ISSN 2955-2508 DOI 10.37658/GR UDC 91

МАКЕДОНСКО ГЕОГРАФСКО ДРУШТВО
MACEDONIAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

ГЕОГРАФСКИ РАЗГЛЕДИ

GEOGRAPHICAL REVIEWS

КНИГА 58 TOME

СКОПЈЕ - SKOPJE
2025

ISSN 2955-2508 UDC 91 DOI: 10.37658/GR

ГЕОГРАФСКИ РАЗГЛЕДИ
GEOGRAPHICAL REVIEWS

КНИГА 58 ТОМЕ
2025

СКОПЈЕ – SKOPJE
2025

ГЕОГРАФСКИ РАЗГЛЕДИ
GEOGRAPHICAL REVIEWS

МАКЕДОНСКО ГЕОГРАФСКО ДРУШТВО
MACEDONIAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

Излегува: еднаш годишно — **Published:** once a year

Тираж: 150 — **Circulation:** 150

Електронска верзија на Географски разгледи — Electronic version of Geographical Reviews
www.reviews.mgd.mk

2025

UDC: 784.011.26:78.071]: 304(497.1)
784.011.26:78.071]:323(497.1)
DOI: 10.37658/GR255807k

THE ARTS AND POLITICS: THE STATE OF YUGOSLAV SOCIETY THROUGH THE LYRICS OF AZRA AND ZABRANJENO PUŠENJE

Goran KITEVSKI
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje
Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics
Institute of Geography
e-mail: kitevski@pmf.ukim.mk

ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines the socio-political landscape of Yugoslav society through the lyrical narratives of two influential musical bands: Azra from Zagreb and Zabranjeno Pušenje from Sarajevo. Amidst rising Yugo-nostalgia and the idealization of the former Yugoslav state, the works of these rock bands provide an alternative perspective on the complexities and challenges of Yugoslav society. By conducting a thematic analysis of their lyrics, this research elucidates the cultural and political sentiments of the era, demonstrating how popular art functioned as a medium for incisive social commentary. The study underscores the importance of Azra and Zabranjeno Pušenje in articulating dissent and shaping public discourse, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of Yugoslav identity. This examination reveals the enduring impact of their artistic expressions on contemporary interpretations of the Yugoslav socio-political context.

Keywords: Yugoslav society, Yugo-nostalgia, alternative perspective, Azra, Zabranjeno Pušenje

INTRODUCTION

In the 1949 film The Third Man, the character Harry Lime, played by the legendary Orson Welles, delivers a memorable line that goes: "In Italy for 30 years under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror, murder, and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland, they had brotherly love—they had 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock?" The quote is neither geographically, historically, nor

essentially accurate: Switzerland excelled in research fields such as linguistics, mathematics, and pharmaceutics, for example, besides producing painters, authors—such as Bodmer, Keller, Meyer, Burckhardt, etc.—and the like (Zwart, 2015), but it presents an ironic paradox: hard times foster greatness, while comfort breeds mediocrity. In this regard, art aligns seamlessly, as it is widely recognized—despite diverse definitions—as a human creative endeavor aimed at expressing emotion and/or conveying an idea through aesthetic means (see: Mijalov & Kitevski, 2018). Often abstract rather than direct, art is wrapped in symbols and perspectives, serving as a form of communication between the artist and a specific audience. This underscores the idea that hard and unstable times, as the quote suggests, provide ground in which art can flourish.

Rock music is a specific, and one of the most popular types of art. Ignored at first by social scientists, it has lately become the object of increasingly frequent scholarly analysis (Ramet, 2019, pg. 103). Generally present across Western societies, primarily in the USA and Great Britain, under specific political and historical circumstances, it took root in the former Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav rock generally stood for critical thinking, cosmopolitanism, openness, and personal autonomy (Spaskovska, 2011), and can be understood as a vigilant observer of the systemic weaknesses of the time. These qualities enabled it to serve as both a critique and a reflection of the sociopolitical conditions that defined the Yugoslav era, positioning the genre as an important cultural force that responded to and mirrored the complexities of the socialist system.

Amid the growing phenomenon of Yugonostalgia, academic discourse appears increasingly unable to effectively communicate the complex realities of the Yugoslav past to a broader public audience. In this context, the works of artists from that era take on a vital role, functioning as the voice of youth and critical reflection. Through their commentary and use of metaphor, these artists offer an alternative perspective on various aspects of Yugoslav life—ranging from the everyday struggles of the common man to the social and political order, as well as the prevailing economic conditions. Their work thus provides a culturally rich and nuanced critique that complements, and at times surpasses, the explanatory power of academic narratives. While the Yugo-nostalgic narrative often revolves around familiar phrases like "we lived in a great country," "those were golden times," "the worker and individual were valued," and "there was order and discipline," the art of that era—particularly the work of 1980s rock bands Azra (from Zagreb) and Zabranjeno Pušenje (from Sarajevo), as explored in this paper —offers a contrasting perspective. Their music highlights the societal flaws that challenge these nostalgic ideals, revealing a more nuanced view of Yugoslav society.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The primary sources for this analysis are the songs of two prominent music groups: Azra from Zagreb and Zabranjeno Pušenje from Sarajevo. Azra's extensive

discography includes over 16 albums and more than 300 songs, while Zabranjeno Pušenje (in its Yugoslav era) has released a total of 4 albums comprising 49 songs. The analysis encompasses a substantial portion, if not the entirety, of these songs, with references drawn only from those that are unequivocal and precise within the context of the study—specifically, 20 songs from Azra and 23 songs from Zabranjeno Pušenje.

The primary method employed in this study is thematic analysis, which involves identifying and analyzing recurring themes in the lyrics of the selected songs. This method is particularly suited to examining the complex layers of meaning embedded in the music, as it allows for the exploration of both explicit and implicit socio-political messages.

To fully understand the significance of the lyrics, the thematic analysis is supplemented by contextual research. The songs are situated within their historical, political, and cultural contexts by drawing on a diverse range of sources, including:

- Interviews with the band members and key figures from the era;
- Biographies and autobiographies of the musicians;
- Scholarly literature on Yugoslav history, culture, and politics;
- Media articles that provide context on the socio-political landscape.

This contextualization allows for a deeper understanding of how the bands' lyrics reflect the tensions, contradictions, and challenges facing Yugoslav society at the time. It also ensures that the analysis captures the broader cultural and political currents that influenced the creation of these songs.

Throughout the paper, the original names of the bands are retained, while all referenced albums and songs have been translated and academically adapted. Special attention has been taken to avoid the use of profane language, both in the lyrics and the titles of the analyzed songs.

While Azra and Zabranjeno Pušenje are not the only rock bands to critique Yugoslav society, they stand out for their explicit focus on fundamental societal and everyday life issues. Bands from other geographies, such as Skopje, Ljubljana, and Belgrade, could certainly enrich the analysis, but their inclusion risks oversaturating the scope of the research. Furthermore, Azra and Zabranjeno Pušenje were specifically chosen not only for their thematic relevance but also for how their active years align with Yugoslavia's final phase. Azra's rise coincided with the death of Josip Broz Tito, while Zabranjeno Pušenje formed shortly after, with both bands continuing to create until Yugoslavia's eventual dissolution.

THE SPECIFIC NOSTALGIA

It is neither new nor unexpected to see a narrative develop and deepen that the modern age, the qualities of society, and the state's organization are experiencing a downfall compared to their versions of the past. The idea of a better past appears to be as old as recorded civilization (Bonnet, 2010, pg. 19). Nostalgia, a compound word consisting of nostos (return) and algos (pain), literally means the suffering caused by

an unrelenting yearning for the homeland (Sedikides et al, 2008). It is a complex, multilayered, volatile, emotionally charged story that glorifies romanticized past times, people, objects, sentiments, and events using binary oppositions to juxtapose them against their inferior counterparts in the present (Velikonja, 2017). Yugonostalgia, specifically, is a particular kind of nostalgia (Simmons, 2009) for the fantasies associated with a country, the SFR Yugoslavia, which existed from 1945 to 1991 (Lindstrom, 2004); a very widespread phenomenon (Krašovec, 2011), as concluded by Kolstø (2014), who notes that there is a broad spectrum of nostalgia for large multicultural states that ended in the dustbin of history during the 20th century—such as Czechoslovakia and the USSR. Bošković (2013) states that it is nostalgia for socialism, and that the sentiment is the same everywhere, only under different names: for example, in East Germany, it is called Ostalgie.

The roots of nostalgia for Yugoslavia can be traced back immediately after the collapse of the country, aligning with the argument that people begin to develop memories once it becomes clear that their previous lifestyle has definitely ended—as if they want to conserve in their memories what they lost in real life (Breznik & Močnik, 2022). Just as the six republics that comprised the former Yugoslavia had their own experiences of the post-Yugoslav era, various expressions of Yugonostalgia have different nuances (Volčič, 2017), and it is remembered differently, either by condemning its repressive characteristics or by yearning for its inclusive policies (Aydoğan, 2022). For example, while in some countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, and North Macedonia, Tito continues to be viewed positively, public opinion is considerably more divided in Croatia and Serbia, where his opponents hold him responsible for post-war repression, assassinations of outspoken émigrés, and the crushing of anti-Yugoslav nationalist movements (Pavlaković, 2020). Yugonostalgia, shaped by diverse Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav contexts and experiences, manifests in various forms. The most prevalent type centers on recollections related to social welfare, including healthcare, workplace security, and education. As Takševa (2019) observes, this nostalgia is less concerned with state formation or communist ideology, and more focused on a way of life and the patterns of social interaction that characterized that era.

By definition, Yugonostalgia should primarily exist among those who lived through and experienced life in Yugoslavia, having directly felt the system they now long for. However, this specific form of nostalgia is notably prevalent even among younger generations who have no memory of the "Third Yugoslavia" (1991-2003), revealing how the sentiment extends beyond personal experience to encompass collective memory and cultural transmission. Suleymanova says that young people, disappointed with contemporary times, turn to the "golden days," which, even if they were not perfect, were still "better than today." Epithets like "golden times" have become standard expressions in Yugo-nostalgic sentiment, and they are almost always identical, echoing the positive remarks found in Bancroft's research survey (2009), encapsulated in the classic statement: "We lived in an excellent country." Other common nostalgic reflections include: "[it was so safe that] one could freely sleep on a bench in a park," "We traveled freely with the red passport," "At that time,

there was order and discipline," "Quality was valued," and "We (Yugoslavia) had the fourth strongest army" (sometimes in Europe, sometimes globally). These remarks collectively represent the idealized memory of a bygone era. Above all, the main symbol of better times and the iconography of all Yugonostalgia is Josip Broz Tito (1892-1980)—the central character in the founding myth of Yugoslavia, in its most important community-building narrative, the multinational partisan struggle (Calic, 2019, pg. 190). Therefore, the nostalgia for the good, brave, just, and visionary leader Tito, Velikonja (2008) calls Titonostalgia.

THE SPECIFIC YUGOSLAVIA

History managed to produce a total of three Yugoslav state formations: the first version, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, was formed in the aftermath of the First World War, on December 1, 1918, changing its name to “the Kingdom of Yugoslavia” (meaning “Kingdom of South Slavs”) in 1929 in order to symbolically reflect the union of South Slav peoples (but not including Bulgarians) into a single state (Trbović, 2008, pg. 104). Yugoslavia ceased to exist on 17 April 1941, the day it surrendered. Hitler and Mussolini plucked the country apart, turning it into a mosaic of annexed, occupied, and quasi-independent territories (Calic, 2019, pg. 125). The second version, the SFRY, was formed on almost the identical territory of the previous royal Yugoslavia, riding on the wave of victory in the Second World War. This republican model was initially designed according to the Soviet concept, with nominally six equal constituent republics: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Montenegro, and with the Constitution of 1974, two new autonomous provinces within Serbia: Vojvodina and Kosovo (see: Kitevski, 2020). The second, socialist version of Yugoslavia is the carrier of the Yugoslav and also Yugo-nostalgic identity and sentiment. Therefore, the remark that Yugonostalgia is in fact Titonostalgia, and/or longing for socialism, is quite accurate. The Third Yugoslavia, formally known as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), was comprised solely of two republics: Serbia and Montenegro. This political entity existed until 2003, when it was restructured into the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The union persisted until 2006, at which point Montenegro, following a successful independence referendum, seceded and established itself as an independent state, thus marking the final dissolution of the Yugoslav framework.

Under the motto ‘No rest while we are rebuilding’, Yugoslavia undertook the great task of cleaning up and repairing (Calic, 2019, pg. 171). The process of reconstruction consisted in transforming Yugoslavia and its population—the majority then living off agriculture—into an industrialized and urbanized working-class society (Bernard, 2019, pg. 45). No other European country experienced faster urban growth after WW2 than Yugoslavia (Calic, 2019, pg. 195). Formatted in Soviet style, until their split in 1948, when Yugoslavia was expelled from the socialist realm. From then on, according to Županov (1989), the state tried to find a third solution—to pave a third path of social development and construct a new model of society—neither

capitalist nor state socialist—a third path called self-managed socialism. Welcoming the Yugoslav-Soviet rift, the West commenced a flow of economic aid in 1949; it saved the country from hunger in 1950, and covered much of Yugoslavia's trade deficit for the next decade (Curtis, 1992, pg. 47). Over $419 million came from the UN program for reconstruction and development alone, the highest amount awarded to any European recipient (Calic, 2019, pg. 171). This, of course, contributed to the great economic growth in the 1950s, when GNP grew at an annual rate of 8.1% (Bernard, 2019), the world's second-highest economic growth rate between 1957 and 1960 (Curtis, 1992). During the 60s, economic emigration was already legalized, leading to a large number of Yugoslavs leaving to work in the West, something that was mostly confined to the north-western Yugoslav border region (Brunnbauer, 2009).

In the 1970s, the Yugoslav economy entered a serious recession with increased oil prices worldwide and a huge growth in the country's debt (Katrine Haug, 2012). After Tito's death, socio-economic problems in Yugoslavia began to be multilayered, determined primarily by economic decline, caused by a dysfunctional economic and political order (Križan, 1989). For example, between 1972-1982, the Yugoslav external debt increased ninefold from $2.4 billion to $20.3 billion (Cvikl & Mrak, 1996). The declining economy, burdened with massive foreign debt, unleashed the forces of nationalism, represented in inter-republican rivalries (Trbović, 2008).

The deep crisis that shook the entire socialist world showed that Yugoslavia had never ceased to be part of that world, and that its economic, social, and political system had all the important characteristics of real socialism (Županov, 1989).

ARTE ET LABORE

One of the defining features of the cultural history of socialist Yugoslavia is the rise and flourishing of rock music. Unlike other socialist countries, where such forms of Western culture were often restricted, Yugoslavia became a unique space where rock music developed to such an extent that, in terms of popularity, energy, and quality, it could stand alongside its natural origins—the USA and Great Britain. This made Yugoslavia the only socialist nation where rock thrived as part of the global cultural movement. Marie-Janine Calic (2019, pg. 211) writes that the youth of Yugoslavia were enthusiastic about bands like The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Jimmy Hendrix, and others, and despite the potentially subversive quality that this type of music had, with its critical texts and provocative poses, the state decided against repression. President Tito and his ideological theorist Edvard Kardelj are said to have personally decided against repressive responses (Ramet, 2002). Among other things, Yugoslav rock music was seen linking the youth cultures of the different republics (Volčič, 2017). According to Spaskovska (2011), punk/rock music in Yugoslavia was a well-thought reflection on socio-political reality, and it was the lyrics that mattered to fans more than the music itself.

One of the reasons rock music, as a popular art with social power, succeeded is

that institutional censorship was never publicly acknowledged, and there was never any government body established for the task of monitoring cultural production (Hoffman, 2017). In the absence of such a centralized institution or bodies, censorial practices were often hidden behind other regulatory strategies (Hoffman, 2017). As an illustration of how hidden regulatory strategies worked, we can refer to the case after the scandal with the affair Crk'o Marshal (The Marshal croaked—I mean, the amplifier), when the band Zabranjeno Pusenje almost disbanded, as their newly released album was boycotted by the media (see: Jankovic, N. 2014, pg. 262, 263). In one sense, to the extent that the communist regime left rock music alone, rock music in Yugoslavia remained "depoliticized." But on other levels, rock in Yugoslavia was political too (Ramet, 2019, pg. 126).

THE ROCK SOLID FOUNDATION

Azra was an influential rock and pop band. Formed in Zagreb in 1977, by the Skopje-born musician Branimir Štulić—now a withdrawn and ascetic man, considered a guru, a poet-philosopher (Perica, 2014, pg. 116). The band's work spanned through the 80s, hyperactively releasing over 16 albums (studio, live, singles, and compilations), with more than 300 songs, almost entirely written by Štulić himself. Although Azra officially disbanded in 1988, later releases continued to appear under Štulić's name, blurring the line between the band's legacy and his solo career, making it difficult to distinguish where Azra ends and Štulić's individual work begins. Azra's main identity lies in its explicit and precise social and political comments—a critical review of important segment of the Yugoslav system and everyday life. Štulić's lyrics, aphorisms, metaphors, and prophecies are part of the intellectual discourse in post-Yugoslav states (Perica, 2014, pg. 116).

Zabranjeno Pušenje, a rock band formed in Sarajevo in 1980, closely associated with the New Primitives movement. Over the years, the band experienced cyclical ups and downs: the release of their first album, Das ist Walter in 1984, sold in over 100,000 copies, significantly surpassed the record label's initial estimation. After the affair with Crk'o Marshal (November 1984), the band entered a period of stagnation, and by the time of their last album release (in 1989), they again had become one of the most popular acts in Yugoslavia. The band disbanded almost simultaneously with the breakup of the SFR Yugoslavia. However, the band resurrected again, this time in two factions—frontman Nenad Janković (who fled to Belgrade hours before the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina) restarted Zabranjeno Pušenje, referred to as Belgrade Zabranjeno Pušenje, while the main composer Davor Sučić, based in Zagreb, also started the band Zabranjeno Pusenje, referred to as Sarajevo Zabranjeno Pušenje, which remains active today as the legal successor of the original setup. In 1998, the world-renowned director Emir Kusturica joined the Belgrade faction, completely taking over the identity, and changing the name and concept to Emir Kusturica & No Smoking Orchestra. Since 2011, the band continued without Nenad Janković, who works under his previous established identity, as Dr.

Nele Karajlić. The core strength of New Primitivism lies in the humorous perception produced by translating the universal into the local (Prica, 1990, pg. 26)—where the setting of the work of Zabranjeno Pušenje is rooted - addressing sensitive social and political topics, humorously portraying the flaws of the Yugoslav order.

THE LYRICS

The point of view: Azra

Branimir Štulić is undoubtedly the most influential and famous (Croatian) singer-songwriter name of the New Wave. His intrinsic analysis and criticism of society, as well as the general critique of the political system, are directly or indirectly visible in most of his songs (Mrnjavčić, 2015). In songs like "The Time of Decision", "Do Something", "Hard Times", "I Can't Help Any of Us", "041", "Horror Is My Thing", "Smart and Bookish People", "When Miki Says He's Afraid", Štulić offers detailed portraits of individuals caught in the grind of modernity – overwhelmed by what is happening to them, paralyzed by the actions of others, simply angry and frustrated (Čirić, 2007, pg. 61). Zlatomir Gajić (2018, pg.181) believes that before Azra, there wasn't such a direct and unfiltered addressing of societal anomalies. And there are many of them: "Bloody Mary" (1980), where the consumerist peak of Yugoslav socialism is described – shopping tours in Trieste (Gajić, 2018, p. 248). Also, the portrait of a character "who has a successful career and works whenever he feels like it", is a portrait of an individual's disillusionment with a system in which he doesn't see a solid foundation or personal advancement through an honest and humane approach to everyday life. Instead, the lack of opportunities for planned advancement in the social hierarchy is compensated for by living on the edge of social conventions, acquiring material goods by any means necessary (Gajić, 2018, p. 248). In a similar context, but reflecting a heightened level of societal frustration, the song "Damn Angry" (1982) critiques the "all-out scramble for living space and titles," highlighting the ruthless pursuit of these goals without regard for the means employed. On the same album, Straight to the Bottom (1982), the song titled "Born to be a meek", which, according to Josip Čirić (2012, pg. 60), is the most disturbing one – a description of a person whose life is determined by the ambitions of others and who sees no meaning in what he is. "Horror Is My Thing" (1981) is a sharp commentary on urban and societal decay: "students without diplomas, women without beauty, bachelors without apartments, travelers without money" - society devastated in every segment. In the song "Always the Same Story" (1981), there is a high level of frustration with the inconsistencies of society, primarily targeting bureaucracy, the dysfunctional and corrupt, incompetence rewarding system. Through the song, it becomes evident that under socialism, work efficiency was generally low, reflecting the undervaluation of labor. At the same time, administrative roles were held in higher regard, offering better salaries and prestige, which is pretty unusual for working class ruled society. Clearly, even during that period, there were significant wage disparities

within the workforce. The pro-market economic reforms of the 1960s in Yugoslavia caused significant wage differences. Allegations of a huge discrepancy between the common worker's pay and that of a manager were widespread (Mihajlević, 2019, p. 34). Azra addresses the issue of nepotism and favoritism directly in the song "Strange Habits" (1981), where the protagonist "got hired through connections." This critique highlights a pervasive issue common in bureaucratically burdened societies, where personal connections and favoritism often supersede merit, perpetuating inequality and hindering social mobility. Disillusionment with bureaucracy is also evident in "When Miki Says He's Afraid" (1981), which observes the leveling mechanisms in Socialist Yugoslavia. One verse, "He bought an expensive car, now they're teasing him," reflects how, even in a society remembered (by the Yugonostalgia) for its egalitarianism, individuals who stand out, like the character who bought an expensive car, are singled out and mocked – a reminiscent of the Tall Poppy Syndrome observed and examined mainly in the Western societies and literature. Tall poppies are usually individuals who, on the basis of unwarranted self-adulation, itself a consequence of success, amassed fortune or fame, and have become targets for criticism; or, less frequently, individuals who, overcome by success, amassed fortune or fame, and on the mistaken assumption that they are above the law, have engaged in unlawful behavior, only to find that, eventually, the law catches up with them as well (Peeters, 2004). Social incompatibility is also woven into the song "Woman of Another System" (1980), where the protagonist is depicted as a woman with refined manners that are foreign to her surroundings, as the title itself suggests.

Elaborate protest is also present in the song "Weekly Commentary", where the group calls attention to the media practice of attacking people with different political ideas and alludes to Yugoslavia's presumption of being "the center of the world" in some usually ill-defined sense (Ramet, 2019, p. 115). Open resistance to the political regime is expressed through a paraphrase of verses from the partisan song "With Marshal Tito" (Mrnjavčić, 2015): "I'm reading the Sunday commentary which clearly says, whoever doesn't think this way is slandering and lying." Štulić also critiques media manipulation and the servility of system supporters within a dystopian urban setting in the song "City Without Love" (1981). A similar frustration with state-controlled media, misinformation, and the suppression of independent thought is echoed in "Satisfaction" (1987), further expressing disillusionment with the manipulation of public perception. Strong critiques of conformity, the fear-based pattern of everyday life, societal trends, rejection of societal pressure, media manipulation, norms, and expectations are shown in the song "Kiss Me" (1981). In "Sunny Side of the Street" (1981), through the point of view of a lonely and isolated participant in urban everyday setting, Štulić refers to people's preoccupations and worries about daily tasks, work, and societal pressure.

In "Don't Hit the Head, D.P." (1981), where the initials D.P. refer to "blue comrade" or police officer, the song delves into themes of personal freedom, particularly the desire for autonomy over narcotic use, while simultaneously addressing the issue of police brutality. The symbolism embedded in both the lyrics and the title reflects a broader societal acceptance of repression, portraying the tension between individual

liberty and authoritarian control as a normalized, yet troubling, aspect of everyday life; "68" is for failed revolutionaries, "Pavel" for romantic revolutionaries, "Bitter Taste" for political exiles, specifically referencing the ban on the collection of poems Woolen Times and the persecution of the author Gojko Djogo (Janjatović, 1998).

The song "Sons of Deceit" evokes a profound sense of fear, paranoia, and disappointment. The identity of "they" in the line "they are coming" remains deliberately ambiguous, leaving it unclear who or what this unstoppable force represents. Whether it's a reference to a political regime, societal pressures, or a more abstract threat, the portrayal of "they" as an inevitable, overpowering presence heightens the song's sense of dread and helplessness. According to some sources, the record company "Jugoton" insisted that the title of the song "Sons of Deceit" should include a note saying it is directed against "imperialism and hegemony,", and in addition, censoring the verse "The Russians are coming". It is believed that in the 1980s, Štulić was panic-stricken that the borders would be closed, that Yugoslavia would be occupied by the Soviets, and that he would be trapped in Yugoslavia forever (Radoš, 2022).

According to Jergović (2015), the song titled "Poland in My Heart" (1981) is the "birthplace of Yugoslav anti-communism". Dedicated to the emergence of the independent trade union Solidarity in Poland in 1980 (Ramet, 2019), it reflects the author's sentiment towards the societal conditions at the time. The song title "Who's Singing Over There" is borrowed from the movie comedy, directed by Slobodan Šijan in 1980, about petty bourgeois hypocrisy and the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during World War II (Mrnjavčić, 2015). The song is dedicated to Josip Broz Tito, and instead of addressing him as "comrade," Štulić refers to him as "relative" throughout the song, rhetorically asking him, "Where to next?" while also telling him that abandoned girls, drug addicts, and prostitutes depend on him. What can be drawn from the sarcastic references is a sense of political inconsistency in Yugoslavia, lost direction, and ultimately decadent results in society. References to Tito are also present in the songs "A Bunch of Discord" and "Spring Is the 13th of December", dedicated to the dismantling of his cult (Mrnjavčić, 2015).

In the later albums, there is a noticeable shift in theme, reflecting the subject's growing despair over the political and social impossibility of change. In the songs from the album Between Extremes, Štulić completely abandons the critique of society and government (Mrnjavčić, 2015), and in later albums, Azra expresses a shift in focus, reflecting on personal disillusionment and societal struggles, marking a departure from Štulić's earlier politically charged critiques, opting instead for more introspective themes and a subtle critique of the human condition (Mrnjavčić, 2015).

Point of view: Zabranjeno Pušenje

The majority of Zabranjeno Pušenje's musical works contain social and/or political commentary. Some are deeply embedded in metaphor, such as "Sunday When Hase Left" (1985), which tells the story of footballer Asim Ferhatović Hase's departure, but

in reality, refers to the death of Josip Broz Tito, with lines like "The flags of the 'Koševo' stadium lowered, a Sunday stopped so May, May could continue" Similarly, "Pklatovi" (I and II, 1989) is entirely shrouded in metaphor, leaving the lyrics open to interpretation—one of which suggests that the "Pklatovi" may represent the invasion of corrupt politicians. Some songs are more transparent: in "Selena, Come Back, Selena", the idealization of Western societies and the erosion of local culture and identity under the influence of Western values is criticized through metaphors. In "Pisonja and Žuga in the Hell of Drugs" (1989), a reference is made to the state of drug problems and societal decadence. "Girls with Fragrant Skin" (1985) refers to the culture of social pretense and fabricating backgrounds in order to gain admiration—reflecting societal pressure to conform to an image of success.

In the song "Journey in the Center of the Kreka-Banovići Mine" (1984), the protagonist, a ghost of a deceased miner, who died in a mining accident, mockingly watches charity concerts on TV, and then visits the castles of the revolutionaries from the 'fifties', evoking the irony of how the socialists very soon became precisely what they fought against (a reference to the Yugoslav red bourgeoisie). Thematically close to the story of Kreka Banovići, about the misdirection and inconsistency of the system, references are also found in the lyrics of the work "Heart, Hands, and a Shovel" (1987): the protagonist of the story is Alija Sirotanović, Hero of Socialist Labor of Yugoslavia—a symbol of the rebuilding efforts of post-World War II Yugoslavia, who, in the wake of industrialization and modernization, started to be forgotten, symbolizing the loss of personal connection to socialist values. In the song "Abid" (1984), through dialogue and a series of metaphors, the main protagonist, Abid, embodies optimism and enthusiasm as he tirelessly works for a better future. Despite being fully aware of the corruption and unfairness within the system, Abid remains dedicated to his efforts. The narrator subtly guides the conversation, further emphasizing the tension between Abid's hopeful outlook and the harsh realities of the world around him.

In the song "Wolf" (1985), the narrator yearns to embody the traits of a wolf, a necessity in a cutthroat society where one must metaphorically "step over dead bodies" to survive and succeed—a cynical commentary likely born from observing the realities of the time. Political inconsistency is also addressed in "Brut" (1985), where the story follows a character who transforms from an ordinary individual into "someone important." When reuniting with his old group of friends, he promises them a factory—symbolizing the hollow political promises that go unfulfilled.

"The Boss's Son" satirically portrays the daily life of a character surrounded by wealth and privilege. The verse "today I got my new Porsche and I'll take a little ride with it, because… I am the Boss's Son!" encapsulates the stark irony of a society where the children of leaders who advocate for equality live in luxury and hedonism. This highlights the inconsistency between the promoted ideals and the realities of the elite's lifestyle. The song "Murga the Cop" (1987) tells the story of Murga, a police officer notorious for his brutal enforcement of "law and order." In one instance, Murga mistreats the son of a prominent leader, but once he realizes the boy's identity, he bows and apologizes. This scene symbolizes the abuse of power and the corruption

within the system, where authority figures oppress ordinary citizens yet remain submissive to the elite. One of the most controversial songs by Zabranjeno Pušenje, "Republic Day" (1987), contains multiple references to the state of Yugoslav society, with a part where the protagonist, Dragan, nostalgically longs for the better times of the past on the day of the creation of the SFRY – explicitly pointing out that in the context of nostalgia, including Yugonostalgia, the time passed is always the better one. One of the most explicit critiques of socialism's inconsistencies is found in the song "Good Friends" (1987). It begins by invoking the familiar proverb, "Money spins where a drill cannot," symbolizing the influence of wealth. The song then becomes more specific, stating that "money can buy you politicians, judges, and newspapers," cynically highlighting the deep-rooted corruption within the political system and society at large. However, this critique is cleverly masked beneath an optimistic narrative suggesting that, despite everything, money cannot buy (only) sincerity and true friendship. A subtle critique of social stagnation and inequality is present in the song "The Ballad of Pišonja and Žuga" (1987), where two teenagers steal a bus, driven by their desire to visit the seaside—one of the hallmarks of Yugoslav tourism, symbolizing the idea that everyone could afford a vacation. After their plan fails, the protagonists gaze at the moon and ask rhetorically: "How can some go up (the Moon), while we can't even go to the sea?" This line powerfully illustrates the contrast between society's advancements, like reaching the Moon, and the inability of ordinary people to afford even a modest holiday, highlighting the persistent inequalities.

In the song "Uncle Sam," the protagonist is a Yugoslav citizen who owes $6,000 on the day the debt is due, symbolizing Yugoslavia's economic subjugation. The character attempts to justify the debt by stating that the country is still developing and trade exchange is weak, adding that "our wealth is brotherhood and unity, and the legacy of the People's Liberation War." Uncle Sam, the personification of the U.S. responds by asserting that he "buys everything," illustrating how, in order to service its debt, Yugoslavia is willing to surrender its core values—values that Western powers are willing to take. Zabranjeno Pušenje also refers to emigration in Yugoslav society. The temporary employment of Yugoslav citizens in Western countries was one of the most important migration phenomena in socialist Yugoslavia. In the early 1970s, one in every four Yugoslavs employed outside of agriculture and craft work was a Gastarbeiter (guest worker), representing Europe's second-highest emigration rate (Bernard, 2019). In "While You're Heading Towards Germany", the harsh and exploitative conditions in work abroad (specifically West Germany) are portrayed, emphasizing the personal sacrifice of the protagonist to have "a beautiful white German car". The harsh realities of illegal, morally questionable, and degrading work abroad are vividly portrayed in "All or Nothing." The protagonist is lured by false promises that "the job is good, and the earnings are easy," and promptly leaves for the West, presumably the Netherlands. As the story unfolds, it is implied that he has died, and Šefket Ramadani, the character who arranged the job, sends 3,000 German marks to his family. The author cynically remarks, "that's how much life abroad seems to be worth (in the West)," illustrating the devaluation of Yugoslav workers in Western societies and the reality of their exploitation. The situation with

migration trends in Yugoslavia is also illustrated in the controversial "Republic Day" (1987) – the verse "Everyone is waiting for a passport to go abroad" was censored, but only in a substantive manner: the word "everyone" was removed, so in the final version, "they are waiting for a passport to go abroad" was allowed. Davor Sučić, the author of the song, explained in an interview (Balkast, 2023) that they had to agree to the "censorship" because the very verse containing the word "everyone" is factually inaccurate. However, the final version is still precise in explaining the situation that many people saw their future outside Yugoslavia. A different type of migration is metaphorically addressed in the song "Cheyenne are Leaving" from Zabranjeno Pušenje's first album, Das ist Walter (1984). The lyrics describe the Cheyenne tribe leaving their land without resistance because it is "too small for two," while the Shoshone advance—serving as a metaphor for the situation in Kosovo and the mass displacement of the Serb population. The song's author, Nenad Janković, later elaborated on this metaphor in his book Closing Time in Sarajevo (2014), where he recalls being summoned to the Secretariat of Internal Affairs in Sarajevo even before the album's release to explain the song's meaning, highlighting its politically sensitive nature.

The Kosovo issue is again portrayed on the final, strongly politically charged album, Little Stories of Great Love (1989). In "The Guard Next to Prizren", the tragedies of war and the immense losses as a result of the manipulation of political leaders and political ambitions are depicted. Similar, almost apocalyptic, prophetic narratives are present in "Drina Canyon", and "Star Over the Balkans". The first is full of metaphors and geography-driven symbolism (river Drina, mountain Romanija, Brijuni islands) illustrating personal anxiety in an atmosphere of societal regression and accumulation of power by corrupt political leaders, but with a glimpse of optimism—"the snow is melting, nothing will stop the arrival of a new spring (meaning: changes)." The final song of the album, and of the band, called "Star Over the Balkans", presents dreamlike, symbolic imagery where, since ancient times, a bright star—representing the star of war—has been expected to appear. In the end, the narrator reveals that he dreamt it finally did, which shows that the fears of a bloody outcome in the Yugoslav wars (1991–1995) were justified, and the reasons for the conflict were evident. With this song, the album ends, the band disbands, and so does Yugoslavia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the lyrics produced by Azra and Zabranjeno Pušenje offers a critique of Yugoslav society during the 1980s, providing key insights into the complexities and contradictions inherent in the socialist state. Both bands, utilizing different stylistic approaches, present an alternative perspective to the commonly nostalgic view of Yugoslavia, critically engaging with the political, social, and cultural context of the period. Their music functions as a form of dissent, highlighting systemic contradictions, social decline, and the growing disillusionment that characterized the

late socialist era.

Azra's lyrics focus primarily on the systemic dysfunction within Yugoslav society, highlighting social decay, bureaucratic inefficiency, and the prevalence of nepotism, where personal connections often take precedence over merit. The band critiques the rewarding of incompetence, low work efficiency, and widening wage disparities, while also addressing media manipulation and state repression. Through this lens, Azra portraits a society where corruption and structural pressures hinder individual advancement and autonomy.

Zabranjeno Pušenje directs its critique towards the erosion of socialist values and the rise of a corrupt political elite. Their lyrics emphasize societal decay, cultural degradation, and the personal sacrifices linked to emigration, reflecting a broader sense of disillusionment with the society. Through apocalyptic narratives and reflections on social regression, the band critiques the tragedies of war and expresses anxieties about the impending disintegration of Yugoslavia. Both bands, in different ways, articulate a profound sense of disillusionment with the socialist state, offering critical insights into its systemic failures and cultural decline.

As the 1980s progressed, Štulić's lyrics evolved from overt political commentary to more introspective themes, mirroring the deepening economic and political crises of the period. His later songs reflect a personal sense of disillusionment and resignation, marking a shift from societal critique to an exploration of individual struggles within a decaying system. This transition symbolizes the broader loss of faith in the socialist project and underscores the internal conflict experienced by many in the face of the regime's failures.

In contrast to Azra, whose social and political commentary is concentrated in the early stages of the band's work, Zabranjeno Pušenje demonstrates a gradual evolution, culminating in their final album, where apocalyptic war narratives take center stage. This thematic progression reflects the intensifying political and social anxieties that accompanied the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Although these artistic expressions may not fully capture the complexities of daily life and the political order of the time, they hold significant interpretative value when contextualized alongside scholarly sources. In conjunction with academic research, the lyrics of Azra and Zabranjeno Pušenje offer a multidimensional lens through which to analyze the socio-political realities of the period, providing a better understanding of historical conditions.

Finally, Josip Ćirić (2012, p. 63) asserts that Štulić's critique of the state's tendency to label dissenters as dangerous, while dictating acceptable norms and threatening those who challenge the status quo with accusations of slander, remains as relevant today as it was in the 1980s. While Ćirić's "today" refers to 2012, the conclusion is timeless, refuting the Yugo-nostalgic notion that modern societies are in decline. Rather, it suggests that the systemic issues critiqued by these bands—bureaucratic inefficiency, repression, and corruption—are enduring social dynamics that transcend specific historical contexts.

Thus, the lyrical critiques offered by Azra and Zabranjeno Pušenje serve not only as a reflection of the socio-political challenges of the 1980s but also as a broader

commentary on the enduring struggles of individuals within flawed systems, both past and present. This analysis underscores the enduring relevance of their work in understanding the decline of socialist ideals and their impact on society and culture.

REFERENCES

Aydoğan, Cemre (2022): "The socialist period was a fairy tale": Yugo-nostalgia and anti-nationalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Vol. 28, Issue 2, pp. 23-54. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7501896

Bancroft, Claire (2009): "Yugonostalgia: The Pain of the Present". Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection. 787. https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/787

Bernard, Sara (2019): Deutsch Marks in the Head, Shovel in the Hands and Yugoslavia in the Heart- The Gastarbeiter Return to Yugoslavia (1965-1991), Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden, 1-273

Bonnett, Alastair (2010): Left in the past: radicalism and the politics of nostalgia, Continuum, New York, pp. 1-208

Bošković, Aleksandar (2013): Yugonostalgia and Yugoslav Cultural Memory: Lexicon of Yu Mythology Slavic Review, Vol. 72, No. 1, pp. 54-78

Breznik, Maja; Močnik, Rastko (2022): Organized memory and popular remembering: The encounter of Yugonostalgia theories with socialism, Memory Studies, Vol. 15(5) pp. 1055–1069

Brunnbauer, Ulf (2009): Labour emigration from the Yugoslav region from the late 19th Century until the end of socialism: continuities and changes, in Brunnbauer (ed.): Transnational Societies, Transterritorial Politics, migrations in the (post-)Yugoslav region 19th - 21st century, München pp. 17-50

Calic, Marie-Janine (2019): "A History of Yugoslavia". Purdue University Press, 1-443

Ćirić, Josip (2012): Kiss me... Štulić, philosophy and real life, New wave and Philosophy. Zagreb: Jesenski and Turk, pp. 57-69

Curtis E. Glenn (1992): Yugoslavia- A country study, Federal Research Division Library of Congress

Cvikl, M. Milan; Mrak, Mojmir (1996): Former Yugoslavia's Debt Appointment, Europe and Central Asia Region, The World Bank

Hofmann, Ana (2018): Micronarratives of Music and (Self-)censorship in Socialist Yugoslavia, The Oxford Handbook of Music Censorship, Oxford University Press

Janjatović, Petar (1998): Illustrated Encyclopedia of YU Rock. Geopoetika, Belgrade

Jergović, Miljenko (2015): Azra: A Small School of Political Thought, on:

www.jergovic.com/subotnja-matineja/azra-mala-skola-politickog-misljenja (in Croatian)

Katrine Haug, Hilde (2012): Creating a socialist Yugoslavia, I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, International Library of Twentieth Century History, vol. 24.1-447

Kitevski, Goran (2020): The Integrative Function of Geographic Conditions in the Formation of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political Identity on the Balkan Peninsula, Faculty of

Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Institute of Geography, Skopje, Doctoral Dissertation, pp. 1-630, (Manuscript, in Macedonian)

Kolstø, Pål (2014): Identifying with the old or the new state: nation-building vs. Yugonostalgia in the Yugoslav successor states, Nations and Nationalism 20 (4), pp. 760–781. DOI: 10.1111/nana.12071

Krašovec, Primož (2011): (Yugo)nostalgia, Atlas of transformation

http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/n/nostalgia/yugonostalgia-primoz-krasovec.html

Križan, Mojmir (1989): Of "Civil Society" and Socialism in Yugoslavia; Studies in Soviet Thought, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp. 287-306 Springer (in Croatian)

Lindstrom, Nicole (2004): Yugonostalgia: Restorative and reflective nostalgia in former Yugoslavia, East Central Europe 32(1-2): pp. 227-237.
DOI: 10.1163/18763308-90001039

Mijalov, R., Kitevski, G. (2018): Cultural Tourism, Stobi Trejd, Skopje, 1-348 (in Macedonian)

Mihaljević, Josip (2019): Social inequalities from workers' perspective in 1960s Socialist Yugoslavia. Revue d'études Comparatives Est-Ouest, 50(1), 25–52.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/27018099

Mrnjavčić, Sonja (2015): Figurative Language in the Songs of Branimir Štulić: The World of Style, URL: https://stilistika.org/mrnjavcic (in Croatian)

Müller-Suleymanova, Dilyara (2022): "I am something that no longer exists ...": Yugonostalgia among Diaspora Youth, in: Youth and Memory in Europe: Defining the Past, Shaping the Future, Media and Cultural Memory ;34, Boston: De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110733501-014

Pavlaković, Vjeran (2020): Memory politics in the Former Yugoslavia, „Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej" 18, z. 2, pp. 9-32.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.36874/RIESW.2020.2.1.

Peeters, Bert (2004): Tall poppies and egalitarianism in Australian discourse: from key word to cultural value. English World-Wide, 25(1), 1-25.
https://doi.org/10.1075/eww.25.1.02pee

Perica, Vjekoslav (2014): Heroes of a New Kind: Commemorations and Appropriations of Yugoslavia's Sporting and Pop-Cultural Heritage. In: Abazović, D., Velikonja, M. (eds) post-Yugoslavia. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137346148_5

Prica, Ines (1990): "New Wave" as an Anticipation of Crisis. Ethnological Tribune, 20 (13), 23-31 (in Croatian) Retrieved from https://hrcak.srce.hr/80623

Radoš, Marina (2022): Sons of Deceit: These Are the Lyrics of Azra's Songs That Štulić Addressed to the Soviets: https://www.index.hr/magazin/clanak/kurvini-sinovi-ovo-su-stihovi-azrinih-pjesama-koje-je-stulic-uputio-sovjetima/2342825 (In Croatian)

Ramet, Sabrina P. (2002): Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milosevic, Boulder: Westview Press.

Ramet, Sabrina, P. (2019): Shake, Rattle, and Self-Management: Making the Scene in Yugoslavia, in book: Rocking the State, Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and

Russia, Routledge, New York, pp. 1-317. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429304934

Sedikides, Constantine, Wildschut, Tim, Arndt, Jamie and Clay Routledge (2008): "Nostalgia: Past, Present, and Future." Current Directions in Psychological Science 17, no. 5, 304–7. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20183308.

Simmons, Cynthia (2009): Miljenko Jergović and (Yugo)nostalgia, Russian Literature, Volume 66, Issue 4, 15, pp. 457-469

Spaskovska, Ljubinka (2011): 'Stairway to Hell: The Yugoslav Rock Scene and Youth During the Crisis Decade 1981-1991', East Central Europe, vol. 38, no. 2-3, pp. 355-372. https://doi.org/10.1163/187633011X597225

Sučić, D. (2023, December): The Only Authentic Response to Punk, (Episode 18, Soundtrack of time) [Video]. Balkast (In Croatian) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ma0GD8qR0A0&t=4019s&ab_channel=Balkast

Takševa, Tatjana (2019): Post-war Yugoslavism and Yugonostalgia as Expressions of Multiethnic Solidarity and Tolerance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, New Diversities Vol. 21, No. 1.

Third Edition, First Printing, 1992. Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, 1-264

Trbović, S. Ana (2008): A Legal Geography of Yugoslavia's Disintegration, Oxford University Press, New York, 1-485

Velikonja M (2008) Titostalgia – A Study of Nostalgia for Josip Broz. Ljubljana: Mirovni inštitut.

Velikonja, Mitja (2011): Nostalgic/patriotic mythology after Yugoslavia. In: Perica, Vjekoslav and Gavrilović, Darko. eds. Political myths in the former Yugoslavia and successor states - a shared narrative. The Hague/Dordrecht: Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation, pp.85- 92.

Velikonja, Mitja (2017): When times were worse, the people were better. The ideological potentials and political scope of Yugonostalgia. In: Slavković M, Đorgović M (eds) Nostalgia on the Move. Belgrade: Museum of Yugoslavia, pp. 12–13.

Volčič, Zala (2007): Yugo-Nostalgia: Cultural Memory and Media in the Former Yugoslavia, Critical Studies in Media Communication, 24:1, pp. 21-38. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07393180701214496

Županov, Josip (1989): Self-Managing Socialism: The End of a Utopia, Political Thought, 26 (4), 21-36 (in Croatian) Retrieved from https://hrcak.srce.hr/113478

Zwart, Hub (2015): The Third Man: comparative analysis of a science autobiography and a cinema classic as windows into post-war life sciences research, HPLS 37(4), Springer, pp. 382–412

Gajić, Zlatomir (2018): The Rock Poetry of Branimir Štulić and Its Media Echoes, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Philosophy, Novi Sad, 1-298 (in Serbian)

Janković, Nenad (2014): Closing Time in Sarajevo, Laguna, Belgrade, 1-399 (in Serbian)

Discographies:

Azra Discography:

1980 – Azra, Jugoton
1981 – The Sunny Side of the Street (Sunčana strana ulice), Jugoton
1982 – Straight to the Bottom (Ravno do dna), Jugoton
1982 – Filigree Pavements (Filigranski pločnici), Jugoton
1982 – Single Records 1979 – 1982 (Singl ploče 1979. – 1982.), Jugoton
1983 – When Pheasants Fly (Kad fazani lete), Jugoton
1984 – Wrong Fusion (Krivo srastanje), Jugoton
1986 – It Ain't Like in the Movies at All, Diskoton
1987 – Just Like Yesterday (Kao i jučer) (Single Records 1983 – 1986), Jugoton
1988 – Satisfaction (Zadovoljština), Jugoton

Zabranjeno Pušenje Discography:

1984 – Das ist Walter, Diskoton
1985 – While You're Waiting for Dawn with the Devil (Dok čekaš sabah sa šejtanom), Jugoton
1987 – Greetings from Safari Land (Pozdrav iz zemlje Safari), Diskoton
1989 – The Little Stories About a Great Love (Male priče o velikoj ljubavi), Diskoton