

THE "SERBIAN CONNECTION" IN THE AGE OF THE BEAT REVOLUTION IN HUNGARY*

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Received: 15 September 2019

Accepted: 1 November 2019

Original scientific paper

ABSTRACT

The music market of Hungary was manipulated by state authorities and the communist party from the 1960s until the 1980s. That distorted environment is the reason why the careers of two of the greatest Hungarian beat stars of the Sixties differed so much: Levente Szörényi and Zorán Sztevanovity were both partially or fully of Serbian origin, both were lead singers of their bands, and both were (in the first phase of their career) very careful with politics; however, their Serbian heritage and their family experiences were totally different, which explains their different behaviour during and after the Beat Revolution in Hungary.

KEYWORDS: Beat, Hungary, Zorán Sztevanovity, Levente Szörényi, Illés

When the new music genres of jazz, rock and roll, and beat first appeared, they all stood for the same things, even though they emerged at various times: a) freedom for everybody who enjoyed that kind of music; b) the revolt of youth against older generations. In the West it was a wave-like phenomenon which emerged during, respectively, the cultural changes of the 1920-30s (in the case of jazz), of the 1950s (rock and roll), and of the 1960s (beat). These "revolts" were rather considered as cultural phenomena, although music always had ideological dimensions, too. In Western countries politics did not have an omnipotent influence on cultural affairs, and vice versa: cultural changes did not cause fundamental restructuring in the poli-

* I am grateful to Zsolt Dessewffy, Richárd Hirschler for their very helpful advice concerning this topic. I am also thankful to Bori Kiss for proofreading the text in English.

tical system. Of course, beat culture and politics had coincidences: the timing of the rise of Beatles' songs coincided "with a Labour government and a new kind of youth fixated liberal consumerism," and this political factor "obviously underpinned their phenomenal success." It is also true that the generational gap in consumer behaviour had an effect on the music market. 1967 was the first year of the music industry when "teen" albums overtook "sales of adult albums on the *Billboard* charts" (Frith et al. 2001: 79; 118).

In Eastern Europe, behind the Iron Curtain, however, the situation after 1945 was very different. Politics played a crucial role in cultural affairs. That is why the Soviet-type political systems of Eastern Europe could not give free rein to movements of jazz, rock and roll or beat. This was a challenge for the one-party systems in the East. During the Cold War, NATO strategists realized how significant and powerful rock and roll was. "By 1958 in NATO's official publication *Revue militaire générale*, we see an explanation of how jazz and rock and roll could be used in the war against communism. It was thought, in a reductionistic but essentially accurate way, that the more a young person listened to Little Richard, the less time he or she would have to spend reading Marx and Lenin" (Vučetić 2018: 108).

The Soviet-type system was based on ideological indoctrination. According to the Hungarian economist János Kornai, the "classical" or "Stalinist" socialist system was based on one-party rule, Marxist-Leninist ideology, and the bureaucratic coordination of the command economy (Kornai 1992). However, Marxist-Leninist ideologies of the omnipotent communist party were threatened by the new wave of Western cultural influences: freedom of improvisation (jazz), the shouting of Little Richard (rock and roll), and the yeah-yeah of the Beatles.

The music industry and its target consumers were changed by the age of beat in the East, too. Melodies for older audiences were replaced by the new music for youth, says Zorán Sztevanovity, one of the legendary figures of Hungarian beat in the 1960s, who is still actively writing and performing music in 2019, at the age of 77 (Kovács 2019). But the music market of this Eastern country has been manipulated by state authorities, state record labels and state radio stations, and of course by the communist party from the 1960s to the 1980s. (Csatári 2015).

The socialist market economy – this was a Hungarian expression for the system after the failed economic reforms of 1968 – has never prevailed over the ideological restrictions of the Soviet-type power system. Communist party leadership and the secret and "ordinary" police services also played important roles in the history of the Hungarian beat movement, and thus the success of a band was not solely determined by market forces. The most popular band in the 1960s, *Illés*, for example, was broken up after the lyricist, János Bródy was threatened with jail in the course of a police investigation against him. Although he only received a small fine at the conclusion of the investigation, secret police were also active in the procedures against him (Kocsis L. 1999: 431-437). The incident was, however, enough to generate tensions among members of the band, and the group disbanded relatively quickly, in the early 1970s.

That distorted environment is the reason why the careers of two of the greatest Hungarian beat stars of the 1960s differed so much. Although both were born in the

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1940s, both played the guitar, both were lead singers of their bands, both were (in the first phase of their career) very careful with politics, and both were (partially or fully) of Serbian origin. However, their Serbian heritage and their family experiences were totally different, which explains their different behaviour during and after the Beat Revolution in Hungary. One of them, Levente Szörényi,³ reached the peak of his beat career with *Illés* with a song based on a Serbian kolo in 1968, but later became the creator of the “Hungarian national rock opera”: *István, a király* (*Stephen, the King*). The other, Zorán Sztevanovity,⁴ was subdued in the 1960s, expressed his feelings and thoughts more and more openly in the 1970s, and only dared truly and publicly to embrace his Serbian heritage with his song *Kóló* at the age of 69, in 2011.

AFTER KHRUSCHEV’S THAW: WESTERN IMPACT ON EASTERN EUROPEAN MUSIC IN THE 1960S

Riding the liberating cultural waves of rock and roll and beat; adopting the shouting of Little Richard and the yeah-yeah of the Beatles – that is why a Hungarian beat band became the symbol of freedom and revolt in its home country in the 1960s. A few years after a failed political revolution, *Illés* sang about Little Richard. Their song about the famous American singer was composed in 1968 (SP 472), and even the first track on their very first record (EP 7297) in 1964 was a cover of Little Richard’s *Long Tall Sally* (Kocsis L. 1999: 389). In 1966 they were already singing “fáj, fáj, fáj” (“it hurts, it hurts, it hurts”) echoing the way the Beatles had shouted “yeah, yeah”. And they did not stop transforming themselves into something new in Hungary: after imitating Western singers and bands, they went on to create their very own musical style. One of these newly composed songs was even used on the Hungarian-language programmes of Radio Free Europe (RFE) after the 1970s. “The word is a dangerous weapon, and there is someone who is weaponless” – this part of their song of 1972 (*A szó veszélyes fegyver / The word is a dangerous weapon*) became a signal for one of the programmes of the American propaganda broadcaster (Bródy 2017: 42; 128).

The success of *Illés* was also a result of Khrushchev’s Thaw and the partial opening of Soviet-type systems in Eastern Europe. However, various Western cultural phenomena were all arriving at the same time in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Hungary because of the ideological limitations of Stalinist communism in the early 1950s, and because of the communist retaliations after the failed 1956 revolution. Thus, the new waves of jazz, rock and roll, and finally beat, reached Hungarian audiences at almost the same time. This piling up caused serious problems. One could say, it created a “music jam”, as we will see later...

3 Levente Bálint Szörényi. Born in Gmunden (now Austria), 26 April 1945.

4 Zorán Sztevanovity (Зоран Стевановић / Zoran Stevanović). Born in Belgrade (now Serbia), 4 March 1942.

The reason for the pile-up was that jazz had been barely tolerated in Hungary for more than a decade. There was a huge gap between Hungary, and, for example, Yugoslavia: the latter developed a fairly vibrant jazz life after 1945. When the Jazz Orchestra of Radio Belgrade gave a concert in Budapest right after the failed revolution (March 1957), Yugoslavian musicians recognized how restricted life (and jazz life) had been in Hungary. Vojislav-Bubiša Simić recalled his memories: “At that time those of us who had come from Tito’s Yugoslavia seemed like heralds of some new era. And even our music, that is to say, our jazz, was a pleasure they had never before experienced ... When we had crossed the border on our trip back home, we said: it’s true that there are a lot of things that aren’t right by us, but there you can see people who live worse than we do” (Vučetić 2018: 101).

Western cultural “menaces” were dangerous from the point of view of the ideological omnipotence of the communist party. Critiqueless devotion, adoration of the West was “false”, according to the Hungarian communist youth organization KISZ. This political and ideological organization led by a hard-liner communist, Zoltán Komócsin, between 1957 and 1961, stated that a broad layer of the Hungarian youth was “sensitive to hostile Western influences” (Fonyódi 2003: 23). In 1959, Komócsin said that hits played in music clubs were inappropriate from the point of view of socialist morale (Csatári 2015: 101).

But the situation in Hungary was improving: János Kádár, the leader of communist Hungary after 1956, knew that he had to make concessions to certain endeavours in the field of art, music, and in a limited way, even in literature. (This despite the fact that the association of writers was considered as triggering factor of the revolution against the Soviet-type system in 1956.) According to the Hungarian historian János M. Rainer, the Soviet-type system did not change institutionally in the whole Kádár-era – it remained a communist dictatorship. But the style of using absolute power had been changing after the cruel and bloody retaliation that followed the 1956 revolution. Tolerance in cultural affairs after 1961 had especially been palpable in the 1960s, if we compare the rule of Kádár to the era of Rákosi, the Stalinist party leader before 1956 (Rainer 2011).

Thus, after 1960, Hungary was not the worst among Eastern European satellite states of the Soviet Union. Analysing the Hungarian beatepoch of the 1960s, Péter Fonyódi states: the ideology and power structure which created the party-state came from the East, but the counter-culture called beat arrived from the West (Fonyódi 2003: 13). This was a result of a “somewhat more evolved rock scene” in Budapest and Warsaw, according to Ryback and Vučetić: János Kádár in Hungary and Władysław Gomułka in Poland “realized that, after the uprisings of 1956, it was not necessary to clamp down in all spheres of life, and therefore in both countries, rock and roll was accepted, so that at the start of the 1960s it had advanced to a stage ‘not found in any other country of the Warsaw Pact’” (Vučetić 2018: 110).

Rock and roll and beat were not the focus of the highest-ranking Hungarian communist ideologists and apparatchiks. During the age of beat (between 1963 and 1970) the main propaganda organ of the Hungarian Communist Party (Commission

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for Agitation and Propaganda: APO) issued a resolution concerning the beat movement only once. APO made 900 resolutions during this 7-8 year long period, and only once, on 7 August 1963, did it debate the "Jazz Affair", which was in reality the Illés affair. The resolution stated: "if there is a need, a few bands (for example: Illés) should be disbanded", broken up (Fonyódi 2003: 21).

What was the problem with this band? Why did Illés became an issue for the party leadership? It was an early formation of Illés which played at a festival for amateur bands organized by KISZ in Budapest. (Between 1957 and 1964, Early Illés's lineup was constantly changing, and the "classic" formation of five musicians emerged after the summer of 1965: Levente Szörényi, Szabolcs Szörényi, János Bródy, Lajos Illés, Zoltán Pásztory.) The festival was held on 3 May 1963 at the Metropolitan Sports Hall in Budapest, where altogether ten ensembles were playing. Lajos Illés, founder and band-leader of Illés called this event the first beat concert in Hungary (Miklós: 1977: 144).

Audiences behaved like Western fans at the time. There was shouting, frenzied fans on the streets, but there was an Eastern speciality, too: audience threw tomatoes at the sole ensemble, the Benkó Dixieland Band, which played only jazz. Even the jury got some tomatoes. Thirty-six years later, Lajos Illés remarked ironically to journalists: "The new youth culture introduced itself like this. Socialism almost collapsed because of us" (Fonyódi 2003: 21). An other member of "Early-Illés", Tas Nényei, remembers that the audience was shouting and chanting: "Il-lés, Il-lés" while the rival band, Metro, was playing. The feud between Illés and Metro began at this moment, according to Nényei (Bálint 2017: 12-13).

At this event, both main characters of my study could have met each other. Metro was led by Zorán, but the meeting of the main characters did not happen: Illés was still playing in its early period without Levente Szörényi. The latter only became the lead singer of Illés two years later. In 1963, Szörényi was still working as a "contract musician", sometimes as a studio musician. He was working for Zorán, too. Zorán was already well known in the music scene, starting his career in 1960 with the band Zenith that later transformed itself into Metro, playing twist. Twist was a novelty in the beginning of the 1960s, but it was not a revolution such as beat became a few years later, bringing about the frenetic success of Illés. The period from the end of the 1950s to the mid-1960s was a strange one in the international music market: rock and roll was almost dead, but beat had not yet been born. Metro fell into the "trap of twist", we could say, looking back at these "in-between" crisis years of pop culture (Frith et al. 2001: 116). And in Hungary there was another handicap for Metro in comparison with Illés: they remained imitators of Western music for too long, not starting to compose their own songs until much later. (Whereas Illés started to write their songs in 1965, as we will see later.) Zorán Sztevanovity and Levente Szörényi did not meet at the scandalous concert, but Szörényi knew what happened after the concert in the Metropolitan Sports Hall in 1963. Young fans even toppled tram cars over on Rákóczi Street, the main road of Budapest (Stumpf 2015: 43, 48; Kovács 2019).

It is interesting that Nényei, a member of the Early Illés, remembers the feud with Metro. But Szörényi, who joined the band later, recalls happy memories. He remem-

bers the cooperation between the “Holy Trinity of Hungarian Beat.” According to him, Metro, Illés and Omega, the three most popular bands, organized a concert together, and all three groups were playing there. Illés and Omega played together in other events, too (Stumpf 2015: 87). This cooperation is not surprising, however. The beat historian Csaba Bálint published a photograph of Illés and Omega band-members holidaying together at Lake Balaton in 1963 (Bálint 2017: 31). Nényei, naturally, can be seen in the photo, but Szörényi is missing, because he would join the band only two years later, in January 1965 (Stumpf 2015: 65). Then in 1967, the members of Metro, Illés and Omega played themselves in a film called *Ezek a fiatalok / These young people*, so the three bands appeared together again.

WHEN THE HUNGARIAN “LENNON-McCARTNEY” WAS BORN

After the scandalous festival at the Metropolitan Sports Hall, Illés had a change in line-up. Members of the Early Illés were influenced by the forbidden radio station Radio Luxembourg. It was a symbol for freedom for them and they copied British and American music. One of the members of Early Illés, Tas Nényei, remembers that his teacher, a priest at his Roman Catholic grammar school in Győr, told him to listen to this Western radio station (Bálint 2017: 15). Nényei later had a quarrel with Lajos Illés over financial issues. Both wanted to get rid of each other. Finally, Lajos Illés fired Nényei and some other members (Bálint 2017: 23).

New members Levente and Szabolcs Szörényi (the Szörényi brothers), and János Bródy joined the Illés group in 1964–65. They modified the “Luxembourg-style” of the *Early* Illés, opposing the view of Lajos Illés, the “old” leader of the band, who insisted that they should only play English or American songs. The new members reinterpreted freedom of expression. For them freedom was not only copying Western music, but creating Hungarian songs. This is, somehow, beat history repeating itself. After Britain, in Hungary too, something special was born. The Beatles composers were writing “their own songs, determining their own production values, making their career moves;” they were confident “that they could write songs for themselves” (Frith et al. 2001: 77; 79). Szörényi and Bródy did the same. They not only decided that they would write their own songs in Hungarian, but they would later refuse other composers and lyricists who would have liked to work for them. Thus, the Szörényi–Bródy duo was born, a few years after the Lennon–McCartney partnership.

Thus, Illés was the first Hungarian beat band singing in Hungarian. They made this decision in Nógrádverőce, in the summer of 1965, in a communist Youth Camp of KISZ. It was there that Szörényi and Bródy started to compose. Among the first Hungarian beat songs, *Oh, mond (Oh, tell me)* imitated the Kinks. The second song, *Az utcán (On the street)* was influenced by Hungarian folk melodies. Band leader Lajos Illés was wary of Hungarian songs not only because he was a fan of Radio Luxembourg. He also worried that fans might abandon them upon hearing Hungarian lyrics. But the endeavours of Szörényi and Bródy prevailed (Stumpf 2015: 62–65).

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This change in style changed the behaviour of the audience. According to their contract, Illés should have played in the Bosch Club in Budapest as a dance ensemble. Boys and girls should have danced to the imitated, Luxembourg-style music, as the club desired. But Illés started to play their own songs, and it was a speciality at this time. The audience also slowly began to listen to the lyrics, and instead of dancing they were just standing in front of the stage (Vámos 1994: 56).

According to Szörényi, things did not go so easily. Writing and composing Hungarian beat songs was at first only a “theoretical” breakthrough. It had no immediate effect: the audience did not even realise that the band was singing in Hungarian. This happened because of bad technical equipment, and also because of the fans’ lack of interest in the lyrics. Later, when a special festival was organized in Salgótarján by the communist authorities preferring bands with Hungarian songs, Illés made a real breakthrough. Szörényi later commented on this festival as follows: “the comrades, anyway, helped the push of Hungarian music. I did not like them, but what is true, is true, I have to admit that” (Stumpf 2015: 75). The four songs of Illés that were performed at the festival were *Az utcán*, *Oh, mondd*, *Mindig veled* (*Always with you*) and *Légy jó kicsit hozzám* (*Be good, a bit, to me*).

We saw that, for example, *Az utcán* was influenced by Hungarian folk motives, and thus, after 1965, it was not only the “West” that influenced the music of the restructured Illés. As Szörényi and Bródy started to compose their own songs, they changed the history of the Hungarian Age of Beat. However, to understand this phenomenon, we should also take into consideration South Slavic influences on Hungarian culture over the last centuries.

SOUTH SLAVIC MOTIVES IN HUNGARIAN BEAT MUSIC

Serbs have made an ever-increasing impact on Hungarian culture since the 18th century. In the field of literature, Mihailo Vitković (Mihály Vitkovics, 1778–1829) played an important role in his time. (Hadrovics 2000: 160–161.) Among painters, Petar Dobrović (Péter Dobrovics, born in the Hungarian town of Pécs in 1890, died in Belgrade, 1942) is considered as one of the 100 best known Serbs in Serbia (Kostic–Urosevic 1993). As for music, the composer of the popular Hungarian TV series *Captain of Tenkes/Tenkes kapitánya* was a Serb musician and ethno-musicologist living in Hungary, Tihomir Vujičić (Tihamér Vujicsics, 1929–1975).

Tihomir Vujičić composed music in various styles, using Serbian, Hungarian and other motives and rhythms. In his final years he played together at several venues (in Pomáz, Csobánka, Szentendre: towns and villages near Budapest) with a local folk band of Pomáz. On the last occasion they met, Tihomir Vujičić offered them his advice (Abkarovits 2004: 17; Eredics 2007: 89). After his death in 1975 this band took his name as a sign of gratitude. This folk ensemble, Vujicsics Együttes, had ethnic Serbs in Hungary among its founders, and won the national talent contest *Ki mit tud* (*Who knows what*) in Hungary in 1977. In the year of 2014 they received the highest cultural award in the country, the Kossuth Prize. The band still exists, and nowadays

they also play beat adaptations. Vujicsics Együttes has concerts with the “heroes of the beat-revolution.” They play with Levente Szörényi, among others, rediscovering the Serbian roots of early beat music in Hungary, and remaking the melodies of the 1960s and 1970s (Marton 2014: 3–4).

Serbian influence had a great impact on Hungarian beat and pop music in the 1960s. Most people in Hungary are not aware of this significant contribution to their culture. Thus just a few of them can identify South Slavic motives, listening to music.

This long lasting ignorance was almost natural, if we consider that Hungary in the 1950s was not an open society. Openness slowly broadened after 1956, following the failed revolution against the Soviet-type system. As a sign of limited Westernization in the 1960s, the notorious Iron Curtain changed to a more porous and flexible “Nylon Curtain”, as Zsolt K. Horváth quotes György Péteri (K. Horváth 2015: 107–108). Gradually transnational and transsystemic changes developed between East and West, and cultural exchanges were no exceptions. Omega, Illés and LGT, the Hungarian bands of the 1960s and 1970s, were allowed to undertake concert tours in the West, but for most Hungarians visiting Western countries remained a distant dream. Images of the West were shaped by the few Western movies allowed into the country, the consumer goods imported or smuggled in, and by the pop music, broadcast by the forbidden radio stations Radio Luxembourg and Radio Free Europe (K. Horváth 2015: 108–109). Although the political system gradually loosened up, the borders opened only after Communism collapsed in 1989/1990.

Earlier, the cultures of neighbouring nations were relatively unknown for Hungarians. This was especially true with regard to Yugoslavia. After the 1948 rift – when Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform and boycotted by all members of the Communist bloc (Granville 1997: 16) – a kind of a “Cold War” broke out between the Soviet bloc and Yugoslavia that also involved Hungary. (Bencsik 2017) After 1948, South Slavic culture was suppressed in Hungary – no wonder that younger generations, growing up in the 1950s, knew practically nothing about the rich cultural heritage of Serbia or Yugoslavia.

PARADOXICAL STORIES OF BEAT STARS IN HUNGARY (I): LEVENTE SZÖRÉNYI

This Hungarian–Yugoslav “Cold War” also had a big impact on Hungarian beat. I will show this through two different – and paradoxical – cases: one is the oeuvre of Levente Szörényi, the other is the story of Zorán Sztevanovity. Both of them were stars in the Age of Beat in Hungary, and both of them had a Serbian-speaking father. Both of them used Serbian melodies and rhythms over the course of their career, but at different times – history plays with Hungarian musicians, too...

The best-known example for misunderstanding the Serbian influence on the nascent Hungarian beat-movement was the winning song of the most important song contest, *Táncdalfesztivál* in 1968. The song not only won the Grand Prize, and four other awards, but it also had been on the Hungarian hit list for 11 months (Stumpf

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2015: 88). The winning song was praised as a "Hungarian" beat song (Koltay 1980: 119), although it was based mostly on a Serbian kolo. Its title was: *Amikor én még kissrác voltam* (*When I was a little boy*) by the band Illés. It was not only the melody, composed by Levente Szörényi, that was based on Serbian motives. (He often listened to Radio Belgrade when he composed the music.) The songwriter János Bródy later mentioned that the title of the song could also have been understood as "When I was a little Serb." In Hungarian, this reads: "Amikor én még kis rác voltam" (Csatári 2017: 43). "Rác" is an ancient Hungarian name for Serbs, after the historical region of Raška. This is where most of the Serbs who fled to the Kingdom of Hungary, many centuries ago, came from.

But Hungarians in general, did not understand this kind of play of words at that time. And more importantly, neither did they recognize the Serbian melody (Marton 2014). After winning the contest, the only "tabloid" in Budapest, *Esti Hírlap* wrote on 21 August 1968, that this Illés song was like one of the melodies of the "kuruc" rebels (Koltay 1980: 119). Patriotic kuruc rebels fought against the ruling Austrian Habsburgs in the early eighteenth century.

It was not by chance that the composer of Illés, Levente Szörényi, used Serbian kolo as a source for his music. Szörényi's father came from a region predominantly populated by ethnic Serbs and Romanians. That region is the historical Banat of Severin (Северинска бановина), in Hungarian "Szörényi bánság". Szörényi's father was born into the family of Groda in the town of Oravicabánya (then Hungary, now Oravița in Romania), went to school in Palić, but later changed his name from Groda to Szörényi, recalling the Banat of Severin (Stumpf 2015: 19). His aim could have been ambiguous: his name should sound like a Hungarian one, but the new name hinted also at the region where Groda came from.

Levente Szörényi's grandmother, Mária Lozovits, was Serbian. She was living with the family during the time they lived in Budapest, and spoke to his son (e.g. Szörényi's father) in Serbian. The family celebrated two Christmases in every year: one for Catholics, and one for Orthodox Christians, because Szörényi's father and grandmother belonged to the latter religious group (Stumpf 2015: 20). However, the children, Levente and Szabolcs, did not learn Serbian. Levente Szörényi's grandfather (who came from a German family in Hungary) was a secretary of state in the Ministry of Finance between the two world wars. However, the family sank into poverty in the 1950s, during the peak of Stalinist communism in Hungary. Thus, Szörényi's parents decided to send the brothers, Levente and Szabolcs, to a state boarding school, which was rather similar to an orphanage (Stumpf 2015). Both brothers went on to join Illés. Levente's brother, Szabolcs Szörényi, recalled the roots of the family and of the music of Illés as follows: "At the beginning we used Serbian folk music motives in our songs: think of *Amikor én még kissrác voltam* for example. Our grandmother was of Serbian origin, she prayed in Serbian, and often softly sang Serbian religious songs. Because of her, our family often listened to Radio Belgrade" (Lőcsei 2003).

Szabolcs Szörényi is, however, not completely right. Illés actually started its career playing/plagiarizing English and American songs, and the band's line-up was constantly changing. When the Szörényi brothers arrived, they were still imitating

Western music, such as The Beatles, The Kinks, The Animals and Pretty Things, and while Levente Szörényi wanted to follow in the footsteps of The Beatles, János Bródy was more of a Rolling Stones fan. But Szörényi prevailed. Fans also brought songs to the band: they wanted Illés to play songs they had heard on Radio Luxembourg's *Top Twenty* programme (Stumpf 2015: 56–57).

In the summer of 1965, Levente Szörényi and János Bródy decided to write their own songs. The breakthrough came after a festival in Salgótarján, where they played their own music based on Hungarian, British and American patterns. It was only after the success in Salgótarján that they created songs based on Serbian rhythms and melodies. The Serbian kolo-type music of *Amikor én kissrác voltam/When I was a little child* skyrocketed the group to the top of the hit list, as mentioned above. Serbian and South Slavic motives could also be discovered in their other songs, for example *A kugli, Miért hagytuk, hogy így legyen? (Why did we let it happen?)*. Illés had no distinct style at this time, according to Levente Szörényi, and it was up to him whether the band used Hungarian or South Slavic melodies (Stumpf 2015: 79–80; 223).

It is interesting that Levente's father did not like this "Serbian connection." Although he spoke with his friends and his mother in Serbian, he told Levente: "You! You should write a few Hungarian melodies, too! You should not push this South Slavic line so strongly" (Stumpf 2015: 26).

The elder Szörényi was a neophyte who emphasised his belonging to the "Hungarian community," although he actually had no Hungarian ancestry. He was pondering the fate of the Hungarians with his friend Sándor Kászony Nagy. But, according to Levente Szörényi, Nagy was also a "rác" (Serb). Levente's father and Nagy were specifically "turanists," who were seeking the Asian roots and the ancient religion of the Hungarians. They organized archaeological digs in the mountains of Pilis, and built a tower to commemorate the tribal leader Koppány. Koppány fought the first Christian king in Hungary, St Stephen (Stephen I), and he is the pagan hero of the rock opera *István a király* composed by Levente Szörényi and János Bródy. Following his father's legacy, Levente Szörényi still supports a similar archaeological project, aiming to find traces of early Hungarians and the Asian Huns in these mountains (Stumpf 2015; Kocsis L. 1999). Szörényi, who is nowadays living on his own in the Pilis mountains, named his dog Koppány, after the pagan hero. Although in his childhood he had double Christmases, Orthodox and Roman Catholic, Szörényi today believes in a form of Zoroastrianism (as he himself says, "like Freddy Mercury did") and in reincarnation. He supposes that Zoroastrianism is closer to the early religion of the ancient Hungarians than Siberian shamanism, which was swept away by Christianity around AD 1000 (Stumpf 2015: 209; 213; 231).

This search for the pagan or Asian roots of Hungarians later also influenced Levente Szörényi in his music; Illés later went in the direction of folk music. This tendency was strengthened after the break-up of Illés. The Szörényi and the Tolcsvay Trió created a new band, Fonográf with János Bródy. Fonográf was a country rock band. Szörényi and Bródy also collaborated on a musical billed as the first Hungarian rock opera, *István a király/ Stephen, the King* which is about the power struggle between St Stephen and Koppány. It symbolized the fight

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between Nationalists (Koppány) and Westernizers (St Stephen), which has dominated Hungarian politics for the last 1000 years. Later, Szörényi composed another rock opera (which received its premiere in 1993) entitled *Attila – Sword of God*. The lyricist of this rock opera was not Bródy, but a politician, one of the right-wing leaders of the conservative MDF party that appeared after the fall of communism. (Sándor Lezsák is still an active politician. He has been a member of the Fidesz parliamentary group since 2006, while Fidesz has been the ruling party in Hungary since 2010.) Szörényi was also the designer of MDF’s party logo. Contrary to Szörényi’s politics, Bródy campaigned for SZDSZ, a liberal party, right after the fall of communism (Kocsis L. 1999).

PARADOXICAL STORIES OF BEAT STARS IN HUNGARY (II):
ZORÁN SZTEVANOVITY

I have mentioned several times that Hungarians are not aware of the impact Serbian culture has on their culture. Many of them do not know that one of their favourite singers considers himself a Serb. Not to forget, however, that he considers himself a Hungarian too (Kovács 2019). Such is the case of “Zorán,” or Zorán Sztevanovity. Although Géza Hofi, the most popular comedian during socialist times used to crack jokes about Zorán based on his Serbian family name, people do not consider Zorán to be a Serb, nor his brother Dusán Sztevanovity, who is one of the best known beat-pop lyricists in Hungary. Both of them played in the beat band Metro. Zorán became famous by winning a talent contest, “Ki mit tud,” in Hungary. Metro was playing at the contest as a backing band, but after “Ki mit tud” both Zorán and Metro became stars in Hungary.

In the 1960s, Zorán’s and Dusán’s “rivals” were Levente Szörényi, the composer and János Bródy, the lyricist of Illés; and Gábor Presser, the composer and Anna Adamis the lyricist of Omega. This was the era of the “Holy Trinity of Hungarian beat” or “beat-trinity”: Metro, Illés, Omega. It is interesting that later both Presser and Dusán Sztevanovity wrote songs for Zorán, who began a solo career in the 1970s (Szántó et al. 1985).

Thus, beat culture in Hungary was dominated by three bands in the 1960s: Illés, Omega and Metro. But the Sztevanovity brothers, playing in Metro, did not use Serbian motives in their music at the beginning of their career. This is a strange phenomenon at first glance, considering their ancestry, but it is totally understandable if we look at the history of Hungarian–Yugoslav relations after 1948.

Zorán’s father, Milutin Stevanović was born in Belgrade in 1921. He was a Yugoslav diplomat in 1948 in Budapest. He did not have close links with Hungary, but was caught out by history. After the Tito–Stalin split, Milutin Stevanović remained in Hungary, and tried to be loyal to the Hungarian Stalinist government, undertaking the editing of a newspaper for South Slavs (*Délszláv Szövetség*) in Hungary. He was considered at this time to be an enemy of Yugoslavia, creating counter-propaganda against Tito and Belgrade among South Slavs in Hungary. But it was the Hungarian

Stalinist regime that caught him: he was arrested a few years later by the infamous secret police, ÁVH.

It happened in 1952 when Zorán was ten years old (Vukman 2016: 1). The secret police took Milutin when he was tutoring his son. His mother was in shock. Marija Stevanović had to work as a typist to earn for her family, raising two children and supporting her mother (Vukman 2016: 7). We do not know what the 10-year-old Zorán felt when he saw his father being taken away. Milutin was charged with spying. Although we do not know the psychological background, it is possible that Zorán chose to avoid addressing politically sensitive issues in his lyrics and using Serbian melodies, because of his personal experiences in his childhood. We only know now that he started to play Serbian-style music regularly in the 21st century, when he released his album with the title track *Kólló*. Over the last few years Zorán has been publicly discussing his family's fortunes. He thinks that he and his brother might have never become musicians had their father remained a Yugoslav diplomat who could have been sent every two, three or four years to a different country. Thus, getting stuck in Hungary helped him become a singer (Kovács 2019).

Although Milutin Stevanović was initially sentenced to ten years in prison, political change came when Stalin died. In Hungary, Imre Nagy, the communist reformer took over the government as a new prime minister in 1953. So Milutin was released from prison in 1955 (Vukman 2016: 5-7). After his imprisonment, Milutin did not give up his cultural activities, editing the last book of Tihomir Vujičić, the well known musician and musicologist, who died tragically in a plane crash in Syria. Because of Vujičić's sudden death, Milutin Stevanović was the one who finalized the text of the musician's book (Eperjessy 2007: 87-88).

Zorán did not want to mix politics with music. He avoided discussing daily politics on the stage (Kovács 2019). But possibly his most important song was written in 1977. The lyrics of *Apám hitte* (*My father had believed it*) hint at his father's views, when he "had believed in the truth of the words," and in "the words of the newstellers," and "in the directions of the rivers." These could be understood as references to Stalinist propaganda, or to the grand plans of Stalinism of making rivers in Siberia flowing backwards. Zorán, in contrast to his father, believes in himself and in the death of weapons, but he (or rather his brother, Dusán, the lyricist) closes the song with these words: "and I believe, believe, believe, in my father." Zorán became the greatest solo pop singer with this and other similar songs in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Hungary.

CONCLUSION

We can summarize Levente Szörényi's and Zorán Sztevanovity's careers by saying that they were moving on the same path but in opposite directions. Both were partially or fully of Serbian origins, but Szörényi did not have awful personal experiences with secret police in his childhood. Yet he was also aware of the perils: his family narrowly

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avoided forceful deportation by the communist authorities at the beginning of the 1950s. On the other hand, Zorán had traumatic experiences, being a Serb in communist Hungary. Thus, it might be that Szörényi was using Serbian motives more freely in his works because he lacked negative personal experiences, and may even have done this to antagonise his father.

It is a paradoxical situation that although Levente Szörényi still occasionally joins the Vujicsics Együttes on stage, he is a strong supporter of the search for the ancient pagan roots of Hungarians. And it should be emphasized that Szörényi is not only considered as the founder of the Hungarian style of beat in the 1960s, but is also the creator of the first Hungarian national rock opera, *István, a király* (1983). On the contrary, nowadays Zorán sings new songs representing Serbian music in Hungary. He has publicly revealed that he supports Serbian sport teams when they play against their Hungarian rivals. He also stated that he considers himself both a Serb and a Hungarian (Kovács 2019).

The beat generation in Hungary started to perform in the 1960s. This decade was the age of protest on both sides of Europe. But the end of the era was totally different in the East and the West. The beat revolution ended in the West in a kind of commercialization, but in the East, it crashed into an impenetrable wall of communist ideology. The ambiguity of Illés's lyrics caused real problems for musical censors in Hungary. János Bródy, the writer of the lyrics, used romantic love poems as a kind of "language of flowers" for hidden political messages. But Illés ceased to exist in the early 1970s. In Hungary, it was the beginning of a complex process of ideological transformation on both sides: beat and pop bands abandoned a critical approach towards socialist society, and communist power began to be tolerant of the "ideologically softened" texts of these musicians. Illés fell apart when Bródy was threatened by the police. Instead of Illés, a lesser "revolutionary" band, Fonográf, was created. The band Metro was also dissolved, and Zorán started his solo career. Fresh endeavours started again in the 1980s when the rock opera *István, a király* was composed by Levente Szörényi and János Bródy. Serbian influences began to disappear from the works of Szörényi, but a few years later, Zorán and Dusán Sztevanovity began to use their Serbian heritage more and more often in their songs.

APPENDIX⁵*Top 10 songs of November 1967*

1. Szörényi, L. – Bródy: Sárga rózsza (Yellow rose) – Illés
2. Szörényi, L. – Bródy: Láss, láss, ne csak nézz (See, see, do not just look) – Illés
3. Schöck – Sztevanovity, D.: Gyémánt és arany (Diamond and gold) – Metro
4. Szörényi, L. – Bródy: Eljöttél (You have come along) – Illés
6. Schöck – Sztevanovity, D.: Belle a részeges kutya (Belle, the drunken dog) – Metro

5 Szőnyei (2004). [Szörényi brothers: Levente and Szabolcs Szörényi; Sztevanovity brothers: Dusán and Zorán Sztevanovity.]

7. Majláth – Fülöp: Rövid az élet (Life is short) – Toldy, Mária
8. Majláth – Fülöp: Nem várok holnapig (I don't wait 'til tomorrow) – Zalatnay, Sarolta
9. Varannai – Tamás: Gondolj majd rám (Think on me) – Echo
10. Szörényi, L. – Bródy: Ne gondold (Don't think) – Illés

Top 10 Songs of July 1968

1. Szörényi, L. – Bródy: Little Richard énekel (Little Richard is singing) – Illés
2. Szörényi, L. – Bródy: Eltávozott nap (Sun gone away) – Illés
3. Szörényi, L. – Bródy: Kis virág (Little flower) – Illés
4. Szörényi, L. – Bródy: Nem érti más csak én (Nobody understands but me) – Illés
5. Presser – S. Nagy: Rózsafák (Rosetrees) - Omega
6. Presser – S. Nagy: Azt mondta az anyukám (Mamma said) - Omega
7. Szörényi, L. – Bródy: Sárga rózsa (Yellow rose) – Illés
8. Presser – Adamis: Ismertem egy lányt (Once I knew a girl) – Omega
9. Sztevanovity, Z. – Sztevanovity, D.: Egy fiú és egy lány (A boy and a girl) – Metro
10. Edwards – Sztevanovity, D.: Átölelsz még (You are still going to hug me) – Zalatnay, Sarolta

Top 10 songs of April 1969

1. Szörényi, L. – Bródy: Holdfény 69 – (Moonlight 69) Illés
2. Presser – Adamis: Trombitás Frédi (Fred the trumpeter) – Omega
3. Schöck – Sztevanovity, D.: Pár csepp méz (A few drops of honey) – Metro
4. Presser – Adamis: Ha én szél lehetnék (If I were the wind) – Omega
5. Szörényi, Sz. – Bródy: Régi dal (Old song) – Illés
6. Szörényi, L. – Bródy: Téli álom (Winter dream) – Illés
7. Frenreisz – Szenes: Tölcsért csinállok a kezemből (Making a cone out of my hand) – Zalatnay, Sarolta
8. Presser – Adamis: Egy lány nem ment haza (A girl didn't go home) – Omega
9. Szörényi, Sz. – Bródy: Az ész a fontos, nem a haj (Reason is important not hair) – Illés
10. Schöck – Sztevanovity, D.: Nem vagyok elveszett ember (I am not lost) – Metro

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ИВАН МИКЛОШ СЕГО

„СРПСКА ВЕЗА” У ВРЕМЕ „БИТ” РЕВОЛУЦИЈЕ У МАЂАРСКОЈ

(РЕЗИМЕ)

Шездесете године XX века су раздобље када се у Мађарској јавља прва генерација „бит” (рок) музичара. Била је то деценија обележена протестима с обе стране „гвоздене завесе” у Европи. Међутим, ово раздобље завршило се на потпуно различите начине на Истоку и Западу. Наиме, на Западу се рок револуција окончала комерцијализацијом, док се на Истоку разбила о непробојан зид комунистичке идеологије. Власти су манипулисале музичким тржиштем у Мађарској, а посебно Комунистичка партија од шездесетих до осамдесетих година XX века. Партијско руководство, као и тајна и „обична” полиција играле су важну улогу у историји мађарског рок покрета. То нестабилно окружје било је разлог због којег се каријере двојице највећих мађарских рок звезда из шездесетих значајно разликују: наиме, каријере Левента Серенија и Зорана Стевановића можемо сумирати тако што ћемо рећи да су се они кретали истом трасом, али у супротним смеровима. Обојица су била делимично или потпуно српског порекла; били су вокални солисти и лидери својих бендова; обојица су (барем на почетку каријере) избегавала политичност. Међутим, њихова породична искуства у вези са српским пореклом била су потпуно различита, што објашњава њихово супротно понашање за време и након рокенрол револуције у Мађарској. Један од њих, Левент Серени, достигао је врхунац своје рок каријере са бендом *Illés* 1968. године, захваљујући песми базираној на српском колу; међутим, касније је постао творац „мађарске националне рок опере” *Краљ Ишћиван*. Други музичар, Зоран Стевановић, био је уздржан током шездесетих, да би затим све отвореније изражавао своје мисли и осећања током седамдесетих, а потом се одважио да јавно обелодани своје српско порекло тек 2011. године, када је имао пуних 69 година, са песмом *Коло*. Ове околности постају јасније када сагледамо историјат мађарско-југословенских односа након 1948. године.

Кључне речи: „бит” музика, Мађарска, Зоран Стевановић, Левент Серени, Илес