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**Crime and turbofolk as a cover to autocracy?
Nationalism in Serbia at the end of the 20th century
Zločin a turbofolk jako krytí autokracie?
Nacionalismus v Srbsku na konci 20. století**

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Rok předložení práce:

2019

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In Prague 06. 04. 2019.

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Annotation:

In this MA. thesis it will be investigated how, by the influence of the politics of Milosevic in the 1990s, implemented by the political elite gathered around him, a rise of crime, war profiteering and the development of a new popular culture genre of turbofolk appeared in Serbia. Such socio-political conditions, supported by a strong media propaganda by the regime, turned out to be the key pillars of Milosevic's autocratic rule. Special emphasis will be given to a new cultural phenomenon that struck this region in the period - the phenomenon of "turbofolk" as the dominant music genre of the time, that completes the picture of Serbian society during the 1990s. Overwhelmed with elements of kitsch and baroque, this popular music genre which originated in the restaurants of central Serbia suburbs, has become an unavoidable part of everyday life of young people, whose new idols were individuals who measured their success by the number and importance of their criminal ventures. The emergence of turbofolk, therefore, is considered in light of the birth of the new socio-political circumstances. But it is interesting to note that turbofolk, with some adjustments, remains the dominant musical genre in Serbia until today.

Key words: nationalism; ethnicity; turbofolk; music; war; popular culture; folklore; Yugoslavia; Serbia

Anotace:

V této diplomové práci bude zkoumáno, jak vlivem politiky Slobodana Miloševiče v devadesátých letech minulého století, která byla implementována politickou elitou shromážděnou kolem něj, dochází k nárůstu zločinu v Srbsku, válečného profiteringu a vzniku nového populárního hudebního žánru turbofolk. Ukázalo se, že tyto sociálně-politické podmínky, podpořené silnou mediální propagandou, jsou klíčovými pilíři Miloševičovéhо autokratického vládnutí. Zvláštní důraz je kladen na nový kulturní fenomén, který se objevil v tomto regionu ve zmíněném období - fenomén "turbofolku" jakožto dominantnímu hudebnímu žánru té doby, který dokresluje obraz srbské společnosti v 90. letech. Tento populární hudební styl, ovlivněn kýčem a barokem, který se vyskitl v hospodách centrálně-srbského venkova a zároveň se stal nedílnou součástí každodenního života mladých lidí, jejichž novými idoly byly jedinci, kteří vnímali svůj úspěch podle počtu svých trestných činů nebo úrovní jejich závažnosti. Vznik turbofolku je proto spojován se vznikem nových, sociálně-politických událostí. Důležité je zmínit, že turbofolk i nadále zůstává, s menšími úpravami, nejdominantnějším hudebním žánrem v Srbsku.

klíčová slova: nacionalismus, etnicita, turbofolk, hudba, válka, populární kultura, folklór, Jugoslávie, Srbsko

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Introduction

"Kad topovi gruvaju, muze ćute".¹ This wisdom did not get a confirmation in Serbia. There were more circuses than bread... Pictures of dismembered bodies alternated with images of happy turbofolk singers.... The economic branches in expansion were only turbofolk and crime. Or that was only heroism and patriotism. A new Belgrade was born. Belgrade of turbofolk singers, criminals, street mobsters, gold diggers. This was the elite of the new age...There is no business like show business. This saying got the confirmation in the 1990s in Serbia.²

The socio-political changes in the SFR Yugoslavia founded by the Constitution of 1974, gradually, after the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, began to induce divisions and differences among nations and followers of different religions that lived on the territory of the six republics - constitutive units of the federation. In the second half of the 1980s, it became clear that survival of the common state is impossible, which was alongside accompanied by the rise of nationalism in almost all the republics. Slobodan Milosevic then came to power in Serbia. Since 1989 he gradually took a turn from his originally communist ideology to political nationalism. At that time, in more or less all other republics of the common state, came rise of nationalism and, in 1991, civil war started.

In this thesis I will explore the connection between political regime of the 1990s in Serbia and nationalism, turbofolk and rise of criminality. I will question the common held belief that turbofolk is product of the politics and war in the 1990s. I will try to get into the core of these relations and contest the populist opinion, which exacerbate relations between turbofolk, crime and war to the level of cause and effect. Even though undeniably correlated, escalation of crime and war and

¹ This often quoted saying is subject of the debate about power and powerlessness of culture and relation that culture and art establish among people and events. The literal translation is: "While the cannons are munching, muses are silent." Latin, originally: "Inter arma silent musae".

² Sav Taj Folk, 2004, B92

the rise of turbofolk often leads to thought that turbofolk was a medium of political regime and the product of war and crime. In the following chapters I will try to answer the question of whether and to what extent this claim is true.

In order to understand and define this music genre I will explain the socio-political circumstances in the territory where it emerged.

In the first section of this thesis I will present theoretical approaches to nationalism and associate them with modern Serbian nationalism. I will explain the historical background of the development of nationalism in Serbia and the way nationalism influenced the beginning of the civil war in former Yugoslavia. The understanding of nationalistic ideology in Serbia in the 1990s is important because it provides a uniform basis from which to analyze turbofolk and rise of criminality, but also what it reveals about the state, its culture, and aesthetics.

In the second chapter I will aesthetically and socio-politically contextualize turbofolk and trace its beginnings. In Yugoslavia, in the 1960s music producers, singers and authors started making arrangements for folk songs, producing them and labeling them as their own. The colloquialism that was used to describe this very popular practice, in which folk songs got the new arrangements and were sung by specific authors, is *neofolk*. I will track the development of neofolk, how it changed and adopted during the 1980s and 1990s, when it became widely known as *turbofolk*. In order to better understand turbofolk I will follow two narratives about this genre: *political narrative*, the perspective on turbofolk from older generations of respondents, born in 1950s and 1960s, and *aesthetic narrative*, the perspective on turbofolk from younger generations born in 1980s and 1990s.

Finally, I will give a review of criminal activity in Serbia in 1990s. Special attention will be given to the representation of the criminals as war heroes and to how turbofolk becomes “soundtrack” of their activity. I will try to present general definitions of criminality and put it into the context of events in Serbia in the 1990s. Whether and to what extent the expansion of crime at that time was accelerated by the political regime and also how did the crime became a rule and not an exception will be also addressed.

I will also pay special attention to the media factor that influenced the expansion of criminality and turbofolk.

Methodology

The first part of this thesis: Rise of Serbian nationalism in Yugoslavia relies primarily on textual analysis. In order to understand and explain the issue of nationalism in late 20th century in Serbia I used mostly written sources. Except from the literature on the subject of nationalism and history of Serbia and Yugoslavia I also used the Memorandum of Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, Constitution of Socialist Federative Republic Yugoslavia, 21.02.1974. and documentary series and movies (*Tito: Poslednji svjedoci testamenta*, *The Death of Yugoslavia*(2012), *Poslednji Jugoslovenski fudbalski klub*(2000)).

In the second part of the thesis I search for linkages between turbofolk and politics in Serbia in the 1990s. Turbofolk, as a music genre, is often understood as “a soundtrack” of Milosevic's regime, as a symbol of Serbian side in the civil war in Yugoslavia and a cultural product of that time. There are also different views how much were turbofolk and Serbian politics intertwined in the 1990s. Marija Gujic states: “The genre has often been criticized for political conformism and sexism promoted by its performances. In addition, it is often seen as an authentic expression of Serbian nationalist political aspirations, and “Serbian culture” which represents the existing social order and social values”³. On the other hand, Misa Djurackovic states that turbofolk is a product of market liberalization, which started in Yugoslavia in the 1960s and was not promoted by the political regime in the 1990s. In order to study this issue, I used interviews and participant observation as a research method. I conducted the research between June of 2017 and October 2018. One of the first things that I learned when I started studying this phenomenon was that Rambo Amadeus, Montenegrin musician, gave this music genre a name. However, none of the authors of many studies written about turbofolk ever interviewed him. I managed to get in touch with him and he agreed to talk on this topic and explain his views on the subject and reasons he called this genre turbofolk.

³ GRUJIC, Marija, *Community and the Popular: Women, Nation and Turbo-folk in Post-Yugoslav Serbia*, Central European University, 2009, p. 2.

As I started doing interviews on the topic of turbofolk, nationalism and criminality in the 1990s I found out that different generations of informants have different views on turbofolk. That is when I separated the informants in two target groups. The first one was a generation born in the 1950s and 1960s, and the second one born in the late 1980s and 1990s. Their understanding of this genre turned out to be very different which could be interesting ground for understanding roots and dynamics of turbofolk. The older generation associates turbofolk predominantly with the politics of the 1990s and nationalistic tendencies of the time, whereas the younger generations perceive it as an integral part of country's culture. Since 1990s turbofolk didn't disappear but changed and it is still very popular in Serbia. For the first group of informants, the topics of nationalism, rise of criminality in the 1990s and turbofolk are inseparable. If I would start the conversation with turbofolk, they themselves would connect it with politics of the 1990s, nationalism and would also start talking about the criminality in that time. Most of them have very intense and negative feelings about turbofolk. My conclusion is that the reason for this is their association of the genre with the politics that brought the entire country economic sanctions, inflations, very poor economic standards, war and finally NATO bombing. The second group of informants, however, did not really associate politics, nationalism or criminality with turbofolk. For them turbofolk is just a very popular music genre. Some of the younger informants actually enjoyed listening to this music, others did not, but the conclusion was the same. It was not possible growing up in Belgrade and not listening to turbofolk.

However, I need to note that I did these interviews in Belgrade and that the perspective on turbofolk might be different in other cities or in rural areas of the country.

I did participant observation in clubs and bars where turbofolk is consumed today. Since, Belgrade is my hometown I also included my personal memories and experience that I had with turbofolk.

Analyses of the lyrics of the songs and public statements of turbofolk singers, but also many music videos were used in purpose of writing this thesis.

Lastly, for the final chapter, except for the interviews, I used literature on the topic of criminality in Serbia in the 1990s, but also on the topic of criminal law and the interference of the state in the prosecution and punishments of criminal activities.

All the photos displayed in this thesis can be found on the internet websites, which are cited in footnotes and I do not claim any authorship of them.

1. The Rise of Serbian nationalism in Yugoslavia

1.1. Nationalism

Nationalism is a concept that is not easily defined and thus, has been hotly debated for decades. Several theories of nationalism have been created in the past. I will begin with an explanation of the term *nation* and the origins of modern nation states since I consider these ideas to be crucial to the formation of modern Serbian nationalism.

People and nations form an integral part of the ethnic categorization, and their complex interconnection has been the subject of contemporary ethnology and anthropology. There are many criteria by which to classify different ethnic communities. The concept of the nation most often refers to a community of people of the same culture and united by an awareness of the communion, living on a common territory. Historically, nations have been formed as a result of wars, migrations, the formation of modern social classes and the development of infrastructure and production, mixing tribe and clan-based communities and other ethnic entities. As a consequence, one can conclude that no nation can be ethnically homogeneous.⁴

Many researchers have subsumed the often problematic concept of nation under a much broader and more complex concept of *ethnos*. Others, on the other hand, believe that these two concepts should be considered as two separate social phenomena. And last but not least, a third group of authors believes that, although different, nation and ethnicity should be considered in the "same analytical breath".⁵

⁴ NEDELJKOVIC, Sasa, *Cast, krv i suze*, Zlatni zmaj, Beograd, 2007

⁵ JENKINS, Richard, *Rethinking Ethnicity*, SAGE Publications, University of Sheffield, 2008,

In the political thought of the 19th and 20th centuries, nation is often considered as an ethnic unity to which explicit ideological properties are attached. "*Nations are historical phenomena related to comprehensive social and cultural changes in the relation to religion, dynasties, the national language, economy and class distribution*"⁶

Very detailed analysis of the differences and similarities between the ethnic group and nation, ethnicity and nationalism gives Eriksen:

*Nationalism and ethnicity are kindred concepts, and the majority of nationalisms are ethnic in character. The distinction between nationalism and ethnicity as analytical concepts is a simple one, if we stick to the formal level of definitions. A nationalist ideology is an ethnic ideology which demands a state on behalf of the ethnic group. However, in practice the distinction can be highly problematic. First, nationalism may sometimes express a polyethnic or supra-ethnic ideology which stresses shared civil rights rather than shared cultural roots, jus soli rather than jus sanguinis.*⁷

Nationalist movements were on the rise in the 18th and early 19th century with the aim of creating nation states and bring together people whose common identity was based on features such as a common language, culture, religion and political heritage. After the French Revolution in 1789, in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen pointed out that the principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation and that "*no body or individual can exert authority which does proceed directly from it.*"⁸ Michael Billig in his work *Banal Nationalism* calls this determination the "*mystic, unbreakable bond between the nation state and territory*"⁹ Today most anthropologists and ethnologists believe that peoples and nations are not the same types of category and that the differences between them cannot easily be explained.

⁶ NEDELJKOVIC, Sasa, *Cast, krv i suze*, Zlatni zmaj, Beograd, 2007, p. 25.

⁷ ERIKSEN, Thomas Hylland. *Etnicita a nacionalismus, Antropologické perspektivy*, SLON, Praha, 2012, (translated from Czech) p. 195.

⁸ Declaration of the Rights of Man – 1789.

⁹ BILLIG, Michael, *Banal Nationalism*, Sage, London, 1995, p. 26.

As already mentioned, nationalism, as a phenomenon, arose in the end of 18th and early 19th century, in connection with French revolution, with the appearance of Romanticism in art and literature, and in response to the claim to universality of the Renaissance and humanism. Before the rise of nationalism, the criterion for distinguishing between people was mainly religion, and from the beginning of 16th century until the Napoleonic wars unique languages and traditions were mixed together, creating a larger group of people of the same culture. This eventually leads to the formation of nations consisting of large groups of people who spoke the same language, professed the same religion and had similar traditions. In 1878, the Congress of Berlin played a definitive role as to the ideas of nationalism in Europe, and especially in the Balkans. After gaining independence from the Ottoman empire, most of the Balkan Slavic countries were finally recognized as independent on an international level in the Congress of Berlin. Most theoreticians of nationalism agree that “although nations tend to imagine themselves as old, they are modern”¹⁰. Nationalism, which is frequently considered a traditionalistic ideology, may glorify and re-codify an ostensibly ancient tradition shared by the ancestors of the members of the nation, but it does not thereby re-create that tradition.¹¹ This is very important in terms of contemporary Serbian nationalism and the development of the 1990s culture in Serbia, which was to a great extent influenced by nationalism. One of the ideas that contemporary nationalisms steams from is the opinion that Serbian national state exists since medieval dynasty of Nemanjici and did not originate with the Congress of Berlin, foreshadowing the fact that before French revolution and Enlightenment, the sense of national and patriotic did not exist in the form that it does today. In his study *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Eriksen uses the fitting example of the Norwegian state and how they used old symbols and traditions from the area of the today's state Norway as traditional Norwegian heritage.

¹⁰ NEDELJKOVIC, Sasa, *Cast, krv i suze*, Zlatni zmaj, Beograd, 2007, p. 29.

¹¹ ERIKSEN, Thomas Hylland. *Etnicita a nacionalismus*, Antropologické perspektivy, SLON, Praha, 2012.

Members of the city bourgeoisie travelled to remote valleys in search of 'authentic Norwegian culture', brought elements from it back to the city and presented them as the authentic expression of Norwegianness. folk costumes, painted floral patterns (rosemaling), traditional music and peasant food became national symbols even to people who had not grown up with such customs. Actually it was the city dwellers, not the peasants, who decided that reified aspects of peasant culture should be 'the national culture'. A national heroic history was established. The creation of 'national arts', which were markers of uniqueness and sophistication, was also an important part of the nationalist project in Norway as elsewhere. As the Norwegian example shows, folk costumes and other national symbols take on a different meaning in the modern context from that which they originally had. They become emblems of distinctiveness in relation to other nations. ¹²

Throughout history, shared language has been identified as one of the most prominent symbols of cultural unification. The ground pillars for that were made with an invention of the printing machine. The first one who started printing in a language other than Latin was Martin Luther, who translated the Bible to German and hence made it available for wider masses of readers. Undoubtedly, the German of that age, similarly to French, English and other European languages, was very different from today's German. Anderson in his book "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism" explains the process of language standardization:

It remains only to emphasize that in their origins, the fixing of print-languages and the differentiation of status between them were largely unselfconscious processes resulting from the explosive interaction between capitalism, technology and human linguistic diversity. But as with so much else in the history of nationalism, once 'there,' they could

¹² ERIKSEN, Thomas Hylland. *Etnicita a nacionalismus, Antropologické perspektivy*, SLON, Praha, 2012, p. 168/169.

*become formal models to be imitated, and, where expedient,
consciously exploited in a Machiavellian spirit.*¹³

Nonetheless, despite this process language minorities still exists all over Europe, to name a few, Breton in France, Rusyn language in Hungary among others. Conflicts between mainstream language majorities and language minorities are a good example of how important the language standardization was for the nationalist ideology and respectively, for the creation of the modern nation.

*"It must be remarked, the drive to homogenization also creates stigmatized others; the external boundaries towards foreigners become frozen, and 'unmeltable' minorities within the country (Jews, Gypsies – but also, say, Bretons, Occitans and immigrants in the case of France) are made to stand out through their 'Otherness' and thereby confirm the integrity of the nation through contrast. In a period such as the present, when claims to cultural rights challenge hegemonies, this means trouble. There is no inclusion without exclusion."*¹⁴

Thus, for example, in an article written in 1836 (published in 1849), the Serbian language reformer, Vuk Stefanovic Karadzic (1787-1864), claims that all those who speak with the Stokavian dialect should be considered Serbs, regardless of their religion (Orthodox, Muslim or Catholic).¹⁵ In the context of his time and his struggle against the clergy, Karadzic's insistence on the determination of the peoples by the language they speak, and not according to their religion, was quite understandable. Nevertheless, it turned out that his definition of Serbianism was unsustainable, since many of the ones he referred to, rejected the idea.

In his study of nations, Benedict Anderson defines nations as *imagined communities*. They are imagined, in simple terms, because one member of the nation will never know all the members of their own nation, nor will he establish a specific relationship with them, yet, they still exist in his mind and he makes

¹³ ANDERSON, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 2006, p. 47.

¹⁴ ERIKSEN, Thomas Hylland. *Etnicita a nacionalismus, Antropologické perspektivy*, SLON, Praha, 2012, p. 173.

¹⁵ KARADZIC, Stefanovic Vuk, *Srbi svi i svuda, Kovčežić za istoriju, jezik i običaje Srba sva tri zakona*, Vienna, 1849.

some kind of a relation towards them and builds a community with them. According to him, the nation emerges as an imagined community, due to the need of a larger community than the one in which individuals live and with which they have an immediate interaction. The occurrence of such imaginary nations Anderson contributes to the triumph of secular Enlightenment ideas that have overridden the idea of the divine right of kings, and led to the need for restoration of sovereignty, in the form of national origin.

It [nation] is imagined because even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion... The Nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind... It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm... Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.¹⁶

While the members of community indeed don't know each other personally, there is a connection between them; a strong connection that unifies them. To gain a better understanding on how it is possible that a concept as general and broad as *nation* can replace the strong interpersonal connections built in smaller communities, one can look into Eriksen's analyses of reflection on nation and metaphoric kinship.

Nationalism promises to satisfy some of the same needs that kinship was formerly responsible for. It offers security and a feeling of

¹⁶ ANDERSON, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 2006, p. 6

continuity, as well as offering career opportunities (through the educational system and the labour market). As a metaphorical pater familias, nationalism states that the members of the nation are a large family: through the national courts it punishes its disobedient children. It is an abstract version of something concrete which every individual has strong emotions about, and nationalism tries to transfer this emotional power to the state level. In this way, nationalism appears as a metaphoric kinship ideology tailored to fit large-scale modern society – it is the ideology of the nation-state.¹⁷

Nationalism as ideology invokes the symbolism of kinship, by employing phrases such as ‘motherland’, ‘father of the nation’ etc. This is clearly evident in Serbian nationalism. To take an example, the above mentioned Nemanjic dynasty was founded by Stefan Nemanja, who was proclaimed ‘father of Serbian nation’. Additional proof of how strongly present kinship metaphors are in the discourse of modern nationalism in Serbia is the use of term “Mother Russia”, which signifies the path that foreign policy should undertake in views of Serbian nationalists. This shows that indeed “this kind of symbolism can be extremely powerful in mass politics.”¹⁸ Kapferer explains further how potent this idea of connection within a community as large and vaguely defined as a nation can be:

Through his examples from the two very different societies, Kapferer shows how nationalism can instil passions and profound emotions in its followers. It frequently draws on religion and myth for its symbolism, which is often violent in character. (One need only think of military parades, which are common in the celebration of Independence Days in many countries.) Like other ethnic ideologies, nationalism lays claim to symbols which have great importance for people, and argues that these symbols represent the nation-state.

¹⁷ ERIKSEN, Thomas Hylland. *Etnicita a nacionalismus, Antropologické perspektivy*, SLON, Praha, 2012, p. 179

¹⁸ ERIKSEN, Thomas Hylland. *Etnicita a nacionalismus, Antropologické perspektivy*, SLON, Praha, 2012, p. 130

Death is often important in nationalist symbolism: individuals who have died in war are depicted as martyrs who died in defence of their nation. If the nation is a community that one is willing to die for, reasons Kapferer, then it must be capable of touching very intense emotions.¹⁹

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that Kapferer touches upon another idea, which is closely related to Serbian nationalism; he suggests a connection between nationalism and myth. Myth accompanies mankind since the beginning of time until the present day and because of its inherently contradictory nature we should be particularly careful when studying myth. One of the main perils of the unchecked interpretation of myths is the possibility to distort history and legitimize extreme ideas.

"The term "myth" in contemporary society begins to be applied to a wide range of problems and often becomes a conservative, regressive and destructive element that is used by the social structures in order to alienate cultural and psychological potentials from individuals and groups: with the use of myth."²⁰

The tendency to poeticization and mythologization of social reality is a universal and enduring feature of humanity. Mythologization is essentially ideologically neutral and can occur in any social discourse: whether religious, nationalist, or economic. Retraditionalization and the awakening of the national consciousness after half a century of socialism in Serbia has been a fertile ground for the revitalization of the national mythology. Although its wider use was inhibited, this certainly does not imply that national mythology in the past was completely latent in all social classes. Since social life does not function well without myths, national myths existed also in the period of socialism. In these decades they were replaced by communist-socialist myths which apart from the specific content in the structurally functional sense are not much different from national myths. Indications of a stronger and more open national myth

¹⁹ ERIKSEN, Thomas Hylland. *Etnicita a nacionalismus, Antropologické perspektivy*, SLON, Praha, 2012, p. 177.

²⁰ NEDELJKOVIC, *Sasa, Cast, krv i suze, Zlatni zmaj*, Beograd, 2007, p. 38

breakthrough into public life began in Serbia with the escalation of ethnic tensions in the late eighties of the 20th century. Author Sasa Nedeljkovic, in his study "Myth, Religion and National identity: Mythologization in Serbia in the Period of National Crisis", researches the individual and institutional levels of mythologization in Serbia in the 90s. *"The manifestation of the tendency to mythologize, at the institutional level, takes place through cultural projects and ideas, political speeches and actions, media titles, etc."*²¹ As one of the main sources he uses the journal "Vojska"²². This journal was created by the military command, and therefore also by the state leadership.

The seriousness with which this transaction occurred is best illustrated by the fact that this journal conducted interviews with a number of public figures from the country and the world, and featured a regular column from one of the most read local Serbian writer, Momo Kapor. NATO aggression in "Vojska" was often portrayed as a struggle between good and evil, right and wrong, light and darkness, truth and falsehood. Yugoslavia, namely the Serbs were on the side of Good, Justice, Light and the Truth ("Truth is a bone in the throat of the enemy"), while the enemy was on the side of evil, injustice, darkness and lies.²³

For a description of the situation, pre-Christian and Christian mythological terms were used. Serbs, as an antipode to NATO were called "torchbearer of spiritual resistance". In the texts, we were able to meet with different understandings and uses of the term "Kosovo". Kosovo has been called "ancient historical, cultural and religious core of Serbia". Kosovo became an all-encompassing symbol of unity: it was a universal and sacred place, a holy place of the Orthodox religion and the world; it was the core of the Serbian nation. In some texts occurs reminder, passed down from generation to generation, not to forget

²¹ NEDELJKOVIC, Sasa, *Cast, krv i suze*, Zlatni zmaj, Beograd, 2007, p. 45

²² Eng: Army

²³ NEDELJKOVIC, Sasa, *Cast, krv i suze*, Zlatni zmaj, Beograd, 2007, p 47-48
Journal Vojska

Kosovo's testament and direction to the heavenly kingdom. Serbian path is identified with the road to Golgotha, which must be completed with triumph. It is a remarkable potentiation of the Christian model of forgiveness: it deliberately separates the perpetrator of evil, on the one hand, from the Evil, on the other hand. Perpetrators should be forgiven, but not the ones who stand behind them.

*"According to many nationalist myths, the nation is born, or arises, from a painful rite of passage where it has to fight its adversaries; the Other or the enemy within. Re-enactment of that violence, as in Sri Lanka, can be justified by referring to such myths, which form part of a 'cosmic logic' or ontology through which the Sinhalese experience the world. This cosmic logic, where evil plays an important part, is congruent with the long-running ethnic hostilities and serves as a rationalization for the use of force."*²⁴ As Eriksen writes Nedeljkovic confirms this assumption of a biblical, cosmic reasoning within his research among his students: *"The form that exists in the minds of many respondents, concerning the fate of Serbian nation, is identical to the biblical myth: 1) the former perfect state of the nation, 2) fall, 3) journey through suffering, 4) national rebirth or resurrection."*²⁵

As the wars in Yugoslavia demonstrate, Serbian nationalism in the 90s was violent in character, and mythologization played a great part in discourse of Serbian nationalism. While in Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, nationalism was a marginal phenomenon and severely punished when occurred (ex. Aleksandar Rankovic, Dobrica Cosic), great example of mainstream view on nationalism gives famous Yugoslav novelist, short story writer and poet Danilo Kiš:

"Nationalism is first and foremost paranoia. Collective and individual paranoia. As collective paranoia it results from envy and fear, and most of all from the loss of individual consciousness; this collective paranoia is therefore simply an accumulation of

²⁴ ERIKSEN, Thomas Hylland. *Etnicita a nacionalismus, Antropologické perspektivy*, SLON, Praha, 2012, p. 184.

²⁵ NEDELJKOVIC, Sasa, *Cast, krv i suze, Zlatni zmaj*, Beograd, 2007, p. 56

individual paranoias at the pitch of paroxysm. If, in the framework of a social order, an individual is not able to “express himself,” because the order in question is not congenial and does not stimulate him as an individual, in other words does not allow him to assume an entity of his own, he is obliged to search for this entity outside identity and outside the so-called social structure. Thus he becomes a member of a pseudo-masonic group which seems to pose problems of epochal importance as its goals and objectives; the survival and prestige of a nation or nations, the preservation of tradition and the nation’s sacrosanct values – folkloric, philosophical, ethical, literary, et cetera. Invested with such a secret, semi-public, or public mission. Other becomes a man of action, a tribune of the people, a semblance of an individual. Once we have him cut down to size, isolated from the herd, and out of the pseudo-masonic lodge where he has installed himself or been installed by others, we are faced with an individual without individuality, a nationalist. This kind of profile, which fits all nationalists, can be freely elaborated to its conclusion: the nationalist is, as a rule, equally piffling as a social being and as an individual. Outside the commitment he has made, he is a nonentity. He neglects his family, his job (usually in an office), literature (if he is a writer), his social responsibilities, since these are all petty compared with his messianism. Needless to say, he is by choice an ascetic, a potential fighter biding his time. Paraphrasing Sartre on anti-Semitism, nationalism is a comprehensive and free choice, a global attitude not only toward other nations but toward people in general, toward history and society; it is at once a passion and a world-view.”²⁶

²⁶ KIŠ, Danilo, *Po-etika, knjiga druga*, Predsedništvo Konferencije Saveza studenata, Belgrade, 1974.

1.2. Development of Nationalism in the Yugoslav Republic of Serbia

I once discussed the phenomenon that it is precisely communities with adjoining territories, and related to each other in other ways as well, who are engaged in constant feuds and in ridiculing each other — like the Spaniards and Portuguese, for instance, the North Germans and South Germans, the English and Scotch, and so on. I gave this phenomenon the name of ‘the narcissism of minor differences’.²⁷

Sigmund Freud

Towards the end of First World War, the Serbs were part of a unification plan with other Yugoslavian nations under the slogan “national and state unity.” This plan came into existence in 1918 and the new country emerged under the name of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, with the Serbian royal dynasty Karadjordjevic as the ruling monarchy. Thereafter, the Serbs considered Yugoslavia as the permanent solution to their national question. This kind of dual national identity, Serb and Yugoslav, remained a part of national consciousness until the 1980s, when it was broken and Serbs rejected the idea of Yugoslavism.²⁸ In 1929 the country was renamed Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

During the Second World War the country was invaded by the Axis powers. In this period on the territory of Serbia two resistance groups were formed: Chetniks and Partisans. Chetniks were the ones who supported king Petar II Karadjordjevic and were fighting against Axis powers in the name of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In 1941, the Ravnogorski movement led by Dragoljub Draza Mihailovic was created. The Chetnik military organization was initially based on a defensive attitude towards the occupier, territorial structure and decentralization. After the transfer of the majority of the Partisan forces from Serbia and Montenegro to

²⁷ FREUD, Sigmund, *Civilization and its Discontents*, General press, New Delhi, 2018

²⁸ PEŠIĆ, Vesna, *Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis*, U.S. Institute of Peace, 1996

Bosnia, the Chetniks took part in an open collaboration with the occupier and participated in attacks on Partisans. A part of the Chetnik commanders, after the first conflicts with the Germans and the NDH²⁹, concluded military contracts with the NDH and the occupier. Indeed, since August 1941 the Chetnik commander Konstantin Kosta Pecanac³⁰ collaborated with the Germans, and from the end of 1943 Chetniks of Draza Mihailovic also started entering into non-aggression agreements with the Germans, for the provision of weapons and carrying out joint actions against the Partisans.



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After the Second World War, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia came to power in Yugoslavia. The newly elected Party initiated active political prosecutions against political opponents and those critical of communism. Thus, General Dragoljub Draza Mihailovic was trialed, sentenced to death for cooperating with the occupier and killed in an unknown location. During and after the breakup of

²⁹ NDH- Nezavisna Drzava Hrvatska (Independent state of Croatia)- Puppet state of Germany and Italy from 1941 until 1945.

³⁰ Kosta Pecanac was rival of Draza Mihailovic in the struggle for power over the Chetniks. Pecanac, like Draza Mihailovic, organized groups of resistance fighters in the forests. He was the first to sign an agreement with the Germans on a joint struggle against the partisan uprising.

³¹In this photo there are three members of Chetnik movement(the ones with the beard and black hats) and two German soldiers. Available at:
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6a/%C4%8Cetnici_i_Nemci_u_o_kupiranoj_Jugoslaviji.jpg

Yugoslavia Mihailovic became one of the greatest figures of Serbian nationalism and was remembered as the hero of the Balkan and First World War, as well as the bearer of the Serbian White Eagles Order, the British Military Cross and the American Legion of Merit (posthumously awarded by Harry Truman, U.S. President). Following the victory of the Partisans, the main institutions that supported Chetniks (monarchies and "bourgeois" political parties) were destroyed, drastically weakened (Serbian Orthodox Church) or forced into new political molds (Serbian cultural and literary associations). At the same time, the traditional features of the Serbian national identity are compromised, because they were linked to the Chetniks.

In the 1990s, politicians such as Vojislav Seselj, were identifying as Chetniks and organizing paramilitary units during the wars that broke in the territory of the former SFRY and vehemently incited Serbs to use force to solve nationalist tensions in Yugoslavia and to ensure that Serb-held territories in other Yugoslav republics stay within Serbia. During the Yugoslav wars, during the breakup of Yugoslavia, many Serbian paramilitary units called themselves Chetniks, because of the inherited nationalist idea of Great Serbia. They also imitated the image of Chetniks, wearing long beards and specific hats. During this period word "Chetnik" became a derogatory term used for Serbs.



³²This photo shows paramilitary unit, during the 1990s war, that resemble Chetniks and are holding the Chetnik's flag. Available at: https://www.dw.com/image/5399140_7.jpg

On the other hand, the Yugoslav Partisans' Communist party maintained advocacy for social revolution and did not denounce the idea of a revolutionary change of the regime. If they would acquire the power they would get to their final goal through national liberation battles. The warfare was mainly guerilla and was led by Chetniks and Partisans against occupying forces. At the same time, the war was also a civil war - one between the communist Partisans and the royalist. Even though in the beginning Chetniks and Partisans were collaborating in their fight against the occupiers, already in the last months of the Year 1941 they separated. The Second World War divided not just the territory of Serbia but entire Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The country was separated by Germany, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria.

On the territory of Serbia the Government of National Salvation, also known as Nedic's regime³³, was established during the Second World War. This government was the central organ of the puppet state of the German Reich. The main task of the government was to preserve the peace in occupied Serbia and to stop the hostilities against German units headed to the Eastern Front. The Government of National Salvation introduced the racial regulation, similar to Nazi Germany, which has led to an overt segregation of the Jewish and Roma population. Nedic's regime helped the occupying forces to clear the territory of the Jewish community. Anti-Jewish and anti-Communist propaganda was actively pursued. As early as November 1941, an Antimasonic exhibition was opened, which referred to the alleged Jewish-Masonic-Communist conspiracy. This exhibition was prepared as a propaganda exhibition in the service of Nedic's authorities in Serbia, and aimed against the Communist, Jews and Masons. The exhibition was funded by the Germans. Although the exhibition was antimasonic, its aims were to promote anti-Semitic ideas and spread hatred towards the Jews. Some of the items were intended to dehumanize Jews and justify the extermination carried out by the

³³ During the interwar period, Milan Nedic was Chief of General Staff and Minister of the Army and Navy. He was replaced and retired for his pro-German attitudes and closeness with the movement Zbor of Dimitrij Ljotic. During the Second World War the German occupying authorities set him up as president of the puppet Government of the National Salvation in order to break the uprising in Serbia.

Nazis. The exhibition was organized by former members of the Zbor Movement³⁴, whose aim was to unveil the alleged Judeo-Mason / Communist conspiracy to rule the world.³⁵ During the occupation in Serbia, there were about 40 daily and weekly newspapers in German and Serbian language, among which were: *New time, Reconstruction, Serbian people, Our struggle* (newspaper of the movement ZBOR). Radio Belgrade was under the control of the Germans and was renamed "Vojnicki Radio Beograd"(Army Radio of Belgrade). The newspapers replicated the contents of German and Italian newspapers, celebrated Nazi victories, attacked Moscow, and Radio London.³⁶

Far-right leaders of that time such as Milan Nedic and Dimitrije Ljotic are commonly mentioned today as a part of *Svetosavski nacionalizam*. *Svetosavski nationalism* is the right political ideology that is a combination of Serbian nationalism and Orthodox clericalism. *Svetosavlje* as a newer concept that represents the ideology of leading church theologians of the 20th century. This ideology originated in the 1930s in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Its most prominent ideologues are Orthodox bishop Nikolai Velimirovic and Serbian pro-fascist politician Dimitrije Ljotic. With the victory of communism after the Second World War, this ideology has been suppressed, but some of its aspects continue to develop among Orthodox theologians. Since the 1990s, *Svetosavski nationalism* has been present on the political scene of Serbia and is represented by some right-wing organizations (Otacastveni pokret Obraz, Sveti Justin, Dveri srpske ...) and individuals within the Serbian Orthodox Church. The essence of the *Svetosavske*

³⁴ The Yugoslav People's Movement "Zbor" was a Yugoslavian pro-fascist, nationalist, conservative and monarchist movement, founded by Dimitrije Ljotic in Ljubljana on January 6, 1935. The ideology of Zbor was a mixture of Italian fascism, German Nazism and Serbian Orthodox fundamentalism. Zbor under the leadership of Ljotić represented the integral Yugoslavism, nationalism, authoritarianism, monarchism, anti-communism, anti-capitalism, anti-Semitism, anti-liberalism, Serbian Orthodox ethics and Serbian paternalism and agrarism. The party never enjoyed great popularity in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, winning about 1% of the vote in two pre-war elections. After the defeat of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia by the Axis powers, the party was completely in the service of the German occupying forces and soon established its military wing of the Serbian Volunteer Corps to combat primarily pro-communist Partisans.

³⁵ MILOSAVLJEVIĆ, Olivera, *POTISNUTA ISTINA Kolaboracija u Srbiji 1941-1944.*, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Belgrade, 2006

³⁶ BRBORIĆ, Ivan, *Ministarski savet Milana Nedica, od decembra 1941. do novembra 1942.*, Istorija 20. veka, 2010

ideology is the syntagm - one nation, one religion in one state. *Svetosavski* nationalists advocate for what they refer to as "Serbian medieval values" ("godliness," "chivalry," "congregation"), and the establishment of Serbian Orthodox theocracy in the area from Kupa to Vardar and from the Danube to the Adriatic Sea. Supporters of this ideology reject Western culture, democracy, liberalism, human rights, republican values, anti-fascist tradition and ecumenical dialogue.³⁷ During the 1990s, *Svetosavski* nationalism became the dominant power within the Serbian Orthodox Church. This movement embodies the sacralization of the nation and the nationalization of religion; it places Orthodoxy at the center of Serbian nationalism, closing the passage of the non-Orthodox to the Serbian political sphere. Some authors avoid the word "*Svetosavlje*" to describe this ideology, because it "has no direct connection with the name or work of Sava Nemanjić"³⁸ They emphasize that Nikolai Velimirovic attributed nationalism to Sveti Sava, while there is no nationalism in his work.³⁹ This is a great example of mythologization and how Serbian Nationalism takes on figures and actions that took place long before Serbian nation, as known today, ever existed. Throughout this ideology Nikolaj Velimirovic glorifies Sveti Sava, the man who lived 800 years before, and uses questionable knowledge of his life and work to make an ideal of how people should live today without taking into consideration the historical context of the actions of Sveti Sava.

While Government of National Salvation established on the territory of Serbia, territory consisted of Croatia, part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as some parts of Serbia and Slovenia was during the II World War the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). The head of this state was the fascist Ustasa movement led by Ante Pavelic. Ustasa movement was a Croatian organisation founded by Ante Pavelic in Italy in 1929. The organization was head of the Independent State of Croatia, from April 1941 to May 1945. Relying on the Axis Forces, primarily on Germany and Italy, this movement in most cases copied their internal structure

³⁷ FALINA, Maria, *Svetosavlje. A Case Study in the Nationalization of Religion*, 2007

³⁸ VUCKOVIC, Slavica, *Moderna i antimoderna u Srbiji*, Republika, n. 262, 2001

³⁹ Sveti Sava was a Serbian monk, prior of Studenica monastery, a writer, a diplomat and the first archbishop of the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church. He was born in 1175 as Rastko Nemanjic, the youngest son of Stefan Nemanja, the founder of Nemanjic dynasty.

and ideology. In their attitudes they emphasized Serbophobia and anti-Semitism, as well as a series of theories that justified their territorial claims. They organized and carried out killings of Serbs, Jews and Roma, and established a large number of concentration camps, of which the most famous one was Jasenovac. The debates over the number of people killed in this concentration camp, which varies from 80 000 to 150 000, show the national tensions between Serbia and Croatia existed during the Yugoslavia, came to a boiling point in the 1990s and still exist today. The question of the evaluation of the crimes committed by the Ustasas was initiated during the breakup of Yugoslavia. Thus, the word Ustasa became an invective term for members of the Croatian nation.

After the war in the atmosphere of making the new Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia the mass executions made in NDH by Ustase, but also by Chetniks would not be examined. The Communists did not want to define these ethnic problems in "national terms" but rather attempted to put blame on the particular movements: Chetniks and Ustase. The new Communist Government praised the victims and raised monuments for them, but a "veil of silence covered over the climate of fear and mutual distrust".⁴⁰ Even after the war and forming the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia two nationalist streams have competed over the country's politics. One was Croatia's aspiration for separatism. On the other hand, Serbia has strived for unification and centralism in hope to keep Yugoslavia under its control.

The League of Communists of Yugoslavia was calming national tensions, by promoting the social revolution that would solve the national questions. After 1945, Partisans were claiming that by making a Federative State they solved the national issues in Yugoslavia. The League tried to keep nationalism of every republic under control by keeping it in the borders of the given republic. The problem was that a lot of Yugoslav nations were living within the borders of neighboring republics and additionally these republics were ethnically mixed, especially Bosnia and Hercegovina.

⁴⁰ PEŠIĆ, *Vesna, Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis*, 2005, p. 8.

The 1960s brought about an awakening of the national thought for Serbia, but also for other republics and therefore also raised the question of separate republics and their own autonomy. The removal from the political life of Aleksandar Rankovic,⁴¹ supporter of centralism, in 1966, was a clear sign of the direction in which political streams were heading. In addition to Rankovic, other public figures from Serbia expressed their aspirations for centralism and unification, proving that Serbians, unlike the other Yugoslavian nations, understood Yugoslavia as the permanent solution to their national question. Looking into Serbian political and intellectual public, one can find many figures that understood Serbia as the bearer and defender of Yugoslav unity.⁴² One of the indicators that other republics aspired for more autonomy was MASPOK⁴³ movement in Croatia. The events of the “purge” of liberals from Communist Parties of Serbia and Croatia that followed the MASPOK movement demonstrated the attitude of the League of Communists towards any kind of threat to the federation. At the beginning of the 1970s, Josip Broz Tito realised that fundamental constitutional changes are called for, because of the emergence of these increasingly frequent and stronger national charges and wishes for a broader scope of authority within the federation. The political pressures for creating a model of the state which would allow a higher degree of autonomy for the separate republics together with the hope for preserving Yugoslavian

⁴¹Aleksandar Rankovic was chief of the military intelligence agency until 1966 and one of the most powerful political figures of SFRY. He opposed efforts that promoted decentralization that he deemed to be against the interests of the Serbian people.

⁴² For example Mihajlo Djuric, who was the professor at Belgrade University's Law School and member of Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was tried and imprisoned (1972.) after expressing his thoughts that Yugoslavia is starting to exist only as a geographical concept, on which grounds, under the masks of a consistent development of equality between nations, several independent, even mutually opposed national states are established. Another, maybe best known, example is Dobrica Cosic, Serbian writer and member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences. His departure from the Communist Party begins with his statements about the endangerment of Serbs in Kosovo.

⁴³ MASPOK or the Croatian Spring was a movement aimed at restoring the Croatian language instead of the Serbian-Croatian in education system, the shift of the monopoly system of foreign exchange management in Belgrade, and the idea that the new highway from Zagreb to Split should be called by the medieval Croatian king Tomislav was interpreted as a nationalistic act by the League of Communists.

federation led Tito and the League of Communists to make constitutional changes in 1974.

The Constitution of 1974 gave more power to the separate republics as compared to the federation, but also to Serbian provinces Kosovo and Vojvodina. Significant changes were also made in the state and socio-economic arrangements of the country. Although the new Constitution was more concerned with the codification of the socio-economic system in accordance to the ultimate scope of the theory of self-managing socialism, the most controversy and historical consequences came from the provisions of the Constitution on the state structure of the SFRY, which were later used as a legal basis for the process of disintegration of the SFRY and interpreted differently by the warring parties during the armed conflicts on the territory of the former SFRY. The pertinent provisions state as follows:

„Yugoslavia is defined as a federal republic of equal peoples and nationalities, freely united on the principle of fraternity and unity in the realization of a special and common interest, with the right of the people to self-determination to secession. The bearers of the sovereignty of peoples and nationalities are republics and provinces within the limits of their constitutional competences. Deciding in the Federation is based on the understanding and reciprocity of the rights and obligations of the republics and provinces. Socio-economic relations are organized as a socialist self-governing system.“⁴⁴

The SFRY Constitution gave more extensive rights and powers to the Yugoslav republics (and in particular the provinces of Socialist Republic of Serbia - Vojvodina and Kosovo). The provinces were even given an effective veto power over the decisions that Serbia may suggest. The most remarks on state regulation under the Constitution of 1974 was given by Serbia in terms of its territorial structure. After Tito's death (1980), it became increasingly difficult to mediate in disputes between republics and provinces. In the mid-1980s, the Serbian leadership demanded a change in the Constitution, not just a correct interpretation. At the beginning of 1987, as a result of the efforts of the Serbian

⁴⁴ Ustav Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije, 21. februar 1974. (Constitution of Socialist Federative Republic Yugoslavia, 21.02.1974.)

leadership, the SFRY Presidency initiated the adoption of more than 130 amendments. However, there was a settlement within the Serbian leadership. At the eighth session of the Central Committee of Serbian Communists, in September 1987, the political stream of Slobodan Milosevic, who vigorously demanded a break with the Constitution of '74, won the power. The entire leadership in both provinces was replaced. In the spring of 1989, Milosevic' government adopted amendments to the Serbian Constitution (of 1974) whereby the rights and powers of the provinces were significantly narrowed. In September 1990, with the enactment of its new Constitution, Serbia ultimately parted with the solutions offered by the Constitution of 1974.

In the meantime, similar processes of reformation started in the other Yugoslav republics. In March 1990, Slovenia removed the "socialist" prefix, and adopted a series of amendments that terminated socialist system. In the summer of 1990, following the victory of HDZ Franjo Tudjman, Croatia adopted a series of amendments that also excluded the prefix 'socialist' and changed its national symbols - the flag and the coat of arms. In December 1990, a new Constitution was introduced in Croatia. In the autumn of 1990, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, after defeating the Communist forces, also broke with the socialist system, and in Montenegro the break was formally marked by the adoption of the new Republican Constitution in the autumn of 1992.

To conclude, since the birth of the idea of Yugoslav unity, Serbian nationalism has been lurking in the background. The situation was further complicated by the turbulent events of the Second World War, which gave rise to nationalist movements in both Serbia and the Nazi puppet state of Croatia. Yugoslavia emerged from the war with a new leader - head of the (Partisan movement and later, the) communist party - Josip Broz Tito, and a new hope for a united federation. Nevertheless, the efforts to preserve Yugoslavia through the constitutional reforms of 1974 turned out to be the very first step towards the breakdown of the country.

1.3. Breakdown of Communism and rise of nationalism in Serbia

It is difficult to say whether the beginning of the long-running "crisis" in Yugoslavia dates back to 1974 Constitution, since 1980, when Tito died, or since 1981, when Albanians demonstrated, seeking the status of a republic for Kosovo. A crisis in the economy was accompanied by a political crisis. Although Tito's death, at the age of eighty-eight, could hardly be considered premature, it found Yugoslavia completely unprepared. True, the central succession mechanism was established, and the presidents of each of the presidencies were replaced on an annual basis.⁴⁵ However, none of Tito's successors had his authority.

Albanian demonstrations in Kosovo in the spring of 1981 were of key importance for shaping the future of Yugoslavia. The emigration of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo became the main national problem of Serbia in the 1980s. Only before the end of this decade, activities related to other national issues, such as the position of Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, reached approximately the same intensity. Since the autonomy of the provinces was guaranteed by the federal constitution, the conflict in Kosovo could not be limited to Serbia alone. In fact, this conflict helped speed up the long-standing inter-republican struggle over the 1974 Constitution. Through this mechanism, Kosovo became a stimulant for the breakup of Yugoslavia. The importance of Kosovo in development of Serbian national thought was already mentioned. It is the main motif in most of the national myths.

*"The term Kosovo has a very complex meaning and a large number of functions in several different systems of value. It also refers to a geographical environment, to a historical event and to an undefined sense of both the ethnic sentiment and the sphere of transcendental."*⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The presidency of SFRY was formed in 1974. and it had 9 members, one representative from each republic and Tito as the president. After his death, a different president was elected every year(always from different republic)

⁴⁶ NEDELJKOVIC, *Sasa, Cast, krv i suze, Zlatni zmaj*, Beograd, 2007, p. 60.

Further, I will try to summarize the historical context of why and how Kosovo became an integral part of modern Serbian nationalism.

Kosovo, as the center of Serbian national thought (and its identification with the constituent part of "old Serbia"), derives from its position at the heart of the Serbian medieval state and centuries-old Serbian patriarchy seat in Pec, and certainly from the Serbian national tradition related to the Battle of Kosovo, 1389. Both the Serbs and the Albanians claimed that, historically, they first came to this area. The Albanians represented themselves as direct descendants of the earliest immigrants, Illyrians, while the Serbs claimed that the Albanians came to this area only after the Ottoman conquest. Moreover, both sides claimed that, due to assimilation, their representation in the censuses of the population, as well as in other historical records, was dishonestly underestimated. After the Second World War, the Partisans have been trying to gain Kosovo Albanians from the very beginning, by creating an Autonomous Kosovo and Metohija within the new Republic of Serbia.⁴⁷

The first significant changes took place in December 1968 when Kosovo, which until then called the "Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija" was given a new name, "The Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo." By deleting the word "Metohija" (which comes from the Greek word that denotes the monastery's property) from the name of the province, the significance of the Slavic and Orthodox elements in its history was diminished.

Changing the political climate (removal of Aleksandar Rankovic from political life) was created at the same time when large group of educated Albanians emerged from Albanian-language schools, which were founded after the Second World War.⁴⁸ The combination of these two factors has enabled the continuing "albanization" of the elite in the province over the next decade. At the same time, a series of changes, both symbolic and practical, enabled the Albanians in Kosovo to strengthen ties with their nation in Albania - the links to which the Yugoslav

⁴⁷ BUDDING, H., Audrey, *Serb Intellectuals and the National Question, 1961-1991*, Harvard University, 1998

⁴⁸ DUIJZINGS, Gerlachus, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, London, 2000

regime previously viewed with great suspicion. From 1968, the word Siptar (derived from the Albanian word Shqiptar), used earlier to mark Yugoslav Albanians as opposed to Albanians in Albania, was officially changed to word Albanian, which was previously used only for citizens of Albania.⁴⁹ The importance of this change was that the unity of Albanians inside and outside of Albania was emphasized. In 1968, Kosovo officially adopted the form of an Albanian literary language, codified in Tirana (mainly based on the Tosk southern dialect, while Kosovo Albanians used the northern dialect Gega earlier).⁵⁰ Perhaps most importantly, through educational exchange, the textbooks and professors from Tirana began to arrive in Prishtina (where the faculties, formerly the branch of the Belgrade University, became independent in 1970). This meant that the explosion of higher education, to which it would come in the next decade, would be under the significant influence of Tirana. In 1968, fierce demonstrations broke out amongst students in Prishtina and spread to other cities in Kosovo, as well as in areas inhabited by Albanians in western Macedonia. Some demonstrators have demanded that Kosovo get the status of a republic.⁵¹ Some went on, demanding that Kosovo, as well as other areas in Yugoslavia inhabited by Albanians, merges with Albania. Although the demonstrations were suppressed by force, the atmosphere of increased tension between the Kosovo Albanians and the inhabitants of the province of Slavonic origin continued. The emigration of the Slavs from the province led to a decline in the total number of Serb and Montenegrin inhabitants, in the decade between the censuses from 1961 and 1971.⁵²

For the Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, this is the place and the myth where his political uprising began.

“When a socialist Yugoslavia was formed, the Serbian leadership remained divided in that new country, prone to compromises for the damage of its own people. The

⁴⁹ BUDDING, H., Audrey, *Serb Intellectuals and the National Question, 1961-1991*, Harvard University, 1998

⁵⁰ MALCOM, Noel, *Kosovo: A Short History*, University Press, New York, 1999

⁵¹ KNUDSEN, Tonny, LAUSTSEN, Carsten, *Kosovo Between War and Peace: Nationalism, peacebuilding and international trusteeship*, Routledge, New York, 2006

⁵² BUDDING, H., Audrey, *Serb Intellectuals and the National Question, 1961-1991*, Harvard University, 1998

*reservations that many Serbian leaders made at the expense of their people, neither historically nor ethically, could be accepted by any other nation in the world. Especially since the Serbs never conquered and exploited others throughout the history. Their national and historical being throughout history and through two world wars, as it is today, is - liberating. They freed themselves forever, and, whenever they were able, they helped others to free themselves. And in the fact that in this region Serbs are a great nation, there is no sin nor shame. This is an advantage they did not use against others. But I must say here, in this great, legendary field of Kosovo, that the Serbs never used this advantage of greatness for themselves."*⁵³

In the Serbian national discourse of the 1980s, a higher birth rate among Albanians was often portrayed as a manifestation of an evil plan, not as a result of demographic and cultural differences. Similarly, the emigration of Slavs from Kosovo is often interpreted only as a result of intimidation and violence. A more objective observation would determine that the emigration of Slavs from Kosovo was a complex process, which was partly motivated by economic factors.⁵⁴

The "Memorandum of the Serbian Academy" is by far the most famous document of the modern Serbian national movement. Some describe it as the basic expression of the exclusionary Serbian nationalism and the "plan" of Milosevic's movement and post-Yugoslav wars, even though in 1986 when Memorandum was published he condemned the clauses of this Memorandum.

By the end of September 1986, the working group prepared a draft document, which became known as the Memorandum, and the Commission, began its consideration. One Belgrade newspaper published an article in two parts, which reveals the existence of the Memorandum and quotes some of its sections.⁵⁵ This discovery has flared up a political fire in all of Yugoslavia. The memorandum was publicly stamped across Serbia and Yugoslavia.

⁵³ Slobodan Milosevic, speech in Kosovo, 1989.

⁵⁴ KNUDSEN, Tonny, LAUSTSEN, Carsten, *Kosovo Between War and Peace: Nationalism, peacebuilding and international trusteeship*, Routledge, New York, 2006

⁵⁵ The Serbian newspaper *Vecernje novosti* published part of the Memorandum in September 1986.

The Memorandum states that Serbia's "economic subordination" is a reflection of its "inferior political position" in Yugoslavia, which has been matched by Slovenia and Croatia in the way it suits them. It contains some of the most well-known claims, such as the assertion that the Serb population in Kosovo is a victim of political and cultural genocide, conducted by Albanian nationalists, determined to create an Kosovo without Serbs.⁵⁶

The conclusion of the Memorandum explicitly states the assumption, that the root of the Yugoslav crisis and the problems of the Serbian people lies in the decentralization of Yugoslavia. The memorandum states that "by insisting on the federal order, Serbia would contribute not only to the equality of all the peoples of Yugoslavia, but also to the resolution of the political and economic crisis."⁵⁷ The Serbian people must be allowed to realize their " historical and democratic law "to establish its" full national and cultural integrity ... regardless of the republic or province." ⁵⁸ Many observers viewed Memorandum as a turn to "Serbian nationalism of a separatist type." ⁵⁹

*"According to this theme (Memorandum), Serbs were naively duped into accepting Yugoslavism and the fraternal bonds of its other nations, while those "brothers" were continually building their ethno-national states on the bones of dead Serbs who fought in wars of liberation...they (Serbs) were the only ones to abdicate their Serbian nationality in the name of Yugoslavian unity. They lost considerable "historical time" in coming to the realization that Yugoslavia was a Serbian delusion. They had every- thing to lose in accepting the Yugoslav project, and other nations had everything to gain. The Serbs were the victims of their own futile Yugoslavism."*⁶⁰

Even though, according to the Memorandum, the first solution is even more centralized Yugoslavia, but it seems that the second solution is a form of a Serbian

⁵⁶ "Memorandum SANU", p. 128.

⁵⁷ "Memorandum SANU", p. 146.

⁵⁸ "Memorandum SANU", p. 144.

⁵⁹ BUDDING, H.,Audrey, *Serb Intellectuals and the National Question, 1961-1991*, Harvard University, 1998

⁶⁰ PEŠIĆ, Vesna, *Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis*, 2005

state. The authors of the Memorandum suggested that national alternatives to the multinational Yugoslav state might be desirable, but they failed to admit that their creation would inevitably imply destruction. The idea that the Yugoslav state is interchangeable, which was gaining importance in the course of the 1980s, is a fundamental change in the Serbian national thought. Serbian nationalism, in a radical anti-Yugoslavian form that rejects any Yugoslav state, remained a marginal phenomenon throughout the entire period of the breakup of Yugoslavia. What became crucial in Serbian politics was one current of thought that was considering the existing Yugoslav state to be unbearable.

On the other hand, the Serbian leadership before Milosevic constantly emphasized the need to take into account the interests of other Yugoslav nations, to work within the framework of the existing political system based on consensus, and to accept that the changes would only come gradually.⁶¹ At the very beginning of his populist revolution, Milosevic rejected exactly these restrictions, that is, the Yugoslav rules of political game. With his decision to place himself on the head of the Serbian national movement, Milosevic abandoned the long tradition of the Serbian Communist Party, primarily to fight its own nationalism, and the determination of his predecessors to work on changes within the existing political order in Yugoslavia. He also fundamentally changed the dynamics of the Yugoslav crisis, because, according to the Constitution of Yugoslavia, on which basis the provinces of Serbia became "constituent parts of the federation", Kosovo was not only an internal issue of Serbia. In order to fulfill his promise to regain Serbia's control over the provinces, Milosevic had to restructure Yugoslavia. However, his attempt to do so has provoked the determined resistance of other republics, primarily Slovenia and Croatia, and thus contributed to the process of state dissolution. It is important to say that it is not Milosevic alone that is responsible for the crash of Yugoslavia. The forces that were on the side of independence existed, independently of him, both in Slovenia and Croatia. However, his policies, and more so, what he said, acting in the context of the post-communist electoral race, contributed to turning these forces from marginal to dominant political positions. In April 1987, in his famous speech in Kosovo Polje, Milosevic

⁶¹ BUDDING, H., Audrey, *Serb Intellectuals and the National Question, 1961-1991*, Harvard University, 1998

advocated the issue of Serbs in Kosovo. In September 1987, Milosevic broke his rivals within the Serbian Party, who resisted his aggressive attitude towards Kosovo. Between October 1988 and January 1989, he conducted the so-called "anti-bureaucratic revolution" and organized a series of mass gatherings, which helped him demolish the leadership in Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro, and replaced them with his allies. This made effective control of votes in four of the eight federal units in Yugoslavia, greatly increasing its power at the federal level. In the spring of 1989, he pushed for amendments to the Serbian Constitution, which drastically reduced the autonomy of the provinces and inflamed the spiral of violence in Kosovo. In May 1989, he became the president of Serbia. The conflict between Serbia and Slovenia accelerated the disintegration of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in January 1990. With the abolition of this last Socialist Yugoslavian institution (except for the Army, which will, later, prove to be more Serbian than Yugoslav), the breakup of Yugoslavia entered the final phase. The new constitution (1990) seized a confederal position, according to which Serbia was designated as a sovereign state, which was currently belonging to Yugoslavia, but could choose to leave it. (This was similar to the proclamation of the sovereignty of Slovenia, on July 2, 1990.)⁶² When explaining the provisions of that constitution, Milosevic publicly touched the main issue for the first time, which opened the possibility of the break-up of Yugoslavia, and that is the question of the borders. He said that the current borders were conditioned by federal Yugoslavia, and that if Yugoslavia becomes a confederation, the issue of borders would be opened and Serbia would protect Serbs outside of Serbia. Milosevic did not say which areas Serbia would require, nor what methods would it use. The platform also says that the new constitution of Yugoslavia should be enabled to create autonomous provinces within Yugoslavia, "based on the expressed will of the population and national, historical, cultural and other specificities".⁶³ (The main objective of this proposal was the autonomous province of Serbs in Croatia.)

⁶² COHEN, J. Lenard, *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics*, Westview Press, 1995.

⁶³ BUDDING, H., Audrey, *Serb Intellectuals and the National Question, 1961-1991*, Harvard University, 1998

In the elections in Serbia in 1990, Slobodan Milosevic and his political party (SPS) and opposition parties wandered over positions on two issues: communism and national issues. Several opposition parties, had an ultimately anti-Communist platform. In that sense, the platform in which he supports federal Yugoslavia allowed Milosevic to sit on two chairs. On the one hand, he enjoyed all the privileges of the communist leader in power, including the highest possible control over public sector jobs, as well as the main means of public information. He could also emphasize his own experience of governing, through a parole that became probably the most elusive election slogan of all time: "There is no uncertainty with us." By restoring the Serbian authority over the provinces, Milosevic put his national merits beyond any objective suspicion. During the campaign, the SPS reiterated its support for a stronger federal Yugoslavia. The main points of the SPS platform were that Yugoslavia should be "a modern federation of equal citizens and equal federal units", so that the new constitution of Yugoslavia should be able to create more autonomous provinces in Yugoslavia, and that the Yugoslav peoples " must have the right to self-determination and secession". From June 1990 he publicly expressed that the issue of the borders would "open up" if Yugoslavia became a confederation (or, in case of disintegration).⁶⁴ The standpoint of the SPS platform that Serbia should provide "material and moral support" to Serbs outside of Serbia also represents a sufficiently clear indication that would be its path, after Yugoslavia.

⁶⁴ BUDDING, H., Audrey, *Serb Intellectuals and the National Question, 1961-1991*, Harvard University, 1998

Turbofolk as (non)political revision

Since the beginning of the 1990s, in Serbia, one specific music genre appeared as the most prominent feature of everyday culture. It is a *turbofolk*, music genre that gain massive popularity in Serbia in the 1990s. Turbofolk could be understood as “a soundtrack” of Milosevic's regime, as a symbol of Serbian side in the civil war in Yugoslavia and a cultural product of that time. It is often associated, by researches and respondents, with ideology of fast superficial life, aggressive sounds, politically non-correct texts, sexist images and nationalist-chauvinist tendencies.⁶⁵ The genre itself is a mixture of then popular “eurodance” music, local folk melodies and oriental rhythms. Despite many different controversial interpretations of this term and numerous speculations about the credibility of its significance, it seems that the term persists in music, academic and political discussions on the topic of where Serbian politics was, where it is now and where it will be.

Rambo Amadeus, a Montenegrin musician, first publicly used this term on his first album in 1988. He used it sarcastically to explain the so-called invasion of the newly composed folk music on Serbian music scene.

*“Folk is the people. Turbo is the system of injecting fuel under pressure to the motor’s inner combustion. Turbofolk is the combustion of the people. Turbofolk isn’t music. Turbofolk is the love of the masses. Activation of the lowest passions of the homo sapiens. Turbofolk is the system of injecting the people. I didn’t invent turbofolk I gave it its name”.*⁶⁶

Even though in the original use, the term had negative connotation, it was widely accepted not only by critics of this genre, but also by the “consumers” and everyone involved in this music industry.

⁶⁵ CVORO, Uros, *Turbo-folk Music and Cultural representations of National Identity in Former Yugoslavia*, Routledge, New York, 2016

⁶⁶ PUSIC, Antonije(Rambo Amadeus), Turbofolk- song, album *Oprem Dobro*, 2005.

Today Rambo Amadeus defines turbofolk as: “uncritical use of technology” Therefore, for him turbofolk presents not only a music genre but also people, politics, art. The music genre itself arose from the “Balkan mentality” of the people as he calls it. According to him: “The entire Balkans functions in its highly synchronized chaos. These chaotic transitions from one extreme to another in views and attitudes, this selective historical memory is characteristic for the entire area of the former SFRY. Because, the culture and customs of the people in the Balkans are mainly modulated by their occupiers who have lived here for centuries, and only here can we search for the causes of the distinction between "people and nationalities" in the Balkans. Dominant cultural model of the Western Balkans is actually finding a national identity in all social aspects, something what Europe did 150 years ago.”⁶⁷ Stemming from this perspective, there can be assumed an intrinsic connection between turbofolk and similar styles in other countries (*chalga, manele*) to Balkanism and Orientalism, which presence is undeniable. The oriental features are, in fact, consider to be the basis for the similarity due to the common Ottoman heritage on the Balkans. ‘Orientalism’ is deemed to be a ‘diffuse’ and ‘elusive’ concept, and so it ‘Easternness’ (or Balkanism), which is why it is worth looking more into them.



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⁶⁷ Rambo Amdeus, interview, 01.10.2018., Belgrade, Serbia.

⁶⁸ Music video of a song Plavi slon by Twins(1999), Available at: <https://s2-ssl.dmcndn.net/11T71/x1080-8PU.jpg>

Since the oriental rhythms are an integral part of the turbofolk music genre, we cannot talk about it without taking into account Orientalism in the Balkans. For Maria Todorova the Balkans have a concrete historical existence traced in the millennium of Byzantine and half millennium of Ottoman rule. It is in the latter period that Balkan territory was demarcated from the rest of Europe. This led to speculative and incomplete knowledge of the territory regarded today as the Balkans. Moreover, whereas the Orient is attributed to belonging to the “East” in the East/West dichotomy, the Balkans have been pejoratively stereotyped as a geographic entity that is neither East nor West, but somewhere in between. The Balkans are recognized geographically as a part of Europe, but in the civilizational values of shared history, they are not.⁶⁹ Todorova writes that; “this in-betweenness of the Balkans, their transitional character, could have made them an incomplete other; instead they are constructed not as an other but an incomplete self.”⁷⁰ It is this theory of Maria Todorova that can explain the very structure of the turbofolk, which is a combination of oriental rhythms, musical genre that was popular in the 1990s of Eurodance and local musical traditions.

⁶⁹ DAKOVIC, Nevena, “Borders In/Of the Balkan Road Movie” *Zoom in/Zoom Out: Crossing Borders In Contemporary European Cinema*. Ed. Alejandra Barricales Bouche and Marjorie Salvador. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars. 2009 p. 71

⁷⁰ TODOROVA, Maria. *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009 p. 18

2.1. Defining turbofolk

In order to grasp the idea of turbofolk, one should first get familiarized with the rhythms, the videos, the image of the singer and other aspects of the genre. Turbofolk could be recognized by the provocative image of the performers to the extent that it could be considered vulgar.



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That image was built by the music in combination with the videos and the lyrics of the songs. Commercial brands and Western elements were introduced to the Eastern culture, Orientalism and Orthodox society. Turbofolk marked a change in the sounds, visual representation, fashion and lifestyle in the music industry. ⁷²



⁷¹Turbofolk singer Vesna Vukelic Vendi in a restaurant. Available at:

<https://matrixworldhr.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/bez-komentara.jpg>

⁷² Music Video for the song *Turbofolk me je naterao* by Mimi Mercedes(2015)Available at:

https://www.calvertjournal.com/images/uploads/embeddable_slideshows/2017_September/dizelasi/mimi2.png

Erotically provocative photographs of turbo-folk female stars in magazines and the tabloid press, as well as all the entertainment TV-shows, many of them going 'live,' also established and celebrated the style which was widely accepted and imitated among Serbian youth but also among representatives of the new 'business' class and ruling politicians.⁷³

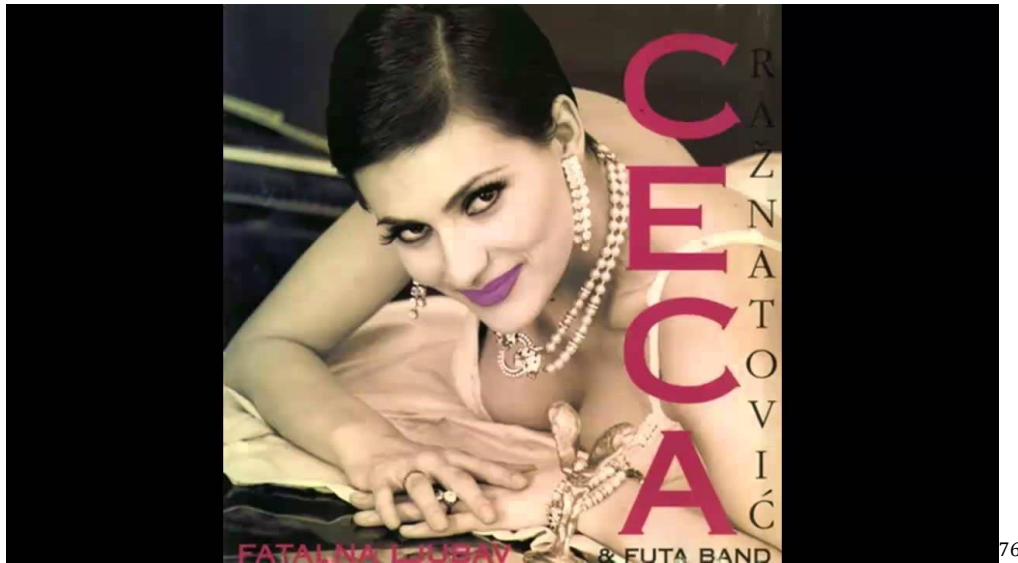
The changes in the music videos can be seen from editing to scenography. Before, folk videos were recorded in the fields with sheep and agricultural elements in the surroundings. This scenography was replaced by fast cars, glitter and glamour. In brief, cocaine replaced slivovica.⁷⁴



⁷³ KRONJA, Ivana, *Turbo Folk and Dance Music in 1990s Serbia: Media, Ideology and the Production of Spectacle*, *The Anthropology of East Europe Review*, 2004.

⁷⁴ *Sav Taj Folk*, documentary, 2004.

⁷⁵ Photo on the album *Od izvora dva putica* by Lepa Lukic(1966) Available at: <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/D0ZNm87v0g/maxresdefault.jpg>



One could, for example, talk about the kitsch, baroque elements present in the videos, as well as about the excessive sound and visual effects employed in them. If there were 20 different effects on one tape able to be used for editing, all 20 would be applied in a single turbofolk video.



⁷⁶Photo on the album *Ljubav Fatalna* by Svetlana Ceca Raznatovic(1995)Available at: <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/XRMJomCJmqc/maxresdefault.jpg>

⁷⁷ Music video for song *Da smo hteli mi* by Sasa Popovic and Zlata Petrovic(1992)Available at: <https://i49.vbox7.com/o/a05/a05b6b7dbb0.jpg>

Rambo Amadeus explains that turbofolk developed from the highway rest stop restaurants, where neofolk existed as a marginal music scene, that was entertainment for bus and truck drivers. When people took this content and put it in a studio, put a lot of effects, hire a stylist for the singers and add stage and sound system, basically use the entire showbusiness technology on *trash* content, that is how turbofolk is created.⁷⁸ Kronja explains that authors of these turbofolk music videos gave folk a new visual identity and with them created new Serbian mainstream popular culture.⁷⁹

There are a number of paradoxes that can be identified. To begin with, the so much used Oriental rhythms were used in the turbofolk songs in times when the political elite was propagating a war against the Muslims in Bosnia. Elements of Turkish culture were present while a connection with Islam was vehemently denied. Moreover, in the turbofolk videos Orthodox religious symbols (the cross) coexisted with emblems of the Western market (such as Versace signs). Kronja's interpretation of this paradox is mainly colored by political oppression that the regime brought to the country:

"It had also encouraged the war-orientated, retrograde patriarchy and the prostitution and commodification of women, while accepting the iconography of Western mass culture, the values of the 'American dream,' 'body culture,' culture of leisure and consumption. All this, of course, had been available only to the new Serbian ruling class, which supported the rule of force and violence, nationalism and political oppression, while the majority of people lived in poverty and isolation."⁸⁰

While, however, turbofolk music was, and still is, appropriating Western musical and fashion trends, it is also perceived as a distinguishable product of the Balkans.

⁷⁸ Rambo Amadeus, interview, 01.10.2018., Belgrade, Serbia

⁷⁹ KRONJA, Ivana, *Turbo Folk and Dance Music in 1990s Serbia: Media, Ideology and the Production of Spectacle*, The Anthropology of East Europe Review, 2004.

⁸⁰ KRONJA, Ivana, *Turbo Folk and Dance Music in 1990s Serbia: Media, Ideology and the Production of Spectacle*, The Anthropology of East Europe Review, 2004. p. 103

In addition, the turbofolk songs are seen as reinforcing the heterosexual model of society by representing the male/female patriarchy dynamics both in lyrics and music videos, however, at the same time the genre was implicitly allowing for homosexual motives and performers.



Marija Grujic makes remarks on the gender aspect of turbofolk :

Despite the fact that the iconography of video spots incorporates many elements of world trends, playing with the idea of performing homosexuality, still the examples of this type of performance have not gone beyond mere provocation and offering voyeuristic pleasure for a (predominantly) male audience. Unlike some music stars from the global music stage, who have openly declared their homosexuality, no music star from the turbofolk scene has ever admitted to having homosexual preferences.⁸²

Turbofolk sparks numerous debates regarding the origin and beginning of the genre, its development and influence. Two streams are prominent in these debates – the views that turbofolk is a product of the war culture that reflected the ideology of Milosevic’s Serbia, and the ones considering turbofolk as something that arose naturally from the entire heritage of the Balkans,

⁸¹Music video for the song *Neodoljiv, Neumoljiv* by Svetlana Ceca Raznatovic(1995) Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ti9JMqTes5Q>

⁸² GRUJIC, Marija, *Community and the Popular: Women, Nation and Turbo-folk in Post-Yugoslav Serbia*, Central European University, 2009., p. 60.

independent of the political regime, as music that was naturally attractive to the consumers. In the next chapter, I will present some of the arguments supporting these streams, as well as my personal conclusions.

A generation gap can also be observed in the context of these discussions, as proven by the research made for the purposes of this thesis. The older generation perceives turbofolk as music that is largely intertwined with Milosevic's politics. In contrast, the younger generation mostly sees turbofolk as strongly present in their daily life even today, and therefore, its members reject the assumption that this genre was exclusively connected to the regime of the 1990s.

2.2. The association of turbofolk and the politics

The historical proximity between the appearance of turbofolk music and rise of nationalist populism in Yugoslavia is well known and therefore commonly assumed that one may be conditioned by another. Research that I conducted showed that people who were witnessing the rise of this phenomenon perceive it as the product and a propaganda tool of the politics and regime in the 1990s in Serbia. For them turbofolk marked the era of civil war, inflation and sanctions in Yugoslavia. It's worth noting that I conducted the research in Belgrade due to a fact that rural-urban dichotomy plays a great part in defining this cultural phenomenon. The city population, which were able to travel and follow the western production (from jazz, Italian canons to Beatles), formed itself as part of the overall Western European cultural space and represented significant consumers of these products.⁸³ Marija Grujic states that neo-folk music was associated with rural lifestyle "as a symbol of something backward, "low", "local", "primitive", "uneducated", "non-western" and often associated with a weak and submissive attitude towards the world".⁸⁴ However, far more commercial success had the singers of so-called *neo-folk music*.

In Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia as in no other socialist country of the times, the influence of Western culture was very strong. Uros Cvoro explains that the state, which controlled most of the cultural activities, promoted folk music even though it was national in form as long as it was socialist in content. It also promoted western culture as long as it suited communist ideology.⁸⁵

⁸³ DJURAKOVIC, Misa, *Ideoloski i politicki sukobi oko popularne muzike u Srbiji*, Institut za Evropske studije, Beograd

⁸⁴ GRUJIC, Marija, *Community and the Popular: Women, Nation and Turbo-folk in Post-Yugoslav Serbia*, Central European University, 2009. p. 87

⁸⁵ CVORO, Uros, *Turbo-folk Music and Cultural Representation of National Identity in Former Yugoslavia*, Routledge, 2016

The division of the city and the village was a crucial element in defining cultural identity. In the formation and reformation of the national identity urban-rural dichotomy is integral part of national variety.

Often, especially in the 1990s rurality served as the exemplar of “Serbism”. This partiality persists in television, film, literature, and of course music. This phenomenon is not characteristic just for Serbia, but many authors make distinctions between urban and rural cultural identity. For example, Tim Edensor makes a remark on the city-village distinction in the context of defining identity:

“This geographical matrix(urban vs rural) is further associated with symbolic institutions, performances and practices, objects, people, times and other cultural elements of national identity. Imagined communities are solidified and naturalized by the density of such bonds. These chains of national signifiers frame identity and tend to delimit other ways of conceiving and feeling, and making connections between places.”⁸⁶

Between those two identities the new neofolk culture rises. In the 1980s in the cities the rock culture was still dominant, but at that time neofolk music rises. Even though turbofolk music was a marginal phenomenon in the cities, that what was truly popular was hidden in the bars and restaurants all over the country.

The group of respondents born in the 1950s and 1960s in Yugoslavia, either claims that the people in the cities had an illusion that neofolk music was not dominant, or that it indeed was not until the late 1980s, beginning of the 1990s and start of the war. However, they all agree that for them, neofolk music was insignificant during the years before the war.

Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that this is the perspective of the urban dwellers. One of the famous turbofolk singers in an interview makes a statement on the neofolk popularity in the 1980s: “When you get out of

⁸⁶ EDENSOR, Tim, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, Oxford, 2002., New York, p. 68

Belgrade, every other radio station plays neofolk music.”⁸⁷ Neofolk music was even existing in the suburbs, but in the 1990s it finally arrives to the cities. At that moment it receives cultural legitimacy⁸⁸ and becomes widely accepted as turbofolk.

At the same time, as a result of war, sanctions and inflation, the crime rate significantly increases. Therefore, it comes to, according to my respondents, the natural connection between the turbofolk and the criminals. Kronja writes about this connection:

*“Turbofolk and dance music promoted the life-style and system of values of the new Serbian elite formed during the nineties: regime politicians, war-profiteers, criminal bosses turned into “businessmen” and glamorous turbo-folk stars, mainly highly eroticised female singers. This system of values aimed to establish the cult of crime and violence, war-profiteering, national-chauvinism and provincialism, together with the abandonment of morals, education, legality, and other civic values.”*⁸⁹

That is reflected not only in the lyrics of many turbofolk songs, but also in relationships between criminals and turbofolk stars. The simple hierarchy could be applied here. The more famous the star - bigger the criminal is.⁹⁰ The rise of this new social elite was shown through media.

Media pluralism was equal to the political pluralism, therefore none. There were three main television stations with national frequency. Pink television had no informative programs, it was playing exclusively turbofolk videos and for the older generation of respondents it represented illusion of happy life and distraction from the war and low economic standards. Another television, Palma, had simple concept of content. Turbofolk music videos and Latin soap operas. And

⁸⁷ Dzej Ramadanovski, *Sav taj Folk*, interview, 2004

⁸⁸ *Sav taj Folk*, 2004.

⁸⁹ KRONJA, Ivana, *Turbofolk and Dance Music in 1990s in Serbia :Media, Ideology and the Production of Spectacle*, *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, Volume 22, 2004 p. 103

⁹⁰ *Sav taj Folk*, 2004.

lastly, Radio Television of Serbia, or so called “Bastilja” with informative programs that were propagating nationalist and chauvinist rhetoric to justify and support involvement of Serbia in civil wars in Croatia, Bosnia and later in Kosovo.⁹¹

This domination of turbofolk in the media, spread onto the entire country and soon turbofolk was not only the dominant genre, but the one that was controlling the market. According to Kronja turbofolk as a music genre and its media presentation proved to be one of the most powerful ideological weapons of Milosevic’s regime.

“They produced a massive, overwhelming spectacle which included intended ideological messages into style, iconography and visual presentation of turbo-folk music, as well as into its lyrics”⁹²

It was achieving the great sell on the pirate audio-cassettes and enormous promotion on television and radio.⁹³ Soon turbofolk could be heard in the buses, shops, kinder gardens, even in the hospital waiting rooms. It truly became the “soundtrack” of the regime.⁹⁴ No alternative music was offered to the public through the mainstream media.

An example of the use of turbofolk in propaganda was project *Target*. This was the project organized during the NATO bombing in 1999. Political regime figured that this was the opportunity to unite the opposition and the ruling parties, protestors and supporters of the regime.⁹⁵ In order to create the narrative of victimization of the nation, during the bombing, in a discourse of Serbian mass media biblical terms and Christian symbols were often used. The goal of this propaganda politics⁹⁶ was representing NATO as an aggressor and determining

⁹¹ KRONJA, Ivana, *Turbofolk and Dance Music in 1990s in Serbia :Media, Ideology and the Production of Spectacle*, Anthropology of East Europe Review, Volume 22, 2004,p. 106.

⁹² KRONJA, Ivana, *Turbofolk and Dance Music in 1990s in Serbia :Media, Ideology and the Production of Spectacle*, Anthropology of East Europe Review, Volume 22, 2004

⁹³ KRONJA, Ivana, *Turbofolk and Dance Music in 1990s in Serbia :Media, Ideology and the Production of Spectacle*, Anthropology of East Europe Review, Volume 22, 2004

⁹⁴ Respondent, M.K., 03.08.2017., Belgrade, Serbia.

⁹⁵ Respondent, I.M., 01.08.2017., Belgrade, Serbia.

⁹⁶ Respondent, K.M., 03.08.2017., Belgrade, Serbia.

the collective identity of a Christian victim for Serbian people.

Project Target were actually so-called protest rallies, which were held regularly during the bombing in the city squares all over Serbia. Musical concerts, speeches and recitals in squares and bridges, were organized by the ruling regime of Slobodan Milosevic.

In these rallies, in the context of national joy, many turbofolk singers were invited to perform. When observing pictures and videos from these protest we can see as a binary opposition to the picture of the Serbian patriarch Pavle, addressing the public and calling for peace, there is a picture with the character of folk singer Svetlana Ceca Raznatovic, the wife of one of the leading criminals and war participants during the 1990s, who, on the same day - on Easter, performs the song named "Jesus".



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Not only that the appearance of a popular singer at a mass gathering satisfied the feeling of belonging to a group of privileged and supreme Orthodox peoples, thus

⁹⁷ Svetlana Ceca Raznatovic, Republic Square, Belgrade (1999) Available at: <https://www.beforeafter.rs/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/99-dana-paralelnog-univerzuma-662-before-after.jpg>

causing religious-national exaltation, but through a certain form of erotic enthusiasm, they provided a collective, national catharsis. Such a form of carnivalization of life in a war corresponds to the need for the treatment of trauma and the rehabilitation of the patriarchal social order.⁹⁸ Many pictures and videos show the “icons” of Serbian pop culture, turbofolk singers and in the background the raised hands of a protestants holding crosses and other religious symbols.



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Another indicator how much people connected turbofolk with the regime is that during many demonstrations on the streets against the regime in the 1990s one of the slogans was “We don’t want turbofolk to win!”. Therefore, protesters identified this music genre with the political regime. Due to the fact that turbofolk and populist nationalism arrived in cities at the same time, for people fighting it,

⁹⁸ MIHALJINAC, Nina, *Svedočenje i reprezentacija traume u vizuelnim umetnostima: NATO bombardovanje SR Jugoslavije*, Univerzitet Umetnosti, Beograd, 2016

⁹⁹ Concert on Republic Square in Belgrade in 1999, somebody is holding religious painting(copy of iconostas) Available at: <https://www.beforeafter.rs/drustvo/99-dana-paralelnog-univerzuma/>

defeating the regime would mean defeating turbofolk. However, this turned out not to be the case.



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2.3. The distinction between turbofolk and politics

Younger respondents perceive turbofolk as something that is separate from the politics of the 1990s in Serbia, mostly because it still exists and is part of their everyday life. After the break of the regime, in the 2000s, turbofolk changed and adjusted and until today still is the dominant music genre in Serbia. Today reggae took the place of former Eurodance and is intertwined with Oriental rhythms and local folk music. Most of the respondents perceive this genre to be turbofolk as well and don't separate it from the one in the 1990s. Some respondents, however, claimed that this new genre is influenced by American trap rap more than turbofolk. It is also worth noting that younger respondents separate the turbofolk music in the 1990s from the neofolk music and from Serbian dance music in the 1990s, due to the fact that older generation of informers put all of these genres under the name of turbofolk. Neofolk for them is the older version of turbofolk, without Eurodance elements in the matrix of the songs, and dance music has less

¹⁰⁰ Photo from a protest, on the panel is written: Let's remove turbofolk form our streets. Available at: <http://www.autonomija.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/protest.jpg>

oriental and Serbian folk sounds in the matrix. As far as the old turbofolk hits, they still could be heard in bars and restaurants not only in Belgrade, but in rest of the country as well. The old content got the new packaging and today is as popular as it was in the 1990s. In support of that, stands the fact that in 2013 more than 100 000 people came to the concert of Ceca Ražnatović (one of the most prominent turbofolk singers from the 1990s).

Ceca Ražnatović, the wife of Željko Ražnatović Arkan, who was the commander of paramilitary unit that was operating in Bosnia during the war, and president of political Party of Serbian Unity, that was active during the 1990s, is a turbofolk singer that is often perceived as the ultimate symbol of turbofolk's connection with Serbian politics in 1990s.



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If we analyze the lyrics of her songs, it's clear that they are exclusively love songs, clear of any political themes. After the war in Yugoslavia, her music is consumed not only in Serbia, but as well in other ex Yugoslavian countries, including Croatia and Bosnia. It is also worth noting that authors of turbofolk didn't really any of national (Serbian) themes, but rather Balkan themes in their lyrics.

¹⁰¹ Wedding of Svetlana Ceca Raznatovic and Zeljko Raznatovic Arkan Available at: https://www.srbijadanas.com/sites/default/files/styles/full_article_image/public/a/t/2018/01/20/screenshot_from_2018-01-20_15-24-49.jpg

“The very nature of turbofolk and comparable genres, a mix of styles borrowed from numerous Balkan and European sources, appears to celebrate the heterogeneous and hedonistic aspects of the Balkans. The Balkans is frequently affirmed with positive attributes reflected in song lyrics.”¹⁰²

In Croatia despite a generable media blanket on turbofolk, live concerts by Serbian and Bosnian performers are extremely popular as are neofolk music clubs.¹⁰³

During the Yugoslav era, this genre was mainly associated with Serbia and Bosnia. In the 1990s, however, in Croatian pop production, certain neofolk techniques appeared, which some professional critics and musicians saw as breaking the boundaries of a desirable Croatian music identity.¹⁰⁴ The attitude towards the entertainment music infiltrated folk and the "eastern melos" show that the transnational phenomena of the turbofolk, that is, the subliminal-folk, are incorporated or rejected as an element of the Croatian cultural space.¹⁰⁵

Parallel to the political changes in Croatia and Serbia, which followed the death of Croatian President Franjo Tuman in 1999 and the fall of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic in 2000, the expansion of cultural contacts enabled music links between the two successor states to re-establish through legitimize recording and distribution of music, which was a significant difference from the underground practices of the 1990s. In June of last year (2018) the first radio station in Croatia, Extra FM, that plays exclusively turbofolk music aired.

Consumerism is very often a motif in turbofolk songs. It is very clearly sublimated

¹⁰² ARCHER, Rory, *“Paint Me Black and Gold and Put Me in a Frame”*: Turbofolk and Balkanist Discourse in (post) Yugoslav Cultural Space, Central European University, Budapest, 2009., p. 66

¹⁰³ ARCHER, Rory, *“Paint Me Black and Gold and Put Me in a Frame”*: Turbofolk and Balkanist Discourse in (post) Yugoslav Cultural Space, 2009.

¹⁰⁴ MITROVIC, Marijana, *(T)ko to tamo p(j)eva? Transnacionalizam u post-jugoslovenskoj popularnoj muzici i njegove granice*, Etnografski institut SANU, Beograd, 2009

¹⁰⁵ MITROVIC, Marijana, *(T)ko to tamo p(j)eva? Transnacionalizam u post-jugoslovenskoj popularnoj muzici i njegove granice*, Etnografski institut SANU, Beograd, 2009

in a song “Nikom nije lepse nego nama” with lyrics: “Coca Cola, Marlboro, Suzuki, discotheques, guitars and bouzouki”¹⁰⁶ As mentioned, materialism is an important and dominant element in turbo-folk. Apart from the lyrics, emblems of western brands appear in music videos and fashion style of the singers. Fast cars, glamorous villas with baroque motives and a lot of gold and diamonds as accessories represent the aesthetics of turbofolk.



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Irena Sentevska writes about the aesthetics of this “turbofolk culture”:

“Their glamorous villas (featuring arbitrarily combined elements of remote origins in ancient Rome and Ottoman Anatolia) are seen as the most visible manifestations of both the arrogance and self-perception of the political war profiteering and show business ‘elites’. Guarded by cast concrete lions, those fairy-tale castles are also perceived as “arias of the Serbian architectural soap opera”. As it happens, the dogmatic monuments of this architectural style are the family house of Ceca and Željko Ražnatović (Arkan) and headquarters of the Pink TV network (major media promoter of turbo-folk) in the posh Belgrade neighborhood of Dedinje.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶Mira Skoric, *Nikom nije lepse nego nama*, album *Hajde Vodi Me Odavde*, 1994

¹⁰⁷Music video for the song *Beograd* by Svetlana Ceca Raznatovic(1995) available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_ppC5iKbK4

¹⁰⁸SENTEVSKA, Irena, *“Turbo folk rules!”: Turbo-Folk, Chalga and the new elites of the post-socialist Balkans*, Mediální studia, 2015



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According to some authors¹¹⁰ and respondents from the first group this new aesthetics promoted criminal and immoral values of the regime, making them legitimate part of the entertainment and was also used to cover the misery of the war, sanctions and inflation.

“In the deep misery of the 90s Serbia, turbofolk was the only possible environment for Baroque luxury”¹¹¹

However, the second group of respondents did not really comment much on this materialistic side of turbofolk. It is still very dominant in both old and new turbofolk songs and videos, but it is clear that this is not only characteristic for turbofolk, but for other music genres as well.

Since the year 2000, after the fall of the regime in Serbia, media blanket was over. New TV and radio stations started working and playing all kind of music and video, not only turbofolk. Many world famous singers and bands were now coming to Serbia and making concerts. The greatest achievement in this regard was Exit festival that began in 2000 as a student protest against the government.

¹⁰⁹ Photo from the album *Kojom gorom* by Dragana Mirkovic for the song *Bice mi kako kad* (1997) available at: https://i.ytimg.com/vi/4Gb_h6zWEKE/maxresdefault.jpg

¹¹⁰ Gordy Eric, Kronja Ivana, Milena Dragicevic-Sesic.

¹¹¹ J.B., respondent, 27.07.2018., Belgrade, Serbia.

During its existence, EXIT has been visited by over two and a half million people from more than 60 countries. CNN, The New York Times, and many others have on numerous occasions proclaimed EXIT amongst the Top Ten world festival destinations.¹¹²

Therefore, for younger generation of respondents it is clear that glorifying materialism is something that many other music scenes practice. If we take the example of American Hip Hop scene, where the idea that one is worth as much as his material property is constantly demonstrated through lyrics and videos. Fast cars, trendy clothing and expensive jewelry is often seen in these videos.

Irina Boga writes about consumerism in music, in a capitalist society:

“Following the American example, smaller societies expressing capitalistic views and finding themselves in a so-called economic ascension will pervert their integrity and spiritual values one by one, yielding in front of materialism and discontinuity.”¹¹³

As already mentioned, Yugoslavia, like no other socialist country, was very much influenced by Western culture. After Tito-Stalin split, Yugoslavian communists were now open toward the West. Since they gained great financial help and even weaponry from the West, in return Tito had to introduce many elements of liberalization in politics, but also in economics. These new conditions made by fast industrialization and urbanization, rise of economic standards created a new conditions in popular and consumerist culture.¹¹⁴ These changes brought new music industry in the cities, that was very similar in production and presentation to western popular music. At the time that was rock'n'roll music. On the other hand, new neofolk culture rises in the villages. New working class and lower middle class found themselves in the lyrics of neofolk songs, about the country side, lost loves and melancholy for the hometown.

¹¹² <https://www.exitfest.org/en/>

¹¹³ BOGA, Irina, *Music and consumerism; the aesthetics of an urban capitalistic society*, Transilvania University of Braşov, 2016

¹¹⁴ DJURACKOVIC, Misa, *Ideoloski i politicki sukobi oko popularne muzike u Srbiji*, 2004.

Liberalization of the market allowed consumers of both genres to enjoy the music, but it also showed what is truly popular. Srdjan Gojkovic, the drummer of the rock band *Elektricni orgazam* says in an interview: "We started our careers in the same time, Belgrade alternative scene (rock musicians) and Lepa Brena (neofolk singer). People in the cities during the 80s had an illusion that Belgrade rock scene was the dominant culture, but neofolk was always dominant."¹¹⁵ While rock bands were selling around 20 000 records in the 1980s, neofolk singers were selling over 600 000 records.¹¹⁶ It's very important to acknowledge the popularity of neofolk in the 1980s when it wasn't promoted by the regime, in order to clarify that even though turbofolk was a great part of the culture in the 1990s and had a role in the propaganda of Milosevic's regime in several occasions, the genre itself has much older roots and represents more general Yugoslavian or even Balkan cultural heritage.

In that sense, one should draw attention on one of the few theoretically based articles in Serbia that affirm turbo folk, from author Dusan Maljkovic, who, in his variations on this subject, is both debating with the old platonic and new models of state-culture relations, which undoubtedly refers to popular culture and its media derivatives:

*"Last, but not least, the role of the state, as a regulator in the sphere of (popular) culture, is perceived as negative, solely because of the nature of the regime itself, but not as universally undesirable. Nationalists and citizens dream of a State that would carry out a repressive policy according to what, from their perspective, represents a decadence, while stimulating a superior cultural model. There is no place here for the will of the illiterate people (which was called democracy in ancient Greece)."*¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Sav taj Folk, 2004.

¹¹⁶ Sav taj Folk, 2004.

¹¹⁷ MALJKOVIC, Dusan, *Stari tekst, novi povodi: još jednom o turbo-folku*, B92, 2007

2.4. Turbofolk as heritage of the Balkans

During its entire history Serbia was a territory where many different cultures, religions and civilizations were meeting and interacting. That left a mark on identity of the people who live in this country. This is not only applicable to Serbia, but rather to the entire Balkan territory.

Maria Todorova writes about this:

“...millennium of Byzantium with its profound political, institutional, legal, religious, and cultural impact... half millennium of Ottoman rule that gave the peninsula its name and established the longest period of political unity it had experienced. Not only did part of southeastern Europe acquire a new name—Balkans—during the Ottoman period, it has been chiefly the Ottoman elements or the ones perceived as such that have mostly invoked the current stereotypes. Aside from the need for a sophisticated theoretical and empirical approach to the problems of the Ottoman legacy, it seems that the conclusion that the Balkans are the Ottoman legacy is not an overstatement.”¹¹⁸

In the 19th century, after the liberation of the Balkans from Ottoman rulership, the Ottomans arguably left a significant heritage in the form of cuisine, ornaments in clothing, decorations and music. At the same time, for the political elite the Liberation meant a definitive break with the Ottomans. In the years succeeding these events, in the process of building the new states, they sought guidance from the enlightened West, from the writers, composers, scholars, and other intellectuals. In the decades to follow, the Ottoman legacy will inevitably mix together with the influences of the European values to form the specificity of the Balkan culture.

Even though some might argue that the new Balkan states were completely

¹¹⁸ TODOROVA, Maria. *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009, p. 12

unrelated to the Ottoman past, the Oriental heritage turned out to be a lot more durable. Today, we still see it present in the everyday life and popular culture, part of which is also turbofolk. Due to the fact that we can hear this kind of music not just in Serbia but in Bulgaria as *chalga*, in Romania as *manele*, in Greece as *lajka*, it could be assumed that this kind of music with oriental, folk and modern rhythms does not belong only to Milosevic Serbia but to the entire heritage of the Balkans. Regardless of any political shifts, exchanges of this kind of music between different Balkan countries continues. This kind of music was not widely acknowledged by publicity or scholarly discussions before the 1990s and it could be claimed that market liberalization in the Balkans allowed this music to spread and grow into a dominant genre. These economic transformations brought about the means to produce more actively turbofolk Misa Djurackovic claims that in the conversation with one of the directors of turbofolk videos in the 1990s, he got the confirmation that the state never intervened nor made instructions on what should and what should not be included in the lyrics or videos. Basically, it was all about laws of the market and not state regulation.¹¹⁹

Even though to a certain extent turbofolk was used as a propaganda tool in the regime of the 1990s, when we discuss turbofolk we should consider a wider context because in a different form, or in a different “package”, this phenomenon existed long before Milosevic and is present until today.

¹¹⁹ DJURACKOVIC, Misa, *Ideologizacija turbofolka*, Kultura, 2002.

3. The rise of criminality in Serbia during the 1990s

3.1. Connecting criminal activity and the political regime

In the 1990s, there was a strong mutual influence between politics and criminality in Serbia. This interconnectivity neither was, nor is it today, a question of factual connection between crime and politics. In fact, crime appears as a paradigm that determines political life and its actors, as well as the entire political and social environment.¹²⁰ The mere fact that crime often involves different forms of violence, and that this violence often gets a criminal epilogue, makes the criminal subculture and the subculture of violence matching phenomena. Although their etiology is different, the intensity and social spread of one of the subcultures supports and intensifies the presence of the other.¹²¹

Serbian society in the 1990s was a drastic example of the dramatic social spread of these two subcultures that reached the level of dominant cultural practice. The spread of the criminal subculture¹²² stemmed from the vast criminalization of society, while the culture of violence strengthened on the basis of nationalism, which referred to evoke the heroic culture of honor awakened

¹²⁰ PAVICEVIC, Olivera, BULATOVIC, Aleksandra, *Moralne osnove društvenog poretka i kriminala*, Zbornik Instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja, vol. XXXIV, Beograd 2015, pp. 31

¹²¹ PAVICEVIC, Olivera, *Zbornik instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja (IKSI), godina XXXII/broj 2/2013*, p. 105.

¹²² FERREL, Jeff, *Culture, Crime, and Cultural Criminology*, Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture, Regis University, 1995, p. 25-42 " Otherwise, the encounter of culture and crime is manifested in three broad categories: criminal identities and events that contain dimensions of cultural significance, the style of artistic worlds caught up in the dynamics of crime and criminalization, and media processes that incriminate subculture content are placed in popular culture " Linking criminal acts, criminal identity and aesthetics makes it an "alternative deviant culture", in which the symbols and meanings of crime are included in the styles of flying practice (motorcycle, tattoo, graffiti subculture). According to this, membership and belonging to criminal groups develops subcultural networks that produce a network of symbols and meanings with detailed speech conventions, looks, self-representation.

from the Serbian past. These two subcultures interfered at different levels – both in the criminal underworld (i.e. criminals-war heroes, hooligans-patriots), as well as in ruling political and cultural elites (i.e. criminals-war heroes-political representatives, statesmen-patriots and criminals, etc.). The most diverse forms of interweaving of these two subcultures, which emerged in the 1990s as a result of social and value destruction in Serbia, are already well-known and studied.¹²³

During the wars in the territory of former Yugoslavia, in the majority of the former republics, the intensive and comprehensive criminalization of society was marked by the myth of criminals-heroes.¹²⁴ This myth refers to the labelling as "fierce" and brave of men who replace the criminal past with "hearted" engagement in defense of the nation. In fact, the alleged patriotism and selfless placement of oneself at the disposal of the "interests" of the nation was only a paradigm of strengthening these actors' own criminal influence and war profiteering, which brought many of them an unexpected profit. That kind of "patriotic duty" served the actors as an ethical filter, while justifying all means, including the mentioned criminal activity, so long as the act was in the name of achieving a higher goal, defined as the defense and survival of the nation.

The split between a reality which consists only a reality based solely on a criminalized economic activity relying on malversations, smuggling, war profiteering and ideological reflex, on the one hand, and a reality of narratives about criminals as war heroes, on the other hand, took on a new form in the following period.

Instead of weakening the firm connection and permeation of politics and criminality after the end of the war new phenomenon appeared in the socio-political environment of Serbia – the general criminalization of political structures in the country. The reason for this turn of events should be sought in the continuous and long-lasting split between the real crime present and the mentioned ideological and political manipulation of the criminal phenomenon,

¹²³ PAVICEVIC, Olivera, *Zbornik instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja (IKSI), godina XXXII/broj 2/2013*, p. 105.

¹²⁴ PAVICEVIC, Olivera, *Zbornik instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja (IKSI), godina XXXII/broj 2/2013*, p. 105.

resulting in the emergence of a multitude of political-criminal affairs. Instead of being recognized and sanctioned with measures of formal as well as informal social control,¹²⁵ criminal behavior starts inspiring young people. Eventually, young people begin to engage in more and more dangerous "ventures" in order to demonstrate what is more impressive and positioned higher on the social rankings. Extortion, kidnapping, killing, and racketeering become a daily occurrence and an essential criterion for measuring social achievement and influence.

"Government actions such as prosecution can be seen as a ceremonial and ritual performance that determines the content of public morality and symbolizes the public affirmation of social ideals and norms".¹²⁶ Hence, choosing who is to be punished and what idea is to be expressed in the judgment on the punishment bears a great social significance. Therefore, the challenging and elimination of the idea of crime as a money-efficient activity must be motivated by social rather than political objectives, primarily through the establishment of an effective and cohesive criminal justice system which would not be guided by discretionary decisions judgments on punishment and would thereby positively shape the society through judicial decisions following the appropriate legislative norms.¹²⁷

In contrast, in post-war Serbia, the difference between politicians and social "elite", on one side, and the criminals, on the other, begins to disappear slowly but very surely and gradually. In brief, this socio-political process has been followed by powerful ideological manipulations, endorsed by nationalism and "culturally" decorated by turbofolk as a sign of recognition of the new social values.

¹²⁵ More about forms of social reaction to crime: IGNJATOVIC, Djordje, *Metodologija istrazivanja kriminaliteta*, Pravni fakultet Ubiverziteta u Beogradu, Belgrade, 2018, pp. 7-8

¹²⁶ RAMIREZ, Mary Kreiner, *Criminal Affirmance: Going Beyond the Deterrence Paradigm to Examine the Social Meaning of Declining Prosecution of Elite Crime*, Connecticut Law Review, pp. 867

¹²⁷ PAVICEVIC, Olivera, BULATOVIC, Aleksandra, *Moralne osnove društvenog poretka i kriminal*, Zbornik Instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja, vol. XXXIV, Beograd 2015, pp. 33

3.2. Representation of the criminal activity in the media



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Consumerism is spontaneously and almost without any alternative incorporated in Serbia, through the media entertainment industry imposing value patterns that enhance competition, unscrupulousness, egoism and greed.¹²⁹ Indeed, the media played an extremely important irreplaceable role in processes and political strategies. Throughout the post-war period, radio, television and press aggressively "bombarded" the otherwise dissatisfied citizens with the details of criminal affairs in an attempt to influence the public. When it comes to the significance and influence of the media, as an instrument and "striking needle" of political manipulation, the statement of Ben Bagdikian,

¹²⁸ Vojislav Seselj, the president of Serbian Radical Party, in a talk show on Pink television with a gun. Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5g8YifGqiA&t=443s&frags=pl%2Cwn>

¹²⁹ PAVICEVIC, Olivera, *Zbornik instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja (IKSI), godina XXXII/broj 2/2013*, p. 106-107.

one of America's most famous American theoreticians of mass media, comes to mind: "Media power is political power."¹³⁰

In the public space of Serbia, a spectrum of different moral feelings towards criminals has developed (today the term "tycoon" has come to life), ranging from overt admiration and awe to hatred and the desire for their public punishment. The political manipulation using this public interest is visible from the fact that real life issues are hidden and replaced by a narrative about a criminal - national hero.¹³¹ This narrative was especially shown through media.



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As a consequence of all the presented processes, in Serbia there is a genesis of a series of negative tendencies. Criminalized politicians and criminals named

¹³⁰ BAGDIKIAN, Ben, *The Media Monopoly*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2000, pp. 23

¹³¹ M.S., respondent, 07.08.2018.

¹³² Zeljko Raznatovic Arkan, paramilitary commander during the civil war in Yugoslavia in 1990s, on his wedding day to turbofolk singer Svetlana Ceca Raznatovic wore two outfits. The first one, Montenegrin national costume, in honor of his Montenegrin origin, and second outfit was the uniform of a Serbian soldier in First World War. Both outfits suppose to represent him as a national hero. This wedding occurred in 1995 and was broadcasted on Pink television. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLc-eO6m4as>

"war heroes" together aggressively build a dangerous and destructive system of values, in which crime, corruption and intimidation as an affirmative category are wrapped up together and presented the actions of "national heroes", all of which backed up and accompanied by powerful media campaigns.

One of the most remarkable example of this perspective on criminals as national heroes is the film "See You in the Obituary" (B92, 1994). This film shows that the current "turbo-folk culture" glorified exactly what young people in Serbia were not able to experience - power and money. In Belgrade, there was an expansion of the culture of these young people, local gangsters, who, using the state of the country, managed to position themselves well in the criminal underground. Young people's role models are represented as powerful individuals in media, such as Aleksandar Knezevic Knele, a young man who has always been portrayed with lots of gold in rich surroundings. He was killed at age of 21 and remained "the idol of young people who want it all and who want it right away. A similar style began to be copied by young fans of turbofolk culture, who blended the style of European dance scene and street mobsters from the "Belgrade Asphalt".¹³³ These became popularly known as "dizelasi". A fast and uncertain lifestyle was painted of men with colorful tracksuits, often drawn in jeans, shortly trimmed beards and hair or often military-shaven and with a lot of gold accessories. The name of this subculture - "dizelasi" - comes from the favorite fashion brand "Diesel", but also from the popular criminal activity on Belgrade streets - the smuggling of gasoline.¹³⁴

¹³³GORDY, Eric D., *Turbaši and rokeri as Windows into Serbia's social divide*, Balkanologie – Revue d'études pluridisciplinaires, vol. IV, numero 1, 2000. pp. 6

¹³⁴ GORDY, Eric D., *Turbaši and rokeri as Windows into Serbia's social divide*, Balkanologie – Revue d'études pluridisciplinaires, vol. IV, numero 1, 2000. pp. 6



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Affiliations to such groups and the establishment of these models of behavior and values for young people, made the majority of those who were in their teenage years during the 1990s, those who were supposed to represent the "engine" of the transition from economy to politics, a "lost generation".¹³⁶ These phenomena and social deviations had a devastating impact on Serbia's socio-political, economic and cultural image and structure, during the transition period.

In relation to the media industry, as an important instrument of propaganda and popularization of turbo folk music and subculture in Serbia in the 1990s, it is important to look into their obsession with crime and its actors in that period where it would be possible to look for a thread that connects these two phenomena. The moment of the heroic admiration of local criminals was not accompanied by a real conflict with the existing centers of political and social power: on the contrary, it served to achieve common goals at a given social moment. Young people couldn't immediately notice this crucial element of the circumstances. In the wake of the devastation of all values, in a situation of utter impotence, the philosophy of the criminal, who lives for the moment, "grabbing everything that life can provide," could be very appealing to a young person. The attractiveness of a physically strong, skillful guy from the margins of society who

¹³⁵ Street mobsters or "dizelasi" available at:

https://www.kurir.rs/data/images/2014/11/21/18/592243_dizelasi_ls.jpg

¹³⁶ MIHAJLOVIC, Srećko, *Oduzimanje budućnosti – Omladina Srbije u vodama tranzicije*, Mladi zagubljeni u tranziciji, Centar za proučavanje alternativa, Beograd, 2004, pp. 25.

achieves a glorious financial upswing, accompanied by all the elements of the turbofolk culture's glamor that developed amid the ravaged social environment, surrounded by war horrors and internally ruined economic, political and moral misery, becomes irresistible.¹³⁷



In this regard, the Serbian society creates the so-called "social models". "The idolization and romanticizing of criminals rests in part on the revival of myths about the" powerful "protector of the" vulnerable group "and the frustrated individuals. In the 1990s in Serbia, the protective function of the state was dramatically weakened: the fall of the rule of law, the revival of subliminal notions of justice, the fugitive "fighters for justice" and the protectors of all the "other" (enemies and oppressors). The degree of uncertainty and displacement also determined the necessary "severity" of the fighters. The defense of the "people" from the threatening "other" is a "great historical" job - and in defending something of such importance, all means are allowed."¹³⁹ Criminologist, prof. Dr. Djordje Ignjatovic, among others, gives an example of the social factors that lead to criminal violence. Ignjatovic emphasizes the concept of Alberto Bandura, who argues that an individual can adopt behavior by observing what others (i.e. the "models") do. He called this "observational learning" or "modeling." Another name for this process is "learning through imitation", "imitational learning." So,

¹³⁷ PAVICEVIC, Olivera, BULATOVIC, Aleksandra, *Moralne osnove društvenog poretka i kriminal*, Zbornik Instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja, vol. XXXIV, Beograd 2015, p. 165-166.

¹³⁸ Street mobster and his gold accessories available at:

<https://www.alo.rs/vesti/hronika/nije-drpio-porse-loto-devojci/178150/vest>

¹³⁹ PAVICEVIC, Olivera, BULATOVIC, Aleksandra, *Moralne osnove društvenog poretka i kriminal*, Zbornik Instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja, vol. XXXIV, Beograd 2015, p. 170.

the most influential people who serve us as models are parents, teachers, people we feel affection for, friends, peers, but especially "symbolic models that we find in movies, literature or media (such as music stars and actors)."¹⁴⁰ To the latter category, given the specificity of the socio-political relations in Serbia in the 1990s, could be added the group of war "heroes", in fact, criminals and war profiteers who were equally elevated by media propaganda. One can also add to these the newcomers, "estrada"¹⁴¹ stars", especially in the field of music. In this way we could look at the counterpart of the "role model" in Serbian society at the end of the 20th century. Many well-known Belgrade criminals, who built their criminal career in previous decades across Europe, at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s (after their "heroic journey") returned to the country, not disregarding any of the abundant opportunities offered by the media to exhibit themselves as sleek rich businessmen or more generally, as capable and successful people with "tiny mischiefs" committed at an early age. Many of them were intensively displayed as protectors of "national interests" and "war-endangered Serbian lives". The war was indeed "a good chance that psychopathic offenders show themselves in a completely different light than their violent behavior qualifies them, the chance to turn their destructive behavior into a "heroic fight for the common good", even to portray themselves as victims for the sake of "higher social goals". "Many of the Serbian "heroes" in the 1990s did not hesitate to use violence – moreover, violence is their essential characteristic. The empowerment of their "masculinity" is usually portrayed (sometimes in clear mythological metaphors) as hard and painful, and a lot of renunciation: albeit "extraordinary" in childhood, poverty, conflict with a father-tyrant or some other "injustice" drives these persons to a "heroic journey": early departure from home and painful seeking of financial security in the world justifies their "petty mischiefs" from youth, which they "sincerely repent" in mature age and are redeemed by an uncompromising struggle for the well-being and the interests of the homeland and its people. The forgiveness for their destructive nature and legitimacy they were given as martyrs who protect the "Serbian hearths". They

¹⁴⁰ IGNJATOVIC, Djordje, *Pojam i etiologija nasilničkog kriminaliteta*, Pravni fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu, CRIMEN (II) 2/2011, p. 201.

¹⁴¹ Estrada- showbusiness

were seen as the meritorious fighters for the "democratic revival of Serbia", or as the "tough guys" who are able to oppose evil and injustice.¹⁴²

3.3. Connecting criminal activity and turbofolk

Alongside the rise of media-political glorification of the criminal elite in Serbia, turbofolk rapidly developed as a „musical expression of the newly-declared war culture“.¹⁴³ According to the respondents interviewed for this research, people quickly made a connection between criminality and turbofolk. The first link between the two was nationalism.

„Some used nationalism as an excuse for war, some used it to make money (war profiteers) and others to sing about it“.¹⁴⁴ The first group of respondents, people born in 1950s and 1960s, saw a direct connection between these phenomena and nationalism because many of the criminals and turbofolk stars often talked publicly about the importance of the interests of the nation and their own patriotism. During the ‘Target’ Project the two came together in common goal of uniting the nation during the NATO bombing. Sasa Nedeljkovic writes that the war criminals from the 90s resemble terrorists, in the sense that they became symbols of national fight, heroes, and icons, even though that type of criminality in its essence does not have any national character.¹⁴⁵

Another indicator of how people connected the rise of criminality and turbofolk in the 1990s were the lyrics of the turbofolk songs. The song „200 na sat“ (200 km/h) represented the culture of the so-called „dizelasi“, the street mobsters, while singing about fast cars, lavish lifestyle and easy money.

¹⁴² PAVICEVIC, Olivera, BULATOVIC, Aleksandra, *Moralne osnove društvenog poretka i kriminal*, Zbornik Instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja, vol. XXXIV, Beograd 2015, p. 171.

¹⁴³ Respondent, I.M, 26.09.2018.

¹⁴⁴ Sav Taj Folk, 2014, B92

¹⁴⁵ NEDELJKOVIC, Sasa, *Cast, krv i suze*, Zlatni zmaj, Beograd, 2007, p. 163,164



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Songs like „Kralj kokaina“ (King of the cocaine) by Moby Dick and „Nemiri“ (Unrest) by Leontina Vukomanovic sing about love and relationships with „tough guys“. „They all fear and respect you, your words are the law... Oh, honey, I cannot love you, because you are a guy from the „asphalt “¹⁴⁷... Oh, honey, I cannot dream about someone who lives on the other side of the law.“¹⁴⁸

On the streets of Belgrade a new aesthetic is visible in the 1990s. Women look like turbofolk singers and men are seen in tracksuits, with emblems of famous fashion brands like Versace, accessorized with Orthodox crosses.

In these circumstances, the natural connection between turbofolk stars and criminals arose. Many criminals of that time dated turbofolk singers. Simple hierarchy could be applied in such cases: the greater the criminal, the more famous the turbofolk star is.¹⁴⁹

Lastly, a number of video clips circulate on the Internet in which Serb paramilitary formations were presented: Arkan's Tigers, Seselj's Chetniks, demonstrating their struggle, their military moves, ideas that continue to impress young people who

¹⁴⁶ Music video for the song 200 na sat by Ivan Gavrilovic(1994), Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3is49vWMwFI>

¹⁴⁷ Street mobster.

¹⁴⁸ Leontina Vukomanovic, *Nemiri*, 1996

¹⁴⁹ Sav Taj Folk, 2014, B92

perceive them as heroes, with turbofolk songs in the background.¹⁵⁰ They were creating this myth about themselves; that they are true patriots and fighters for the rights of the less fortunate.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMzH3tmmc08>

¹⁵¹ MITROVIC, Marijana, *(T)ko to tamo p(j)eva? Transnacionalizam u post-jugoslovenskoj popularnoj muzici i njegove granice*, Etnografski institut SANU, Beograd, 2009

Conclusion

In my attempt to find the connections and distinctions between nationalism, turbofolk and criminal activity in Serbia in the 1990s I came to the conclusion that that these categories, even though phenomenologically different, throughout a period that is the focus of this thesis, accomplished a strong intercourse. So strong, in fact, that in the consciousness of people it created an image that these are three sides of the same phenomena, the three components of then political regime.

Since, in the SFRY, nationalism was a marginal phenomenon and severely punished when occurred, Milosevic's turn from his originally communist ideology to political nationalism was a drastic change for the respondents that took part in my research. Negative and intense understanding of this ideological turning was also shown through cinematography and many political interviews that were televised, after the 5th October.¹⁵²

What followed this ideological change were 5 years long civil war, sanctions and inflations. As a result of the sanctions and inflations, the expansion of criminality in the country took place. At the same time, the war that was happening in the neighboring countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, attracted military and paramilitary units from Serbia. Some individuals from these units committed war crimes and profited. Many were charged and imprisoned for their crimes and some came back to the country and were later charged on different charges or killed by other criminals, because of their internal conflicts. The connection between war profiteers and criminal organizations was strong. Many of them were also connected to the political regime and some even made their own political parties or joined already existing ones. The connection between politics and criminals was stronger than the state's jurisdictional system, so, many of the

¹⁵² Overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic occurred on 5 October 2000. in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, following the presidential election on 24 September. The overthrow started with the protests because of the obvious irregularities that were found in the Federal Electoral Committee official results, which claimed that no candidate won over 50% of the votes and that a second round would take place.

crimes went by unpunished and criminal activity became more of a rule, than exception. In media many criminals represented themselves as national heroes and crimes they committed as necessary in the defense of national interests.

Finally, even though older generations of respondents make a connection between nationalism, criminal activities and war in the 1990s with music genre turbofolk, I came to different conclusion. This genre has its own genesis. The cultural heritage that Ottomans left on the Balkan together with the influence of enlightened West, from which the political elite sought guidance after the Liberation, created the cultural specificity of this territory. Oriental motives were always visible in clothing, decoration and music. During the 1960s and 1970s, the new neofolk music genre emerged. Neofolk songs were actually folk songs that got new arrangements and authors of these arrangement labeled the songs as their own. Since SFRY was very much influenced by Western popular culture, in the 1980s these neofolk songs are complemented by rock music elements, for example electric and bass guitar. At this point, even though neofolk songs and musicians were not present in the mainstream media (televisions with national frequency) they were very popular.¹⁵³ The popularity of neofolk was recognized by Rambo Amadeus, Montenegrin musician, who came up with the name turbofolk in 1988. He used this name to describe “uncritical use of technology”. “Trash” content got all the power of new showbusiness technology, according to him. Finally, in the early 1990s, turbofolk, now influenced by Eurodance rhythms instead of rock, got all the media attention that was lacking before. It was in this period, that turbofolk was the only music genre available in the mainstream media. This is the main reason many of the respondents and researches call it “soundtrack” of Milosevic’s regime. However, after the 5th October, turbofolk continuously develops and remains popular to this day. The exact same music genre is very popular in other Balkan countries, but under a different name. In the last couple of years, Eurodance elements were exchanged for reggae elements, but folk music tradition and oriental rhythms are still present in these new songs. And Rambo’s definition applies to them as well. Another indicator how turbofolk

¹⁵³ While rock bands were selling around 20 000 records in the 80s, neofolk singers were selling over 600 000 records., Sav Taj Folk, 2005

survived political regime is concert of Ceca Raznatovic in 2013 that visited more than 100 000 people.



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When we take into consideration all of the above, even though to a certain extent turbofolk was used as a propaganda tool in the regime of the 1990s, when discussing turbofolk it is important to acknowledge a wider context because in a different form, or in a different “package”, this phenomenon existed long before Milosevic and is present until today.

¹⁵⁴ Concert of Svetlana Ceca Raznatovic in 2013 in Belgrade, available at: <https://data.whicdn.com/images/66451952/large.jpg>

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Transcripts

Rambo Amdaues (Antonije Pušić), 01.10.2018. , 14:00, Belgrade, Serbia

RA: Turbofolk is the uncritical use of technology. We need to approach turbofolk from three angles. Firstly, we will explain turbofolk as a music genre. Secondly, we will explain it in the ambience of the wider social context, to see what was the social context that produced turbofolk. Lastly, we will see if the definition of turbofolk applies only to the music genre or to other human activities as well.

Let's start from the first point. Music genre. If the definition and algorithm are well put we can apply it on all three segments. So, we have mastered the technology, but we didn't get to know the wider context. In music, it looks like this: From the highway restaurants, where there is one marginal, cute music scene, marginal, hidden in kafana with the audience, that are bus drivers and travellers, entertainment for them. When we take this content and put it in a studio, put a lot of effects, hire a stylist for the singers and add a stage and sound system, basically use the entire showbusiness technology on pap content we get turbo trash. So, that marginalized content was cute and it was not turbo. Long before turbofolk existed the same musical method in London named Bhangra. Children born in London, with origins from Pakistan and India, also bought rhythm machines and made kind of a reference to the music of their parents with the cultural pattern they acquired in London. That is not turbofolk, that authentic genre.

Now let's go through the social context...

J: If we could just look back on this music angle of the phenomenon, I would ask You, since many people define the genre as a mix of eurodance and folk music, according to your algorithm is this definition wrong? Per se turbofolk then didn't actually started in the 90s when eurodance music was popular, but before in the 80s with Lepa Brena?

RA: We are dealing with science here. We are searching for algorithm and the form. So, I don't want to answer this question. Therefore, social phenomenon. The entire Balkans functions in its highly synchronized chaos. These chaotic transitions from one extreme to another in views and attitudes, this selective historical memory is characteristic for the entire area of the former SFRY.

Because, the culture and customs of the people in the Balkans are mainly modulated by their occupiers who have lived here for centuries, and only here can we search for the causes of the distinction between "people and nationalities" in the Balkans. Dominant cultural model of the Western Balkans is actually finding a national identity in all social aspects, something what Europe did 150 years ago.... We grow up here in socialism. All kitsch contents were marginalized, and then the society democratized, right to vote and privatization of media. Until that moment there were people educated who created the music program. And then people with no musical background, private owners of TV stations, started creating a musical program based on their own taste without any context, again they uncritically used the technology. So if we are looking for the culprit for turbofolk, that is a democracy. Communist elite was educated at music academies and they were experts of their job.

J: So, liberalization of the market...

RA: Liberalization and adaptation of media to the taste of the market. Medias stopped having the educational character and started having a profitable character. The fact that nationalism produced turbofolk is wrong. Democratization produced both turbofolk and nationalism. Those two are the firstborn children of democratization. Everybody voted for the national parties and the state has fallen into the chaos of nationalism. People were politically unlearned, and only what came to their mind was that Croat should vote for Croat and Serb for other Serb.

So we came to the point that nationalism and turbofolk are the consequences of the same thing, democratization. Is that clear?

J: Yes

RA: Here we can also use the definition. Turbofolk is the uncritical use of technology. Uncritical voting.

The third aspect is that turbofolk is not only music. Here is an example, Rwandan genocide...

J: I watched your interview where you are explaining how Hutu made a mass slaughter of Tutsi, when they got modern weapon, even though before that they were fighting for centuries. And how that is the example of uncritical use of technology.

RA: Exactly. In Switzerland, everybody has an automatic weapon and nobody shoots uncontrollably. Turbofolk is also a musical fountain on Slavia, changes colors and music, in that way it becomes a fountain of bad taste, therefore turbofolk.

J: So, turbofolk is a consequence of liberal market, therefore it still exists..

RA: Yes and changes its form. So everything that is trash and supported by modern technology is turbofolk.

J: So, today instead of in the 90s modern eurodance music, we have reggae, and be...

RA: The rytham is changing. Trash stays and the rhythm is changing.

J: So the modern part of the music genre, that turbofolk takes from the West is changing. So it started in the 80s and then popular was rock?

RA: They didn't use much of rock, only electronic guitar. The only question is if the primer, the basic content is trash. If it is trash then the product is turbofolk.

J: During my conference, I got an interesting question, Is Goran Bregovic turbofolk?

RA: That is questionable, am I turbofolk? Can we answer that question? Use the definition. Bregovic made a lot of quality songs. By that logic is Dusko Trifunovic turbofolk.

Trash is nice, and even necessary, when not mainstream.

Look at turbofolk music videos, all the kitsch and editing effects. It all comes to the definition: Uncritical use of technology. It is very simple.

J: Many people that I interviewed, generations born between the 1950s and 1960s, just like You mentioned, believe that turbofolk was a marginal phenomenon in before the 90s, but in the 80s while EKV would sell 20 000 records, Lepa Brena would sell 600 000 records. So even though it wasn't commercialized through media, it still was popular.

RA: Danijel Popovic, who was participating in Eurovision competition with the song Julie sold 1 million records and Bijelo Dugme also sold 500 or 600 000 records, that doesn't mean that they were turbofolk. The number of sold records is not a parameter.

J: Not as a parameter if it is turbofolk or not, but rather if it was marginal or popular before.

RA: I don't refer at other singers, I only use my definition. For sure for Beatles people were also referring that they are trash in the beginning.

J: For the theorist, Maria Todorova Balkan is geographically Europe but historically and culturally is not. And the cultural heritage of the Ottomans that is left is visible in food, clothes and music. Do You think that turbofolk is also influenced by this heritage?

RA: No, because how would you then explain that Banghra from London is not turbofolk and it has a larger influence of East. Holger Czukey, he is a turning point in modern music. He had an album Der Ostern ist Rot, where he used Chinese anthem. Then after him, there are Brian Eno and David Byrne and their album My Life in the Bush of Ghosts, in which they integrated sampled vocals and African and Middle Eastern rhythms. So we can not go this direction when trying to find roots of turbofolk.

J: When You first used the term turbofolk what did You think about the term? Did your definition evolved or changed from the year 1988 until today?

RA: The same thing I think now. At that moment everything became turbo, it has become the term to represent something extra, something more, deluxe.

So the definition is very clear and anything more than this definition is just irrelevant.

M.K.(1966) , 03.08.2017., 11:00, Belgrade, Serbia

J: What do You consider to be turbofolk?

M.K.: Music genre, that was popular during the 1990s.

J: Do You think that Lepa Brena was singing turbofolk?

M.K.: Interesting, when did turbofolk really start? I do believe that Lepa Brena's music was also turbofolk.

J: And do You consider this new popular music in this region, performers like Jala Brat and Buba Corelli to be turbofolk?

M.K.: No. Because, it is easy for the ear, currently popular...

J: But turbofolk was also popular...

M.K.: But not anymore.

J: And according to the sound of that music You do not think that it has anything in common with turbofolk?

M.K.: According to the sound it is not turbofolk. According to the sound of that music, I am not sure what it is, how to define it...

J: It has elements of reggae, Serbian folk music and oriental rhythms, right?

M.K.: Oriental rhythms represented in a modern way, in order to be attractive... ah, so You want to say that it is actually turbofolk? But no, I would not agree. You need to consider the wider context in order to define turbofolk. Turbofolk includes also somebody like Rada Manojlovic, who doesn't include Oriental rhythms in her songs.

J: But doesn't she use Oriental motives as well?

M.K.: Well, maybe she does, but...

J: How would You describe turbofolk to the foreigner who never heard it before?

M.K.: Well, first of all, I do not think that turbofolk exists anymore, even If it does exist it is very limited to a small group of people that listen to this music genre. That "pure" turbofolk from the 1990s disappeared, people are not making that kind of music anymore, and they do not consume it. Popular music today, like some musicians that You mentioned are not turbofolk. And that is why I cannot define it today. I only remember how we use to define turbofolk in the 1990s.

J: How did You use to define it?

M.K.: That is excessive folk music, which is intended for uneducated people. These people do not have a problem to repeat anything that they hear in these lyrics.

J: So do You connect this music genre to a specific time period?

M.K.: Absolutely, I connect it to the 1990s. It was part of the propaganda politics of the regime in the 1990s. It was a "soundtrack" of that regime. It was brainwashing music that was made in order to distract the people from everyday life in a criminal country that was in a war. Today we have a reality TV shows and at that time turbofolk was just a product of social, economic and political circumstances.

J: So if You connect turbofolk with the 1990s, do You consider Ceca to be turbofolk?

M.K: Absolutely, especially Ceca's beginning.

J: And what about these new Ceca's songs? Are they turbofolk?

M.K.: I do not know, I do not listen to that. I just know one new song by Ceca. Trepni. I am not sure, but I do not think that is turbofolk. It is some weird hybrid of something that makes no sense. As is Jala Brat and Buba Corelli. I think that is just currently popular music, that won't be popular much longer, it will disappear much faster than turbofolk did.

L.O.(1992) 20.07.2017., 20:00, Belgrade, Serbia

J: What do You think turbofolk is?

L.O.: Turbofolk is rural music genre.

J: Do You connect turbofolk with any specific time period?

L.O.: Well, I believe it arose at the beginning of the 1990s, but it was also popular during the 2000s and today still is.

J: What performers do You think make turbofolk today?

L.O. : Jala, Buba, Coby, Maja Berovic, Jelena Karleusa, Senidah, Rasta, the entire Grand production, idjVideos production, Balkaton production...

J: And what do You think represents the beginning of turbofolk? Who were the first performers that made turbofolk?

L.O.: I believe that the beginnings of turbofolk were even before the 1990s, actually. I think that it arose in restaurants in rural areas. So it was interesting for the rural population, less educated people. And then, later the genre developed.

J: How did it develop later?

L.O: Well it became more popular, more singers were singing turbofolk, they were adapting, and using modern music elements in order to make popular hits.

J: Do you think that turbofolk was connected to the political regime of the 1990s in Serbia?

L.O.: I think that many people connect the word turbofolk to the regime, but why is the genre continuously popular today then? After all the political, economic and social changes that happened in 2000, why didn't turbofolk disappear?

J: Do you think that the genre continues to develop after the year 2000? Do you think that it changed since the 90s?

L.O.: It absolutely did. Slowly, because when I think about some hits from the early 2000s they are basically the same as the ones from the 90s, but as the times and trends were changing so was turbofolk.

J: What trends does turbofolk follow then?

L.O.: Well, I do not know... they follow European, actually world trends.

J: Trends in a sense of music or the style of the performers or some other?

L.O.: Well both actually. They look like bad copies of some world-famous singers.

J: Like who for example?

L.O.: Well like Rihanna, Ariana Grande, Shakira...

J: So do you actually listen to turbofolk?

L.O.: Maybe I'll be contradictory now. On the one hand, I think that turbofolk is very poor quality music, but at the same time, turbofolk is for young people, starting with teenage years an inevitable part of everyday life, so I adjusted and turbofolk became part of my growing up.

J: But what do you mean when you say "an inevitable part of everyday life"?

L.O.: I'll give you a practical example. In high school, when we started going out, everybody exclusively listened to turbofolk. We only went to places where they would play turbofolk. Turbofolk was the highlight of our night out. You'd be an outsider if you did not listen to a turbofolk.

J: You gave me an example from high school, but what is the situation now?

L.O.: Now, as far as my generation is concerned, the situation is a bit different, but that is because I do not wish for entertainment, in the same way, I experienced it then.

J: And how do today's high school students perceive entertainment, do they consume turbofolk?

L.O.: We can apply the same principle that existed when we were in high school, only now these new forms of turbofolk are popular, Rasta, Buba, Jala...

J: How do you see further development of turbofolk? Do you think that it will be popular in the future or is it something that has an expiration date?

L.O.: I think it will be popular in the future because we are now witnessing that in spite of all the political and economic changes we kept turbofolk in our everyday life. We only adjusted it to the circumstances. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that it will be so in the future. I do not think that it will be the same music genre

that was in the 1990s, as today it's also not the same, but in some form, it's safe to say that it will survive.