

## Stalin's Gifts: Yugoslav Feature Films 1945–1955<sup>1</sup>

The first decade after World War II was especially tempestuous in Yugoslavia not only in politics, with the communist takeover and important events on the international level, but in art as well. The chronological frame of this work is, on the one hand, defined by the end of World War II and the early division of spheres of interest between the members of the victorious alliance. That same year, the first post-war feature film was produced in cooperation with the Soviet partner. Growing tensions between East and West resulted in the formation of two military-political blocks, NATO in 1949 and the Warsaw Pact in 1955, which created the conditions for political stability in Europe for the next few decades. In the last year of socialist Yugoslavia's first decade, domestic film clearly displayed a new Hollywood-oriented sensibility and affirmation of western aesthetic and ideological concepts, unlike the standards of socialist realism that were favored by the Communist Party up to that point. Apart from this basic chronological outline, there are two more significant points of delimitation. The first was the start of the open conflict between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in 1948. The other was the signing of the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation between Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey in 1953<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> By signing the Balkan pact in 1954, Yugoslavia practically became an affiliate of NATO. See: Dragan Bisenić, *Odnos Jugoslavije i NATO* [Relations between Yugoslavia and NATO], in: *Politika*, 29 March 2001, 27; Dragan Bisenić, *Kako je sklopljen Balkanski savez* [How the Balkan Treaty was concluded], in: *Politika*, 30 March 2001, 25 (interview with Vladimir Velebit). See also: Jack B. Watson (ed.), *World History Since 1945* (London 1994) 74–96; Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu. Odnosi s velikim silama 1949–1955* [Yugoslavia in Cold War. Relations with great powers 1949–1955] (Zagreb 1988); Dragan Bogetić, *Jugoslavija i Zapad 1952–1955* [Yugoslavia and the West 1952–1955] (Beograd 2000); Đorđe Borozan, *Jugoslovensko-britanski odnosi 1948–1952* [Yugoslav-British relations 1948–1952], in: *Istorija 20. veka* 2 (2000) 67–82.

During this decade, Yugoslavia walked the perilous path from being Stalin's loyal follower to becoming a strategic link on NATO's southern flank, all the while remaining a socialist state. This anomaly in the mosaic of Western countries could be explained by the need to preserve socialist Yugoslavia as a multinational and multi-confessional country at any cost, despite the fact that a brutal civil war had occurred. Josip Broz Tito's communist dictatorship, at this point in its "firm" phase, opposed the challenges of liberal and democratic tendencies and particular nationalisms with the ideology of social equality and Yugoslav nationalism ("Yugoslavism"). Tito put a stop to the spiral of retribution and eliminated the prospect of another break up of the country. Hence, the West tolerated the authoritarian methods that he employed to achieve this<sup>3</sup>. On the domestic front, the government created a psychosis of a "besieged city"<sup>4</sup> in order to strengthen its position of power. In international relations, Tito's variant of socialism, especially in its later stages, combined with his policy of "non-alignment", was a dangerous diplomatic weapon, since it threatened the ideological homogeneity of the Soviet bloc<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> During the first few years after World War II, Tito isolated those parts of the population that he regarded as unreliable, primarily those who belonged to the German, Italian, and Hungarian national minorities, of all ages and sexes. This was followed by the forced emigration of Germans and Italians. As of 1948, there was a network of camps and prisons for political opponents, especially party-members accused of being pro-Soviet. This network functioned at least until 1956. See: Goran Miloradović, *Karantin za ideje. Logori za izolaciju "sumnjivih elemenata" u Kraljevini Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca (1919–1922)* [Quarantine for Ideas. Isolation camps for "Suspicious Elements" in Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1919–1922)] (Beograd 2004) 73–84; and Goran Miloradović, *Logori za izolaciju političkih protivnika na tlu Jugoslavije (1918–1920)* [Camps for the Isolation of Political Opponents on the Territory of Yugoslavia], in: *Istorija 20. veka 2 (2000)* 115–125.

<sup>4</sup> Dragan Bogetić, *Jugoslovensko približavanje Zapadu u vreme sukoba sa Kominformom* [The Yugoslav Approach to the West during the Conflict with Cominform], in: *Istorija 20. veka 1 (1998)* 61–67 here 65.

<sup>5</sup> Dragan Bogetić, *Jugoslavija i Zapad 1952–1955* [Yugoslavia and the West 1952–1955] (Beograd 2000) 142; Radovan Radonjić, *Jugoslovenska 1948. i disolucija sistema realnog socijalizma* [1948 in Yugoslavia and the Dissolution of the System of Real-Socialism], in: *Istorija 20. veka 1 (1998)* 9–26. The way the Soviets perceived Yugoslavia in May 1953 is corroborated by M. Zimnjani's report as chief of the Fourth European Department of the Foreign Ministry of the USSR to Foreign Minister V. M. Molotov, On the situation in Yugoslavia and its foreign policy (top secret), 27 May 1953: "The internal policy of the Tito clique, after breaking with the USSR and the peoples' democratic countries, aimed at restoring capitalism in Yugoslavia, at the liquidation of all democratic accomplishments of the Yugoslav people, and at the fascistization of the state and army personnel. In foreign policy, the efforts of the ruling circles of Yugoslavia aim at broadening economic and political ties with capitalistic states, first and foremost with the USA and England. This has made Yugoslavia dependent on them and

The communist coup destroyed the old Yugoslav elite of the middle and upper classes that mostly had a liberal-democratic and predominantly nationalist political orientation and a loyalty to tradition and religion. The economic system of the country was changed. Private property and entrepreneurship were abolished and state ownership and planned economy were introduced. Since the new system of values that was imposed included aesthetics, film as a mass-media tool was particularly interesting<sup>6</sup>. This means that film and all events and issues that revolved around it can be a good indicator of social and political processes<sup>7</sup>.

Naturally, Yugoslav communists were not the first to recognize the potential of motion pictures as a propaganda tool. In Soviet Russia, there was

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has drawn it [Yugoslavia] into aggressive blocs organized by the Anglo-American imperialists." Source: Arhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii [Foreign Policy Archives of the Russian Federation, Moscow] (AVP RF) 06/12a/617/74/7–12. According to: Andrei Edemski, *The Turn in Soviet-Yugoslav relations 1953–55*, in: *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 10 (March 1998) 138.

<sup>6</sup> The best evidence to underscore the turnabout that happened by the end of the forties is the data on the import and viewership of foreign films in Yugoslavia during 1947–1951:

Year	USA	USSR	Britain	Other
1948	1	97	3	21
1949	19	58	8	23
1950	33	0	11	8
1951	24	0	16	24

Taken from: Nenad Đorđević, *Beogradska kinematografska svakodnevnica 1950. godine* [Cinema life in Belgrade in 1950], in: *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 3 (1996) 1–2, 109–116 here 111. The category “other” contains mainly western European films. The influx of American aid for the import of films (since 1951) resulted in the following breakdown of imported films between 1945 and 1965: “778 American films, 460 Soviet, 347 French, 276 Italian and 236 British films”. See: Predrag Marković, *Beograd između Istoka i Zapada 1948–1965* [Belgrade between East and West 1948–1965] (Beograd 1996) 446.

A similar trend is shown by an overview of the number of viewers at cinema screenings in Yugoslavia:

Year	Yugoslav	USSR	Other
1947	2 402 024	28 432 397	10 826 690
1948	5 399 322	37 879 820	14 981 721
1949	5 973 537	32 151 881	28 741 216
1950	3 664 862	10 707 019	30 954 711

Taken from: Ljubodrag Dimić, *Agitprop kultura. Agitpropovska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji 1945–1952* [Agitprop Culture. The Agitprop Phase of Cultural Politics in Serbia 1945–1952] (Beograd 1988) 179.

<sup>7</sup> This kind of approach to art has a scientific explanation and argumentation. See: Andrej Mitrović, *Angažovano i lepo. Umetnost u razdoblju svetskih ratova 1914–1945* [Engaged and Beautiful: Arts in the Period between the World Wars] (Beograd 1983) 217.

already a long tradition of its political use. Lenin allegedly recommended a film by David Wark Griffith, entitled “Intolerance”, as a model for Russian artists<sup>8</sup>. Henceforth, there was not one Russian film produced in the twenties that was not influenced in some manner by it and its director. Changes in filmmaking occurred when Stalin came to power. Propagandist films that affirmed collectivism and sacrifice and that glorified the wise leader prevailed in the Soviet production of the thirties. This concept was in its prime during the Second World War<sup>9</sup>.

Stalin sent one such film and a projector as a present to the Yugoslav communist leader, Tito, in May 1944. At that time, Tito was headquartered with his high command and the allied military missions in the western Bosnian town of Drvar. It was a propagandist film entitled “Zoia”, made in the same year by Lev Arnstam, who was also co-writer of the script together with Boris Chirskov. The film is the life story of a young girl named Zoia Kosmodemianskaia (code-name: Tania), a member of the Komsomol who had a Spartan spirit and was fanatically devoted to the party and her homeland<sup>10</sup>. She was captured by the Nazis and shot after lengthy torture that had not succeeded in forcing her to reveal the way to reach Stalin. After the scenes of torture, the director inserted documentary material of Lenin’s funeral and a scene of Zoia’s birth, which implied a mystical bond between the old and the new generation of fighters for socialism. Zoia was brought up in a patriotic spirit and, not afraid of death, was always ready to sacrifice herself for the happiness of others. Encouraged by her bravery, the imprisoned citizens of the little town close to where she was caught

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<sup>8</sup> Petar Ljubojev, *Evropski film i društveno nasilje* [European Film and Social Violence] (Novi Sad/Beograd 1994) 183–185; Luda Schnitzer, Jean Schnitzer, Marcel Martin (eds.), *Cinema in Revolution. The Heroic Era of the Soviet Film* (New York 1987) 34; 17; 115. This is not surprising, as Griffith is supposed to have constructed a complete system of “revising history through film”. See: Milan Ristović, *Film između istorijskog izvora i tradicije* [Film between the historical source and tradition], in: *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 2–3 (1995) 344–351 here 346. A strong relation between film and politics was identified a long time ago. See: Žan Pol Faržije, *Zagrada i zaokret: pokušaj teorijske definicije odnosa film-politika* [Parenthesis and Turn: an Attempt at the Theoretical Definition of the Relation between Film and Politics], in: *Teorija levice* (Beograd 1987) 22–31. Allegedly it was Lenin himself who “discovered the importance of film as a means of political control”. See: Paskal Bonize, Žan Narboni, *O revolucionarnim avantgardama: razgovor sa Marselom Pleneom* [About Revolutionary Avant-gardes: A Conversation with Marcelin Pleyne], in: *Teorija levice* (Beograd 1987) 70–85 here 75.

<sup>9</sup> Ljubojev, *Evropski film* 199–212.

<sup>10</sup> The real Zoia was born on 14 September 1923 and was eighteen at the time of her execution. The screenwriters used her life-story, with some modification to the historical chronology, to “interlace” and “overlap” important events from Zoia’s life with important events in the Soviet history. The film sent a powerful message to the Soviet viewer who identified his homeland with a raped and tortured girl named Zoia.

helped defeat the Germans by passive resistance<sup>11</sup>. The public in the small town of Drvar stood in line for days to watch this film about a young beauty with an iron will intended to personify the new Soviet citizen and toughened by the challenges of the twentieth century. The extraordinary impression that Zoia had made upon the viewers did not go unnoticed higher up. Most of the audience saw “pictures in motion” for the first time in their lives. They did not know how films were made and could not distance themselves from the plot of the film and the characters<sup>12</sup>.

And then, on 25 May 1944, the sky above Drvar, considered a relatively safe city behind the rear military lines, became white with the parachutes of airdrop units of the SS. With the support of four divisions of land-based units, they began an operation to capture Josip Broz and the allied military missions present at his headquarters. Due to neglect that is quite hard to understand, there was only one battalion present in the defense perimeter of the headquarters and there were no substantial partisan military units in the vicinity. The citizens of Drvar found themselves in a situation where they could protect the head commander with their own lives, just like the actors in the Russian film they had watched not long before. They played their role with the utmost gravity, which was recorded by the camera of a parachutist who questioned them. People died one after another without uttering a word, providing enough time for the high command and the allied missions to evacuate themselves<sup>13</sup>. Tito and his associates remembered well

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<sup>11</sup> Zoia the movie character pondered in her diary: “If you are not a hero, is it worth living?” She later concluded: “I know what happiness is: to be a fearless fighter for the homeland, for Stalin!” She was hanged after being accused of arson. In the film, her last words to the villagers, who gathered to see the hanging, were: “Stalin will come!” The next and last scene shows the advance of the Red Army and places Zoia’s face in the foreground.

<sup>12</sup> Torben Grodal, *Moving Pictures. A New Theory of Film, Genres, Feelings, and Cognition* (Oxford 1997) 225–227; Ristović, *Film između istorijskog izvora i tradicije* 346–348; Žan-Luj Komoli, *Tehnika i ideologija* [Technology and Ideology], in: *Teorija levice* (Beograd 1987) 97–153.

<sup>13</sup> Ljubojev, *Evropski film 186–188*; Branko Petranović, *Istorija Jugoslavije 1918–1978* [History of Yugoslavia 1918–1978] (Beograd 1980) 339f. The people in this area had been loyal to Tito and strongly resisted the attacker. It is questionable, however, how long they would have endured without being additionally prepared with propaganda, as the operation was led on both sides with the utmost determination and cruelty: “German forces in Drvar had orders to shoot all captured partisans on sight, and the orders were carried out. Besides, they also shot a great number of civilians, especially those who were connected with Russian and British military missions, and who, unfortunately, could not escape. The partisans also apparently did not take prisoners. This is not surprising, considering the behaviour of Germans in Drvar [...]”. From the report of the British deputy chief of mission, Colonel Street, see: Rade Bogdanović, *Britanska tajna dokumenta o vazdušnom desantu na Drvar 25. maja 1944* [British Secret Docu-

this practical lesson on the suggestive power of film and its importance as a means to mould the minds of the masses<sup>14</sup>. It would not be overstated to say that the film “Zoia” achieved an effect in Yugoslavia that was equal to the impact of Griffith’s “Intolerance” in Russia: in the eyes of the state’s leader, it was the paradigm of a successful film.

Stalin’s next gift arrived in 1945: a film crew and the equipment for making the first film on the events in Yugoslavia in the aftermath of World War II. It was a film project with the ambitious title “Bura nad Balkanom” [Storm over the Balkans] (a possible reflection of the idea then current for a Balkan Federation), which was later given the more modest title “V gorakh Jugoslavii” [In the Mountains of Yugoslavia] by director Abram Room and screenwriter Georgi Mdivani. The producer was the Soviet enterprise Mosfilm, but there is some indication that at first it was supposed to be a co-production, an idea abandoned shortly before the work was completed. The film had three main themes: that the uprising against the Axis powers was led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia; that participation of peasants was decisive for the war in Yugoslavia; and that victory could only be achieved with the support of the Red Army. The complicated situation resulting from the civil war during the occupation and the political mood of different social groups were explained statically and through clichés, slogans, and symbols. It was a typical propaganda film in the manner of socialist realism, with the exaggerated ambition to show the whole historical period. A great number of Yugoslav theater-actors joined the Russian crew in order to learn how films were made. The experience gained here deeply influenced Yugoslav cinematography. The socialist-realist style was retained for a long time in drama, especially in films about war<sup>15</sup>. This film was later suppressed, as Yugoslav communists were not satisfied with its political meaning. They were portrayed in the film as Stalin’s younger brothers and loyal followers who decided to wage war against the occupier on 22 June 1941, the day Germany attacked the USSR. The film ends with

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ments on the Attack on Drvar on 25 May 1944], in: *Istorijski glasnik* 1–2 (1997) 157–164 here 163.

<sup>14</sup> This kind of reasoning found support in the rapid growth of the number of cinemas in Yugoslavia. While in 1939 there were 423 permanent and 27 mobile cinemas, by the end of 1948 there were 736 permanent and 32 mobile cinemas with projectors for 35 mm film, and 105 permanent and 47 mobile cinemas with projectors for 16 mm films. In the course of that year the cinema attracted 58,260,863 visitors. In 1947, a faculty of drama was opened, in 1948 a secondary film school. In 1949, there were already 9 journals about film. See: H. Nastić, *Film* [Film], in: *Jugoslavija* (autumn 1949) 116f.

<sup>15</sup> Petar Volk, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma* [History of Yugoslav Film] (Beograd 1986) 136–138; Vicko Raspor, *Riječ o filmu* [A Word about Film] (Beograd 1988) 12; Ljubojev, *Evropski film* 215–217.

a joint parade of the Soviet and Yugoslav armies in the main square of Belgrade decorated with Stalin's and Tito's portraits and Soviet and Yugoslav flags. The masses shout: "Tito, Stalin! Moskva, Belgrad!" The five-pointed star on the Yugoslav flag was all over the screen at the end. It was obvious even during the filming of this picture that the author's vision did not comply with the needs and wishes of the Yugoslav side, such that the film was soon forgotten<sup>16</sup>.

This was not enough to destroy the vast confidence that Yugoslav communists had in everything that came from the Soviet Union. Despite the experience with Room's film, there was still a prevailing belief in the superiority of Soviet art: "If one is fair in the evaluation of a film by taking its content, ideological wealth, and artistic beauty as criteria, then all films produced in the world [...] have to be classified in two clearly distinguished categories. On one side there will inevitably be films of Soviet production, and on the other side there will be American and West European films. Soviet cinematographic art has been accepted by the masses of the whole world, owing to the fact that it had managed through its numerous masterpieces to show the attitude of the Soviet man towards reality in its progressive development. A cinematographic art for the masses has been created in the Soviet Union, highly ideological, acceptable, and attractive at the same time. [...] and that is why all our efforts will be directed towards providing as many good Soviet films as we can."<sup>17</sup> This enthusiasm, as we shall see, did not last long.

During the first decade after the Second World War, 56 feature films were made in Yugoslavia, although official filmography recorded only 54. The films that did not satisfy the political leaders were left out. The film "Majka Katina" [Mother Katina] by Nikola Popović from 1949 dealt with the civil war in Greece and the role of Yugoslavia there. The film severely criticized the policy of Great Britain in that country and was affirmative

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<sup>16</sup> Communists declared the first Yugoslav film to be the work by V. Afrić, "Slavica", from 1947, in memory of which one cinema in Belgrade still carries that name. That attitude was confirmed in 1955 on the occasion of the celebration of ten years of the Yugoslav film industry. The patron of the celebration was Josip Broz Tito himself. See: Branislav Obradović (ed.), *Filmografija jugoslovenskog igranog filma 1945–1980* [Filmography of Yugoslav Feature Films] (Beograd 1981) 5–10; Raspor, *Riječ o filmu* 44–46 and 272; Volk, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma* 136–138; *Proslava 10-godišnjice jugoslovenskog filma* [Celebration of Ten Years of Yugoslav film], in: *Vjesnik Saveza socijalističkog radnog naroda Hrvatske*, 4 March 1955, 5.

<sup>17</sup> *Arhiv Jugoslavije* [Archive of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, nowadays Archive of Serbia and Montenegro] (AJ) 180–K1, Kratak referat o stanju kinematografije u FNRJ [A Short Report on the Situation in Cinematography in the FPRY], 15 November 1946. The author was a person from the FPRY Committee for Cinematography.



of the Soviet Union's role. Since the political situation had changed before the end of production, the Yugoslav communists decided that the film should not be distributed and informed public that it was "not finished yet". In December 2002, it was shown for the second time in the Museum of the Yugoslav Film Archive. Although not a masterpiece, the film was produced at a solid professional level in the manner of Soviet socialist-realist films with wartime topics. The other title missing on the list is "Ciguli Miguli", directed by Branko Marjanović, filmed in 1952, and prohibited until 1977<sup>18</sup>. There is yet another film to be mentioned, "Tajna dvorca I.B." [The Secret of I. B. Castle] with the subtitle "Baletna pantomima" [A Ballet Pantomime], filmed and produced by Zagreb-based Jadran Film in 1951. It is a satire at the expense of Stalin and the Soviet leadership following the resolution of the Information Bureau about the situation in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the conflict that occurred in its aftermath. The duration is only 21 minutes (it is therefore not included in the list of feature-length films), but it was so poisonous that censorship prohibited it straight away and today it is the least-known Yugoslav film.

If the films made during this decade are grouped on the basis of content, one sees the themes from World War II absolutely outnumber all others. This is not surprising, as the communists, who emerged from the civil war as victors, had to explain the new situation and legitimize their authority. Among other propaganda tools, they dedicated 21 war films to this purpose out of the 56 that were produced in total, or 37.5 percent. Although it is not always easy to set precise chronological boundaries, a general time-frame can be established: the themes of twelve films dealt with the first half of the twentieth century (until 1941), and ten with the nineteenth century. This means that 150 years of pre-World War II history were given almost the same attention as the last four years of the war. One film deals with the eighteenth century; one is about the early Middle Ages, while two are fiction, one of them outside our time-scale. Altogether they make

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<sup>18</sup> Ranko Munitić, *Zabranjene igre Yugo-filma (1)* [Forbidden Games of Yugo-Film (1)], in: *Yu-film danas – jugoslovenski filmski časopis 51–52* (summer-autumn 1999) 2–3, 249–254. There were prohibitions both earlier and later. By the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, work on the films "Poslednji odred" [The Last Unit] by Fedor Hanžeković, "Rudari" [The Miners] by Ljudevit Crnobrnja and "Kragujevac 1941" by Žorž Skrigin was stopped. For the different, more or less subtle means of censorship see: Milan Nikodijević, *Zabranjeni bez zabrane. Zona sumraka jugoslovenskog filma* [Forbidden without a Ban. The Twilight Zone of Yugoslav Film] (Beograd 1995); Milica Komad, *O filmskom ukusu partijskih ideologa 1963. Jedna epizoda iz kulturnog života komunističke Jugoslavije* [About the Taste in Film of Party Ideologists in 1963. An Episode from the Cultural Life of Communist Yugoslavia], in: *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju 6* (1999) 1, 57–66.



up 7.1 percent of the production. Only nine films handled contemporary themes, i.e. the period after the war, which made up 16 percent of the film production. Out of these nine films, two were stories about factory workers; two were police thrillers; one was about the agrarian revolution; and four were comedies. Though the number of films on contemporary themes was small, there was a proportionally high percentage of comedies. Thus, current events were rarely used as topics for making films, and when so, mostly as comedy. Communists had great problems in presenting contemporary reality<sup>19</sup>. Two of the greatest film-scandals of the decade were linked to films with current topics.

The first one concerned the film “Jezero” [The Lake] in 1950. In 1948, the screenwriter Jugoslav Đorđević started to write a screenplay on changes in the life of peasants under the influence of industrialization. However, the conflict between Yugoslavia and the Soviet block set up other political priorities. Several influential people, such as Milovan Đilas, Aleksandar Ranković, and Edvard Kardelj demanded that the film’s story be based on sabotage at the building site of a power plant<sup>20</sup>. A significant number of suggestions made by such politicians were accepted and the film was produced, but it caused a stormy reaction among workers and engineers. They rejected the idea that there were saboteurs among them, even on film. Again, this is the phenomenon of the “immature” audience and its naïve identification with the roles in the film and its inability to distinguish reality from artistic interpretation. This was especially the case when the script featured a well-known building site such as the power-plant Jablanica on Neretva River, the construction of which was continuously covered by newspapers and film journals. “Jezero” was not formally forbidden, but removed from the cinema repertoire. The film director Radivoje Lola Đukić did not get a chance to make another film for the next ten years, while the screenwriter committed suicide thanks to the depression that resulted from the public condemnation of the film<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> The film director, Fedor Hanžeković, wrote a satire full of irony about avoiding contemporary themes, which were, for him, a refuge for painters, musicians, writers. See: Fedor Hanžeković, *Heureka*, in: *Vjesnik u srijedu*, 19 January 1955, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Ljubojev, *Evropski film* 218f.

<sup>21</sup> Volk, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma* 152; Raspor, *Riječ o filmu* 74–79; Ljubojev, *Evropski film* 218f. It has to be stressed that these authors were not dissidents, but were sincerely trying to fulfill the expectations of the political leadership. The effect was, however, the opposite of what was intended, because the “people in charge” were absolute amateurs in the field of film (like so many filmmakers of that time) and could not predict what effect their incompetent interventions would have. A similar thing happened with the film about the struggle of the secret police with espionage. “Poslednji dan” [The Last Day], made in 1951, was about the confrontation of the Direction for State Security (UDB-a) with spies (directed by Vladimir Pogačić, screenplay Oskar Davičo). This

Another great scandal occurred with the film “Ciguli Miguli”, made by two ex-partisans, screenwriter Joža Horvat and director Branko Marjanović. It was a contemporary comedy that severely criticized Stalinism. The main character was a moustached party-bureaucrat named Ivan Ivanović, who wanted to “put things in order” in the choirs of a small town. He tried to forbid different repertoires and to force all the choirs to sing the same songs demanded by their conductor. The story ends with his failure and expulsion. At first, the project was supported by the head of the Federal Department for Agitation and Propaganda (Agitprop), Milovan Đilas, only to be attacked later by the political leadership of Croatia, where the most powerful person was Vladimir Bakarić. The film was forbidden, since it was believed that the satire of a single case of bureaucratic abuse of power attacked the Communist Party in general. Although it was not the author’s intention, some Yugoslav communists recognized themselves in this film caricaturing the Bolsheviks. Besides, there are certain indications that the scandal was used to start the confrontation with Đilas<sup>22</sup>. The Stalinist methods were in essence gifts to the Yugoslav communists who without them could not be what they really were – Stalinists.

The overview of the professional and social position of the main characters in the films during the decade after World War II provides an interesting picture. Most of them were peasants (17). Only four main characters, on the other hand, were workers. The small number of workers is not surprising, as they were understood as the principal support of the authorities. The target group of the propaganda was the peasantry that made up the majority of the population and that was defined as unreliable. Intellectuals were considered ideologically untrustworthy and so were not used as main characters. The exception was the practical and necessary physician, represented by five characters. There were furthermore two artists – a ballerina and a pianist. These seven characters had predominantly positive roles and, together with several characters of citizens who were criticized and caricatured, they formed the second largest social group with 14 characters altogether. Youth both from country and town were also numerous, with ten characters. Young people were an important target group for propaganda.

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film was not forbidden, but intervention by politicians and the police had ruined it completely. The writing of the screenplay turned into an ideological-aesthetical struggle between the director and the screenwriter. Pogačić later said that the minister of the interior was present during these conflicts with his assistants and the officers of UDB. Ljubojev, *Evropski film* 220. See also: Munitić, *Zabranjene igre* (1) 245f.

<sup>22</sup> See: Ljubojev, *Evropski film* 551–554; *Filmography* 5, 61; Munitić, *Zabranjene igre* (1) 248–254. Munitić is of the opinion that this is the first anti-Stalinist film, made long before Chuhraj’s “Clear skies”, Andrzej Wajda’s “Marble Man”, or Abuladze’s “Penitence”.

In fourth place, together with the workers, were army officers (four), who were also regarded as supportive of the regime and thus less important as a target group for propaganda.

Let's have a look at the topics dealt with in the most massive film production in Yugoslavia and some typical events that happened in connection with the so-called partisan films. Nothing can provide a better portrait of the times in which Josip Broz's regime tried to change its colors<sup>23</sup>. The direction of the first entirely domestic film after World War II was entrusted to the actor Vjekoslav Afrić, one of the assistants to Russian film director Abram Room for the film "V gorakh Jugoslavii". The film "Slavica" was made in 1947 and named after its main character. It is the idealized life-story of a Dalmatian female worker and her part in the social struggle prior to the war and later in the partisan movement, where she was killed in the last battle. The film is another story about the sacrifice of the individual to the collective interest. There is a strong contrast between old and new and between the idealized characters of revolutionaries and the caricatures of their enemies. Theatrical, didactical, and naive expression was not a barrier to the film's becoming a cultural and social phenomenon seen by 3.5 million viewers in the course of 20 years. The victory is celebrated in the film without Stalin's portrait and only with Tito's, which expressed a desire for independence from the Soviet Union and rejected the iconography of Room's film<sup>24</sup>. The politics and programming of "Slavica" was the main reason why the film was often mentioned and praised in socialist Yugoslavia, while "V gorakh Jugoslavii" was rather forgotten<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> This was the most important part of the production, which is confirmed by the fact that every film company that was established in Yugoslavia started with a film thematically based on the last war. The exception was Lovćen Film from Montenegro, which began with a historical theme. By the middle of this period, in 1950, there were eight film companies, six on republic level and two at federal level. See: Raspor, Riječ o filmu 11; Milutin Čolić, Jugoslovenski ratni film 1–2 [Yugoslav War Film 1–2] (Beograd/Titovo Užice 1984) 743–746.

<sup>24</sup> Vjekoslav Afrić later expressed the following opinion about the film "V gorakh Jugoslavii": "During the filming we were not satisfied with the interpretation of our national liberation struggle. The Stalinistic method in presenting our past was deeply insulting. [...] I started to write 'Slavica' out of spite, almost polemicizing with the screenwriter of the Soviet film. That mood did not leave me even when we abandoned them and started to make our own [film]". Čolić, Jugoslovenski ratni film 170f; also 523–525. Pointing out his motives, Afrić forgot to explain that in those times no film, including "Slavica", could have been produced without a party order.

<sup>25</sup> But none of those films was really the first one. Before "Slavica", around 20 feature films were made on the territory of Yugoslavia. Apart from some fragments, most of these have been lost. The first feature film was "Život i dela besmrtnog vožda Karadžordja" [Life and Deeds of the Immortal Leader Karadžordje] in 1911 and the last film produced before the communists took power was "Nevinost bez zaštite" [Innocence

It was then that the intention to show the most important aspects of the communist struggle and its main ideological postulates in a clear and idealised form became apparent. The demand by the party-run state, as the only producer of films, meant that the first motion pictures resembled chronicles with elements of feature films. The screenwriters tried to meet that challenge by attempting to incorporate entire thematic fields with a great number of historical events and characters over a long time span instead of treating just one theme. Later, an antipode to this kind of work began to emerge that could be called the critical film. Dealing mostly with contemporary themes, it was much more convincing and achieved a greater artistic effect. Criticism sometimes emerged in war films as well, but the desire to film a “better” past was much more frequent.

In that respect, it is interesting to reconstruct events surrounding the film “Zastava” [The Flag] from 1949, directed by Branko Marjanović, screenplay written by Joža Horvat, and produced by Jadran Film from Zagreb. Before its public showing, the press “subtly” suggested: “Wasn’t that last artistic film at the same time the best?”<sup>26</sup>, while one famous film critic excitedly wrote that “Zastava is the second film by the Zagreb-run Jadran Film that shows a justification for film-production enterprises at republican level as an important factor for national culture, as well as for finding and mobilizing film cadres”<sup>27</sup>. It was said that “excited applause followed [...] the screening of Zastava”<sup>28</sup> which was seen by 250,000 citizens of Zagreb<sup>29</sup>. Apart from that, a comprehensive campaign was carried out to affirm “the truth” offered by the film: “in the Army, short lectures were organized to inform soldiers about the contents and the meaning of this film, while the screening of the film was followed by lively discussions”<sup>30</sup>. The film was shown in Vienna, and later, with other Yugoslav films, went on a tour of the United States, only to arrive in Israel as the first Yugoslav film sold abroad<sup>31</sup>. Finally, “the Presidency of the Government of the Na-

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without Protection], directed by Dragoljub Aleksić. It was filmed in Belgrade during the German occupation.

<sup>26</sup> I.[ve] M.[ihovilović], Pred premijeru “Zastave” novog domaćeg umjetničkog filma [The New Domestic Feature Film before the Screening of “The Flag”], in: Vjesnik Narodnog fronta Hrvatske, 18 September 1949, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Raspor, Riječ o filmu 73.

<sup>28</sup> Raspor, Riječ o filmu 69.

<sup>29</sup> Čolić, Jugoslovenski ratni film 1–2, 535. To put this number in proportion, in 1948 Zagreb had a population of around 315,000.

<sup>30</sup> Raspor, Riječ o filmu 30.

<sup>31</sup> Prikazivanje filma “Zastava” u Beču [Showing the Film “The Flag” in Vienna], in: Vjesnik Narodnog fronta Hrvatske, 21 February 1950, 1; Prikazivanje jugoslovenskih filmova u USA [Showing Yugoslav Films in the USA], in: Vjesnik Narodnog fronta Hrvatske, 11 March 1950, 3.

tional Republic of Croatia underlined the success by giving awards to the screenwriter, director, cameraman, and other associates”<sup>32</sup>. However, this film was not at all a master-piece, despite the ambitious promotion, but just an average piece of art with numerous and obvious faults<sup>33</sup>. What was this all about, then?

“Zastava” treats a heroic deed by a Varaždin-born ballerina, who in 1942 managed to recapture from the Ustashe the flag of fallen partisans<sup>34</sup>. Joining the partisans, she “becomes a devoted national artist and delighted fighter for freedom. In the battle of Kalnik, she proudly raises the red flag high.”<sup>35</sup> It was the first film to show the partisan struggle from a specific angle, as a primarily “Croatian” conflict between partisans and Ustashe. The plot unfolds on what is undoubtedly Croatian territory (Zagreb, Varaždin, Zagorje)<sup>36</sup>. The authors of this psychological<sup>37</sup> film carefully used names with positive associations in Catholic Croatia, such as Marija for the ballerina and Petar for the partisan commander, while the Ustashe – one of its commanders, named Vuksan, hounds Marija with offers of love – were

<sup>32</sup> I.[ve] Mihovilović, Naša kinematografija u 1949. godini [Our Cinematography in 1949], in: Vjesnik Narodnog fronta Hrvatske, 1 January 1950, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Underlining at first that the film “was a success” and that it is better than many foreign productions, critics had to notice the amateurism of the screenwriter, the limitations of the main actress, the existence of several possible ends, and some other minor defects. See: I.[ve] M.[ihovilović], “Zastava” najnoviji domaći umjetnički film [“The Flag” as the Latest Domestic Artistic Film], in: Vjesnik Narodnog fronta Hrvatske, 14 October 1949, 2f.

<sup>34</sup> Those who wrote that the “plot is the result of artistic imagination”, praised the “truthfulness”, “experience”, and “authenticity” of the film and confirmed that “the plot was historically true”. See: M.[ihovilović], Pred premijeru “Zastave” 2.

<sup>35</sup> Filmografija 6.

<sup>36</sup> The plot of the first partisan film by Jadran Film “Živjeće ovaj narod” [This People Will Live] from 1947, made after a screenplay by Branko Ćopić, and directed by Nikola Popović, took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the plot of “Slavica” by the Belgrade-run Avala Film was placed in Dalmatia, both in ethnically diverse areas. The special meaning of the locations of the film “Zastava” in Zagreb and Zagorje was pointed out, probably not intentionally, by Vicko Raspor, who wrote in a very affirmative review of the film, that Jadran Film was “an important factor of *national* unity” [italics by G. M.]. See: Raspor, Riječ o filmu 73. The professional crew of Jadran Film was inherited from Hrvatski slikopis, a film production company of the so-called Independent State of Croatia. When the president and the secretary of the Committee for cinematography of the Government of FPRY, Aleksandar Vučo and Jakša Petrić, went to Zagreb at the end of 1946, they reported that “[t]he relations between the Jadran Film company and the crew of the film ‘Živjeće ovaj narod’ is not honest enough. Jadran Film does not consider that film as their own”. Arhiv Jugoslavije, fond 180, Komitet za kinematografiju vlade FNRJ, K-3, Zapisnik sa sednice održane 3. decembra 1946. godine, Pv. br. 207 [Records from 3 December 1946 session, Conf. No. 207].

<sup>37</sup> Čolić, Jugoslovenski ratni film 1–2, 536.

portrayed as unrealistic caricatures. In reality, the majority of partisan fighters in Yugoslavia were Serbs who joined up in order to escape the genocidal policy carried out by the Independent State of Croatia with its capital in Zagreb. That city was the focus of the survivors' hatred in the first years after the war. It may thus have been the case that the people in Zagreb excitedly applauded not only the artistic value of film, but the celluloid absolution from the new authorities. The ballerinas also received an absolution. Some of the town's burghers escaped the sword of revolution thanks to their young female relations who had been closely associated with partisan officers (and sometimes married them). They had been protectors of their families and friends. Since ballerinas had most often taken on that role, the public had concluded that they were immoral, inclined to self-serving behavior, and used emotions and sexuality to manipulate. This did not apply to all ballerinas, but the new authorities indirectly provided argumentation for these claims by trying publicly to purify them through film<sup>38</sup>.

These events were particularly significant in light of the fact that in the same year (1949) another domestic feature film with World War II as its theme was not only banned, but partly destroyed as well. The film was directed by Žorž Skrigin and produced by Avala Film. The screenplay was written by Ljubiša Manojlović and later edited by Stanislav Vinaver. The theme of the film was the execution of the hostages in Kragujevac on 21 October 1941. During its production, very few newspapers paid attention to it and it was mentioned under three titles: "Kragujevac 1941", "Velike žrtve" [Great Sacrifice], "Bilo je to u jednoj maloj zemlji" [It Happened in a Small Country]. The main role was given to Rade Marković, while the cast included Mija Aleksić, Ljuba Tadić, Bert Sotlar, Ita Rina, Olga Spiridonović, and others. The editor of the film, who later became the film director's wife, Olga Kršljanin, took the film rolls to the "authorities" for review and approval. Suspecting that they might not be acceptable, she hid one roll 650 meters long (22 minutes). It was broadcast in 1990, when the Skrigins talked in public about the whole affair for the first time. The reason for the ban and destruction of the material possibly lay in the responsibility of partisan leaders who had incited reprisals by barbarian acts against German soldiers. Žorž Skrigin mentioned that the institution which banned the film was Agitprop CK KPJ<sup>39</sup>. This was an exclusively Serbian theme, in which trag-

<sup>38</sup> The official attitude towards other professions and themes from the artistic milieu and the middle-class remained negative. The film "Koncert" [The Concert] from 1954, directed by Branko Belan, featuring a female pianist as the main character, was not accepted well. The film by the same director entitled "Pod sumnjom" [Under suspicion] where the main character was a ship-owner's son, also found little approval.

<sup>39</sup> Živomir Simović, *Sudbina filma "Kragujevac 1941" Žorža Skrigina* [The Destiny of the Film "Kragujevac 1941" by Žorž Skrigin], in: *Sineast* 86/87 (1990/1991) 3–8.



edy had unquestionably occurred on Serbian soil and whose victims were solely Serbian civilians, and the role of partisans was far from heroic or honorable.

One step towards a critical interpretation of the Second World War on the territory of Yugoslavia was made with the film entitled “Daleko je sunce” [Far away is the Sun], filmed in 1953 after a novel by Dobrica Ćosić<sup>40</sup>. For the first time on film, viewers were able to see a conflict within a partisan unit. It had a Bolshevik ending: a sentence of death and the execution of an individual who did not obey the edicts of the Communist Party. A peasant named Gvozden, the best fighter in the unit, believed that his unit should not leave unprotected the native village of the majority of fighters, which would moreover leave it without logistic support<sup>41</sup>. His idea had to be abandoned in light of a decision by the commissar that the unit should move and of the revolutionary moral that demanded that every individual sacrifice not only his own life, but that of his dearest as well if required by the Party. The culmination of the drama was the moment when Gvozden himself accepts this set of values and consciously agrees to sacrifice himself in the interests of the Party. This film was the first to show personal vanity and disharmony in the leadership and the message was that the peasants, as a social group, were the biggest victims of the ideology they served<sup>42</sup>.

The film “Ešalon doktora M.” [The Echelon of Doctor M.] from 1955 by Živorad Mitrović represents, despite its weaknesses, an important step in overcoming the clichés of socialist realism. It was directed in the manner of Wild West films in the exotic surroundings of Kosovo and Metohija, with a great number of close-ups and spectacular shots, including heavy fighting and a car race. This was the obvious influence of Hollywood. Partisans were not idealized in this film. They are allowed feelings of love and [even!] slight

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<sup>40</sup> “Overcoming old formulas and a search for new ways of development becomes an imperative of Yugoslav political and cultural practices during 1951 and 1952”. See: Ratko Peković, *Ni rat ni mir. Panorama književnih polemika 1945–1965* [Neither War nor Peace. A Panorama of Literary Polemics 1945–1965] (Beograd 1986) 109. The writers were the first to feel the new impulse, but it was apparent in film as well, especially when literary pieces were used for screenplays.

<sup>41</sup> Peasants from partisan and Chetnik units alike preferred not leaving their villages. Rapidly growing partisan units crumbled after military defeats and were sometimes reduced overnight to half-strength, or even from units of 1,000 to only 150 fighters. See: Branko Petranović, *Srbija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1939–1945* [Serbia in the Second World War 1939–1945] (Beograd 1992) 184. The same problem was treated in the film “Šolaja” by Vojislav Nanović.

<sup>42</sup> Ljubojev, *Evropski film 250–253*; Čolić, *Jugoslovenski ratni film 1–2*, 349–351; Volk, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma* 149f.



eroticism<sup>43</sup>. Although it was scornfully called a cartoon by a number of critics, it filled the cinemas, so that later more war films were done the same way. Some Hollywood actors, such as Richard Burton or Yul Brunner, were engaged.

A much better motion picture, both more controversial and more interesting for analysis, was “Šolaja” by Vojislav Nanović from 1955 about a local partisan hero from western Bosnia. While some called it a “pure socialist-realistic monument”<sup>44</sup>, others described it as “western of a different type”<sup>45</sup>. This film is far more intriguing in its attitude towards both the past and contemporary politics. Although the story develops in a nationally diverse milieu, the film was made primarily for the “Serbian cause”. The uprising of Serbian peasants against the occupation and genocide committed in the Independent State of Croatia and the struggle against the Ustashe and the Italians offer the framework for the main theme: the process of the differentiation of the rebels into partisans and Chetniks that led to civil war. Both formations tended to gain influence over the peasantry through local self-proclaimed leaders and prominent individuals such as Simo Šolaja. The immediate rivals in this Mephistophelean struggle for charismatic leadership are the partisan commander Prole [prole + tarian = proletarian, representative of the social group that did not exist in Bosnia at that time, but that is pointed up by the use of the name] and the Chetnik commander captain Drenko [dren = dogwood, a wood known for its firmness and health, a symbol of solidity]. Such symbolism was hardly acceptable to the authorities<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Čolić, *Jugoslovenski ratni film 1–2*, 544–546; Raspor, *Riječ o filmu* 42; 97; 116; Volk, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma* 176f. Due to the public’s great interest, Žika Mitrović made two other films with the same characters in the same milieu: “Kapetan Leši” [Captain Leši] 1960 and “Obračun” [The Conflict] 1962.

<sup>44</sup> Munitić, *Zabranjene igre* (1), 243.

<sup>45</sup> Nebojša Pajkić, *Šolajina vojska ili o kazanom i prikazanom u filmu “Šolaja”* [Šolaja’s Army or What Was Said and Shown in the Film “Šolaja”], in: B. Zlatić, M. Radaković, N. Pajkić (eds.), *Režija: Vojislav Nanović – poslednji pionir* [Film directing: Vojislav Nanović – the last pioneer] (Beograd/Novi Sad 1993) 97–110 here 99; see also 109–110. Nanović finished the film “Ciganka” [The Gipsy Girl] in 1953, in which the spirit of the western film could be felt. See: Saša Radojević, *Iza zamrznutog kadra* [Behind the Frozen Cadre], in: *Režija: Vojislav Nanović – poslednji pionir* 89–96 here 91. Nanović himself explicitly named as his model the famous director of (western) cowboy films John Ford. See: Milutin Petrović, *Napisi i članci Vojislava Nanovića* [The Writings and the Articles of Vojislav Nanović], in: *Režija: Vojislav Nanović – poslednji pionir* 166–170 here 166.

<sup>46</sup> In 1956, the critic singled out as problematic the way partisans and Chetniks were shown: “Our film again begins disturbingly [...]. An attempt to avoid the scheme with captain Drenko is unconvincing. In the Sarajevo version, I have seen that this commander leaves for Kupres with the partisans. In the Belgrade version, luckily, that ad-

This film is also of interest because it was made in two versions, one at the demand of the federal authorities stressing the influence of the Party on the peasants who voluntarily sacrificed themselves for the benefit of communist ideology and agreed to go to war far from their homes. This was the version meant for the rest of Yugoslavia. The other version, closer to historical fact, was made for theaters in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In it, peasants were involved in the struggle for their own survival. The main character died defending his village from the Ustashe and knew nothing about the theories of Karl Marx. At that time, there were still politically influential war veterans in Bosnia and Herzegovina who had known Šolaja and how he died. His sons were extras in this film<sup>47</sup>. It is not clear which version of the film “suffers from [...] the falsification of historical facts”<sup>48</sup> and was “the first, and could be the last, communist film to confront its own dogma”<sup>49</sup>.

However, another aspect was much more important. Nanović was sometimes accused of amateurism: “Owing to complete ignorance of the basic principles of montage, the director has forced us to watch partisans shooting at partisans as soon as the battle in the film starts. It is obvious that the director did not intend such.”<sup>50</sup> Even if he did it on purpose, i.e. was consistent, what was his message to the viewers? And what does it mean when “Šolaja dies in the film so that his machine gun shoots at the ground, *our* ground”<sup>51</sup>? Perhaps Nanović had not been satisfied with the country for which he had previously fought in the war? He finally left for America and stayed there until shortly before his death.

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venture was slightly modified. However, the spirit of that personality has not been changed [...]. Where [...] do we find the honesty of his attitude to fighting partisan enemies? [...] The screenplay does not mention the actions by the partisan. They mainly depend on the movement and actions of Šolaja's unit. They submit to him without question. That submission to Šolaja's decisions is shown in a way that leaves an impression that the partisans did this out of fear, even cowardice. They really act as a bewildered, inactive, and confused group unable to undertake anything. [...] Is it suitable to make material and other sacrifices for such films, which, we should say, question the sublime nature of the motives upon which they were made?” Čolić, *Jugoslovenski ratni film 1–2*, 232–234.

<sup>47</sup> Ljubojev, *Evropski film 249–250*. At the time of filming it was allegedly “normal” that two versions of a film were made. See: *Razgovor sa Radetom Markovićem* [A Dialogue with Rade Marković], in: *Režija: Vojislav Nanović – poslednji pionir 55–76* here 70.

<sup>48</sup> *Raspor, Riječ o filmu 109*.

<sup>49</sup> *Pajkić, Šolajina vojska 102*.

<sup>50</sup> *Raspor, Riječ o filmu 109*. This suicidal shooting was repeated throughout Nanović's opus, where the main character is a disappointed man who has a past, but not a future. See: *Bogdan Zlatić, Zanatlija žive slike* [The Craftsman of a Living Picture], in: *Režija: Vojislav Nanović – poslednji pionir XI–XXIX* here XII.

<sup>51</sup> *Raspor, Riječ o filmu 109*. Italics V. *Raspor*.

“Šolaja” could be seen as a kind of pendant<sup>52</sup> to the film “Zastava”, made six years earlier. Both dealt with the recent past and both offered not only a picture of events, but also an explanation of the civil war and the revolution. Both were furthermore the work of former partisans<sup>53</sup>. Nevertheless, in a political and ideological sense, they are opposed to one another. “Zastava” and its message were praised and strongly affirmed by the authorities and critics, while the author of “Šolaja” was “first targeted” by the establishment, and later made to realize that “there is no bread for him in domestic cinematography”<sup>54</sup>. If communists really used film as “a weapon”<sup>55</sup>, there were then really “partisans shooting at partisans” in the first decade of postwar Yugoslavia. They hit one another with different views and explanations of the recent past, ideological and political judgments, and moral statements<sup>56</sup>.

A political problem similar to the one with “Šolaja” came about relative to the film “Trenutki odločitve” [The Moments of Decision] by František

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<sup>52</sup> Those looking for the “inside enemy” could see, if they tried (which they did) “the essence of the double-meaning in the film which consequently tells one thing, but expresses something else”. Pajkić, *Šolajina vojska* 102.

<sup>53</sup> The screenwriter of “Zastava” was Joža Horvat, a Croatian writer and former “distinguished partisan leader in Kalnik”. Raspor, *Riječ o filmu 70*. The director of “Zastava” Branko Marjanović, however, who also made films in the Independent State of Croatia, was rewarded and, like people with a similar past, was sympathetic to political demands. Vojislav Nanović took part in Belgrade during the war in several dangerous and illegal actions before he joined the partisans. His past (see his autobiographic film “Besmrtna mladost” [The Immortal Youth] 1948) protected him from being quickly and easily silenced as the “enemy inside”. This deviation from the official version of the past was a consequence of a critically evaluated experience. See also: Razgovor sa Vladislavom Srdanović [A Dialogue with Vladislav Srdanović], in: *Režija: Vojislav Nanović – poslednji pionir 175–182*.

<sup>54</sup> Zlatić, *Zanatlija žive slike XXIV; XXV*.

<sup>55</sup> Dimić, *Agitprop kultura* 177.

<sup>56</sup> The milieu of the film was completely impregnated with the “tested cadre”. For instance, film critic Vicko Raspor participated in illegal activities in Zagreb, then joined the partisans, and said later about his older, more experienced, and much more influential friend and “party connection” Vladimir Bakarić: “We left meetings with Bakarić with ‘soaring spirits’. He really knew how to explain the orders!” Raspor, *Riječ o filmu 290; 298*. This past was perhaps the cause of Raspor’s radicalism when evaluating the films “Zastava” and “Šolaja”. The film critic and author of several books on film Milutin Čolić was in the underground himself and later a partisan and a prisoner in a concentration camp in Norway. Dobrica Ćosić, the author of the book upon which the film “Daleko je sunce” was based, is a former partisan as well. Film director Vjekoslav Afrić was a member of a partisan theater troop, while several screenwriters, such as Oskar Davičo and Branko Ćopić, were partisans, as were the cameraman Žorž Skrigin and the film director Radoš Novaković. There is no point in listing the many former partisans who were employees of film enterprises and censorship committees.

Čap from 1955. The film council of Triglav Film intervened in the screenplay and took out some parts where partisans were shown as “green cadre”, while the Slovene patriot fighters [*domobranci*] were to be portrayed as a structured army outside German command. It was additionally demanded that the occupational troops be more in evidence, as well as that the *Osvobodilna fronta* be clearly mentioned. Especially requested was the removal of the moral dilemma of the main character, Dr. Koren, following the killing of a Slovene *domobran*. Finally, the title of the film was also changed. It was originally supposed to be called “Krvava reka” [Bloody River]<sup>57</sup>. In Čap’s film, as well as in “Šolaja”, suspicion focused not on the way the occupier was shown, but on the image of the enemy within the nation itself. The defeated forces in both the Slovenian and the Serbian civil wars remained in the country as a latent threat to the authorities, while the Axis and its allies had definitely become history.

Co-productions and other forms of cooperation with foreign film companies also serve as a good indicator of political processes. One example has already been mentioned: the film “V gorakh Jugoslavii” was filmed in cooperation with a Moscow film studio. This enterprise was considered politically very important and the decision to start filming was made by the highest political body, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. After the bitter experience with the Soviets in this film, the authorities were very cautious about cinematographic enterprises. The tumultuous years of the conflict with Stalin followed. The next cooperation in film was thus in 1954 and the partner came from the western side of the Iron Curtain.

It was the war-film “Poslednji most” [The Last Bridge] made in cooperation with Cosmopol Film from Vienna<sup>58</sup>. The activities of the Nazis in Yugoslavia during World War II were drastically played down, which caused a storm of disapproval from the domestic public. The prohibition of the film was even demanded. Censorship nevertheless approved it, while “the plenum of Yugoslav film workers even pointed out that the co-production ‘Poslednji most’ was positive and without faults, completely failing to disclose the fact that this film won the first Catholic award in Cannes”<sup>59</sup>. It was to mark a new course in state politics. In 1954, Yugoslavia practically became an associate member of NATO, so it was important to overcome

<sup>57</sup> Aleš Gabrič, *Socijalistična kulturna revolucija. Slovenska kulturna politika 1953–1962* [Socialist Cultural Revolution. Slovenian Cultural Policy] (Ljubljana 1995) 99–101.

<sup>58</sup> Screenplay: Norbert Kuntze, Helmut Käutner, Tanasije Mladenović, and Stole Janković; director: Helmut Käutner. Maria Schell was given the best-actress award at the Cannes festival. See: *Filmografija* 8f; Čolić, *Jugoslovenski ratni film 1–2*, 352–354.

<sup>59</sup> Raspor, *Riječ o filmu* 41.

the psychological gap towards other members of the alliance, especially Germany, which was an unpleasant memory in Yugoslav minds.

In that same year (1954), two melodramas were filmed in cooperation with German partners. One was “Kuća na obali” [The House on the Beach] in cooperation with J. A. Film Kompanie from Hamburg. The plot is based on a mother and daughter being in love with the same man and includes elements of a crime-story<sup>60</sup>. The other film is “Greh” [Sin], directed by František Čap, done with Saphir Film GmbH from Munich. It is a story about a heretofore childless peasant whose maid gives birth to his son<sup>61</sup>. None of these films featuring love and family stories achieved significant success, but they did not cause any scandals either, as their themes did not relate to the problems of recent history.

In 1955, two other co-productions with foreign partners were filmed. “Krvavi put” [The Bloody Road] in cooperation with Norsk Film from Oslo is a war drama about Yugoslav internees in Norway who were helped by the local people to escape from a Nazi camp. Again, the film searches for a historical link between socialist Yugoslavia and a western country. The theme was better in this case and the film was more readily accepted by the public<sup>62</sup>. The last co-production in the first post-war decade was “Dva zrna grožđa” [Two Grapes], made with the Greek partner Nikos Skulidis and Co. from Athens. The film is about the love between a young farmer and the daughter of a landowner, who disapproved of the relationship and did all in his power to thwart it. Such a social theme, situated in country milieu, was familiar to the population of both states, which were signatories of the Balkan Pact. This nevertheless did not insure its success.

The modest results from cooperation with the West in producing films did not have international political consequences. On the other hand, the period of the conflict with Stalin, transformed love into intolerance: “It is clear today that those who turned us away from establishing a domestic film and art industry only favored the line of general revisionism that had long been embedded in the CK VKP(b). And when we counted on their support and directed our viewers almost solely to Soviet films and showed that we were in practice ready for close cooperation with the USSR in the domain of culture, their ‘internationalist’ attitudes were that there is neither a need nor the necessary condition for creating our own film industry,

<sup>60</sup> Volk, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma* 365–366; *Filmografija* 9.

<sup>61</sup> Before coming to Yugoslavia, Čap directed films in Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Germany. Professionally, he was superior to domestic film directors. Due to his origins and views, it was sometimes maliciously commented that: “Čap drives his small limousine flying the flag of the Demochristian *Weltanschauung* of ‘Grijeh’ [Sin].” Raspor, *Riječ o filmu* 40. See also: Volk, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma* 309–311; *Filmografija* 9.

<sup>62</sup> Čolić, *Jugoslovenski ratni film I-II*, 220–231; Volk, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma* 150.

that it would be very risky, that it was too early, that it would be megalomaniac, and so on. In that way, Abram Room, the Soviet film director who filmed ‘V gorakh Jugoslavii’ during 1945 and 1946 ‘warmly’ recommended that we direct our film policy towards entrusting Soviet authors and actors to make feature films in our country, while the representative of Sovkспортfilm ‘advised’ us to limit our production only to film journals and not make documentaries or feature films, as they could be imported from the Soviet Union. In short, according to them, we should not engage in fruitless work and should just develop a culture that was socialist in form and nationalistic (hegemonic, great Russian) in content on our silver screens.”<sup>63</sup> Yugoslav communists needed some time to understand the content of Stalin’s “generous presents”, but after sobering up, they did not mince words venting their bitter disappointment. Another co-production was done with the Soviets as late as 1958. It was “Aleksa Dundić” by Leonid Lukov, produced by Avala Film from Belgrade and Kinostudio Gorki from Moscow.

Strengthening ties with the West was also put in the perspective of the market economy. The first Yugoslav film sold abroad was the war-film “Zastava” filmed in 1949 and sold to Israel in 1951. The second was “Čudotvorni mač” [The Miraculous Sword], filmed in 1950 and sold in 1952 to the United States of America<sup>64</sup>. Afterwards came the films “Ciganka” [The Gypsy Girl] (1953) sold to Turkey, “Crveni cvet” [The Red Flower] sold to Greece in 1950, “Nevjera” [Infidelity] from 1953 sold to Egypt, and “Plavi 9” [The Blue 9] from 1950 sold to Austria and West Germany. Until 1955 export of Yugoslav film to the West and neutral countries prevailed, whereas after 1955 the Eastern bloc moved to the front and became the primary market in the decades to come. The cause of this change does not lie in the

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<sup>63</sup> Raspor, Riječ o filmu 12. Raspor gave this speech at the Founding Congress of the Federation of the Film Workers of Yugoslavia on 5 April 1950 in Belgrade.

<sup>64</sup> There are statements that Nanović’s film strongly influenced the director John Milius when he filmed the famous “Conan the Barbarian” (USA, 1982). See: Petar Jakonić, Čudotvorni mač Konana Varvarina [Miraculous Sword of Conan the Barbarian], in: Režija: Vojislav Nanović – poslednji pionir 49–54. There are also claims that “it was the best-selling Yugoslav film. This was, at least, the case a few years ago when I talked with some people from Jugoslavija Film. A big handicap for the movie is that it was filmed in black and white. If it had been otherwise, I think it would have lasted longer in the cinemas.” Interview with Rade Marković 66. Severe criticism of Tito’s regime underlies this motion picture. The criticism is most explicit when a character from the movie, a royal fool, directly addressed the viewer with the following line: “Our country has gone far/ We have castles, arches/ Treasures and joy,/ But to no avail/ When fools lead the way!/ Look at this disgrace/ A fool teaches them wisdom!” Vojislav Nanović, Čudotvorni mač. Filmski scenario [Miraculous Sword. Film Screenplay] (Beograd 1951) 55.

domain of ideology, but in the inability of Yugoslavia to produce technically sound and interesting films for the developed and demanding market of the western hemisphere.

The change in foreign policy did not influence the authorities to change their Stalinist attitudes and customs<sup>65</sup>. One victim was the director of the film "Pod sumnjom" [Under Suspicion] in 1956, Branko Belan, who did not satisfy the censorship commission. The director of the company Bosna Film for which Branko worked, Moni Finči, forced him to cut off a score of sequences, telling him that "if you won't, I will call in someone else to do it". Belan later reported that "when I cut off the first scene, I felt so bad, that I cut the subsequent scenes even more than necessary. It was a kind of suicide, you know."<sup>66</sup> Belan never directed a feature film again.

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During the decade after the Second World War, Yugoslav film followed the change of state policy and the turn towards the West by slowly abandoning the propaganda of socialist realism and beginning to develop a Hollywood-like style of propaganda. Although Yugoslav communists courted the West from the beginning of the fifties, they did not democratize the state. When liberal trends emerged domestically, there was a reaction from the repressive state machinery. Contemporary themes were not welcome, even though their authors were loyal to the Party, as they unavoidably ruined the mythical picture of reality that the Communist Party wanted to maintain. Due to its importance in shaping the masses, film was entrusted primarily to ideologically and politically reliable individuals. Despite the firm control exercised over the "brotherly" Yugoslav nations, the dissent that occurred could not be characterized as accidental, but rather as a kind of political pluralism. The fact that it appeared within a one-party system makes this phenomenon even more interesting and its consequences more complicated. Despite state and party control, a critical spirit managed to survive and develop in the arts, sometimes creating real masterpieces. Film was here often in the forefront.

<sup>65</sup> On the contrary, censorship was included in the final evaluation. Josip Broz Tito wrote in his report in 1954: "The Federal Commission for Reviewing Films was founded in 1944. From the day it was established, the Commission reviewed 895 foreign and domestic films, out of which 321 are long feature films and 574 short films and film journals." See: Izveštaj Saveznog izvršnog vijeća za 1954. godinu II [Report of the Federal Executive Council for 1954, part II] in: Prilog Vjesnika, 7 March 1955, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Munitić, *Zabranjene igre Yugo-filma* 247. The president of the censorship commission tried to comfort the desperate director with words that were more naïve than cynical: "You see, almost everything can remain; only ten sequences have to be excluded. There are cases when even more has to be cut out."