

“We have become cosmopolitans with no ties at all”. Anti-cosmopolitanism in Popular Music of Stalinist Hungary

Literary, philosophical and musical debates were all crucial episodes of the ideological war in the post-war Soviet Union on Western culture. Stalin and his henchmen showed how the anti-Western sentiment could be linked both with national pride and the growing antisemitism of the dictator. The latter also contributed to the birth of the new enemy of communists: the *cosmopolitans*.

At the beginning, the *anti-cosmopolitan campaign* was directed against the Jewish intelligentsia, but the meaning of the phrase *cosmopolitanism* went rapidly under a spectacular change. It became a generic term: virtually nobody escaped accusations of being cosmopolitan, who was supposed to be a representative of “fake” (Western-type) *internationalism* or “American lifestyle”.

The diatribes against cosmopolitanism had a particular role in musical life, especially in the sphere of popular music: jazz and dance music, claimed as “warmongering instruments” of American imperialists, became major objects of the new socialist realist critiques.

Moreover, from 1949, the Soviets helped the local Communist parties in their struggle against “cosmopolitan intruders” in music: they sent deputies to all the satellite states to show them how to purify musical life from internationalist influences. Hungary was no exception to that.

Relying on archival data, contemporary media coverage and oral history interviews, my presentation aims at reconstructing what “cosmopolitanism” meant in the musical discourse of Stalinist Hungary. I argue that “cosmopolitanism” was an element of a non-consistent (critical) language, whose terms (i.e. Americanism, aristocratism, etc.) were often interchangeable, and served the purpose of establishing a vague and contradictory system of requirements which was almost impossible to comply with. I will also examine how the communist party understood and presented the “true” (proletarian) *internationalism*. In this, I use the Budapest concerts of the Soviet folk ensembles (Osipov in 1949, Piatnitsky in 1950) as solid bases for comparison, as they were destined to introduce the musical examples of the new, *national* popular culture.

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