

Popular music under siege: Sarajevo 1992-1995

by Petra Hamer

Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia-Herzegovina, was under siege from 6th of April 1992 till 14th of December 1995 when more than 11.541 people were killed and even more were forced to flee. Those who stayed were under constant bombardment by Yugoslav national army and Serbian paramilitary forces that made transgressions on Sarajevo. Transgression as resistance on the aggression meant living the "normal" life, being creative (DIY), being stubborn (*inat*), electing miss of besieged Sarajevo, attending festival *Sarajevska zima* (Sarajevan winter), performing in demolish city hall in a play *Waiting for Godot* or musical *Hair...* It meant to support a project Rock under the Siege that presented local alternative bands and their music. Bands were playing metal, hard-rock and punk, using English lyrics full of criticism, cynicism and irony. On the other hand it meant listen to popular and traditional music with patriotic and encouraging lyrics in Bosnian language. Those songs become an important part of political propaganda and a tool for reestablishment of national identity. And so did the following songs: *Vojnik sreće* (The soldier of fortune) by Dino Merlin, *Help Bosnia now* by Bosnian band aid, *Moja zemlja* (My land) by Bombaj Štampa and *Šehidski rastanak* (Martyrs goodbye) by Safet Isović.

In ex-Yugoslavia Sarajevo has been the centre of popular music and culture. With the eruption of war in 1992 the musicians who stayed in besieged city started to sing different songs. After Dayton peace agreement was sign and the life in Sarajevo returned into normality new musical genres emerged the scene *Novokomponovana narodna muzika* and *turbo folk*.

Short biography

Petra Hamer (1988) is an ethnologist and cultural anthropologist interested in music and the Balkan. In her studies she focuses on popular music of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the time of siege and personal stories of their inhabitants. Fieldwork results were presented on several international conferences. While working in the refugee camp in Gornja Radgona, Slovenia, she did a fieldwork research about the impact of the camp on local community. She was the first residential student on Institute of ethnology and folklore research in Zagreb, Croatia. She is a president of Tamburizza society Apače and a future PhD student at University of Graz.