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Original Scientific Paper

THE COLD WAR SEEN THROUGH THE PRISM OF YUGOSLAVIAN CINEMA: A 'NON-ALIGNED' VIEW ON THE CONFLICT

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Abstract:

The focus of this paper is the treatment of the topics related to the Cold War in Yugoslavian cinema, compared to the most prominent features of the discourse of the Cold War in Hollywood and the Soviet cinema. The Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, in its four and a half decades of existence, put a significant emphasis on spreading political messages through state-sponsored, mostly feature films. The aspect of the treatment of the Cold War by Yugoslavian cinematography is furthermore intriguing having in mind the unique strategic position the country had in the period of the Cold War, after the deterioration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union's relations, and the role Josip Broz Tito played in the establishment of the Non-Alignment Movement, which acted buffer zone in the ever growing hostility between the USA and the Soviet Union. The sample of movies we analyze present in a narrative form the perception of the Otherness of both the main protagonists in the conflict and the position of the 'non-aligned' view on the Cold War events.

The analysis of the political messages in Yugoslavian cinema is all the more compelling having in mind that Yugoslavian officials saw cinema as a very convenient way of sending political messages to the masses through the medium dubbed as *Biblia pauperum*. This resulted in a flourishing of the national cinematography in the decades of Yugoslavia's existence with film that were strongly politically committed. The sample of movies was analyzed in terms of the production, the financing, the commercial success of the movies and the critical response they evoked. Furthermore, we convey a discourse analysis considering the aspect of commitment, the explicit and implicit interpretations of the events of the Cold War, the response of the public and their treatment in today's discourse of the Cold War. The sample also contains films produced after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, reminiscing of aspects related to the Cold War. Our findings will then be put through a comparative analysis with the most prominent features of Hollywood and Soviet films that marked the juxtaposed discourses of the Cold War.

Keywords: Cold War, Yugoslavian cinema, discourse analysis, propaganda, commitment in cinema

1. INTRODUCTION

Starting from the period following the Second World War, the concepts of designing the international relations in the contemporary social climate were based on the efforts to minimize the causes for generating violence. Such tendencies were structured as a global ideology whose tenets related to the prevention of possible apocalyptic visions of humanity's future. World War I and the Great October Socialist Revolution were certainly the initial instigators which brutally anticipated the processes of ideological differentiation and the events that would later be summarized in the term *Cold War*. This phrase is the ideal social construct for the theoretical conceptualization and justification of the tensions which are nothing more than a modernized form of the atavistic tendency to conquer territories and mass manipulation. In this sense, the processes and events that are an inherent part of the Cold War are the most striking example of the dual nature and hypocrisy of all modern conceptions of peacekeeping, human rights and the "culture of peace". The idea of the Cold War and the culture of peace represent the "mannerism" of the late modern/postmodern age – the modern conceptions of the omnipresence of democracy, the all-powerfulness of technology and the cultural relativism.

The fight for the postulation of values, mainly orchestrated by the USA and the USSR, at the time of the most striking examples of Cold War, represents the backbone of the Cold War. This type of "warfare" has emanated the most controversial part of the "warfare" itself, as it seeks to manipulate the public opinion, further compromised by the conscious or unconscious "recruitment" of world intellectual elite as the most effective "army". The involvement of the Third World countries further deepens the possibility of broader divisions, since they proved to be a fertile ground for the implementation of the new form of cultural imperialism. The former Yugoslavia was such a project – an example of the complex intercultural communication between the East and the West (in this case between socialism and capitalism). The establishment of the Second Yugoslavia (SFRY, later Yugoslavia), paradoxically, was a result of the joint efforts by the USA, UK and USSR, which, during the Second World War, had a strategic interest to support Tito's partisan detachments. After the end of World War II, Yugoslavia was transformed into a socialist country, i.e., a member of the group of countries behind the Iron Curtain. Unlike other countries of this group, Yugoslavia evaded the strong influence of the Soviet Union, especially after 1948. This year marked a period of cooling and later a complete suspension of the diplomatic relations between the USSR and SFRY, i.e., between Tito and Stalin. This is one of the reasons why Tito turned to the West (mainly the USA and Western Europe), while not changing the initial development course of socio-political (socialist) relations. The changes that the Yugoslav society underwent, postulated through theoretically ambitious objectives and goals, were evolving through the prism of conflicting and complex relations, concerning "the efforts for pulling the country out of the economic, social and cultural backwardness and political immaturity, or a lack of a modern political tradition", but also the complex constellation of international relations that it was a part of¹. In the five decades of its existence Yugoslavia transformed itself socially, economically, culturally, as well as in its relation to the international community. After the split with the USSR, with its opening to the world, and especially to the Western countries, the introduction of the so-called self-management socialism in several stages (from the 1950s until the collapse of socialism), its participation in the Non-Aligned Movement (from 1961), the impact of Western counterculture, the emergence of national chauvinism (as of the end of 1960), Yugoslavia established itself as a

¹ Антоанела Петковска, *Социологија на македонската ликовна уметност, 1945-1980* (Скопје: Македонска цивилизација, 1997), p. 42.

country which was in many respects different from the other countries of the Eastern Bloc. Because of these reasons, and most of all, its own path in the development of socialism, Yugoslavia attracted more attention from the international community, disproportionate to its real political and economic power.

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ‘NON-ALIGNED’ YUGOSLAV CINEMATOGRAPHY

During the late XIX and early XX centuries, the national cinemas of the later Yugoslavia were separated into several segments of national cultures that would later enter Yugoslavia as a multicultural community of Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Bosnians, Montenegrins and other ethnic groups. The first permanent cinemas appeared in 1900, first in Belgrade and then in other major cities of the former Yugoslavia. Since the beginning of the modern Yugoslav cinematography after World War II and up until the collapse of Yugoslavia, around 800 films were produced, together with over 120 co-productions and 1000 films which used various imaging services in Yugoslavia².

After the liberation and the formation of DFY as a socialist country, the new authorities seemed to have understood well the power and intrigue of film as a medium for the realization of the new ideological and cultural goals as well as for building a common and distinctive cultural identity of the different peoples that came within Yugoslavia. The analysis of political messages in Yugoslav cinema is all the more compelling having in mind that Yugoslav officials saw cinema as a very convenient way of sending political messages to the masses through the medium dubbed as *Biblia pauperum*. In fact, cinema was faced to the delicate task to treat issues such as the legacy of World War II, the processes of rebuilding the country after the military destruction, and the structuring of the new social system³. Many authors dealing with the history and theory of Yugoslav film distinguish several different stages of development of Yugoslav cinema, also having in mind the social milieu: the period of socialist realism (1945-1950), establishing self-management and decentralization (1951-1960), the new film and the black wave (1961-1972), the new Yugoslav cinema (1973-1990), and the last period beginning after the breakup of Yugoslavia (1991-2001).

2.1 The Period of Socialist Realism

This phase of the development of Yugoslav cinema is characterized with propagandistic purposes and follows the aesthetics and poetics of socialist realism under the influence of the Stalinist-Zhdanov model. Accordingly, the “committed” character of the themes aimed at the glorification and promotion of the ideological paradigms of orthodox socialism, which was built on the ruins of the Second World War, the national liberation of the peoples of Yugoslavia and, of course, the highlighting of the heroic myths, especially those related to the character of Josip Broz Tito and other famous revolutionaries and partisans of the communist movement. Of course, this period was not devoid of cinematic attempts to penetrate the boundaries of the rigidity of socialist realism. Goran Miloradović gives an intriguing overview of this first phase of development of the Yugoslav cinema:

² Dejan Kosanović, “Yugoslavija – raskrsnica pokretnih slika”, in: *Zbornik radova Fakulteta dramskih umetnosti* (4, 2000), p. 162

³ Ante Peterlić (Ed.), *Filmska enciklopedija*, Vol. 1, (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod "Miroslav Krleža", 1986), p. 623

The primary importance that was attributed to the film industry in the creation of awareness of the population at the time before the advent of television indicated that the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), immediately upon winning government, paid special attention to cinema. The first five-year-plan envisioned the construction of the Central Film Studio in Belgrade, as a pillar of the development of the film industry. But the Yugoslav film industry received attention from other zones of interest beyond the borders of the country as well. Having in mind that the second half of the forties and early fifties was a period of defining the two spheres of interest in Europe, both of the carriers of those processes, the USSR and the United States, sought to gain supremacy in the cinemas throughout Yugoslavia. Americans' starting point was better, because of their dominance in Yugoslavia during the inter-war period, and Zagreb was the gateway for American films. The delicate power balance on the international arena during the first phase of the Cold War and the tendencies which stemmed from it had great repercussions over the history of socialist Yugoslavia, and the events and processes in the Yugoslav film⁴.

The persistence of the "infiltration" of the USSR in the cultural policy of Yugoslavia can be illustrated by the example of the Soviet director Abram Room⁵:

...[It was] 'warmly' recommended that we build a film policy in the direction that only Soviet film crews, among which there would be Soviet actors as well, should be entrusted with our country's film production, and the representative of *Soveksportfilm* 'advised' us to limit our film production only to newsreels and do not even engage in the production of documentaries and art films, which, according to him, should simply be imported from the Soviet Union. In short, we should have, according to them, turned away from 'four-eyed business' to create a culture on the silver screen which is socialist in form, and nationalist in content⁶.

Until the dissension with USSR, and in accordance with the cultural policy of the time, the Yugoslav authorities opted mostly for Soviet film journals, and the film releases of West were marginalized with the aim to completely stop the practice of Western film imports, even if this meant that "the cinemas will operate with half of their capacity"⁷.

A more thorough analysis of the relationship of the West and the East towards the Yugoslav culture, especially in the field of cinema, shows ever latent and sometimes explicit tendencies for the prevention of an authentic and indigenous production process in the Yugoslav cinema. Both Anglo-Saxons and Soviets were not, in fact, interested at all in supporting a strong homogeneous and centralized Yugoslav cinema, because it would mean increasing its influence in Yugoslavia and in other socialist countries. Ideological differences and national disputes proved to be a fertile ground for such spins:

The successful resistance that Croatia and Slovenia put against the centralist tendencies coincided with the interests of the United States and Great Britain to

⁴ Горан Милорадовић, "Домаћи трилери у иностраној режији: обавештајне и саботерске активности против југословенске кинематографије 1945-1955 године", in: *Годишњак за друштвену историју*(2010), p. 69-70.

⁵*In the Mountains of Yugoslavia (В горах Југославији)* is a Soviet-Yugoslav film produced immediately after the Second World War. The action applies to the events which happened in Yugoslavia during the war and favors the idea that the Liberation War was inspired by Hitler's declaration of war on the USSR. Although this is the first feature film in the history of Yugoslav cinema, however, this status is commonly attributed to the film *Slavica* (1947), precisely because of the Tito and Stalin split, because the character of Tito played by a Soviet actor was no longer politically "suitable".

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.82.

⁷ Miomir Gatalović, "Između ideologije i stvarnosti", in: *Istorija 20. veka* (2009), p. 39.

thwart the development of the Yugoslav film industry, and to replace the Soviet influence with their own. This meant a weakening of the overall resistance of the Yugoslav cultural influences from the West, which gradually, but with an ever greater power, were spread through the Hollywood film production. Marshall Tito's personal influence to open the gates for the popular American film was strengthened through the meeting with the representative of the Association of American Film Producers, Eric Johnston, in October 1948... The centralistic tendencies were supported primarily by Serbia which, due to the dispersion of the Serbian population throughout Yugoslavia, was very interested in integrity, centralization and functionality of the federal states in all respects, culturally as well. Serbia's failure in this endeavor was a bad sign for Yugoslavia's future⁸.

*Slavica*⁹, the first official Yugoslav film, was produced in 1947 and represents a paradigm for the era of socialist realism, but was also the first film product that encouraged Yugoslav intellectuals and filmmakers to question the essence of the development of cinema in Yugoslavia, which would involve professionalism, skill, artistry, thematic and genre diversity, with poetics and aesthetics deprived of rigidity, banality, stereotyping and amateurism. Films like *Život je naš* (1948), *A story of a Factory* (*Пруча о фабрици*, 1949) and *The Lake* (*Језеро*, 1950) dealt with themes of the Liberation War, the reconstruction of the country after the war and the building of the new socialist system (sacrifice, heroism, enthusiasm). Of the few films produced in the period up to 1951, only two did not deal with partisan thematic - *Sofka*¹⁰ (1948) and *The Magic Sword*¹¹ (*Чудотворни мач*, 1950), but nonetheless they were in a way a metaphor or allegory which favored the idea of overcoming social injustice and the human fate in onerous historical moments.

Regarding the film distribution from the USA and the USSR in Yugoslavia, it is important to emphasize that Yugoslavia had a wide open door for American films before World War II. With the formation of the new socialist state and Yugoslavia's turning to the USSR, the Yugoslav film market opened to films of Soviet production. However, this does not mean that American film had lost its popularity and viewership. In fact, in 1945, of 217 films that were imported, 93 of them were of Soviet production and 70 of the USA. The dominance of the Soviet film continued in the next few years, so that in 1948, of 122 imported films, 97 were Soviet and only one American¹². Policies and quotas on imports of foreign films were monitored with particular rhetoric of the party leadership, so Radovan Zogović in 1948 declared war on the "reactionary and decadent American movies":

... This terrible and ravaging Hollywood opium, has today, in an era of intensifying social conflict in the United States and other capitalist countries, the urgent task to divert the attention and awareness of people from social problems, to problems of psychopathologic nature, to poison the consciousness of the people, to choke them or

⁸ Горан Милорадовић, "Домаћи трилери у иностраној режији: обавештајне и саботерске активности против југословенске кинематографије 1945-1955 године", in: *Годишњак за друштвену историју* (2010), p. 85

⁹ The film *Slavica*, produced in 1947, is the directorial debut of Vjekoslav Africa, a theater director who had his first film experience as assistant director to Abram Room for the film *In the Mountains of Yugoslavia*. It is a pathetic story of the partisan successes in Dalmatia and the experience of the tragic heroine of the film - Slavica. The film was a huge commercial success, but it also initiated a discussion about its (possibly negative) impact on the future Yugoslav cinematography, especially in the field of artistic expression.

¹⁰ *Sophka* is based on the novel *Unclean Blood* (*Нечиста крв*, 1910) by Borisav Stanković, which takes place in a Serbian province, in a culture still under a great influence of the Ottoman Empire.

¹¹ A fable based on the fairytale of Baš – Čelik.

¹² Radina Vučetić, "Kauboји u partizanskoј uniformi - američki vesterni i partizanski vesterni u Jugoslaviji šezdesetih godina 20. veka", in: *Tokovi istorije* (2010).

enchant them with scenes of death, murder, nightmares, hallucinations, pornography and domestic idyll, to evoke zoological moods, atavistic instincts, admiration towards crime and criminals, a passion for gangster experiences. And this is why we have to use your sharpest means of criticism and dethroning against the American reactionary and decadent film¹³.

2.2 Establishing Self-Management and Decentralization

The cooling of the relations between Yugoslavia and the USSR and the intention of establishing its own path to socialism marked a new period in the development of Yugoslav cinema. The specificity of Yugoslav socialism is tied to the implementation of the idea of self-management which included a general decentralization of the economy and society as a whole. Likewise, the Yugoslav film industry, though slowly, began to decentralize in all stages of film production. At the same time, this concept brought a change of economic principles in the functioning of the industry, new sophisticated distribution networks, a greater expertise of all participants in the creation of new film products, the establishment of a more open criticism regarding the artistic freedom, which was prompted by the opening of Yugoslavia to the artistic and cultural influences from the West. The intention to separate the new Yugoslav film from the aesthetic and thematic mold of the previous phase opened Yugoslav film production to the influences of Italian and British neorealism which, in turn, meant a greater international recognition and popularity of these films.

The separation with the USSR and the abandonment of the Soviet version of socialism put Yugoslavia in a delicate position on the international scene in terms of its ideological legitimization. In some ways, the pragmatics of the regime, evident in their endeavor to bring Yugoslavia closer to the West, “enforced” a period of a greater creative freedom in culture, art and social life in general. The idea of “branding” the Yugoslav system as “humanistic socialism” based on “democratic values” was a compromise solution to the Yugoslav authorities, who were not willing to renounce the established political system. In the artistic sphere, the repercussions were the abandonment of socialist realism, which was replaced with a number of new and different art movements as an attempt for the Yugoslav culture and arts to gain worldwide attention. However, the regime showed caution concerning the side effects of such openness to influences. The products of Western mass culture, which had always enjoyed popularity in Yugoslavia, were gradually incorporated into the methodology of the propaganda apparatus of the socialist government: regarding cinema, new hybrid genres were born, such as the Yugoslav western and the use of Hollywood matrices in the treatment of topics that aimed to give a “rebirth” of the already staled partisan film. These two routes had ideological and educational function for the new generations who had no direct experience of the National Liberation War and the idealism in the building of the new state. Paradoxically, American capitalist mass culture matrices served as very suitable methods for ideological indoctrination in socialist Yugoslavia. This mode of benevolence toward partisan westerns was not at all coincidental, since this genre achieved greatest popularity in the 1960s, parallel with the emergence of the so-called *black wave*, i.e. films that break down the previous myths of the National Liberation War and the Revolution¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., p. 53-54.

¹⁴ Ibid

The films that give an insight into the most important tendencies of this phase of the development of Yugoslav cinematography were:¹⁵ *Poslednji dan* (1951), *Legends of Anika* (*Anikina vremena*, 1954), *The Last Bridge* (*Poslednji most*, 1954), *Ešalon doktora M.* (1955), *Zenica* (1957). Živorad (Žika) Mitrović was one of the most important filmmakers of this period who skillfully managed to “borrow” the form of the American westerns in shaping partisan topics which had become boring and mundane for a large part of the audience. Thus, this director is considered the “father” of the Yugoslav “western” and is remembered for his films *Ešalon doktora M.*, *Captain Leši* and *Miss Stone*. However, Hajrudin Krvavac achieved the greatest popularity in this genre in later periods with a series of films, including his most famous *Walter Defends Sarajevo* (*Valter brani Sarajevo*, 1972).

A new type of realism was established, embodied in the achievements of several Yugoslav directors (Bauer, Stiglitz, Bulaić, Pogačić, etc.) whose hallmark was leaving the abstract and epic approach to the Liberation War towards a new twist to the intimate, personal, and sometimes brutally naturalistic showing of the consequences of the war. Such is the nature of the following film achievements: *My Son, Don't Turn Round* (*Ne okreći se sine*, 1956), *The Ninth Circle* (*Deveti krug*, 1960), *Partisan Stories* (*Partizanske priče*, 1960)¹⁶. Other genres that marked this period were comedy, satire, literary / historical films, action and adventure films as well as the anticipation of some new cinematic trends (Vatroslav Mimica).

2.3 The New Film and the Black Wave

One of the most interesting and fertile stages of the development of Yugoslav cinema is the period from 1961 to 1972, when the decentralization of the Yugoslav cinema continued due to the reduction of central government control over political, economic, and cultural aspects. This strengthened the possibilities for a more authentic development of the national cinemas in the six federal republics. The free conceptualization of socialism and the establishment of artistic freedom encouraged film critics, scholars, and film artists to support creativity, diversity and experimentation with film topics, especially in the treatment of the modern way of life. This was the period that Yugoslavia achieved its maximum referring to film creation and export of film products. On the other hand, the production of films with trivial and popular content was greatly enhanced, which was an indicator of the commercialization of Yugoslav culture, including neoconservative tendencies with more skillful and technically developed matrices of partisan films or films related to the issues of national liberation in general, mostly with epic character: *The Battle of Neretva* (*Bitka na Neretvi*, 1969), *Kozara* (1962), *Black Seed* (*Crno seme*, 1971), *When You Hear the Bells* (*Kad čuješ zvona*, 1969), *Preko brojna* (1962), *Face to Face* (*Licem u lice*, 1963). The large number of events that marked the late 1970s, the rise of the counterculture in the West and in some eastern countries, the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia (1968), and the Croatian national-separatist movement (1971) had a strong impact on the nature of part of the Yugoslav cinema. This atmosphere was in part prompted by certain circles of the Yugoslav intelligentsia which, in the spirit of the New Left, was trying to posit an authentic, philosophical and sociological premise of a more humanistic, democratic and self-governing socialism. This intellectual re-thinking of the totalitarian and uniform side of socialism was not, of course, always accepted by

¹⁵Most of them are propaganda films dedicated to the socialist reconstruction of the country, heroism, and sacrificing private life.

¹⁶ Daniel Goulding, *Liberated Cinema: the Yugoslav Experience 1945-2001*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002).

the authorities, regardless of the apparent mission of Yugoslavia to restructure the system beyond the reach of Stalinism and Zhdanov's influences in culture and the arts. In their speeches from 1962 and 1963, Tito and Veljko Vlahović openly called for a fight against "the decadent, pro-Western, and subversive elements" among the intellectual and artistic elite, whose works, according to them, bordered with crimes against the system. However, Vlahović stood for freedom of creation (and the possible disagreements between art and the social system or the authorities), but did not agree with the concept of *l'art pour l'art*. Precisely because of the intention of some film authors to display the hypocrisy, alienation and angst of the fate of the modern man, even in the "happy socialist society", some of their films are called New Yugoslav Films and later films of the proscribed *black wave*, which were subjected to censorship, pressures, persecutions and disqualifications by the government (purges). Some of them fled the country due to such practices, enlisting the so-called dissident cultural elite whose ideological and political creed did not correspond to the requirements of the socialist state. Similar occurrences were common in the socio-cultural contexts and film industries in some other European socialist countries (Czechoslovakia, Poland, the USSR, and Hungary). The phenomenon of the *black wave* cinema in Yugoslavia and other socialist countries, in fact, was not about the conflict between the attempted restoration of Stalinism and the socialist realism tendencies within the system and the film makers' efforts to resist the retrograde climate of totalitarianism, but rather a form of resistance of the Yugoslav authorities towards determining the actual anomic consequences of the inconsequentiality of the alleged venture in the humanization of social reality and on the other hand, the artists' need to point out the contradictions in which people, eager for freedom, generate confused and unfulfilled alienated individuals.

Analyses of the most prominent feature films of the period

The Poem (Pesma, 1961) is a film that deals with the events of the Second World War (illegal combat) in which the rigid ideological positions of the socialist revolution are being vivisected and challenged, especially in the context of assessing the "moral suitability" of the intellectuals and the fight for their "recruitment" in the movement.

Siberian Lady Macbeth (Sibiriska Ledi Magbet, 1962) is an intriguing feature for several reasons: firstly, it is directed by the cult "dissident" Polish director Andrzej Wajda; secondly, it is based on the novel by Nikolai Leskov, a 19th century Russian novelist, a novel that is often paralleled with *Madame Bovary* by Flaubert; it is a story of love with a background idea of class differences and the idea of ruthlessness in achieving one's goals in a divided society as Tsarist Russia was. However, the focus of the film and the script is the personal moment set in the hopelessness of Siberia as a synonym for brutality and suffering.

Obračun (1962) is a typical sequel, not just of the cult partisan film *Captain Leši*, but also of the type of combat films made in the manner of westerns (a favorite among a wide audience).

Put oko sveta (1964) is the work of the director Soja Jovanović, and the script is based on the comedy by Branislav Nušić. The film expresses a clear tendency to display and confront the philistine mentality of the peoples of Yugoslavia against their intention to conquer the world, and the manners of the adventurous and cosmopolitan spirit that is a metaphor for the abandoning of the rural Balkan cultural pattern. The same tendency but in a different, is present in Dušan Makavejev's debut work, *Man Is Not a Bird (Čovek nije tica, 1965)*. The film is a satire of the ideals of the small man, trapped between the skyscrapers of the modern and industrialized socialist society and is an outstanding example of a black wave film in the East European cinema.

Three (Tri, 1965) is a film by the famous Yugoslav director Aleksandar Petrović, which is considered as his second most mature work and a great example of Yugoslav black wave in

film¹⁷. The work is an apotheosis of absurdity of life and death, the war and its brutality and the unscrupulousness of those who generate it. Death as a punishment, as a victim or as forgiveness is followed through the moral dilemmas of an individual who passes through different stages of metamorphosis regarding the attitude towards war as an absurd.

I Even Met Happy Gypsies (Skupljači perja, 1967) was another work of director Aleksandar Petrović, and it is considered one of the best films as part of the black wave¹⁸. It is not a coincidence that the main characters in the film are the Roma people in Yugoslavia (Serbia), an issue that was further elaborated by Emir Kusturica. In the spirit of the Italian neorealism and Southern Mediterranean pathos, the ethnic, social and intimate human tragedies and controversies caused by Yugoslav socialism are put under scrutiny. The film speaks of the prisons which people are trying to escape from and the ones that they create themselves, elaborated through the symbolism of the nostalgic and phantasmagoric Roma folklore. This is an example of a cinematography in which the highlighted poetics, passion and melancholy are realized through the brutal and tragic scenes of despair and meaninglessness.

The Morning (Jutro, 1967) is a film by Mladimir (Puriša) Đorđević who, in the spirit of the black wave, tries to cope with the legacy of the Second World War and the establishment of the new regime and the deep ethical dilemmas of those whose lives have been marked by them.

Early Works (Rani radovi, 1969) is an allegory of the 1968 student protests in Yugoslavia depicted through the characters of three young men and a girl who, inspired by the early works of Marx, choose to change the world¹⁹. Their mission ends tragically, pointing to the absurdity of every revolution.

The Battle of Neretva (Bitka na Neretvi, 1969) is the most ambitious partisan epic, a work of one of the most favorite and maybe most commercial directors of Yugoslav cinema, Veljko Bulajić. The level of artistic craftsmanship and spectacle of the film meets Hollywood criteria just as Bondarchuk's *War and Peace*. The international cast (USA, Europe, and the USSR) and the crew coming from all of the Yugoslav republics, is a proof of a latent servile, shallow and megalomaniac idea. Namely, the film advocates the collaboration between disparate ideologically postulated cultural and societal forms, which melodramatically create synergy in the spirit of respect for heroism, patriotism and rejection of military violence.

WR: Mysteries of the Organism (WR Misterije organizma, 1971) is one of the internationally most popular and most "scandalous" films by director Makavejev, interesting for part of the blasé intellectual elite, especially in Europe. This "erotic psychedelic satire" of hard core black wave films was proscribed in Yugoslavia for many years (its first public screening was in 1986). The concept of the film is a bizarre story with trivial aspects, a cynical psychological-philosophical meta-narrative of the dystopic nature of modern society, especially one based on "communist" ideology and Stalinist rule. Another juxtaposition of the work is the false boon of the American society, with consequences that only seem to allow freedom and vitality of man's

¹⁷It is a film that won a number of national and international awards, such as the Pula Festival Grand Prix for directing, best film, and acting and the Milton Manaki Critics' Award; best film award at the Czechoslovak prestigious film festival in Karlovy Vary; the film was featured and received awards at the Acapulco Film Festival; it also received Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Language Film. In 1979 it was named second best Yugoslav film, after *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* by the same director.

¹⁸ The film won a series of important international awards: Special Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, the FIPRESCI Award (film critics' award), an Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Language Film, a Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Film; the film received only one award at the National Film festival in Pula (Best Actor).

¹⁹The film received only one award, the Golden Bear at the Berlinale. Up until 1982 it was not approved for public screening in Yugoslavia.

existence as a truly lonely individual. The openness to sexual pleasure and promiscuity is just a synonym for individual self-fulfillment and happiness. This is one of the few Yugoslav films which recognize, indirectly of course, the effects of the Cold War in culture, the spirit of the counterculture and the absurd, packed in an obscene, even pornographic form according to some critics, with emphasized sociological discourse. Goulding's analysis of the wider context surrounding *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* directly binds this cinematic work with the author's understanding of the Cold War and its interpretation for the failure of capitalism and socialism:

In the context of the film, the United States and the Soviet Union are monuments to sexuality misdirected into power politics and militarism. The principal symbols of American repression are the right-wing excesses of the McCarthy era, in which pathologies of "Get the Commies" were combined with suppression of intellectual unorthodoxy and the contemporary (at the time the film was made) US military intervention in Vietnam. Stalin is the preeminent symbol of Soviet repression. [...] The contemporary symbol of the repressive Stalinist-Leninist orthodoxy is represented in the politically conditioned Russian ice skating champion Vladimir Ilyich (after Lenin's first name), whose perfectly formed lips speak nothing but socialist clichés. Yugoslavia represents a separate path to socialism espousing humanistic self-management socialist doctrine but not always living up to its claims²⁰.

The Master and Margaret (Majstor i Margarita, 1972) is a film inspired by Mikhail Bulgakov's novel differently interpreted by director Aleksandar Petrović, containing elements of intimate and ideological character, and using the metaphysics and mythology of surrealism and fiction of the Faustian type. The satanization of the "dark" aspects of human nature in burdensome and claustrophobic reality is transmitted through the seemingly religious symbolism of Christian ethics and Biblical themes (the allegory of the relationship between Jesus and Pontius Pilate, as well as the association of Satan). On the other hand, the plot's intrigue comes from the dissident associations, the autobiographically intoned basis related to Bulgakov and his correspondence with Stalin as the personification of the clash between freedom of creativity and the authoritarian nature of totalitarianism manifested through the dubious activity of social censorship in the Soviet society. The concept of cinematic expression is associated with the author's views on the counterpoint between the freethinking intellectuals on the one hand, and the regime "pets" or opportunistically oriented intellectuals, on the other²¹.

2.4 New Yugoslav Cinema (1973-1990)

The period of the 1980s marked by turbulent global changes (the Soviet Union was in a deep economic crisis, compounded by the political crisis caused by the loss of breath in the Cold War with the United States), the rise of neo-conservatism through the policies of Reagan and Thatcher (in the United States and Britain respectively), and the internal crisis in Yugoslavia which intensified after Tito's death in 1980, had their own repercussions in all aspects of life, including the silver screen. The themes and language of the films characteristic of the black wave of the 1960s and 1970s become central in the last decade of the existence of a (more or less) unified cinematography. Dealing with issues that affect the general Yugoslav society, but with a modern

²⁰ Ibid., p.137.

²¹ The film won several international and national awards: St. Marco's Plaque in Venice; Cudalk Award, Venice; Silver Hugo, Chicago; Big Golden Arena for Best Film, Pula; Golden Door of Pula; Golden Arena for direction; Golden Arena for Best Actor; Golden Arena for art. This was Petrović's last film; censorship prevented it from attracting the attention of the domestic public.

film language and technologies, the need to keep up with the film trends in Europe and the West in general was obvious.

After a period of relative stagnation in the Yugoslav film production during the 1970s and 1980s, up until the collapse of the Federation in the early 1990s, the period was marked by the expansion of films inspired by the “anathemized” *black wave*. The authors who were suppressed in the previous period, as well as the young filmmakers inspired by the black wave (which, as already noted, collaborated in the film schools in other Eastern Bloc countries, particularly Czechoslovakia) had become part of the mainstream, partly because of reduced censorship by the authorities, and in part because of the critical acclaim these films received abroad. The cooperation between the national cinemas within the Federation became more limited, although it did not completely cease until the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and continued later as well, especially in the XXI century. The cinema of the 1970s is marked by the development of new genres, or “new thematic circles”, such as easy boulevard comedies, partisan action films, historical epics, character comedies, children's and youth films, films which were strongly critical towards the social and political circumstances, films devoted to the issue of temporary work abroad, and even films from the field of science fiction²². Prominent filmmakers of this period of Yugoslav cinema were Srđan Karanović, Goran Paskaljević, Slobodan Šijan, Lordan Zafranović, Emir Kusturica, many of them educated at FAMU. Their films anticipate, in a way, the breakup of Yugoslavia, with a brutal or deliberately primitive “poetic” attitude towards the present and the past, towards the marginalized social groups, the alienation and the anomy. On the other hand, there was a much greater expansion of TV production (entertainment series, etc.), commercialization, development of mass culture and pandering to the audience with light, jovial and humorous content, such as the films *Žika's Dynasty* (*Žikina dinastija*), *Crazy Years* (*Lude godine*), *Tight Skin* (*Tesna koža*) which showed a delicate sensibility for the little man and everyday life of people in the given societal circumstances, for the stereotypes in the mentality of peasants, the new urban population, the working class, the intelligentsia and the red bourgeoisie²³. Films with higher ambitions and harsh discourses of identity caused by the black wave were: *When Father Was Away on Business* (*Otac na službenom putu*, 1985), *Zadah tela* (1983), *The Red Horse* (*Црвениом коњ*, 1981), *Happy New Year '49* (*Срећна Нова '49*, 1986), *Living like the Rest of Us* (*Živeti kao sav normalan svet*, 1982), *Time of the Gypsies* (*Dom za vešanje*, 1989).

The film *When Father Was Away on Business* already shaped and suggested the specific cinematic language of the prominent Yugoslav director Emir Kusturica²⁴. The film deals with all the troubling threads of the Yugoslav society, using a plot generated from the period of the rising hostility between the USSR and Yugoslavia, and the confusion created among the people who were raised in the Soviet-Stalinist spirit. The ideological conflict caused a number of political repercussions that would eventually compromise even the image of Josip Broz Tito, because of

²² Ante Peterlić (Ed.), *Filmska enciklopedija*, Vol. 1, (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod "Miroslav Krleža", 1986), p. 624-625.

²³ Major retrospectives of Yugoslav films were organized by the prestigious Georges Pompidou Center in Paris (spring 1986) and the National Film Theater in London (fall 1986), while a series of retrospectives were organized in the United States by the American Film Institute (1987), and in special sections devoted to Yugoslav films at major international film festivals. Several films which had been “put on the shelf” in the late sixties were re-released for domestic viewing, and critical film scholarship in Yugoslavia made important strides in resolving the significance of the *new film* movement of the sixties and its relationship to and continuity with developments in the *new Yugoslav cinema* of the 1980s (Goulding, 2002, p. 147).

²⁴ The film won the following awards: Golden Palm at the Cannes Film Festival in 1985, the FIPRESCI Prize the same year and Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Language Film.

the way he used to deal with his political opponents in order to “purge” Yugoslavia of Stalin supporters. What is evident is the director’s intention to support, idealize and romanticize the idea of brotherhood and unity, of coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups, based on the already existing fear of conflict among the Yugoslav people. His reference to the recent past is an obvious metaphor for the contradictions of the unique Balkan model of socialism, which was respected by the West as more successful. The use of naturalistic and surrealistic solutions in the film aesthetics is characteristic of the author, but these are not indistinguishable in other Yugoslav films. The narrative experienced through the eyes of a child is banal if the viewer cannot understand the spirit of the age as an innocent ambiance which is later filled with tragic events.

Stole Popov's *Happy New Year*²⁵ presents an episode of the Yugoslav socialist epic that deals with the same issues as *When Father Was Away on Business*; therefore, both of these films are often compared or mentioned in a joint context. However, the contradictions and the dynamic changes of the socio-cultural setting are designed in a far more simplified, almost socialist realistic manner, using strong references to ideology and melodrama as the only possible solution for representing the dark, confusing and existentially horrifying period of the breakup of Yugoslavia with the Soviets, but also with the international socialist tissue. The intimate fable which permeates the fates of individuals and the overall social and political circumstances are far from the bitter humor and subtle fairy-tale manner of Kusturica. The tragic fate of the man and his inability to deal with the current gloom are explicated in a far greater pathetic seriousness and drama, which makes it impossible to posit its aesthetics as more typical of the film narrative.

2.5 Yugoslav Cinema after the Dissolution of the Federation (1991-2001)

The main trends of the development of Yugoslav cinematography after the breakup of the Federation are related to the consolidation and establishment of the new national cinemas in all aspects of film production, distribution, and exhibition. Thematically, according to the specific cultural identity, the country’s status in the former Republic, the way in which the individual federal states split from the Federation, as well as the experiences of the transition period (of socialism into capitalism), one can identify several domains of interest: the effects of the war destruction in the 1990s and similar conflicts, forcing the tight national and historical issues, the affirmation of the individual cultural identities (reinventing history), “dealing” with the new values and norms, with the new lifestyles of the liberal democracy and market economy, the alienation and the existential uncertainty of the citizens, the ethnic tensions between the constituent nations of the former Yugoslavia, *Yugonostalgia* versus hatred toward socialism and illusory brotherhood and unity. Furthermore, certain directors, many of whom were active at the time of socialism, made films with a prevalent tendency to present the exoticness of the Balkans as a space of historical brutality and tribal cultures, and a tendency to explicate the dissolution of the socialist federation as a series of such processes, which coincide with certain theoretical discourses of a number of intellectuals outside the Balkans, such self-exotization of certain film authors, and a wider acceptance and valorization at the global market of the film production.

3. CONCLUSION

The intellectual, cultural and artistic history of Yugoslavia, including that of film art, was strongly influenced not only by external influences from Western countries (the United States) and the USSR, but also a reflection of the differentiated ideological beliefs and projects arising from the internal ideological and political tensions between the individuals and groups that marked the

²⁵ The film won first prize at the Pula Film Festival in 1986 and received positive reviews at home and abroad.

entire history of Yugoslavia. This dialectic of causalities, of course, is not only typical of socialist Yugoslavia, but also for other socialist countries. Some appear in all these countries and generate similar counterpoints between the idea of socialism as “a system with a human face” or a dynamic utopia, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the perception of socialism as a totalitarian regime, i.e. dystopia.

As in many other aspects of social life (economics, politics, culture), in the field of cinema the Yugoslav authorities, regardless of the current circumstances or exactly because of them, showed pragmatism, even servility towards both the United States and the USSR, regardless of the works and filmmakers who were trying to preserve the nature of the freedom of artistic creation, to retain the individual artistic creed as well, and not flee from the specific Balkan/Mediterranean sensibility, which puts them in the group of potent and immanently creative filmmakers, even on a European and global level. The tragedy of the concept of the Cold War is, in fact, that while the major powers created the tactics and the strategies of the Cold War, taking into account only their basic interests, its true “victims” were the less powerful cultures and societies. Of course, the authorities always contribute to closing that circle of power one way or another. The big stories of intellectual interventions or intellectual dissent, including ones generated and postulated in part of the film industry, unfortunately, always come down to the confrontation between elitist and mass culture not in its core, but in a trivial sense. Thus, the creation and the creative achievements of Yugoslav cinema can be considered a kind of “byproducts” of the constant conflict of interests of the big powers. Backed with “natural” or generated risks inherent to the dynamics and dubious development of the Yugoslav social fabric, the impact of the Cold War at different times produced different substrates and meanings and infiltrated more or less subversively on a meta-scale of the social and cultural setting in Yugoslavia.

Basically, the features of the “internal Cold War” are supported by the external residues of the international ideological collisions. The essential internal tensions of the Yugoslav society always moved on a scale from collectivism to individualism, statism versus democracy, tradition versus progress, class versus nation, rural versus urban, intellectualism versus “socialist mass culture”. Apart from dividing the structure of the Yugoslav society, they also produced opportunities for labeling all those who were trying to avoid the official policies of the country in various stages of its development. The persistent attempts to liberalize the social relations and for greater freedom of cultural creation, ultimately, more or less aggressively ended with the “reminder” of the true ideological and political sense of Yugoslav socialism and socialism in general. Therefore the creation of various formal or informal groups, whose labeling could be the reason for the coherence or departure from this basic idea, and its eventual betrayal related exactly to the struggle between capitalism and socialism manifested through aspects of the Cold War was not unprecedented. This tendency was followed by some Yugoslav filmmakers who began to serve images that demystify ideals imposed in western and Yugoslav partisan films to the viewer saturated by images of the “happy socialist society”.

The dogmatic form of the Cold War in film and culture in general involves organized and institutionalized propaganda which approaches the narrative, aesthetics, technology, and distribution of the film seriously and systematically and postulates the basic and functional significance of one or another ideology. The satanization of the ideological “otherness” is implemented with explicit semantics and recognizable metaphors. The ideological schism in Yugoslav cinema arose not so much from the concept of direct (e.g. advertising or espionage or subversive actions from outside) influences from Eastern and Western provenance. Furthermore, we can identify discourses committed to drastically different understandings of the spirit of

socialism, the freedom of man and the true tenets of socialism. In such films, of course, you can always identify or fabricate the aims related to the conflict between totalitarianism and libertarianism. Thus, the caricatured socialist ideals oppose the angst, alienation and idleness of spirit, which are possibly a direct consequence of the hypocrisy of socialism. Film and achievements of both sorts are not always consistent with the sophisticated style of film language and aesthetics, and the melodramatic theme is rarely an adequate excuse for the blasé, “folk” and the melodramatic nature of most of these achievements.

The continuous quest of the Yugoslav socialism in the maintenance of the country in condition between the East and the West models all tendencies in the art practice as well, in social sciences and humanities. The Soviet socio-cultural dialectics as well as that of European and even American origin had significant implications on the Yugoslav spiritual culture as well as the lifestyle of its citizens (according to their socio-demographic characteristics). Of course, such situations result in several juxtapositions: political “coquetry” and balancing the institutions of the system in relation to the East - West axis, the creation of conservative-traditionalist and moralist “circles” of the theorists and social scientists, (quasi)intellectualistic adherences to the new Left, frivolous effectuation of the conformism of the consumer society, and even national-chauvinist subversion. This habitus of the Yugoslav “revolution” is almost duplicated on the silver screen, in the domestic production as well in the “public censorship” or the identification with the products of the Soviet cinema, or the ones imported from the United States and other countries, labeled as Western civilization.

Regardless of the puritanical tendencies in a great part of Yugoslav cinema (primarily from the reign of socialist realism and later), contained in the almost canonical narratives / stories and not particularly inventive cinematic structures, especially those dedicated to World War II heroism, one can recognize examples of matrices dedicated to the interplay of Eros and Thanatos, embodied in human characters and forms of communication. Despite the fact that the characters and the stratification of their relationships may seem like a cliché or stereotype, Yugoslav authors, from whatever reasons, introduce piquancy of the erotic or violent type parallel to the attempts for an idyllic presentation of the “positive heroes”, who ultimately always suppress their atavistic urges. On the other hand (as in the new film or films of black wave), the Yugoslav cinema was often dominated by insufficiently refined cinematic expressions used in the demystification of the characters of the intellectual and cultural history of the Yugoslav peoples. Productions that are prevalently grotesque, satirical and folk in nature, with at times even surreal representations of “the spirit of the people” (the little man, the peasants, the workers), stand out.

The mode of the films which implicitly or explicitly speak of the disorientation and social division among the youth in the socialist Yugoslav society is specific (after 1968), as well as that of films whose intention is displaying the middle class and the elites, whose snobbery and quasi-intellectualism marks the stratification of society, but also shows its ideological clashes. Many Yugoslav films question the privileges in the “society of equals” as a consequence of the class reproduction - representing these individuals with privileges inherited from the time of the monarchical Yugoslavia as anomalies and attempted amnesty of the system. On the other hand, the new elite are sometimes presented in an overly caricatured and benevolent manner, i.e., the former partisans who, regardless of their merits, enjoyed many privileges of the system. The characters of the intellectual elite that essentially deal with dubiousness of the Yugoslav socialism juxtaposed with another kind of humanism, whose implications are global, are presented either in an idealized or heroic situation or as individuals subjected to full resignation and depression. The philosophical complexity of the ideas that are behind some of these films is again not realized with the features expected of a mature cinematic achievement (the films give an amateurish impression

even when they are made by professionals). The attempt to acquire international recognition led to a strong emphasis on the esotery, rusticity, brutality and humanism in themes and characters through the film language. In some of those attempts the audience is served a film product that shows in a savory and delicate way the cultures of Balkan/Mediterranean peoples. The quest of some Yugoslav filmmakers in, for the time, unusual genres like horror and crime-fantasy stories point out the need for avoiding the clichés of the engagement / commitment of cinema only as propaganda, or the need to follow the intentions of art for art's sake, and to make available all the elements of art as a serious, but also frivolous game. Of course, such achievements, as well as most categories of film poetics and themes that have already been mentioned, perhaps predictably resulted from the acceptance of the fact that film is a creative industry which has to meet some market criteria and thus the broader cultural needs of the audience. It is interesting that despite the rich folklore of the Yugoslav peoples, their fairy tale and playful mythological structure, these themes are not common in the Yugoslav film production (except in some TV feature and documentary film productions).

Regardless of the Cold War and the disparate conceptual and ideological premises of the Soviet and American cinema, certain stages in the development of film production are almost identical in terms of monitoring the need for freedom of artistic production, the pressure of the state and its policies in certain periods (highlighted censorship and the need for commercialization). Both tendencies can be found in Yugoslav cinema as well, with the possibility of greater freedom for selecting the topics than in the case of the USSR, and less opportunity for commercialization than in the American cinema.

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