

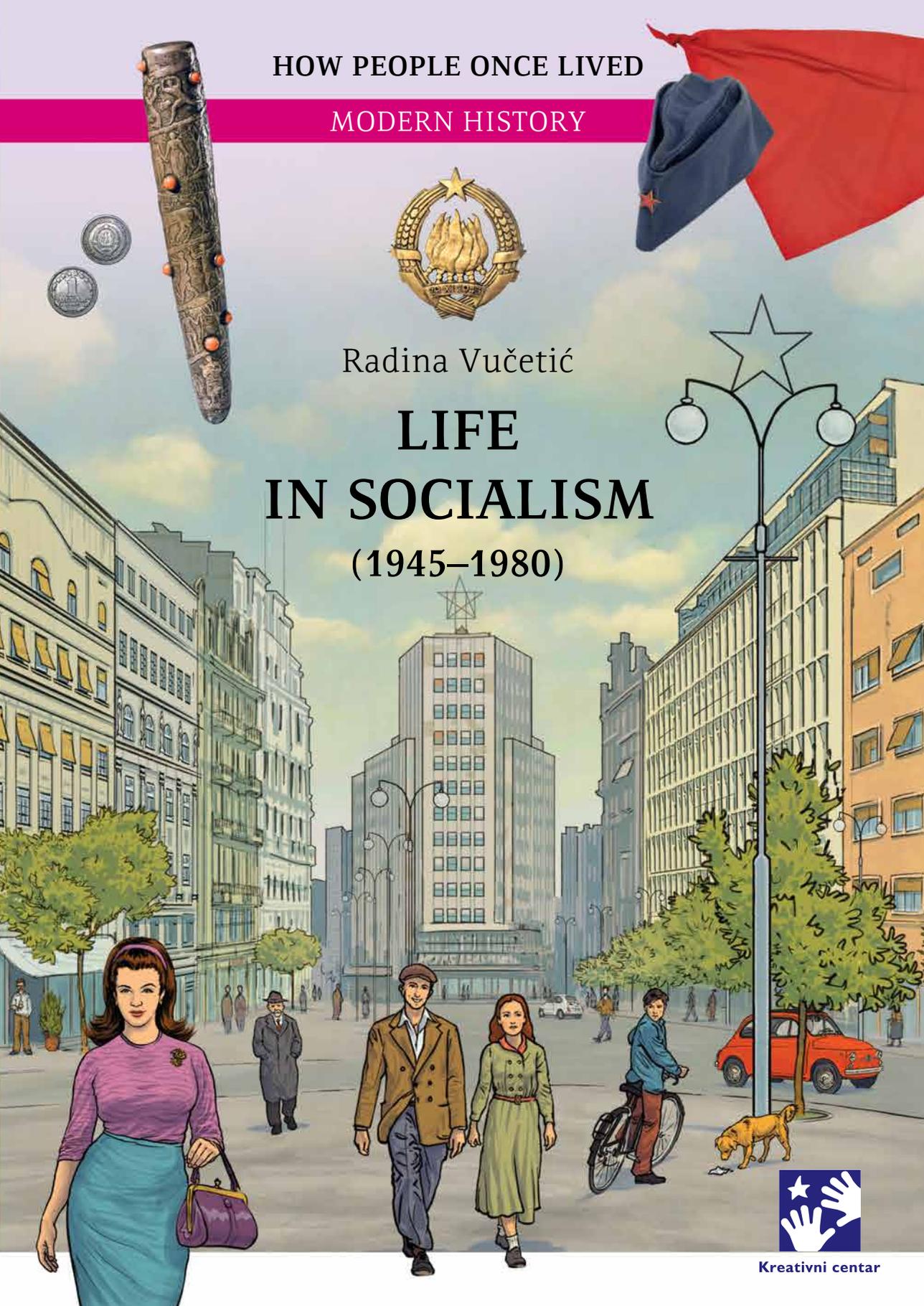
HOW PEOPLE ONCE LIVED

MODERN HISTORY



Radina Vučetić

# LIFE IN SOCIALISM (1945–1980)



Kreativni centar

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HOW PEOPLE ONCE LIVED MODERN HISTORY

## *Publisher*

KREATIVNI CENTAR  
Gradištanska 8, Beograd  
tel.: 011/ 38 20 483, 38 20 464, 24 40 659  
www.kreativnicentar.rs  
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## *Director*

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HOW PEOPLE ONCE LIVED

*Modern history*

LIFE IN SOCIALISM

(1945–1980)

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## *Prepress*

Saša Stefanović

## *Print*

Grafostil

## *Copies*

1000

## *Year of printing*

2020

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ЦИП – Каталогизација у публикацији  
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд  
930.85(497.11)\*1945/1980\*  
316.728(497.11)\*1945/1980\*

**VUČEĆIĆ, Radina, 1972–**

Life in Socialism : (1945–1980) / Radina Vučetić ; [illustrator Vladimir Bursać] ; [translator Radojka Jevtić]. – Beograd : Kreativni centar, 2020 (Beograd : Grafostil). – 32 str. : ilustr. ; 24 cm. – (Edition How People Once Lived. Modern history / [Kreativni centar])

Nasl. izvornika: Живот у социјализму (1945–1918). – Тираж 1.000.  
– Timeline: str. [33]. – Registar.

ISBN 978-86-529-0835-6

а) Свакодневни живот -- Београд -- 1945–1980

б) Београд -- Културна историја -- 1945–1980

COBISS.SR-ID 22177033



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Radina Vučetić

# LIFE IN SOCIALISM

(1945–1980)



Kreativni centar

# In both the East and West

World War II (1939–1945), which left behind utter devastation and millions of victims, struck Yugoslavia in 1941 and lasted for four years. At the moment of its liberation, Belgrade was left with only 270,000 residents. The world was completely transformed in the wake of global terror, and the new era began in form of Cold War. Two systems clashed in this power struggle between the East and West: communist, represented by the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, and capitalist, democratic one, led by the United States of America and Western European countries.

Yugoslavia emerged from World War II with a new political order. Monarchy was abolished, while Belgrade became the capital of another communist country of the so-called Eastern Bloc. The beginnings of the post-war period saw a complete turn towards the Soviet Union and adoption of the Soviet model of state, economy and culture.

Year	Population
1944	270,000
1951	428,000
1961	619,000
1971	780,000
1981	1,100,000

◀ Population of Belgrade



▲ Divided Europe on the map from the Historical Atlas of the World (London, 1978)

In 1948, the country experienced a shift after Tito's clash with Moscow and Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. After this event, Yugoslavia became a socialist state with a communist order. It received tremendous economic and military aid from the West, especially from the US. It was also becoming increasingly West-oriented in terms of culture and everyday life.



▲ The non-alignment policy represented a new direction in Yugoslavia's foreign affairs. The Non-Aligned Movement, formed by countries outside of the two existing blocs, was established in 1961 at a conference held in Belgrade.

The Yugoslav socialist state changed its name several times: Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (DFY, 1945), Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY, 1945–1963), and Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY, 1963–1992).

Belgrade was liberated on October 20<sup>th</sup> 1944, becoming the capital of a country that now had a new name and ideology. Owing to its unique position between the East and the West, it could easily welcome Nikita Khrushchev, Richard Nixon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Igor Stravinsky and Alfred Hitchcock, but also numerous international actors, and even the crew of the Apollo 11, only a hundred days after the Moon landing!

*Tito and the US President Richard Nixon during his visit to Belgrade, 1970* ►



Belgrade was a city of newcomers; one third of its population was born in the capital and two thirds settled from elsewhere. The majority were Serbs, followed by Montenegrins and Croats. The fact that the average age of a Belgrade resident in the mid-sixties was as low as 27 attested to the city's youthful character.

During the fifties and sixties, period that marked a definite turn towards the West, Belgrade was transformed into a modern city that hosted important international conferences and festivals.

### JOSIP BROZ TITO

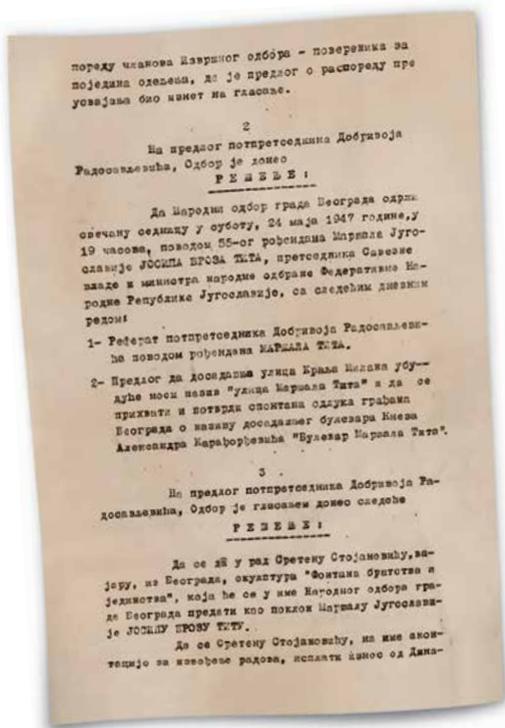
Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) was an unprecedented figure in socialist Yugoslavia. During the war, he was the Partisan leader and head of the communist movement. Later, he was elected President for Life, Marshal, Supreme Commander, General Secretary of the Party... Such convergence of official functions in the hands of one man inevitably led to the rise of cult of personality.

This was visible in various aspects of life.

Cities, streets and schools were being named after Tito and his photographs were hung in all public institutions. In 1947,

he was made an honorary citizen of Belgrade, and one of the main streets in the city, previously

named after King Milan, was renamed Marshal Tito Street. Another institution meant to celebrate the personality cult was the *May 25 Museum*, opened in Belgrade in 1962, where gifts that Tito received were kept and exhibited to the public. Every time he would travel, massive send-offs and welcome rallies were organised in Belgrade.



◄ *Decision on changing the name from King Milan to Marshal Tito Street*

# Socialism in the city

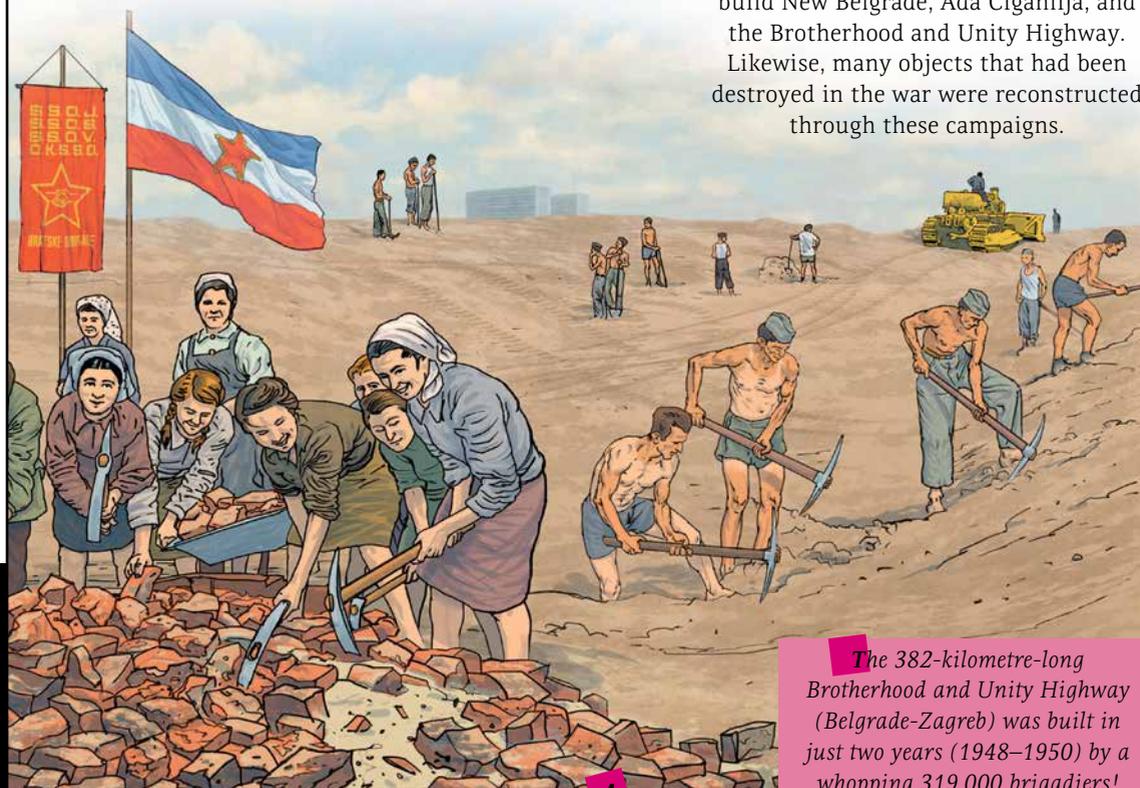
After the city was liberated, next on the agenda were eradication of poverty and strengthening of the new communist ideology. Under the slogans of “reconstruction and renewal” and “brotherhood and unity”, a new metropolis was being born, with its own neighbourhoods and traditions.

The campaign to restore the country and build socialism was led by the Communist Party. Belgrade, where one third of the buildings had been destroyed or severely damaged during the war, was being reconstructed at lightning speed, completely transforming its appearance in the process. Moreover, new authorities confiscated and nationalised much of the private property; members of the pre-war elite and wartime collaborators were often the losers in this process.

Youth working actions played a special role in restoration of the country and construction of its infrastructure (railways, bridges, roads). Young people were not compensated for these actions, which often involved hard physical labour. Still, they volunteered to work, as participation led to good social prospects. Youth actions helped build New Belgrade, Ada Ciganlija, and the Brotherhood and Unity Highway. Likewise, many objects that had been destroyed in the war were reconstructed through these campaigns.

## THE FIVE-POINTED STAR REPLACES THE CROWN

*Theatre Square became Republic Square, the Bridge of Brotherhood and Unity (later Branko's Bridge) replaced the demolished Bridge of King Alexander; the former Court Park became Pioneers Park, streets that had been named after kings, queens or duchesses now carried names of national heroes, and the crown was replaced by the five-pointed star.*



*The 382-kilometre-long Brotherhood and Unity Highway (Belgrade-Zagreb) was built in just two years (1948–1950) by a whopping 319,000 brigadiers!*



Socialist realism dominated the local architecture in the first five years following the liberation. It was characterised by robust Soviet-style blocks, which now had fewer rooms that were smaller in size. However, socialist realism was quickly abandoned in favour of more contemporary architecture trends.

◀ *The most striking example of socialist realism in architecture is the Trade Union Hall (Dom Sindikata). This monumental building long served as the headquarters of trade unions.*

The sixties were the golden age of Belgrade's construction. Many important projects were built during this time: state institutions, museums, sports centres, hospitals, hotels, first underground passages, bridges, and main roads. The nearby town of Zemun was connected to Belgrade, forming a unified whole.

### NEW BELGRADE, A CITY FROM SAND

The pre-war vision of building New Belgrade came to life in post-war Yugoslavia, when the city started expanding to the left bank of the River Sava. The call for general urban plan of New Belgrade was announced in 1947, and the construction of the new neighbourhood out of sand and swampland began in 1948. The urban plan included construction of the Federal Executive Council and the Central Committee buildings, Olympic Stadium with a capacity of 150,000 and a lake designed for 70,000 visitors.



▶ *A whopping 86,767 apartments were built during the sixties. Unfortunately, even that wasn't enough to home all the people who needed a roof over their heads.*



The building of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (CK) was completed in 1964. Serving as the Party headquarters, this American-style skyscraper had an unequivocally socialist purpose. Another major skyscraper, the Belgrade Palace (*Beograđanka*), was built in 1974. With its 24 floors, it was designed to dominate the city's skyline and become its central landmark. A modern department store was located on the lower levels, while the remaining floors consisted of office space, including that of Studio B, city's radio station.

▶ *The Central Committee building*

### AVALA TOWER

One of the symbols of the city, the 202.85-metre Avala Tower designed by Uglješa Bogunović and Slobodan Janjić, was opened in 1965. At the time of its construction, it was the tenth tallest building in the world. The tower was open to the public and children were especially excited to ride the elevator, just like their parents, who believed it was beneficial for the respiratory system. The tower was destroyed in the 1999 bombing and reconstructed in 2010.

*At the top of the Avala Tower stood a television antenna that weighed 25 tons* ▶



# The socialist standard

Upon its revolutionary rise to power, the Party set a big task – eradication of underdevelopment, departure from the *old* and creation of a *new* society in the spirit of communist principles. Ideology influenced all aspects of life, so the people from Belgrade were under full control of the Party and the state. Immediate post-war years were marked by abject poverty, but the standard of living began improving in the sixties. However, the period of prosperity was short-lived and Belgrade residents were facing a severe economic crisis a mere decade later.

Apartments built in socialist Yugoslavia were modest in size, typically with one or two bedrooms. However, unlike the small apartments of the past, built for servants and the poor, these units were brighter, more functional and equipped with modern furniture.

*A television set from the sixties* ▶

Despite the limits in size, living rooms in these apartments could still accommodate bulky three- and two-seater sofas, an armchair, a coffee table and a cabinet that took up an entire wall. As of the late sixties, television sets occupied the central place in every living room.



In the first decades following the war, communal apartments were a common housing phenomenon. An apartment would be seized from its previous owner, who was then allowed to use only one part of it, living alongside new tenants. Alternatively, a decision could be made for two unrelated families to share a single apartment. Large apartments were frequently partitioned, often by simply bricking up doors that connected two rooms. Sometimes, one of the divided apartments would be left both without the kitchen and bathroom. This was a common punitive measure for the so-called public enemies, whose property was being seized.

◀ *A furniture store in the early seventies*

*The pre-war neighbourhood of Dedinje acquired an elite status in communism. This is where Tito's residence and mansions of party officials and foreign ambassadors were located. The former city elite – merchants, industrialists, professors, scientists and artists – was replaced by the new, political elite.*

## NEW NEIGHBOURHOODS

*On the city's periphery, new neighbourhoods were being planned and built: Banovo Brdo, Karaburma, Konjarnik, Šumice, Braće Jerković, Miljakovac, Čukarica, Kanarevo, Petlovo and Julino Brdo. Just like in any other up-and-coming metropolis, severe lack of housing and constant influx of new residents led to formation of an illegal neighbourhood – Kaluđerica.*

*A fridge and semiautomatic washing machine* ▶



## THE RISE OF CONSUMER SOCIETY

The emergence of consumer society in Yugoslavia was an inevitable side effect of the country's economic boom and the post-war "golden age". As the standard of living improved, so did citizens' purchasing power, leading to people building vacation houses, buying new furniture, appliances, cars, but also prestigious commodities – transistor radios, record players, foreign-made clothes...

**UVEZENO JE ZA VAS... INOSTRANI PROIZVODI NA NAŠEM TRŽIŠTU**

**ODMERIVAČ SEČERA**  
 Za domaćin je najvažno da...  
 Cena: 1000 dinara

**IZLIVAC MEDA**  
 Jednako važna...  
 Cena: 1200 dinara

**MEŠA ZA LIMUN**  
 Za sve ljubitelje...  
 Cena: 1500 dinara

**UNIVERZALNE KUHINJSKE MAKAZE**  
 Najbolji pomoćnik...  
 Cena: 800 dinara

**CEDILJKA ZA LIMUN**  
 Za sve ljubitelje...  
 Cena: 1000 dinara

**VILJUŠKE ZA SERVIRANJE ZAKUSKE**  
 Najbolji pomoćnik...  
 Cena: 1200 dinara

**KALUPI - MODLE ZA PUDING**  
 Za sve ljubitelje...  
 Cena: 1500 dinara

**NOVI MODEL VADIČEPA**  
 Najbolji pomoćnik...  
 Cena: 1000 dinara

**ROŠTIJ ZA PEČENJE HLEBA - DVOPEKA**  
 Najbolji pomoćnik...  
 Cena: 1500 dinara

**APARATI ZA PEČENJE DVOPEKA**  
 Najbolji pomoćnik...  
 Cena: 1500 dinara

**RAŽANJ ZA ELEKTRIČNE ŠTEDNJAKE**  
 Najbolji pomoćnik...  
 Cena: 1500 dinara

**MAŠINA ZA SEČENJE HLEBA I SUHOMESNATIH PROIZVODA**  
 Najbolji pomoćnik...  
 Cena: 1500 dinara

**INFRA - GRIJ PEČNICE**  
 Najbolji pomoćnik...  
 Cena: 1500 dinara

*With the rise of living standards in the second half of the sixties, a trend of building holiday homes around Belgrade emerged. This resulted in settlements designed for weekend getaways in Grocka, on Kosmaj and Trešnja, and along the banks of the River Danube.*

Even though it seemed that the standard of living was progressively improving, especially throughout the sixties, life in the city was accompanied by various shortages (when even bread was in short supplies) and power outages. During one blackout in 1969, even the Internal Department of the Military Medical Academy (VMA) and the on-call service of the city Secretariat of Internal Affairs were out of power.

# Economy and industry

In the period after the liberation, Belgrade's economy was steadily growing, even though more than 50 percent of its industrial plants had been destroyed or damaged in the war. The country started producing car engines, tractors, lifts, radio receivers, home appliances, etc. Belgrade soon got new department stores, hotels, the Fair and the congressional Sava Centre.

Ball bearing produced by the IKL factory ▲

▼ Kosmaj 49 radio, 1949



The Sovietization in the immediate post-war period was also reflected on the economy. Yugoslavia devised its first Five-Year Plan of Economic Development in 1947, whose fundamental goals were eradication of economic underdevelopment and strengthening of the state sector, with focus on heavy industry and electrification.

Upon seizing power, communists took a radical departure from the way of life as it had existed in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The law on confiscation and nationalisation allowed the state to take over plants, shops, houses and apartments from the former bourgeoisie – industrialists, merchants and innkeepers. Private ownership and foreign capital slowly ceased to exist, and the state would soon come to own everything.

◀ Assembly line at the Industry of Machinery and Tractors

When seen from air, Belgrade gave the impression of a city teeming with factories. Zemun was home to developing electronic and pharmaceutical industry and Ikarus bus factory; Industry of Machinery and Tractors (*Industrija mašina i traktora – IMT*) was located in New Belgrade; industry of tractors and motor vehicles and electric industry were established in Rakovica; industry of machinery and metal constructions was set up in Železnik, while chemical industry was centred in Pančevo. The main food producer was Agricultural Combine Belgrade (*Poljoprivredni kombinat Beograd – PKB*).

*Agricultural Combine Belgrade* ▶

Repurposed from an old workshop for barges and flatboats repair, Tito Shipyard in New Belgrade became one the biggest and most advanced Yugoslav shipyard.



## THE NEW FAIR

With the original Belgrade fair having been used in wartime as a concentration camp in which the majority of the city's Jewish population was killed, a new fair was built in 1957 on the right bank of the Sava. The first event that took place at the new premises was the International Technical Fair, and Belgrade began hosting the International Book Fair the following year. Children especially looked forward to the New Year's Fair, which has been taking place since 1962.



◀ The New Fair building



Tito visiting the Technical Fair ▲

After confiscating property that once belonged to pre-war department stores owners, such as Vlada Mitić, the state set up socialist commercial enterprises, also known as People's Stores. In the beginning, they were poorly stocked, but things took a turn in the sixties with the opening of Department Stores

Belgrade (*Robne kuće Beograd*), which later became the largest retailer in the Balkans. The newly built department store in Terazije Square was especially popular among locals, as it featured the city's first escalator.

Carts with articles on sale were located in front of the department store in Terazije Square ▶



Department Stores Belgrade logo ▲

Increase in purchasing power, especially since the mid-sixties, created an environment in which the citizen could take out a great number of loans. This is how they were able to buy furniture, appliances and cars, or travel to various, increasingly attractive tourist destinations.

First loans were introduced in 1950. Until 1952, they could only be used for home canning, weddings and funerals.



The country experienced a severe case of inflation in 1979, when prices shot up by 25 percent in a single year. It was followed by shortages of consumer goods (coffee, oil, sugar, laundry detergent) and more power outages. That same year, the Law on Limiting the Use and Movement of Motor Vehicles came into effect as a fuel-saving measure.

# The end of an era

Even though the breakup of socialist Yugoslavia unravelled in 1991/1992, the beginning of the end could be felt after Tito's death in 1980. Due to growing national, economic and political problems, followed by collapse of communism throughout Europe, this peculiar, yet prosperous country was ultimately erased from the political and geographical map of the world – in most turbulent and bloody manner.

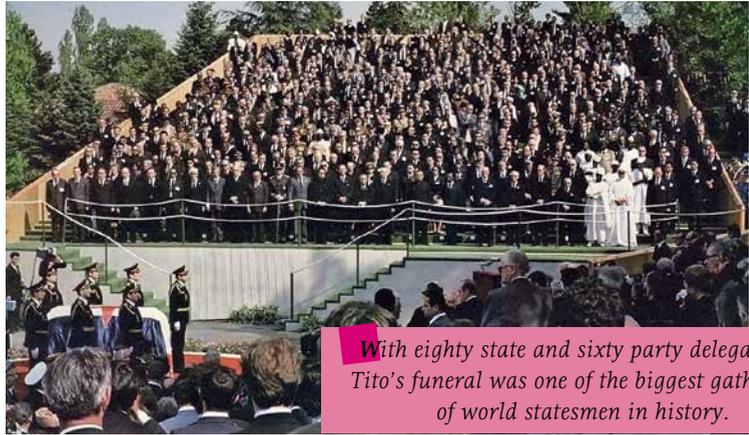
*The front page of Politika, May 5<sup>th</sup> 1980* ►



*House of Flowers* ▼



Josip Broz Tito died on May 4<sup>th</sup> 1980, and was honoured with a state funeral of spectacular proportions. In what was called “the last journey of the Blue Train”, his body was transferred from Ljubljana to Belgrade, where citizens and foreign officials paid their respects before the catafalque displayed at the Federal Assembly. Finally, the burial took place at the House of Flowers.



*Foreign delegations at Tito's funeral* ►

Owing to cult of personality, image of Tito as a just leader who looked after his citizens was built throughout his rule. His reputation in

the world was undisputable. In the wake of his death, the slogan “After Tito – Tito” emerged, an oath that *Titoism* would live on. However, following the breakup of Yugoslavia, Tito's way of governing and this era as a whole began to be subject of re-examination, one which continues to this day.

*With eighty state and sixty party delegations, Tito's funeral was one of the biggest gatherings of world statesmen in history.*

## BELGRADE IN THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

Every city has its own unique traits – Belgrade can reasonably claim to have been the capital of more states than any other city in the world. Since the beginning of the 20th century alone, it has been the capital of Kingdom of Serbia; Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes; Kingdom of Yugoslavia; Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (DFY); Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY); Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY); Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY); State Union of Serbia and Montenegro and, finally, Republic of Serbia. Name changes were often accompanied by historical shifts of various gravity, and at times even outright tragedies. All throughout, Belgrade has remained true to itself, always preserving its core values.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS::

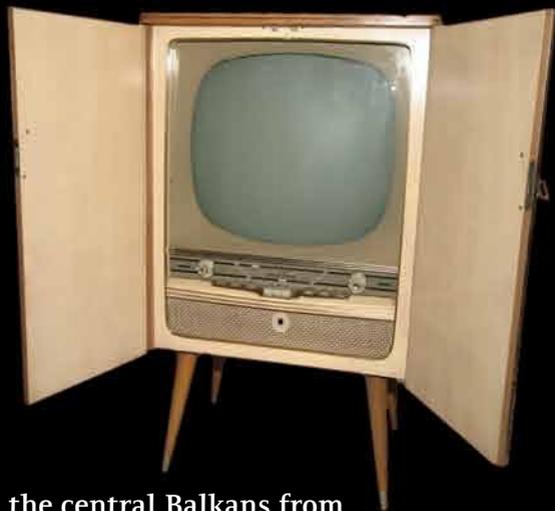
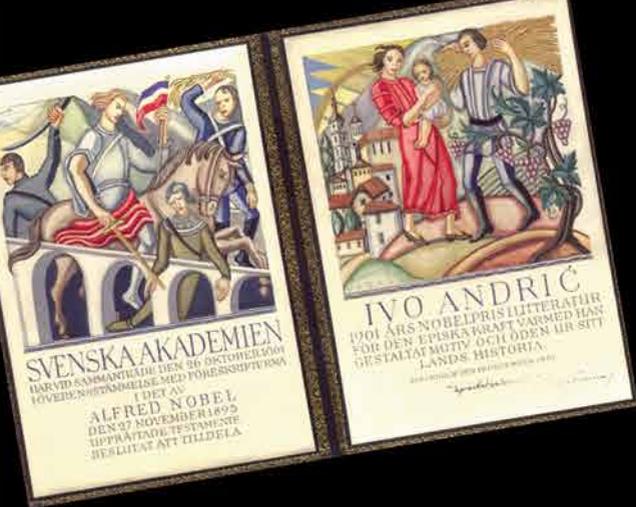
Museum of Yugoslav History, Museum of Science and Technology, Museum of Yugoslav Film Archive, Automobile Museum, Belgrade City Museum, Ethnographic Museum in Belgrade, Serbian Railway Museum, Pedagogical Museum in Belgrade, Historical Archives of Belgrade, FC *Red Star* Museum, Basketball Federation of Serbia, Industrija mašina i traktora a.d. Beograd, PKB korporacija, Robne kuće *Beograd* d.o.o. company, *Galenika* a.d. pharmaceutical company, the production department of the newspaper company *Politika novine i magazine* d.o.o., KBC *Bežanijska kosa*, Faculty of Dental Medicine in Belgrade, Football Association of Serbia, Tanjug news agency, *Tašmajdan* Sports Centre, Snežana Vicić (collection of postcards of the Vicić family), Tomislav Peternek, Eva Bulj, Gordana Magdić, Violeta Babić, Slavica Marković, Danijela Paracki and Jovan Vajdl for the illustrative material used in this book.



# Timeline

- 1944 ♦ **October 20<sup>th</sup>** – liberation of Belgrade and establishment of the new, communist rule
- 1945 ♦ **November 11** – women vote in the parliamentary election for the first time
- 1946 ♦ **April 21<sup>st</sup>–22<sup>nd</sup>** – Red Star Club opens the court in Kalemegdan Park with a basketball tournament
- 1948 ♦ **November 11<sup>th</sup>** – Tito declared the first honorary member of SASA (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts)  
♦ Mandatory vaccination against tuberculosis and diphtheria introduced
- 1949 ♦ **August 5<sup>th</sup>** – Yugoslav Film Archive founded
- 1951 ♦ **May** – Petar Lubarda's exhibition at the Gallery of the Association of Fine Artists of Serbia marks a watershed moment in the break from socialist realism
- 1952 ♦ **May 23<sup>rd</sup>** – after being nearly destroyed in the World War II bombing, the National Museum opens in Republic Square
- 1956 ♦ **September 10<sup>th</sup>** – a new bridge across the River Sava in Belgrade opens to traffic  
♦ **December 17<sup>th</sup>** – premiere of Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* in Atelje 212 Theatre
- 1958 ♦ **August 23<sup>rd</sup>** – Television Belgrade begins broadcasting an experimental programme  
♦ Artistic group *Mediala* founded
- 1960 ♦ October Salon founded, the largest exhibition of visual arts in Belgrade
- 1969 ♦ **July 31<sup>st</sup>** – Yugoslavia Hotel opens, the most modern and luxurious one in the country
- 1971 ♦ **March** – group of conceptual artists that includes Marina Abramović becomes active
- 1973 ♦ In Serbia, 53.3% of households own a television set, and 53% a refrigerator
- 1980 ♦ **May 4<sup>th</sup>** – death of Josip Broz Tito  
♦ Slobodan Šijan's film *Who's Singin' over There (Ko to tamo peva)* wins special jury prize at the Montreal Film Festival





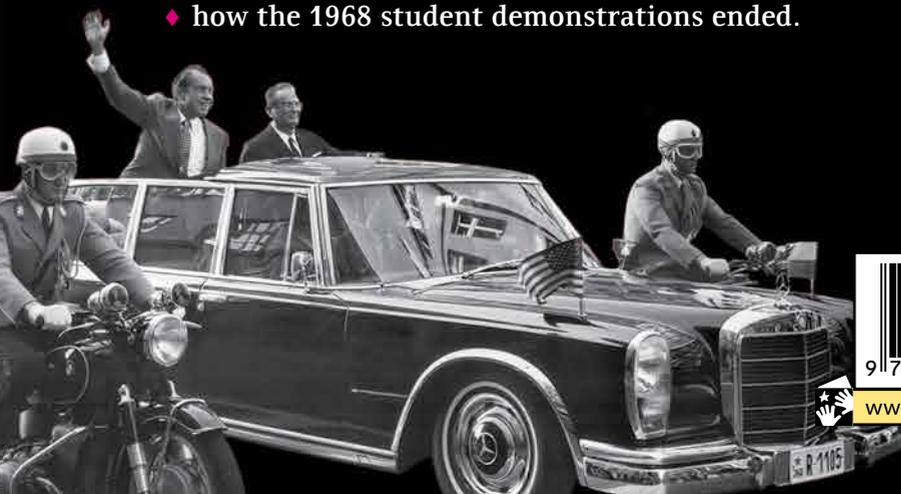
**HOW PEOPLE ONCE LIVED** edition describes everyday lives of people from the central Balkans from prehistoric times to modern day. Texts by renowned experts, lavish illustrations, treasures from museums' collections and archives, but also results of archaeological studies, will unveil an exciting past, full of new and unknown details.

## LIFE IN SOCIALISM (1945–1980)

Discover how people lived in socialism!

Find out:

- ◆ what the participants of youth working actions built
- ◆ when the first loans were introduced
- ◆ when *Fića* became the national car
- ◆ when women gained suffrage
- ◆ how people celebrated Josip Broz Tito's birthday
- ◆ how the 1968 student demonstrations ended.



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