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Multimedial Perception and Discursive Representation of the Others: Yugoslav Television in Communist Romania

This chapter offers insight into the way the Others, Yugoslav neighbours, were perceived by the Romanians watching Yugoslavian television in the 1980s in Timişoara, the biggest city of the Romanian Banat. This period of Romanian history, the last years of the totalitarian communist regime, was characterized by an ever-growing and ubiquitous personality cult of Nicolae Ceauşescu.[1] Romanians were forced to live in the self-sufficiency imposed by a ruler trying to prevent his citizens from any form of contact with the rest of Europe. Nevertheless, those living in the close vicinity of state borders had the privilege of watching foreign television, which had a strong signal in these regions, and thus of getting accustomed to the reality of the neighbouring countries, of learning their languages, and of finding out about the Western way of life and values. This chapter is based on a series of interviews with Romanians from Timişoara, who represented a fervent audience of Yugoslav television in the last decades of communist rule. I will analyse the way in which the image of the relevant Others, the Yugoslavs, is discursively constructed by the interlocutors who got acquainted with them by watching Yugoslavian television. In order to render a better image of the social and political context in which all this happened, I offer a brief review of Romanian television during that period, which has been characterized as the most absurd media in Europe, and I discuss the practice of watching foreign TV in socialist Europe. I draw upon the concept of otherness employed in human geography and also try to see to what extent the traces of these relevant Others can be detected today in Timişoara.

Romanian State Television in the 1980s, "The Most Absurd Media in Europe"

The history of Romanian state television (TVR) is so closely connected to Ceauşescu's era (the "Golden Age", as it was labelled by the official propaganda of that time) that, between 1965 and 1989, the two are almost inseparable (Matei 2013). After 1973, TVR becomes completely subordinated to the Romanian Com-

[1] Nicolae Ceauşescu was the political leader of Romania between 1965 and 1989, when he was overthrown and killed in the Romanian Revolution of December. He became the general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party in 1965, then head of state in 1967. While following an independent policy as regards foreign relations, Ceauşescu kept a centralized administration in the country, drastically limiting free speech and the media and tolerating no internal dissent or opposition.

munist Party; it loses its institutional autonomy and becomes a party institution. Thus, "its role of a mediator between the party, on the one hand, and the citizens, on the other, comes to an end" (Ibid.: 41).

When Ceauşescu's regime becomes aware of the enormous potential of television and realizes that it has lost control over it, the government tries to limit broadcasting to a symbolical minimum. The extreme shortage of consumer goods is thus accompanied by a drastic reduction of TV broadcasting. After 1984, the broadcasting program of TVR is shortened to only two hours during weekdays (see Fig. 1). This radical reduction, in fact a return to conditions of the pre-1965 state, has two main reasons. The first is the energy-saving program that Ceauşescu initiated in 1984, which lasted until the fall of the communist regime in December 1989 and aimed at paying off the external debt of the country. The second is the unprecedented extent of censorship. A ten-hour daily broadcast was impossible to control, thus it had to be shortened so all TVR's administrative and political censors and the ideological department of the Romanian Communist Party could oversee the entire program (Ibid.: 34).

Apart from these severe limitations, radio and television shows, movies, theatre shows, and all other forms of artistic creation were to follow the guidelines in the *July Theses*.[2] The educational and ideological role of these artistic creations had to surpass their aesthetic value, so that they appealed to the masses, especially to the workers and peasants, and put an end to the influx of "decadent" Western products.

After 1984, the ideological and cultural (later economical) politics of the communist party turned TVR into the "most absurd media in Europe" (Ibid.: 53). Nevertheless, Ceauşescu's personality cult started to form earlier, after 1973, and definitely changed the broadcast profile of TVR. His personality cult was "unique in its absurdness and pomposity", suggests political analyst Vladimir Tismăneanu (1999: 159). The charisma of the "saviour of the nation" was, in fact, a "transitory, precarious and uncertain construction" (Tismăneanu 2012) and no other southeastern European leader in the post-Stalinist era managed to construct such a forceful, systematic, and theatrical cult of personality, except maybe for Enver Hoxha (Ibid.). Daniel Ursprung compares the personality cults of Stalin, Hoxha, and Ceauşescu and notices that, in Ceauşescu's case, "the element of social integration is not as important as with the other two dictators, and the central motifs of the Romanian leader's iconography are his deification and glorification" (Ursprung 2010: 71).

Ceauşescu's personality cult, "omnipresent, grotesque and noxious" (Tismăneanu 2012), was also built and imposed on the citizens by means of Romanian state television. This "huge ideological polyp with millions of antennas"[3]

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[2] The name under which Ceauşescu's speech from July 1971, in front of the Executive Committee of the Romanian Socialist Party, is known.

[3] Alexandru Matei quotes Dumitru Popescu, who was the subtle creator of the cult of personality of Nicolae Ceauşescu (Matei 2013: 58).

becomes the ideal means of enforcing the communist ideology and ethics. Dana Mustață, in an essay on the secret watching of foreign TV in communist Romania, notices that "the media played the key role in the turning of Ceauşescu into an idol to be obeyed" (2013: 155). His age was the age of television, where the shooting camera was ubiquitous: smile and enthusiasm were the compulsory features of the coverage and reports meant to depict the "new life"; the Party and its beloved leader were the shining faces which the TV screen would introduce into each and every household (Cernat et al. 2008: 261).

After the fall of the totalitarian regime in December 1989, numerous memoirs of everyday life under communism were published in Romania. Many discuss the scarcity of TV broadcast in the late 1980s. Paul Cernat, for example, remembers: "I was watching the entire TV program, even the most boring agricultural shows, everything was of interest to me. In Ploieşti, in my grandparents' house, I was watching with them, in an old fashioned manner, the entire broadcast" (Cernat et al. 2004: 24). Cernat describes the "satisfaction full of interest with which I would watch the funerals of important communist leaders" (Ibid.: 25), when TVR did not broadcast anything else.

Watching Foreign TV in Socialist Europe

As a legitimate reaction to the reduction of TV broadcast time and the ubiquitous and subversive communist propaganda, Romanians started to look for alternatives that would satisfy their need for information and entertainment. As the televisions of the neighbouring states had a rather strong signal in the border zones, watching Bulgarian, Hungarian, or Yugoslav televisions became a way of reversing the isolation and the self-sufficiency ideal imposed by Ceauşescu's regime. Furthermore, it became a way of parting the imaginary iron curtain separating communist Romania from the West and even from the communist, but far more liberal, countries of the region.

Alexandru Matei, writing the history of Romanian television in its glorious years (1965–1983), notices that, in the 1980s, TVR relinquishes all roles, except for the propagandistic one. Instead, its place is taken by the *para-television network*:

> The object of media studies in the monotonous 1980s in Romania should be the para-television network in the country: the practice of watching foreign movies on videotapes, the satellite dishes whose installation was, paradoxically, permitted (at least in Transylvania, where no channel of national television was in range), as well as massive watching, in the vicinity of the borders, of neighbouring televisions (the best known is the case of Bulgarian TV, everyday guest of Bucharesters) (Matei 2013: 58).

Watching the "bourgeois" televisions of neighbouring states was common practice in the border zones of the Eastern Bloc. The programs of Western televisions (mainly those of Italy and West Germany) allowed people from eastern Europe to

compare their life standard with that of capitalist states, which was usually much higher. The fervent watchers thus found out how democracy functioned and got accustomed to a freedom unknown under communism. It is believed that, in the long run, Western television programs encouraged prodemocratic attitudes and undermined public support of communism (Kern & Hainmueller 2009: 379), playing a significant role in the fall of communist regimes in southeastern Europe (Nye 2008).

The majority of East Germans were regularly watching the TV broadcasts of West Germany, which were far more popular than their own. A few authors notice that West German television was subject to a constant comparison of the life standard between rich West Germany and its much poorer neighbour East Germany, which in time destabilized the political legitimacy of the East German regime (Kern & Hainmueller 2009: 379; Kern 2011; Grdešić 2014). As West and East Germany had a common language and a similar culture, this probably increased the influence of West German television, which was also paying special attention to political issues in East Germany.

In situations in which neighbours did not share the same language, language acquisition frequently happened. Thus, the Romanians learned Serbian by watching Yugoslav TV (Sorescu-Marinković 2011), the Albanians learned Italian and Serbian, the Estonians learned Finnish, and so forth. Finnish TV, for example, was transporting the Estonians on the northern border of the Soviet Union to the coloured world of entertainment and consumerism, teaching them Western values and encouraging them to dream of a better future (Lepp & Pantti 2012: 76). The role of Finnish TV in enabling a transition to democracy in Estonia in the beginning of the 1990s has been analysed in both popular and public discourse. It is believed that Finnish TV was the main agent of change that supported the fall of the communist regime, as its programming presented the Estonian with Western values and thus served as a subversive means of destabilising the totalitarian regime (Ibid.: 77).

In southeast Europe, in Enver Hoxha's Albania, the televisions of neighbouring states (Italy, Greece, and Yugoslavia) became the main connection between the isolated Albanian society and the rest of the continent. Even if forbidden, watching foreign TV broadcasts was widely spread in the border zones of socialist Albania.[4]

[4] In his collection of essays *Monologue. Mass-Media and Totalitarian Propaganda*, Albanian sociologist Artan Fuga depicts the efforts of the Albanians to intercept the TV signal from neighbouring countries in the last years of communism: "TV receivers come out on the roofs at night, immediately after dusk, and vanish in the early morning, before dawn. They are hidden in the attics. People appear on the roofs like ghosts when night falls. They silently walk on tiles, like acrobats. The whole town is like full of vampires, the spirits of the dead who rampage in the night on the roofs. … Citizens are looking for the freedom of information climbing on the roof or like squirrels on the tree, where the TV receivers are hidden in the thick leafage. Their price goes higher and higher. Tin is stolen from factories. Craftsmen who can manufacture receivers are the most sought after, the most valued among friends, neighbours and relatives. That's a secret job, which earns well" (Fuga 2010: 141).

Unlike in other socialist eastern European countries, people in Albania caught installing TV receivers or watching foreign TV programs could be sentenced to 3 to 10 years in prison. After 1973, TV jammers were mounted in the border zones, but with minimal results as it was usually possible to watch foreign TV even without TV receivers (Idrizi 2016).

In 1982, the architecture of public places in Romania changed completely, Dana Mustață remarks, as TV receivers started appearing on the roofs of buildings after the interdiction of broadcasting the world football championship in Spain (2013: 156). This practice was tacitly accepted in Ceaușescu's Romania, where State Security (Securitatea) was controlling every aspect of its citizens' lives: "The public space of the country remained clear of suppressive measures against reception of foreign television, as well as of any (functional) infrastructures obstructing foreign radio signal coming into the country" (Ibid.: 157).

A TVR document from July 4, 1982, with the title *Information concerning the Reception of Foreign Television Programmes on the Territory of Our Country*, contains a map put up by Securitatea of the "reception zones" in Romania exposed to neighbouring countries' television (Ibid.: 162). A note to this document explains that in southern Romania 6 to 8 million people were watching Bulgarian TV; 3 to 4 million Romanian citizens were watching Yugoslav TV in southwest Romania, while those in the north and east were watching programs of Soviet TV. According to this document, Yugoslavia had the highest number of transmitters sending signal into Romania (Ibid.: 158). From the above mentioned televisions, Yugoslavia's was the most liberal and had the most interesting and diverse programs (Sorescu-Marinković 2015). Furthermore, its strong signal was covering the entire Banat, the highest regions of Transylvania, and parts of Muntenia and Oltenia, where it overlapped with the signal of Bulgarian TV.

The Others Across the Border: Mediated Memories

Even if one of the bloodiest borders of Europe in the 1980s, the Western border of Romania was, in the same time, very porous and greatly facilitated the circulation of goods, people, ideas, and images. As Badenoch et al. put it, "Broadcasting during the Cold War involved complex processes of circulation, appropriation and rejection of broadcasted content that were only ever partially circumscribed by the ideological blocs" (2013: 367). Yugoslav television played a main role in shaping the view on life of the Romanians in the Western part of Romania. This space functioned as a gateway for receiving TV broadcast from the "free world", introducing the Romanians into the Western world of consumerism, getting them accustomed to Western civilization but also to the Yugoslav system of values. Thus, the Yugoslavs became significant, relevant close Others, whom the Romanians admired and wanted to imitate. Those living near the western Romanian border became a "mass of population living in Romania, but feeling towards Yugoslavia" (Gheo 2006: 122).

If we were to employ Staszak's definition from the *Encyclopaedia of Human Geography*, according to which otherness is "the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group ("Us", the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ("Them", Other) by stigmatizing a difference—real or imagined—presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination" (2009: 44), we would come across a paradox. In our case, the Others, discursively created by my interlocutors and many times stereotyped, are not stigmatized but presented in highly appreciative terms. Even if Staszak claims that the stereotypes used by the in-group to present the out-group that are "largely stigmatizing and obviously simplistic", as the out-group is coherent only as a "group as a result of its opposition to the in-group and its lack of identity" (Ibid.: 44), the stereotypes used by my respondents to depict the Others, the Yugoslavs, are mainly positive. They praise the courage, temperament, and decisiveness of the Yugoslavs, as we shall see, and moreover, the in-group, the Romanians, is constructed in relation to these Others, not the other way around. Thus, the stigma is bored by the in-group, which tries to imitate the out-group so as to become as similar as possible with the relevant and admired Others.

Otherness obviously comprises a geographical dimension, as cultural surfaces are divided by and into spatial blocs—regions, zones, countries, continents, and so forth—which are more or less homogenous. In our case, the respondents, Romanians from the western region of Romania, were divided from the Others, the Yugoslav, by the state border between the two countries, Romania and Yugoslavia, one of the most rigid borders of that time. Clearly, states need to control their borders as they are "their first lines of defence, institutions of social coercion, and symbols of a variety of state powers" (Wilson & Donnan 1998: 10). However, people living near the border are often members of "informal networks which compete with the state" (Ibid.: 10). The Romanians of Banat definitely inhabited a space "in between" in the 1980s, being anchored in the tangible territory of Romania but freely circulating in the "free world" presented to them by the Yugoslavs and Yugoslav TV.

Discursive Representation of the Others: The Yugoslavs

In order to discuss the way in which Romanians in the western part of the country perceived the relevant Others, the Yugoslavs, in the 1980s, I will resort to my research, started in 2010 in Timişoara. Initiated with the original aim of determining the degree of linguistic competence of the Romanians who learned Serbian by watching Yugoslav TV in the 1980s, the investigation developed over time so as to focus on aspects of everyday life under communism and the role of Yugoslav TV in shaping the world view of my respondents (Sorescu-Marinković 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2015). They form a real *affective community*, in Halbwachs's terms, a mnemonic group of people sharing the memory of the same experiences of everyday life

under communism.[5] The interviews on the social context in which my respondents learned Serbian represent valuable fragments of oral history, which reveal the unique perspective of the participants on the last years of the communist regime in Romania and the practices that shaped their everyday life. It is important to mention that the fifteen people I interviewed between 2010 and 2015 were in their teens during the last years of the communist regime in Romania, thus, when they talk about the 1980s, they talk about their personal maturation. The Others beside them in this process were the Yugoslavs, whom they came to know and admire mainly through watching Yugoslav TV. Apart from this practice, real contact with the Yugoslavs also existed. My respondents recalled the flea markets in Timişoara, to which Serbs would come during weekends to sell consumer goods; some of them had relatives on the other side of the border, while a few had friends belonging to the local Serbian diaspora. All these helped in circulating goods and images from Yugoslavia and from western Europe.

My respondents practically grew up with "the Serbs", as they call the Yugoslav TV, on which they watched everything: cartoons, music shows, entertainment programmes, sports, documentaries, news, educational programmes, movies, and series. They discovered consumer society through Yugoslav TV and for the few hours when they would watch it, they were granted escape from the gloomy Romanian socialism. Former Yugoslavia represented a specific civil space, based on the socialist culture of everyday life and closer to Western society than to the Eastern Bloc. The vision of Western culture and life and the encounter with its values (among which was the consumer mentality, governed by different laws: competition and predominance of personal interest, individualism as opposed to socialist solidarity, and so forth) brought about an important change in the view on life of my respondents. They could recall with incredible accuracy the wording, music, or images of TV ads they would watch on Yugoslav TV, which they loved, remembered, learned by heart and repeated, even when they did not have a clue what they were advertising.

The interviews conducted in Timişoara acted as a form of therapeutic confession that helped my respondents come to terms with the collective past, with a large swathe of history, by reconsidering and analysing their own smaller pasts. All were eager to talk about the period in question, and our conversations were frequently marked by their laughter and exclamations, indicating a high level of implication and the active process of remembering. The Others, the Yugoslavs,

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[5] For Halbwachs (1980 [1950]), individual memory can be understood only by connecting the individual to the various groups he or she simultaneously belongs to, groups that carry and support the collective memory. Collective memory encompasses thus individual memories, but it is different from them and develops according to its own laws. Therefore, only by recognizing the role of the *affective community* within which our thoughts and feelings originate can we understand how memories are reorganized and reconstructed and how the past can be better understood if we remember it together.

became part of an identity introspection, and the respondents' relations with them were looked upon as an important real and symbolic resource.

During the interviews, the Others were presented by my interlocutors in two manners: by generalization and by particularization. Thus, they talked of the Yugoslavs in general, about the people on the other side of the border leading a much better life and making the lives of Romanians brighter by offering them insight into their values and way of living. But they also recalled particular Others with whom they got acquainted by watching television, such as TV hosts and Yugoslav artists, actors, entertainers, politicians, and so forth. Sometimes, the TV-mediated knowledge of the Others was just an impetus for getting acquainted with nearby Others, the Serbs living in Timişoara or over the border. The interlocutors evoked these particular encounters and ethnic stereotypes circulating in the Banat about the Serbs and both reproduced them and tried to challenge or to explain them.

When generalizing, my respondents created an idyllic image of everything coming from Yugoslavia, including the people. Thus, the leitmotiv most of the narratives are based on is "We didn't have anything, They had it all". One of the interlocutors talks about "Them" in highly appreciative terms:

> We didn't have anything. We only had two hours of broadcasting, between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m., and then it was cut even more, and the news was only about Ceausescu. While here… Everything new in music was first aired on Serbian channels. After 1979 we didn't have anything any longer. They had sports, they had news, they had all the good music… (Mihai, male, b. 1969).

Yugoslav TV and radio hosts were remembered as having incredibly sensual voices. Smokers of cigarettes that Romanians could not buy, the voices coming from the Yugoslav ether were as vivid at the moment of remembering as they were in the 1980s:

> The voices of Serbian female speakers were something so sexy for Romanian men, incredible. All of us thought they were smoking all day long Vikend, Vek, Fik, Port and the rest, you know. Both the ones on the radio and on TV. All were the same, had incredible smokers' voices. My God, did they sound good on air! I get goose pimples now when I remember it (Romulus, male, b. 1974).

The Yugoslav and foreign music that my respondents had access to by watching the Yugoslav TV was filling a huge gap in Romania. Here, by the end of the 1970s, the state radio and TV almost completely ceased to broadcast any foreign music, while the number of politically suitable Romanian artists was constantly and drastically decreasing. The admiration for the Others on the other side of the border is also obvious in the interlocutors' veneration of Yugoslav artists. Zdravko Čolić, Oliver Mandić, Lepa Brena, Bijelo Dugme, Riblja Čorba, Bajaga i instruk-

tori, and Magazin are only few of them, whose songs my respondents knew by heart. Everybody I have talked to recalled with great delight the 1984 concert of Lepa Brena (see Fig. 2) in Timişoara, where more than 40,000 tickets were sold. It was a unique event in communist Romania, where no foreign artists were any longer granted permission to appear in front of the public:

> It was crazy with the Lepa Brena generation. She was very popular and in 1984 she came to Timişoara for a concert on the stadium. It was packed! … I was not there, I was too small, but I have some recordings and after that I found some videos from that concert on Youtube. It was extraordinary. Imagine a full stadium, I mean 50,000 people. There were folks on the grass, on the tribunes. It was all packed. And Lepa Brena on a crane for electricity, of the ones used to repair street lights, they put her up there, very high. She sang from up there. Crazy, crazy! She sang that song, you know it for sure, *Long live Yugoslavia* (Horaţiu, male, b. 1971).

Musicologist Ana Hofman talks about Lepa Brena in the context of repolitization of "musical memories" of Yugoslavia and considers her to be a Yugoslav mainstream cultural project, the first real Balkan star. The concerts she held in the 1980s in Romania and Bulgaria are thought to be not only exquisite music shows, but also political events par excellence, as "in these countries Brena and her music served as a specific 'window' to the west and a sign of the level of liberalization and democratization" (Hofman 2012: 24).

Apart from Yugoslav artists, the actors of the former federation were idols of an entire generation of Romanians, who watched all the movies and series broadcast on Yugoslavian TV. One of the TV series many of my respondents talked about in highly appreciative terms was *Vruć vetar* ('Hot Wind'), aired in 1980 on the Belgrade TV channel. The humoristic TV series follows the adventures of Šurda, a man in his mid 30s, who comes from a small town to Belgrade, the capital city, hoping to get rich (see Fig. 3). Romanians' fascination with this series went so far as trying to identify with the main character even by imitating his way of dressing—namely, wearing a hat similar to the one he was wearing. Šurda's hat became so popular in Timişoara that it made the local hat industry boom:

> Šurda, that's Şerban. Šurda comes from the main character of the TV series. From Šurda. It was a TV series, in the 1970s or 1980s. … Šurda was wearing a hat. The series was nothing special, it didn't have a special topic, it was not a police series, or love or horror. It was simply about life. And the main character was called Šurda and he was wearing a plaid hat. Sort of a communist Sherlock Holmes. And that hat immediately became a fashion icon. That very moment, the hat industry in Romania started producing Šurda's hat and everybody was wearing it. That hat was a real must those days. … The first one in our school to wear it was Şerban, this is how he got the nickname Šurda (Mihai).

The TV mediated contact with the Others also prompted real encounters with Serbs from the Romanian Banat, which is home to an important Serbian minority. Having a Serbian boyfriend was considered very romantic at that time, as Serbs possessed the language knowledge necessary to understand everything broadcast on the Yugoslav TV:

> When I was 16-17, I had my first boyfriend, his name was Vojte and he was a Serb. And so I found out about Bajaga, Magazin and the like, I can't remember all of them, but I know that Vojte would translate the lyrics for me. Boy, was it romantic! Because back then there was no Google (Laura, female, b. 1976).

My interlocutors also talk about meeting people from Yugoslavia after the fall of the communist regime. The short accounts about them emphasize the differences between the two cultures, and the Others are not idealized any longer. After years in which Romanians have learned Serbian to be able to understand what they were watching on Yugoslav TV, there is no greater satisfaction than teaching Serbs Romanian, in return:

> I got friends with some Serbs from Novi Sad who came to Timişoara to study, you know. To study medicine. And they didn't know a word in Romanian. I taught the Serbs to speak standard Romanian, you know. And this was a great satisfaction to me, for I succeeded. … The first thing I taught them was "I kiss your hands". The Serbs are no gentlemen, they are rather rough, do not offer flowers to girls, do not open the door for them, are not careful with their girlfriends or spouses. … And they do not have polite pronouns! Boy, that was hard! You can't say *you* to your professor! (Horaţiu, male, b. 1971).

As I have mentioned before, even if stereotypes are by their nature simplistic, they are not stigmatizing in this case. The Others, the Yugoslavs and the Serbs, are presented as courageous, temperamental, stubborn, nationalistic, emotional, and affectionate—qualities highly praised by Romanians, a people usually stereotyped as passive and inert:

> They are passionate, they express all their feelings and passions in a very obvious, exaggerate[d] way. What is said about Mexicans can also be said about Serbs: nobody is as sad as a sad Serb, nobody is as happy as a happy Serb, nobody is as mean as a mean Serb… You know, somehow the stereotypes go into the direction that Serbs live their life very intensely, emotionally and passionately. As well, there is a stereotype according to which they are big drunkards and break glasses at parties. That they are big nationalists and are very attached to every national aspect connected to Serbia, to Yugoslavia, whatever… And that they go forward if they have an idea, they don't have any dilemmas, they don't know what self-restraint is. If they want something, they go, they make

> noise, make a big fuss out of it, until they get it. But maybe they are normal in comparison with us, with most of the Romanians who lived under communism and are used to be quiet, not to make noise, to whisper, not to reveal our plans, nor directly, but beating around the bush, so we avoid possible problems (Şerban, male, b. 1969).

However, the nondissimulated admiration for the Others is challenged when stereotypes and real information on Serbian colleagues mingles in the discourse of some of my interlocutors:

> And I had Serbian colleagues in high school. Can you imagine, they have always had separate sport teams, they would not mix with us, they would not play football with the Romanians, but against the Romanians. All of them could play the accordion. That was a family thing. All had to learn how to play it. From early childhood. All the boys. And they were emancipated, because they came from a community which knew more, had more, was reading more and because of that they were more conceited and more aggressive. Aggressive and athletic. And obviously, our girls were madly in love with them. But some of them were really nice people (Mihai, male, b. 1969).

The Legacy: The Image of the Others Today in Timişoara

If in the 1980s the former Yugoslavia represented the most palpable image of the West for the Romanians living in Banat, after the fall of the communist regime this started to change. The stereotypes made room for a representation closer to reality, as the borders opened and the Romanians met the Others and had non-mediated contact with them. As well, Romania's prestige grew after it joined the European Union in 2007, and it was paralleled by Yugoslavia's disintegration and its symbolically being pushed away to the edges of Europe. However, the image of the relevant Others for the Romanians in the 1980s is today more present and palpable in Timişoara than ever. Undoubtedly, the multiethnic character of this central European city helped to incorporate the images of many Others in the city's imagery and consciousness. But the 1980s will probably be best remembered owing to the exquisite glimpse at the free Western world that Yugoslav TV offered to everybody in Timişoara and in the Banat, when Romania was crossing the darkest period of its recent history. The admiration and respect for the Yugoslav neighbours, which was engrained then has probably never ceased. Thus, in the last years, several Serbian restaurants have opened in Timişoara and they enjoy great popularity. Among them are Taverna sârbului ('Serbian tavern', Fig. 4) and Karadjordje restaurant (Fig. 5), names that undoubtedly have a special resonance for Timişoara's residents.

Another diner which makes direct reference to Yugoslavia this time, not to the Serbs in particular, is one called Lepa Brena (Fig. 6). Very popular in the beginning of the 2000s, this homage to one of the biggest Balkan stars of the 1980s is today

the meeting place of Yugonostalgics and turbo folk lovers—the same Yugonostalgics who were supposed to fill in the Timişoara stadium in 2012 at the long-awaited Lepa Brena concert (Fig. 7), 28 years after the first one in 1984, which was called off in the end.

Yugonostalgia—broadly defined as "nostalgia for the fantasies associated with a country, the SFRY (Socialist Federal Republic or Yugoslavia), which existed from 1945 to 1991", where "no necessary relationship exists between the temporally and spatially fragmented memories of a Yugoslav past and the present desires, expressed by and through Yugonostalgic representations of this past" (Lindstrom 2006: 233)—is known to be strongest among ex-Yugoslav emigrants and diaspora communities, many of whom left the ex-Yugoslav region after the breakup of the federation at the beginning of the 1990s (see Marković 2009: 205). These individuals "produce nostalgic discourses as a justification of their Yugoslav pasts, experiences and memories, but simultaneously, these nostalgic discourses are to be seen as an answer to the nationalistic discourses many former Yugoslavs could not identify with" (Petrović 2007: 264). Paradoxically, many Banat Romanians are also—and still—Yugonostalgic, without having ever lived in Yugoslavia. Yugonostalgia, this recently highly debated and intensely criticized concept (see Petrović 2012: 122–154), as it is expressed in Timişoara, is to be understood not so much as identification with a political system or regime. People here are emotionally attached mainly to the consumerist facets of Yugoslavia, their nostalgia being directed towards different aspects of popular culture.

Instead of Conclusions

By now, it is widely accepted that the reception of foreign televisions in the border zones of the countries of the Eastern Bloc played an important role in getting people accustomed to the values of capitalism and a Western way of life. The same happened in Romania, and the influence of the Yugoslav TV in the 1980s in the Banat was a cultural phenomenon that deserves the entire attention of anthropologists, linguists, historians, and sociologists. The Yugoslavs became the significant, relevant Others, whom the Romanians admired and tried to imitate. Today, these Others are still alive in the discourse and consciousness of my interlocutors and, after twenty years, this image has become nuanced; but the admiration still persists. The mediated image of the Others, of the Yugoslavs, that Romanians received and perceived in the 1980s was by any measure a distorted one, which partly changed after the fall of communism. The propaganda that was also present on the Yugoslav TV seems to not have been perceived, or at least not to its full extent, by the Romanians, as it was far more diluted than the propaganda being broadcast on Romanian state television. Further research should focus on the way the Others, people on the other side of the borders, of the iron curtain, are represented in the accounts of the residents of the former Eastern Bloc. The widespread idea of two separate communication blocs, with almost no points of contact, will surely be contested

and challenged by their accounts about the Others, which will unquestionably prove that cultural, social, and economic exchanges and influences occurred during that period and were sometimes prompted by the foreign media.

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TELEVIZIUNE

Joi ★ 2 iulie 1987

20.00 Telejurnal

20.15 VIAȚA ECONOMICĂ — LA ZI ÎN AGRICULTURĂ

20.25 INVITAȚIE ÎN STUDIOURILE RADIOTELEVIZIUNII (C)

Participă Maria Slătinaru-Nistor, Dan Iordăchescu, Florin Georgescu

Redactor Marga Huss-Crăciun

20.50 (C) MEMORIA DOCUMENTELOR

NOI SÎNTEM RĂDĂCINA...

Documentar de Maria Preduț

21.10 MARI ACTORI, MARI REGIZORI

Irène Papas

Redactor Eugen Atanasiu

21.50 Telejurnal

22.00 Închiderea programului

RADIO

(1)

6.00 RADIOPROGRAMUL DIMINEȚII
- **Buletin de știri**

6.15 Sfatul medicului.

6.30 LA ORDINEA ZILEI ÎN AGRICULTURĂ

7.00 RADIOJURNAL.

7.30 AZI, ÎN ȚARĂ
Răspuns comunist chemărilor tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu. Acțiuni hotărîte pentru realizarea sarcinilor de plan la producția fizică, la ceilalți indicatori, cu deosebire la export
Corespondențe din județe
8.00 Revista presei
8.10 Curierul melodiilor
8.55 Publicitate
9.00 Buletin de știri
9.05 RĂSPUNDEM ASCULTĂTORILOR
10.00 Buletin de știri
10.05 SUCCES, CUTEZĂTORI ! Ediție realizată în județul Hunedoara. Redactor Gheorghe Scripcă
10.35 Noi, ai țării pionieri. Cîntece de Ștefan Andronic
10.45 Publicitate
11.00 Buletin de știri

11.05 **POLITICA NOASTRĂ**
Congresul al IX-lea al P.C.R. — deschizător de epocă nouă, de măreție înfăptuiri. Dezvoltarea echilibrată, armonioasă a forțelor de producție pe teritoriul patriei — realizări și perspective
Documentar radiofonic
Redactor Ion Costea

11.35 Muzică ușoară de Richard Stein
11.50 Buletin hidrologic
12.00 Buletin de știri
12.05 ȘTIINȚA SECOLULUI XX
Tehnologii nucleare în sprijinul industriei
Redactor Eugen Roibu
12.25 Trăim decenii de împliniri măreție. Cîntece patriotice
12.40 Din comoara folclorului. Mari interpreți de odinioară : Fănică Luca și Ion Luca Bănățeanu

13.00 DE LA 1 LA 3
- RADIOJURNAL.
- **1987 — Anul Conferinței Naționale a partidului. Muncă, responsabilitate, eficiență.**

Reportaje și relatări.

15.00 Avanpremieră Radio-TV
15.15 Arii din operete cu Bianca Ionescu și Ioan Suciu

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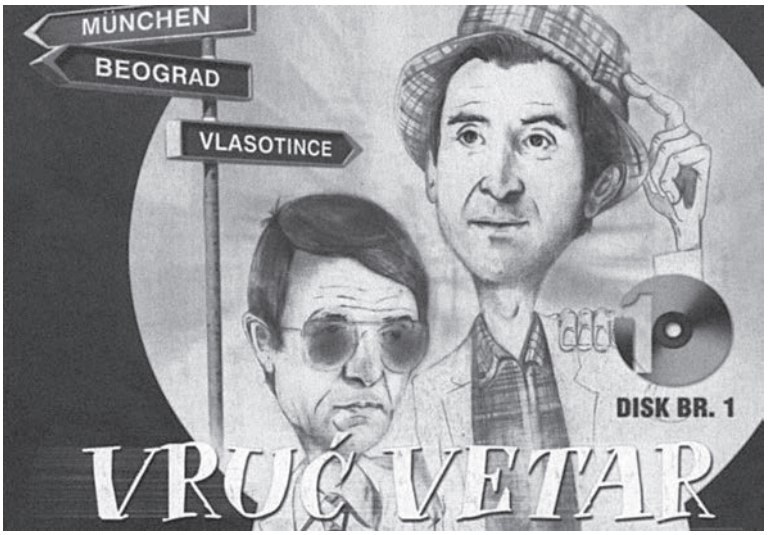
PROGRAM OF THE ROMANIAN STATE TELEVISION OF JULY 2, 1987, BROADCASTING HOURS: 20:00 TO 22:00

Yugoslav music icon Lepa Brena in the 1980s

2 Source: official Lepa Brena's Facebook profile.

YUGOSLAV HUMORISTIC TV SERIES *VRUĆ VETAR* ('HOT WIND'), AIRED IN 1980 3
Source: www.imdb.com.



SERBIAN RESTAURANT *TAVERNA SÂRBULUI*
('SERBIAN TAVERN') IN TIMIŞOARA 4
Photo credit: Lavinia Sorescu.

SERBIAN RESTAURANT *KARADJORDJE* IN TIMIŞOARA

5 Photo credit: Lavinia Sorescu.

RESTAURANT *LEPA BRENA* IN TIMIŞOARA
Photo credit: Lavinia Sorescu. 6

POSTER ANNOUNCING LEPA BRENA'S PLANNED 2012 CONCERT IN TIMIŞOARA: "AFTER 28 YEARS, I COME BACK TO TIMIŞOARA!"

7 Photo credit: Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković.