Partisan Resistance Today? The Music of the National Liberation Struggle and Social Engagement

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> *They kept trying to smother the songs of resistance, but they did not smother them, ever, nor the spark of resistance, which was constantly smouldering here and there and burst into a flame of rebellion.*
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> (Hercigonja and Karakljajić 1962)

Any interpretation of the past can only be a dissonant and dynamic, always political and without doubt a performative process. This spurs the emergence of and competition between alternative interpretations of the past that may also be understood as acts of opposition and even resistance to dominant and/or competing narratives. This is particularly clear when references to particular historical periods or events are problematised in daily political struggles and media discourses: recourse to alternate histories or the search for alternative visions of the past can thus be regarded as an attempt to devise a potential conceptual framework within which an articulation of alternative politics

(visions of the future) is possible. This carries with it certain (political) connotations that in the post-Yugoslav context are powered by the historical experience and perpetual reinterpretations of the national liberation struggle and antifascist resistance, as well as the entire period of socialist Yugoslavia – these periods have notably defined Yugoslav and contemporary social, (pop) cultural and political milieux, and the responses to it.

In this essay, we discuss the shifting meanings and ascribed interpretations of the historical experience of the Yugoslav antifascist resistance as expressed through music. In an attempt to encourage this reflection on the musical expressions of the partisan resistance from a historical perspective, we primarily analyse scholarly works and media discourses and combine historical, musicological and cultural studies approaches. Although we aim to cover quite a broad historical period – from the end of World War II to the present – we focus on the key periods which brought important ideological shifts in the notion of partisan resistance as expressed through music.

Taking this as our starting point, we first engage with the musical revolutionary legacy of the National Liberation Struggle (hereafter the partisan resistance) and its dominant reinterpretations and reappropriations during socialist Yugoslavia. In the second part, we discuss the uses of this past in the post-socialist context, marred by perpetual crisis and precarity that often encourage taking recourse to the past in the search for a source, tool and approach to revolutionise the present and voice viable alternatives. We attempt to discuss several broader questions related to thinking and practicing resistance in the past and in the current moment and to reflect on the wider questions of technologies of power and social engagement in contemporary society.

We therefore highlight the importance of certain ideological and mythological elements found in partisan songs, which once played an important role in public discourse (and, of course, the dominant ideology), but have become, after the collapse of the country and through the 1990s, the unwanted, irrelevant or superfluous "rubbish of the communist past". In the post-Yugoslav present, these subjects are being reinterpreted, re-contextualised, redefined and reused in a wide range of practices and discourses: from commodification and political purposes to various public uses that aim to (re)articulate the values or set the parameters for potential alternatives to the present conditions. In view of the various (ambivalent, controversial, unexpected) references to this music in public discourses, we therefore discuss its value, importance and mobilising potential in the current moment.

Musical activities in Yugoslavia between 1941 and 1945 were an important part of the artistic endeavours that supported the antifascist resistance.[1] The songs sung during the liberation struggle were a way to motivate, support and mobilise soldiers for combat, share the news and cope with the extreme harshness of the wartime experience. Contemporaries of the time wrote that these songs were honest and mostly factual testimonies about the course of the partisan resistance and life therein (Hercigonja and Karakljajić 1962). In the circumstances of the wartime situation, the songs represented an important means of communication and a channel for spreading news that were "broadcast through verses, from troops to troops, from village to village" (Marjanović and Milošević 1961). The majority of partisan songs were typically created "along the way" and spontaneously, through the interaction among the soldiers, who also made a bricolage of folk or "foreign" tunes, adapting the lyrics as well. This also meant that over time new (current) content was added: "During our glorious liberation struggle, amidst the raging war and the smoke of burnt homes, from the blood and tears and heroic ventures of thousands of our fighters, new songs have emerged – fight songs, songs of new aspirations, that give us faith in victory" (Naše pjesme 1942, 1944).

Given that the partisan resistance was not only a resistance against occupation but also a revolution – a radical transformation of the existing social structure – partisan songs were not only a weapon in the fight against the occupying forces; they reflected and mobilised a revolt against the incumbent system and promoted a new social structure. They celebrated the fight against the class enemy, capitalism and exploitation: "The spirit of reproach, of protest, of resistance was becoming increasingly alive and powerful, it was reflected in the songs with a growing vigour" (Hercigonja and Karakljajić 1962).

Musicmaking within the partisan movement was characterised by the dynamism (a large number of songs in a relatively short period of time) and heterogeneity of the musical material: it drew upon folk songs (with new content), work songs, revolutionary songs and combat songs from previous wars, e.g. World War I (Bošković-Stulli 1960). The partisan resistance also revived songs of peasant uprisings or used them as references in writing new songs. Foreign revolutionary songs from the French Revolution, the October Revolution and particularly

1 On the role of music in the Slovenian National Liberation Struggle see Križnar 1992; Pirjevec and Repe 2008; Komelj 2009; Hofman 2011, 2015, 2016.

the Spanish Civil War were an important part of the repertoire of the combatants, and had spread throughout the entire territory of Yugoslavia. And it was these songs that most notably emphasised the international aspect of antifascism, and solidarity with other nations in a common struggle. The meshing and adaptation of lyrics, music and genres indicates both the specificity and the international nature of the Yugoslav antifascist resistance.

An important part of the making of the partisan repertoire were adaptations and the mixing of two main groups of songs – folk songs and fight songs (see the prefaces of the songbooks *Naše pjesme* (*Our Songs*) (1942, 1944); *Slovenske partizanske pesmi* (*Slovenian Partisan Songs*) (1942); *Krajiške narodne pjesme iz NOB-e i socijalističke izgradnje* (*Regional Folk Songs from the Struggle for Liberation and the Period of Socialist Reconstruction*) (1949); *Zbornik partizanskih narodnih napeva* (*Collection of Partisan Folk Songs*) (1962)). The folk songs brought by fighters from their home villages and towns gradually acquired political, combative and revolutionary content, but were also, in the extreme circumstance of war, interwoven with pre-war memories. Folk songs were adapted to the physicality of marching and fighting, thereby approaching the aesthetics of fight songs. Following Matija Murko, Marija Klobčar points out that "the war itself evokes memories of the long forgotten songs" (Murko in Klobčar 2012: 27–46) and also of the various different songs that reminded them of their home or entertained them. Despite the different Yugoslav partisan units and regions having their own specific repertoires, a large number of songs were shared throughout the entire territory of the former Yugoslavia, particularly in the case of the "foreign" revolutionary repertoire. Several songs were translated from Slovenian and Macedonian into Serbo-Croatian and vice versa, and it was precisely this exchange of songs or "mixing" of the repertoire across nations and regions (usually not through direct contacts with the fighters, but through songbooks) which was presented as one of the important features of music-making within the partisan movement (Hofman 2011).

On the other hand, the composers of the fight songs frequently used elements from folk traditions and composed them in "the folk spirit", in order to mobilise the masses more effectively. A large part of this music was in fact produced by well-known composers and poets, such as Oskar Danon, Nikola Hercigonja, Karol Pahor, Karel Destovnik-Kajuh, Matej Bor or Radovan Gobec, who were themselves active participants in the liberation struggle and supporters of the resistance against fascism.

The relationship between guidance and spontaneity is one of the central issues that indicate the complexity of the rebellious

potential of partisan songs (it should be noted here that this complexity also refers to different uses in different regions of Yugoslavia). Researchers label 1943 as the year of the turning point, after which the balance between spontaneity and guidance was challenged. After the second AVNOJ (Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia) meeting in Jajce that year, it seems that the original spontaneity had given way to institutionalisation: it was slowly taken over by guided performances and propagation of the songs (Karakaš 1974: 112). In this respect, a comparison between the songs from the war period and those published after the war – regardless of the dominant discourses of spontaneity – shows distinct changes (especially) in the lyrics: In one of the partisan songbooks (*Naše pjesme* from 1944), the song 'Hej Slovani' ('Hey, Slavs'),[2] which later became the official Yugoslav national anthem, features new lyrics, co-written by Vladimir Nazor, which celebrated Stalin and the Soviet army:

Oj Slaveni, zemlja tutnji
s Volge i Triglava
istim glasom huče Visla
Jadran, Timok, Sava.

Hey, Slavs, the earth is rumbling
from the Volga and Triglav,
the Vistula, the Adriatic, the Timok, the Sava,
all roar with the same voice.

The song was given its now-familiar form in a 1949 songbook, in which the "ideological orientation" was overtly emphasised and new lyrics introduced. It is therefore important to note that a large part of the genre of partisan songs was actually produced in the post-war period (Hofman 2011: 100). Official post-war discourses in fact contributed to the creation of the notion of the "music of resistance" as an important part of the creation of the partisan myth as one of the foundational narratives of socialist Yugoslavia and Yugoslav cultural identity (this creation included a selection process and various interventions into musical material).

Therefore, in the period after World War II, a large part of this music held an important place in the "official" culture and politics. In

2 The song was written by Samuel Tomášik in 1834 and was used as an anthem, among others, by the Pan-Slavic movement. The melody is the work of the Polish composer Josef Wybicki dating to 1797. Given the song's long history, we do not have the space to further explore the intricacies of translations in different periods and into different languages.

addition to film, partisan songs became the most powerful and most widely-used medium in the process of the mythologisation of the national liberation struggle. They were a regular part of official commemorations and ceremonies, which made them an important sound marker of the official politics of memory. The songs were arranged by well-known composers, mostly for mixed choirs, symphonic orchestras and military bands. The main characteristic of the partisan songs – their formation and use in spontaneous resistance and collective singing – was eventually replaced by large ensembles, a specific monumentalised approach to this music in a highly ritualised context of national celebrations. Over time, the "resistance" component, revolutionary and engaged, was increasingly dissipating into empty form: "Saturation with the NOB [National Liberation Struggle] has often resulted in the exhaustion of the antifascist struggle and its reduction to the level of ossified official ideology without any power of mobilisation ..." (Kirn 2011: 239).

Because cultural policy was primarily focused on the "education and enlightenment of the masses," the "appropriate" and "artistic" representation of music produced during the national liberation struggle was of utmost importance, especially in the first years after the war. Later on in the 1950s, the ideological tensions between mass and "high" culture and art persisted, but it was popular culture that increasingly seized media spaces and subcultures. Cultural policy insisted on the "modernisation" of the mass culture through importing elements of "high culture", whereas the latter was to be "de-elitised" and adapted to all working people (see AJ-142: 47–164). The attitude towards partisan songs in public discourse therefore gradually changed and the methods of its representation became more "open". Eventually, this repertoire, generally characterised by highly ideologised rhetoric and reserved for "high art", found its way into popular music, largely adopted and instrumentalised for "ideological needs".

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE NOB AND PARTISAN RESISTANCE THROUGH POPULAR MUSIC

Popular music in socialist Yugoslavia was quite a powerful ideological tool (to varying degrees, depending on the period) and at the same time an instrument and a field of subcultural resistance. After the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform in 1948 and the purported abandonment of socialist realism through the dismissal

of Agitprop in 1952, the country increasingly started opening up to the West, which by the early 1960s resulted in the importing, and often smuggling, of goods, including food, clothing, cars, electronics, music and musical instruments. In this atmosphere, official ideologists began to accept the musical genres deemed morally suspect immediately after the war (especially jazz and other genres of Western popular music), which have thus become part of Yugoslav everyday life (Vuletic 2008; Vučetić 2009). But revolutionary and partisan topics still inexorably infiltrated the popular culture through the media, education, youth labour campaigns and other collective activities. As a result, not only were partisan songs rearranged for jazz ensembles, they became a regular feature of everyday consumption of music – at concerts by amateur bands and parties in the late 60s (Vasiljević 2013: 125). Therefore, the creators of pop-cultural content themselves were also not passive or even subordinate recipients of the ideology, largely accepting and implementing partisan and revolutionary content in their works.

The "march" of partisan and revolutionary content can be observed from the 1960s onwards, at the latest, even within the genres that were largely seen as "light entertainment" or "consumer culture".[3] "Revolutionary music" was no longer the exclusive domain of formalised events, but had penetrated, with the help of popular groups, into the everyday. Dean Vuletic notes this was the result "of entrapment among the tolerance, imitation and rivalry" of Yugoslav cultural policy, which was trying to go beyond Cold War politics, satisfy the citizens' desire for entertainment, and at the same time remain true to the principles of socialist ideology (Vuletic 2008: 862). Meanwhile, the partisan struggle and its values had to be "de-elitised" and presented to the younger generations. As an example, at a festival of war songs in 1970, Majda Sepe performed a song titled 'Dolgolasi partizan' ('Long-Haired Partisan'), which combined the genres of military marching songs and 1960s chanson:

Kdo je to, s kuštravo glavo
poje, na kitaro si igra?
"Ali ta dober bo vojak?" vprašal se bo, kdor ga ne pozna
Mlad je še, a vendar dobro ve,

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3 The mid-60s were also a period of crucial transformation of the Yugoslav economy, with the introduction of the market reform in 1965 and workers' self-management. Economic governance underwent a substantial shift in focus, especially with regard to capital management and redistribution of capital (for more on the market reform and class struggles within Yugoslav society see Kirn 2014).

kaj je mir in kaj svoboda.
Tudi on je vojak bataljona, ki je zdaj skrit,
ki čaka, le tli.

Who is this, with his dishevelled hair,
singing, playing guitar?
"Is he going to be a good soldier?" may ask one who does not know him.
He is still young, and yet he knows
what peace is, and what is freedom.
He too is a soldier of the battalion, now hidden,
waiting, only smouldering.

In this respect, the intertwining and overlapping of the two traditions of resistance – the partisan rebellion of the 1940s and the youth rebellion of the 1960s – is particularly interesting. Throughout the lyrics, the partisan resistance is a somewhat marginalised, or latent, but nonetheless significant power that is "waiting, only smouldering". The pop-cultural rebellion, on the other hand, was typically represented by long hair and a guitar, two of the trademarks of popular culture for at least the past fifty years. Though searching for rebellion in a pop song may seem a bit strange, it is in fact entirely reasonable if one accepts the interpretation that post-war Yugoslavia drew upon emancipatory socialism, an ideology in which the future is in the hands of the young. With the generational change of the 1960s, the partisan narrative was adapted to address contemporary problems and to establish a new connection between the state and personal responsibility, morality and ethics (Jakiša and Gilić 2015: 24).

In the late 1970s, in the context of the revival of partisan themes, rock music became a central staple, the distinctive youth subcultural channel of resistance that at that time remained quite firmly within the parameters of the regime (see Raković 2011; Ramet 1994; Muršič 2011). In 1978, for example, Djordje Balašević released the single 'Računajte na nas' ('Count On Us'), while that same year the Slovenian punk band Pankrti released 'Lublana je bulana' ('Ljubljana Is Sick'). Counterpoising the two songs reveals a significant difference in the worldviews, politics, ideology and music of the time. Partly due to the attitude of Yugoslav official policy of toleration for the popular genres, many pop and rock groups and musicians – from Hazard, Bijelo dugme and Indexi to Djordje Balašević – ideologically remained within the Yugoslav framework, singing songs that openly expressed a commitment to the idea and ideology (or were at least not deconstructing it openly). Balašević's verses from 'Računajte na nas' ('Count On Us') speak for themselves:

Sumnjaju neki, da nosi nas pogrešan tok,
jer slušamo ploče i sviramo rok.
Al' negde u nama je bitaka plam,
...
Kroz vene nam protiče krv partizana,
i mi znamo zašto smo tu.

Some suspect that we are carried by the wrong stream,
because we are listening to records and playing rock.
But somewhere inside us, a flame of battles is burning,
...
The blood of the partisans flows through our veins,
and we know what we are here for.

Similarly to Sepe in Long-Haired Partisan, Balašević refers to rock music, but concludes at the same time that the liberation struggle is not a distant mythical past but rather a significant "organic part" of the first generation that did not have first-hand experience of the antifascist struggle (*somewhere inside us, a flame of battles is burning*). However, such cases are hardly isolated. Other examples of references to the partisan resistance in popular musical are, for example, the Yugoslav Festival of Revolutionary and Patriotic Songs and the War Songs Festival, featuring singers and musicians who transcended the differences in music genres to unite in the "idea". In 1977, it included pop stars Oliver Dragojević and Neda Ukraden, and pop-rock group Indexi, among others. A song titled 'Jugoslavija' ('Yugoslavia'), dedicated to glorifying the partisan fighters, was performed in Slovenian:

V melodiji slišim davni šum,
skozi dež gredo junaki,
samo zamišljam si lahko,
ker videl tega nisem.
...
Podajmo si roke, ljudje,
in spomnimo tistih se dni,
ko smo gradili deželo
in jo branili s krvjo.

I hear a distant crackle in the melody,
heroes walking through the rain,
I can only imagine,
as I have not seen them.
...
Let's hold our hands together, people,
and remember those days
when we were building our land
and defending it with our blood.

Thirty years after the war, references to the resistance and the partisan movement were still very common, but also excessively (over-) communicated. It cannot be argued here that it was a matter of a mere performance of form without content (Yurchak 2006), nor, on the other hand, that this mythical theme had actually established itself so firmly in everyday life. These processes were much more dynamic and linked to generational affiliation, which is reflected in the above-mentioned songs.

By the late 1970s, the young were already born deep into the post-war period and were occupied with considerably different problems and immersed into different lifeworlds than those that had afflicted their parents' generation. This was the right moment for the "social deafness" (Tonkiss 2003: 304) – the unresponsiveness and lack of understanding among the political elites, and among the generation with the experience of World War II in general, for the situation in which the youth found themselves – to receive an answer. New musical genres emerged, particularly punk and new wave, which moved away from the liberation struggle romanticism and professed urban subcultures and identities, starting off with the Slovenian Buldožer in 1975 and continuing into the 1980 with Pankrti (see Pogačar 2008), as well as industrial avant-gardists Laibach and new wave bands such as Disciplina Kičme, Ekatarina Velika and Azra, among others. Rock music, punk and new wave in particular, was one of the main instigators of debates over social problems and criticism, as well as for the infiltration of new political ideas and concepts (Mandichevski in Spaskovska 2011: 360).

The mid-1980s brought other important movements – "New Primitivism" and "New Partisans" – that conceptualised revolutionary topics in a new way, either in order to deconstruct them or to revitalise them. In their work and approach, both movements reflected a Bosnian context and Sarajevo's specific place in the cultural imagination within Yugoslavia. New Primitivism, a subcultural movement from 1980s Sarajevo – whose legacy includes three icons of popular culture that remain popular today, the band Zabranjeno pušenje (No Smoking), Elvis J. Kurtović and the Bosnian TV show (initially a radio programme) *Top lista nadrealista* (*The Surrealist Hit Parade*) – used humour to address more-or-less topical issues, while not forgetting the partisan struggle and the legacy and achievements of the revolution. The song 'Neću da budem Švabo u dotiranom filmu' ('I Will Not be a Kraut in a Subsidised Film') from the first album by Zabranjeno pušenje, *Das ist Valter* from 1984 contains one such response:

Slavni režiser je u našem gradu,
snima novi film, kažu, bit će dobar,
strani glumci, prijemi i lova
nema sumnje, smiješi mu se Oskar.
Neću da budem Švabo
u dotiranom filmu,
neću da budem statist
u životu i u kinu,
neću da budem Švabo,
Švabo da budem neću.

There is a famous director in our city,
making a new film, it will be good, they say,
foreign actors, receptions and money,
no doubt, the Oscar is in sight.
I will not be a Kraut
in a subsidised film,
I will not be an extra
in life and in the movies,
I will not be a Kraut,
I don't want to be a Kraut.

Despite the subversive (for the time) rock form, a certain continuity can nonetheless be observed, an intertwining of an alternative form with the Yugoslav/partisan mythology. The song refers to the pop-culturalisation of the past as a tool of chronological perpetuation on one hand, and to the children's play "Partisans and Germans", which served as a subtle transmitter of certain ideological values.

From the late 1980s, perhaps the best known is the ironic 'Dan republike' ('Republic Day') by Zabranjeno pušenje (from the album *Pozdrav iz zemlje Safari* (*Greetings from Safari Land*), 1987), where a few telling verses expose the sadness and tragedy of the post-revolutionary situation:

Danas je Dan republike i stari kaže
otvorite prozore, pijan je i čini mu se,
da logorske vatre u daljini gore ...
Danas je dan, Dan republike
i stara kaže jesi l' normalan Dragane,
zatvaraj prozore, ne radi grijanje.

Today is Republic Day, and my old man says
open the windows, he's drunk and it seems to him
that campfires are burning in the distance ...
Today is the day, Republic Day,
and my mother says, are you insane, Dragan,
close the windows, the heating is broken.

Zabranjeno pušenje elucidates the generation gap between the youth of the early 1980s and their parents, who were born during the war or its immediate aftermath, but were in any case heavily affected by its recentness. At the same time, the lyrics express the experience of the degradation of the values of the partisan resistance and its exploitation in the light of the dysfunctionality of late-socialist Yugoslav society. It can be argued that to some extent, the mythologisation of the partisan resistance led to the exhaustion and alienation of the population. On top of the imminent economic crisis this further propelled the ideological crisis of the system, giving ample food for the new young performers to chew on and channel into critique.

References to the partisan resistance in these cases were in fact less explicit, although hardly absent. And it is precisely the continual presence of this subject in New Primitivism – which represented a deviation from and a criticism of the system and its basic orientation – that indicates the difficulties caused to the younger generations by the institutionalised, ideologised and instrumentalised treatment of the partisan struggle and the revolution. Far from claiming they were devoted Yugoslavs, and despite their vocalising disappointment and criticism over the situation in the country, new wavers, punks and also New Primitives nevertheless remained within the context of Yugoslavia. Ljubica Spaskovska asserts that "one could claim that the progressive Yugoslav rock bands which previously did not hesitate to create songs with political and engaged messages, even the mainstream Bijelo dugme, certainly wanted a different Yugoslavia, but a Yugoslavia nevertheless" (Spaskovska 2011: 366).

More explicit references to the partisan resistance and revolution can be found in the musical movement called New Partisans, largely uninfluential in terms of music (but much more so in terms of popularity), which originated in a genuine enthusiasm and desire to re-evaluate the fading values of the partisan resistance and revolution (Velikonja and Perica 2012). It seems that unlike the above-mentioned movements, the New Partisans took the values of the revolution and World War II as their basic starting point. However, their unique call to "return to the roots" faded into an ultimate devaluation, due to the (nationally and globally) radically volatile socio-political climate in the second half and at the end of the 1980s, which could not be satisfied by such an anachronistic answer.[4]

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4 Dalibor Mišina argues (in our opinion a bit over-theorised, since such intentionality can hardly be attributed to these groups) that the "original Yugoslavism" movement, roughly represented by the groups Bijelo Dugme, Plavi orkestar and Merlin, contained

The music of late socialism, despite its often-expressed social engagement, was more than anything else simply entertainment, jokes and more or less random social rebellion (if at all). Ever since its inception it had been part of the vortex of consumerism and fame. In this context, the various musical scenes, spanning new wave, punk, New Primitives and New Partisans, have proved to be an important milestone in the (musical) history of Yugoslavia, and this music turned out to be one of the last major and influential social phenomena. The analysed genres and performers reveal that through canonisation, the revolutionary potential and value of the partisan songs in new renditions and reinterpretations became a tool for a wide variety of uses, simultaneously ascribing multiple meanings to the representations of the partisan resistance. However, through the canonisation, formalisation and "mainstreamisation" after World War II, the music's revolutionary potential and charge was lost, as was the opportunity to re-evaluate its rebellious potential and adapt it to the changing socio-political situation.

POST-SOCIALISM: NEW USES OF THE PARTISAN RESISTANCE IN MUSIC

After 1991, and based on the events from the late 1980s, the whole concept of antifascist resistance changed to the extent that it was largely discarded as an emancipatory ideology, while the very idea of liberation and freedom was reconstituted as a rebellion against totalitarian communism. The future-oriented socialist interpretation of antifascism, until then seemingly deeply infused in the everyday life, politics and even pop-cultural activities of Yugoslavia, gave way to a "re-nationalising", "re-traditionalising" resistance, which – while ostensibly referencing the future – drew its strength as the alleged remedy for ills inflicted upon the present by the "corrupt" socialist past.[5]

However, we should not forget how the performers who positioned themselves in opposition to the nationalisation and, in Ugrešić's

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three related logics: the socio-political logic or the fight against de-Yugoslavisation, which stemmed from a multitude of not necessarily consistent voices and views; the socio-cultural logic, which presumed the consolidation of revolutionary Yugoslavism in relation to cultural chauvinism; and the moral-ethical logic, which built on the absence of a general normative field as a reason for the Yugoslav crisis (Mišina 2010: 268).

5 According to Yurchak in his analysis of the artists and musicians who are "reviving" the Soviet past in their artistic engagements, their main motivation is to return to "authentic revolutionary idealism" (Yurchak 2008: 265).

words, the confiscation of memory (Ugrešić 1996) used partisan songs. Soon after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, musicians such as Zoran Predin ('Počiva jezero v tihoti') and Branimir Štulić ('Partizan'), recorded covers of partisan songs. In 1995, Branimir "Johnny" Štulić, the former singer of the Croatian 1980s rock band Azra, recorded a rearrangement of the famous partisan song 'The Partisan' (originally a French song from World War II, better known in Leonard Cohen's rendition), which shows an interesting take on the revitalisation of the musical legacy of the partisan resistance.[6]

Simultaneously, the commodification of the partisan resistance (particularly from 2000 onward) is also significant, if for no other reason due to its increased exposure in the media. For example, a number of DJs, folk, pop and rock performers (Rock Partyzani, Zaklonišče prepeva, Tijana Dapčević, Lepa Brena) openly relied on partisan iconography (and to a lesser extent on its actual musical heritage) in their songs and external appearance, although at the same time they often vigorously manipulated and sanitised it. With the song 'Yugo' alone, the group Rock Partyzani, for example, communicates two things – that they are a rock group and that they lean on the partisan tradition – while at the same time introducing a word play by replacing the letter "i" with the letter "y" in the word "partizani", transforming partisans into entertainment. Thus, they refer to two important pop-cultural and historical phenomena: rock (and also "Yugo-rock", as their music reveals) and the tradition of the liberation struggle. It is interesting that during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the leader of the band was actively involved with the group Agropop, which was at the time riding on the waves of nationalist feelings of the "de-Yugoslavising" Slovenia.[7] It is hard to avoid the impression of a very clear commercial orientation. On the other hand, their use of the music shows that the formation of meaning is not entirely in the hands of the "artist", but – to a large extent – depends of the audience that invests different meanings in the performed content. As Mitja Velikonja and Vjekoslav Perica point out, at the level of Rock Partyzani music's public life and considering the fact that they were addressing current social problems, this music can also provide a critique of the present (Velikonja and Perica 2012: 123).

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6 On the role of new media in the revitalisation of partisan songs and building communities see Pogačar 2015.

7 However, in a documentary titled *Nekoč je bila dežela pridnih* (*Once There Was a Land of the Diligent*), one of the main protagonists of the band distances himself from any "organised" nationalism and describes the group Agropop as a "mockery" of the system.

Nevertheless, problems of the post-socialist transformations in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, especially after 2000, led to a revaluation of the attitude towards the legacy of the national liberation struggle, including music. Self-organised choirs, such as Kombinat and Zborke (Ljubljana), Le Zbor (Zagreb), Zbor Praksa (Pula), Horkestar, Prroba, Svetonazori (Belgrade), Raspeani Skopjani (Skopje) and 29. November (Vienna) are significant in this respect. It should be noted that each of these choirs has its own specific agenda and its own interpretation and contextualisation of the partisan songs, which is also dependent on the context in which it operates. By reviving the tradition of choral singing they aim to revive the collective spirit, but also seek to revitalise the musical tradition of the partisan resistance, with an emphasis on the revolutionary aspect and on its resistance and emancipatory potential (Petrović 2011: 319; see also Hofman 2015, 2016). The object of these strategies is not (just) a nostalgic attitude towards the Yugoslav past (although it does arouse such feelings in the audience), but, on the contrary, a focus on the active and radical use of the partisan and socialist heritage in the present. The members of these choirs see social activism as an essential part of their music. Through various activist campaigns, they practice resistance in both the local and global contexts. In the case of the choir Kombinat from Ljubljana, reference to the revolutionary potential is most evident in their involvement in the 15 October/Occupy movement, various actions related to global issues in Slovenia and elsewhere, but particularly in the Slovenian protests at the end of 2012 and early 2013 (see Hofman 2015, 2016). The choir draws attention to the disregarded values of the partisan resistance in the post-socialist era and mobilises the revolutionary potential of the partisan songs as a response to current societal challenges.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION – A NEW INTRODUCTION?

After the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia in 1991, the legacy of the partisan movement was actively minimised and neutralised, and considered a part of the totalitarian propaganda. Revisionist processes in the countries of the former Yugoslavia conflated the concepts of antifascist resistance, socialism, communism and totalitarianism. Since the breakup of socialist Yugoslavia, partisan songs and the music that thematised partisan resistance later on have often been interpreted and devalued as a strictly ideological practice, the social engagement of which was guided by officials and party elites.

As we presented in the previous section, new voices in the last few years reflect the need to reconceptualise our view of the partisan resistance and put it into the framework of social engagement. In light of these reinterpretations, partisan songs and their contemporary reinterpretations are acquiring new meaning, in the context of the struggle against social and economic changes and inequalities, and the abolishment of human and worker's rights. This music offers new understandings and a new potential in the post-Yugoslav context, yet raises the question of how to conceptualise the new meanings and tactics of resistance in order to respond to current challenges. Hence, we must be very sensitive about the definition of resistance, so that we do not find ourselves in a situation where we will not be able to recognise it anymore due to the "inflation" or "romanticisation" of the concept in a world of universal conformism and opportunism. The events in Slovenia around the celebrations of the Day of the Uprising holiday in April 2013 testify to the complex and highly contradictory conceptions and practices of resistance. On the eve of the public holiday, partisan songs were performed at the President's Palace, on the streets in front of the "insurgents" taking part in the 5th Pan-Slovenian People's Uprising, and at a sold-out concert at the biggest stadium in Slovenia (Stožice). Politicians were conspicuous protagonists of the dramaturgy of the resistance, either among the audience in the front rows, or as active participants of the "unorganised" celebration of the Day of the Uprising, or even as the benevolent guardians of the tradition of the resistance.[8] This short vignette shows us all the complexity of the current meanings, reconceptualising and reimagining of the partisan resistance. Finally, this points to the conclusion that, much like our ancestors, in the lived historical moment we are in no position to assess the consequences of our actions from a point in the future. Instead, we can only do so through an often inadequate and romanticised comparison to the past, which makes it increasingly difficult to conceive resistance and even harder to practice it.

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8 For more about these events and the problems with the concept of musical resistance today see Hofman 2015, 2016.

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