

From:

Miranda Jakisa, Nikica Gilic (eds.)

Partisans in Yugoslavia

Literature, Film and Visual Culture

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The ubiquitous Partisan narrative in Yugoslavia served well as founding myth of its newly united people. Its retrospective deconstruction has absorbed most of the academic attention for the Yugoslav Partisans since the break-up. This edition in contrast looks into the (hybrid) nature of partisanship itself as it appears in film, art, and literature. It explores the Partisans in Yugoslavia in Partisan novels, films, and songs, analyzes the – still ongoing – transformation process of the Partisan narrative, and reviews its transitions into popular (visual) culture.

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On Partisans and Partisanship in Yugoslavia's Arts

MIRANDA JAKIŠA

P/PARTISAN ARTS

The term “partisan” raises right from the start a crucial general question when dealing with Yugoslavia’s P/partisan art in literature, film, song and in visual culture: is it *partisan* in itself or is it first and foremost concerned with the (historic dramatis personae of the) Yugoslav *Partisans*? Partisan art and partisan art, as we will see in this volume, often tread a common path in the history of the partisan narrative in Yugoslavia.

The idea of partisanship as such, the idea of decidedly taking sides, of being part of one group (and not the other), the idea of being a *Parteigänger*, is relevant for both p/Partisan arts. While depictions of the Partisans in Yugoslavia, that is Partisan art, as well as retrospective attitudes towards these representations always take a stance on the historic partisans in one way or another, partisan art creates the sides to be taken. In bringing a projected and anticipated, and (yes!) revolutionary content into being, partisan art, while creating itself, produces the other.¹ In other words, partisan art establishes an *us and them* in the first place. This not only applies to political and war enemies, but to aesthetic adversaries, too.

1 In the following the terms and notions *Partisan* and *partisan* will not be orthographically distinguished any more. For further elaborations on the Partisan/partisan entanglement see Komelj and Terzić in this volume.

Partisan art wildly and enthusiastically *opposes*. It opposes something, someone, or both and the dissenting polemics being used in this opposition in Michel Foucault's words, "recruites partisans" and "establishes the other as an enemy, an upholder of opposed interests against which one must fight until the moment this enemy is defeated and either surrenders or disappears".²

Partisans are in vogue again and they are so appreciated exactly for the unambiguous face-off situation they produce. Acknowledging partisan art, rediscovering its partisan qualities therefore implies willingly embracing the new totality partisan art creates and in doing so unthinking postmodernist notions: dissemination, fragmentation, simulacrum, references without reference. Partisans – that's the real deal!

ENEMIES AND FRONTLINES

Let us stay a while with the decidedness of partisan dissent and the production of enemies. If we turn to concrete partisan narratives in Yugoslavia we encounter frontlines on different levels and in different times beginning with the chiasmically construed imagery of irregular and individualized partisan fighters from the *narod* (people) confronted with an amorphous mass of foreign fascist invaders who turn the people – more or less involuntarily – into dauntless defenders: into *partizane* (partisans)! This narrative, with the fascist invasion in the role of a natural catastrophe within the partisan master plot, has been constantly written and rewritten in Yugoslavia since the 1940s.³

From its first hour, stepping into the path of an enemy defines a partisan story, yet the front lines of the confrontation remain flexible. Partisan combat by nature operates from an ambush, it is irregular in almost all aspects of warfare, be they artistic or not. Nevertheless, the distinction between friend and foe could not be clearer than in partisan combat. Aleksandar

2 From Paul Rabinow's interview "Polemics, Politics and Problematizations" with Michel Foucault in 1984. In Paul Rabinow(ed.): *Essential Works of Foucault*. Vol.1 "Ethics", New York: The New Press 1997: 112.

3 See also Jakiša, Miranda: "Der 'tellurische Charakter' des Partisanengenres: Jugoslawische Topo-Graphie in Film und Literatur", in: Esther Kilchmann /Andreas Pflitsch/Franziska Thun-Hohenstein (eds.), *Topographien pluraler Kulturen. Europa vom Osten gesehen*, Berlin: Kadmos 2011: 207-223.

Flaker's distinction between *us* and *them* in partisan stories and the permanent option to change or choose between sides, which he considers crucial for the partisan "image of the world", does not question, but confirms the distinctness of the friend-foe divide.⁴

The spirit of the partisan fight and the overly powerful enemy that had to "surrender or disappear" (Foucault) animated and energized partisan poetry already in the war years and made it part of the liberation struggle itself (see Komelj in this volume). Partisan encounters with distinct enemies continued to exist and multiply in Yugoslavia's art even when the historic enemies of World War II started to fade, had to be reshaped and when the partisan fight in general became more figurative. So in Đorđe Balašević's famous song *Računajte na nas* (You can count on us, 1978) the young generation in the late 1970s still refers to battles to be fought in the partisan tradition (see Zimmermann in this volume). The success of Balašević's song is simply a symptom for the *generational metalepsis* the partisan narrative managed to achieve from the late 1960s on when the partisan generation was superseded by a younger one. This metalepsis, a 'leap forward' in Yugoslavia's partisan (hi)story, bound the Yugoslavs abidingly to the partisan past and transferred the partisan spirit to art production anew. One of this spirit's liveliest expressions can be found in the alternative partisan film production within the *nouvelle vague* or *novi val* (see Jovanović in this volume).⁵ The renewed frontline in film separated 'real' art from the dishonest needs of the "red bourgeoisie" and made the directors partisans of art that fought an all-European artistic war on a Yugoslav frontline.

The (artistic) partisan spirit (kept) alive in Yugoslavia for many decades still echoes in today's dissenting comments on the retrospective reduction of Yugoslavia's manifold partisan expressions in art to plain *state art* (often paraphrased as socialist realism). The adversaries of this latest frontline are those (art) historians, literary and film scholars who willingly and often deliberately underestimate and underrate the historic meaning of the liberation struggle depicted in partisan film, literature and song. Even though

4 Flaker, Aleksandar: "Partizanska slika svijeta", in: *Forum*, 6.20 (1981): 898.

5 See also Jakiša, Miranda: "Großes Kino der Subversion und Affirmation. Vom Schlagabtausch im Film der jugoslawischen 1960er", in: Hannes Grandits/Holm Sundhussen (eds.), *Jugoslawien in den 1960er Jahren: Auf dem Weg zu einem (a-)normalen Staat?*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2013: 185-213.

some know better, they choose to interpret Yugoslavia's artistic production solely along Third Way politics, reducing them to a result of Titoist measures and coercion in art. All too often in order to assert own nationalist demarcations, such interpretations, disapproving of partisan film and literature right from the start, prefer to stress the liberties of the post-Yugoslav societies than to actually take a genuinely interested look at partisan art production itself. The contributions to this volume voice both sides of this late Yugoslav partisan frontline in one way or the other.

In the following I will come back to each of these three Yugoslav partisan frontlines, beginning with a more thorough glance at the most recent one.

REDUCTION AND FUNCTION/ALIZATION OF PARTISAN ART

There is more to the claim that the reduction of partisan art to state art is highly problematic than differing evaluations of historical events. According to Rastko Močnik, the appeal partisan art still has today has nothing to do with the disappearance of the ideological framework it was bred in.⁶ To assume this, Močnik claims, would mean to affirm the idea that art and culture are domains to be strictly separated from social and historic contexts. Even more, such a separation means to deprive partisan art of its integral imbeddedness in exactly these contexts without which partisan art cannot exist at all.

This crucial notion adds to the entanglement of *partisan* partisan art and art about the actual *Partisans* of World War II that was introduced above. Močnik's analysis once more brings up the circular figure that characterizes partisan art as anticipator of its own circumstances. Partisan art as "kulturno stvaralaštvo" or as "kulturna akcija"⁷ installs the framework in which itself will become possible. In it, the future is evacuated to the present, or as Miklavž Komelj writes, partisan art is defined by the "presence of the unre-

6 Močnik, Rastko. "Partizanska simbolička politika", in: *Zarez* 7.161/162 (2005): 12-14.

7 R. Močnik: "Partizanska simbolička politika", 13.

alized” it embodies.⁸ Partisanship therefore not only produces itself and the enemy, it also asserts the will of an avant-garde (future) that at the same time is inaugurated by it (present). In *creating the present*, Partisan art in Yugoslavia took an active part in the fight itself – not only in the war years but also afterwards. Močnik stresses that there even was such a partisan art in Yugoslavia before there was an actual war, its project being the fight against fascism as the “most developed appearance of capitalist barbarism”.⁹

Some of the contributions to this volume focus on partisan art in the war itself, most of them on partisan art after the war. In all of them, the historic partisans of the Yugoslav Liberation Struggle, of the NOB,¹⁰ have already entered the stage. To write about the partisans in Yugoslavia – as we did – always implies a more or less contoured attitude towards Yugoslavia and its history. The contributors to this volume have all experienced the difficulties of such an endeavour. Whether you want to or not, you find yourself holding a line.

One of the challenges of writing on partisan arts was dealing with the often-quoted function of the Yugoslav partisan narrative to provide a founding myth for the new state of postwar Yugoslavia. Seen from this angle, Yugoslavia’s partisan narratives shrink to commissioned work in the service of an ideological re-education program of a primarily self-sustaining, suppressive regime. This way, works of partisan writers like Vladimir Nazor, Oskar Davičo, Branko Ćopić, Miško Kranjec or Mihailo Lalić are retrospectively degraded to ‘state novels’, calling their literary quality into question while the partisan film production in its variety is reduced to a common goal: “propagandizing and legitimizing the newly founded people’s socialist government”.¹¹

The ubiquitous partisan narrative did indeed serve the state of Yugoslavia well in its post World War II nation building and in the re-education of

8 Komelj, Miklavž: *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?*, Ljubljana: Založba/*cf. 2009.

9 R. Močnik: “Partizanska simbolička politika”, 13.

10 NOB is *Narodnooslobodilačka Borba* (People’s Liberation Struggle). In this volume we refer to the Yugoslav Liberation Struggle with the acronym NOB that was in use in Yugoslavia and after.

11 Goulding, Daniel. *Liberated Cinema. The Yugoslav Experience, 1945–2001*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2002, 16.

its newly united people.¹² But while this prominent function as a founding myth, as a uniting narrative (of supranational “Vergemeinschaftung”, to use Max Weber’s term), and the retrospective deconstruction of the partisan ‘myth’ received significant academic attention since the break-up of Yugoslavia, few efforts have been made to explore the actual consistency of the historic partisan narratives, let alone of their – still ongoing – transformations and revivals. The contributions in this volume attempt to fill some of the gaps – some of them combative, some less so – exploring partisan narratives and imagery from different angles and with varying disciplinary approaches, focusing on some of the blind spots, but also adding to existing work, taking into consideration those first postwar partisan articulations (particularly Komelj, Kirn and Wurm in this volume) as well as very recent revisions and reflections of the Yugoslav partisan story (particularly Komelj and Colombi in this volume).

Yugoslav partisan literature, song and film from 1941 on, that much is clear, tell and retell the story of the Yugoslav partisans in World War II. For Yugoslavia the war started on April 6th, 1941. Yugoslavia’s Royal Army surrendered unconditionally already on April 17th and almost immediately antifascist resistance sprang up throughout the country. The vigor and ubiquitousness of the Yugoslav resistance was not only due to the presence and the actions of the Axis powers in Yugoslavia, but had also to do with the national and ideological differences within the country. The partisans fought the Germans and their allies but also various national collaborator organizations and groups. These combats taking place all over Yugoslavia were the central source of inspiration for partisan narratives in literature and film.

Reflecting on the everyday reality of war in Yugoslavia in the 1940s in his study *Experiment Yugoslavia*, the German historian and expert on the history of South Eastern Europe Holm Sundhaussen writes that, in the light of the events, joining the partisan resistance must have seemed for Yugo-

12 Snježana Koren writes about the role of the partisan story in schoolbooks that it legitimized Yugoslavia and the socialist revolution and that the sacrifice of the Yugoslav peoples served as foundation of the “brotherhood and unity” idea. In these educative goals, she adds, the partisan fighters and fallen heroes were crucial, Tito taking the most prominent position among them. Koren, Snježana: “Heroji i antiheroji u udžbenicima: slike nacionalne povijesti u udžbenicima uoči i nakon 1990. godine”, www.ffzg.unizg.hr/pov/zavod/triplex/historymemoryfulltexts.doc, 2.

slavs the best chance of survival.¹³ One of these events that turned people into partisans according to Sundhaussen, was the *OKW*-order (OKW: Oberkommando der Wehrmacht) of 16th September 1941 to execute 50-100 persons for each German soldier killed by partisans. On the basis of this order ten thousands of civilians were killed by December 1941, thousands alone (including school children) in the massacre of Kragujevac in October 1941. In his study *Yugoslavia and its Successor States* Sundhaussen stresses some twenty years later, that such events subsequently transformed into narratives and became omnipresent in Yugoslavia's politics, memorials, holidays, films, songs etc.¹⁴ In short, we can say World War II became omnipresent in Yugoslavia, and this omnipresence was above all realized through the arts. What is interesting is that it was only after the Wars of Yugoslav Succession that the role of the World War II narrative in Yugoslavia was highlighted so clearly by many historians. Before, when the focus was on the relative freedom in Yugoslavia, the partisan heritage and story must have seemed less significant (than non-alignment, Third Way politics and self-management) seen from outside.

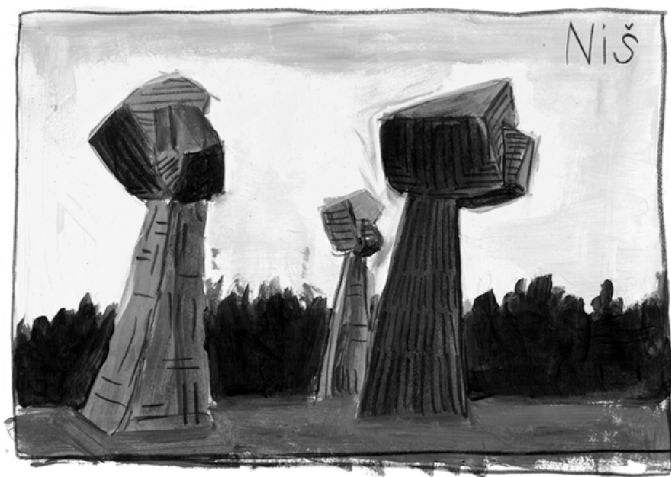
The image of Miodrag Živković's monument to the murdered schoolchildren and teachers *Prekinut let* from 1963, a monument relating to the Kragujevac massacre, indeed was and still is deeply engraved in Yugoslav memories. It affirmed and reminded Yugoslavs throughout all Yugoslav decades that World War II was not only a cherished founding 'myth' that brought with it exaggerated figures, pathetic memorial days and ambitious modernist partisan monuments, it also was the crude reality and experience of the people living on Yugoslav territory between 1941 and 1945.

Partisan literature, songs, films and other artistic expressions, especially those early ones, are therefore as much efforts of coming to terms with the traumatic experience of war as they were ideologically functionalized in Yugoslavia. The aspect of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as it appears in many partisan novels of the 1940s and 1950s, like those by Oskar Davičo, Milovan Đilas, Branko Ćopić, Dobrica Ćosić, Vladimir Nazor, Mihailo Lalić, Miško Kranjec, Ivan Goran Kovačić and others, has in my view so

13 Sundhaussen, Holm: *Experiment Jugoslawien. Von der Staatsgründung bis zum Staatsverfall*. Mannheim: B.I.-Taschenbuchverlag 1993, 81.

14 Sundhaussen, Holm: *Jugoslawien und seine Nachfolgestaaten 1943-2011. Eine ungewöhnliche Geschichte des Gewöhnlichen*. Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau 2012, 37.

far not been given appropriate attention. These novels can and should be read as part of the European literature of survival, i.e. of postwar and even Holocaust literature, that has shaped the literary landscape of Europe's 20th century so incisively with the works of authors like Grossman, Levi, Márai, Kertész, Tišma, Böll or Borchert. In other words: All the important and overdue research that critically turns to the many questions socialist Yugoslavia left unanswered still should not ignore that literature is not written on command and per state order!



Ill. 1: Contemporary illustration of the monument to the victims of mass execution in Niš, Tri pesnice (Three Fists by Ivan Sabolić, 1963) by the artist Nastasia Louveau, acrylic/pencil 2011.

The early Yugoslav partisan novel, a literature dealing with the experience of World War II, had as much as other European literary works of the time a therapeutic function for its traumatized readers – and writers. Most of the partisan novels of the first two decades, for example *Lelejska gora* (1957) by Mihailo Lalić, therefore can in a far more convincing manner be contextualized in the field of postwar literature than, for instance, within the ‘method’ of socialist realism. The number of partisan postwar novels in the 1950s is significant for the obvious reason of temporal proximity. These early, and in all cases biographic or biographically inspired partisan novels (see Vervaeet in this volume) were exclusively written by war veterans and

also addressed controversial topics such as Yugoslavia's internal fascism or partisan war crimes. So besides the therapeutic function we can also assume that the early partisan narratives fulfilled a reflecting and critical function. This secondary function seems even more important in Yugoslavia, yet so far has not been recognized as such, considering the fact that during the entire Tito era there were at best few (or even no) critical approaches to NOB history from historiography.¹⁵ Literature's role in the late 1940s and 50s cannot be overestimated in that respect. Renata Jambrešić-Kirin describes the similar critical function partisan film had later, from the late 1960s on.¹⁶

While there definitely was a lack of genuine research on the Yugoslav partisans in Yugoslav times, there still exists an impressive number of publications on the NOB theme from Yugoslavia – editions, conference volumes, illustrated books, historical essays, memoirs, and of course short stories and novels, children's books, even comic strips as well as a great range of poetry. Some of the latter is evidently poetry for purpose, songs referring to the NOB and glorifying its leader Josip Broz Tito, to be recited on memorial days (see Zimmermann in this volume). Not to speak of the spectacular often-quoted number of more than 200 partisan films the Yugoslav film critic Milutin Čolić presents in his book on Yugoslav film in the 1980s.¹⁷ It is also Čolić who informs us that partisan film is a subcategory of war film and who was the first to take a closer look at the question of the partisan film as a genre (see Gilić and Stanković in this volume).

In constantly telling and retelling (at least parts of) the partisan story the painful experiences of war could be transformed into an optimistic tale of *active victimhood*, an attitude that was to dominate the Yugoslav self-perceptions in the years to come. It was not by chance that the overall output of NOB literature and film throughout the Yugoslav decades was so enormous. It served the people, who in the beginning, but as we will see, also later found their present and personal experiences in them, and it served the state.

15 H. Sundhaussen, Holm: *Experiment Jugoslawien*, 95.

16 Jambrešić-Kirin, Renata: "Politika sjećanja na Drugi svjetski rat u doba medijske reprodukcije socijalističke culture", in: Lada Čale-Feldman/Ines Prica (eds.), *Devijacije i promašaji: etnografija domaćeg socijalizma*, Zagreb: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku 2006:172.

17 Čolić, Milutin: *Jugoslovenski ratni film*, Beograd/Titovo Užice: Institut za film/Vesti 1984.

So the exploitation of the partisan story by Yugoslavia's (cultural) politics was without a doubt useful for the formation of national unity as well as for personal claims of Josip Broz Tito whose partisan leadership achievements 'predestined' him for a lifetime presidency. Yet the 'myth' of the partisan liberation struggle and the heroic figure of the partisan can by no means easily be reduced to a common denominator or a one-sided function exclusively in state service. On the contrary, the partisan narrative turned out to be flexible and adaptable in more than one respect. But before turning to the narrative's adaptive qualities, I would like to dwell for a moment on the question of socialist realism in Yugoslavia that is raised whenever Yugoslavia's partisan art is evaluated in terms of indoctrination.

THE GHOST OF SOCIALIST REALISM

Partisan art – at least from today's perspective – raises very different expectations, occupies different points of view and changes gradually with shifting fields of vision. While Rastko Močnik claims that we deal with artistic works that were created in the midst of a live-or-die war and that it was created by people who considered their partisan art as action in a fight for freedom and emancipation,¹⁸ others consider partisan literature to have been nothing more than state ideology made digestible for the masses. Ideology and masses fuse in the 'accusation' of socialist realism, or soc-realism.

For many, the supreme way of doing justice to the partisan arts from Yugoslavia is to classify them with the term "socijalni realizam" (social realism) instead of "socialist realism". Social realism was a (significant!) early Yugoslav modification of socrealism already before World War II in the 1930s.

Vojislav Mataga points out that in socialist realism (as well as in Romanticism) the category of "tipičnost" is highly trivialized in the positive hero presented.¹⁹ The ideal positive hero in socrealist literature, he adds, is the party secretary, the commissioner, the SKOJ secretary, in short, any distinct member of the communist nomenclature or the hero of work, the

18 R. Močnik: "Partizanska simbolička politika", 12.

19 Mataga, Vojislav: "Socijalistički realizam i kič", in: *Republika* 1/2 (1995): 42.

shock worker.²⁰ Mataga's elaborations, even though written from within post-Yugoslavia, give no examples from Yugoslav literature to demonstrate in what way this trivialization actually occurred and which Yugoslav texts actually were socialist realist. Mataga's more general point about socrealist art is that it is meant for the masses and therefore has to banalize and trivialize artistic production to *kitsch* to make it digestible for the 'common people'.²¹ Putting aside whether this argumentation, not only brought forward by Mataga, is convincing or not, it is remarkable that there is no mention of the partisans even though the partisans outnumbered any other 'communist' topic in Yugoslav literature! The literary historian Krešimir Nemeć, by contrast, does name actual socrealist novels from Yugoslavia in his literary history – as expected, partisan novels among them! – yet adds that there is not more than “a handful” of them.²² So where has all the socrealist literature for the masses gone?

Maša Kolanović, following Nemeć' list of Yugoslav (Croatian) socrealist literature, analyzes one of these partisan novels, Josip Barković's *Sinovi slobode* (Sons of Freedom, 1948), in detail (see Kolanović in this volume). Kolanović stresses, like Mataga, that it is the core pattern of romance that dominates such texts. Partisan novels, at least the allegedly 'socrealist' ones, are above all romances according to Maša Kolanović's convincing study about popular culture and the Croatian novel.²³ In them good fights evil and wins in the end.

Read from today's perspective, the black-and-white plot and the description of the sacrificial partisan fight appear in many respects ridiculous. To explain this, Kolanović, attempting also to rid partisan novels of the socialist realist stigma, reads them as projects of populism and of popular culture and refers to Northrop Frye's study on the genre of romance, according to which romance finds ways to lend a face to the dominant ideals of the time, in the binary fight of good and evil. But is it really necessary to find superordinate terms to defend partisan narratives?

Dubravka Ugrešić proves to be a reliable ally in taking a second glance at socialist realism in Yugoslavia. Ugrešić in her essay *Long Live Socialist*

20 V. Mataga: “Socijalistički realizam i kič”, 45.

21 V. Mataga: “Socijalistički realizam i kič”, 44.

22 Nemeć, Krešimir: *Povijest hrvatskog romana*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga 2003, 10.

23 See also Kolanović, Maša: *Udarnik! Buntovnik? Potrošač...Popularna kultura i hrvatski roman od socijalizma do tranzicije*, Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak 2011.

Realism! pugnaciously demonstrates the socrealist elements in today's literature: "Contemporary market literature is realistic, optimistic, joyful, sexy, explicitly or implicitly didactic, and intended for the broad masses. As such, it ideologically remolds and educates the working people in the spirit of personal victory, the victory of some good over some evil. It is socialist realist!"²⁴ Ugrešić in the same essay reminds us that socrealism has been "given such a hammering" and was "killed stone dead" so that "today there is hardly anyone who knows what socialist realism"²⁵ actually was all about.

Indeed, the term socialist realism *socrealizam* has turned into a term of vituperation. It discredits whatever is labeled with it, 'unmasking' it as pure ideology and depriving it of any aesthetical significance. Dying partisans with their entrails in one hand still fighting the fascists with the other, love without even the slightest sexual interests, simple-minded glorification of the partisan leader Tito and a general overemphasis of masculinity (comradeship, solidarity, rivalry, competition) as well as outdated gender constellations – all of this can indeed be found in partisan novels! I am afraid, in all these points they do not differ much from other literature from the time not branded socrealist...

Even partisan films from the time of the so-called *crveni val* (Red Wave) in the late 1960s have retrospectively been 'downgraded' to socialist realism (see Jovanović's and Velisavljević's critique in this volume) – in a time when, by the way, socrealism had faded even in the Soviet Union. Daniel Goulding and Peter Stanković explicitly and historically more convincingly read the early partisan film as socialist realism or more specifically as nationalist realism.²⁶ Yet Tomislav Šakić resolutely opposes even this temporal constriction, stressing that there has n e v e r been a directly propagandistic fiction film with ideological text and socrealist pattern in Yugoslavia.²⁷ As long as there does not exist a single film analysis showing the socrealist pattern of a Yugoslav film, I prefer to stick with Šakić.

Accordingly, the art historian Ješa Denegri claims that the whole of Yugoslav art production actually has to be categorized as "socialist

24 Ugrešić, Dubravka: "Long live socialist realism!", in: Dubravka Ugrešić, *Thank you for not reading. Essays on Literary Trivia*. Dalkey Archive 2003: 27.

25 D. Ugrešić: "Long live socialist realism!", 25.

26 D. Goulding: *Liberated Cinema*, 8.

27 Šakić, Tomislav: "Filmski svijet Veljka Bulajića: poprište susreta kolektivnog i privatnog", in: *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis* 57/58 (2009): 19.

modernism”, since from very early on it had lacked the elements of socialist realism. Denegri claims this even for the time before the often-cited speech Miroslav Krleža gave at the Congress of Writers in Ljubljana in 1952. His speech is usually considered to mark the official rupture with socialist realism in Yugoslavia (see Wurm in this volume on the relation of Soviet and Yugoslav film and the aesthetic paradigm of so-called socrealism). So when was the Yugoslav partisan narrative supposed to have been socrealist at all when we take into account that the first partisan short stories were written in the war years of the 1940s and that the first Yugoslav feature film was produced in 1947? And what light does it shed on the small ‘list’ of Yugoslav socialist realist texts that Katerina Clark, an expert on socialist realism in the Russian novel, notes that even in the Soviet Union writers “dismantle[d] the tradition”²⁸ as soon as Stalin died in 1953?

Clark on the other hand mentions in the same breath that a “legacy of socialist realism” can even be found in the early novels of dissident writers like Solzhenitsyn.²⁹ So it might not be necessary to deny socrealist legacies altogether to defend Yugoslavia’s art from being merely in the hands of the bad (not dissident) ideology? Maybe ideology even proves to be good enough in special historical situations like the one postwar-Yugoslavia found itself in, wretched, shattered and wasted? In the end, for Yugoslav artists, directors and writers it might not have been necessary to “batter their child”, the child of socialist realism, as far as there was such a child at all, “to death”³⁰ Socialist realism in Yugoslavia raises more questions than there are convincing answers: What makes a text socrealist? When was there a socrealist art in Yugoslavia?

In the end there is not much more left than Dubravka Ugrešić’s elucidating comment on the Yugoslav cinema program of 1953: “Let’s be honest, there is no essential difference between the aesthetics of Esther Williams films and the aesthetics of the communist spectacles. Except that Esther Williams puts on a better show.”³¹

28 Clark, Katerina: “Socialist realism in Soviet Literature”, in: *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature*, London/New York: Routledge 2001: 174.

29 K. Clark: “Socialist realism in Soviet Literature”, 174.

30 D. Ugrešić: “Long live socialist realism!”, 27.

31 D. Ugrešić: *Thank you for not reading. Essays on Literary Trivia*. IL: Dalkey Archive Press 2003, 177.

PARTISAN SPIRIT AND A NARRATIVE THAT ADAPTS

The partisan narrative and the ideology it transported turned out to be flexible and adaptable. The partisan narrative in Yugoslav arts transformed between 1941/42 and 1992 whenever a new Yugoslav reality was to be provided with meaning. An overview of literary and filmic partisan narratives and partisan songs shows at least three intertwined phases of change in the narrative that were interacting with the political and societal present and that simultaneously collided with aesthetic paradigm shifts in European literature and film (postwar literature, *nouvelle vague*, postmodernism).

First, partisan literature mainly consisted of partisan poetry³² and short stories by active partisans already published in the war years (e.g. Vladimir Nazor, Ivan Goran Kovačić and Branko Ćopić). In his 1947 speech at the Croatian Writers Society's Annual Meeting Vladimir Nazor pointed out that the old notion of the muses silenced by the weapons singing was not true in Yugoslavia. On the contrary, he adds, there was a great demand for poetry and many started writing poems for the first time in their lives.³³ In the following two decades, as mentioned above, also explicitly autobiographical works and autobiographically legitimated fiction novels by partisan veterans were printed (see Vervaeet in this volume). Like Dobrica Ćosić's novel *Daleko je sunce* (1951), which was dedicated "to my comrades", other partisan novels from the 1950s found ways to authenticate their writers as eyewitnesses even if their texts were not genuine memoirs. The authentic claim "I was there" played a crucial role and marked a position between fact and fiction in which the common distinction of author and narrator in literature was eliminated. This connection of factual participation and literary retelling transformed the person of the author to a representative of the real reader, it served the witnessing of facts and at the same time left enough room for an utopian overcoming of reality in the spirit of partisanship. Photos of Vladimir Nazor with a red star sewn to his hat became iconic of the partisan writer. Nazor was a Dalmatian modernist who, already 63 years old, joined the partisans in 1942 and whose writing and attitudes changed drastically. Veljko Bulajić, in his famous 1969 film BIT-

32 M. Komelj: *Kako misliti partizansko umetnost?*

33 Nazor, Vladimir: Govor počasnog predsjednika, in: *Republika. Mjesečnik za književnost, umjetnost i društvo*, Zagreb 1947, 145-147.

KA NA NERETVI (THE BATTLE OF NERETVA), one of the figureheads of *Red Wave* cinema, devoted a whole scene to the icon Nazor, evoking a common Yugoslav literature and people's enlightenment through books and education correlated with the partisans.



Ill. 2: Vladimir Nazor with the partisans: well known photography (fake?) and in the film BITKA NA NERETVI

The *partisan spirit* produced through literature and film empowered the Yugoslav reader/viewer through the partisan narrative, providing her/him with an attitude that was free of the passivity and helplessness of the victim role, without relinquishing the moral innocence and integrity of the assaulted. This position proved to be one that could be developed and made Yugoslavia's dissident role in between the rivaling systems of East and West its historic legacy. Yugoslavia was to remain an active victim and this notion was reproduced very strongly by the arts, including film. With this attitude, even Yugoslavia's critical youth could be taken aboard, a youth that, as the line in Balašević's song goes, was born long after the battles ("bitke daleke") and could not, unlike the early writers, claim to have been there. Going third ways, taking independent and resistant paths became a generational moral commitment for those on board the *ship Yugoslavia*.

In Živojin Pavlović's film KAD BUDEM MRTAV I BEO (1967) we find a direct reference to the uncomfortable 'boat ride' of Yugoslavia's youth in this second phase. The main character Džimi Barka (barka – like *bark*) complains to Bojana aboard a boat, while the Yugoslav flag is waving in the background, that he deserved a better life than his actual (we can add: Yugoslav) one. Pavlović's film does not imbue its characters with the partisan spirit, but rather its aesthetic devices and historical hints that ambush traditional film making as well as the Yugoslav red bourgeoisie's inertia. In Pavlović's film both are being accused of betraying the socialist revolution.

So up to the 1960s the partisan author thrust the partisan character aside, replacing him.

With the change of generations in the 1960s the formerly dominant therapeutic function lost its significance. Yet the partisan spirit of Yugoslavia's partisan beginnings was transposed to the present and can without much effort be detected in films and literature of the second phase between the early 1960s and late 1970s.³⁴ This transposition established a connection between state and personal responsibility and tied contemporary problems and issues back to the 'advance services' the historical partisans had offered. Morals and the ethics of the present needed to match the standards the partisans had set once and for all.

In this second phase of metalepsis, also numerous partisan films by 'state directors' like Stipe Delić and Veljko Bulajić were released that directly addressed questions of the present and produced their own version of partisan transfer: the role of women in society, linguistic nationalisms, distributional justice between Yugoslav republics, minority politics, self-management, development policy, praxis philosophy and more (see Gilić, Jovanović, Velisavljević in this volume). In them, the metalepsis of transposing contemporary issues into the partisan history of Yugoslavia appears symptomatically in the form of filmic temporal goofs. So for example in Bulajić's blockbuster KOZARA (1962) the main female character Zlata – evidently construed as a contemporary role model of the working and independent woman – wears 1960s clothes in a 1940s setting (see Vittorelli in this volume on the imagery of the female partisan in Yugoslavia). Next to the *Red Wave* films in the 1960s and 1970s (see Stanković, Velisavljević and Jovanović in this volume) we also encounter partisan children's literature and film, mostly about partisans couriers and child partisans, addressing (school-)children and teenagers. In this time also a number of filmic adaptations of partisan novels were produced: some of them are ideologically simplified and lack the critical potential the novels once had, some update the partisan experience in new ways (e.g.: Lalić's *Lelejska gora* 1957 adapted in 1968 by Zdravko Velimirović; Davičo's *Pesma* 1952 adapted in 1975 by Živojin Pavlović).

But as introduced above with Pavlović's KAD BUDEM MRTAV I BEO, even films thematically not dealing with the partisans engaged the new

34 R. Jambrešić-Kirin: "Politika sjećanja na Drugi svjetski rat u doba medijske reprodukcije socijalističke culture", 170.

generation, perpetuated the ideological force of the partisan narrative and paradoxically became a simultaneous means of critique of Yugoslavia. There is a series of critical partisan films from the *New Wave* that polemically discuss Yugoslavia's history (see Jovanović in this volume). In them a generation of writers and directors inspired by praxis philosophy usurps the partisan view point and accuses in the same breath the fathers' and therefore partisans' generation of having betrayed the spirit of the revolution.

In the time after Tito's death in 1980, the Yugoslav partisan narrative took ironic, postmodern and post-socialist turns (see Komel and Colombi in this volume). In the course of the paradigm shift brought about by the retro avant-garde in Yugoslavia (NSK, Mladen Stilinović), a new idea of political and artistic utopia emerged that took hold of the partisan narrative with deconstructive and media archeological intent.³⁵ Examples like the remake of the partisan film *TRENUTKI ODLOČITVE* (1955) by František Čap, remade by Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid in 1985 (see Colombi in this volume), show how formal and ideological borrowings from the partisan film lead to a dissociation of the political present and the narrative.

At the same time, immense transformations of partisan motifs took place in literature, while the partisan novel as format disappeared completely for some time. It was only in the last few years that partisan novels sporadically reappeared, like, to take an example from Bulgaria, Alek Popov's ironic, yet ambivalent novel *Sestri Palaveevi v burjata na istorijata* (2013) or the first partisan crime fiction novel from Serbia: Vule Žurić's *Nedelja pocova* (2010) that reshapes the story about the famous partisan Nikoletina Bursać. The partisan hero Bursać appears as a victim of murder at the beginning of the text! But also genuine partisan novels like Maruša Krese's Slovenian novel *Da me je strah* (2012) have reentered the stage of partisan literature.

Through all decades the partisan narrative has performed as a space of political and societal negotiations in Yugoslavia (see Petrović on the role of JNA photos in the partisan tradition in this volume). The narrative is still alive, as one can see from the current partisan iconography appearing for example in the context of post-Yugoslav anti-capitalist, anti-global political protest actions and demonstrations as they occurred in Slovenia, Macedonia and Bosnia in the last few years. It still makes sense – in another way than

35 Arns, Inke: *Avantgarda v vzvratnem ogledalu*. Ljubljana: Maska 2006 [dissertation published in German 2004].

before – to turn to the partisan narrative and partisan arts and to trace their beginnings, the fate they encountered on the way right up to the most recent versions and transformations.

THE ROAD TO HELL IS PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS

I would like to thank the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and Humboldt University for their support of the conference “Partisans. Narrative, Staging and Afterlife” held in Berlin in 2011. There is special compensation for historical sufferings in the fact that the Thyssen Stiftung co-financed this event on the Yugoslav partisans so generously. Thyssen Hütte AG played a crucial role within Germany’s arms industry during World War II and several Thyssen branches abused forced laborers in that time. As 270 000 laborers alone from Yugoslavia were enslaved in Germany, there must without a doubt have been Yugoslavs and also partisans among those forced to work for Thyssen.³⁶

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