

# **The Role of Music in the Conflict- Tool of Reconciliation or a Deadly Weapon (Case Study of War in Former Yugoslavia)**

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## **Abstract**

*The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the role that music played in the war during the conflict in former Yugoslavia. In the first part, the usage of music in building the common Yugoslavian identity is presented. Secondly, the influence of the music during the pre-conflict period is exposed. Furthermore, the role of music as a weapon is considered. Finally, the paper demonstrates the potential of music during the reconciliation period.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Throughout history, music has always been a useful instrument for propaganda and an efficient motivator for group action. Although music has the potential to bring people together, at the same time, this sense of belonging to a specific group may be used in order to build antagonistic sentiments towards the other group (Grant et al., 2010). Even though there has been relatively little research on connection between music and propaganda, existing evidence suggests that the most successful musical propaganda is an affirmative one which induces positive associations (Grant et al., 2010). On the other hand, there are lots of examples of the negative influences in music which raises the issue of justification of the censorship. Music simply cannot be seen as absolutely positive since there are many examples when music was tool of the oppression and persecution of others or it was used to encourage hatred and violence (Grant et al., 2010).

There is evidence that forced singing was practiced in order to humiliate the enemy in Nazi Germany and the recent conflicts in Zimbabwe or Uzbekistan. While many studies have shown that frequent exposure to violent lyrics can influence the development of an aggressive personality and that violent songs raise feelings of antagonism, other researchers note that the impact of such music on a specific listener is absolutely dependent on the listener himself (Grant et al., 2010). It has to be noted that music does not occur in a vacuum but it is rather a part of a broader cultural context. Finally, there are some types of music material which may be banned or censored but, at the same time, they are easily available online (Grant et al., 2010). Moreover, it is always the people who decide to engage or interpret music in one or another way- to include or to exclude "others" (Shekhovtsov, 2013).

Music has a huge potential when used in conflict transformation, to prevent or to resolve conflict by non-violent means, it can assist in processes of healing and rehabilitation. Moreover, the world of music often can be a place of comfort, consolidation and safe haven. It provides a sense of purpose and feeling of power. In addition, playing music facilitates empathizing which is crucial for peace building (Grant et al., 2010).

## **2. PERIOD OF PROSPERITY OF YUGOSLAVIA- MUSIC AS A TOOL OF CONSTRUCTION OF A COMMON IDENTITY**

Music played an enormously important role in Yugoslavia from the very beginning. Its potential to foster a common identity was recognized rather early. Therefore, various music programs were organized all over Yugoslavia- music teachers got the opportunity to do "professional exchange" in other parts of the country, folklore groups were encouraged to include songs from all parts of Yugoslavia in their programs and music was in general engaged to raise feeling of brotherhood and unity (Pettan, 2010). Thanks to the deep infiltration of music in the Yugoslavian everyday life, some musicians were the first ones to foresee coming war events. In addition, many musicians endeavored to use music to prevent the forthcoming disaster. On the other hand, other group of musicians employed music to propagate rising nationalist sentiments (Pettan, 2010).

In the late 1940s, the regime pushed the performance and production of pieces which celebrated anti-fascist Partisan movement, glorified the wartime struggle, socialist development, Yugoslavism and the Soviet Union. Songs from other parts of Eastern Europe, especially Russian ones were also welcomed (Vuletić, 2008). The ensembles and radio stations were encouraged to

incorporate the musical production of all of Yugoslavia's national cultures to foster sense of common identity. Those who performed songs that were considered politically inappropriate were exposed to the possibility of punishment which included imprisonment and penal labor (Vuletić, 2008). In this period, the official policy of Yugoslavia's political leaders was resistance to Western popular music, especially the American one with the explanation that it has a low cultural value and is politically and socially unacceptable (Vuletić, 2008). Jazz was present in Yugoslavia since the inter-war period and numerous jazz bands were formed all over the country during the 1920s. However, in the late 1940s, the communist party stigmatized jazz because of its American associations and censored its consumption and production (Vuletić, 2008). Even though they understood the power of popular music, communists were struggling to find an effective approach towards it (Vuletić, 2012).

Despite the regime's attempts, Western popular music was still being consumed in Yugoslavia. In 1953, authorities gave their official approval for the establishment of the Association of Jazz Musicians in Belgrade and the first "dance melody" competition in Zagreb which marked the beginning of the Zagreb Festival, the first popular music festival established in Yugoslavia and one of the first popular music festivals in Europe (Vuletić, 2008). Nevertheless, some politicians were still criticizing Western music influence calling them dangerous for promoting decadent and immoral behavior and blaming them for motivating young people to leave Yugoslavia with false promises of "a better life". By the end of the 1950s, popular music was so common that it was being played at occasions such as events celebrating official holidays (Vuletić, 2008). In the following period, radio and television services were expanded with a special focus on music programs which should have been a response to Westernization as well as a tool to familiarize citizens with cultures from other parts of Yugoslavia. The popular music's key role in creating pan-Yugoslav identity persisted even after further decentralization of the state (Vuletić, 2012).

Due to the Yugoslavia's rising power, Yugoslavia's consumer goods were perceived as more "Western" comparing to those produced in their own states which contributed to the appeal of Yugoslav popular music in Eastern Europe. In the same time, communist party considered radio as the best means for disseminating its own propaganda as well as challenging those coming from East and West (Vuletić, 2012). Even though television later played a significant role in the development of the Yugoslav popular music industry, radio remained a crucial media for promoting a domestic popular music culture between 1957 and 1961 (Vuletić, 2012).

Before rock and roll came to the scene, festivals played a significant role in connecting Yugoslavia. In September 1958, the first pan-Yugoslav popular music festival took place in the one of the most glamorous destinations on the Adriatic- at the seaside town of Opatija (Vuletić, 2012). The location of festival was crucial. This region used to be a part of Italy and because of its closeness to the Italian border Opatija Festival symbolized fostering of cultural relations between Yugoslavia and the West (Vuletić, 2012). Moreover, it was modeled on popular Italian music festival in Sanremo showing that Yugoslavia is open to the Western cultural influences. The biggest Yugoslavian music star of that era, Ivo Robić, won the first Opatija Festival singing a duet with Zdenka Vučković. The song title was "Tata, kupi mi auto" (Daddy, Buy Me a Car) and it looked on growing consumerism among Yugoslavia's population which was result of country's economic prosperity (Vuletić, 2012).

In this period, Tito was traveling to foreign destinations to promote Yugoslavia's key role in the Nonaligned Movement, but those occasions were also used to present Yugoslavian jazz and pop artists whose role significantly increased in Yugoslavian cultural diplomacy. Soon enough, Yugoslav jazz orchestras gained popularity in Eastern Europe benefiting on the fact that Yugoslavian music was "the most Western" one these audience had opportunity to experience (Vuletić, 2008). Competing at the Eurovision Song Contest provided Yugoslavia an opportunity to promote itself and its growing tourist industry to a large audience. However, it has to be noted that in the 1950s popular music was still censored if it rebelled against official state's ideology and self-censorship remained a regular part of music production and performance (Vuletić, 2008).

Yugoslavia's radio and television stations began to cooperate in the production of popular music festivals which was the perfect occasion to promote pan-Yugoslav cultural cooperation. Festivals were specifically targeted at young people starting with establishment of the Youth Festival in 1948 (Vuletić, 2012). The Opatija Festival did not attract artists from all over Yugoslavia from the beginning, but it became more pan-Yugoslav after the insistence on the participation of representatives from every republic starting in 1960 onwards. It was broadcasted on radio stations all over the state, attracted a mass audience and the songs that it produced quickly became hits in Yugoslavia. Moreover, it also attracted international attention (Vuletić, 2012).

Although the authorities were viewing at popular music as a less divisive cultural form in national relations because of its internationalism and modernity, it managed to expose some divisions within the state. There was a linguistic variation in Yugoslavia and the Serbo- Croatian was perceived as privileged because programs that were produced in this language were mainly

broadcasted overall the country (Vuletić, 2012). Contrary to this, Macedonian and Slovenian broadcasts were rarely elsewhere in Yugoslavia because Serbo-Croatian speakers were not as familiar with the idioms. Following the decentralization of the federation in 1963 and the republics' greater powers in the areas of cultural politics and economy, popular music festivals were accordingly established in every republic. Commenting on the proliferation of such festivals, even Tito remarked that Yugoslavia was under "festival mania" (Vuletić, 2012). The popularity of the Opatija Festival decreased in the 1960s and the festival in Split became one of international prominence. However, this festival was not inspired by the pan-Yugoslav aspirations as the Opatija Festival had been (Vuletić, 2012).

### **3. YU ROCK- MUSICIANS AS PROPHETS OF THE FUTURE CONFLICT**

Yugoslav rock overall argued for critical thinking, cosmopolitanism and openness and it has been gradually progressing from a subculture to the mainstream (Mišina, 2010). In the period from the late 1970s to the late 1980s rock music in Yugoslavia was marked by stronger political commitment, especially by expressing the socio-cultural critique of reality and most urgent issues in Yugoslav society. Due to the Yugoslavia's relative openness towards West, many Yugoslavs developed interest in British punk which did not stop them to engage with Yugoslavism or socialism at the same time. Rock and punk music in Yugoslavia was definitely a reflection on sociopolitical reality and in many occasions the lyrics mattered more than the music sometimes even including prophetic reflections (Spaskovska, 2011). Three music movements emerged in this time: New Wave, New Primitives, and New Partisans, each with its own way of using rock to raise attention and offer solutions for worrying events of that time. Young musicians saw themselves as the wind of change in their country, targeting especially youth and trying to provide them understandings of the problems and tensions within Yugoslavia (Mišina, 2010).

New Partisans advocated Yugoslavism as an answer on raising nationalism. They saw the only possible solution for country's future in reanimation of the Partisan revolutionary past as a ground on which Yugoslavia was founded (Mišina, 2010). It is not surprising that The New Partisans originated in Sarajevo which had reputation of the most Yugoslav city. Accordingly, the citizens of Sarajevo were first to feel any change of the nature of Yugoslavia's socio-cultural orientation, such as decreasing de-Yugoslavization and xenophobia (Mišina, 2010). New Partisans propagated "original Yugoslavism which included socio-political, socio-cultural and moral-ethic aspects. They were united in their belief that the nationalistic tendencies could be fought successfully through

strategic reanimation of the legacy of the World War II. In order to mobilize their audience and to evoke their patriotic sentiments, they mixed folkloric and revolutionary musical idioms with modern rock music (Mišina, 2010). Goran Bregović, leader of the band "Bijelo Dugme" promoted concept of the "Yugoslav idea of a somewhat different type" which emphasized a change in the communists' frame of mind that would lead Yugoslavia toward more open, pluralistic society (Mišina, 2010). The highlight of Bregović's Yugoslavism involvement was the 1986 album titled "Pljuni i zapjevaj moja Jugoslavijo" (Spit and Sing, My Yugoslavia) which was produced in the spirit of resistance against the ethno-nationalism. The central preoccupation of the 1988 album "Ćiribiribela" was prediction of the coming war and the question- where one who

belongs to whole Yugoslavia can go when the war breaks up and all of the sudden he does not belong anywhere (Mišina, 2010). Saša Lošić and his band "Plavi Orkestar" focused more on the socio-cultural aspects of New Partisans' poetics. They viewed the revolutionary cultural spirit of the World War II and Partisan struggle as the crucial tool for fighting against nationalism and xenophobia (Mišina, 2010). "Plavi orkestar"'s Yugoslavism was call for mental sanity of an entire generation who, just like the members of the band, was raised in the Yugoslav spirit of multiculturalism based on the heroic partisan struggle in the World War II. The band's idea was to use the Partisan war film genre, which included particular moral views and which symbolizes Yugoslavian unity and adapt it in the music form (Mišina, 2010). For Dino Dervišhalilović and his band Merlin, the main cause of inter-national problems was the moral-ethical nihilism and materialism of its citizens. He claimed that Yugoslavs became so self-centric that they got alienated from one another and from themselves (Mišina, 2010). His solution for re-building Yugoslavian society was return to true moral and ethical, non-material values on which Yugoslav society was grounded- the ethics of World War II partisanism. He repeatedly invited all rockers to organize a national tour to remind their audience that all Yugoslavs depend on each other. This idea was most explicitly embodied in Merlin's song "Cijela Juga jedna avlija" (Entire Yugoslavia One Courtyard) (Mišina, 2010). Nevertheless, the nature of the New Partisans polarized Yugoslavia's citizens as well as the authorities. Besides the advocates of movement's idea and fans of their music, there were also those who were viewing on New Partisanism as on the banalization and trivialization of the achievements of Partisan struggle (Mišina, 2010).

Young Yugoslavs, who found themselves in a situation where any opinion which differed from the official one was condemned by regime, viewed the rock-culture as the possibility to rebel and differentiate themselves from their parents' generation (Pogačar, 2008). In 1975, Marko Breclj formed the band "Buldožer" which is considered to be "the father of the New Wave". Due to the

raising modernization and urbanization, city played a crucial role in the artistic expression of New Wave bands. On the one hand, it was perceived as the place of unlimited opportunities but in the same time as the root of all problems that plagued Yugoslavia (Pogačar, 2008). Despite the New Wave was conceived urban phenomenon, it was not limited just on big cities and it was spread into the countryside where the genre also found followers (Pogačar, 2008). The members of the bands were usually originated from the cities which made New Wave more urban, in both-sound and lyrics. It was rebel against the political situation, corruption and current social issues. However, they opposed the rock of older generation as well as emerging music tendencies such as neo-folk, shepherd rock and posers in general (Pogačar, 2008). The New Wave was politically engaged and lyrics of songs were usually provocative and included taboo topics such as oppression, corruption, or homosexuality. They were expressing the general spirit of their generation- boredom, disappointment with the present situation and loss of ideals. A nostalgic feeling for times of closeness between people, when one still lived on the countryside, raising consumerism which showed a deep hypocrisy of communist society, loneliness and alienation in big, grey cities were common themes (Pogačar, 2008).

The third music movement of that time, New Primitivism (Novi Primitivizam) was created in Sarajevo in the first half of the 1980s. This music-cultural phenomena has been marked in the first place by bands Zabranjeno pušenje (Smoking Forbidden) and Elvis J. Kurtović as well as by the TV show Top Lista Nadrealista (Top List of Surrealists). The New Primitives' movement based their work on local Bosnian humor and urban Sarajevo subculture (Spaskovska, 2011). The youth, in a typical attempt to rebel against generation of their parents, supported Yugoslav identification, perceiving selves as a supranational or even anational which was their way of a protest against raising nationalist politics (Spaskovska, 2011).

The regime did not show lots of opposition towards rock music. The songs were sometimes publicly criticized but barely censored. In addition, popular band Bijelo Dugme was invited to perform for President Tito on New Year's Eve in 1975 (Spaskovska, 2011) and the band Merlin took part at the last Youth Day in 1987 (Spaskovska, 2011).

#### **4. CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT PERIOD- MUSIC AS A TOOL OF SEPARATION, PROPAGANDA AND AGRESIVNESS**

During the conflict in former Yugoslavia, music had an important role for rising national awareness. It was used as a tool for sending message to domestic population on whom they are and who they are not, as an instrument of presenting the country to the world audience in the preferred way. On the other hand, it was even employed as a weapon during the conflict and in the war aftermath (Baker, 2010). Music in ex-Yugoslavia influenced ethno-political conflict in few ways. It was supplement to violence as well as it was used for morale rising among people and for the conceptual separation. In addition, it was regularly commenting on recent social events (Baker, 2013).

The ethnonationalism found its way into the music scene with some prominent musicians publicly expressing controversial and nationalistic statements (Spaskovska, 2011). Musicians as a professional group were definitely included into patriotic initiatives by singing songs that mostly expressed the dominant ethnocentric collective narrative. However, that definitely cannot be said for all musicians in that period (Baker, 2013).

Nevertheless, the situation changed in 1989/1990 when the musicians involved in the first wave of nationalist/patriotic wave appeared on the scene without serious fear of ban or imprisonment (Baker, 2013). In Croatia, this early wartime hits were directed to both- the European Community which was asked to stop the Yugoslav army's brutal aggression as well as to the domestic consumption to which aggressor was presented as absolute Other (Yugoslav, Communist and Serb). The wartime Croatian popular music had also a function of a source of troop and civilian morale. The musicians sometimes performed at the front line to promote national defiance (Baker, 2013). Nonetheless, music editors had to draw the line somewhere and to silence songs they considered over aggressive even though the boundary for overaggressiveness was never officially fixed. In the end, those songs found its way to the wider public through the cassettes or local radio programs. In texts of those songs, the Serb aggressor was portrayed as the only one responsible for violence. In addition, he forced Croatian people to fight and defend themselves (Baker, 2013).

Furthermore, music was used as a weapon in another ways during the war in Yugoslavia. For instance, war prisoners in prison camps were forced to sing nationalist songs aimed to cause feeling of humiliation among them. Some of prisoners testified that they were forced to sing the Croatian anthem or some Ustaša songs while, on the other hand, other prisoners were forced to sing songs corresponding to their own ethnicity instead, also as a mean of humiliation (Baker, 2013).

Events in Vukovar in many ways present the use of music as a direct form of aggression by both sides. The additional form of use of music was setting words to music to make them more memorable even for enemies. The role of musicians who were regularly present in the media was to raise the morale. During the occupation, popular musicians from Serbia were delivering concerts in Vukovar. Similarly, in autumn 1991 Croatian forces militarized singers into so called artistic units (Baker, 2013).

After the war ended, music continued to be used as a tool of separation. The broadcasting policy's goal was to eliminate symbols of Serbian and Balkan identity and less wanted music was excluded being labelled as too Serbian or too eastern. Additionally, some new questions caused public debates such as should music produced elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia be present in Croatia (Baker, 2013). In the after war math, the idea of using music as a weapon was generally accepted, but the official narrative was that Croatia was the one who was justifiably defending. Additionally, recognizing that Serbia was misusing music was a legit reason to exclude Serbian performers with the explanation that hearing Serbian music could be offensive for Croats who had suffered in the war. Moreover, the other explanation offered was that Serb musicians should accept Serbian role as the war aggressor before they could perform in Croatia (Baker, 2013). But the music which was targeted (Serbian popular music) was far away from the songs used during the war which usually had patriotic or nationalistic character (Baker, 2013).

After the war and during Franjo Tuđman's presidency in Croatia, popular music was heavily politicized (Baker, 2010). Consequently, according to Tuđman's belief that Serbs and Croats belong to solely different civilizations, a state-driven popular music policy divided music in more or less desirable categories based on how they match the official presidential narrative. For example, the producers of "Croatian dance" (very popular genre during the 1990s) argued that their adaptations of German and Italian house music had proved Croatian belongings to the Western world (Baker, 2010). The national television, HRT, which had the monopoly during the 1990s, had practically decisive role about popularity of the performers (Baker, 2010).

The music which celebrated the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) became easily accessible. Starting with the late 1990s music in Croatia interfered more directly with political life. The production of patriotic popular music which celebrated the veterans from the Homeland War as well as the call for reviving faith in God and the family absolutely flourished (Baker, 2010). The topic which was in the centre of public attention in this period, found itself in popular music's lyrics. The main theme was the betrayal of believed war heroes by their compatriots who questioned their

actions during the war and cooperate with the ICTY. Some of the singers who performed the music of this genre dominated Croatian charts with each new musical number (Baker, 2010) The most famous representative of this genre is definitely former army volunteer Marko Perković Thompson. His debut hit "Bojna Čavoglave" continued to be his most popular song despite the integrated slogan "za dom spremni" (Ready for the Home (land)) that was used by the Ustašas. Being veteran himself, Thompson was able to convincingly express the disappointment of veterans who, according to him, have lost power and dignity in Croatian society (Baker, 2010). On the other hand, Thompson was involved in various scandals which widespread his public image as an extremist, mostly related to the Ustaša's symbols (Baker, 2010). In addition, the patriotic popular music of this period was interfered by a rising amount of Euroscepticism as the result of the common perception that the EU is little concerned for Croatia and its national interest (Baker, 2010).

Yugoslavia was the only communist state which took part in the Eurovision before 1989. Following that tradition, most Yugoslav successor states joined the competition after the break-out (Baker, 2008). In 1993, Croatia appeared for the first time at the Eurovision as an independent state with entry which tried to incorporate symbols of Croatian identity and Croatian supposed European tradition. Consequently, Croatian entry "Don't Ever Cry" portrayed a Croatian woman during the war praying for her 18-year-old son, most likely a soldier. In order to achieve better understanding among the European audience, the song was partly performed in English (as much as was then allowed). In addition, various national symbols were included. The stage was covered with tiny Croatian šahovnice (the part of Croatian emblem), maps of Croatia as well as the European stars (Baker, 2008).

However, one decade later, Croatia completely changed the strategy. Probably motivated by the success of Serbian musician Željko Joksimović, many folkloristic elements were included. In 2006, Boris Novković composed the entry "Moja štikla" (My stiletto) performed by Croatian popstar Severina Vučković (Baker, 2008). Famous ex-Yugoslav musician Goran Bregović, who is originally from Sarajevo but who has spent the wartime in Belgrade, was responsible for the song's arrangement what led to charges that he used Serbian rather than Croatian folklore. The authenticity of the song and how well it matches Croatia became an overwhelming theme in the country's media (Baker, 2008).

## **5. RECONCILIATION, PEACE-BUILDING AND PARADOX OF TURBO-FOLK**

Music is very often used in order to promote peaceful solutions and to simply connect people. In the conflict transformation, music can sometimes be that highly needed bridge between a shared past and reconciliation. It brings people together allowing them to understand their own view of reality as well as the experiences of other group. It underlines common ground and communicates in both directions (Grant et al., 2010).

The last celebration of, once very popular event, the Youth Day was held on the 25th of May 1988 in a very uncommon manner. Instead of omitting the traditional Baton of youth and presenting ideological symbols, a discussion was organized in Novi Sad with the topic of the current societal crisis (Spaskovska, 2011). A general trend especially among the urban, educated youth was a supranational, antinationalist attitude and nationalist hysteria had an important effect on the Yugoslav rock scene. Most of the rock bands raised their voices against the emerging violence, nationalism, and upcoming war (Spaskovska, 2011). Moreover, the rock scene initiated and organized several peace concerts and manifestations as a way of protest against current hazardous situation in Yugoslavia. Most of them took place during 1991 (Zaječar, Dubrovnik, Pula, Ljubljana, Sarajevo) when the outbreak of the war became very imminent scenario (Spaskovska, 2011). Several rock bands based in Belgrade (Električni orgazam, Partibrejkers, and EKV) formed "Rimtutituki", an anti-war initiative which organized several concerts calling for peace while recording the anti-war song "Slušaj 'vamo (mir brate, mir)" (Listen here (peace, brother, peace)) (Spaskovska, 2011).

Even today, rock music from the 1980s period remains loved and present all over former Yugoslavia. Although new generations usually recognize lots of old hits which gradually turned into ever-greens, sometimes they do not understand what lyrics are actually about. To capitalize such a popularity, the once most significant Yugoslav bands are now reuniting, touring again in the countries of the former Yugoslavian states or organizing so-called tributes (Spaskovska, 2011) what is frequently perceived as encouraging Yugonostalgia.

In 2000s, music from the region started finding its way to what was recently perceived as a "hostile market". For instance, Bosniak sevdah (which was labeled as "too Eastern" sounding during the 1990s) was reintroduced into the Croatian music market. In 2008, Hit Records released a compilation of post-2000 songs by Neda Ukraden, a Bosnian Serb singer born in the Croatian town

of Imotski who moved to Belgrade during the war. The status of popular music from other parts of Yugoslavia has started to change slowly (Baker, 2010). Stars from Serbia such as Đorđe Balašević, Momčilo Bajagić-Bajaga and Zdravko Čolić gave their first concerts in Croatia since the war. Croatian stars started to gradually perform more in Serbia or Montenegro and it became a business matter rather than politically problematic. Nonetheless, Croatian relationship with Serbian pop-folk remains the most challenging (Baker, 2010).

So-called folk music has played a particularly important role in the process of building national identities and promoting all kinds of national projects due to its association to the specific places and the common understanding of folk music as the genuine symbol of its own nation. Additionally, folk music considerably contributes to the image of a nation as an imbedded community (Shekhovtsov, 2013). Turbofolk music was mostly created in Serbia and Bosnia. Therefore, it endorses the Serbian collectivism and sense of being a victimized but chosen people (Volčić and Erjalec, 2010). It is difficult to say was the Turbo-folk music tool of division between the former Yugoslav republics or it actually re-created cultural ties between them.

It is very interesting that Serbian pop-folk is particularly popular among Croatian generation which grew up during Tuđman's rule and which was supposed to be indoctrinated with his patriotic values. However, it is still not clear if those young people use this music to express some kind of rebel or do they attach political meaning to it at all (Baker, 2010). The political narratives of the 1990s created dichotomy in which it ascribed this genre a position of Croatian popular music's Other (Baker, 2010). However, the recurrence of a common Yugoslav marketplace for popular music has definitely a lot to do with a common linguistic area (Baker, 2010).

In the beginning, this type of music has been directly linked to post-war culture which propagated violence, nationalism and war-profiteering. In the same time, it was helping to preserve image of Serbian nation as superior. Serbian soldiers at battlefields all over Yugoslavia were listening to this music with strong nationalistic sentiments. However, after the fall of Milošević's regime, turbo-folk remained extremely popular in Serbia and has even expanded into other former Yugoslav states (Volčić and Erjalec, 2010).

Turbo-folk stars were known and celebrated for their lifestyle which has usually included connection to criminal activities, hard partying, materialism, sex, and violence (Volčić and Erjalec, 2010). One of the most popular female turbo-folk singers, Ceca, embodies everything what turbo-folk has symbolized starting with the late 1980s until today (Volčić and Erjalec, 2010). Ceca is among her fans not seen as a representative of Serbian national identity but rather as embodiment

of real "Balkan" woman- strong, powerful, intelligent and devoted to her man and nation, woman who has succeeded despite all obstacles on her way (Volčić and Erjalec, 2010). Ceca successfully impersonates three key combined three desirable characteristics of the Balkans: she is beautiful, has rural origins but enjoys all perks of the urban lifestyle. Ceca did not only frequently sing for Serbian soldiers on the front during the wars in 1990s in order to motivate them but she also married Arkan, Serbian para-military leader, gangster and war profiteer who was killed in 2000 under unclear circumstances (Volčić and Erjalec, 2010). In 1999, during the bombing of Serbia, Ceca held concert against NATO (Hudson, 2003). Ceca and performers of similar music style were subject of mistrust and antagonism during the 1990s in Slovenia and Croatia. On the other hand, following a proven formula, lots of imitations of Ceca appeared all over Yugoslavia (Volčić and Erjalec, 2010). However, the adoption of rhythm, lyrics and techniques from Serbian or Bosnian folk music was in Croatia often viewed as borrowing something that is foreign for Croatian music tradition from an "enemy culture" (Baker, 2007).

Although it seems that most of the young people who are consumers of turbo-folk depoliticise this music (Volčić and Erjalec, 2010), there are still lots of those who find this trend worrisome due to political reasons. For example, in 2009 war veterans organized protests against Lepa Brena's concert in Zagreb (Baker, 2013).

Finally, music was not only used inside the countries involved in Yugoslav conflict but in order to assist those who were forced to flee abroad under the horrors of war. For instance, the Azra project focused on Bosnian refugees in Norway set up Norwegian-Bosnian music ensemble which enabled refugees to raise their voices and to interact socially. The main goal was to strengthen their Bosniak cultural identity while in the same time motivating intercultural communication between Bosniaks and Norwegians (Pettan, 2010).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The example of usage of music during the conflict in former Yugoslavia clearly demonstrates a huge potential of music to do both- to bring people together and to turn them against each other.

In the end, we ourselves are those who have power left to decide how to use music- whether we will employ it in order to spread and propagate our selfish goals or to try to heal and reconcile separated communities.

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