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## **“DEATH TO FASCISM ISN’T IN THE CATECHISM”: LEGACIES OF SOCIALISM IN CROATIAN POPULAR MUSIC AFTER THE FALL OF YUGOSLAVIA<sup>1</sup>**

This paper discusses both textual and structural legacies of socialism in Croatian popular music since the collapse of socialism and Yugoslavia. Yugoslav socialism struggled to reconcile socialist consciousness and capitalist consumerism, forcing the producers of popular culture to make sense of the political field that surrounded them and put ideology into practice. The structural conditions of cultural production under socialism, the use of socialist iconography and memory as resources in post-socialist popular music and the negation of the socialist experience by patriotic musicians reflect three layers of socialist legacy in contemporary Croatian popular culture.

Key words: socialism, postsocialism, popular culture, popular music, Croatia, memory

It might seem thankless to seek legacies of socialism in Croatian popular music, given how firmly Croatia’s political culture during its establishment as a sovereign state was based on rejecting socialism. Yet Croatian independence did not signal a total break with the past even though 1990s public discourse required exactly that: people who belonged to domestic commercial popular culture’s institutions, audiences and markets were still remembering life in a larger spatial entity and a socialist socio-political system although they were sometimes called upon to perform a clean rupture with their past. In popular music, socialism left both textual and structural legacies. Those who performed, composed, recorded, marketed, broadcast, bought, listened to, danced to and enjoyed popular music were negotiating the consequences of war and deep-rooted political change on a domestic level – including a sudden reinterpretation of the “domestic” itself. Sometimes, this involved re-interpreting socialism in the light of more recent

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personal experiences; sometimes, it meant negating the socialist experience as a totalitarian imposition which, according to the founder of the new state, had no place in politically independent Croatia.

Individuals who negotiated these local and national changes were simultaneously caught up in late 20<sup>th</sup> century consumer capitalism, which sold itself as the most successful model of social organisation. For David Harvey (1999:114), this mode of postmodernism sees time and space compressed, local cultural forms exposed to a global commodity market and people brought to turn to a “place-bound identity” as an apparent source of security and “individuation” amid change. Zygmunt Bauman (1998:2) reinforces the concept of postmodernism as insecurity, arguing that its accelerated flows of goods, capital, people and ideas benefit a minority while leaving most with the low status of “[b]eing local in a globalized world”. He further considers that the postmodern political economy is based on producing and distributing “public attention” (Bauman 1992:ix). Here, where the media and popular culture supposedly saturate contemporary society and structure what and how people consume, postmodern theory becomes particularly relevant to studying popular culture. Croatia and the other post-socialist states did not suddenly enter this system in 1989, 1990 or 1991. As socialist systems they had also interacted with it beforehand and even accommodated certain of its elements within the socialist consciousness that was supposed to structure production and consumption of goods and texts.

One way to clarify how popular music adapted to the collapse of socialism would be a Bourdieusian approach to practice, incorporating taken-for-granted knowledge and unspoken assumptions. Applying the entirety of his work to popular culture, however, may be problematic. His own theory of cultural production involves literature and art rather than “the most widely consumed cultural products – those disseminated by the media”; it also leaves out the entertainment industry’s multi-national dimension (Hesmondhalgh 2006:218, 220). There are more concerns in redirecting a sociology of mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century middle-class France to a (post-)socialist context: if capital and markets under socialism had different meanings, Bourdieu’s “cultural capital” and “symbolic markets” would therefore not match domestic understandings of those ideas (Verdery 1991:5). It is more valuable, perhaps, to redirect Bourdieu’s more general observations on practice and common sense, where he argues (1977:21) that individuals are situated within various layers of “habitus” which make actions seem intelligible or unthinkable. Stef Jansen (2005:159) has already been able to apply Bourdieu’s concept of “distinction” (group-defining value judgements based on consumption) to explain why people who associate themselves with “urban” cultural environments dislike pop-folk music. Fields of practice thus provide an extra way to think about wider aspects of popular culture and identity.

Does writing about legacies of socialism in popular culture mean writing about popular culture in post-socialism? As more time passes, “post-socialism” itself – originally the study of “whatever would follow once the means of production were privatized and the [Communist] Party’s political monopoly disestablished” (Chari and Verdery 2009:10–11) gets harder to grasp. Although it helped to deal with “the shock of the new” after the collapse, it does not account for more recent domestic elites’ interactions with “global forces” (Sampson 2002:297–98); it may also gradually lose meaning as those with direct experience of the period exit politics (Humphrey 2002:13). At least post-socialism avoids the normative and teleological connotations of “transition”. Whatever one will call it, one should bear in mind the risk of constructing an “automatic and systematic interpretive link” between every micro-level process and post-socialism (Prca 2004:144). Everything after Yugoslavia is after socialism; it need not all belong to a “post-socialist” academic project.

### **Socialism as Ideology and Experience**

The production of popular culture in socialist Yugoslavia operated within the discursive field of the “socialist consciousness”, although producers, journalists and politicians contested the field’s content and boundaries – just as would happen in post-socialism with the field of national cultural identity. Socialist theory itself went through various convolutions (consider how many constitutions were needed to express shifting ideas about the state’s nature and function), with symbolic foundation in Tito’s own pronouncements and detailed input from the theorist Edvard Kardelj. Kardelj’s ideas about self-management and the state withering away made the “socialist consciousness” all the more important because they left individuals (working through workers’ councils and mass organisations) to enact socialist policy under the guidance of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ) (Jović 2008:66–67). A host of individuals produced ideology’s practical effect on popular culture by striving to comprehend the changing and confusing theoretical field, translating its abstruse principles into their own experience and accommodating their own personal circumstances and goals within Titoism’s social and political expectations.

Yugoslav socialism’s distinctiveness derived from the SKJ core’s confusion after the Tito–Stalin split: the ex-Partisans who believed themselves the most faithful revolutionaries could not understand their rejection by the pinnacle of world Marxism–Leninism. Their “emotional reaction” led them to construct a supposedly more faithful application of original socialist theory around the “anti-bureaucratic and anti-étatist” principle of self-management, understanding Stalinism as a deviation (Rusinow 1977:50–52). Within a Cold War geopolitical context,

Yugoslavia was to be more authentically socialist than the Soviet bloc yet not part of the capitalist west. The west, however, courted it as a counterweight to Soviet ideology and the Yugoslav regime’s development of industry and infrastructure (letting it cast itself as the only socialist system which could guarantee modern, satisfying living standards) owed much to western economic aid. This geopolitical ambiguity created a further layer of tension in translating ideology into practice.

Everyday experiences under Yugoslav socialism were transformed by the high economic growth in 1953–64 as the SKJ reoriented the economy towards consumer goods (Luthar 2006:235). Every aspect of consumerism had to be negotiated within the socialist ideological frame, hence Yugoslav advertisers laboured to convince economists and policymakers that commercial promotion was legitimate and essential in a socialist market economy (Patterson 2003:217–20). The Yugoslav market (unlike socialist shortage economies elsewhere) could usually supply desired categories of goods, although purchasers often preferred western goods’ quality and branding. Yugoslavia’s proximity to capitalist Italy and Austria and its relatively open borders thus produced “shopping tourism”, where families and friends travelled (usually in someone’s Zastava – the ubiquitous Yugoslav car) to purchase clothes, electrical goods, household items and even monthly groceries (Švab 2002:66–67). What they brought home enabled the emerging Yugoslav middle class to implicitly agree symbolic meanings to consumer goods and claim and reconfigure a middle-class identity (Luthar 2006:236). The state’s customs limits were routinely circumvented, yet what it lost in revenue it arguably gained in “social peace” (Švab 2002:71, 75), at least until the early 1980s economic crisis that shattered households’ purchasing power and destroyed the taken-for-granted certainties of Yugoslav everyday life, starting with the capacity to aspire to and fulfil a certain standard of living and ending with the very idea of Yugoslavia as a socialist federation.

Shopping tourism – which also brought home popular-cultural texts (e.g. cheap records) – transferred to the micro-level the tension between socialist principles and consumerist assumptions involved in producing Yugoslav ideology, goods and meaning. With popular music a well-established consumer good under capitalism, Yugoslav socialists agonised over whether their own market should be allowed to overpower the idea of music contributing to and drawing from a socialist consciousness. In the late 1950s, however, “cultural and political elites” fought back their suspicions and decided that appropriating the attractive western product would contribute to a pan-Yugoslav “brotherhood and unity” culture and protect Yugoslavs’ “cultural loyalties” (Vuletić 2008:862). *Zabavna muzika* thus became a characteristic of the Yugoslav cultural sphere, even a speciality: in the glory days, Yugoslav singers toured both the Soviet bloc and the western (French and German) chanson/schlager circuits. The Soviet pro-agitprop, anti-jazz model officially faded from view, but a vestige endured in musicians’ constant negotia-

tions with the shifting political field (how far to take references to the Party, the army or religion?) and the “trash” [“šund”] tax, republics’ punishment for cultural texts that let down their socialist function.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Politicised Conditions of Production**

Cultural production was clearly caught between political imperatives during the 1968–71 “Croatian Spring” intellectual–political movement (“maspok”), personified musically by the Croatian singer Vice Vukov’s patriotic turn. While maspok participants raised awareness of how much money was made in Croatia but transferred outside, Vukov told hecklers to go back to Belgrade and commented on his feud with the Serbian star Đorđe Marjanović in national terms; he appeared at one event in a syncretic Croatian folk costume and recorded songs with implicitly Croatian-patriotic readings. As the Yugoslav regime prepared to dismantle the maspok, Radio Sarajevo and Skopje’s annual pop festival refused to feature Vukov, TV Belgrade withheld three TV Zagreb shows with him in and at the end of 1971, just as the Croatian party leaders were forcibly retired, TV Zagreb dropped him too. He spent some years studying in France, then came home and withdrew from showbusiness (Luković 2008).

Vukov (or his absence) tacitly reminded later musicians, broadcasters and executives that their professional field’s boundaries were politically defined. A “mass rock culture” (Perasović 2001:144) of stadium concerts and specialist media emerged in the late 1970s and peaked in the so-called “new wave” of 1980s rock. Yugoslav rock has been seen both as a means of extending public space and enabling expression outside official institutions, most of all in Slovenia (Pogačar 2008:822–23), and as a safety valve for rebellion which appealed to urban youth but did not challenge the underlying socialist order. It also provided a salutary example of one Yugoslav cultural space where young people travelled between different republics’ major cities to follow their favourite bands, a mobility they took for granted at the time (Volčič 2007a:78–79). In Sarajevo, the 1980s “New Primitives” movement affectionately wove Titoist/Partisan imagery into their productions: thus *Zabranjeno pušenje*’s first album *Das ist Walter* alluded to the classic Partisan film *Valter brani Sarajevo* [Walter defends Sarajevo] and *Plavi orkestar*’s second was *Smrt fašizmu* [Death to fascism], echoing the anti-fascist struggle’s slogan.

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<sup>2</sup> For a case study of the political impact on Yugoslav newly-composed folk music, see Rasmussen (2002). NCFM had to negotiate the ethno-political axis of the concept of the “narod” [“people”] (as Kardelj moved towards an even more decentralised concept of the state, the emphasis moved from a single Yugoslav people to the cultural expression of a political balancing act among six “narodi”) while also proving its worth within a mass-culture discourse suspicious of commodified popular entertainment.

For those who produced musical texts, negotiating Yugoslav socialism’s fluid ideological field was one more ordinary professional practice. Contributing to the public representation of Titoist ideology was often a routine work activity: songs abounded to do with Tito, Yugoslavia, industrialisation, youth work actions and the Partisan uprising, and the socialist commemorative calendar’s events encompassed popular music as well as folklore displays. Zabavna, rock and folk performers played at events such as the annual celebration of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) and, especially in the 1980s, pop festivals incorporated dedicated patriotic evenings.

Performers and composers from every republic, including Croatia, participated in the ongoing musical memorialisation of socialist society and Tito. Some songs produced in Croatia – notably *Druže Tito, mi ti se kunemo* [Comrade Tito, we swear to you], written by Đorđe Novković and performed by Zdravko Čolić from Sarajevo (where Novković grew up)<sup>3</sup> – would enter post-socialist nostalgic vocabulary alongside Đorđe Balašević’s and Lepa Brena’s Yugoslav standards. Other songs waned because they failed to resonate with listeners long-term or because they did not fit their musicians’ post-socialist public personas. Doris Dragović’s *Hej, Jugosloveni* [Hey, Yugoslavs], Oliver Dragojević’s *Tito i prva proleterska* [Tito and the first proletarian [brigade]] and many more would eventually re-surface on nostalgia compilations outside Croatia and/or online, but became meaningless or worse at home.

Songs about the socialist system also entered the everyday entertainment space beyond any marked commemorative field – or rather, socialism did not recognise an everyday apolitical entertainment space as a concept. The Croatian pop singer Boris Novković, Đorđe’s son and a nascent teen idol, was conscripted in 1986 soon after his debut hit *Tamara* had made him a pop sensation. He joined the army on schedule, but not before recording the ballad *Odlazim i ja u JNA* [I’m leaving for the JNA too], in which the narrator and his girlfriend, contemplating his departure, were resting in a bedroom papered with James Dean posters. Just as military service was an expected life stage for all Yugoslav males, being left behind when your boyfriend was conscripted was a situation every (heterosexual) Yugoslav teenage girl could expect to experience. The principle of appropriating a western popular-cultural form in order to construct Yugoslav political identities had first been espoused by the party in the 1950s (Vuletić 2008:862) and reappears in Reana Senjković’s commentary on the teenage girls’ magazine *Tina* (a title franchised from Britain). *Tina*’s editors at the Vjesnik group in Zagreb reconfigured the contents of a western teen magazine within a socialist consciousness – for instance, turning the problem page into a promotion of “the fundamental principle of the survival of the Yugoslav socialist community” (Senjković 2008:121).

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<sup>3</sup> The song’s title already belonged to an anonymous Partisan-era poem (with different lyrics) and was seen on school front doors and textbooks (Bringa 2004:158).

*Odlazim i ja u JNA*, too, fit perfectly into this practice (and indeed targeted much the same age group). For understandable reasons, however, the song did not pass into the repertoire of nostalgic musical memories which would be exchanged on video websites and MP3 blogs some twenty years later. The JNA of the established socialist state (as distinct from the Partisans’ mythic army) was a problematic topic for tender everyday commemoration, most of all in Croatia, where the JNA’s primary meaning in the 1990s was as the adversary of a new war.

When Franjo Tuđman’s Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) replaced the Communists as the political power-holders in Croatia, music professionals usually presented their accommodation to socialist politics as an irksome, unwelcome obligation. It was common to say that under socialism Croatia could not be mentioned – an exaggeration which nonetheless, after Vukov, made some sense. The regime’s suspicion of nationalism had still not prevented musicians performing and selling songs about their relationship to place, community and home (united in the concept of the “zavičaj” or birthplace), although they had expressed their sentiments to the region not the nation; it seemed natural when their language and images for the zavičaj were transferred to the “domovina” [“homeland”] after 1990. Religious allusions in popular music tested the boundaries of the socialist ideological field, which attempted to limit churches’ everyday relevance. Tomislav Ivčić claimed in 1991 that his 1979 recording of *Roko*, about a Dalmatian named Roko after his native island of Sveti Rok, kept him shut out of Splitski festival until 1990, when the Communists no longer had power over it (Pribić 1991). In Croatian rock (and political) mythology, the first sign of political loosening occurred on New Year’s Eve 1989, when Prljavo kazalište performed *Ruža hrvatska* [Croatian rose] on Trg Bana Jelačića in central Zagreb (Perasović 2001:218). The consolidation of Tuđman’s government and its response to the war nonetheless hardened a new discursive field – if, indeed, the field’s shape was so very new.

### **Commentaries on Socialism and Its Present Relevance**

The dominant public discourse of 1990s Croatia denied socialism any relevance in the present, although every inhabitant – from the president, a former JNA general and official historian, downwards – had been implicated in the ideological field where all aspects of socialist life belonged. Many writers have described the erasure and destruction of socialist legacies (street names; monuments) in public space (e.g. Drakulić 1996; Ugrešić 1998; Rihtman-Auguštin 2000, 2004); individuals felt compelled to “re-interpret [...] their own biographies” to disentangle themselves from the suddenly undesirable connotations of a socialist, multi-ethnic past (Jansen 2002:82). The new public meaning of socialism, as espoused by many losers of the Croatian Spring, was an ideology which had been fundamentally

committed to eradicating Croatianness as an acceptable identity although it had misled some of its Partisan adherents into thinking socialism would truly liberate Croatia.

Zygmunt Bauman (1992:17) claims the postmodern state has withdrawn from regulating or ideologising culture and left cultural production to the market of “consumption as entertainment”, disappointing intellectuals who had hoped to replace the state as arbiters. This market-driven sphere is not suddenly free of content-structuring ideological assumptions based on cultural producers’ habits (Kellner 1995), nor of inequalities in the hegemonic power of representation (Hall ed. 1997); however, it lacks the explicit level of endeavouring to align cultural production with ideology which typified socialism. By these criteria, 1990s Croatia did not enter postmodernism at once. The state still took significant interest in commercialised cultural content, while implicitly and explicitly situating one’s own production within the new prevailing public ideology invited advancement and patronage. Popular culture was still politically structured, albeit around anti-socialism not socialism.

All post-Yugoslav states, however, witnessed a revival of iconography and cultural texts associated with the socialist regime (and/or experiences of multi-ethnicity and inter-republic travel). These practices are often called “Yugonostalgia”, although that may fail to capture the texts’ and symbols’ full range of meanings (Velikonja 2002:194). In Croatia, for instance, the continuum extends from subcultural practices and distinctive features of a local music scene to commercial entertainment enterprises with corporate sponsorship (e.g. Bijelo dugme’s 2005 reunion). The capital of overt Croatian nostalgia was Tito’s birthplace, Kumrovec, where the anniversary of Dan mladosti [Youth Day] attracted domestic and other ex-Yugoslav visitors and enabled locals to benefit from hospitality and souvenir stalls.<sup>4</sup> The celebrations formally began with joint singing of socialist choral songs, many of which also had pop versions by well-known musicians (Petrović and Rubić 2006:232–35). Throughout a collection of anthropological essays on Kumrovec, a key musical text is *Računajte na nas* [Count on us], an early song by the Novi Sad singer-songwriter Đorđe Balašević which described his young generation’s loyalty to Tito’s principles.<sup>5</sup> The song was produced in Croatia but

<sup>4</sup> One researcher’s interviews suggest Istria was the most heavily represented Croatian region there, Slavonia and Dalmatinska zagora the least (Birt 2006:354–55).

<sup>5</sup> The narrator initially says he does “not mention the past and far[off] battles, because I was only born after them” [“ne spominjem prošlost i bitke daleke, jer rođen sam tek posle njih”], yet he “know[s] that another hundred offensives await us” [“ja znam da nas čeka još sto ofanziva”]. Although “some suspect the wrong flow carries us, because we listen to records and play rock” [“sumnjaju neki da nosi nas pogrešan tok, jer slušamo ploče i sviramo rok”], Balašević’s narrator and his fellow band-members (Bilja Krstić, Verica Todorović and Bora Đorđević) promise that “the destiny of future days is in us, which may frighten some people / Partisans’ blood runs through our veins” [“u nama je sudbina budući dana, i neke se možda plaše za nju / kroz vene nam protiče krv partizana”].

still formed part of Croatia’s textual legacy of socialism. Istrian punk, meanwhile, has used socialist symbols as a signifier of contemporary anti-fascism (as per German “antifa” punk), and certain groups, e.g. Tito’s Bojs from Labin, refer more directly to domestic socialism in critiquing capitalism and Americanisation (Kovačić 2006:322–23).<sup>6</sup>

Yugonostalgia had ambivalent micro-political meanings. While individuals’ nostalgia in shaping a shared musical space from retrospectively-excluded musical texts contributed to wider discursive strategies resisting the predominance of ethnicity (Jansen 2005), Zala Volčič (2007b:34) has argued that commercialised nostalgic forms shut off reflection on the political responsibility for destroying the past. This is often, but not always, the case: within the Croatian cultural economy, the rapper Edo Maačka and the art-rock group Let 3 have used various aspects of Yugoslav socialist iconography to frame incisive commentary on the post-Yugoslav, post-socialist experience. Let 3’s 2005 album *Bombardiranje Srbije i Čačak* [The bombing of Serbia and Čačak] pictured the band-members on the cover in the Yugoslav republics’ folk costumes and combined its songs<sup>7</sup> into a critically acclaimed satire of exaggerated Balkan masculinity and showbusiness–folk. Edo Maačka (Edin Osmić) as a MC and lyricist concentrates on the realities of post-war life in BiH and Croatia through themes such as war profiteering, cross-border firearms/tobacco/drugs smuggling, human trafficking, the mid-1990s Zagreb rock scene, the unfamiliar presence of US soldiers in BiH and the meanings of Bosnian/ex-Yugoslav language and culture in emigration. The visuals of his 2006 and 2008 albums drew on familiar socialist themes: *Stig’o ćumur* [The coal’s arrived] depicted young miners in hip-hop poses, and the cover of *Balkansko a naše* [Balkan and/but ours] pictured a boy Pioneer with US stars and stripes overlaid on his blue hat and red scarf. The image wrote socialism into the narration of Osmić’s own experience, not the only determinant but still indelible.

Beyond iconography, a small but equally interesting amount of popular music (represented here by Zabranjeno pušenje and Alka Vuica) also used its lyrics to discuss everyday manifestations of the experiences of socialism, representing

<sup>6</sup> The mining town of Labin was a site of strong engagement with the socialist legacy. Tito’s Bojs aside, Labin’s Vertigo club began organising Dan mladosti nights in 1998, playing Yugoslav new-wave music and contemporary alternative rock from Croatia and Serbia (Mrkić Modrić 2002). Labin was also one of the first Croatian towns to host Serbian rock musicians, often by invitation of the Labin Art Express collective.

<sup>7</sup> Among them: *Ero s onoga svijeta* (from Jakov Gotovac’s Dinaric folk-opera); the Serbian patriotic song *Rado ide Srbin u vojnike* [The Serb happily goes for a soldier]; Đorđe Marjanović’s *Beograda* [[Oh.] Belgrade]; Šaban Šaulić’s *Dodi da ostarimo zajedno* [Come so that we can grow old together] combined with Deep Purple’s *Child In Time*; Mišo Kovač’s *Odvest ću te na vjenčanje* [I’ll take you to the wedding], in Croatian and Slovenian versions; the Macedonian folk-song *Zurle trestat* [The zurle [pipe] is sounding]; *Pjevaj mi, pjevaj, sokole* [Sing to me, falcon], a folk song from Montenegro/Herzegovina/Lika; Ferid Avdić’s *Izadi mala* [Come out, darling] transposed into back-slang to sound linguistically Other; some original compositions.

personal and public legacies in the present. One group of ZP members, including Elvis J Kurtović and Sejo Sexon, reformed in Zagreb after the destruction of Sarajevo. Their 1999 song *Jugo 45* used the iconic Zastava car to depict a young person’s family life and the decline of Yugoslav Sarajevo. First came a typically humorous anecdote about the narrator’s “old man” squeezing the car into a tight parking spot; they used it for holidays, seaside trips and buying jeans in Trieste; their neighbours Franjo and Momo and his maternal uncle Mirso (archetypal Croat/Serb/Bosniak names) borrowed it for selling apples, taking a pregnant wife to hospital and visiting prostitutes, laughter filled the house and the Jugo 45 was in the garage [“u kući puno smijeha, u bašći Jugo 45”]. One evening the narrator heard dark murmurs from the three neighbours in the garage; “our Jugo 45 looked very small that night” [“izgled’o je baš mali to večē naš Jugo 45”], and one morning the family “fled with two nylon bags, first along Lenin street, then down Ljubljana street” [“pobjegli smo jednog jutra s dvije kese najlonske / prvo malo Lenjinovom, pa preko Ljubljanske”] – a miniature image of socialist Yugoslavia’s history from Leninist start to democratising, disillusioned finish. They ended up, like so many Bosnians, in a different city and apartment; the father, successfully negotiating BiH’s new ethno-political realities, became a minister in a post-Dayton canton.

The Croatian musician and journalist Alka Vuica, meanwhile, was one of few performers and even fewer women who engaged with social and political developments through zabavna music (rather than rock) – an extra dimension which arguably made her the most subversive recording artist in 1990s Croatia.<sup>8</sup> Vuica had had strong connections with the 1980s Sarajevo rock scene before taking up music herself. Her 2004 song *Pioniri* [Pioneers], sampling the Pioneers’ anthem and Tito’s speeches,<sup>9</sup> described the disillusionment of a woman who had believed during her idealistic Pioneer childhood “that there would never be war, and the two coolest guys were Tito and my dad” [“vjerovala sam da nikad neće biti rata, i da su najveći frajeri Tito i moj tata”]. Yet Tito, the celebrated womaniser, had “buggered us all” [“svima nama uvalio ga zguza”], boys had “taken off [Pioneer] scarves and tied cravats” [“skinuli ste maramice, svezali kravate”] – an observation shifting complicity in nationalist politics towards men and away from women – and the song played out with a folk song from Zagorje, Tito’s and Tuđman’s native region.

<sup>8</sup> Her 1990s career – covering Goran Bregović songs (when he was still a suspicious figure for leaving Sarajevo and collaborating with Emir Kusturica), agreeing to perform in Belgrade in December 1999 and rejecting early-1990s prescriptive linguistics which would have re-titled her song *Laži me* “Laži mi” – subtly illustrated how a life could have strong patriotic credentials (in one interview about *Laži me* she related her family’s resistance to Italianisation during the Fascist occupation of Istria (Stojšavljević 1995)) yet not fit the presidential narrative’s narrow cultural boundaries.

<sup>9</sup> Music and singing coloured the Pioneer experience for many children under socialism, including both authors of an article on music at Kumrovec (Petrović and Rubić 2006:223–24).

On the same album, another song, *Bosna* [Bosnia], imagined Yugoslav life more sweetly in a duet with the Bosnian sevdah singer Halid Bešlić, set to a melody from the Turkish pop singer Tarkan. Bešlić sang that he was dreaming of old friends [“a ja sanjam stare drugove”], using the Bosnian “drug” [“friend”] rather than the post-Yugoslav Croatian “prijatelj”; Vuica replied “every day I think of you, of Sarajevo and of us, [of] the eighties” [“svaki dan mislim na tebe, na Sarajevo i na nas, osamdesete”]. Vuica was “still in the garage and like[d] the same rock and roll” [“još sam u garaži, volim isti rock and roll”]; Bešlić invited her to the kafana, the typical folk venue, where he was still “playing the same folk [songs]” [“u kafanu zađi, sviram iste narodne”].<sup>10</sup> The pair were reunited in the čaršija (the Sarajevo marketplace) and sang together that “everything changes but we don’t [...] Bosnia forever” [“sve se mijenja a mi ne [...] Bosna zauvijek”].

### **The Negation of Socialist Experience**

With political change in early 1990s Croatia came a shift of symbolic power which re-bounded the discursive field understood to structure the limits of the “thinkable” (Bourdieu’s “doxa”). As in most other post-socialist countries, governing anti-Communists narrated a fundamental opposition between “Communism” and “democracy” (such that democracy’s primary meaning sometimes seemed to be “anti-Communism”, not other components such as political pluralism or popular sovereignty) and posited Communism as an ongoing political threat. The latter narrative made particular sense during the Homeland War, when the JNA (once the Partisan narrative’s major beneficiary) had attacked Croatia alongside rebel Krajina Serbs. After the JNA offensive and Slobodan Milošević’s co-option of socialism, any further Croatian appeals to socialist war memory would be tinged with the knowledge that that memory’s protagonists and heroes had become the antagonists of the independent state’s own founding narrative. Anti-Communists found further evidence of a socialist plot against Croatia in the knowledge that the State Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Croatia (ZAVNOH) had been subsumed and its leaders persecuted by the Yugoslav state.

Tuđman’s official imperative to promote “national unification” between former Partisans and Ustaše because both sides had believed they were fighting for Croatia (Uzelac 2006:202) proved more beneficial for the memory of Ustašism than socialism. When later politicians called Croatia a state founded on anti-fascism (distancing the contemporary state from the NDH’s internationally more troubling legacy), they added the somewhat ingenuous caveat that anti-fascism

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<sup>10</sup> Another example of expansive linguistic space in Vuica’s lyrics (Croatian has “kavana”). The rock-folk convergence implied in the reunion had characterised the pre-war “Sarajevo school” of popular music.

and Communism had to be distinguished. While the aspiration to defeat fascism had certainly connected socialist and non-socialist allies and provided a rationale for the idealism of European unification, insisting on separating anti-fascism and socialism ignored 45 years of their inseparability in Yugoslav public discourse. Events ostensibly commemorating the “anti-fascist struggle” demanded the public’s continued sacrifice and loyalty for the Yugoslav state, while the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, sloboda narodu” [“Death to fascism, freedom for the people”] was used in the Pioneers’ song and banalised into everyday childhood experience. In Yugoslav terms, anti-fascism could be distinguished from socialism far more easily in 1945 than in 1990.

The opposition protests which dogged Ivica Račan’s 2000–03 governments responded to the first occasion in sovereign Croatia that a former Communist who had not distanced himself from state socialism as a Croatian Spring victim and/or HDZ member held political power. Politicians from HDZ and further right-wing parties, former generals/admirals (including some of those forcibly retired by President Stipe Mesić in 2000), veterans’ lobbyists and musicians united in their allegations against Račan and Mesić, among which the most successful allegations were the interlinked charges of Communism (playing on Račan’s previous political allegiance and Mesić’s liberalism) and treachery to the nation. The classic central European post-1989 model of claims and counter-claims of Communist activity arguably did not become established in Croatia until Račan’s ministry, but became endemic thereafter.

The anti-Mesić/Račan protests facilitated a strand of oppositional–patriotic popular music, epitomised by Marko Perković Thompson, which had crystallised alongside veterans’ disaffection in late Tuđmanism and emerged as Thompson’s primary theme by 2002. Thompson’s willingness to consider the NDH as a legitimate moment in the Croatian statehood tradition (rather than a criminal ally of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy) and his re-use of certain NDH language made him a divisive public figure; controversies over NDH memory were at the forefront of his meanings as a star.<sup>11</sup> However, the worldview Thompson constructed dealt just as much with socialism (or its negation). In challenging and rejecting socialist memory, Thompson and similar musicians also equated modern-day political opponents with communists who (patriotic discourse held) were automatically antagonistic to national interests. These reconfigured communists could either be demonised or mocked; either way, as Katherine Verdery (1996:90) argues, the allegations formed part of a “larger process of reconstituting political legitimacies” by contesting the bases of “moral authority”.

Thompson, for one, took the socialist enemy seriously. His 2002 song *E, moj narode* [Oh, my people] included communists (besides “antichrists and masons”)

<sup>11</sup> On the compatibility between Thompson’s music and other songs directly praising the NDH, see Senjković and Dukić 2005.

among the Croatian narod’s historical enemies. When his next new album came around, many journalists and liberal intellectuals had built a lasting image of him as a far-right extremist, based on potential allusions to Ustaša language in his lyrics, audience behaviour and his association with a song mocking the NDH concentration camps (unrecorded by him but attributed to him on bootleg live MP3s). In one new song that defended his right to express himself, *Neka ni’ko ne dira u moj mali dio svemira* [Let nobody touch my little bit of the universe], he framed the controversy within the continuity of political antagonisms. He thus claimed that “for them I’m a fascist” although he only wanted a/the “free country” [“za njih sam fašista, a nikad nisam htio tuđe ništa, samo nju, zemlju slobodnu”]. His critics were “servile pens attacking as if they had defended their villages” [“napadaju ta sluganska pera k’o da oni branili su sela”] – whereas he, as an army volunteer, had – and he accused them of calling patriotism fascism just “to defend their communism” [“domoljublje prozvali fašizam, tako brane njihov komunizam”]. Other musicians too framed contemporary political disputes as a clash between communism and right-thinking patriots: e.g., in 2007, the tamburica group Slavonski dukati/Mladi šest released *Nije na prodaju* [It’s not for sale] during a political controversy over Serbian investment in Slavonia. The lyrics’ narrator said that at Easter she always saw people she remembered as atheists (i.e. ex-Communists) pretending to care about Christ [“[...] neki prave da im je stalo do tebe, Kriste / a ja ih pamtim kao ateiste”]. The rest of the song warned “former comrades” [“bivši drugovi”] not to sell off the plains like they had sold off Croatia’s islands and waterways.<sup>12</sup>

The nebulous communist Other could, instead, be ridiculed. Niko Bete, best known for songs honouring Ante Gotovina and Mirko Norac,<sup>13</sup> did that on a 2004 album track, *Dva drugara* [Two comrades], which mocked the boy Partisans from the popular Yugoslav comic-strip *Nikad robom* (voice samples used their catchphrase “Pazi metak!”).<sup>14</sup> The two characters turn left in the forest and are captured by “bearded faces everyone knows” [“lica bradata svima dobro poznata”] – the caricature of Četniks and Serbs – where they meet an unspecified unhappy end; the song’s čoček arrangement emphasised the image of Serbdom overpowering Communism. Shorty’s *Narodna* [Folk [music], 2007) parodied Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav pop-folk music by alluding to well-known pop-folk lyrical tropes,

<sup>12</sup> More precisely, not to *touch* “my” plains [“u ravnicu mi ne dirajte”] – alluding to the title of a famous Homeland War tamburica song – because “we” had died and fought for them [“za to smo ginuli, za nju ratovali”]. See Baker 2009:44.

<sup>13</sup> Both generals fled from war crimes investigations in 2001. Norac briefly disappeared that February; domestic courts convicted him of war crimes in March 2003 and (on the Hague Tribunal’s extra charges) May 2008. Gotovina remained at large between July 2001 (when the Tribunal indicted him) and his arrest in Tenerife in December 2005. The Hague began his trial in 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Contemporary socialist cultural criticism disliked the strip (Senjković 2008:60–61), yet it still entered the complex of nostalgic memories.

jokes about famous singers and stereotypes of typical folk listeners. Such stereotypes (male folk listeners who drive a Mercedes, wear thick necklaces, smoke fake western cigarettes and show off mobile phones) were also widespread in “anti-nationalist” anti-folk discourse (Jansen 2005), although “anti-nationalists” associated tastes for folk with Croatian as well as Serbian ultra-nationalism. The politics of *Narodna*’s othered protagonist were specifically Yugoslav–Serbian, as revealed in the man’s JNA tattoo, his instruction “hit the accordion for the friends/comrades and companions/let’s make a kolo up to Titovo Užice” [“udri u dugmetaru zbog drugova i družica/napravimo kolo sve do Titovoga Užica”], his comment that “all Yugoslavia’s dancing again” [“igra opet cijela Jugoslavija”] and his readiness to marry Ceca.<sup>15</sup>

Certain musicians’ lyrics and interviews also suggested that a family and hometown background of negative experiences under socialism would produce personal resolve to challenge communists today. The narrator’s maternal grandfather and uncle in Bete’s 2004 song *Zapjevaj* [Sing] were victims of Communism: they had “fallen for the Home in a far-off summer” [“poginuli su za Dom ljeta dalekog”] and tearfully sung the Ustaša anthem *Evo zore, evo dana* [Here comes dawn, here comes day] at Bleiburg and Goli otok, two sites where Communists persecuted NDH soldiers and Domobrani (Home Guardsmen).<sup>16</sup> Bete’s earlier song *Za šaku dolara* [For a fistful of dollars, 2000] depicted an ordinary Dalmatian happy with his modest lot, including the observation that “some say ‘death to fascism’, that’s not written in the catechism, my parents taught me” [“neki kažu ‘smrt fašizmu’, to ne piše u katekizmu, učili me moji stari”]. Anti-communist politics here were just one aspect of a commonsensical family upbringing grounded in religion.

Thompson, too, invoked the antagonism between Yugoslav socialism and Croatian nationalism – which, Bete seemed to imply, had produced families that still respected the NDH. Thompson’s 1998 song *Geni kameni* [Stone genes] mentioned the emigrations of 1945, and his 2000 video for *Moj Ivane* [O, my Ivan] – his arrangement of a folk song from Kupres in Herzegovina) showed the return of a successful middle-aged émigré greeted by the entire village, including a blonde

<sup>15</sup> Titovo Užice: the socialist name of Užice (Serbia); “užičko kolo” [Užice circle-dance] became an important signifier of Serbian folk culture (the antithesis to Croatian national identity). *Igra rokenrol cijela Jugoslavija* [The whole of Yugoslavia is dancing rock’n’roll]: the Belgrade band Električni orgazam’s famous new-wave song. Ceca: a Serbian pop-folk singer, widow of the Serbian paramilitary Željko Ražnatović-Arkan.

<sup>16</sup> Between Tuđman’s election and the war, the singers Đuka Čaić and Ivo Fabijan had both dealt with the forced marches and massacre at Bleiburg (known to Croatian nationalists as “the Way of the Cross” [“Križni put”]). Čaić’s song *Križni put* depicted the younger brother of a Bleiburg victim, whose mother had been too afraid to tell him; Fabijan’s *Proljeće u Bleiburgu* [Springtime in Bleiburg] imagined a murdered Domobran’s son returning, envisioning the Croats’ bones rising up and hearing his father warning against war. The narrator of Miroslav Škoro’s 1993 song *Mata* was the son of a Križni put survivor who had been imprisoned for several months when “they” attacked Mata’s village in 1991.

girl in folk costume; one sequence, captioned “Kupres 1979.,” made it clear the Yugoslav security services had been searching for him when he left. Thompson also cast himself as a chief adversary of contemporary communism off-stage. He complained in 2007 about the double standard of public war memory in which NDH symbols were treated more harshly than those of Communism:

At the same time as they falsely depict me as a fascist, they celebrate Tito’s birthdays. Instead of officially proclaiming him the biggest war criminal on these territories, young people in Kumrovec wear SFRJ slogans on T-shirts. The fact that Tito committed genocide against the Croatian people [hrvatskim narodom] is not respected at all. In the Croatian people, nobody does not have someone in the family who was killed, persecuted or imprisoned by the Communist regime. That way rebelliousness and revolt are created, so people behave how they behave. And then they blame me for it, not Tito and his criminal regime (Stjepandić and Kalinić 2007).

Thompson’s narrative was countered in return in 2008, when the Istrian regionalist politician Damir Kajin campaigned against Thompson performing in Umag or Pula. Thompson told an audience in Križevci that “we’ll come [...] to the parts where there is still communism, we’ll kill communism”(Starčević 2008) and Kajin responded with a positive and Croatian-patriotic narrative of communism in Istrian history (Baker, forthcoming). It may seem obvious for a country that gained independence, indeed fought for independence, from a socialist federation to develop a popular culture rich in anti-socialist discourse. However, to consider it an inevitable consequence of transition and war would obscure the processes of discursive distancing and symbolic and physical violence against the historical memory of socialism that people carried out during the post-socialist inversion of political power relations.

Croatian society is not alone in having to negotiate the socialist past’s ambiguities. In Hungary, Budapest’s House of Terror memorialises Communist persecution yet arguably downplays Hungarians’ own complicity and the violence of the previous pro-fascist Hungarian state (Rátz 2006:253); the fiercest Estonian arguments concern statues’ location and movement (Ehala 2009); Latvia’s focal point is the annual Latvian Waffen-SS Legion march. In contemporary Croatia, however, these conflicts of memory appear to be played out mainly in popular culture, perhaps because other foci have been neutralised or irrelevant. Croatia as yet has no national contemporary history museum, and when Račan became prime minister, equivalents to Estonia’s Bronze Soldier were no longer standing. Because anti-communism had been woven into the early-1990s presidential narrative of war and independence, the principle was even harder to disentangle from the idea of patriotism than in other states which had not changed borders or which had seceded peacefully from something larger.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Istria – the Croatian region with the most complicated early 20<sup>th</sup>-century history – paradoxically appears more straightforward than the rest of Croatia. In Istria, the idea of patriotic resistance

## **Conclusion: Towards a Theory of Popular Music under Post-socialism?**

The fate of socialist war memory suggests that the construction of socialism as a constitutive other of the early Croatian state still defines the acceptable discursive field for Croatian musical production today. Yet that very phenomenon derives from a continued vestigial norm for the boundaries of the field to depend on the collectivist governing politics of the day – where the business of popular culture is not just selling entertainment for profit but interpellating the consumer into a collective state-sanctioned group, be it the Yugoslav socialist community or the Croatian narod. It may be more productive to interrogate this framework than situate Croatian (or ex-Yugoslav? or post-socialist?) popular culture within western academic debates over whether the Frankfurt School’s pessimism or John Fiske’s populist optimism offers a more appropriate analysis of the contemporary entertainment media.

Marxism’s influence on cultural theory in the west, meanwhile, makes even a distinction between “western” and “socialist” scholarly concepts problematic. It cannot be compared to Marxism’s scale as a constitutive principle for practice as well as theory in socialist states, yet the Frankfurt School’s Marxist basis, not to mention Stuart Hall’s adaptation of Gramsci into cultural studies, suggests one should not entirely separate western and socialist domains of thought. Recognising this interconnectedness would, moreover, respond to Katherine Verdery’s call (2002:20) for a holistic approach to studying the Cold War’s impact outside “the ghetto of Soviet area studies”.<sup>18</sup> Positions in the western popular culture debate also flow into domestic cultural analysis in post-socialist societies, whether or not they should.<sup>19</sup>

The intersection between socialist experiences and post-socialist domestic politics reflects the legacies of socialism differently across ex-Yugoslavia. Most such research so far concerns Slovenia, which sees both a “Balkan culture” participated in by non-Slovenes and an ironic response epitomised by the rock group

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did not have to be blurred with collaboration, because the Fascists had occupied Croatian territory and persecuted Croatians; in Istria, the Partisans’ role as liberators and Tito’s resolve over Trieste can reconcile sympathy for socialism within the discursive field of patriotism, at the price of silence over Italian victims of Yugoslav persecution (see Ballinger 2002).

<sup>18</sup> As a future direction in studying post-socialism, Verdery also observes that following “post-colonial studies” emphasis on the role of knowledge and representation in colonial rule might provide a “new mandate for research”. Has south-east European studies, where the post-colonial has become a frequent paradigm since the early 1990s (Bakić-Hayden 1995; Todorova 1994), already anticipated this?

<sup>19</sup> Can authors who grew up neither under socialism or under post-socialism *answer* this question as well as raising it – or do the meanings of popular culture, consumption or celebrity interfere with their comprehending the concepts’ full nuances in a post-socialist society?

Zaklonišče prepeva (Velikonja 2002). Post-Yugoslav representations of socialism in different successor states nonetheless depend on a common base of cultural and musical texts. In self-consciously nostalgic cultural production and reception/reuse, the symbolic language of socialism is a convenient shorthand for a period of readily attainable consumerist aspirations, ample employment and travel opportunities, before visa restrictions, economic sanctions, before the war, the destruction of families and homes and before the free market was fully exposed to 1990s–2000s transnational capitalism – sentiments which cannot always easily be expressed in the few minutes of a for-profit single. A certain indirect “socialist chic” also flows back in from a west which only experienced the original as fascination. The ragged military jackets, red-flag-bearing female attendants and Alexander Rodchenko-inspired constructivist typography of the video for BiH’s 2009 entry at the Eurovision Song Contest in Moscow (*Bistra voda* [Clear water] by Regina) surely owed as much or more to the image of the British bands Franz Ferdinand and Coldplay as to the revolutionary artists of Leninist Russia.

The eye-catching, knowing constructs of post-socialist socialist style in texts/events such as Bijelo dugme’s famous three-capital reunion in 2005 should not obscure a deeper layer, socialism’s structural legacies. One such may even be the very shape and extent of the contemporary post-Yugoslav music market: e.g. the Macedonian music industry exports to the other ex-Yugoslav states (after almost five decades of Tito’s promoting a Macedonian ethno-national identity within a Yugoslav framework) even though its musicians must use a different language to do so.<sup>20</sup> At this point, it becomes difficult to distinguish socialism as an ideology from the experience of living, working and creating in a state of six republics and two provinces. The decentralised multiethnic entity of “brotherhood and unity” between Yugoslav narodi was so intimately woven into Yugoslav socialism that it may not even make sense to pick out what factors are the result of socialist ideology and what factors the result of Yugoslavia’s larger geographic and economic borders.

Dividing comparisons by country also risks missing transnational phenomena which used not even to be flagged as such, e.g. contemporary forms of cultural flows between Yugoslav urban centres which are now in different states (such as one counterpoint of this paper, the Zagreb–Sarajevo route). Croatia has shared many of the political and economic experiences that make the “post-socialism” comparative relevant: the exclusion of socialism/Communists from political dominance, the construction of an ethno-nationalist state identity discourse centred on national particularity and traditionally-bounded gender roles, the expanding inequalities of the free market, the clientelistic privatisation of state resources after the collapse of an ideology holding that they were the property of the people

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<sup>20</sup> The flow became two-way in 2009 when the Croatian singer Antonija Šola began recording in Macedonian.

(even if in practice they were not used to the people’s genuine benefit) and the social and political order’s gradual adaptation to European Union conditionality. Simultaneously, however, post-Yugoslavia plus the Caucasus states and Russia belong to a smaller group of societies where prolonged armed conflict has further complicated the idea of common post-socialist experience. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, states’ varying experience of EU membership, non-membership, candidacy and conditionality introduce yet more cracks into post-socialist similarity. While different (post-)socialist countries always had their specificities (Verdery 1996:11), the varying speeds and consequences of EU accession may finally mark the end of the post-socialist comparative.

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## “SMRT FAŠIZMU, TO NE PIŠE U KATEKIZMU”: NASLIJEDE SOCIJALIZMA U HRVATSKOJ POPULARNOJ GLAZBI NAKON RASPADA JUGOSLAVIJE

### SAŽETAK

U radu se raspravlja o tekstualnom i strukturalnom naslijeđu socijalizma u hrvatskoj popularnoj glazbi od raspada socijalizma i Jugoslavije. Popularna je kultura u okviru jugoslavenskog socijalizma bila nelagodan kompromis između socijalističke svijesti i kapitalističkog konzumerizma. Popularna je glazba doživjela ista proturječja kao i drugi aspekti života u Jugoslaviji, poput *shopping-turizma*, a pregovaranje s ideološkim poljem socijalističke prakse bilo je rutinski dio profesionalnog života glazbenika. Najvidljivije naslijeđe socijalizma u hrvatskoj popularnoj glazbi su komentari o svakodnevnom životu u Jugoslaviji te ikonografija koja predstavlja osobno i javno naslijeđe socijalizma nakon raspada Jugoslavije. Međutim, negacija socijalističkog iskustva u nekim antikomunističkim glazbenim tekstovima i sama je naslijeđem socijalizma – ne samo zato jer se bez socijalizma ne bi imalo što negirati već i zbog kontinuiteta nazora da bi zabava trebala interpelirati potrošače unutar državno poduprtog kolektivnog identiteta. Taj je nazor premostio socijalističko i rano postsocijalističko razdoblje te nastavlja definirati granice prihvatljivog diskurzivnog polja kulturne produkcije. U zaključku se razmatraju izgledi za teoriju popularne kulture u postsocijalizmu, pri čemu povijesne i zemljopisne razlike otežavaju usporedbu.

Ključne riječi: socijalizam, postsocijalizam, popularna kultura, popularna glazba, Hrvatska, sjećanje