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Vjekoslav Perica and Mitja Velikonja, *Nebeska Jugoslavija: Interakcije političkih mitologija i pop-kulture* (Heavenly Yugoslavia: Interactions of political mythologies and pop-culture) (Belgrade: Biblioteka XX vek, 2012), 276 pp.

For the past twenty years the historiography of western Balkan countries has favored conflict studies at the expense of the social and cultural history of Yugoslavia and its successor states. Consequently, these aspects of Yugoslav history have been more visible on the internet and online social networks than in academic and related publications. *Nebeska Jugoslavija*, by Croatian historian Vjekoslav Perica and

Slovenian sociologist Mitja Velikonja, coming from an independent Serbia-based publisher, is one of those still rare interdisciplinary studies with a socio-cultural focus. Both authors acknowledge that the book was not created as one single study, but as a collection of three separate essays. This, however, can hardly be seen as problematic, since this format proved to have facilitated the narrative of the interaction between political mythologies and popular culture. The interdisciplinary approach represents one of the important qualities of the book: the joint work of a social historian and a sociologist and expert in cultural studies has produced a book not only about Yugoslav history, but also about the Yugoslav present, that is, about the presence of the Yugoslav culture in western Balkan countries. Interdisciplinary studies of this type are still few in and about the Balkans. This book shows how instructive this perspective can be.

In addition to three lengthy chapters, each of them a separate case-study with an extensive bibliography, the content of the book is also influenced by two additional factors. First, through their participation in numerous conferences and symposia, the authors have had opportunities to speak with Yugoslavian politicians and public officials, thus incorporating new information into their work. Second, by referring to comments on online social networks, the authors have included public insights about Yugoslav culture and sports, thus providing important feedback about their influence on contemporary society. This book views the Yugoslav peoples' history through the eyes of two "greatest generations," one of which emerged from World War II, and the other, born from the 1950s to the early 1970s, from the postwar socialist revolution. Both generations still influence the culture and society of the countries that emerged after the breakup of Yugoslavia.

The first essay, "New Supplements for a Genealogy of the Yugoslav Partisan My-

thology," by Vjekoslav Perica, mainly concerns the first (partisan) generation emerging triumphant from World War II and its own honor creating the Yugoslav partisan mythology. Perica sees this political mythology as a factor in the establishment of the Yugoslav nation and describes it as a secular religion that legitimized the socialist federal Yugoslavia. Drawing from his earlier book, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, he presents the role of partisan mythology, comparing it with the traditional religions and ethnic nationalist ideologies. He continues by analyzing the role of popular culture in the transfer of this patriotic mythology from one generation to another. The second essay, "Rock'n'retro: New Yugoslavism in Contemporary Slovenian Pop-Music," by Mitja Velikonja, presents the influence of the partisan mythology in contemporary Slovenian pop-rock music. In this detailed socio-cultural analysis, Velikonja focuses not only on the still existing remains of the partisan mythology but also on what he sees as the development of a new hybrid popular culture, built on the former while influenced by contemporary elements as well. This new subculture is critical of the present (neoliberal economy); it is also nostalgic, lamenting over the past. Although some forms of this new music and subculture call for radical social change, the mainstream is preoccupied with fun and entertainment. Velikonja concludes that the main value of this culture is in its ironical and critical approach to existing social problems, and recent civil unrests in Maribor and other Slovenian cities apparently bear out his views.

In the third essay, "Generations versus Nations: Post-Yugoslav Discourses of Heroism," Perica analyzes legacies of Yugoslav-era rock music and sporting achievements. This is how the young great generation (post-partisan generation) expressed itself during the 1970s and 1980s, but this urban revival was interrupted by war. Em-

phasizing the important role that heroes play in the creation of nations, he distinguishes between the partisan generation type of heroes (warriors) and the post-partisan generation hero-type, who had to prove themselves in a different context, leading the development of urban youth culture and sport in Yugoslavia. Relying on the comments posted on online social networks and other online resources, his ambition is to present not only the influence these heroes exercised before the breakup of Yugoslavia but also how these heroes are perceived today. Brief biographies of famous basketball players, such as Mirza Delibašić and Dražen Petrović, as well as boxing world champion Mate Parlov, and influential musicians, such as Branimir Johnny Štulić, are included in this essay, supporting Perica's claim that these people can be seen primarily as all-Yugoslav (rather than exclusively ethnic Croatian, Serbian, or Bosnian) heroes, although all of them do have ethnic identities which they did not hide or wish to suppress. The author finishes the essay by pointing out that Yugoslav pop-culture has proven to be more successful in creating a common Yugoslav identity than socialist ideology or titoist cults imposed from above by the state. After all, it is this Yugoslav culture that lingers on even after the breakup of Yugoslavia and constitutes the basis of Heavenly Yugoslavia.

The title of this book ironizes the "Heavenly Serbia" mythology, the folk-tradition-turned-nationalistic myth constructed on the memory of the medieval Battle of Kosovo. One could also interpret the title as referring to only the highest levels of Yugoslav superstructure (that is, culture and "secular" religion), while avoiding the lower levels of superstructure (politics) and its basis (economy). Nonetheless, it would be worthwhile to investigate further the interconnection between Yugoslav culture on the one hand and politics and economy on the other. This

wider interdisciplinary approach should be able to produce even better understanding of Yugoslav culture.

It also seems that, for certain claims regarding the contemporary influence of Yugoslav culture, further sociological research is necessary. Though cultural analysis of the content of Slovenian popular songs and research on online social networks and other online resources may give important and valuable insights, better understanding of the influences of Yugoslav culture would demand a more thorough approach. These observations are less pertinent to a study of the history of Yugoslav culture, but more so to an examination of the contemporary situation.

Heavenly Yugoslavia nonetheless presents an important and unique contribution to the understanding of Yugoslav history and its influences on western Balkan countries. It is a good starting point for future research in both social history and sociology and cultural studies and, because of its distinct style and remarkable quality, should be of interest to both experts and the broader public readership.

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The main objective of the *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* is the dissemination of scholarly information in the field of modern Greek studies. The field is broadly defined to include the social sciences and the humanities, indeed any body of knowledge that touches on the modern Greek experience. Topics dealing with earlier periods, the Byzantine and even the Classical, will be considered provided they relate, in some way, to aspects of later Greek history and culture. Geographically, the field extends to any place where modern Hellenism flourished and made significant contributions, whether in the “Helladic space” proper or in the *Diaspora*. More importantly, in comparative and contextual terms, the Mediterranean basin and Europe fall within the province of the *Yearbook*’s objectives. Special attention will be paid to subjects dealing with Greek-Slavic relations and Eastern Orthodox history and culture in general.

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