Meeting Held in Yugoslavia, Belgrade, November 1982; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children’s Friendship Meeting “Dečani ’84” of the Association for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of SAP Kosovo, Priština, December 1984; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 13th International Meeting of Children’s Friendship of the World held in 1988 in SAP Vojvodina.

103 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Activities of the Fourth International Children’s Friendship Camp, 1979; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Fifth International Children’s Friendship Camp, Skopje, September 1980; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children’s Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children’s Friendship Meeting “Dečani ’84” of the Association for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of SAP Kosovo, Priština, December 1984.

Uprising Day of the People of Montenegro (13 July),¹⁰⁴ Uprising Day of the People of Slovenia (22 July),¹⁰⁵ Uprising Day of the People of Macedonia (2 August).¹⁰⁶ In addition to significant dates from Yugoslav history, the camp also marked the state holidays of the guest countries, such as Independence Day (USA, 4 July)¹⁰⁷ or Bastille Day (France, 14 July).¹⁰⁸ From 1976 to 1988, the participants of the international children's camp in Yugoslavia visited many museums and memorials commemorating the antifascist struggle, including Base 20 at Kočevski Rog,¹⁰⁹ the grave of Boško Palkovljević Pinki at Fruška Gora, the 25 May Museum and the House of Flowers in Belgrade,¹¹⁰ the Memorial Cemetery in Sremska Mitrovica, Rohalj Base,¹¹¹ the Brotherhood and Unity Monument in Belčište village,¹¹² Workers' Battalion Monument at Kadinjača near Titovo Užice,¹¹³ the Memorial of the Fifth Frontier Assault Brigade at Avala, the Šumarice Memorial Park in Kragujevac, the Yugoslav-Norwegian Friendship Monument in Gornji Milanovac, the Red Army Fighters Monument at Peace Hill in Gornji Milanovac,¹¹⁴ the Monument to the Fallen in the Battle of Carev Laz, the Mausoleum of Fallen Partisan Fighters in Titograd,¹¹⁵ the Boro and Ramiz Memorial in Priština,¹¹⁶ the Monument to the Uprising of the People of Banija and Kordun at Petrova Gora, Josip Broz Tito's family home in Kumrovac,¹¹⁷ the monument commemorating the breaking of the Srem Front in Adaševci and the Museum of the Socialist Revolution in Novi Sad.¹¹⁸

Another way to familiarise children with the wartime and revolutionary legacy was organising conversations with the participants and heroes of the Second World War, such

as national heroes Vojin Đurašinović – Kostja (1919–1982)¹¹⁹ and Fana Kočovska Cvetković (1927–2004),¹²⁰ or Anton Vlašić, a participant in the People's Liberation War (NOR).¹²¹ It was not unusual for NOR participants who had, in the meantime, become high state officials to be involved in the MSPD Organising Committee. Three NOR participants were members of the Organising Committee at Dolenjske Toplice in SR Slovenia in 1987: Jože Smole (1927–1996), Majda Gaspari (1929) and Marko Bulc (1926–2019).¹²² To supplement their vivid recollections, the camp attendees watched war films, including the blockbusters *Sutjeska*¹²³ (1973, directed by Stipe Delić) and *Boško Buha*¹²⁴ (1978, directed by Branko Bauer) or more modest movies, mostly produced by Narodna tehnika, such as *Životni put druga Tita* (Life of Comrade Tito),¹²⁵ *Tito i pioniri* (Tito and the Pioneers) and *Najdraži susreti* (Cherished Encounters).¹²⁶ Additionally, the children sang Second World War-themed songs (*Jugoslavijo, Sa Ovcara i Kablara*,¹²⁷ *Do slobode*¹²⁸ and others), saw exhibitions (e.g. Pioniri Jugoslavije u NOB-u/Yugoslav Pioneers in the People's Liberation Struggle),¹²⁹ exchanged small gifts such as pins and postcards featuring Second World War heroes, for instance, Ganimete Terbeshi (1927–1944).¹³⁰ Some International Children's Friendship Camps were organised as part of broader jubilees of antifascist holidays, such as the one in 1980, which marked the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Victory over Fascism Day.¹³¹

The antifascist tradition was envisioned as the centrepiece of the cultural and historical programme to encourage camp attendees to connect with the universal idea of antifascism. Regardless, cultural and historical heritage from the distant past, which was associated with the freedom-fighting and cultural traditions of the Yugoslav peoples,

104 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Activities of the Fourth International Children's Friendship Camp, 1979 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Fifth International Children's Friendship Camp, Skopje, September 1980; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Meeting "Dečani '84" of the Association for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of SAP Kosovo, Priština, December 1984.

105 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981.

106 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Tenth International Children's Friendship Meeting YUGOSLAVIA 85 – Zagreb, September 1985.

107 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 7th International Children's Friendship Meeting Held in Yugoslavia, Belgrade, November 1982.

108 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981.

109 AJ, 637, 95, Report by Viljem Petelin, Camp Commander, on the Third International Camp Sutjeska '78, 1978.

110 The visit to the May 25 Museum was a regular part of the programme whenever the International Meeting of Children's Friendship was organised in the territory of the Socialist Republic of Serbia and the Socialist Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. After Tito's death, the House of Flowers became another memorial frequently visited during the Camp events held in Yugoslavia.

111 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Activities of the Fourth International Children's Friendship Camp, 1979.

112 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Fifth International Children's Friendship Camp, Skopje, September 1980.

113 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981.

114 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 7th International Children's Friendship Meeting Held in Yugoslavia, Belgrade, November 1982.

115 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Activities of the International Children's Friendship Camp – Sutomore, 1983.

116 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Meeting "Dečani '84" of the Association for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of SAP Kosovo, Priština, December 1984.

117 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Tenth International Children's Friendship Meeting YUGOSLAVIA 85 – Zagreb, September 1985.

118 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 13th International Meeting of Children's Friendship of the World held in 1988 in SAP Vojvodina.

119 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Organisation and Activities of the International Children's Friendship Camp – Šuplja Stena near Avala, 1977.

120 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Fifth International Children's Friendship Camp, Skopje, September 1980. In 1980, Fana Kočovska Cvetković served as the President of the Presidency of the Association of Organisations for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of Macedonia. Four years later, she was the President of the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Meeting "Dečani '84" of the Association for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of SAP Kosovo, Priština, December 1984.

121 AJ, 637, 95, Report by Viljem Petelin, Camp Commander, on the Third International Camp Sutjeska '78, 1978.

122 AJ, 637, 95, XII International Children's Friendship Camp (basic information)

123 AJ, 637, 95, Report by Viljem Petelin, Camp Commander, on the Third International Camp Sutjeska '78, 1978; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981.

124 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Activities of the Fourth International Children's Friendship Camp, 1979.

125 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Meeting "Dečani '84" of the Association for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of SAP Kosovo, Priština, December 1984.

126 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Tenth International Children's Friendship Meeting YUGOSLAVIA 85 – Zagreb, September 1985.

127 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981.

128 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Tenth International Children's Friendship Meeting YUGOSLAVIA 85 – Zagreb, September 1985.

129 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Tenth International Children's Friendship Meeting YUGOSLAVIA 85 – Zagreb, September 1985.

130 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children's Friendship Meeting "Dečani '84" of the Association for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of SAP Kosovo, Priština, December 1984.

131 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Fifth International Children's Friendship Camp, Skopje, September 1980.

was also featured prominently in the MSPD programme. To facilitate learning about the “centuries-long struggle” and culture of the peoples inhabiting the Yugoslav space, camp participants visited the Church of St. Sophia (11th century) and Samuel’s Fortress at Ohrid (1980),¹³² Karađorđe’s residence in Topola (19th century) and the Church of St. George at Oplenac (20th century) (1982),¹³³ the Mausoleum of Petar II Petrović Njegoš at Lovćen (20th century), Cetinje Monastery (15th century), Biljardi – the former residence of Petar II Petrović Njegoš (19th century), the Vlach Church (15th century), the Lovćen Fairy monument (20th century), the buildings that once housed the embassies of Italy, France and Austria-Hungary in Cetinje (1983),¹³⁴ Visoki Dečani Monastery in Dečani (14th century), the Patriarchate of Peć (14th century) in Peć, the Gazimestan Memorial commemorating the 14th-century Battle of Kosovo (built 1953) (1984)¹³⁵ and the Petrovaradin Fortress in Novi Sad (17th–18th century) (1988).¹³⁶

International Children’s Friendship Meeting: Community

Learning about the local population’s way of life and work was the most elaborate part of the camp’s programme. More narrowly, familiarising oneself with the locals’ way of life and work entailed learning about the local circumstances, primarily through interactions with representatives from state organs and institutions, public organisations and enterprises. More broadly, it aimed to enhance the authority of and belief in a system underpinned by a synergy of socio-political actors. To build authority, the camp sought to facilitate direct interactions between the children and various individuals – politicians, officials, public and cultural workers and employees from diverse sectors. As a result, the children had opportunities to actively engage as community members and learn about the principles upon which a nation committed to peace education should be based. In other words, the camp provided the children with the chance to develop an awareness of their role in the functioning of the community, both in its narrowest and broadest sense.

The successful implementation of Yugoslavia’s best-known international children’s camp was largely reliant on the financial support of local, republic-level and province-level economic giants. Within Yugoslavia’s self-governing socialism-based economy, every economic enterprise had a duty to support children’s social activities. Production and

business activities were primarily viewed through the lens of societal benefit, with profit considerations being secondary. This approach was based on the belief that economic development was more significantly driven by investments in human resources through education and child-rearing processes rather than profit generation.

The funding model for the MSPD was primarily based on the financial principles of the Children’s International Summer Village. International participants were responsible for their travel expenses, while Yugoslavia sponsored the children’s accommodation within the country. The preparation costs for the camp, as well as the travel expenses for Yugoslav groups, were covered by institutions, public organisations and enterprises from the children’s home regions. The organiser financed the living and operational expenses at the camp. This funding model required the involvement of state institutions, public organisations and the economic and banking sectors. However, over time, the structure of the camp’s funding changed. In the early years, while fewer groups from abroad attended MSPD and the organisation expenses were lower, the camp was dominantly sponsored by the republic- and province-level associations of organisations for the education and care of the children of Yugoslavia, with their share reflecting the percentage with which the associations financed the programme of the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia.¹³⁷ As attendance grew and delegations from remote parts of the world increased, participation by state institutions (primarily self-governing entities involved in children’s protection, health and social welfare and housing), banks, insurance companies, lottery companies and other enterprises expanded significantly. By the mid-1980s, the funding secured for the camps overtook their expenditure,¹³⁸ but this favourable financial trend proved short-lived. Growing inflation in the second half of the 1980s rapidly “melted” the funds allotted in advance for organising the camp.¹³⁹ Due to the camp’s inability to achieve self-sustainability, issues arose with providing accommodation and meals for the children, necessitating *ad hoc* interventions from hospitality enterprises, whose fees exceeded the planned funding parameters. In the latter half of the 1980s, the personnel in the camps’ organising committees began to reflect the growing presence of funds provided by the business sector. The Croatian Chamber of Commerce had a representative at the MSPD held in Zagreb in 1985.¹⁴⁰ Two years later, in Dolenjske Toplice, one of the members of the MSPD Organising Committee was Marko Bulc, who served as chairman of the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce from 1982 to 1989.¹⁴¹ The presence of prominent figures from the Yugoslav business world in

132 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Fifth International Children’s Friendship Camp, Skopje, September 1980.

133 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 7th International Children’s Friendship Meeting Held in Yugoslavia, Belgrade, November 1982.

134 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Activities of the International Children’s Friendship Camp – Sutomore, 1983.

135 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children’s Friendship Meeting “Dečani ’84” of the Association for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of SAP Kosovo, Priština, December 1984.

136 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 13th International Meeting of Children’s Friendship of the World held in SAP Vojvodina.

137 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Activities of the Fourth International Children’s Friendship Camp, 1979.

138 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children’s Friendship Meeting “Dečani ’84” of the Association for the Socialist Education and Care of the Children of SAP Kosovo, Priština, December 1984.

139 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 13th International Meeting of Children’s Friendship of the World held in 1988 in SAP Vojvodina.

140 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Tenth International Children’s Friendship Meeting YUGOSLAVIA 85 – Zagreb, September 1985.

141 AJ, 637, 95, XII International Children’s Friendship Camp (basic information).

organising committees enabled an influx of additional funds. In 1985, the members of the Organising Committee for the Zagreb camp included representatives of the Croatian Lottery, the Parliament of SR Croatia, the Central Committee of SR Croatia and the Council of the Trade Union Alliance. The presence of trade union representatives in the Organising Committee ensured easier communication with companies and enterprises in SR Croatia.¹⁴² The Organising Committee for the 1988 camp held in Futog was chaired by Momo Čolaković (1940), Secretary of the Presidency of the Council of the Trade Union Alliance of Vojvodina.¹⁴³ The involvement of the business sector at the camp also served another purpose – a much more pivotal one. Although faltering, the Yugoslav economy still represented a labour system encompassing all members of Yugoslav society. Consequently, the segment of the programme designed to “learn about the people’s life and work” typically included visits to factories and direct interaction with workers and the production process or the consumption of products provided to the camp’s participants as gifts.¹⁴⁴

In addition to direct engagement with the sphere of labour, the camp participants also had direct contact with politics by way of numerous visits to the camp by representatives of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and a range of state institutions, as well as the camp participants’ visits to institutions, usually of the host city. Although present in the camps’ organising committees, the representatives of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia were not typically involved in working with the children, with those duties entrusted to professionals: public workers, representatives of both relevant associations, numerous (local and foreign) educators, childcare specialists and teachers from all areas of children’s arts and creativity. The MSPD’s task was to foster the self-governing abilities of the children’s collective, as well as to awaken various interests. To achieve these objectives, the children were organised into self-governing bodies (assemblies, detachments, companies and squads) and grouped into a range of “clubs” depending on their personal interests, e.g. art, drama, music, technology (cinema and photography), computers, folk dance, disco and sports clubs (with the last including tennis, chess, volleyball, handball, futsal, basketball, shooting sports, polygon driving and so on).¹⁴⁵ Cultural workers and athletes played a key role in designing programmes to include children in social dialogue, thereby

contributing to the development of socialist peace education. Many of these individuals were established specialists in working with children through various mediums such as art and drama (e.g. designer Borut Vild (1954), architect Snežana Ristić (1956),¹⁴⁶ drama instructor Ljubica Beljanski Ristić (1945)),¹⁴⁷ literature (e.g., poets Pero Zubac (1945) and Radivoj Šajtinac (1949–2025),¹⁴⁸ actor Mirjana Šajtinac (1948)¹⁴⁹, or television (e.g., Željko Marjanović, Velimir Milošević, Mladen Sihrovski).¹⁵⁰

Conclusion

A few years after the last Yugoslav international children’s camp (Futog, 1988), the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia disappeared from the map of Europe and the world, giving way to several independent states. In the ensuing years, much of the former Yugoslav territory was devastated or downright destroyed in the war(s) in Croatia (1991–1995), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992) and Kosovo (1998–1999). The ravages of war did not spare many of the children’s complexes that had, mere years earlier, served as venues for bringing children together based on the ideas of antifascism, coexistence, internationalism and solidarity. The devastation of venues for the emancipation of children as a social group can be seen in two ways: firstly, as war damage, and secondly, as the ideational underpinnings of the mass war crimes that savagely rejected spaces of the culture and idea of togetherness to establish a culture of atrocities on those very same sites.¹⁵¹ Countless school buildings, sports facilities and cultural centres were repurposed for internment, abuse and mass murder. In areas that escaped war devastation, many spaces that had provided collective accommodation for children (e.g. the Boško Buha Memorial Complex at Jabuka Mountain near Prijepolje) now served as refugee centres.¹⁵² Numerous “pillars” of socialist Yugoslavia’s official education and child-rearing policy shared the same fate, including antifascist memorials and factory compounds. Further exposed to the “transformation of the economic model”, which essentially meant transitioning from self-governing socialism to (often unchecked and predatory) capitalism, disused factory complexes merely reinforced the rejection of one cultural and societal model and the unquestioning acceptance of another.

142 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Tenth International Children’s Friendship Meeting YUGOSLAVIA 85 – Zagreb, September 1985.

143 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 13th International Meeting of Children’s Friendship of the World held in 1988 in SAP Vojvodina.

144 The International Children’s Friendship Meeting was supported by: the Food Industry Complex “Takovo” (Gornji Milanovac), the Publishing House “Dečje novine” (Gornji Milanovac), the “Đerdap” Hydroelectric Power Plant, the Knitwear and Garment Factory “Umka”, the Food Industry Complex “Belgrade”, the Pharmaceutical Factory “Krka” (Novo Mesto), the Motor Vehicle Industry (Novo Mesto), the Garment Factory “Labod” (Novo Mesto), the Packaging Production Plant “Noles”, the Textile Industry “Novotex” (Novo Mesto), the Construction Company SGP “Pionir” (Novo Mesto), “Stoteks” (Novi Sad), NIS Novi Sad, “Merkur” (Bačka Palanka), “Agrokoop” (Novi Sad), the Agricultural Complex “Heroj Pinki” (Sremska Mitrovica), “Agroplod” (Resen), “Stružanka” (Struga), “Bratstvo” (Ohrid), “Trepča”, the Kosovo Electric Power Company, Export-Import “Kosovo”, “Kosovotrans”, “Printeks” (Prizren), Invest Metal, the Leather and Footwear Complex from Peć, as well as “Badel” (Zagreb), “Franko” (Zagreb), “Kraš” (Zagreb), “Podravka” (Koprivnica), “Ledo” (Zagreb) and “Pionir” (Subotica) and many others; AJ, 637, 95.

145 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the Tenth International Children’s Friendship Meeting YUGOSLAVIA 85 – Zagreb, September 1985.

146 AJ, 637, 95, Note regarding the programme of the International Meeting of Children’s Friendship in Zagreb.

147 AJ, 637, 95, Note regarding the programme of the International Meeting of Children’s Friendship in Zagreb.

148 Pero Zubac and Radivoj Šajtinac co-authored the script for the MSPD held in 1988 in Futog; AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 13th International Meeting of Children’s Friendship of the World held in 1988 in SAP Vojvodina.

149 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the 13th International Meeting of Children’s Friendship of the World held in 1988 in SAP Vojvodina.

150 AJ, 637, 95, Report on the International Children’s Friendship Camp in Yugoslavia in 1981 – from 1 to 6 July and from 20 July 1981.

151 For more, see: Viktor Ivančić, Hrvoje Polen, Nemanja Stjepanović, *Iza sedam logora. Od zločina kulture do kulture zločina* (Beograd, Zagreb, Split: Forum ZFD, 2018).

152 Sanja Petrović Todosijević, “Memorijalni kompleks Boško Buha,” *Remarker*, 6 March 2019, last modified 30 May 2025. <https://remarker.media/drustvo/memorijalni-kompleks-bosko-buha/>.

The life and death of the Yugoslav culture for children, as well as all attempts at its ongoing and future reinterpretation as the shared legacy of all peoples that lived in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, are possible to reconstruct by analysing case studies. The International Children's Friendship Meeting is one of those "good practice" examples. The roots of the social organisation of children for strengthening peace policy transcend the efforts of socialist Yugoslavia, going back deeper into the past and tracing various paths and sidetracks of international relations, which came to a head during the two world wars but continued to find ways to overcome war experiences and engage in dialogue under the auspices of organisations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations. The attempts of both Yugoslav states to participate in international affairs and the building of a "world without war" are difficult to understand without analysing deep social and political crises, the experience of the royal dictatorship, fascism and antifascism, authoritarianism, imperialism and colonialism as well as the rise of utopia as a political platform on which states and societies can be built. Recognising children as an equal part of the community, capable of contributing to building a "future world", was of crucial importance for the development of educational policies and fostering dynamic and inclusive societal relations. The policy of modernisation and emancipation of children's social life in socialist Yugoslavia was inseparable from Yugoslavia's integration into the complex system of postwar international relations, the reform of the entire school system with the assistance of UNESCO, financial investment into personnel training, financial investment into bolstering the most vulnerable parts of the system (education, social welfare and healthcare), which are crucial for supporting children as a social group, and economic development. Just as the development of international relations directly informed the key ideas of the social organising of children, so social work with children, conducted through an intricate system of mass public organisations, launched many professional public workers who, after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, went on to play prominent roles in their "new" milieus – paradoxically, often in alleviating the devastation left in the wake of the very same war(s) that had pushed the idea of social support to the most marginalised community members to the bottom of the list of political priorities.

Summary

The international children's programme called the International Children's Friendship Camp (1976–1988) was the central international-level initiative of the Pioneer Association of Yugoslavia, itself a part of the Association of Organisations for the Education and Care of the Children of Yugoslavia. Hosting the International Children's Friendship Camp was an element of Yugoslavia's broader international cooperation efforts, implemented, among other avenues, through the mass public organisations that brought together all members of Yugoslav society, including the youngest. In the broadest sense, the concept of the international camps held in Yugoslavia from 1976 to 1988 drew on the country's non-aligned foreign policy. Analysis of the reports on the hosted MSPDs suggests that non-alignment was understood as a policy that encourages "international understanding and cooperation". "Peace education", implemented by "developing children's friendship", was seen as an "element of strengthening international understanding and cooperation" and the ultimate objective of organising international camps in Yugoslavia. MSPD was directly inspired by the Pioneer Camp Sutjeska and modelled after the Children's International Summer Villages (CISV). Every year, the camp was held in a different Yugoslav republic or autonomous province, lasting two or three weeks. The logistics of MSPD were entrusted to the Organising Committee and the Meeting Task Force. The members of the Committee were meant to reflect the influence of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, powerful state organs and the business world on implementing the official educational and child-rearing policy. Conversely, the Task Force members embodied the influence of professionals (public workers, childcare specialists in various aspects of children's life, work and creativity) on formulating the camp programme. Overall, MSPD hosted around 2000 children and educators from Yugoslavia and abroad – at least thirty-five countries and liberation movements. The international camps in Yugoslavia sought to foster togetherness through its organisation (self-governance) and activities. The programme activities contributed the most to fostering friendships among the attending children and strengthening their collective identity. The programme was implemented in several segments, most importantly through visits to "natural beauty spots" and "cultural and historical monuments" and encounters with the local "people and their life and work". Engaging the children in various sports and cultural activities and relaxation and leisure were also important segments of the educational and child-rearing work aimed at implementing "socialist upbringing for peace".

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