

Jane Doe

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Professor Hardy

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Controlling the Masses Through Media

In countries which have been overtaken by communism, there is an interesting trend. It seems as though everything is nationalized and used to control the people of the nation. For Bulgaria, that trend continued as it was overtaken by communism in 1945. The communist takeover of Bulgaria changed many aspects of Bulgarian society. One such change was the effect on the musical industry. The new government used music as a tool to unify the country to support the new communist regime.

When changes in a government are drastic, the populace becomes disoriented and doesn't know where the power is located. That is why the new government of Bulgaria needed to use something large which could reach the whole nation in order to calm the unrest caused by the many changes put into effect by the new regime.

To calm this unrest in Bulgaria, the government instituted a plan for the unification of the people. Donna A Buchanan, who has a PhD in ethnomusicology (Buchanan, 2016), stated:

The Bulgarian government's plan for socialist development constituted a vital part of nation-building because it aided the synthesis and consolidation of the population. However, because the concept of a nation is a symbolic construction requiring recognition of shared identity and membership within specific conceptual, as well as territorial boundaries . . . political ideology also needed to provide a symbolic apparatus that would discount ethnic, religious, and other

cultural differences fragmenting national unity. . . . [T]raditional music was ideologically manipulated to construct an image of national homogeneity. . . . (Buchanan, 1991).

Imagine a country which, within the last 80 years, had overthrown the Turkish regime which had ruled them for 500 years and who had again been taken over, this time by a communist regime. The many changes and political turmoil of the nation would cause it to be anything but united. The communist government knew this and so implemented this plan of using traditional music to forge a new national identity.

One author described some of the changes made by this plan in this way:

After the socialist revolution in 1944, the new social and cultural situation led to changes in the development of Bulgarian musical life. All cultural activities were centralized and acquired a strong ideological orientation. . . .The new state performing institutions were responsible for organizing concerts and popularizing music (Buchanan, "Bulgaria").

There are more authors who speak of the way music and the media were used to control or indoctrinate the masses of Bulgaria. One such author spoke of the way in which the nationalization of the musical industry led to a black market for western rock music (Ganev, 2014). Another author explained how cinematography was also used during the communist period to spread propaganda concerning the new regime. The government nationalized the industry with private firms not being allowed after 1948 (Garbolevsky, 2011).

All the effects of the nationalization of the musical industry in Bulgaria can't be determined and may not have even manifested themselves yet. But this much is clear: the communist regime did use the musical industry to control the masses of Bulgaria.

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