TITO’S NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

“These mass gatherings encourage above all the eruption and the contagious spread of a good mood which is expended on shouting and movement, which forces uncontrolled surrender to the most spontaneous impulses. Always to the very end, to exhaustion, even to the point of being sick afterwards. This is what the law of holidays prescribes.” ¹

(Roger Caillois)

In Yugoslavia the celebration of New Year gained special importance only after the Second World War. Although the law on bringing the old and new calendars into line in the Kingdom of the Serbs Croats and Slovenes had been passed in 1919, Little Christmas, as New Year was known, was seldom celebrated and only as a symbol of Europeanization. In the early post-war years the custom of festivities for New Year was introduced; the first advertisements for

¹ Roger Caillois, Théorie de la fête, Culture 73/74/75, Centre for the Study of Cultural Development, Belgrade 1986, pp 32-33.
celebrations in hotels and restaurants appeared in the press and the USSR model was introduced for mass celebrations in public places (city squares, cultural centres, army clubs, factories and workplaces). Public holidays erase the borders between the personal and the social, and one of their primary functions is integration. This was a consideration when New Year celebrations for the president of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Josip “Tito” Broz, were being organized. Until the emergence of television, Tito celebrated the New Year among a small circle of friends and, each January 1, a message was broadcast on the radio in which he gave the citizens New Year greetings. When it happened that he was outside the borders of the country for the New Year an intimate celebration would be organized for him on the state yacht Galeb or in a local hotel. For example, an appropriate venue needed to be found in Egypt for New Year 1956. This wasn’t easy, because the hotel in which Josip Broz and his entourage were accommodated was rather ancient and there was a danger of the room collapsing if thirty-odd people were moving around in it. The alternative venue, the hotel bar on the ground floor, was inconvenient because of the large number of ordinary tourists.

In the sixties of the last century, when television broadcasts had become an integral part of everyday life, through the medium of the television image Tito’s celebrations became a “private”, a “home” and virtually a “family” event that the whole of Yugoslavia would watch. From that point on, the protocol staff of the Office of the President took great pains to see that the president was in a different republic of Yugoslavia each year and that, in addition to his private celebration with his wife and friends, he also visited one of the mass public celebrations, walked in the streets, rode on the city transport and was in the close company of the people.

Ana Panić
Curator, Art Historian
NEW YEAR CELEBRATION AS POLITICAL RITUAL

New Year was proclaimed a state holiday in SFR Yugoslavia only in 1955, with the passing of the first general law on state holidays. In the previous law, from 1929, it was mentioned only as a religious holiday for Catholics. The introduction of new holidays and ceremonies was an important element of the collective national identity and of the creation of a feeling of belonging to a community of all those living in Yugoslavia, regardless of their religion or nationality.

After the Second World War, the new, post-revolutionary authorities, in the process of a comprehensive transformation of the society and the creation of a new Man of Socialism began to implement the political strategy of inventing tradition. State holidays, festivals and rituals were an important part of this process as a means of preserving the social order and imposing new principles. The aim was to implant certain values and standards of behaviour
through repetition. In the early post-war years the old and new holidays were mixed in an interweaving of tradition and new ideology. Christmas was still officially celebrated, the newspapers published three-day holiday issues with Christmas songs and greetings. But from 1947 there wasn’t even a hint of the Christmas atmosphere in the press and every possible effort was made in public to suppress religious holidays: the old calendar of festivals, with its pre-revolutionary and religious connotations, had to be recoded, and a new “socialist” holiday was required. The Women’s Anti-Fascist Front was charged with handling the PR for this holiday, so at the end of 1948 this least-politicised mass organization, which up to then had been in charge of solving the practical problems of life (providing for children, working with women), embarked on promoting the New Year as the future “national tradition”. Children were also excellent vectors for this promotion. Emphasis was put on the New Year as a children’s holiday, a day of joy for all pioneers (and workers) who on this day could sum up the results of their work. The tree was decorated with socialist symbols, modelled after the celebrations in the USSR and Grandfather Frost was criticized as a creation of the Bolsheviks and clerics which bore far too much resemblance to St Nicholas. Instead, the central figure was to be a girl in national costume as the personification of the New Year bringing in the future, or as an old Partisan who would maintain the continuity of revolutionary traditions. Through a combination of propaganda and coercion (The authorities had ordered that trees, sweets and toys be withdrawn from the shops and then put back on sale again immediately before New Year, in order not to be on the market at the time of celebration of religious holidays.) the newly-created national holiday took its full form at the end of 1949, replacing in the public life of SFR Yugoslavia the former commemoration of religious festivals.

Ana Panić
Curator, Art Historian
TITO’S NEW YEARS
1962, CROATIA, BRIONI, THE RESIDENCE
2009
MY NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION
TITO’S NEW YEARS
1963, CROATIA, ZAGREB,
THE OLD PALACES ON RADIĆ SQUARE
2009
MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

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2009
MY NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION

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TITO’S NEW YEARS
1967, CROATIA, BRIONI, THE WHITE VILLA
TITO'S NEW YEARS
1968, SERBIA, BELGRADE, HOTEL METROPOL

Museum of Yugoslav History 2008
TITO’S NEW YEARS
1971, CROATIA, BRIONI, THE WHITE VILLA

Museum of Yugoslav History 2008
2009
MY NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION

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TITO’S NEW YEARS
1971, CROATIA, BRIONI, THE WHITE VILLA

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TITO’S NEW YEARS
1975, SERBIA, BELGRADE, THE RESIDENCE
2009
MY NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION

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2009
MY NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION

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TITO’S NEW YEARS
1961, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, SARAJEVO,
THE YUGOSLAV PEOPLE’S ARMY CENTRE
2009
MY NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION

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2009
MY NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION

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TITO'S NEW YEARS
1959, INDONESIA, TAMPAKSIRING

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MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

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MY NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION
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MY NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION
TITO’S NEW YEARS
1956, EGYPT, LUXOR, WINTER PALACE HOTEL

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2009
MY NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION
TITO’S NEW YEARS
1964, CROATIA, BRIONI, HOTEL ISTRA
2009
MY NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION
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