#6 / 2024 HISTORY IN FLUX PP. 77 - 96

Irena Šentevska
Independent researcher, Belgrade
irenasentevska@gmail.com

UDC <329.14:791.4>:33.021.8](497.1)"19"
https://doi.org/10.32728/flux.2024.6.4
Review article

Kužiš, stari moj: Reflection on Crises and Reforms of the Socialist Society in Yugoslav Cinema

Despite all the difficulties of post-WWII scarcity, the state apparatus of the new, socialist Yugoslavia recognized the importance of the fledgling film production for affirmation of the new social relations. The 'partisan' period of Yugoslav cinema was followed by the soc-realist period of administrative management which set the foundation for contemporary film production in Yugoslavia. Cinema was considered a new socialist art governed by the principles of 'people's realism'. Contemporary social reality was portrayed not as it was, but as it ought to be, aligning with the expectations of the new man and society. This paper follows chronologically the changes in feature films of socialist Yugoslavia from the medium of promotion of the socialist society to the medium of reflection of its crises and reforms. From the film sagas about the heroes of postwar revival, shock workers and visionaries of a better society, to the bitter portrayals of aged and disillusioned partisans, corrupted officials who abuse the self-management system, ailing miners and depressed railmen, *Gastarbeiters* in the limbo of economic migrations, etc. Yugoslav cinema opens a specific perspective on the crises and reforms of Yugoslav socialism which is worth taking a closer look at.

KEYWORDS:
Yugoslavia, film industry, crises, reforms, self-management

This article discusses the role of Yugoslav feature films as a medium of reflection on the crises experienced by the Yugoslav socialist society and its reforms conceived in attempts to overcome such crises and improve society in general. This is a very broad topic, the literature and sources on these subjects are immense, and the topic itself requires much more than a single article. The purpose of this article is thus twofold: 1) to provide a general overview of the films that reflected the crises and reforms of Yugoslav socialism on a *thematic level*; 2) to situate these films chronologically and on a very basic level in the context of the changes that the Yugoslav film industry and the society, in general, went through from the end of the Second World War to the period of dissolution of Yugoslavia. In my opinion, it is important to approach this topic from a perspective that would consider both the Yugoslav film industry and the Yugoslav socialist system (with all their gradual transformations and local specificities) as totalities; this article, accordingly, attempts to establish a basic "dialogue" between them. In the post-Yugoslav period of construction of separate national film histories and cultures, this perspective is often overlooked even though the film industry, at least in its early decades, was the most "Yugoslav" segment of socialist Yugoslavia's cultural infrastructure. With that being said, it is interesting to follow in this chronological framework the transformations in cinema's role from an instrument of promotion of the (new) socialist society to the medium of reflection on its crises and, ultimately, failures.

Prva petoljetka: Socialist realism, administrative management and the foundations of the Yugoslav cinema

After the Second World War, in contrast to other newly established socialist republics in Central and Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia, Poland, or Hungary), Yugoslavia lacked almost all the foundations necessary to establish a viable film industry. As was the case in the Soviet Union, the leadership of the new socialist society recognized the importance of the film industry in promoting and advancing the new social order.

The founding of the Film Company of the Democratic Federative Yugoslavia (Filmsko preduzeće Demokratske Federativne Jugoslavije)[1] on July 3, 1945 marked the true beginnings of the film industry in socialist Yugoslavia. This was a period of administrative management based on the Soviet models of stratified and centralized modes of operation. FP FNRJ controlled the entire Yugoslav film production – documentary, cultural, educational films, and newsreels. Its basic task was to develop the fledgling film industry.

In this post-war and post-revolutionary context cinema was deemed a new socialist art, grounded in the concepts of "people's realism" (*narodni realizam*). The films were expected to reflect the contemporary social reality not as it was, but as it should be according to the optimistic expectations of the new man, new society, and new social relations. The first feature films made in socialist Yugoslavia were perceived and celebrated as victories

[1] From January 1946 called FP FNRJ (Filmsko preduzeće Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije – Film Company of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia).

of the new society: their stories (celebrating the war efforts and ultimate victory of the "people"), as well as their artistic merits, were effectively overshadowed by their symbolical value.

Cinema's strategic and agitational importance resulted in its quick and total institutionalization. Party officials suggested that films should be treated "like weapons."[2] Agitprop committees were responsible for organizing film screenings, attracting working-class audiences to theaters, and ensuring the 'proper' use of films. In June 1946, the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia formed the Film Committee (*Komitet za kinematografiju*), which outlined a five-year plan for developing all areas of filmmaking. In the next two years the Committee founded new film companies in each of the six Yugoslav republics. In the name of decentralization of the Yugoslav film industry, the Committee was dismissed by the end of 1951.[3]

As noted by Petar Volk, every film created in this early period brought about "theoretical dilemmas" – whether it "only confirmed our ability to produce feature films or something new was expected regarding [their] content... Each filmmaker was expected to answer where the borders of conformism are, what he intended, and whether his work strived to help pave the way for more original and authentic creativity" in the film domain.[4] Socialist revival and reconstruction of the country was the overwhelming theme of documentaries and short films. Nevertheless, the only feature films addressing this subject were *Život je naš* (*Life Is Ours*, dir: Gustav Gavrin, 1948), *Priča o fabrici* (*The Factory Story*, dir: Vladimir Pogačić, 1949), and *Jezero* (*The Lake*, dir: Radivoje Lola Đukić, 1950). These films celebrated visionaries and working-class heroes of the new society, who were struggling against old machinery and their lack of expertise with unwavering belief and muscle power – while often facing obstruction from saboteurs and villainous reactionaries.[5]

The film *Život je naš* is a soc-realist spectacle of constructing a railway tunnel in rural Bosnia. Young and enthusiastic builders, members of the voluntary youth brigades from all corners of Yugoslavia, have to overcome endless technical and natural obstacles (including resistance within their own families and the passive rural local community) to finish the tunnel in due time. The film's star is a shock worker (*udarnik*) Milan (Borislav Gvojić) who contributes to the ultimate success of the project by escaping from the hospital (where he was treated for injuries at his workplace) and returning to work. The film, among other things, features a "guest appearance" by real-life Yugoslav politician and diplomat Batrić Jovanović[6] in the role of commander

---

2 Ljubodrag Dimić, *Agitprop kultura: Agitpropovska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji 1945-1952* (Belgrade: IRO Rad, 1988), 51.

3 Ivo Škrabalo, *Između publike i države: Povijest hrvatske kinematografije 1896-1980* (Zagreb: Znanje, 1984), 155.

4 Petar Volk, *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma* (Belgrade: Institut za film, Partizanska knjiga, 1986), 143.

5 The plot of the spy drama *Poslednji dan* (*The Last Day*, dir: Vladimir Pogačić, 1951) revolves around the Yugoslav secret police's struggles with saboteurs and other enemies of the new social order orchestrated by a former Gestapo member in a mining seaside town.

6 After the liberation of Yugoslavia Batrić Jovanović took active part in organizing voluntary work campaigns. He served as member and commander in the headquarters of the youth

of youth brigades, and a lecture titled "Electric light bulb – a Russian invention" delivered by Milan himself. Throughout the film, this mild-mannered shock worker undergoes a visible transformation from a young and enthusiastic Serbian peasant to a record-breaking professional miner. He also meets his future romantic companion, Stana (Bahrija Hadži-Osmanović) in the work brigade.

Priča o fabrici is a more nuanced portrayal of a textile factory in Croatia (which changed ownership and management during the Second World War) and its struggle to increase production by 40% in the circumstances of harsh post-war scarcity. The story is told through court hearings, during a trial of a group of saboteurs who set off an explosion in the factory. This clique is headed by the former owner of the factory (Tito Strozzi), who served time in a labour camp due to his collaboration with the fascists. His accomplices include a former collaborationist Ustasha colonel (Bojan Stupica),[7] the unfaithful engineer's wife, a catholic monk, and a few crooked factory workers. The joint efforts of three inspired individuals – the director of the factory who is a former blue-collar worker (Ljubiša Jovanović), a zealous textile worker (Marija Crnobori), and a principled main engineer (Strahinja Petrović) – and their supporters, eventually materialize in the building of the new factory. However, this film also depicts the main characters' personal and professional sacrifices. In the final words of the factory's director Kovač, this story is, accordingly, "not a story about a factory – it is a story about human beings."

The film *Priča o fabrici* introduces the character of the main engineer in an industrial plant, and shows the dramatic process of his adjustment to the new social order, typical for many representatives of the prewar "technical intelligentsia." However, in the film *Jezero*, an engineer played by actor Karlo Bulić, joins in a plot to destroy the new hydroelectric power plant built on the river Neretva. According to filmmaker and critic Vicko Raspor, in this script, Jugoslav Đorđević wanted to use the construction of an actual industrial giant from the Five-Year Plan as a monumental backdrop for a "drama, which is acted out in human souls."[8] While the new society symbolized by the power plant was under construction, the film's protagonists, especially villagers epitomized by the main character Petar (Milivoje Živanović), were meant to experience deep inner transformations – even at the cost of abandoning their old village homes to make way for the new artificial lake. However, the final result did not receive an enthusiastic reception, especially because of the "emphatic request from Jablanica workers,"[9] who protested the very idea of the existence of saboteurs in their working environment.

---

work brigades which constructed the railways Brčko-Banovići (1946) and Šamac-Sarajevo (1947).

7 The cast of this film (and other early titles of Yugoslav cinema) was largely composed of the members of the Yugoslav Drama Theatre (Jugoslovensko dramsko pozorište), founded in Belgrade in 1947. Slovenian theatre director and artist Bojan Stupica was the theatre's initiator and intermittent artistic leader.

8 Vicko Raspor, *Riječ o filmu* (Belgrade: Institut za film, 1988), 74.

9 Bogdan Tirnanić, *Crni talas* (Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2008), 22.

After the Cominform Resolution of 1948, the political climate in Yugoslavia changed once more: within the film industry, the conflict between the Soviet and Yugoslav governments was reflected in the pronounced criticism of the "revisionist" tendencies in Soviet cinema. The emerging Yugoslav film industry began to seek new organizational models and artistic inspiration.

Decentralization of the Yugoslav film industry

After the Yugoslav General Assembly voted on The Basic Law on Management of State Economic Enterprises and Higher Economic Associations by the Workers' Collective on June 27th, 1950 the Yugoslav film industry went through fundamental transformations. Film companies acquired exclusive rights to use or "own" the production resources and they became the sole owners of the produced films. The mechanism of workers' committees and self-management boards was introduced to the film companies, although at first, they did not have a significant decision-making role. Only the new Film Law (*Osnovni zakon o filmu*),[10] which became effective in April 1956, brought about the real transition from the administrative to the self-management phase of Yugoslav cinema.

Along with the general economic growth and favourable foreign policies, Yugoslavia was slowly opening up to the cultural and artistic influences from the West. Experiments with new styles of realism brought along a greater diversity of themes and genres (such as light comedy and satire, literary adaptations of historical works, action-adventure, and children's films...) Greater emphasis was put on character development and psychological individualization. Directors such as France Štiglic, Branko Bauer, Stole Janković, Vladimir Pogačić, Radoš Novaković or Veljko Bulajić adopted new approaches to the partisan film genre and narratives of the national liberation struggle. The ever-growing amateur filmmaking circles nourished novel modernist filmmaking tendencies. By the end of the 1950s, the Yugoslav amateur film movement had attracted some of the most prominent film directors, screenwriters, cinematographers, and film editors. The most influential amateur film group was assembled around the Kino-klub "Beograd" (including future prominent filmmakers Dušan Makavejev, Živojin Pavlović, Marko Babac, Kokan Rakonjac, Dragoljub Ivkov, etc.) In the late 1950s and early 1960s, these film *auteurs* began their struggle against what Srđan Vučinić sees as the three main impeding factors for the Yugoslav cinema at the time – ideological constraints, conventions of literature and theatre, and populist horizons of expectations from the film industry.[11]

After Yugoslavia's split with the Soviet Union contemporary themes and problems of socialist daily life required new artistic approaches. In Veljko Bulajić's early films, the famed director of partisan war epics explored new possibilities adopted from Italian neorealism. He was educated at the film school Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome, with screenwriter

[10] Veljko Radosavljević, *Sjaj crnog: Prilog za bolje razumevanje jednog razdoblja srpske kinematografije* (Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2018), 48.

[11] Srđan Vučinić, *Portreti: 24 sličice u sekundi (Eseji o jugoslovenskom filmu)* (Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2018), 12.

and film theorist Cesare Zavattini as his tutor. Bulajić's film *Uzavreli grad* (*Boom Town*, 1961) was an epic tale of the construction of the blast furnace in the steel plant in Zenica. However, the main protagonist, foreman Šiba (Ilija Džuvalekovski), does not get the credit for this industrial triumph. Because of his minor mistakes, he gets demoted and leaves Zenica with his family. Šiba had thus already embodied a new type of hero in the Yugoslav cinema – a builder of the new society trapped in a "tragic misunderstanding with the society" he strived to help build after the war.[12] The significance of the film *Uzavreli grad* thus lies in the fact that Bulajić addressed the problem of a Yugoslav revolutionary who becomes an impediment to social progress at this early stage of the development of Yugoslav cinema.

In his book *Social Critique in Contemporary Yugoslav Cinema* Milan Ranković noted that in the film *Veselica* (*The Party*), released in 1960, Slovenian filmmaker Jože Babič stirred social criticism in a different, "morally and politically even more sensitive direction." This film's main protagonist is not a former revolutionary who stays at the helm of things even when his position of leadership is challenged and loses its social significance. He is a former partisan who is unjustly dismissed and marginalized by those who are "more ambitious, more unscrupulous, and adaptable among his former war comrades." This film was seen as inaugurating one of the central themes of Yugoslav critically oriented cinema: the problem of dissociation of the individual from the society. The problem is all the more complex because Aleš (Miha Baloh) is a "man who had enthusiastically and selflessly participated in a struggle for creating the same society that he now alienates himself from."[13] He is lonely and embittered with his present life because in the war he had lost both his arm and his partner, partisan nurse Mara (Mira Sardoč).

While reflecting on the new social reality in Yugoslavia, other filmmakers of this period also opted for melodramatic plots. In the film *Zenica* (1957) directors Miloš Stefanović and Jovan Živanović situated an intimate melodrama in the new industrial city in central Bosnia, where dramatic tension results from the conflict between traditional and modern lifestyles and ideologies.[14] In his film *Samo ljudi* (*Only People*, 1957) Branko Bauer situated a melodramatic plot (a love story involving an engineer who lost his leg and a girl who lost her sight during the war) in a "soc-realist" environment (construction site of a hydroelectric plant). Amid a Stakhanovite atmosphere of reconstruction and development, these protagonists engage in bourgeois activities such as skiing, playing the piano, and collecting old watches. In the film *Prekobrojna* (*Supernumerary*, 1962) Bauer introduced comic elements to the coming-of-age teenage melodrama set in youth camps of the builders of the highway "Brotherhood and Unity." The cast included members of the

---

12 Milan Ranković, *Društvena kritika u savremenom jugoslovenskom igranom filmu* (Belgrade: Institut za film, 1970), 36.

13 Ranković, *Društvena kritika*, 37.

14 Jovan Živanović further elaborated the theme of marital misunderstandings between a young engineer (again played by Rade Marković) and his wife, who finds it difficult to adapt to the industrial (mining) environment in the film *Te noći* (*That Night*, 1958).

4th Čačak Youth Work Brigade "M. Vuković-Miro" and the 4th Celje Youth Work Brigade "Boris Vinter."[15]

Vojislav Nanović's film *Pogon B* (*Factory B*, 1958) combined elements of comedy and "industrial drama"[16] set around unsuccessful attempts to exploit an oil drill in the muddy plains of Vojvodina. The plot revolved around a single event – the decision of the workers' council to dismantle the oil exploitation facility (Pogon B), opposed by two engineers. Their attempts to persuade the bureaucratic self-management structures and executives of their company to maintain the drill only bear fruit (oil) when they join forces with the main comic character in the film – Mane Karakas (Pavle Vuisić) – a pencil-moustached veteran oilman from Lika with many years of experience gained in the oil fields of South America.

In stark contrast to the muddy rural Vojvodina rendered in black and white, Vojislav Nanović took Mane Karakas to one more film adventure in the colourful light summer comedy *Bolje je umeti* (*It Is Better To Know How*, 1960) set on the beaches of Montenegro. As noted by Ranko Munitić, in this period the use of color film in Yugoslav cinema became a standard practice due to the thriving production of tourist films between 1952 and 1957.[17] Contemporary development of infrastructure for mass tourism on the Adriatic coast, Lake Ohrid, Slovenian mountains, and other similarly attractive locations, was vividly reflected in the romantic comedy titles, such as *Svi na more* (*All to the Seaside*), *Leto je krivo za sve* (*Summer Is to Blame for Everything*), *Zvezda putuje na jug* (*The Star Goes to the South*), *Velika turneja* (*The Great Tour*), *Ko pride ljubezen* (*Quand vient l'amour*), *Ne čakaj na maj* (*Don't Whisper*), *Naš avto* (*Our Car*), *Mirno leto* (*A Quiet Summer*), etc. Certain elements of the market economy introduced in the Yugoslav film industry did encourage the production of light comedies.

As a film genre, comedy also enabled new modes of reflection on the multicultural tapestry of Yugoslav brotherly nations and nationalities. In that respect, Branko Marjanović's film humoresque *Ciguli Miguli* (1952) was even deemed as too excessive, which made the film effectively banned from public display for the next 25 years. The "first Croatian film honoured with a ban"[18] thus follows the preparations for launching a modern cultural centre in a provincial town in Croatia, and contains one of the funniest scenes of the early Yugoslav cinema: the failed attempt of the senior managers of music ensembles *Milopoj*, *Socijalistički zvon, Hrvatska zora*, *Truba* and *Crveni kos*,

---

15 It is interesting to compare the depiction of life in the youth camp, and participation in the work brigade as a life-changing experience depicted in the film *Prekobrojna* with the situation at *omladinska radna akcija* portrayed in the late-socialist film *S.P.U.K. (Sreća pojedinca – uspjeh kolektiva)* (*Happiness of the Individual – Success of the Collective*, dir: Milivoj Puhlovski, 1983).

16 These themes include resistance to industrialization in a rural environment; relations between the workers and bureaucracy; relations between the young professionals and senior executives, "and, finally, the attitude of a young urban lady towards a backward provincial environment which becomes an obstacle for her relationship with a young engineer." Bogdan Zlatić, "Pogon B domaćeg filma," in *Režija: Vojislav Nanović – poslednji pionir*, eds. Bogdan Zlatić, Miloje Radaković and Nebojša Pajkić (Belgrade and Novi Sad: Jugoslovenska kinoteka, 1993), 140.

17 Ranko Munitić, *Jugoslavenski filmski slučaj* (Split: Marjan film, 1980), 113.

18 Ivo Škrabalo, *Hrvatska filmska povijest: ukratko (1896-2006)* (Zagreb: VBZ, 2008), 52.

to perform the Macedonian folk dance (oro) "Teškoto." In protest against the cultural reorganization of the town as enforced by the sloppy, sleazy, and dubiously qualified communist apparatchik Ivan Ivanović (Ljubomir Didić), even the local pioneer association withdraws from the opening ceremony.

With his omnibus film *Subotom uveče* (*Saturday Night*, 1957) Vladimir Pogačić became the first filmmaker who challenged the habitual dislike for contemporary themes of everyday life in the early Yugoslav cinema. His efforts remained rather solitary in depicting a post-war society that is slowly adjusting to new realities and adopting new daily routines.

The swinging 60s and shades of black in Yugoslav cinema

The 1960s saw a further decentralization and democratization of "self-management film enterprises and a shift toward greater republican autonomy in the organization and dispersal of financial resources for film production, distribution, and exhibition."[19] The Basic Law on Film was revised in 1962, announcing a period of significant reorganization of the film industry in all six Yugoslav republics. By the end of the decade, new centres for film production were launched in the autonomous regions of Vojvodina and Kosovo: Neoplanta film in Novi Sad (1966) and Kosova film in Priština (1970). These reorganization efforts resulted in more differentiated representations of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Yugoslav nationalities. They also prompted the leading film critics of the period (such as Ranko Munitić, Bogdan Tirnanić, Slobodan Novaković, Rudolf Sremec, etc.) to start discussing the criteria for differentiation of the respective (national) film schools.

Part of the mainstream film production reflected on the self-management system's development in Yugoslavia as a new phase in shaping the society created after the Second World War. The best example is Branko Bauer's 1963 film *Licem u lice* (*Face to Face*), whose plot is almost entirely situated at the branch meeting of the League of Communists in a Serbian construction company. The agenda imposed by the company's director Čumić (Ilija Džuvalekovski) includes only two items: The case of comrade Koprivica and Any other business. Milun Koprivica (Husein Čokić), a firm believer in justice and Yugoslav socialism, is (wrongly) accused of writing an anonymous letter containing grievances about the state of affairs in the company and its Party unit – which he has been otherwise voicing openly. The letter, which argues that self-management in the company exists only in theory, discredits the vain and autocratic director Čumić,[20] who insists on Koprivica's expulsion from the League of Communists.

Koprivica, who had been a member of the party since 1943, is a former partisan and member of the workers' council, finds it hard to reconcile his ideals (of social justice and equality that he had fought for in the Revolution) with the reality of his present working environment. This inability even results

---

[19] Daniel J. Goulding, *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience, 1945-2001* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 62.

[20] As main protagonists, self-management companies' directors (even when they are actually involved in coruptive practices) are more sympathetically portrayed in later films such as *Kuća* (*The House*, dir: Bogdan Žižić, 1975), *Përroi vërshues* (*Swelling River*, dir: Besim Sahatçiu, 1983) or *Naš človek* (*Our Man*, dir: Jože Pogačnik, 1985).

in divorce from his wife, a mild-mannered fellow worker. She is also present at the meeting and has split feelings about his "case." Added complexity to the conflict between Čumić and Koprivica comes from the fact that they had been close friends and companions ever since they fought in the same partisan unit. When the company was founded Čumić had personally brought Koprivica to work there.

Those present at the meeting are at first ambivalent and passive. They use all kinds of excuses to leave the meeting, fearing the consequences of an open confrontation with Čumić. Their motivation to attend in the first place is very low. In a dramatic turn of events, the behaviour of director Čumić itself becomes a "case" and he gets on the agenda in Milun's stead. The workers come to realize that their problem is Čumić's autocratic and vindictive mindset, but equally, their failure to exercise the basic principles of self-management – critical thinking, open discussion, and responsible decision-making. The meeting lasts until the early morning hours.

Branko Bauer's film Četvrti suputnik (*The Fourth Companion*, 1967) again explored the theme of workers' collective confronting a superior who uses ideology as an instrument of manipulation. The main conflict is between the municipal strongman Niko (Ilija Džuvalekovski) and the idealistic, principled secretary of the party committee Ivan (Mihajlo Kostić) regarding the financing of new sports and recreation centre. Themes of corruption and abuse of the self-management system were also explored in Fadil Hadžić's film *Službeni položaj* (*Official Position*, 1964), but they were present even in comedy titles such as *Inspektor* (*Inspector*, dir: Milo Đukanović, 1965).

Under the influence of the French new wave and Italian film avant-garde, including the new film tendencies in Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia and Poland), an emerging generation of filmmakers in Yugoslavia experimented with form and language, exploring contemporary issues and dark aspects of the personal, social and political life in a socialist society. The new film protagonists now included anti-heroes and losers – people from the fringes of the socialist society, disillusioned partisan heroes and builders of the new Yugoslavia, or their sons and younger siblings trapped in tragic generation gaps. This was the case with the characters played by Janez Vrhovec and Slobodan Dimitrijević in the films *Čovek nije tica* (*Man Is Not a Bird*), *Prometej s otoka Viševice* (*Prometheus from the Island of Viševica*), *Iluzija* (*Illusion*), *Ponedjeljak ili utorak* (*Monday or Tuesday*), *Vreme bez vojna* (*Times Without War)* etc.

In his last feature film *Poslednja postaja* (*The Last Station*, 1971) Jože Babič continued to explore the inner world of disillusioned builders of the socialist society. As noted by Greg DeCuir, Jr. already in the first image of this film we see a lone man walking through a desolate urban setting. "This sort of image would not be uncommon in a classic film noir in which protagonists are often positioned against an imposing and unforgiving urban environment. The figure is Tone [Polde Bibič], a hard-drinking, world-weary, cynical former Partisan soldier. Characters such as this were common in the world of classic film noir which often depicted returning war veterans who simply could not

fit into the world they once knew and were a part of."[21] This character is anti-traditional regarding classical depictions of brave and honourable Partisan soldiers. DeCuir thus places him in the long line of Yugoslav film anti-heroes.

Tone's meager living conditions and overall attitude – loss of hope in the system he had fought for (which is either caused or exacerbated by his drinking habits) – entangle him in a shady business of taking a group of illegal emigrants across the border with Austria. Things go wrong and Tone is injured in the process. Hiding his wound, he finds himself at a partisan picnic arranged by his former war comrades, who refuse to believe his confession. The story ends with Tone falling face-first into a bowl of Partisan goulash, dead.

In their films, directors Aleksandar Petrović, Dušan Makavejev, Živojin Pavlović, Želimir Žilnik, Kokan Rakonjac, and others explored the hidden aspects of social reality embodied in familiar images of poverty and decay – as opposed to the official rhetoric of equality and bright socialist future for all. This film movement demanded "new forms of narration and a deeper approach to human individuality and sensibility."[22] The new film responded to the broader tendencies of democratization and decentralization of Yugoslav society. However, as noted by Dunja Jelenković, in these films "the blame for the crisis in the society was ascribed to the negative developments, such as corruption, deviation from the program of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, non-transparency, inequality, inability of the authorities to provide jobs and housing, but not to the system itself."[23] Economic difficulties of the time (such as high unemployment, labour migrations, contrasts between the developed and underdeveloped parts of the country, social differences in a nominally classless society, etc.) and the overall ideological atmosphere of the 1960s shaped and finally resulted in branding these filmmaking efforts as "crni talas" (Black Wave).[24]

The critical focus on the negative aspects of Yugoslav society could have been understood as a form of protest arguing for "more humane social relations."[25] However, more often than not it was viewed as hostile to the political system established in Yugoslavia after the Second World War. For example, in December 1963, Veljko Vlahović, then a member of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, addressed film workers and party activists, criticizing in his speech what he saw as ideological and aesthetic deviations from the self-management system in film companies. In this period, the only Yugoslav film officially banned for public distribution was the 1963 omnibus *Grad* (*The City*) directed by Marko Babac, Živojin Pavlović, and Kokan Rakonjac. Marko Babac noted in a later

---

21 Greg DeCuir, Jr., *Jugoslovenski crni talas: Polemički film od 1963. do 1972. u Socijalističkoj Federativnoj Republici Jugoslaviji* (Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2019), 79.

22 Lorejn Mortimer, *Teror i radost: Filmovi Dušana Makavejeva* (Belgrade: FDU and Clio, 2011), 133.

23 Dunja Jelenković, *Festival jugoslovenskog dokumentarnog i kratkometražnog filma, 1954-2004. Od jugoslovenskog socijalizma do srpskog nacionalizma* (Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2023), 340.

24 Namely, after the 1969 Yugoslav Film Festival in Pula, Belgrade newspaper *Borba* published a feature by Vladimir Jovičič titled "Crni talas u našem filmu" (Black Wave in Our Cinema).

25 Ranković, *Društvena kritika*, 51.

interview that filmmakers in this period had to be very cautious about the "conception of the main characters. If the main characters did not open a perspective of affirmation of the ruling party in the broadest sense, that was unacceptable. If these were characters who doubted themselves, who had difficulties communicating with other people, who had problems existing in a wider social framework – all that was inappropriate for the system. Not only our system."[26]

Nevertheless, between 1969 and 1972, there was renewed pressure in the public sphere against the new filmmakers and their works. The campaign was partly influenced by various political events: the 1968 student demonstrations in Belgrade, the Warsaw Pact invasion in Czechoslovakia, and the "Croatian Spring." All these circumstances imposed increased ideological discipline on the non-institutional Marxists, members of the non-Marxist intelligentsia, radical student leaders, and artists. As part of broader political developments in Yugoslavia, aiming to obstruct the rapid flow of political power into the federal units, this counterattack against the Black Wave led in 1973 to the fragmentation and effective disbanding of the whole "movement."

Against its "shades of black," the Yugoslav cinema of the 1960s eagerly explored the more amusing aspects of life in a socialist society – following the remark made in 1961 by Serbian film theorist Dušan Stojanović, that "[u]ntil recently the cinema had the 'task' to 'uplift' the masses, while today its 'task' is to amuse them."[27] This mission was fulfilled with popular music comedies and domestic versions of American genre movies. Whereas filmmakers such as Radivoje Lola Đukić and Milo Đukanović continued to delve into the amusing aspects of everyday life in Yugoslavia, those focused on social criticism away from the main currents of the Black Wave (Fadil Hadžić, Vladan Slijepčević, Branko Ivanda, Krsto Papić etc.) were dealing with its less amusing aspects. The global rise to prominence of the American and British youth subcultures was reflected in the works of the "new film" directors (Boštjan Hladnik, Lordan Zafranović, Boro Drašković, Kokan Rakonjac, Živojin Pavlović, Dušan Makavejev, Želimir Žilnik, etc.) However, mainstream filmmakers were also concerned with the problems facing young people in contemporary Yugoslav society (Stole Janković, Svetomir Toma Janić, Igor Pretnar etc.) After all, as noted by film critic Milan Ranković, this was the generation that after the Revolution went a long way "from unselfish sacrifices in the work brigades, to the hippy movement; from the zealous puritan ethics and firm political structures of SKOJ,[28] to dinner parties with drugs."[29]

[26] Marko Babac, "Građanin prvog cenzurisanog reda," in Milan Nikodijević, *Zabranjeni bez zabrane* (Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2022), 108.

[27] Dušan Stojanović, *Velika avantura filma* (Belgrade / Novi Sad : Institut za film / Prometej, 1998), 74.

[28] The League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia (Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije).

[29] Ranković, *Društvena kritika*, 97.

Revenge of the mainstream

The period between 1973 and 1977 saw a low point for the film industry in Yugoslavia, as the general decline in innovation and experiment resulted in nondescript film production. The radicalism of the "new film" was all but gone and the spotlights were once again on action-war (partisan) movies, light comedies, historical dramas, and their repetitive formulas.

At the same time, predominantly rural and provincial Yugoslavia was being increasingly modernized. Despite the economic difficulties, backwardness, and poverty of some regions, inflation, unemployment, and social inequalities, the country was acquiring a more urban and industrialized social landscape. For the filmmakers, all the problems and tensions resulting from the social and economic changes offered a wealth of material to reflect on. The steady influx of the rural population resulted in a chronic lack of housing space in the cities. This was reflected in the films which explored the micro-dramas propelled by these circumstances. Social and spatial mobility and economic liberties, greater than in any other country with communist rule, made the "temporary work abroad" (Gastarbeit) a major theme for Yugoslav cinema already in the 1960s.[30] Yugoslav film screens began to be overpopulated with protagonists who were maladjusted to their new homes and environments.

To take but one example, in the film *Ljubavni život Budimira Trajkovića* (dir: Dejan Karaklajić, 1977) we meet the teenager Budimir Trajković in the phase in his life when he lives on the 22nd floor in Belgrade's suburban street Rudo and his family is about to move to Iraq. It is revealed in the film that he had completed his first four elementary grades in Ajdovščina (Slovenia). Then he moved to Bijelo Polje (Montenegro), finished his first year of high school in Strumica (Macedonia) and Maribor (Slovenia), and started his second year in Kotor (Montenegro) – because his father and grandfather were both construction workers, building physical and symbolic bridges between the Yugoslav republics. Budimir's biography was not typical for a teenager from Belgrade, but his problems were: in his "suspended adolescence" he lacked both living and personal space. "Can I be alone for at least five minutes of my life?," he asks in a moment of despair and gets an answer from his grandpa: "That depends on the life."

As professionals whose major responsibility was improving the quality of life in socialist Yugoslavia, architects and engineers received comparably significant on-screen time in films. Their depiction, however, changed along with the changes in the film industry and society at large. In the film *Vlak bez voznog reda* (*Train Without a Timetable*, dir: Veljko Bulajić, 1959) an engineer, "who builds bridges and roads" is described as someone who is well dressed, educated, well-spoken, and who travels all over the country, building things. In the 1950s films, the main concern of the technical intelligentsia was the "reconstruction and development" of the country ravaged in the war, while in the 1960s architects, male and female,

[30] For detailed filmography see Irena Šentevska, "Celluloid building sites of socialist Yugoslavia: cinema fiction and unfinished modernizations," in *Unfinished Modernizations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism*, eds. Maroje Mrduljaš and Vladimir Kulić (Zagreb: Udruženje hrvatskih arhitekata, 2012), 115-19.

became connected with "love and fashion,"[31] new consumerist lifestyles and popular culture. In the 1970s, however, their main preoccupation became survival in the (corrupt) profession. The film considered the "first Croatian disaster movie," *H-8* (dir: Nikola Tanhofer, 1958) – albeit as a minor event in the story – had already contained a dialogue between a truck driver (Marijan Lovrić) and his morally dubious companion (Fabijan Šovagović), who admits his intentions to improve his career in petty crime by getting a job in a construction company. As different films suggest, corruption in the Yugoslav construction industry may be read as a metaphor for a society heading from its building phase towards a phase of decadence and self-demolition.

This tendency is best reflected in the characters of (usually young and inexperienced) architects ending up as broken visionaries who fail to meet the demands of their profession and society at large. For example, Janko (Mladen Vasary) in the film *Živi bili pa vidjeli* (*That's the Way the Cookie Crumbles*, dir: Bruno Gamulin and Milivoj Puhlovski, 1979) falls in love with the daughter of the general manager of the building industry giant Urbing, but his refusal to collaborate in the fishy deals of his father-in-law brings him down from the design studio to the construction site – as a blue-collar worker. Tamaš (Milan Štrljić) in the film *Zalazak sunca* (*The Sunset*, dir: Karolj Viček, 1982) unwillingly gets involved in the townhall's malversations with social housing in a small city in Vojvodina. Slobodan (Svetozar Cvetković) in the film *Stepenice za nebo* (*Stairway to Heaven*, dir: Miroslav Lekić, 1983) experiences bitter defeats as an unemployed youngster in Belgrade who finally manages to get a job in Subotica. The fierce soixante-huitard Saša (Boris Komnenić) in the film *Tajvanska kanasta* (*Taiwan Canasta*, dir: Goran Marković, 1985) abandons his artworks and accepts, to his detriment, the position of a construction supervisor of a newly planned housing estate. All these young men have lost the battle for a better and *more beautiful* world or, in the words of Janko Vizek (*Živi bili pa vidjeli*), "a socialist living environment."[32]

In the 1978 Croatian film *Posljednji podvig diverzanta Oblaka* (*The Last Mission of Demolitions Man Cloud*, dir: Vatroslav Mimica), the protagonist Josip Crnković called Oblak (Pavle Vuisić) is an aged communist revolutionary and former member of the 15th International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. He had fought against Yugoslav gendarmes, fascists in Spain, Germans in France, Croatian collaborationist Ustasha forces, and supporters of Stalin, and was wounded in battle 24 times. Immediately after the war, Oblak was deputy minister and director of several factories. His brother Rudi Crnković Janko was a national hero who lost his life tortured by the Ustashas as a secretary of the Zagreb City Committee of the Communist Party. Oblak is faced with the bitter truth that the socialist society he helped build is marred by corruption, materialism, and selfishness, and far astray from the ideals that he had fought for. His conflict with a spoiled football star and his manager escalates into a conflict with the local power figures. He receives threats from the construction company Tehnoza-Impex, based in his neighbourhood, that the house he lives in with his wife (which is a historical landmark as a

31 *Ljubav i moda* (*Love and Fashion*, dir: Ljubomir Radičević, 1960).

32 Šentevska, "Celluloid building sites," 105-109.

stronghold for the pre-war workers' movement, and partly museum) will be demolished to make way for modern buildings. He nevertheless attempts to fight back and save his dignity, ultimately demolishing the house himself. The tragedy of this character lies in the fact that the former soldier of freedom who had worked alongside architects and engineers on building a new society now receives existential threats from them. Although praised in television documentaries, in reality, he loses the respect of the same society he had helped create.

The last years of Yugoslav cinema

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw a significant revitalization of Yugoslav cinema, with the feature film production reaching the level of its greatest productivity since the 1960s (25-30 film titles annually). Nevertheless, this positive trend coincided with a period of severe economic difficulties and political crisis in the Yugoslav Federation. After the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, political paralysis on the federal level gave rise to centres of power in different republics, whose interests were not necessarily in harmony with the plans for the economic and social stabilization of the federation. Nationalism and ethnic disputes were constantly on the rise. The films produced in this period thoroughly reflect all these social developments.

The reforms introduced by the 1974 Constitution and the 1976 Law on Associated Labor (*Zakon o udruženom radu*), and the new self-management structures in the media system, resulted in the emergence of self-sufficient film markets in the respective Yugoslav republics. Film companies increasingly relied on creative and financial collaboration with television studios. Local cinema production was inarguably popular, but the filmmakers often encountered difficulties with inadequate funding or technical resources. Nevertheless, owing to the improved opportunities for co-productions with foreign partners, bank loans, and additional sources of public funding, important co-production and distribution contracts were successfully closed until the break up of Yugoslavia in 1991.

In the 1980s, mainstream cinema in Yugoslavia was commercially oriented and politically conformist. Yet, in contrast to the light comedies about ordinary or showbiz life,[33] sporadic attempts at expanding the repertory with imported film genres such as sci-fi, gangster film, thriller or film noir typically failed to meet the audiences' affection. Film adaptations of literary works and feature films for children slowly gave way as well.

In response to the social and political crisis of the time, leading filmmakers focused on a critical revision of the Yugoslav revolutionary past, as well as the rapidly transforming present. In this respect, the initiative was taken by the representatives of the so-called "Prague school," including directors Goran Paskaljević, Srđan Karanović, Goran Marković, Lordan Zafranović, Rajko Grlić, and slightly younger Emir Kusturica, along with the

[33] *Lude godine* (*Foolish Years*) 1-9; *Tesna koža* (*Tight Skin*) 1-4; *Hajde da se volimo* (*Let's Fall In Love*) 1-3 (starring the ultimate Yugoslav pop-folk prima donna of the 1980s – Lepa Brena (Fahreta Jahić).

cinematographers Živko Zalar and Vilko Filač. Their films reflected the crisis of trust in the Yugoslav socialist system and questioned its very foundations.

Urban periphery and habitat of the losers and anti-heroes of the socialist society, minutely portrayed in the titles such as *Buđenje pacova* (*The Rats Woke Up*, dir: Živojin Pavlović, 1967), *Vrane* (*Crows*, dir: Ljubiša Kozomara and Gordan Mihić, 1969), *Tragovi crne devojke* (*Traces of a Black Haired Girl*, dir: Zdravko Randić, 1972) or *Kužiš stari moj* (*You Get It, Man?*, dir: Vanča Kljaković, 1973) was revisited in the 1980s films such as *Kuduz* (dir: Ademir Kenović, 1989). The world of ultimate losers in the struggle for better living conditions – Roma protagonists "discovered" by Aleksandar Petrović in his acclaimed 1967 film *Skupljači perja* (*I Even Met Happy Gypsies*)[34] – was revisited by Goran Paskaljević in the film *Anđeo čuvar* (*Guardian Angel*, 1987) and Emir Kusturica in his (also internationally successful) film *Dom za vešanje* (*Time of the Gypsies*, 1989).

With industrialization in full swing, many predominantly young people from the rural parts of the country moved to Yugoslav cities to work or study. Because of their strong attachments to their rural background, they were referred to by the Croatian publicist Veselko Tenžera as "centaurs of the Yugoslav economy."[35] Rural-urban migrations, economic context, and psychological reasons behind this mobility were a heavily exploited topic in Yugoslav cinema from its earliest days to its last decade.[36] The theme of colonization and repopulation of regions such as Vojvodina or Slavonija with newcomers from the less developed parts of Yugoslavia was inaugurated with Veljko Bulajić's 1959 film *Vlak bez voznog reda*. This film depicts a colonization campaign in 1946, in which protagonists from Dalmatinska Zagora struggle to start a new life in Baranja.[37] Zdravko Randić's 1963 film *Zemljaci* (*Compatriots*) vividly depicted the dreary life of seasonal workers who came from Bosnian villages for the corn harvest in Vojvodina, "bringing along their problems, doubts and longing."[38] Jože Babič's 1965 film *Po isti poti se ne vračaj* (*Do Not Come Back Along the Same Road*) likewise depicted the obstacles and animosity experienced by the seasonal workers from Bosnia and Herzegovina from the native population in Slovenia.[39]

In the early 1960s "temporary work abroad" (Gastarbeit)[40] became a major response on behalf of the Yugoslav authorities to the difficulties

---

34 Vlastimir Sudar notes that in this film Petrović challenged the conventional romantic depictions of Roma life in the older Yugoslav films such as *Sofka* (dir: Radoš Novaković, 1948) and *Ciganka* (*The Gipsy Girl*, dir: Vojislav Nanović, 1953) based on the works by Bora Stanković. Vlastimir Sudar, *Portret umjetnika kao političkog disidenta: Život i djelo Aleksandra Petrovića* (Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2017), 196-97.

35 Veselko Tenžera, *Zašto volim TV* (Zagreb: Znanje, 1988), 129.

36 For a detailed filmography see Šentevska, "Celluloid building sites," 117-18.

37 Bulajić returned to the topic of post-war colonization in his later film *Obećana zemlja* (*The Promissed Land*, 1986), along with Nikola Stojanović in the film *Od zlata jabuka* (*Golden Apple*) released in the same year.

38 Petar Volk, *20. vek srpskog filma* (Belgrade: Institut za film and Jugoslovenska kinoteka, 2001), 370.

39 Filip Robar-Dorin's later film *Ovni in mamuti* (*Rams and Mammoths*, 1985) explores a similar topic in the Slovenian context.

40 Ondřej Daniel, "Gastarbajteri: Rethinking Yugoslav Economic Migrations towards the European North-West through Transnationalism and Popular Culture," in *Imagining Frontiers,*

posed by unemployment, especially of the unskilled labour force. After 1968, when the presence of the workers from Yugoslavia on the German labour market became regulated by a bilateral agreement (*Anwerbeabkommen*), Yugoslav cinema produced a long list of films that explored the life of the guest workers abroad or, more often, their experience with the communities and life that they had left behind.[41] Mobility depicted in those films was a harbinger of modernization and often, new freedoms granted by the Yugoslav socialism. The inability to move from one's home region (*zavičaj*) and change one's life circumstances was an indication of crisis, either social or individual.[42]

The first years following the war (the Five-Year Plan and building of socialism in Yugoslavia) had never ceased to inspire Yugoslav filmmakers to make statements about the current state of affairs in the (socialist) society. However, in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s the dominant mood of these films[43] was not optimistic. The emphasis was often put on the personal struggles, deprivations, and sacrifices that the visionaries and builders of the new society had to make while claiming their role in the communist revolution. From the Black Wave period onwards, the downward trajectory of the industrial and manual workers[44] and their position in the late-socialist society was keenly explored in the films *Sovražnik* (*The Enemy*, dir: Živojin Pavlović, 1965), *Protest* (dir: Fadil Hadžić, 1967), *Slike iz života udarnika* (*Life of a Shock Force Worker*, dir: Bahrudin Bato Čengić, 1972), *Pavle Pavlović* (dir: Mladomir Puriša Đorđević, 1975), *Pismo-glava* (*Heads or Tails*, dir: Bahrudin Bato Čengić, 1983), Život radnika (*A Worker's Life*, dir: Miroslav Mandić, 1987), *Tako se kalio čelik* (*The Way Steel Was Tempered*, dir: Želimir Žilnik, 1988) etc. Late Yugoslav cinema was also more inclined to explore the theme of worker's strikes, protests, and other open expressions of dissatisfaction with the political and economic system.[45] The 1980s also saw increased interest in

Contesting Identities, eds. Steven G. Ellis and Ľuďa Klusáková (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2007), 293.

41 Starting with the film Čovik od svita (*Man of the World*, dir: Obrad Gluščević, 1965), some examples include the titles *Sunce tuđeg neba* (*The Sun of Another Sky*, dir: Milutin Kosovac, 1968), *Ludi dani* (*Crazy Days*, dir: Nikola Babić, 1977), *Ne naginji se van* (*Don't Lean Out the Window*, dir: Bogdan Žižić, 1977), *Suton* (*Twillight Time*, dir: Goran Paskaljević, 1982), *Druga generacija* (*The Second Generation*, dir: Želimir Žilnik, 1983), *Rani snijeg u Münchenu* (*Early Snow in Munich*, dir: Bogdan Žižić, 1984), *Na putu za Katangu* (*On the Road to Katanga*, dir: Živojin Pavlović 1987), *Povratak Katarine Kožul* (*Return of Katarina Kožul*, dir: Slobodan Praljak, 1989) etc.

42 This theme was thoroughly explored in the Black Wave films such as *Horoskop* (*Horoscope*, dir: Boro Drašković, 1969).

43 *Osvajanje slobode* (*Winning of Freedom*, dir: Zdravko Šotra, 1979), *Era dhe lisi* (*The Wind and the Oak Tree*, dir: Besim Sahatçiu, 1979), *Visoki napon* (*High Voltage*, dir: Veljko Bulajić, 1981), *Rdeči boogie* (*Red Boogie*, dir: Karpo Godina, 1982), *O pokojniku sve najlepše* (*Never Speak Ill of the Dead*, dir: Predrag Antonijević, 1984), *Na istarski način* (*The Istrian Way*, dir: Vladimir Fulgosi, 1985), *Moj ata socialistični kulak* (*My Dad, the Socialist Kulak*, dir: Matjaž Klopčič, 1987), *Azra* (dir: Mirza Idrizović, 1988), *Vreme čuda* (*Time of Miracles*, dir: Goran Paskaljević, 1989), *Granica* (*The Border*, dir: Zoran Maširević, 1990) etc.

44 Including the former prostitute (Mira Stupica) in the film *Palma među palmama* (*A Palm between the Palms*, dir: Milo Đukanović, 1967), director's adamant driver (Miodrag Krivokapić) in the film *U ime naroda* (*In the Name of the People*, dir: Živko Nikolić, 1987) and factory inventor (Ivo Ban) in the film *Odpadnik* (*Maverick*, dir: Božo Šprajc, 1988).

45 *Kud puklo da puklo* (*Whichever Way the Ball Bounces*, dir: Rajko Grlić, 1974), *Novinar*

revisiting the more oppressive aspects of the Yugoslav socialist authorities, symbolized by the trauma of the Goli otok prison camp. This theme was explored even in high-profile productions such as *Otac na službenom putu* (*When Father Was Away on Business*, dir: Emir Kusturica, 1985), awarded the Golden Palm at the 1985 Cannes Film Festival. Other filmmakers turned to the neuralgic points of the present, such as Žarko Dragojević in the 1988 film *Kuća pored pruge* (*The House by the Railway Tracks*), which explored the Serb-Albanian relations in Kosovo (from a Serbian perspective).

Throughout the previous decades, new housing blocks and modern buildings had already become familiar scenery in Yugoslav films. However, by the 1980s this on-screen imagery had become more decrepit and weathered. The 1981 film *Vlakom prema jugu* (*Southbound Train*, dir: Petar Krelja) depicts contemporary life in the New Zagreb estate of Zaprađe. In an attempt to collectively solve a plumbing problem, the tenants end up in the basement. "We went in in Zagreb, but we'll probably get out in Split 3," said the accidentally present guest from Dalmatia. The main protagonists of this film Marina and Branko reside in a rented apartment with their child. They stood in a long line of young couples with unresolved housing problems, which had been a major theme in Yugoslav cinema ever since the first story in the film *Subotom uveče* (*Na košavi*). Other examples include married student couples who lived in rented apartments or student barracks: Ivan and Sonja in the story *Čekati* (1965 omnibus *Ključ / The Key* directed by Vanča Kljaković, Krsto Papić and Antun Vrdoljak) or Minja and Nenad in the film *Čudna devojka* (*Strange Girl*, dir: Jovan Živanović, 1962). Young workers Mirko and Marija in Dragoslav Lazić's 1966 film *Tople godine* (*Hot Years*) also experienced grave difficulties while trying to find their place in a big city. Housing issues also troubled Mira and Zare (*Mirno leto*, 1961), Martin and Zora (*Martin u oblacima / Martin in the Clouds*, 1961), Davor and Minja (*Živjeti od ljubavi / To Live on Love*, 1973), Dragan and Ljubica (*Čuvar plaže u zimskom periodu / Beach Guard in Winter*, 1976), Flojd and Šilja (*Nacionalna klasa / National Class Category Up to 785 Ccm*, 1979), Zoran and Biba (*Daj što daš / Whatever You Can Spare*, 1979), Janko and Martina (*Živi bili pa vidjeli*, 1979), Perhan and Azra (*Dom za vešanje*, 1988), and many other Yugoslav film families[46] and single persons – such as the characters played by Ljubiša Samardžić in Milan Jelić's trilogy *Rad /Moj tata /Razvod na određeno vreme* (*Part-Time Work* 1980 / *My Part-Time Dad*, 1982; *Part-Time Divorce* 1986)[47] and *Avanture Borivoja Šurdilovića* (*The Adventures of Borivoje Šurdilović*, 1980), based on the TV series *Vruć vetar* (*Hot Wind*).

The theme of corruption in the construction industry was further developed in films such as *Lov u mutnom* (*Fishing in Troubled Waters*, 1981, director: Vlastimir Radovanović). In this film, in an attempt to find a new home

(*Journalist*, dir: Fadil Hadžić, 1979), *Prestop* (*Transgression*, dir: Matija Milčinski, 1980), *Olovna brigada* (*The Lead Brigade*, dir: Kiril Cenevski, 1980), *Kako sam sistematski uništen od idiota* (*How I Was Systematically Destroyed by an Idiot*, dir: Slobodan Šijan, 1983) etc.

46 This includes even the large family of little Zoran (Dimitrije Vojnov) in Goran Marković's 1992 "post-Titoist" film *Tito i ja* (*Tito and Me*).

47 The home owner in this trilogy, baker Milutin (Bata Živojinović), described how he had acquired his apartment: "I went into a fridge. Everyone said: 'Milutin is crazy'. But I sat in the fridge and got the apartment."

for his family of eleven (as only families of twelve are entitled to state-granted flats), Paja Glavonja (Bata Živojinović) usurps an apartment in New Belgrade with dubious ownership. The flat belongs to a corrupt official who acquired it through plain fraud, and graft in the construction process. "I moved out of an illegal neighborhood, I moved illegally into an apartment, and, what do you know, the apartment is illegal as well," complained Paja Glavonja when he realized his failure to solve his housing problem.

Critical revision of the revolutionary past in the last period of Yugoslav cinema included a critical revisiting of the housing policies in effect immediately after the Second World War. The apartment in Marijan Vajda's 1960 film *Zajednički stan* (*Shared Apartment*) was a place of comic plots where the leading comedian of the generation, Miodrag Petrović Čkalja, came to the fore. Homeowner characters played by Nikola Simić and their problems with "protected tenants" in the popular films *Laf u srcu* (*A Great Guy at Heart*, 1981) and *Tesna koža* 1-4 (1982-1991) were also largely of comical nature. Nevertheless, in the 1980s films such as *Samo jednom se ljubi* (*You Love Only Once*), *Bal na vodi* (*Hey Babu Riba*), *Već viđeno* (*Reflections*), or *Oficir s ružom* (*The Officer with a Rose*), the shared apartment is mostly a place of frustrations and tragic social conflicts, where members of the prewar bourgeoisie would end up with new tenants (mostly new government officials). Typically, they would have nothing in common except shared bathrooms and kitchens. When his plumber asks him: "Were all your neighbors partisans, by any chance?" Fadil Hadžić's *Ambasador* (*The Ambassador*, 1984) responds: "No. There are some surviving members of the bourgeoisie. See, there, two houses away, there is still an industrialist who fired me for being a communist before the war. His grandson and my son are good friends now."

Conclusion

In the harsh, unfavourable circumstances of the first post-war years of socialist Yugoslavia, cinema was deemed a new socialist (realist) art, expected to reflect the new social reality according to the optimistic expectations from the new man, new society, and new social relations. Feature films addressing contemporary themes were, accordingly, celebrating visionaries and working-class heroes of the new society. But even these Stakhanovite super-heroes of socialist labour had to struggle with a lack of confidence in the new system – sometimes even within their own families. Thus, from its earliest years, Yugoslav cinema described the personal and professional sacrifices that the builders of the new society had to make to live up to their ideals.

After the Cominform Resolution of 1948, with the changes in Yugoslavia's political climate, the emerging film industry began to seek new organizational models, opening up to the cultural and artistic influences from the West. After 1950, with the introduction of self-management in the Yugoslav economy, the film industry also underwent fundamental transformations. By the end of the decade, new filmmakers began to challenge the conventions posed by literature and theatre, and the ideological constraints and populist expectations from mainstream cinema. Yugoslav films began to feature new types of protagonists, including former partisans who found themselves

in tragic misunderstandings with the society they fought in the war to help build. Some of these film characters ended up being marginalized by more ambitious, unscrupulous, and adaptable among their former war comrades.

The turbulent 1960s brought further decentralization and democratization in the self-management film enterprises, along with reflection on the changes in Yugoslav society, emerging new lifestyles, and influences of the globalized popular culture. Part of the mainstream film production reflected on the development of the self-management system in Yugoslavia as a new phase in shaping the society created after the Second World War. These films equally challenged ideological manipulations, the autocratic mindset of the apparatchiks, and workers' failure to exercise the basic principles of self-management such as critical thinking, open discussion, and responsible decision-making. Themes of corruption and abuse of the self-management system entered mainstream cinema, even in the genre of comedy. On the other hand, an emerging generation of filmmakers (of the so-called Black Wave) was set to explore contemporary issues and dark aspects of the personal, social, and political life in a socialist society, embodied in contemporary images of poverty and decay. Their protagonists now included people from the fringes of the socialist society but also disillusioned partisan heroes and builders of the new Yugoslavia trapped in tragic generational conflicts.

In the 1970s, after a suppression period of the more radical aspects of the Black Wave, Yugoslav cinema was again dominated by partisan action epics, light comedies, historical dramas, and their repetitive formulas. Nevertheless, a considerable portion of the film production explored contemporary issues such as social and spatial mobility, economic liberties, the life of the *Gastarbeiter* workers, etc. The theme of corruption in the building industry was further expanded into a metaphor for a society on the brink of decadence and self-destruction.

The last decade of Yugoslav cinema saw significant revitalization of the film industry and, yet, this positive trend coincided with the period of severe economic difficulties and political crisis in the Yugoslav federation. From films exploring the traumas of Goli otok to those describing the Serb-Albanian relations in Kosovo, the filmmakers engaged in critical revisions of the Yugoslav revolutionary past, with the rapidly transforming present. Emphasis was put again on personal struggles, deprivations, and sacrifices that the visionaries and builders of the socialist society had to make while fulfilling their revolutionary missions. The filmmakers keenly explored the downward trajectory of the industrial workers and their position in the late-socialist society, along with the themes of worker strikes, protests, and other open expressions of dissatisfaction with the political and economic system. The film production of the 1980s thus became a vivid mirror of the crisis of the Yugoslav socialist system and its ideological foundations, foreshadowing its overhanging demise.

Bibliography

1. Daniel, Ondřej. "Gastarbajteri: Rethinking Yugoslav Economic Migrations towards the European North-West through Transnationalism and Popular Culture." In *Imagining Frontiers, Contesting Identities*, edited by Steven G. Ellis and Luďa Klusáková, 277-302. Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2007.
2. DeCuir, Jr., Greg. *Jugoslovenski crni talas: Polemički film od 1963. do 1972. u Socijalističkoj Federativnoj Republici Jugoslaviji*. Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2019.
3. Dimić, Ljubodrag. *Agitprop kultura: Agitpropovska faza kulturne politike u Srbiji 1945-1952*. Belgrade: IRO 'Rad', 1988.
4. Goulding, Daniel J. *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience, 1945-2001.* Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002.
5. Jelenković, Dunja. *Festival jugoslovenskog dokumentarnog i kratkometražnog filma, 1954-2004. Od jugoslovenskog socijalizma do srpskog nacionalizma*. Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2023.
6. Mortimer, Lorejn. *Teror i radost: Filmovi Dušana Makavejeva*. Belgrade: FDU and Clio, 2011.
7. Munitić, Ranko. *Jugoslavenski filmski slučaj*. Split: Marjan film, 1980.
8. Nikodijević, Milan. *Zabranjeni bez zabrane*. Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2022.
9. Radosavljević, Veljko. *Sjaj crnog: Prilog za bolje razumevanje jednog razdoblja srpske kinematografije*. Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2018.
10. Ranković, Milan. *Društvena kritika u savremenom jugoslovenskom igranom filmu*. Belgrade: Institut za film, 1970.
11. Raspor, Vicko. *Riječ o filmu*. Belgrade: Institut za film, 1988.
12. Stojanović, Dušan. *Velika avantura filma*. Belgrade / Novi Sad : Institut za film / Prometej, 1998.
13. Sudar, Vlastimir. *Portret umjetnika kao političkog disidenta: Život i djelo Aleksandra Petrovića*. Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2017.
14. Šentevska, Irena. "Celluloid building sites of socialist Yugoslavia: cinema fiction and unfinished modernizations." In *Unfinished Modernizations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism*, edited by Maroje Mrduljaš and Vladimir Kulić, 96-119. Zagreb: Udruženje hrvatskih arhitekata, 2012.
15. Škrabalo, Ivo. *Hrvatska filmska povijest: ukratko (1896-2006)*. Zagreb: VBZ, 2008.
16. Škrabalo, Ivo. *Između publike i države: Povijest hrvatske kinematografije 1896-1980*. Zagreb: Znanje, 1984.
17. Tenžera, Veselko. *Zašto volim TV*. Zagreb: Znanje, 1988.
18. Tirnanić, Bogdan. *Crni talas*. Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2008.
19. Volk, Petar. *20. vek srpskog filma*. Belgrade: Institut za film and Jugoslovenska kinoteka, 2001.
20. Volk, Petar. *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma*. Belgrade: Institut za film / Partizanska knjiga, 1986.
21. Vučinić, Srđan. *Portreti: 24 sličice u sekundi (Eseji o jugoslovenskom filmu)*. Belgrade: Filmski centar Srbije, 2018.
22. Zlatić, Bogdan, Miloje Radaković and Nebojša Pajkić, eds. *Režija: Vojislav Nanović – poslednji pionir*. Belgrade and Novi Sad: Jugoslovenska kinoteka, 1993.