

## NEW WAVE IN YUGOSLAVIA: SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

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**Abstract.** *This paper analyzes the social and political implications of a popular culture music trend known as New Wave in SFRY. This trend was created in Great Britain and USA by the end of the 1970's but it "moved" to our country, as well, due to its openness to Western culture. The Yugoslav New Wave was not a sheer copy of the Western trend but it managed to create its own original music expression becoming a phenomenon of one generation. The most popular new wave bands (Prljavo kazalište, Azra, Haustor, Film, Lajbah, Šarlo akrobata, Električni orgazam, Idoli) left a significant mark on the society, generation and the whole epoch not only in the sense of the music they created but also in the social, cultural and political sense. The New Wave was an avant-gard music trend whose ideals were reflected in simple musical forms, characteristic ideological engagement, visual presentations (music album covers and posters) and particularly in their lyrics full of irony, allusions and metaphors in relation to the establishment of the time. The paper compares the Western and Yugoslav new wave and punk music with a reference to their achievements and influence which is still present in contemporary culture.*

**Key words:** *New Wave, Subculture, SFRY, Socialist ideology, Urban culture*

### INTRODUCTION

The new music trend, known as *New Wave*, originated in Great Britain and the United States of America in the late 1970s. This music genre represented a break from the previously popular sound characterized by guitar reefs and long guitar parts as well as from the socially unengaged song themes. With its short, choppy rhythms and the lyrics with an openly critical, sardonic attitude, it created a socially engaged music. It was less the matter of music skills and more of having an idea. Thus, *New Wave*, having created a critical attitude towards society with its unique music style and way of life, with its redefinition of the basic social values and its own existence, represented something culturally new and original.

Since the SFRY was considerably open towards the Western culture at that time, punk and New Wave appeared in our country, as well. From the point of sociology, it is important to interpret New Wave as a subcultural and urban phenomenon which openly confronted the parental and dominant socialist culture. New Wave represents a phenomenon through whose unique music style the whole generation of young people strived to create their own identity. Notwithstanding the fact that New Wave, being an urban cultural phenomenon, moved the borders of the urban culture, it also gave it a modern dimension unprecedented by any other subcultural phenomenon before or after it.

The most influential bands of the period were *Prljavo kazalište*, *Azra*, *Haustor*, *Film*, *Pankrti*, *Lačni Franc*, *Lajbah*, *Šarlo akrobata*, *Električni orgazam* and *Idoli*. Other popular bands, such as *Luna*, *La Strada*, *Paraf*, *Laki pingvini*, *Boa*, also belong to the new wave bands.

#### THE SOCIOLOGY OF SUBCULTURE

The concept of subculture first appeared in the American sociology in the 1940s where it defined and acknowledged the heterogeneous minority social groups in the American society. However, to study subcultures as a sociological phenomenon it is essential to move further into the past, to the 1920s and mention the *Chicago School of urban sociology* whose representatives were first to study the relationship between the traditional society, on one side, and the delinquent groups, on the other (Perasović 2001: 8). Throughout the period ranging from the twenties to the 1950's, Park, Wirth, Burgess and other Chicago sociologists studied gangs as the particular forms of deviant and delinquent urban groups applying Durkheim and Merton's anomie theory. It is important to state that the class issue was emphasized when studying these subcultures (the data showed that the majority of the delinquent youths were of the working class origin). The concept of class as essential in understanding delinquent groups was exploited in later studies, as in the theory of Albert K. Cohen. In his work *Delinquent boys*, the author states that since the dominant system of social values is the one embodied by the middle class which the working class children cannot ever achieve, they turn to the streets where they create their delinquent subcultures. Yet, Cohen concludes that the way delinquent boys behave in their gangs is not the criminal behavior in truth (according to him, it is more the issue of "short-term hedonism"). In most cases, their behavior is nothing more than spending time in their blocks and looking forward to some fun. (Božilović 2009: 15).

Birmingham School of sociology played a crucial part in the study of the phenomenon of subcultures in the 1970's. The theoreticians and sociologists like Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdidge, Phil Cohen and others, used the concept of class, as well, but they added the issue of the age-group emphasizing that the collective experience particular for one age-group influenced significantly the youth subculture. In their work *Resistance Through Rituals, Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (1976), Hall and Jefferson define subculture as the working class youth culture which confronts the dominant social values with its style and symbolical rituals. (Vučković 2003: 32).

Albert Cohen defines four characteristics of subculture: style, jargon, music and ritual. Dick Hebdidge, the prominent representative of the Birmingham School, considers style to be the crucial feature of subculture; therefore, he defines subculture as *the form of resis-*

*tence* in which the contradictions and complaints about the ruling ideology are indirectly presented through style. Hebdidge might be the first, but not the only one, who defines subculture using style as the starting point. Michael Brake also regards style as the external manifestation of subculture and a certain kind of symbolic communication reflected through image, poise and jargon (Brake 1986: 19). Style is an unavoidable constitutive element in forming the subcultural identity. Hebdidge defines subculture as the meaning of style, style being the symbolic violation of the social order. Hebdidge states that style is rich in meaning and "our task" is to "discern the hidden messages inscribed in code on the glossy surfaces of style, to trace them out as 'maps of meaning'" (Hebdidge 1980: 28). The Serbian sociologist of subculture, Ratka Marić, similarly identifies the *area of symbolic action* in subcultural style and its basic integral elements – *image*, i.e. the physical appearance, *music*, *poise* (bearing, gestures) and *jargon* comprised of a particular vocabulary, pronunciation and some hidden meaning that transfers the message and retains the mystery (Marić 1998: 178).

In the beginnings of the subcultural grouping, the music preferences corresponded to style in most cases. The early period of subcultures is characterized by the fact that clothes, behavior, hair-style and jargon could clearly indicate the music style that the young preferred. Judging by the clothes, it was easy to guess the name of their favourite band. However, the contemporary situation is different in that the music preferences do not necessarily stem from the style. Individual music preferences and their style need not be related. For example, the sneakers brand *Converse All Star* (commonly called *Starke* in Serbian) which has always been "reserved" for the lovers of punk, rock and other related music subcultures is nowadays worn by young people belonging to various youth groups that are completely opposed to the already mentioned subcultures. Folk singers of all ages are keen on wearing this sneakers brand in their public performances which is the image their fans faithfully follow. Music preferences, style and ideology may be appreciated in the same manner. In the consumer society, style need not be connected to a particular system of ideas. Within a particular music subculture, there might exist individuals or even groups of individuals with radically different ideologies that range from cosmopolitanism to ethnic nationalism (Stanojević 2007: 280). It is precisely these issues, as well as the fact that subcultures are related to the working class and the resistance to the dominant culture, that constitute the criticism of the Birmingham concept of subcultures.

Sarah Thornton is a distinguished contemporary theoretician of subcultures. She emphasizes heterogeneity, hierarchy and criss-cross patterns as the crucial features of subcultures, something that earlier theoreticians overlooked. The ideas of previous studies of subcultures, the Birmingham School in particular, according to which subcultures are homogeneous entities whose music preferences, style and ideology represent an absolute whole, are clearly unacceptable in the contemporary analysis of subcultures. The author, Sarah Thornton, studies the club subcultures and the related music subcultures. Music preferences represent the point of reference for the young people that both identifies them and distinguishes them from the rest of society. In music subcultures, it is the factor of recognition or distinction that becomes a particular music preference. Music preferences help young people to distinguish and distance themselves not only from the parental and dominant culture but also from the popular culture, mainstream and other youth groups. Starting from Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, Thornton elaborates the concept of *subcultural capital* as the basis of subcultural stratification which also reflects the social subcultural status (Thornton 1995).

The contemporary postmodern approach almost completely dismisses class in its explanation of subcultures but does not recognize any other concept as dominant. Belonging to a certain subculture is not defined by young people's ethnicity and class. The postmodern discourse has replaced the concept of subculture with the concept *lifestyle*. Such an argument is supported by the assumption that since contemporary society is overwhelmingly the society of individuals the concept of subcultures as the unifying force is less likely to offer a proper explanation of contemporary social structures. Whereas the resistance to domination is a significant characteristic of the traditional subcultures, the concept of lifestyle as such does not include any resistance to dominant culture.

Michel Maffesoli views subcultures as intrinsic to the 20<sup>th</sup> century societies and was perhaps the first to use the term *neotribalism* in a scholarly context in order to explain this concept. Contemporary subcultures, which have been evolving progressively since the 1970's, function as modern urban tribes whose prerequisite is consumer society. Consumer society allows individuals to create their own lifestyle reflected in the kind of music they listen to, clothes they wear, food they eat, places they go out to and the way they spend their spare time. *New tribes* do exist as true modern communities which connect individuals who share similar lifestyles. Maffesoli believes that youth *new tribes* perform rituals analogous to the rituals of ancient peoples. Body piercing and tattooing, clothes, the way of walking and particularly the music and dance do indicate the fact that new tribes have the same ritual form of tribal communities whose function is to confirm that they belong to the community, which is the function of integration (Stanojević 2007: 275).

Style is recognized as *differentia specifica* of subcultures as regards the concept that subculture is commonly related to – counterculture. This difference is best reflected in relation to dominant culture. Namely, while counterculture opposes basic values of the prevailing culture through an ideological and political struggle and creation of its own alternative institutions, subculture exists within the dominant culture and is not necessarily antagonistic towards it. Unlike the countercultural movement, subcultures do not aspire to destroy the dominant culture even though their values and lifestyles differ enormously. "Counterculture represents the radical wing of subculture since it is unequivocally and directly opposed to the central values of the dominant culture" (Božilović 2009: 25). Another difference resides in the fact that counterculture is realized in the form of a social or *cultural movement* while subculture is manifested through *style* in everyday life. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has given birth to a variety of subcultural and countercultural movements which are not to be studied outside the social and political context, democratic and civil society in particular.

#### NEW WAVE IN WESTERN EUROPE AND AMERICA

Punk and New Wave appeared in the countries of Western Europe and the United States of America in the late 1970's. These music subcultural phenomena represented not only the criticism of the capitalist society by approaching the ideology of anarchism but also an alternative to the previous music trend based on sympho and jazz rock and to the hyperproduction of uncreative popular music. Their lyrics, their appearance and style, their decadent behavior in concerts and in media as well as their lifestyle which commanded the drug and alcohol consumption were the means by which punk and new wave

bands strongly opposed the dominant consumer culture of the capitalist Western societies. Henry Torgue argues that, unlike the political messages that streamed through the pop music lyrics, the punkers' message was "No future". They connected protest and provocation and their music became a "clear interference into society". Their actions were destructive, irrational and perverse in mocking contemporary customs although they themselves fell victims to the masterly organized advertising campaign (Torgue 2002: 28). Punk rock and New Wave (which evolved from the so called *Postpunk*)<sup>1</sup> emphasized the ability to display one's individuality, to be different from others and to be free to express one's political views. Social and political protest mattered more in punk and New Wave than the skill of playing musical instruments or performing a guitar solo. Punk bands were very successful in transferring their views of society to their audience using simple rhythms and vulgar texts while new wave bands expressed the same ideas in a more sophisticated manner. This antisocial attitude was censored by the establishment and proclaimed socially and politically unacceptable. For instance, after the famous hits *God save the queen* and *Anarchy in the U.K.*, Sex Pistols were forbidden to perform in public so that they did their tour anonymously and their songs were banned from being broadcast on the radio (Kyaw 2009: 84).

New Wave as the music trend coming from the West is, in theory, frequently associated with the New Wave in film which is considered to be the precursor of the former. *La Nouvelle Vague* in the French film industry was based on the criticism of the capitalist social system, technocracy and alienation of modern man<sup>2</sup>. It gained its popularity in the late fifties and early 1960's through the works of prominent film directors such as Jean-Luc Godard, Françoise Truffaut, Claude Chabrol, Luis Malle. Although the ideas of the New Wave in film were outlined in France, it is in Great Britain and the USA that it evolved as the equivalent to the music movement. An overt social criticism, aesthetic experimentation, original and unconventional ideas is what the New Wave in film and the New Wave in music share. David A. Cook asserts that the New Wave in film is significant in its resistance to the conventions of the time inherited from the period of the 1930's and 40's which prevented the art of film from expressing its audiovisual possibilities to the full. Tearing down of these conventions cleared the way for the film to express various inner and outer states (Cook 2007: 235–236). I assume that the same important role may be attributed to the New Wave in music. Punk and New Wave were the music trends born out of the general resentment of the firmly established conventions that governed behavior and prescribed social norms according to the existing values and ideology as well as of the stagnating music scene.

The leading punk and new wave centres in the world were New York (particularly Country Blue Grass Blues club), London and Manchester. The most influential bands of the time were Sex Pistols, The Ramones, The Clash, Talking Heads, etc. New Wave is believed to have lasted from 1978 to 1986, but it experienced its golden days in the first four years of its existence. In the eighties, New Wave "broke into" several music trends: Neue Deutsche Welle, Synth Pop/Electro, Dream Pop, New Romantics and Dark Wave (Vukić 2010: 28).

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<sup>1</sup> Postpunk is a subgenre of the punk music characterized by a strikingly introvert and experimental sound and more morbid texts (Vukić 2010: 33).

<sup>2</sup> Godard's films *Weekend* i *Alphaville* represent good examples of such criticism.

## POLITICAL CONTEXT OF NEW WAVE IN YUGOSLAVIA

In the early 1980's, SFR of Yugoslavia was the state of liberal socialism or, in the popular terms, of "soft" socialism. Being open to the West and world social influences, Yugoslavia distanced itself from USSR and other Eastern Block countries of dogmatic socialism whose governments, hidden behind *the iron curtain*, controlled all areas of social and cultural life. Yugoslavia separated from the Eastern Block countries as early as 1948 which created the cultural atmosphere that initiated the new wave subculture in the later years. People in Yugoslavia listened to jazz in the fifties whereas the sixties were the years of rock'n'roll. Thus, the national rock scene emerged promoting the rock bands that combined traditional folk music and rock sounds (Kyaw 2009: 88). The most popular were the bands *Bjelo dugme*, *Riblja čorba*, *Smak*, *Yu grupa*, *Parni valjak*, as well as the singers such as *Miki Jevremović*, *Mišo Kovač*, *Zdravko Čolić*, *Oliver Dragojević*, *Đorđe Balašević* and others. This is how Pavle Čosić describes the relationship of these artists towards the state: "They all had one thing in common – an absolute commitment to the ideals of the self-governing socialism and Josip Broz Tito, in particular. They could not make a single record or be broadcast on radio or television unless they had in their repertoire at least one song about "comrade Tito", just like the dear little song "You can count on us". (<http://www.nspm.rs/kulturna-politika/novi-talas-kao-neverovatan-splet-okolnosti-i-kao-istorija-koja-se-pretvorila-u-bajku.html>).

The death of Tito marked the beginning of the end of the age of *Titoism*<sup>3</sup>, so that the country started to turn to the West even more and accept its social and cultural influences which were combined to suit the particular social and political circumstances in Yugoslavia in the eighties (Vučetić 2012). Whereas punk and New Wave were the opponents of capitalism in the West, these music trends developed in Yugoslavia as the criticism of socialism and panegyrics to the working class.

The end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties witnessed the appearance of a generation of young people who would become the main creative force in creating the new values reflected through various arts, music in particular, and whose originality would have a crucial effect on culture in all Yugoslav republics. New Wave offered an alternative ideology and alternative music. Their song lyrics, their performances in concerts, the graphics on their music album covers and their video spots were all the means by which the bands, applying irony, allusion and metaphor, pronounced their view of the social ideals. The study of music bands from almost all Yugoslav republics reveals this sarcastic view of social reality. The band *Idoli* and their song *Maljčiki* provide undoubtedly the best example. Natalja Kyaw analyzes this song in the following way: "The text is one continuous exeggerated affirmation of the socrealistic discourse. The lyrical subject describes his world as if he were speaking from a propaganda placard: the singing worker works hard and rejoices at his own achievements as well as the good harvest and future victories of socialism. The stanza in Russian only emphasizes the connection with Stalinism and is something that was deliberately chosen as a wise strategic move to avoid any problems with censorship. The deconstruction of the socialist working ethics is not just an attack on Stalinism, but, through the Russian example, on socialism in general and thus the ideological basis of socialist Yugoslavia" (Kyaw 2009: 97).

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<sup>3</sup> Titoism is the term used for the Yugoslav version of socialism.

The most influential music band in Slovenia was, or better to say, has always been Laibah. This band initiated the creation of the artistic movement *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (New Slovenian Art). This political and artistic group was founded in 1984, but in 1990 its members founded their virtual state with their own money, flag and passport. Out of all the bands from the former Yugoslavia, it is only Laibah that managed to have a very successful worldwide career. Petar Janjatović describes the way in which they were perceived abroad: "They attracted the attention of the European media in concerts with their totalitarian sound and the looks that were not expected from the band coming from the other side of the iron curtain. Their rapid breakthrough to the West was facilitated by the setting of the socialist realism, provoking concerts and the status of dissidents they enjoyed at home. The provocative use of the symbols of the Third Reich offended the Slovenian association of war participants. Combining the elements of the socialist realism, Nazi art and Italian futurism, they created the style that had to be noticed" (Janjatović 2007: 127). The political resistance of the artists in Slovenia was much sharper and with more extreme symbolism than in other Yugoslav republics (similar to the resistance of the new wave bands from the West to their capitalist states). The affair "Placard" dates from this period. Namely, the New collectivism as part of the *Neue Slowenische Kunst* project was assigned a task to design the placard for the Youth Day, that is, the birthday of Josip Broz. The use of the Nazi symbols upset the public considerably, but the affair was soon forgotten and the culprits were never punished which can be attributed to the rise of liberalism, individualism and civil consciousness in Slovenia at the time. Besides Laibah, there were other bands significant for the Slovenian music scene, such as *Borgezija*, *Buldožer*, *Pankrti* and *Lačni Franc*. This is how Milena Dragičević Šešić assesses the Slovenian scene: "From Buldožer, from Pankrti and Lačni Franc to Laibah and Borgezija, the Slovenian rock scene always reflected some part of the spiritual aspirations and activities of the youth subcultures, opposing both the commercial, established rock in Yugoslavia and abroad and the governing social norms and political system" (Dragičević Šešić 1992: 173).

SFRY lost its main ideologist in 1980 who was, as it became clear later, an important factor of the state integrity. A number of bands started flirting with nationalism more freely (and with orthodox faith in Serbia), such as *Idoli* and *Prljavo kazalište*. The former used the orthodox symbolism in the design of the cover for their music album *Odbrana i poslednji dani* (Defence and the Last Days) released in 1982 while the latter toured Croatia performing war songs and thus igniting nationalism (Kyaw 2009: 93). Vlado Divljan, one of the members of the band *Idoli*, has always emphasized in numerous appearances on television how the use of this symbolism was never aimed at spreading the intolerance among the republics but at opposing the dominant socialist ideals of Yugoslavianism. New Wave is often considered to be one of the first indicators of the future dissolution of Yugoslavia which also contributed to the process; however, it does not follow that this provocative behavior of the young people was militant in any way or that it called for the disintegration of the country. Although the Yugoslav New Wave was subversive from the point of view of sociology, its primary goal has always been music, not politics. Musicians worked together in the spirit of the so called brotherhood and unity (but in the true sense of the words, not by the political dictate), they participated in the festivals in all the republics and were popular in other republics as much as in their own whereas thus created communal social atmosphere served as an inspiration and a motive for those musi-

cians to express their view of the dominant culture in the original way. An interactive network of musicians was created which functioned as a whole all over SFRY irrespective of their ethnicity, religion, class, mother tongue and other social and cultural characteristics.

New Wave was also an alternative music trend. The promoters of this alternative music scene regarded the bands such as *Bijelo dugme* and *Riblja čorba* as rural. These two bands found their inspiration in the traditional folklore which they transferred into rock music. The performances, vocabulary and even the costumes of such bands reflected some unrefined and primitive quality that the West-oriented bands did not share. Their musical leitmotifs were quite different from the existential problems that the urban young people were preoccupied with, such as anxiety, limited freedom, estrangement, then political and ecological problems of their country and the whole world. *Riblja čorba* possessed the necessary critical power in its early phase which got weaker over the years only to later dissolve in the political patriotism and populism. Srđan Gojković Gile, the frontman of the band *Električni orgazam*, defines his own view of the Yugoslav music scene in the early eighties: "We thought of Bijelo dugme or Riblja čorba as rural (primitive) bands. We viewed them in the same way in which Sex Pistols probably viewed the bands like Yes or Genesis. We were just kids, punkers and our main philosophy was that everything before us was shit, that history began with us. It was not true, of course, but it was what it looked like to us back then. The sensibility that both Bijelo dugme and Riblja čorba possessed was too rural for us but that was precisely the key ingredient of their success" (www.myusicclub.com). The new wave music, which was born out of the punk music, was characterized with the technical skill of playing and provocative and bold lyrics that were the criticism of the whole system. Their songs were not necessarily love songs and even when they were, love was dealt with in the social context with an emphasis on individualism and loneliness. According to some authors, those were the first signs of the strong desire to build a civil society.

New Wave was supported by youth institutions, such as *SKC* (SCC – Student Cultural Centre) in Belgrade and it would have never reached its popularity had it not been for the media support. The shows worth mentioning are *Hit meseca* (Hit of the Month) on Belgrade TV channel, then *Diskomer* (Discometer) done by Sloba Konjević on Studio B TV channel as well as the show run by Marko Janković on the same TV channel. Equally important are the radio *Študent* (Student) and the Zagreb radio *Stojedinica* (One-oh-one). An important role was played by the record company *Jugoton* (Yugotone) from Zagreb which first released the compilation album *Novi pank val* (New Punk Wave) and then the music album made by Prljavo kazalište. The famous compilation, *Beograd: Paket aranžman* (Belgrade: Package Arrangement),<sup>4</sup> which best represented the new wave scene in Serbia, was also issued by Jugoton. The important music magazines of the time were certainly *Džuboks* (Jukebox) and *Polet* (Vigour). *Polet* was the only print medium at that time which paid attention to the young bands and printed the controversial front pages. It represented the ideological tie between the new wave bands whose aim was to render the street sensibility: "We want to be not the magazine for the young but the youth magazine", says Zoran Franičević, a journalist of *Polet*, in the film *Sretno dijete* (A Happy

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<sup>4</sup> This compilation done by three bands, Šarl akrobata, Idoli and Električni orgazam, is popular among the young even today representing an authentic creation of the time.

Child) directed by Igor Mirković, thus suggesting their wish to depict the life of the young as it was and not as it was dictated by the socialist ideal of the time.

Foreign media, especially the British and the Dutch ones, were considerably interested in the Yugoslav New Wave since they acknowledged its high quality music. *Melody Maker* printed a substantial article "Independent Punk" with very good reviews of Električni orgazam, while Pankrti got very good reviews later which allowed them the entry to the Western market. Besides the British, the Dutch magazine *Koekrand* published texts and photographs of the New Wave bands from SFRY (Vukić 2010: 165-66).

The members of the Union of Socialist Youth appreciated the popularity of the new wave bands and allowed them to use their premises for rehearsals and concerts, helped in the organization of festivals and printing of the advertising materials. This generation solidarity supports the assumption that socialist ideology was no longer, at least in the way it used to be in the past, a powerful factor of integration and grouping of the young. The Western influences had a considerable effect on everyday life in Yugoslavia with the pluralization of lifestyles, their fashion and music which all caused the strengthening of the generation identity. Since the middle of the last century, the young found their idols among the icons of the Western pop and rock culture, such as James Dean, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. The cinemas showed American westerns and contemporary melodramas, the Soviet films being few and not so popular. This policy which marked the 1960's protected the country from the influences of the Soviet politics. It also disproves the stereotype about the totalitarian socialism in Yugoslavia. Todor Kuljić assumes: "There co-existed peacefully the still desirable austere official communist values on one hand, and the private consumer values, on the other" (Kuljić 2009: 128). However, even though the ideology of the time was not a powerful force by which the young identified themselves, it still observed and controlled them. With the advent of the eighties, the young, being disgusted and wearied by the socialist values and the lifestyle of their parents, shook the basic socialist values and started forming themselves as the nonconformist generation. Cultural determinism overpowered the political one, and the generational subculture dominated the ideology.

Similarly to other states in which the punk music "corrupted" the system, SFRY attempted to protect its established values by censorship. The state officials applied various methods in repressing this "improper" behavior. The Committee for Education, Culture and Physical Education founded an office that introduced the so-called tax on kitsch (bad taste, *šund* in Serbian from the German word *Schund*) in order to control the song contents. The bands whose albums were labeled like this were not freed from paying the tax but were even more popular among the young. Some song lyrics, if found inappropriate, happened to be changed prior to recording.<sup>5</sup> For example, bands were to produce the list of the songs to be performed before the concert so as to get the approval that their repertoire was socially acceptable. The symbolism which opposed the official ideology of brotherhood and unity was banned. Artists were taken to police stations for questioning and put under surveillance. The bands were refused concert dates and concert halls and were often proclaimed *persona non grata* in the media just for the sake of being margin-

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<sup>5</sup> The band *Haustor* was ordered to remove one song from its album, the song called *Radnička klasa odlazi u raj* ("The Working Class Goes to Heaven").

alized. However, neither the repressive politics of the time managed to repress the creative energy of the young nor were the government officials consistent enough in applying it. Besides, the young people were given considerable support by the liberal politicians and some influential persons (Kyaw 2009: 99).

#### NEW WAVE AS SUBCULTURE

In Hebdidge's view, subculture is essentially the opposition to the dominant ideology represented through style seen not as the highest aesthetic values but as the new system of communication, expression and introduction<sup>6</sup>. New Wave in SFRY did represent some form of resistance to the ruling socialist ideology. The idea of socialism, whose end was seen approaching in the early eighties, was perceived ironically by the urban youth and shown in their lyrics and visual representations. The revolt was expressed towards favoring the working class (*Maļčiki* (Malchiks), *Idoli*), the lifestyle of the rich (*Zlatni papagaj* (A Golden Parrot), *Električni orgazam*), media (*Neprilagođen* (A Misfit), Film), political bonds (*Mali čovek* (A Little Man), *Šarlo akrobata*). This feeling of general dissatisfaction was summarized in the uncompromising song *Niko kao ja* (Nobody like Me) by Šarlo Akrobata, which reflected the refusal to accept the social bonds and the wish to be original and individual.

New Wave was a unique subcultural phenomenon in former Yugoslavia whose original sound and lyrics threatened the establishment and opened the new horizons and perspectives for the young. The founding values of socialism started to collapse being replaced by the new liberal and individual values promoted by this new generation. Video spots, live concerts and other public performances were the expressions of a provocative behavior totally different from the common and socially accepted norm which was reflected in the clothing, make-up, hairstyle and jargon.

The film *The Promising Boy* (*Dečko koji obećava*), directed by Miša Radivojević and written by Nebojša Pajkić, expressed this authentic new wave movement aestheticism. The main character, accidentally and almost prophetically named Slobodan Milošević, revolts against the society that surrounds him. Opposing his parents' culture and the dominant system of values, this young urban rebel confronts everyone stubbornly, remaining loyal to the ideals of his generation and the punk music. The film soundtrack was done by the new wave bands Šarlo Akrobata, Električni Orgazam and Paraf. This film confirms the fact that New Wave was the phenomenon which arose out of the cultural and generational conflict unburdened with class and social overtones.

The crucial features of New Wave are the following:

*Tied to the European and American music scene, yet original.* New Wave first appeared in the West but it developed as a subculture in SFRY out of its own resources and according to the particular circumstances of the time. This movement was open and tied to Europe and the USA, yet original and authentic. Its expression was the same – the resistance to the dominant ideology but that ideology was not the same in the West and in Yugoslavia. Whereas the punk and new wave music abroad opposed the capitalist con-

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<sup>6</sup> "... Subcultural styles are regarded as art, but only in certain social contexts (and out of them); not as timeless forms defined by the unchangable criteria of traditional aesthetics but as 'appropriation', 'theft', subversive metamorphosis, as m o v e m e n t" (Vlajčić 1980: 10).

sumer ideology, the Yugoslav movement revolted against the ideology of socialism and conformist and anti-individualistic principles.

*Alternative to the ruling ideology and music mainstream.* In Yugoslavia, New Wave represented an alternative and resistance not only to the dominant political culture (socialism) but also to the music popular culture of the time (the so-called, rural, "shepherd's" rock'n'roll).

*Avant-garde, later popular.* The new wave movement developed from the avant-gard subcultural phenomenon to the popular mainstream music (thanks to the domestic and foreign media), which inevitably happens to every subculture. Commercialization and popularity dissolved it making it more conformist and less subversive which it was in its early phase. It gave rise to different music trends that were less hermetic and less "dangerous" to the system and more to the taste of the audiences.

Yet, since the bands of the period used their music as the medium for rendering their own sarcastic view of the society, it follows that their aim was not the overthrow of the government. Their sole goal was music and the rock'n'role lifestyle. Gregor Tomc, a member of the Slovenian punk band *Pankrti*<sup>7</sup> commented upon this: "Punk was no symptom of the disintegration of the self-governing socialism, as Žižek asserted and which was later accepted by others. Punk was music. I think that we in Pankrti loved music so much and were too autonomous to take part in some agitprop, new left project" (In Kyaw 2009: 100).

#### NEW WAVE AS AN URBAN PHENOMENON

New Wave in SFRY is an example of an urban cultural phenomenon *par excellence*. An urban surrounding is a perfect ground for the creation of the pluralistic lifestyles, subcultures, social movements and alternative forms of thinking and action, which is all a necessary factor of any social change. Tolerance and understanding differences are a prerequisite for the existence of an urban culture<sup>8</sup>. The laying of the foundations of the Yugoslav urban culture started in the 1950's when SFRY, having separated itself from Stalinism, turned to the West and got influenced by its culture. It was only in those social circumstances characterized by the openness to the Western cultures that cities like Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana could become the centres of the urban subcultures, such as New Wave. Eric Gordy describes the period after World War II when there began to form two cultures in Belgrade, the urban popular culture on one side, and the culture of the new-comers or the *urban(ized) peasants*<sup>9</sup>, on the other: "City population and urban peasants differed in taste, particularly in music taste. While the urban population of Belgrade, especially the young, turned to the Western European societies and American culture developing a very influential domestic jazz and rock culture, the urbanized peasants developed a taste for the newly composed folk music, a hybrid form that tied the traditional folk music conventions to the contemporary topics, especially to the modern orchestration" (Gordy 2001: 119).

<sup>7</sup> The band Pankrti is the first punk band in socialist Yugoslavia, founded in 1978.

<sup>8</sup> "Cultural pluralism is the product of the social consciousness development and contains the components of individual and collective choices and is complementary with the principle of urban tolerance" (Pušić 2003: 27).

<sup>9</sup> The term used by Andrej Simić in the 1973 study to designate the new-comers from the rural areas who completely integrated into the urban culture.

The newly composed folk music, as the main feature of the rural influences in the urban surrounding, was in the cultural margins at the time when New Wave came into being. The urban life was determined by the rock'n'roll culture together with punk and New Wave as its sub-genres. The Belgrade youth created its rock'n'roll culture that was equal to the Western European scene. The cult Belgrade club *Akademija* (Academy) was described in *New Musical Express* magazine as one of the best underground clubs in Europe (Gordy 2001: 117-126).

The social circumstances of the time contributed to the creation of the urban subcultural identities based on individualism, freedom of speech, nonconformity, unconventionality which was all promoted by the new wave and punk bands. The new wave generation sang of individuality as opposed to the desirable collective spirit and populism and accordingly created identity. They emphasized I, not WE. Weary of collectivism maintained by older generations and the whole establishment, they revolted against it and promoted originality. It led to some sort of conflict of identity. Young rebels emphasized personal identity as opposed to collective identity which was socially accepted. This is how Zagorka Golubović defines personal identity: "Unlike collective identity, self-identity is not only a continuity in time but it also presupposes a reflexive consciousness – a self-conscious *I* that understands its own biography; namely, in order to become *I*, an individual must develop an authentic self" (Golubović 1999: 21). The refusal to be cast in the mould of a socialist man opened the question of the continuity of the system but it made the urban culture of the country even richer.

The new wave music developed not only in the largest urban centres like Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana and Sarajevo, but also in other towns in Yugoslavia, in Rijeka and Novi Sad in particular. The music scene in Rijeka has remained famous for the bands Paraf and Termiti. The influences coming from the West as well as from the Ljubljana punk music scene were felt in Rijeka more than anywhere else due to its characteristic geographic position. (Vukić 2010: 120). The Novi Sad music scene was also interesting and original with its bands Luna, La Strada, Pekinška Patka, Boye and Obojeni Program. The lyrics written by Slobodan Tišma about how it was to be "young and happy"<sup>10</sup> and live in the city are of particular interest. The city figured as a very frequent inspiration for the artists in the eighties. Besides Luna and La Strada, this is evident in the song lyrics written by Milan Mladenović. The urban setting reflected in its streets, parks, apartment buildings and apartment blocks became a frame within which there developed individualism, loneliness, some particular feel of the city and exploration of everyday urban life, their own existence but also of all the advantages of living in the city. Streets, parks, blocks of buildings were seen as the home of the urban individual. While for some people "the inn was their own destiny", the others found their destiny in the city streets. The city was the only place where the young could create the sense of themselves and say in the Fromm-like way: "I am what I am". The anthropologist Zagorka Golubović defines this shaping of the self as the process of psychological maturing: "The individual does not only become sensible to the demands of the surrounding but they also create a critical view of their own culture" (Golubović 1999: 25). Thus, the urban context was a prerequisite for the subcultural style developed by the music trend informally called New Wave.

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<sup>10</sup> The song by the same name played by the band La Strada.

## INFLUENCE AND IMPORTANCE OF NEW WAVE AT PRESENT

Even though New Wave lasted shortly<sup>11</sup>, its influence on music and culture has been quite significant. The new wave music has remained the point of interest of the young since it is almost impossible to listen to the rock music without listening to some of the new wave bands of the time. The generations who grew up with it and who "bought it forward", in a way, still remember that time so that the New Wave phenomenon is occasionally written about in newspapers or dealt with in TV shows.

The documentary *Sretno dijete (A Happy Child)* deals with the phenomenon of punk and New Wave in the period between 1977 and 1982 and explains how it was like to grow up with this music and the revolt of the whole generation. Igor Mirković, the author of the film, interviews the prominent musicians of the time in an attempt to depict the growing up of the last socialist generation and explain their views of society, but also the relationship of the state to these young artists. The documentary and experimental film made by Sonja Savić, *Šarlo te gleda (Šarlo is Watching You)*, represents another reminiscence of the new wave period and the importance of the band Šarlo Akrobata. The exhibition of photographs by Goranka Matić, which was held in Belgrade, Zrenjanin, Indija, Niš and other Serbian towns, marked the thirtieth anniversary of New Wave in 2007.

New Wave influenced the future music trends in the eighties and somewhat in the nineties. After the break-up of the new wave bands, there were founded the legendary Serbian rock bands Ekatarina Velika and Disciplina Kičme. In the nineties, the political situation changed social and cultural issues and dictated the overall development of the country. That period was not a fertile ground for the rock'n'roll bands especially because of the fact that they were not allowed to appear in the media, mainly because their rock songs were rebellious and revolted against the repressive government. However, the good music was retained and could be heard in city streets and city squares supporting citizens in their peaceful civil protests. Rock concerts in city squares were the only indicators of the urban culture in some towns. The music created in the nineties was critical, politically coloured and depressive. The bands of the period are *Partibrejkers, Darkwood Dub, Kanda Kodža* and *Nebojša, Jarboli, Kristali, Block Out, Bjesovi, Deca Loših Muzičara, Obojeni Program, Eyesburn* and many others.

New Wave played an important role in integrating the Yugoslav society and culture into the European culture so that life in our cities and towns resembled the life in any of the world metropolises. Foreign bands had live concerts in Yugoslavia, they performed together with the domestic bands and Western media reported about the music scene of the time. Even the neighbouring nations of the Eastern Block countries who lived in isolation showed a great interest for our music scene. People in Yugoslavia lived under the cover of socialist values but there appeared to be more understanding for the needs of the young and their voice was more likely to be heard than nowadays. Magazines, TV channels and

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<sup>11</sup> All subcultures share the same destiny: they come into existence, shine brightly and then vanish like falling stars. This happened to the subculture of the new wave generation: "It is not difficult to note that there has always been some imbalance between the radical cultural ambitions and inefficient means by which to accomplish them in all youth cultural movements. Eventually, and unfortunately, counterculture would often get drowned in the tangle of unexplored symbols, gestures, fashion fads, various mascots and paroles left for the future generations to finalize them" (Božilović 2004: 76-77).

radio stations were mediators between the urban youth who created the music and the urban youth who were eager to hear that music as the expression of their own ideas. New Wave was important in that "it transferred some familiar urban motives into the original rock'n'roll expression. That generation assigned itself a task to invent the Serbian rock language in the sphere of music, symbolism and image" (Vukić 2010: 181). It was then that the catchword "*Naše, a svetsko*" ("Ours but world-famous") was created symbolically showing that we were part of the world via the rock music without losing anything of our own identity. We showed the ability to understand global problems and our local, national problems within them. Finally, the new wave music emphasized the wish not to be isolated from the rest of the world. Its farsightedness surpassed economy and politics, which was its most significant and everlasting value.

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## NOVI TALAS U JUGOSLAVIJI: SOCIO-POLITIČKI KONTEKST

**Jelena Božilović**

*U radu se analizuju društvene i političke implikacije muzičkog pravca popularne kulture koji se u SFRJ proslavio pod imenom Novi talas. Ovaj pravac nastao je krajem sedamdesetih godina XX veka u Velikoj Britaniji i Americi, ali se, zahvaljujući otvorenosti zemlje prema kulturi Zapada, „preselio“ i kod nas. Jugoslovenski Novi talas nije bio prosta kopija zapadnog uzora, već je kao generacijski fenomen uspeo da izgradi vlastiti identitet kroz jedinstveni muzički izraz. Najpoznatiji bendovi ovoga pravca (Prljavo kazalište, Azra, Haustor, Film, Lajbah, Šarlo akrobata, Električni orgazam, Idoli) obeležili su svoje društvo, generaciju i epohu ne samo u muzičkom, već u socio-kulturnom i političkom smislu. Alternativna ponuda Novog talasa ogledala se u muzički jednostavnoj formi, u osobenom ideološkom angažmanu, u vizuelnoj prezentaciji (omoti ploča i plakati) i, naročito, u tekstovima punim ironije, aluzija i metafora u odnosu na vladajući poredak. U radu se daje komparacija zapadnog i jugoslovenskog Novog talasa i panka, sa osvrtom na njihove domašaje i uticaj u savremenosti.*

**Ključne reči:** *New Wave, subkultura, SFRJ, socijalistička ideologija, urbana kultura*