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## MAESTRO BOJAN ADAMIČ IN 1947 IN ALBANIA: PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR MUSICAL CULTURE OR PENAL DECREE

**IZVLEČEK:** Prispevek osvetljuje vzroke za napotitev pianista, skladatelja in dirigenta Plesnega orkestra Radia Ljubljana Bojana Adamiča (1912–1995) leta 1947 v Tirano. Sam je poudarjal, da je bil to kazenski dekret zaradi njegovega ustvarjanja in poustvarjanja ameriško naravnane jazzovske glasbe, s čimer naj bi izkazal neposlušnosti do socialistične oblasti. Da je bil v Tirano poslan kazensko, iz dokumentov ni mogoče ne dokazati ne zanikati. Prav mogoče je bil v ozadju ustni dekret.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** Bojan Adamič, Plesni orkester Radia Ljubljana, jazz glasba v Jugoslaviji, kulturna pomoč Albaniji, politični dekreti

**ABSTRACT:** This paper discusses the reasons for sending the pianist, composer and conductor of the Radio Ljubljana Dance Orchestra, Bojan Adamič (1912–1995), to Tirana in 1947. He insisted that this deployment was a penal decree caused by his creation and recreation of American-oriented jazz music, which was understood as disobedience by the socialist authorities. That he was sent to Tirana on penal grounds can neither be proved nor denied on the basis of archival documents. There may well have been a verbal decree behind it.

**KEYWORDS:** Bojan Adamič, Radio Ljubljana Dance Orchestra, jazz music in Yugoslavia, cultural assistance to Albania, political decrees

### INTRODUCTION

**B**OJAN Adamič (1912–1995) is recognized as a pioneer of Slovenian dance and jazz music, popular song, chansons and film and theatre music. He was also the founder of the now legendary Radio Ljubljana Dance Orchestra (PORL), one of the first professional ensembles of this kind in post-war Europe. Many also remember him as an important member of the *Veseli tobogan* show. He worked throughout Yugoslavia and was an influential figure in the development of entertainment and jazz music festivals. As a composer and arranger, he created an exceptional oeuvre for dance orchestra or big band, into which he wove many motifs taken from

Slovenian folk music and thereby founded the so-called Slovenian expression. He wrote about what prompted him to create this type of music: "I started writing original compositions because Western music was banned."<sup>1</sup> No less important and outstanding is his series of compositions for brass bands, which are still played today by the best ensembles of this type in Slovenia and elsewhere. His work with the ensemble PORN and with works showing off his characteristic expression gained him international fame. He was a pianist with a diploma from the Ljubljana Academy of Music (1941), composer, arranger, conductor, music editor, versatile recreator, juror and, last but not least, an excellent photographer. For his work, he received several national, societal and artistic awards, among which were the highest awards for cultural achievements from the former Yugoslavia: the Golden Arena at the International Pula Film Festival (1955, 1957, 1958), awards from music festivals in Zagreb, Opatija, Maribor and elsewhere, a gold medal from the Yugoslav Composers' Union (1970), the Silver Order of Freedom of the Republic of Slovenia (1992), the Prešeren Award for lifetime achievement (1979) and, last but not least, the Župančič Award of the City of Ljubljana (1993).<sup>2</sup>

During the last decade, several in-depth studies and publications have been written about the life and work of Bojan Adamič.<sup>3</sup> In 2012 the Academy of Music of the University of Ljubljana, as part of a research project conducted by the Department of Musical History, organized and held a symposium on Bojan Adamič. This had international participation and was also included in the "Year of Bojan Adamič" project pursued under the auspices of the European Capital of Culture Maribor 2012. The event was immortalized by a full-length concert of compositions by Bojan Adamič performed by the Slovenian Police Orchestra and the Slovenian Army Orchestra

<sup>1</sup> Sivec, "Naša leta", 19.

<sup>2</sup> Biographical data about Bojan Adamič is available in the composer's documented memoirs and other sources from the family archive of Adamič's daughter Alenka, preserved in the Music Collection of the National and University Library (SI-Lng) and on a website containing preserved documents and older, shorter biographical publications, which is edited by Adamič's sister Antonija Levart and his daughter Alenka Adamič, accessible at <http://www.bojan-adamic.si/biografija/>. The first comprehensive biography is the work of the present author (Koter, "Bojan Adamič: The Correlation between His Creative and Performing Life"), where Bojan Adamič's memories, published interviews and other material he left behind are also considered. The first comprehensive and in-depth assessment of his work and its importance for the Slovenian and Yugoslav cultural space came in the publication *Bojan Adamič: (1912–1995)*, published by the Academy of Music of the University of Ljubljana. This contribution was made following an international symposium on Bojan Adamič in 2012 marking the centenary of his birth. In addition to his biography, there are papers about his musical activity during World War II, his music for big band and brass orchestra, his film music, his importance for the development of Slovenian pop music and chanson and, finally, his role on the radio show *Veseli tobogan*.

<sup>3</sup> They were encouraged by the Association of Slovenian Brass Bands, with the "Year of Bojan Adamič" project marking the centenary anniversary of his birth, and by his daughter, Alenka Adamič, who edited her father's papers and website (available at <http://www.bojan-adamic.si>) and donated a good amount of written, notation, video and photographic material to the National and University Library (SI-Ln), the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia and the Slovenian Cinematheque. Individual units from the preserved papers of Bojan Adamič are held at SI-Ln, the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, the National Museum of Slovenia, the Slovenian Cinematheque, the National Museum of Contemporary History Ljubljana, the City Museum of Ljubljana, and the Gornjesavski Museum Jesenice. The family-owned archive is also accessible to researchers.

under the baton of Milivoj Šurbek at the Union Hall in Maribor. The following year, the achievements of the new research were published in the publication, *Bojan Adamič (1912–1995)*, released as a thematic issue of *The Journal of Music Education of the Academy of Music in Ljubljana*.<sup>4</sup>

A new turning point in research occurred in 2022, on the 110th anniversary of the birth of Bojan Adamič, with encouragement from the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Tirana. It is less well known that Bojan Adamič was sent to Albania in May 1947 as a representative of the former Yugoslavia under the rubric of “cultural aid”, staying there for a few months (from the beginning of May until, probably, the end of August). Until recently, this part of his life has remained largely unknown. Adamič himself mentioned the episode in some interviews, observing that he was sent to Tirana as a punishment for being the disobedient conductor of PORL, with which he had performed American dance and jazz music and music of his own that was of such a character that it was at that time deemed to promote a politically undesirable culture. He also remarked that this had been an extremely difficult period that he did not want to talk about.<sup>5</sup> At the Slovenian embassy in Tirana this fragment from the life of Bojan Adamič was recognized as an opportunity for further research and for detailed elucidation of the causes and circumstances that led to the decision by the Yugoslav authorities to send him to Albania. With great anticipation and many-sided engagement they opened this subject, which, they thought, would answer many questions and bring to light a connection between Slovenian and Albanian cultural and political history.<sup>6</sup> Paramount was the topic of Bojan Adamič’s fields of activity and the importance of his expert work for Albanian musical and general culture. The Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Albanian Academy of Sciences, the Bojan Adamič Foundation headed by Alenka Adamič and the Academy of Music at the University of Ljubljana, which in 2012 came up with a research project, were invited to participate. With the help of the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Belgrade, Alenka Adamič launched a “search campaign” for archival documents in the Archives of Yugoslavia and the Historical Archives of Belgrade that would clarify the uncertainties and complement existing knowledge. Some new documents were discovered at the beginning of 2022 and more in 2023; the search is not yet completely finished. A special “academy” celebrating Bojan Adamič’s role in Albania and Kosovo took place on 4 May 2022, in Tirana (this was the exact day, 75 years previously, when Adamič had arrived in Albania in 1947) at the Albanian Academy of Sciences and in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia.<sup>7</sup> Alenka Adamič, in collaboration with the National and University Library in Ljubljana and the Academy of Sciences in Tirana, prepared a documentary exhibition about Bojan Adamič, which was on display at the premises of the Albanian Academy of Arts, attracting a lot of interest. The event was rounded off by a performance of Adamič’s composition entitled *Ljubljana Piano Concerto (1971)* with the renowned Albanian artist Merita Rexha as soloist. At the conference some new findings were presented, partially supplementing our knowledge;

<sup>4</sup> Koter, “Bojan Adamič (1912–1995)”.

<sup>5</sup> Sivec, “Naša leta”, 18. Adamič did mention that he was also a gymnastics teacher, but this cannot be confirmed on the basis of the available documents.

<sup>6</sup> All efforts in this regard were placed within the framework of the thirtieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Slovenia and Albania.

<sup>7</sup> This event, which had the most media coverage in Albania, was attended by high-ranking representatives from both countries, diplomats, faculty professors, musicology students and the wider cultural public. In Slovenia it was covered by the newspaper *Dnevnik*. Ingrid Mager, “Na misiji v Albaniji”, *Dnevnik*, 7 May 2022, 17.

more especially, many new questions emerged, and the participants were urged to continue with their researches and publish their findings in a book.<sup>8</sup> This study of Adamič's activities in Albania also stimulated the recording of a documentary film, *Albanska sonatina*, shot partly in Albania and partly in Slovenia by RTV Slovenia.<sup>9</sup>

As already mentioned, some new documents from the Belgrade archives have become available to researchers, and the contents of the family archive containing the personal letters that Bojan Adamič sent to his wife Barbara during the Albanian period are also accessible.<sup>10</sup> Documentary material offers the opportunity to learn about the political background of the time and thereby better understand the causes of the so-described "personnel assistance" to the Albanian state in the first years after World War II. Adamič's letters and his work report, written at the end of May 1947 and sent to the Committee for Culture and Art in Belgrade, make it possible to analyse and understand his daily life, his experience in a new environment and his areas of activity, and also to recognize the problems he had to face, the obstacles that limited him at work, his personal distress and feeling of helplessness and his efforts to satisfy the expectations of his superiors on both the Yugoslav and the Albanian sides. We can also detect there his enthusiasm for Albanian ethnographic culture and many other things. All this can be of great help in answering the central question considered in this article: do the official documents and correspondence regarding Adamič's deployment and activities in Albania explain and confirm his claim of a penal exile to Albania. Was he sent to Albania merely as a broad-minded musician who accepted the assigned tasks in order to contribute to the development of Albanian musical institutions and ensembles, or did the socialist government send him there to deflect him from jazz and American dance music?

## BOJAN ADAMIČ: IN THE STYLE OF JAZZ AND AMERICAN DANCE MUSIC

For a better insight into the problem, it is necessary to shed light on Bojan Adamič's path to American dance music and jazz before and immediately after World War II, as well as the attitude of the socialist authorities towards this type of music after the war. As a student, Bojan Adamič encountered music that infiltrated the area of Slovenia from the West in the form of film and dance music. Between the two world wars he became a regular visitor to Ljubljana's cinemas, where films with sound had begun to be shown at that time. Film music and its scores overwhelmed him to the point of making him start improvising. At first, he played at youth dances, since he was a good pianist. He was taught by the renowned pedagogue Anton Ravnik (1895–1989) from his lower level at the music school *Glasbena matica* of Ljubljana up to his graduation

<sup>8</sup> The texts for the book were prepared jointly by Vasil Tole (composer, ethnomusicologist and vice-president of the Academy of Sciences of Albania) and the author of this article. The work was published in November 2023 in the Albanian language, with the support of the Slovenian Book Agency, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania. Translations into Slovenian and English are planned.

<sup>9</sup> The author and director of the film is Natalija Gorščak. The documentary premiered on 24 October 2024.

<sup>10</sup> Bojan Adamič's letters to his wife Barbara are dated between 2 May and 20 August 1947. Here, I would like to thank Alenka Adamič for her trust and for allowing insight into such personal family documents.

from the Academy of Music in 1941. Adamič had absolute pitch, which is how he memorized the music he heard perfectly – not only melodically, but also harmonically – and then played it impromptu.<sup>11</sup> From an early age, he was also interested in the organ, which he initially played as an autodidact, subsequently graduating from the secondary level at the Academy of Music with professor Stanko Premrl (1880–1965). During his school and university years he regularly played the organ at Sunday student Masses at St Joseph’s Church in Ljubljana and included hit tunes to accompany the singers. Despite the secular atmosphere, or perhaps because of it, his playing impressed not only the youth but also the adult community, since many people, including high school professors, reportedly went to the Masses. The catechist there quietly tolerated Adamič’s musical shenanigans.<sup>12</sup>

The first Ljubljana ensemble to play foxtrot, tap, swing etc. and compositions with elements of jazz was called Original Jazz Nagode (from 1922 onwards). Eventually, new groups followed, but before the 1930s no genuine jazz ensembles cultivated improvisation. Bojan Adamič joined the Ronny ensemble at the age of eighteen. Like others, the band pioneered jazz and wrote its first covers mostly for film soundtracks. The Ronny ensemble performed successfully in tourist locations, which included a then prestigious casino in Bled. After its disbandment due to ideological disagreements among the members, Adamič in 1936 founded his own ensemble, with which he began to develop “real” jazz with improvisation, which was also influenced by the increasing influx of records and Hollywood films featuring swing music. Enthusiasm for this kind of music rose sharply among the youth. Certain instruments have also become synonymous with jazz. Bojan Adamič played saxophone, clarinet and trumpet, the last-named instrument considered the principal one for jazz improvisation. Documentation from the Ljubljana State Conservatory shows that for at least one year (1934) he attended a conducting school led by the composer and conductor Lucijan Marija Škerjanc (1900–1973).<sup>13</sup> When working with the ensemble, he was considered to be extremely zealous and even hard on his colleagues, which is why he was given the nickname “Maestro”, initially as a joke, although over the years it became an entirely justified sobriquet that stuck with him throughout his life. Since pre-war Ljubljana could not find a trumpet player who could cope with improvisation and jazz music, Adamič also took up this instrument. He was tutored by the then well-known Ljubljana professor František Karas,<sup>14</sup> otherwise a member of the Slovenian National Theatre’s orchestra. By playing in bands with dance and jazz music, for which he also wrote arrangements and his first original works, Bojan Adamič made a lifelong commitment to jazz. However, this did not mean alienation from classical music. He continued to be fascinated by Bach and Beethoven, studied piano, organ and trumpet, and kept perfecting his compositions at the secondary level with the composer Slavko Osterc (1895–1941). Some professors objected to his enthusiasm for jazz and improvisation and accused him of engaging in “obscene” entertainment music and neglecting his study obligations; the leadership of the Music Academy headed by Julij Betetto even considered expelling him. His piano

<sup>11</sup> Koter, “Bojan Adamič: The Correlation between His Creative and Performing Life”, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Bojan Adamič, “Biography”, accessed [1. 6. 2023] <https://www.bojan-adamic.si/en/biography/>.

<sup>13</sup> Stefanija and Zorko, *Med ljubeznijo in poklicem*, 581.

<sup>14</sup> Biographical information about František Karas is unavailable.

teacher, Anton Ravnik, strongly opposed this idea and successfully defended him. On 28 June 1941 Adamič graduated with a degree in piano.<sup>15</sup>

At the beginning of World War II he founded the Bojan Adamič Orchestra, which became one of the most popular bands in Ljubljana at the time. The social role of jazz, which was most favoured by young people involved in the Falcon movement and less so by Catholics and communists, changed with the beginning of the war. Because of its background and connections with the Allied armed forces, it won favour among the wider social strata; at the same time, it was persistently rejected by the Italian and German authorities.<sup>16</sup> During the first two years of the war, Adamič's orchestra continued to perform, namely in a jazz club on Šentpeterska cesta (today Trubarjeva ulica), Adamič donating his earnings to the Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation movement (Osvobodilna fronta, hereinafter OF).<sup>17</sup> With the capitulation of Italy, the people of Ljubljana joined the partisan movement in large numbers, including Adamič, together with some members of the orchestra. After a short combat episode, during which he was seriously wounded, at the beginning of 1944 he was assigned to the main staff of the National Liberation Army to organize its military band. With the combined forces of wounded, disabled, amateur musicians and a handful of trained musicians, the main staff band was created. Adamič expressed his enthusiasm for entertainment music and jazz in combat songs, marches and other songs with revolutionary content, arranging them in the style of American entertainment music and jazz; in addition, he arranged classical works as standards. This is how he developed his style, which was much closer to entertainment music and jazz melodically and rhythmically than to marching bands. Musicians accepted his music despite their reservations, as did senior political figures. Adamič's interwar and wartime oeuvre includes around 150 works, original compositions and covers, including choruses and chamber works, but most of it is lost. He also participated in broadcasts on the partisan radio OF, variously as a composer, arranger, accordionist and pianist. He was decorated for his services, received the rank of second lieutenant and later became a major. In 1945 he was awarded the Medal for Bravery by the state.<sup>18</sup>

Post-war socialist Yugoslavia developed a completely new attitude towards jazz music. It is evident that it was unwanted and stigmatized as pro-Western propaganda. Despite the regime's holding of such a position, Adamič was allowed in May 1945, as a deserving partisan, to found the PORL, one of the first professional ensembles of its kind in post-war Europe. When composing the repertoire, Adamič had to adapt to the directives of a socialist and pro-Soviet-oriented society, which expected compositions in a revolutionary and working-class spirit, as well as marches and lighter songs. He did not agree with these directives, instead creating compositions with a Slovenian inspiration and elements of jazz. By so doing, he created the first-ever Slovenian dance and jazz music for Big Band ensembles. The best musicians in the Slovenian territory played in the ensemble at that time, leaving a permanent mark on entertainment and

<sup>15</sup> Koter, "Bojan Adamič: The Correlation between His Creative and Performing Life", 6–7. Certificates and diplomas are held by the family archive of Alenka Adamič.

<sup>16</sup> Bojan Adamič, "Razmišljanja", accessed 3 June 2023, <http://www.bojan-adamic.si/razmisljanja/#o-svoji-maturi>.

<sup>17</sup> In the papers of Bojan Adamič, preserved in SI-Lng, the Bojan Adamič Preserved-Papers Fund, there are several different autobiographical testimonies to his activities in the field of jazz, most of them undated. One example is a typescript entitled "Jazz in Slovenia".

<sup>18</sup> Koter, "Bojan Adamič: The Correlation between His Creative and Performing Life", 9–10.

jazz music. Despite opposition from the authorities, jazz irresistibly took root within the society of the then Yugoslavia. Adamič was becoming increasingly recognizable and influential on account of his music and orchestra, a fact that made him a disturbing element which had to be stopped. Influential politicians first took a “soft approach”. They tried to convince him that he deserved some political position as someone who had served the nation – for example, as director of the Ljubljana Opera House, the Slovenian Philharmonic or something similar, probably mainly in order to attract him away from jazz. He refused all offers and remained at Radio Ljubljana as music editor, assistant director and conductor of PORL. Because of his musical style, he had many problems: among other things, the authorities rejected all his requests for further education abroad. He really wanted to study in London or Moscow.<sup>19</sup> Under his direction the dance orchestra made significant progress, holding its own concerts as early as 1945. The authorities showed considerable displeasure with the concerts. Articles were written about jazz, labelling it as music without aesthetic and artistic value and as American and capitalist propaganda. A concert at the beginning of 1947 in Belgrade was particularly fateful for the ensemble. The audience, which included many staff from the American Embassy, gave a roaring applause to the songs of Glen Miller and others. The Yugoslav authorities were outraged and even developed the construct that the concert had been organized by the American Embassy in order to incite the incident.<sup>20</sup> Some enthusiasts were even arrested by the State Security Administration (UDBA) after the concert, and the next day Adamič was ordered to give up jazz, to change the schedule of his concerts and to adhere to the socialist doctrine regarding culture. That day, Adamič had a completely different concert from the one originally planned – one where he had no choice but to comply – so he played folk song covers on the piano, while the orchestra played waltzes and Russian songs. As he said, it was a sad day, a fiasco for jazz. He later wrote his thoughts about the event: “There’s nothing you can say that would not get you hanged.”<sup>21</sup> Strong pressure was also put on the management of Radio Ljubljana; there was even talk of disbanding the orchestra, which was said to be “a main source of pollution for the Slovenian soul”.<sup>22</sup> The director of Radio Ljubljana at that time was Ante Novak, a leading partisan who was considered an opportunist and was therefore demoted several times from high positions.<sup>23</sup> Shortly after the PORL incident in Belgrade, Novak was dismissed, the official reasons for which are unknown. He was replaced by an unknown director, otherwise a member of the Central Committee of Slovenia, which was a senior political position. This man was clearly sympathetic to Adamič and his activities, since he even intervened in his favour in the highest political circles and was of a principled disposition. When the public controversy against jazz and Adamič continued and the musician was not allowed to publish his side of the story, this director supported him, as evidenced by the statement: “As long as I am in office, we will talk with arguments”<sup>24</sup>, but he was in turn soon replaced.

<sup>19</sup> See the webpage <http://www.bojan-adamic.si/>.

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.bojan-adamic.si/biografija/#povojno>.

<sup>21</sup> Petar Luković, “Večni fant s trobento: paberki iz življenja in dela Bojana Adamiča”, *Nedeljski dnevnik*, 20 November 1988, 25.

<sup>22</sup> Bojan Adamič, “Razmišljanja”, accessed 3 June 2023, <http://www.bojan-adamic.si/razmisljanja/#o-svoji-maturi>.

<sup>23</sup> See <https://www.bojan-adamic.si/biografija/#povojno>.

<sup>24</sup> Petar Luković, “Večni fant s trobento: paberki iz življenja in dela Bojana Adamiča”, *Nedeljski dnevnik*, 20 November 1988, 25.

A third director in the spring of 1947 was not at all supportive of Adamič, and soon they had a heated argument. Adamič was convinced that this was precisely the reason why he was sent to Albania.<sup>25</sup> The Belgrade Committee for Art and Culture was supposed to have played a part in this, for it must have been aware of the incident at the concert given by Adamič's orchestra in Belgrade at the beginning of 1947.<sup>26</sup>

## POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA AND ALBANIA AFTER WORLD WAR II UNTIL 1948

For a better understanding of the issue, it is also necessary to shed light on the political facts about the relations between the two countries immediately after World War II. In the first years, Yugoslavia and Albania had close political relations. After the liberation of Albanian territory at the end of April 1945, Yugoslavia was the first state to recognize the new government of Colonel General Enver Hoxha, and the two countries established diplomatic relations.<sup>27</sup> Since Albania failed to develop a diplomatic network until 1948 due to non-recognition by most countries (the first country after Yugoslavia to recognise Albania was the Soviet Union at the end of 1945), Yugoslavia represented Albania's political interests in sixteen countries. Among other things, Yugoslavia contributed to the signing of the peace agreement with Italy and to the fact that the country was not divided into Albanian and Greek parts, which Greece wished to achieve through getting a lot of support from leading Western European countries. Greece supported the idea of annexing part of Albania to Yugoslavia, and part to Greece. Allowing Albania to join Yugoslavia was also advocated by the Soviet Union, which supported the expansion of the Yugoslav Federation into the Balkans; Bulgaria, too, was under consideration. The failure of Albanian politicians to integrate into European and world political currents caused the two countries to become even more closely connected in the autumn of 1946. Albania was extremely underdeveloped: eighty per cent of its population was illiterate; it needed agrarian reforms to revive its agricultural sector; experts were needed in all branches of the economy: teachers at various levels, cultural workers, artists etc. At the end of June 1946, during Enver Hoxha's first visit to Belgrade, Josip Broz Tito and Hoxha started talks on annexing Albania to the Yugoslav Federation, concluded numerous economic agreements and outlined the practice of personnel assistance.<sup>28</sup> From the middle of 1946 to the end of June 1948, when the two countries separated politically, the Yugoslav authorities sent experts of various kinds to Albania, primarily economists. The two countries even had a plan for a unified economic area, but relations were repeatedly strained by various tensions, which reached boiling point in the spring of 1948, when the Yugoslav authorities accused Albania of collaborating with the Soviet Union, and the Albanian authorities accused Yu-

<sup>25</sup> Available at <http://www.bojan-adamic.si/biografija/#kazen>. See Petar Luković, "Večni fant s trobento: paberki iz življenja in dela Bojana Adamiča", *Nedeljski dnevnik*, 20 November 1988, 26.

<sup>26</sup> He wrote about the involvement of the Committee for Culture and Art in Belgrade, which is supposed to have demanded the choice of Adamič for Albania, in: Bojan Adamič to his wife, 19 June 1947, family archive.

<sup>27</sup> Hadalin, *Boj za Albanijo*, 110.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 120–140.



Yugoslavia of striving for inadmissible military influence over Albanian territory. Plans for a federated economic community were thus ditched.<sup>29</sup> The main actor in this conflict was the Soviet Union, which saw a potentially powerful union in the planned Balkan federation (Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania), which was to be chaired by Tito and in time could become dangerous competition to the Soviet Union. Accordingly, it chained Albania to itself.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to their political ties, shortly after World War II Yugoslavia and Albania also developed cultural contacts, which became more frequent in 1946. At that time, a fairly lively flow of cultural creators and teachers, mainly Yugoslavs, to Albania began. Under Yugoslav influence the Albanians reorganised their educational system in 1946. So instead of teaching Italian and French, the dominant foreign languages previously learned, they introduced classes of Russian and Serbo-Croatian. At this point, Tito approved the employment of ten teachers in Albania, and Serbo-Croatian and Albanian courses for Yugoslavs were introduced as well. Shortly afterwards, in 1947, a Serbo-Croatian-Albanian dictionary was published. Future Albanian experts were educated in Yugoslavia, since at that time Albania did not have colleges and universities. The University of Tirana started operating only in 1957. Among the first cultural institutions established after the war with the help of Yugoslav experts was the first permanent Albanian theatre (in operation since the autumn of 1945), which was founded by local amateur actors under the leadership of the Serbian theatre director Božo Nikolić. A year later, the development of Albanian film began similarly.<sup>31</sup> In the same year (1946), the idea of concluding a cultural convention between the two countries as an “instrument for the coordination of cultural goods” emerged. Until 1952 the forms of culture in Yugoslavia were directed by Agitprop as part of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.<sup>32</sup> From available documents, we understand that the first musician sent to Albania under the banner of “cultural aid” was Bojan Adamič.<sup>33</sup> Despite all intentions, until the middle of 1947 cultural exchanges did not take place under the auspices of institutions for culture and art, but instead through diplomatic channels – a situation also confirmed by documents concerning the deployment of Bojan Adamič to Albania. A convention on cooperation between the two countries in the field of culture was signed on 9 July 1947, i.e. during the time when Adamič was already in Albania.<sup>34</sup>

## ADAMIČ'S ACTIVITY IN ALBANIA THROUGH OFFICIAL AND PERSONAL DOCUMENTS

Adamič repeatedly stated and emphasized that this was a penal decree and a plan for his enforced “re-education” that was supposed to teach him a lesson and keep him away from jazz. In his memoirs, he wrote, among other things:

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 142–168.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 176–191.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 192–195.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>33</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, July 1947, family archive. We discover that he was accompanied by his colleague Asić, a musician from Serbia, but it is not known when the latter arrived in Albania.

<sup>34</sup> Hadalin, *Boj za Albanijo*, 196.

Because I was involved in athletics, I was appointed as a gym teacher in Tirana. [...] Albania is a completely different story. What I saw there was unimaginable. A despot with a rifle held the whole nation in check. Everything was as he said: sports, politics, art.<sup>35</sup>

Documents attesting his deployment to Albania are dated from March 1947 onwards. The first is a government document (dated 14 March 1947) addressed to the Ministries of Education of Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia, which states that the government of Albania had approached them with a request for Yugoslavia to send fourteen musicians to act as members of the national symphony orchestra and as teachers at the Academy of Music in Tirana. The government office in Belgrade wrote that the request had to be granted, even at the expense of some local ensemble or institution, and that it was necessary to choose good musicians who were also educators and, above all, politically irreproachable.<sup>36</sup> Three musicians from Slovenia were selected for this purpose: Uroš Prevorsek, Bojan Adamič and Samo Hubad. It is not known who chose them, but it is a fact that all three were well-educated and versatile musicians. On 24 March 1947, the Slovenian Ministry of Education replied to the above-mentioned letter:

Comrades Uroš Prevorsek and Bojan Adamič are willing to go to Albania to a designated place. Prevorsek is an excellent violinist, teacher and conductor; Adamič is, above all, an excellent pianist; he is ready to organize and conduct an orchestra of light (entertainment) music, but as for teaching work, he has the ability to deliver it but takes little pleasure in it. The Ministry of Education requests that you inform us when Radio Ljubljana should release the aforementioned comrades. Samo Hubad is not an option on grounds of poor health.<sup>37</sup>

Next came the document with which the Ministry of Education, Culture and Arts ordered the departure of Uroš Prevorsek and Bojan Adamič to Albania on 5 April 1947, and instructed Radio Ljubljana to relieve them of their duties immediately, if possible.<sup>38</sup> It is not known at present why Prevorsek did not go. On 26 April the Radio Committee of the Government of the Federal National Republic of Yugoslavia in Belgrade addressed a document to the Committee for Culture and Art in the same city with a list of musicians that Radio Tirana would need for its orchestra. The categories and number of individual musicians required are precisely listed. Needed were: "an orchestral conductor, 3 first violins, 1 viola, 1 cello, 1 double bass, 1 flute, 1 oboe, 1 clarinet, 1 bassoon, 1 horn, 1 trombone, 1 tuba."<sup>39</sup> This made up a total of fourteen musicians

<sup>35</sup> Bojan Adamič, Biography: available at: <http://www.bojan-adamic.si/biografija/#povojno>.

<sup>36</sup> A copy of the document (letter from the Ministry of Education of Serbia to Zagreb and Ljubljana) from the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, 14 March 1947, no. 170, is held by the family archive of Alenka Adamič.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of Slovenia to the Committee for Culture and Art of the SFRY Government, 24 March 1947, no. K103/1, the Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade. A copy of the document is held by the family archive of Alenka Adamič.

<sup>38</sup> A copy of the document from the Archive of Yugoslavia in Belgrade is held by the family archive of Alenka Adamič.

<sup>39</sup> Document RADIO COMMITTEE of the Government of the Federative National Republic of Yugoslavia, sent to the Committee for Culture and Art, Belgrade, 26 April 1947, no. 2001, the Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade. A copy of the document is held by the family archive of Alenka Adamič.

belonging to all sections of the orchestra. The document states what conditions were to be included in the contract concluded with the management of Radio Tirana, namely:

- 14 musicians are to conclude a contract for a period of 4 years with the following duties:
1. 4 hours of rehearsals per day; 2 concerts per week in a large ensemble with a 45-minute symphonic programme; 1 show per week with a small orchestra; the Radio Orchestra will hold a public concert once a month in Tirana or other cities in Albania; the orchestra will participate in performances of operas, operettas and ballets.
  2. The musician will also work as a professor of an instrument at the Artistic Lyceum [initially, the institution was named as the Academy of Music, but it was actually the Artistic Lyceum], where he will teach Albanian musicians.
  3. It is mandatory to conduct a course at the Radio Station for all members of the orchestra of Albanian nationality.<sup>40</sup>

Further, the amount of payment is listed, where it is explicitly pointed out that the individual will receive a salary according to “his abilities” and that “the management of Radio Tirana undertakes to find each person an apartment and a canteen for meals.”<sup>41</sup> The planned tasks were extensive and varied, as well as consistent with the situation Albania was facing: a severe shortage of skilled musicians in all professional categories. Today, we know that of all those proposed, only Bojan Adamič travelled to Tirana, but it is not known why the relevant services did not find or identify other candidates. In one of the letters Adamič mentions that Uroš Prevorsek is also expected to arrive on 1 September, and that a lot of things need to be done and prepared “so that our boys will be comfortable when they get here”.<sup>42</sup> This statement implies that Adamič had the assigned task of studying the situation and finding out what kind of professional profiles the Albanians would need.

From this we may conclude that more musicians were expected to arrive in September of that year, but there is no proof that any did. We may also assume that the Yugoslav musicians had the option of choosing whether or not they would go to Tirana; it is even possible that they would have decided to take this step because of a better income, since they would still receive a salary at home in their home institution, while in Albania they would receive daily wages, which ought to be sufficient for the local living conditions.<sup>43</sup> Adamič reports that this was not the reason in his case, since he was almost penniless: none of the parties wanted to pay him, so he even had to borrow money for his meagre survival.<sup>44</sup> Ostensibly and officially, he agreed to go to Albania and do everything that was proposed, but we do not know if there was any pressure in the background, either from his superiors at Radio Ljubljana or from more important political circles. His later statements, published in the above-mentioned interviews, possibly indicate that there was a verbal decree behind it. He wrote that Albania was difficult for him in all aspects and that he persisted mainly in order to keep in existence the Ljubljana PORL orchestra, which was of vital importance to him and his music. At the same time, he was worried about what he would do after

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 19 May 1947, family archive.

<sup>43</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 19 June 1947, family archive.

<sup>44</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 21 May 1947, family archive.

returning to Ljubljana, since he wrote: “where and what kind of job will I go to after I return from Albania”.<sup>45</sup> As we now know, he was able to continue working at Radio Ljubljana, but we don’t know if there were any complications.

Returning to the Albanian offer to the musicians, it seems understandable that the contract for four whole years was unacceptable to the candidates. It is not known when this condition changed, but we know that Adamič was initially supposed to have a contract for six months, then one for three months.<sup>46</sup> On 30 April the management of Radio Ljubljana relieved him of his official duties and paid him his salary for the following month, and at the same time asked the government in Belgrade to reimburse them.<sup>47</sup> The sum of 7,500 dinars was comparable with the sum offered by the Albanian side in the above-mentioned document. We understand Radio Ljubljana’s advance as a gesture for the first weeks of his stay, which turned out to be very useful, since the monetary side of Adamič’s activity in Albania was far from settled. After several weeks of negotiations, he was granted a fairly modest amount, which he mostly spent on food and housing.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps this was also the reason why he eventually stopped pressing for family members to come to Albania with the musicians.<sup>49</sup> He arrived in Belgrade on 2 May 1947 in order to obtain an entry visa for Albania. The document of the Committee for Culture and the Arts, sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, states that “comrade Bojan Adamič, a musician from Ljubljana, needs to be issued a visa to work in Albania after the approval of the Committee for Culture and the Arts.”<sup>50</sup> The same committee also addressed a letter to the Albanian Embassy in Belgrade, from which it is clear that Bojan Adamič, who is willing to accept this post, is being sent to Albania by the government of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, which expects the relevant bodies to be informed of his arrival. At the same time, it is pointed out that he is a professional conductor and pianist who will work to promote the development of Albanian musical institutions.<sup>51</sup> However, in Ljubljana he was specifically instructed to monitor, observe and evaluate the state of musical culture, the qualification of the musicians, the performance of ensembles etc., and to write reports on those matters and send them to the Committee for Culture and Art in Belgrade.<sup>52</sup> Also, from a paper by Ljubomir Petrovič addressing cultural contacts between Albania and Yugoslavia between 1946 and 1948 we understand that Adamič was sent to Albania with the intent of assessing the current state of Albanian musical culture and the professional

<sup>45</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 19 May 1947, family archive.

<sup>46</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 25 May 1947, family archive.

<sup>47</sup> Document from the personnel department of Radio Ljubljana to the Federal Committee for Culture and Art of the Republic of Yugoslavia, 30 April 1947, no. 122/47. The original is held by the Archives of Yugoslavia Belgrade, and a copy by the family archive of Alenka Adamič.

<sup>48</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 21 May 1947, family archive.

<sup>49</sup> “Bojan Adamič’s Report on Musical Life in Albania”, report by Bojan Adamič on musical life in Albania addressed to Meša Selimović (head of the Department for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries), 23 May 1947. An accompanying letter from the Embassy of Yugoslavia in Tirana, 13 June 1947, no. 4–33, the Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade. A copy is held by the family archive of Alenka Adamič.

<sup>50</sup> Document issued by the Committee for Culture and Art Belgrade addressed to the Department for Passports of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 May 1947, no. 2257, the Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade. A copy is held by the family archive of Alenka Adamič.

<sup>51</sup> Document issued by the Committee for Culture and Art addressed to the Albanian Embassy in Belgrade, 2 May 1947, no. 2207, the Archives of Yugoslavia. A copy is held by the family archive of Alenka Adamič.

<sup>52</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 15 May 1947, family archive.

level of the musicians.<sup>53</sup> Letters by Bojan Adamič prove that he was musically active and by no means just an observer of the situation, and also that the letters were largely censored. It was also not possible to talk carelessly over the telephone.<sup>54</sup>

He reports on how he experienced his first day in Belgrade in a letter to his wife Barbara, where he writes, among other things, that he was “well-received” at the Albanian embassy, but that he was disappointed with the staff at the Committee for Culture and Art of Yugoslavia, about whom he commented:

I would prefer to go home, because they were really looking for a musician for the orchestra, and not me. I was commissioned because someone forgot to read the letter from the ministry carefully. I had quite a fight to stop them sending me back to Ljubljana.<sup>55</sup>

That opens a question of who it was that misunderstood the mentioned letter and the needs of Albania and chose Adamič as a future member of the Albanian Symphony Orchestra. This may be precisely the key to the problem – seemingly ignored. Given the situation he found himself in, Adamič could even have reacted differently and returned to Ljubljana. Thus the question arises again and again whether there was some kind of agreement between him and someone unknown that compelled him to accept the work in Albania and perform it unconditionally. In the next letter (undated, probably written while he was still in Belgrade) he points out that he had received 3,000 dinars “for support”, which he used to pay for his trip to Tirana, and that he and his wife would spend the rest when “we will travel around Yugoslavia a bit on the way home”.<sup>56</sup> In practice, husbands could be joined at work in Albania by their wives, who were supposed to perform various jobs there – but on condition that they were fluent in the appropriate language, Serbo-Croatian, Italian, French or Albanian.<sup>57</sup> In the above-mentioned letter, he wrote: “I will see to it that you get a job right away.”<sup>58</sup> This did not happen, but it is clear from the following letters that they were constantly trying to obtain a passport for her so that she could at least visit him at the end of July or August and then travel home to Slovenia together with him.<sup>59</sup>

According to Adamič, when he arrived in Tirana on 4 May there was considerable confusion, about which he wrote: “I am unwanted, unsolicited, and I have to argue every day to stay here”.<sup>60</sup> Apparently, Belgrade did not properly communicate his arrival, because the Albanians expected the musician to be a member of the symphony orchestra, and since Adamič did not meet their expectations, they were not ready to accept or pay him. He did not have sufficient means of subsistence, and at the Yugoslav Embassy he was told to find his own way. He was to

<sup>53</sup> Petrovič, “Kulturne veze Jugoslavije i Albanije”, 74–83. This is also confirmed by Adamič’s daughter, Alenka Adamič, who says that the starting point of his activities was entrusted to him by Lidija Šentjurc, with whom they got along well.

<sup>54</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, undated, family archive.

<sup>55</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 2 May 1947, family archive.

<sup>56</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, undated (probably written 3 May 1947), family archive.

<sup>57</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 19 May 1947, family archive.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> In the letter he mentions Lidija Šentjurc, who promised to help. Bojan Adamič to his wife, 21 May 1947, family archive.

<sup>60</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 7 May 1947, family archive.

stay for three months, maybe even six, and was under contract until 5 August 1947. As he said, he had to do his best not to be sent back. He lived in modest conditions in the well-known Hotel Dajta, ate in the canteen, where food ran out several times, and was afraid of catching malaria and typhus, which were both common diseases at that time.<sup>61</sup>

He took his mission very seriously and with full responsibility, although at the beginning he did not know what the Albanians expected from him, and he also had problems with communication. In addition to Albanian, individuals spoke Italian or French, less often Serbo-Croatian. Adamič attended a course in Albanian, which was foreign and difficult for him, but he had some knowledge of Italian, which helped him a lot.<sup>62</sup> He agreed on his duties with the director of the theatre and radio and with the head of the committee for culture and art. He gradually got more and more assignments, his main task being to teach and instruct the members of the radio orchestra, and by doing so to contribute to their professional and artistic development. He also wrote original works and covers for the orchestra, which were signed by “others”. That hurt him, but he did not dare dispute it.<sup>63</sup> He repeatedly emphasized that he had given regular instruction to the conductor of the radio orchestra that had not been paid for.<sup>64</sup> The radio orchestra, which he occasionally conducted, held many concerts during Adamič’s time, since he stated that they also performed outside Tirana, even night after night, even though the places concerned were quite far from each other and the roads were bad. He especially praised the excellent relations with fellow musicians and the friendliness and hospitality of the locals. After two weeks in Albania, he even wrote: “I wish I could stay because I could have been of great use in a few matters”.<sup>65</sup> Considering the integrity of his work, we can conclude that this statement was rather modest, since in three months he became an indispensable part of the development of Albanian music. He also participated in the creation of the radio programme, reviewed the archive, noted that there was extremely little material for broadcasting, and asked his colleagues in Ljubljana to send him records and other material. Among other things, he wrote covers of folk songs for various bands.<sup>66</sup> This was following the already mentioned convention on the popularization of Yugoslav culture in Albania, which took place most intensively on Radio Tirana. As can be seen from his letters to his wife, he repeatedly mentions the lack of original Slovenian compositions, especially ones from the folk domain, which he needed for covers or arrangements.<sup>67</sup> He also wrote extensive works for the orchestra, often overnight.<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately, the vast majority of those works have not been preserved. The content of the programme is eloquently attested by a preserved Radio Tirana listing for October 1947, where national and partisan songs were in the foreground.<sup>69</sup> Adamič worked as well with the radio choir, where he auditioned, participated in the creation of the programme, and, when necessary, also performed as a tenor, occasionally leading two main choirs. He was also engaged in the theatre, for which he wrote stage music and toured in Durrës

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 15 May 1947, family archive.

<sup>63</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, June 1947, family archive.

<sup>64</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 30 May 1947, family archive.

<sup>65</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 15 May 1947, family archive.

<sup>66</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 25 May 1947, family archive.

<sup>67</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 19 June 1947, family archive.

<sup>68</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, undated, family archive.

<sup>69</sup> Hadalin, *Boj za Albanijo*, 196.

and elsewhere.<sup>70</sup> It seems that these experiences helped him to continue this type of activity at home. In addition to all his duties, he also taught at a high school (it is not known what subject) and at the so-called Lyceum of Arts (in this case it is also not known what subject), which represented the beginning of the Academy of Music.<sup>71</sup> He mentioned a plan for the reform of Albanian musical life, which was supposed to be his main task, and complained that he was unsupported for all the work.<sup>72</sup> He was also supposed to establish the operation of a trade union, which he hardly thought possible. As he wrote, key positions in culture were occupied by people without knowledge and education, and they obtained their positions through acquaintances in political circles and intrigue. He often found himself in disgrace if he happened to hang out with politically objectionable people. At those times he even felt threatened, but there were no serious sanctions against him. As we understand, they spared him because they soon realized how valuable his immensely needed musical skills were.<sup>73</sup> As a good pianist, he was given the task of performing as a soloist and holding concerts in various places in Albania. As he stated, in the abundance of work, he sometimes played the piano in the morning.<sup>74</sup> He delivered many concerts from 20 July 1947 onwards in all major cities.<sup>75</sup>

He worked from early morning until midnight, when the lights were turned off, and after that he often continued with the help of a torch. According to him, he lived in very modest conditions, as his requests for a salary arrangement in his homeland and adequate daily allowances, such as others enjoyed, were not granted. He felt cheated.<sup>76</sup> He had to report back on his work to Belgrade, for which he urgently needed a typewriter that supported the Latin alphabet and letters with diacritics placed over them. He complained about this in a letter sent home, and within a few weeks a typewriter was brought to him by his colleague Lesjak, who was travelling on vacation to Ljubljana and then back to Albania.<sup>77</sup> There ought to exist more reports: shorter ones on his ongoing work and a final longer one after his return. So far, only one such report is known, dated 23 May 1947. Apparently, it was reviewed at the Yugoslav embassy in Tirana, a cover letter was added, and it was sent to Belgrade three weeks later.<sup>78</sup> It is clear from a comment made by the embassy in Tirana that the letter by Adamič concerning the skills of the Albanian musicians could not be trusted. The report, addressed to Comrade Mišo Selimović, is written in Slovenian. Adamič reports on the situation at Radio Tirana, on the qualifications of the musicians there and on the members of the radio symphony orchestra, whom he describes as incompetent and lazy workers. He concludes this section with a remark that the situation is anarchic. Among the reasons, he cites impossible working conditions at the radio station, the instrumentalists' great lack of knowledge of music theory, their lack of mastery of their instruments, the

<sup>70</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 30 May 1947, family archive.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, July 1947, family archive.

<sup>74</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 30 May and 4 July 1947, family archive.

<sup>75</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 6 July 1947, family archive.

<sup>76</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, July 1947, family archive.

<sup>77</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, 25 May 1947, family archive. The first name of the said Lesjak could not be ascertained.

<sup>78</sup> Work report by Bojan Adamič, 23 May 1947, with an accompanying letter from the SFRY Embassy in Tirana, 13 June 1947, 11 pages in length, the Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade. A copy is held by the family archive of Alenka Adamič.

poor training of pedagogues and, last but not least, the malnutrition of the population, as they supposedly ate only one meal a day (cornbread, spinach and a little onion). He says that Albania has otherwise made a huge leap forward from an almost feudal society to a socialist one; that it has no musical tradition in classical music; that it is heavily influenced by Italian music; that those responsible at the Albanian Committee for Culture and Art do not even know this area, that they are not interested in changes and many other things in that spirit. He expressed his assessment as follows:

We, Yugoslavs who help and participate in the cultural field, are always standing in front of a wall. There is a big difference between us and Soviet citizens [...], from salary to countless little things – everywhere you can see that we are not really wanted, that we are not valued at all. One involuntarily gets the impression that they want to join the Soviet Union as soon as possible [...], I have the impression that they want to get rid of every one of us as soon as possible, as well. But if they fail to do so, then everyone makes sure that none of us gets into a position of responsibility. They should know that none of us wants a place on their committee, because that's not what we came here for. But we all want to be in a place where we have an overview of what has already been done and what hasn't so that we can advise and work as concretely as possible. [...] None of us blames them for their ignorance because we understand their situation. [...] But we have succeeded in very few things so far.<sup>79</sup>

Aware that he was ordered to work at the radio mainly to assist in all areas of its operations, including the radio programme, the orchestra programme, work with the choir etc., he was determined to fulfil a task given to him by the Minister of Education in Ljubljana, Lidija Šentjunc: to learn about the situation and level of music in Albania in order to help in the longer term.<sup>80</sup> His report was intended to make it clearer to the Committee in Belgrade what kind of musicians they should send for the orchestra and the Art Lyceum.<sup>81</sup> He believed that the professional competence of Yugoslav musicians was not really a priority for the Albanians: political consciousness was more important to them.<sup>82</sup> He described how he did not receive a proper contract or residence permit, clothes, ration tickets etc. He added that he could not borrow money indefinitely: therefore, he would be forced to sign a shameful contract.<sup>83</sup> For the Yugoslav musicians who were supposed to come to Tirana on 1 September 1947, he suggested that only truly conscious Yugoslavs should come: those ready to do everything for the advancement of Albanian music. He wrote that for general communication and teaching at the lyceum, knowledge of Italian is essential. Further, he wrote that there was no need for first-rank musicians from the Yugoslav side, since most of the orchestra's membership would be Albanian and possess only minimal knowledge. He pointed out that they should have teaching experience and a sensitivity towards people, since they should be able to treat illiterate persons appropriately, and that the ability to assist the growth of a positive attitude towards work was expected. He added that the conductor would have to deal with “apartments, bread tickets, disorderly sheet music materials, illiterates,

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 7.



laziness, an impossible audience and, especially with the Committee here, that he must necessarily be a violinist".<sup>84</sup> He further added that he would personally arrange for the then Albanian conductor and concertmaster to go to study in Yugoslavia.<sup>85</sup> Adamič was convinced that the professional training of personnel and transformation of the attitude of the general population towards music were central tasks for Yugoslavs, emphasizing that they should not cover up these facts to candidates who would be going to Albania – otherwise, the individuals would leave later voluntarily resign or abscond.<sup>86</sup> He concluded his report with a question about how many Albanian students Yugoslavia could accept, because he was convinced that there were quite a few talented ones among their musicians.<sup>87</sup>

In the accompanying letter to the report, it is written that Adamič did not consider the general and cultural state of the country; that his criticism was completely unjustified and too harsh; and that he did not take into account the most important thing: that Albanians should adopt a correct Marxist understanding of culture and art with the help of Yugoslavia. According to the writer, this could not be achieved in a short time, as Adamič expected. In the conclusion it is emphasized that the embassy's office does not agree with some parts of the report.<sup>88</sup> In his report Adamič has nowhere said anything about Marxist doctrine or the image of socialist culture: his report is to be understood only as a real-time snapshot. Today, we can understand it as a frank presentation of reality and a constructive proposal for the progress of Albanian music.

As mentioned, Adamič's contract was supposed to expire on 5 August 1947, but there is no information on when he actually left Tirana. It is clear from the last letters to his wife that she did not get a passport as they had planned, and that they were supposed to meet at home in Ljubljana.<sup>89</sup> He also mentions a visit by comrade Marković from the Presidency of the Yugoslav Government (probably Momčilo Moma Marković, an important politician), who was supposed to help solve the problems concerning salaries. Adamič says:

He was very surprised at my situation because I am the only Yugoslav who is in such a situation, and he asked if I had not been punished or if I was not a defector. So, I showed him the discharge certificate from the Radio [Ljubljana] and explained everything. I think he will make a real fuss [...] The presidency had no idea that there were any professors other than technical experts. He told me that the federal government had issued a decree according to which everyone had to go back to their old job.<sup>90</sup>

Thus it seems that Yugoslav politics worked along several tracks and that particularly arbitrary decisions were made by the UDBA. Bojan Adamič returned home either at the end of August or

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>88</sup> Accompanying letter from the SFRY Embassy in Tirana, 13 June 1947, to a report by Bojan Adamič, 23 May 1947, the Archives of Yugoslavia, Belgrade. A copy is held by the family archive of Alenka Adamič.

<sup>89</sup> Bojan Adamič to his wife, undated (probably July 1947), family archive.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

in September 1947.<sup>91</sup> The only piece of music from this period so far known to have been preserved is a Sonatina for orchestra signed: “2 September 1947, Tirana”.<sup>92</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Just as [Momčilo Moma ?] Marković had promised, the post of PORL conductor was indeed waiting for him in Ljubljana, but that did not mean an end to his problems regarding jazz and his views on music. Although it has not been possible to prove through documents that Adamič's Albanian episode was the product of a political persecution intended to distance him from PORL and jazz, his personal statements about this, mentioned in the interview, could well be a fact. Since he never wished to talk later about this period, not even with his family, that period is best understood as a painful life-experience endured under political pressure. It is necessary to take into account the possibility that after his controversial concerts with American-style music, he was on the receiving end of a verbal decree, as a result of which he remained in Albania even when the local authorities wished to send him back to Yugoslavia with an apology, because he did not fit the expected profile of a musician. Withdrawal could have meant giving up on PORL. It is his perseverance and the content of his letters to his wife that confirm that he was ready to sacrifice many things for the ensemble. Proof that there were political pressures comes also in the form of censored letters to his wife, reports to the authorities in Belgrade and, last but not least, the wire-tapping of telephone conversations.

Regardless of what his feelings were, there is clear evidence that he fulfilled his mission well, sincerely striving for the improvement of Albanian musicians and ensembles. Whoever was responsible for his ending up in Tirana may have been surprised that Adamič did not argue or come into conflict with his superiors or the musicians he worked with in the given situation. He proved himself to be a man who was aware of what his task was and performed it honourably. Therefore, it is not surprising that he was very disappointed when the Committee for Culture and Art in Belgrade commented that his report was too subjective and offensive to Albanian musicians. Over the years, he drove this part of his life into oblivion, although not completely: in interviews about his life and work, he mentioned it several times. Today, this episode can be understood as an example of how the Yugoslav authorities, in the period before its expulsion from the Cominform (the break with Moscow), treated cultural figures who violated the authorities' directives on socialist culture – especially those who were knowledgeable and could not understand the unfounded directives of the authorities about the corrupting influences of American music and jazz in general. The Yugoslav socialist government knew how to punish or remove popular and influential cultural figures or musicians such as *maestro* Bojan Adamič undoubtedly was.

The problems with jazz continued even after his return, although perhaps a little less intensely. At the beginning of the 1950s a special commission was established at the federal level with the task of examining whether jazz was suitable for a socialist society. After extensive and

<sup>91</sup> Petar Luković, “Večni fant s trobento: paberki iz življenja in dela Bojana Adamiča”, *Nedeljski dnevnik*, 20 November 1988.

<sup>92</sup> Papers of Bojan Adamič, SI-Lng.

lengthy debates and arguments pro et contra, when it seemed that jazz would be definitively banned, the result turned out in his favour. Adamič pleaded for its recognition even with Josip Broz Tito and other influential politicians such as Moša Pijade.<sup>93</sup> Since the opinions of political leaders about the corrupting influence of jazz music differed greatly, and also since the era of sharp disagreements was slowly ending, better times began for jazz and entertainment music after 1955. In 1955 several smaller ensembles were formed from the PORL, and the first Yugoslav jazz festival in Bled (1960) gave an even greater impetus, with which jazz music in Slovenia and Yugoslavia spread irresistibly and gained more and more followers.<sup>94</sup> The PORL, with Adamič as conductor, continued to play a leading role in this. It was invited to all the most important festivals and events of the highest rank. With success at home came opportunities to visit abroad. Its performances were a sensation. In Hungary, for example, they managed to fill the stands with more than ten thousand spectators.<sup>95</sup> In 1962, Adamič handed over leadership of the orchestra to his colleague Jože Privšek (1937–1998), but he still performed with the orchestra from time to time.<sup>96</sup> From the end of August 1962 to the end of July 1980 he was officially employed as the conductor of the Big Band of RTV Slovenia, as it is called today, and in the last year before his retirement (1981) he became the director of music production at RTV Ljubljana.<sup>97</sup> In fact, during this time, he was in Belgrade much more often and also in some other Yugoslav cities, where he worked in various fields. At the same time, he was a regular guest at important European and world big band orchestras.<sup>98</sup> Today, it is accepted that Bojan Adamič founded and developed the Big Band line-up in Slovenia and throughout Yugoslavia, created original musical literature, promoted the high professionalism of ensembles and individual soloists, and created an internationally recognizable name for himself.

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<sup>93</sup> See Adamič's autobiographical note: "O jazzu in njegovi vlogi v Jugoslaviji", Papers of Bojan Adamič, SI-Lng.

<sup>94</sup> Amalietti, *Zgodbe o jazzu*, 7.

<sup>95</sup> [bojan.adamic.si](http://www.bojan-adamic.si/biografija/#koncerti), available at: <http://www.bojan-adamic.si/biografija/#koncerti>.

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<sup>97</sup> From the family archive of Alenka Adamič. See also Meden, "Adamič, Bojan".

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MOJSTER BOJAN ADAMIČ LETA 1947 V ALBANIJI:  
STROKOVNA POMOČ H GLASBENI KULTURI ALI KAZENSKI DEKRET

Bojana Adamiča (1912–1995) poznamo kot pionirja slovenske plesne in jazz glasbe, popevke, šanson, filmske in scenske gledališke glasbe ter ustanovitelja zdaj že legendarnega Plesnega orkestra Radia Ljubljana (PORL), enega prvih tovrstnih profesionalnih sestavov povojne Evrope. Deloval je na celotnem jugoslovanskem prostoru in bil vplivna osebnost razvoja festivalov zabavne in jazzovske glasbe. Kot skladatelj in aranžer je ustvaril izjemen opus za plesni orkester oziroma big band, v katerega je vtikal številne motive slovenske ljudske glasbe ter s tem utemeljil t. i. slovenski izraz. V mednarodnem prostoru se je proslavil predvsem z ansamblom PORL in z deli zanj tako značilnega izraza. Za svoje delo je prejel vrsto priznanj, med katerimi izstopajo nagrade za kulturne dosežke nekdanje Jugoslavije.

V proučevanju njegovega življenja je bilo do nedavnega nepojasnjeno, zakaj je bil prav on maja leta 1947 kot predstavnik nekdanje Jugoslavije poslan v Albanijo, in sicer kot t. i. kulturna pomoč. Tam je ostal nekaj mesecev (od začetka maja do predvidoma konec avgusta). Sam je poudarjal, da je bil v Tirani kazensko kot neposlušen dirigent PORL-a, s katerim je izvajal ameriško plesno in jazzovsko glasbo ter v tem duhu napisana svoja avtorska dela, in s programom promoviral takrat politično nezaželene žanre. Poglobljen pogled na ta del njegovega življenja so omogočili nedavno odkriti dokumenti iz arhivov nekdanje socialistične Jugoslavije v Beogradu ter Adamičeva osebna pisma ženi Barbari. Dokumentarno gradivo omogoča razumevanje političnega ozadja časa ter vzrokov, ki so vplivali na to, da je jugoslovanska oblast prva leta po vojni (do sredine leta 1948) pošiljala albanski državi kadrovske pomoči. Adamič je bil v ta program vključen v okviru političnih prizadevanj, da bi jugoslovanski federaciji priključili tudi Albanijo. Država je bila izrazito nerazvita v vseh segmentih gospodarstva in kulture, zato so tja pošiljali strokovnjake raznih področij, da bi pomagali v razvoju, Adamič pa je bil med vsemi edini glasbenik. Dokumenti potrjujejo, da je bil izbran zaradi svoje strokovnosti in da so mu bile dodeljene naloge, s katerimi bi doprinesel k razvoju tamkajšnjih glasbenih ustanov in ansamblov. Imel je nalogo proučiti razmere in ugotoviti, kakšne profile bi Albanci zares potrebovali. Več glasbenikov naj bi prišlo septembra leta 1947, vendar o tem ni dokazov.

Tega, da je bila v ozadju kazen za njegovo neposlušnost, ki naj bi ga odvrnila od jazz in ameriške glasbe ter peljala na pravo pot v duhu socialistične družbe, kot je sam nakazal v nekaterih intervjujih, iz dokumentov ni bilo mogoče ne dokazati ne zanikati. Predvidevam, da so imeli jugoslovanski glasbeniki možnost izbire, ali želijo oditi v Tirano, kakršnekoli prisile dokumenti ne potrjujejo. Adamič je bil kot nekdanji partizan z visokim činom precej privilegirani, vendar je po prepričanju nekaterih vodilnih oseb s svojim ansamblom prestopal meje dopustnega in prihajal v konflikte. Prav mogoče je bil v ozadju ustni dekret. Adamičeva pisma ženi Barbari in njegovo poročilo o delu, poslano Komiteju za kulturo in umetnost v Beograd, nastalo konec maja 1947, orisujejo njegovo doživljanje okolja, področja delovanja, prepreke, ki so ga pri delu omejevale, osebne stiske ter nemoč pri prizadevanju, da bi zadostil pričakovanjem nadrejenih na jugoslovanski in albanski strani. Prav tako tudi to, da je bil vsestransko glasbeno aktiven in nikakor ne le opazovalec razmer. Sam je zapisal, da mu je bilo v Albaniji vsestransko težko in da je vztrajal

predvsem zato, da bi obdržal ljubljanski orkester PORL, ki je bil zanj in njegovo glasbo vitalnega pomena.