

“Spit and Sing, My Yugoslavia”: New Partisans, social critique and Bosnian poetics of the patriotic

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As “music of commitment,” in the period from the late 1970s to the late 1980s rock music in Yugoslavia had an important purpose of providing a popular-cultural outlet for the unique forms of socio-cultural critique that engaged with the realities and problems of Yugoslav society. The three “music movements” that embodied the new rock’n’roll spirit – New Wave, New Primitives, and New Partisans – used rock music to critique the country’s “new socialist culture,” with the purpose of helping to eliminate the disconnect between the ideal and the reality of socialist Yugoslavia. This paper examines the New Partisans as the most radical expression of music of commitment through the works of its most important rock bands: Bijelo dugme, Plavi orkestar, and Merlin. The paper’s argument is that the New Partisans’ socio-cultural engagement, animated by advocacy of Yugoslavism, was a counter-logic to the nationalist dissolution of a distinctly Yugoslav fabric of a socialist community in crisis. Thus, the movement’s revolutionary “spirit of reconstruction” permeating its “poetics of the patriotic” was a mechanism of socio-cultural resistance to political, cultural and moral-ethical de-Yugoslavization of Yugoslav society. Its ultimate objective was to make the case that the only way into the future – if there was to be any – rested on strategic reanimation of the Partisan revolutionary past as the only viable socio-cultural foundation of the Yugoslav socialist community.

Keywords: Yugoslavia; rock music; social critique; New Partisans; music of commitment; Bijelo dugme; Plavi orkestar; Merlin

Compared to the research interests in Yugoslav politics and economic matters the topic of popular music and culture has received fairly marginal scholarly attention, despite the fact that “popular music is one of the cultural phenomena that has been most shared among the peoples inhabiting the territory of the former Yugoslavia” (Vuletic 861). This is perhaps not too surprising given that since the early 1990s academic interests in Yugoslavia have been focused primarily on coming to terms with what Crnobrnja calls the “Yugoslav drama” and on explaining the reasons for the breakup of the Yugoslav state and the subsequent all-out ethnic carnage. The works of, most notably, Sabrina Ramet and Eric Gordy are noteworthy exceptions here in that, within this larger research *problematique*, they offer important glimpses into the popular-cultural dimension of Yugoslav society. In recent years, there has been a rising interest in Yugoslav popular music and there appears to be a new generation of scholars who are working on mapping it out as a new field of research (e.g. Pogačar; Stankovič; Vuletic). Despite the important steps forward, however, the topic remains very much a research area in search of a definition and conceptual framing, and with a body of literature that is fragmentary at best.

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The aim of this paper is to contribute to the mapping of this new area of research by offering a conceptual framework for understanding and analyzing Yugoslav rock music and culture in the period from the late 1970s to the late 1980s.¹ Following Sartre's notion of "literature of commitment,"² the paper proposes that the Yugoslav rock music of this period³ is best understood as the "music of commitment" – that is, as a meaningful and purposeful artistic intervention – whose relationship to the country's culture was that of a social critique oriented towards engaging with the realities and problems of Yugoslav society. The three incarnations of music of commitment – the music movements⁴ of New Wave, New Primitives, and New Partisans⁵ – saw themselves as the bearers of the new rock'n'roll spirit and the outlets for channeling youth's understandings of the problems of, and tensions within, Yugoslavia's "new socialist culture." Each movement addressed these from the viewpoint of its own unique socio-cultural location and its own distinct poetic expression,⁶ but all three shared the belief that their cultural interventionism could help improve society and bridge the gap between the ideal and the reality of the Yugoslav socialist community.

To substantiate its proposition, the paper will offer a sociologically informed historical analysis of the New Partisans and examine the movement's "poetics of the patriotic" through the ideas and music of its three most important rock bands: Bijelo dugme, Plavi orkestar, and Merlin. The analysis will demonstrate that, as music of commitment, the socio-cultural *praxis* of New Partisans was animated by militant Yugoslavism as a counter-logic to the nationalist dissolution of a distinctly Yugoslav fabric of the socialist community in crisis. Thus, the movement's revolutionary "spirit of reconstruction" permeating its poetics of the patriotic was a mechanism of socio-cultural resistance to political, cultural and moral-ethical de-Yugoslavization of Yugoslav society.⁷ The principal point of New Partisans' socio-cultural engagement was to impress upon the country's *conscience collectif* that rebuilding of the dissolving Yugoslav space and the possibility of its re-Yugoslavization was crucially tied to two distinct combat strategies: (1) radical redrawing of the country's political field so as to enable non-confrontational existence of multiple political voices (articulated by Bijelo dugme); and (2) spiritual re-enchantment through the reintroduction of cultural and moral-ethical principles of the World War II revolutionary Partisan tradition (articulated by Plavi orkestar and Merlin). The paper will show that the movement's advocacy of Yugoslavism through the poetics of the patriotic was, ultimately, a socio-cultural strategy for resisting society's nationalist turn by making the case that the only way into the future – if there was to be any – rested on strategic reanimation of the Partisan revolutionary past as the real (and only viable) foundation of the Yugoslav socialist community. As such, it was the most radical expression of music of commitment.

The analysis of the New Partisans, then, is an exploration of a particular historical instantiation of music of commitment whose principal objective, in detailing the specifics of the particular, is to elucidate the properties of the universal. In doing this, the aim of the paper is to open up a pathway for further scholarly research on Yugoslav popular music and culture, and to offer a conceptual lens through which particular trajectories of that research can be successfully investigated.

New Partisans and the poetics of the patriotic

The New Partisans originated in Sarajevo and drew upon the local socio-cultural *milieu* for its philosophy and *praxis* articulated through the movement's poetics of the local.⁸ This is not coincidental and has to do with Sarajevo's reputation at the time as the most Yugoslav

city of Yugoslavia. Just as Bosnia and Herzegovina was, for a variety of cultural and ideological reasons, considered the most Yugoslav republic in a sense that it was perceived as the most harmoniously multicultural and, in that, a model of what the whole country was supposed to be like, Sarajevo, as the most Bosnian city of all (meaning the most multicultural, open, and unsuspecting of the “others”⁹), enjoyed the reputation of being the epicenter of a specifically Yugoslav brand of socio-cultural arrangement. In other words, Sarajevo was in many respects thought of as Yugoslavia condensed into one city. In the context of the New Partisans, this meant that any change (be it positive or negative) in the nature of Yugoslavia’s socio-cultural orientation was first sensed within Sarajevo’s cultural *milieu* as subtle, but perceptible, micro-shifts in the ways in which many cultural communities cohabiting in the city changed their disposition towards one another. Given Sarajevo’s avowed Yugoslavism, any sort of change of this kind would immediately result in putting to work defense mechanisms for staving off the real or perceived danger to the city’s (and, on the larger scale, Yugoslavia’s) multicultural harmony. Thus, it is no surprise that in the climate of increasing de-Yugoslavization of both immediate and national socio-cultural space, Sarajevo’s musicians were the first to respond and offer “new partisanism”¹⁰ as a way of counteracting the dangers of increasingly evident nationalistic and xenophobic tendencies in the country.¹¹

The New Partisans’ advocacy of “original Yugoslavism” through the poetics of the patriotic had three distinct but interrelated “logics in use”: (1) socio-political, (2) socio-cultural, and (3) moral-ethical. The first one was grounded in the premise that crucial for combating the de-Yugoslavization of the country’s national space was the process of relaxing the rigidity of an official political ideology and a broadening of the country’s political field so as to accommodate the multiple and not necessarily congruent political voices and perspectives. From the viewpoint of this position, the most productive way of addressing the crisis of the Yugoslav socialist community was coming to terms with the narrowness of its political process and staving off anti-communist tendencies by making them legitimate dimensions of the overall Yugoslav political experience. This perspective was advocated most prominently by Goran Bregović and his concept of the “Yugoslav idea of a somewhat different type.”

The socio-cultural logic of New Partisans’ poetics of the patriotic saw reinforcement of the values of “revolutionary Yugoslavism” – that is, the revolutionary cultural spirit of the World War II Partisan struggle – as essential in combating the nationalistic and xenophobic tendencies in the country. According to this position, the most troublesome aspect of increasing partialization and tearing of Yugoslavia’s socio-cultural space was the destruction of the country’s cultural platform and the rise of virulently chauvinistic cultural expressions fundamentally antithetical to the original cultural spirit of Yugoslav society as a multicultural socialist community. From this point of view, confronting the forces of socio-cultural de-Yugoslavization required a reanimation of the Yugoslav multicultural spirit and advocacy of an inclusivist form of cultural experience through revival of the most exemplary of the Partisan socio-cultural tradition. The principal proponent of this notion was Saša Lošić and his band Plavi orkestar.

Finally, the moral-ethical logic of new partisanism saw the vacuity of the general “normative field” as the principal source of the Yugoslav socio-cultural and political crisis. From this perspective, the main tearer of the country’s inter-national relations was the prevailing attitude of moral-ethical nihilism which encouraged self-centeredness and estranged Yugoslav peoples from one another and, ultimately, from themselves. Crucial for the preservation of Yugoslav community, from this point of view, was a re-enchantment of socio-cultural and political interactions and practices by actively

advocating a return to the humanist-socialist values of (revolutionary) Partisan morality and ethics. The latter, as advocated most prominently by Dino Dervišhalilović and his concept of “entire Yugoslavia one courtyard” (*cijela Juga jedna avlija*), were the only viable means of (re)connecting the derailed present with the foundational past.

Although stylistically and musically Bregović, Lošić, and Dervišhalilović employed distinct strategies in advocating Yugoslavism through the poetics of the patriotic, there were, however, three important “elective affinities” that unified Bijelo dugme, Plavi orkestar and Merlin into the New Partisans music movement: (1) the geographic coincidence of being from Sarajevo and drawing upon the city’s harmonious multicultural and decidedly Yugoslavist socio-cultural *milieu* for intellectual and artistic inspiration; (2) a common belief by the bands’ leaders that the threat of nationalistic disintegration of Yugoslav society can be fought successfully through strategic reanimation of the legacy of the World War II Partisan revolution and through the engagement of its political, cultural and/or ethical principles as counter-mechanisms to the nation’s unraveling; and (3) conscious and deliberate integration of the folkloric and revolutionary stylistic and musical idioms into the rock music template as a strategy for evoking and mobilizing the broadly appealing patriotic sentiments among their audiences. Together, these not only provided Bregović, Lošić, and Dervišhalilović with a common intellectual-artistic foundation for their socio-political engagement through the New Partisans but also made their projects distinct from those of other artists (such as, for example, Električni orgazam, Jugosloveni, Hari Mata Hari, and ITD Band) who, in the late 1980s, also evoked some forms of Yugoslav(ist) sentiment in their music.¹²

Goran Bregović: “Spit and Sing, My Yugoslavia”

At the root of Goran Bregović’s New Partisans’ engagement is, as he puts it, the “Yugoslav idea of a somewhat different type.” What he has in mind, essentially, is Yugoslav society open to a plurality of voices and opinions – a fully democratic social space with fully democratized social and, especially, political institutions accommodating enough for a situation of “three people who don’t think the same way sharing the same place” (in Velički 23). According to Bregović, Yugoslavia’s biggest problem is the discrepancy between the general ideological development and the overall social development: while society in general has made tremendous steps forward in just about any sphere of social life, the understanding of ideology and the political worldview had remained at the level of post-World War II rigidity and narrowness. This, in Bregović’s view, was having a tremendously retarding impact on society as a whole since ideological rigidity and the inability to accept the possibility of “thinking otherwise” within one socio-cultural space were creating all sorts of inter-civic tensions, with the potential of turning into open national(istic) antagonisms. For Bregović, the most significant manifestation of the existing ideological rigidity in Yugoslav society was officialdom’s tendency to declare any form of disagreement, criticism and/or disenchantment – or, as he calls them, “anti-communism” – as nationalism. The danger of this “propaganda mistake” (as Bregović puts it) is the irrational “manufacturing” of nationalists with the potential to attract people who otherwise do not think in nationalist terms but are, like “real nationalists,” dissatisfied with certain aspects of society and can therefore identify with the nationalistic ideas propagated by those branded as nationalists by the regime. As Bregović explains (in Velički 23):

It is normal that there are anti-communists when communists have not fulfilled everyone’s expectations. It is normal that there are people who do not believe that – according to

Marx's theory – the working class will solve the problems of all classes [...] It is normal that there are people who think that the worker who is the workers' representative, and is in a position of authority in the name of the workers, does not have the class interest identical to the worker who gave him the right to govern in his name. There are as many people who think for the state as there are those who think otherwise.¹³

The big problem, in Bregović's view, is that "we declare every anticommunist as nationalist, which is not true. And we already feel the consequences of this. We are producing the nationalists quite irrationally [...] There is nothing there but a propaganda mistake" (in Velički 23). He says elsewhere: "the state is guilty of declaring any anti-communism as nationalism. They shouldn't be channeling it that way, for if they keep on insisting on it, Croats will start hating Serbs and Serbs Croats" (in Tomić and Đorem, "Goran Bregović" 7). In light of this (and the current situation of increased national tensions), the most important task, according to Bregović, is to advocate a "civilizational move forward" and propagate Yugoslavia as an open society that is broad enough for the non-confrontational existence of a multiplicity of different ideas, no matter how opposing and seemingly incompatible. As he puts it, "humanity had invented *bon ton* so that four people who cannot stand each other can sit at the table and have lunch without slashing each other with utensils" (in Vesić 10). In the same way, Yugoslav society, if it is to make a necessary civilizational move forward, ought to come up with some sort of "inter-civic *bon ton*" that will enable socio-cultural encounters based on tolerance and acceptance rather than ideological exclusivism. Ultimately, Bregović's shift from the position of "left apathy" (as he puts it in Simić 31) to being proactively left and to the New Partisans¹⁴ is, as he puts it, his "small contribution to this constructive idea" (see Vesić).

One of the central aspects of Bregović's new partisanism is his position that the problem of Yugoslavia is not necessarily the problem of communists and that, correspondingly, the resolution of the former does not necessarily imply the abolition of the latter. To this effect he states (in Luković, "Goran Bregović" 311):

my sympathies for the ruling party are obvious. The mere fact that there is a social healthcare system and free education is enough to support the sympathy. That is the guaranteed minimum of human dignity that does not exist in other countries. And this new bourgeoisie now wishes to buttress some sort of capitalism which works perfectly in America but here would create evil. Objectively, therefore, the communists are an opportunity for the people [...] Of the people who lived on this soil in the last thousand years, it is not possible to find a better generation [...] The communists are therefore my favorites in the history of the people here. That generation is really to be admired.

Doubtless, Bregović does not believe that Yugoslavia's civilizational move forward requires a change in the political leadership of the country; rather, what is needed is a change in the communists' frame of mind and a loosening of the ideological rigidity characteristic of the ruling party, which would serve as a catalyst of a sort for a society-wide thaw and contribute to the relaxing of the country's (increasingly nationalistic) inter-civic encounters.

Bregović's foray into using his art as a platform for explicit socio-political engagement began in 1983 with the album *Uspavanka za Radmilu M.* [A Lullaby for Radmila M.] and the song "Kosovska." Reacting to the Serbian-Albanian ethnic tensions in the country's southern region of Kosovo, Bregović wrote the first ever Yugoslav rock'n'roll song in Albanian as an attempt to bridge the gap between the two communities and establish, at least through art, an inter-ethnic dialogue. The song reflected Bregović's general attitude – later fully developed within his particular brand of new partisanism – about "unlike minds learning to live together" as a precondition for civility and civil(ized) society. In

specific terms, the Albanian lyrics in the songs were Bregović's attempt to break the linguistic-communication barrier between the Serbo-Croatian majority and Albanian minority (which existed because the two communities spoke different languages) by having the former learn at least a few words of the latter's language and, if only through his song, communicate in unison.¹⁵ In hindsight, Bregović will characterize this episode as a "revolution that failed" (because, after temporary success, it failed to realize his expectations), but the experience with "Kosovska" would nonetheless reorient him towards more explicit social engagement and further politicization of his music aesthetics.

Bregović's explicit advocacy of Yugoslavism as an ideological counter-force to the rising tide of increasingly exclusivist political discourses in the country would take center stage on Bijelo dugme's 1984 self-titled album. The record opens with the rendition of the national anthem (the "song in crisis") as, effectively, Bregović's call to rise above the present. As he puts it (in Nikolić, "Goran Bregović" 52): "[Hey, Slavs'] is a very beautiful song. It is [...] above current politics. The song doesn't serve any current political option, but is a song about the people. I mean, everything changes but the hapless Slavs, standing here where they are with their song":

Hey, Slavs, the spirit of our forefathers still lives on
while the hearts of their sons are still beating for the people
live on the Slav spirit, you'll live on forever
in vain the threats of hell's abyss, in vain the thunder's fire

Let the storm tear everything down above us
let the stones crumble, the oaks break, and the earth shake
we'll still stand up straight like the crags
damned is the traitor of his homeland

At the lyrical level, the song is, in effect, Bregović's call to stand up for Yugoslavism and togetherness in the face of the forces threatening to rip (Yugo-)Slavs apart. At the musical level, the rendition operates as a symbolic expression of the eternal in "Slavism": starting off with a guitar riff/solo and continuing with the pounding drum beat with the folkloric female vocals laid over, the *mélange* of the traditional and the modern is evocative of the compatibility and connectedness of the new and the old – the present and the past – and, in this, the sense of timelessness of (Yugo)slavism. Bregović (in Vesić 10) reflects on the idea behind his rendition of the national anthem in this way:

Yugoslavia as an idea interests me very much. Besides, I saw [...] when I put the anthem on the record and when it's played at our big shows that people are, effectively, Yugoslavs. Individually we are petty and wretched, but when put in a situation that requires togetherness, we really know how to be together.

Ultimately, the song was Bregović's means for "putting the people in a situation of togetherness." The second key song on the record, "Lipe cvatu, sve je isto kao i lani" [The Linden is Flowering, Nothing has Changed since Last Year], again encapsulates both lyrically and musically the essence of Bregović's Yugoslavism. The song places even greater emphasis on the use of folkloric elements in the service of reconnecting with the past, and amplifies the effect by pairing the music with a set of lyrics dealing with the traditional themes of love and yearning – topped off with a southern (i.e. "Yugo") version of Slavic sentimentality:

The summer's coming – how are you?
I wish I could know where you are and with whom
who was warming you up
when it was snowing last winter
who was kissing you – God punish him

I don't care where you go
 go wherever you want – it's all Yugoslavia
 I don't care, you are not a child
 but it's your loss
 the loss is yours, but my heart is aching

I swear by my soul and by God
 by my blue peasant blood
 I swear, I will die
 but I won't look for you
 I won't, and I'll die

The linden is flowering
 nothing has changed since last year
 except my heart and your heart
 are not in love any more

The Yugoslavism of the song is nuanced and crafted as an intersection of the folkloric musical and lyrical elements with the Slavic temperament permeating throughout conveyed by an attentive rock-tinged vocal. If “Kosovska” was Bregović’s first Albanian rock song, “Lipe cvatu [. . .]” was his first unequivocally Yugoslav song, meant to invoke a country-wide trans-ethnic closeness by striking the Slavic cord within the audience throughout the country. Ultimately, what Bregović was after with “Lipe cvatu [. . .]” was crafting a direct line for tapping into “emotional Yugoslavism” and bringing it out in full force.

The 1986 follow-up to Bijelo dugme’s self-titled LP – *Pljuni i zapjevaj moja Jugoslavijo* [Spit and Sing, My Yugoslavia] – is the centerpiece of Bregović’s socio-political engagement and the artistic springboard for launching his New Partisans platform of the Yugoslav idea of a somewhat different type. The concept behind the record is strongly influenced by Bregović’s conviction that the “Yugoslav idea appears to be more civilized than the insistence on national divisions the way we do it” (in Bakić 20). As such, it is informed by the spirit of resistance against the increasingly potent anti-Yugoslav element – ethno-nationalism.

Musically, the radicalization and concretization of Bregović’s engagement is expressed through the borrowing from the Partisan revolutionary music idiom and revolutionary political tradition. The Yugoslavism from the previous record is thus re-specified as explicit partisanism, and the call for togetherness through an appeal to common Slavism is remodeled as the “call to arms” through the re-revolutionization of the patriotic spirit. In this context, Bregović’s call to rise above the present shifted from the terrain of invoking the mythical-ancestral to stirring up the real-revolutionary. The record’s title track, “Pljuni i zapjevaj moja Jugoslavijo,” encapsulates the essence of Bregović’s New Partisans revolutionary Yugoslavism:

Spit and sing, my Yugoslavia!
 my mother, stepmother, my sorrow and consolation
 my heart, my old house
 my quince from the cupboard
 my bride, my beauty
 my poor queen
 Yugo, Yugoslavia

This bread, I’m breaking it
 my Yugoslavia
 for you and the better days
 horses not saddled
 if you don’t toughen up here
 eh, pity you

here no one will ever find his tribe
until learning how to howl

This bread, I'm break it
my Yugoslavia
for you and the better days
horses not saddled
my heart, my old house
my quince from the cupboard
my bride, my beauty
my poor queen

Rise up Yugoslavia
sing – let them hear you
whoever doesn't listen to the song
will listen to the storm!

Bregović's statement that "quite possibly Yuga [a common term of endearment for Yugoslavia] hasn't had such a patriotic song, like the one I wrote, in a long time" (in Miletić, "Trudim se da neutrališem organ" 33), and the highly emotional tone of the song's lyrics, reveal rather explicitly the commitment to his "poor queen of Yugoslavia" and the preference for revolutionary partisanism. Bregović will certify the latter with the record's opening track and an introduction to "Pljuni i zapjevaj moja Jugoslavijo" – the rendition of an old revolutionary song "Padaj silo i nepravdo!" [Down, Might and Injustice!] – which he sings together with the living hero of the Partisan revolutionary struggle Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo and the choir of Sarajevo's orphaned children.

Musically, "Pljuni i zapjevaj moja Jugoslavijo" is crafted around the antinomy between "Yugoslavia's song" and the "storm" (standing for the rising ethno-nationalism). The flute opening, used to establish a connection to the Partisan tradition (for this well-known traditional instrument was also heavily used in Partisan times), is gradually mixed into the rising rock'n'roll crescendo which culminates in the bass-and-rhythm machine-driven gallop – the driving force of the whole song. The gallop is suggestive of the gravity of the situation and the urgency of the cause; the only pause made is at the beginning of each chorus, when a plea is made for Yugoslavia to rise up and face the storm with the strength and beauty of its song (i.e. all of its endearing qualities spelled out metaphorically at the beginning of the number). The ending of the song sees the beginning of the struggle, with the high-pitched sound symbolizing Yugoslavia's song, and the darker, tempestuous tones standing for the storm. The ending closes with the battle fade-out, leaving the final outcome of the conflict hanging in the air.

The record *Pljuni i zapjevaj moja Jugoslavijo* was originally conceived by Bregović as an artistic incarnation of his New Partisans concept of the Yugoslav idea of a somewhat different type, which was (as we have seen) centered on the broadening of Yugoslavia's political field and loosening of its ideological rigidity as the precondition for a civilizational move forward towards political pluralism. Thus, the record was to represent a symbiotic meeting point for the three seemingly incompatible ideological positions – communist partisanism, Serbian dissidentism, and Croatian nationalism – represented through either the work or participation of their most celebrated/problematic propagators: the Partisan revolutionary Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, the Serbian painter Mića Popović, and the Croatian singer Vice Vukov. But because, as Bregović puts it rather colorfully (in Vesić 10), "suddenly people got scared shitless by the few names being mentioned around my record," and due to some friendly advice not to stir things up and refusals to realize the original graphic solution for the album's cover, *Pljuni i zapjevaj*

moja Jugoslavijo was ultimately released as a truncated “politicization of a rock’n’roll aesthetic” and an incomplete complement to Bregović’s advocacy for a civilization move forward. In retrospect, Bregović’s inability to produce the record as originally conceived was perhaps an indication that the official society was not ready for his Yugoslav idea of a somewhat different type.

Bijelo dugme’s last record *Ćiribiribela*, released in 1988, is Bregović’s final face-off with ethno-nationalism and his “last call for sanity” in the face of a sombering realization of the possibility of the Deluge (symbolized by the album’s cover which depicts the loading of Noah’s ark). In many respects, Bregović’s last declaration of Yugoslavism is a retreat into the realm of the intimate and the private, instigated by his disillusionment with the communist leadership’s inability or unwillingness to relax its ideological rigidness and broaden the country’s political field, and the notion that perhaps all that he has been advocating can only be preserved at a personal emotional level (see Hadžifejzović 29; Popović 9). Bregović’s “turn inward” is best captured in the following statement:

You know, Yugoslav concepts have not been held in high regard these past few years, and especially now. I am not sure that [the Yugoslav] political option has currency at all. Nationalist options have a much greater currency[.] (In Bakić 20)

Thus, Bregović’s central preoccupation on *Ćiribiribela* is Yugoslavism as (the possibility of) a personal condition of being in the world rather than a grand political-ideological platform – i.e. as the possibility of preserving the Yugoslav within oneself as one’s own spiritual and normative compass. This was significantly anticipated in the statement made a couple of years before the record’s time:

I think about [Yugoslavism] at the levels of the practical and the daily, in line with my own self-preservation. My father is a Croat and my mother is a Serb. Therefore I am neither sufficiently Croat nor sufficiently Serb. If I marry a Muslim, what will my child be? Purely out of self-preservation I have to fight for the Yugoslavs; because the Croats will go to Croatia, the Serbs to Serbia, but where will I stay – not to mention my child? (Bregović in Velički 23)

Bregović would more or less restate the position two years later, after the release of *Ćiribiribela*:

I am Yugoslav! Why would I now need to insult someone?! I am from a mixed marriage and it would be stupid of me to make my choice and chose a side, and insult either my mother or my father. (Bregović in Bakić 20)

This sentiment is clearly underscored with the opening and the closing song of the record. The former, the album’s title track, is Bregović’s contemplation of a hideout as possibly the only option of preserving one’s inner self in the face of war:

If the war breaks out tomorrow
what would we do, my baby
lock the door
close the windows
draw the curtain
stay home and kiss

And when the shooting starts
we’ll cover our heads
underneath the small blanket
you and me and the stars
we’ll nibble the grapes
and wait for the war to end

The song's theme of trying to answer the question of "where will I go?" is couched in a rather festive rhythmic antidote, but the latter's disquietingly cheerful mood and a somewhat strained upbeat tempo are suggestive of its artificialness and displacement: the somber nature of the musing simply cannot be dressed up, at least not completely. The record's closing song, "Lijepa naša" [Our Beautiful], reads as a dream-like sensation where the Serbo-Croatian harmony is symbolized in the chorus-merging of parts of the two (as branded by the official regime) nationalist songs: one from Serbia, one from Croatia:

Sometimes I dream we are flying
 flying as if cursed
 I dream a northern wind
 it's wearing out my wings
 me and you, two falcons
 looking for a falconer's shoulder

Sometimes I dream of Christmas
 and then I get awoken by the trains
 heading south from my pillow
 to where my heart dwells
 to where they miss me at Christmas

Our beautiful homeland
 our dear heroic country
 far and away
 far away from the sea

The desire for harmonious unity is expressed in the first two verses, as the falcons flying from the south to the north and the trains heading south. The meeting point (the realization of harmony, that is) is accentuated by the song's chorus which opens with a Croatian song "Lijepa naša" and ends with a Serbian song "Tamo daleko" [Far and Away]. Offered as the narrator's dream, however, the very last song of Bijelo dugme's grand oeuvre may ultimately reflect Bregović's perhaps subconscious realization that the Serbo-Croatian harmony he desires within himself and for other Yugoslavs may, in the end, be attainable only as a vision – real or imagined.

Saša Lošić: "Death to Fascism!"

Not too long after Bijelo dugme's advocacy of Slavic togetherness through the rendition of the national anthem on their 1984 LP release, another Sarajevo band – Plavi orkestar – took up Yugoslavism as a means of popular-cultural intervention within the socio-cultural fabric of Yugoslav society. The band's Yugoslavist platform had its most immediate genesis in Saša Lošić's (lead singer and principal creative force in the band) experiences while in the army, doing his military service, where he was, as he puts it, under the "exalting suffering" of a cathartic quality which was the spark for the songs written by him that appeared on the band's 1985 debut album. The other defining moment was the socio-political situation in the country and the tense climate of increased chauvinist nationalism(s) and ethnic enclosures which were perceived as a direct negation of the established socio-cultural tradition of the society known to Lošić and the people of his generation. Combined together, the two moments triggered an emotional-intellectual defense mechanism with the Yugoslavist cultural platform as an appropriate (if not the only appropriate) response to the reality faced. As Lošić puts it (in Palameta 13):

we have turned to Yugoslavism because of all these vampiric situations [...] which are tearing down the cognitive frame of reference [...] to an entire generation not used to living with the

burden of, for example, taking apart your most banal phrase[:] “how are you, where are you, why are you?” We wanted a return to the times when you wouldn’t be burdened with the possibility of finding out hidden allusions in your each and every word.

At stake in Plavi orkestar taking up Yugoslavism was a struggle for mental sanity of an entire generation of Yugoslavs whose socio-cultural and political views were of qualitatively different disposition from the one they were faced with, and who – at least from Lošić’s viewpoint – needed some sort of intellectual defense mechanism against an assault mustered by the alien ethno-nationalist forces. To resist it, the only viable strategy was to counter-attack it with a return to tradition and a forceful advocacy of a Yugoslav orientation as the only possible and viable social, political, and cultural option for a society in crisis.

Why Yugoslavism rather than something else? Simply because that was the emotional-intellectual and socio-cultural core of Lošić and the generation he belonged to and stood for. Born in the mid-1960s and growing up in the late-1970s they were the cohort raised on Yugoslav values and with an engrained Yugoslav perspective, the foundation of which was the Partisan tradition with all of its normative dictums, embodied in the heroic anti-fascist struggle of World War II. Therefore, it would only be normal that for Lošić there would be an immanent equation between Yugoslavism and “Partisanism” and that any sort of Yugoslav emotional-intellectual platform and a call for a return to tradition would, by default, be couched in what was understood as Partisan normative sensibilities and an appeal for the remembrance of the anti-fascist tradition. Thus in the wake of the release of Plavi orkestar’s first record *Soldatski bal* [Soldiers’ Ball] Lošić observes that: “it is our wish that the true values, which started fading because of some idiotic happenings, resurface at the forefront. We wish, for example, to re-instill in youth a minimal respect for the legacy of anti-fascist struggle” (in Ivačković 32). The “idiotic happenings” here are what Lošić elsewhere refers to as the “spitting at the sacred symbols” – i.e. essentially anything of non-Yugoslav (and anti-Yugoslav) orientation. As he puts it (in Palameta 13): “When you see all that madness, all that spitting at the sacred symbols, you realize that you ought to have a minimum respect towards the latter[, for] if we forget them I am not sure who will remember them.”

Thus for Lošić and Plavi orkestar the Yugoslavist orientation in music was far from an unconscious reflex to what they lived through but was a consciously chosen and carefully planned “cultural platform” through which they communicated with their audience and anyone interested in what they had to say. Although, as he put it (in Vukmir and Wruss 22), “people are not focused on our general ideas and messages, abhorring the conceptual in our thing, and are accepting the spontaneous and the obscure,” the conceptual and non-spontaneous were, in fact, the bedrock of it all. To get around the problem of the conceptual in their presentation and to naturalize the non-spontaneous, Lošić and Plavi orkestar developed a particular form of aesthetics which effectively merged the two living traditions (that of folk and revolutionary music) and borrowed heavily from both in terms of a presentational style. Tapping into the traditional forms was of strategic importance for two principal reasons: giving the band’s call for a return to traditional values a matching stylistic aura and thus making it authentic; and de-intellectualizing the platform offered and having it appear as coming from the people, spontaneously. The latter, in particular, was fairly strategic for making sure that Plavi orkestar’s platform was devoid of elitist and, thus, pretentious tendencies, and was given non-alienating populist and, thus, as broad an appeal as possible.

Crucial in Plavi orkestar’s conceptualization of the Yugoslavist platform as a form of cultural interventionism was Lošić’s collaboration with Malcolm Muharem, the band’s

manager and the *de facto* “intellectual co-conspirator” behind the idea. Labeling the approach as a “Bosnian artistic experiment,” Muharem very lucidly pointed to the premeditated in Plavi orkestar’s preoccupations with Yugoslavism, and the artistic strategy of an “idealization of tradition” as its definit(iv)e basis. As he puts it (in Vukmir and Wruss 23):

Our position is that only that which is based on traditions can exist. [O]ur attitude is that given the historical moment our milieu and our society are at, a return to [revolutionary] traditions and their reexamination are the necessary means of gaining ground under our feet [. . .]

Idealization of tradition is romanticism of a sort which, in a situation when everything is in crisis and when people are struggling to survive, becomes a necessity [. . .] [R]ecalling tradition [. . .] is not an industry of oblivion; it is rather, I would say, an industry of remembrance. Remembrance is offered as the power to work things out within ourselves.

Thus, in the context of the strategy employed, a recollection of the past is not a hermetic self-contained process but rather a strategic means of reflecting upon the present. Its ultimate value is the elucidation of the past’s absence in the present and, in a sense, the confrontation with the present which denies the past the dignity of existence. As a form of cultural interventionism, therefore, Plavi orkestar’s new partisanism is, in Muharem’s final assessment, “not a glorification of the things passed but an identification with the resistance” (in Bašić and Maleš 23).

On a larger plane, Plavi orkestar’s new partisanism figures as an insertion of the crucial (and crucially missing) cultural bloodline into the socio-cultural tissue of Yugoslav society in crisis. According to Lošić (in Bašić and Maleš 23), “the cultural platform of Yugoslavia is definitely dead and the culture today consists of life alone.” What he means is that the present moment does not have a particular aesthetic as the foundation for “real life” (which is the reason for disenchantment and the nationalistic re-enchantment) and that the task of Plavi orkestar is to reintroduce one as a necessary foundation for resisting the disenchanting present. To that end, the band’s New Partisans “total(izing) aesthetic” (i.e. one that includes musical, visual and overall presentational style) is an attempt to “re-enchant the world” and stir it away from the present. Its totalizing effect is manifested in its all-encompassing aspect (i.e. the fact that it deals with all, or as many as possible, dimensions of contemporary Yugoslav society), and in its all-encompassing reach. The latter implies that the aesthetic is fundamentally populist in its orientation, aiming for the broadest possible appeal, and that it uses populist means to reach its audience and to envelop everyone – hence the “traditional revolutionary music,”¹⁶ the “traditional revolutionary look,” the “traditional revolutionary aesthetic” and the “traditional revolutionary message.”¹⁷ On the other hand, the totalizing effect also suggests that Plavi orkestar’s New Partisans engagement has a pedagogical function that ultimately aims at educating and “enlightening” everybody, or at least everybody within their audience. Understood this way, the band’s new partisanism posits itself as a new cultural project (or platform) of fundamentally populist scope that is at the same time, because of its pedagogical moment, elitist and, because of its non-elitist reach, populist. Or as Muharem puts it (in Bašić and Maleš 22): “*Orkestar* is aesthetical totalization because it audaciously takes the iconography of the bottom and the methods of the élité [and creates] the totalizing aesthetic which encompasses everything and attempts to not permit anyone to step out of any of its segments.”

At its broadest, Muharem argues that Plavi orkestar’s platform is a revolt against the elitist concept of culture fundamental to Yugoslav society, i.e. the kind of cultural dynamic grounded in a dichotomy of the “enlightening mechanism” of the elite culture (or, as Bregović calls it, “rape by a piano”) and the “(un)culture of the masses.” As he has it

(in Bašić and Maleš 23), “we are arguing for an all-encompassing concept of culture which will enable representation of the creativity of the last peasant,” and for the form of cultural experience that will not prioritize and valorize one particular or indeed any cultural expression over others. Thus understood, Plavi orkestar’s new partisanism is a cultural parallel and complement to Bregović’s notion of the Yugoslav idea of a somewhat different type and its premise of all-inclusive ideological pluralism as the political foundation of Yugoslav society. Fundamentally, the two are oriented towards the same kinds of normative demands and ethic(s) and aesthetics of living inherent therein.

Plavi orkestar’s Yugoslavist platform was inaugurated in 1985 on the band’s first record, *Soldatski bal*. The intent behind the record was expressed through its cover artwork – a reworking of The Beatles’ famous *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* cover – which offers the band’s cultural perception of Yugoslavia by bringing together the 49 most important cultural icons, selected not on the basis of “objective criteria or relative importance” but by “way of nostalgia.” As Lošić states (in Janjatović 20): “we have used the way of nostalgia[,] and I take these [people] as myths from my childhood channel, from a bird’s eye view, and not because they are imposed by some historical context.” In addition to the band’s Yugoslav heroes, the cover is graced with the Yugoslav flag and the red star, thus providing an unequivocal visual referent to Plavi orkestar socio-cultural inspirational and ideological point of departure. On the musical plane, *Soldatski bal* projects the band’s Yugoslavist socio-cultural platform by broadening the rock idiom with traditional folk elements and, in doing so, merging the two – from the point of view of official culture – culturally incompatible musical forms. The strategy behind the symbiosis was two-fold: acknowledging the *de facto* existing cultural reality of Yugoslav society – namely, that folk-music is the *default* music of the Yugoslav (popular-)cultural sphere and thus the most populist cultural expression that there is; and shaking up the elitist concept of culture by testing the boundaries of its tolerance through an irritation (such as recording a duet with Nada Obrić, one of the most popular folk singers at the time).

At the immediate musical plane, the song “Stambol, Pešta, Bečlija” is the band’s most direct expression of its Yugoslav orientation and an acknowledgement, through invocation of its foundational axiom of “brotherhood and unity,” of the socialist cultural normativity as the *de facto* principle of the all-encompassing cultural experience. Crafted as a series of heartfelt expressions of genuine friendships among “comrades” from different parts of Yugoslavia, and peppered with easily recognizable local cultural references, the song accentuates the idea that, as the chorus has it, “here all people are the same; here all people are good.” The same idea is also behind the three guest singers in the song who, through their different regional accents united in harmony, “help carry the same emotion throughout different parts of Yugoslavia” (Lošić in Milosavljević 43). As Lošić puts it (in Janjatović 20): “‘Stambol, Pešta, Bečlija’ is ‘brotherhood and unity’ incarnate – a mini-Band Aid.”

The 1986 follow-up to *Soldatski bal*, *Smrt Fašizmu!* [Death to Fascism!], furthers Plavi orkestar’s Yugoslavist platform by offering the totalizing aesthetic of new partisanism. Overall, the record is motivated by a desire and need to shift an understanding of rock’n’roll and its position in society from the terrain of the oppositional to the plane of the affirmative. As Lošić puts it (in “Rock and Roll” 2):

I believe it is time that we leave behind the understanding of rock’n’roll and its iconography as the force of destruction and come to appreciate its spirit as the force of construction and as one of the pillars for building socialist revolution and socialist self-management.

Thus, the ultimate aim in this respect is to reinsert rock'n'roll into society as a new constructive cultural alternative whose *raison d'être* is to aid the society in crisis and offer viable solution(s) to the acute socio-cultural cancer. In Lošić's view, the crucial problem of Yugoslav society is the absence of a cultural platform generative of a specific "aesthetics of living" and a corresponding social spirit that would affirm rather than deny the Yugoslav cultural framework and experience. In this context, he sees rock music as an important socio-cultural vehicle with the potential to intervene within society and promote the "Yugoslav referent" as *the* marker of an affirmative aesthetics of living and a constructive form of culture. Hence, *Smrt Fašizmu!* and its totalizing aesthetic of new partisanism.

The premise of Plavi orkestar's record *Smrt Fašizmu!* was the use of the Partisan war film genre, a specific cultural expression of a concrete period in the history of Yugoslav society, as a generalized scenario for re-examining a particular aesthetic of living (see Bašić and Maleš 22). Central to it was not the genre's subject of revolution but the fact that the revolutionary ethos nursed in these films had, in retrospect, a strategic socio-cultural (and perhaps even pedagogical) function of fostering a specific Yugoslav spirit as the foundational element for the worldview of the generation that grew up on them. In other words, the Partisan war movies were important not because they were about the war but because they were grounded in particular moral and ethical themes that very much shaped the aesthetic of living of Yugoslav citizenry at a specific point in time. In this sense, it was the films' specific kind of "aesthetic *Weltanschauung*" in the form of a "generalized scenario" that was, in Lošić's view, fundamental for the aesthetic of living in real life and thus generative of a constructive Yugoslav spirit and the corresponding (popular-)cultural platform. Thus what *Smrt Fašizmu!* as a form of socio-cultural intervention had as its ultimate objective was re-examination of the logic of a "Partisan aesthetic" as a symbolic vehicle for a specific aesthetic of living and reintroduction of the former as, in Lošić's view, a desirable and even necessary symbolic referent for facing and dealing with the carcinogens of the current socio-cultural moment. In taking up the subject of the Partisan aesthetic, therefore, the intent was not to accentuate the past by glorifying it but rather to aestheticize it and offer it as a symbolic foundation for the resistance to the present moment of "disenchantment of the Yugoslav world" (i.e. its de-Yugoslavization) and its "nationalistic re-enchantment." Hence "aestheticization of politics" as the foundation for *Smrt Fašizmu!*'s "reflexive extrospection" on the contemporary socio-cultural realities of the society and the basis for a new Yugoslav(ist) cultural platform.

For Lošić, *Smrt Fašizmu!* is essentially an adaptation – without ironization – of a Partisan war film into the music form (see Miletić, "Povratak u izloge"; Tomić and Đorem, "Saša Lošić"). Thus its cover functions as the movie poster, visually encapsulating the record's normative essence: most of the space is devoted to a picture of an old woman (who, in the context of Partisan imagery, symbolizes the purity of struggle, the dedication to a cause, and – on a grander scale – the determination of the Yugoslav people to resist occupation) standing in front of a red communist flag, with the bottom of the cover depicting the fascist leaders Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini overseeing the mobilization of Nazi troops. The top of the cover has the band's name prominently displayed in the color shades matching those of the flag, and symbolically indicating identification with everything that the Partisan portion of the cover represents; the bottom part of the cover has the slogan "death to fascism!" covering most of the visualization of German Nazis and Italian Fascists, indicating a resolve to write them off. The title of the record itself is suggestive of the affirmation of the Partisan legacy, because "death to fascism!" was

the first part of the revolutionary greeting slogan during World War II: in full, the slogan proclaims “death to fascism! – freedom to the people!”

Musically, the record boasts Partisan folkloric imagery and revolutionary composition as the basis for expressing the moral and ethical themes of the Partisan war films and, ultimately, creating an “aural revolutionary aesthetic.” The opening track, “Fa, fa fašista nemoj biti ti (jerbo ću te ja draga ubiti)” [Fa, Fa, Fascist Don’t You Be (Because I Will Kill You, My Dear)], is perhaps the most explicit example thereof:

Do you remember, my dear, the king Peter
who left the country in such a hurry¹⁸
it’s then that you left me, my dear
with my head hurting and my heart full of pain

Your mother is crying, your father is crying
because you got seduced by a blond German
you left with him, I don’t need another
in the whirlwind of war, all I’m left with is a sorrow

Now you are warming up a pie for Hitler’s son
while throwing away my bouquet of hyacinth
you became a lady of dark brothels
and I’ll be cooling off Truman’s eggs

If you ever receive this letter, my dear
I’m sorry to say, but we never loved each other
look at the sky, a star falling
summer is coming, and I’m gone

Fa, fa, fascist don’t you be
because I will kill you, my dear

The song opens with the sound-images of aircraft flying over and dogs barking, symbolizing the occupation of Yugoslavia and the beginning of war. For the main character, this is also a personal tragedy because of his sweetheart going astray and falling in love with a German soldier. This aberration immediately turns her into a fascist and, therefore, an enemy. The remainder of the song uses an unequivocal language to accentuate the dichotomy between “good” and “evil” (i.e. fascists and anti-fascists) and cast the whole situation in a highly moralistic tone. In this context, the moral of the story is quite clear: if you decide to align with the fascist you do not deserve any love, and – by default – your right to live is suspended. With regard to its composition, the song relies heavily on Partisan folklore in terms of its relatively simple tune and the way the lyrics are sung: every line is repeated, with the repetition backed up by additional voices. The two are the staples of a traditional singing style as a song-learning method whereby the initial singing is used as a way of introducing lyrics and melody to peers, and the repetition functions as a means of joining in and learning the song bit by bit.¹⁹ This was also the principal method used by the Partisans during the war to sing and transmit their revolutionary messages. Ultimately, by adopting the traditional-revolutionary compositional aesthetic Plavi orkestar is not only artistically authenticating an expression of the Partisan ethos but also declaring its artistic commitment to the revolutionary values that ethos enunciates.

At the level of general socio-cultural intervention, *Smrt Fašizmu!* is grounded in Lošić’s concern with the broadening of the Yugoslav cultural platform through “syncretic amalgamation” of the country’s heterogeneous socio-cultural elements. As such, its focal point of concern is the realm of the cultural-ideological. In a way, Lošić’s *Smrt Fašizmu!* wades the same waters as Bregović’s *Pljuni i zapjevaj moja Jugoslavijo* in that both records are concerned with loosening the country’s ideological rigidity – the latter

within the sphere of socialist politics, the former within the general framework of socialist culture. They are also on the same page with respect to the belief that, since the political and cultural foundations of Yugoslav society are multinational and multi-ethnic in their very essence, its political and cultural ideology ought to be broad enough to address and reflect these in the most meaningful fashion. Thus, in the same way that Bregović ultimately does not see a contradiction or tension between his idea(l) of the politically multi-perspectival Yugoslavia and the country's socialist political-ideological basis, Lošić is also convinced of the complementarity between the country's socialist cultural-ideological essence and (the possibility of) the culturally multi-perspectival Yugoslav society. Therefore, just as Bregović considers syncretic political pluralism as the only viable political option for the Yugoslav state, Lošić sees syncretically amalgamated cultural pluralism as the only real cultural bedrock for Yugoslav society. The latter is perhaps best illustrated in *Smrt fašizmu!*'s juxtaposition of partisanism and religion as, in the conventional cultural-ideological formulation, two diametrically opposed and (almost) mutually exclusive worldviews, but, in Lošić's (re)interpretation, "differently complementary" forms of Yugoslav socio-cultural experience. Or, as he puts it:

syncretism therefore in the form of everything being part of Yugoslavia – religion together with our glorious tradition [...] Represented are both offensive and defensive religion, from all places, but in a mild form[.] In other words, without partisanship [...] We are creating a reconciliatory state – Yugoslavia with all of its differences. (In Miletić, "Povratak u izloge" 34)

Lošić's idea(l) of "Yugoslavia with all of its differences" is most directly addressed in the song "To je šok" [That's a Shock] which centers on the bewilderment within an "earthly-secular being" at having a religious experience. Indirectly (but conspicuously), the complementarity of differences is suggestive in the way most – if not all – songs on the record have their rhythmic/expressive foundation(s) in the folkloric music idioms of Yugoslavia's diverse ethnic communities. In this, the ultimate objective of *Smrt fašizmu!*'s socio-cultural interventionism is to make explicit that the legacy of the Partisan revolutionary tradition (i.e. the socio-cultural principle of brotherhood and unity) is, if applied in its true spirit, not merely conducive to the syncretic amalgamation of Yugoslavia's socio-cultural diversity – it is its finest and most valuable expression.

Dino Dervišhalilović: "Entire Yugoslavia One Courtyard"

If Bregović and Lošić used the New Partisans platform to interrogate and ameliorate Yugoslavia's ideological foundations (the realms of the political and the cultural), Dino Dervišhalilović, the leader of Sarajevo's rock band Merlin, employed it as a means of reflecting on the state of the country's ethical and moral fabric. For Dervišhalilović the crux of the crisis of Yugoslav society has to do with the all-pervasive attitudes of cultural nihilism and cultural snobbery which are, in his view, tearing apart the cultural fabric of the country and threatening its moral and ethical collapse. Correspondingly, Dervišhalilović's artistic engagement has as its ultimate objective the restoration of true moral and ethical values on which Yugoslav society was originally founded through an appeal to a particular form of "moral-ethical partisanism."

In many respects, Dervišhalilović considers the problem from the viewpoint of an ordinary working-class person and tries to address it through a non-intellectualizing gut-feeling reflex. He observes the world from the vantage point of a "commoner" and reflects on what he perceives straightforwardly and without unnecessary rhetorical flourishes. For him, the matter is self-obviously clear: the cancer of Yugoslav society is the superficiality and disingenuousness of its current form of culture, manifested in the

all-pervasive nihilist attitude and in the supremacy of materialist shallowness. What Yugoslavia needs more than anything else, in Dervišhalilović's view, is a return to the true values of "substantive genuineness" and moral commitment to "trans-material goals." For him, the latter are encapsulated in the revolutionary ethics of World War II partisanism, whose essence is centered on the "purity of idea," "honesty of thought," and "unwavering commitment to a cause." In the end, these are the ultimate moral and ethical virtues sorely needed as a cure for the pathology within the Yugoslav cultural fabric.

The partisanism of Merlin's 1986 record *Teško meni sa tobom, a još teže bez tebe* [It is Difficult with You, but Even More So without You], therefore, is an attempt at invoking authentic revolutionary Yugoslavism as the original and supreme expression of the country's moral and ethical foundations, and, in this, appealing for a "return to the real." Its essence is encapsulated in the record's title and, even more directly, the album's cover which juxtaposes the pictures of Marilyn Monroe and the young Partisan Marija Bursać as symbolic representations of the two diametrical sets of ethics and morality – the decadent Western and the true Partisan. Dervišhalilović is unequivocally on the side of the latter and the direct association of the image of Marilyn Monroe with the phrase "it is difficult with you," and the image of Marija Bursać with the phrase "[...] but even more so without you" is a clear insight into his engagement with the problem. As he explains it:

the record's cover [...] has on the one side a picture of Marilyn Monroe and the text – "it is difficult with you," and on the other a picture of a Partisan Marija Bursać and the second part of the verse – "and even more so without you" [...] I wanted to stress the subtlety of the concept of war and post-war morality, character and youth's spiritedness, and to express the sadness that we seem to be having less and less of it. Do you talk to young people? All that's in their heads is money, cars and popularity, with most of them not having any or even being able to have it ever – therefore boredom, sadness, alcoholism, depression; thus the "I don't care" attitude. It's been a long time since I heard someone being praised by the words: "That's a really good person." Rather, the praises today are: "That one has really a lot of money." That is why I find it "even more difficult without Marija." I don't want to be guilty if in the year 2000 Marija says: "I'll throw myself on the tank for 50,000 dinars," and so she gets paid out by the order of the platoon's commander! My God, what sorrow [...] (In Tvrtković 14)

For Dervišhalilović, the country's cultural aberration is painfully evident in the attitude of snobbery and the glorification of superficiality within everyday social encounters and interactions. He sees these as highly degenerative cultural phenomena because they not only prioritize false cultural values but also because, more fundamentally, they generate socio-cultural rifts between people and foster dehumanizing cultural hierarchies antithetical to a genuine(ly) socialist-humanist society. As he puts it:

I wish we could go back and live the way we used to – to the times when we used to gather in front of our buildings and played music. Today in Sarajevo, to get into top five bars you need a pass. If you are a journalist, or a good-looking chick, or a rocker – no problem, you can get a pass. But if you are a factory worker, no pass for you. And this is where I see us lacking that revolutionary morality. And that's why we find it even more difficult without all those known and unknown Partisan lady-comrades [...] Therefore I invite all rockers to organize a national tour this coming winter under the banner "entire Yugoslavia one courtyard" [...] It would be very beneficial if we could get it into our heads that we are all on the same side of the barricades, that we are all eating the same bread. (In Misirlić, "Cijela Juga" 3)

Given the gravity of the situation, Dervišhalilović is quite adamant about the need to resist the moral and ethical down-spiraling and to actively promote the "revolutionization of our moral-ethical selves" by looking up to the Partisan past. Failing to do so will invite

the spreading of “primitive cultural experiences” and their destructive tendencies of “separate and divide.”

The essence of Dervišhalilović’s perception and experience of Yugoslavia’s moral malaise is projected through the song “Cijela Juga jedna avlija” [Entire Yugoslavia One Courtyard] in which he both diagnoses the nature of the problem and offers the course for its solution:

Belgrade is dancing, Novi Sad is dancing
Tuzla, Sombor, Zagreb, Titograd
entire Yugoslavia one courtyard

Merry estrada, a parade of stars
full of ingenious entertainment and young girls
I’m not sure what’s with me tonight
I’m so nervous

Hey young flower, come to me
the one next to you is telling you lies, and the cops are after him
I’m your real man, a worker, a countryman
come with me – don’t be sad

Serbs, Bosnians, Blacks, and Albanians
were never strangers in my city
so, c’mon, what’s up with you

Belgrade is dancing, Novi Sad is dancing
Tuzla, Sombor, Zagreb, Titograd
entire Yugoslavia one courtyard

You come, or you don’t
either way, it’s all the same to me

The principal conflict in the song is between the liar with the cops on his back (symbolizing a decadent Westernized local) and the real, authentic, working-class Yugoslav. The former is not only trouble to be avoided but also bad news not to be trusted; the Yugoslav, on the other hand, is an incarnation of genuine goodness and – although not as superficially slick as the former – fundamentally of the right moral and ethical compass. This idea is incarnated in the all-embracing attitude that “entire Yugoslavia is one courtyard,” and the attitude that “Serbs, Bosnians, Blacks, and Albanians were never strangers in my city.” The affirmation of the Yugoslav’s “Partisan traditionalism” is accentuated musically by the weaving of folkloric and rock’n’roll idioms in the form of blending of the female vocals characteristic of traditional Bosnian village-style singing and the song’s rock’n’roll bedrock. On a broader plane, the fusion is also suggestive of Dervišhalilović’s central contention regarding the essential compatibility between the essence of the old and the demands of the new, and of his position that the wellbeing of Yugoslavia’s moral-ethical fiber depends crucially on the reanimation of moral-ethical values of the country’s Partisan-revolutionary past. Hence Dervišhalilović’s new partisanism as, ultimately, a means of Yugoslavia’s moral-ethical – and thus spiritual – rearmament.

New Partisans and the poetics of the patriotic: a conclusion

The New Partisans was the last socio-cultural music movement of SFR Yugoslavia and, in all crucial respects, the end of music of commitment. The poetics of the patriotic and the spirit of reconstruction that defined the movement’s socio-political *praxis* were the final, but perhaps most radical, expressions of the “music revolution in thought and practice” that began a decade earlier with rock music’s substantive turn and the first music

movement of the New Wave. With the New Partisans, the notion of substantive engagement as the foundation of rock music's (pre)condition for meaningful existence in society would shift from the terrain of subculture to counterculture and be reformulated as the radical negation of the given and a fundamental opposition to the nationalist(ic) antithesis of Yugoslav societal essence. The primary reason for this was in the fact that, differently from the New Wave and the New Primitives which formulated their respective poetics *within* the contours of the existing and, ultimately, engaged with what they thought to be its aberrant and/or problematic aspects and manifestations, the New Partisans forged its philosophy and practice *against* the contours of the existing and in the face of what were perceived as fundamentally destructive socio-political, socio-cultural and moral-ethical developments. Therefore, while the attitude underlying the *praxis* of New Wave and New Primitives was one of, fundamentally, amicable quarrel with the given, the stance informing New Partisans' socio-political engagement was one of, fundamentally, head-on confrontation. Although all three movements shared a constructive disposition towards the Yugoslav socialist community, its affirmation in the case of New Partisans had to be expressed through qualitatively different ways and means – a call for a revolution rather than an appeal for amelioration.

The radical and revolutionary nature of the New Partisans was both a source of its strength and a cause of its hardship, which was manifested in the polarization of Yugoslavia's cultural-political authorities (and public) on the issue of the movement's character, methods and ultimate intent. On the one side, there were those who recognized in the New Partisans and its poetics of the patriotic a genuine and sorely needed impulse to revitalize the crumbling foundations of Yugoslav socialist community, and who understood its methods of revolutionary folk-rock aesthetics as a constructive and strategic means to a (much) great(er) socio-political end. Perišin's commentary (9) is quite illustrative in this regard:

To place the revolution and its traditions in the midst of not so rosy a reality and draw from its steady well the ideas and solutions means first and foremost to work on their updating and modernization [. . .] In this significant socio-economic and political moment when our country is facing great difficulties there is, perhaps more than ever, a need to emphasize those, primarily ethical, principles and virtues characteristic of our revolutionaries before, during, and after the war that we seem to forget all too easily.

On the other side, there were those who (mis)read the New Partisans' music-aesthetic pastiche of Yugoslavia's folkloric/revolutionary idioms and the movement's unabashed Yugo-(senti)mentality as nothing but a profanization of the sacred values and traditions of the glorious achievements of Partisan socialist struggle, and who therefore dismissed the whole project as nothing more than an attempt to reduce the revolution and its legacy to the banalities and trivialities of immature and fundamentally irresponsible popular-cultural embezzlement. In their eyes, the New Partisans and its politicization of rock music was a return to a highly problematic "estradiation" of a revolutionary tradition rooted in the 1970s trend of transforming the essence of Yugoslav socialist culture into exploitative profit-driven mass-cultural clichés. The crux, and foundation, of this position is perhaps best captured in Ivanjek's 1977 commentary on "original partisanism" (19), where he writes:

If in the eyes of the young generation the Partisans are turning into Mirko and Slavko couriers,²⁰ then it is better to be without them or to simply accept them as the typical heroes of popular art without a referent to this or that revolution and with no particular normative basis that justifies their existence.

Implicitly or explicitly, Ivanjek's stance was a cognitive referent for much of the critique charged against the New Partisans and the movement's perceived bastardization of all that

was lofty and exalting. The polarization and debate that followed in certain respects helped the New Partisans agenda for it brought to wider public attention the matter ordinarily relegated to the sphere of popular culture and its concerns, and made it – for a while, at least – enter into the general Yugoslav *conscience collectif*. The polemic tone that grounded much of the for-or-against forensics on New Partisans’ poetics of the patriotic, however, also took away from the movement’s potency because it placed its principal advocates in a situation where their idea(l)s and the artistic-aesthetic strategies they employed to (attempt to) realize them were quite often put under critical scrutiny and were therefore in need of repeated justification and defense. The latter, ultimately, stifled the New Partisans’ revolutionary spirit for it hindered the intended strategy of permanent cultural offense, forcing it into periodic thrusts of artistic-aesthetic retrenchment. This, in addition to the fact that in the hands of less competent and – why not say it – less scrupulous pop-music “agitators,” the ideas of New Partisans were to a significant degree voided of their philosophical-normative suppositions and reduced to substance-deprived forms of mass-cultural candies, made the movement gradually lose its socio-political steam and, as the 1980s were drawing to a close, dissipate into the unconscious of Yugoslav (popular-)cultural memory. Shortly thereafter, the idea(l) of Yugoslav socialist community followed suit.

Notes

1. The mid- to late 1970s was a time of popular-cultural revolution in Yugoslavia. Inspired largely by the British punk music revolution of the mid-1970s, its essence was the “substantive turn” of Yugoslav rock music – i.e. the radical transformation of rock’n’roll from a cultural form that understood its essence as a particular performative style to a cultural expression that was animated by a clearly defined normative substance. Before the substantive turn the cultural significance of rock music in Yugoslavia was assessed in terms of its ability to approximate, as faithfully as possible, the style and standards of Western rock’n’roll performance; after the substantive turn the cultural importance of Yugoslav rock music was assessed in terms of its ability to engage meaningfully with the realities of life in Yugoslav society and to communicate meaningfully to its audience. The end-effect of this revolutionization of rock music was its recasting as a form of socio-cultural *praxis* – that is, as a purposeful and meaningful artistic undertaking grounded in serious artistic dedication to society and responsibility to audiences.
2. For Sartre, foundational to “literature of commitment” (*littérature engagée*) is the notion of artistic engagement based on artists’ serious responsibility to society. The literature of commitment is thus predicated on the artist adapting freely made choices to socially useful ends, and defining himself by consciously engaging in willed action. In this context, “engaged art” is a freely chosen artistic endeavor predicated on commitment to society and responsibility to audience. Its ultimate objective is social usefulness rather than artistic self-involvement. In Sartre’s view, “art of commitment” is the polar opposite of bourgeois art for art’s sake.
3. Broadly, the history of Yugoslav rock music can be divided into four phases: first from the mid-1950s to the mid- to late 1960s; second from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s; third from the early 1970s until 1977; and fourth from 1977 until the late 1980s. In the first phase, rock’n’roll in Yugoslavia is a relatively marginal phenomenon tied to a few larger urban settings with a non-existent rock’n’roll industry. Rock music’s public visibility during this period is confined to weekend dance parties where the local acts use a primarily “reproductive approach” in an attempt to emulate as closely as possible the new rock’n’roll style and sound coming from the West (see Žikić; Vuletić 863–65). The second phase marks the beginning of Yugoslav rock’n’roll making first significant inroads towards full-fledged socio-cultural legitimation and institutionalization. The most significant developments of this phase are the rise of the first professional rock bands (such as Kornji Grupa and Indexi) and an all-around technological, performative and stylistic professionalization of rock’n’roll – i.e. access to better instruments, a more serious approach to music, and better playing; a more defined sense of style and target audience; and gradual transformation of weekend dance parties into the first rock’n’roll concerts. These are coupled with two important infrastructural developments – the rising recording

industry and increasingly rock-accepting (if not necessarily rock-friendly) media outlets – which secured the presence and visibility of rock music under Yugoslavia’s socio-cultural sky. The third phase is hallmarked by the rise and establishment of Bijelo dugme, Yugoslavia’s most important rock’n’roll band, and Buldožer, the country’s most important alternative rock band. The significance of Bijelo dugme and its leader Goran Bregović lies in introducing the first viable form of fully professional and authentically domestic rock music within Yugoslavia’s cultural landscape, and in transforming it from a marginal socio-cultural phenomenon to a central popular-cultural referent of Yugoslav youth culture (see Vukojević, “Dobrodošli u osamdesete”). The significance of Buldožer, on the other hand, rests in its being the very first Yugoslav incarnation of “rock’n’roll underground” and in introducing the new approach to music, performance and image previously unknown to (or not experienced by) the local rock’n’roll audience (see Glavan). Together, the two bands represent the most important foundations and precursors to the new rock sensibility inaugurated in the fourth phase. The beginning of the fourth phase is marked by the formation of the first punk scene in Slovenia in 1977, followed by the subsequent development throughout the 1980s of the three most important music movements: New Wave, New Primitives and New Partisans. Essential for this phase is the emergence of a new and distinct rock sensibility, coupled with a new type of poetics oriented towards communication that is meaningful, truthful, and oriented towards the real, the present, and the immediate. Effectively, the fourth phase is the period of revolutionary transformation of Yugoslav rock music and its substantive turn (for a cursory overview of the history of Yugoslav rock music, see Ramet, *Balkan Babel* 127–49; see also Ramet, *Rocking the State* 103–39).

4. I use “music movement” to denote several important aspects of Yugoslav rock music and its relationship to the Yugoslav socialist community: (1) the centrality of music as a cultural resource of socio-political empowerment; (2) the intentionality of using music to a strategic socio-political end; and (3) the fundamentally constructive relationship between Yugoslav “rock forces” and official society. Thus music movement is meant to encapsulate conceptually the strategic importance of rock music as an engaged popular-cultural force in the struggle for the affirmation and realization of (the ideal of) the Yugoslav socialist community. Moreover, it is meant to convey that the utopian imaginary which fueled the socio-cultural engagement through rock music had its source within Yugoslav society itself rather than in some form of imported, or external, socio-cultural transcendence of the existing.
5. Of the three music movements, New Partisans has the most problematic status in terms of ex-Yugoslav cultural memory. The invisibility of its mid- to late 1980s socio-cultural existence is overwhelmingly a consequence of an extensive cultural revisionism throughout the region in the 1990s, whose strategic objective was to reconstruct the cultural histories of emerging post-Yugoslav societies according to the demands of new post-socialist nationalist ideologies. Nevertheless, the traces of New Partisans’ popular-cultural legacy can be found in the works of Slovenian rock band Zaklonske prepeva and, in particular, their 1998 album *Novo vreme – stare dileme* (see Stankovič 107–09). More recently, in his review of the 2009 record *Muzej revolucije* by Sarajevo’s Zabranjeno pušenje, Amir Misirlić observes that “this is a revolutionary album that speaks against the spirit of new times, and I would call it a some sort of ‘new partisanism’” (see “Amir Misirlić”).
6. New Wave’s “poetics of the real” thus addressed the problem of youth’s invisibility in Yugoslav society as a meaningful social agency in the context of the country’s “new socialist culture,” while New Primitives’ “poetics of the local” focused on the dominant culture’s hypocrisy of privileging non-local cultural experiences as the national cultural foundation. Finally, New Partisans’ “poetics of the patriotic” dealt with the dominant culture’s nationalist turn and the dissipation of the foundational social and political values of the revolutionary past. The basis for all three variants of the “poetics of the present” was a radically new mode of expression whose central preoccupation was a direct and unmediated reflection on the here-and-now of one’s social experience and one’s existence in the world, and whose mode of expression was a language that was straightforward, honest and devoid of unnecessary stylistic and rhetorical adornments.
7. The 1980s was a decade of gradual political, economic and cultural unraveling of the Yugoslav state, bolstered by increasingly complex ethnic tensions and conflicts. Of particular importance for contextualizing New Partisans’ poetics of the patriotic are (1) the unrest in Kosovo which began in March 1981 and continued throughout the decade, intensifying in the second half of the 1980s; (2) the 1984 public debate about the status of the Yugoslav anthem, part of which was an open call for a new national song; (3) the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of

Arts and Sciences, released in September of 1986, that became a rallying point for Serb nationalists; (4) the rise to power of nationalist leaders Slobodan Milošević (in 1987 as the new leader of the Communist League of Serbia), Franjo Tuđman (in 1989 as the founder of the HDZ), and Alija Izetbegović (in 1990 as the founder of the SDA); and (5) the dissolution of the Communist League of Yugoslavia at its 14th Congress held in January 1990. There is a voluminous literature detailing and analyzing events leading to the break-up of Yugoslavia (see, for example, Crnobrnja). Bregović's song "Kosovska" from Bijelo dugme's 1983 record *Uspavanka za Radmilu M.* was a reaction to increasingly tense Serbo-Albanian relations in Kosovo, while the 1984 rendition of "Hey, Slavs" from the band's eponymous release was Bregović's reply to the public debate regarding the national anthem. In the same vein, the "Yugo-centric" orientation of Bijelo dugme's 1984 record and Plavi orkestar's 1985 release *Soldatski bal* were artistic antipodes to de-Yugoslavization of the country's political and socio-cultural fabric, while the 1986 records *Pljuni i zapjevaj moja Jugoslavijo* (by Bijelo dugme), *Smrt Fašizmu!* (by Plavi orkestar) and *Teško meni sa tobom, a još teže bez tebe* (by Merlin) all confronted the rising tide of ethno-nationalism of the pre- and post-Memorandum period. Finally, Bijelo dugme's *Ćiribiribela*, released in 1988, was a meditation on the "nationalist deluge" of the late 1980s, symbolically anticipating the drowning of the official political incarnation of the Yugoslav idea at the decade's close.

8. Until the early 1980s, the cultural milieu of Sarajevo was, for all practical purposes, the great unknown within the socio-cultural fabric of Yugoslav society. While Belgrade and Zagreb, as the two principal socio-cultural centers, had their cultural stamps firmly imprinted in just about any region of the country, Sarajevo's image was that of a "dark vilayet" (*vilayet* is an Arabic-derived word for one of the chief administrative divisions in Turkey that, in a Bosnian context, refers to an administrative province within the Ottoman Empire) – i.e. the place from which, with a few notable exceptions, nothing culturally significant ever comes. If Sarajevo was known to the outside world it was primarily through "the jokes about Mujo and Haso, the aroma of *ćevapi*, and the sound of Bijelo dugme" (see Todorović 26). At the root of the city's cultural invisibility was Sarajevo's core-periphery relationship with the country's principal cultural metropolises, the source of which was the cultural inferiority complex ingrained in the collective mind of the local official cultural authorities. Compared to the cultural output of Zagreb and Belgrade, Sarajevo's cultural offerings were perceived as not sophisticated enough and lacking the luster of "veritable culture." In other words, they were seen as "primitive" and therefore as something that ought to be either hidden from Yugoslav cultural eyes or re-specified so as to conform to the officially accepted and recognized cultural mould. Not only were Sarajevo's cultural realities taken as the sources of uncomfortable cultural inferiority, but the language itself (i.e. the way Sarajevans communicated in their daily lives) was considered a cultural anomaly to be rectified through aggressive linguistic interventionism by the local cultural authorities (see Zildžo in *Sarajevski New Primitivs* 24). The consequence of the linguistic and, more broadly, cultural purges within the Sarajevo milieu was a cultural double life which relegated the authentic in the local socio-cultural universe to the sphere of dark peripherality while elevating the inauthentic(ally forced) to the status of the city's illuminating culturability. The ultimate message was that the way one is is not the way one ought to be, and that, in order to be, one needs to alter who (and where) one is. Hence the image of Sarajevo as the dark *vilayet*. Not only was this the image through which the country – if it was noticing it at all – framed its regard for Sarajevo's socio-cultural milieu, but also the prism that filtered the latter's regard of itself. It was only with Emir Kusturica's unabashed embrace of Sarajevo's "cultural peculiarity" as the source of artistic inspiration and expression for his internationally acclaimed 1981 directorial debut *Sjećaš li se, Dolly Bell* that the city's linguistic, cultural, and sociographic distinctiveness was transformed from a source of discomfort and shame into a source of pride and affirmation of local individual and collective identities (on Kusturica's "artistic localism" see Aleksić). Kusturica's film and the subsequent cultural affirmation of the New Primitives' poetics of the local mark the awakening of Sarajevo's new socio-cultural conscience and the forging of the city's new socio-cultural relationship to the rest of the country.
9. For Abdulah Sidran this is "trans-historical Sarajevo" as a "metaphysical congregation of the local Balkan collective destinies, traditions, cultures, emotions and mentalities" (in Joković 38).
10. The first organized attempt to reintroduce "partisanism" occurred in the fall of 1972 under the slogan of "nicely fitting Partisan jacket" (*lijepo stoji partizanska bluza*). The overall intent of the action was to resist the destructive influence of "imperialism" (i.e. cultural Westernization of

Yugoslav society) and an appeal for a return to the true moral values of Yugoslav society. The operation had two fronts of action – music and fashion – and was, as one of the high officials of the Yugoslav Peoples' Army put it, a “happy marriage of Partisan spirit and attire.” The musical front had the task of invoking the spirit of true moral values by offering songs that celebrated the heroic Partisan legacy and values of the World War II Partisan liberation struggle, while the fashion front had the function of recreating the Partisan revolutionary spirit by (re)introducing revolutionary “designer clothes.” Thus, the overall aim was to arm Yugoslav youth with an appropriate spirit and appropriate style and, in doing so, invoke a sense of proper and authentic moral/ideological disposition. Despite these best intentions, however, the “nicely fitting Partisan jacket” action was a short-lived, one season, effort: “buttressed with pomp and revolutionary slogans, the action failed at the most important level – that of the market. The clothes were piling up in the warehouses of *Kluz* [one of Yugoslavia's biggest clothing manufacturers and retailers], while the unscrupulous youth kept on wearing the menacing jeans with ‘Made in USA’ tags” (see Luković, “Boris Bizetić” 255). The crucial difference between the “nicely fit Partisan jacket” action and the *praxis* of New Partisans was that the former was animated “from above” while the latter welled up “from below.”

11. For a detailed account of the history of Sarajevo and a discussion of the city's complex multinational fabric, see Donia.
12. Also important is the fact that Bijelo dugme, Plavi orkestar, and Merlin were the first bands to openly advocate Yugoslavism through their music and that the outpouring of Yugo-sentimentality by a number of artists and bands in the late 1980s gained prominence only after New Partisans' poetics of the patriotic met with commercial success.
13. All English translations are by the author.
14. The term “New Partisans” is Bregović's coinage first mentioned in an interview with Dušan Vesić (see Vesić).
15. Reflecting on the importance of Bregović's engagement, Krstić (15) writes:

If one were to put it bombastically, one could say that with “Kosovska” the Yugoslav rock'n'roll revolution penetrates all regions of Yugoslavia and that ought to generate – even if Bregović is unaware of what he is working on – significant consequences. On the plane of daily politics, he has done more against the counter-revolution in Kosovo with this song than all other political forums with their sloganly conclusions. Not to mention that Bregović made a million people for the first time ever sing in a language of one of our peoples and of the nationality they effectively do not understand. One now only needs to wait for some sort of rock'n'roll scene to emerge in Albania itself, which is something that today appears inevitable.

While Krstić might have been somewhat overly enthusiastic about the inter-national ramifications of Bregović's proactive political stance, he was on the right track, or so it appeared in 1983, as far as local effects were concerned. Bregović's “Kosovska” did indeed become the most popular song on the record and, as far as rock music goes, the most popular song in Albanian ever in Yugoslavia. Owing to its popularity, for the first time in its career Bregović's Bijelo dugme played concerts in Kosovo.

16. To that end, Muharem states (in Bašić and Maleš 23) that “we insist on using unpopular forms, and a form of revolutionary music is completely thrown into obscurity.”
17. As Lošić puts it: “I simply cannot stand primitive forms any more. It is not an escape from rock or folk-rock, but to me rock somehow appears to be an untouching music – sterile so even home-makers listen to it. However, some sort of folk has remained as some kind of an inheritance, some sort of a spirit [. . .]” (see Miletić, “Povratak u izloge”).
18. A reference to Yugoslavia's pre-World War II monarch who, at the first sign of Hitler's attack on the county, fled abroad.
19. The same method is used by, say, US army recruits.
20. The characters of a highly popular Partisan comic strip.

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