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Presenting (Imposing) Values through Films¹. The Case of the Yugoslav Partisan Films

Abstract

The text discusses how the Yugoslav socialist system's main values had been treated in the partisan films, but only in so-called “filmed offensives”. Those films are *Kozara* (*Kozara*, 1962), *Descent on Drvar* (*Desant na Drvar*, 1963), *The Battle of Neretva* (*Bitka na Neretvi*, 1969), *The Battle of Sutjeska* (*Sutjeska*, 1973), *The Republic of Uzice* (*Užička republika*, 1974), *The Fall of Italy* (*Pad Italije*, 1981), *The Igman March* (*Igmanski marš*, 1983), depicting seven military operations of German army and its allies against Yugoslav partisans during the World War two. After the war, those battles had become very important points of remembering and the narration of “seven offensives” was a prism for reducing the complexity of that war in collective memory of Yugoslav people. In that sense, films about those events have had special status in Yugoslav society and culture. Between many important values, text deals with socialism (as a basic system value), irreligiosity, collectivism, egalitarianism, multi-ethnicity and national equality. Those values are not considered per se, but how they were constructed in the selected films.

Keywords: dominant values, partisan films, socialist Yugoslavia, ideology

1. Dominant Value Orientations in Socialist Yugoslavia

Establishing a socialist system after World War II entailed fundamental changes of the social system, considering that this system (socialist republicanism) replaced the opposing capitalist monarchy. With the establishment of socialism, a different system of values was constituted, one which implied discontinuity with the previous state in various elements, such as “the affirmation of atheism, certain amount of control, and even suppression of national feelings in the name of internationalism, Yugoslavism and ‘brotherhood and unity’, as well as realizing equality between

¹ The text is an adapted and translated part of the book *Ideology of the Film Image (Ideologija filmske slike)*, Belgrade: Faculty of Philosophy, 2011.

women and men” (Golubović, 1995: 119). The specific nature of the newly formed conditions in the ideological-political and national respect entailed that certain value orientations became specially “nurtured” and emphasized. Film was an ideal tool for such purposes, since by using this type of media in an indirect manner, the values that were the most favorable at a given moment could be presented very suggestively and persuasively. This text will therefore concentrate on the so-called “filmed offensives”; Yugoslav partisan films depicting seven military operations of German army and its allies against Yugoslav partisans: *Kozara* (*Kozara*, 1962), *Descent on Drvar* (*Desant na Drvar*, 1963), *The Battle of Neretva* (*Bitka na Neretvi*, 1969), *The Battle of Sutjeska* (*Sutjeska*, 1973), *The Republic of Uzice* (*Užička republika*, 1974), *The Fall of Italy* (*Pad Italije*, 1981) and *The Igman March* (*Igmanski marš*, 1983).

Before moving on to the analysis of the film’s treatment of dominant values, it is necessary to say something regarding their presence. If one were to generally consider the value orientations in socialist Yugoslavia, one could say that socialism itself had the supreme value status in the newly formed conditions, since it was “officially understood as a value in itself, as well as the value measure of all other social goals” (Gredelj, 2000: 202), and the dominant value orientations. However, when considering the values of some socialist order, we cannot just remain solely to the analysis of socialism as the most important value.

A more systematic and in-depth research, which dealt with the dominant value orientations in Yugoslav socialism, was the one performed by Dragomir Pantić (1977). In this highly cited and quoted research paper, an attempt was made to identify the main value orientations and present their presence among the strata of the Yugoslav society at the time. In this sense, Pantić emphasized the following value orientations as dominant ones: modernism, collectivism, egalitarianism, openness to the world, orientation towards public property, orientation of self-government, material orientation (materialism), humanitarianism and irreligion. All the mentioned orientations, in their total scores, are dominant over the opposites, but only several exceed the half: openness to the world (56%), orientation towards public property (65%), orientation of self-government (68%), materialism (65%), humanitarianism (52%) and irreligion (88%), while only irreligion has an absolute majority in all strata (Pantić, 1977)². Although all

² The materialist orientation has the majority in almost all strata (it only equals 48% within the humanist intelligentsia). However, according to Pantić’s findings, its intensity is very weak, which should not significantly reduce the fact that it was widespread. It needs to be emphasized here that the strata that Pantić had in mind were

these value orientations may be viewed as dominant, all of them, apart from irreligion, contain a key affiliation with the social strata, which significantly influences the fact whether such orientations or their opposites would be developed. This further leads to the mentioned value orientations not being absolutely dominant in the society as a whole, but only in certain strata. Of course, the more widespread the strata in the overall population, the greater the presence of the value orientation it carries, but none could be said to have been absolutely dominant, apart from irreligion (and possibly the orientation towards self-government, which does not have absolute domination only in two classes [private sector and farmers], along with the already mentioned materialism), since all the rest greatly varied in relation to the strata.

Another value orientation, which was also not absolutely dominant in terms of value (it was not even close to it), needs to be emphasized, but it did intensely manifest itself in certain periods.

This was nationalism. Within the framework of the socialist order, the national orientation was not widespread. This is, at least, supported by the research conducted in this period, such as the research performed by Pantić in 1967, which states that 59.2% of the respondents in the socialist Yugoslavia did not distance themselves in ethnic terms. In the research conducted by the same author in 1985, the same author states that the national distance was stable in the period between 1966 and 1985, and that it was also reduced (quote according to Golubović, 1995: 152).

Such a situation was greatly influenced by the fact that, during the socialist period, nationalism was, at least officially, anathematized (which may have influenced that fact that respondents gave socially favorable responses). The Directives of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia/League of Communists of Yugoslavia were clear in this respect, and were primarily concerned with combating nationalism in their own national surroundings, with the pressure of the ideological apparatus being far stronger in multinational surroundings.³ In addition, the official ideology promoted socialist internationalism relatively strongly, as well as the value concepts of brotherhood and unity (which was directly supposed to influence the equalization of ethnic differences as strongly as possible) and socialist Yugoslavism (which was inherited from the pre-socialist period, but was later skillfully merged into the socialist ideology, which was not extremely difficult to perform, considering that Yugoslavism transcended nationality in itself,

managers, humanist and technical intelligence, administrative employees, qualified workers in the field of service provision, private entities, unqualified workers in the city, as well as peasants-workers and farmers.

³ With a strong party supervision in multinational environments, the findings of analysts could partially be explained, suggesting that the greater the ethnic diversity of the Republic/province, the higher the tolerance index (Lazić, 2005: 50).

and, as such, fit into the idea of socialist internationalism). All this resulted in reducing the display of nationalist convictions and passions to a minimum, which is confirmed by the previously mentioned empirical research.

However, in addition to there being so many antinationalist factors and regulators, nationalism was still present. This is confirmed by the powerful nationalist waves in Kosovo, starting from the late 1960s, as well as in Croatia in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The eruptions of nationalist passions actually meant that, although nationalism was not more visibly widespread, it did not mean that it did not exist at all. Certain authors believe that the tank of nationalism in socialist Yugoslavia, which later served for the tragic explosion of this orientation, was actually in the minority of the population, and that it was persistently maintained as a parallel value form, opposed to the dominant orientation towards ethnic tolerance (Lazić, 2005: 48). This might served to explain the already mentioned powerful nationalist waves in Kosovo and Croatia. The same author further emphasizes that there was also a continuous historical dimension of nationalism, which dated back to “pre-Yugoslav” times, when the nationalisms of the oppressed peoples began to emerge in the imperial surroundings of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. In its infancy, the existence of nationalisms, to a certain extent, depended on their joint action, and after the separation of imperial forces and the formation of the first Yugoslav state, they got a wider area to maneuver in, considering the fact that the framework for their display was firmer. The mutual intolerance of ethnic political elites reached its full force here, and it seems that this animosity remained a permanent category, up to a certain point, in the second, i.e. socialist Yugoslavia, with the only difference being that it was well-masked by the communist ideology.

A certain continuity, which characterized national orientation, was more significantly typical of another value orientation, extremely close to nationalism. This was authoritative orientation,⁴ which proved to be more widespread than its nationalist counterpart was. The presence of the authoritarian orientation within socialist Yugoslavia was confirmed by numerous researches (Kuzmanović, 1994). The great prominence of authoritarianism should not be surprising, considering the fact that the “authoritarian type of personality was the dominant one (...) in the so-called real socialism” (Golubović, 1995: 11). In a similar manner, Mladen Lazić states that

⁴ Authoritarianism was seen as a non-critical relationship towards authority and the principle of hierarchy in social relations, i.e. as authoritarian submissiveness and, at the same time, authoritarian dominance and aggression towards those who violated conventional norms.

communist ideology was characterized by distinct authoritarian attributes (Lazić, Cvejić, 2004: 62), which could mean that authoritarianism was, in certain ways, a systematic characteristic. This, to a certain extent, proves the concept of “authoritative modernization”, which, among other things, also emphasized the fact that the modernization in Yugoslavia was directed towards the authoritarian political form, owing to numerous hereditary factors and ideology (Kuljić, 1998).

Therefore, if authoritarianism was one of the characteristics of the socialist system (if not fully, than definitely in certain segments), then it could not have been suppressed or repressed in any manner. So, it is logical that it manifested itself more strongly than nationalism, which it was closely related to. In contrast, nationalism was one of the major “internal enemies” of the socialist order, which most of the ruling structures were also aware of, which is why it was systematically suppressed.⁵ It may even be said that the presence of authoritarianism was, to a certain extent, the direct consequence of the systematic suppression of nationalisms, where the powerful national feelings could not be completely “smothered”, so they were reflected through authoritarianism, to a certain extent.

The example of the final two value orientations, in a way, shows a certain continuity in terms of the values of the socialist past with the pre-socialist past, which further implies that the newly-formed “socialist values” did not fully suppress all the values which had been dominant in the pre-socialist period. In this sense, traditionalist orientation was especially prominent in its perseverance, and it was extremely widespread in the first half of the 20th century, and continued its existence in socialist surroundings. The relative widespread presence of traditionalism was, among other things, presented by Pantić in his research, where he found that almost a third of the respondents nurtured this orientation (Pantić, 1977).

In addition to the mentioned, Lazić and Cvejić also state that the existence of traditionalism was evident in socialism, and that it mainly displayed patriarchal attributes (Lazić, Cvejić, 2004). However, in addition to this patriarchal traditionalism, there was the so-called revolutionary traditionalism, which primarily concerned attempts to establish “revolutionary and socialist tradition” from the mid-twentieth century (Golubović, 1995: 120). The latter traditionalism was,

⁵ The struggle against nationalism was left to the political elites of the republics, and its consistency and intensity greatly depended on the national structure of the every Republic. However, it seems that more serious steps to greatly neutralize nationalism/chauvinism were never taken. This may confirm the constant insistence on stating one's nationality in official documents, as well as the failure to use the concept of Yugoslavism as a national or supranational orientation.

on the one hand, an expression of the desire for the communist nomenclature to conserve the symbolic capital acquired in the struggle against the occupying forces. On the other hand, it was part of a wider political culture in the Balkans.

The presence of the value orientations, which seemed to have been among the more dominant ones in Yugoslav socialist society, was also reflected on the movie production. It seems justifiable to presume that the more significant some value was for the system with respect to its survival and functioning, the more stressed was the insistence on it, which entailed paying a significantly greater amount of attention to its construction on film.

2. The Film Construction of the Dominant Values

2.1 Socialism

Socialism as, conditionally speaking, the supreme value, “the measure of all other values”, as well as the bearer of the whole value system, was not as directly stressed or emphasized in film offensives. Of all the analyzed films, it is only in *The Republic of Uzice* and, to a certain extent, in *The Fall of Italy* that the favoritism of socialism can be more clearly noticed, with only the firstly mentioned film expressing this favoritism more strongly. It was reflected in the critique of the system of the monarchy, which may be noticed at the very beginning of the movie in scenes that illustrated the disorganization and semi-breakdown of the royal army, and the readiness of the royal political elite to an almost unquestioned capitulation. As a clear opposite to this, a partisan movement was installed, which was shown as organized and ready to fight the occupying forces.

A greater expression of favoring socialism in the film *The Republic of Uzice* may be noticed in the monologue of the partisan commander (Boris Buzančić), in which he explicitly mentions the need for creating a new state (and with it, the new system of values), stressing that the very “people do not want the old country to come back”, by which the partisan movement was presented as, conditionally speaking, the expression of the people’s dissatisfaction. The mentioned monologue concludes with a statement regarding the need to establish a new society, one which man can “create by himself and in which he will decide how to live”. This suggested the necessity of creating a new order, where this new order, arriving along with the partisan

struggle, brought the new system of values, simultaneously suppressing the old system of beliefs and its value forms. The clash between the old and the new (value) order was reflected in a single sentence, complacently uttered by a young partisan while burning documents of the old authorities: "Look at how the old world burns!". This statement would symbolically show a certain type of helplessness and obsolescence of the old system, which had declined as a result, and a new alternative came in its place in the form of a socialist society, presented as a necessity in the movie.

In addition, the image of the clash between the old and the new values permeates the whole film, and can be perceived as a leitmotif of the same film. A similar procedure, at least it seems, was partially used in the movie *The Fall of Italy*, which also contained, almost throughout the whole film, a constant background smoldering clash between the old and the new system of values. At a symbolic level, this clash could have been perceived through the peasants who were deeply "steeped" into superstition, whose appearance in the movie was mostly related to the scenes lacking light, which was probably supposed to present the omen of a dark past. In contrast, e.g. in *Descent on Drvar*, especially in the first part, it was stressed several times that the life in the Republic of Drvar under partisan rule was normal, practically carefree, despite the state of war. It is possible to presume that this indirectly suggested that the society which the partisans had built, despite everything, provided a normal life for all the people. **1**

On the other hand, it may be said that socialism was indirectly put forward through the character of Josip Broz Tito, the partisans, as well as the five-pointed red star, which were all symbols of the Yugoslav socialist system as such. Tito was the leader of a socialist country and his movie versions (especially in *The Battle of Sutjeska*, as well as in *The Republic of Uzice*) indirectly represented not only this country, but also its socialist orientation. Similarly, the partisans were connected to socialism and its symbols. There is also, of course, the five-pointed red star as a symbol of a clear ideological orientation, and what could be mentioned here is the impression that it seems much redder in *The Republic of Uzice* than in other works (this refers to the movies filmed in color).

Overall, it would seem that the socialist idea did not find the "proper echo" in the production of war spectacles which was adequate for its real significance. None of the analyzed films can be said to have directly favored socialism, which was completely disproportionate to the extreme importance that socialism had for Yugoslavia. In the end, judging by its character, Yugoslavia

was a socialist country, but this was not stressed in the movies, nor presented as an especially significant fact. The reasons for such practice may possibly be found in “export ambitions”, since open favoritism of socialism as an ideal order (or the one that was on the right road to being ideal) would significantly reduce the “export possibilities” of a certain film, especially on non-communist markets. In the same way, the direct praise of socialism would most probably automatically label the very movie as political propaganda, and it is justified to assume that this was not desired by its creators, or by those who provided different additional support regarding the production.

2.2 Irreligion

One of the values which was closely connected with the socialist idea, and was, as such, widespread in socialist Yugoslavia, was irreligion. It needs to be emphasized here that irreligion was conceived as a value orientation in itself, i.e. primarily as an opposite to religious orientation, as well as a critical deliberation of the mentioned. One of the key reasons for the presence of irreligion⁶ may lay in the fact that the whole socialist period was permeated by a powerful process of converting to atheism, a radical termination of all relationships between the church and the state, and in general, enlightening views which stressed rationalism, and saw the religious sphere solely in the domain of the private. Such moves of the socialist regime greatly influenced the occurrence of a decline in the interest in religion and, in general, having religious beliefs marginalized as an orientation.

The marginalization of religion and emphasizing irreligion as the desirable value orientation was also present in film offensives. However, a certain critical treatment of these phenomena was not so direct and open, as one may expect, considering the status of the very religion in society.

Instead, it was emphasized in a somewhat more indirect form. In this way, for example, in the movie *The Battle of Neretva*, several scenes depicting a great gathering of the Chetniks clearly show that they are in front of a religious building which mostly resembles an orthodox church. These scenes should indirectly point to their closeness with the clergy, and since the Chetniks inside them are portrayed as the embodiment of savagery and civilization backwardness

⁶ In the already cited research by Pantić, it was registered that only 5% of the respondents demonstrated religious creed, and a total of 88% stated that they were not religious, which, according to this author, represents the highest percentage of irreligion established in Yugoslavia (Pantić, 1977: 369).

(considering their savage yelling and waving some sort of sabers), this should also probably suggest, in a certain manner, something about the character of the church.

In addition, in the same scenes, a Chetnik politician holds a speech, filled with hatred, on the need to destroy the partisans, and on several instances uses catchphrases such as “God be with you” and “God willing” by which he significantly alludes to his inclination towards religion and God, and the phrases he uses may even have a greater bearing when considering the fact that they were neither widespread nor popular during the socialist period. In addition to the mentioned, it may also be added that the Orthodox Church, in this way, rises as some sort of “Chetnik’s base”, since this is their starting point in the final clash with the partisans in that movie.

A more direct link between the Chetniks and the Orthodox Church was presented in *The Republic of Užice* where the presence of the clergy is clearly seen at the meeting place of the Chetniks, as well as in later “celebrations” organized by the Chetniks. Such connections of the Serbian Orthodox church with the Chetnik movement, in addition to historical parallels,⁷ entailed several significantly important issues. Firstly, the Chetniks were an absolute antipode to the partisans and the very partisan movement as it was. Therefore, their portrayal as religious people could directly suggest that the partisans (and everyone associated with them) were definitely not religious. In addition to being the total opposite, the Chetniks were also a symbol of “absolute evil”, so the connection with the “religious-church complex” (D. Đorđević) with them signified the criticism of the church, to a certain extent. **2**

The criticism of the church in war spectacles was never limited to one denomination (Orthodox Church). A very sharp criticism of the Catholic Church (much sharper than the previously described one) can be noticed in *The Fall of Italy*. In this film, the image of the clergy is centered on the character of two friars, one of whom is openly on the side of the fascists. Such direct criticism of the Catholic Church was “illustrated” by the scenes in which the mentioned friar agreed with the shooting of the population by the fascists, as retaliation for the previous attack of the partisans. Furthermore, the friar openly speaks of the Ustasha brethren, at which time he

⁷ From the start of the 20th century, and up to mid-twentieth century, the Serbian Orthodox Church had a highly favorable and privileged position in society. For example, in the Kingdom of Serbia, orthodoxy gained the status of an official national religion (which, among other things, implied that all state and national holidays were followed by church ceremonies, that religious education was obligatory in schools, and that church officials received state salaries), while the Serbian Patriarch had a seat on the King’s Council in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and several priests held mandates in the People’s Assembly (Vukomanović, 2001: 101–102).

holds a highly militant speech on the need to fight the partisans. The character of the second friar is portrayed in a significantly milder form, and is allotted less time, and the scene in which he advises his colleague, the militant one, “not to take sides” and that “they should follow the people” is especially interesting. This somewhat eases the negative image of the clergy, which is that not all Catholic priests were of a pro-Ustasha orientation, but it also stresses a certain conformism of the catholic church which, unable to recognize and choose the right side, chose to “follow the people”, since this seemed as the least “painful” option.

A somewhat different and, up to a point, more complex relationship towards (ir)religion was present in *The Battle of Sutjeska*. This work contains an especially interesting character of the priest (Stojan Arandelović), who is among the partisans and who has a cross on his cap, and a five-pointed red star beneath it. This mixture of different and opposing symbols is rather unclear, and the symbolic confusion is emphasized by the fact that the presence of the clergy among the partisan army is specially stressed. In the end, this might be interpreted as an attempt to integrate the religious into the socialist system of values, but also shows one not so critical relationship towards the clergy, since the mentioned character of the priest does not solely serve as an “ornament”, but also possesses certain dramatic complexity.

In this sense, his dialogue with the woman in black (Irene Papas) needs to be mentioned, and in it, she openly asks what the partisans believe in when they do not pray, suggesting that this is the reason they do not win. The same woman continues her confession in a rather sharp tone, stating that her husband had died because he kept Stalin’s picture under the pillow while she prayed for him to be cured. To her significantly critical comments regarding the atheism of the partisans (and, it would seem, the communist ideology as a whole), the priest composedly replies that they (the partisans) believe “in themselves, in all of us”. In this way, the priest actually defends the partisans from the attack against their godlessness, although one might expect that he would be the one to criticize them for the mentioned characteristics.

In addition, another interesting scene is when the dying soldier refuses the priest’s prayer for his soul, addressing him as “comrade” (“leave it be, *comrade* preacher”), and giving him his ammunition to use it to “say a prayer” (which he later does in the film, shooting from a big machine gun at the Germans and saying: “Bora, do you hear my prayer?!”). Certain confusion between symbols and values can also be seen here, since the partisan addresses the member of the clergy with “comrade preacher”, and these two words practically immediately exclude one

another. The character of the priest is completely contradictory, which is especially visible in the scene when he prays to god for the partisans to breach the German lines, but in the end he rather confidently adds: “And if you're not there, we'll go through”. This may emphasize two things. On the one hand, this speaks of a certain crisis of the priest's faith, who is no longer certain whether God exists at all, while placing the partisans above God's will on the other hand, thus making them a completely independent subject, solely responsible for their own destiny. Therefore, irreligion manifested itself in war spectacles through an indirect criticism of the church, by directly affiliating it with the enemy, i.e. whether they are the Ustasha, or the Chetniks. This correlation also significantly raised issues related to the role and behavior, both of the Orthodox, and the Catholic Church on the territory of Yugoslavia during World War II. In addition, irreligion was manifested through the insecurity of the clergy itself and their inability to use religion to influence the things in the direction they found best. Furthermore, one of the manifestations of irreligion could be the non-existence of any allusions to religion in most of the film offensives (four out of a total of seven movies).

2.3 Collectivism and Egalitarianism

Since the prominent irreligion was characteristic for most socialist systems, the concepts of collectivism and egalitarianism were among the main “determinants” in other countries, which had a socialist background. For a moment, it might be interesting to digress a little and pay attention to the absolute opposite to the collectivist and egalitarian form – individualism. This value was (and still is) one of the key ideas behind the west-liberal capitalism and was therefore often represented as a central value in a wider, global perspective. A great significance of individualism was more or less indirectly reflected on the western movie production, providing this value with a notable position and an enviable role. It is structuring on the movie screen most frequently entailed a main character who mostly single-handedly solved the problem, defending and saving the “democratic world” from various usurpers, and who, as such, matured to an individual hero, simultaneously presenting a symbolic foundation which the system rested on. Unlike this film structure, representing collectivism and egalitarianism entailed that there was no individual as a separate factor, prompted by something (as a distinct individual). Instead, he is

only one part of a wider community (collective) which he belongs to and which he does not stand out from very much.

Such building of collectivity and equality is also presented in film offensives, and it is best and most strikingly represented through the partisan army. Among them, there is no special hero whose courage, strength, intelligence etc. are stressed above the others' and who is superior to the others in any other respect (such as, for example, the archetypal warrior embodied in the Hollywood image of Rambo, who symbolizes a "one man army"). It seems that this cannot be stated even in the case of Josip Broz Tito, who has the pivotal role in *The Battle of Sutjeska*. He is only the most prominent individual (which was what the acting of Richard Burton greatly contributed to), with other films containing more or less prominent characters,⁸ but they never resolve the conflict situation themselves. Instead, they act together with others, as members of the collective. For this reason, Milan Ranković rightly stresses that the collective fate is the main character of Bulajić's best films (Ranković: 1970: 40), but this is a claim which might be generalized and applied to other film offensives. In them, main actors did exist (not as in the Hollywood sense), but their appearance was not specially emphasized, and their film existence was often lost in the mass scenes of the spectacles, where collectivity dominated in every respect.

A more specific building of collectivism and egalitarianism, compared to the one previously described, may be seen in a very typical scene in the movie *Kozara*. This refers to the discussion about the ox, between Obrad (Dragomir Felba) and Šorga (Velimir Bata Živojinović), where Obrad wishes to take Šorga's ox (so that everyone could eat) despite his reluctance. During the argument, Obrad says that he has already given his ox, and when Šorga comments that he is not the state, Obrad persuasively replies: "We are all the state!" Since Šorga does not want to submit, persistently stating that the ox is his, Obrad readily replies: "Nothing is mine or yours, it all goes

⁸ These were usually very well-known names of local cinematography, or foreign actors (among the most famous ones were the already mentioned Richard Burton, Yul Brynner, Orson Welles, Sergei Bondarchuk and others). Such practice was somewhat similar to the Hollywood "star system", with the only difference being that the characteristic Hollywood system was not so developed in Yugoslavia. On the other hand, it seems that Hollywood glamour was not missing, which can be confirmed by the premiere of the movie *The Battle of Neretva*, which was attended by the whole political elite of socialist Yugoslavia (including Tito), local movie stars, as well as Orson Welles, Yul Brynner, Maria Schell, Sylva Koscina, and, according to some sources, the ceremony was made more glamorous by Sofia Loren and Omar Sharif, all in the presence of an audience of 3000 people, in: http://www.tvsa.ba/kolumne/full/antologija_partizanske_epopeje_5_dio_glumci_na_neretvi_i_premijera_u_skende_riji/, last access: 10 December 2009.

to the *common* kitchen”. In the end, Šorga is persuaded and, slightly irritated, replies: “I’ll take him to the collective myself. I am the state, too...!” ³

The described dialogues in the mentioned scenes directly allude to the opposition of general and individual interests, such as the fact related to which interests were prevalent in socialism, openly constructing a collective form in front of the others. In the same way, the mentioned dialog brings a significant analogy according to which the state is equalized with the people. If we were to develop this further, the logical conclusion would be that socialist Yugoslavia was first the state of the people, i.e. the state of the free people, as such, which creates an impressions that the people were first, and that the state came after, and that it was, in a certain way, secondary to the people.

The lines from the film dialogue may also illustrate certain etatist tendencies, considering the fact that the faith in a strong and firm state, which takes care of its people, was widespread in the socialist period of Yugoslavia. What also needs to be mentioned here is one, for egalitarianism, indicative scene from *Descent on Drvar* in which the peasant and the partisan commander of the area argue about salt, which clearly presents that partisans, despite the hard conditions, tried to distribute food equally. Such representation of egalitarianism may be taken as a classic example, as it connects this value orientation to the very partisan movement. On the other hand, it shows that egalitarianism “functioned in the field”.

The reflection of collectivist and egalitarian forms through the prism of film offensives, conditionally speaking, had two levels. One level entailed more obvious allusions and, as such, was centered on the portrayal of the people, while the second level was related to the partisans, and was more permeated with symbolism and more indirect connotations. In this respect, it may be stated that partisans represented a team without prominent individuals, whose joint action opened the road to freedom. This may further imply that the collective and equality in it were always dominant in every situation, when compared to the individual, and that, as such, they needed to represent the framework of the system. Such an attitude was especially vividly illustrated by the scene from the film: *The Igman March*, in which the partisans say the following to their comrade, who’s leaving them: “You can’t do anything by yourself!” suggesting here the absolute supremacy of the collective compared to the individual.

2.4 Multi-ethnicity

The feelings of unity and equality did not only present value orientations as such, but it can also be said that they were also the foundations of other values, important for the socialist system. One of them was multi-ethnicity. When one takes into consideration that multi-ethnicity, in its broadest sense, entails peaceful coexistence (tolerance, understanding) of various ethnic groups in a certain area, it should be clear as to what its significance was for such an ethnically heterogeneous community as socialist Yugoslavia used to be. Due to this situation, multi-ethnicity had to be strongly emphasized, both on the level of the official, political party⁹, and on a formal level, which primarily concerned everyday life. One of the tools, which may have been used within this second sphere, was the war spectacle films. It may be assumed that the form of the spectacle in which the film offensives were most frequently “expressed” definitely captivated attention with its “lavish image”, and in this manner, in a very subtle way, it could be suggested how one should behave towards other “peoples and nationalities”.

In this sense, multi-ethnicity in these movies was not directly and “firmly” advocated, but it was, at first glance, characterized by an omnipresence which was not so obvious, but which was still most expressed when portraying the partisan army. This, more frequently symbolic than military formation in the movies themselves, was of a different ethnic background in every movie, i.e. all the peoples and nationalities on the territory of Yugoslavia were equally represented. They were all embodied in several key characters which comprised the framework of the very army.

For example, in *The Battle of Neretva*, we have a Slovene, Martin, then a Croat, Stipe, followed by Serbs, Novak and Danica, as well as the nationally undefined individuals, Ivan, Nikola and Vlado. In the same film, at the very beginning, one of the partisans “loudly and clearly” reads a proclamation to “brethren, the peoples of Yugoslavia, Serbs, Macedonians, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins and Muslims”, which actually means that the partisans, as well as the country built as a result of their struggle, were highly ethnically diversified, and at the same time very powerfully connected (like brethren). Similarly, *The Igman March*” also stressed the highly

⁹ One of the main ideologists of the Yugoslav social state, Edvard Kardelj, whose statements may be equalized with the official party position, may be cited as one of many examples. In this respect, Kardelj speaks of an “organic growth of the socialist community” (Kardelj, 1973: XLVII). This almost biologic dimension probably entailed that the people on the territory of Yugoslavia were so destined to live together that their unification was completely natural and became an equivalent to a biological organism. Similarly, Kardelj saw a certain predestination of mutual coexistence in the *ethnic similarity* and *cultural closeness* of the peoples on the territory of Yugoslavia (cursive by N.Z.).

diversified ethnic composition of the partisans, especially stressing Montenegrins, Serbs, Muslims and Slovenes. 4

In addition, there is another highly interesting shot from the movie *The Republic of Užice*, which shows a partisan wearing a cap with a Serbian flag below his five-pointed red star. This image could possibly suggest that the partisan movement was multinational, in the sense that he integrated different nationalities into himself, and that, as such, their importance was secondary. Furthermore, the friendly and emotional relationships in the partisan army may be mentioned as one of the indicators of multi-ethnicity. Such a highly paradigmatic concept was characteristic of almost every film offensive and it implied a distinct and very clear emphasis of a great friendship (or emotional bonds) between the partisans of various nationalities.

The primary formula of displaying multi-ethnicity implied, up to a point, that the leading characters within the partisan army had to be from different republics, and, as such, was applied to almost all film offensives. This film multi-ethnicity of the partisan army may seem romanticized, and even mythological in a certain sense, but Tito's order during the foundation of the First Proletariat Brigade, i.e. that all the nationalities of Yugoslavia were to be included in it, should definitely be taken into consideration (Tito, 1949: 83). This was most probably the form which tended to be applied to as many partisan units as possible. The Sixth Division of Lika may be cited as an example, because it was highly multiethnic in its composition and comprised of fighters from all former Yugoslav republics, apart from Slovenia, and it was especially emphasized that it was composed of Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Italians, Russians, Macedonians, Albanians, as well as members of other nationalities¹⁰.

However, based on certain sources, the participation of the Serbs, especially in the first two years of war, was somewhat greater when compared to other nationalities (Ivetić, 1995), with a similar statement that, at the end of 1943, in Yugoslavia, it was the first time that the majority of the partisans were not Serbian (Hoare, 2006: 343). Josip Broz Tito, in a string of talks and articles at the beginning of 1941, also warned about the poorer response of Croats in the sense that "the Croatian people have not yet massively taken arms against the occupying forces like the Serbian, Montenegrin and Slovenian people have. (...) Dalmacija and the Littoral were an exception, because the partisan detachments were composed of only Croats" (quote based on Jović, 2007: 62–63).

¹⁰ "Anniversary of the Sixth Division of Lika" (Jubilej Šeste ličke divizije), in: *Politika*, 26 November 2007: 8.

As far as the Serbs are concerned, it needs to be emphasized that these were mostly Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia (the Independent State of Croatia at that time), and not from Serbia, who were among the first to start an uprising due to the extremely difficult existential position, caused by the regime of the Ustasha. However, were we to summarize all this, we would conclude that the ethnic diversity of the partisan movement grew with its becoming massive and more firmly consolidated (primarily, as an organized military power). Therefore, the more the partisans gained stronger characteristics of an organized army, the more “multiethnic” they became, or at least it seemed that way.

For this reason, the insistence on a multiethnic character of the army can be considered as one of the essential tasks of those employed in the movie industry at the time. In his talk with the crew of the movie *The Battle of Sutjeska*, Josip Broz Tito openly suggested that the Second Proletarian Brigade “was not to be labeled as Serbian. Namely, it was Serbian, but was called the Second Proletarian Brigade. Historically, it is true”.¹¹ By presenting such an army, which was ethnically diverse and, as such, managed to defeat a stronger enemy, who was also superior in numbers, in a broader sense could have (and should have!) meant that the measure of success was not in one’s ethnicity, but in successful cooperation (which could also be realized in peace time), irrespective of one’s ethnicity. In this way, the partisans on film may be interpreted as a negation of ethnicity, since the heterogeneity of ethnicity, as such, is emphasized in their case, by which it loses its significance, being homogenous, considering the fact that its importance or functionality were not stressed at all. Moreover, the multi-ethnicity of the partisans seems to have been one of the important leitmotifs of the film, which was used to clearly show that the joint work of all ethnic groups on the territory of Yugoslavia may bring success and prosperity. In accordance with this, nationality was, as such, to a certain extent “watered down”, and its presence in films was noticeable, on the one hand, while it was completely irrelevant on the other (primarily with reference to functionality, or any other purpose).

2.5 National Equality

In addition to multi-ethnicity, a similar and almost equally important value orientation is national equality, which was mostly related to the greatest possible equation of differences between the

¹¹ Archives of J. B. Tito, KPR II-2/552.

various nations (which actually meant that it should primarily be considered as an opposite to national orientation). The affirmation of this value orientation was partially covered within the idea of brotherhood and unity, but considering the fact that its adoption was especially relevant for the survival and relatively normal functioning of the state, all opportunities for its additional emphasis and stressing were used. One of the most suitable examples for this was the war film spectacle. This was clearly perceived by Josip Broz Tito as well, when the crew of *The Battle of Sutjeska* openly spoke that such films had “great value to our cohesion, since all nationalities are visible.”¹² **5**

In all the analyzed film offensives, national equality was, just as multi-ethnicity, most explicitly shown through partisans and their struggle. What can be easily noticed in this respect is that the partisan ranks contain no division or differentiation according to national criteria. All the nationalities in the partisan army have equal treatment in the sense that none are specially emphasized, whether it comes to courage, dedication, or any other heroic activity. In fact, their nationality is not marked in any other manner, except through certain regional characteristics (most frequently speech, i.e. dialect).

The dialog between a brother and a sister (Ljubiša Samardžić and Marija Lojk) is especially indicative when it comes to this in *Descent on Drvar*. When he found out that the female comrade is from Slovenia, the brother tells his sister: “Everything got mixed up in this revolution”, to which she replies: “We are all equal now”. It may be said that this short dialogue clearly indicates, conditionally speaking, the official position with regard to the issue of nationality, but it also gives certain guidelines on how to build relationships between different nationalities. The “national key” which, among other things, also implied the equal treatment of all nations on the territory of Yugoslavia was actually embodied in the movie line: “we’re all equal now” (primarily in the national sense). Therefore, national equality as the direct opposite to national inequality (nationalism) was of existential importance for the very state, and it seemed that the partisan army contained the ideal “form” for its subtle presentation.

2.6 Political Correctness

¹² Archives of J. B. Tito, KPR II-2/552.

Multi-ethnicity, and especially national equality, can be said to be very close to the highly widespread contemporary concept of political correctness. Although political correctness is primarily focused on the language or speech, and is related to the attempt of its changing in those situations which seem to be unacceptable for certain reasons, it seems that it may also be related to the forms and contents outside strictly narrative discourse. Two things which film offensives especially need to stress, and which seem very close to the concept of political correctness, are related to balancing the combat efficiency of the Yugoslav nations, as well as balancing the cast. The first entailed portraying the representatives of all nations as equal participants in the armed uprising. This is easily noticed in almost all movies, since all nations have their representatives and all of them had, as was presented, endured the equal burden of battle. Such equalization was in accordance with the official position of Yugoslav communists at the time, i.e. that all nations on the territory of Yugoslavia made an equal contribution in the struggle against the occupying forces, which seems to have primarily been directed to the greatest possible preservation of equality of different nationalities.

The second aspect, conditionally speaking, of communist political correctness was related to balancing the cast. On the one hand, this implied the participation of actors from all republics, which were part of socialist Yugoslavia, while this was again presented in the movies through the partisan army, which was of an extremely ethnically diverse character, as was most explicitly shown through the characters of various nationalities, which it was composed of.¹³ Director Veljko Bulajić could be cited as an example of this practice, since his movies are considered to have been realized in cooperation between several Yugoslav film centers, with the participation of the movie elite from Zagreb, Belgrade, Sarajevo, and almost always from abroad (Šešić, 2006: 110).

In addition, balancing the cast was also related to the mismatch (mixing) between the real nationality of the actors and the one represented in the movies. All film offensives contain examples with actors having roles whose nationalities are different from their own. For example,

¹³ The observation made by film critic Milan Vlačić, with respect to such casting is interesting, since he believes that the “intention (...) was to have more centers, since the money became unified” (the author’s interview with M. Vlačić, published on 3rd June 2008). Therefore, it can be assumed that the economic aspect was much more dominant when compared to the rest, and as this film critic believes, the Republic key was not much used (although M. Vlačić also states that there were, conditionally speaking, finished forms with respect to the engagement of actors from other republics, and he cites as an example that Petre Prličko and Ilija Džuvalekovski from Macedonia were always involved). Therefore, on the one hand, attention was firstly paid to economic factors, while the “republic key” was always ready.

in *Kozara*, we already have a situation in which a Slovenian actor, Bert Sotlar, portrays a Serbian partisan, Vukša, while Mihajlo Kostić Pljaka portrays a Muslim, Ahmet. Similarly, in the following film offensive, *Descent on Drvar*, Slovenian actress, Marija Lojk, portrays a Serbian woman, sister of the main character, Milan. *The Battle of Neretva* contains an almost identical situation since Serbian partisan, Vuk, who dies at the very beginning of the film in the hands of his brother, Novak, is portrayed by Slovenian actor Radko Polič. Another Slovenian actor, Lojze Rozman, portrays the commander of the brigade, Ivan, who may be viewed either as some form of the supranational character, as his nationality is not elaborated on in the film in any respect (the only conspicuous fact is the dialect he uses). Furthermore, Bosnian actor Hajrudin Hadžikarić portrays the famous Croat poet, Vladimir Nazor. Macedonian actor Kole Angleovski, who portrays Serbian partisan Žika, is also worth mentioning, and the same actor portrays a Serbian peasant, Stanojlo, in *The Battle of Sutjeska*. *The Fall of Italy*, presents us with a similar situation, although somewhat specific, since several Serbian actors have notable roles in the film (Gorica Popović, Bata Živojinović, Dušan Janićijević, Mirjana Karanović, Dragan Maksimović), but they portray Croats from Dalmatia. There is also the last film offensive *The Igman March* in which Serbian actor Mića Tomić portrays a Muslim, Adem.

All these examples show that none of the analyzed films failed to use the opportunity to combine genuine and fictional (film) nationalities, and this “mixture” may signify several things. Such a mixture may be seen as relativization and, in a certain sense, neutralization of the national, i.e. one of the ways of reducing the significance of the ethnic aspect in a wider sense. A sort of amalgam, represented by actors who portrayed the roles of other nationalities, to an extent, undermined the very concept of national exclusivity, simultaneously indirectly showing that the differences between the nationalities of Yugoslavia were inconspicuous and practically meaningless. In a broader sense, this might imply the fact that film was used in this manner to establish the “new man of socialism”, hero and comrade, completely free of national constraints and views.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the presenting of dominant values in analyzed films were somewhat specific. The most important value, socialism, almost not seriously mentioned at all

(except in one film). In contrast, irreligion has been manifested through the implicit criticism of the church or the absence of any reference in terms of religion. Other value orientations like collectivism, egalitarianism, multi-ethnicity and national equality were mostly indirectly shown through the partisan army, which was also the mirror of political correctness. Herewith, multi-ethnicity and national equality also may be viewed as a some kind of supra ideological segments. Their existence within socialist Yugoslavia were crucial for that system, but they were also part of the, so to say, the Enlightenment discourse and their function was largely humanistic (of course, it should not be exaggerated, because communist political elite instrumentalized those concepts for the sake of maintaining their own power, which may be one of the reasons for their rapid disintegration after nearly a half century of existence).

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