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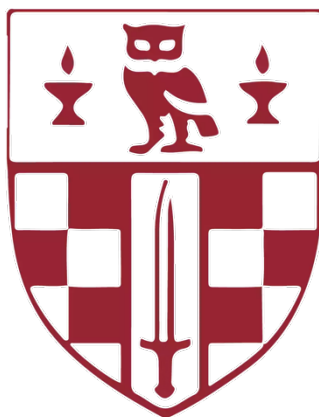
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Birkbeck College  
School of Historical Studies  
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# Peasant Internationalists and the Making of the Yugoslav Third Way, 1920-1956



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UBEL DTP  
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Submitted for PhD Examination

**Abstract:**

This dissertation investigates how Yugoslav specialists in health, education, economics, agriculture, and law strove to improve the living conditions, socioeconomic status, and welfare of peasants. In studying their 'lived experience' of internationalism using social and intellectual history methods, I conceptualise a unique type of twentieth-century international cooperation – 'peasant internationalism.' The project investigates 'peasant internationalism' in two ways: a social network of expertise that persisted beyond the Second World War and a collection of ideas and approaches to rural modernisation. Between 1920 and 1956, peasant international initiatives simultaneously bolstered and critiqued the 'liberal international' framework by influencing international laws and policies, approaches to modernisation, international aid, and development. The perspectives of peasant internationalists also demonstrate how national and international priorities coexisted within the League of Nations (LON) and the United Nations (UN) and how the smaller states shaped the international system from within and outside – through their collaboration in regional research institutes. The Yugoslav delegates cooperated with their colleagues from Central-Eastern Europe and other predominantly agricultural states in advocating for rural social justice, federalism, universal health, and democracy nurtured within the context of the global capitalist economy. However, they did not speak the language of liberalism or socialism. They understood sovereignty predominantly in economic rather than political or ideological terms. Finally, this dissertation reveals the salience of peasant internationalism in explaining the transition of power in Yugoslavia from the émigré government to the communist regime, revealing how it also influenced the Yugoslav foreign policy and political economy after WWII, paving the road to the country's leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement.

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# List of Abbreviations

AJ – Arhiv Jugoslavije (Archives of Yugoslavia)  
AVNOJ- Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije (the NKOJ)  
CAME – Conference of Allied Ministers of Education  
CE - Central-Eastern (European)  
CEEPB – Central and Eastern European Planning Board  
ECOSOC – Economic and Social Council of the UN  
FPRY – Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia  
HAD – Hrvatski Državni Arhiv  
HSS – Hrvatska seljačka stranka (Croat Peasant Party)  
IAOA - International Anti-Opium Association  
ICIC – International Committee for Intellectual Cooperation  
IEO - International Education Office  
ILO International Labour Organisation  
IOC -International Opium Conference  
JIC - Jugoslav Information Bureau  
KPJ – Komunistička partija Jugoslavije (the Communist Party of Yugoslavia)  
LON- League of Nations  
NAM – Non-Aligned Movement  
NDH – Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (Independent State of Croatia)  
NLC – National Liberation Council  
NKOJ – Narodni komitet oslobođenja Jugoslavije (NLC)  
NOP – Narodnoslobodilački pokret (The National Liberation Movement)  
NYPL – New York Public Library  
PCB – Permanent Central Board  
RYNB – Royal Yugoslav National Bank  
SHS - Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes)  
SUNFED – Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development  
UCSS – United Committee of South Slavs  
UN – United Nations  
UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development  
UNESCO – United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Cooperation  
Organisation  
UNRRA – United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency  
US – United States  
WHO – World Health Organisation  
WWI – World War I  
WWII – World War II

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# 1. Introduction

In the autumn of 1935, Rudolf Bićanić, a Yugoslav economist, yearned for human interaction after enduring three years of solitary confinement in Mitrovica prison. He wanted to return to “the people” – the Yugoslav peasants. He was not interested in “the small circle of the privileged elite.”<sup>1</sup> Bićanić decided to journey through the poorest passive regions of Yugoslavia - southwest Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Dalmatia – which, due to its climate, “even in normal times had difficulty producing enough food and employment to support the population.”<sup>2</sup> During his travels, he gained deep insights into the life of a “fine, yet suffering highland peasant imprisoned in the magic circle of a harsh existence.”<sup>3</sup> According to Bićanić, a peasant had to dedicate all his resources and energy to fulfilling basic needs, unable to ever attain a resemblance of prosperity. “He is perpetually in want and therefore perpetually exploited.” To earn a living, “he sells his produce” and “if he has nothing to sell, which is often than not the case, he borrows at the most unfavourable rates or works for the lowest daily wages,” observed Bićanić. The main economic preoccupation of a peasant is to “survive the winter and avoid perishing of starvation. Bills, expenses, an eye to profit, planning in general – are beside the point.”<sup>4</sup>

Upon learning of these hardships, Bićanić was filled with intense fury, making his “blood boil, and his fists knot up.” He was not captivated by things but by “people,” particularly those in the Yugoslav countryside, which appealed to his “conscience and sense of responsibility.”<sup>5</sup> He acknowledged that to effectively engage in public life, one must deeply understand the life and desires of the people. “Whoever wishes to become active in public life must know how the people live and what they really want. That knowledge is a precondition of every public activity, whatever

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Bićanić, *How the People Live: Life in the Passive Regions* (Plurabelle Books, 1981), 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>5</sup> Bićanić argued that ‘*gospoda*’ or *gentlemen* who visit the Yugoslav villages are usually only interested in the folk culture (dress and cultural traditions). On the contrary, he wanted to hear about the daily lives of a Yugoslav peasant. He collated his reflections on the daily struggles for food and water, as well as the peasant experience in buying and selling goods at the market and paying off debts in his book *How the People Live*, 28.

its specific direction: sociology, economics, politics, culture,”<sup>6</sup> he stated. Bićanić was not the only civil servant who defended peasant interests and fought to improve the socioeconomic conditions of life in the Yugoslav countryside. The dissertation explores how economists, health reformers, legal experts, diplomats, and educators discovered the hardships of Yugoslav peasants and how this recognition shaped their activities outside Yugoslavia, working in international institutions from 1920 to 1956.

This dissertation examines the contributions of six prominent figures — Slobodan Jovanović, Konstantin Fotić, Andrija Štampar, Rudolf Bićanić, Nicholas Mirkovich, and Boris Furlan — to Yugoslav international engagement. Despite their diverse backgrounds and expertise, each played a pivotal role in defining Yugoslavia’s position within the international system. Engaged across various organisations and political contexts, including the League of Nations (LON), the United Nations (UN), the Central and Eastern European Planning Board (CEEPB), and the Yugoslav émigré government, these individuals navigated their dual roles as both experts and diplomats in international forums with pragmatism. This dissertation examines the contributions of six prominent figures — Slobodan Jovanović, Konstantin Fotić, Andrija Štampar, Rudolf Bićanić, Nicholas Mirkovich, and Boris Furlan — to Yugoslav international engagement. Despite their diverse backgrounds and expertise, each played a pivotal role in defining Yugoslavia’s position within the international system. Engaged across various organisations and political contexts, including the League of Nations (LON), the United Nations (UN), the Central and Eastern European Planning Board (CEEPB), and the Yugoslav émigré government, these individuals navigated their dual roles as both experts and diplomats in international forums with pragmatism. While Štampar, Furlan, Bićanić, and Mirkovich were noted for their technocratic expertise in health, education and economics, Jovanović and Fotić considered themselves foremost diplomats and legal experts. Therefore, these experts were not a unified group. They diverged in the degree of their personal motivation for the improvement of peasant life conditions, reflecting on different conceptualisations of international policies.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 24.

(1) Jovanović and Fotić indirectly contributed to protecting the economic standing of Yugoslav peasants through their concern for upholding Yugoslav production of raw opium (2) Štampar and Furlan's work focused on improving peasant welfare more directly as they nationally and internationally introduced new rural welfare measures focusing on health, housing, and education. At the same time, (3) Mirkovich and Bićanić took Jovanović's and Fotić's arguments to the level of international political economy inspired by their sociological studies of rural life. They fought to integrate Yugoslavia into a more equitable international economic order based on the market economy, foreshadowing the acceleration of these claims during the period of decolonisation. Despite their personal disagreements, including open hostilities between Fotić and Bićanić and differences in motivations behind their international contributions, when considered through the prism of international cooperation, these men's common desire to advocate for the rights and welfare of rural inhabitants qualifies them as 'peasant internationalists' who Yugoslavia on the 'optimal' path to modernisation with the countryside at its centre. Concurrently, 'peasant internationalism', as a form of international cooperation, is defined as a network of technical expertise and as a collection of ideas and policies propagating a rurally centred approach to modernisation, which they would from 1942 onwards, more often referred to as 'development.'

This interplay between specialised knowledge and diplomatic activity in international organisations is a helpful lens for holistically studying the Yugoslav international engagement across various socioeconomic forums bridging the interwar, wartime and early Cold War periods.<sup>7</sup> By prioritising expert or technical cooperation in the context of international diplomacy, the dissertation reveals the significance of the interwar period for understanding small-state contributions to the international system. Yugoslav experts and their colleagues from Turkey, India, Egypt, Iran, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Romania, among other states, redefined international laws and standards, forming cooperative networks across continents and furthering peasant-focused approaches to modernisation and international development.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> On the interdependent relationship between the two categories, see Jessica Reinisch, "Technical Conferences as a Technique of Internationalism", *The British Journal for the History of Science* 56 (4) (2023): 1–18.

<sup>8</sup> I understand development as a multidirectional and reciprocal process enacted by a range of historical actors who understood that societies and economies develop in stages, with some states exhibiting higher and some lower levels of economic productivity, social protection, and life standards.

Peasant internationalists were not merely the agents of nationalism shaping the international image of the Yugoslav state. They were also the ‘agents of internationalism’ as they actively informed and challenged conceptualisations of various international projects. The following chapters present five case studies of how the Yugoslav rural peasant conditions motivated these experts in thinking and acting internationally. This includes the domain of international relations, formal diplomatic contacts between the nations, and the movement and circulation of their ideas, knowledge, networks, and imaginations across borders.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, the story of Yugoslav international cooperation along peasant-driven agendas offers a new way to think about the relationship between state sovereignty, modernisation, diplomacy, technical expertise, and international hierarchies in the time of the Yugoslav post-imperial transition.<sup>10</sup>

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia, officially known as the Kingdom of Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes until 1929, was established on December 1, 1918, mere weeks after the First World War ended. It was a diverse and heterogeneous country that recognised two official alphabets and three religions, underwent four constitutional changes, and had nine governments. The Kingdom was administered by eleven provincial authorities and employed thirteen different legal codes.<sup>11</sup> Ethnic tensions, largely a result of the divergent historical development of the country’s regions, the Serbian dominance over political and legal state structures, and the underrepresentation of all constituent “tribes” of the Yugoslav state marked the early years of its existence as an independent state.<sup>12</sup> These conflicts, particularly the lack of ethnic and ideological consensus among political elites inherent in the “Serb-Croat Question” revolving around the differing visions of the Yugoslav state

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<sup>9</sup> Borrowing the terminology from Jessica Reinisch, "Introduction: Agents of Internationalism," *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 2 (2016): 200.

<sup>10</sup> For an example of such challenges, see the case of the civil administration transition in Slovenia in Rok Stergar, "Continuity, Pragmatism, and Ethnolinguistic Nationalism: Public Administration in Slovenia during the Early Years of Yugoslavia," in *Hofratsdämmerung?*, vol. 75 (Germany: Böhlau Wien, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Srdjan Milošević, "Društvo Jugoslavije 1918–1991: Od Stagnacije do Revolucije" in: Perović, Latinka et al. (eds), *Jugoslavija u Istorijskoj Perspektivi* (Helsinki odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2017), 328.

<sup>12</sup> Montenegrins, Bosnian Muslims and Macedonians all fought for recognition of their rights as “tribes” of the Yugoslav nation. Marie-Janine Calic, *History of Yugoslavia* (Purdue University Press, 2018), 71.

precipitated the establishment of King Alexander's dictatorship in 1929.<sup>13</sup> A decade later, the creation of Banovina Hrvatska transformed the Kingdom into a semi-federal monarchy, addressing Croat objections to the centralist and Serb-dominated state structures. However, this 'marriage of convenience,' orchestrated through the deal between Cvetkovic and Macek, was short-lived. As the effects of the Second World War loomed over Europe, the stability of this arrangement crumbled, with Yugoslavia being occupied by the Axis powers in April 1941.<sup>14</sup>

Yugoslavia, at its heart, was also a nation of peasants. As suggested by Srdjan Milosevic, the socioeconomic landscape of interwar Yugoslavia could aptly be termed "a museum of agrarian structures." The breadth of socioeconomic relations spanned from the semi-feudal system of 'kolonat' in Dalmatia to remnants of ancient aristocratic land estates in the country's northeast. This complex mosaic of agrarian conditions labelled Yugoslavia as a "capitalism of the European periphery," characterised by remarkably low industrialisation and urbanisation rates. The country trumped only Albania in low urbanisation rates, with just two cities — Zagreb and Belgrade — boasting populations exceeding 100,000.<sup>15</sup>

Despite representing the numerical majority, the living conditions of Yugoslav peasants were amongst the continent's most dire. As recorded in the 1939 Yugoslav monograph produced for the League of Nations, in 1921, over 79% of the population officially lived of agriculture. According to Bićanić, more than two-thirds of peasants resided on land parcels less than two acres in size, resulting in a mere 2% producing sufficient food to evade indebtedness.<sup>16</sup> Hunger and malnutrition afflicted two million people, and poor health, coupled with an alarming infant mortality rate of 16.5% and an illiteracy rate surpassing 50%, positioned Yugoslavia atop undesirable European

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<sup>13</sup> On the "Serb-Croat Question," see Dejan Djokić, "Nationalism, Myth and Reinterpretation of History: The Neglected Case of Interwar Yugoslavia", *European History Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (2012), 80. For the overview of the Yugoslav state-building process and the Vidovdan constitution, consult Chapter 2 "The First Yugoslavia, Part I" in Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005* (Indiana University Press, 2006), 35-77 and for King Alexander's dictatorship, Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia* (University of Toronto Press, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Djokić, "Nationalism, Myth and Reinterpretation of History," 74.

<sup>15</sup> The rates of urban population remained under 18% during the interwar period, while the population of industrial workers was limited to 4%. Milosevic, "Drustvo Jugoslavije," 339-340.

<sup>16</sup> Bićanić, *How the People Live*, 93-98.

statistics.<sup>17</sup> These statistics varied significantly from region to region, much like the socioeconomic structures. Peasants residing in the arid Dinaric highlands, alongside those in parts of today's North Macedonia, experienced the harshest conditions. While historians have examined the government's efforts to resolve these peasant problems — collectively known as the Agrarian Question — within the context of the Yugoslav state, the influence of these living conditions on Yugoslavia's international relationships, extending beyond the scope of peasant parties and their regional alliances, remains unclear.<sup>18</sup>

Historical analyses of Yugoslavia's international history often overlook the perspectives of these 'peasant internationalists' by favouring the views of senior political leaders from interwar and wartime Yugoslavia. My research rectifies this omission by amplifying the voices of lesser-known civil servants, some conscious and some 'reluctant internationalists' across diverse disciplines, emphasising their ideas, collaborations, and contributions to international cooperative projects.<sup>19</sup> This study also investigates the ideas of rural modernisation and international networks of Yugoslav experts and diplomats, illustrating the strategic use of internationalism to strengthen, consolidate and expand Yugoslav sovereignty in political and economic realms.<sup>20</sup> Finally, it connects the interwar, wartime and Cold War Yugoslav history with the history of internationalism and technical cooperation to reveal the foundations of the Yugoslav 'third way' in political economy and foreign policy between the East and the West.

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<sup>17</sup> The League of Nations, *European Conference on Rural Life, 1939*, 'National Monographs Drawn up By Governments,' C.169. M.99, 8-9.

<sup>18</sup> The Agrarian Reform was one of the most pressing issues of the new state. Jozo Tomasevich produced one of the most comprehensive studies of the slow attempts to implement the Agrarian reform in various parts of Yugoslavia starting with the "The Interim Decree on the Preparation of the Agrarian Reform February 25, 1919." He also studied the consequences of this reform on the size and structures of the farms, land utilization, production, market conditions and exports of agricultural goods. Jozo Tomasevich, *Peasants, Politics, and Economic Change in Yugoslavia*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955), 345–628; Doreen Warriner, "Urban Thinkers and Peasant Policy in Yugoslavia, 1918-59", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 38, no. 90 (1959): 59–81; Milivoje Erić, *Agrarna Reforma u Jugoslaviji: 1918-1941* (Izdavačko preduzeće "Veselin Malseša," 1958).

<sup>19</sup> Referring to the 'Reluctant internationalists project' completed at Birkbeck College, University of London 2013-2017. <http://www7.bbk.ac.uk/reluctantinternationalists/> [last accessed, 11 July 2023].

<sup>20</sup> Following Glenda Sluga's arguments in Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

Given this thematic and periodical focus, the dissertation places two sets of questions at the heart of the analysis: (1) What kind of ideas, aims, and objectives did Yugoslav peasant internationalists promote in the international sphere? In what way were they a distinctive feature of the Yugoslav socioeconomic context? When were these ideas furthered and propagated by other state representatives, and what consequences did that have for Yugoslav international alliances and cooperation beyond 1945? (2) How did peasant international ideas and collaborative networks shape the international norms and standards, interest groups, structures, and approaches to modernisation in the League of Nations and the UN? To what extent did peasant internationalism influence liberal and socialist international cooperation, development policies, and imaginaries after 1945?

## 1. Historiographical Context

“I know too well that only a few townsmen, a few educated men, know anything about how the people really live,” testified Bićanić, finding the reason for the lack of political visibility of peasants in the intelligentsia’s ignorance and lack of knowledge about the rural living conditions.<sup>21</sup> Histories of Yugoslav international relations and high diplomacy often reflect the diversity, division and conflict that seemed so endemic to the first Yugoslav state. Yet, they also frequently fail to appreciate the international consequences of perhaps the only unifying aspect of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia – the predominantly agricultural character of the country and the arduous life of peasants.

Historiographical themes and trends have significantly influenced the study of Yugoslav history since the end of the Second World War. During the country’s reconstruction as a federal socialist republic in 1945, which emphasised “brotherhood and unity” in contrast to the ethnically fraught interwar Kingdom, historians prioritised the questions of creation and dissolution of the First

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<sup>21</sup> Bićanić, *How the People Live*, 24.



Yugoslavia (1918-1941) to make sense of its decline and eventual disintegration. For instance, they examined how territorial integrity, ethnic considerations, and the ideological perspectives of different representatives influenced Yugoslavia's representation at the Paris Peace Conference and "held together first Yugoslavia during a long interval before the [Vidovdan] constitution could be ratified."<sup>22</sup> Studies by Lederer, Mitrovic and Krizman on the Yugoslav delegation at the Paris Peace Conference reveal that the principle of historical legitimacy took precedence over ethnic principles to preserve the state's territorial integrity, threatened by Italy's potential occupation of the Adriatic Coast and Austrian and Hungarian revisionism, addressing numerous minority issues with neighbouring states.<sup>23</sup> During the 1980s, a decade marked by re-emerging ethnic tensions and a severe economic crisis leading into the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, historians, led by Ivo Banac, revisited the roots of Yugoslav political instability. This era revealed a deep-seated tension between the desire for Yugoslav unity and distinct national identities and aspirations underpinning the political crisis culminating in the country's dissolution.<sup>24</sup>

Only in the last decade has Yugoslav historiography taken the transnational turn, with interwar history still needing to catch up with the studies of Yugoslav cooperation after 1945.<sup>25</sup> Drapac and

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<sup>22</sup> The Vidovdan Constitution was only ratified in June 1921; for a detailed analysis of the constitution and the political structure in interwar Yugoslavia, see John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 117; Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*; Ivana Žebec Šilj, "Pregled Općeg Političkog Stanja u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, Kasnije Kraljevini Jugoslaviji", *Studia Lexicographica: Časopis Za Leksikografiju i Enciklopedistiku* 12, no. 22 (2018): 27–45.

<sup>23</sup> Andrej Mitrović, *Jugoslavija na konferenciji mira 1919-1920*. (Beograd: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika Socijalističke Republike Srbije, 1969); Bogdan Krizman, "Stvaranje Jugoslavenske Države i Njeni Medjunarodni Odnosi u Istoriji Jugoslavije", *Časopis Za Suvremenu Povijest* 5, no. 2 (1973): 32–42; Bogdan Krizman, "Vanjska Politika Jugoslavenske Države 1918-1941: Diplomatsko-Historijski Pregled", 1975; Bogdan Krizman, "Vanjskopolitički Položaj Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca Godine 1919", *Časopis Za Suvremenu Povijest* 2, no. 1 (1970): 23–59; Ivo J. Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference; a Study in Frontiermaking*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

<sup>24</sup> Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Cornell University Press, 2019); Emily Greble and Vladislav Lilić, "Nations, Politics, and the Role of History in East Central Europe", *The American Historical Review* 128, no. 2 (2023): 951–62.

<sup>25</sup> Patricia Clavin defined 'transnationalism' as a social space inhabited by people, the networks they form, and the ideas they exchange. She argued that transnationalism creates honeycomb structures that sustain and give shape to the identities of nation-states, international and local institutions, and particular social and geographic spaces. It binds and contains hollowed-out spaces where organisations, individuals and ideas can operate it and eventually be replaced by new groups, people, and innovations. Patricia Clavin, "Defining Transnationalism", *Contemporary European History* 14, no. 4 (2005): 422. Akira Iriye profoundly influenced this international and transnational turn. Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (UCP, 2004).

Balikić investigated the external influence on its state formation and explored how the Allies conceptualised and affected Yugoslavia's national and state-building processes.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, Marie-Janine Calic's study of Yugoslavia's post-1921 activities in the League of Nations zooms in on the demands for territorial integrity, regional security, and ethnic and minority problems birthed by peace treaties. Although she acknowledges that there were reasons other than sovereignty and territorial integrity vital to the successor states, as the League of Nations "addressed issues such as migration, disarmament, terrorism, and combat of disease which were not contained by state borders," her analysis of the Central-Eastern (CE) European contributions to these international endeavours stops short with the example of Nicolae Titulescu - a Romanian lawyer who was twice elected as a chair of the LON's Financial Committee. He was also a supporter of the regional security bloc – The Little Entente - between Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, which aimed to protect the Habsburg post-imperial states against the Austrian and Hungarian revisionism.<sup>27</sup> However, providing territorial security guarantees was not the only aspect of this regional cooperation. As Sara Silverstein demonstrated, the *Little Health Entente* played a significant role in the early 1920s in the process of universalisation of healthcare provision, which later transferred to the LON and reconceptualised sovereignty in Central-Eastern Europe, linking it to medical self-governance.<sup>28</sup>

This dissertation explores the seldom-examined Yugoslav participation in the socioeconomic initiatives of the League of Nations. It speaks to recent historiography highlighting the League's significant role in shaping international governance across various domains, such as public health, economic management, crime control, and the management of imperial dissolution.<sup>29</sup> Daniel

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<sup>26</sup> Vesna Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia: A Transnational History* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010) and Lucija Balikić, *Najbolje namjere: kako su britanski i francuski intelektualci stvarali Jugoslaviju* (Zagreb, 2021).

<sup>27</sup> Marie-Janine Calic and Elizabeth Janik, *The Great Cauldron: A History of Southeastern Europe* (Harvard University Press, 2019), 414–17. He was also a supporter of the Little Entente, a regional security bloc that acted as "a central building bloc of the new, post-First World War architecture of security." This alliance formed in 1920 and 1921 through the system of bilateral treaties between Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia aimed to protect the countries against the Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Austrian revisionism.

<sup>28</sup> Sara Silverstein, "Reinventing International Health in East Central Europe: The League of Nations, State Sovereignty, and Universal Health", in *Remaking Central Europe*, eds. Peter Becker and Natasha Wheatley (Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>29</sup> David Petrucci, "The Crisis of Liberal Internationalism: The Legacies of the League of Nations Reconsidered", *Journal of World History* 31, no. 1 (2020): 115.

Gorman's 'functional internationalism' concept encapsulates this 'technocratic' problem-solving approach to diplomacy, driven by global challenges and the collaboration of a diverse group of professionals, experts, activists, and intellectuals committed to technical cooperation as a foundation for international governance.<sup>30</sup> Building on this framework, the subsequent chapters delve into the contributions of Yugoslav specialists to international efforts in health, rural development, anti-drug legislation, sanitation, education, and economic reconstruction. An effect of adopting a 'technocratic' perspective is the critical importance of economic sovereignty in comprehending Yugoslavia's approach to international cooperation and its pragmatic 'third way' positioning within the international system after 1945.<sup>31</sup> Peasant internationalists, as experts in their particular field, used the governance ideas and modernisation models of both socialism and liberalism. However, they did not understand their proposals in ideological terms, in the same vein that Johanna Bockman demonstrated in her sociological study of Eastern European economists.<sup>32</sup>

While economic perspectives do feature in the study of Yugoslav international history, the existing scholarship focuses on macroeconomic trends aiming to elucidate the impact of staggering inflation, balance of payments deficits, patterns of trade and exchange rates on Yugoslav foreign policy and escalating political crisis.<sup>33</sup> However, this top-down view of the Yugoslav political economy does not reveal the effects of the economic "backwardness" on the ideas and actions of Yugoslav diplomats and technocrats, whom the government employed "as carriers of specialised knowledge" and their ability to distinct "technical problems from their political applications."<sup>34</sup> For instance, Calic and Lampe elucidated how Yugoslavia's macroeconomic position within the global

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<sup>30</sup> Daniel Gorman, *International Cooperation in the Early Twentieth Century*, New Approaches to International History series (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 6.

<sup>31</sup> By asking what the League did and meant to various subjectivities historians have thought the liberal internationalism of the League of Nations focusing on the social and economic cooperation, scientific exchanges of knowledge, and movement of ideas and people across national boundaries. Ana Antic, Johanna Conterio, and Dora Vargha, "Conclusion: Beyond Liberal Internationalism", *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 2 (2016): 359–71.

<sup>32</sup> Johanna Bockman, *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism* (Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>33</sup> John Lampe, for example, studied how the differences in economic development of Croatia and Serbia fueled the political crisis in interwar Yugoslavia. Zagreb's commercial bank refused to participate in the newly established Yugoslav Central Bank in Belgrade, which had a majority Serbian shareholder. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 119-120.

<sup>34</sup> Reinisch, "Technical Conferences as a Technique of Internationalism," 1.

and European economic order contributed to the country's "underdevelopment." They assert that while Yugoslavia might have pursued an independent regional economic policy, it remained economically subordinate to the major powers—Great Britain, France and Germany—thus fostering a state of dependency and inferiority.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Hadzi-Jovančić interprets the Yugoslav-German trade agreements of the 1930s through a lens of Yugoslav geopolitical security concerns against its superior neighbour.<sup>36</sup>

In prioritising international cooperative facets of Yugoslav economic history, the dissertation's methodological pivot allows for a deeper analysis of how microeconomic living conditions — factors like production, purchasing power, education levels, and health of peasants — shaped Yugoslav participation in the League of Nations' social and economic committees. It probes the question of whether the Yugoslav officials indeed saw the future of their country tied to the democratic allies – the US, Britain, and France and the liberal international world order based on democracy, freedom, and justice.<sup>37</sup> Peasant internationalists interpreted their roles within the League differently. The intertwined issues of health, education, economic reconstruction, drug production, and agricultural restructuring suggest that for these Yugoslav experts, international cooperation was not simply an ideological matter of socialism or liberalism. They prioritised the questions of national and international modernisation, understanding self-determination in predominantly economic rather than political terms.

Yugoslavia was not alone in its quest to find a voice in the international system. Other Central and Eastern European states established post-World War I shared this fate, collectively striving for inclusion in the new international structures and global economic trade networks. These nations

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<sup>35</sup> Apart from Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, for studying trade balances, and differences in economic performance between Yugoslavia and the rest of the Western industrialised states, consult, Zachary T. Irwin, "Yugoslavia's Relations with European States", in *Beyond Yugoslavia* (Routledge, 2019), 349–92; Alan F. Fogelquist, *Politics and Economic Policy in Yugoslavia, 1918-1929* (University of California Press, 1990); Kovač Oskar, "Foreign Economic Relations", in *Beyond Yugoslavia* edited by Sabrina Petra Ramet and Ljubisa S. Adamovich (Routledge, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Perica Hadzi-Jovancic, *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia: An Economy of Fear, 1933-1941* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).

<sup>37</sup> Dejan Djokić and Alan Sharp, *Pasic and Trumbic: The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes* (London: Haus Publishing, 2010), 99.

on the European periphery — including Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria — collaboratively informed, reconceptualised, and moulded the League of Nations' approach to international cooperation in health, economic reconstruction, and education. They premised their involvement in international projects on their perceived economic 'backwardness' interpreted as an opportunity for modernisation and development rather than a sign of civilisational inferiority.<sup>38</sup> The dissertation documents these collaborative efforts from the perspective of Yugoslavia's relationships with like-minded Central-Eastern European colleagues.

Rather than competing against each other for influence within the League of Nations socioeconomic committees, these Central-Eastern European experts fostered a spirit of cooperation that lay at the heart of peasant internationalism, understanding exchanges of expertise as conduits for overcoming regional 'backwardness.'<sup>39</sup> These attempts at international cooperation embraced the structures, functions, and procedural framework of the League of Nations. Still, they also infused the organisation with distinctive, peasant-centric ideas and methodologies of modernisation and state-building.

From the regional Central-Eastern European perspective, international involvement served as an opportunity for state-building by gaining much-needed financing for public health and rural community projects. However, by collaboratively solving these issues within the international sphere, peasant internationalists globalised their approach to rural modernisation by integrating objectives of progressive welfare-focused movements across various socioeconomic spheres. Rural

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<sup>38</sup> These emerging narratives have begun to question the 'peripherality' of these nations. Historians of medicine have played a particularly important role in this process. Sara Silverstein, "The Periphery Is the Centre: Some Macedonian Origins of Social Medicine and Internationalism", *Contemporary European History* 28, no. 2 (2019): 220–33; Susan Gross Solomon and Lion Murard, 'Outside the Family of Nations: First Thoughts on Writing a History of Public Health from the Perspective of Outlier Nations', *Gesnerus* 74, no. 2 (2017): 216–28; Susan Gross Solomon, Lion Murard, and Patrick Zylberman, *Shifting Boundaries of Public Health: Europe in the Twentieth Century* (University Rochester Press, 2008); For a more theoretical reflection on the invention of Eastern Europe as a periphery, consult Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford University Press, 1994).

<sup>39</sup> James Mark and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonisation* (Oxford University Press, 2022); Bogdan C. Iacob, "Malariology and Decolonization: Eastern European Experts from the League of Nations to the World Health Organization", *Journal of Global History* 17, no. 2 (2022): 233–53.

hygiene and rural life conferences in the 1930s saw the interdisciplinary collaboration of rural experts expanded the reach of the League of Nations Health Organisation from European to global health concerns, as evidenced in chapter three. When taken together, the following chapters narrate how Yugoslav and CE experts emerged as facilitators of technical assistance and development programs within the United Nations, socialist solidarity projects, and non-aligned networks beyond 1945.

The theoretical and methodological frameworks of the dissertation are deeply rooted in the historiography of internationalism. Over the last decade, historians have confronted and reshaped the dominant narratives that depict the League of Nations as a failure, which were founded on diplomatic studies of the great powers' imperialist, nationalist, and protectionist policies in the 1930s.<sup>40</sup> By shifting focus from the diplomatic to the technical (socioeconomic) aspects of the League's activities — a methodological pivot echoed in this study — historians have unravelled the complexities of diverse 'internationalisms' within and beyond the League.<sup>41</sup>

These recent investigations of alternative internationalisms challenge the monolithic interpretation of the League as a platform for Western-focused liberal internationalists to advance their nationalist agendas. For instance, Daniel Laqua demonstrated how, despite ideological divisions within Belgium, Catholics, liberals, and socialists often found common ground on international issues. To them, internationalism was part of a broader commitment to progress and reform that transcended national boundaries.<sup>42</sup> Continuing in this vein, *Internationalists in European History* and *Placing Internationalism* delve into the multifaceted nature of international history, exploring its various forms and examining historical perceptions of geography, regions, centres, peripheries,

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<sup>40</sup> For example, see Patricia Clavin, "Europe and the League of Nations", *Twisted Paths: Europe 1914–1945*, 2007, 330–54; Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History 1919–1933* (OUP Oxford, 2005), chap. 7; Patrick O. Cohrs, *The New Atlantic Order: The Transformation of International Politics, 1860–1933* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

<sup>41</sup> Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge University Press, 2017); Jessica Reinisch and David Brydan, *Internationalists in European History: Rethinking the Twentieth Century* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021).

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Laqua, "The Age of Internationalism and Belgium, 1880–1930: Peace, Progress and Prestige", in *The Age of Internationalism and Belgium, 1880–1930* (Manchester University Press, 2015), 11. Also see special section on "The Dark Side of Transnationalism" in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, 51, 1 (2016), 3–90.

borderlands, and trans-regional connections within the history of internationalism.<sup>43</sup> By studying what is “inside of the container” of the League of Nations, this dissertation tries to make sense of how the Yugoslav actors positioned the country in the myriad of international projects, practices and ideas.<sup>44</sup>

My point of departure is considering internationalism as a “lived experience,” concentrating on how the lives of Yugoslav experts—themselves influenced by harsh peasant life conditions—shaped international ideas and practices.<sup>45</sup> This exploration requires multi-scale analysis. Scholars have begun dissecting the complex interplay between individuals and knowledge networks, examining how their training and expertise informed international interactions.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, they have evaluated how national contexts and individual local experiences influenced international policies, subsequently reshaping our understanding of government and state participation in international organisations.<sup>47</sup>

Echoing these methodologies, I combine an analytical approach of the bureaucratic and organisational histories of the League of Nations with a mixture of “internationalism from below.” Apart from paying close attention to how individuals thought and acted internationally, I contextualise the decision-making of technical experts and diplomats through the top-down analysis of international organisations' policies and hierarchies. This allows the dissertation to question the impact or causal significance of peasant internationalists' actions.<sup>48</sup> This approach elucidates the following guiding questions. What were the ideas and solutions to socioeconomic problems in the countryside that Yugoslav peasant internationalists advocated for, and which projects did they dispute? How did the local and national contexts in which they operated influence their priorities and motivations? How did their interactions with other national representatives

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<sup>43</sup> Stephen Legg et al., *Placing Internationalism: International Conferences and the Making of the Modern World* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021); Reinisch and Brydan, *Internationalists in European History*, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Reinisch, "Introduction: Agents of Internationalism," 196.

<sup>45</sup> Reinisch and Brydan, *Internationalists in European History*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 202.

<sup>47</sup> Antic et. al., “Beyond Liberal Internationalism,” 361.

<sup>48</sup> For a detailed discussion of integrating multiple scales of analysis, see Antic et al., “Beyond Liberal Internationalism,” and for studying internationalism as a lived experience, Reinisch and Brydan, *Internationalists in European History*, 7.

inform, reinforce, or challenge the institutional and ideological framework of the League of Nations and the UN?

Exploring Yugoslav international history through the perspective of historical actors is a product of the praxiological shift that the scholarship has undergone in the past decades.<sup>49</sup> In the case of interwar Yugoslavia, Dejan Djokić investigated the Yugoslav participation at the Paris Peace Conference through the eyes of the delegation leaders—Nikola Pasic and Ante Trumbic. He uncovered how these diplomats sculpted Yugoslav international representation, navigating the intricate interplay of inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic, and intra-party rivalries while striving to present a united front on issues concerning the territorial integrity of the Kingdom.<sup>50</sup> Vedran Duančić emphasised the perspectives of technical experts—geographers—to highlight how their contributions to the preparatory work for the Paris Peace Conference reflected contrasting and competing visions of the Yugoslav state and nation.<sup>51</sup> This study combines Djokić’s and Duančić’s approach, demonstrating how Yugoslav experts, who operated in the grey zone between diplomacy and technical expertise, contributed to forming the international image of Yugoslavia between the East and the West. Guided by primary sources, this dissertation opens new inquiries by drawing on several different historiographies, including the history of internationalism, Yugoslavia, health and medicine, education, reconstruction, and development.

Instead of focusing solely on ethnic, national, military, and ideological contexts usually employed to interpret the actions of Yugoslavs in international organisations, this study embraces Tara Zahra’s theoretical concept of “national indifference.” It argues for a situational understanding of the peasant internationalists’ actions rather than viewing them through the lens of ethnic, religious, or

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<sup>49</sup> The historical genre of microhistory opened up a range of new methodological approaches by focusing on the lived experiences of specific individuals or small groups, often ordinary people, to shed light on larger societal and historical phenomena. Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harvard University Press, 1983).

<sup>50</sup> Djokić and Sharp, *Pasic and Trumbic*.

<sup>51</sup> Vedran Duančić, *Geography and Nationalist Visions of Interwar Yugoslavia, Modernity, Memory, and Identity in South-East Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).



party conflicts.<sup>52</sup> While this project acknowledges the presence of national and ethnic influences in the decision-making of Yugoslav experts, it contends that political loyalties were not strictly predetermined by party membership or ethnic identity.<sup>53</sup> Instead, these allegiances were fluid, constructed, and subject to challenge.<sup>54</sup>

Taking the category of national indifference as a point of departure, I draw upon Dominique Reill's analysis of Adriatic multi-nationalism and Emily Greble's investigation into the multiculturalism and political pluralism of WWII-era Sarajevo.<sup>55</sup> Probing the legacies of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires, these historians highlight how a narrow focus on the nation can mask the complex motivations and justifications backing diverse state-building processes, some of which lay in the international sphere. In Greble's study, Sarajevo's moral and cultural values, encoded in its civic code and community life, facilitated residents' political and institutional loyalty shifts during World War Two.

Peasant internationalists found the motivations for their shifting loyalties in improving the peasant conditions of life. Hence, my approach to questions of international Yugoslavia differs from that of many studies that take nationalism and nation-state as a primary category of analysis. It does not explore what Yugoslavia meant for the peasant internationalists but how the experts used the social and economic conditions of life in Yugoslavia as a template for conceptualising the world and the Yugoslav place within the international system.<sup>56</sup> By exploring how the issues of rural locality

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<sup>52</sup> Echoing the approach taken by Rok Stergar and Tamara Scheer, "Ethnic Boxes: The Unintended Consequences of Habsburg Bureaucratic Classification", *Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 4 (2018): 575–91.

<sup>53</sup> Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis", *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 93–119.

<sup>54</sup> The understanding of political loyalties in this article follows Brubaker and Cooper's definitions of 'loyalties' as a fluid aspect of 'identities.' Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'", *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1.

<sup>55</sup> Emily Greble, *Sarajevo, 1941-1945 Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Hitler's Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Dominique Kirchner Reill, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice*, (Stanford University Press, 2012). See, also Dominique Kirchner Reill, Ivan Jeličić, and Francesca Rolandi, "Redefining Citizenship after Empire: The Rights to Welfare, to Work, and to Remain in a Post-Habsburg World", *The Journal of Modern History* 94, no. 2 (June 2022): 326–62.

<sup>56</sup> An approach also taken in Katherine Lebow, Małgorzata Mazurek, and Joanna Wawrzyniak, "Making Modern Social Science: The Global Imagination in East Central and Southeastern Europe after Versailles", *Contemporary European History* 28, no. 2 (May 2019).

influenced this process of international positioning, the dissertation reveals a distinct rural-centred vision of modernity propagated by peasant internationalists. By a few decades, peasant internationalism foresaw the emergence of peasant studies in post-colonial and constructivist trends in interpreting the world through social sciences.

The perspective of 'peasant internationalists' reinforces Zahra's argument that, although challenging to interpret national indifference, it can only be understood situationally. "It does not belong to Left or Right, to women or men, to cowardly collaborators or a heroic resistance."<sup>57</sup> Instead, a focus on the ideas propagated, networks formed, and actions executed by Yugoslav 'peasant internationalists' across a range of transnational forums reveals that the living conditions of the Yugoslav peasant, coupled with instances of international cooperation focused on the peasantry, largely characterised Yugoslavia's social and economic international activities of experts from 1920-1956. The following stories depict how peasant internationalists, whose loyalties were claimed rather than served, manipulated various international, Yugoslav, ethnic, political, professional, and institutional affiliations to further their visions of social and economic progress, simultaneously strengthening the prestige of the 'experts' in international cooperation.

Building on the diplomatic and foreign political scholarship on Yugoslav international history interpreted through the theoretical framework of national indifference and embracing the premise of the diversity of 'internationalisms', this dissertation enriches the field of internationalism by outlining a distinct approach to international cooperation termed peasant internationalism. My endeavour to integrate multiple fields of socioeconomic cooperation into a coherent analysis led to an unexpected realisation - historians need a new category of international collaboration to tell a more nuanced story of small, predominantly agricultural states' contributions to the international system. The holistic and intersectoral approach applied to studying Yugoslav international cooperation reveals how Yugoslav, Central-Eastern European and (post)colonial state representatives concurrently reinforced and challenged the dominance of the major powers within

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<sup>57</sup> Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities," 113.

and beyond the League of Nations.<sup>58</sup> Understanding their actions can reshape our interpretations of post-colonial solidarity networks, alternative conceptions of rural modernity, and the system of international socioeconomic governance in the LON and the UN explored in the conclusions.

The depiction of Yugoslavia emerging from these outward-looking perspectives differed from the one of division, conflict, and inferiority usually painted by scholars. Instead, a narrative of shared interests, activism, and creativity began to take shape, showcasing Yugoslavia as an exemplary figure in global exchanges of technical expertise and knowledge despite – or because - of its rural, peasant character. *The Yugoslav Monograph*, produced for the *League of Nations European Conference on Rural Life*, affirms these accomplishments in the 1930s. “In spite of the obstacles created by centuries of separate existence,” Yugoslavia is making “uninterrupted headway in the matter of rural development, as is proved by thousands of agricultural cooperative societies with millions of members.”<sup>59</sup> International organisations provided a platform for Yugoslav experts to showcase advancements in rural health, economy, housing, sanitation, and insurance provision on an international stage. But what has obscured these unprecedented breakthroughs?

## 2. Peasantism

In the 1930s, Rudolf Bićanić found an answer to that question in the reality that “a few educated men know anything about how the people really live. They are versed in the economic problems of the Far East, but they never looked into the life of the peasant or the suburban worker. The nationalism of our intelligentsia is formal, ‘ideal,’ never grounded in the soil of reality. Their interest in social problems is only ideological, abstract.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> I use the term (post)colonial to capture the change in the political status of Yugoslav partners in the LON and the UN from 1920 to 1956.

<sup>59</sup> The League of Nations Archives, *European Conference on Rural Life*, 1939, ‘National Monographs Drawn up By Governments,’ C.169. M.99, 83.

<sup>60</sup> Bićanić, *How the People Live*, 24.

My response lies in the limited analytical perspective on peasant party politics and the interconnected intellectual movement of ‘agrarianism.’ In contrast, this work employs ‘peasantism’ as its thematic linchpin, extending the analytical framework of agrarianism and activities of peasant party members and structures to encompass the diverse ways in which the conditions of peasant life and rural environment motivated Yugoslav experts active in international forums.

The focus on peasant party politics has proven to be a helpful entry point to studying Yugoslav regional cooperation and the influence of peasant parties on the national landscape of CE European states before 1945. For instance, assessing the significance of peasant party leaders in Central-Eastern Europe, John Connelly revealed how salient “the power of simple convictions” of improving peasants’ lives were for the national political landscapes when “carried by people of charisma” – T. G. Masaryk, Aleksandar Stamboliiski and Stjepan Radić.<sup>61</sup> Radić served as an ideologist of peasant politics in interwar Yugoslavia, leading the Croat Peasant Party into government in the 1920s. He shared Masaryk’s realist view on politics, which preached that daily action on the local level brings about meaningful social, cultural, and economic progress.<sup>62</sup> But rather than advocating that progress demanded the disappearance of small nations and transformation of peasants into industrial workers, these three men, as well as peasant internationalists, imagined a future where there was room for both: an educated medium-size landowner peasant that “would become a part of prosperous, peaceful and cooperative Europe.” This perspective set the peasant internationalists apart from socialist or social-democratic thinkers and politicians.<sup>63</sup>

While Connelly’s work illuminates the significance of rural issues within the political milieu of Central and Eastern Europe, it leaves open the question of the impact of “peasant utopias” on the region’s international identity and collaborative endeavours beyond Central-Eastern Europe and the Second World War. Peasantism widens the analytical scope of peasant party politics to explain

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<sup>61</sup> John Connelly, *From Peoples into Nations: A History of Eastern Europe* (Princeton University Press, 2020), 297.

<sup>62</sup> Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, The Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904-1928* (University of Toronto Press, 2000), chap. 6.

<sup>63</sup> Connelly, *From Peoples into Nations*, 297.

why and how prominent experts in various fields, influenced by the physical, social, and economic conditions of the rural environment, envisaged the rural path to modernisation or development. The village “utopias” preached by Masaryk, Radić, and Stamboliiski were not silenced by the advent of totalitarianism and fascism in Europe, as argued by Connelly.<sup>64</sup> Investigated within an international framework, the rural visions of a “peaceful and cooperative Europe” emerge as fundamental to grasping the post-World War II concepts, models, and practices of socioeconomic cooperation alongside the approaches to ‘socialist’ and ‘liberal’ international development.

The ideological foundations of the Yugoslav ‘third way’ are also conceptually tied with an intellectual movement of ‘agrarianism.’ As stated by Johan Eelland, agrarianism did not rest on any consistent philosophy or set of writing. Instead, it should be viewed as “a pragmatic ideology, one which was inspired by other ideologies and social thinking and developed in response to concrete social situations and problems in agrarian society.”<sup>65</sup> This study aligns with Eelland’s interpretation of agrarianism as a “so-called ‘third force’ in politics and economy: it falls between liberalism and socialism,” confronting these two dominant paths to modernisation. “Ideologically agrarianism viewed the ideas imposed by Marxists and liberals as a threat to rural society; although it shared many similarities with these dominant ideologies, they were also inspired by nationalism and science.”<sup>66</sup>

Concurrently, peasant internationalists shared common ground with socialist or communist ideas on social and economic progress. However, they also disagreed with their view of urbanisation and industrialisation. Peasant internationalists propagated rural and decentralised approaches to modernisation, inherent in Bićanić’s modernisation strategy of “optimal industrialisation of the countryside” to challenge the communist centrally controlled, often nationalised economy. By adapting Marxist principles of social justice to suit the unique rural landscape and post-imperial

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<sup>64</sup> Connelly, *From Peoples into Nations*, chapter “The failure of national self-determination.”

<sup>65</sup> Johan Eelland, “Agrarianism and Modernization in Inter-War Eastern Europe”, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:214690/FULLTEXT01.pdf> [last accessed 12 August 2024], 36; Marie-Janine Calic, *History of Yugoslavia*, (Purdue University Press, 2018), 111.

<sup>66</sup> Eelland, “Agrarianism and Modernization in Inter-War Eastern Europe,” 35. For a more detailed analysis of the convergences between agrarianism and Marxism, see 53-4.

transition of interwar Yugoslavia, they emphasised the importance of decentralised modernisation initiatives, starting from the village level, within a democratic political framework.

The following stories echo Alex Toshkov's call for a more positivist study of European peasantry. Still, they also extend beyond his comparative analysis of peasant leaders in Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, and Czechoslovakia.<sup>67</sup> While the definition of 'agrarianism' offers a helpful base, 'peasantism' broadens the concept's analytical and evaluative scopes. For scholars like Eelland, Connelly, and Toshkov, agrarianism was intrinsically linked to peasant parties in Central and South-Eastern Europe, especially during what Toshkov terms 'the Golden Age of European Peasantry' — the interwar years.<sup>68</sup> Drawing inspiration from Doreen Warriner's definition, this study perceives the thematic linchpin of 'peasantism' as a 'climate of opinion' permeating all facets of Yugoslav society, both before and after the peak of the peasant party's activities in the 1930s.<sup>69</sup> It was a product of a rural environment, strengthened by the post-imperial challenges of state-building in the region. Investigating the significance of 'peasantism' in an international context evaluates how the Yugoslav experts participated in socioeconomic cooperative projects: those who actively shaped peasant politics, those who opposed it, and those who professed their public activity 'apolitical.'

### 3. Arguments, Contributions, and Overview

Expanding the analytical scope of 'agrarianism,' adopting the methodologies of histories of international cooperation, and applying the theoretical framework of 'national indifference' allow the dissertation to formulate four original contributions to the scholarly debate. First, Yugoslavia,

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<sup>67</sup> Toshkov challenges the arguments that "the rhetoric of these movements was backwards-looking" and that "the agrarian movement did not offer a comprehensive, universal explanation of the world." The discussion of the topic is also available in Calic, *History of Yugoslavia*, 2018, 111.

<sup>68</sup> Alex Stoyanov Toshkov, "The Rise and Fall of the Green International: Stamboliiski and His Legacy in East European Agrarianism, 1919-1939" (PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 2014). Alex Toshkov, *Agrarianism as Modernity in 20th-Century Europe: The Golden Age of the Peasantry* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).

<sup>69</sup> Warriner, "Urban Thinkers and Peasant Policy in Yugoslavia, 1918-59," 60.

in collaboration with other Central-Eastern European countries, pioneered numerous international projects between 1920 and 1956, influencing international standards and laws. Peasant internationalists challenged the dominance of the big powers in the institutional hierarchy but also reinforced the liberal international frameworks of the LON and the UN. Second, peasant internationalists' arguments in transnational cooperative forums encouraged international organisations to consider the effects of delayed and uneven industrialisation decades before the era of decolonisation in the so-called "Third World." Third, the sphere of international cooperation demonstrates that for Yugoslav experts, economic sovereignty considerations often superseded those of political sovereignty. Lastly, 'peasant internationalism' provides insights into the transition from the *Kingdom of Yugoslavia* to the *Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia* in 1945, concurrently exposing parallels between peasant internationalist ideals of rural social justice and the country's 'third way' in political economy and foreign policy. Given that these contributions traverse fields of Yugoslav interwar, wartime, and Cold War history, history of internationalism and technical cooperation, studies of reconstruction, development, and socialist solidarity, I explore them here based on the central research questions they aid in addressing.

### *3.1 Peasant Internationalism*

The first significant contribution to historiography investigates the nature and objectives of Yugoslav international cooperation. Exploring peasant internationalism answers the question of what motivated Yugoslav experts to participate in international cooperative projects and how they understood these endeavours. In turn, what can these motivations tell us about the character of Yugoslav international cooperation between 1920 and 1956?

Drawing from an analysis of archival materials from the League of Nations and United Nations, alongside the material from Belgrade and Zagreb, the following chapters unveil a different aspect of Yugoslav international activity, as opposed to the many existing accounts. Peasant internationalists did not prioritise questions of geopolitical security, such as resolving the 'Adriatic Question,' settling disputes with neighbouring states arising from border and minority conflicts or

countering the hegemony of big powers and revisionist tendencies of Austria and Hungary by forming regional blocs like “The Little Entente.”<sup>70</sup> Instead, they advocated for Yugoslavia’s integration into global markets, securing crucial international loans and credits to facilitate the ‘optimal industrialisation of the countryside.’ Bićanić and Mirković’s approach to economic reconstruction and modernisation emphasised the preservation of social cohesion in rural communities while enhancing agricultural production methods needed to address agrarian overpopulation and low levels of industrialisation. Other experts, like Jovanović and Fotić, defended the country’s poppy plant cultivation and the peasants’ standing in global markets by highlighting the varied uses of the poppy plant in the Balkans. Finally, experts represented by Štampar and Furlan fused welfare and development rhetoric in their quest to improve health, education, housing, and infrastructure in the Yugoslav and global countryside.

Focusing on the lived experience of Yugoslav peasant internationalists helps us re-think CE Europe’s role in the history of international cooperation. In the case of Hungary, Zsolt Nagy analysed how, to secure Hungary’s status as a respected European nation and garner invaluable international support for the revision of the Trianon treaty, the Hungarian political elite orchestrated a comprehensive cultural diplomatic campaign. He further demonstrated that the construct and imagery of Central-Eastern European nations emerged from regional competition rather than cooperation. This effort to align with both real and imagined European/Western ideals was a process that, for Hungary, ultimately proved unsuccessful.<sup>71</sup>

Instead of upholding arguments centred on Central-Eastern European states’ limited international reach, focusing on socioeconomic cooperation reveals a contrasting image of the region. The lens

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<sup>70</sup> These are the dominant themes in the historical overviews of Yugoslav history and its relations with the neighbouring states. For example, see Calic and Janik, *The Great Cauldron*; Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*; Glenda Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity, and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe* (SUNY Press, 2001); Enver Hasani, *Self-Determination, Territorial Integrity, and International Stability: The Case of Yugoslavia* (Austrian National Defense Academy, 2013).

<sup>71</sup> Zsolt Nagy, *Great Expectations and Interwar Realities. Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy, 1918–1941* (Central European University Press, 2017). For the Yugoslav case, see Andrew Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford University Press, 1998). Nela Erdeljac’s ongoing PhD project at the University Zagreb studies various aspects of Yugoslav cultural diplomacy between 1920 and 1960.



of peasant internationalists demonstrates how regional expertise pioneered a plethora of international projects drawing from various traditions of international thought – liberal, socialist, and agrarian. These initiatives, ranging from rural sanitation, education, and public health to decentralised economic reconstruction, indicate that internationalism from 1920-1956 cannot be reduced to a positivist narrative of Western-style social progress or liberal international institutions' imperial designs.

These efforts collectively dispute the *simultaneity* concept, the confluence of industrialisation, print culture, nation-state consolidation, and mass modernisation, which Anderson and Gorman suggest explain the advent of nationalism and internationalism, respectively.<sup>72</sup> Peasant internationalists elucidate how postponed national self-determination and lagging industrial and technological progress impacted the Yugoslav approach to modernisation and influenced the notions of international socioeconomic cooperation in the twentieth century. Just like the Viennese judicial experts in Wheatley's *Life and Death of States*, peasant internationalists did not consider Yugoslavia's structural "backwardness" as a barrier to its equal standing amongst nations. They harnessed the legal potential of international organisations. As early as 1930, Andrija Štampar recognised that to protect his public health system from the authoritarianism of the new Yugoslav regime, he needed to extend his activities beyond national borders. After all, "international law - higher and prior, always already before and after- provided the continuity that breakable states could not."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Gorman, *International Cooperation in the Early Twentieth Century*, 10; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016).

<sup>73</sup> Natasha Wheatley, *The Life and Death of States: Central Europe and the Transformation of Modern Sovereignty* (Princeton University Press, 2023), 23.

### 3.2 Peasant Internationalists as International Standard-makers

Examining Yugoslav contributions to technical meetings and conferences within international institutional networks illuminates the evolution of partnerships, laws, and practices in their formative stages. This narrative offers a more nuanced and intricate depiction of Yugoslav multilateral relationships, extending beyond Yugoslavia's interactions with major powers.<sup>74</sup> Alongside their colleagues from Central-Eastern Europe, Yugoslav delegates shaped and informed international norms and standards. The second chapter illustrates this argument from the perspective of Dr Andrija Štampar. It follows how Štampar and regional health reformers conceptualised universally applicable yet flexible and locally attuned methods for extending public health coverage, adapting them to various global contexts. This argument is inherently linked to the second enquiry question probing the significance of peasant internationalism for understanding the history of multiple forms of internationalism and international socioeconomic cooperation.

The conclusions of this work reaffirm Holly Case's assertion that "small states matter."<sup>75</sup> The last decade has seen challenges to the prior interpretation of the League of Nations, which primarily focuses on its failure to uphold peace through the system of collective security. This narrative of the League of Nations legacy emphasises the diplomatic over the socioeconomic aspects of the League's activities. It is primarily centred on the perspectives of the 'big powers' (Great Britain, France, Japan, Italy, USA) — who, all apart from the USA, were countries with decision-making power within the League's Council (executive organ).<sup>76</sup> However, the League of Nations, as the first inter-governmental institution of a kind, also created a global platform for smaller nations to

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<sup>74</sup> For example, consult: James Evans, *Great Britain and the Creation of Yugoslavia: Negotiating Balkan Nationality and Identity* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020); Vuk Vinaver, *Jugoslavija i Francuska Izmedju Dva Svetska Rata: Da Li Je Jugoslavija Bila Francuski "Satelit"* (Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1985); Ivo Tasovac, "American Foreign Policy and Yugoslavia, 1939-1941" (Texas A&M University, 1999).

<sup>75</sup> Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>76</sup> Sluga and Clavin, *Internationalisms*, 2017; Jessica Reinisch, "Introduction: Agents of Internationalism", 195–205; Ana Antic, Johanna Conterio, and Dora Vargha et. al., "Conclusion: Beyond Liberal Internationalism", Susan Pedersen, "Back to the League of Nations", *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (2007): 1091–1117.

collectively address and coordinate on issues of health, labour standards, and economic policy, fostering international collaboration, improving international standardisation of laws and practices, and setting the groundwork for the United Nations and its specialised agencies. Concentrating on the League's socioeconomic projects, the emergent historiography of international cooperation has begun to revise the League's legacy, an objective to which this project contributes.

The historians of medicine and science have been the vanguards of uncovering the significance of Central/Eastern/South-Eastern Europe in twentieth-century social sciences and international cooperation.<sup>77</sup> They have highlighted the actions of the regional reformers, such as Ludwik Rajchman and Andrija Štampar. These leading experts in the League of Nations' Health Organisation led the League's advocacy for improving access to healthcare services and introduced disease control measures which tackled the social and economic roots of ill health, as opposed to the previous practice of targeting the vector of the disease.<sup>78</sup> For instance, *The Little Health Entente*, built on the Habsburg medical networks, was integral to establishing coordinated government health operations to address the shared challenges of agrarian countries in CE Europe *vis-à-vis* the LNHO.<sup>79</sup> By situating public health in the broader history of socioeconomic cooperation, the perspective of peasant internationalists explores what these agrarian challenges consisted of and how international cooperation could help address them.

Understanding the liminality of the region, first visible in the region's 'betweenness' in territorial arrangements of *cordon sanitaire* between Soviet Russia and the West following the Paris Peace

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<sup>77</sup> More studies are explored in chapter two, but some of the most influential works of the interwar period are represented by, Iris Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health: The League of Nations Health Organisation 1921-1946* (Peter Lang, 2009); Željko Dugac et al., "Care for Health Cannot Be Limited to One Country or One Town Only, It Must Extend to Entire World: Role of Andrija Štampar in Building the World Health Organization", *Croatian Medical Journal* 49, no. 6 (2008): 697; "Popular Health Education and Venereal Diseases in Croatia between Two World Wars", *Croatian Medical Journal* 45, no. 4 (2004): 490–98; and "Public Health Experiences from Interwar Croatia (Yugoslavia) and Making Western Medicine in the 1930s China", *Acta Medico-Historica Adriatica: AMHA* 16, no. 1 (2018): 75–106.

<sup>78</sup> Marta A. Balińska, *For the Good of Humanity: Ludwik Rajchman, Medical Statesman* (Central European University Press, 1998); Marta Alexandra Balinska, "Ludwik Rajchman: International Health Leader", in *World Health Forum* 1991; 12 (4): 456-465, 1991; For contextualisation of Rajchman's activities in the LNHO, consult Solomon, Murard, and Zylberman, *Shifting Boundaries of Public Health*.

<sup>79</sup> Sara Silverstein, "Reinventing International Health in East Central Europe: The League of Nations, State Sovereignty, and Universal Health", in *Remaking Central Europe*, 87-92.

Conference, CE experts began to actively contribute to new social concepts and systems through the platform of the League of Nations. The geopolitical shift from the world of empires to the world of nation-states started in CE Europe and continued in the dependent and colonial territories after World War II, “recharged social science as a field of potential innovation and transformation.”<sup>80</sup> Peasant internationalists successfully integrated several socioeconomic agendas to promote a holistic approach to modernisation with a village at its centre, uniting health, economic, education, agricultural and legal experts. One of them was Dr Andrija Štampar, whose rural health centre became a model of a decentralised public health service and an example of welfare-focused international health policy. This dissertation builds on Silverstein’s remarks that “Štampar’s methods anticipated by several years the emergence of ‘peasant studies’, the field concerned with both understanding and reforming agrarian societies.” The thematic linchpin of ‘peasantism’ broadens the analytical scope of ‘peasant studies’, a prototype of development studies thirty years later,” to explore a decentralised, pragmatic, and rural path to modernisation envisaged by peasant internationalists.<sup>81</sup>

This dissertation goes beyond the history of medicine and health to consider how conceptualisations of epidemiology, public health and disease control relate to broader attempts at improving social and economic conditions of life in rural regions. In examining how the “countryside went global” through the lens of Romanian sociologist Dmitri Gusti, Raluca Muşat highlighted the importance of *The Bucharest School of Sociology* for promoting the greater involvement of social sciences in the debates and projects of rural modernisation, both nationally and internationally.<sup>82</sup> The case of Rudolf Bićanić, who used sociological surveys in 1935 when travelling around the Yugoslav passive regions, demonstrates how significant these methods were for analysing, evaluating, and planning for social and economic reforms in and beyond CE Europe and Yugoslavia. But by combining the history of medicine and public health with other dimensions of Yugoslav activity in socioeconomic committees of the LON, this analysis builds a picture of a

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<sup>80</sup> Katherine Lebow, "Making Modern Social Science," 138.

<sup>81</sup> Silverstein, "The Periphery Is the Centre," 229.

<sup>82</sup> Raluca Muşat, "Making the Countryside Global: The Bucharest School of Sociology and International Networks of Knowledge", *Contemporary European History* 28, no. 2 (2019): 205–19. David Mitrany, a renowned British sociologist of the Romanian roots was a close collaborator of Yugoslav peasant internationalists.

versatile, flexible, and foremost pragmatic approach to international cooperation referred to as peasant internationalism. It explores the interrelationships between conceptualising public health as welfare, a tool of state-building, and an approach to modernisation.

Brought together by the interconnected and interdisciplinary environment of the League of Nations, peasant internationalists utilised the 'inbetweenness' of the region, embedded in the region's conditions of rural locality with access to full membership in the League, as an 'epistemic resource' for positioning themselves as facilitators of technical assistance programmes in international organisations from the 1930s.<sup>83</sup> Their cooperation propelled Yugoslavia to champion rural and decentralised modernisation policies as an alternative to urban industrialisation favoured by Western (liberal) and Soviet (socialist) plans. These international practices and unifying rhetoric of a peasant-focused road to modernisation shaped the international aid, reconstruction, and development programmes beyond the Second World War, explored in the last chapter. Outside the public health and epidemiology sphere, the opium-producing countries – Yugoslavia, Iran, Egypt, India, and Turkey – effectively advocated for amendments in the Opium Committee's legal framework underlying international drug trafficking laws. They countered the moral rhetoric of Great Britain, France, and the US, focusing on the social immorality of drug abuse with economic arguments, thereby safeguarding the peasants' poppy seed cultivation and protecting their incomes. This strategy empowered Yugoslav diplomat Konstantin Fotić to tilt decision-making power within the League of Nations' Opium Committee towards agricultural opium-producing nations, countering the influence of opium-manufacturing industrialised states of Great Britain, France, and Germany.

### *3.3 Economic over Political Sovereignty*

Fotić and Jovanović's arguments in the Opium Committee suggest that for peasant internationalists, economic sovereignty considerations often superseded those of political sovereignty (such as

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<sup>83</sup> For more on the in-betweenness of the regions as an epistemic resource for social scientists, see Lebow, Mazurek, and Wawrzyniak, "Making Modern Social Science," 139.

geopolitical security, border revisionism and minority regimes). Peasant internationalists grounded their visions of international Yugoslavia in the economic realities of life. Apart from defending the peasant economic interests linked to the poppy plant cultivation, Andrija Štampar stressed the social and economic roots of disease; only by demonstrating that peasants would benefit financially from better hygiene practices could the health reformers secure public support for their health initiatives. Second, Rudolf Bićanić's actions in transferring the economic legitimacy of Yugoslavia to the National Liberation Council and Tito lay in his desire to accelerate the provision of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration's (UNRRA) relief material to the Yugoslav countryside. Lastly, the CEEPB's scholars argued that economic reconstruction after the Second World War had to precede any attempts at forming federate and confederate political unions. For these experts from Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Greece and Poland, political cooperation and regional security depended on economic stability achieved through targeted, state-supervised social and economic reforms dependent on Western aid. These arguments build on the historiography investigating Habsburg post-imperial transitions in the region. Scholars, including Dominique Reill, Bogdan Iacob, and Sara Silverstein, have demonstrated that for Habsburg's successor states, political independence did not signify the end of self-determination.<sup>84</sup> How this economic conceptualisation of sovereignty impacted small states' international position is still an open question.

Over recent years, economic historians and historians of international thought have investigated how economic superpowers such as Great Britain, the United States, and France constructed and maintained their political and economic supremacy.<sup>85</sup> For instance, Adam Tooze proposed that the international order has always been dependent on a central stabilising power – be it the capitalism

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<sup>84</sup> Iacob, "Malariaology and Decolonization", 234; Sara Silverstein, "Doctors and Diplomats: Health Services in the New Europe, 1918–1923", in *A New Europe, 1918–1923* (Routledge, 2022), 142–60; Silverstein, "Reinventing International Health in East Central Europe"; and "The Periphery Is the Centre: Some Macedonian Origins of Social Medicine and Internationalism", *Contemporary European History* 28, no. 2 (2019): 220–33; and Reill, *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire*.

<sup>85</sup> J. Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2014); Jamie Martin, *The Meddlers: Sovereignty, Empire, and the Birth of Global Economic Governance* (Harvard University Press, 2022); Patricia Clavin, *The Great Depression in Europe, 1929-1939*, *European History in Perspective* (St. Martin's Press, 2000); Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012).

of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Dutch Republic, Victorian Britain, or the American Hegemony established after 1945 – effectively marginalising the influence of smaller, agricultural states in the international political and economic order. Similarly, research that intertwines the dynamics of globalisation and self-determination tends to focus on the partial or restricted political sovereignty of Central-Eastern Europe. This focus often paints Central-Eastern Europe as an object to the economic and political dominance of great powers.<sup>86</sup> Jamie Martin examined how Britain, France, and the US gained powers to intervene in traditionally domestic economic policy arenas, charting the evolution of new international practices, ranging from conditional lending to international development. However, Martin’s analysis also positions CE Europe in oppositional and dependent relations to these international practices. His research into the reception of financial reconstruction projects from 1920-1956 revealed that high-ranking government officials and the public often perceived these international interventions as instances of imperialist ‘meddling’ in the political and economic sovereignty of Central, Eastern, and Southern European states.<sup>87</sup>

Yet, the arguments change when we examine the international economic order from the vanguard point of peasant internationalists. Analysing the instances of ‘peasant internationalist cooperation’ highlights that those experts who negotiated and secured economic and technical aid from international institutions and Allies did not necessarily perceive these practices as ‘imperialist’ and problematic. Instead, they viewed the negotiation process within international forums as an opportunity to obtain the most extensive financial aid, irrespective of its ideological implications.

Rather than interpreting economic reconstruction negotiations through the lens of their limited political sovereignty—stemming from a lack of military and geopolitical power—they perceived them as chances to augment Yugoslavia’s standing in the international economic order and an opportunity to implement socioeconomic reforms that would see living standards in the countryside improve. For instance, working as part of the CEEPB, Sava Kosanovich and Nicholas Mirkovich endeavoured to enhance the region’s competitiveness in the global economy. They

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<sup>86</sup> Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton University Press, 2019) and Martin, *The Meddlers*.

<sup>87</sup> Martin, *The Meddlers*, an example of Albania 75-6.

posited that the economic reconstruction of Central-Eastern Europe depended on foreign credit. The targeted economic reconstruction of the region would act as a foundation for regional security, enabling this economically cooperative region to operate as a “bridge between the Soviet Union and the West.”<sup>88</sup> Rudolf Bićanić and Nicholas Mirkovich, including the CEEPB’s Polish assistant Oskar Lange, incorporated the mechanisms of decentralised economic planning into neoclassical economic models of competitive markets. Their prioritisation of uplifting peasant conditions of life by applying a ‘socialist’ state-planning mechanism into a free market economy as an instrument of achieving social justice positioned the economists as partners of state-socialist governments in designing economic reforms and strengthening the connections with the newly independent states of the ‘Global South.’<sup>89</sup>

Through collaboration, peasant internationalists aimed to reshape the liberal international economic order to ensure fairer competition in the global markets for predominantly agricultural countries, which would, in turn, improve peasants’ purchasing power and standards of life. The last two chapters also complement the research projects by Adom Getachew and Allana O’Malley, who have started to illustrate this process from the perspective of (post)colonial states, intellectuals and experts.<sup>90</sup> O’Malley demonstrated how various state and non-state actors from the Global South – a term that describes a heterogenous group of formerly colonised countries with lower levels of

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<sup>88</sup> NYPL, Box 3, f: ‘Antioch College’, *Institute for the Reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe*, Feliks Gross’ speech, March 1943.

<sup>89</sup> I use the term ‘Global South’ not just as a geographic and economic descriptor but also as a valuable historical, conceptual framework, which helps historians reveal perspectives on the historical processes of formerly colonised countries still navigating the legacies of imperialism and striving for full autonomy in a globalised world. The Global South is not a monolithic entity but a diverse and heterogeneous collection of states with varying political, economic, and cultural contexts. The term encapsulates the shared experiences of these countries in terms of inequality and the challenges posed by global capitalism while also recognising the agency of these nations in redefining their place in the international system. I argue that connecting these stories to the interwar history of Central-Eastern Europe could reveal new dimensions of these historical processes.

More on the ‘socialist’ roots of neoclassical economics, and the role of CEEPB’s Oskar Lange, see Johanna Bockman, *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism*.

<sup>90</sup> Alanna O’Malley, *The Diplomacy of Decolonisation: America, Britain and the United Nations during the Congo Crisis 1960-1964* (Manchester University Press, 2018); Simon Jackson and Alanna O’Malley, eds., *The Institution of International Order: From the League of Nations to the United Nations* (Routledge, 2018); Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*, chapter “The Welfare World of the New International Economic Order”, in *Worldmaking after Empire*, 142–75; Manu Belur Bhagavan, *India and the Quest for One World: The Peacemakers*, The Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History Series (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).



industrialisation – proactively engaged with the liberal world order within the UN, seizing opportune moments to challenge its power dynamics and networks from within. She showed how these newly independent countries utilised the “privileged laboratories of international organisations” to “systematically question the empire and shape the workings of venues such as the UN’s Commission of Human Rights and the Economic Commission for Africa.”<sup>91</sup>

Concurring with O’Malley’s findings, ‘peasant internationalists’ did not resist the decision-making power of the West inherent in the institutional structures. Instead, they utilised these “international laboratories” to form alliances and develop regional and transnational solidarity networks, such as the opium-producing bloc comprising Yugoslavia, India, Egypt, Iran, and Turkey between 1925 and 1949. Thus, Central-Eastern Europe in the interwar years was not merely a site for technical and ‘developmental’ experimentation by Western-dominated international and philanthropic organisations.<sup>92</sup> The regional expertise actively combated the conditions of their perceived “backwardness” by adjusting international norms and standards to accommodate the predominantly rural social and economic structures.

In articulating their demands, these advocates did not utilise the rhetoric of liberalism and capitalism. Instead, they levelled their protests against the rapid ‘urbanisation’ and ‘industrialisation’ inherent in Western conceptualisations of modernisation by emphasising the importance of ‘social justice’ in international socioeconomic projects. This advocacy was not framed within the context of socialist, centralised institution building. Instead, it was expressed in the context of citizens’ rights to public services, concurring with the findings of Sara Silverstein in her study of universal healthcare, emphasising the need for grassroots democracy and decentralised decision-making on the village level.<sup>93</sup> By revealing the formative importance of CE European post-imperialist experience, the perspective of peasant internationalists delineates how these experts devised strategies that both reinforced and challenged the institutional frameworks of the League

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<sup>91</sup> A. O’Malley – Re-thinking the Past and Present of Liberal Internationalism Conference paper, City University of London – May 2023.

<sup>92</sup> Mark and Betts, eds., *Socialism Goes Global*, "Introduction."

<sup>93</sup> Silverstein, "Reinventing International Health in East Central Europe," 83-4.

of Nations and the early years of the UN by accepting the liberal and democratic framework but furthering the values of social justice usually associated with socialist political traditions.<sup>94</sup>

This necessitates a re-evaluation of the significance of economic sovereignty in relation to political sovereignty as a form of self-determination. For Yugoslavia, the experience of post-imperial transition occurred a few decades earlier than it did for countries in the Global South. Nonetheless, similar challenges were encountered in the old continent, including the transition from imperial to independent state bureaucracies and the absence of simultaneity of modernisation processes compared to the West.

The dissertation thus further complements the research of Dominique Reill and Natasha Wheatley, who scrutinised the impact of Habsburg imperialism and its legacies on nation and state-building processes in the region, as well as conceptualisations of modern sovereignty.<sup>95</sup> On the example of the smallest Habsburg successor state, Fiume, Reill demonstrated that the most potent impediments to Wilsonian visions of independent Fiume lay in the imperial frameworks and mindsets of the local elites, which persisted even after the empires had fallen. These post-imperial mindsets, founded in the economic reality of life, motivated the residents of Fiume to link the city bureaucratically and legally to the most prosperous state in the region- the Kingdom of Italy – rather than the industrially underdeveloped Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.<sup>96</sup> Reill's arguments challenge the widely accepted notion that post-World War I populations advocated for national self-determination to escape the empire. For the citizens of Fiume, as for peasant internationalists, the social and economic ties superseded the questions of national self-determination on ethnic lines.

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<sup>94</sup> As Christy Thornton has demonstrated with the example of *The Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States*, the viewpoint of non-Western actors could significantly reshape our understanding of the principles and theories that underpin the international political and economic order in the LON and the UN. Christy Thornton, *Revolution in Development*, (University of California Press, 2021).

<sup>95</sup> Dominique Kirchner Reill, *The Fiume Crisis*; Wheatley, *The Life and Death of States*.

<sup>96</sup> Reill, *The Fiume Crisis*, 17.

This story complements their research by exploring different dimensions of obstacles and opportunities faced by the Yugoslav state created by the imperial dissolution. For peasant internationalists, the post-imperial obstacles were not embedded in the national monetary politics nor the problematic imperial conceptualisation of sovereignty Wheatley investigated. Instead, they were rooted in the region's slow industrialisation and low standards of life in the countryside, plagued by poor health, high illiteracy, and seasonal hunger. By investigating how these conditions of uneven industrialisation influenced Yugoslav participation in the League of Nations and the UN, the dissertation uncovers distinctive peasant internationalist visions of modernity and progress born out of cooperation and based on the social and economic realities of life in various agricultural regions.<sup>97</sup> It would be this version of modernity, inherent in the modernisation approach of the optimal industrialisation of the countryside, explored in chapter four, that reflects the ambiguity of Yugoslav international orientation between the East and the West.

### *3.4 Peasantism and Socialist Yugoslavia*

The nuanced interplay between Yugoslavia's pursuit of political and economic sovereignty through international cooperation provides a revealing lens into the early manifestations of Yugoslav 'coexistence' and its 'third way' approach in political economy and foreign policy that emerged post-1945. Traditionally, scholars have traced these characteristics to Yugoslavia's diplomatic ambivalence and liberalisation of economy to the consequences of the Tito-Stalin split in 1948. This multisectoral research generates a more nuanced understanding of this pragmatic Yugoslav's international position. By employing the thematic linchpin of peasantism, chapter five enhances our knowledge of the communist legitimisation of power. It follows the financial malversations of Rudolf Bićanić, who, motivated by economic rather than ideological considerations, transferred the economic and then political legitimacy of Yugoslavia from the émigré government in London to Marshall Tito. The case of Bićanić and the Central and Eastern European Planning Board

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<sup>97</sup> Gorman, *International Cooperation in the Early Twentieth Century*, 10.

foreshadow the pivotal role of technical experts in shaping the history of Yugoslav non-alignment, as elucidated in the last chapter and the conclusions.

Broadening the scope of this dissertation beyond the standard demarcation of two Yugoslav states—1941, the year of the German-Italian occupation—illustrates the critical importance of ‘peasantism’ in understanding the transition to socialist Yugoslavia. Scholars studying the wartime years of 1941-1945, during which time the Yugoslav government resided in London, tell the story of communist legitimation through the lens of military victories of partisan units in Yugoslavia, the tarnished prestige of Simović’s, Jovanović’s, Trifunović’s and Purić’s cabinets in London, and the Allied support for Marshall Tito.<sup>98</sup> Peasant internationalists provide a perspective of lesser-known civil servants during these tremulous years to reveal the significance of socioeconomic arguments for understanding the signing of the Tito-Šubašić agreement in June 1944 and the formation of the Provisional Government of Democratic Federal Yugoslavia in March 1945.

While the following narratives do not dismiss the significance of patriotism, ethnic identification, and state structures in the shifting political loyalties, they background these perspectives explored in Jović’s account of communist legitimation of power.<sup>99</sup> As opposed to the Croatian communists and socialists in Jović’s account, who claimed that interconnected national and class issues could be resolved only by radical changes in class structures, peasant internationalists believed in the gradual and constitutional change in the country’s socioeconomic structures achieved by the cooperation of all social classes.<sup>100</sup> Based on this distinction between socialist and peasant

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<sup>98</sup> Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Hitler’s New Disorder: The Second World War in Yugoslavia* (Columbia University Press, 2008); Stevan K. Pavlowitch, "Momčilo Ninčić and the European Policy of the Yugoslav Government in Exile, 1941-1943: I", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 62, no. 3 (1984): 400–420; Drapac, *Constructing Yugoslavia*; Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945 Occupation and Collaboration*, (Stanford University Press, 2001).

<sup>99</sup> Dejan Jović has examined the continuities between peasant politics and communism by comparing the political programs and memberships of the KPJ and the Croat Peasant Party. However, Jović interprets these parallels through the lens of national and ethnic politics, explaining why Tito’s vision of a federative and republican Yugoslavia resonated with Croatian political elites in the 1940s. Dejan Djokić and James Ker-Lindsay, *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies* (London; Routledge, 2011), chapter "Reassessing Socialist Yugoslavia, 1945-90 : the Case of Croatia."

<sup>100</sup> Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radic, The Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904-1928* (Toronto University Press), 366 based on Stjepan Radić’s ideas articulated in "Bit i cilj agrarne demokracije", *Dom*, 4 July 1928, 4.

internationalist views of political economy, the dissertation reveals a new socioeconomic dimension of the birth of socialist Yugoslavia, provided by the case of Rudolf Bićanić. The National Liberation Council's *Jajce Declaration* in November 1943 motivated Bićanić to leverage his position as a vice-governor of the Yugoslav National Bank to transfer the economic legitimacy of Yugoslavia to Marshall Tito, enabling himself to start the international relief and credit negotiations for Yugoslavia as early as summer of 1944 to relieve the pressing problem of peasant illness and hunger.

Despite the stark differences in policy implementation and the role of democracy within the new state, the ideals of social justice served as a shared ideological platform between peasant internationalists and the KPJ during the Second World War. Many Yugoslav experts in the CEEPB and some within the Yugoslav émigré government found that the National Liberation Council's plans resonated with their visions of socioeconomic reconstruction. Bićanić, Mirkovich and Kosanovich argued that the peasant-focused principles of social justice should be the bedrock of any attempts at nation-building, reconstruction, and subsequent development in Central-Eastern Europe.<sup>101</sup> In a speech to the directors of the ILO in May 1942, Mirkovich and Kosanovich connected social justice to the agrarian issues of Central-Eastern European economies as they highlighted the intricate link between agriculture and industry and the relationship between peasant social issues and economic productivity. However, for 'peasant internationalists,' social justice took a rural and decentralised character.

The promise of social and economic reforms based on social justice for all proclaimed by the KPJ in the *Jajce Declaration* catalysed a shift in political loyalties away from the émigré government in London. This "marriage of convenience" between Bićanić and the KPJ was an expression of peasant internationalist pragmatism. Peasant internationalists ultimately supported the communist vision of Yugoslavia because the socioeconomic reforms announced in *Jajce* offered the best chance to fulfil

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<sup>101</sup> The concept of social justice was not a socialist term *per se* unfamiliar to the processes of international cooperation. It had been established as a key objective of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) striving since 1919 to enhance living and working conditions, albeit for the industrial and trade sectors. International Labour Office, *Lasting Peace the I. L. O. Way; the Story of the International Labour Organisation* (Geneva, 1951).

the ideas of decentralised and rurally focused modernisation. When placed in the context of ‘peasantism,’ this consensus between socioeconomic experts, cultural workers, and Tito gave communism an air of familiarity, relevance, and continuity rather than representing a complete break from the past.<sup>102</sup> The Communist Party capitalised on these shifting loyalties to establish a ‘democratic’ dictatorship, which ultimately disillusioned many people who had helped to legitimise the regime, including Rudolf Bićanić.<sup>103</sup>

The principle of rural social justice was not merely viewed as a tool for Yugoslav state-building. It was also an optimal pathway towards gradual industrialisation of the countryside within all predominantly agricultural economies that would integrative peasant lives into urban-rural modernisation networks. Bićanić’s and Mirković’s visions of integrated socioeconomic reforms fused elements of socialist centralised planning and Yugoslav autonomy of local cooperative peasant units, all functioning within the framework of a global market economy. These visions of Yugoslavia’s social and economic reconstruction post-WWII connected the Yugoslav technical experts to the International Labour Organisation (ILO)—the only UN-specialised agency with a direct legacy tracing back to the interwar period. As illustrated in the fourth chapter detailing the activities of the CEEP, the concept of rural social justice propagated by peasant internationalists inadvertently contributed to the legitimisation of the ILO and positioned Central-Eastern European experts as primary facilitators of the technical assistance programs post-1945. Building on these discoveries, the afterlives of the international cooperative projects demonstrate the significance of peasant international cooperation for understanding the role of socialist states in international organisations, processes of globalisation, international development, decolonisation, and non-alignment.

Outlining the organisational afterlives of peasant internationalism also contributes to a bigger narrative of how enduring the rurally-centred visions of modernisation and expert networks were

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<sup>102</sup> For the significance of artists and writers in consolidating the supranational conceptualisation of Yugoslavism inherent in the communist understanding of Yugoslav cultural identity, see Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*.

<sup>103</sup> Sonia Wild-Bićanić, *Two Lines of Life* (Croatian PEN Centre, 1999), 163.

for perpetuating the legacies of the League of Nations. As Mark Mazower and Jamie Martin demonstrated, the concepts of world governance and development did not originate in 1945 but were carried on from more profound and more extensive legacies in the interwar period.<sup>104</sup> The following stories offer another lens into exploring these continuities and provide a window into an 'alternative' form of solidarity and cooperation between the 'East' and the 'South.' While Central-Eastern European socialist parties leveraged interwar and wartime 'peasant internationalist' networks, they did not create them. The 'Afterlives of peasant internationalism' and conclusions urge historians to consider the 'alternative globalisation' and non-alignment with peasant international networks and approaches to modernisation in mind.

#### 4. Overview and Sources

In addition to the introduction, the dissertation is organised into five thematic chapters and a conclusion. Analysing how the struggles of Yugoslav peasants motivated Yugoslav experts and diplomats to think and act internationally through various international platforms testifies to the potential of peasantism as a thematic framework and the power of studying internationalism as a lived experience.

The story begins with the second chapter, which investigates Yugoslav's engagement in the League of Nations 'Opium Committee, responsible for regulating and eradicating illegal opium trafficking between 1921 and 1946. The Yugoslav delegates, Slobodan Jovanović and Konstantin Fotić played pivotal roles in shaping the Committee's directives between 1924 and 1929, notably preventing the imposition of opium production quotas that could have harmed Yugoslav peasants. Fotić later cemented the presence of the opium-producing bloc (Yugoslavia, India, Turkey, and Iran, Egypt),

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<sup>104</sup> Mazower, *Governing the World*; Jamie Martin, *The Meddlers*.

striving for equal representation with industrialised opium-manufacturing nations in regulatory bodies. The chapter ultimately contends that the study of Yugoslav relationships with India, Turkey, Egypt, and Iran needs to be seen in the context of these alliances and expert networks.

The third chapter shifts focus to the realm of health, exploring the contributions of Dr Andrija Štampar to the rural hygiene and life initiatives of the League of Nations Health Organisation from 1930 to 1939. The analysis underlines Štampar's innovative three-tiered, decentralised public health system, presented as an efficient and effective model for organising health services in rural districts at the 1931 European Rural Hygiene Conference. Štampar's rural health centre scheme was adaptable enough to accommodate diverse living conditions and varying levels of bureaucratic development in rural nations. With the endorsement of fellow peasant internationalists from Central-Eastern Europe, the LNHO transported Štampar's health organisation model across Asia, Latin America, and Africa, while the socioeconomic conceptualisation of health became the working principle of the organisation influencing health standardisation through rural health indices.

The dissertation then moves to the period of the Second World War. Chapter four explores the efforts of the CEEPB, a pioneering research institute in New York focused on formulating principles for post-war reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe. Through peasant international cooperation, Nicholas Mirkovich and Rudolf Bićanić developed a vision of regional modernisation encapsulated in their plans for optimal rural industrialisation, aiming to preserve cultural cohesion while promoting agricultural mechanisation and industrialisation. Working on educational reconstruction, Boris Furlan and Sava Kosanovich advocated for the democratic reconstruction of Yugoslavia and Central-Eastern Europe, imagining the region as a strategic bridge between the Soviet Union and Western Europe. The chapter evaluates the influence of the CEEPB's collaborations, public lectures, and research on shaping American post-war reconstruction principles and their pivotal role in ensuring the International Labour Organisation's continuity as a specialised agency under the United Nations.



The next thematic chapter focuses on Rudolf Bićanić, a key figure in the CEEPB and a prominent Yugoslav economist who served as a vice-governor of the Yugoslav National Bank in London from 1941 to 1945. The narrative critically examines Bićanić's motivations for subversive and overt anti-governmental propaganda, successfully transferring Yugoslavia's economic legitimacy from the exiled government to the National Liberation Council and Tito. Bićanić's financial manipulations, which denied the exiled government access to Yugoslav funds abroad, hastened the signing of the Tito-Šubašić agreement and the establishment of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Yugoslavia in March 1945. Significantly, Bićanić leveraged his resultant position as the primary Yugoslav negotiator before the UNRRA to secure crucial provisions for the struggling Yugoslav peasants, fulfilling a longstanding personal and political commitment.

The last chapter probes into the afterlives of peasant international networks and approaches to modernisation after 1945 through two case studies. Initially, the narrative highlights a scenario of the absence of direct peasant international networks. Still, the Yugoslav engagement in international initiatives to curb opium production under the guidance of the United Nations Economic and Social Council showcases the resilience of Yugoslav economic conceptualisation of sovereignty in international law, now recalibrated for a socialist planned economy. Contrastingly, the public health domain presents a divergent scenario through independent action and sustained impact of Andrija Štampar at the World Health Organisation (WHO). This context unveils the continuity of rural welfare initiatives championed by Yugoslav specialists serving as WHO consultants. These efforts emphasise the continued decentralisation of public health projects and their pragmatic adjustments to local realities, challenging the portrayal of the WHO as a Western diplomatic instrument biased towards technocratic solutions in global health matters.

Collectively, these chapters aid historians in addressing several challenges in writing an international and global histories of Yugoslavia. They move beyond the bilateral analyses of Yugoslav international engagements, overcoming logistical and linguistic hurdles and delineating

the long-term influence of international practices within national and global political arenas.<sup>105</sup> This is achieved by employing a mixed methodology of placing the lived experiences of internationalism at the forum of international cooperation and exploring the personal archives of several peasant internationalists.

The second, fourth and sixth chapters prioritise the approach of ‘placing of internationalism.’ They extensively use the archives from the League of Nations and the United Nations to dissect the activities and contributions of Yugoslav experts and diplomats to these organisations. This geographical lens facilitates exploring interactions and networks within international forums, thereby uncovering the intricate web of national, Allied and international connections cultivated by peasant internationalists. An analysis of their engagements in Geneva and New York sheds light on how these connections informed both the ideas and implementation of principles of rural social justice, democratic and egalitarian education, universal health, and international opium control.

In contrast to the traditional focus of international legal history on institutional resolutions and outcomes, this dissertation employs a nuanced examination of committee and conference meeting minutes to assess the contributions of peasant internationalists to various cooperative projects, charting the evolution of the decision-making processes. However, this methodology has limitations, particularly in offering a comprehensive view of the national contexts engaged in technical cooperation. Most notably, the analysis of the motivations of big powers’ representatives remains underexplored. The dissertation presents only a glimpse into their approaches to technical cooperation, a gap partially bridged by incorporating correspondence and administrative records across the organisational landscape. These additional sources unveil underlying partnerships, motivations, and objectives, thus enriching the portrayal of diverse national perspectives within the international arena.

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<sup>105</sup> Based on the roundtable discussion “Writing a Global History of Yugoslavia”, The Association for the Study of Nationalities World Symposium, 2023, Columbia University.

In a complementary fashion, the third and fifth chapters prioritise the archives of Dr Andrija Štampar and Dr Rudolf Bićanić, located in Zagreb, providing a focused examination of their contributions and influence on international cooperation across various forums over several decades. This approach tracks the evolution of their professional journeys and the interplay between their technical work and diplomatic roles. This methodology offers a way to navigate beyond the constraints typically encountered in studies centred on institutional bureaucracies by vividly capturing the personal experience and motivations behind their ideas and projects of decentralised, rurally focused modernisation.

Many of the sources I consult can be classified as 'technocratic' in nature, emphasising expertise, evidence-based decision-making, and specialised knowledge. However, these sources are inherently political, reflecting the ambiguous role of technical experts in the international system as both diplomats and 'carriers of specialised knowledge.' For example, the meeting minutes, reports, and statistical overviews of regional economies and education systems in the CEEPB were intended to provide an objective, technical approach to studying Yugoslav living conditions during WWII. Nevertheless, they were politically motivated and aimed at lobbying for international loans and socio-economic reforms after the war. The lack of support from the émigré government in recognising these demands eventually led to a shift in political backing towards AVNOJ, led by Furlan and Bićanić in London.

The political dimension of these technocratic sources is further evident in the reasons behind their creation. Many peasant internationalists sought to address Yugoslav issues on the international stage, as their influence within the national context had diminished following King Alexander's dictatorship in 1929. My decision to prioritise these sources is not an attempt to depoliticise the narrative of Yugoslavia's 'third way.' Rather, it aims to shed light on the various 'technocratic' perspectives and the broader historical trajectories that shaped Yugoslavia's path between socialism and liberalism. This complexity is reflected in the nature, origin, and purpose of 'technocracy' during the interwar, wartime, and early Cold War periods: a liberal belief influenced these eras in scientific rational progress, often shaped by the conditions of rural life, and achieved through international cooperation as a form of expert diplomacy.

However, this prioritisation of technocratic sources over state-produced documents with a clearer government perspective comes with its limits. Unless those documents were included in the personal archives consulted, it remains difficult to infer whether the lack of governmental involvement and instructions to the delegates in Geneva and New York accurately reflected the real situation. Consequently, we only gain insights into which 'peasant internationalists' deemed relevant to the archive, which could reveal a lot about the personal interests of the protagonists.

Nevertheless, the League of Nations documentation held in the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, consulted in the early stages of research, indicates that the Yugoslav technocrats enjoyed much freedom in their activities and representation of the country before WWII. Other than several reports of the Yugoslav representation in the ILO, the technical conferences on the freedom of the press and the work of the transit committee, the official state documentation of the government in Belgrade is limited to the correspondence with the League's Secretariat concerning the appointment of delegates and experts.

The choice of Geneva as the start of the peasant internationalists' journey is logical and strategic. As the inaugural headquarters of the League of Nations, Geneva was selected for Switzerland's long-established tradition of neutrality, its central position in Europe, and its distinguished status as a hub for diplomacy. The investigation begins with an analysis of Yugoslav participation in the League's Opium Committee meetings in Geneva from 1924 to 1929. It highlights Yugoslav contributions to protecting the interests of the opium-producing countries and establishes the intricate web of Yugoslavia's multilateral engagements with non-European League members, setting the stage for the Yugoslav third way that could be traced back to Geneva.

## **2. Yugoslavia in the League of Nations Advisory Committee for Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs: The Birth of the Opium-Producing Bloc, 1924-1929**

### 1. Introduction

In the verdant landscapes of Yugoslavia, the radiant blossoms of the poppy plant painted the countryside of the Macedonian part of the Yugoslav Kingdom in shades of crimson and white. In the eyes of the international anti-opium movement, these fields were the starting point for the dark trails of the illicit opium trade. Before blossoming, the poppy plant's unripe seedpods can be incised shallowly to let the sap ooze out, which then hardens into a gum-like substance, yielding raw opium. The high-quality Yugoslav opium, measured through its percentage of morphine content, continued its journey from the south of the country to Solon in Greece, where the mass was manufactured and sold to pharmaceutical companies in Germany, France, and Great Britain. However, the poppy plant, the source of raw opium before it blossomed, was also a part of the Yugoslav culinary culture. The Yugoslavs used poppy seeds in cooking and producing oils and cakes. To this day, the poppy seeds decorate the dining tables of family celebrations and festivals, finding their place in pastries, cakes, and savoury dishes. The extended thematic framework of peasantism, which explores the effects of social, economic, and cultural rural environment on Yugoslav international cooperation, shines a new light onto the international anti-opium debate, demonstrating that opium was as much an economic issue as was the humanitarian and moral concern.

The illicit trafficking and the broader issue of opium trace back to the nineteenth century. Both the production and trade of opium played pivotal roles in the foreign policies of nations and empires, especially evident during the two Anglo-Chinese Opium Wars. These wars, from 1839-1842 and

1856-1860, thrust the opium issue into international prominence. In the eighteenth century, the British East India Company heavily invested in, and subsequently dominated, the cultivation of poppy plants and the production of raw opium sold to China in return for tea. By the dawn of the 19th century, opium had gained popularity as a recreational drug among the Chinese, leading to widespread addiction. The adverse effects of consumption—ranging from chills and nausea to, in some cases, death during withdrawal—became apparent. Acknowledging the mounting social crisis, the Chinese government prohibited opium production and importation in 1800. However, Britain's victory in the Opium Wars reversed this ban, compelling China to cede additional trade and territorial rights to the British.<sup>1</sup> This British triumph not only perpetuated opium use in the Far East but also, alongside the burgeoning pharmaceutical industries in Europe and the United States, catalysed the onset of global opium addiction.

At the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1856, Francesco Della Sudda, the director of the Central Pharmacy of the Ottoman Empire, showcased opium as unparalleled in quality. Opium from Smyrna, a region within the Ottoman Empire, was indeed esteemed, boasting a substantial 18% morphine content—a key indicator of its premium grade and its suitability for drug manufacturing.<sup>2</sup> By this metric, Turkey, Persia, and Yugoslavia were leading producers of high-quality opium, with an average morphine content surpassing 10%. In contrast, Indian and Chinese opium contained only 3-5% morphine. This lower potency influenced its primary use in the Far East, such as smoking and ingestion, rather than in drug manufacturing.<sup>3</sup> The rich morphine content in the opium produced by Turkey, Persia, and Yugoslavia made them especially sought-after trading partners. The higher morphine concentration meant they could produce more opioid drugs from less raw opium, offering an advantage in navigating stringent anti-opium regulations. Once the export-import trade quotas for opium were established by the Second Geneva Convention in 1929, the

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<sup>1</sup> William Travis Hanes and Frank Sanello, *The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another* (Sourcebooks, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Disappointing in comparison were the samples from Persia, East India, Greece, Italy, Southern France, and Algiers with a morphine content of under 10%. Rimner, *Opium's Long Shadow: From Asian Revolt to Global Drug Control* (Harvard University Press, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Leslie Raymond Buell, "The Opium Conferences", *Foreign Affairs* 3, no. 4 (1925): 567-583.

pharmaceutical giants in Germany, Great Britain, and the US favoured sourcing opium from these regions.

These trading connections date back to the late 19th century when a surge in the pharmaceutical industries of Western Europe occurred. This growth fostered a strong connection between manufacturing powerhouses like Germany, the US, and Britain and the high-quality opium producers of the Middle East and the Balkans. Through its pharmaceutical Böhringer, Germany emerged as a preeminent producer of morphine during this period. This prominence in morphine production intertwined German imperial policy with opium trade networks, a connection bolstered by the support of affluent business magnates and political elites.<sup>4</sup> This intricate relationship between opium production and drug manufacturing persisted through the interwar years in the League of Nations. It became a contentious topic at the Second Opium Conference in Geneva from 1924 to 1925. At the conference, opium-producing nations, including Turkey, Persia, India, and Yugoslavia, alongside representatives from opium-manufacturing countries like Great Britain, Germany, France, and the US, debated the merits of limiting opium production by banning poppy plant cultivation. Such limitations were seen as potentially detrimental to the agricultural economies of these nations and could adversely impact the livelihoods of their predominantly peasant populations.

While the roles of Yugoslavia, Turkey, and Persia as primary producers of raw opium are crucial, historical discussions of the international anti-opium movement have predominantly centred on the perceived inefficacy of the US morally driven opium suppression policy. In the early 1920s, US representatives in the Opium Committee advocated for reducing opium production to levels that would only meet medical and scientific needs, believing this to be the sole way to eradicate the global “vice” of opium addiction. These representatives heavily emphasised curtailing opium production in India and China, where the substance was mainly consumed by smoking or eating and had not been previously regulated by international conventions. This stance, arguably hypocritical, placed significant economic burdens on opium producers such as China and India

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<sup>4</sup> Steffen Rimner, *Opium's Long Shadow*.

while exempting larger industrial nations, including the US. Leslie Buell, a contemporary commentator, already pointed out this hypocrisy as the US continued manufacturing high-quality opium from the Middle East and the Balkans. The US arguments in the Opium Committee also did little to address the domestic issue: a staggering 110,000 documented drug addicts within the US. This practice starkly contradicted the US moral stance on production limitations.<sup>5</sup>

Yugoslav historiography, primarily represented by Vladan Jovanović's research on the robust Yugoslav opium trade, delves into the intricate ties between the government's opium policies and its ambition to penetrate Western pharmaceutical markets in collaboration with Turkey. Although Jovanović emphasises the significance of the opium trade to Yugoslav producers and the state budget, particularly in relation to 1930s trade relations with the USA, he overlooks Yugoslavia's pivotal international role in the 1920s. In this crucial decade, Yugoslav international cooperation laid the groundwork for establishing trade networks with Turkey, Iran (Persia), and the West.<sup>6</sup> This foundation was anchored in the peasant international cooperation in the League of Nations Opium Committee, which illustrates one of the diverse ways through which the Yugoslav experts in law, economics, health, and education strived to improve the living conditions of Yugoslav peasants and concurrently played a salient role in the international anti-opium movement.

Yugoslavia thus stood somewhat apart in a world grappling with the challenges of opium addiction and the urgency of international anti-opium conferences and conventions to ban the production of opium. It was this divergent use of a poppy plant that the Yugoslav experts and diplomats working in the *League of Nations Advisory Committee for Opium and Dangerous Drugs*, here referred to as the Opium Committee, highlighted at the *Second Geneva Opium Conference* in 1924/25. Their colleagues from India, Turkey, and Iran supported Yugoslav arguments on adapting the international anti-opium conventions pragmatically to apply their principles in different local and national contexts. The international cooperation between the countries began the transformation

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<sup>5</sup> Leslie Buell, "The Opium Conferences" and Welles A. Gray, "The Opium Problem", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 122 (1925): 148–159.

<sup>6</sup> Vladan Jovanović, *Opijum Na Balkanu: Proizvodnja i Promet Opojnih Droga 1918.-1941* (AGM, 2020); Vladan Jovanović, "Jugoslavensko-Američka Opijumska Suradnja 1929.-1941. Godine", *Časopis Za Suvremenu Povijest* 50, no. 1 (2018).



of the principles of the international anti-opium standards. I refer to their arguments and networks formed within the Opium Committee as peasant internationalists because of their overwhelming focus on protecting peasant economic interests and, thereby, the country's role within the international raw opium trade. As argued by peasant internationalists, opium was not just a humanitarian and moral quest of the League of Nations, aiming to rid humanity of the social effects created by opioid addiction. It was also an economic issue, as its questions were intrinsically linked to the agricultural production of poppy seed, which brought livelihood to many peasants in the southern part of Yugoslavia, the region known as "Serbian Macedonia."

Drawing from archival documents housed in the League of Nations Archive in Geneva, this chapter first explores the international anti-opium movement, tracing its origins to the nineteenth century. It then delves into the rise of the opium-producing bloc in the 1920s, which initially included Yugoslavia, India, Iran, and Turkey. These countries challenged the prevailing, morally charged rhetoric on opium eradication championed by the USA and Great Britain. Slobodan Jovanović highlighted the alternative use of poppy plants in Yugoslavia, specifically for making cakes and oils. This perspective influenced a colleague from India during the Second Geneva Conference in 1924/25 to echo a similar economic rationale. He revealed that rural communities often utilised opium for veterinary and medical needs, given the daunting distances and challenges in accessing professional medical care. The ban on the production of raw opium would thus have catastrophic consequences for the Indian peasants.

The next section of the chapter investigates the contributions of Konstantin Fotić to the Opium Committee, who rose to the chairmanship of the body in 1929. Since 1927, Fotić had carved a niche for himself as an even-handed mediator bridging the opium-manufacturing and opium-producing nations. His efforts within the Committee guaranteed that opium-producing countries, Yugoslavia included, received equitable representation in the Permanent Central Board. This supervisory entity, established by the League of Nations, was tasked with monitoring compliance with export-import quotas, a foundational tenet of the Geneva Opium Convention, which was shaped significantly by the arguments advanced by the opium-producing bloc. The chapter concludes by tracing the legacy of peasant international cooperation within the framework of the

international anti-opium movement, shedding light on its implications for Yugoslavia's opium trade policy during the 1930s.

## 2. The International Problem of Opium

The problem of opium and its illicit traffic predates the foundation of the League of Nations in 1920. A helpful starting point to begin the history of the international anti-opium movement is the First International Opium Conference (IOC) in 1909 in Shanghai. Attended by thirteen nations, the conference delegates discussed strategies to regulate the trade in opium to reduce its cultivation, production, and distribution. Although the conference did not produce any binding international agreements on suppressing opium trafficking or opium production, it was a foundation for further international cooperation. The Shanghai Conference led to the signing of the *Hague International Opium Convention* in 1912, inspired national drug control legislation, such as the 1914 *Harrison Act* in the USA, and acted as a blueprint for the establishment of the *League of Nations Advisory Committee on Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs* in 1921.<sup>7</sup>

The Shanghai Conference revealed just how vital opium commerce was to the imperial interests of Britain, France, Germany, and Japan, which remains the most dominant theme of twentieth-century opium historiography. For instance, Japan in the 1910s established an elaborate opium system dependent on the series of Japanese territorial expansions: the official administration of Taiwanese, Korean, and Manchurian territories. This opium system also revealed the earliest link between drug and human trafficking on the international level, which strengthened the voices arguing for eradicating illicit opium traffic based on humanitarian and moral grounds.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Steffen Rimner, *Opium's Long Shadow*, "Introduction."

<sup>8</sup> Manchuria emerged as the most critical area of Japanese morphine smuggling, Rimner, *Opium's Long Shadow*, 243-7. Steffen Rimner highlighted the role of journalists and non-state actors in international anti-opium propaganda. He exposed the crucial role of correspondent Morrison and his anti-drug propaganda in 1915 on the content of global moral imperatives against the suppression of the opium trade due to its links with the

Although there is a plethora of literature on 19th-century opium history, most notably spotlighting the repercussions of the Opium Wars between Britain and China, in-depth examinations of the League's initiatives to curb illicit opium are surprisingly rare.<sup>9</sup> Scholars have underscored opium's pivotal role in forging the economic, political, and moral empires during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as its profound influence on the nations of trade to the Far East and Southeast Asia.<sup>10</sup> For instance, America's engagement in the anti-opium movement via the IOC in 1909 was intrinsically tied to its broader foreign policy objectives and its overarching "civilising mission." American businessmen and Bishop Croft galvanised the US government's stance on the opium quandary in the Far East. Ian Tyrrell shed light on how Bishop Croft's advocacy swayed the stance of Roosevelt's administration. Croft believed that "the pauperising of more than one hundred million of [Chinese] people by opium and the antiforeign feeling was one of the largest obstacles to the development of that largest market in the world."<sup>11</sup> A vibrant opium-free China could materially enhance missionary possibilities for the United States in East Asia.

This line of reasoning indicates that moral reformers leveraged the opium dilemma to sculpt the American regional economic and diplomatic strategy. These actions, in turn, bolstered the ascendancy of American global dominance.<sup>12</sup> World War One did little to alter America's viewpoint or stance on opium and related illicit substances. This mission to "civilise" found stronger footing and institutional backing through the US's active participation in the Opium Committee. This involvement extended to the informal Committee of One Hundred in 1931, which

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Japanese drug and human trafficking. Morrison's intelligence networks drew a parallel to the British legacy of opium trading after the Opium Wars (1839-1842 and 1856-1860). Rimner, *Opium's Long Shadow*, 248-250.

<sup>9</sup> L. Buell and E. Grey are the most notable scholars who researched the international history of opium in the interwar years.

<sup>10</sup> For example: Daniel JP. Wertz, "Idealism, Imperialism, and Internationalism: Opium Politics in the Colonial Philippines, 1898-1925" in *Modern Asian Studies* 47, No. 2 (2013): 467-499. For example, John M. Jennings, "The Forgotten Plague: Opium and Narcotics in Korea under Japanese Rule, 1910-1945" in *Modern Asian Studies* 29, No. 4 (1995): 795-815 and Xavier Paulès, "Opium in the City: A Spatial Study of Guangzhou's Opium Houses, 1923-1936" in *Modern China* 35, No. 5 (2009): 495-526.

<sup>11</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2013), 156-57.

<sup>12</sup> Tyrrell, *Reforming the World*, 158-59.

convened directors from national anti-opium agencies spanning Great Britain, the United States, Germany, Canada, the Netherlands, France, and Switzerland.<sup>13</sup>

This chapter investigates how the moral imperative for banning the production of opium, championed by America as a response to the imperial drug policies in the Far East, met resistance from the ascending interests and influence of opium-producing nations, namely Yugoslavia, Iran, India, and Turkey. This coalition of opium producers effectively contested the ethical arguments underpinning the League's stance on opium. In doing so, they undercut the notion of a Western "civilising mission" that the USA fervently advocated since the late nineteenth century. Slobodan Jovanović, a Yugoslav delegate, was at the forefront of defending the economic imperatives of agrarian economies tethered to poppy seed cultivation. He highlighted the potential repercussions of an overarching ban on poppy cultivation, emphasising that the opium issue was as much an economic problem as it was a moral and health one. With these arguments, he laid the ground for peasant international cooperation established at the Second Geneva Opium Conference in 1924/25 and the bilateral foreign trade agreements between Yugoslavia and Turkey in 1932.<sup>14</sup>

In his seminal work on the international history of the anti-opium movement, Stefan Rimner highlighted the merits of a transnational approach, delving into diverse sources and viewpoints concerning the opium trade and its trafficking from the 1850s to 1921. He emphasised the pivotal role of journalists and lobbyists in shaping international public sentiment on opium and explored its influence on the trio of Hague Opium Conferences held between 1911 and 1915. Most notably, these discussions culminated in the *Hague International Opium Convention* of 1912, a foundational framework for the League's anti-opium initiatives.

Drawing on the contributions of internationalists Sir William Job Collins and Elizabeth Washburn Wright, Rimner charted the evolution and institutionalisation of the global anti-drug system. He delved into the intricate personal networks of these "anti-opium crusaders," who, aware of their

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<sup>13</sup> Jovanović, "Jugoslavensko-Američka Opijumaska Suradnja," 38.

<sup>14</sup> Further projects will examine whether peasant international cooperation was also dominant in other socioeconomic committees of the League, including the Economic and Financial Organisation.

influential standing in Beijing, collaborated closely with the Chinese government to curb opium cultivation. Post the Shanghai Conference in 1909, Beijing emerged as a nexus for transnational discourse — a melting pot where personal ambitions met and often clashed with governmental trade agendas. Recognising the need for a more structured approach, these experts championed the creation of the International Anti-Opium Association (IAOA) in Beijing in 1918, marking a significant stride in global anti-opium advocacy.<sup>15</sup> The IAOA played a pivotal role in unveiling opium transactions in East Asia, furnishing governments and international entities with intricate local insights that were otherwise elusive. Boasting a comprehensive network of informants spanning multiple continents, the IAOA significantly bolstered the League's efforts to combat illicit drug trafficking. The association's data on poppy cultivation and opium smuggling consistently outperformed governmental sources' accuracy and reliability. Consequently, the League's Opium Committee, since its inception in 1921, heavily relied on the IAOA's intelligence.<sup>16</sup>

The Yugoslav contributions to international anti-opium control enrich Rimner's research on "Opium's Long Shadow," highlighting the pivotal role of smaller, predominantly agricultural opium-producing nations in the genesis, evolution, and execution of international anti-opium policies. This perspective reveals that, when united, these smaller nations, often overlooked in traditional League of Nations scholarship, wielded considerable influence over international legal norms and standards. The opium-producing bloc framed the core tenets of the Second Geneva Convention of 1925 and championed equitable representation for opium-producing countries within the supervisory committee, known as the Permanent Central Board. Given that this collaboration was rooted in safeguarding the economic interests of peasants and national economies, the central figures in these narratives are aptly termed peasant internationalists.

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<sup>15</sup> Rimner, *Opium's Long Shadow*, 262-268.

<sup>16</sup> Rimner, *Opium's Long Shadow*, 270.

## 2.1. *Yugoslavia in the Opium Committee*

Just weeks after establishing the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in December 1918, Yugoslav diplomats and experts travelled to Paris. Present at the Paris Peace Conference tables, the country's representatives played a role in drafting the League's Covenant, primarily to consolidate the territorial boundaries of the new state and address emerging minority issues.<sup>17</sup> These stories of international recognition, territorial legitimation and the country's foreign political orientation in the aftermath of the Paris Conference have received historical scrutiny due to their significance for validating the state's existence in the new international order.<sup>18</sup> Aligning with the theme of 'peasantism' in this dissertation, an exploration of Yugoslavia's involvement in the Opium Committee unveils lesser-known facets of its international engagement—specifically, its contributions to the socioeconomic ventures of the League of Nations (LON).

After the much-awaited international recognition of the country, Yugoslavia slowly increased their involvement in the League throughout the 1920s.<sup>19</sup> The first official Yugoslav engagement in the League came in 1921 to settle the minority and frontier issues with Albania and, in 1922, with Hungary. The following year saw a surge in Yugoslav involvement within the League as they gained a seat in the *Advisory and Technical Committee for Communication and Transit* (which remained one of the critical areas of Yugoslav contributions to the LON in the 1930s), the *Temporary Mixed Commission for the Reduction of Armaments*, the *International Committee for Intellectual Cooperation*, and the *Opium Committee*. By the end of the decade, Yugoslavia became directly

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<sup>17</sup> D.H. Miller, *Drafting of the Covenant* (New York: Putnam, 1928), Vol. 2, 64–105, and Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916–1931* (Penguin, 2015), 259–65.

<sup>18</sup> Explored by Wheatley, *The Life and Death of States*, 2023. For the Yugoslav context, see Ivo J. Lederer, *Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference; a Study in Frontiermaking*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); Bogdan Krizman, "Stvaranje Jugoslavenske Države i Njeni Medjunarodni Odnosi u'Istoriji Jugoslavije", *Časopis Za Suvremenu Povijest* 5, no. 2 (1973): 32–42; Andrej Mitrović, *Jugoslavija na konferenciji mira 1919-1920*. (Beograd: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika Socijalističke Republike Srbije, 1969).

<sup>19</sup> A rare exception of this was the exhibition outlining the Yugoslav involvement in the League of Nations, Dusan Joncic, *Kraljevina Jugoslavija u Drustvu naroda: katalog izlozbe* (Belgrade: 2014).

involved in the work of several other League enterprises,<sup>20</sup> However, one of the most influential examples of the country's engagement in the LON came in the Opium Committee, which culminated in Konstantin Fotić's election as a chairman in 1928.

Yugoslavia had three prominent representatives in the Opium Committee during the 1920s.<sup>21</sup> Slobodan Jovanović joined in August 1924 as the delegate for its sixth session. He was replaced by Nikola Petrović in 1925 before Konstantin Fotić joined the Committee in 1927. Since only Slobodan Jovanović and Konstantin Fotić actively contributed to the Committee's discussions and agenda, my analysis will focus on these two individuals. Both Jovanović and Fotić are relatively unfamiliar figures in the international history of interwar Yugoslavia; much of that can be attributed to their political marginalisation by the Communist Party after the Second World War. After the formation of socialist Yugoslavia, Fotić was politically exiled in the same process as Slobodan Jovanović, eventually settling in the US. Slobodan Jovanović was imprisoned due to his ties to the Yugoslav emigre government during World War II (WWII) and because of his controversial support for the fascist collaborators during the war, explored in chapter five of this thesis. Only after the collapse of Yugoslavia in the 1990s did the rehabilitation of the life and work of these interwar figures begin to emerge.<sup>22</sup>

Slobodan Jovanović (1869-1958) was a distinguished Serbian scholar, statesman, political philosopher, lawyer, historian, writer, and public and constitutional law professor at the University of Belgrade.<sup>23</sup> Deeply influenced by his father Vladimir—an ideologist for the Serbian Liberal Party and the influential pre-war organisation, United Serbian Youth—he inherited a blend of patriotic

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<sup>20</sup> For example, in the work of the *Second Economic Conference*, the *Preparatory Commission for the World Disarmament Conference*, the *Health Committee* and later the *Health Organisation* in 1929.

<sup>21</sup> The official name of the country established in December 1918 was the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (SHS). However, this chapter uses the post-1929 official name 'the Kingdom of Yugoslavia' or 'Yugoslavia' for the purposes of consistency and clarity unless the official name of the country was used in the delegates' speeches.

<sup>22</sup> Milicevic, *Konstantin Fotić*, 150-1.

<sup>23</sup> He acted as a prime minister of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in-exile during the Second World War. After the establishment of socialist Yugoslavia Jovanović was in 1946 sentenced to 20 years of hard labour, confiscation of property and deprivation of civil rights.

nationalism and liberal values.<sup>24</sup> His upbringing and international education shaped his belief in individual freedoms and parliamentary democracy. Unlike his father's liberal patriotism, Slobodan's patriotism leaned conservatively, emphasizing the intertwining of history and tradition. This perspective influenced his interpretation of the state, a cornerstone of his political ideology, and shaped his stances in the Opium Committee.<sup>25</sup> His beliefs in the 1920s, highlighting the need to preserve the traditional Yugoslav poppyseed uses and agricultural cultivation in the "Southern Serbian region of Macedonia," were rooted in this nexus of tradition and history.

As a political theorist, he believed in the synthesis of traditional and new rather than being a proponent of a radical change, as Milosavljevic explains: "What is most acceptable to Jovanović is that government decision-making should be experience-based, because the state, longer-lasting than any one individual, relies for its law on its traditions rather than on the changing will of its members."<sup>26</sup> He envisioned the state as a neutral entity, balancing diverse interests and mediating between centripetal and centrifugal forces.<sup>27</sup> In Jovanović's view, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy coexist each acting as a check to maintain equilibrium among heterogeneous social factions. This intricate political theory informed his approach to Yugoslav representation in international cooperation in the Opium Committee.<sup>28</sup>

Like Jovanović, Konstantin Fotić was an internationally educated diplomat and legal expert. He earned his law degree from Bordeaux in 1912 and completed his doctoral studies in Paris by 1914. After a distinguished military stint on the Solun front for the Kingdom of Serbia, he transitioned into diplomacy in 1916 as a foreign correspondent. He later served as the secretary for the Yugoslav delegation at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and held key foreign office roles in Vienna and London during the early 1920s. By 1927, under Foreign Minister Ninko Perić, Fotić became the

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<sup>24</sup> Boris Milosavljevic, "Liberal and Conservative Political Thought in Nineteenth Century Serbia: Vladimir Jovanović and Slobodan Jovanović", *Institute for Balkan Studies at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts* (2017): 132-33.

<sup>25</sup> Milosavljevic, "Liberal and Conservative Political Thought", 130-35. Jovanović espoused his political theory in "Država" [the State], (1922).

<sup>26</sup> Milosavljevic, "Liberal and Conservative Political Thought", 146.

<sup>27</sup> Jovanović, "Država", 59.

<sup>28</sup> Milosavljevic, "Liberal and Conservative Political Thought", 146.



primary delegate for Yugoslavia in Geneva. Fotić's peers esteemed him for his lucid and poised responses in the Opium Committee, the Preparatory Committee for the World Disarmament Conference, and the Committee for Refugees.<sup>29</sup> In 1929, he concurrently chaired both the Opium Committee and the Committee for Refugees while also liaising with the Yugoslavian embassy in Moscow.<sup>30</sup> Although Fotić did not overtly champion the national interests of Yugoslav peasants, his advocacy for policies empowering opium-producing nations—including Yugoslavia—echoed Jovanović's earlier emphasis on an economic lens in shaping international anti-opium policies.

American journalists perceived Konstantin Fotić as wielding substantial diplomatic influence in Western circles. He openly opposed Yugoslavia's 1935 foreign policy shift from France to Germany, ending his tenure as a Yugoslav delegate to the League of Nations.<sup>31</sup> Despite a distinguished run in Geneva during the dictatorship era (1929-1934), Fotić's appointment as the Yugoslav ambassador to the USA in 1935 seemed a regression in his illustrious international career.<sup>32</sup> In his memoirs, he critiqued Yugoslavia's foreign policies of the late 1930s, revealing a pro-Western and anti-German orientation.<sup>33</sup> His endorsement of Draža Mihailović's Chetnik regime and opposition to Marshall Tito's National Liberation Council during his US ambassadorship influenced his post-war trajectory. His controversial transfer of the Yugoslav National Bank's funds from the US to Brazil, at the behest of the émigré government, sealed his destiny under the communist regime. Tagged as a "collaborator of the fascist regime" by the communist leadership, he faced persecution. This friction, detailed in the dissertation's fifth chapter, also pitted Fotić against prominent Yugoslav economist Rudolf Bićanić, who disapproved of Fotić's actions.

The histories of Jovanović and Fotić underscore the significance of viewing historical figures through a lens of situational identities and shifting loyalties rather than fixed ethnic, political, or ideological affiliations, fitting with the theoretical framework of the "national indifference." While

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<sup>29</sup> Natasa Milicevic, "Konstantin Fotić - Diplomata od Karijere" in *Istorija 20. Veka*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1998): 144.

<sup>30</sup> Milicevic, "Konstantin Fotić", 148.

<sup>31</sup> Milicevic, "Konstantin Fotić", 149.

<sup>32</sup> *AJ*, 38 *Centralni Presbiro (CPB) Jugoslavenski Diplomati*, f. 892. *New York Herald Tribune* article, October 1935.

<sup>33</sup> Konstantin Fotić, *Rat Koji smo Izgubili: Tragedija Jugoslavije i Pogreška Zapada* (Belgrade: 1995), 15.

neither had strong affiliations to Yugoslav peasant parties or championed the peasant cause, the socioeconomic realities of rural Yugoslavia influenced both of their participation in the Opium Committee. They underscored the potential pitfalls of applying 'Western-centric' international laws to non-Western regions. A distinguishing approach of peasant internationalists, this stance aimed at safeguarding peasant livelihoods and infused pragmatism into the international anti-opium laws. In doing so, they garnered support from counterparts in India, Turkey, Iran, and later Egypt, who grappled with similar challenges given their unique poppy uses. Their shared lived experience of internationalism and interactions in international forums offer a richer narrative of complex circulations of ideas and knowledge than official conference reports suggest.<sup>34</sup>

### 3. The Birth of the Opium-Producing Bloc

The institutionalisation of the international anti-opium movement commenced with the IOC in Shanghai, followed by the establishment of the International Anti-Opium Association (IAOA) in Beijing in 1918. After its founding, the League of Nations ensured adherence to the Hague International Anti-Opium Convention of 1912. As stipulated in Article Nine, this convention "bound the contracting governments to introduce the direct measures to limit the manufacturing of the opium and other narcotic drugs."<sup>35</sup> To monitor and support these efforts, the League instituted a dedicated section within its secretariat and entrusted it "with the collection of information as to the action taken by the various countries to execute the Opium Convention and to obtain information on the production, distribution and consumption of narcotics."<sup>36</sup> Finally, to support the countries' cooperation and advise the Council on all opium-related questions, the League formed the Opium Committee in 1921, which Yugoslavia joined in 1924.

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<sup>34</sup> Jessica Reinisch and David Brydan, "Introduction," in *Internationalists in European History: Rethinking the Twentieth Century* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021).

<sup>35</sup> Extract From the Minutes of the Tenth Session of the Opium Committee, October 1927, C. 577. 1927. XI, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

During the 1920s, Yugoslavia's role in the Opium Committee was pivotal due to its standing as an opium-producing nation and the significant contributions of Slobodan Jovanović and Konstantin Fotić to its efforts. These two peasant internationalists protected the economic interests of the Kingdom while upholding the values of international cooperation, which culminated in Fotić's election as chairman of the Committee in 1928. While Fotić's and Jovanović's actions in the Opium Committee may not have been entirely altruistically motivated by peasant life, their concern for the state's inability to implement the poppy plant ban and the impact this would have on the precarious political stability of the country, deemed peasants a relevant factor in drafting international policies. However, their arguments, when viewed in the broader context of the League's Opium Committee, became catalysts for peasant international cooperation in the shape of the opium-producing bloc. This cooperation considered the livelihood and health of peasant populations in formulating their arguments, as exemplified by the contributions of the Indian delegate to the Second Opium Conference proceedings, considering India's use of opium for veterinary and health purposes.

The Opium Committee's founding members included representatives from France, Siam, China, Germany, Great Britain, India, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the USA. Chairmanship roles within the Committee lasted for a one-year term, with the possibility of extension through a member vote, with all committee sessions open to the public. Before the foundation of the opium-producing bloc, as an expression of cooperation in the form of peasant internationalism between the smaller states in the Committee, the Committee's primary objective was to limit opium production, guided by the ethical standpoint of suppressing opium as a societal vice. This principle necessitated a direct international rationing system to ascertain the permissible quotas of narcotics for medical and scientific purposes. However, translating this principle into practical application was complicated due to varying opium uses between industrialised and agricultural nations. Consequently, after the *Second Opium Conference* in Geneva in 1925, the direct production rationing approach was supplanted by an indirect control system, which followed the movements of drugs after the raw material came into a country. This pivot in international norms emerged from an informal alliance among opium-producing countries, Iran, India, Yugoslavia, and Turkey,

fostered through the mechanism of peasant international cooperation within the League of Nations.<sup>37</sup> Their economic discourse, challenging the moral arguments for an outright opium-production ban championed by the USA and Great Britain, underlined the prioritisation of economic considerations over political sovereignty in Yugoslav international interactions 1920-1956. Analysing Yugoslav contributions to the Opium Committee through a multilateral lens, particularly by focusing on placing internationalism in Geneva, offers insights into the formation of social networks under the umbrella of peasant international cooperation.

### 3.1 *The Opium Committee*

Between 1922 and 1924, the proposals of the American, British, and French delegations dominated the Opium Committee's deliberations. These proposals aimed to confine opium production strictly to meet global medical and scientific demands. The American "civilising mission," discussed by Rimner, shaped the rhetoric of this moral obligation to rid humanity of the evil that is opium. The US delegation recommended that the League enforce laws based on *The International Opium Convention* of 1912. Their suggestion during the fifth meeting of the Opium Committee in 1923 concluded that: (1) "If the purpose of the Hague Opium Convention is to be achieved according to its spirit and true intent, it must be recognised that the use of opium products for other than medicinal and scientific purposes is abuse and not legitimate." And (2) "to prevent the abuse of these drugs, it is necessary to exercise control of the production of raw opium in such a manner that there will be no surplus available for non-medicinal and non-scientific purposes."<sup>38</sup>

By 1924, the *International Hague Opium Convention* had garnered signatures from fifty-one countries, with 42 ratifying it. Notably, Yugoslavia did not. Implementation of the convention's principle to limit opium production appeared challenging, as evidenced by only twenty states

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<sup>37</sup> Minutes of the Fifth Session, June 1923, The Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C. 418, M. 184, 1923, XI, *The LON Archives*. The system of import and export certificates furnished by the governments monitored the movement of raw opium.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

providing data on their annual opium imports and exports. Being an opium-producing nation, Yugoslavia echoed these implementation difficulties.<sup>39</sup>

Yugoslavia's decision not to ratify the Hague Convention was particularly notable given its stature as a raw opium producer. Opium cultivation in Yugoslav territories has its roots in the nineteenth century, during the Ottoman era, especially in the region later known as "Serbian Macedonia." Macedonian opium was particularly sought after because of its high morphine content, ranging from 8-12% and occasionally reaching 15%. This made it a prime choice for the pharmaceutical markets in Germany, Great Britain, France, and the USA. Following the Balkan Wars in 1911, opium cultivation became considerably more lucrative than wheat, experiencing a tenfold profit surge. The districts of Tikves, Veles, Stip, and Kumanovo in "Serbian Macedonia" began producing an annual crop ranging between 100,000 and 120,000 kg. At the Second League of Nations Assembly in 1921, Yugoslav delegates approximated the poppy cultivation area to be between 5,000 and 8,000 hectares. According to the same report, in the years preceding the war, opium exports reached a value of 7,179,000 dinars, targeting markets in Asia Minor, Germany, England, and the United States for further processing. By 1921, export values increased to 8,087,866 dinars, representing less than 1% of the global market value.<sup>40</sup>

While Yugoslavia might not have been a global leader in raw opium production, considering the variety of opium applications (from drugs to consumption), the cultivation of poppy seeds held immense significance for the peasants of South Macedonia. This stemmed from their longstanding tradition of utilising poppy seeds in cake and oil production.<sup>41</sup> However, Yugoslavia also used its poppy seed crop for manufacturing raw opium. Primarily processed in Solun, Greece, this raw opium was then sold to Western European manufacturers.

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<sup>39</sup> Minutes of the Fifth Session, June 1923, The Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C. 418, M. 184, 1923, XI, *LON Archives*.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* "Annual Report on Yugoslavia."

<sup>41</sup> The Opium Committee saw this as a prerequisite of the opium production and its illegal traffic.

The popularity of Yugoslav opium flourished in the late 1920s and the 1930s as international opium regulations were implemented. Its elevated morphine content meant pharmaceutical titans like *Mallinckrodt, Merck & Co., and New York Quinine & Chemical Works* could purchase fewer kilos of Yugoslav opium compared to its Chinese counterpart, which contained just 3-5% morphine, for opioid drug production, bolstering these companies' profit margins. It allowed them to produce a larger volume of drugs using the same quantity of raw opium typically sourced from the Far East while adhering to the production limits set by the Hague and Geneva Opium Conventions.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.2. Yugoslavia Joins the Opium Committee

During the Sixth Meeting of the League's Opium Committee in 1924, Slobodan Jovanović was the first delegate to voice concerns about the system of opium production limitation discussed by the Committee. These deliberations culminated in the *Opium Convention Draft Agreement*, set to be voted on at the *Second World Opium Conference* in Geneva between 1924 and 1925. Opening his remarks with a desire "to make a certain general observation," Jovanović emphasised the duality of the opium issue: it could be seen from both a humanitarian and an economic perspective.

Jovanović contended that the *Opium Convention Draft Agreement* had primarily overlooked the latter economic dimension. He pointed out, "The war had caused great financial and economic disturbances in every country, especially in those which had taken an active part in it [as Yugoslavia did]."<sup>43</sup> Given this context, he felt inopportune to push for a convention mandating universally stringent measures against opium misuse. He also expressed concerns about the governance in some states, particularly Persia and Turkey, asserting that their central authority was not robust enough for adequate control. Therefore, "the control would be challenging to

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<sup>42</sup> Jovanović, "Jugoslavensko-Američka Opijumska Suradnja 1929.–1941. Godine," 39.

<sup>43</sup> Minutes of the Sixth Session, August 1924, "Jovanović's remarks," Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C. 397, M. 146, 1924, XI, *The LON Archives*.

establish."<sup>44</sup> Most importantly, Jovanović recognised and supported the international moral obligation, but he highlighted the national implications of poppy cultivation for Yugoslavia.

“In the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, for instance, it was not possible legally to limit the cultivation of the poppy, for to do so would be to attack the liberty of the nationals of the State and to compel them to restrict the cultivation of a plant which was used not only for medicinal purposes but also in the making of cakes, the manufacture of oil, etc. In this country, it would be tough to convince the population that such a limitation would benefit them, for no abusive use of opium existed in the country.”<sup>45</sup>

Jovanović’s arguments underscored the importance of national sovereignty over international law, emphasising the historical significance of opium use within the country. This stance aligned with Jovanović’s ideological vision of the state’s role and duty to uphold its citizens’ socio-cultural traditions. Furthermore, Jovanović expressed concerns that countries not ratifying the convention might exploit reduced market competition, leading to inflated opium prices. As an alternative, he advocated for a trade control system that levied penalties on nations exporting vast opium quantities and territories “where illegal smuggling is present.” Mr Bourgois of France concurred with Jovanović’s remarks in saying that “the evil had to be attacked where it existed, and not where it did not exist; a Convention had to be drafted which would be applied and not merely signed, and countries had to be induced to make sacrifices for the good of a cause and not for the benefit of a competitor.”<sup>46</sup>

Jovanović’s stance garnered support from the American delegate, Mr Wright, and the Chinese representative, Chao Hsin-Chu. However, Dr Anselmino of Germany diverged in his views. He asserted that the opium issue was fundamentally moral, health, and social concern. He argued that

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Minutes of the Sixth Session, August 1924, “*Mr Bourgois speech*,” Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C. 397, M. 146, 1924, XI, *The LON Archives*.

national economic interests, as championed by Jovanović, should be secondary. Dr Anselmino was optimistic that, in due course, global public sentiment would compel all nations to embrace the Convention.<sup>47</sup>

This discourse raised a pivotal dilemma and echoed the debates across the League of Nations socioeconomic committees: Should international standards prioritise national or international interests, and can these viewpoints be reconciled? The deliberations in Geneva suggested no clear answer. While the League of Nations supervised the Hague Convention, ensuring adherence to international anti-opium conventions, much like other international laws, hinged on the endorsement of individual nations. As with Yugoslavia, these conventions could disrupt countries' socioeconomic balance, especially during post-imperial state-building. Jovanović's arguments illuminated the essential need to tailor international anti-opium conventions to safeguard the well-being of rural communities reliant on poppy cultivation. The pragmatic adaption of international laws and standards became one of the critical arguments reiterated by peasant internationalists from Yugoslavia, Central-Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America, 1920-1956.

The Opium Committee chose to sidestep the jurisdictional dilemma. They proposed a resolution to the Council of the LON, suggesting an outreach to opium-producing countries to consider crop substitution in lieu of poppy cultivation. This gesture aimed to reassure nations that had not yet ratified the Hague Opium Convention, ensuring their economies would remain unharmed.<sup>48</sup>

### 3.3. *The Second Geneva Conference, 1924-1925*

The question of national or international jurisdiction over international anti-opium laws became the central point of debate at the *Second Geneva Opium Conference* (November 1924-February

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, "Mr Anselmino's speech."

<sup>48</sup> Minutes of the Sixth Session, *August 1924*, Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C. 397, M. 146, 1924, XI, *The LON Archives*.



1925). The crop substitution proposal, intended to appease agricultural states, failed to gain adequate delegate support. Bolstered by Jovanović's stance, several countries voiced concerns over international regulations on opium production.

Mr Campbell of India expanded on Jovanović's arguments, highlighting the inequities of the opium production-limitation system. He emphasised the challenges faced by countries like India, where they were expected to comply with strict production limits while others operated outside the convention freely.<sup>49</sup> Given India's agricultural economy and society, with a cattle-to-human ratio of 2:1, opium played a vital role as a primary veterinary medicine. Campbell proposed that to ensure equity, the permissible opium production limit for India should be raised by a third, considering the majority was for animal rather than human use.<sup>50</sup>

Mr Campbell highlighted a crucial argument put forward by peasant internationalists throughout the interwar period - international conventions, like the *Geneva Opium Convention*, cannot be applied equally to all countries as the geographical, social, and economic conditions vary significantly worldwide.<sup>51</sup> He further explained his opinions on blanket international laws by drawing comparisons between the use of opium in India and the consumption of alcohol in Europe:

“India is inhabited by small agriculturalists who have terrible tropical diseases. All the diseases are very frequent – they have found a household remedy in the opium. (...) In India, there are few chemists, and they are far away; therefore, people must be able to stock the opium.”<sup>52</sup>

Given the varied local customs, uses, and demands for opium, the Conference should aim for universal laws but tailor their application to individual localities. This approach would curtail system abuse and diminish illegal opium trafficking. Concluding his address, Campbell appealed

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<sup>49</sup> Records of the Second Opium Conference, August 1925, “Mr Campbell's speech,” Plenary Meetings and Text of the Debates, Vol. I, C. 760, M. 260, 1924, XI, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

to the reasoned judgment of his fellow delegates, echoing the economic concerns Jovanović raised in 1924 against limiting opium production:

“I desire to make an appeal to my colleagues - not to their idealism, but to their statesmanship. Is it even probable that an identical system of control can be applied with equal efficiency in producing and consuming countries, in countries of the West and in countries of the East, in countries with a highly developed social organisation and in countries where the life of the people proceeds on much more primitive Lines? Let there be a universal aim in the suppression of opium; let there be a universal obligation to enforce laws. Let there be a universal test of the efficiency of the laws. Let there be a Central Board to publish the results. But the actual tenors of the laws and regulations to be enacted let the state be free to enact them in a manner which is best applicable to the local conditions.”<sup>53</sup>

Campbell’s call to address the issue of pragmatism over idealism sparked an extensive debate on balancing universal principles with practical considerations in international policies. Representatives from Poland and Italy contested the universal yet adaptable approach to regulating opium production. In contrast, the Turkish delegate wholeheartedly backed Campbell. He emphasised the need to distinguish between countries that import opium, those affected by illegal trade, and those producing the raw material. The opium-producing countries were “in most cases agricultural and underdeveloped and therefore the livelihood of most people depends on the exports of raw opium – as is the case in Turkey.”<sup>54</sup> He thought peasants should be compensated if the international community wished to limit their livelihood. “Similarly, the Turkish Government cannot sign a document the provisions of which it considers to be inapplicable,”<sup>55</sup> referencing Jovanović’s remarks during the Sixth Session of the Opium Committee.

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<sup>53</sup> Records of the Second Opium Conference, August 1925, “Mr Campbell’s speech,” Plenary Meetings and Text of the Debates, Vol. I, C. 760, M. 260, 1924, XI, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>54</sup> Records of the Second Opium Conference, August 1925, “Turkey’s response,” Plenary Meetings and Text of the Debates, Vol. I, C. 760, M. 260, 1924, XI, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

Jovanović sided with the argument made by the Indian representative but, unlike the representative of Turkey, announced his reservations about the scheme of crop substitution. He elaborated that regions in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes producing raw opium could not quickly adopt alternative crops due to specific soil conditions. While poppy cultivation could be supplanted by tobacco, wine, or cotton farming, these crops already saturated the domestic market and would need help to compete internationally. Jovanović's insights at the *Second Geneva Opium Conference* were deeply rooted in his understanding of the unique challenges facing peasants due to the physical, economic, and environmental constraints of the Yugoslav countryside and the competitiveness of the global agricultural markets.<sup>56</sup>

Jovanović next argued that curtailing opium production could lead to significant social upheaval in Yugoslavia, underscoring the importance of considering a law's practical implementation when framing international standards. Prohibiting poppy seed farming might "create a social proletariat and cause an economic crisis" as people of Southern Macedonia "would be deprived of their principal resource" – a consequence the Yugoslav delegation sought to prevent. He added that the production in Kingdom SHS was "so small that it did not account for 1% of the world production, and the abuse of opium is unknown to the country, which also has to be taken into account when deciding the level of opium which can be legitimately used."<sup>57</sup> Jovanović concluded his speech by stating:

"In the opinion of my delegation, the struggle against this scourge of humanity cannot be successfully carried on simply by limiting the cultivation of the poppy, in view of the fact that it is impossible to organise effective control in all countries."<sup>58</sup>

Opium-producing nations voiced strong reservations about the production limitation system, which had backing from industrialised, opium-manufacturing countries such as the USA, Great Britain, and France. In this context, Yugoslavia, Iran, Turkey, and India formed a cohesive lobbying

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

bloc, emphasising the need for a nuanced approach when applying these measures, all while safeguarding the economic interests of agricultural states.<sup>59</sup> The unique blend of physical, social, and economic aspects of Yugoslavia's rural environment, encapsulated by the central theme of peasantism, forged a shared sentiment among Yugoslav representatives. This sentiment compelled them to champion the economic welfare of their country's peasant population, regardless of internal political affiliations. These discussions on applying international norms were set against a larger backdrop: the ongoing debate on whether the League of Nations' international system genuinely addressed the concerns of post-imperial states. This debate would resurface during the decolonisation era of the 1960s.

To address these issues, the Conference established a sub-committee tasked with crafting a resolution addressing the "economic impact and unfairness of the *Draft Proposal*." Persia's (Iran) delegation, echoing the sentiments of India, Yugoslavia, and Turkey, proposed a revision to Article 1 of the Opium Convention. This amendment, later fine-tuned by France, read: "The Contracting Parties undertake to strengthen the laws and regulations which they have adopted in virtue of the Hague Convention to ensure the control of the production, distribution and export of raw opium."<sup>60</sup> This amendment received the support of most states, winning the vote 17 by 9.

To many nations, the alteration to Article 1 seemed a regressive move in the realm of international opium control, reverting to the limited principles of the *Hague Convention of 1912* while enhancing governmental law enforcement powers. However, for opium-producing countries like India, China, Turkey, Egypt, Persia, and Yugoslavia, this amendment signified something entirely different. It underscored the possibility of moulding international legislation to echo the national priorities of predominantly agrarian nations. It stood as a testament to the resilience and lasting influence of the League's ideals. Notably, this proposal, tailored pragmatically to harness support from countries worldwide, persisted beyond the lifespan of the League itself. It informed the *Interim Agreement* signed by Egypt, Yugoslavia, Iran, and Turkey in Ankara in 1949 and served as a basis

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<sup>59</sup> Minutes of the Fifth Session, June 1923, "American delegate's speeches," The Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C. 418, M. 184, 1923, XI, *LON Archives*.

<sup>60</sup> Records of the Second Opium Conference, August 1925, Plenary Meetings and Text of the Debates, Vol. I, C. 760, M. 260, 1924, XI, *The LON Archives*.

for the *UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs* in 1961, explored in the dissertation's final chapter. This chapter in international anti-opium debates reveals that smaller countries, often marginalised in historical analyses of international law, could impact and actively shape the League of Nations' international system when united. A parallel argument, focusing on international health standards, is presented in the subsequent chapter.

#### 4. The Permanent Central Board

While the opium-producing nations claimed a battle victory, the war was still unfolding. The Geneva Opium Convention, which supplanted the 1912 Hague Convention, instituted rigorous oversight of the opium trade via the *Central Opium Board*, which was subsequently renamed the *Permanent Central Board* (PCB). This Convention empowered the PCB to monitor global opium movements and address any illicit trafficking on an individual basis.

Debates concerning the PCB's formation commenced in the final stages of the Second Opium Conference in Geneva in 1925. A pivotal challenge in finalising decisions revolved around ensuring the impartiality of its members and determining the Board's composition. The sticking point of the debate was the ratio of opium-producing countries to that of opium-manufacturing countries represented on the Board. Konstantin Fotić advocated for amplifying the influence of opium-producing nations, aiming to prevent the Board's decisions from being solely swayed by states dominating the pharmaceutical opioid markets.

In 1925, Slobodan Jovanović supported the initial observation regarding the Board's structure raised by the Polish representative.<sup>61</sup> At the concluding moments of the Conference, the contentious point was handed over to the drafting committee, which included Yugoslav delegates. The finalised

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<sup>61</sup> Records of the Second Opium Conference, August 1925, "Jovanović's response on establishing the Opium Board," Plenary Meetings and Text of the Debates, Vol. I, C. 760, M. 260, 1924, XI, *The LON Archives*.

Article 19 of the Geneva Opium Convention, crafted by the British delegate, acceded to the desires of the opium-producing nations.

“In making these appointments, the electoral body shall see that the vacant seats are equitably distributed among persons possessing a thorough knowledge of the drug situation and connected on the one hand with producing and manufacturing countries and on the other with consuming countries. The members of the Central Board shall not hold any office which renders them dependent on their Governments.”<sup>62</sup>

This decision did not solve the question of the Board structure as the discussions continued in the League of Nations Opium Committee. The final negotiations, taking place before the ratification of the Geneva Opium Convention, culminated during the tenth meeting of the Opium Committee. In 1927, Konstantin Fotić carried on Slobodan Jovanović’s struggle to increase the decision-making power in the supervisory body in favour of the opium-producing states. Throughout 1927, Fotić crafted a sub-committee proposal outlining the relationship between the Opium Committee and the PCB. This proposal specifically tackled the issue of representation, advocating for an equitable division between opium-manufacturing and opium-producing countries (a 4:4 ratio).<sup>63</sup>

Fotić’s work on this proposal cemented his standing as a distinguished diplomat within Geneva’s intellectual circles. His proposal reconciled the divide between idealistic aspirations and practical solutions concerning international opium control. It did not shy away from the universalist ideal of suppressing the illicit traffic of opium globally, set forth by the League of Nations. However, it also recognised the need to listen to the states producing raw opium, given that their economies and trade balances might suffer from ill-advised and poorly applied international principles. His proposal granted more control over the international anti-opium policy to the opium-producing countries (such as India, Egypt, Persia, Turkey, and Yugoslavia) by including them on an equal ratio

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<sup>62</sup> Records of the Second Opium Conference, August 1925, “Documentation concerning the establishment of the Opium Board,” Plenary Meetings and Text of the Debates, Vol. I, C. 760, M. 260, 1924, XI, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

in the PCB while maintaining the League's ultimate authority over the question of illicit opium traffic.

During the tenth meeting of the Opium Committee, deliberations about the Board's structure were initiated by the Italian representative, Mr Cavazzoni. He voiced concerns over the PCB's autonomy and validity, asserting that it should function as a direct arm of the League, closely aligned with the Opium Committee. To him, the PCB should not be a detached international oversight entity that could potentially undermine the League's mandate on the opium issue. Cavazzoni sharply contested the subcommittee's proposal, drafted by Fotić, suggesting that the focus should be on refining the Geneva Convention instead of "creating new difficulties."<sup>64</sup> Mr Cavazzoni pointed out that the Opium Committee was overstepping its bounds when discussing the question of PCB as the Geneva Opium Convention was not yet in force. He also posited "that the Geneva Convention was inconsistent with the Covenant of the League because the League Assembly, as such, found no place in the Convention, and that the Council was set up as the ultimate authority."<sup>65</sup> Cavazzoni's underlying intent was to advocate for discarding the PCB, viewed by him as a flawed mechanism, and to revert to the rationing system—a stance the Opium Committee had previously distanced itself from in 1925 due to the advocacy of opium-producing nations.<sup>66</sup>

Konstantin Fotić stood firm and defended his position regarding the necessity of the PCB's existence. He agreed with Cavazzoni that the Geneva Convention was "imperfect, particularly regarding the Permanent Central Board." However, a "unanimous agreement on the subject had been reached in the sub-committee. The Committee "was not concerned with the question of the existence of the Permanent Central Board but had merely to consider its relations with the Advisory Committee. The Committee had to determine the respective duties of the two bodies."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Minutes of the Tenth Extraordinary Session, November 1927, "Mr Cavazzoni's speech," Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C. 557, M. 199, 1927, XI, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> 'Minutes of the Tenth Extraordinary Session,' November 1927, "Mr Fotić's response," Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C. 557, M. 199, XI, *The LON Archives*.

Moreover, Fotić expressed scepticism regarding the Italian push to revert to the opium-rationing system, an idea previously championed by American and French representatives before 1924 and fervently opposed by peasant internationalists. While acknowledging the merit in Mr Cavazzoni's proposition for international regulations on drug trafficking, which Fotić remarked as "sound and good," he argued that "internal control could only be imposed by the result of internal legislation. The League of Nations could not impose legislation on Governments but could only get Governments to accept the obligation to introduce the legislation by means of a Convention." By indicating the intertwined nature of national and international policies, Fotić stressed that the effective implementation of the Convention hinged on "the goodwill of the countries and their understanding of international morality."<sup>68</sup>

While Fotić's speech predominantly centred on the broader anti-opium principles of the Opium Committee and the PCB, he simultaneously safeguarded Yugoslavia's interests. He continued the rhetoric of pragmatic application of the international tenets in local contexts, defending the legality of the Board that would, for the first time, allocate equal authority to opium-producing nations, Yugoslavia included.<sup>69</sup>

The discussions maintained this trajectory during the eleventh Opium Committee meeting in 1928. Mr Cavazzoni again articulated the Italian government's reservations about the PCB's autonomy, referencing the stipulations of Article 23 of the Covenant: "The Italian Government is all the more anxious that the organisation of the Central Board should be solidly attached to the framework of the League because the Article 23 of the Covenant grants to the League entire competence in the matter of manufactured drugs. My Government would be against any measure whereby this competence was directly or indirectly restricted for the benefit of a more or less autonomous organisation."<sup>70</sup> Cavazzoni argued that the PCB should emulate the League of Nations Health

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Minutes of the Eleventh Session, April 1928, "Mr Cavazzoni's speech," Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C. 328, M. 88, XI, *The LON Archives*.



Organisation, which boasted an advisory committee of experts and a secretariat that operated as an integral component of the League.<sup>71</sup>

Mr Campbell, representing India, questioned Cavazzoni's position, clarifying that he was sharing "a personal perspective rather than the official stance of India." He candidly expressed confusion over Cavazzoni's proposal. If his recollection was correct, he added, "the Central Board, as constituted by the Convention, was the result of an Italian proposal, put forward as a compromise and accepted by the other members of the 1925 Conference."<sup>72</sup>

Konstantin Fotić, adopting a more balanced approach, expressed complete agreement with Cavazzoni's observations, praising them for their logical sensibility. "The proposal made by the Italian representative was marked by common sense and was perfectly logical." Re-evaluating his earlier arguments about the PCB's independence, Fotić meticulously examined Article 23 of the Covenant. He underscored the League's persistent hesitance towards independent entities. He reminded the Committee of "the very strong feeling always shown by the League against the independence of its organisations," showcasing his adaptability in reassessing positions and welcoming informed critique.<sup>73</sup> Echoing this sentiment, Mr Bourgois of France concurred with Fotić's response. He then introduced revised language to bridge the perspectives of Cavazzoni, Fotić, and Sir M. Delevingne of Great Britain, who staunchly advocated for the Board's complete autonomy.<sup>74</sup>

In the eleventh session of the Opium Committee, the moment for a decisive vote arrived. Considering Fotić's insights, Mr Bourgois crafted a proposal that garnered majority support, passing six to four with three abstentions. The finalised wording was:

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Minutes of the Eleventh Session, April 1928, "Mr Campbell's response," Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C. 328, M. 88, XI, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>73</sup> Minutes of the Eleventh Session, April 1928, "Mr Fotić's response," Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C. 328, M. 88, XI, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>74</sup> Minutes of the Eleventh Session, April 1928, "Mr Bourgois' response," Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C. 328, M. 88, XI, *The LON Archives*.

“The Advisory Opium Committee decided that the Secretary-General of the League of Nations is asked to ensure the working of the administrative services of the Committee. This proposal does not in any way prejudice the right conferred upon the Central Board under paragraph 2 of Article 20 to appoint the members of its staff subject to the approval of the Council and in agreement with the Secretary-General in respect of their nomination.”<sup>75</sup>

The Committee, under Konstantin Fotić’s guidance, found a middle ground in defining the Board’s functional independence while remaining organisationally attached to the League. While the Secretary-General of the League of Nations would approve Board nominations, the PCB would maintain its technical autonomy. In this context, Fotić endorsed Bourgois’ proposal, diverging from the positions of Great Britain, India, Japan, and the Netherlands. The Opium Committee subsequently invited Yugoslavia to nominate a Board member, proposing Dragan Milicevic for the role. These deliberations ensured that Yugoslav representatives retained a platform to champion the economic welfare of peasants and influence international standards on illicit opium and drug trafficking in the subsequent years.<sup>76</sup>

The discussions highlighted in this chapter represent clear instances of the influence wielded by the opium-producing bloc within the Opium Committee. These collaborations, motivated by the economic interests and welfare of peasant communities, sought to protect the financial interests of raw opium producers in predominantly agricultural nations, counteracting the dominance of significant opium manufacturing powers. The accomplishments of this bloc captured attention. As a British delegate, Mr Delevingne observed:

“The Central Board has too little power and is not a perfect instrument, but it represents a compromise and the best possible form of the powers it could contain based on the willingness of other countries to cooperate. (Smaller nations have

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Permanent Central Board, December 1928, Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C.571, (b), 1928. XI, *The LON Archives*.

said they do not wish to give the Board a lot of powers in determining how much can be produced and when it is a national responsibility)."<sup>77</sup>

The viability of the opium production ban, illustrated by the efforts of the Yugoslav delegation, bridged national considerations with international moral, health, and social implications, emphasising the intricate balance between national and international priorities. Although the actions of the Yugoslav and opium blocs shifted power towards producing nations, they did not undermine the League of Nations' authority. The proposals of the opium-producing bloc to base the international opium conventions on export-import quotas had universal applicability without harming the national opium trade policies, as demonstrated by the case of Yugoslavia in the 1930s.<sup>78</sup>

#### 4.1 Yugoslav Opium Trade

The discussions within the Opium Committee also illuminate another argument of this dissertation explored in the last chapter and the conclusion: peasant international cooperation on socioeconomic issues frequently set the stage for Yugoslav bilateral, multilateral, and trade agreements.

Konstantin Fotić, serving as the Yugoslav ambassador to New York in the 1930s, was instrumental in forging trade agreements between Yugoslav opium producers and major American pharmaceutical firms like *Mallinckrodt, Merck & Co.*, and *New York Quinine & Chemical Works*. In 1929, Yugoslav opium made its mark on the American market, exporting opium valued at 21 million dollars under the official international opium quota. Following some initial hurdles, mainly due to delays in ratifying the Geneva Convention in 1931, Yugoslavia's opium export quotas found

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<sup>77</sup> Permanent Central Board, December 1928, "Report and concluding remarks" Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs, C.571, (b), 1928. XI, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>78</sup> International historians and international studies experts have challenged this ideological divide recently. See Lucian Ashworth, "Where are the idealists in interwar International Relations?", *Review of International Studies* (2006): 291-308 and Patricia Clavin and Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism(s)*, "Introduction".

stability in 1932, ranging between 35 to 48 tons annually. Notably, American pharmaceutical corporations purchased 99% of the raw opium from Macedonian regions of Yugoslavia.<sup>79</sup>

Leveraging his international status and the relationships cultivated in Geneva, Fotić influenced the Yugoslav opium trade in the 1930s. In April 1931, while serving as an aide to the Yugoslav foreign trade minister, Fotić, fresh from his Geneva visit, approached the Turkish consul in Belgrade to establish an official opium-producing cartel to stabilise export quotas to the US. Later that month, the ensuing agreement, formalised in Ankara, aligned well with Turkey's aspirations. Turkey aimed to enhance its opium trade, capitalising on the renowned quality of Yugoslav "Macedonian" opium. By 1932, the two nations founded the joint *Central Bureau for the Trade of Raw Opium* in Istanbul (*Bureau Central Turco-Yougoslave pour l'exportation de l'opium brut*) in 1932, operational two years later.

Working in tandem, the state-controlled *Yugoslav Committee for the Export of Opium* (JUZOP) and the *Turkish National Committee* oversaw the placement of all "legal" opium, supervised by the PCB, onto Western markets. *The Massachusetts Importing Company*, headquartered in New York, facilitated the opium trade route between Belgrade and the US. In early 1935, the Bureau initiated discussions with Iran. However, these talks failed due to Iran's insistence on an equal 33% share of exports to America, as opposed to the 12% that the Bureau proposed.<sup>80</sup> Ultimately, Yugoslavia's contribution to the total exports via the Central Bureau constituted just 23-26% of the overall raw opium trade, leading to the Yugoslav government's discontent with the cartel's performance.<sup>81</sup>

The momentum the League of Nations established in their anti-opium initiatives persisted even after the League ceased to exist. Shaped partly by the contributions of peasant internationalists and by the USA, the *Economic and Social Council of the United Nations* inaugurated the *UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs* in 1946, its maiden intergovernmental body. Driven by US interests, the 1949 *Ankara Conference*, attended by delegates from Turkey, Iran, Yugoslavia, and

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<sup>79</sup> Jovanović, "Jugoslavensko-Američka Opijumska Suradnja," 40-46.

<sup>80</sup> Jovanović, 46. Based on R-AJ-411-15-28, l. 152-157, Dr Dragoslav Mihailović, "Opijumski pregovori sa Persijom, vođeni od 10. januara do 29. marta 1935. godine", Carigrad, April 1935.

<sup>81</sup> Jovanović, "Jugoslavensko-Američka Opijumska Suradnja," 46.

Egypt, culminated in *The Interim Agreement*. This proposed rigorous national opium production caps, setting a precedent in the realm of anti-drug legislation. Although it came nought due to the French lobbying against such strict national quotas, the Ankara conference revealed two crucial aspects of the interrelationship between nationalism and internationalism. Firstly, the collaborative spirit of peasant internationalists outlived the League of Nations as countries grappled with harmonising their national aspirations with the broader goals of international collaboration. Secondly, after WWII, the considerations of economic sovereignty took precedence in international cooperation over considering limitations to the political sovereignty of the state, explored in the last two chapters.

## 5. Conclusions

The issue of illicit opium trafficking and the measures taken to counteract it illuminates a critical argument explored in this dissertation. It highlights how the Yugoslav expert diplomats conceptualised sovereignty economically, furthering the power of small states in the international system. Informed by the cultural and economic conditions of the rural environment, Slobodan Jovanović, supported by peers from India and Turkey, highlighted the varying uses of opium across Yugoslavia. By presenting these arguments, Jovanović protected the economic interests of Yugoslav peasants and the state, who used poppy seeds for culinary purposes and as a main source of income through trade. Notably, the trade in “legal” opium through the Turkish-Yugoslav cartel —for medicinal and scientific purposes — constituted the annual revenue of one of the nine Yugoslav provinces (banovinas) during the 1930s. It reminds historians of the potentially catastrophic impact a ban on poppy cultivation would have had on the income of the peasant population and state trade balance had it not been for peasant international cooperation in the Opium Committee.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Jovanović, "Jugoslavensko-Američka Opijumaska Suradnja," 46.

The Committees of the League served as a nexus where national and international agendas converged and where pragmatism and universal international standards could be reconciled. While safeguarding their national interests, Yugoslav representatives still furthered international goals. The Peasant Internationalist highlighted the symbiotic relationship between the opium markets and peasant livelihoods, advocating for the economic interests of predominantly agricultural regions worldwide that produced raw opium rather than the big powers who had been the manufacturers of opioid drugs. This defence of national interests did not undermine the authority of the League of Nations as a leading intergovernmental organisation in the interwar years, exemplified by the PCB and the League's efforts to deliver and further the Hague and Geneva Opium Conventions. The opium-producing coalition sought pragmatic, globally applicable solutions that might bridge and surmount ideological disparities within the League, striving to ensure that the organisation genuinely reflected the needs and interests of all countries.

This was achieved by transforming the international opium principles from strict opium-production quotas to more indirect global control of the opium trade based on export and import quotas. This approach ensured that the burden to combat illicit opium trafficking did not lie solely with opium-producing nations. Manufacturing powerhouses like Germany, France, Great Britain, and the USA were implicated as well, given that their pharmaceutical industries had a duty to confine their acquisitions within the annual import caps set by the Geneva Conventions.

The emergence of the opium-producing coalition during the Second Geneva Opium Conference in 1924-1925 suggests the capability of smaller agrarian nations to apply pressure and shape the framing of international conventions. Yugoslavia, India, Iran, and Turkey forced the League of Nations and the big powers to consider the effects of delayed and uneven industrialisation and standards of life long before the onset of decolonisation and the emergence of the New International Economic Order. As Natasha Wheatley demonstrated, Central-Eastern Europe in the 1920s became a crucible of modern sovereignty by serving as a precedent for the debates regarding the position and power of states in the international order and the relationship between political

and economic sovereignty under international law.<sup>83</sup> This chapter demonstrates how and why these considerations often swayed to the latter's economic side, connecting Yugoslavia and Central-Eastern Europe to the states in the so-called 'Global South,' decades before the onset of decolonisation and the policy of non-alignment. It illuminates the salience of economic perspectives on international cooperation as a motivational factor for Yugoslav partnerships with India, Egypt, Turkey and Iran, which should be explored in more detail when considering the country's non-aligned connections.<sup>84</sup>

The analysis of interwar peasant international networks and partnerships across the continents supports the argument on the need to re-interpret power in international politics as a facet of the interactions between historical entities within international bodies rather than assessing power only through the prism of international authority.<sup>85</sup> Such an interpretation of the League of Nations focused on the perspectives of the big powers is different from Yugoslavia's experience in the League's socioeconomic committees.<sup>86</sup> Peasant international cooperation is part of a more extensive set of inquiries that explore attributes of the relationship between the states, delegates and international law. A new booming literature on the League's socioeconomic activities and its salience for understanding the modern international system and challenges of the post-WWII period furthers this argument, especially in the case of smaller and non-European member-states.<sup>87</sup>

Finally, the international opium question unearths a fresh set of questions about Yugoslav participation in the League of Nations socio-economic projects. As explored in the following four

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<sup>83</sup> Natasha Wheatley, *The Life and Death of States: Central Europe and the Transformation of Modern Sovereignty* (Princeton University Press, 2023).

<sup>84</sup> As explored by Adom Getachew, "Worldmaking after Empire" in *Worldmaking after Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2019), and Natasha Wheatley, *The Life and Death of States*.

<sup>85</sup> Christopher Clark, "Power," in *Ulinka Rublack's Concise Companion to History* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 139.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Instrumental for this thesis have been Gorman, *International Cooperation in the Early Twentieth Century*; Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge University Press, 2017); Reinisch and Brydan, *Internationalists in European History*, 2021; Raluca Muşat, "Making the Countryside Global"; Legg et al eds., *Placing Internationalism*; Solomon, Murard, and Zylberman, *Shifting Boundaries of Public Health*; Véronique Plata-Stenger, *Social Reform, Modernization and Technical Diplomacy: The ILO Contribution to Development (1930–1946)*, vol. 8 (De Gruyter, 2020); Jamie Martin, *The Meddlers*.

chapters, these narratives are crucial for comprehending Yugoslav ‘peaceful coexistence,’ the ambiguity of the socialist solidarity and aid projects, and the Yugoslav non-aligned foreign political orientation. The international question of opium was just one arena through which Yugoslav peasant internationalists built their relationship with representatives of colonial and (post)colonial states of Central-Eastern Europe, Far East, South-East Asia, Latin America, and Africa. As subsequent chapters illustrate, shared perspectives and solutions concerning socioeconomic stability, modernisation, and nation-building—championed through peasant international cooperation—forged ties between Yugoslavia and experts and diplomats from India, Iran, Egypt, and Turkey long before the notable Yugoslav-Soviet split in 1948. Their collaborative efforts, especially in addressing opium trafficking and health concerns, set the stage for a reimagined approach to welfare, economic growth and social stability. The Opium block’s reshaping of the international hierarchies and representations in the committees could be thus considered part of longer histories detailing post-colonial struggles for decision-making power and economics, culminating in the UN Charter of 1960 and the Declaration on the Establishment of the New International Economic Order in 1974.

The shared concerns for cultural traditions and agricultural prices that impact the lives of rural inhabitants influenced the Yugoslav-Indian partnership within the League of Nations. Echoing an economic rationale of Yugoslav delegates, the Indian representative emphasised that rural communities often utilised opium for veterinary and medical needs, given the daunting distances and challenges in accessing professional medical care. Access to physicians in rural areas was indeed one of the biggest challenges facing health reformers, including Dr Andrija Štampar, a protagonist of the next chapter. The following chapter traces another international project through which the predominantly agricultural states highlighted the need to consider divergent conditions of life as a basis for international policies. Štampar’s three-tiered health centre scheme, based on conceptualising health through the prism of rural poverty and welfare, became an international standard in the 1930s. It aimed to alleviate the problem of peasants’ access to healthcare and improve their sanitation, education and housing conditions. By analysing Central-Eastern European contributions to the League of Nations Health Organisation, the following pages reveal a more



nuanced understanding of the interrelationships between social and socialist medicine beyond the League of Nations, placing rural locales at the centre of the narrative.

# 3. Dr Andrija Štampar and the Economic Approach to International Health, 1920-1939

## 1. Introduction

“The people of the village where I lived as a student were my first and the best teacher”, explained Dr Andrija Štampar in the acceptance speech for the Leon Bernard Foundation prize received for his promotion of international health in 1955. “I learned from them to look upon life realistically, and they first made me think of innumerable factors connected with so many fields of human activity which influence health.”<sup>1</sup> Štampar, a pioneer of 20th-century public health from Yugoslavia, was a ‘peasant advocate’ whose contributions to the field of social medicine in the League of Nations Health Organisation (LNHO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) outlived his career as an international expert in rural health.<sup>2</sup> He considered public health and social medicine as crucial elements of modernisation and state-building. When centred around the value of the “human capital of the poorest members of society,” public health could transform the living standards of the peasant population worldwide, reiterated Štampar throughout his career.<sup>3</sup>

Born in 1888 in the Croatian village of Drenovac, Štampar built an impressive medical career spanning over four decades and seeing through as many changes of political regimes – The Austro-

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<sup>1</sup>Andrija Štampar, “Address by Andrija Štampar in Accepting the Leon Bernard Foundation Prize at the Eighth World Health Assembly,” in *Selected Papers of Andrija Štampar*, ed. Mirko D. Grmek (Zagreb: Andrija Štampar School of Public Health, 1966), 203.

<sup>2</sup> The People’s Economic Council Secretary in China referred to Štampar as ‘a peasant advocate.’ Željko Dugac and Marko Pećina, *Andrija Štampar: Dnevnik s Putovanja 1931–1938* (Zagreb: HAZU, Škola Narodnog Zdravlja Andrija Štampar, 2008), 624.

<sup>3</sup> Grmek, *Selected Papers*, 203. The Yugoslav Ministry of Public Health produced a comprehensive overview of the development of public health in Yugoslavia 1919-1938 as a part of the Health Committee’s study of maternal and child welfare led by Andrija Štampar: “*Preparation for the Conference on Rural Life Study of Infant and Maternal Welfare – Reports*”, Jacket I and Jacket II, 1938-1939, 8.A.29936.8855, *The League of Nations Archives (LON)*.

Hungarian Monarchy, the interwar Yugoslav Kingdom, the fascist Independent State of Croatia, and the socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. Štampar's three-tiered universal public health system in Yugoslavia received accolades from his peers and the attention of Croatian and Western scholars as an example of a locally grounded public health organisation sufficiently flexible to be applied in any local and national context. His collaboration with the LNHO transported this system as far as China, serving as an exemplary model of institution-building and rural modernisation.

Nevertheless, his international career, which saw the birth of two different international systems (The LON and the UN), is still in the shadow of his national Yugoslav public health achievements. Thus far, scholars have analysed Štampar's contributions to the League of Nations (LON) rural projects in China and his brief but significant leadership of the *Interim Health Commission* 1946-48, which administered the formation of the World Health Organisation. However, they have not qualitatively analysed his conceptualisation of public health promotion and disease control beyond the promotion of universal health standards and evaluated their international and global significance. This chapter fills this gap by focusing on the rural, integrative, and participative character of Štampar's public health projects, best exemplified by his contributions to the LNHO's *Rural Hygiene and Life* initiatives, 1931-39.

The likes of Željko Dugac, Iris Borowy, Patrick Zylberman, Lion Murard, and Sara Silverstein explored Dr Andrija Štampar's contributions to the field of health and social medicine by focusing on the League's technical assistance projects in China 1932-36 and the significance of Štampar's 'universalist' conceptualisation of health for interwar Yugoslavia, the LNHO and the WHO.<sup>4</sup> This

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<sup>4</sup> Dugac and Pećina, *Andrija Štampar*; Željko Dugac et al., "Care for Health Cannot Be Limited to One Country or One Town Only, It Must Extend to Entire World: Role of Andrija Štampar in Building the World Health Organization," *Croatian Medical Journal* 49, no. 6 (2008): 697; Patrick Zylberman, "Fewer Parallels than Antitheses: René Sand and Andrija Štampar on Social Medicine, 1919–1955," *Social History of Medicine* 17, no. 1 (2004): 77–92; Iris Borowy, "Global Health and Development: Conceptualizing Health between Economic Growth and Environmental Sustainability," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 68, no. 3 (2013): 451–85; Stella Fatović-Ferenčić and Martin Kuhar, "'Imagine All the People': Andrija Štampar's Ideology in the Context of Contemporary Public Health Initiatives," *Acta Medico-Historica Adriatica: AMHA* 17, no. 2 (2019): 269–84; Željko Dugac, "Public Health Experiences from Interwar Croatia (Yugoslavia) and Making Western Medicine in the 1930s China," *Acta Medico-Historica Adriatica: AMHA* 16, no. 1 (2018): 75–106; Sara Silverstein, "The Periphery Is the Centre: Some Macedonian Origins of Social Medicine and Internationalism," *Contemporary European History* 28, no. 2 (2019): 220–33.

research complements these works by illuminating the relevance of rural locality for Štampar's understanding of social medicine and public health and his economic grounding of health policies.<sup>5</sup> When placed in the context of the LON, the chapter reveals that other Central-Eastern (CE) European health reformers shared Štampar's sentiment for the rural, locally attuned and flexible approach to public health. Their international cooperation in Geneva successfully challenged the rhetoric of the German, Spanish and Italian representatives at the 1931 European Rural Hygiene Conference and established social medicine as a working principle of the 1930s international health projects.

Examining Štampar's role in international rural health initiatives reveals how collaborative efforts gave birth to a unique decentralised economic perspective on international health and state-building. This was possible through anchoring this study on the thematic notion of peasantism, which sheds light on how public health reforms emerged as a pivotal strategy to address the socioeconomic challenges of rural life in CE Europe during the postimperial state-building of the 1920s. Central-Eastern European physicians reimagined public health by tailoring the tradition of social medicine to address the economic challenges prevalent in CE Europe's rural regions instead of densely populated urban centres popular among other proponents of social medicine. In the interwar period, these peasant internationalists synthesised the principles of agrarianism with those of social medicine to amalgamate various approaches to improving the health standards of rural populations through socioeconomic reforms applied across the continent in Belgium, France, Germany, Denmark, and the Soviet Union. Promoting decentralised forms of governance based on the popular participation of peasants and integrating health projects with agricultural cooperative programs set these health reformers apart from other similarly politically pragmatic social hygienist movements.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Sara Silverstein explored an aspect of this rural locality in: Silverstein, "The Periphery Is the Centre", 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Zylberman, "Fewer Parallels than Antitheses: René Sand and Andrija Štampar on Social Medicine, 1919–1955"; Lion Murard, "Social Medicine in the Interwar Years. The Case of Jaques Parisot (1882-1967)", *Medicina Nei Secoli: Journal of History of Medicine and Medical Humanities* 20, no. 3 (2008): 871–90; Iris Borowy, "In the Shadow of Grotjahn. German Social Hygienists in the International Health Scene", Borowy and Hardy, eds., *Of Medicine and Men* (PeterLang, 2008), 145–72; John Kirk and H. Michael Erisman, *Cuban Medical Internationalism: Origins, Evolution, and Goals* (Springer, 2009); Hana Mášová, "Social Hygiene and Social Medicine in Interwar Czechoslovakia with the 13th District of the City of Prague as Its Laboratory", *Hygiea Internationalis: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the History of Public Health* 6, no. 2 (2007): 53–68; Tricia Ann

Illustratively, Štampar's holistic conceptualisation on rural health, initially implemented in interwar Yugoslavia, tied rural hygiene to the issues of rural sanitation, agrarian reform, formation of agricultural cooperatives, the establishment of new schools and universities for peasants, enhancement of health and work insurance provision in the countryside, and improving peasant access to global markets and physicians. To realise these ambitions, Štampar devised a three-tiered decentralised public health system rooted in its smallest administrative component, the village. He fervently advocated for this approach for nearly three decades via international organisational platforms.

He was not alone in these efforts. Central-Eastern European medical experts dominated the LNHO hierarchies during the interwar period by establishing themselves as leading experts in epidemiology, medical self-governance, public health promotion, and rural reconstruction.<sup>7</sup> In propagating an economic approach to international health policy, these experts argued that rural hygiene and life standards were inadequate because of the economic constraints of national public health budgets, the economic challenges faced by peasants in post-imperial states in CE Europe, and the lack of integration of CE Europe in the global agricultural markets. They also asserted that establishing a decentralised system of medical institutions not under the direct control of the state could help these newly independent states, more vulnerable to global economic shocks, to promote socioeconomic stability. To safeguard their proposals for the decentralisation of national health service, visible in the outcomes of the *European Rural Hygiene Conference* in Geneva in 1931, the CE health reformers embedded the integrative, pragmatic, and participatory economic approach to rural health in international law by designing *Rural Health Indices* in 1938. The indices measured and assessed the rural living conditions globally and embodied the peasant internationalists' reconceptualisation of rural hygiene into rural life projects.

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Starks, *The Body Soviet: Health, Hygiene, and the Path to a New Life in the 1920s* (The Ohio State University, 2000); Susan Gross Solomon, "The Limits of Government Patronage of Sciences: Social Hygiene and the Soviet State, 1920–1930", *Social History of Medicine* 3, no. 3 (1990): 405–35.

<sup>7</sup> Sara Silverstein, "Reinventing International Health in East Central Europe: The League of Nations, State Sovereignty, and Universal Health," in *Remaking Central Europe*, ed. Peter Becker and Natasha Wheatley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 76.

The integrative perspective on health exhibited by the *Rural Health Indices* and *Rural Life* conferences suggests that rural hygiene should be explored in the more expansive framework of post-imperial modernisation and state-building, which in (post)colonial societies premised itself on the reconstruction of all socioeconomic aspects of rural life. These transnational medical collaborations aligned public health with economic rural reconstruction efforts. Because of their focus on rural locality and peasant welfare, the dissertation refers to these CE European health experts as peasant internationalists despite not directly fostering collaboration among peasants on an international scale.<sup>8</sup>

The leading intergovernmental health organisation, the LNHO, globalised peasant international cooperation, explored here through the prism of health experts and their rural approach to modernisation. Peasant internationalist arguments on rurally-focused, integrative, and decentralised health institutions resonated with socio-medical reformers in (post)colonial states across Latin America, Asia, and Africa as they also grappled with analogous socioeconomic challenges stemming from the intricacies of rural life and its environment. Through the LNHO training and fellowships, Štampar's health centre scheme became an exemplar for a cost-effective, participatory public health model geared towards uplifting rural health and living standards. Dr Štampar was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the European and Latin American conferences on Rural Life in 1940, inspired by the success of the African Conference in Johannesburg in 1935 and the Far Eastern initiative in 1937 in Bandung. Although WWII derailed the Rural Life Conference, the networks and expertise of the peasant internationalists formed the bedrock for post-1945 WHO and state-socialist-backed public health initiatives and technical assistance projects, details of which are further elaborated in conclusions.

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<sup>8</sup> This was the case on the national level through the networks of local rural health centres) promoted internationally by the LNHO. The significance of peasant internationalists' arguments on the structure and the functions of the WHO will be explored in a separate article, "Peasant International Cooperation and the Visions of Social Medicine beyond Socialism," also analysed in the *Afterlives* chapter of this dissertation.

In agreement with recent scholarship, this chapter relativises the categorisation of the League of Nations as an exclusively liberal internationalist project and reconsiders the role of smaller states in the League's technical committees.<sup>9</sup> The chapter builds the argument in three stages using the official LNHO documentation, including the meeting minutes, proposals, and resolutions of rural hygiene and life projects. It also analyses Štampar's correspondence, based on his collection of essays, speeches, articles, and travel diary accessed through his files at the Croatian State Archives in Zagreb. It answers three broad enquiry questions that follow the chapter's structural flow. How did peasant conditions of life shape Andrija Štampar's understanding of social medicine and its application in the Yugoslav and international contexts? Second, how can we distinguish the CE European approach to international health in the context of the LNHO's rural hygiene and life initiatives? And what is the significance of the peasant internationalists' economic policy to health within and beyond the rural life context?

To address these inquiries, it is imperative to assess the League of Nations' rural hygiene projects by broadening the lens of the history of medicine and global health. Peasant internationalist networks and approaches to modernisation functioned as instruments for state-building and rural revitalisation in agricultural post-imperial nations, such as Yugoslavia. By sponsoring technical expertise and knowledge exchanges, the League of Nations and the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) successfully introduced universalist and pragmatic three-tiered health systems to regions like Asia and Latin America.<sup>10</sup> The significance of 'peasant internationalism,' as a vehicle for promoting social and economic welfare in rural regions, is further accentuated when one re-evaluates the knowledge exchange and skill transfer spanning Central-Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, and

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<sup>9</sup> The studies are too numerous to name all but a good start for exploring different iterations of twentieth-century internationalism are Gorman, *International Cooperation in the Early Twentieth Century*; Sluga and Clavin, *Internationalisms*, 2017; Reinisch and Brydan, *Internationalists in European History*, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Lion Murard studied how this process of imitation and replication looked from the perspective of the LNHO's leader Ludvik Rajchman in, Lion Murard, "Designs within Disorder: International Conferences on Rural Health Care and the Art of the Local, 1931–1939," in *Shifting Boundaries of Public Health: Europe in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Susan Gross Solomon, Lion Murard, and Patrick Zylberman (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008). The RF contributed to up to one-third of the LNHO's budget. For the significance of their work in CE Europe, see Paul Weindling, "Public Health and Political Stabilisation: The Rockefeller Foundation in Central and Eastern Europe between the Two World Wars", *Minerva (London)* 31, no. 3 (1993): 253–67 and Paul Weindling, "Philanthropy and World Health: The Rockefeller Foundation and the League of Nations Health Organisation", *Minerva (London)* XXXV, no. 3 (1997): 269–81.

Asia. This re-evaluation challenges the conventional timeline attributing East-South cooperation to 'socialist solidarity' and cross-border knowledge and technical expertise exchanges inspired by Cold War geopolitical dynamics.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Štampar's Vision of Public Health

Before investigating Štampar's contributions to international public health projects and the significance of peasant internationalists' economic approach to international health, one needs to situate Štampar's distinct rural health conceptualisation in the longer social medicine tradition. Peasant internationalists adapted the nineteenth-century social medicine approach to the conditions of life in CE Europe, emphasising the salience of considering the socioeconomic roots of illness in isolated rural areas rather than unsanitary, overcrowded cities. Their economic approach to health also differed from the Soviet social medicine practitioners as the application of their proposed socioeconomic reforms stemmed from the local community with minimal state oversight.

In Dr Štampar's opinion, the success of social hygiene – a nineteenth-century movement established to study venereal diseases in urban settings - was limited because it was unrelated to the social conceptualisation of medicine in public policy. "All our efforts will fail until everybody enjoys the benefits of hygienic culture. It is in the economic levelling of the society that the success of social hygiene lies," argued Štampar.<sup>12</sup> Social medicine, encompassing social hygiene, emphasised the impact of living conditions on health and supported the view that public health

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<sup>11</sup> James Mark and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonisation* (Oxford University Press, 2022), particularly B. Jacob's chapter on "Health"; Kristin Roth-ey *Socialist Internationalism and the Gritty Politics of the Particular* (London: Bloomsbury, May 2023). This evaluation builds on recent works re-thinking the legacy of liberal internationalism of the League of Nations. Antic, Conterio, and Vargha, "Conclusion", 2016; Petruccelli, "The Crisis of Liberal Internationalism".

<sup>12</sup> Andrija Štampar, "On Health Politics", *American Journal of Public Health* (1971) 96, no. 8 (2006): 1382.



could be improved by influencing the external conditions of life.<sup>13</sup> These external conditions for Štampar and Yugoslavia, were predominantly rural as, according to the Yugoslav monograph published in preparation for the *Rural Life Conference* in 1940, 78.9% of inhabitants worked in agriculture.<sup>14</sup>

Štampar asked himself, 'How could medical practice improve the health of all citizens, including peasants?' Simply increasing the number of physicians was not an answer because "people's health was never directly related to the number of physicians practising individual therapy."<sup>15</sup> He observed that the mortality rates in Croatia and Slavonia remained unchanged between 1900-1920 despite the number of physicians and hospitals becoming 15 times higher. The answer for Štampar lay in replicating "the successes achieved in England, Scandinavian countries, and Germany where the fall of mortality and morbidity rates occurred as a result of intensively applied social policy and not individual therapy."<sup>16</sup> After being appointed Director of the *Department of Racial, Social and Public Hygiene* in the *Ministry for Public Health*, Štampar began reorganising the public health system in Yugoslavia in the 1920s. He established a decentralised, locally attuned, and participatory health system to offset the lack of material resources (including food, water, clothes, medicine, and consumer goods) and budget constraints that plagued the Yugoslav countryside.<sup>17</sup>

Štampar belonged to a group of public health experts who favoured social instead of individual conceptualisation of medicine.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, Štampar assigned the "crisis of present-day medicine that followed out of the development of health policy in foreign countries" to the preference for

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<sup>13</sup> Iris Borowy and Wolf D. Gruner, *Facing Illness in Troubled Times: Health in Europe in the Interwar Years, 1918-1939* (Peter Lang, 2005), 3.

<sup>14</sup> "Monograph on Yugoslavia," *The National Monographs*, C.169.M.99, 10., *The LON Archives*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> He began to apply his vision locally, in select villages but envisaged this system to cover the entire country within 30-40 years.

<sup>18</sup> As a result of the influence of the *organicist sociological school*, social phenomena began to be studied in detail in the second half of the nineteenth century. The school argued that "just as individual organisms are composed of cells, so society is composed of individuals; just as individual organisms can be sick, so can society. In this way, medical observations come close to the sociological ones and remain under the continual influence of sociological principles." Andrija Štampar, "On Social therapy," *Glasnik Ministarstva narodnog zdravstva*, No. 7 (1919-1920), 261-271; also available in, Grmek's *Selected papers of Andrija Štampar*, 79.

individual curative therapy over social medicine. Individual medicine “has no influence on general people’s health,” stressed Štampar, as “the best physicians serve only wealthier individuals in great towns.” The underlying causes of ineffective medical practice were the “unequal economic relations, which have created great differences between the individual cells of a social organism.” They had drawn medical practice “into the abyss of social inequality,” warned Štampar.<sup>19</sup>

His experiences in Yugoslavia in the 1920s shaped his framework of a locally attuned, pragmatic, and participatory public health system presented at Geneva in 1931. He began applying socio-medical principles into practice in 1921 when, under the recommendation of Prof Milan Jovanović-Batut, a staunch supporter of social medicine, he began working for the Ministry of Public Health. Štampar knew that to further his vision of social medicine, he needed to build a unifying public health system that would reach peasants nationwide. The best way to tackle the challenge of institution building in agricultural countries with inadequate infrastructure and health facilities was to create solid communal foundations and encourage public service participation starting at the local level of a village community.<sup>20</sup> A reverse method to the one applied in most industrial countries with heavily centralised public health systems or the Soviet Union.

But how did this public health system look in practice? A three-tiered rural health centre system was a centrepiece of Štampar’s work in Yugoslavia, which he estimated would take 30-40 years to complete. The apex of the health service pyramid was the *district health centre*, the highest health institution in each Yugoslav region. The subdistrict health station, linked to the nearer town, played a middle supervisory level with full-time physicians employed. He defined this establishment as a *secondary health centre*. On the ground level, known as a *primary health centre*, each village hired a full-time graduate of Peasant University who recorded births and deaths, vaccinated and administered first-aid.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>20</sup> Mirko D. Grmek, “Life and achievements of Andrija Štampar” in *Selected papers of Andrija Štampar*, 20-26.

<sup>21</sup> “Monograph on Yugoslavia”, *The LON Archives*.

Štampar's bottom-up and participatory public health system proved the most influential for his international career in the LNHO. Between 1921 and 1930, Štampar established a network of over 250 public health institutions, with the *Central Institute of Health* in Belgrade at its epicentre. In 1927, with the financial support of the *Rockefeller Foundation*, he opened an independent *Zagreb School of Public Health*, which enabled better coordination of 19 laboratories, six epidemiological institutes, 23 health centres, numerous institutes for malaria, mobile dispensaries (for venereal diseases, tuberculosis, trachoma), 17 school clinics and 21 village health centres all established in the first five years of his socio-medical work.<sup>22</sup> In 1928, the Institute supported a foundation of the *Peasant University*, where peasants were educated in administering primary care in rural health centres and offered courses in child care, housekeeping and cooking for women. By 1928, nine courses were provided for peasant men, and eight were provided for women, who educated 336 men and 296 women.<sup>23</sup> The courses prepared peasants to facilitate healthcare in the primary health centres.

The foundation of *Peasant University* was essential to Štampar as he recognised the interrelationship between voluntary learning and the economic benefits of better hygiene. His arguments on the underlying economic causes of poor health in Yugoslavia predisposed Štampar's health institutions to closer collaboration with rural economic and social cooperatives in Yugoslavia, primarily organised by Stjepan Radić's *Croat Peasant Party*.<sup>24</sup> These village-based associations competed in draining marshes, erecting manure storage tanks, cleaning houses, installing dung bins, sanitised wells, and school latrines.

For instance, through the joint health institute and cooperative work, the small village of Mraclin was transformed into a "model health demonstration centre," whilst Slavkovića became a model village in the Serbian region of Yugoslavia. These villages served as an exemplar to rural health

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<sup>22</sup> Andrija Štampar, "Five years of medical work in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes" in Grmek, *Selected papers of Andrija Štampar*, 96-98.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> For a summary of rural cooperative activities, see "Monograph on Yugoslavia", *The LON Archives* and for a more comprehensive analysis of the economic, agricultural cooperative movement linked to the Croat Peasant Party, Ivica Šute, *Slogom Slobodi!: Gospodarska Sloga 1935-1941* (Srednja Europa, 2010).

experts of what grass-root locally attuned public health policy could achieve and a future example of community development projects also popular after the Second World War.<sup>25</sup> It prompted David Mitrany, a renowned British scholar travelling around Yugoslavia in 1924, to recall “the most impressive experience of what down-to-earth movement could achieve when bent upon inner development almost wholly through cooperatives, including health and cultural cooperatives.”<sup>26</sup> Štampar hoped this health system could be extended to the entire country in a few decades.

The centrality of learning through exhibitions of model villages demonstrated the success of economic incentives for promoting better hygiene. Supervised and organised by Štampar, the *International Rural Housing Exhibition* in Paris in 1937 showcased the transformation of rural life in the European villages.<sup>27</sup> Following these ideas, Štampar contributed to reconceptualising international health projects at the LNHO along the lines of social medicine. The establishment of bacteriological institutes, dispensaries, rural health centres, and peasant universities in Yugoslavia reflected this process of integrative socioeconomic approach to rural public health policy.<sup>28</sup> In the 1930s, he shaped the direction of this institutional realignment of values in three distinct ways: (1) by emphasising the need for prioritising the rural dimension of social hygiene; (2) by widening the definition of socialisation of health services to include all aspects of social and economic life in the village; (3) and by emphasising the salience of social pedagogy and economic constraints for the success of public health projects in various national contexts.

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<sup>25</sup> Lion Murard “Designs within disorder” in Susan Gross Solomon, *Shifting Boundaries of Public Health*, 150. Corinna R. Unger, chapter 6, “Approaches to Development” in *International Development: A Postwar History*, New Approaches to International History (Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 148.

<sup>27</sup> Another legacy of the peasant internationalist approach to cooperation was the *International Exhibition of Rural Housing* in Paris, supervised and organised by Dr Andrija Štampar in 1937. Under Štampar's instructions, the national exhibits, including Yugoslav, had to consist of models of dwellings before and after 1900, models or pictures of adjacent agricultural premises (kitchen gardens, livestock houses) and a showcase of the collective social life in the villages (roads, transportation, townhalls, churches, schools, leisure). Each nation was invited to “present its achievements in the most original way.” Presentation techniques could include diagrams, lantern slides, wood models, large school photographs, revolving slides, and cinematography. “Rural Hygiene”, *Exposition internationale de la maison rurale*, Paris 1937, 8A. 26064. 8855, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>28</sup> Grmek, *Selected Papers of Andrija Štampar*, chapters “On Social Therapy” and “On Health Politics.”

Yet, Andrija Štampar was not the only health expert who recognised social medicine's potential as a tool of modernisation and state-building. The interwar period saw the emergence of a consensus between governments, medical experts, professional associations, and international institutions that viewed health as a public issue. Governments, in different ways and to various degrees, accepted the welfarist notion of the state that viewed health as a social good, which charitable organisations financially supported. While philanthropic organisations, such as the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) in the 1920s and 1930s, operationally retained only a tangible role, they remained financially involved in the internationalisation and institutionalisation of social medicine in the League of Nations.<sup>29</sup>

The League of Nations Health Organisation was at the centre of this international health regime in the interwar period. In June 1921, the Council of the LON formed a *Provisional Health Committee*, which held six sessions until 1924 before being replaced by the new *Health Committee*, the central legislative body of the LNHO. Between 1921 and 1939, fifty-nine professionals served on the Committee, including Štampar.<sup>30</sup> The organisational epicentre of the LNHO was its secretariat headed by a medical director, Dr Ludwik Rajchman, who also served as a secretary to the Health Committee. Rajchman, a Polish bacteriologist, shared Štampar's belief in the conceptualisation of medicine that viewed health as a social agenda, one that is bound by the studies of social and natural environments affecting human health.<sup>31</sup>

Peasant internationalists used the heterogeneity of social life in the region of a predominantly rural character as a template for conceptualising the world and their country's place within an international framework.<sup>32</sup> Throughout the interwar period, they used the LNHO to promote rural, participatory, and pragmatic health services by utilising the organisation's transnational exchanges of knowledge and funding opportunities. Štampar gathered information on successful public health

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<sup>29</sup> Borowy and Gruner, *Facing Illness in Troubled Times*, 2-3.

<sup>30</sup> Martin David Dubin, "The League of Nations Health Organisation," in *International Health Organisations and Movements, 1918–1939*, ed. by Paul Weindling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 58.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

<sup>32</sup> Željko Dugac, "Andrija Štampar (1888-1958): Resolute Fighter for Health and Social Justice", in *Of Medicine and Men*, 73–101; Lion Murard, "Social Medicine in the Interwar Years. The Case of Jacques Parisot (1882-1967)", 871–90.

programmes that could be applied to any rural context by supervising medical staff visits to Yugoslavia and lecturing and participating in hygiene seminars.

These professional networks, collaborations and exchanges built in the 1920s served as a foundation for the economic approach to international health exhibited by peasant internationalists in the 1930s, challenging the urban and centralised health policies.<sup>33</sup> The collaboration of peasant internationalists at the Rural Hygiene and Life Conferences in this way builds on Sara Silverstein's investigation of *the Little Health Entente*, a network of regional health reformers from the former Habsburg Empire in the immediate aftermath of WWI as peasant internationalists continued to challenge the 'humanitarian relief' concept of international health policy.<sup>34</sup> In the 1930s, the emphasis of peasant internationalists' work in the LNHO shifted towards developing decentralised health services, stressing the need for local implementation of public health reforms. Through the rhetoric at the *European Rural Hygiene Conference* in 1931, peasant internationalists elucidated the intricate balance between national sovereignty and international cooperation, displaying contrasting arguments to the representatives of more industrialised member states, including France, Britain, Belgium, Germany, and Italy. They grounded their socio-medical principles on the economic reality of life in rural settings, perceiving sovereignty in economic terms akin to the Yugoslav representatives in the Opium Committee.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Patrick Zylberman demonstrated the most profound understanding of the importance of agricultural aspects to Štampar's thought. He considered Štampar's models of health "folklore" and "populist", noting the divergence between the Marxist visions of industrialised healthcare and Štampar's agrarian "folklore" model. Zylberman recognised the village as a primary target of Štampar's health programmes, compared to Rene Sand's Western-oriented visions of social medicine focusing on the workplace and family. Patrick Zylberman, "Fewer parallels than antitheses," 77.

<sup>34</sup> Silverstein, "Reinventing International Health in East Central Europe", 76; Silverstein, "Doctors and Diplomats".

<sup>35</sup> Martin, *The Meddlers*, 2022.

### 3. The Rural Hygiene Conference

In the 1920s, following the successful implementation of integrative modernisation schemes in Yugoslavia, the LNHO's international platform, coupled with the international cooperation of CE European health reformers, became instrumental in disseminating Štampar's economically grounded rural reconstruction solutions globally. Štampar's approach to international health in the 1930s remained profoundly influenced by the challenges faced by peasants—namely, material scarcity and economic hardships. His approach holistically connected rural hygiene with broader facets of rural reconstruction, encompassing education, sanitation, infrastructure, insurance offerings, and improving market and labour conditions for peasants.

As an international rural health expert, Štampar spearheaded the international knowledge and technical assistance exchanges throughout Europe, the Far East, and Latin America. During the 1931 *European Rural Hygiene Conference* in Geneva, Štampar's 'primary health centre,' an element of a decentralised and participatory public health system, became an international health standard. The Rural Hygiene Conference set the future rural health and welfare agenda of the LNHO by outlining the problems and recommending measures to promote better health outcomes in rural communities.<sup>36</sup> Štampar's contributions to this conference and collaboration with his CE colleagues exemplified how the peasant internationalist cooperation and the economic approach to health could be used as a vehicle of state-building and modernisation in all post-imperial and colonial territories.

The Rural Hygiene Conference in Geneva, held in June and July 1931, convened on the proposal of the Spanish representative, Prof Pittaluga. Three preparatory meetings - in Rome, Budapest, and Geneva – preceded the central conference meeting. Seven rapporteurs, all distinguished public health reformers, decided that the European Rural Hygiene Conference discussions would be organised in three sub-committees. The first sub-committee dealt with expanding medical

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<sup>36</sup> Minutes, European Conference on Rural Hygiene, July 1931, C.473.M.202., *The LON Archives*.

insurance on the continent, the second on providing health services in rural districts, and the third on the conditions and problems of rural sanitation.<sup>37</sup> Dr Andrija Štampar served as a rapporteur of the second committee, preparing his proposals for the most effective health system organisation in the rural districts. After much deliberation, the medical experts defined 'rural district' as "an area where the agriculture is chief or even sole industry, or where all other industries are of small importance, and dependent upon agriculture."<sup>38</sup>

A shared spirit of interdisciplinarity imbued the conference proceedings attended by 24 national delegates, as well as the representatives of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Committee for Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC). Despite considerable differences "given climatic, agricultural and ethnological diversity in Europe," Pittaluga expressed his hopes that "the type of agricultural life in the various countries can be made the subject of a general critical examination such as will allow us to lay down general rules and indications." Regrettably, he continued, "It was difficult for the moment to apply this criterion to the other continents in which rural conditions are still widely different from those which characterise Western civilisation, with all its drawbacks and defects."<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, members of these countries sent qualified health experts and administrators who proposed to follow the work of the Conference in the capacity of observers.<sup>40</sup> Led by Dr Rajchman, the LNHO consistently sought to find ways of including the countries in the Americas, the Far East, and Africa in the LON projects. On the proposal of the Indian representative in 1932, the LNHO's Far Eastern Bureau indeed organised the *Far Eastern Conference on Rural Life* in 1937 in Bandung.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Rural Hygiene Conference 1931, Preparatory Sub-Committee Minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> session September 1930, 8A. 23966. 22507, *the LON Archives*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> The observer countries included Mexico, the USA, Cuba, India, China, Japan, Colombia, and Bolivia. The representatives of the ILO and ICIC were also present. *Minutes, European Conference on Rural Hygiene, July 1931, C.473.M.202., The LON Archives.*

<sup>41</sup> Laurence Monnais and Harold J. Cook, eds., *Global Movements, Local Concerns: Medicine and Health in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press Pte Ltd, 2012), Annick Guenel, "The 1937 Bandung Conference on Rural Hygiene: Toward a New Vision of Healthcare"; Socrates Litsios, "Revisiting Bandoeng," *Social Medicine* 8, no. 3 (2014): 113–28.



This chapter focuses on the deliberations of the second conference sub-committee guided by Štampar's report on the most efficient and effective organisation of health services in the countryside. This report and subsequent discussion represent a blueprint for understanding the economic approach to public health promoted by CE health reformers through the vehicle of peasant international cooperation. The central disagreement between the delegates concerned the state's role in the organisation of public health services. CE European representatives supported Štampar's decentralised system proposal, which envisaged a three-tiered public health system built from the ground up based on the local networks of "primary health centres" in rural districts, on the model established in Yugoslavia. On the other hand, the representatives of Spain, Italy, Germany, and Belgium argued for a more centralised system under direct state control, as this model was already in place in these countries.

### 3.1. *Decentralised Public Health Organisation*

A three-tiered health centre system was a centrepiece of Štampar's public health restructuring work in the Croatian region of Yugoslavia in the 1920s. Štampar proposed a similar model as an international standard for organising efficient and cost-effective rural health services throughout Europe. He suggested that, on the ground level, a *primary health centre* would develop a health and welfare promotion program based on a preliminary survey of a local population's topographical, economic and health conditions. The secondary health centres then coordinated the work of the primary health centres. They were a "fully developed organisation than the primary centre on account of its greater completeness of equipment, its larger personnel and the wider scope of its work."<sup>42</sup> The secondary health centre would organise campaigns against infectious and social diseases, promote maternal and infant hygiene welfare, plan sanitation improvements, teach about the hygiene of milk and foods, and supervise education in hygiene practices. Finally, the

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<sup>42</sup> Minutes, European Conference on Rural Hygiene, July 1931, C.473.M.202., *The LON Archives*, 144-153.

apex of the health service pyramid was the district health centre, the highest health institution in each region, envisaged to cater to 100,000 people.<sup>43</sup>

Dr Štampar suggested that the district health officer (at least one per 100,000 inhabitants) should be appointed to protect and promote public health in all aspects, ensuring “economy, efficiency and unity of health organisation.” A health peasant advocate, educated at a peasant university, would record the information collated by a district health officer, involving the local population in the success of the public health schemes, explained Dr Štampar.<sup>44</sup> The foundation of the Peasant University became a distinguishing feature of the participatory Yugoslav approach to public health, which premised that public participation was crucial to the success of health initiatives, later reiterated at the *Far Eastern Rural Life Conference* in Bandung.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to a health officer, nurses with a nursing diploma, a sanitary inspector and a clerk would be hired in each rural area unit, as was the case in Yugoslavia. Sanitary inspectors at the *Institute of Hygiene* would work on rural sanitation based on the planning models of a sanitary engineer. However, many rural districts could not afford such an engineer due to budget constraints. In those cases, they would be paid by the state or a central public health institution.<sup>46</sup> To successfully implement this peasant-focused localised model of a public health system, public health institutes in major cities, like the one founded in Zagreb in 1927, would supervise “the sociological studies of the conditions of life in the rural areas”, which was based on detailed surveys of health and socioeconomic conditions of local communities. By the mid-1930s, public health institutes became a central feature of the national health system in many Central-Eastern European countries. Supported by the exchanges of knowledge and expertise through the LNHO-organised conferences, lectures and capacity-building initiative, the directors of the public health institutes participated in the circulation of medical knowledge and technologies across borders.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Guenel in Monnais, *Global Movements and Local Concerns*, 67-70.

<sup>46</sup> Minutes, European Conference on Rural Hygiene, July 1931, C.473.M.202., *The LON Archives*, 144-153.

<sup>47</sup> The LNHO organised the Conference of the Directors of Public Health Institutes in 1937, followed by more regular meetings. See *Meetings of the Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Hygiene*, 8A. 25954.287. Štampar also travelled across Europe to Bulgaria, Romania, the USSR, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and

However, not everyone agreed with Štampar's proposals regarding the purpose of primary health centres. The representatives of Italy, Spain, and Germany presented a different argument, supporting centralised public health institutions under state control. A French representative, Mr Sarraz Bournet, argued that "treatment by the [primary] centre should be an exception rather than a rule," considering the private nature of medical practice in France. "A practising physician in France was never an official," demonstrated Sarraz.<sup>48</sup> "The law on social insurance stipulated freedom in the choice of the doctors." Dr Canal Comas of Spain similarly commended Štampar's report but called his decentralisation proposals idealistic. He agreed with Štampar that "the cooperation of the population in country districts must be won in order to achieve decentralisation of the health service and to entrust this to the local authorities." However, depriving the state of its powers of direction and control "was for most countries, too idealistic, especially in cases where local conditions such as general education, the state of communications and other elements of country life were not very highly developed."<sup>49</sup>

Instead, Dr Comas proposed stronger centralisation of health services in agricultural economies rather than their decentralisation.<sup>50</sup> He also argued for establishing local primary health centres on "very simple lines," such as providing diagnostic treatments or urgent care. The representative of Germany also ascribed to this idea, explaining that it was impossible to "give an effect to the proposals that all countries should undertake the organisation of the primary health centres; Germany certainly could not do so. There, the task, when not undertaken by the secondary health centre, was carried out by individual doctors within his practice." Dr Konrich then defended his position, which was "not in favour of adopting a too rigid form for the health centres. At any rate, such rigidity would not be acceptable to Germany." He favoured the simplified system, which could be improved by strengthening infrastructural networks. "Instead of many small centres, it would be better to centralise the work in one larger centre," argued Konrich.<sup>51</sup>

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Germany to promote his integrative vision of rural hygiene and to learn from his colleagues. His detailed reflections are available in the Croatian State Archives, HR-HAD-831, boxes 5 and 6.

<sup>48</sup> Minutes, European Conference on Rural Hygiene, July 1931, C.473.M.202., *The LON Archives*, 48.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

This disagreement occurred for two reasons between the proponents of centralisation and peasant internationalists, who supported localised and decentralised public health services in rural districts. The first was the peasant internationalists' grounding of public health policies and incentives on the economic reality of peasant life conditions, and the second was the divergent interpretation of the role of peasants in European societies.

Mr Prohaska— Head of the *Department of Agriculture* in Belgrade – was the first Yugoslav representative to stress the necessity of grounding public health projects in the economic realities of life rather than the 'peasant enlightenment' favoured by his German counterpart. He reflected on a successful strategy of improving peasant participation in social insurance by financially involving peasants in the operations of cooperative agricultural societies. Cooperatives flourished in Yugoslavia in the 1930s, supported by the success of peasant parties, and provided a foundation for improved farming techniques.<sup>52</sup> Prohaska envisaged that as well as improving agricultural techniques, cooperatives could become vital to raising health standards in rural areas by offering social and health insurance schemes through their membership.<sup>53</sup>

Prohaska's economic stimulus projects aimed to increase peasant participation in social and medical insurance, which in CE Europe stood at under 4% level, by linking health promotion with financial benefits.<sup>54</sup> Prohaska asserted that "the Yugoslav peasants were more apt to take an interest in institutions of an economic character [such as agricultural cooperatives] than in purely intellectual propaganda." This synthesis of agricultural cooperatives and rural hygiene projects yielded satisfactory results in Yugoslavia. For example, Prohaska contended that even in isolated villages with poor communications, the cooperative village-based societies organised a dispensary with a few beds and a doctor's dwelling. "By means of these centres [opened as a part of Štampar-

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<sup>52</sup> For more on Yugoslav cooperatives see: Šute, *Slogom slobodi!: gospodarska sloga 1935-1941*.

<sup>53</sup> This approach was also prevalent in the Latin American countries. When the Second World War slowed down the technical assistance and knowledge exchange opportunities, a conference on rural life was in preparation for 1940 to be held in Mexico City. A speech by Mr Colomban - a head of the Cooperative Section in Mexico - during the preparatory conference meetings highlighted the importance of cooperative movements in Yugoslavia for the organisation of cooperatives in Latin America. Rural Hygiene Conference of Latin American Countries. *Preparatory documentation*, March 1940, 8.A.40005. 8855. *The LON Archives*.

<sup>54</sup> Monograph on Yugoslavia, *The LON Archives*.

directed public health programmes], the rural population obtained treatment which was formerly inaccessible to them on account of their great distance from the towns.”<sup>55</sup> Mr Prohaska concluded that when the Yugoslav peasant contributed to the membership, “he undertook a part of the responsibility equal to ten times that contribution; if the cooperative society failed in its work, he had to pay a considerable sum.” This remark also applied to the health insurance organisation of the cooperative societies.” The peasants had a double interest in its functioning— namely, as co-operators and as insured persons.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to being an incentive for better hygiene practices, the economic adaptation of public health projects to constrained peasant and ministerial budgets also ensured better application of health policies at the state level. This method was critical in times of crisis, as the economic depression in Europe slashed the public health budgets in half.<sup>57</sup> For instance, Mr Chodzko, the Health Minister of Poland, explained that the financial hardships of peasants heavily constrained their hygiene practices. “The basic cause of the current world crisis was the feeble demand evidenced by the peasant for industrial products, and also the deficient standard of life and the primitive agricultural equipment of even well-to-do peasants.”<sup>58</sup> Dr Vasilie of Romania agreed with him, highlighting the negative effect of the economic crisis in Europe on rural health provision.

“The present economic crisis had forced Roumania to modify her policy; hence, she had been obliged to abandon free medical aid, hitherto traditional. Roumania was essentially an agricultural country, and the problem would, it was hoped, be solved by means of compulsory insurance for agricultural workers. Unfortunately, unfavourable conditions, such as distance, insufficient pay, lack of means of transport, etc., hindered the work of doctors, who were forced to engage in private practice.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Minutes, European Conference on Rural Hygiene, July 1931, C.473.M.202., *The LON Archives*, 36-39.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Monograph on Yugoslavia, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>58</sup> Minutes, European Conference on Rural Hygiene, July 1931, C.473.M.202., *The LON Archives*, 44-5.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

On the contrary, the representative of Italy observed improvements in living conditions and the changing role of peasants in Italian society as an effect of industrialisation and better education outcomes. He argued that instead of focusing on the economic benefits of hygiene, the lack of peasant interest in public health initiatives lay in their limited knowledge of basic hygiene practices.

“It must be admitted that the modern peasant no longer resembled his predecessor. He had acquired more self-respect and personality and was fully aware of the part he played in the national economy. He read newspapers and took an interest in politics. His knowledge of sanitary requirements, however, was usually rather limited. Generally, he paid very little attention to the quality of his drinking water or food supplies, to the presence of flies in his house or to the dangers of malarial districts.”<sup>60</sup>

This stark contrast in the living habits of peasants between Italy and Yugoslavia exemplifies the effects of late industrialisation in the post-imperial states. The research undergone by public health institutes and sociological schools, such as the one in Bucharest led by Professor Dmitri Gusti, demonstrated that the peasant life conditions in the West and South of the continent differed from those in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>61</sup> The mortality rate in Yugoslavia in 1931 was 16.5% (compared to 2,5 in Germany), with an average life expectancy of 45 years for men. Illiteracy was also high at 50.5% in 1921, modestly falling to 44.5% by 1931.<sup>62</sup> Rudolf Bićanić's sociological study - *How the People Live: Life in the Passive Regions* - in Yugoslavia testified that without economic reform, the educational reforms would not be successful given the poverty and hunger experienced by over two million people in Yugoslavia yearly.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>61</sup> Muşat, "Making the Countryside Global", 2019.

<sup>62</sup> Latinka Perović et al., *Jugoslavija u Istorijskoj Perspektivi* (Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2017), 333 and 353.

<sup>63</sup> Rudolf Bićanić, *How the People Live: Life in the Passive Regions*, 24-9.

Peasant internationalists thus recognised the need for an integrative approach to improving health outcomes in rural areas, where poverty and education acted as inhibitors of ill health.<sup>64</sup> Dr Kacprzak of Czechoslovakia agreed with Štampar on this matter and highlighted the vital interrelationship between rural hygiene’s educational and economic aspects. “Sanitation and level of rural hygiene are not solely linked to the level of rural education but also the conditions of the markets and the demands of the market economy for the purest and best quality product.”<sup>65</sup> He contended that because the urban districts were wealthier than the rural communes, and its citizens had a higher level of education and political influence, they often considered peasants conservative.

Without the peasants’ goodwill and the cooperation between rural and urban institutions and inhabitants, the improvements in public health would be negligible. The Polish delegate also pointed out that all countries that made progress in this matter— such as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia — presented the health benefit of better hygiene in relation to their financial aspects. “Only on the spot and within the limits of his own environment could the peasant be convinced of the benefits of hygiene,” stressing the need for peasant-focused and flexible public health organisation.<sup>66</sup>

Supporting Štampar’s proposal, The Czechoslovak delegate explained that compared to the industrially more developed economies, private health practices in Czechoslovakia “have existed only for three years and in Yugoslavia for five.” Due to the high levels of illiteracy and the ongoing expansion of networks of primary schools in many districts, the role of physicians had to be different, argued Dr Kacprzak. “They [the doctors] need to also serve as doctors, teachers, and priests.”<sup>67</sup> Therefore, in agricultural, post-imperial states of CE Europe, the collaboration of local

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<sup>64</sup> They built on Rudolf Virchow’s conceptualisation of social medicine, stressing the need for economic reform as a part of socio-medical strategy of public health improvement. Howard Waitzkin, ‘One and a Half Centuries of Forgetting and Rediscovering: Virchow’s Lasting Contributions to Social Medicine’, *Social Medicine* 1, no. 1 (25 February 2006): 7.

<sup>65</sup> Minutes, European Conference on Rural Hygiene, July 1931, C.473.M.202., *The LON Archives*, 52.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

rural cooperatives and associations was necessary for success, as demonstrated by Mr Prohaska in the committee on social insurance.<sup>68</sup>

The differences in the socioeconomic conditions of CE Europe and more industrialised Germany, Denmark, and Belgium were stark. In these countries, the governments organised the inspection and training of medical staff. Western and North Europe enjoyed significantly lower mortality rates (up to 13%), irrespective of their percentage of the agricultural population. They had well-organised and supervised private childcare agencies and prenatal care, whilst the higher social insurance participation improved the standards of rural life.<sup>69</sup> The higher literacy levels amongst the peasants supported these higher living standards. Hence, education and propaganda activities against the diseases were already in place.

Based on the conditions of public health services in Central-Eastern Europe and the increased economic challenges peasants faced, one model of health services discussed by the representatives would only fit some countries.<sup>70</sup> The locality of peasant problems had to be in the centre of the health service provision, argued Štampar. To illustrate the need for flexibility in health service provision, which accounts for the socioeconomic differences in living standards, Štampar juxtaposed the health systems in Germany and England on one side and Yugoslavia on the other. In the former scenario, the state-administered health services through the centralised health network, whilst in the latter, the state only had supervisory functions. In the latter case, present in agricultural societies with less developed institutional bureaucracies and infrastructural connections, the state employed local authorities to organise health service administration in the best way possible. However, “both models yield good results depending on how the administration of a country is organised,” continued Štampar, recognising the need for flexible adaptation of international health standards.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. This was the case in Belgium, where 60% of the inhabitants lived from agriculture. However, peasant internationalists considered the Belgian system centralised due to the institutional hierarchy of public health. For a comparative study of maternal and child services, see *Study of Maternal and Infant Welfare Reports*, 8.A.29936.8855, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>70</sup> Minutes, European Conference on Rural Hygiene, July 1931, C.473.M.202., *The LON Archives*, 144-153.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.



At the end of the discussions, the conference adopted a pragmatic approach formulated in Štampar's response to the discussions. Indeed, his public health philosophy embodied the need for differentiation based on the socioeconomic standing of the local population. However, he stood by his remarks on the significance of primary health centres, which would allow for grassroots participation in public health to encourage faster and lasting results of health campaigns. When a country was "inadequately supplied with rural doctors," Professor Konrich and Dr Fergusson's suggestions on the functions of the primary health centres and the private role of the physicians could not stand," contended Štampar.<sup>72</sup> Concluding the Conference proceedings, Dr Pittaluga recommended that the Conference proposals be sent back "to the administrations and organisations of your own countries as principles which should provide the basis for reforms in hygiene and public health in agricultural and rural districts."<sup>73</sup>

The proceedings of the Conference's second committee demonstrated that the differences in understanding of health service provision in the rural district were endemic to the diverging conditions of social and economic life in Europe. The role of Štampar as a rapporteur and the numerical strength of Central-Eastern European representatives contributed to the adoption of proposals that would allow and encourage the participation of peasants in health initiatives and link health to other aspects of rural life, especially those of the rural economy.

The peasant international cooperation at the *European Rural Hygiene Conference* in 1931 illustrated a distinct economic approach to global public health in the 1930s grounded in the socioeconomic peasant realities of life in CE Europe. But why is recognising this approach and the instances of cooperation significant? The next part of the chapter explores the impact of these arguments on the international health and welfare standards, which embedded the economic approach to health into international law and set them apart from socialised, state-centralised

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<sup>72</sup> Minutes, European Conference on Rural Hygiene, July 1931, C.473.M.202., *The LON Archives*, 60-1. Štampar explored the logistical problems of the disproportioned number of physicians in rural areas in his article on "Health politics."

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

medical services in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the European Rural Hygiene deliberations are significant for understanding the approach to health promotion after WWII as an element of technical assistance provision in the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, and the ILO.

#### 4. The Significance of Peasant Internationalism

Peasant internationalists argued that studying all aspects of rural life holistically and grounding public health measures in local economic conditions could accelerate the improvement of peasant living standards worldwide rather than the approaches based solely on peasant hygiene education. The salience of 'peasant internationalism' in the context of the LNHO thus lies in its reconciliation of the universal international health policy and its pragmatic application in different local contexts. This economic approach to international public health stressed the need to integrate rural hygiene with other aspects of rural life. Grounded in the principles of social medicine, peasant internationalists' rhetoric remained relevant throughout the 1930s due to the creation of rural health indices, the expansion of rural hygiene into rural life projects, and the globalisation of rural health and reconstruction initiatives.

Štampar's health centre scheme and economic grounding of health policies from Geneva continued to influence the Health Committee's agenda throughout the 1930s. In 1936, the French health expert Jacques Parisot presented a three-year (1937-1939) health program of the LNHO, which consolidated the integration of rural hygiene into a broader international framework for improving the socioeconomic conditions of rural life. The five spheres of action outlined in Prof Parisot's report included: (1) the study of the rural environment (agricultural reforms, cooperative movements, the social and economic conditions of rural population); (2) nutrition and production

of foodstuffs; (3) rural dwellings and dependencies; (4) education of peasants; (5) and peasant work and leisure.<sup>74</sup>

Parisot's Health Committee agenda also gave special recognition to one LNHO's health scheme in particular "since it has been followed out by many countries in Europe and elsewhere, and it has proven uniformly successful not only in rural but also in urban areas." That was Štampar's Health Centre. He further explained that the flexibility of Štampar's primary and secondary health centre scheme was a vital element of its success as it "was couched in terms sufficiently general to allow their extensive application, whilst sufficiently definite to be of real utility and afford valuable guidance for effective and economical health administration in the rural environment."<sup>75</sup> The 'studies of the rural environment' outlined in Parisot's report exemplify the peasant internationalist' influences on the Health Committee's agenda, which in the second part of the 1930s contributed to the process of 'making the countryside global,' as referred to by Raluca Musat.<sup>76</sup>

Peasant internationalists' arguments at the Geneva conference strengthened an integrative approach to rural health that transformed the LNHO's *rural hygiene* projects into *rural life* initiatives. The transnational episteme of *rural life* experts - including physicians, public policy experts, sociologists, engineers, and educators - sustained the circulation of rural health knowledge assisted by the international projects of the LON and their global reach. The first project was the LON technical assistance provision to the Chinese government, where Štampar put his integrative and decentralised health system scheme into practice. The Chinese Government and the LON took his recommendations on board. They expanded the rural health projects in eleven Chinese provinces from narrower health-focused initiatives to the integrative reconstruction of all aspects of rural life.<sup>77</sup> The second was the comparative studies of rural dwellings, work, leisure, and

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<sup>74</sup> Rural Hygiene: Past and Future Work of the League of Nations Health Organisation in the Field of Rural Hygiene, Prof Parisot's report, Rural Hygiene: Programme of Future Action, September 1936, 8.A.25778.8855, The *LON Archives*. Štampar applied his integrative vision of public health during his residency in China in the 1930s.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Muşat, "Making the Countryside Global", 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Štampar's involvement in the Chinese reconstruction project deserves more space than this chapter allows due to the richness of contacts and the number of institutions visited. The correspondence and reports from this trip are available in Zagreb in Štampar's personal files 831 at the Croatian State Archives.

education presented at the *International Rural Housing Exhibition* in Paris in 1937, organised and supervised by Štampar and imagined as a precursor to the *European Rural Life Conferences*.<sup>78</sup>

*The Rural Life* agenda of the LNHO institutionalised the peasant internationalists' economic approach to rural health and transported them outside of Europe. The *European Hygiene Conference* attracted the interest of international health experts, international organisations, and governments. "It stimulated the development and guided and facilitated the health protection in rural areas, not only in Europe but elsewhere," explained Parisot.<sup>79</sup> The peasant international cooperation left an imprint on the programme of subsequent studies drawn up by the Health Committee "and by conferences outside of Europe, which convened under the auspices of that body, such as the *Pan African Health Conference*. As soon as its financial resources allowed, the Health Organisation would convene a rural conference for the Far East," continued Parisot.<sup>80</sup>

The Conference indeed convened in August 1937 in Bandung. Each national representative, many still serving in the colonial-representative capacity, prepared a report on the overview of peasant life in their community. Reflecting on the efficiency of the Central Advisory Board on Health, countries of the Far East agreed with the conclusions drawn in Geneva that the problems of rural life were intrinsically an economic issue.<sup>81</sup> The Indian representative argued, "It is difficult for countries, circumstanced as they are, to grapple successfully with the disease. So long as such the

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<sup>78</sup> Under Štampar's instructions, the national exhibits, including Yugoslav, had to consist of models of dwellings before and after 1900, models or pictures of adjacent agricultural premises (kitchen gardens, livestock houses) and a showcase of the collective social life in the villages (roads, transportation, townhalls, churches, schools, leisure). Each nation was invited to "present its achievements in the most original way." Presentation techniques could include diagrams, lantern slides, wood models, large school photographs, revolving slides, and cinematography. "Rural Hygiene", *Exposition internationale de la maison rurale*, Paris 1937, 8A. 26064. 8855, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>79</sup> Rural Hygiene: Past and Future Work of the League of Nations Health Organisation in the Field of Rural Hygiene, Prof Parisot's report, Rural Hygiene: Programme of Future Action, September 1936, 8.A.25778.8855, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> For the most comprehensive account of the long-term significance of the Bandung Conference, see Litsios, "Revisiting Bandoeng".

low economic standard persists and devitalises the people, progress in combating social and health evils cannot be either rapid or enduring.”<sup>82</sup>

The tone and discussions in Bandung reiterated the peasant internationalist approach to health promotion from Geneva. All Far Eastern countries agreed on the necessity of locally attuned and participatory character of rural life projects. They also acknowledged that the question of decentralisation should not be an obstacle to the success of the projects, given that most countries lacked even basic health service infrastructure. Haydrick’s report on the conference resolutions highlighted that “the rural work should not so much concern the decentralisation of existing services but should be based upon building up the services founded upon the cooperation of the people in the periphery,” argued the chairman of the rural life commission for the Far East. “Cooperation of the village people is essential”, he continued, “as intensive activities and doctor’s house visits must create confidence in the people and win their support to make health centres efficient.”<sup>83</sup> The place to secure the support of the people were village halls and schools, affirmed the Conference delegates in the same spirit as Andrija Štampar and his CE colleagues. Social participation in health projects and bottom-up diffusion of health knowledge and practices from the local to the national and international level was again restated as a key to building an effective public health system.

#### 4.1. *Rural Health Indices*

Entrenching the peasant internationalists’ economic approach to public health in international law secured the long-term legacy of the LNHO’s rural health projects.<sup>84</sup> Under Rajchman’s leadership,

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<sup>82</sup> Rural Hygiene Conference in the Far East, Speeches by Delegates, Rapporteurs, Speech of the Indian delegate Sir Izma Ismail - leader of the Indian delegation, August 1937, 8.A.37715.8855, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>83</sup> Commission I: Health and Medical Services, Report to the Plenary Meeting of the Conference by Dr J.L. Haydrick Chairman of the Commission, Rural Hygiene Conference in the Far East, Reports of the Commissions, August 1937, 8.A.37714.8855, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>84</sup> Sara Silverstein is exploring the importance of international law for preserving the legacy of inclusive and universal access to medical institutions in “Doctors as Diplomats.”

with Štampar employed as the LNHO's international health expert, the economic approach to health based on the principles of social medicine became an official international standard through the creation of *rural health indices*. In 1938, the *indices* integrated biological and socioeconomic criteria for measuring and evaluating life standards in rural areas. They demonstrated a possibility to reconcile the universalist framework of international health standards with flexibility, cost-efficiency, and pragmatism to cater for the lack of economic resources in (post)imperial territories.<sup>85</sup> They also reinforced the peasant internationalists' arguments regarding the state's responsibility to safeguard the material security closely related to the health of all citizens into international law.

In May 1938, The Health Committee of the LON published a document outlining the methods for measuring standards of rural life.<sup>86</sup> Because the use of "vital statistics alone has proved insufficient for investigation [of local conditions of life], while the detailed local enquiry drawing up a health report on the external environment is too complicated, (...) a comprehensive method had therefore to be discovered, showing the interactions between social, economic, and health factors which are more or less interdependent." The rural health indices promoted a living study of vital reactions that are "simple, accurate and fairly easy to obtain."<sup>87</sup> The report outlined three groups of rural health indices which would serve as categories for measuring and evaluating the transformation of rural life: (1) indices of vitality and health; (2) indices of social and economic environment; (3) indices of public health activity.<sup>88</sup>

The lens of 'peasant internationalist' cooperation in the LON expands on Paul Weindling's analysis of rural health indices to reveal their CE European origins. Weindling traced their structure to the health appraisal system used in the US health demonstrations and the *City and Rural Health Conservation* contests. He indicated that the LNHO blended the US appraisal structure with health

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<sup>85</sup> The Yugoslav memorandum to the European Rural Hygiene Conference also presented the same arguments. Principles of rural hygiene and health cooperatives, Rural Hygiene: Yugoslavia, 8A. 23705. 10183, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>86</sup> After the experimental studies in Hungary in 1937 and a comparative application of indices in Belgium and Poland in 1938, the directors of public health institutes decided to endorse the value of indices as an international standard.

<sup>87</sup> Health Indices: Remarks on Health Indices for Rural Districts, C.H.1331., May 1938, in Hygiene Rural: Documentation, October 1938, 8A.35716.8855., *The LON Archives*.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

measures in specific communities.<sup>89</sup> This chapter agrees with Weindling that the new system corrected the aggregate methods of measuring national health statistics, which masked regional, social, and age-specific differentials.<sup>90</sup> The peasant internationalists' economic approach to health indeed contributed to adapting international health standards to the conditions of rural localities, which included the provision of primary and secondary health centres, the availability of physicians, the type of rural housing, and levels of education in rural areas.<sup>91</sup>

Peasant internationalism demonstrates that a move from the quantitative national aggregate statistics for measuring health outcomes to a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods represented by the rural health indices was not an exclusive by-product of the American foundations' influence on the LNHO. These changes also reflected a new consensus regarding the need to study rural health in conjecture with social and economic determinants of life. They institutionalised an integrative framework of measuring rural health, which represented a mixture of idealist 'health for all' objectives whilst promoting 'realist' - pragmatic, participatory and flexible – application of these objectives in various local contexts. This integrative framework allowed the experts to establish a mixed method performance criteria for selecting rural life interventions in different parts of the world, later used by the WHO and the ILO in their technical assistance programs.<sup>92</sup>

#### 4.2. *Social or Socialist Medicine?*

Recognising the economic approach to international public health can re-think the relationship between social, socialist, and Western medicine in the context of international health policy. Dr Andrija Štampar's and peasant internationalists' arguments undoubtedly shared similar aims to

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<sup>89</sup> Weindling, "American Foundations and the Internationalizing of Public Health," in *International Health Organisations and Movements*, 79.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> For a full exploration of the rural health indices consult, Health Indices: Remarks on Health Indices for Rural Districts, C.H.1331, *The LON Archives*.

<sup>92</sup> Andrija Štampar, "In Central Asia for the Second Time" and "In the Nile Valley" in *Grmek, Selected Papers of Andrija Štampar*.

those of socialist medicine practised in the Soviet Union inherent in the concept of ‘health for all.’<sup>93</sup> Yet, they disagreed with the purpose and the centralised method for widening access to healthcare services. The difference between the socialist and economic approach to health hinged on the flows of power and authority within the state and their ties to the system of international health governance of the League of Nations and later of the UN.

The socialist public health model aimed to fulfil the ideal of universal health by imposing centralised control over all aspects of national health policy. In state socialism, a state assumed the function of a central planner. Communist peasant parties centrally directed public health services as they saw fit, usually to increase industrial output and accelerate urbanisation.<sup>94</sup> During his travels through the Soviet Union in 1937, which included Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine, Štampar reflected on the organisation of the Soviet public health system and its relation to rural reconstruction. Štampar was impressed by the health institutions’ focus on the “people rather than profit.” From his visit and sociological study of public health institutions, Štampar concluded that the Soviet Union “considers public health as a foundation of society in the Union,” with many Soviet states giving up a large proportion of its budget to public health institutions.”<sup>95</sup>

However, he was appalled by the lack of critical examination of the health institutions’ work by sanitary inspectors who “were clearly not in a state to provide an overview of the sanitary work and services.” The inspectors “did not know or did not want to speak about their work. The main inspectors and officials spoke only Russian, and they presented their cases and statistical overview with no graphical tools.”<sup>96</sup> The lack of time he had to examine the functioning of these institutions critically also disappointed Štampar. He believed in continuous evaluation of reforms and practices

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<sup>93</sup> On the Soviet social conceptualisation of medicine among other works see, Marius Turda, "History of Medicine in Eastern Europe, Including Russia", 2011; Leonard J. Bruce-Chwatt, "Malaria Research and Eradication in the USSR: A Review of Soviet Achievements in the Field of Malariology", *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 21, no. 6 (1959): 737; Frances Lee Bernstein, Christopher Burton, and Dan Healey, *Soviet Medicine: Culture, Practice, and Science* (Cornell University Press, 2010).

<sup>94</sup> On the socialist public health system and its relationship with the LNHO see Iacob, "Health" in *Socialism Goes Global*. For the overview of socialist planning see Michael Ellman, *Socialist Planning* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>95</sup> HR-HDA-831, Andrija Štampar’s Collection, 5.2.6. USSR Diary, 399.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*



absent in the centralised Soviet public health system, whose main aim was population management and strengthening the state apparatus.<sup>97</sup>

The purpose of widening the scope of public health services was different in interwar Yugoslavia and much of CE Europe. The peasant internationalists' economic approach to health promotion relied on a decentralised and bottom-up diffusion of medical knowledge and authority where the state assumed only a supervisory function. These health services supported the gradual transformation and modernisation of peasant communities inherent in Štampar's three-tiered rural health centre scheme.

Over the years, historians have struggled to answer the question of Štampar's political and ideological orientation because there is no simple answer to that question.<sup>98</sup> Štampar's and peasant internationalists' approach to health and rural reconstruction cannot be considered socialist, Western, or liberal. Following Tara Zahra's theoretical framework of national indifference, this dissertation demonstrates that Štampar's ambivalence and fluid relationship with political ideology stems from the prioritisation of economic over political sovereignty—a trait shared with other peasant internationalists explored in the following chapters. Because of his emphasis on the values of "social justice," historians have often placed Štampar in the socialist camp, which, on the level of social ideology, is not entirely inaccurate.<sup>99</sup> However, Štampar also believed in the vehicle of international cooperation, the importance of dialogue and learning from best practices irrespective of the political contexts in which they existed.<sup>100</sup> He considered international organisations the best

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid and "On Health Politics" in Grmek, *Selected Papers of Andrija Štampar*.

<sup>98</sup> Vedran Duančić, "Recent Trends in the History of Science in Croatia", *Centaurus* 63, no. 3 (2021): 553–68.

<sup>99</sup>For example, Kuhar and Ferencic consider Štampar's practices socialist due to their similarities with the socialist states' interventionist policies of building public services to secure equal access to healthcare. They argue that after the establishment of the "WHO under Štampar's leadership, he never openly failed to link his ideas to socialism (...). He even gave his project the name 'our ideology', thus giving a political accent to the reform. Stella Fatović-Ferenčić and Martin Kuhar, "Imagine All the People:" Andrija Štampar's Ideology in The Context of Contemporary Public Health Initiatives", *Acta medico-historica Adriatica*, AMHA 17, no. 2 (2019): 280. The roots of social medicine, explored by Rudolf Virchow, found inspiration in Friedrich Engels's writings. See Waitzkin, "Virchow's Lasting Contributions to Social Medicine," 6.

<sup>100</sup> Martin David Dubin presents a more balanced argument of Štampar's vision of social medicine, arguing that his thought is an example of "socialist humanism." It was an expression of the power struggle between the industrial (Western Europe and Scandinavia) and agricultural states (Central-Eastern Europe) in the LNHO necessary to counteract the dominance of the Western powers in the administrative hierarchy of the

platforms for ensuring the continuation of knowledge and expertise circulations across borders. While he was a proponent of technological ‘Western’ methods of tackling the effects of ill health, such as the DDT mosquito spraying to combat malaria, he also understood that without lasting socioeconomic reforms, the causes of ill health would persist.<sup>101</sup>

Although Štampar represented socialist Yugoslavia internationally during the Cold War, it would be reductive to label his health policy views politically socialist or characterise him as an ‘apolitical’ physician.<sup>102</sup> The inherent ambiguity of peasant internationalism manifested through Štampar’s international actions. On one hand, he championed the idea that public health should transcend politics, but his actions were not devoid of political implications. A more nuanced characterisation might be to recognise him as a peasant internationalist because of his prioritisation of economic sovereignty and belief in the importance of technical cooperation. He consistently held public officials to rigorous scientific and professional standards, reflecting his multifaceted contributions within and outside the national public health sphere. This chapter thus argues that Štampar’s vision of health had less to do with political socialism and more with the social and economic reality captured by the thematic concept of peasantism. Štampar’s economic interpretation of health was shaped by socio-medical principles adjusted to post-imperial transition experiences from interwar Yugoslavia and the opportunities for peasant international cooperation provided by the LON.

Collectively, peasant internationalists advocated for the judicious adaptation of international health standards to rural settings, striking a balance between universalism and pragmatism in international

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organisation due to the influence of the British and French members of the International Public Health Bureau Members. Martin Dubin, “The League of Nations Health Organisation”, 62-4.

<sup>101</sup> Bogdan Iacob characterises the Eastern European approach to international health after 1945 as ‘syncretic’ exhibiting a mixture of social and technological solutions to improving public health outcomes. Iacob, “Malariaology and Decolonization.”

<sup>102</sup> Štampar continued to support the League’s aims and objectives in the time of the demise of its authority and reach after the Italian occupation in Abyssinia in HR-HDA-831, *Rural hygiene expert*, 5.4.6. “Diary entry about his return to Geneva in the late 1936 and early 1937.” For the argument on the ‘apolitical nature’ of Štampar’s public health vision, consult Sara Silverstein, *Man of an Impossible Mission: Andrija Štampar's Separation of Politics and Healthcare in Yugoslavia and the World Health Organization* (Rockefeller Archive Center, 2013).

health policies. Štampar, as well as his peasant internationalist colleagues, were pragmatic idealists. They supported the universal conceptualisation of ‘health for all’ but adapted their implementation to the living conditions of rural populations worldwide.<sup>103</sup> They intertwined economic aspects of self-determination with a decentralised, democratic political vision of medical governance. In challenging the ‘liberal’—or, as they perceived, ‘urban and centralised’—health systems endorsed by the LNHO, the Central-Eastern European advocates played a role in championing a more ‘universal’ approach to rural health and welfare pragmatically adapted to local conditions.<sup>104</sup> Historians can reveal different applications of social medical principles in CE Europe from the rest of the continent by considering Štampar’s and peasant internationalists’ economic approach to public health in a more expansive modernisation context. This chapter agrees with Silverstein that “Štampar’s methods anticipated by several years the emergence of ‘peasant studies,’ the field concerned with both understanding and reforming agrarian societies.” However, what Silverstein refers to as “peasant studies, a prototype of development studies thirty years later,” when studied in the international context, builds a picture of a pragmatic approach to international cooperation called peasant internationalism. Through peasant internationalism, CE European health reformers promoted an alternative rural version of modernisation instead of its urban industrial counterpart and an economic decentralised approach to international public health.<sup>105</sup> This model of medical rural self-governance became integral to this modernisation

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<sup>103</sup> The economic approach to public health impacted the LON’s projects in China and the subsequent Barefoot Doctors’ scheme of Mao Zedong. For general overviews of the LON involvement in China, consult Margherita Zanasi, "Exporting Development: The League of Nations and Republican China", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 1 (2007): 143–69, Xiaoping Fang, *Barefoot Doctors and Western Medicine in China*, Rochester Studies in Medical History, v. 23 (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012); Iris Borowy, "Thinking Big—League of Nations Efforts towards a Reformed National Health System in China", *Uneasy Encounters: The Politics of Medicine and Health in China 1937* (1900): 205–28; Martin, *The Meddlers*, 2022. And for an overview of Štampar’s work in China, Dugac, "Public Health Experiences from Interwar Croatia (Yugoslavia)."

<sup>104</sup> Historically, the WHO is credited with globalising international rural reconstruction endeavours, evidenced by the establishment of its six regional offices. Consequently, this study underscores narratives that trace the origins of the universal health concept back to the interwar period. For the LNHO’s role in this process, see Iris Borowy, "The League of Nations Health Organization: From European to Global Health Concerns", 11–30 and *Coming to Terms with World Health*. Sara Silverstein’s ongoing project explores the process of ‘universalisation’ of health in the interwar period from the CE perspective *Doctors as Diplomats: The Origins of Universal Healthcare in International Society*. For an introduction to Štampar’s role in this process, consult Dugac et al., "Care for Health Cannot Be Limited to One Country or One Town Only," 2008.

<sup>105</sup> Silverstein, "Periphery is the Centre", 229.

strategy in response to post-colonial state-building challenges after WWII outside of Europe, explored in the last chapter.

## 5. Conclusions

Štampar learnt from the turbulent political landscape of Yugoslavia that even relatively sympathetic governments might change health policy directions. To achieve his objective of integrative rural reconstruction, he argued that the institutions dedicated to extending access to healthcare must exist beyond the state.<sup>106</sup> With high mortality rates, poor housing, inadequate infrastructure, and venereal and occupational diseases, countries in CE Europe, including Yugoslavia, required a different approach towards improving public health. In CE Europe, people suffering from ill-health effects often lived in rural, isolated areas, not in over-crowded and unsanitary cities as the tradition of social medicine dictated. These differences came to the shore during the European Rural Hygiene Conference in Geneva in 1931. Dr Andrija Štampar's decentralised three-tiered health system based on popular participation and collaboration with social and economic agricultural cooperatives challenged the arguments favouring the centralised, state-directed approach to health policies of more industrialised states with developed bureaucracies.

This chapter illuminates another aspect of the international system where the economic conceptualisation of policies dominated the expert discussions. It builds on the Yugoslav discussions in front of the Opium Committee to reveal that peasant internationalists understood modernisation as a holistic process of socioeconomic change. Protecting the welfare and economic interests of peasants and the state was a major part of this process. The principles of social justice for all achieved through interdisciplinary and interinstitutional cooperation within the liberal international framework promoted by Štampar became a feature of peasant international cooperation for decades to come.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 232.

Through the vehicle of peasant international cooperation, CE European health reformers placed pragmatic considerations ahead of political and ideological alignments and thinking outside of the 'liberal internationalist' box. They argued for adapting international minimum health and welfare standards to include the elements of sanitation, education, agrarian reform, insurance provision and infrastructural development. These qualitative indicators of rural life, based on sociological observations of all aspects of peasant living conditions, became known as the rural health indices. Rural health indices, conversely, entrenched the integrative approach to rural reconstruction as a model for measuring and increasing rural life standards. The chapter thus highlights the often-overlooked rural character of international public health projects and their economic conceptualisation that precedes the onset of socialism in 1945.

Assessing the contributions of Central-Eastern European states to the LNHO further complicates the argument of homogeneity of 'liberal internationalism' in the interwar period and reveals continuities with the post-WWII period. The Geneva discussions linked to the LNHO demonstrate that CE European experts reinforced the democratic political and capitalist economic framework on which the LON was based. However, they also reveal that progressive ideals of universal health based on the values of social justice, usually associated with the socialist approach to medicine, were a major part of these debates, as already demonstrated by the historians of medicine. Štampar is a major contributor to this narrative as he argued for linking public health projects with integrative reform of rural life illustrated in his theoretical reflections on social medicine and his rural reconstruction of Chinese rural provinces. The Yugoslav three-tiered decentralised health model, disseminated and promoted by the LNHO, became an international standard, remaining in the spotlight beyond the League's existence by inspiring rural health solutions worldwide, including the Chinese 'barefoot doctors' scheme.<sup>107</sup>

Integrating elements of economic rural reconstruction with the health and welfare of peasants influenced international cooperation beyond the LON's Health Committee. Frank McDougall's

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<sup>107</sup> Fang, *Barefoot Doctors and Western Medicine in China*. Future research on this topic is outlined in the *Afterlives* chapter.

calls for the policies of “Economic Appeasement” became the League’s answer for reviving globalisation during the economic protectionism of the 1930s by reducing poverty and improving the living standards of the poorest groups in each country. McDougall and Alexander Loveday’s arguments and approach to globalisation in the Economic and Financial Committee of the LON drew heavily from the conclusions of Rural Hygiene and Rural Life Conferences.<sup>108</sup> Peasant internationalists and leading social and economic experts of the League, including the ILO’s director Howard Butler, influenced the early post-war approaches to ‘development’ based on the concept of a holistic and multisectoral approach to reform. A consequence of peasant internationalists’ work was that in the late 1930s, the term ‘planning’ was no longer seen as a strategy for maximising profits and efficiency. Butler explained that the primary objective of ‘planning’ was “social, to guarantee not only better wealth but its better distribution,” effectively blurring the lines between socialist and liberal approaches to development.<sup>109</sup>

Recognising the economic approach to international health as practised by Štampar and his Central-Eastern European colleagues provides a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between social, socialist, and Western medical approaches after 1945. *The Afterlives* chapter explores these continuities between the interwar and Cold War periods, illuminating how the economic approach to health shaped the early development approaches through the prism of the UN technical assistance projects in the 1950s. Peasant internationalism should, therefore, be considered a useful approach towards decentring international health away from Western perspectives. Distinguishing the decentralised Yugoslav three-tiered public health system from its Soviet counterpart during the interwar era assists historians in deciphering the genesis and enduring influence of the Yugoslav ‘third way,’ profoundly influenced by the social and economic realities of life in the region and not necessarily political aspects of socialism after 1945.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Tara Zahra, *Against the World: Anti-Globalism and Mass Politics between the World Wars* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2023), 232–33.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, 230.

<sup>110</sup> For the analysis of these two dominant approaches to international health in the Cold War period, see Dóra Vargha, “Between East and West: Polio Vaccination across the Iron Curtain in Cold War Hungary”, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 88, no. 2 (2014): 319–43; Dóra Vargha, *Polio across the Iron Curtain: Hungary’s Cold War with an Epidemic*; Mary Augusta Brazelton, “Health for All?: Histories of International and Global Health”, *History Compass* 20, no. 1 (2022):1; 5–7.

How the coming of WWII influenced peasant internationalism and expert networks is a salient question. The next chapter further explores the intersectionality between welfare, economics, education and post-war reconstruction to trace the survival and further evolution of ideas espoused by Bićanić, Fotić and Jovanović into more comprehensive modernisation theories and models. I analyse this by shedding light on an often-forgotten part of this story, the Central and Eastern European Planning Board (CEEPB), a regional research institute operating in New York from 1942-1945. While Štampar was not directly involved with the CEEPB's research due to his incarceration in Graz, his insights into public health indelibly shaped the Board's vision of post-war CE Europe. The CEEPB recognised the significance of Štampar's Harvard Cutter Lecture in 1938, including it in the Yugoslav post-war reconstruction papers due to its emphasis on the principles of rural social justice and democratic and egalitarian education shared by the CEEPB.

## 4. The Central and Eastern European Planning Board and the Post-war Reconstruction of Central-Eastern Europe

### 1. Introduction

Speaking at the Antioch College's Institute for the Reconstruction of Central-Eastern Europe, a Yugoslav economist, Nicholas Mirkovich, painted a vivid picture of a peasant - not as a mere worker of the land but as a beacon of hope and progress after its end. Addressing an audience filled with economic experts and attentive American students, Mirkovich depicted a peasant population of Central-Eastern Europe as an "energetic, vital, conscious and constructive force which will and must be used in such a way as to benefit the social and economic progress of mankind."<sup>1</sup> Mirkovich was not dreaming of a utopian future but warned of the need to consider the lives of peasant populations worldwide in the post-war reconstruction efforts. He believed that the prosperity of Europe, and by extension, the success of the 'United Nations' mission for global security, as proclaimed by the Atlantic Charter, hinged on uplifting these very peasants. Combining the rhetoric of democracy with social justice, he noted that the region's economic strength and democracy are two sides of the same coin.

Yet, Mirkovich also touched upon the dark truth. The economic vulnerabilities of Central-Eastern Europe's peasants had once made them susceptible to the fascist's expansionist claws, leading to the very turmoil the world had just witnessed. However, he argued that this was not an accurate image of the peasants; they were "democratic in their nature acting against tyranny, domination,

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<sup>1</sup> NYPL, Box 3, f: Antioch college, "Mirkovich's speech," 11 March 1943. Sava Kosanovich reiterated Mirkovich's argument on the interrelationship between regional reconstruction and global security in his speech to the United Nations Information Center entitled "Peace and Security in Central-Eastern Europe" on March 1, 1943.



regimentation, and deception.”<sup>2</sup> His warning was clear - to truly rebuild and ensure peace, the focus must shift towards transforming Eastern Europe into a “dynamic economic region.”<sup>3</sup> Mirkovich’s vision for Central-Eastern Europe was cooperation, economic growth, and unity.<sup>4</sup> His dream was a united Europe, where Central-Eastern Europe, with its “urgent desire to cooperate in the name of security and democracy,” will become a bridge between Western democracy and the Russians.”<sup>5</sup> The Central and Eastern European Planning Board (CEEPB), an affiliate research institution of Mirkovich, worked on designing a socioeconomic framework and outlining the political principles for this reconstruction process between 1942-45.

The story of the CEEPB begins in November 1941 at the International Labour Conference in New York, which considered the purpose of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in wartime. In a joint statement, the government, workers’ and employers’ delegations of Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland, and Yugoslavia declared “the intention of closest cooperation in the struggle for freedom and post-war reconstruction.” They agreed that planning for “the reconstruction and development of industry, agriculture, and merchant marine” was an urgent priority to save a hundred million Central-Eastern (CE) European inhabitants from their “present state of wretchedness.” In this proclamation of solidarity and intention of future collaboration, the New York delegates lobbied for including four countries “within the sphere of the international exchanges of goods and services” after the war’s end. In this process, they emphasised that special attention should be paid to “the masses of the peasant population, and to their social and economic standards because it is on those elements that the peace and security of the region depend on.”<sup>6</sup> To further this aim, on 7 January, the representatives of four “national planning groups” based in New York founded the Central and Eastern European Planning Board as a research centre informing the post-war reconstruction process.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Resembling the words and plans of the Central and Eastern European Planning Board’s supporter, Jean Monnet, an architect of the European Union.

<sup>5</sup> NYPL, Box 3, f: Antioch College Institute, “Mirkovich’s speech,” 11 March 1943.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

The CEEPB unveils a frequently neglected Central-Eastern European perspective on post-World War II reconstruction. This viewpoint remains in the shadow of the prevalent narratives focused on the Western Allies and their desire to secure Europe's political and economic future as a bulwark against communism and fascism. During the war, Central-Eastern European government ministers and economic and social experts played a pivotal role in these efforts. Through their collaboration within the CEEPB, they engaged with numerous American and international government and volunteer planning organisations to lay the groundwork for reconstructing economies and societies after the Second World War.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter zooms on the CEEPB as both a location and a forum for international cooperation. It delves into Yugoslav visions for post-war economic and educational reconstruction, placing them within the context of regional, Allied, and international priorities. Furthermore, it explores the ramifications and results of these visions, including related propaganda initiatives and professional networks. For example, the chapter reveals the CEEPB's connections with the American and international efforts at Europe's educational reconstruction from 1942 to 1946 and the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) struggle for survival between 1943 and 1945.

The Board functioned at a crucial nexus, bridging national émigré reconstruction groups, international organisations, intellectuals in exile, and Allied post-war planning committees. In this dynamic transnational context, Yugoslav representatives played a role in outlining their desired vision of Yugoslavia and Central-Eastern Europe. Working concurrently within the CEEPB and the Yugoslav national planning organisation known as the 'Yugoslav Information Centre' (JIC), these representatives, numbering around a dozen and operating under the guise of a 'ministerial mission,' actively contributed to shaping Yugoslavia's international orientation.<sup>8</sup> Leveraging the goodwill

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<sup>7</sup> Jessica Reinisch, "Internationalism in Relief: The Birth (and Death) of UNRRA," *Past & Present* 210, no. 6 (2011): 258–89; For example, the 'Inter-Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements' was established in London in September 1941. Eight European Allies, the Free French, British Dominions and the UK, agreed to collaborate in compiling estimates on likely requirements for relief materials in the occupied countries after their liberation.

<sup>8</sup> Pavlowitch classified the Yugoslav delegation in New York as "a ministerial mission" in Stevan K. Pavlowitch, "Out of Context: The Yugoslav Government in London 1941-1945," *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 1 (1981): 101.

extended by American Allies, they advocated for the need for foreign credit. Additionally, they facilitated transnational knowledge exchanges with American institutions, including the US State Department, the Departments of Agriculture and Education, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the International Labour Office, and the Board of Economic Warfare, among many others. Their efforts were instrumental in fostering collaboration and securing support from various organisations, which the Board's assistant, Oskar Lange, facilitated.<sup>9</sup>

These instances of international cooperation culminated in expressions of sympathy and promises of aid, which came to fruition in 1944 and 1945. The research conducted by the CEEPB and the JIC on the war's impact on Yugoslav society and economy was instrumental in guiding Rudolf Bićanić's Yugoslav loan negotiations in Washington, D.C., explored in the next chapter. Moreover, the networks established by the Board enhanced relations between Central-Eastern Europe, Allied governments, and international organisations. For instance, the economic and educational surveys conducted by the CEEPB and JIC provided a crucial informational foundation for identifying post-war Yugoslav needs, particularly in raw materials and foodstuffs. This information was pivotal in shaping the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration's (UNRRA) understanding of regional necessities and the logistics of relief distribution.

Consequently, the Board emerged as a vital link between national planning bodies and international initiatives to prepare for post-war reconstruction. It played a dual role: firstly, it was an example of 'functional internationalism', characterised by technical expert meetings; secondly, as a proponent of 'diplomatic internationalism,' its outreach activities sought to foster political cooperation between Central-Eastern Europe and the Allies. The activities of the Board's Economic and Educational Committee, both divisions of the CEEPB, mirrored the technical conferences that have been instrumental since 1919 within the League of Nations framework. These conferences

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<sup>9</sup> The US government established the Board of Economic Warfare in 1941 to develop policies and programs to strengthen the USA's international economic relations. It supported the Allied war effort by procuring strategic resources; its rich collection of records is held at the *Columbia University Archives*. The goodwill of the Americans was in stark contrast to the unwillingness of the British government to enter the conversation with the leading group of Yugoslav ministers based in London. Stevan K. Pavlowitch, "Momčilo Ninčić and the European Policy of the Yugoslav Government in Exile, 1941-1943: II," *Slavonic and East European Review* 62, no. 4 (1984): 531–51.

often laid the groundwork for diplomatic summits led by heads of state, illustrating the Board's influential role in both technical and diplomatic arenas.<sup>10</sup>

The Board also served as a determining element for sustaining the networks of experts and diplomats and their rurally focused ideas on modernisation, here referred to as peasant internationalism, during and after WWII. The issue of agricultural overpopulation, rooted in the socioeconomic rural milieu of Central-Eastern (CE) Europe, emerged as a predominant topic in both the technical discussions and public diplomatic efforts of the Board. The climate of 'peasantism,' investigated throughout the dissertation, thus also imbued the process of technical cooperation in the CEEP. In this context, Yugoslav economists and agricultural experts wielded significant influence over the processes that shaped the blueprints for the region's economic reconstruction after the war. Their visions transcended ideological debates about the post-World War II international system as they considered the social impacts of reconstruction reforms on peasant communities. In line with the spirit of this dissertation, I refer to these individuals as 'peasant internationalists,' highlighting their unique role in shaping the post-war landscape.

Peasant internationalists, convening in the Economic and Educational Committees of the Board, shared a deep commitment to the principles of social justice, advocating for their advancement within the ambit of liberal international institutions. This commitment, while not unprecedented, echoed the foundational aims of the ILO, a vital supporter of the CEEP. Established in 1919, the ILO has been steadfast in its dedication to improving living and working standards, primarily in the industrial and trade sectors. In May 1942, in their address to the ILO's Directors, Nicholas Mirkovich and Sava Kosanovich interwove the concept of social justice with the agrarian challenges faced by Central-Eastern European economies. They aptly highlighted the interdependent relationship between agriculture and industry, demonstrating how concerns centred on peasant societies could influence economic productivity beyond the agricultural sector. The compelling presentations of these Yugoslav representatives garnered considerable attention

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<sup>10</sup> Jessica Reinisch, "Technical Conferences as a Technique of Internationalism," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 56, no. 4 (2023): 1–18.

from their American counterparts by effectively arguing that rural social justice was a linchpin for European security.

This discourse by Yugoslav and other CEEPB delegates consistently portrayed Central-Eastern Europe as a 'bridge of civilisations' between the 'East' and the 'West'. Mirkovich was particularly adept at broadening the perspective of Yugoslav economic challenges to a global context, emphasising that improving the living standards of Central-Eastern European peasants would have far-reaching effects on the overall well-being of "all common men." These efforts were complemented by aspirations to establish a democratic and egalitarian educational framework in the region, ideologically grounding these initiatives in the values of democracy and tolerance.

The subsequent pages argue that the principles of rural social justice shaped the proposed solutions to the issue of agricultural overpopulation in Yugoslavia and Central-Eastern Europe. Rudolf Bićanić and Nicholas Mirkovich informed this rural approach to modernisation here termed 'optimal industrialisation of the countryside', acknowledging the necessity of comprehensive social and economic reforms to address this challenge. Central to implementing these reforms was the reliance on international credit, which would facilitate the restructuring of the agricultural sector and enhance the productivity of regional agriculture, especially in contexts where one-third of the peasant population constituted excess labour. In his outreach endeavours through the CEEPB, Nicholas Mirkovich emphasised that addressing the agricultural population issue was crucial in mitigating the region's perceived 'backwardness.' He argued that this challenge was a societal and technical dilemma requiring holistic consideration. Mirkovic asserted that when devising technical solutions, experts must thoroughly assess the social impact of their reforms, particularly on the peasant population.

Through its assembly of technical experts, the CEEPB also inadvertently played a pivotal role in establishing the ILO as a specialised agency of the United Nations. The Board's activities underscored the significance of technical expertise in the ILO's assistance programs, a concept that later became a cornerstone of international development approaches post-1945. Examining the activities of the 'Yugoslav ministerial mission' in New York offers insights into the heightened

appreciation for Yugoslav technical expertise during the 1950s and 1960s. This recognition was partly a result of the productive collaboration between peasant internationalists and international organisations, such as the ILO, during wartime.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, the Board functioned as both an institutional and intellectual conduit, bridging the histories of two Yugoslav states: the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. An examination of the contributions made by Yugoslav delegates to the CEEPB in 1942 and 1943 offers a fresh perspective on the activities of the émigré government during the war, which shaped the transition processes between the two states. The CEEPB's delegates showcased a remarkable display of cross-party and cross-ethnic unity in formulating an imaginative vision of the Yugoslav future. Unlike their counterparts in London, the CEEPB experts were not frozen in "the office without a country," with "no precise information channels" plagued by "impotence" and "disunity."<sup>12</sup>

Whilst the London-based cabinet slowly "exhausted their moral credit with the British," in 1942 and 1943, Sava Kosanovich, Nikolas Mirkovich, and Boris Furlan were actively envisioning Yugoslavia's future political, economic, and social framework in New York during 1942 and 1943.<sup>13</sup> In collaboration with their regional and American colleagues, the Yugoslav representatives at the CEEPB developed a vision for the country's political economy based on rural social justice within a democratic and federal state structure. Their strategies for reconstruction, coupled with the Board's extensive networks that persisted even after Yugoslavia relinquished its organisational membership in August 1943, contributed to the Allies' growing detachment from the émigré government in London. This shift progressively eroded the London government's credibility as the legitimate representative of the Yugoslav people. The Yugoslav participation in the CEEPB sheds light on the increasing allure of social justice values integral to socialist socioeconomic agendas.

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<sup>11</sup> Véronique Plata-Stenger, *Social Reform, Modernization and Technical Diplomacy: The ILO Contribution to Development (1930–1946)*, vol. 8 of *Work in Global and Historical Perspective* (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2020), particularly chapters five and eight.

<sup>12</sup> Pavlowitch, "Out of Context - The Yugoslav Government in London 1941-1945"; also in Dejan Djokić and James Ker-Lindsay, *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies* (London: Routledge, 2011), chapter, Stevan K. Pavlowitch, "Yugoslavia in Exile: The London-based Wartime Government, 1941-45."

<sup>13</sup> Pavlowitch, "Out of Context", 99.

These mirrored the economic reconstruction plans advocated in New York, cultivating acceptance and support for Yugoslavia's 'third way' in political economy and foreign policy, between liberalism and socialism, East and West, after 1945.

The perspective of Yugoslav peasant internationalists - experts and diplomats - is a pivotal analytical framework in this chapter. Given the diverse array of Yugoslav experts in the CEEPB and the complexity of their ideas, this narrative—similar to that in the Opium Committee chapter—highlights the concept of 'placement' of internationalism. This notion of 'placement,' which pertains to the geographical context in analysing Yugoslav aspirations within the CEEPB and New York, provides a more profound understanding of the organisation's professional networks. However, its true significance becomes apparent only when one scrutinises the interplay of national, Allied, and international organisational strategies for reconstruction within their distinct historical contexts. Such an examination sheds light on the interconnected themes of 'rural social justice' and 'democratic, egalitarian education.' As a nexus for international collaboration among peasant communities, the CEEPB shaped the Allied perspective on the reconstruction needs of Central-Eastern Europe. Concurrently, it furnished Yugoslav experts with essential data for forthcoming financial negotiations and significantly enhanced the international reputation of Yugoslav technical expertise.

This chapter addresses the central inquiry of this dissertation: how did the social and economic rural environment influence Yugoslavia's vision of modernisation and consequently define its role in the evolving international system, particularly during the uncertain wartime landscape of 1942-43? It explores the answers through three research questions: (1) How did Yugoslav experts influence national and regional approaches to post-war reconstruction? (2) What role did the Central-Eastern European Economic Planning Board (CEEPB) have in American reconstruction planning? (3) How impactful were these instances of regional cooperation on the future configuration of international organisations?

Analysing the resources from the CEEPB collection at the New York Public Library—including correspondence, minutes, resolutions, pamphlets, and official documents—and the papers of the

Yugoslav national planning group, this chapter scrutinises the ideas propagated, networks cultivated, and connections maintained among the peasant internationalists. The analysis initially focuses on Yugoslav perspectives regarding economic and educational reconstruction before transitioning to assess the concrete implications of these visions, particularly about American plans for the educational rebuilding of Europe and the ILO's position in the international system. Subsequent sections reincorporate the CEEP into the narrative of post-war reconstruction, emphasising the critical yet often-overlooked years of 1942 and 1943 and the significance of technical expertise in this historical process.

## 2. Post-War Reconstruction Planning

Although the members of the Board characterised their meetings as 'technical,' intending to identify 'rational' solutions for regional reconstruction and developing proposals for politicians, they were acutely aware of the political dimensions of their work. They recognised that the effective realisation of their concepts for CE Europe's economic and social rebuilding hinged on "the political realities determined by the foreign policies of three big powers: The United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union."<sup>14</sup> The CEEP, therefore, must be contextualised within the broader post-war relief and reconstruction planning visions of various Allied political and academic groups.

Firstly, the narrative of the Board offers a more nuanced understanding of how smaller states, as recipients of international aid and loans, envisioned and actively influenced post-WWII reconstruction. Scholars like Burnham, Williams, Kindleberger, White, and Martin have delved into the post-war reconstruction plans of the Allied governments, primarily focusing on British and American priorities for Europe.<sup>15</sup> During WWII, the Allies acknowledged the need for substantial

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<sup>14</sup> Feliks Gross, "Peace Planning for Central and Eastern Europe," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 232, no. 1 (1944): 175.

<sup>15</sup> For the UK perspective, see Peter Burnham, *The Political Economy of Postwar Reconstruction* (Macmillan, 1990). For the overview of the "hegemonic stability theory" that Burnham openly challenges, see Charles Kindleberger *Marshall Plan Days* (Routledge, 1987). More recently, in the context of international economic



capital, logistical planning, and research to prevent a more profound economic crisis and the necessity for a more extensive financial reconstruction of Europe. Yet, in these accounts, the perspectives of experts and politicians from the nations receiving aid are underrepresented.

The examination of the CEEPB's activities aligns with the arguments made by Jessica Reinisch and Holly Case concerning the UNRRA and Transylvania, respectively. For instance, Jessica Reinisch demonstrated that UNRRA's activities were not dictated solely by the Allied planning efforts, including the *Inter-Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements* established in London in September 1941, an organisation that compiled estimates on likely requirements for relief materials in the occupied countries after their liberation. Nor were they Washington's design aligned with *The Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations'* (OFRRO) establishment in November 1942 to organise American relief abroad.<sup>16</sup>

While the US rhetoric of the American 'second chance' to heal the world grew more pronounced and was accompanied by "the insistence that isolationism was undesirable, selfish and plainly impossible to maintain," this American 'missionary internationalism' was in part shaped by the 'cooperative internationalism' of the CE European countries, demonstrated Reinisch. They argued that the distribution and management of relief materials should remain under the jurisdiction of the states and local experts rather than Allied or international entities.<sup>17</sup> The JIC and CEEPB perspectives reveal the birth of this cooperative internationalism during the war to inform the Allies about the necessities of Central-Eastern Europe, including food, medicine, raw materials, and clothing. By exploring the ideas advanced by the Yugoslav experts, the CEEPB sheds light on another facet of 'cooperative internationalism,' emphasising its rural dimensions. The CEEPB's secretaries, Feliks Gross and his assistant, Oskar Lange, worked tirelessly to send hundreds of copies of research

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history Jamie Martin, *The Meddlers: Sovereignty, Empire, and the Birth of Global Economic Governance* (Harvard University Press, 2022). For the US perspective, see: Andrew J. Williams, "'Reconstruction' before the Marshall Plan", *Review of International Studies* 31 (2005): 541–58 and *Failed Imagination? The Anglo-American New World Order from Wilson to Bush*, 2nd ed, (Manchester, 2007). Donald White, "History and American Internationalism: The Formulation from the Past after WWII," *Pacific Historical Review* 58:2 (May 1989).

<sup>16</sup> Reinisch, "Internationalism in Relief" and "Introduction: Relief in the Aftermath of War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 3 (2008): 286.

<sup>17</sup> Reinisch, "Internationalism in Relief," 266-7.

articles and publications to various Allied relief organisations, disseminating the output of the Board's activities, partially funded by the national governments.<sup>18</sup>

This chapter also draws inspiration from Holly Case's study on Transylvania, which explores how Hungarian and Romanian experts and politicians conceived, articulated, and advocated their plans for reconstructing and nationalising Transylvania.<sup>19</sup> Like their Romanian and Hungarian counterparts, the leading figures of this chapter - Mirkovich, Kosanovich, and Bićanić - championed a distinct Central-Eastern European approach to reconstruction. They viewed the 'industrialisation of the countryside' as the most effective strategy for the socioeconomic rebuilding of Yugoslavia. Like his Transylvanian colleagues, the Yugoslav education expert Boris Furlan underscored the significance of democracy and freedom, thereby aligning Yugoslavia and the region with the Allied vision of a democratic, federative, and tolerant Europe. The Board's interactions with Jean Monnet, an architect of the European Union, could reveal its relevance in conceptualising the idea of a united Europe based on economic cooperation. This theme could be separately examined by paying closer attention to the Polish contributions to the CEEPB and evaluating them in relation to the history of European integration.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, the CEEPB's plans for post-war reconstruction offer a more intricate understanding of Yugoslav wartime history and the country's positioning in the post-war international system. Historically, the CEEPB's role has been largely absent from these narratives. Kosta Pavlowitch, in his studies of the Yugoslav émigré government's activities, briefly acknowledged the existence of the 'Yugoslav ministerial mission' in New York. Drawing on Bogdan Krizman's papers on the émigré government, he presented a detailed account of the political machinations, challenges, and

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<sup>18</sup> The full list of these organisations is available in the Secretary's Quarterly report. NYPL, CEEPB, b. 11, f. "Liquidation and Foreign Agents," Feliks Gross Quarterly Reports. These efforts were not always sufficient. The Polish information center and the JIC, under the direction of Gavrilović, were the CEEPB's biggest financial supporters. Gavrilović sent 150 dollars to Gross for the forwarding of Furlan's and Mirkovich's articles to the collaborating relief and reconstruction societies across America. NYPL, CEEPB, b. 7, f. "Yugoslavia," Gavrilović to Gross, 1942.

<sup>19</sup> Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II*, 1st ed., vol. 17, Stanford Studies on Central and Eastern Europe (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Feliks Gross, 'Peace Planning for Central and Eastern Europe', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 232, no. 1 (1944): 169–76.

disunity among the Yugoslav exiled government ministers in London, as well as the ramifications of their deteriorating relations with the British government. However, beyond a cursory mention, the contributions of Yugoslav delegates in New York remain largely unexplored in the accounts of the disintegrating political legitimacy of the Yugoslav government in exile.<sup>21</sup> The omission of the CEEPB from historical studies of Yugoslav wartime history could be attributed to prevailing trends in the historiography of socialist Yugoslavia and the location of the archives in New York. These studies often interpret the wartime period as a backdrop to the communist ascent to power in 1944/45, focusing on the émigré government's inability to offer a viable political alternative for reorganising the future Yugoslav state.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, historians of the Cold War period have delved into the late 1940s to understand the 'ambivalent' foreign policy orientation of socialist Yugoslavia as they sought to clarify the causes behind the 1948 Tito-Stalin split, which resulted in Yugoslavia's unique position as a socialist country outside the Eastern Bloc. Political perspectives dominate these histories of Yugoslavia's post-World War II reconstruction.<sup>23</sup> The common themes include the reputations of different political and military groups, debates about the future political organisation of the state, ethnic tensions, and the divergent opinions of various government ministers. For instance, one prominent aspect focuses on Tito's aspirations to create the *Balkan Federation*, bearing similarities to plans discussed by the émigré government in London following the signing of the Yugoslav-Greece agreement on 15 January 1942.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Pavlowitch, "Out of Context"; also in Dejan Djokić and James Ker-Lindsay, *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies* (London: Routledge, 2011), chapter "Yugoslavia in Exile".

<sup>22</sup> The location of the CEEPB documents in the New York Public Library contributed to the lack of research into this organisation.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Previšić, *The Tito-Stalin Split 70 Years After* (Zagreb: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, FF Press, 2020), chapter by Ivo Goldstein, "Tito-Stalin Split of 1948 as a Personal Conflict," and Petar Dragisic, "Walking a Tightrope: Tito's Regional Ambitions and the Cominform Resolution." Also see Natasa Miskovic, "The Pre-History of the Non-Aligned Movement: India's First Contacts with Communist Yugoslavia, 1948-1950", *India Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (2009): 185–200; Martin Previšić, *Breaking down Bipolarity: Yugoslavia's Foreign Relations during the Cold War*, *Rethinking the Cold War*; Volume 11 (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021).

<sup>24</sup> On the Yugoslav-Greek agreement in London, see Pavlowitch, "Yugoslav government in London", 99. The Balkan Union is the most researched attempt at Yugoslav regionalism as it impacted the country's reputation and arguments over the Yugoslav foreign policy in the wake of the Tito-Stalin split in 1948. Jeronim Perović, "The Tito-Stalin split: a reassessment in light of new evidence," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9, no. 2 (2007): 32-63; Julianne M Reitz, "Tito's Balkan Federation attempts: the immediate factor in the Soviet-Yugoslav split of

The CEEPB offers another perspective on these Yugoslav notions of 'regionalism,' particularly in the context of the Balkan Union - plans for Southern European and Central-Eastern European political and economic unity after the war.<sup>25</sup> The political ideal of the CEEPB's work was the subsequent formation of the Central-Eastern European (Con)Federation. This "progressive democratic federation would serve as a bridge between the Soviet Union and Western Europe," argued the CEEPB representatives.<sup>26</sup> This expression of political solidarity - which the CEEPB's secretary Gross considered an "ideal" rather than a working goal - represented a New York alternative to a more historically researched proposal for the formation of the *Balkan Union* by the members of the Yugoslav government and scholars united at the *Danubian Union Club* in London.<sup>27</sup>

While investigating the implications of these activities for a 'united Europe' is a valuable research avenue, this dissertation shifts focus to the socioeconomic aspects of Yugoslav international activities, influenced by the thematic linchpin of 'peasantism.' This change in perspective and emphasis moves away from the common scholarly focus on Yugoslav foreign policy, regional alliances, and the political power struggle, thereby uncovering the true legacy of the CEEPB - the comprehensive economic and social research that constituted the day-to-day activities of its members. The experts understood that "equalisation of living standards" and "economic cooperation must be the base for any future political union of Central-Eastern Europe."<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the statistical handbooks produced by the CEEPB served as vital blueprints for Yugoslav negotiations with the Americans, particularly regarding the Lend-Lease program (a result of the work of the Board of Economic Warfare) and the relief package of the UNRRA.<sup>29</sup>

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1948", Ball State University, (2003); Petar Dragisic "Walking a Tightrope: Tito's Regional Ambitions and the Cominform Resolution" in Martin Previšić, *The Tito-Stalin Split 70 Years After*.

<sup>25</sup> For the overview of various opinions on federative CE Europe discussed in the CEEPB see Feliks Gross, "Peace Planning for Central and Eastern Europe," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 232, no. 1 (1944): 171.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid and "Central and South-East European Union;" report by the *Danubian Club* in London, September 1943.

<sup>28</sup> Gross, "Peace Planning," 170.

<sup>29</sup> NYPL, Box 1, f. 3, and Box 13, "The Survey of Central and Eastern European Planning Board."

## 2.1. *The Yugoslav Émigré Government and the CEEPB*

The questions of Yugoslav international positioning vis-à-vis international institutions and socioeconomic cooperative activities furthered by this thesis, nonetheless, require a clarification of the Yugoslav government's role in this process. During the Second World War, the government's involvement in this process could be characterised as sporadic and reluctant, reflecting the disunity of the government portrayed by Pawlovitch in his narratives. Although free from any London directives, the Board's daily research and intellectual cooperation projects were subject to the financial support of the national émigré governments. Each national planning group, including the Yugoslav, pledged to contribute \$1000 a year for the smooth operation of the Board.<sup>30</sup> Given the chaotic months following the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941, this was a hefty financial commitment. In the days following the fascist takeover, the government council comprised of 17 ministers, including King Peter II, fled the country to avoid capture by the Axis forces. They initially sought refuge in Greece, but as the Axis powers expanded their control, the Yugoslav government-in-exile was forced to move further to Palestine and Egypt before relocating permanently to London.<sup>31</sup>

Slobodan Jovanović's cabinet, which succeeded General Simović as the Yugoslav Prime Minister from January 1942 to June 1943, financially supported its New York 'ministerial mission.' In a move to further bolster Yugoslavia's position with the Allies, on 11 February 1942, the Yugoslav government-in-exile in London established the national planning group known as the *Jugoslav Information Center* (JIC), along with its research branch, *The Office for Economic Affairs and Reconstruction*. This entity served as a focal point for academic rehabilitation and post-war planning work. Government ministers, led by the Minister of State and Reconstruction – Sava

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<sup>30</sup> With Poland, Yugoslavia most regularly contributed to the yearly membership fees and additional printing expenses. For instance, Stojan Gavrilović sent \$250 for the printing of the Antioch Institute for Central-Eastern Europe programs. NYPL, Box 2; fold. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Pawlovitch, 91-3.

Kosanovich, concentrated on “the collection of data on the current economic and social life in Yugoslavia” and the preparation of studies “of the economic development up until the time of the invasion in 1941.”<sup>32</sup>

From the spring of 1942 to the summer of 1943, the JIC published four volumes of research papers titled ‘Jugoslav Postwar Reconstruction Papers.’ The main Yugoslav contributors to the CEEPB – Nicholas Mirkovich, Rudolf Bićanić, Sava Kosanovich, and Boris Furlan – were also the primary authors of these academic papers, edited by Nicholas Mirkovich. Additionally, Yugoslav peasant internationalists, as experts in economics, sociology, health, and education, also “prepared reports for various agencies of the United States Government” and “participated in the Inter-Allied and regional reconstruction committees.”<sup>33</sup> The JIC thus acted as a sister organisation to the CEEPB, with its base at Fifth Avenue serving as a home to its Economic Committee.<sup>34</sup>

Though the government-in-exile established its New York branch as a ‘ministerial mission’ to secure political and material support from the Americans, its connection with the Board remained tenuous.<sup>35</sup> Despite this lack of enthusiasm and communication from London, the CEEPB’s secretariat regularly updated the government on the Board’s activities. Dr Stojan Gavrilović, the nominal director of the JIC, was particularly supportive of the Board’s work and attended the Educational Reconstruction Institute at New York University (NYU). CEEPB’s secretary, Feliks Gross, also consistently communicated the Board’s research and plans to the Minister of Social Politics and Reconstruction, Srdan Budisavljević, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Momčilo Ninčić. However, the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Slobodan Jovanović, was notably less responsive, failing to reply to any of the CEEPB’s correspondence personally.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> NYPL, CEEPB, Overview of the JIC’s purpose, activities and reason for closure, b.7, f. “Yugoslavia,” *Kosanovich to Gross*, September 1945.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> The meetings of the Board’s Economic Committee were held in the *Yugoslav House*, a gilded-age mansion, sold in 2017 for 50 million dollars. <https://ny.curbed.com/2017/4/16/15318530/upper-east-side-fifth-avenue-mansion-for-sale> [last accessed 10 November 2023].

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> NYPL, Box 7, Correspondence, f. “Yugoslavia.”

The lack of governmental interest in its New York office was likely a blessing in disguise for the Yugoslav representatives at the CEEP. They enjoyed the representative legitimacy of the Yugoslav government yet were unencumbered by the political decision-making deadlock in London, which stemmed from cabinet ministers' divergent loyalties to resistance movements.<sup>37</sup> The CEEP narrative aligns with the arguments of Pavlowitch and Krizman that the period from January 1942 to June 1943 represented the zenith of Yugoslav émigré activity. The uncertainty about the political makeup of the future state created an expansive room for visionary and progressive ideas about the future of the Yugoslav economy and its social and political structures. These ideas remained a staple in Yugoslav and European academic discussions throughout the 1950s and 1960s, contributing to an intellectual movement known as 'democratic socialism.'<sup>38</sup>

The situation underwent a significant change in the summer of 1943. August of that year marked a turning point in the shifting allegiances of peasant internationalists in London and New York, a topic explored in the subsequent two chapters. The Yugoslav involvement in the CEEP ended abruptly with Yugoslavia's withdrawal from the Board in August 1943 and the dissolution of the JIC on September 6, 1943. This dramatic shift followed Božidar Purić's appointment as the prime minister of the Yugoslav government-in-exile, succeeding Miloš Trifunović, who resigned after only 45 days due to ongoing disputes between Croatian and Serbian cabinet members over the actions of resistance movements within the country. Purić's cabinet, controversially for the Croats and the British, supported the Chetniks (a Serbian nationalist movement in Axis-occupied Yugoslavia) and retained their leader, Draža Mihailović, as the Minister of Defence.<sup>39</sup> Following the liquidation of the JIC, Stojan Gavrilović informed Feliks Gross that Konstantin Fotić, the Yugoslav ambassador to the USA, would assume the role of Yugoslav liaison for the CEEP in New York. Fotić, known for

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<sup>37</sup> For the primary source chronological overview of the émigré-government activities in London, see, Franko Mirošević, "Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu, 1941-1945, Dokumenti, Arhiv Jugoslavije, „Globus,“ Zagreb 1981.: Knjigu 1. Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu 1941-1943. Priredio Bogdan Krizman, 529 Str.; Knjigu 2. Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu 1943-1945. Priredio Branko Petranović, 447 Str.," *Časopis Za Suvremenu Povijest* 14, no. 2 (1982): 234–44.

<sup>38</sup> Isao Koshimura, "Analysis of the Socioeconomic Works of Rudolf Bičanić from the Perspective of Global History," *Zbornik Janković*, no. 5–6 (2021): 308.

<sup>39</sup> Chetniks collaborated with the Italians and the Germans and were therefore not viewed as an "Allied resistance movement." For more on the role of the Chetnik movement and Partisans, see Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford University Press, 2002).

his sympathies towards Mihailović, which brought him into conflict with Rudolf Bićanić and Croatian elements in the government, was officially “in charge of the information and propaganda activities in this country.”<sup>40</sup>

Although the Yugoslav withdrawal impacted its direct participation in the Board’s outreach activities post-August 1943, the research shaping Yugoslav approaches to post-war reconstruction, especially in the economic realm, secured the long-term legacy of the CEEPB. These efforts explored through the perspective of Rudolf Bićanić build a more comprehensive picture of the CEEPB’s significance for the socioeconomic reconstruction of Yugoslavia and the region post-1945, which began with the establishment of the Economic Committee in May 1942 in New York.

### 3. Economic Reconstruction

The Economic Committee of the Central and Eastern European Planning Board held its inaugural meeting on 28 May 1942 at the Yugoslav Government House on Fifth Avenue in New York. Including representatives from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Greece, the Committee discussed the region’s “common economic problems and outlined methods of dealing with these problems in a united manner to integrate Central-Eastern Europe into the world economy.”<sup>41</sup> In its first session in May 1942, the Committee established four specialised sub-committees, each focused on a critical sector in economic reconstruction: agriculture, finance and trade, industry, and relief.

Under the leadership of Chairman Prof Antonin Basch, economic experts, academics, and émigré government ministers delineated a dual approach to post-war reconstruction. Initially, they focused on assessing the countries’ immediate post-war relief needs, deliberating on acquiring and distributing essential relief supplies, such as food, medicine, and raw materials. They considered

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<sup>40</sup> NYPL, The CEEPB, b. 7, f. “Yugoslavia,” Gavrilović to Gross, September 1943.

<sup>41</sup> NYPL, Box 9, f. “Economic Committee and Sub-committees,” *Basch - The Opening speech*, May 1942.



this phase crucial for “putting the economy back to work.”<sup>42</sup> Subsequently, the Committee shifted its attention to long-term strategies, concentrating on comprehensive agricultural, social, and economic reforms, which they called “reconstruction in the proper sense” or “development.”<sup>43</sup> This reconstruction aspect gained prominence in the Committee’s research publications and became a focal point in their interactions with American policymakers and the public.<sup>44</sup> The culmination of these efforts was the establishment of the *Institute for Reconstruction of Central-Eastern Europe* at Antioch College, Ohio, in the winter of 1943, which promoted the peasant internationalists’ commitment to rurally-focused reconstruction.

The reconstruction plans of the CEEP’s Economic Committee catalysed collaboration beyond national, ethnic, and party lines, paving the way for innovative concepts for Central-Eastern Europe’s socioeconomic reforms. The Committee’s economic experts pinpointed ‘agricultural overpopulation’ as the principal factor behind the region’s economic “backwardness” or “retarded development.” They proposed bringing the industry to the countryside and integrating these regions into global finance and trade networks as a solution. These peasant internationalists communicated with the public that small-scale peasant landowners, operating within a free-market economy, would be pivotal to post-war economic rebuilding, rooting their modernisation approaches in rural localities.

Examining these strategies from a Yugoslav viewpoint sheds light on how the delegates recognised essential steps for revitalising the Yugoslav economy. They delineated a clear direction for Yugoslav economic policy, aiming to contribute to a developmental vision grounded in the principles of rural social justice. This perspective not only highlights the Yugoslav approach to reconstruction grounded in peasant realities of life but also underscores the broader commitment of the CEEP to address regional disparities and promote more equitable economic growth through domestic and international development policies.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Basch defined the long-term vision of the socioeconomic progress of the region in these terms. Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Mexican economists displayed a similar emphasis on a long-term approach to reconstruction, domestically and internationally. See, Thornton, *Revolution in Development*.

Nicholas Mirkovich, chair of the Agricultural Sub-committee, and Rudolf Bićanić, vice-governor of the Yugoslav National Bank working from London, were prominent figures in agriculture and economics. They identified 'agricultural overpopulation' as a fundamental issue plaguing the region's economies, echoing the academic work in London's Chatham House.<sup>45</sup> This challenge stemmed from a disproportionate relationship between the total population size and the agricultural sector's capacity to sustain it. The demographic shifts further aggravated these social pressures, specifically the rise in birth rates and the decline in mortality rates.<sup>46</sup> These demographic changes placed an increased burden on the agricultural sector's production capabilities, exacerbating the economic strain in the region.<sup>47</sup>

At the European Agricultural Conference in London in March 1942, Rudolf Bićanić highlighted agricultural overpopulation as a pressing issue aided by insights from his Polish colleagues. He asserted that one-third of all peasants constituted an excess in the working population. Bićanić estimated that withdrawing 17.5 million peasants from the agricultural sector would not impact its production output. He described rural overpopulation as a form of "hidden unemployment," which suppressed agricultural workers' wages, standard of living, and purchasing power. This, in turn, significantly impacted agricultural output due to limited land and resources.<sup>48</sup> For instance, a hundred hectares of land in South-Eastern Europe had to sustain 90-150 peasants, in stark contrast to 16 in the US and 20 in Argentina. The small average landholding size of less than 1.25 hectares prevented peasants from generating enough surplus to invest in intensifying agricultural methods.

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<sup>45</sup> Michele Alacevich, "Planning Peace: The European Roots of the Post-War Global Development Challenge", *Past & Present* 239, no. 1 (1 May 2018): 219–64.

<sup>46</sup> Created by an extension of the public health system in Yugoslavia overseen by Dr Andrija Štampar in Yugoslavia explored in the previous chapter.

<sup>47</sup> Bićanić, "Agricultural overpopulation," *The JIC papers*, vol. 1, 1942.

<sup>48</sup> He explained that the conditions in Yugoslavia converged with the conclusions of J. Poniatowski from Poland, who calculated that one-third of all agricultural population in Poland was a surplus population. Bićanić relied heavily on the sources, information, and case studies from Yugoslavia, relying on other experts' studies to draw more comprehensive conclusions for the region. His advice informed Mirkovich's outline of steps towards the economic reconstruction's short- and long-term goals and clarified the role of village and peasant communities in this process. Rudolf Bićanić, "Agricultural Overpopulation," in *JIC papers*, vol. 1 and *Sociologija i prostor : časopis za istraživanje prostornoga i sociokulturnog razvoja* 40, no. 3/4 (157/158) (2002): 253–76.

The cycle continues, argued Bićanić, “as a result of little surplus commodities, peasants do not have enough money to buy the consumer goods of industry, which reiterates the entire vicious cycle of low wages.”<sup>49</sup>

Bićanić and Nicholas Mirkovich emphasised the importance of land reform. They argued that private land ownership was essential to enhance peasants’ purchasing power and improve their economic status in the market.<sup>50</sup> In his research, Rudolf Bićanić addressed how nations like Yugoslavia could confront the challenge of agricultural overpopulation.<sup>51</sup> One solution Bićanić proposed was the reclamation of marshlands in Greece and Yugoslavia, a measure that could provide land to 1.1 million of the 8.7 million impoverished peasants. Another approach involved redistributing 10% of the landholdings larger than 50 hectares in Yugoslavia to a fraction of the landless peasant population.<sup>52</sup>

Rudolf Bićanić also explored the concept of internal colonisation as a potential solution to agricultural overpopulation. This approach involved the forced relocation of peasants from densely populated but less fertile areas, termed “passive parts of the country,” to the more fertile Eastern plains of Yugoslavia. While Bićanić acknowledged that such a measure, later implemented by communist authorities, could enhance living standards for some families, he also recognised the undesirable social implications of forced migration and colonisation.<sup>53</sup> Bićanić emphasised that merely reducing the population density on the land, whether through emigration or colonisation, was not an adequate solution due to its social impact.<sup>54</sup> He argued that increasing agricultural productivity must complement any land reform. Instead, the economists at the CEEPB concurred that advocating for peasant-focused methods tailored to the unique aspects of the rural

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> NYPL, Box 3, f: Antioch college, and Box 3: Mirkovich’s speech 11 March 1943. Jozo Tomasevich’s work dealt with various aspects of agricultural reform.

<sup>51</sup> He drew on his experiences in “Gospodarska sloga,” an organisation affiliated with the Croat Peasant Party in Yugoslavia that focused on agricultural, economic, social, and cultural matters.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> For more information on the agrarian colonisation, see Jozo Tomasevich, *Peasants, Politics, and Economic Change in Yugoslavia* (Stanford University Press, 1955). HR – HDA – 1005, Rudolf Bićanić’s Collection, *Correspondence*, 1942.

<sup>54</sup> Rudolf Bićanić, “Agricultural Overpopulation,” in JIC papers, vol. 1, delivered March 1942, London.

environment would be the most effective for achieving long-term development of the region, considering both economic efficiency and social welfare.

### 3.1. *Optimal Industrialisation of the Countryside*

Mirkovich and Bićanić proposed a comprehensive three-step approach for addressing the challenges of agricultural overpopulation, integrating both social and technical aspects of reconstruction. Their first aspect emphasised social reconstruction, or as Mirkovich termed it, “construction.” This phase involved redistributing large estates to those working the land, particularly small peasants, “who create a social and political environment of mutual understanding, respect and assistance.”<sup>55</sup>

The second aspect was technical, which was particularly interesting to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) directors at the meeting. This step included “the technical improvement in production and the primary stages of distribution,” addressing the lag in agricultural output. The experts suggested that boosting production outputs required the development of a knowledge base and the liberalisation of internal agricultural markets “to ensure with the price levels that Balkan peasants get a fair share of total income for his produce.” This would ensure fair pricing and income for Balkan peasants’ produce, akin to ending agricultural protectionism in major market centres like London, Rotterdam, Milan, or Chicago.<sup>56</sup> Finally, Mirkovich highlighted the need to adjust agricultural production units. This entailed aligning with international economic standards and legislation at the national level, which would enhance the competitiveness of Balkan peasants in the global market. This multi-faceted approach aimed to address the immediate and long-term challenges faced by the agricultural sector in Central-Eastern Europe and beyond.

Addressing a keen audience at Antioch College in Ohio, which included students, representatives from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and directors of the ILO, Mirkovich outlined

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<sup>55</sup> NYPL, Box 3, f: Antioch college, “Mirkovich’s speech,” 11 March 1943.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

a three-tiered, peasant-focused strategy for this integrated development of the region. He identified the critical steps of this strategy as (1) land reform, (2) mechanisation and intensification of agricultural production, and (3) expansion of the industrial sector.<sup>57</sup> Before his untimely death in 1944, Mirkovich served as the chief editor of the Yugoslav Economic Affairs and Reconstruction Papers. He consistently emphasised the importance of an open market-driven economy, supplemented by state oversight in socioeconomic reforms and social security measures for the rural population as fundamental for the region's economic reconstruction, including Yugoslavia.

After the land reform, discussed by Bićanić and Mirkovich, mechanisation and rationalisation of agriculture were the gravest challenges facing Central-Eastern Europe. However, when tackling these challenges, they argued that the goal of mechanisation and rationalisation should be accompanied by measures of optimal rather than rapid industrialisation to absorb the excess peasant population. These sustainable economic reforms, based on the appreciation of the social impact on peasant communities and long-term economic horizon, went against the grain of the established neoclassical economics applied in the West to promote rapid industrialisation.

Bićanić, whose academic paper was presented in London and garnered attention from European and American economists, contended that intensification of production through the mechanisation of agriculture was a challenging solution for Yugoslavia and Central-Eastern Europe. Instead, a crop replacement scheme should precede these efforts.<sup>58</sup> As a first step, crops that demand more human labour must be introduced, decreasing cereal production and increasing poultry, dairy and livestock production. "The problem of intensification of agriculture and improvement of the diet must go hand in hand", as it did in England and Scandinavia between 1873 and 1895, clarified Bićanić.<sup>59</sup> Once the substitute of crops is completed, collectivisation through cooperative movements and societies could "give better livelihoods from the land to a greater number of people."<sup>60</sup> These "rural communes or cooperatives" in Yugoslavia acted as not only administrative

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<sup>57</sup> NYPL, Box 3, f: Antioch college, "Mirkovich's speech," 11 March 1943

<sup>58</sup> For the reception of his paper, consult HR – HDA – 1005, Rudolf Bićanić's Collection, *Correspondence*, 1942.

<sup>59</sup> Rudolf Bićanić, "Agricultural Overpopulation," in JIC papers, vol. 1, delivered March 1942, London.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

units but also economic units that resulted in better exploitation of common land in the villages.”<sup>61</sup> This approach highlighted a gradual, structured process for modernising agriculture while considering the socioeconomic realities of the region.

Bićanić perceived rapid urbanisation as an unfavourable solution, citing the social and hygienic issues it had caused in 19th-century Western Europe.<sup>62</sup> Instead of trying to “catch up with the West,” Bićanić suggested that the region adopted a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century approach of a “gradual urbanisation model” based on new “urban-rural planning developments” that aimed to integrate village and urban life in a continuous supporting social, administrative, economic, and cultural network.<sup>63</sup>

Rapid industrialisation, mirroring the 19th-century Western model, was also deemed unrealistic for Yugoslavia due to the consequent need for a proportional increase in trade and transport workers. This would require a tripling of the industrial workforce in countries like Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania, and Bulgaria and a doubling in Greece, a monumental task requiring capital and technical equipment absent from the region, argued Bićanić. Although complex, this strategy offered a dual solution: addressing agricultural overpopulation’s employment challenges and stimulating industrial capital markets for reinvestment within the country. However, the need for exports to facilitate reinvestments presented another hurdle, as competing in the global market would be difficult for a developing industrial economy as “the limit of export of industrial goods would soon be reached.” The established approaches to reconstruction dictated by economic development theory outlined by the Western economic superpowers were thus unsuitable for the “backward” and “peasant” dominated region of Central-Eastern Europe. Bićanić estimated that if these “industrialised Western” methods were applied to the Yugoslav economy, “the effect of changes on Central-Eastern Europe would take 50-100 years to complete.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Bićanić developed his remarks on the cooperative movements in Bićanić, “Cooperatives in Yugoslavia,” JIC papers, vol 4.

<sup>62</sup> For the working standards and legislation scholarship, see Gerry Rodgers and International Labour Organization, *The International Labour Organization and the Quest for Social Justice, 1919-2009* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2009).

<sup>63</sup> Rudolf Bićanić, “Agricultural Overpopulation.”

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Instead, Bićanić firmly believed that a combination of targeted social and economic reforms, alongside the development of integrated industries in both rural and urban areas, was crucial for enhancing the internal market and boosting the purchasing power of Yugoslavia's peasants. He advocated a novel approach: "bringing industry to the village." This strategy, he argued, was feasible in an era marked by electrification and motorisation. According to Bićanić, "Planned and directed investment would create new industries employing more labour." He emphasised the importance of stimulating village industries, promoting complementary occupations, and implementing public works projects as immediate and effective measures for supporting the peasantry. Furthermore, Mirkovich and Bićanić saw significant value in bolstering the work of existing agricultural cooperatives in Yugoslavia. They believed these cooperatives were crucial for the government to stimulate future growth. As Mirkovich argued, these societies could address the challenges faced by small farmers in production while allowing them to retain their "social position of a free toiler maintaining social and economic benefits of individual control over the land," argued Mirkovich.<sup>65</sup>

In echoing Bićanić's findings, Nicholas Mirkovich underlined the importance of intensifying agricultural production as a crucial aspect of the region's long-term reconstruction. Speaking to the audiences at Antioch College in 1943, he advocated for a holistic approach that combined agricultural enhancement with social measures to uplift living standards, focusing on rural social justice. Mirkovich proposed that expanding the industrial sector, based on the region's natural resources like coal, copper, iron, zinc, lead, timber, and hydroelectric power — resources hitherto underutilised for rural benefit — should be the final phase of these agricultural reforms.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> NYPL, Mirkovich, "Elements of Reconstruction in Central-Eastern Europe," Antioch College Closing Speech, 11 March 1943, the JIC papers, volume 3.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3.2. *The International Perspective*

The Economic Committee's work revolved around devising practical strategies for the reconstruction and long-term development of Central-Eastern Europe, striving to go beyond theoretical discussions of economic reconstruction by including practical recommendations on applying these ideas in the regional and national contexts. A pivotal moment to promote their work came at the *European Agricultural Conference* in London on 13 March 1942. Bićanić addressed a significant challenge: "The agricultural overpopulation impedes economic development and places substantial pressure on Eastern Europe's economy." He advocated for customised solutions for each country, emphasising the need for state-supervised, coordinated planning within a broader international economic framework."<sup>67</sup> Alongside the British public and economic experts, the Board also targeted the USA, aiming to secure foreign investment crucial for reconstruction through the Antioch College Institute and their collaboration with the Board of Economic Warfare.

Functioning as a conduit for internationalist cooperation transcending party, ethnic, and national boundaries, the CEEPB also sought to initiate discussions on post-war financial stabilisation and resource redistribution that would dominate the Bretton-Woods meetings in 1944.<sup>68</sup> The Board served as a vital platform for blending and promoting Yugoslav and Central-Eastern European rural-centric reconstruction approaches through peasant international cooperation, embedding them in the context of international economic recovery.

Stephen de Ropp, chairman of the Polish planning group and a member of the Economic Committee, echoed the Board's long-term vision and commitment to economic equality. "To

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, *The European Agricultural Conference* of a full title, "European Agriculture: Scientific Problems in Post-War Reconstruction," was arranged by the *Division for the Social and International Relations of Science* as a matter arising out of the recent conference on *Science and World Order*. The agricultural conference was held in the rooms of the Royal Society, Burlington House in London. Sir John Russell chaired a group of British and foreign experts who discussed the immediate technical steps necessary for reconstruction, settlement, marketing and prices, farm and factory, nutrition, the cooperative system, land reforms, peasant prosperity, excess population, peasant education, the improvement of peasant farming, livestock problems, artificial insemination, milk production, market gardening, and the relations of European agriculture to world conditions.

<sup>68</sup> Rudolf Bićanić, "Agricultural Overpopulation."



ensure the quality of opportunity in the depressed areas”, industrialised areas of Europe will have to sacrifice “some of their own privileged conditions.” “The principles guiding price levels, credits and the whole system of production should be closely analysed in this respect,” argued de Ropp.<sup>69</sup> De Ropp further noted a global problem of discrepancy in the per capita income between industrial and agricultural populations. In some areas of the world, like in Eastern Europe, “the factory methods of agricultural production render precarious the existence of a farmer of a peasant type.” As a result of the differential price levels of agricultural produce, the “industrial worker in Eastern Europe per hour of labour gets a much higher share of goods for consumption than the agricultural worker.” To bridge the income gap between agricultural and industrial workers, and consequently between Eastern and Western Europe, de Ropp identified three key areas where long-term foreign assistance was necessary: (a) credits, (b) raw materials, and (c) mass production.<sup>70</sup>

The cooperation of national, regional, and international technical expertise facilitated by the Board was essential in reconstructing the economies following the war. Still, the members of the Economic Committee were aware that the success of the Board's post-war economic planning largely hinged on American financial support. They hoped to garner this support using public outreach activities and linking socioeconomic reconstruction with post-war security.

Educating American students and the public about the region’s need for financial and material assistance was crucial in shaping American public opinion to support government-financed economic and social recovery in Europe. This aspect of the Board’s efforts, as detailed in the next part of the chapter, saw some success despite the difficulties in measuring its immediate impact on American post-WWII financing to Europe. However, agricultural and industrial experts within the CEEPB recognised that achieving their goal of reducing living standard disparities between Eastern and Western Europe depended on foreign credit and donations of raw materials and mass-production items. They were determined to influence the realisation of this process rather than

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<sup>69</sup> Box 9, f. “Economic Committee and Sub-committees,” *Stephen de Ropp’s Speech*, May 1942.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

viewing financial assistance as something that happens to them.<sup>71</sup> To garner support from the American government, peasant internationalists linked economic reconstruction with European security and the broader goal of sustaining world peace, a connection further explored in the next part of the chapter.

For instance, speaking in front of the Economic Committee in May 1942, which included both the American government and the ILO representatives, Mirovich argued that the Committee's collaboration should focus on "the common man" or a peasant. Mirkovich affirmed the universality of the region's challenges because "the majority of the world lives in rural areas, so our thoughts must go to the rural population." As the common welfare of the world depended on the peasants' economic, social, and living standards, "the welfare of that population must become the focal point of the planning and what reconstruction in the field of agriculture in a very broad sense means."<sup>72</sup> To engage the American members of the Committee, Mirkovich echoed the words of the American Vice-President Henry A. Wallace. He referenced Wallace's statement from April 1942, which underscored that "peace must mean a standard of living for the common man. Perhaps it will be America's opportunity to support the freedom and duties by which the common man must live."<sup>73</sup>

Despite the echo of their arguments, these economic experts, or "silent people" as Mirkovich referred to them, never linked their ideas with a particular political ideology, although their reconstruction approaches leaned towards the left of the political spectrum. They advocated for progressive concepts such as state-provided social securities within an open economy framework that encouraged competition and private property, fostering capital accumulation in the region. This approach resonated with Keynesian economics, which argued for a balance between state-directed social and economic planning and the liberalisation of trade and global market growth.<sup>74</sup> Peasant internationalists' integration of social and economic aspects of reconstruction based on

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<sup>71</sup> As was the case with Austria and Greece at the end of WWI under the League of Nations financial stabilisation loans discussed in Martin, *The Meddlers*.

<sup>72</sup> NYPL, Box 9, f. "Economic Committee and Sub-committees," *Mirkovich's speech*, May 1942.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> John Maynard Keynes, "National Self-Sufficiency", *Studies* 22, no. 86 (1933): 177–93; Keynes; Plata-Stenger, *Social Reform, Modernization and Technical Diplomacy*, vol. 8, chap. "Introduction."

social justice aligned with the principles of the welfare state, becoming more popular in Britain throughout the war. This approach was reflected in the ILO 1919 constitution and the British government's Beveridge Report of 1942, both advocating for robust welfare instruments. However, peasant internationalists' view of the political economy could also be interpreted as an example of how economic planning ideas influenced neoclassical liberal economics, which shaped the post-WWII international economy, as argued by Bockman echoing Zahra's conclusions on the debates over interwar globalisation.<sup>75</sup>

Peasant internationalists' focus on the rural aspect of social justice suggested a need for a flexible and pragmatic approach to long-term reconstruction or development. This emphasis highlighted the differing approaches to reconstruction between industrial and agricultural societies. The latter part of the chapter explores how these perspectives impacted the survival of the ILO and shaped international development programs increasingly led by technical experts. However, realising this vision of rural social justice required not only economic restructuring but also social reforms. Key to these efforts, as the peasant internationalists at the CEEPB advocated, was an education system grounded in democratic and egalitarian principles.<sup>76</sup>

#### 4. Educational Reconstruction

Just a month after the first meeting of the Economic Committee, the CEEPB organised the preliminary meeting of the Education Committee in June 1942, which was dedicated to discussing the social aspects of reconstruction. Collaborating with the *US Committee for Educational*

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<sup>75</sup> Johanna Bockman, *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism* (Stanford University Press, 2011); Tara Zahra, *Against the World: Anti-Globalism and Mass Politics between the World Wars* (WW Norton & Company, 2023).

<sup>76</sup> From the perspective of the Cold War, Bićanić's thought could be classified as a peasant-focused iteration of social humanism. This ideology, reminiscent of a later intellectual movement in Cold War Eastern Europe, supported economic openness resting on faith in the international economic system of free markets. Isao Koshimura refers to it as 'democratic socialism.' Koshimura, "Analysis of the Socioeconomic Works of Rudolf Bićanić from the Perspective of Global History."

*Reconstruction* at NYU, led by Professor Reinhold Schairer, the peasant internationalists emphasised the importance of immediate 'material reconstruction' of education. This concept prioritised the rebuilding of learning facilities and the provision of textbooks and educational resources, with guidance from regional experts. Feliks Gross, the CEEPB's Secretary, argued that in Central-Eastern Europe, this 'material reconstruction' should take precedence over the American focus on 'spiritual reconstruction' of educational institutions prioritised for Germany as a response to the Nazi overhaul of the German education, leisure, and family life.<sup>77</sup> However, he also proposed that material reconstruction should foster democratic values and educational opportunities, aligning with the American objective of democratising Allied-occupied territories after WWII.<sup>78</sup>

Despite being a partner in the Allied efforts to reconstruct European educational systems after World War II, the CEEPB's role remains underrepresented in these historical narratives. Historians, including Sam Lebovic and Charles Dorn, have delved into American and international initiatives for post-war educational reconstruction and relief in Europe, parallel to the Board's work. Just like the Board, the efforts of the West Coast prepared the ground for establishing the international educational organisation after the war's end. For instance, Dorn emphasises the significance of Grayson N. Kefauver's Stanford group, which worked alongside the CEEPB and the NYU Committees to establish the *International Educational Office* that would coordinate educational relief to Europe.<sup>79</sup>

Together, these groups of academics met at Harpers Ferry in Virginia in September 1943, outlining the functions of a new international education organisation. These included collecting data on educational systems in war-affected nations, rebuilding cultural exchange programs and curricula, and eradicating illiteracy. Alongside the more researched Conference of the Allied Ministers on

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<sup>77</sup> Feliks Gross, "Educational Reconstruction in Europe," *American Sociological Review* 8, no. 5 (1943): 543–6.

<sup>78</sup> Sam Lebovic, "From War Junk to Educational Exchange: The World War II Origins of the Fulbright Program and the Foundations of American Cultural Globalism, 1945–1950," *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 2 (2013): 280–312; Sam Lebovic, *A Righteous Smokescreen: Postwar America and the Politics of Cultural Globalization* (University of Chicago Press, 2022).

<sup>79</sup> Charles Dorn, "'The World's Schoolmaster': Educational Reconstruction, Grayson Kefauver, and the Founding of UNESCO, 1942–46," *History of Education* 35, no. 3 (2006): 297–320.

Education (CAME), these efforts laid the groundwork for UNESCO's creation.<sup>80</sup> However, American hesitancy to commit to post-war educational relief, coupled with Europe's shifting geopolitical landscape in 1944, narrowed UNESCO's focus to educational exchanges and promoting international collaboration in education, science, and culture.<sup>81</sup>

The CEEPB's impact on education after the war was also evident in the Fulbright Program's establishment, an integral part of the American education approach of "nationalist globalism."<sup>82</sup> Sam Lebovic characterises this initiative as a response to "material and ideological residues of the conflict with fascism." The CEEPB partnership played a role in reinforcing the "presumed US hegemony" and structured "the ideology of American cultural expansion after 1945" through regular meetings, conferences and institutes on educational reconstruction.<sup>83</sup>

#### *4.1. Education in Central-Eastern Europe*

By July 1942, the educational landscape in CE Europe was in chaos. In Czechoslovakia, most schools had been closed for three years since the onset of Nazi occupation, with only a few institutions in the Sudetenland's industrial regions remaining open for Nazi officials' children. The Nazi regime also shut down libraries and decimated many of the 'undesirable' academic collections in Czechoslovakia and Poland. In Poland, the devastation was even more severe, with most university buildings, institutes, and laboratories reduced to ruins.<sup>84</sup>

Professor Boris Furlan, an educational expert from Ljubljana University in the former Yugoslavia, led the Education Committee and was a critical liaison between the CEEPB and the NYU-based US Committee on Educational Reconstruction. Furlan noted that educational conditions in Yugoslavia varied depending on whether regions were annexed by Axis powers or controlled through puppet

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<sup>80</sup> Dorn, "The World Schoolmaster," 307-11.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 316.

<sup>82</sup> Lebovic, "From War Junk to Educational Exchange," 283.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>84</sup> NYPL, Box. 5, f. "Institute for Educational Reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe," *Gross' speech and Hanc's speech*. July 1942.

governments. In annexed areas, the Yugoslav education system was dismantled and replaced with Italian or German systems. Meanwhile, in areas under indirect control, the curriculum in local languages was reshaped to propagate “Nazi ideology.”<sup>85</sup> According to Feliks Gross, the extent of occupation and the penetration of Nazi ideology influenced the dual priorities of ‘material’ and ‘spiritual’ reconstruction in the educational sector.

The NYU *School of Education*, headed by Professor George Payne, was the leading partner of the CEEPB’s social reconstruction initiatives. NYU also hosted the *US Committee on Educational Reconstruction*, a non-governmental research body led by Professor Reinhold Schairer, a staunch supporter of the CEEPB. It was the Board’s Education Committee that first proposed an official collaboration with the US Committee and Professor Schairer, as documented in his official report to the US State Department. Over the following years, both organisations leveraged each other’s technical expertise in education to further the goals of setting foundations for educational reconstruction based on equality of opportunities and democratic values.<sup>86</sup>

The inaugural meeting between the Board and NYU in July 1942 formalised their collaboration, addressing common challenges and starting to formulate future policies and relief plans. “The Central and Eastern European nations would collect all available material and reports and thorough knowledge of the [educational] situation so that it may be submitted to the universities and colleges in lectures, special meetings, and seminars.” NYU would reciprocally “do all in their power to make such facts known to its students and staff of all other institutions of higher learning in America.” Dean Payne’s resolution, setting the direction for the US Committee’s collaboration with the Board, echoed Boris Furlan’s vision “that the commissions should be American led with the advisors from other countries.”<sup>87</sup> Following the first meeting, the experts decided to form a special *Joint Commission* where American academics and representatives from the four CE European countries worked together to devise practical solutions for educational reconstruction.

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<sup>85</sup> NYPL, Box. 5, f. “Institute for Educational Reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe,” *Furlan’s speech*, July 1942.

<sup>86</sup> NYPL, Box. 5, f. “Institute for Educational Reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe,” *US Committee on Educational Reconstruction report*, April 1942.

<sup>87</sup> NYPL, Box. 5, f. “Institute for Educational Reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe,” *Furlan’s speech*, July 1942.

The Yugoslav delegation used various strategies to persuade the Americans of the urgency of 'material' reconstruction of places and materials for learning. Emphasising values of "respect," "tolerance," and "educational equality of opportunity," the Yugoslav experts underscored the region's commitment to democratic principles and resistance against fascism during the war, placing Yugoslavia within the democracy-loving camp of nations. The Yugoslav report to the joint Central-Eastern Europe-US Commission highlighted achievements in literacy, religious tolerance, and cultural unity among Slovenes, Serbs, and Croats, reflecting ideals of "equality," "freedom," and "brotherhood."

For instance, in discussions with the US Committee, Boris Furlan stressed the martyrdom and resistance of the region's youth and teachers, aligning their struggles with the broader Allied fight against Axis powers. He described the "system of spiritual oppression" in Yugoslavia, varying by region. The Nazis eliminated the use of the native language in Slovenia, whilst the Italians were Italianising the education system. In those areas controlled by the "domestic traitors," although in their native tongue, the fascist ideology infiltrated "into the minds and souls of our schoolboys and girls," explained Furlan.<sup>88</sup> Despite these challenges, there were acts of defiance, like Croatian high school students refusing Italian certificates: "an act of conscious heroism and patriotism severely punished by the occupational authorities."<sup>89</sup> Prof Louis Adamic, a prominent Yugoslav writer and journalist working from the USA, reported a massacre in Kragujevac, Serbia, where around 4,000-5,000 residents, including teachers and students, were killed for their anti-Nazi resistance.<sup>90</sup>

Judging from Prof Schairer's reaction to Furlan's address, the tactics paid off. He highlighted the deep-seated nature of American 'national globalism' and its cultural diplomacy in the fight against fascism. He acknowledged the American youth's limited awareness of CE European teachers' and students' resistance. Foregrounding the importance of understanding the sacrifices made by these

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<sup>88</sup> NYPL, Box. 5, f. "Institute for Educational Reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe," *Furlan's report on Yugoslavia*, July 1942.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, quoting Louis Adamic's report.

scholars, Schairer declared, "All courageous people should also know that their fight is also our fight."<sup>91</sup> This narrative of sacrifice and resistance linked Central-Eastern Europe's education system to the Allied campaign against Axis aggression. It marked an initial step towards reorienting the region's cultural values towards democracy and equal opportunity in education. This strategy of the Board was a deliberate effort to show American audiences that the resistance of students and teachers was crucial in the battle for freedom and essential for peacebuilding in Europe.

In addition to the martyrdom narrative, education experts sought to demonstrate to Americans the deep-rooted democratic tendencies in the Yugoslav, Greek, Polish, and Czechoslovak education systems.<sup>92</sup> Paulina Albala, a prominent Serbian feminist and literature professor from Belgrade, connected the concepts of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" to Enlightenment principles and the "whole modern history of the Yugoslav peoples – Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes." She argued that every aspect of Yugoslav national life – political, religious, economic, social, cultural – "demonstrate convincingly our efforts and strivings to apply, execute, and convert into living forces the democratic principles."<sup>93</sup>

Albala illustrated how the ideals of freedom and rural social justice profoundly influenced Yugoslavia's national life, shaping its cultural and educational frameworks. She traced these principles to the sixteenth century, placing their roots in peasant and rural communities, citing "the struggle of the Serbian part of the Yugoslav people against the external enemies" and the Croat peasant resistance of Matija Gubec. Gubec "in 1573 stirred his fellow Croat and Slovene peasants against their oppressive feudal regime," representing the dedication to freedom and rural social justice. She further noted the historical focus of Yugoslav education on "liberating the national mind from darkness and spreading the welfare of education amongst the masses of the people."

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<sup>91</sup> NYPL, Box. 5, f. "Institute for Educational Reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe," *Schairer's speech*, July 1942.

<sup>92</sup> Other members of the CEEPB also contributed to this effort: Vojta Benes, "A proposal for the reconstruction of the educational system in Post-war Central and Eastern Europe (New Europe, 1943); Jan Kozak, "Democratic ideas in post-war education in Central and Eastern Europe (New Europe, 1943); Oskar Halecki, "Intellectual cooperation in the post-war world," (New Europe, 1943); Feliks Gross, "Reconstruction of education in Europe", *American Sociological Review* (1943).

<sup>93</sup> NYPL, Box. 13, f. "Reports and Documentation", Pauline Albala's *Democratic trends in Yugoslav Education Report*, 1942.



Finally, Albala detailed the establishment of Serbian schools, the advent of the printing press in Montenegro, and the creation of the “Academia Operosorum” in Slovenia, an early effort towards educational democratisation.<sup>94</sup>

In these efforts, Alabala noted tolerance and human dignity as core principles of Yugoslav education, alongside rural social justice and democracy. In her report to the Joint Commission, she assessed Dositey Obradović’s advocacy for broad religious tolerance and his push for using the vernacular in literature, enabling “the common men, the peasants and shepherds, to learn to read as quickly as possible.” Albala explained the importance of the language reform of Vuk Karadžić “for creating the simplest and purest type of orthography”, as well as Ljudevit Gaj in the Croatian lands, “who made it possible for everyone to become literate in a matter of days.” Valentin Vodnik and Anton Martin Slomšek in Slovenia propagated the national revival of the Slovene people and the value of human dignity, one of the central premises of the concept of social justice.<sup>95</sup> The CEEP’s Education Committee’s documentation, including Albala’s report, underscored the link between resource distribution and unequal access to educational resources that the reconstruction aimed to address.

After demonstrating the alignment with the ideas of equity and democratic values in education, the debates in the Joint Commission moved towards the practical matters of methods and organisation of educational efforts. In their discussions, peasant internationalists stressed the need for American leadership and financial support in educational reconstruction. They also emphasised the importance of tailoring these efforts to local conditions and needs, with national experts guiding and informing the process. Boris Furlan advocated for the CE European experts to play a consultative and planning role in rebuilding educational institutions and managing the distribution of resources like raw materials, food, and technical assistance.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> NYPL, Box. 13, f. “Education Committee,” Meeting Minutes, *Boris Furlan’s Speech*, June 1942.

At a Joint Commission meeting at NYU, Prof Reinhold Schairer concurred with Furlan's views, stating that European nations could only regain strength through "the strengthening of inner forces and resolves in these countries." The US Commission reiterated the CEEPB foundational principles that it is necessary "to establish economic and social conditions favourable to the functioning of the truly democratic system of education." Schairer advocated for America to take "a leading part in assisting to the full those war-stricken nations to rehabilitate themselves both economically and educationally in the five years following the war" and alluded to the need to educate the American public opinion about these efforts.<sup>97</sup> Proposing the creation of the Institute for Educational Reconstruction of Central-Eastern Europe, Schairer envisioned a "learning by doing" approach to studying world affairs, a departure from previous theoretical analyses of education systems. This proposal hinted at a new era of technical assistance and development programs following the war's end.<sup>98</sup>

While American scholars focused on revising educational curricula based on democratic principles, Boris Furlan from Yugoslavia proposed other more urgent areas for American assistance in the region. Furlan shifted the focus from theoretical discussions about textbooks to the "real problems" of Central-Eastern European education, specifically physical rebuilding and enhancing cultural relations. The first problem concerned "the restoration of things that have been destroyed," including libraries, universities, and laboratories. Second, "the establishment and expansion of cultural relations" between the USA and the region to maintain cultural ties between the countries. Furlan suggested creating an American Institute in Yugoslavia, modelled after existing Italian and French institutes, including a dedicated scholarly library. He also advocated for educational funds and exchange programs akin to the Fulbright Program established after the war.<sup>99</sup>

To the frustration of his colleagues, Furlan, as an academic, was more concerned with the institutions of higher learning, as opposed to the American preference for elementary education,

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<sup>97</sup> NYPL, Box. 13, f. "Education Committee," The US Commission on Educational Reconstruction, *Schairer's Report to the US Government*, July 1942.

<sup>98</sup> Plata-Stenger, *Social Reform, Modernization and Technical Diplomacy*, chapter 8.

<sup>99</sup> NYPL, Box. 5, f. "Institute for Educational Reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe," *Furlan's speech*, Combined meeting of the CEEPB and the US Commission on Educational Reconstruction, June 1943.

where the reconstruction did not involve exclusively knowledge production but also developing the “attitudes and habits” of the local population.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, Furlan still echoed the democratic principle of educational reconstruction work: “General peace must be based on general democratic education.” As a leader of the CEEPB’s delegation to the Joint Commission, Furlan understood that the immediate priorities lay in rebuilding rather than educational content creation, shaping the Board’s arguments on the importance of ‘material educational reconstruction,’ discussed by Board’s Secretary Feliks Gross. Amidst the escalating political struggle for Yugoslavia’s legitimacy between the National Liberation Council and the émigré government in London, Furlan’s prioritisation of tangible aid and cultural connections emerged as a pragmatic strategy. This approach emphasised establishing material and economic conditions conducive to recovery rather than delving into detailed curricular discussions, which, as the delegates realised, hinged on the post-war political equilibrium.

#### 4.2. *International Education Office*

In April 1943, the collaboration between Central-Eastern European and American educational experts in the Joint Commission culminated in the *Institute for Educational Reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe* at NYU. This form of public diplomacy initiative sought to establish unified standards and methods for Europe’s post-war educational rebuilding. The Institute gained significant traction, supported by US government figures, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and prominent educators, including Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt. Her involvement was notable, as she later became the first Chairperson of the *UN Commission on Human Rights* and contributed to the drafting of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

The Institute’s primary outcome was the *Democratic Charter of Education*, reflecting a peasant-centric, social justice-driven agenda for democratic education championed by Furlan and Albala. This Charter signifies a shared American and Central-Eastern European perspective on education,

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, *James Marshall’s Speech*, Combined meeting of the CEEPB and the US Commission on Educational Reconstruction, June 1943.

focused on learning and inquiry. It advocated for the freedom of teaching and studying, ensuring teachers' independence from dogmas and economic constraints and affirming students' rights to question and think independently. The document also promoted education as a vehicle for improving public health, speaking to the holistic view of socioeconomic reconstruction promoted by Dr Andrija Štampar in the previous chapter. The experts advocated incorporating nutrition into school programs and valued practical education, promoting vocational and technical training to prepare individuals for "active world citizenship."<sup>101</sup> Mrs Roosevelt underscored this ethos in her comments on the Institute's work: "Education shall be used to build world fellowship." In the same spirit, the experts at the Institute agreed that they would "fight for the world justice and human equality so that the dignity of the human being shall prevail."<sup>102</sup>

The Charter's final proclamations called for democratic and egalitarian education, ensuring "equal opportunity for development through education regardless of sex, birth, race, creed, income, or age."<sup>103</sup> The US Commission and the CEEPB spearheaded the proposal for an International Education Office (IEO), inspired by the example of the ILO, to implement these principles. Although this specific vision did not materialise as intended, Feliks Gross represented the CEEPB in efforts towards this goal throughout 1943, which shaped the Allied plans to establish UNESCO.<sup>104</sup> The Charter's ideals were later perpetuated through the 1946 Commission for International Educational Reconstruction and UNESCO's collaboration with UNRRA, providing educational relief to Europe, as envisaged by the CEEPB.<sup>105</sup>

The concept of social justice furthered by democratic education was at the forefront of the educational reconstruction priorities of the US Commission and the CEEPB. This approach was also a strategic way to highlight the need for American involvement in educational reconstruction

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> NYPL, Box. 5, f. "Institute for Educational Reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe," *The Charter of Democratic Education*.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, the First Principle.

<sup>104</sup> More on this see Dorn, and the inability of the US to commit to greater scope of power of UNESCO. NYPL, Box. 5, f. "NYU Correspondence," *Schairer to Feliks Gross and Gross to Furlan*, Report on the Committee Proceedings, January 1943 and May 1943.

<sup>105</sup> Harold E. Snyder, "The Commission for International Educational Reconstruction," *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors* 33, no. 2 (1947): 371–80.

beyond Europe. Feliks Gross emphasised the universality and importance of European culture to Western civilisation, stating that “If European culture falls, the entire Western civilisation will decline. The European culture is a pillar of the Western civilisation.”<sup>106</sup> Sava Kosanovich expressed a similar sentiment, noting Yugoslavia’s eagerness “and hope to share our problems with America,” as the educational challenges posed by the Axis forces were a global issue. For this reason, “the educational reconstruction is not only our problem but a problem of all humanity.”<sup>107</sup> Prof Alice Keillihier of NYU similarly interpreted the educational reconstruction of war-torn areas of Europe as “a first step towards a global reform of education that would ensure equal access to education opportunities.”<sup>108</sup> The Institute envisioned establishing Regional Educational Offices to foster the global implementation of the Charter’s principles, a task later undertaken by various UN-specialised agencies, including UNESCO and the WHO.

The Education Committee, collaborating with the US Committee at NYU, envisioned CE Europe as a “bridge of civilisations” connecting “the Western democracy and the Russians,” which hinged on American support for rebuilding institutions post-war. Agreeing with Nicholas Mirkovich, the Czech expert Jan Kozak asserted that “there is one common denominator for Central and Eastern Europe that is democracy. All these nations want to be a bridge between the East and the West and refuse to be used as a spearhead either way.”<sup>109</sup> International technical cooperation focused on concrete problems and specific goals positioned Central-Eastern Europe as a critical link between the East and the West. This peasant international cooperation through the CEEPB highlighted the importance of tailoring the American “national globalist” view of reconstruction to meet the needs of rural communities, addressing challenges like agricultural overpopulation, illiteracy, poor health, and educational resource scarcity.

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<sup>106</sup> NYPL, Box 3, f: “Antioch College,” *Institute for the Reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe*, Feliks Gross Speech, March 1943.

<sup>107</sup> NYPL, Box 3, f: “Antioch College,” *Institute for the Reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe*, Feliks Gross Speech, March 1943.

<sup>108</sup> NYPL, Box. 5, f. “Institute for Educational Reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe,” *Prof Keillihier speech*, first combined meeting of the CEEPB and the US Commission on Educational Reconstruction, July 1942.

<sup>109</sup> NYPL, Box. 5, f. “Institute for Educational Reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe,” *Jan Kozak’s speech*, July 1942.

## 5. The Significance of the CEEPB

Americans recognised that only through international institutions with a global reach could the rebuilding of education systems effectively harmonise national and local values with American post-war goals.<sup>110</sup> The CEEPB was instrumental in helping the US navigate a delicate balance between promoting democratisation and avoiding coercive tactics that would contradict these very principles. Technical cooperation presented a solution to this apparent contradiction. It facilitated the spread of American cultural values and bolstered efforts towards world peace while integrating national actors like CE experts into educational reconstruction. This approach reflected the American vision of European reconstruction after WWII, emphasising the principles of 'self-help' or 'self-reliance.' This concept, which later influenced debates at UNRRA and UN development agenda, did not imply that reconstruction was solely the responsibility of national governments.<sup>111</sup> On the contrary, American educational scholars saw the field as a vital arena for the US to lead in instilling democratic values and tolerance in Axis-occupied nations while allowing for significant local decision-making, as exemplified by the discussions between Furlan and Schairer in the Joint Commission.

This part of the chapter explains the CEEPB's connections and impact on the US approaches to postwar reconstruction and its significance in the context of international cooperation through the ILO. It will also assess the importance of the Board's research for Yugoslav reconstruction, highlighting its relevance for understanding the political and economic trajectory of the Yugoslav state and its role in the international system after the war.

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<sup>110</sup> Lebovic, "From War Junk to Educational Exchange."

<sup>111</sup> Reinisch, "Internationalism in Relief."

### 5.1. The Americans

Americans held the conviction that a democratic Europe after the war would enhance global security and solidify American global leadership, a sentiment pragmatically echoed by the CEEP. Sava Kosanovich, a leader of the Yugoslav delegation, depicted Yugoslavia as a valued member of the “United Nations,” an active contributor in implementing the social and economic ideals of the Atlantic Charter driven by the rural iteration of the ideals of social justice. The CEEP provided a platform for experts to champion rural social justice through peasant international cooperation, laying the groundwork for the region’s social and economic recovery. Peasant internationalists imagined the region as “a pillar of the Western civilisation, a protector of democratic values, and a key element of European security acting as a “bridge between the West and the Russians.”<sup>112</sup>

Additionally, the CEEP played a pivotal role in disseminating the principles of the *Democratic Charter of Education* to a broader American audience. Similar to the efforts of the *Institute for Reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe* at Antioch College, these initiatives aimed to enlighten the American public about the region’s socioeconomic challenges and characteristics, garnering support for American relief initiatives. For instance, Boris Furlan, as head of the Yugoslav delegation to the United Nations Information Centre, helped the US Educational Commission facilitate radio broadcasts across America to highlight the achievements of the Institute. In one such broadcast in March 1943, Sava Kosanovich, chair of the Yugoslav Planning Group, emphasised the significance of Central and Eastern Europe as a key factor in maintaining peace in Europe.<sup>113</sup>

The CEEP’s work reflected a belief among experts and political leaders that technical expert exchanges and international collaboration through functional agencies, like the ILO and the future IEO, would lay a more stable foundation for peace than other methods focused on hard security guarantees. The meetings between the American and CE European education experts were

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<sup>112</sup> NYPL, Box 3, f: “Antioch College,” Institute for the Reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe, *Feliks Gross’ speech*, March 1943.

<sup>113</sup> Sava Kosanovich, in JIC papers, vol. 3, 1 March 1943.

examples of technical conferencing as a method to promote coordination of relief material, logistics, staff, and implementation of policies that served as a base for political cooperation after the war.<sup>114</sup> To optimise the use of this relief, the CEEPB supplied the Americans with detailed information on the region's educational needs, such as textbooks, infrastructure rebuilding, equipment procurement, and training for teachers and staff.<sup>115</sup>

However, The American cooperation with the Board was not purely altruistic. The timing of the *Institute for the Educational Reconstruction* at NYU and meetings at Harpers Ferry in September 1943 following these efforts was significant. These initiatives were America's answer to the *Conference of the Allied Ministers of Education* (CAME), initiated in London in November 1942. Throughout 1943, CAME emerged as the primary European platform for discussing postwar educational and cultural reconstruction. Along with its eight founding members, including Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Greece (all part of the CEEPB), CAME's membership expanded to encompass Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, and South Africa. Regular meetings among these representatives also considered creating an educational organisation with broad authority to coordinate cultural exchanges and allocate educational relief funds. Concerned about losing sway in Europe's post-war cultural landscape, the US State Department sent delegates to the CAME meetings in May 1943.<sup>116</sup>

Just a month later, *the Institute of CE Educational Reconstruction at NYU* presented an alternative to the CAME efforts and expression of American "national globalism." It demonstrated the possibility of reconciling CE reconstruction goals with American "national globalism" or "missionary internationalism," defined by Reinisch, by demonstrating that national experts should guide the educational reconstruction efforts financed by the US.<sup>117</sup> Sam Lebovic describes "national globalism" as the American pursuit of free and equal exchanges of knowledge and mutual understanding, typical of functional liberal internationalism, yet intertwined with nationalistic

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<sup>114</sup> Reinisch, "Technical Conferences as a Technique of Internationalism," 9-10.

<sup>115</sup> Gross, "Educational Reconstruction in Europe."

<sup>116</sup> Dorn, "The World Schoolmaster," 307-9.

<sup>117</sup> Missionary internationalism is a term used by Reinisch in "Internationalism in Relief."



priorities and power asymmetries.<sup>118</sup> The CEEPB's story reveals that Central and Eastern Europeans recognised this power imbalance and leveraged it for much-needed aid. At the same time, Americans aimed to propagate their cultural values of democracy, tolerance, and justice in Europe.

The Board offers a window into studying the process through which peasant internationalists actively shaped this vision of American cultural diplomacy, including their advocacy for the international educational organisation. The Institute and the Democratic Charter of Education were based on an earlier collaboration between the Board and the State Department.<sup>119</sup> The Secretary of the CEEPB, Feliks Gross, shaped this process through his meetings with the *Commission for an International Education Office* (IEO) in January and May 1943 in Washington, DC.<sup>120</sup> The Commission agreed that this international education body would "promote a common understanding of social realities and the interdependence among the nations of the modern world." Among many other functions, the *International Education Organisation* and its *Office* would define the nature of education appropriate for democratic societies in the modern technological world; assist the reconstruction in the Axis-occupied countries; encourage and supervise exchanges between countries, students and teachers; disseminate information through publication and conferences: start a journal called *International Education Review* and define a minimum standard of education in all member nations.<sup>121</sup>

However, in 1944, the mood in Washington shifted following the US State Department's decision to withdraw support for establishing an international organisation dedicated to educational relief in Europe. This decision left both the US Committee on Educational Reconstruction and Professor Schairer deeply disappointed. This shift was due to complex factors, including the US involvement in the UNRRA, which already included educational relief in its mandate. Additionally, changing geopolitical dynamics following the American invasion of France and plans for military occupation

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<sup>118</sup> Lebovic, "From War Junk to Educational Exchange," 285 and 295.

<sup>119</sup> NYPL, Box. 5, f. "Institute for Educational Reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe," *The Joint Committee Practical Proposals*, June 1943.

<sup>120</sup> NYPL, Box. 5, f. "Institute for Educational Reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe," *The International Education Office Documents, Commission for an International Education Office, Confidential Proposal* (established by the joint NYU, CEEPB and the US Committee), *Gross to Furlan*, January 1943.

<sup>121</sup> NYPL, Box. 13, f. "Education Committee," *The Joint Commission Resolutions*, June 1943.

zones in Germany, where the US could directly influence education policy, played a role. As a result of the American reluctance to commit to financing educational relief through this body, the CAME delegates meeting at the 'Conference for the Establishment of United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation' in 1945 agreed that the UNESCO would serve 'only' as a clearinghouse of the reports, information (that the CEEPB provided), and public and private relief resources.<sup>122</sup> Reflecting its commitment to technical cooperation and functional internationalism, the CEEPB contributed to these developments, albeit indirectly.

However, the story of the CEEPB's impact in the field of education does not end with the establishment of UNESCO. Dissatisfied with the American approach to international education, the American Council of Education, comprising former members of the US Education Commissions, convened a series of conferences in 1946 to address educational rehabilitation in Europe. These meetings, attended by representatives from UNRRA, UNESCO, the US Departments of State and Education, and the American Association of University Professors, received detailed reports on the dire state of education in the affected regions, akin to the CEEPB's findings. Subsequently, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a CEEPB supporter and participant in the NYU Institute, extended an educational reconstruction grant to war-ravaged European nations.<sup>123</sup>

The representatives established the *Commission for International Educational Reconstruction*, appointing Harold E. Snyder, a former UNRRA training director, as secretary.<sup>124</sup> Shortly after, UNESCO involved Snyder in a July 1946 education reconstruction conference and sent him to Greece and "other European countries to observe educational needs and confer with the official there the appropriate forms of American assistance." Drawing on the CEEPB's wartime reports and studies, the Commission served as the central hub for educational assistance requests. UNRRA entrusted the Commission with managing a fund for sending educational supplies and materials to

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<sup>122</sup> Dorn, "The World Schoolmaster," 316.

<sup>123</sup> NYPL, Box. 4, f. "Carnegie Endowment Fund Correspondence." Snyder, "The Commission for International Educational Reconstruction," 371.

<sup>124</sup> Snyder, "The Commission for International Educational Reconstruction," 372.

CE Europe; an approach championed years earlier by Boris Furlan. These efforts included shipping scientific, technical, and professional books. Additionally, the *National Conference of Education Reconstruction*, organised by the Commission, advocated for the quick implementation of the *Bloom Bill* and the *Fulbright Act* to offer numerous fellowships and scholarships at American universities. It also recommended increasing American cultural attaches overseas. Thus, the Commission's work realised aspects of the *Democratic Charter of Education*, which echoed Furlan's emphasis on 'material reconstruction' and improved cultural ties with the USA.<sup>125</sup>

The Board of Economic Warfare was another significant American collaborator and contractor of the CEEPB's expertise, this time in the economic sphere. Nicholas Mirkovich, leading the Agricultural Subcommittee, conveyed strategies for economic reconstruction of Central-Eastern Europe in the report commissioned by the Board. Reflecting the approach of the 'optimal industrialisation of the countryside,' he advocated for initial land reforms granting small landowners full rights, complemented by state credits to foster cooperative movements, enhancing production to "bring new social possibilities and an abundance of cultural life" in the rural areas. The state would legally regulate agricultural production. Still, the economic system would be "based on the mixture of private and common property." Through this gradual process of agricultural modernisation, Mirkovich envisaged a peasant state dominated by "social justice, equality of rights and cooperative production" that would "replace bourgeoisie capitalist production, increasing the productivity and economic independence of the peasants."<sup>126</sup> Although the direct impact of this report on American economic policy in CE Europe is unclear, based on the scope of this study, the CEEPB's emphasis on peasant social justice garnered the sympathies of another organisation – the International Labour Organisation.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> NYPL, Box. 4, f. "Carnegie Endowment Fund Correspondence," *Mirkovich's Report Agriculture in South-Eastern Europe*.

## 5.2. The ILO

Yugoslav experts might have considered Americans their primary audience for public diplomacy projects. Yet the efforts of the JIC and CEEPB were also crucial for the evolution and survival of the ILO. Established in 1919 to foster social progress through dialogue and cooperation among governments, workers, and employers, the ILO sought to develop standard rules and policies underpinned by social justice, a principle shared with the CEEPB. Both organisations asserted that “universal and lasting peace can be established only if it was based on social justice.”<sup>127</sup> The ILO and CEEPB advocated that better organisation and financing of production and distribution would enhance living standards and social conditions. Since 1919, the ILO has set international standards to improve these conditions. Despite criticisms of being too Western-centric and industrial-focused, by the late 1930s and 1940s, the ILO had begun expanding its focus to rural worker issues, aiming to promote the ‘universality’ of the ideal of social justice, increasing their reach in Latin America and Asia.

The expansion of the League of Nations cooperative work on rural health and life standards, explored in the previous chapter, contributed to this shift. The ILO’s director, Howard Butler, influenced by the work of the Economic and Financial and Health Committees of the LON, began to envisage the ‘planning’ and the ILO’s role in the process as no longer a strategy for maximising profits and efficiency but as a guarantee for better wealth distribution and improved living standards worldwide.<sup>128</sup> The ‘optimal industrialisation of the countryside’ as a modernisation method supported the ILO’s work in achieving these social goals of planning in the rural sphere at a time when historians interpreted the organisation as an extension of American strategic interests.

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<sup>127</sup> The origins of the ILO lie further back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As industrialisation began to transform economies and societies, the social question dominated the political landscape of Western Europe (how do we deal with the social consequences of industrialisation?) International Labour Office, *Lasting Peace the I. L. O. Way; the Story of the International Labour Organisation*, 6–18; Rogers, “The ILO and the Quest for Social Justice, 1919-2009”, 15–18.

<sup>128</sup> Tara Zahra, *Against the World: Anti-Globalism and Mass Politics*, 230.

Scholars, including Sandrine Kott, Eddy Lee, Antony Alcock, and Veronique Plata-Stenger, regard the wartime period as one of the most challenging periods in the ILO's history.<sup>129</sup> The collaboration between the CEEPB, national planning bodies, and the ILO suggests the significant role of peasant internationalism in demonstrating the ILO's relevance when its ties with the USA were tenuous and its future within the UN system was uncertain. Professor Carter Goodrich, President of the ILO's governing body, and Lindsay Rogers, Director of Reconstruction at the ILO, actively participated in the CEEPB's Economic Committee's activities and research projects during 1942 and 1943. Notably, the collaboration with national and regional planning groups, like the CEEPB, highlighted the ILO's value at the UN-founding San Francisco conference, leading to its inclusion in the future international organisational landscape as a facilitator of technical assistance programs.

With the ILO's move to Montreal in 1940, the United States and its policy towards Latin America influenced the ILO's activities during World War II. As Sandrine Kott notes, this shift was a response to the Nazification of Europe, which alienated the ILO's primary supporters: liberal politicians and reformist trade unionists.<sup>130</sup> During the war, the ILO focused on establishing social security systems in Latin America through technical assistance programs centrally directed by the US Board of Economic Warfare. Kott and Plata-Stenger suggest that the ILO reoriented its mission of universal social justice to align with the US government's military strategy, particularly in improving social protection for workers in strategic material production, many of which were in Latin America. This chapter offers a more nuanced view of this reorientation.<sup>131</sup>

The ILO's strategic alliance with the USA began to wane after the 1942 *Inter-American Social Security Conference*, partly due to a change in leadership. Edward Phelan, an Irishman who took over as Director in February 1941, lacked the strong ties with the British administration and the

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<sup>129</sup> International Labour Office, *Lasting Peace the I.L.O. Way; the Story of the International Labour Organisation*, 6–18.

<sup>130</sup> Kott, "Fighting the War or Preparing for Peace?," 363. The trade unionists were all in hiding or imprisoned, while the ILO staff that remained in Europe experienced fear and scarcity.

<sup>131</sup> Kott, "Fighting the War or Preparing for Peace?"; Plata-Stenger, *Social Reform, Modernization and Technical Diplomacy*, vol. 8, chapter 8.

White House that his predecessor, John Winant, had established.<sup>132</sup> Despite the ILO's focus on social security in industries vital to the USA, Sandrine Kott observed that improving labour conditions remained a priority for governments in exile. Notably, representatives like Jan Stanczyk from Poland and Olav Hindahl from Norway, who participated in the 1941 New York ILO Conference, emphasised this aspect.<sup>133</sup> Adding a voice of peasant internationalists in the CEEPB to these narratives demonstrates ILO's commitment to social justice in Europe, including the rural areas.<sup>134</sup>

During the Economic Committee's inaugural meeting in May 1942, ILO directors acknowledged the CEEPB's contributions and the value of technical expertise in reconstruction. Prof Goodrich communicated his pride "in the joint statement of four nations at the ILO Conference in 1941." He informed the participants that "the stress on the governmental part is not at all accidental as there is a large place for such technical work that would be shared by the governments of respective countries,"<sup>135</sup> alluding to the pleas of the ILO to their member states in 1940 to furnish the organisation with the necessary data regarding the working and living conditions during their exile to Montreal.<sup>136</sup> Lindsay Rogers – a Director for Reconstruction- also expressed his pleasure in "hearing nothing about the frontiers or boundaries." He continued, "I think that it is very encouraging to know the proper orientation of your work and to perform a clear selection of problems to be settled. I am glad to see that you concentrate your efforts exclusively on social and economic matters. No better selection could be done."<sup>137</sup>

For the ILO, this selection was indeed very significant, reiterating the importance of technical expertise in the post-war reconstruction process, which the organisation could help to facilitate. The ILO officials also understood the importance of universalising the ideals of social justice, which

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<sup>132</sup> Kott, "Fighting the War or Preparing for Peace?", 363 and Stephen Hughes and Nigel Haworth, "A Shift in the Centre of Gravity. The ILO under Harold Butler and John G. Winant", *Essays on the International Labour Organization and Its Impact on the World during the Twentieth Century*, 2010.

<sup>133</sup> Kott, "Fighting the War or Preparing for Peace?", 365.

<sup>134</sup> Case, *Between States* is an exception.

<sup>135</sup> NYPL, Box 9, f: "Economic Committee and Sub-committees", *Carter Goodrich's speech*, May 1942.

<sup>136</sup> Twenty governments answered their pleas, with this number later climbing to 24.

<sup>137</sup> NYPL, Box 9, f. "Economic Committee and Sub-committees", *Lindsay Rogers' speech*, May 1942.

continued throughout the wartime years. CEEPB played a role in this process by relating social justice and educational opportunity to the global cause for peace. For instance, in his speech at Antioch College, Sava Kosanovich argued that “lasting peace cannot be achieved unless it is based on social justice, grounded in freedom, dignity, economic security and equal opportunity.”<sup>138</sup>

In 1944, the *Declaration of Philadelphia*, signed by ILO member states, reaffirmed the organisation’s universalist goal, emphasising the promotion of “dignity, freedom, economic security, and equal opportunities regardless of race, creed, or sex.”<sup>139</sup> It echoed the CEEPB’s view on the intertwined nature of social and economic aspects of reconstruction, grounded in social justice. The Declaration suggested that organisations focusing on social goals should influence international economic policy, establishing social objectives as the primary measure for economic policies.<sup>140</sup> The reaffirmed ILO principles aligned with the peasant internationalist approach to reconstruction inherent in the ‘optimal industrialisation of the countryside’ by advocating for simultaneous consideration of social and technical reconstruction aspects. Only by considering the social impact of policies, based on data and research, could governments and international organisations clarify the necessary socioeconomic policies.

The CEEPB and ILO concurred that universal social justice should be achieved by adapting these socioeconomic policies to national and regional contexts, a concept reflected in the Philadelphia Declaration. The first objective of the Declaration was particularly salient, which stated that policies should focus on achieving “full employment and raising living standards.”<sup>141</sup> This consideration aligned with Prof Basch’s stance, presented in May 1942, acknowledging the differing reconstruction needs of industrial and agricultural countries. Speaking before ILO directors, Basch highlighted the contrasting economic challenges of Eastern and Western Europe post-war: Western Europe’s focus on full employment versus Eastern Europe’s aim for a “decent

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<sup>138</sup> International Labour Office, *Lasting Peace the I. L. O. Way; the Story of the International Labour Organisation*, The Philadelphia Declaration, and NYPL, Kosanovich’s speech “Security of Central-Eastern Europe,” *Antioch College Closing Speech*, 11 March 1943.

<sup>139</sup> Alcock, *History of the International Labour Organisation*, 183.

<sup>140</sup> Rodgers, *The International Labour Organization and the Quest for Social Justice, 1919-2009*, 179-180.

<sup>141</sup> International Labour Office, *Lasting Peace the I. L. O. Way; the Story of the International Labour Organisation*, chapter “The Philadelphia Declaration.”

standard of life." He consequently called for "the structural changes in agriculture and the development of the industry." The aim was to "create an equilibrium in these four nations to start a dynamic development of the region."<sup>142</sup>

The *Declaration of Philadelphia* granted the ILO a mandate to address the social impact of international economic and social policies.<sup>143</sup> Due to the British lobbying, the UN-founding San Francisco Conference recognised the ILO "as one of the agencies that would be brought into the relationship with the organisation [UN]."<sup>144</sup> However, the ILO's role in this new context was ambiguous, especially as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the IMF received more definitive mandates for economic policy.

The CEEPB contributed to the longevity of the ILO by demonstrating that the organisation would be indispensable in supplying national economic and social data and sustaining networks and logistics of expertise. The ILO's Montreal Office was a hub for gathering valuable socioeconomic information from national governments and maintaining expert networks, including the CEEPB staff. During the war, the number of national ILO correspondents increased to 24, with Central-Eastern European countries playing the most dominant role in collaborating with the organisation, noted Kott.<sup>145</sup> The collaborations with Central-Eastern European delegates enabled the ILO to prove its indispensability in future UN development programs.<sup>146</sup> In a competitive structure of global governance, the organisation found its purpose by facilitating technical assistance, often relying upon Central-Eastern European experts, including Yugoslav economists and health and education specialists, as the leaders of these programs.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> NYPL, Box 9, f: "Economic Committee and Sub-committees", *Basch; the Opening Speech*, May 1942.

<sup>143</sup> Rodgers and International Labour Organization, *The International Labour Organization and the Quest for Social Justice, 1919-2009*, 29.

<sup>144</sup> Alcock, *History of the International Labour Organisation*, 194. See also the United Nations Conference on International Organisations, San Francisco, 1945, Documents, vol. 82: documents and Report of the Committee on Constitutional Questions.

<sup>145</sup> Kott, "Fighting the War or Preparing for Peace?" , 367.

<sup>146</sup> Rodgers and International Labour Organization, *The International Labour Organization and the Quest for Social Justice, 1919-2009*. Plata-Stenger, *Social Reform, Modernization and Technical Diplomacy*. Rogers and Plata refer to the 1950s as the 'golden years' of the ILO.

<sup>147</sup> A Kott, "Fighting the War or Preparing for Peace?" and Alcock, *History of the International Labour Organisation*, chap. "Technical Assistance, 1947-59."



The CEEPB's ties with American Planning Agencies and the ILO also enhanced the prominence of technical experts as facilitators of international socioeconomic policies. While peasant internationalists played a significant role in the shift from worker protection to a focus on wealth development and free trade, facilitated by international organisations through technical expertise exchange, they were not solely responsible for this process. This transition also marked a declining influence of labour trade movements, favouring a new cadre of economic experts. There was a consensus among these experts supporting the growing influence of the welfare state, the role of wealth distribution in development and free trade as a global promise for a better life.<sup>148</sup> The contributions of peasant internationalists are an essential piece of a puzzle to comprehend this shift in social priorities of governments and international organisations, as seen between the New York (1941) and Philadelphia Conferences (1944). In subsequent decades, organisations like the WHO, ILO, and UNESCO relied on Central and Eastern European expertise for transnational knowledge exchange, vocational training, health institution reconstruction, and addressing rural sanitation and educational challenges in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. The cooperative models developed by these experts, supported by peasant internationalism, served as templates for future modernisation and development projects during the Cold War, as detailed in the *Afterlives* chapter.

Despite their limited national policy impact due to weak ties with national émigré governments, the CEEPB and the JIC were influential in Yugoslavia's post-WWII reconstruction. They formed a foundational knowledge base for international and American relief and loan negotiations. Rudolf Bićanić, the central figure in the following chapter, leveraged his academic connections, economic research, and the policy recommendations of the CEEPB to address socioeconomic challenges in rural Yugoslavia during negotiations with the UNRRA in 1944-45 and the American financial institutions. Utilising his insights on the need for foreign credit and investments, he effectively advocated for a substantial aid and credit package for the newly established Yugoslav state under Marshall Broz Tito's leadership.

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<sup>148</sup> Kott, "Fighting the War or Preparing for Peace?" , 375.

## 6. Conclusions

The Central and Eastern European Planning Board illustrates the post-WWII rise in the prestige of technical experts initiated by the League of Nations in the 1920s. The actions of experts in governmental and non-governmental functions intensified during the war as the war's devastation popularised the interwar conviction that relief and reconstruction were primarily technical challenges that could be scientifically resolved. They supported the functionalist argument that "international agreement would radiate from these technical fields and ultimately make reconstruction possible."<sup>149</sup> The story of the CEEPB underscores the need for historians to consider the rural dimension of this 'functional internationalism,' which could be explored through the prism of peasant internationalism as a network of expertise and a rurally focused approach to modernisation they promoted.

The Board is also a crucial part of the story of how and why the experts promoted and institutionalised the ideas of the decentralised and rural path to modernisation as an alternative to both liberal and socialist paths to progress by prioritising the economic aspects of state sovereignty. The Board's experts recognised that the 'technical' or 'scientific' solutions to Europe's social and economic issues could be secured through diplomatic channels. These peasant internationalists were also aware that Yugoslavia was heavily reliant on the support of the Allies for its postwar recovery, which required cooperation between politicians and experts. They aimed for their technical cooperation to supplement or circumvent the political mechanisms lacking during wartime due to the stalemate faced by various émigré governments, including Yugoslavia's.<sup>150</sup> The CEEPB became an important forum and diplomatic medium through which social and technical experts from the region influenced the post-war reconstruction efforts to promote a more equitable and peasant-friendly path to modernisation.

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<sup>149</sup> Reinisch, "Technical Conferences as a Technique of Internationalism," 10.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

The Board's work thus becomes foundational in answering the question of how Yugoslavia and Central-Eastern European experts began to shape the blueprints for the 'New International Economic Order' before the onset of decolonisation. Mirkovich and Bićanić, working through the CEEPB, built on the Yugoslav arguments in the Health and Opium Committees to conceptualise a more comprehensive theory of socio-economic growth. Their 'optimal industrialisation of the countryside' emphasised the need for a decentralised path to development with a rural twist, combining liberal modernisation theory and socialist prioritisation of state planning. They indicated that without foreign credits, raw materials, and educational supplies, Yugoslavia and the region would struggle to establish the necessary conditions for modernisation that would rapidly improve peasant living standards. Bićanić and Mirkovich proposed that foreign investment, combined with cooperative resource management, timely mechanisation of agriculture, and state support for key industries, could significantly enhance the country's economic production.<sup>151</sup> This approach to modernisation, which I refer to as the 'optimal industrialisation of the countryside,' would integrate national economies, including those in Central and Eastern Europe, into the regional and global networks safeguarded by international laws to secure their competitiveness.

The Board viewed their work as salient in shaping a potential future federation of Central-Eastern European states, crucial for maintaining future peace in Europe by acting as a cultural bridge between East and West. A democratic education system with cultural ties to the USA underpinned this vision. Experts envisioned establishing democratic-based education systems. But, as argued by Boris Furlan, the integrative spiritual and material reconstruction of learning facilities was instrumental in spreading democratic ideals of tolerance, inclusion and peace in Central-Eastern Europe and beyond. Furlan's vision coincided with the US Committee for Educational Reconstruction, promoting democratic values in Axis-occupied territories, considering them bulwarks of future peace and prosperity in Europe. Furlan's collaboration with the American experts through the joint CEEPB-US Commission, which culminated in the Democratic Charter of

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<sup>151</sup> He envisaged that with the national resources alone funding the agricultural policy reforms, it would take Yugoslavia between 50-100 years to achieve the level of production seen in Western and Northern Europe before the war.

Education, became a part of the birth of UNESCO, as well as fellowships and exchange programs such as Fulbright.

Peasant internationalists at the CEEPB also understood the global relevance of Central-Eastern European reconstruction, promoted through their collaboration with the ILO, as they illuminated the need for a different approach to post-WWII recovery in the East and the West. An analysis of economic and educational reconstruction plans, spearheaded by Mirkovch, Bićanić, and Furlan, demonstrated that post-war recovery hinged on addressing agricultural overpopulation and establishing conditions for sustained social and economic growth through democratic and egalitarian education and optimal industrialisation of the countryside. The mutually beneficial relationship between the Board and the ILO contributed to the survival of the organisation and placed the regional social and economic experts in a prime position to facilitate the UN's technical assistance programs as a part of their development agenda. The experts legitimised their research and set socioeconomic planning as universal benchmarks disseminated through peasant internationalist networks between the experts, governmental and international institutions and the Allied public.<sup>152</sup> Although the CEEPB dissolved in the summer of 1945, its standards and principles continued to impact the work of the ILO, UNICEF, and WHO through the continued work of experts including Bićanić, Štampar and the CEEPB's assistant, Oskar Lange. The UN resolutions in 1945 concerning the ILO confirmed the shift in the international social and economic priorities from "the protection of working populations through social security provisions towards development and free trade as a promise for a better life globally."<sup>153</sup> Concurrently, socialist governments began to leverage these partnerships to support solidarity and aid initiatives in Asia and Africa, as outlined in the *Afterlives* chapter and the conclusions.

These narratives provide historians with an intellectual background to the appeal of socialist socioeconomic programs to regional technical experts. For instance, the publication of research papers of the JIC and meeting minutes of the CEEPB act as valuable resources to trace the evolution

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<sup>152</sup> Charlotte Bigg et al., "The Art of Gathering: Histories of International Scientific Conferences." *The British Journal for the History of Science* 56, no. 4 (2023): 6.

<sup>153</sup> Sandrine Kott, "Fighting the War or Preparing for Peace?", 375.

of ideas surrounding rural social justice, Yugoslav negotiations with the UNRRA, and the country's political economy in the 1950s. The development of concepts like "self-help" and "self-reliance" in educational reconstruction can be linked to Central-Eastern European strategies for the government-led distribution of UNRRA relief materials, a topic explored in the next chapter.

To more closely investigate the conjunctions between the Board's research and UNRRA's reconstruction effort, the next chapter zooms into the personal story of one of the Board's contributors – Rudolf Bićanić. Rudolf Bićanić, the chief Yugoslav negotiator with UNRRA, extensively used the CEEPB's and JIC's reports, articles, and statistics in negotiations and his advocacy for 600 million dollars in credits and loans for Yugoslavia. However, Bićanić could not achieve this from his position as an émigré government member based in London. His actions of transferring Yugoslavia's economic and political legitimacy from the émigré government in London to the partisans and Marshall Josip Broz Tito preceded his lobbying for the relief to the Yugoslav countryside, demonstrating the relevance of peasant international networks and modernisation approaches for the history of the making of socialist Yugoslavia.

# 5. The Power of Gold: Rudolf Bićanić and the Search for Political Legitimacy Over Yugoslavia

## 1. Introduction

After three years spent in Mitrovica prison for transporting Svetozar Pribićević's political leaflets from Prague to Yugoslavia under King Alexander's dictatorship, Bićanić confessed he "craved human company."<sup>1</sup> This was a poignant reflection on his detachment from the "gentlemen's world" he had once known. Emerging from incarceration in 1935, Bićanić embarked on a transformative odyssey. In 1935, traversing the Yugoslav 'passive regions,' he unearthed stark revelations through sociological surveys of peasant life. His findings painted a harrowing portrait of peasant existence: chronic shortages of food and water, squalid housing conditions, and the silent suffering endured by millions of Yugoslav peasants. These sobering first-hand accounts crystallised in Bićanić's mind the undeniable truth that understanding and advocating for these struggles was "a precondition of public activity whatever its specific direction."<sup>2</sup> Across the former Yugoslav states, he is celebrated for the result of these travels gathered in the book, "How the People Live: Life in the Passive Regions." In this work, Bićanić interwove the social, economic, cultural, and political threads of rural existence, offering a panoramic view of a world often overlooked in political life and historical narratives.

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<sup>1</sup> Bićanić et al., 'How the People Live'. Bićanić was imprisoned for transporting Svetozar Pribicevic's Independent Democratic Party leaflets to Yugoslavia, which was during King Alexander's dictatorship in Yugoslavia considered treason. Sonia Wild-Bićanić, *Two Lines of Life* (Zagreb: Durieux: Croatian PEN Centre, 1999), 112.

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Bićanić, 'How the People Live,' 1.

However, Bićanić was not just a witness to history; he was also a shaper of it, serving as a Croat Peasant Party (HSS) member from 1935 to 1943 and later a vice-governor of the Royal Yugoslav National Bank. Amid the tumult of World War II (WWII), his contributions to Yugoslav political life were profound and far-reaching. The impact of the war on the rural population of Yugoslavia and the improvement of living conditions of peasants in the reconstruction period following the hostilities motivated Bićanić's activities in London as a member of the Yugoslav government in exile 1941-44.<sup>3</sup>

Bićanić's tenure in London also holds a crucial piece of the puzzle to decipher the complex shift in political legitimacy over Yugoslavia during WWII. This process saw power transfer from the émigré government to Marshall Tito. Scholars often spotlight two pivotal events in the genesis of socialist Yugoslavia: the establishment of the communist-led Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (*Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije* - AVNOJ) in November 1943 and the consequential Tito-Šubašić agreement in June 1944.<sup>4</sup> However, a pivotal question arises: if the Allied support for Tito's regime was instrumental in his ascent, why did the Western Allies recognise the National Liberation Council (*Nacionalni komitet oslobodenja Jugoslavije* – NKOJ) as the legitimate voice of the Yugoslav people? Bićanić's voice answers this question and builds a more nuanced story of the birth of the 'second' Yugoslav state – the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia in November 1945.

This chapter demonstrates that the debates regarding Yugoslavia's future social and economic policy, inherent in peasant internationalists' view of modernisation, shaped the process of the

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<sup>3</sup> Karaula established a timeline of Bićanić's time in London in Željko Karaula, "Prilozi za biografiju Rudolfa Bićanića," *Radovi Zavoda za znanstvenoistraživački i umjetnički rad u Bjelovaru* 10 (2016): 196–224. Bićanić's service in the Yugoslav émigré government is in the shadow of his time at Sloga – an economic and social organisation of the Croat Peasant Party (HSS). Bićanić spent five years directing Sloga's activities and heading the affiliated research centre -*The Institute for the Study of the Peasant and National Economy*. For more on Bićanić's contributions and actions in Sloga, see Željko Karaula, *Hrvaska Seljačka Zaštita u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji* (PhD thesis, University of Zagreb, Department of Croatian Studies, 2015); Ivica Šute, *Slogom Slobodi!: Gospodarska Sloga 1935-1941* (Srednja Europa, 2010). For an overview of Bićanić's research into the Croatian countryside, consult Grahovac, 'Rudolf Bićanić o Seljaštvu, Selu i Poljoprivredi.'

<sup>4</sup> Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); for an overview of the entire process, see Dušan Bilandžić, *Historija Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije: Glavni Procesi 1918-1985* (Školska knjiga, 1985).

Communist legitimization of power as much as the ethnic, ideological, and military contexts. These latter narratives explore the impact of the National Liberation Army's military victories, the communist solidarity networks, and the paralysis of the Yugoslav émigré government caused by the status of the Chetnik leader - Draža Mihailović - in the Yugoslav government, which exacerbated the ethnic tensions between the ministers.<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Bićanić's international activity in London and Washington offers a novel perspective into the events preceding the Tito-Šubašić agreement in June 1944. These events between January and May 1944 paved the way towards forming the joint Yugoslav government comprised of representatives of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (*Komunistička partija Jugoslavije* - KPJ) and members of the former exiled cabinet led by Ivan Šubašić. Through the propaganda activity in the United Committee of South Slavs (UCSS), Rudolf Bićanić contributed to detaching the Yugoslav international image from the Chetnik regime of Mihailović and reconstructing the Allied image of Yugoslavia in line with the AVNOJ's federative vision of the country proclaimed in Jajce in November 1943.

Bićanić's support for the AVNOJ's socioeconomic programme motivated his self-directed, arbitrary, and chaotic process of political legitimization of the communist regime, revealing the impact of peasant internationalist view on modernisation on the Yugoslav political life. With his colleagues in the UCSS in London, Bićanić informed the Allied public about Yugoslavia's 'real' situation through radio speeches, personal letters, newspaper reports and images obtained through the *Jugoslav Information Center* in New York and Swiss newspaper outlets.<sup>6</sup> In the public sector, as a vice-governor of the Royal Yugoslav National Bank, he used asset manipulation and subversive

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<sup>5</sup> Studying the sources collected by Bogdan Krizman, Stevan K. Pavlowitch produced the most detailed analysis of the Yugoslav émigré government. Bogdan Krizman, *Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu 1941-1945: Dokumenti*, vols. 1–2 (Arhiv Jugoslavije, 1981). Stevan K. Pavlowitch, "Yugoslavia in Exile", in Dejan Djokić and James Ker-Lindsay, *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies* (Routledge, 2011); Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder: The Second World War in Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Stevan K. Pavlowitch, "Momčilo Ninčić and the European Policy of the Yugoslav Government in Exile, 1941-1943: I", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 62, no. 3 (1984): 400–420; Stevan K. Pavlowitch, "Out of Context - The Yugoslav Government in London 1941-1945", *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 1 (1981): 89–118. Newman, John Paul, Ljubinka Škodrić, and Rade Ristanović. "Mapping the History of the Resistance in Southeastern Europe." In *Anti-Axis Resistance in Southeastern Europe, 1939-1945* (Brill Schöningh, 2023), 18-34.

<sup>6</sup> The New York Public Library (NYPL), Box 9, folder "Economic Committee and Sub-committees," *The Second Meeting of the Economic Joint Committee, Antonin Basch and Sava Kosanovich conversation*.



political activity against the émigré government to grant, or appear to have granted, Marshall Tito control of the Yugoslav gold reserves and the economic life of the future Yugoslav state. With it, Bićanić contributed to transferring the international legitimacy of Yugoslavia from the émigré government, which “slowly exhausted their moral credit with the British,” to the National Liberation Council and Tito.<sup>7</sup> As Tito’s only international representative, he mediated the Tito-Šubašić agreement, which set in motion the formation of the *Provisional Government of Federal Democratic Yugoslavia* in March 1945.<sup>8</sup> This process also enabled Bićanić to negotiate the Yugoslav post-war relief and reconstruction loans in Washington DC in 1945, where his economic concerns over the livelihood of the peasant population trumped the ideological consideration over the Yugoslav foreign political orientation.

This research complements the established historiography of the Yugoslav government in exile. Focusing on the activity of the London-based émigré government, Pavlowitch analysed the lack of consensus among the Yugoslav ministers. Due to the diminishing prestige of the government in the eyes of the British, brought about by the inclusion of the Draža Mihailović in Slobodan Jovanović’s and Božidar Purić’s cabinets, Pavlowitch characterised the exiled government as frozen in “the office without a country,” with “no precise information channels” plagued by “impotence” and “disunity.”<sup>9</sup> However, the perspective of the leading government ministers in London, such as PM Slobodan Jovanović and the foreign minister Momčilo Ninčić, does not explain why the Allies turned to Tito to negotiate and discuss the post-war political, economic and social reconstruction of Yugoslavia as early as March 1944.<sup>10</sup> Emphasising the experience of the Yugoslav technical experts, including Bićanić, through the thematic lens of peasantism sheds light on the transition

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<sup>7</sup> Pavlowitch, "Out of Context," 101.

<sup>8</sup> Karaula, "Prilozi za biografiju Rudolfa Bićanića."

<sup>9</sup> Pavlowitch, "Out of Context" and "Yugoslavia in Exile," in *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia*.

<sup>10</sup> The Allied intelligence that followed the partisan military victories in March 1944 certainly played a role in this process. However, Bićanić’s perspective reveals the salience of personal networks and lobbying during political uncertainty and fast-changing international landscapes. Bogdan Krizman, *Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu 1941-1943: Dokumenti*, vol. 1-2 (Arhiv Jugoslavije, 1981); overview of the documents: Franko Mirošević, 'Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu, 1941-1945, Dokumenti, Arhiv Jugoslavije, „Globus“, Zagreb 1981.: Knjigu 1. Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu 1941-1943. Priredio Bogdan Krizman, 529 Str.; Knjigu 2. Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu 1943-1945. Priredio Branko Petranović,' *Časopis Za Suvremenu Povijest* 14, no. 2 (1982): 234–44; For more information on Ninčić’s foreign policy during Slobodan Jovanović’s cabinet see: Pavlowitch, "Momčilo Ninčić and the European Policy of the Yugoslav Government in Exile, 1941-1943".

process between the Royal Yugoslav Government and the Provisional Government established in March 1945. When placed in the international context of loan and relief negotiations, Bićanić's actions also become a part of the story of the continuation of peasant internationalists' networks and their rurally-centred approach to modernisation presented in front of the UNRRA Council. This chapter demonstrates that Bićanić's peasant-driven agenda and pragmatic approach in seeking IMF, World Bank, and Export-Import Bank loans contributed to the historical understanding of the Yugoslav 'third way' in economic and foreign policy between liberalism and socialism.

As a result of Bićanić's record-keeping collated in his files available at the Croatian National State Archives in Zagreb, this paper retraces Bićanić's steps during his time abroad, 1942-1945. It discovers the richness of his international contacts and academic, political, and economic activities in the United Kingdom and the USA. When contextualised against the narratives of post-war reconstruction, Bićanić's perspective becomes a part of a story of the birth of the *Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY)* in November 1945. Bićanić's files reveal that in the spirit of peasant internationalism, the social and economic issues of peasant life, alongside the exiled government support for Mihailović, motivated and informed the turning political loyalties of Yugoslav intellectuals and academics in Britain and America during WWII.<sup>11</sup> Bićanić's correspondence with the Yugoslav experts working at the *Central and Eastern European Planning Board (CEEPB)* and the *Office for Reconstruction and Economic Affairs* in New York between 1941 and 1943 reveal that his vision of the Yugoslav socioeconomic policy did not exist in a vacuum.<sup>12</sup> It is part of a broader climate of 'peasantism,' shaped by the socioeconomic conditions of the rural environment.

While my analysis focuses on the more 'technical' sources collated by Bićanić, it also uses the documents in the archive concerning the political situation in occupied Yugoslavia to frame the

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<sup>11</sup> His frustration with the government's support for Mihailović despite his collaborative activities represents an ethnic perspective into the political legitimisation process motivated by his Croatian patriotism and support for the federalisation of Yugoslavia. Karaula provides an overview of Bićanić's activities focused on the ethnic tensions in Željko Karaula, "Prilozi za biografiju Rudolfa Bićanića".

<sup>12</sup> Yugoslavia, *Jugoslav Postwar Reconstruction Papers* include over 40 surveys and analytical and evaluative studies of the Yugoslav social and economic conditions before and during WWII. The activity of the Office, working in collaboration with the Central and Eastern European Planning Board (CEEPB), was a topic of the previous chapter.

relevant political context for explaining possible motivations for Bićanić's actions and his relationship with other government members, including Konstantin Fotić. Amongst those are reports on the ethnic tensions within the government during exile caused by the crimes of the Independent State of Croatia and the subsequent Serbian Orthodox Church memorandum of 1941.

Moving away from ethnic and ideological narratives of the birth of socialist Yugoslavia, the study highlights the necessity to explore how individuals pragmatically navigated World War II's volatile political and military contexts. Tara Zahra's 'national indifference' concept offers a valuable analytical framework for explaining Bićanić's actions in London.<sup>13</sup> While this article acknowledges the presence of national and ethnic influences in the political decisions of Yugoslav technical experts in exile, it proposes that political loyalties during wartime were not fixed and predetermined by party membership or ethnic identity. They were fluid, constructed, and contested.<sup>14</sup> As Aviel Roshwald suggested, rather than sticking to a fixed perspective, it is beneficial to consider how changes in context can influence the prioritisation and focus of various aspects of a population's identity. This is particularly relevant when competing political factions and military entities strive to associate their identities with their objectives.<sup>15</sup> Instead, focusing on the ideas espoused, networks created, and actions performed by Bićanić in a variety of transnational forums, the following story contributes to the arguments furthered by this dissertation. It demonstrated how the socioeconomic climate of 'peasantism' and instances of peasant-focused international cooperation characterised the Yugoslav international activity between 1920-1956, positioning Yugoslavia between the East and the West during the Cold War, as evident from Bićanić's negotiations in Washington.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Zahra demonstrated the diversity of behaviours and attitudes that can be grouped under the analytical category of national indifference. Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 93–119.

<sup>14</sup> The understanding of political loyalties in this article follows Brubaker and Cooper's definitions of 'loyalties' as a fluid aspect of 'identities.' Brubaker and Cooper, 'Beyond "Identity"'.

<sup>15</sup> Roshwald, *The Occupied*, 199.

<sup>16</sup> The dissertation expands the normative understanding of 'peasantism' associated with either peasant politics (studied through the activities of numerous peasant parties in interwar Yugoslavia) or 'agrarianism' (an intellectual movement, which aimed to solve the Central-Eastern European 'agrarian overpopulation problem.' Instead, peasantism is understood as a 'climate of opinion' shared by a range of figures of various political and professional backgrounds between the 1920s and 1950s. My definition of 'peasantism' follows Warinner's critical remarks on the communist political economy and urban/rural planning which were also shared by

The chapter analyses Bićanić's perspective and contribution to this process in four stages. First, it depicts the backdrop of Bićanić's entrance to the government in 1941 as a foreign trade minister and his visions of the future Yugoslav state discussed in his academic papers and correspondence with the leading economic experts. It then analyses Bićanić's subversive propaganda activity against the émigré government through the UCSS, which coincided with the Jajce Declaration in November 1943. Third, it reconstructs his double agent actions as a sympathiser of the communist National Liberation Council whilst defying to step down from the government role of the vice-governor of the National Bank, thereby leveraging his position to transfer the legitimacy of the Bank's assets to Tito. Finally, the chapter outlines the significance of Bićanić's actions for the formation of the provisional government of Yugoslavia in March 1945 and his leadership in the negotiations of relief and reconstruction loans in the summer of the same year.

## 2. Two Lines of Life

To fully comprehend the spectrum of Bićanić's peasant-focused motivations in London, given the intertwining nature of his political role as vice-governor of the Royal Yugoslav National Bank (RYNB) and his technocratic career as an economist, historians ought to simultaneously analyse Bićanić's 'two lines of life.'<sup>17</sup> His political career in Yugoslavia began in 1936 by directing the cultural, economic and aid cooperative of the *Croat Peasant Party* called *Sloga*. Bićanić spent five years organising *Sloga*'s activities and heading the affiliated research institute, *The Institute for the Study of the Peasant and National Economy*.<sup>18</sup>

However, the beginning of his governmental career as a Foreign Trade Minister unfolded against a dramatic backdrop. Two days after The Kingdom of Yugoslavia Allied with the Axis Powers on

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Bićanić: Doreen Warriner, "Urban Thinkers and Peasant Policy in Yugoslavia, 1918-59," *Slavonic and East European Review* 38, no. 90 (1959): 59–81.

<sup>17</sup> Borrowing the term from Wild Bićanić, *Two Lines of Life*.

<sup>18</sup> Šute, *Slogom Slobodi!*; Grahovac, "Rudolf Bićanić o Seljaštvu, Selu i Poljoprivredi."

March 25, 1941, a cadre of pro-British military officers carried out a political coup in Belgrade. The coup resulted in the creation of the pro-Western Simović government, which proclaimed Peter II as a Yugoslav monarch. In response to these events, Hitler launched a military attack on Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941. The attack demolished all state and government organs, comprehensively restructuring the nation's political landscape. Amidst this swiftly shifting scenario, the newly formed Simović government, King Peter II, and 15 of the 22 government ministers sworn in on March 27, 1941, escaped the country, taking the Yugoslav gold reserves from the National Bank in Belgrade.<sup>19</sup>

Bićanić served in the Yugoslav exiled government as a representative of a split and dysfunctional *Croat Peasant Party (Hrvatska seljačka stranka – HSS)*. After the invasion of Yugoslavia, the party splintered into several factions. The right-leaning group of HSS members, including unaligned party leader Vladko Maček, who was then under house arrest, remained in the newly established Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska - NDH*). Numerous members of this group endorsed the NDH's fascist regime, a stance that would later serve as a basis for the party's persecution by the communist authorities. The other left-leaning faction opposed Maček's strategy of waiting for the Allied liberation of Yugoslavia to delegitimise both the fascist and the communist claim to power and decided to switch their allegiance to the KPJ. Joining the 'left-wing' of the HSS under the leadership of Juraj Krnjević, Bićanić arrived in London, a WWII seat of the Yugoslav émigré government.<sup>20</sup>

Bićanić's perspective suggests that the socioeconomic program of the KPJ was as significant of a factor in the early support for the communist regime as was the KPJ's promise of federalism and their 'supra-national' conceptualisation of Yugoslav culture.<sup>21</sup> Between 1941 and 1943, the Yugoslav government experienced a profound transformation in leadership and structure due to

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<sup>19</sup> Of 22 ministers sworn in on 27 March 1941, two had been killed, and five decided not to leave Yugoslavia. The other fifteen ministers fled the country and reached London through Greece and Jerusalem in late May 1941. Pavlowitch, 'Out of Context - The Yugoslav Government in London 1941-1945', 91-2. For a more general overview of the events consult: Bilandžić, *Historija Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije*.

<sup>20</sup> Pavlowitch, "Momčilo Ninčić and the European Policy of the Yugoslav Government in Exile," 403.

<sup>21</sup> Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, 127-72.

the intricacies of WWII. Although in exile, the government retained a cabinet structure, with individual ministers overseeing different sectors. Decision-making was shared among the King, the Prime Minister, and the cabinet, with the latter instrumental in policy formulation and advising Prime Ministers: Simović, Jovanović, Trifunović, and Purić. However, the constraints of exile and internal rifts among ministers hindered its efficacy.<sup>22</sup>

Disagreements between Serbian and Croatian factions plagued the government, reducing Allied support. This decline in support was exacerbated by the government's association with the collaborationist Chetnik regime under Dragoljub (Draža) Mihailović. King Peter II's influence was pivotal, as the exiled government aimed to uphold the monarchy. This is exemplified by King's refusal to heed requests from Churchill and Roosevelt to oust Mihailović from his role as war minister.<sup>23</sup> The government's detachment from events in Yugoslavia limited its control, making its decisions more symbolic, even as it endeavoured to represent Yugoslav interests on the international stage.

Starting in January 1942, Bićanić assumed the role of vice-governor of the RYNB, not an independent financial institution, as the Yugoslav government centrally controlled it. The government's control encompassed the state's monetary policy and, consequently, the operations of the Bank. As per the Bank's revised statutes of September 1940, its operation required the legal approval of three signatories: the governor of the Bank and two vice-governors. A governor and vice-governors were subjects of the Royal Yugoslav government in Belgrade. They were appointed by the Royal Decree on the Proposal of the Minister of Finance and in agreement with the president of the Council of Ministers.<sup>24</sup>

The transfer of Yugoslav gold reserves from Belgrade in the chaotic days of the Nazi takeover in April 1941 highlights the significance of controlling the Bank's assets as they held the key to economic and political legitimacy over the Yugoslav territories then under Axis occupation. The

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<sup>22</sup> Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, chapter 4.

<sup>23</sup> Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović, and the Allies, 1941-1945*, 210-12.

<sup>24</sup> HR- HDA – 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, f-XL, *The Statutes of the Royal National Bank*.

assets allowed the émigré government in London to access the emergency funds, pay for the salaries of government ministers, conduct operations in foreign currencies, support the in-country resistance movements, and serve as an insurance instrument in loan and credit negotiations. Based on the financial report by Minister Šutej from February 1942, the Bank's gold reserves were estimated to be 80 tons, out of which nine tons remained in the country, and the rest was distributed between New York (over half), London, and Brazil. The government also controlled a further \$35.5 million worth of assets in the official state bank account, split between New York (over 21 million dollars), Brazil, and Ankara.<sup>25</sup> In the situation of the political vacuum during WWII, with members of the government dispersed across the world, the Council of Ministers passed the amendments to the statutes of the Bank, which enabled the governor and vice-governors to make executive decisions, deeming them responsible for all financial dealings and damages of the Bank.<sup>26</sup>

In stark contrast to the fragmented and dysfunctional exiled government in London, the National Liberation Movement (*Narodnooslobodilački pokret* – NOP) inside Yugoslavia showcased well-structured organisation and decisiveness under the leadership of the KPJ. This dominance was evident as the Central Committee, headed by Josip Broz Tito, was integral in shaping military tactics and overarching policy. The Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (*Antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije* - AVNOJ) emerged as the NOP's legislative backbone. With the *Jajce Declaration* in November 1943, AVNOJ was recognised as Yugoslavia's interim governing body. This declaration not only centralised the decision-making process from various local partisan councils within the movement but also unveiled plans for the country's impending socioeconomic transformation anchored in principles of social justice. The Tito-led Central Committee adopted the mantle of a provisional government via AVNOJ.<sup>27</sup>

Over the subsequent six months, due to Bićanić's peasant-driven agenda in London, both the British and the Americans recognised the NOP not just as a more efficient resistance movement but as the sole legitimate one. By June 1944, this movement held Yugoslavia's political legitimacy and bore

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<sup>25</sup> HR- HDA – 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, f-XL, *Report by Šutej* February 7, 1942.

<sup>26</sup> HR- HDA – 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, f-XL, *The Statutes of the Royal National Bank*.

<sup>27</sup> Pavlowitch, *Hitler's New Disorder*, 2008, 210-12; Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945*.

the mantle of international representation, pivotal for post-war negotiations concerning the country's reconstruction. For Bićanić, ensuring timely aid to the Yugoslav countryside was a matter of deep personal commitment shaped by his sociological research into the effects of war on Yugoslavia and his first-hand experience of living among the peasants. His economic research outlining the possible solutions to the problem of agricultural overpopulation and a network of academic contacts sustained through peasant international cooperation with the CEEPB enabled Bićanić to put part of his ideas of peasant-focused modernisation into tangible policy outcomes.

### 2.1. *Bićanić in London*

Between May 1941 and November 1943, Bićanić devoted his efforts in London to investigating the war's impact on the Yugoslav economy and advocating for post-war relief supplies targeted at the country's rural regions. At this time, Bićanić became a vice-governor of the Royal Yugoslav National Bank and served as a Yugoslav representative in the *Inter-Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements* established to compile estimates on likely requirements for relief materials in the occupied countries after their liberation.<sup>28</sup> In the latter appointment, Bićanić fought to put on the committee's agenda a question of the lack of food and medical provisions for rural inhabitants of Yugoslavia. In September 1943, in one of his frequent letters to Sir Frederick Leith-Ross - Chief Economic Adviser to the British Government – together with his recommendation, Bićanić included a picture of Tito and a short overview of the war situation in Yugoslavia entitled: "Yugoslavia – a post-war problem." A copy of this brief overview was also sent to MP Hugh Dalton, Major Birch from the Army Bureau of Current Affairs, the Yugoslav Society of Great Britain, and Mr Hubert Jebb of the Economic Research Department in the Foreign Office of the UK<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Jessica Reinisch, "Internationalism in Relief," 262.

<sup>29</sup> HR- HDA – 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 15, F-VVIII, *A letter to Leith-Ross* 1942. For an example of Leith-Ross's approach to relief and rehabilitation, see Frederick Leith-Ross, "Opening lecture" in War Organisation of the British red Cross Society and Order of St John of Jerusalem, *Training Course of Pre-Armistice Civilian Relief Overseas, Report of Lectures*, January 1943.



But why did Bićanić, as a member of the émigré government, decide to change the course and begin subversive propaganda in support of the NOP in September 1943, two months before the foundation of the AVNOJ in Jajce? To comprehend this pivotal shift in Bićanić's allegiances from the émigré government towards the NOP, we must delve deeper into his aspirations for the future of the Yugoslav state based on peasant internationalists' view of rurally-centred modernisation. We also need to contextualise his political and economic philosophy against the actions of the Yugoslav émigré government led by Prime Minister Slobodan Jovanović.<sup>30</sup>

Influenced by his travels and work in Sloga, Bićanić advocated acknowledging the interrelationship between social, cultural, and political life. He believed that “the natural conditions and not the political frontiers must form the basis of our [postwar] planning.”<sup>31</sup> In his response to Prof David Mitrany, a renowned British sociologist of Romanian roots, he expressed his belief that “The existence of socioeconomic organisations, such as Sloga, would become a foundation for the existence of international peasant corporations necessary for a fairer and more adequate international economic development.”<sup>32</sup> His acclaimed academic paper “Agricultural Overpopulation,” presented at the *European Agricultural Conference* in London in March 1942, similarly argued for the optimal industrialisation of the countryside instead of urbanisation and industrialisation of the ‘Western nineteenth-century model,’ explored in the previous chapter.<sup>33</sup> His paper received positive reviews from leading economists at the time, including Mrs Janet Smith, who was working for the League of Nations delegation at Princeton. She commended Bićanić's work and passed on the work to Dr Notestein and Mr Loveday, who were “always interested in learning about European agriculture.” Mr Loveday, a leading expert in the LON's Economic and Financial Committee, reiterated this praise and sent Bićanić a copy of the League of Nations study

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<sup>30</sup> The collection of primary sources regarding the activity of Slobodan Jovanović's cabinet see Krizman, *Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu 1941-1943*, 1981.

<sup>31</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 4, F – X, *Letter to Sir John E. Russell*, December 1941.

<sup>32</sup> HR-HDA - 1005, *Letter to Mitrany February 1942*. HR-HDA, *Mrs Janet Smith's letter*, September 1942.

<sup>33</sup> Bićanić; Yugoslavia, *Jugoslav Postwar Reconstruction Papers*, vol. 1-2; also available as an academic paper Rudolf Bićanić, "Agricultural Overpopulation," *Sociologija i prostor: časopis za istraživanje prostornoga i sociokulturnog razvoja* 40, no. 3/4 (157/158) (2002): 253–76; For a contextualisation of Bićanić's political economy in global history see Isao Koshimura, "Analysis of the Socioeconomic Works of Rudolf Bićanić from the Perspective of Global History", *Zbornik Janković*, no. 5–6 (2021): 304–28.

on transitioning from a war to a peace economy, written in collaboration with the leading economists of the time including the CEEPB's supporter and ILO's Director Carter Goodrich.

Bičanić's optimal vision of a future political economy envisaged Central-Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia as supporters of an open global economy focused on agricultural restructuring and improving the lives of peasants based on the moral principles of social justice.<sup>34</sup> Targeted state interventions over the critical aspects of social and economic life and cooperative economic enterprises would support a small peasant landowner operating in the free economic market system. The government, on the other hand, would control crucial industries such as mining and transport.<sup>35</sup> His understanding of the future political economy, influenced by the climate of peasantism, was in line with the social and economic program of the KPJ announced in Jajce, the development of local partisan administrative organisations on the ground in Yugoslavia, and their federative visions of the future state. The AVNOJ's proposed state organisation of Yugoslavia accounted for differences in state traditions of constitutive parts of the Yugoslav state, supporting the equality of Yugoslav nationalities and greater socioeconomic justice for all citizens.<sup>36</sup> The peasants in rural regions immensely helped the local partisan administrative organisations of the NOP, which existed before the foundation of the Anti-Fascist Council in November 1942.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the AVNOJ promised to fight for a more democratic and fairer political system with

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<sup>34</sup> The Jajce Declaration also appealed to Bičanić's belief in democratic federalism as well as the concept of social justice. Social justice was not a new concept. It was enshrined as a working goal of the International Labour Organisation, which had since 1919 focused on improving living and working standards, albeit of industrial and trade sectors Gerry Rodgers and International Labour Organization, *The International Labour Organization and the Quest for Social Justice, 1919-2009* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2009). International Labour Office, *Lasting Peace the I.L.O. Way; the Story of the International Labour Organisation*. 175.

<sup>35</sup> Bičanić, "Agricultural Overpopulation".

<sup>36</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bičanić Rudolf, *Memorandum from Jajce*, November 1943; HR- HDA – 1005, Bičanić Rudolf, box 8, f. XL and XIX, *Report New Yugoslavia*, The UCSS disseminated the following message to the Allied governments regarding the activities of the National Liberation Council: "The People's Liberation Movement is under the leadership of the High Command of the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia. It is amongst many of their aims to fight for the freedom of the people and social and democratic rights. All people's institutions were to be decided after the war on truly democratic principles and the inviolability of private property. The People's Liberation Movement accords all national rights of the Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Macedonians and others alike and guarantees that the national rights would be won for all peoples of Yugoslavia."

<sup>37</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bičanić Rudolf, box 8, F – XL and XIX, *Report New Yugoslavia*, The UCSS.

political power given to the rural inhabitants, similar to the ideas expressed by Bićanić in his correspondence to Mitrany.

Bićanić's shift in allegiance from the émigré government to the partisan-led NOP was not a haste move but a result of a yearlong process motivated by the actions of the leading Yugoslav government ministers. The crimes of the Independent State of Croatia against the Jewish and Muslim minorities in the Winter of 1942 gave a pretext for an increase in pro-Chetnik and anti-Croatian international representation of Yugoslavia, which Bićanić and non-Serbian ministers found unacceptable. Whilst King Peter II, during his tour of the US and Canada in June 1942, depicted Mihailović as a heroic fighter for the freedom of Yugoslavia, appointing him as the Yugoslav Army general, the news regarding Mihailović's collaboration with the German regime became known to the British intelligence.<sup>38</sup> Despite knowing of Chetnik's collaboration with the Fascist "quisling regime", Slobodan Jovanović's cabinet maintained their support for Mihailović in food, munitions, and medicine. They also continued to lobby for British support of the Chetnik movement. As the news regarding Chetnik's collaboration appeared publicly, the emigre government's support for Mihailović became more problematic and effectively paralysed their decision-making.<sup>39</sup> Simultaneously, the proclamation of the AVNOJ as a 'true' anti-fascist resistance movement in Yugoslavia began to gather pace with the proclamations and notes sent to Britain, the USA and the USSR in January and February 1943.<sup>40</sup>

The last straw for Bićanić and other Yugoslav technocratic elites in New York was the choice of Božidar Purić, who replaced Miloš Trifunovic in August 1943 as the new Yugoslav prime minister. Contrary to Churchill's wishes, Purić's 'non-political working party' was "the most thoroughly committed to Mihailović of all the émigré cabinets."<sup>41</sup> Purić withdrew the Yugoslav membership at the CEEPB in New York shortly after his appointment, closing *The Office for Economic Affairs and*

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<sup>38</sup> Sir O Sargent delivered a note to the Yugoslav and Allied governments of successful partisan activities in Yugoslavia in December 1942. Krizman, *Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu 1941-1943*, 1981.

<sup>39</sup> Pavlowitch, "Momčilo Ninčić and the European Policy of the Yugoslav Government in Exile", 1984.

<sup>40</sup> Mirošević, "Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu, 1941-1945", *Dokumenti, Arhiv Jugoslavije*, "Globus," 1982. Based on Krizman, *Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu 1941-1943*, 1981.

<sup>41</sup> Pavlowitch, "Out of Context", 101.

*Reconstruction* – a governmental research institute comprised of economic and social experts in agreement with Bićanić over Yugoslavia's future social and monetary policy.<sup>42</sup> Konstantin Fotić, a Yugoslav ambassador to the US and a devoted Mihailović supporter, became the only official diplomatic contact with the US government.

The controversy over the rightful international representation of Yugoslavia and the disassociation of the exiled government with the country's social and economic problems motivated Bićanić to take action into his own hands. Unlike most of the cabinet in London, the discontinued Yugoslav 'ministerial mission' in New York, which served as a haven for peasant internationalists during the war, believed that the country's political restructuring rested on ensuring the reconstruction of Yugoslav society and economy after the war. These peasant internationalists, who prioritised economic over political sovereignty, understood the necessity of foreign credits and investments from the USA to ensure Yugoslavia's future prosperity and integration into the global economy. In this context, Rudolf Bićanić started to discuss his ideas on the political reorganisation of post-war Yugoslavia along democratic principles. In his letters to renowned Croatian sociologists, Dinko Tomašić, Bićanić explained his ideas of a "community of peasant nations in Eastern Europe" and "federative Yugoslavia."<sup>43</sup> Writing to Peter Young in the Autumn of 1943, Bićanić also noted that: "there is a great political fluidity in Europe, this fluidity means an evolution of social forces and historical processes (...) the émigré governments cannot be considered as representative of the state of mind prevailing in Europe which is fighting Hitler."<sup>44</sup>

This correspondence marked the next phase of Bićanić's political activity – defiance of the émigré government through the United Committee of South Slavs (UCSS) foundation. Months later, Bićanić used his position in the RYNB to start openly supporting the NOP. The importance of democracy and federalism in the AVNOJ's proclamation in Jajce appealed to Bićanić's political orientation,

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<sup>42</sup> NYPL, The CEEP, *Kosanovich to Gross*, Overview of the JIC's purpose, activities and reason for closure, b.7, f. "Yugoslavia," September 1945 and Yugoslavia, *Jugoslav Postwar Reconstruction Papers*, vol. 1-4.

<sup>43</sup> Karaula, "Prilozi za biografiju Rudolfa Bićanića," 216-8.

<sup>44</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 15, F-VVIII, *A letter to Mr Young*, October 1943.

whilst their methods of liberation, which depended on peasant solidarity and direct local administration of a liberated area, secured Bićanić's support for the partisan-led movement.

### 3. The United Committee of South Slavs

While Rudolf Bićanić may have grown disillusioned with the exiled government's capacity to advocate for Yugoslav interests overseas, he did not resign from his post as the vice-governor of the RYNB. Instead, he opted to leverage his position to support the NOP and AVNOJ, persuading the British government and public of the partisan fascist resistance and revealing Mihailović's 'pro-collaborator' activities.

From November 1943 to May 1944, Bićanić directed a propaganda campaign through the UCSS, established in London on November 29, 1943. Serving alongside Boris Furlan and Mihailo Petrović, he was a vital member of the Committee's executive organ based at the University College London. The constitution of the UCSS, announced on the same day, related the future of Yugoslavia with "the real self-determination of nations proclaimed by the United Nations." The organisation considered itself "a mediator of all the war needs, as well as social and economic needs of the people fighting against fascism in Yugoslavia," demonstrating their interest in improving the conditions of life in the countryside. The UCSS was to "strengthen the antifascist fight by forming a wider antifascist democratic coalition" to "unstable the collaborators in their practice" and contribute to the "territorial integrity of the future Yugoslav state."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> HR- HDAA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, F- XXV, *The UCSS proclamation*. The UCSS communicated these aims in a six-point action plan as a part of their note sent to the governments of the USA, Australia, and Britain. The action plan was greeted by many worthy personalities such as Vladko Maček (head of the Croat Peasant Party), Professor Seton Watson (a British political activist and a historian who encouraged the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Kingdom during WWI); Louis Adamic (the president of the Committee of South Slavs in the US, Ivan Ribar- the chairman of the National Liberation Council and Marshall Tito - Commander in chief of the Partisan army.

The Committee used three strategies to achieve their aims: (1) dissemination of messages to the Allied governments and the public regarding the activity of the People's Liberation Movement through the series of information leaflets, radio speeches and lectures;<sup>46</sup> (2) coordination of already existing international efforts regarding the future orientation and organisation of Yugoslavia; (3) and exposing the collaboration of the Chetnik and the fascist forces on the ground in Yugoslavia. Between November 1943 and May 1944, the Committee contributed to redefining the Allied image of Yugoslavia's resistance movement by presenting the AVNOJ as a legitimate representative of the Yugoslav people and a member of the "United Nations" – a phrase first used in the Atlantic Charter - countering the persisting British support for the Chetnik movement.

The first and most urgent aim of the United Committee was to inform the Allied public, politicians and academics in the anglophile world of the "situation on the ground in Yugoslavia" and to "make known the wishes of the Croatian, Serbian and Slovenian people regarding the future organisation of the Yugoslav state," which was to be in line with the ideals espoused by the Jajce Declaration.<sup>47</sup> In the first month of its existence, the UCSS circulated the report entitled "New Yugoslavia", describing the methods used by the partisan groups to liberate the Yugoslav territories and establish local administration units. The report informed that the local population, comprised chiefly of peasants, greeted the freedom of election of local administration with enthusiasm.<sup>48</sup> But "as the People's Liberation Army came to control more and more territories, the local administration system was no longer adequate to coordinate the activities of all the local representatives."<sup>49</sup> Therefore, "The Anti-Fascist Council was established with 65 delegates headed by Dr Ivan Ribar."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Between December 1943 and Spring of 1944, UCSS published and disseminated the following leaflets: "Free Yugoslavia" (which included the foreword by Professor Seton Watson), "The Epic of Yugoslavia", "The Yugoslav Youth Fights Back" and "The Liberation of Yugoslav Litoral." HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, FXXIX. For the transcripts of Bićanić's BBC speeches, see HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 9, F- XXXV, *Bićanić's speeches BBC*.

<sup>47</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, F- XXV, *The UCSS proclamation*.

<sup>48</sup> This administration rested on a widely practised tradition of the *People's Radical Party* in Serbia at the turn of the century. HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, F-XXIX, *New Yugoslavia bilten*.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Ribar was among the leaders of the Yugoslav Partisans, having established the Unified League of Anti-Fascist Youth before his death in November 1943, before the *Jajce Declaration* was signed.

The main task of this council was to conduct the administration of local areas, organise supply for the army and partisan units, and food for the local population."<sup>51</sup>

Bićanić's speeches to the BBC reiterated a similar message and connected the public support for democracy and federalism in the 1920s to the NOP. "Since 1918, the demands for democratic public opinion, self-administration and a federal state structure were loud." However, "during King Alexander's dictatorship 1929-1934, the country was administratively reorganised, and the officials were transferred to places they knew nothing of habits, customs, laws and needs of the population."<sup>52</sup> This administrative reorganisation of the country into nine *banovinas* after 1929 starkly contrasted Bićanić's principles of grounding the political activity on the knowledge of social conditions, cultural customs and economic problems of the countryside.<sup>53</sup> By establishing continuity in the traditions and values between the 1920s and the partisan's actions, Bićanić sought to legitimise the AVNOJ as the real representatives of the Yugoslav people whose policy was "in line with the policy of the United Nations to entertain sincere relations and friendship with the Allies."<sup>54</sup> In the Autumn of 1943, Bićanić promoted these arguments through a series of lectures on the partisan resistance movement in Yugoslavia through the British ATS Colleges, Royal Academies and Societies to create a consensus between the politicians, public and leading Allied military figures regarding the position of the AVNOJ and its executive organ NKOJ.<sup>55</sup>

Another critical strategy for politically legitimising the AVNOJ was coordinating the existing émigré Southern Slav initiatives, which supported the federal and democratic reorganisation of the country. The UCSS considered itself a link between the political organs of the United Nations and

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 9, F- XXXV, *Bićanić's speeches BBC*.

<sup>53</sup> HR- HDA -1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 4, F- X, *Bićanić's letter to Mr Russell, 1942*.

<sup>54</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 12, F-XLI, *Bićanić's report summary, UCSS box*.

<sup>55</sup> In the Autumn of 1943, whilst working at the Watford station of the ATS college, Sonia Wild organised a seminar on anti-fascist resistance movements focusing on their socioeconomic backgrounds. She decided to write to Rudolf Bićanić on the advice of Kingsley Martin, then an editor of the *New Statesmen*, and Dorothy Woodman, head of the Union of Democratic Control. Bićanić's lecture turned into a series of seminars led by Rudolf Bićanić at the ATS college across Britain in the late Autumn of 1943 and winter of 1944. Bićanić and Wild became romantically involved during their collaboration before getting married in 1945. Wild-Bićanić, *Two Lines of Life*.

“the people’s representatives across the globe.” The organisation reported on the Slavic groups’ most essential activities by organising congresses and meetings of the Yugoslav emigres in the US, Canada, and South America. For instance, *The Congress of American Serbians* urged for “the unity of people and the NOP”. At the same time, *The Slovene Congress* held in Cleveland in December 1942 “demanded unification of all Slovenian units into a United Slovenia equal to other units in a new federal democratic Yugoslavia.”<sup>56</sup> *The Congress of the Croatian Americans* held in Chicago in February 1943 expressed similar desires, stating that they “expect that America and their powerful allies, Great Britain and Soviet Russia, would do their utmost to ensure to the other Yugoslav people the realisation of the free and democratic way of life in a federal state in which all peoples have equal rights and obligations.”<sup>57</sup>

The last important aspect of the Committee’s work was exposing the Chetnik movement as the national enemy to legitimise partisans as the sole Allied force in the occupied territories. Mihailo Petrović, one of the UCSS’s founding members, revealed the “false propaganda” from the *Fascist Italian Press*. This story was also reported by the *Times* and *Reuters* in November 1943. According to this news, “General Djukanović [who controlled parts of occupied Serbia] has died of wounds received in Montenegro. Yugoslav officials claimed that Djukanović joined Draža Mihaolovic circles early and was a keen Anglophile.” Petrović argued that these news reports created by “Glas Crnogoraca”, who are under the official control of the Italian Fascist Press, have the aim to discredit the world of the National Liberation Army and the communist resistance regime by propagating the regime of Mihailović as a Western ally. He added that there is proof that Djukanović was a part of the Fascist Quisling Organisation, similar to the Ustaša regime of Ante Pavelić in the Independent State of Croatia. Another concerning example of this false propaganda, which the UCSS countered, was a report on the war effort in Western Serbia.<sup>58</sup> Petrović’s report was corroborated by Bićanić, who wrote to the *News Chronicle* in London that “government information service reported that general Mihailović had extended his control over Western Serbia. Yugoslav flags flew from official buildings, and the Yugoslav railway was in full operation.” In reality, Bićanić continued, “Germans,

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<sup>56</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 12, F-XLI, *Letters received by the UCSS*.

<sup>57</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 12, F-XLI, *Letters from the Congress sent to the UCSS*.

<sup>58</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 12, F-XLI, *Petrović report*.



as well as Mihailović's Tchetniks and the troops of General Nedić, were defending the approaches to Serbia against the Serbian units of the People's Liberation Army."<sup>59</sup>

Yet one needs to question how successful the UCSS was in convincing the Allied governments, led by Winston Churchill, F.D. Roosevelt and Stalin, to accept the AVNOJ as an Allied political group. Judging from the resolution celebrating the third anniversary of the anti-fascist resistance in Yugoslavia on 27 March 1944, their efforts paid off. The Committee expressed "their warm gratitude to Prime Minister Churchill, who proclaimed the whole truth about the struggle of the peoples of Yugoslavia officially and paid them high tribute."<sup>60</sup> A month earlier, on 22 February 1944, as the propaganda activity of the UCSS gathered pace, Churchill, in front of the British parliament, openly recognised the NOP as the Yugoslav resistance movement, officially ending the British support for the Chetnik regime.<sup>61</sup> Despite the progress, the UCSS did not achieve the official recognition of the AVNOJ/NKOJ as Yugoslav political representatives.

With this end in mind, in March 1944, UCSS appealed "to all United Nations governments to sever all relations with the exiled Yugoslav government which is working against the liberation struggle and to recognise the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia as the only legitimate Yugoslav authority elected by the people as the only reliable and active ally to the United Nations."<sup>62</sup> The Resolution of the UCSS added that this official recognition "could render common struggle further while it would be a decisive blow to the enemies whose only hope was to create the differences with their propaganda and exploiting the indeterminate attitude of the Allied Governments towards Yugoslavia."<sup>63</sup>

However, the British favoured a compromise between the cabinet ministers in London, led by Purić, and NKOJ. Bićanić and the UCSS realised that an agreement would have benefitted all parties

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<sup>59</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 12, F-XLI, *Reports on the war effort*.

<sup>60</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 12, F-XLI, *3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary report*, November 1944, the UCSS.

<sup>61</sup> Franko Mirošević, 'Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu, 1941-1945, 242.; Krizman, *Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu 1943-1945*, 1981.

<sup>62</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 12, F-XLI, *3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary report*, November 1944, the UCSS.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

involved as it would the paralysis in the Yugoslav international representation and strengthened the war effort in Yugoslavia. Most importantly, for peasant internationalists, the compromise would have allowed the Yugoslav experts to start negotiating military help and post-war reconstruction credits and loans that the socioeconomic recovery of the country depended on. Through his contacts with the CEEPB in New York, Bićanić knew there was a “tremendous amount of goodwill to be exploited across the Atlantic” and appreciated the significance of obtaining international representative legitimacy.<sup>64</sup> But why did King Peter allow the negotiations to take place, and what led to the resignation of Purić’s cabinet on 1 June 1944? Bićanić’s technocratic ‘line of life’ as an economic expert and a vice-governor of the RYNB reveals behind-the-scenes details that led to the *Vis Agreement* and the formation of a joint cabinet comprised of the representatives of the NKOJ and the émigré government ministers.

#### 4. The Power of Gold

In January 1942, Rudolf Bićanić took the role of vice-governor of the RYNB, courtesy of an appointment by the Minister of Finance, Juraj Šutej. From January to June 1944, he strategically leveraged his position to influence foreign central banks, effectively obstructing the émigré government's access to Yugoslav funds stationed overseas. The RYNB’s operational capacity was compromised during wartime. While the official statutes signified that the bank’s assets were under the governor’s and two vice-governors’ stewardship, insights from Bićanić’s letters to Ambassador Jevtić painted a different picture. Figures such as the Yugoslav Prime Minister, King Peter, and the Yugoslav Ambassador to the US, Konstantin Fotić, wielded considerable sway over financial decisions. Recognising the bank’s precarious position and significance over the Yugoslav political future, Bićanić astutely navigated the existing power void to his advantage. He wielded the power

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<sup>64</sup> Pavlowitch, “Out of Context,” 101.

inherent in his signature to persuade central banks holding these funds to recognise Tito and the AVNOJ's control over the Royal Yugoslav National Bank's assets. This wise move thwarted Konstantin Fotić in New York from transferring these funds to King Peter's private account in the USA or Mihailović in Serbia.

On 22 November 1942, a week before the UCSS proclamation, Bićanić voiced his concerns over the government's fiscal and monetary policy and Purić's cabinet appointments (Mihailović) in a letter sent to the Yugoslav ambassador in London – Bogoljub Jevtić. As a result of the government's increased expenditure and the direction of trade and reconstruction policy after the closure of the *Office for Economic Affairs and Reconstruction* in New York, Bićanić resigned from the position in the *International Board of Trade and the Inter-Allied Committee of Post-war Relief and Reconstruction*. In the same letter to Jevtić, he expressed his concerns over the appointment of Konstantin Fotić as a Yugoslav ambassador to the UNRRA, contributing to the Pro-Chetnik orientation of Purić's government, which "makes it impossible for him to represent this government internationally."<sup>65</sup>

Bićanić conveyed two crucial arguments regarding the Bank: "As a vice-governor, he should be at least responsible for maintaining and safeguarding the property of the bank held abroad." However, he was "never given any information where the property was, what it amounts to, and how much was being spent." Bićanić also criticised the government's monetary policy and warned against the overprinting of the notes from emigration, which worsened the hyperinflation of the currency and exacerbated the living conditions in Yugoslavia.<sup>66</sup> Instead, "the bank should be under the national control and the Board of Trustees should decide how much the money is being printed and how much is circulating." Just a month later, as Bićanić's activity with the UCSS in the Winter of 1943/44 gathered pace, he received the government's letter informing him of his removal from vice-

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<sup>65</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *A letter to Jevtić*, November 1943.

<sup>66</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *A letter to Jevtić*, November 1943. Konstantin Fotić authorised the transfer of authority in 1941 from the jurisdiction of the National Bank to the "state property" of the government. Bićanić warned that "The bank should be under the national control and the Board of Trustees should decide how much the money is being printed and how much is circulating."

governor position by the Royal Decree of 23 December 1943.<sup>67</sup> The government's move was logical in the wake of Bićanić's open support for the AVNOJ. Without Bićanić's signature as one of the two vice-governors of the Bank, the government would not have been able to make swift economic decisions, contributing to the political and economic paralysis of Purić's cabinet.

#### 4.1. *A Double Agent*

The subsequent events took an unexpected turn, with Bićanić responding defiantly to this decision. During the winter of 1943/1944, Bićanić sought legal advice from the Yugoslav academics based in New York and California.<sup>68</sup> Bićanić seemingly attempted to hold onto his control over the Yugoslav finances to ensure relief would eventually reach the Yugoslav countryside. Over a month later, on 24 January 1944, he replied to Ambassador Jevtić, who acted as a mediator in this dispute, refusing to accept his removal from the position of vice-governor. Bićanić expressed his concerns that "his sacking did not follow the proposed legal format outlined by the statutes of the bank."<sup>69</sup> Bićanić referred to the Bank's bylaws, which specified that the removal from the position of the governor or vice-governor had to be initiated by the Minister of Finance and approved by the Council of Ministers, the legalities which were, according to Bićanić, not met.<sup>70</sup>

Jevtić responded, similarly defiantly, saying "that he had received a letter from King Peter II informing him of his removal from the position on 23 December 1943. This letter also included the serial number of the royal decree. "A more legal form than this does not exist," responded the Ambassador.<sup>71</sup> He further warned Bićanić, "I regret to remind you of grave circumstances that the decision of staying in your vice-governor seat would have. I hope you will not put me in the

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<sup>67</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *The Royal Decree of Bićanić's dismissal*.

<sup>68</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Bićanić's letter seeking legal advice*, December 1943.

<sup>69</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Bićanić's letter to Jevtić*, 24 January 1944.

<sup>70</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *The Statutes of the National Bank*, February 1942.

<sup>71</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Jevtić's letter to Bićanić*, 29 January 1944.

position to undergo such measures as a formal representative of our government in London."<sup>72</sup> This diplomatic row ended with Bićanić's final response on 11 February 1944, which stated that he was "not able to vacate the position of the vice-governor" and that he will not respond to the threats sent in the letter."<sup>73</sup> Whilst Jevtić's response might have been an informal threat to Bićanić's political career, Bićanić was determined to continue acting as the Bank's vice-governor. But why would he risk his career to preserve a seemingly vacant position that he was unhappy about in the first place?

Bićanić was concerned about the worsening economic situation in the country, the government's passive attitude regarding the post-war reconstruction planning, and the lack of faith in the government's fiscal policy. Building on his peasant international cooperation with the CEEPB and the *Yugoslav Office for Economic Affairs and Reconstruction*, Bićanić evaluated the devastating effect of war on the Yugoslav economy and peasant population in a paper entitled *The Effects of War on Rural Yugoslavia*.<sup>74</sup> The lack of government understanding regarding the food provisions, appropriate clothing, inadequate housing and infrastructure, structural problems of agricultural overpopulation and absence of proper medical care, all of which required foreign investments and relief, frustrated and motivated Bićanić to hold onto his position. This position gave him control to block the financial transactions of Purić's cabinet and to exert pressure on the allies in the lead-up to the economic reconstruction conferences. His aims also had a profound effect on the political future of Yugoslavia. With these moves, Bićanić attempted to sway the Allies to accept the AVNOJ as the legitimate representative of the Yugoslav people whose socioeconomic programme announced in Jajce aligned with Bićanić's support for social justice and democracy inherent in peasant internationalist vision of modernisation.

Still, Bićanić had to act quickly to prevent Purić's cabinet from accessing the gold reserves. To legitimise Tito's control over the Yugoslav assets, which would have strengthened the AVNOJ's position in the power struggle for international representation, Bićanić first had to delegitimise the existence of the "Royal Yugoslav National Bank." In late January 1944, Bićanić dispatched

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> HR- HDA – 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Bićanić's letter to Jevtić*, 11 February 1944.

<sup>74</sup> Rudolf Bićanić, "The Effects of War on Rural Yugoslavia," *The Geographical Journal* 103, no. 1/2 (1944): 30–45.

telegrams and letters to the headquarters of the national banks where the Yugoslav reserves and assets were held - New York, Ankara, and Rio De Janeiro. He warned the treasurers of the banks and foreign ministers of the USA, the UK, and the Soviet Union that the exiled government of Yugoslavia illegally attempted to obtain control over the Bank's assets, which belonged to the state and the people of Yugoslavia. On 28 January 1944, he reported that "an attempt made by the Royal Yugoslav Government in Cairo to transfer the gold reserves in the amount of 11 million dollars from London to Rio. The legal procedure for this requires the signatures of the governor and two vice-governors of the bank, which he, as an active vice-governor, refused to provide," communicated Bićanić. The reason for this refusal lies in the name of the Bank - in the official fund transfer request, quoted as "De Bank Nationale Royaume de Yugoslavie." According to Bićanić, "this bank does not exist and hold any branches in the country or abroad, there are no officials here authorised by the Board of Directors to give such signature to transfer the money from Barclays to another bank."<sup>75</sup>

Based on the government's next steps, Bićanić's bluff paid off, as the government could not transfer the assets.<sup>76</sup> Bićanić's timely blocking of the financial transfers had a tremendous impact on the direction of Yugoslav international representation in the coming months. In a special proclamation of 11 March 1944, the NKOJ, acting as a provisional Yugoslav government, officially authorised Bićanić to protect the funds of the National Bank abroad.<sup>77</sup> *The Decree of the Re-organisation of the National Bank of Yugoslavia on 17 March 1944* granted Bićanić "special powers and status in the newly reconfigured *Bank of Yugoslavia*."<sup>78</sup> To keep the continuity of his position in the eyes of the Allies, Bićanić remained "in the position of the vice-governor with powers to represent the national bank, open accounts in the name of the national bank, enter into agreements or sign documents, take all steps necessary to come into possession to obtain control over the funds and property of the bank outside of Yugoslavia and organise local law branches in England and US."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, *Letters to the National Banks*, 28 January 1944.

<sup>76</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Fotić to Jevtić letter*, March 1944.

<sup>77</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *11 March 1944 proclamation*.

<sup>78</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *The Decree of the Re-Organisation of the National Bank of Yugoslavia*, 17 March 1944.

<sup>79</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Proclamation regarding the Re-organisation of the Bank*.

With this decree, Bićanić became a crucial international agent of Marshall Tito with the power to direct the economic life of Yugoslavia. While Bićanić lobbied for the transfer of Yugoslavia's political legitimacy to the AVNOJ, the émigré government was in a check-mate position, unable to control the state assets.

Yet, the émigré government did not accept this setback easily. In the twelfth hour, in March 1944, the government attempted to change the Bank's bylaws to enable them to transfer the gold reserves from London to New York under the custodianship of Konstantin Fotić. Fotić urged Ambassador Jevtić to allow the bank governor and only one of the acting vice-governors (Mrmolja) to sign the decree to transfer the reserve money of 11 million dollars into Fotić's US account. This change in the bylaws would have resolved a difficult financial situation as the government could not pay the salaries of the Yugoslav army stationed in Cairo.<sup>80</sup> Bićanić was aware of this attempt and, on 22 March 1944, dispatched a telegram to Mr Fraser, the British War Transport Minister, to postpone any payment to the Royal Yugoslav Governments until the Bank legitimacy problem was officially resolved.<sup>81</sup> The British government, however, refused to annul the international obligations and treaties entered by the Royal Yugoslav Government, which was communicated to Bićanić in the letters by Mr Fraser and Mr Howard.<sup>82</sup> Cordell Hull's (American State Secretary) approval of Fotić's actions in transferring parts of Yugoslav assets to his account in New York endangered Bićanić's earlier gains. It was another blow to the legitimation process of the AVNOJ.<sup>83</sup>

Learning from his past mistakes of targeting the political elites and learning from the discussions with fellow peasant internationalists, Bićanić changed his approach and directed his future correspondence exclusively to the economists – the national bank governors and treasury officers.

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<sup>80</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Fotić to Jevtić letter*, March 1944.

<sup>81</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Bićanić's letter to Mr Fraser*, March 1944. The Bićanić also sent the letter to the Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, on 29 March. The letter read: "The so-called Yugoslav émigré government are deprived of all rights of legal government. It is recommended that the praesidium of the Anti-Fascist Liberation Council should re-examine all international treaties and obligations entered by the émigré government. International agreements and obligations entered by the émigré government in the future on behalf of Yugoslavia and her people will not be recognised." HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Bićanić's letter to Molotov*, March 1944.

<sup>82</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Mr Fraser and Mr Howard's responses*, March 1944.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

This instance of technocratic malversation was accompanied by aggressive propaganda through the UCSS outlets, informing the major Allied newspaper of the partisan's military victories in Yugoslavia.<sup>84</sup> Bićanić's actions aimed to shift public opinion over Yugoslav political representation and convince at least one banking institution of his authority as an acting vice-governor.

This time, Bićanić's change of strategy was successful. On 11 April 1944, he dispatched informative telegrams to the *United States Federal Reserve Bank*, *The Swiss National Bank* and *The National Bank of Brazil*.<sup>85</sup> Following this propaganda, on 17 April 1944, he received a letter from the *Swiss National Bank* confirming the blockade of the Yugoslav funds until the political situation was resolved.<sup>86</sup> A few months later, a telegram from Rio de Janeiro informed: "Mr Bićanić of the bank's refusal to hand 9 million dollars of assets to King Peter deposited in Brazil and subsequent freezing of the Yugoslav account in line with wishes of Marshall Tito."<sup>87</sup> As a testament to Bićanić's victory throughout April 1944, major newspapers reported on these events in the US and Britain, including the *Reuters*, *The New York Times*, *New York Tribune-Herald*, *Chicago Sun*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *The Daily Sketch*.<sup>88</sup>

Purić's decision to coerce King Peter into transferring the gold reserves from Rio back to Serbia, where Draža Mihailović would control them, certainly contributed to Bićanić's success. In the Spring of 1944, the Allies considered this particularly problematic as the governments reached a consensus over Mihailović's collaborative activities.<sup>89</sup> Purić's attempt to transfer the Bank assets, coupled with the UCSS propaganda in London in March 1944, which portrayed Mihailović as an enemy of the "United Nations," destroyed the last straw of the reputation of the exiled government.

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<sup>84</sup> HR- HDA – 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 12, F-XLI, *Newspaper articles and telegrams*, the UCSS. For more on the partisan victories in the Spring of 1944 see Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia*, 2001.

<sup>85</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Bićanić's telegrams to Molotov and the National Banks*, March 1944.

<sup>86</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *A telegram from The Swiss National Bank to Bićanić*.

<sup>87</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *A telegram from Rio de Janeiro to Bićanić*.

<sup>88</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Newspaper reports concerning The Yugoslav National Bank*.

<sup>89</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Telegram regarding Purić's attempt*. The transfer would have been possible due to Purić's changes in the by-laws of the Bank, authorising himself to make executive decisions over the Bank's assets. The communist successes on the battlefield and Chetnik's failed offensive also contributed to this shift in the attitude of the Allied governments. Krizman, *Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu 1943-1945*.



Through their actions and continued support for Mihailović, Purić's cabinet detached themselves from the principles of the Atlantic Charter and United Nations, which turned the opinions of the Allied politicians in favour of the AVNOJ and Tito. Bićanić's transfer of economic legitimacy profoundly affected Yugoslav political representation and financial future. Bićanić, now serving as Tito's official international representative, was in a prime position to lead the reconstruction negotiation of Yugoslavia with the Allied and UN organisations, which he could direct to serve the interests of peasant communities.

## 5. International Representation

The significance of Bićanić's actions lies in their timing. In the short term, the shift in economic legitimacy emphasised the necessity for a political compromise between the AVNOJ and the Yugoslav émigré government. With Bićanić as a mediator, the British government took the initiative to facilitate these negotiations. Maclean's mission to Yugoslavia in September 1943, reporting on the Partisan military triumphs and Chetnik defeats in the 4th German offensive, contributed to the British acceptance of the NOP as an Allied military force.<sup>90</sup> Growing Allied dissatisfaction regarding the Chetnik collaboration with Italian and German occupiers, combined with the UCSS propaganda efforts and Bićanić's economic malfeasance, hastened the process of addressing the question of Yugoslav political representation to the dissatisfaction of Churchill and Roosevelt.<sup>91</sup>

Roberts' and Roshwald's analysis of the Axis occupation of Yugoslavia (1941-1945) indicates that Churchill's decision to redirect British support from Mihailović to Tito was primarily a military move. The British revitalised their military interest in Yugoslavia after the meeting between Churchill and Stalin in October 1943. During this meeting, the two leaders agreed that Britain

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<sup>90</sup> Philip B. Minehan, *Civil War and World War in Europe: Spain, Yugoslavia, and Greece, 1936-1949* (Springer, 2006); Aviel Roshwald, *Occupied: European and Asian Responses to Axis Conquest, 1937-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

<sup>91</sup> Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović, and the Allies, 1941-1945*, 204-23.

would maintain “ninety per cent dominance in Greece” and that they would “go fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia.” This decision was a component of the broader British strategy in the Balkans to realign support in Greece from communist to their anti-communist adversaries.

However, Bićanić's actions in the early Spring of 1944 in London made the British aware of the substantial political ramifications of this military strategy. Supporting partisans militarily opened a question of political legitimacy and international representation of the country, as acknowledged in Roosevelt's letter to King Peter in May 1944.<sup>92</sup> Considering Bićanić's malversations shifts the timeline of the British attempts to diminish the communist influence over Yugoslavia before Maclean briefed Churchill in the Exchequer Office on May 6, 1944.<sup>93</sup> The Allies failed to grasp that, unlike with the Americans, the questions of economic sovereignty for many Yugoslavs took precedence over political sovereignty.<sup>94</sup> Among Yugoslav socioeconomic experts, the concerns over the Yugoslav economic future prevailed—one that Bićanić would later impress upon Tito during their loan negotiation talks in Washington, DC.

Developments surrounding the RYNB in March and April accentuated Churchill's inclination to invite Ivan Šubašić, the pre-war Governor of Croatia, to fly to London to lay the groundwork for a new government. This sentiment manifests in the copious letter exchanges in April 1944 involving the British, Americans, and King Peter II.<sup>95</sup>

The British recognition of Tito's political and economic grip on Yugoslavia, coupled with Bićanić's dialogues with Tito, accelerated the formation of a provisional Yugoslav government—a mission culminating in the signing of the Tito-Šubašić Agreement in June 1944. In the letter dated May 16, 1944, Bićanić informed Tito that Churchill had given him the green light to engage King Peter in discussions regarding the government's collaboration with the AVNOJ and NKOJ. Yet, Bićanić expressed hesitance in acting as the intermediary in these negotiations, considering that his

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<sup>92</sup> Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović, and the Allies, 1941-1945*, 218-20.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 210-12.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 209. Roberts argued that the Americans were exclusively concerned over the questions of political power in Yugoslavia.

<sup>95</sup> Roberts, *Tito, Mihailović, and the Allies, 1941-1945*, 207-12.

reputation in “the émigré government was tarnished, which would reflect negatively on the support of these talks by the Serbian population.”<sup>96</sup> Consequently, General Velebit, one of Tito’s most trusted military advisors, took the helm to lead the preliminary negotiations that paved the way for the Tito-Šubašić Agreement. Bićanić meticulously reported on the initial dialogues between the émigré government, led by Ivan Šubašić, and relayed Šubašić's conditions for a potential coalition government to Tito before their final meetings at Vis in June 1944.<sup>97</sup>

Bićanić’s granular reporting on Šubašić's objectives and stance concerning the nation’s political future equipped Tito with the insights needed to articulate a clear agenda for entering the Vis negotiations. This, in turn, facilitated a political compromise that led to the formation of a provisional government comprising of both the NKOJ and émigré politicians. Without the recognition of the NOP as a legitimate political ally to the “United Nations” and the authorisation to establish a provisional Yugoslav government, Bićanić would have been ineligible to participate in the post-war reconstruction talks that got underway in Washington DC in the summer of 1944, and unable to improve the dreadful living conditions in the Yugoslav countryside, a primary objective of peasant internationalists.

### 5.1. *Giving Back to the Countryside – International Loans and Relief*

The acceptance of the AVNOJ as a political ally of the United Nations, as proclaimed in the Atlantic Charter, and as the political representative of Yugoslavia was crucial for Bićanić’s participation in the discussion on post-war economic reconstruction that began in the summer of 1944.<sup>98</sup> After becoming Tito’s leading international delegate, Bićanić advocated for the aid to reach the Yugoslav countryside and to be allocated based on local needs. His contributions to the Yugoslav

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<sup>96</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, f-XL, *Bićanić’s letter to Tito*, May 1944.

<sup>97</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, f-XL, *Bićanić’s letters to Tito*, May and June 1944.

<sup>98</sup> How crucial it was for international aid to form a provisional government can be seen in the example of Poland. The Polish political representation question was not resolved until January 1945, which resulted in the delay in receiving UNRRA help and forming a clear reconstruction plan. Reinisch, “We Shall Rebuild Anew a Powerful Nation’.”

reconstruction were particularly significant in securing relief and loans from the *United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration* (UNRRA), the American banks and international agencies in the making – the *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development* (World Bank) and the *International Monetary Fund* (IMF).

Bićanić recognised the necessity of international representation in Washington, DC, as early as March 1944. The AVNOJ's limited international visibility adversely affected the KPJ and prospects of financial loans for Yugoslavia. This concern was heightened when, following research by the UCSS, UNRRA's Director-General Herbert Lehrman visited Cairo in spring 1944 to meet the exiled government.<sup>99</sup> Lehrman's meeting alerted Bićanić to the issue of political legitimacy and the need for Tito to intensify political talks with the émigré government, as merely freezing financial assets was insufficient for securing representation in Washington. Bićanić suggested that "the AVNOJ and himself send a formal protest to the Allied governments about this move from Lehrman and increase propaganda activities through the media outlets talking about the devastation of the country, a terrible economic situation as well as widespread hunger."<sup>100</sup> With this move, Bićanić aimed to empower the AVNOJ to guide short-term relief allocation and long-term post-war reconstruction. A presence in Washington DC would also have given Tito's delegates decision-making authority over Yugoslavia's political future. After transferring the political legitimacy of Yugoslavia, Bićanić focused on safeguarding the Yugoslav economy, directing international aid to the impoverished rural populace.

As Tito's right-hand man, Rudolf Bićanić was a natural choice to lead the Yugoslav delegation in Washington. Post-war reconstruction, an urgent task at the end of World War II, was heavily influenced by lessons learned from World War I. The delay in relief delivery and lack of a competent organisation for coordinated relief work in 1918 highlighted the critical link between reconstruction, stability, and security.<sup>101</sup> In his paper *Central European Stability and Yugoslavia*, Bićanić emphasised the necessity of learning from these past mistakes to prevent the suffering of

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<sup>99</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 11, F-XL, *Bićanić's report to Tito 20 March 1944*.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Jessica Reinisch, "'Auntie UNRRA' at the Crossroads", *Past & Present* 218, no. 8 (2013): 72-4.

millions in Yugoslavia, particularly the hungry and malnourished children and peasants. This paper stemmed from his experiences as a foreign trade minister. As a Yugoslav representative on the *Inter-Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements*, established by Churchill in 1941 and chaired by Leith-Ross, one of Bićanić's key contacts.<sup>102</sup> Following the Inter-Allied Committee's lead, various authorities began planning for the management and distribution of relief supplies post-conflict. The United States, with the establishment of *The Office for Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operation* (OFFRO) in early 1942, played a significant role in this process. However, the foundation of the UNRRA as the first UN specialised agency in November 1943 marked a pivotal moment in addressing the international relief challenge.<sup>103</sup> It underscored the necessity of international collaboration to assess the needs of war-ravaged countries, tackle logistical hurdles, and orchestrate the aid process to minimise waste and delays.<sup>104</sup>

Within this general relief agreement, however, diverse interests and interpretations of international cooperation existed and often clashed. Rudolf Bićanić's efforts in Washington, influenced by the climate of peasantism and experience of peasant international cooperation, focused on securing essential resources, food, clothing, and funds for the country's post-war reconstruction, disregarding the political and ideological influences associated with the aid. Bićanić's approach, which could be termed pragmatic peasant internationalism, was notably different from the American 'missionary-internationalist' view of relief efforts, as observed by Reinisch. This American approach to relief embraced the notion of equitable and just world leadership while recognising its links with economic co-dependency.<sup>105</sup>

In contrast, Yugoslav pragmatic peasant internationalism, rooted in long-standing international cooperation with CE European colleagues within the League of Nations and the CEEPB, aligned with the 'collaborative internationalist' stance on European reconstruction shared by other Central

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<sup>102</sup> Nehemiah Robinson, "Problems of European Reconstruction", *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 60, no. 1 (1945): 1-55.

<sup>103</sup> George Woodbridge, *UNRRA: The History of United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*, vol. 1 (New York: 1950), 21-2.

<sup>104</sup> Reinisch, "Internationalism in Relief", 263.

<sup>105</sup> Reinisch, "Internationalism in Relief", 267-270.

and Eastern European nations.<sup>106</sup> This collaborative internationalism stressed the need to secure aid from the US while maintaining national control over the distribution. In many ways, these arguments resemble Boris Furlan's stance on educational reconstruction within the CEEPB. Peasant internationalism offers a valuable context for explaining why Bićanić prioritised acquiring relief and economic loans for long-term reconstruction of rural areas over concerns regarding American ideological influence in Yugoslavia, highlighting the importance of economic over political sovereignty.<sup>107</sup>

In parallel with UNRRA negotiations, Bićanić spearheaded early efforts in late 1944 to secure relief and reconstruction aid for Yugoslavia, focusing on the American *Lend-Lease Program* and the extended *Agreement for Mutual Help* offered to Allied nations. Despite Bićanić's suggestion for Božidar Alexander to lead the negotiations, Tito insisted that Bićanić personally negotiated the loans in Washington DC in December 1944, prioritising Lend-Lease over UNRRA assistance.<sup>108</sup> Lend-Lease was intended to provide immediate relief during the ongoing war and prepare a comprehensive list of Yugoslavia's post-war reconstruction needs.<sup>109</sup> This decision was likely influenced by Lend-Lease's immediate availability and grant nature, in contrast to the slower UNRRA process, exemplified by delays in the case of Poland, which likewise struggled with the question of political legitimacy.

Given the urgency to finalise Lend-Lease contracts with the US government by June 1945, Bićanić pressed Tito to apply for this aid because "the Lend and Lease system was established for the strengthening of the war effort, not for the rebuilding of the country." Bićanić believed that Yugoslavia should also use this system to "obtain certain agricultural produce (although they are

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<sup>106</sup> Reinisch, *Ibid.* For more information on UNRRA in Yugoslavia see, Kornelija Ajlec, "UNRRA and its arrival in Yugoslavia, 1944–1945," *Istorija 20. Veka*, no. 2 (2020): 129–50.

<sup>107</sup> As it was the case in Poland, see Reinisch, "Internationalism in Relief", 277-290 and "We Shall Rebuild Anew a Powerful Nation".

<sup>108</sup> In March 1941 American Congress passed *The Law for the defence of the United States* (which came to be known as *Lend-Lease*). According to Bićanić, it was in the interests of the US to give goods away to the Allied countries because they contributed to the defence of the United States.

<sup>109</sup> Lend-Lease would technically constitute a grant, expected Bićanić, because America did not see many countries repaying their debts after WWII.

technically UNRRA material) and with the Soviet support we should explain why we need them now for the war effort.”<sup>110</sup> The goods available through Lend-Lease, reported Bićanić, were “weapons, munitions, ships and planes; machinery and goods for the repair of the war weapons and machines; reserve parts for all of the war material; all other industrial or agricultural produce which could be used for the defence.” Furthermore, he argued that Tito should also consider pushing for the extended Lend-Lease program, also called *The Agreement for Mutual Help*, which is granted to countries such as Australia, the UK, and Canada. He suggested that Yugoslavia could provide America “wood and coal and a chance for the Americans to export it throughout Europe [using Yugoslav ports] as the Allied army moves around the continent.” However, “through this agreement, most importantly, we would gain a moral approval of the American government through our goodwill and effort to give back the help received through the Lend and Lease system”, implying that Yugoslavia could struggle to repay the American loans.<sup>111</sup>

Leveraging his central role in a broad network of agricultural, economic, academic, and political experts, Bićanić sought a better future for Yugoslav peasants, independent of the KPJ’s policies or the geopolitical dynamics between the USSR and the USA. Aware that Lend-Lease and *The Mutual Aid Agreement* would not fully meet post-war Yugoslav needs, he maintained communication with influential figures in Washington, utilising personal networks and scheduling meetings to gauge American plans for post-war Europe. These interactions were vital for shaping Yugoslavia’s reconstruction strategy, enabling Bićanić to anticipate American aid levels before Congressional approval to reinforce Yugoslav pragmatic peasant internationalist stance. Key figures like Harry White, William Clayton, and Jean Monnet advised Bićanić to seek short-term relief from UNRRA and long-term economic development aid from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, advice on which he acted on.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, F-XVI, *Bićanić’s Lend and Lease Memorandum to the government*.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Harry White was the architect of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank which have served as the pillars of the new economic order. William Clayton was an Assistant Secretary of State under Roosevelt administration, whilst Jean Monnet a founder of the European Commission.

Despite challenges and contradictory information, Bićanić was determined to secure the required reconstruction funds and materials. After presenting his *Lend-Lease Memorandum* and *Mutual Aid Agreement* proposal to William Clayton (the First Assistant of State for Economic Affairs), the 6 June 1945 meeting revealed that “Lend and Lease cannot be organised.” However, Bićanić insisted that “it could since the American troops will pass through Yugoslavia and might have to use Yugoslav railways.”<sup>113</sup> Clayton suggested an alternative: a smaller Export-Import Bank loan focusing on urgent needs like railways and industrial goods transport.<sup>114</sup> Bićanić also learned during visits to the US foreign ministry and the Export-Import Bank that while immediate reconstruction funds could be sought from UNRRA, the future *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development* and the *International Monetary Fund* would provide loans for broader development, subject to their terms. By June 16, 1945, Bićanić estimated an urgent need for \$300 million from UNRRA and an additional \$600 million over five years from the World Bank and the IMF.<sup>115</sup>

In a report to Marshall Tito on June 19, 1945, Bićanić outlined the urgent need for Yugoslavia to actively secure loans and credits in the competitive post-war financial landscape.

“All the countries are trying to get loans and credits. Because of this complex and busy situation where everyone is trying to get money, we need to be there in the spot, constantly negotiate and be on the market. We need to have all the technical material ready so that in case we can get a loan, we can react quickly before the funds run out. Financial help from the US towards Yugoslavia depends not only on the political situation between Yugoslavia and the US but also on relations between the Soviet Union and the US – these relations are getting better.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, F-XVI, *Report to Tito regarding Lend-Lease*, 6 June 1945.

<sup>114</sup> In that case, Bićanić reported, Yugoslavia would sign a deal with big American firms, paying only 10-20% of the value of its products initially and the rest either in Yugoslav goods or as a loan. The loan is usually 75% of the value of the goods which you want to buy and the interest rate is 4% in duration of 6 months to 15 years. HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, F-XVI, *Bićanić's report to Tito*, 19 June 1945,

<sup>115</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, F-XVI, *Bićanić's Lend-Lease Memorandum and report to Tito*, 24 July 1945.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.



Bićanić relayed to Tito the ‘top-secret’ information from Harry White, a key figure behind the creation of the Bank and the IMF, about America’s readiness to invest \$20 billion to “ensure peace.” Although “poor lending terms with high-interest rates of Export-Import Banks do not suit us, we should continue negotiations if Lend-Lease does not work out”, argued Bićanić.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, Mr White briefed Bićanić that “the budget for both organisations should be passed by the end of 1945 for 9.1 billion and 8.8 billion dollars, respectively”. He asked whether Yugoslavia would accept the IMF and World Bank agreements, to which Bićanić reported to Mr White that “the ratification should not be a problem”, indicating Yugoslav readiness to agree to the terms of American economic leadership.<sup>118</sup> He conveyed to Tito that 500-700 million dollars for the reconstruction could be gained from these two projects, whilst preparation for investments and detailed plans should be made immediately. Over the following weeks, his communications with Tito focused on the advantages of International Bank and IMF loans over bilateral agreements with American banks.<sup>119</sup> Acknowledging the political and ideological implications of these financial decisions, Bićanić reassured Tito that “as this is the World Bank, our foreign policy and relations with America does not matter as much as we will be a full member of the bank and should therefore be able to use the funds.”<sup>120</sup>

Bićanić, acutely aware of the delicate balance of power in Europe and Yugoslavia’s relationships with the Soviet Union and the United States, recognised the need for careful diplomacy to maximise aid. His pragmatic approach favoured a strong alliance with the United States, seen as vital for addressing widespread malnutrition, destruction, and hunger plaguing the Yugoslav countryside. In discussions with Mr Clayton about Yugoslavia’s needs from the Export-Import Bank, Bićanić emphasised the country’s hope to secure financial support from its “great Ally,” the United States, as a critical step in resuming foreign trade and bolstering economic independence,

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, F-XVI, *Bićanić’s Lend-Lease Memorandum and report to Tito*, 24 July 1945. The bilateral loans with the American banks were called Export-Import loans and came with less favourable financial conditions. Bićanić communicated to Tito that Yugoslavia would sign a deal with big American firms, paying only 10-20% of the value of its products initially and the rest either in Yugoslav goods or as a loan. The loan amounted to 75% of the value of the goods at an interest rate of 4% and a duration of 6 months to 15 years. HR- HDA – 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, F-XVI, *Bićanić’s report to Tito*, 19 June 1945.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

suggesting that for peasant internationalists economic considerations still superseded the questions of ideological alignments.<sup>121</sup>

Simultaneously, Bićanić prepared his first comprehensive report on complex UNRRA negotiations, alerting Tito that “UNRRA is not popular in America because they are also helping the countries in the Soviet sphere of interest” and advised him that “please be aware of this help needed in your political communication or any reports and news regarding America or UNRRA, being nice to them would mean another 200 million dollars of help for us.” From July 1945, while the development plans for the IMF and World Bank were underway, Bićanić concentrated on representing Yugoslavia at UNRRA and addressing the immediate food crisis in the countryside.<sup>122</sup>

## 5.2. *Yugoslavia at the Crossroads*

In mid-1945, Yugoslavia found itself at a crossroads, balancing the economic benefits of a close relationship with the United States against its ideological alignment with the Soviet Union and other communist-leaning states in Central-Eastern Europe. The latest dispatch from Washington to Marshall Tito encapsulated this ambiguous position. In this report, Bićanić included his recommendations for the post-war trajectory of the Yugoslav political economy, favouring the support from the Western international institutions. Bićanić urged the government to deliberate on joining “the new European Economic Committee as considering that the Soviet Union was not a part of it”, as well as the “Committee for Coal” in London, where Czechoslovakia was a member. He advised that decisions regarding these memberships should be made after the Potsdam Conference of the Big Three in July 1945 after consulting the Czech and USSR governments. Recognising the uncertainty in Yugoslav foreign policy, Bićanić concluded by suggesting an

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<sup>121</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, F-XVI, *Bićanić's letter to Clayton*, 18 June 1945.

<sup>122</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, F-XVI, *Bićanić's report to Tito regarding the situation in Washington*, 24 July 1945. His overview indicated that the Ministry of Finance, Trade and the National Bank needed to start working on the strategy regarding the Bretton Woods agreements and the establishment of the World Bank and the IMF. The National bank should be asking for a loan of 600 million from the World Bank. Due to the policy and organisation of the bank's leadership Bićanić believed Yugoslavia would be able to receive such a loan. The government should also form a commission which would make an investment plan on how the money would be used in order to stay in line with the laws of the World Bank, advised Bićanić.

increase in representatives in America if leaning towards accepting loans or a reduction if deciding otherwise.<sup>123</sup>

Whatever the political ambivalence in Belgrade over the direction of Yugoslav foreign policy and future foreign political orientation, Bićanić remained pragmatic in his approach before the UNRRA Council, prioritising sufficient food supplies for the rural populace and advocating for collaborative, regionally tailored decision-making. He aimed to secure at least \$300 million in aid from UNRRA by aligning with regional allies (Czechoslovakia, Greece, and Poland) to establish the UNRRA Sub-Committee on Food Supplies. This Committee aimed to improve food and clothing distribution in ravaged areas and involve recipient states in UNRRA's decision-making. Bićanić reported to Tito his initiative for "the UNRRA Central Committee and the Committee for Food listens to the report of all the countries receiving help. The Soviets, Greeks, and Czechs accepted this proposal, but with the Polish government, it is difficult to communicate; likewise, I have not managed to contact the Chinese yet."<sup>124</sup> Similarly, Bićanić expressed concern that American apprehensions about Yugoslavia's alignment with the "Soviet sphere of influence" harmed its position in front of UNRRA, which was "discriminating against Yugoslavia in favour of Greece."<sup>125</sup>

Assuring that the UNRRA food parcels reached the Yugoslav countryside was Bićanić's top priority. He argued that this priority had to be considered against the American perceptions of Yugoslav communist tendencies. In preparation for UNRRA's Supplies Conference in Rome in June 1945, Bićanić drafted a memorandum titled *Urgent food needs in Yugoslavia*, advocating for increased food supplies to the country's passive regions. He highlighted the deficiency zone encompassing South Croatia, Dalmatia, and Montenegro, with a population of 7-8 million, facing severe shortages. The grain production in this region was "insufficient to cover barely half its needs on UNRRA bases level; milk, meat and fat production covers only a small proportion of its needs; no sugar is available at all," warned Bićanić.<sup>126</sup> Bićanić emphasised that the proposed increase in

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<sup>123</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 8, F-XVI, *Bićanić's report to Tito regarding the situation in Washington*, 24 July 1945,

<sup>124</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 3, F-VII, *Bićanić's 5<sup>th</sup> report on UNRRA*, June 1945.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 3, F-VII, *Bićanić's UNRRA Memorandum*, June 1945.

UNRRA supplies was intended to meet minimum regional demands and represented a compromise with the Mission.<sup>127</sup>

The problem of insufficient food supplies still needed to be resolved by the Third Council Meeting of UNRRA. In August 1945, Bićanić reiterated his concern about the unresolved issue of adequate supplies for Yugoslavia, noting that the allocation for 1946 remained unchanged in 1946.<sup>128</sup> The conclusions of the Third Council Meeting confirmed the extension of the UNRRA administration in Yugoslavia throughout 1946. Countries providing aid were requested to contribute 1% of their GDP, with the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom still serving as principal donors. By the end of 1945, Yugoslavia had received approximately \$250 million in aid, with a similar allocation planned for 1946. Bićanić's successful initiative to include recipient countries in UNRRA's decision-making processes led to Yugoslavia's selection as a permanent member of the Supply Committee, consisting of sub-committees for supply and distribution.<sup>129</sup> This shift towards recipient inclusion in decision-making reflects a broader discussion on the balance between international aid and national sovereignty inherent in the tensions between 'missionary' and 'collaborative' internationalism.

Although working in different political contexts, Bićanić consistently focused on improving peasant living standards, a theme central to his academic work since his arrival in London in 1941. Addressing the third UNRRA Council, he argued that "the natural conditions and not the political frontiers must form the basis of our plans [for post-war economic reconstruction]."<sup>130</sup> This perspective contrasted with the approach of Sava Kosanovic from the Central-Eastern European Planning Board and Polish representatives in UNRRA, who emphasised American responsibility and Yugoslav entitlement to aid.<sup>131</sup> Bićanić instead advocated for international obligations and duties grounded in scientific research reflecting rural life conditions guiding funding decisions. For him, aid to Yugoslavia should be internationally driven, based on the socioeconomic needs of its

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 3, F-VII, *Bićanić's report on the Third Council Meeting*.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 4, F- X, *A letter of congratulations to Mr Russel*.

<sup>131</sup> See Reinisch, "Internationalism in Relief", 278.

struggling peasant population, rather than Yugoslavia's ideological alliances in the post-war order.<sup>132</sup> Bićanić believed that an increase in relief supplies to Yugoslavia was a logical decision given that “this part of Europe is a unit not only from the point of view of natural conditions but also from the standpoint of the social organisation of agricultural production – peasant smallholdings,” as he confessed back in 1943.<sup>133</sup> Therefore, realistic economic priorities took precedence over broader ideological considerations, demonstrating the pragmatic nature of peasant internationalists and their vision of rurally-centred modernisation.

Yet, it would be dismissive to say that political considerations played no role in Bićanić's action. After all, Bićanić did envisage future regional collaboration of Central-Eastern European states and the international system based on regional economic communities similar to the ideas developed by the CEEPB.<sup>134</sup> In many academic exchanges, Bićanić confessed that “today, the smaller nations of Central and Eastern Europe can only choose between federalism or destruction. They must collaborate, unite, or league themselves in greater units; otherwise, they are in danger of being devoured by the dynamic forces of the Great Powers.” Furthermore, the idea of federalism had two significant potentials; “by collecting their forces, the smaller nations can assert themselves in the international community as well as protect their national life against oppression and tyranny.” For him the concept of regional federalism represented “a definite political programme which asks from bold statements to break down the monopoly of petty nationalists, political and vested interests.”<sup>135</sup> However, Bićanić maintained that political economy should develop from economic recovery and cooperation, starting with local peasant communities and gradually integrating into national, regional, and international economic networks. While he ideologically favoured regional federalism, in his correspondence, he pragmatically argued that such collaboration was feasible only after states achieved a certain level of economic development, enabling them to complement Western industrial powers in a genuinely collaborative, internationalist manner.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 3, F-VII, *Bićanić's report on the Third Council Meeting*

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Feliks Gross, *Crossroads of Two Continents* (Columbia University Press, 1945).

<sup>135</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 4, F- X, *A letter to the Federal Union Conference*, 1943.

<sup>136</sup> Rudolf Bićanić, *Problems of Planning East and West* (The Hague: The Hague Mount. Co, 1967).

## 6. Conclusions

Bićanić's activity in the UCSS and his position as vice-governor of the RYNB depict a more nuanced story of the communist legitimation of power in the months preceding the Tito-Šubašić agreement in June 1944. Bićanić's actions reveal that the socioeconomic problems of the Yugoslav peasantry shaped the political loyalties of the Yugoslav technocratic elites as much as the ethnic and ideological debates over the Yugoslav state's future. Opening the Yugoslav "social question" before the war's end – an accusation of the émigré government towards AVNOJ in 1943 – was a decisive move towards winning over much of the Yugoslav intelligentsia, experts, and left-leaning political figures in exile.<sup>137</sup> The climate of opinion fostered by peasant internationalism predisposed the Yugoslav expert support for the KPJ's program of "social justice for all" as a solution to the problem of agricultural overpopulation. Thus, the KPJ rule through AVNOJ became a favoured political framework through which social and economic reforms defined by Yugoslav economic and education experts at the CEEPB in New York 1942-43 could be achieved.<sup>138</sup>

Bićanić's story testifies that a climate of 'peasantism,' shaped by the socioeconomic conditions of the rural environment, should be considered when explaining increased support for the KPJ during the Second World War. Bićanić's lobbying to legitimise the NKOJ and AVNOJ as an Allied political element through the UCSS and to block the émigré government's access to the RYNB assets accelerated the British support for reconciliation between the NKOJ and the exiled government.

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<sup>137</sup> Franko Mirošević, "Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu, 1941-1945," 241 based on Krizman, *Jugoslavenske Vlade u Izbjeglištvu 1943-1945*.

<sup>138</sup> The technocratic views over the optimal direction of the Yugoslav political economy, which Bićanić explored in his academic papers in the 1950s and 60s, could be conceptualised as *Integrative Agrarianism*. Optimal industrialisation of the countryside achieved through this concept promoted the synthesis of economic, social, and cultural reforms on the local level. This this rurally centred modernisation urban and rural areas would be tied together by sustainable and mutually reinforcing socioeconomic networks. For an introduction to Bićanić's political thought, consult Koshimura, "Analysis of the Socioeconomic Works of Rudolf Bićanić from the Perspective of Global History."

Consequently, Churchill's and Bićanić's mediation led to the signing of the agreement between Tito and Šubašić in June 1944 and a *de facto* political legitimization of the AVNOJ by the Allies. International recognition of the communist organs of power, supported by obtaining practical control over Yugoslavia's economic assets, was an essential precondition for allowing Bićanić, as Tito's international representative, to negotiate the country's economic reconstruction. He knew that the country's long-term development depended heavily on American loans. His pragmatic peasant internationalism went hand in hand with the critical premises of American 'missionary internationalism' based on self-help and self-reliance, promoted through bilateral economic help and UNRRA's relief.

However, Bićanić and other peasant internationalists working at the UNRRA Council were determined to secure greater national control of the relief distribution process, aiming to direct the aid where it was most needed. In the case of Yugoslavia, that was the struggling countryside. Yugoslav and Central-Eastern European representatives argued for more decision-making power of the receiving countries in allocating and distributing UNRRA's funds, which amounted to 415 million in aid by the end of 1946.<sup>139</sup> Rudolf Bićanić's pragmatic peasant internationalism, a part of the 'collaborative internationalism' of CE European experts in the UNRRA, demonstrates how pragmatism and idealism could practically be reconciled in international policy. They continued the tradition of peasant internationalist arguments that strengthened the economic sovereignty of Yugoslavia and Central-Eastern Europe without compromising the acceptance of aid and loans. The story of Rudolf Bićanić is also an integral part of the narrative, highlighting the rising role of technical expertise in international politics. Through peasant international cooperation, they outlined a need for a rurally focused modernisation. The collaboration of Yugoslavia and other Central-Eastern European states at the UNRRA Council reflected Bićanić's view that the UNRRA relief should pave the way for long-term reconstruction or 'development,' as the CEEPB referred to the process.<sup>140</sup> By positioning himself as a leading Yugoslav representative in Washington lobbying for the greatest possible financial package, Bićanić aimed to achieve a part of the peasant

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<sup>139</sup> For the overview of this process, see Jessica Reinisch, "'Auntie UNRRA' at the Crossroads.'

<sup>140</sup> HR- HDA - 1005, Bićanić Rudolf, box 3, F-VII, *Bićanić's report on the Third Council Meeting*.

internationalists vision of future economic development of CE Europe, inherent in the 'optimal industrialisation of the countryside.'

It is thus crucial to contextualise peasant international actions within the national and international political environment and intellectually explore their vision of future Yugoslavia and CE Europe. Only in this way can historians investigate the entangled histories of experts' "two lines of life," as this dissertation does with the Yugoslav peasant internationalists.

In this case, a harmonious analysis of both spheres of individual action, technical expertise, and political engagement reveals why Bićanić suddenly retreated from public life in Yugoslavia. After completing the UNRRA negotiations in the autumn of 1945, he unexpectedly decided to resign from his position as foreign trade minister, which he had occupied since January 1945. Although he had never spoken directly about his decision, his wife, Sonya Wild Bićanić, explained his reasoning. She attested that her husband stayed in politics as long as he had to ensure that the UNRRA's help would reach the starving population and children of the Yugoslav passive regions.<sup>141</sup> After his return to Yugoslavia in November 1945, disappointed by the lack of democratic elements in Yugoslavia, Bićanić accepted a position as a *Professor of Political Economy* at the University of Zagreb. He "unwaveringly from the point of view of a just and more equal democratic society" opposed the communist regime.<sup>142</sup>

In the last twenty years, Bićanić returned to his first love – the research into the Yugoslav countryside. As an academic, he was haunted by "all the things that were being done wrong" but was unable "to do anything about it except for write articles such as 'How not to develop a country.'"<sup>143</sup> In over 130 academic papers, Bićanić elaborated models for a more equitable political economy (presented at the leading agricultural and economic conferences in India, the USA, Sydney, and Vienna).<sup>144</sup> He also collaborated with scholars from the Global South through UNESCO and the FAO, continuing and strengthening the networks of peasant internationalists

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<sup>141</sup> Wild-Bićanić, *Two Lines of Life*, 163.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> During the 1950s and 1960s, Bićanić wrote over 130 academic papers and spoke at a dozen international economic and sociological conferences, publishing two further monographs - *The Period of Manufactures in Croatia and Slavonia 1750-1860* and *The Industrial Revolution in Croatia after 1848*. For an overview of his academic activity, see Rudolf Bićanić, *Ekonomska podloga hrvatskog pitanja* (Zagreb: 1995), "Introduction" by Uroš Dujšin, and Karaula, "Prilozi za Biografiju Rudolfa Bićanića."



during the Cold War. Their networks and ideas on the 'third path to modernisation between liberalism and socialism were reflected in the socio-economic policies of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Yugoslav arguments in favour of the New International Economic Order, institutionalised following Bićanić's sudden death in 1968.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> For a brief overview of the Yugoslav involvement in this process see Marie-Janin Calic, *History of Yugoslavia* (Purdue University Press, 2018), 183; and for the Global South perspective Adom Getachew, "The Welfare World of the New Economic Order", in *Worldmaking after Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2019).

# 6. The Afterlives of Peasant Internationalism, 1945-1956

## 1. Introduction

In the aftermath of World War II (WWII), a new socialist Yugoslav state emerged, profoundly influencing the life trajectories and professional aspirations of the Yugoslav experts and diplomats termed ‘peasant internationalists.’ Despite the change in political leadership, the rural modernisation approaches peasant internationalists promoted through cooperative activities continued to influence the state’s international identity. The experiences of Rudolf Bićanić, a pivotal figure in the Yugoslav cabinet during the war, epitomise the dual legacy of this period.<sup>1</sup> On one side, WWII marked a juncture in Yugoslavia’s history, as the Communist Party of Yugoslavia initiated sweeping political, social, and economic reforms. These changes realigned the country’s international allegiance, pivoting towards the Soviet Union and distancing from the United States in the immediate postwar era. Yet, the war also served as a crucial link between the first and second Yugoslav states, preserving and perpetuating international collaborative ventures that had begun in the 1920s.<sup>2</sup>

The onset of war catalysed transnational collaboration, particularly in economic and social realms, as countries confronted the war’s impacts on their populations, economies, and strategic material procurement. The establishment of the Central and Eastern European Planning Board (CEEPB) embodies the collective aspiration to reconstruct Europe on democratic principles and maintain

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<sup>1</sup> Sonia Wild-Bićanić, *Two Lines of Life* (Zagreb: Durieux: Croatian PEN Centre, 1999), 163. Disillusioned by the same government, it helped to establish that Bićanić left the government upon his return to the country as a sign of his disapproval of the political and economic rapprochement towards the Soviet Union.

<sup>2</sup> For the accounts of interwar and post-war continuities, see Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton University Press, 2009); Jamie Martin, *The Meddlers: Sovereignty, Empire, and the Birth of Global Economic Governance* (Harvard University Press, 2022); Natasha Wheatley, *The Life and Death of States: Central Europe and the Transformation of Modern Sovereignty* (Princeton University Press, 2023).

ongoing cooperation with the Allies. The Board shaped approaches to international reconstruction and aid through socioeconomic collaboration, a commitment institutionalised with the United Nations (UN) founding in San Francisco in April 1945. Peasant internationalists' projects, ideas, and professional networks did not dissolve with the war's end and the CEEPB's dissolution. They flourished within the new UN framework, influencing the work of the ILO, UNESCO, WHO, and UNICEF, among other organisations. Peasant internationalists continued championing economic initiatives, focusing on improving peasant welfare, enhancing agricultural productivity, and advocating for decentralised local governance. In doing so, they fortified expert networks across various socioeconomic fields and underscored that the challenges of Central and Eastern European reconstruction were of international concern, extending beyond the Yugoslav borders and Allied interests to shape European reconstruction. Consequently, WWII signalled the importance of technical expertise in leading modernisation or 'development' projects (as these endeavours became increasingly known), shaped by knowledge circulations through the Iron Curtain.<sup>3</sup>

Investigating the significance of peasant internationalism — a type of international cooperation embracing both socioeconomic expertise networks and the advocacy of rural, peasant-focused modernisation strategies — thus demands analysis that transcends WWII's temporal confines and nation-states' boundaries. Weaving together Yugoslav international history's interwar, wartime, and Cold War phases unveils new dimensions of international cooperation, illuminating the technocratic roots of Yugoslavia's 'third way' in foreign policy and political economy explored in the conclusions.

This chapter sets the stage for these reflections based on examples of peasant internationalist afterlives. The case of the Ankara Conference convened to solve the opium overproduction problem demonstrates the continued economic formulation of sovereignty propagated by the Yugoslav representatives, this time in a state socialist capacity. Considering that India and Yugoslavia were pivotal in forming the Non-Aligned Movement, their collaboration in Ankara

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<sup>3</sup> For an introduction to international development, with an overview of its Western, liberal, foundations, consult Corinna R. Unger, *International Development: A Postwar History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

prompts an exploration into the other avenues of socioeconomic cooperation among these states from 1949 to 1955, preceding the formal meetings of national leaders between 1956 and 1961.<sup>4</sup>

Subsequently, the narrative moves on to Dr Andrija Štampar's influential role within the World Health Organisation (WHO). It highlights Yugoslavia's continued championing of an integrative and economic approach to rural modernisation in post-1945 international health policy, which connected health, education, economy, sanitation, international law, and domestic social reforms. It demonstrates how the peasant internationalist rurally-focused modernisation also profoundly influenced the United Nations' development paradigms in the 1950s as they advocated for the decentralisation of public health services, combining small-scale welfare-focused projects with large-scale technical assistance provisions of the UN through the involvement of Central-Eastern European experts in a consultative capacity.<sup>5</sup> The chapter further explores the early examples of Yugoslav-Indian alliance in promoting the *Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development* (SUNFED), showcasing the countries' aligned goals, arguments, and strategies in international cooperation and a peasant-centred and decentralised path to 'development.'<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development* (UNCTAD) defined the term "Global South," referring to the countries in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and most parts of Asia and Oceania, which are of traditionally lower standards of living due to centuries of colonialism and imperialism. However, the 'Global South' is not just a geographic and economic descriptor but is also a useful historical conceptual framework, which helps historians reveal perspectives on historical processes of formerly colonised countries still navigating the legacies of imperialism and striving for full autonomy in a globalised world. The Global South is by no means a monolithic entity but a diverse and heterogeneous collection of states with varying political, economic, and cultural contexts. The term encapsulates the shared experiences of these countries in terms of inequality and the challenges posed by global capitalism while also recognising the agency of these nations in redefining their place in the international system. I argue that connecting these stories to the interwar history of Central-Eastern Europe could reveal new dimensions of these historical processes.

<sup>5</sup> Corinna R. Unger, "International Organizations and Rural Development: The FAO Perspective", *International History Review* 41, no. 2 (2019): 451–58.

<sup>6</sup> Ghandi in India promoted a highly decentralised architecture of national politics and modernisation. He proposed a village-centred economy in the 1930s, similar to peasant internationalists' modernisation model of "optimal industrialisation of the countryside." Unger, *International Development*, 29. In her exploration of the NAM foundations, Miskovic notes Jawaharlal Nehru's fascination and appeal with the Yugoslav economic model, which, when contextualized with peasant internationalism, could be traced to the interwar period and extended beyond the study of Asian-Afro relations to include Central-Eastern Europe. Nada Boškowska Leimgruber, Harald Fischer-Tin, and Nataša Mišković, "Introduction" in *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi, Bandung, Belgrade*, Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Asia (London: Routledge, 2014).

In the context of the UN, this 'syncretic' approach to development that peasant internationalists foreshadowed decentres the histories of development away from the West.<sup>7</sup> In the era following 1945, the significance of technical expertise in international diplomacy has been scrutinised within the context of escalating geopolitical tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. During the Cold War years, their battle to win the hearts and minds of citizens worldwide through military, relief, and technical assistance turned the battleground into a 'development' competition between socialist and liberal visions of progress.<sup>8</sup> However, it is necessary to question to what extent these two approaches to development or modernisation were mutually exclusive. Socialist Yugoslavia emerged as a nation that navigated and transcended these dichotomies of the Cold War era.

This chapter delineates how Yugoslav peasant internationalists furthered the demands for social justice and welfare by decoupling these aspirations from a strictly socialist political framework and aligning them instead with the United Nations post-WWII development agenda. By exploring peasant internationalists' involvement in these projects, historians can gain deeper insights into the persistent influence of interwar rural modernisation arguments as a fabric of the UN technical assistance provisions. On the Yugoslav side, they reveal the technocratic roots of the Yugoslav 'third way' in foreign policy and political economy that became a defining feature of Yugoslavia in the international system following the Yugoslav-Soviet split in 1948. This distinctive approach culminated in Yugoslavia's Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) leadership.<sup>9</sup>

The burgeoning field of Yugoslav historiography, focusing on the nation's post-1945 engagement with the non-European states, has started to unravel the complexities of this Yugoslav 'third way' and 'peaceful coexistence.' However, these narratives often overlook the interwar period and the

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<sup>7</sup> The perspective of Western countries still arguably dominates these histories; see Unger, *International Development and Sara Lorenzini, Global Development A Cold War History*, (Princeton University Press, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> An good example for understanding the 'big picture' of development historiography is Stephen J. Macekura and Erez Manela, *The Development Century: A Global History*, Global and International History (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Peasant internationalists demonstrate that smaller Eastern European states' interest in forging relations with independent India, Pakistan and Indochina predate the 1955 Bandung Conference. James Mark and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonisation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 66

role of socioeconomic expertise in this international positioning.<sup>10</sup> Peasant internationalists offer a new window into studying the country's non-aligned orientation, encompassing both political and socioeconomic aspects and highlighting the continuity of personnel and ideas promoted by Yugoslav experts within international organisations. These connections aligned Yugoslavia more closely with the newly decolonised nations of the non-European world than with its socialist Eastern European neighbours or Western allies. Thus, the post-1945 agrarian modernisation strategies, marked by increasing cooperation of the 'East' with countries from the so-called Global South, might not represent a "conceptual revolution." Instead, they could "be better understood as the reformulation of the older discourse, a process whereby older models of social change were reworked and blended together into a holistic pattern."<sup>11</sup>

Reflecting their varied personal, professional, and political trajectories, the lives of six prominent peasant internationalists diverged after 1945. Rudolf Bićanić, distancing himself from politics, thrived as an economist, advocating for balanced industrialisation in rural areas until his untimely death in 1968.<sup>12</sup> His colleague, Nicholas Mirkovich, met a tragic end in May 1944, a loss deeply felt by members of the Central and Eastern European Planning Board.<sup>13</sup> Andrija Štampar, on the other hand, achieved considerable international acclaim post-1945, holding esteemed roles such as the chairman of the WHO's Interim Commission, an Executive Board member, and a WHO consultant in Afghanistan, Egypt, and Sudan. He also served as Dean of Zagreb University's

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<sup>10</sup> Ljubica Spaskovska, James Mark, and Florian Bieber, "Introduction: Internationalism in Times of Nationalism: Yugoslavia, Nonalignment, and the Cold War," *Nationalities Papers* 49, no. 3 (2021): 409–12; Ljubica Spaskovska and Anna Calori, "A Nonaligned Business World: The Global Socialist Enterprise between Self-Management and Transnational Capitalism," *Nationalities Papers* 49, no. 3 (2021): 413–27; Milorad Lazic, "Arsenal of the Global South: Yugoslavia's Military Aid to Nonaligned Countries and Liberation Movements," *Nationalities Papers* 49, no. 3 (2021): 428–45; Anna Calori, "Cigar Socialism: An Entangled History of Yugoslav-Cuban Relations," *Cold War History* (2023): 1–19; Ljubica Spaskovska, "Constructing the "City of International Solidarity": Non-Aligned Internationalism, the United Nations and Visions of Development, Modernism and Solidarity, 1955–1975," *Journal of World History* 31, no. 1 (2020): 137–63. Lena Dallywater, Chris Saunders, and Helder Adegar Fonseca, eds., 'Comrades in Arms: Yugoslav Military Aid to Liberation Movements of Angola and Mozambique, 1961–1976', in *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War 'East'* (De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019), 151–80.

<sup>11</sup> Corinna R. Unger, *International Development*, 8; Michael E. Latham, "Modernization," in *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 7 (2003): 727–28.

<sup>12</sup> Wild-Bićanić, *Two Lines of Life*, 163–4.

<sup>13</sup> The New York Public Library (NYPL), *The Central and Eastern European Planning Board*, Box. 7, "Feliks Gross' letter to the Delegates," 1944.

Medical Faculty and President of the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences. The fates of Konstantin Fotić, Slobodan Jovanović, and Boris Furlan took different turns. Furlan, a supporter of the KPJ since 1943, faced life imprisonment in the infamous 1947 *Nagode* trial against non-communist Slovenian political figures. Fotić sought refuge in the USA, avoiding the communist regime's imprisonment. At the same time, Jovanović was implicated in wartime collaboration due to his support for Draža Mihailović and faced sentencing as the émigré Prime Minister.<sup>14</sup>

### 1.1. *The Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia*

To fully comprehend the significance of the afterlives of peasant internationalism for the Yugoslav state and its international orientation, it is essential to contextualise them within the emergence of socialist Yugoslavia and the shifting geopolitical dynamics influencing its foreign policy. The period between 1945 and 1956 was marked by several U-turns in the country's political economy, foreign policy, and geopolitical positioning away from the Allies to the Soviet Union, 1946-1948. The transition towards an independent coexistence 1948-1950 was marked by further economic centralisation before the rapprochement with the US and the introduction of self-management as a socialist economic alternative in the early 1950s. But to evaluate the continued relevance of peasant internationalism for socialist Yugoslavia and its future non-aligned partnership, it is crucial to set the stage for the chapter's analysis and conclusions, teasing out the divergences between the socialist and peasant internationalist visions of modernity against this backdrop.

The establishment of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ – Federativna Narodna Republika Jugoslavija) marked the beginning of an era characterised by ambitious socioeconomic reforms aimed at transforming the predominantly agrarian society into a modern socialist state. Central to this transformation was the role of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which, despite

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<sup>14</sup> Konstantin Fotić, *The War We Lost; Yugoslavia's Tragedy and the Failure of the West*. (New York: Viking Press, 1948) and On Furlan's death, see [http://www.dlib.si/listalnik/URN\\_NBN\\_SI\\_DOC-PX2HAFER/7/index.html#zoom=z](http://www.dlib.si/listalnik/URN_NBN_SI_DOC-PX2HAFER/7/index.html#zoom=z) (accessed 1 February 2024).

its majority three-quarters peasant membership, struggled to put the countryside at the centre of its modernisation plans aligned with the peasant internationalist vision of reconstruction guided by social justice and democracy.<sup>15</sup>

In the formative post-war period, the relationship with the Soviet Union significantly shaped Yugoslavia's political and economic fabric. During the transitional phase of late 1945 to early 1946, under the leadership of President Tito and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ – *Komunistička partija Jugoslavije*), efforts were made to synchronise Yugoslavia's political and economic frameworks with those of the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe. For instance, historians have attributed the stagnation in peasant living standards to the 1948 collectivisation of peasant smallholdings and the centralised procurement system for agricultural products, known as 'otkup'. Boris Kidrič, the architect of Yugoslavia's first five-year plan, ambitiously targeted a fivefold increase in industrial output. However, while legally voluntary, the 'otkup' system effectively coerced peasants into an unfavourable economic position, compelling them to sell their produce at low prices and buy industrial goods at high rates, diminishing their purchasing power and fueling a substantial black market.<sup>16</sup>

Despite its stringent nature, the 'otkup' fell short of securing half of the agricultural output projected in the five-year plan. Consequently, in early 1949, Kidrič launched a new collectivisation campaign, consolidating numerous peasant smallholdings and effectively ending the era of primary reliance on private agriculture in a further shift towards state-centralisation of the economy. This agricultural policy starkly contrasted with the economic growth models championed by Bićanić and Mirkovich, who drew inspiration from Danish and German grassroots credit and production

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<sup>15</sup> Marie-Janin Calic, *History of Yugoslavia* (Purdue University Press, 2018), 163; John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 238.

<sup>16</sup> The challenges faced by the socialist Yugoslavia in the post-war period were formidable. The nation had endured staggering demographic and material losses, with over a million lives lost, 3.5 million people left homeless, 289,000 farms ravaged, and significant damage to a third of its industry. The infrastructure was in shambles, with most roads, railways, and bridges reduced to ruins. In 1945, agricultural prospects were bleak, evidenced by the fact that only 43.8% of households possessed an iron plough, while 18.2% had only a rudimentary wooden one. These conditions were even more dire than the Central and Eastern European Planning Board anticipated in 1942-43. Calic, *History of Yugoslavia*, 171.



cooperative ventures rather than the USSR's farming cooperatives imposed from above and controlled centrally by the state apparatus.<sup>17</sup>

At odds with the state's ambitious drive towards rapid industrialisation and nationalisation, figures such as Rudolf Bićanić and Andrija Štampar—prominent peasant internationalists—voiced strong opposition to centralisation and lack of attention to rural locales in sweeping socialist reforms. They critiqued the state's adherence to the Soviet model, a stance that persisted even as Yugoslavia began to incorporate decentralisation and market mechanisms into its economy post-1950, notably through the introduction of the 'self-management' system.<sup>18</sup> This divergence from Soviet economic policies signified a crucial moment of reevaluation and adaptation for Yugoslavia, as Tito aimed to distance Yugoslavia from the Soviet Union and attract significant Western investments and loans. Bićanić and Štampar's emphasis on rural-centric modernisation elucidates the complexities of Yugoslavia's alliances with newly decolonised states. It suggests that these alliances were not merely strategic diversions from Soviet influence but were profoundly informed by a commitment to an alternative vision of modernity, one that was simultaneously socialist and global in its outlook and rooted in a longer tradition of peasant internationalism.<sup>19</sup>

The significance of international aid in Yugoslavia's post-war recovery, focusing on Rudolf Bićanić's instrumental role in negotiating support through UNRRA, unveils the significance of Yugoslav geopolitical positioning and economic strategies underpinning post-WWII reconstruction efforts. The aid provided to Yugoslavia through UNRRA amounted to 415 million dollars. This included 237 million dollars in essential food, clothing, and medical supplies. The rest was earmarked for rejuvenating the nation's industry, agriculture, and transportation infrastructure, successfully restoring about 90% of the damaged inland infrastructure and ports. Despite Tito's

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<sup>17</sup> Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 250. Nikolay Kamenov differentiates three different cooperative models (credit, production, and farming) in Liesbeth van de Grift, Dietmar Müller, and Corinna R. Unger, *Living with the Land: Rural and Agricultural Actors in Twentieth Century Europe – A Handbook* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2022), chapter 6 "Pooling resources in the European Countryside."

<sup>18</sup> Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 254 and Calic, 179-183. For more on self-management, see Gal Kirn, *Partisan Ruptures: Self-Management, Market Reform and the Spectre of Socialist Yugoslavia* (Pluto Press, 2019); Spaskovska and Calori, "A Nonaligned Business World."

<sup>19</sup> As argued in the socialist globalisation and development literature including Mark and Betts, eds., *Socialism Goes Global*; Calori et al., "1.Alternative Globalization?".

efforts to minimise the role of the United States and Western nations in Yugoslavia's post-WWII rebuilding, a substantial 72% of the UNRRA's supplies were provided by the Americans.<sup>20</sup> This narrative not only highlights the need to consider Yugoslavia's reconstruction with war-time efforts in mind but also illustrates the state socialist need to renegotiate the Yugoslav position in the international community in the perpetual flux between the East and the West before 1950.

The communist regime constrained the freedom of expression and independent policymaking of peasant internationalists, affecting the influence and scope of their national impact. Consequently, figures like Štampar and Bićanić, while active nationally, redirected their efforts towards implementing their rural-focused modernisation visions through international platforms. Štampar managed to escape the impact of censorship nationally by offering diplomatic and politically neutral commentary to the Yugoslav press while seeking a degree of technical independence for his institutions based in Croatia. For example, he continued his involvement in Yugoslavia's public health sector by accepting the position as the Director of the *Yugoslav Academy for Arts and Sciences* while openly critiquing Tito's overarching federal health policies for failing to address local specificities and the unique challenges of rural life internationally.<sup>21</sup>

Through platforms like the United Nations, peasant internationalists continued to influence Yugoslavia's international orientation, transcending conventional socialist or liberal frameworks. Despite his criticism of the government's policies, Andrija Štampar played a prominent role in representing Yugoslavia in the WHO, albeit often in a non-governmental consultant capacity. Yugoslavia's membership in the WHO from 1948 to 1956 as the only Eastern European member during that period opened new avenues for technical diplomacy. This unique position enabled Yugoslavia to bridge the often-called 'Western approaches' to international health, prioritising

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<sup>20</sup> Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 239-40.

<sup>21</sup> Štampar's articles published in the national newspapers between 1945 and 1956 reflect the lack of open support or criticism of the communist regime. Štampar spoke in a rational, scientific tone and rhetoric which only mentioned KPJ and Tito in relation to their efforts of liberating the country from the fascist rule. For example, see HR-HDA-831, Štampar as the President of JAZU, box 5, f. 6.7; "Štampar's report on the work of Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1947." For his criticism of Tito, see Sara Silverstein, "Man of an Impossible Mission?: Andrija Štampar's Separation of Politics and Healthcare in Yugoslavia and the World Health Organization", 12.

medical technologies by combining them with integrative socioeconomic reforms adapted to local conditions in line with the interwar economic approach to international health.

The continuation of peasant internationalist networks in the WHO/UNICEF explored in the chapter indicates that experts continued to play a pivotal role in shaping Yugoslavia's 'third way' between the East and the West.<sup>22</sup> Yet, even in the absence of direct personnel continuities, as with the international anti-opium movement, the peasant internationalist ideas that prioritised the economic aspects of sovereignty over ideological considerations continued to dominate Yugoslav international practices. The meeting of the opium-producing bloc in Ankara in 1949 demonstrates how intergovernmental cooperation within the UN's Economic and Social Council could still further the country's economic interests within the planned socialist framework, strengthening the political ties between Turkey, Iran, India, and Yugoslavia within and outside of the organisation.

## 2. Opium

The opium-production bloc, established during the Geneva Opium Conference in 1925, continued influencing the agenda of the transformed Opium Committee, now called the *UN Commission for Narcotic Drugs*. Formed under the *United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)*, the Commission underscored the significance of the international anti-opium movement as it grappled with the issue of global opium overproduction, a problem intensified by excess production of opium beyond medical and scientific needs, risking spillage into illegal markets.

Efforts to resolve this issue were complicated by the opium-producing bloc, including Yugoslavia, India, Turkey, and Iran, which advocated for maintaining control over poppy cultivation and opium production during the interwar period. However, The League of Nations Opium Committee concluded that controlling the trade of approved opium quantities would curb the illegal opium

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<sup>22</sup> As reiterated by Wild-Bićanić in, *Two Lines of Life*.

trade. *The Commission of Enquiry to the Far East* dispatched in 1928 also reiterated this stance under the chairmanship of Yugoslav Konstantin Fotić. The Commission concluded that “as long as the poppy cultivation is not under the control of the treaty, there will always be illicit traffic in opium.”<sup>23</sup> While the Opium Committee initiated drafting a convention to limit opium production in the 1930s, despite the opium-producing bloc’s arguments a decade earlier, the war halted the progress on legislation. The United States, propelled by the resolution of the 78th Congress in 1944, actively lobbied for restricting poppy cultivation and encouraged a new international convention for the limitation of opium production during and after the war. These combined efforts of the United States and the Opium Committee kept the issue of opium production prominent on the international agenda.<sup>24</sup>

In its first two decades, the United Nations spearheaded three significant initiatives to address the problem of opium overproduction. The inaugural effort, a meeting in Ankara in November and December 1949, brought together opium-producing countries—Turkey, Iran, Yugoslavia, and Egypt—with observers including the Secretary-General of the UN and delegations from China and the US.<sup>25</sup> Despite the unanimous decisions at the Ankara Conference, the resulting *Interim Agreement* was unsuccessful. This failure was not due to the Conference's half-measures but rather the reluctance of opium-manufacturing countries like France to accept the *International Purchasing and Selling Agency* as a critical oversight and regulatory authority on the international drug markets. The second effort, led by the opium-producing nations, culminated in the 1958 *UN Opium Conference Protocol*, while the third initiative led to the adoption of *The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs* in March 1961, in place to this day.

The US proposal to the ECOSOC’s *Commission for Narcotic Drugs* in 1948 served as a prelude to the Ankara Conference, which was to draft a convention to simplify and modernise the existing

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<sup>23</sup> Robert W Gregg, “The United Nations and the Opium Problem” in *International & Comparative Law Quarterly* 13, no. 1 (1964): 99-101. The US failed to ratify the Second Geneva Convention in 1925 due to the limitations of its framework.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> This meeting was deemed a crucial step toward international control of illicit drug trafficking. *U.N. Economic and Social Council, Commission on Narcotic Drugs*, 12<sup>th</sup> plen. mtg., U.N. E/CN.7/AC.1/SR.12 (7 December 1949) and 2<sup>nd</sup> mtg., U.N. E/CN.7/AC.1/SR.2 (22 November 1949).

opium production system. This proposal included an *ad hoc* meeting of major opium-producing countries to develop a plan for limiting opium production, which would form the basis for a unified Narcotic Convention. Turkey, hosting the conference, invited key opium-producing countries, specifically those with annual production exceeding 20 tons, of which at least 15 tons were for alkaloid manufacturing.<sup>26</sup>

The Ankara Conference, comprising twelve public sessions, conducted most of its crucial quota negotiations in private. This secrecy limits our understanding of the detailed discussions among the delegates. However, final statements by a Yugoslav representative shed light on Yugoslavia's concessions and its significant impact on shaping the *Quota System*, which determined each state's permissible opium production based on poppy seed cultivation. Yugoslav delegation, led by Kušević and Nikolić, staunchly advocated for quotas based on historical opium sales averages and opposed the system of free orders proposed by the opium manufacturing countries, which benefitted the opium manufacturing countries.

The Quota System emerged as the biggest accomplishment of the Conference. In its second session, Yugoslav delegate Nikolić proposed production quotas based on market shares, calculated using the average opium production from 1925 to 1940. This system aimed to provide "long-term assurance of opium production," stabilising agricultural economies. Nikolić argued that this agreement was beneficial not just for planned economies like Yugoslavia but for all nations.<sup>27</sup> The Yugoslav delegation expressed strong reservations about the existing Free Orders system, which allowed manufacturing and consuming countries to order opium within an approved annual limit for medical and scientific purposes. Nikolić criticised this approach for leading to market speculation, corruption in buyer selection, and unstable production. Moreover, the Yugoslavs contended that it was unfair "to place the producing countries, which were already making

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<sup>26</sup> Only the USSR was absent from the proceedings as the only other opium-producing countries that fell in this category due to their "disinterest in the interim agreement which would make the drafting of the single convention much more difficult." Gregg, "UN and the Opium Problem," 99.

<sup>27</sup> U.N. Economic and Social Council, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 2<sup>nd</sup> mtg., U.N. E/CN.7/AC.1/SR.2 (22 November 1949), 4-5.

sacrifices in limiting the production for humanitarian needs, in such a position of dependency on the consuming countries."<sup>28</sup>

While the Ankara Conference agreements appeared to prioritise humanitarian and moral goals over the economic needs of agricultural workers in developing countries by limiting opium trafficking, the Quota System represented quite the opposite. Still understanding the question of opium production through the economic lens, the Yugoslav delegation aimed to secure long-term, stable opium production. This stability was achieved through fixed market shares, aligning well with socialist Yugoslavia's planned economic system.<sup>29</sup> This approach was beneficial for the agricultural economies, which faced potential collapse due to the rising use of synthetic drugs (like cocaine and heroin) for medical purposes. The fixed-share system legally obligated manufacturing and consuming countries to purchase a predetermined amount of opium from the producing countries post-resolution adoption. In the same tone as at the Geneva Conference in 1925, the Iranian representative argued:

"In certain regions, peasants depended on poppy seed cultivation for their livelihood; in others, it was the only crop. Thus, the steps already taken by the [Iranian] government to limit the production of opium caused the peasants severe hardship, especially as the lack of funds and technical resources had prevented the Government from replacing opium with another crop, and the financial loss sustained by the peasant was reflected in an equally grave loss to the Treasury. Any further restrictions on the production and exports of opium might, through its financial repercussions, provoke serious social disturbances."<sup>30</sup>

Nikolić's final speech focused on calculating opium quotas and demonstrated the mechanisms for reconciling national and international interests in the context of international policies. The

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>29</sup> U.N. Economic and Social Council, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 2<sup>nd</sup> mtg., U.N. E/CN.7/AC.1/SR.2 (22 November 1949), 3-4.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Yugoslav delegation advocated using accurate, verified statistics from customs authorities based on average trade from 1925 to 1940. Recognising that many developing countries lacked reliable agricultural statistics, the proposal suggested cross-verifying these figures with data from importing (manufacturing) countries. The disruption caused by World War II led the Yugoslav delegation to propose using export figures from the post-1925 Geneva Convention era until the war's onset as the basis for quota allocation. They argued that "since the yield of opium varied considerably from year to year [due to the Great Depression and agricultural crisis], the normal share of an exporting country in supplying the medical market could only be established based on an average for a number of years."<sup>31</sup>

Nikolić reflected on the need to reconcile national and international interests when settling on the opium production quotas. He acknowledged that this proposal did not inherently favour Yugoslavia, citing the period from 1934 to 1940 when Yugoslavia's opium exports were reduced due to the agricultural crisis and trade agreements with Nazi Germany. Despite ideally seeking a 22% share, the delegation accepted a 16.5% share in the average as a compromise, as "the delegation appreciates a necessity at all costs to reach an agreement on a question of great humanitarian significance."<sup>32</sup>

The Quota System, anchored in the historical market shares of opium, served as a safeguard for the agricultural economies as the opium-producing countries would be independent of the demands of industrial manufacturers, providing them more control and predictability over their production. Following extensive negotiations, the consensus was to permit opium production totalling 105% of global requirements, allocating an additional 5% of the shares to Iran as compensation for its unique opium usage for smoking.<sup>33</sup> This compensation garnered support for the Yugoslav proposal from various participants, including the Secretary-General. The system aimed to stabilise agricultural production and secure the economic interests of peasants while making necessary

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>32</sup> *U.N. Economic and Social Council, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 12<sup>th</sup> plen. mtg., U.N. E/CN.7/AC.1/SR.12 (December 1949).*

<sup>33</sup> For detailed information, see Gregg, "The UN and the Problem of Opium", 102-03 and *U.N. Economic and Social Council, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> mtg., U.N. E/CN.7/AC.1/SR. 6-9 (December 1949).*

compromises for establishing international control. This control over illegal drug trafficking was to be achieved by limiting production, overseen by the newly formed *International Purchasing and Selling Agency*, another significant outcome of the Ankara Conference.

While the League of Nations had considered indirect supervision of opium production through *The Permanent Central Board* (sponsored by Konstantin Fotić in Geneva), the Ankara Conference resolved to establish a complete *International Opium Monopoly* – the most far-reaching international proposal on drug trafficking to this date. The international monopoly, enforced by the *International Purchasing and Selling Agency*, would have eliminated the free trade of opium had it come into effect.<sup>34</sup> *The Agency* was meant to consist of two entities, one technical and one political: *The Regulatory Committee*, focusing on opium policy, and *The Opium Agency*, handling commercial activities. *The Opium Agency* would have operated independently and non-politically, executing trade based on agreed policies and regulatory guidelines.<sup>35</sup>

The lack of independence of Yugoslav representatives when it comes to decision-making in post-WWII international cooperation became apparent in the discussions concerning the establishment of the *Agency*. While generally supportive of its establishment, the Yugoslav delegation repeatedly expressed concerns about its impact on Yugoslavia's bilateral trade agreements. Delegate Nikolić highlighted the lack of opportunity to provide the Yugoslav government with "a clear picture of the *International Purchasing and Selling Agency*, and of the further fact that the proposal [by the Secretary General] before the Committee failed to take into account the problem of existing bilateral trade agreements."<sup>36</sup> It was concluded that "the Yugoslav government would communicate to the Secretary-General of the UN at a later date its views on the form of the

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<sup>34</sup> The agency was tasked with buying, storing, and distributing opium globally, ensuring 1) stability for producing states through guaranteed crop purchase; 2) equitable pricing; 3) a reliable opium supply for manufacturing and consuming countries, unaffected by environmental factors or international relations; and 4) defining all opium outside the International Monopoly as illicit. Gregg, "UN and the Problem of Opium," 101.

<sup>35</sup> U.N. *Economic and Social Council, Commission on Narcotic Drugs*, 6<sup>th</sup> mtg., U.N. E/CN.7/AC.1/SR. 6. (29 November 1949), 6.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*



Agency.”<sup>37</sup> These reservations and the need for government consultations suggest that the delegation’s autonomy might have been more restricted than the latitude enjoyed by Jovanović and Fotić in the interwar period.

Despite concerted efforts at the Ankara Conference, the *Interim Agreement* failed to materialise. Analysis of delegate speeches and their sensitivity to opium-producing countries reveals an understanding among opium-producing countries that the success of the conference depended on the support of big pharmaceutical nations, including France, the USA, and Germany. However, these nations were unwilling to endorse the proposed *International Monopoly* systems. In August 1950, the *Joint Committee for Opium Trade*, comprising representatives from both opium-producing and drug-manufacturing countries, was established in Geneva. Yet, the Committee could not finalise an agreement due to four major obstacles. The first issue was the pricing formula, where a consensus could not be reached because of the economic disparities between the producing and manufacturing nations. Secondly, the rise in synthetic drug market share raised concerns about competition. The final two hurdles centred on financing and inspecting the *International Monopoly System*. The manufacturing countries were reluctant to relinquish national control over production and sales in favour of international regulation by the *International Purchasing and Selling Agency*.<sup>38</sup>

*The Interim Agreement* demonstrates that the opium-producing bloc utilised their interwar Opium Committee connections to ensure stable opium production, perhaps under threat from the rise in the use of synthetic drugs. The opium-manufacturing countries failed to ratify the Ankara agreement, unwilling to cede national control over the manufacturing and supervision of narcotic drugs. Instead, the transitory 1958 opium protocol allowed free trade of opium, with production quotas based on the estimated acreage required to meet manufacturing countries’ demands, diverging from the Yugoslav proposal of historical production averages, giving more power to the producers while considering the fluctuating needs of manufacturers. This French proposal, more

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<sup>37</sup> U.N. Economic and Social Council, *Commission on Narcotic Drugs*, 11<sup>th</sup> mtg., U.N. E/CN.7/AC.1/SR. 11. (4 December 1949).

<sup>38</sup> Gregg, “The UN and the Opium Problem,” 102-8.

conservative in limiting opium production, paved the way for the 1961 *Single UN Narcotic Drug Convention*. This comprehensive treaty sought to codify all existing narcotic drug laws and address systemic loopholes, leading to the non-enforcement of the Opium Protocol.<sup>39</sup>

Despite its minimal impact on long-term legislation, the Ankara Conference and the subsequent *Interim Agreement* hold significance for two reasons. Firstly, they demonstrate the persistence of cooperation among opium-producing countries after WWII and the policies that guarded the economic interests of Yugoslavia in international diplomacy. In a radically changed geopolitical landscape, opium-producing nations, including Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and Yugoslavia, leveraged their interwar connections to forge formal alliances and enhance their global standing within the UN institutional framework. However, under the new socialist context, this emphasis evolved from safeguarding peasant livelihoods to stabilising and ensuring opium production, aligning more closely with the socialist planned economy. The Ankara gathering and the subsequent opium-manufacturing countries' rejection of their proposals possibly pushed these nations towards a more official collaboration. Even if the direct causation is difficult to prove, the peasant internationalist experiences and arguments of cooperation that support greater economic equality between nations (in this case, opium, producing and manufacturing countries) played an integral part in Tito's speeches and rhetoric of non-alignment from 1945 onwards.<sup>40</sup> These arguments, present in 1945, as they were in the 1960s, shaped the calls for the *New International Economic Order* and moulded the Yugoslav leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement. Secondly, the Ankara Conference sheds light on the constrained scope of action available to Yugoslav international officials operating in a governmental capacity. It highlights the limited freedom these officials had to navigate and make decisions even within the strict technical confines of their roles, which depended on the party's approval, illustrating the increasingly political feature of technical cooperation in the Cold War context.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ranko Petkovic, *Tito on Non-Alignment*, (Belgrade: 1976), The Library of Congress, D839. S78 1976. Only after 1948 did Tito begin to link economic sovereignty and anti-colonialist arguments to socialism and social globalism in his international and national speeches. The analysis of this rhetoric will feature in a separate study.

<sup>41</sup> For the interrelationship between technical and diplomatic spheres of activity in international organisations, consult Dora Vargha, "Technical Assistance and Socialist International Health: Hungary, the WHO and the Korean

### 3. The WHO and the Economic Approach to International Health

Andrija Štampar's efforts in the health sphere as the leading international rural health expert proved to be more successful in advocating for the interests of agricultural states in international organisations. Štampar's career in the WHO illustrates a direct example of the continuation of peasant internationalist projects and networks post-WWII focused on improving the lives and welfare of peasant communities worldwide. It also demonstrates the continued resonance of the economic approach to international health promoted by peasant internationalists and supporters of social medicine alike, exhibited at the 1931 European Rural Hygiene Conference. In the interwar period, peasant internationalists synthesised the ideology of agrarianism with the principles of social medicine to amalgamate various approaches to improving the health standards of a population through socioeconomic reforms already present in Belgium, France, Germany, Denmark, and the Soviet Union.<sup>42</sup> Conceptualised as a response to the 'economic backwardness' of Central-Eastern Europe, peasant internationalists tied public health with economic modernisation projects advocating for an integrative and decentralised 'economic approach to international health explored in chapter three. Politically flexible, peasant internationalists, like other social hygienist movements of the time, did not try to achieve their reforms by aligning with

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War", *History and Technology* 36, no. 3–4 (2020): 400–417; Jessica Reinisch, "Technical Conferences as a Technique of Internationalism", *The British Journal for the History of Science* 56(4) (2023), 1–18; Véronique Plata-Stenger, *Social Reform, Modernization and Technical Diplomacy: The ILO Contribution to Development (1930–1946)*, vol. 8, Work in Global and Historical Perspective (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2020).

<sup>42</sup> Patrick Zylberman, "Fewer Parallels than Antitheses: René Sand and Andrija Štampar on Social Medicine, 1919–1955", *Social History of Medicine: The Journal of the Society for the Social History of Medicine* 17, no. 1 (2004): 77–92; Lion Murard, "Social Medicine in the Interwar Years. The Case of Jaques Parisot (1882-1967)", *Medicina Nei Secoli: Journal of History of Medicine and Medical Humanities* 20, no. 3 (2008): 871–90; Iris Borowy, "In the Shadow of Grotjahn. German Social Hygienists in the International Health Scene", *Borowy, I. & Hardy, A., Of Medicine and Men*, 2008, 145–72; John Kirk and H. Michael Erisman, *Cuban Medical Internationalism: Origins, Evolution, and Goals* (Springer, 2009); Hana Mášová, "Social Hygiene and Social Medicine in Interwar Czechoslovakia with the 13th District of the City of Prague as Its Laboratory", *Hygiea Internationalis: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the History of Public Health* 6, no. 2 (27 December 2007): 53–68; Tricia Ann Starks, *The Body Soviet: Health, Hygiene, and the Path to a New Life in the 1920s* (The Ohio State University Press, 2000); Susan Gross Solomon, "The Limits of Government Patronage of Sciences: Social Hygiene and the Soviet State, 1920–1930", *Social History of Medicine* 3, no. 3 (1990): 405–35.

one political ideology.<sup>43</sup> Pragmatically navigating the political spectrum and rooting the reforms in rural localities, they preached decentralised forms of medical governance based on the popular participation of peasants, linking this participation with economic incentives through agricultural cooperative programs.

The following pages demonstrate why following the continued resonance of peasant internationalists' economic approach to international health is particularly useful when unravelling the competing and overlapping internationalisms in the contexts of the WHO, socialist solidarity movements and the UN development projects in the Global South. In the absence of state-socialist countries from the WHO, Yugoslav experts carried a mantle in bridging the so-called 'socioeconomic' and 'technological strategies' for improving health outcomes in the organisation.<sup>44</sup> They continued to promote a decentralised, pragmatic, and locally focused approach to public health, advocating for socioeconomic reforms and rural modernisation through the WHO-UNICEF institution-building and public health projects, linking them with the application of new medical technologies such as vaccinations promoted by the organisation. The persistent advocacy for systemic reforms to address the economic roots of disease also strengthened the Yugoslav-Indian partnership, culminating in joint advocacy and contribution to the WHO's branch of the Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development (SUNFED).

In July 1946, the *International Health Conference* in New York approved the constitution of the new international health agency, the World Health Organisation. The conference also founded the *Interim Commission*, presided over by Dr Štampar, which organised and supervised the legal, technical, and practical transfer of international health administration from the LNHO to the new organisation.<sup>45</sup> The constitution of the WHO highlighted the connection between health, peace,

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<sup>43</sup> On the pragmatism of social hygienists, see David Brydan, "Franco's Internationalists: Spanish Health and Welfare Experts on the World Stage, 1939-1959," PhD thesis, 2016.

<sup>44</sup> Mary Augusta Brazelton, "Health for All?: Histories of International and Global Health", *History Compass* 20, no. 1 (2022) and Dora Vargha, "Missing Pieces: Integrating the Socialist World in Global Health History", *History Compass*, 2023, provide a historiographical overview of works written on the two competing approaches to international health during the Cold War decades.

<sup>45</sup> Marcos Cueto, Theodore M. Brown, and Elizabeth Fee, *The World Health Organization: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), chapter 2 "The Birth of the World Health Organization."

and security. Štampar was responsible for including the ‘preamble’ to the constitution, referred to as “the Magna Carta for health,”<sup>46</sup> which highlighted the interconnected nature of health to other socioeconomic conditions of life and health as an “attainable standard.” This became “one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.”<sup>47</sup> The text drafted by the Conference in New York also recognised the peasant internationalists’ arguments of “the conditions of unequal development in different countries” and “the difficulties these conditions create to promote health and control disease, particularly communicable disease.”<sup>48</sup>

The new geopolitical landscape and the establishment of socialist regimes in Central-Eastern Europe, to an extent, affected the reach of peasant internationalist networks and the WHO programs, which “were partially captive to the US foreign policy and priorities.”<sup>49</sup> While the interpretation of the WHO’s work in the 1950s as an American “instrument of ideological containment” might be fitting in the case of international disease eradication programs that favoured cost-effective biotechnological solutions to epidemiology, the same cannot be said for the other half of the WHO’s activities focusing on public health promotion. The WHO’s training, fellowship, and technical assistance provisions in the public health sphere followed the principles of social medicine and the economic approach to international health promoted by peasant internationalists and other social medicine supporters during the interwar period. For instance, John B Grant, a Rockefeller Foundation staff member, played an important role in promoting a decentralised approach to medical self-governance by helping establish health centres in 1947 in Pholela, South Africa. Similarly, Marta Eliot, a US delegate to the 1<sup>st</sup> WHA and a close friend of Štampar, successfully argued for the inclusion of Environmental Sanitation into the priority work

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas Parran’s proposal modelled the WHO constitution on the organisation of the US Public Service. It was considered most complete and comprehensive and was used as a draft for the Constitution of the WHO. However, a substantial feature of the document, the so-called ‘Preamble,’ did not exist in Parran’s draft. Štampar was responsible for the wording of this section based on Gautier and Biraud’s documents circulated through the LNHO towards the end of WWII. Cueto *et al.*, *The World Health Organization*, 44.

<sup>47</sup> Frank P. Grad, “The preamble of the constitution of the World Health Organization”, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 80 (2002).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Cueto *et al.*, *The World Health Organization*, 86.

areas of the WHO in its first decade, recognised as an essential element of rural welfare and development programs by the WHO Director-General Marcolino Candau (1953-73).<sup>50</sup>

Although the WHO Constitution defined health in relation to broad social, economic, emotional, and psychological well-being, Cold War divisions influenced the organisation's institutional structure. In 1949, as an act of dissent against the perceived "Western" and "imperialist" bias of the WHO (attributed mainly to the "American voting majority" within the organisation), Eastern European representatives withdrew their membership. This departure, spearheaded by the Byelorussian and Ukrainian representatives, left Yugoslavia as the sole Eastern European nation represented at the World Health Assemblies (WHA). The 1950s absence of these Eastern European countries in the WHO, following their 1949 exit, shaped a historical narrative that perceived WHO in the 1950s as a 'Western-centric' institution, an argument that surviving peasant internationalists' networks complicate.<sup>51</sup>

The division between the "state-socialist" perspective and the "Western" interpretation of international health led to two prominent strategies for disease control and eradication during the Cold War's initial decade. The "Western" methodology prioritised advancements in medical biotechnologies. Primarily shaped by the perspectives of US State Department officials, it closely tied the WHO's activities to the US foreign policy goals of curbing global communist influence. These objectives manifested through international medical and economic endeavours. Through entities like the *International Cooperation Agency*, established in 1955, the US aimed to counteract the "pervasive Soviet influence" by bolstering countries' economic resilience and national security via medical and economic aid programs. Such initiatives, exemplified by campaigns against diseases like yaws and malaria, leaned towards using essential biotechnologies, such as immunisation or DDT spraying, targeting disease transmission vectors.<sup>52</sup> In contrast, the socialist

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<sup>50</sup> Socrates Litsios, "Rural Hygiene in the Early Years of the World Health Organization: Another Casualty of the Cold War?", *Anais Do Instituto de Higiene e Medicina Tropical* 15, no. 1 (2016): 128-9.

<sup>51</sup> Nine countries withdrew their membership in 1949: Albania, Bulgaria, Byelorussia, China, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Roumania, the USSR and Ukraine. China, however, resumed the work with the WHO in other fields: the *WHO Newsletter*, 1950, The WHO Archives.

<sup>52</sup> Cueto *et.al.*, *The World Health Organization*, 86-95.

health perspective championed a holistic, in historiography referred to as a “syncretic” approach, integrating technological solutions for disease eradication with socioeconomic reforms that targeted the environment that fostered disease proliferation.<sup>53</sup>

This chapter questions the division between “technological” and “socioeconomic” approaches to international health policy in the early Cold War period, instead demonstrating entanglements and syncretism of both seen through the contributions of Yugoslavia to the WHO. Exploring the continuation of peasant internationalist networks and economic approach to health underscores that, despite this epidemiological focus, longer-term socioeconomic strategies commonly linked to “socialism” significantly influenced the WHO’s aims and actions between 1948 and 1956 in its field operations. This continuity was evident in the WHO’s emphasis on public health administration, environmental sanitation and rural welfare in its technical assistance and fellowship programs. In doing so, it speaks to the recent historiography, which has begun to re-evaluate the degree to which state-socialist countries and the ‘Western-centric’ WHO pursued distinct international health agendas. Using the case of polio vaccination as an illustration, Dora Vargha highlighted that medical knowledge and technologies traversed the Iron Curtain, even though diplomats from both blocs touted these advancements as victories in the ideological war between socialism and capitalism.<sup>54</sup> By focusing on the public health promotion aspects of the WHO’s activities, insights into peasant international networks and rural approaches to modernisation contribute to this research area by shifting a timeline of the WHO’s adoption of the syncretic approach to global health from the onset of decolonisation and readmission of the socialist states to the organisation in 1956 to the organisation’s early years 1948-1955.

The World Health Organisation’s Public Health Administration’s (PHA) Fellowships and Assistance was one avenue through which the peasant internationalist economic approach to health as a

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<sup>53</sup> Jacob, “Malariology and Decolonization,” in Jessica Lynne Pearson, *The Colonial Politics of Global Health: France and the United Nations in Postwar Africa* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018).

<sup>54</sup> Vargha, “Polio across the Iron Curtain”. Also, see Erez Manela, “A Pox on Your Narrative: Writing Disease Control into Cold War History”, *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 2 (2010): 299–323.

rurally focused iteration of social medicine continued to influence health diplomacy in the WHO's first decade. Štampar's health centre scheme from interwar Yugoslavia, promoted as a model of public health organisation in the League of Nations Health Organisations, was as popular in South-East Asia as it was in Europe, demonstrated by the success of the Far Eastern Bandung Conference in 1937. The three-tiered health centre scheme continued to live on through the WHO and UNICEF-sponsored PHA programs. Building on this success and recognition from the interwar period, the Yugoslav health officials continued their economic approach to health by leading rural welfare projects and public health seminars in Egypt, Sudan, and Afghanistan. Further calls for the return of the interwar rural welfare theme to the WHO agenda also came from Yugoslavia in 1954 as the country revived the "Public Health Problems in Rural Areas" as the subject for technical discussions at the Seventh Annual Health Assembly, much to the delight of the Latin American countries.<sup>55</sup>

The WHO's fellowships and technical assistance programs reflected the integrative, decentralised, and poverty-focused initiatives with their rural focus championed by peasant internationalists in the interwar period. According to the 1953-1955 budget, these schemes accounted for a significant portion of the WHO's global expenditure.<sup>56</sup> The fellowships in public health, nursing, tuberculosis, and malaria updated experts on the efficient and cost-effective public health organisation methods, enhanced environmental sanitation (rural areas), tackled diseases like tuberculosis and malaria, and trained medical professionals in various public health aspects.<sup>57</sup> The budget also estimates that between 1953 and 1955, the WHO organised fellowship, training, or education opportunities in 92 out of 97 member or associate states.<sup>58</sup> Yet, one must question the nature of these exchanges and their degree of alignment with the economic perspective on international health supported by peasant internationalists.

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<sup>55</sup> Seventh World Health Assembly, "Background to Rural Health by Andrija Štampar," A7/Technical Discussions, 1954, The WHO Archives.

<sup>56</sup> World Health Organization, Executive Board, Thirteenth Session, Programme and Budget, "Proposed Program and Budget Estimates for 1955," EB13/WP/2, The WHO Archives.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Only Costa Rica, El Salvador, Trinidad (tuberculosis), Basutoland (nutrition) and Brunei (nursing) did not participate in these WHO schemes. World Health Organization, Executive Board, Thirteenth Session, Programme and Budget, "Proposed Program and Budget Estimates for 1955," EB13/WP/2, The WHO Archives.



In 1955, Štampar, reflecting on the PHA fellowships in Africa and Asia, assessed the impact of these WHO programs in his 1956 article for the *Croatian Medical Newspapers*. Leading a “Seminar in Public Health Administration,” he noted improvements in peasant living standards attributed to the Egyptian adoption of the Yugoslav decentralised medical governance based on health centres. Representatives from across the *Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office* joined the seminars.<sup>59</sup> Štampar noted that establishing 140 health centres in Egypt was modelled on his proposals from Geneva in 1931 that resulted from Professor Wakil's (Minister of Public Health until 1940) visit to European countries under the LNHO's fellowship schemes. During his time in Europe, Prof Wakil concluded that “the health centres of our type would suit Egyptian conditions the best.”<sup>60</sup>

Štampar continued to practice health policies rooted in a sociological understanding of the peasants' lives and the country's economic conditions after 1945. He sought to familiarise himself with the Egyptian Ministry of Public Health operations, various institutions, and university functions. He contemplated the collaborative efforts of WHO-UNICEF in Egypt. He observed that “at the very beginning of our stay in Egypt, we could see that efforts were being made to establish new health institutions of preventative character and train as many qualified personnel for these health services as possible.”<sup>61</sup>

Štampar highlighted Egypt's focus on two primary public health pillars: health centres and training facilities for health personnel, both of which Yugoslav experts strongly endorsed. The WHO-UNICEF program supported the *High School of Nursing*, the *Department of Sanitary Engineering*, and the *School of Public Health in Alexandria*.<sup>62</sup> He was impressed by the five-year plan of the *Permanent Council of Public Health* in Egypt. This plan aimed to establish over 700 health centres,

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<sup>59</sup> The East Mediterranean regional office included Pakistan, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Israel, Ethiopia, Lybia and Sudan. Štampar, ‘In the Nile Valley’, *Zdravstvene novine*, No. 9, and Grmek, *Selected papers of Andrija Štampar*, 217. These seminars were held in Europe three times before, Štampar led the first series of seminars in Sweden, Scotland, and Belgum which “enabled him to enlarge his knowledge of these countries.” Ibid, 4 and, Grmek, *Selected papers of Andrija Štampar*, 218.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, *Zdravstvene novine*, 3.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, Grmek, *Selected papers of Andrija Štampar*, 219.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

modelled after the ones he had proposed in Geneva. Štampar explained, “Contracts for constructing 200 of these centres have already been made.” Future projects will prioritise building centres in rural areas to enhance peasants' access to healthcare.<sup>63</sup> He pointed out that “the shortage of qualified personnel” was the main challenge faced by the authorities. The Egyptian ministry accommodated those stationed at the centre to entice highly skilled health workers and technical staff. Regarding the financial aspects of the WHO programs for rural health, Štampar stated that a single centre, designed to serve 15,000 inhabitants, would have a construction cost of 30,000 pounds, with an annual maintenance fee of around 10,000 pounds. The Egyptian authorities confirmed that they will invest more than 10 million pounds over the subsequent five years to establish centres in rural areas. Additionally, he visited the *Medical School* in Cairo, noting that “serious efforts were being made to extend the teaching of Hygiene and Social Medicine from 70 hours in the past to 130 hours,” including practical field training in urban and rural settings.<sup>64</sup>

The significant Yugoslav presence and influence over these projects did not escape Štampar's attention. For example, the WHO and UNICEF programs supported the *Demonstration and Training Centre* in Qualiub. Located 30km from Cairo in the “fertile yet overcrowded” Nile Delta, Qualiub was a rural region housing approximately 250,000 residents, mostly peasants.<sup>65</sup> Through the support of the WHO, the team of experts in “health, education, agriculture, veterinary sciences, sanitary engineering, home economics and industry” collaboratively developed “adequate social and health services.” Besides designing methods for the most effective work in each field, the training was “organised for qualifying the necessary personnel for this work.” Primary and secondary health centre networks were being built around Qualiub to establish a collaborative network of health institutions, explained Štampar.<sup>66</sup>

Yugoslav health experts “deserve credit for developing this work,” asserted Štampar. The WHO enlisted Dr Kesić, an associate professor from the School of Public Health in Zagreb, to assist the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Grmek, *Selected papers of Andrija Štampar*, 220.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Egyptian government as the *Chief Medical Adviser* in establishing these institutional networks. Not far from Qualiub, Mr Teodorović, a sanitary engineer and an Assistant Professor at the same School of Public Health in Zagreb, dedicated two years to the *Centre for Basic Education of Arab Countries*. His colleagues in Egypt noted that he “showed great understanding of rural conditions when tackling individual sanitary problems where he always used simple methods easily acceptable to the people,” reiterating the significance of the participatory nature of the economic approach to health.<sup>67</sup>

Although it is difficult to gauge to what extent these self-perceived successes of Yugoslav health personnel reflected a recognition of the international health experts at large in the case of Egypt, the support for Yugoslav leadership on rural health matters did not escape the attention of Štampar’s colleagues in the WHO and the public. Štampar’s reception in the USA between 1945 and 1948 galvanised by the United Yugoslav Relief Fund of America (UYRFA), and the financial support for Štampar’s economic and participatory approach to health by the leading American health experts and philanthropists boosted the prestige of the health centre schemes globally in the early stages after WWII.<sup>68</sup> For instance, John W. Grant of Rockefeller Foundation replicated Štampar’s health centre scheme in Phollela, South Africa, in 1947. Martha Eliot - an American social reformer - similarly strengthened Štampar’s arguments on considering health as a social and economic problem of rural life when successfully advocating for the inclusion of environmental sanitation as a crucial objective of the WHO’s early years.<sup>69</sup>

A more explicit call for reevaluating the WHO’s work on rural health came in 1954, again from Yugoslavia.<sup>70</sup> The WHO’s Executive Board, during the Seventh WHA, approved the Yugoslav

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 221.

<sup>68</sup> John W. Kingsbury Papers, United Yugoslav Relief Fund of America papers, III Box 15. Letters and reports received by John W. Grant by the Committee by William Chadbourne, Dr Nelback from Yale University and Kenneth Sincalim Loutit.

<sup>69</sup> Socrates Litsios, ‘Rural Hygiene in the Early Years of the World Health Organization: Another Casualty of the Cold War?’, *Anais Do Instituto de Higiene e Medicina Tropical* 15, no. 1 (2016): 128-9.

<sup>70</sup> Rural health was not nominally a feature of the World Health Assembly Discussions until 1955. However, the “Operational Services” section of the Executive Board Agenda (section 5), specifically the public health services provision fellowship and training programs praised by Štampar, illustrate the continuation of the

proposal and chose “Public Health Problems in Rural Areas” as the subject for technical discussions at the Seventh Annual Health Assembly.<sup>71</sup> Štampar re-engaged with the WHA, presenting an overview of rural health conditions and current projects as a base for the Seventh WHA technical discussions. It is worth noting that these experts participated not as representatives of their countries but purely in a technical capacity, reflecting the distinct roles of diplomacy and technical operations in global organisations. After reflecting on the LNHO’s work, Štampar explained that in line with the WHO’s field operations and peasant internationalist legacy, “rural health problems will be particularly considered with special emphasis on the organisation of health services and sanitation problems.”<sup>72</sup>

Firstly, Štampar’s report emphasised that the success of WHO’s initiatives largely depended on the accessibility of healthcare in rural regions, consistent with his observations from the 1920s. He pointed out to health experts and governments that “the organisation of social and health services reaches much more deeply in urban and industrial districts, and [physicians] help is more readily accessible there than in rural areas with predominantly agricultural population.” The most significant problem remained the distribution of physicians. Dr Kacprzak highlighted that in 1939 in Poland, urban areas boasted one physician for every 1,394 residents, while in rural regions, the figure was one per 21,414. Štampar noted a similar disparity in India. In the Sind region, the doctor-to-population ratio in urban versus rural areas stood at 49:1, whereas in developed nations like Japan and Norway, the ratio was a more balanced 2:1.<sup>73</sup>

The technical dialogues on rural health centred on three main themes: public health units in rural regions, rural sanitation, and zoonoses. Leading the discussions on rural sanitation, Mr Petrik of Yugoslavia emphasised the importance of continued support for the WHO environmental sanitation “as a part of general public health programmes.” He accentuated the importance of

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economic approach to international health policy and the peasant internationalists’ decentralised and pragmatic health centre model on the WHO’s operations between 1949-1955.

<sup>71</sup> Seventh World Health Assembly, “Background to Rural Health by Andrija Štampar”, A7/Technical Discussions, 1954, The WHO Archives.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

“individualising the program to the community's needs and inducing self-aid through instruction and education.”<sup>74</sup> The discussions reflected the need for pragmatic adaptation of international health projects and a “simple approach within the means of resources of the local area – carried out by democratic methods and in a democratic spirit.” Consequently, Petrik posited that the WHO’s operations should not prioritise one-size-fits-all solutions for rural sanitation. Instead, they should champion “economically sound and fit programs that harmoniously fit into the social scheme,” reiterating the significance of small-scale projects adapted to local conditions, as supported by peasant internationalists.<sup>75</sup>

Overall, these general discussions set forward nine principles for improving health outcomes in rural areas in line with the peasant internationalists’ arguments from Geneva in 1931. These included better distribution of health and technical personnel in rural areas, participation of local people in programmes, the need for appropriate health education and financing of the projects that enhance the decentralisation of public health administration and services.<sup>76</sup> The following year, at the Eight WHA held in Mexico City in 1955, the hosts continued to praise and alert to the importance of rural health as a major agenda item of the WHO. The issue reached the Mexican newspapers, reporting on the need to continue the improvement of rural health standards through action programs indicated in Štampar’s report a year earlier.<sup>77</sup>

In the tradition of social medicine, Yugoslav health experts continued to practice the integrative economic approach to public health in the WHO. In these attempts, they often found sympathy and support from the Southeast Asian delegates who increasingly linked health with the issues of combatting poverty. The perspective of predominantly agricultural countries like Yugoslavia and India could demonstrate how the large-scale technical assistance projects were reconciled with

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<sup>74</sup> Seventh World Health Assembly, “Report of Technical Discussions,” Rural Sanitation Discussions, A.7/Technical Discussions, May 1954, The WHO Archives.

<sup>75</sup> Seventh World Health Assembly, “Report of Technical Discussions,” Rural Sanitation Discussions, Petrik’s contributions, A.7/Technical Discussions, May 1954, The WHO Archives.

<sup>76</sup> Seventh World Health Assembly, “Report of Technical Discussions,” General Discussions, A.7/Technical Discussions, May 1954, The WHO Archives.

<sup>77</sup> HR-HDA-831, Andrija Štampar’s collection, Box 5, f. 8.4., Andrija El Universal newspaper extract, May 18, 1955; La Mundial newspaper extract, 9 May 1955; El Nacional Newspaper extract, 1955.

the small-scale rural welfare projects. Insights into mechanisms, personnel, and processes involved could decentre the WHO's history in the context of international health policy and development, away from the US and USSR.

This intricate link between economic underdevelopment and health was also a broader feature of the UN 'development agenda.'<sup>78</sup> For instance, during the Seventh Meeting of the WHO's Executive Board in 1951, Mr Mladek, representing the *International Monetary Fund* (IMF), noted his appreciation of "the fact that the WHO is also aware of the close connection between its work for the health of the mankind and the economic conditions of the world."<sup>79</sup> *The United Nations Programme of Technical Assistance for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Areas*, later known as SUNFED (*Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development*), evolved as another avenue through which Yugoslavia sustained the economic approach to international health within the WHO.<sup>80</sup> This UN-wide program aimed to create an "emergency fund" to bolster technical assistance initiatives in "underdeveloped" nations. Yugoslavia had been at the forefront of technical assistance endeavours in the WHO since 1950, with a \$10,000 contribution to the WHO *Programme of Technical Assistance*. India and Ceylon were other significant contributors, with \$21,000 and \$1,000, respectively, reported by the WHO 1950 Newsletter.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> David Webster, "Development Advisors in a Time of Cold War and Decolonization: The United Nations Technical Assistance Administration, 1950–59", *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 2 (2011): 249–72.

<sup>79</sup> Seventh Meeting of the Executive Board, "Speech of Mr Mladek," 1951, EB8/Min/7, 3-4. Prof Parisot, a keen supporter of social medicine and a director general of the Executive Board, informed the Board of the planned cooperation between the IMF, the International Bank and the WHO, mainly through the Administrative Committee on Coordination. "When a question of a loan to a country for economic development was under consideration, it was customary for the Fund and the Bank to ask WHO to provide a public-health officer to report on the health conditions of the country, as having a genuine bearing on the country's capacity to handle the programme appropriately."

<sup>80</sup> Spaskovska, "Constructing the "City of International Solidarity,"" 149-50. After much deliberation and opposition from the UK, US, and Canada, thanks to the support of the Scandinavian countries and Yugoslavia, the *Special Technical Assistance Fund* won the support of the General Assembly. The UN General Assembly, in the spirit of compromise, decided that a 'technical assistance' rather than capital development fund would be formed, settling for a low-interest loan rather than a grants-in-aid approach.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid* and the *WHO Newsletter*, 1950, reported on these sums.

The rhetoric of considering the economic roots of ill health persisted well into the 1950s within the WHO and was not the sole feature of socialist health projects during the Cold War.<sup>82</sup> It was instead linked to the socioeconomic conceptualisation of disease already prevalent in the League of Nations Health Organisation. Mr Marković, the leader of the Yugoslav delegation at the Eighth World Health Assembly in 1955, contended that given the disparities between “developed” and “under-developed countries,” it is “imperative that the former provide at least minimal assistance to the latter.” In his opening address, Marković strongly advocated for creating a special UN development fund, which both groups of countries would support. The fund aimed to “finance basic social and economic projects” and to bolster WHO’s mission of “raising health standards.” He also emphasised the profound impact of a collaborative approach to development, as seen in joint technical assistance programs by UNICEF, UNESCO, and WHO, of which Yugoslavia had been a part since 1950. Marković expressed optimism about the ongoing expansion of such initiatives, noting their contribution to global security. Furthermore, he championed “putting the political and ideological difference aside” to prioritise “cooperation and coexistence.” This sentiment was, he observed, “steadily winning the support of various states despite their different political and social systems.”<sup>83</sup>

The WHA endorsed the establishment of a special fund, setting aside 10 million dollars for “financial and material assistance to under-developed member countries for long-term projects to improve their national health services.”<sup>84</sup> Stemming from a joint proposal by Yugoslavia and India, the WHO became an affiliated member of the *Special UN Development Fund*. As per UN General Assembly resolution 822 (IX), it was decided that the Fund would not have its independent staff but instead rely on personnel from other UN-specialised agencies.<sup>85</sup> This decision allowed Yugoslavia, India, and Ceylon to anticipate that the organisation would draw on their personnel

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<sup>82</sup> Patrick Zylberman, “Fewer Parallels than Antitheses”; Stella Fatović-Ferenčić and Martin Kuhar, “‘Imagine All the People:’ Andrija Štampar’s Ideology in The Context of Contemporary Public Health Initiatives,” *Acta Medico-Historica Adriatica: AMHA* 17, no. 2 (2019): 269–84; Bogdan Iacob, “Health” in Mark and Betts, eds., *Socialism Goes Global*.

<sup>83</sup> Eighth World Health Assembly, Official Records of the World Health Organization, No. 63, “Minutes and reports,” Head of the Yugoslav Delegation, Mr Marković’s speech, 1955, pp.106-7, The WHO Archives.

<sup>84</sup> Eighth World Health Assembly, Official Records of the World Health Organization, No. 63, “Minutes and reports,” 8.24. Creation of the Special Fund, 1955, The WHO Archives.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

when facilitating assistance programs. Unlike the medium-term and long-term loans with low-interest rates championed by the International Bank and the IMF, the fund was to be structured as a 'grant-in-aid.'<sup>86</sup> This approach was favoured as it would have enabled countries to build public health services from the ground up, drawing inspiration from interwar decentralised rural reconstruction initiatives championed by peasant internationalists. Perhaps the ultimate failure to ratify the establishment of SUNFED by the US in 1960 led India and Yugoslavia into closer collaboration by establishing official foreign political and economic ties as a prequel to the Belgrade Non-Aligned Summit in 1961.<sup>87</sup>

#### 4. Conclusions

The Yugoslav involvement in the WHO's public health programs illustrates that peasant internationalist ideas and expert networks remained integral to the United Nations' socioeconomic cooperation throughout the 1950s. By adapting the principles of social medicine to rural conditions of life in the region, peasant internationalists connected Central-Eastern European experts and states to still colonised countries of the Global South. This peasant internationalism in the interwar period also foreshadowed the Central-Eastern European leadership in the UN technical assistance and development programs that set the ground for East-South economic and social cooperation through the UN and bilateral socialist solidarity programs from the mid-1950s.<sup>88</sup> While this dissertation predominantly concentrates on the former, it emphasises the future need to jointly consider both the socialist and UN networks and platforms for exchanging knowledge and expertise to build a more comprehensive picture of the influence of peasant internationalism in the Global South.

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<sup>86</sup> Eighth World Health Assembly, Official Records of the World Health Organization, No. 63, "Minutes and reports," Clarification of the SUNFED purpose by the UK representative, 1955, The WHO Archives.

<sup>87</sup> This inference is based on the differences in the conceptualisation of development, including the role of rural modernisation in this process. Unger, *International Development*; Stephen J. Macekura and Erez Manela, *The Development Century: A Global History*.

<sup>88</sup> As currently explored by the interdisciplinary and international teams of *Connecting3Worlds* project (<https://connecting3worlds.org>) and the Socialist Medicine project at the Humboldt University (<https://socialistmedicine.com/postcolonial-spaces/>).



While the continuation of the networks of peasant international experts was absent in the case of the international opium movement, this case study still reveals the continued prioritisation of economic sovereignty in the delegates' arguments and an ongoing cooperation between India, Yugoslavia, Iran and Turkey. The 1949 Ankara meeting of opium-producing countries offers insight into the evolving dynamics between decolonised states and Yugoslavia following their independence. It suggests that Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's affinity for Yugoslav economic reforms and modernisation strategies was not solely a result of his fascination with socialism or the economic reforms of the KPJ.<sup>89</sup>

By tracing the influence of peasant internationalism from the 1920s through the Cold War, a different lens emerges to interpret this global partnership. Peasant international networks and ideas on rural modernisation provide foundations to explore the origins of 'syncretic' approaches to colonial development, which amalgamate socialist planning with 'Western-led' development politics, often referred to as middle-way Keynesianism. The afterlives of peasant internationalism also emphasise the need to ground these modernisation approaches in socioeconomic growth theories rather than ideological conflicts between socialism and liberalism, which the political pragmatism of peasant internationalism continuously reiterated.<sup>90</sup>

Investigating the interrelationships between peasant internationalism, socialist globalism, and UN technical assistance is also vital for understanding Yugoslavia's international orientation during the first decade of the Cold War, including its leadership of the NAM. It exemplifies that a thorough examination of Yugoslav non-aligned leadership requires looking beyond Yugoslav archives and

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<sup>89</sup> Natasa Mišković, Harald Fischer-Tiné, and Nada Boskovska, *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi-Bandung-Belgrade*; Natasa Miskovic, "The Pre-History of the Non-Aligned Movement: India's First Contacts with the Communist Yugoslavia, 1948-50", *India Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (2009): 185–200, Dusko Dimitrijevic and Jovan Cavoski, eds., *the Non-Aligned Movement: Sixty Years since the Belgrade Summit*, accessed 2 February 2024, (Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, 2021), especially chapters written by Amit Das Gupta and Sanja Jelisavac Tomic.

<sup>90</sup> For the syncretic approach to colonial development and East Central European experts' role in this process, see Malgorzata Mazurek, "Polish Economists in Nehru's India: Making Science for the Third World in an Era of De-Stalinization and Decolonization", *Slavic Review* 77, no. 3 (2018): 588–610. To explore how this approach fitted within the UN vision of development and was partly shaped by the economic thought of J.M. Keynes, consult Webster, "Development Advisors in a Time of Cold War and Decolonization."

those of its Global South partners to include the broader perspectives provided by international organisations.<sup>91</sup> The United Nations often served as a crucible for forming, shaping, and reinforcing NAM arguments and partnerships, as evidenced by the Tito-Nehru meetings in 1949, calls for the establishment of UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), or the push for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the 1970s.<sup>92</sup> Understanding how experts from the socialist bloc adapted and continued their projects under the auspices of international organisations would build the depth, scope, and significance of the NAM and Yugoslavia's role in international politics. It would build a more comprehensive picture of the interplay between liberal and socialist internationalism and the strategies these experts employ to navigate the post-WWII complexities.

The example of the Ankara Conference demonstrates that even without direct continuities in expertise networks, the peasant internationalist ideas on rural-focused modernisation continued to thrive after WWII. Peasant internationalists remained supporters of a globalised capitalist economy.<sup>93</sup> They saw the improvement of living standards of peasant communities as prerequisites of globalisation and security, in line with the "economic appeasement" arguments presented by Frank McDougall and Arthur Loveday, Bićanić's contacts, in front of the League's Economic and Financial Committees.<sup>94</sup> For peasant internationalists, political independence was not the end of the self-determination process, as was the case for many countries outside Europe after 1945. Yugoslavia continued to collaborate with their partners from the Global South in fighting for better economic opportunities worldwide, which, based on the speeches of the Yugoslav politicians

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<sup>91</sup> International archives should be a part of the multidirectional and multimodal approach advocated by Paul Stubbs in Paul Stubbs, "Yugocentrism and the Study of the Non-Aligned Movement: Towards a Decolonial Historiography", *History in Flux: Journal of the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula* 3, no. 3. (2021): 133–55 and Paul Stubbs, ed., *Socialist Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned Movement: Social, Cultural, Political, and Economic Imaginaries* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023).

<sup>92</sup> As also argued by Mišković, "The Pre-History of the Non-Aligned Movement" and Spaskovska and Calori, "A Nonaligned Business World". Peasant internationalism pushes this timeline back to the interwar period.

<sup>93</sup> Disagreeing with Tara Zahra's argument that activists promoting a peasant cause furthered conservative and anti-globalist agendas. Tara Zahra, "Introduction" in *Against the World: Anti-Globalism and Mass Politics between the World Wars* (WW Norton & Company, 2023), XXII-XXV.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 230.

1945-1948 in front of the UN, had profound non-aligned undertones, at least a decade before the official advent of the movement.<sup>95</sup>

One point of departure from the interwar peasant internationalist rhetoric of economic sovereignty was the collective conceptualisation of rights in the new socialist context.<sup>96</sup> The discussions of the opium-producing bloc in Ankara illustrate Yugoslavia's adaptation of these ideas to the new socialist context and their impact on international law-making. During the interwar period, Yugoslavia opposed an opium production ban, focusing on safeguarding individual peasant access to poppy-seed crops against the challenges of crop substitution schemes. However, in the post-WWII era, under a socialist economy with nationalised and collectivised agricultural holdings, the Yugoslav approach to anti-opium policy shifted. The delegation, under the KPJ's influence, now advocated for an opium production ban based on strict quotas, prioritising the country's economic stability evaluated through five-year plans.

The question that remains open is why peasant internationalists often found the UN a better fitting avenue for their modernisation projects than the trope of socialist solidarity. My answer to this question would be in the individual conceptualisation of peasant rights and socioeconomic life inherent in a decentralised approach to modernisation, which, on the practical level, could only be implemented in a democratic political milieu and strengthened through global capitalist economic networks. Peasant internationalists' prioritisation of economic sovereignty opens an inquiry into the Central-Eastern European influences on the NIEO through the calls for UNCTAD (*United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*). Rather than viewing this process exclusively through the lens of decolonisation and anti-colonial transnationalism, historians need to consider its much longer and more enduring history, which is also inherent in the networks and

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<sup>95</sup> Ranko Petković, *Tito on Non-Alignment*, (Belgrade: 1976), The Library of Congress, D839. S78 1976.

<sup>96</sup> Arno Trültzsch, "Non-Alignment in the United Nations and Its Impact on International Law: The Case of Yugoslavia," *The 60th Anniversary of the Non-Aligned Movement* (Belgrade: IPE, 2022), 163–78.

ideas of rurally-centred modernisation propagated by peasant internationalists from the 1920s onwards.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> This would enrich the narratives presented by Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*; Macekura and Manela, *The Development Century*.

## 7. Conclusions

Embracing the concept of 'peasantism' as the dissertation's thematic glue reveals a rich tapestry of stories, weaving together the seemingly disconnected threads of Yugoslav international engagement throughout the interwar, World War II (WWII), and the Cold War eras. This approach illuminates the profound impact that the challenges of rural life in Yugoslavia had on the country's international interactions and alignments post-1919 Paris Peace Conference. It shines a spotlight on the efforts of dedicated experts and diplomats who ventured beyond domestic borders, driven by a mission to enhance the living conditions in Yugoslavia's rural heartlands on the international stage.

By shifting our gaze outward, adopting the viewpoints of Yugoslav representatives rather than foreign officials, we gain a unique perspective on how the everyday hardships faced by peasants ignited the passion of 'peasant internationalists.' These experts and diplomats championed a vision of international cooperation deeply influenced by the peasants' struggles, crafting innovative, inclusive, and bottom-up approaches to governance and modernisation during the first half of the 20th century. Though the peasants' voices remain elusive, their stories and struggles come alive through the peasant internationalists' empathetic understanding and ambitious cooperative projects, offering a compelling glimpse into how rural imaginaries shaped international policies and standards.

These chapters collectively illuminate Yugoslavia's role in crafting international policies and laws across diverse socioeconomic spheres, including health, education, economy, and agriculture. While these efforts might not be formally recognised as a movement by the historical actors participating in them, I argue that the collective endeavours of experts to uplift the welfare, health,

and economic conditions of peasant communities represent a unique form of international cooperation termed 'peasant internationalism.' This concept is envisioned as a social network of expertise and a collection of rurally oriented ideas and approaches to modernisation. By evaluating the role of experts in this process and the translation of their ideas into policies, scholars can highlight the formative role of smaller agricultural states in the League of Nations hierarchies. Moreover, they can better discern the continuities and disruptions in the evolving modernisation strategies in the twentieth century, connecting the League of Nations and UN institutional histories and West-South-East circulations of knowledge and expertise. These conclusions explore the significance of peasant internationalism for the historiography of the twentieth century, mapping out a myriad of intriguing questions ripe for further scholarly exploration.

In connecting interwar, wartime and Cold War histories, this dissertation emphasises rural localities' critical role in influencing national and international discourses on post-imperial state-building, health diplomacy, education, anti-drug legislation, economy, and development. This endeavour should not be a matter of isolated historiographical studies. Instead, I call for a comprehensive approach that illuminates the pathways through which rural modernisation imaginaries influenced the Yugoslav and global 'third way' making across the socioeconomic cooperation spectrum in the League of Nations and the UN. This realm of international policy and cooperation ultimately shaped the Yugoslav leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement as the countries more loudly reiterated the calls for economic equality and social justice in the UN with the onset of decolonisation in the 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Yugoslav 'third way' was formally adopted as a state strategy only in 1948, its foundational principles had been in gestation for decades. This dissertation delves into the essence of the 'third way' as perceived by peasant internationalists in the League of Nations, examining how their rural vision of modernity informed its core premises. The "Bridge of Civilisations" metaphor, frequently invoked by the Central-Eastern European Planning Board (CEEPB) during

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<sup>1</sup> Edvard Kardelj and Nikolaos A. Stavrou, *Edvard Kardelj, the Historical Roots of Non-Alignment*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), The Library of Congress.

WWII, signifies a pivotal transition towards more explicit articulations of Yugoslav liminality in terms of civilisation, economics, and foreign policy in 1942.

The dissertation began this exploration by examining the international health and anti-drug-trafficking aspects of Yugoslav international cooperation within the League of Nations (LON). It investigated Yugoslav participation in the Opium Committee in the 1920s, where delegates Slobodan Jovanović and Konstantin Fotić successfully advocated for protecting the economic interests of peasants in Yugoslavia and other opium-producing countries (India, Turkey, and Iran), balancing them with international regulatory opium demands. This opium-producing bloc, which emerged during the Second Geneva Conference in 1925, began to challenge the dominance of the big powers, also opium-manufacturing countries, in the supervisory bodies of the Opium Committee. Two decades later, still prioritising economic over political sovereignty, Yugoslav representatives adapted their arguments in Ankara in 1949 to fit the post-WWII planned economy of socialist Yugoslavia.

The narrative then shifted to Dr Andrija Štampar's innovative contributions to public health organisations through the League of Nations Health Organisation (LNHO). Štampar adopted the welfare-focused social hygiene principles, which emphasised the socioeconomic determinants of disease but adapted them to the dominant rural conditions of life in Central-Eastern (CE) Europe. Based on his experiences in interwar Yugoslavia, Štampar used the international platform of the LON to promote a decentralised, pragmatic, and participatory health centre scheme. Supported by the CE European representatives in the LON's Health Committee, including its director, Dr Ludwik Rajchman, the health centre scheme became a universal, cost-efficient, and adaptable public health model, which set new standards for international public health policy. The local implementation of health centre schemes involved training local personnel to administer and manage national health systems and was central to the vision of modernisation promoted by peasant internationalists, which contributed to the universalisation of health through the LNHO

and later the World Health Organisation (WHO).<sup>2</sup> This rurally focused, 'economic' approach to international health continued to influence the WHO field operations in the 1950s, as seen in the example of Egypt while inspiring many Asia, African and Latin American governments to adopt similar solutions to improving the health of their populations.<sup>3</sup>

The coming of WWII impacted the Yugoslav approaches to international cooperation, which are investigated in this dissertation through the prism of the research institute, the Central and Eastern European Planning Board (CEEPB) in New York. The fourth chapter traced the contributions of Yugoslav social and economic experts on the Board as they propagated that economic and educational reconstruction of Central-Eastern Europe should be based on the principles of democracy, rural social justice, and inclusive education. The Board's work did not go unnoticed, as the networks of peasant international experts influenced the American approaches to post-war educational reconstruction and the International Labour Organisation's survival in the UN system.

Finally, the fifth chapter zoomed into one of the main collaborators of the CEEPB, Rudolf Bićanić, and his critical role in transferring Yugoslavia's economic and political legitimacy to the National Liberation Council (NKOJ). Bićanić was motivated by securing relief and economic reconstruction loans for the Yugoslav countryside, including over \$400 million of UNRRA's funds, necessary to set the Yugoslav countryside on the path to economic and social recovery.

The significance of peasant internationalism resides in its intricate layers, adaptability, and grounded pragmatism. Often overlooked, this movement extends beyond merely recognising the rural affinities of individual experts; it represents a profound collaborative commitment to enhancing the lives of rural communities. These ideas were born in the national and local contexts

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<sup>2</sup> Iris Borowy, "The League of Nations Health Organization: From European to Global Health Concerns," in *International and Local Approaches to Health and Health Care* (Bergen: University of Bergen Press, 2010), 11–30.

<sup>3</sup> Agricultural cooperatives were the most influential modernisation solution exported from Europe to the other continents that supported a pragmatic, decentralised, and participatory approach to development furthered by peasant internationalism. For the importance of agricultural cooperatives on modernisation and development, consult Corinna R. Unger, *International Development: A Postwar History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 29-34 and 103-115.



of Central-Eastern Europe, grappling with post-imperial transition challenges. Faced with the limitations of national budgets, peasant internationalists adopted a localised strategy for rural modernisation that would eventually be interwoven into broader national, regional, and international frameworks theorised by Rudolf Bićanić. These grassroots strategies were inherently democratic, actively involving local communities in the decision-making processes, as seen in the example of a rural health centre, a lesson that a decolonised world would take inspiration from after 1945.

Pragmatism and flexibility assured the enduring resonance of peasant internationalism beyond the demise of peasant party politics, which stems from its unique language and intellectual grounding in agrarianism rather than a conventional liberal or socialist political framework.<sup>4</sup> Peasant internationalists prioritised the economic conception of sovereignty based on the values of social justice. This perspective is exemplified in Dr Andrija Štampar's 1938 speech at Berkeley, which asserted that "must consider there are no Eastern and Western civilisations but that there is a rural, urban, and industrial civilisation."<sup>5</sup> While their approach to international cooperation was undoubtedly shaped by the ascendance of peasant politics in Central-Eastern Europe, their engagement with these political movements ranged from cultural promotion to active political involvement or even complete disassociation from political life.<sup>6</sup>

Far from being solely the product of a specific post-WWI peasant party milieu, peasant international networks demonstrated resilience and continued influencing international cooperation after WWII. They continued to ground their vision of modernity on the principles of rural social justice and

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<sup>4</sup> For the definitions of agrarianism, see "Introduction" and Eellend, "Agrarianism and Modernization in Inter-War Eastern Europe", <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:214690/FULLTEXT01.pdf> [last accessed, 12 August 2024]; Toshkov, "The Rise and Fall of the Green International", PhD thesis, Columbia University, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> HR-HDA-831. Andrija Štampar's collection, Box. 3, f. 5.3.1. *Travels and program through the USA*, "speech at Berkeley," 1938.

<sup>6</sup> Although Štampar has been defined as socialist, and apolitical in his political orientation, his personal collection reveals subversive involvement in supporting Croat Peasant Party cause through his activities in the USA. For example, see his publications on the brother Radić, his review of the Croat peasant writers published for the Croat Peasant Day Festival in San Francisco in 1939, and his letters to Rudolf Bićanić, which testify Štampar's support for the peasant party cause. HR-HDA-831, Andrija Štampar's collection, Box.4, f. 5.4.59. "Hrvatski seljacki pisci," 1939 and 10.45 letters to Bićanić.

democratic and federative political structures operating in the context of a global capitalist economy.<sup>7</sup> Peasant internationalists' view of political economy, explored in the CEEPB chapter, could be considered socialist when viewed in the context of political economy. However, as Johanna Bockman explained in her sociological studies of Eastern European economists, interpreting economists' actions through socialism vs liberalism and state-planning vs free markets, dichotomies distort the meanings of economists' actions, as well as peasant internationalists.<sup>8</sup> The doctrinal pragmatism of peasant internationalists supports Bockman's arguments that although economists utilised both liberal or socialist economic models in their analytical work, they did not consider their writing socialist or liberal; they only became so after being used by various parties for political purposes. As a result of perceiving their work through a technical rather than ideological lens, peasant internationalists found greater freedom of expression and influence after 1945 on the international stage rather than the doctrinally rigid socialist political system in Yugoslavia.

This ideological flexibility underscores the significance of considering the influence of rural society, its economic challenges, and political manifestations beyond conventional party channels and ethnic or national boundaries, promoted by the theoretical framework of the 'national indifference.'<sup>9</sup> Peasant internationalism, as a network of expertise and a set of ideas, not only enriches narratives of the League of Nations but also reframes the story of the communist rise to power in Yugoslavia, unveiling new research directions in international development, Cold War international relations, and post-1945 socialist solidarity projects, thereby bridging these often-disparate historiographies.

Hence, Yugoslavia's involvement in the League of Nations and the UN carries broader international significance. The debates fostered in Geneva in the interwar period illuminate how

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<sup>7</sup> This argument counters Zahra's characterisation of Central-Eastern Europe's peasant-dominated landscape as anti-globalist. See "Introduction" in Zahra, *Against the World*.

<sup>8</sup> See the Introduction and chapter 1 in Johanna Bockman, *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism* (Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis", *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 93–119.

the struggles endemic to rural life in Central-Eastern Europe became development models in colonial and semi-colonial regions through integrated multisectoral cooperation in health, agriculture, land reform, finance, education, and infrastructure. In the aftermath of the war, through strategic lobbying in New York and Washington, D.C., Rudolf Bićanić ensured that rural areas would remain a focal point of international aid efforts. As the Cold War ushered in a new era of geopolitical tensions, limiting cooperative ventures across the Iron Curtain, peasant internationalists shifted their focus. Their professional networks fragmented across the landscape of the UN specialised agencies and institutions, but they continued to shape technical assistance and socialist solidarity projects in Asia, Africa, and Latin America based on pragmatic, localised and decentralised models of governance and modernisation. By repurposing interwar and wartime models of rurally focused modernisation in different contexts, they underscored their commitment to uplifting rural communities worldwide and navigating the complex international landscape with adaptability and resolve.

### *7.1. The 'Third Ways'*

The analytical power of peasant internationalism lies in its ability to connect “The Three Worlds – East, West and South,” linking Yugoslavia and Central-Eastern European states with the Global South through ‘Western-dominated’ international organisations.<sup>10</sup> Yugoslavia occupied a liminal position in the international system, aptly depicted by the “Bridge of Civilisations” metaphor used by the CEEPB. On the one hand, these Central-Eastern European nations enjoyed privileged access to international institutions during the interwar period, unlike many Global South counterparts still burdened by colonial rule. On the other hand, their realities, marked by poor health, illiteracy, and low economic productivity, created affinities with colonial or (post)colonial states grappling with partial or limited sovereignty and LON or UN membership in the pre-decolonisation era.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> I am borrowing the terminology from “Connecting3Worlds” project (<https://connecting3worlds.org>).

<sup>11</sup> For the connections between Central-Eastern Europe and colonial world see, Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 2007); Margherita Zanasi, “Exporting Development: The League of

Still, the delegates from Yugoslavia and Central-Eastern Europe conveyed a powerful message to their colonial counterparts: social and economic “backwardness” should not impede active participation in the international system. Speaking to the American university audiences, Mirkovich depicted the peasant population of the region as an “energetic, vital, conscious and constructive force which will and must be used in such a way as to benefit the social and economic progress of mankind.” He emphasised that improving the lives of peasants should become a foundation “for not only European economic recovery but also the success of the United Nations’ quest for collective security, arguing that “ economic and political democracy must go hand in hand.”<sup>12</sup> This perspective aimed to redefine the role of peasants in the international economic and political landscape and positioned their upliftment as crucial to broader international goals, intertwining local welfare with international security and progress. The global professional networks of peasant internationalists enabled experts to shape international standards in health, anti-drug policy, education, and economy, simultaneously challenging and bolstering the liberal international framework of international organisations.

From the Geneva Opium Conference to the Ankara meetings and the Indo-Yugoslav advocacy for SUNFED within the WHO, agricultural states leveraged international organisations to champion a more equitable international system. This system would recognise the disparities in living standards between the West and the rest, including Central-Eastern Europe and the Global South. Drawing from expert ideas on rural modernisation, this dissertation proposes that peasant internationalism could be seen as a precedent to the calls for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the 1960s and 70s. By examining how Central-Eastern European countries like Yugoslavia prioritised economic concerns over dogmatic considerations of political sovereignty from the 1920s onwards, scholars can gain a more profound understanding of the influences shaping the NIEO. They can also

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Nations and Republican China", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 1 (2007): 143–69. Malgorzata Mazurek, "Measuring Development: An Intellectual and Political History of Ludwik Landau's Scale of World Inequality", *Contemporary European History* 28, no. 2 (2019): 156–71.

<sup>12</sup> NYPL, Box 3, f: Antioch college, "Mirkovich speech," 11 March 1943. Sava Kosanovich reiterated Mirkovich's argument on the interrelationship between regional reconstruction and global security in his speech to the United Nations about Peace and Security in Central-Eastern Europe on March 1, 1943.

appreciate the challenges posed to the liberal international system from within, which were not solely anti-colonial but also post-imperial, with roots in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America.<sup>13</sup>

Recognising the more extended history of the Yugoslav 'third way' offers the potential to redefine the Yugoslav and Central-Eastern European involvement in the technical assistance projects of the UN. The flexibility and pragmatism of peasant internationalism could be discerned through the tension between small-scale rural welfare projects and large-scale technical assistance projects, a dominant feature of socialist and liberal internationalism, respectively.<sup>14</sup> It demonstrates how Yugoslavia navigated both approaches to modernisation, wedding them together through various UN agencies.<sup>15</sup>

While historical scholarship has started to unravel the ties between Central-Eastern European states and (post)colonial development, these interactions are seldom analysed through the lens of their interwar origins. More commonly, they are viewed through the prism of global socialism, overlooking a deeper qualitative examination of the continuities and synergies in modernisation strategies between Central-Eastern Europe and the Global South from 1920-1960.<sup>16</sup> This includes the question of how rurally focused, decentralised modernisation solutions championed by figures like Gandhi and Bićanić influenced the economic planning and development projects in postcolonial contexts.<sup>17</sup> The alignment of strategies such as economic planning and land reforms

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<sup>13</sup> A consideration relevant to the "The Invisible History of the United Nations and the Global South – INVISIHIST" project at the Leiden University.

<sup>14</sup> For the overview of rural approaches to modernisation, governance and development in the European context, consult, Liesbeth van de Grift, Dietmar Müller, and Corinna R. Unger, *Living with the Land: Rural and Agricultural Actors in Twentieth-Century Europe – A Handbook* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2022), especially "Introduction", Corinna Unger's and Nikolay Kamenov's chapters.

<sup>15</sup> Grmek, *Selected papers of Andrija Štampar*, "In the Nile Valleys", "Review of the Eight World Assembly, May 1955," and "In Central Asia for the Second Time."

<sup>16</sup> For example, Bogdan Iacob appreciates the importance of interwar context to socialist development but does not differentiate between centralised and decentralised governance models. Bogdan Iacob, "Health" in James Mark and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonisation* (Oxford University Press, 2022).

<sup>17</sup> For understanding the Indian modernisation, see Corinna R. Unger, "The Decolonization of Development: Rural Development in India Before and After 1947", in *Internationalism, Imperialism and the Formation of the Contemporary World*, ed. Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and José Pedro Monteiro, Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History Series (Springer International Publishing, 2018), 253–78; Corinna R. Unger, "Industrialization vs. Agrarian Reform: West German Modernization Policies in India in the 1950s and 1960s", *Journal of Modern European History* 8, no. 1 (March 2010): 47–65; Nicole Sackley, "The Village as Cold War Site: Experts, Development, and the History of Rural Reconstruction", *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 3 (2011):

reveals a shared vision for rural modernisation between Eastern Europe and South Asia, establishing a common foundation well before the 1950s.

For instance, the transfer of expertise and knowledge across these regions predates the post-1956 era of Soviet and Eastern European engagement with the 'Third World Politics' that emerged following de-Stalinisation in Eastern Europe, as proposed by Malgorzata Mazurek. A case in point is Oskar Lange, a Polish economist who began his career as an editorial assistant for the CEEP. His tenure on the Board honed his expertise and expanded his professional networks, propelling him to prominence as the inaugural state-socialist Polish ambassador to the United States and the United Nations post-World War II. Lange's career took a decisive turn in 1955/56 when he assumed the role of a chief economic advisor in India, contributing to the development of India's Second Five-Year Plan (1956-1961).<sup>18</sup>

The alignment of economic reform proposals in India by Oskar Lange, Ignacy Sachs, Michael Kalecki, and Paul Rosenstein-Rodan with the modernisation strategies of Rudolf Bićanić and Nicholas Mirkovich, emphasising the optimal industrialisation of the countryside via the CEEP is striking.<sup>19</sup> Poland, Yugoslavia, and India were united in their belief in a 'third way' of political economy, firmly holding that economic planning was crucial to nation-building while supporting capital market mechanisms and the global flow of goods—a perspective they shared with their Indian counterparts. While they agreed with British Keynesian macroeconomics, they posited that Keynes' general theory was not universally applicable, especially outside the Western context. This led them to pioneer the emerging field of 'development economics,' challenging the notion of one-size-fits-all growth models and advocating for socioeconomic reforms designed explicitly for rural realities.<sup>20</sup> The CEEP's Institute at Antioch College and its communications with the US Board of

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481–504; David C. Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India* (Harvard University Press, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Mazurek, "Polish Economists in Nehru's India," 590-1.

<sup>19</sup> By the end of 1956, following Poland's rejection of Soviet-style agricultural collectivisation, family-run farms accounted for 90% of the country's agricultural output. This shift mirrored changes in Yugoslavia post the early 1950s self-management reforms. *Ibid*, 599.

<sup>20</sup> Mazurek, "Polish Economists in Nehru's India"; Albert O. Hirschman, *The Essential Hirschman* (Princeton: University Press, 2013), 49–73. On the Central-Eastern European influences on development economics through the work of Chatham House and the Polish-British economist Paul Rosenstein-Rodan, see Michele Alacevich,

Economic Warfare in 1943 also showcased a consistent commitment to locally contextualised socioeconomic modernisation strategies.

However, this 'third way' was relevant beyond the realm of economics as it supported the integrative economic conceptualisation of international health of Andrija Štampar and his Central-Eastern European colleagues. Together, in the LNHO and WHO, these experts collaboratively advocated for improving health by targeting social and economic environments in which disease spreads and pragmatically tailoring health policies to fit rural conditions and local needs. The insights from peasant internationalists thus help us recalibrate the historical understanding of 'third way' or 'middle path Keynesianism' in colonial development—a fusion of socialist planning and state-led welfare reforms—tracing its origins back to the interwar period. By the 1960s, the perspectives championed by Central-Eastern European experts gained new relevance, offering a critique of the prevailing modernisation theory through the lens of peasant studies.<sup>21</sup> The experts advocated for an alternative modernisation and globalisation strategy in the Global South, not as a novel concept emerging from socialist modernity but as an extension and revitalisation of interwar and wartime dialogues, alliances, and partnerships. This approach gained fresh momentum during the détente era and within non-aligned relations, illustrating peasant internationalism's enduring influence and adaptability across decades.

This discourse also brings to light an essential aspect of the relationships formed between socialist Eastern European countries and the newly independent states of the 'Global South,' exemplified by partnerships like the Polish Indian collaboration. These connections were not detached entities operating independently of the technical assistance efforts spearheaded by the United Nations or the Eastern European diplomatic engagements with the US and USSR. Many of these experts,

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"Planning Peace: The European Roots of the Post-War Global Development Challenge", *Past & Present* 239, no. 1 (1 May 2018): 219–64.

<sup>21</sup> Mazurek, "Polish Economists in Nehru's India", 609; Unger, *International Development*, 139-41; Corinna R. Unger, "Chapter 4: Developing Rural Regions: Europe in the World" in *Living with the Land: Rural and Agricultural Actors in Twentieth Century Europe*.

advocating for a peasant-centric model of modernisation, had refined their expertise within the ambit of international organisations long before the outbreak of World War II.<sup>22</sup>

However, the contributions of Central-Eastern European experts to technical assistance should neither be simplistically categorised as mere offshoots of Western ‘developmentalism.’ Their operational independence in initiatives such as WHO-UNICEF projects, alongside their advocacy for decentralised institution-building to tackle health issues and poverty, contests the monolithic interpretation of the United Nations development agenda in the 1950s as predominantly influenced by America.<sup>23</sup> Integrating the viewpoints of peasant internationalists into the annals of UN development history promises a richer, more complex narrative of international development efforts, highlighting that participating countries did not uniformly see such endeavours as undermining national sovereignty. From the point of view of experts, ‘development’ assistance was a potential for nationally adapted modernisation initiatives, where a varying measure of international oversight did not necessarily undermine the state’s ability to govern.<sup>24</sup>

Michael Kalecki reflected this argument in his observations on the Indian equidistance from the Soviet Union and the United States. He observed that the non-aligned countries, referred to as ‘intermediate regimes,’ were adeptly navigating between superpowers to secure financial aid from both. They were “proverbial clever calves that suck two cows: each gives them financial aid in competition with the other,” which resonates deeply with the strategy of Yugoslav peasant internationalists between 1920-1956.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, in his negotiations with the Americans, Bićanić placed the economic interests of Yugoslavia ahead of the ideological considerations of the KPJ. This approach underpins Corinna Unger’s argument that, despite international development often carrying implicit expectations, its potential to offer tangible improvements to people’s lives and its

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<sup>22</sup> Spaskovska and Calori recognise this development, but focus on the post-1945 influences, Spaskovska and Calori, "A Nonaligned Business World".

<sup>23</sup> Webster, "Development Advisors in a Time of Cold War and Decolonization."

<sup>24</sup> Unger, "Developing Rural Regions". I disagree here with Jamie Martin’s view on the negative perceptions of international aid, grants and loans in Central-Eastern Europe as an encroachment on sovereignty in Martin, *The Meddlers*, 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Michał Kalecki, "Intermediate Regimes" (1966), in his *The Last Phase in the Transformation of Capitalism* (New York, 1972): 121–22.; also, in Mazurek, "Polish Economists in Nehru’s India," 607.



appeal should not be understated.<sup>26</sup> Peasant internationalists' integration of rural-centric modernisation into the technical assistance frameworks of UNICEF and WHO exemplifies a pragmatic fusion of national and international development goals, benefiting both the aid recipients and the donor nations.

Peasant internationalism thus also reveals new perspectives on the history of international development. Its core concepts, including 'burden sharing' and 'self-help' that informed the UN's technical assistance framework, found their influences stretching beyond the confines of American foreign policy. While President Harry Truman officially integrated this developmental ethos into American foreign policy in 1949, its genesis can be traced to the collaborative efforts of Central and Eastern European experts during WWII.<sup>27</sup> These experts were pivotal in conceptualising 'long-term' socioeconomic reconstruction strategies by participating in various voluntary governmental and non-governmental planning committees, such as the CEEPB. This collaborative effort led to a decentralisation of technical assistance, wherein international experts operated under the direct accountability of national governments rather than the overarching UN bureaucracy during their fieldwork operations. Such an operational framework provided the flexibility needed to adapt assistance programs to recipient countries' unique demands, as Reinisch already demonstrated in the case of UNRRA.<sup>28</sup> Andrija Štampar, Teodorović, and Kesić leveraged this opportunity to ensure that WHO-UNICEF project objectives were customised to suit the specific conditions in countries like Egypt and Sudan, as exemplified by Štampar's reflections on his field missions in the 1950s. Their cooperative, pragmatic and participatory approach enhanced the effectiveness of international aid and underscored the pivotal role of Central and Eastern European expertise in refining and implementing a development agenda responsive to the diverse rural landscapes and local needs.

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<sup>26</sup> Unger, *International Development*, 9.

<sup>27</sup> Webster subscribes to this conceptualisation of technical assistance to President Truman and his speech in front of the US Congress in January 1949, where technical assistance was set out as point four on the US foreign policy agenda. In the last decade, historians have pushed back the timeline of this conceptualisation to the wartime years, see Jessica Reinisch, "Internationalism in Relief: The Birth (and Death) of UNRRA", *Past and Present* 210, no. 6 (2011): 258–89.

<sup>28</sup> For an analysis of the juxtaposition between the American 'missionary internationalism' built on the concept of self-help guided by the US financial assistance, and the CE European 'collaborative internationalism,' see also Jessica Reinisch, "Internationalism in Relief".

This perspective also broadens the scope of current historiography concerning the non-Western roots of development thought and policy.<sup>29</sup> Through the lens of peasant internationalists, historians are provided with a deeper understanding of how technical assistance intersects with evolving development paradigms in post-colonial contexts. This analysis raises critical questions regarding the customisation of development projects to fit local environments, thereby contesting, reshaping, and occasionally subverting established Western development models.<sup>30</sup> Such a standpoint unveils multiple pathways for examining the contributions of Central-Eastern European intellectuals and practitioners to the United Nations' development and technical assistance initiatives. Moreover, this exploration encourages concurrently examining the shifts within these regions' political and economic landscapes throughout the Cold War, highlighting how internal state dynamics influenced their international engagement.<sup>31</sup> A pertinent case study to consider is the UN's technical assistance mission in Bolivia in 1949, notably influenced by Czechoslovak experts active in Latin America during WWII. This mission laid the groundwork for establishing the *Technical Assistance Administration* (TAA) in 1950, a key UN development agency operational until 1959.<sup>32</sup> The TAA, renowned for being the third largest endowed UN development body (behind WHO and FAO), provided national governments with resource surveys and dispatched experts to assist with development planning across various sectors, including the economy, public administration, and social welfare. The TAA's focus on rural welfare makes its missions to Indonesia, India, and Pakistan particularly relevant for studying the enduring impact of peasant internationalists' modernisation strategies, which influenced diverse areas of life such as health, agriculture, irrigation, education, economy, and social and public administration reforms. Given the Indian–Yugoslav partnerships, a pertinent case study could be the Yugoslav expert assistance in overseeing sweeping cooperative projects at the *Pakistan Academy of Rural Development* in Comilla, East

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<sup>29</sup> It resonates with Christy Thornton's analysis of the Mexican roots of development Thornton, *Revolution in Development*.

<sup>30</sup> Rephrased and adapted questions inspired by Webster, "Development Advisors in a Time of Cold War and Decolonization," 250-251. This will be explored in a chapter format in De Gruyter's Yearbook for the History of Global Development, vol.2, 2025.

<sup>31</sup> Offner adopts this approach in the case of the Americas in Amy C. Offner, *Sorting out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Developmental States in the Americas*, Histories of Economic Life (Princeton University Press, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> Webster, "Development Advisors in a Time of Cold War and Decolonization," 255.

Pakistan, in 1958-9 on the request of the Pakistani government. The Comilla cooperatives would become the “Comilla Model of Rural Development” during the 1970s and the heyday of the green revolution.<sup>33</sup>

Exploring the socioeconomic dimensions of the Yugoslav ‘third way’ further extends into the socialist solidarity and aid projects between Yugoslavia and the Global South. From this vantage point, the Yugoslav leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement, as the sole European, predominantly white state, appears less surprising and less reliant on Tito’s regional ambitions in the Balkans and the Soviet-Yugoslav split in 1948. It underscores a broader, more inclusive development vision, transcending regional politics and showcasing a global commitment to addressing rural societies’ unique challenges and potentials. Peasant internationalism thus offers a new technocratic perspective for analysing the Yugoslav involvement in the Non-Aligned Movement and its ‘third way’, enriching the traditional focus on Yugoslav foreign political and military solidarity with the Global South.

This dissertation opens up the question of how state-socialist countries harnessed the networks and technical expertise of peasant internationalists for broader state-socialist objectives. Exploring peasant internationalism suggests that the conventional distinctions between trade and aid and profitability and solidarity within socialist economic policies, as analysed by Mark and Calori, did not emerge in the 1960s and 1970s. During the Cold War, the East and South sought to diversify their post-independence economic, cultural, political, and intellectual ties. However, they were also part of a longer tradition and pragmatism of peasant internationalism dating back to the 1920s.<sup>34</sup> These relationships were underpinned by earlier models of local, participatory, and adaptable modernisation strategies that acknowledged the diverse living standards of peasants, disseminated through international networks such as the League of Nations and sustained through the ethos of peasant international cooperation.

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<sup>33</sup> Thank you to Tariq Omar Ali who alerted me to the extent to which Pakistani government in the 1950s relied on Yugoslav experts to set up cooperative agricultural ventures in the country.

<sup>34</sup> Calori et al., "1. Alternative Globalization?"

To fully comprehend how the socialist states “re-institutionalised and reshaped global interactions and economic flows with the Third World according to their vision of global economic development and the new international division of labour,” a broader historical perspective is thus required.<sup>35</sup> Recognizing peasant international cooperation as an element of this “alternative globalisation” suggests a need for a comprehensive approach to studying globalisation and modernisation. This approach should transcend singular socioeconomic dimensions to include a wide array of fields such as social welfare laws, Central and Eastern Europe’s engagement with the Economic and Financial Organisation of the League of Nations, and their participation in the Telecommunications and Transit Committee of the LON. Such expansive studies promise to offer a holistic narrative of peasant internationalists’ experiences and contributions within international organisations, enriching our understanding of their impact on international cooperation and laws.

Another pertinent enquiry this project opens is the differentiation between peasant internationalists’ cooperative economy and socialist collectivisation methods. In peasant internationalists’ view, collectivisation should not be conflated with agricultural cooperation. While cooperatives presented a grass-root governance model (a reason behind their popularity in colonial contexts), collectivisation assumed state control over economic life, rejected by peasant internationalists. The continuation of this research is vital for two reasons. First, as already argued, it reveals the roots and prehistory of the arguments presented by post-colonial states in the Global South to enhance their visibility and decision-making power in Western-dominated economic and financial institutions. These arguments were instrumental in shaping the NIEO, a concept widely studied by economic and development historians. Second, an examination of Yugoslavia’s and non-aligned countries’ efforts to transcend Cold War dichotomies—through non-aligned summits, founding of UNCTAD despite opposition from the US and Europe in 1964, and contributing to SUNFED funds despite Western disapproval— could serve as a crucial entry point into the entanglements between socialist and liberal globalisation. Future projects could assess the impact of the socioeconomic facets of peasant internationalism on Yugoslav political non-alignment alongside the more well-known influences of global and domestic socialism.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 15-16.

Therefore, peasant internationalism offers a fresh perspective on the narrative of Yugoslav 'third way' in foreign policy and political economy, marked by its co-existence between the East and West, distinguishing it as the only socialist country politically detached from the Eastern Bloc.<sup>36</sup> Peasant international cooperation suggests that the NAM should not be understood only as an alternative form of internationalism. Instead, the foundations of NAM's values and connections were also intricately woven within the fabric of the liberal international system—simultaneously reforming the system and being shaped by it from within, supported by the case point of India and Yugoslavia. Viewing the Non-Aligned Movement in a dialogue with the liberal internationalism of the UN, peasant internationalism sheds light on the less explored technocratic origins of NAM, revealing a complex interplay of political and economic strategies that underpinned its formation and evolution outside the more traditional focus on socialist solidarity projects.<sup>37</sup>

With this conclusion in mind, this dissertation situates itself amidst a growing body of historiography that has recently started to uncover the social, cultural, and economic foundations of non-alignment. This emerging perspective challenges the traditional view of the movement as merely a succession of diplomatic summits, recognising it instead as a vital component of international cooperation and globalisation.<sup>38</sup> The liberation of Yugoslavia from fascist rule fostered military and commercial connections with African and Asian nations in their quests for independence. At the same time, the Tito-Stalin schism acted as a pivotal geopolitical catalyst for Yugoslavia's engagement with the non-socialist world. By delving into the socioeconomic underpinnings of non-alignment, this work reveals the technocratic origins of Yugoslavia's 'third way.' Peasant internationalism served as a precursor to this global engagement, laying the

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<sup>36</sup> Svetozar Rajak, "No Bargaining Chips, No Spheres of Interest: The Yugoslav Origins of Cold War Non-Alignment", *Journal of Cold War Studies* 16, no. 1 (1 December 2014): 146–79; Robert Niebuhr, "Nonalignment as Yugoslavia's Answer to Bloc Politics", *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13, no. 1 (1 January 2011): 146–79; Aleksandar Životić and Jovan Čavoški, "On the Road to Belgrade: Yugoslavia, Third World Neutrals, and the Evolution of Global Non-Alignment, 1954–1961", *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18, no. 4 (1 October 2016): 79–97; Tvrtko Jakovina, "Aktivna Koegzistencija Nesvrstane Jugoslavije", *Jugoslavija u Istorijskoj Perspektivi*, n.d., 434–85, and "Tito's Yugoslavia as the Pivotal State of the Non-Aligned", in *Tito-Vidjenja i Tumačenja* (Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2011), 389–404; "The Tito-Stalin Split 70 Years Later" edited by Martin Previsic and Tvrtko Jakovina, <https://www.yuhistorija.com/doc/zbornik%20tito%20-%20stalin%20split%20book.pdf> (University of Zagreb, Philosophy Faculty), [last accessed 4 July 2023].

<sup>37</sup> Spaskovska noted the need for recognising these ambivalences, see Spaskovska in 'Constructing the "City of International Solidarity."'

<sup>38</sup> As outlined by Spaskovska, Mark, and Bieber, "Introduction."

groundwork for the formalised cooperation between Yugoslavia and the non-European world that began in 1961 in Belgrade and was officially institutionalised in Lusaka in 1970.<sup>39</sup>

Peasant internationalism is thus a part of the rich tapestry of traditions, dilemmas, and inquiries that catalysed the Non-Aligned Movement, examining the interplay of ideologies and the cross-pollination between nationalism and internationalism, capitalist and socialist values. However, remaining faithful to the ethos of peasant internationalists, I argue that for Yugoslav technocrats, the 'third way' was marked less with the concern about political ideology and was more pragmatically connected to the conditions of knowledge production and international sociability as a unique form of expert diplomacy. Addressing challenges such as poor health, access to global agricultural markets, and the scarcity of basic sanitation required a collaborative effort. This necessitated engagement with Central-Eastern European and non-European experts from countries like India, Egypt, Turkey, China, and the Latin American continent, who shared similar hurdles in elevating living standards. The quest for economic vitality under the banner of state-building—politically legitimised yet economically wanting—propelled Yugoslav involvement in international organisations and the advocacy for an alternative, rurally focused path to modernisation within the international framework. For peasant internationalists, the pursuit was not to protect the rural from modernity but to place the rural at the centre of it.

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<sup>39</sup> The exploration of the non-diplomatic NAM engagement before WWII has thus far been limited to the military context. For instance, Milorad Lazić explains how the memory of the Yugoslav liberation from fascist rule was used to galvanise commitment to non-aligned solidarity with the new partners in Africa and Asia in Lazić, "Arsenal of the Global South."

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