

Film and Socialism in the Post-War Poland

By
Petar Mitric

Thesis submitted to the Central European University
History Department

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

First Supervisor: Professor Balazs Trencsenyi
Second Supervisor: Professor Maciej Janowski

Budapest, Hungary
2007

Copyright in the text of this thesis rests with the Author. Copies by any process, either in full or part, may be made only in accordance with the instructions given by the Author and lodged in the Central European Library. Details may be obtained from the librarian. This page must form a part of any such copies made. Further copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the written permission of the Author

Abstract

The first objective of my thesis is to present the way in which Polish film narrated the history of socialism in the 1945-1960 period. Socialism in Poland of this period can be divided into three phases, each containing a unique connection with film. Pursuing this objective, my argumentation will treat film primarily as a historical source. Thus, I will apply Hayden White's neologism "historiophoty" to the analysis of several Polish films and their interaction with society.

Table of contents

FILM AND SOCIALISM IN THE POST-WAR POLAND	1
ABSTRACT.....	3
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER 1 - THEORETICAL CHAPTER	10
1.1 <i>FILM AND HISTORY</i>	11
1.2 <i>ITALIAN NEOREALISM</i>	15
1.3 <i>CONCEPT OF WAR CINEMA</i>	16
CHAPTER 2 - EARLY POLISH POST-WAR FILM AS AN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY; FILM AND IDEOLOGY, FILM AND SOCIOLOGY	23
2.1 <i>POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL ATMOSPHERE IN THE EARLY POST-WAR POLAND</i>	23
2.2 <i>CONCEPT OF THE NATIONAL CINEMA IN POLAND</i>	31
2.3 <i>CONGRESS IN WISLA – OFFICIAL INTRODUCTION OF STALINISM TO CULTURE</i>	47
CHAPTER 3 - THE FILM IN SERVICE OF STALINIZATION	50
3.1 <i>STALINIZATION IN POLAND (1950-1955)</i>	50
3.2 <i>FIVE FROM BARSKA STREET – ALEKSANDER FORD’S APPEASEMENT OR CHALLENGING THE SOCIALIST- REALISM</i>	54
3.3 <i>ANDRZEJ WAJDA – SIGNALING THE EMERGENCE OF NEW GENERATION OF FILMMAKERS</i>	72
CHAPTER 4 – THE ROLE OF THE POLISH SCHOOL IN RAISING THE NATIONAL SENTIMENTS IN THE 1956 – 1960 POLAND	73
4.1 <i>SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE – DE-STALINISATION AND REVISIONISM</i>	73
4.2 <i>ANDRZEJ WAJDA’S KANAL ON THE TWO SIDES OF THE IRON CURTAIN – COLLECTIVE CATHARSIS IN POLAND, PRAISES FROM ABROAD.</i>	77
4.3 <i>POLISH SCHOOL AS AN ALTERNATIVE IDEOLOGY – ACCEPTING THE PAST, FACING THE PRESENCE</i>	91
BIBLIOGRAPHY	101



Introduction

This poster for Krzysztof Kieslowski's film *Amator* (Camera Buff) was made in 1977, in a different period from the one I am addressing here. Neither Kieslowski nor *Camera Buff* is, at least directly, among the topics I am going to cover in the text of this thesis. The matter of my concern is actually the notion that this poster evokes when it is observed separately from the film for which it was created – the notion of a tight link between socialism and film in Eastern Europe. Socialism is epitomized in the brick. Camera objective attached to the brick stands for film as “the most important art” which was always meant end expected to accompany the development of socialism.

Revolution and the introduction of socialism to Poland and other Eastern Bloc countries in the post-World War the Second Europe led to state-financed, institutionalized, national and engaged cinema. The film was expected to be revolutionary and serious matter. Film in Eastern Europe quickly identified itself with the values of the socialist revolution, resting on its formative postulates, ideas and achievements. However, as the courses of socialism changed and, better say, deteriorated, the cinema was evolving and each new generation enhanced it with an authentic vision and poetics, and made it maturer. Film became the reminder of the revolutionary values that were gradually being abandoned. It de-tabooized the important national issues, and articulated the everyday problems and plights from which ordinary people suffered. The phenomenon is that although parting from the authorities of a socialist state, in a sense that it adopted a critical attitude toward them due to the limitation a socialist state imposed on its national cinema, film intended to restore and sustain the revolutionary values. It never showed the tendency to change them radically or to renounce them.

The first objective of my thesis is to present the way in which Polish film narrated the history of socialism in the 1945-1960 period. Socialism in Poland of this period can be divided into three phases, each containing a unique connection with film. Pursuing this objective, my argumentation will treat film primarily as a historical source. Thus, I will apply Hayden White's neologism "historiophoty" to the analysis of several Polish films and their interaction with society.

My second objective is to scrutinize the idea that birth of national cinemas in socialist countries was essentially connected to the Revolution. Introduction of the socialist order led either to birth or radically different recreation of national cinemas.

Revolution celebrated victory, communism, solidarity, collectivity, security, abolition of bourgeoisie, and film celebrated Revolution. Later, while the Party officials were departing from all values of the Revolution, going into the extremist forms of conformist, opportunism and elitism, significant groups of film authors wanted to remind about the values maintaining its revolutionary formative pattern. Those patterns became so powerfully imbedded into Eastern European cinemas that they absolutely distanced from any filmic style, which was not intellectual, engaged and revolutionary. I will set my focus on the case of Polish cinema and its authors, who, although sometimes renounced their socialist or communist orientation, remained devoted to the intellectual, engaged, cathartic, qualities of cinema that would always motivate people to be active and united instead of passive and indifferent.

The Second World War was definitely predominant topic (if not the only one) in all post-war Eastern European films (starting from those produced in the USSR). My third objective is to defend the interpretation stating that two groups within the films with the war thematic can be differentiated: *war cinema* and *historical cinema*. Both cinemas have the war as a subject matter. Nevertheless, while the latter intends to give an account of a particular war and serve as a dry historical source or commercial entertainment, the former stitches up the observer into its imaginary world by connecting the evoked recent past with the present moment at a symbolic level.

During elaboration of aforementioned ideas and classifications, there is an important question that persistently comes up. To what extent can war cinema be regarded as a valid historical source from the point of view of modern historiography? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to approach the filmic material in several

ways. What should be thoroughly examined are the relations that cinema and its creators established with society, ideology, politics, and, above all, history. My general definition of war cinema and its dependence on history will rest on the interpretation in the following three books: **War Cinema** by Milutin Colic, **Cinema Studies: The main concepts** by Susan Hayward and **Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914-2005** by Denise J. Youngblood. The relation between film and sociology will be presented on the basis of the concepts by Georges Sadoul, Marc Ferro and Pierre Sorlin who describe with slightly different approaches how film reflects society in which it is created and the ideology which shapes society.

Hayden White invented the term *historiophoty* in order to define the process of using the visual material as historical sources. The creation of the term and challenging the potency and dominance of the official modern historiography by introducing the use of new, radically different, sources raised debates among certain historians. They assumed the attitudes either for or against applying the filmmaking or film analysis in the history writing process (Robert A. Rosenstone, R.J.Raack, I.C.Jarvie, among them).

Before moving to the case of Polish cinema, the concept of *neorealism* must be also defined. Neorealist films and the network of their interactions with war, ideology, and society served as the primary model for the first two Polish generations of filmmakers who lived worked in the historical period that is of mine concern. I chose one concepts from the extensive literature on neorealism which is of particular importance in the analysis of the first Polish films, their poetics and interaction with society and national history: *integral realism* by Cezare Cavatini. According to it, the cinema of a country must be both national and people's.

The body of my thesis is divided into three chapters; each dedicated to a particular phase in the historical period I am writing about. Each chapter contains a short introduction describing the period in question at the macro-historical level, the elaborate analysis of one or, in the case of the first chapter, three films, and a conclusion which stands for an adequate transition to the next section of the text.

The first chapter covers the period between 1945 and 1949. It gives the overview of Poles' reactions to the all-way changes in post-war society and transpositions of their concerns into the first three significant Polish films: *Forbidden Songs*, *Boarder Street*, and *Last stage*. The chapter introduces the processes of nationalization and institutionalization of cinema, the life of the first film, their interaction with the audience and the authorities, and their relevance in creating the idea of universal humanism and universal suffering.

The second chapter covers the phase of the severe Stalinization of Poland, which lasted from 1950 to 1955. This change significantly influenced cinema and its course. Cinema's creative and artistic role was minimized. It served solely as a means for indoctrination and spreading the Stalinist Propaganda. The case study of the film *Five from Barska Street* will be presented. The analysis of the topics of the film, and its life and after-life (examined according to the reactions in the press of the period) has a function to describe the values of the Stalinized Poland, the imposed perception of cinema, and attempts of challenging the process of dogmatization in both film and society.

The third chapter introduces again the new phase in Polish post war history marked by the death of Boleslaw Bierut, Poznan's riots and the "thaw". Except for the

certain amount of freedom in expression and poetics this phase also introduced the new generation of filmmakers, who grew up and who were intellectually shaped in the post-war Poland only. The Second World War was for them history already. Nevertheless, their films almost always featured the war as the theme. However, they used the war as a topic in order to face and evoke in front of the audience the current problems that struck them as the post-war lost generation. A new cinematic style called Polish Film School was created and during five years of its existence it produced war (not historical) films which today really justifies the existence of the notion of historiophoty and who created the potent legacy for all future generations of Polish filmmakers.

CHAPTER 1 - Theoretical Chapter

Films as a historical *source*, even in an ideally typical case, can only give an indirect picture on the situation and circumstances which serve as a framework for their birth. In addition to that, being a direct weapon capable of influencing society in the given period, film also contains the aim concept which has very little to do with reality on a primary level. Therefore, the analysis of film as a historical source and a source in history writing will be carried out in several segments.

The first point of view is given by the information concerning the *structures, movements, and values of society* appearing in films (sometimes even independent of the primary intentions of the authors); confronting the pictures created by certain historical analysis and information with firm reality. Then I will analyze the way in which the *normative-ideological concept* which appear in the after-war period change after 1956.

Film then gives over to a greater and greater extent to *the realistic elements of the age*, as well as the *ideological aimconcepts of the age*, autonomous, but still similar to the earlier ones of the creators who were already partly independent of the political and ideological leadership. The position of film and film production within the cultural policy, and the critical reception of the film can be analyzed only in the context of the general political situation in the country, internal relationships and debates of the profession, and the subsequent *confrontation* of a finished film with the set of norms that has already played a part in the production. A film is a product of a political system, and thus dependant of political structures. However, film also plays a significant role in shaping people's attitudes, so it can also, in its semi-independence, influence society and indirectly or subtly undermine the existing order and thus provoke political changes. When Eastern European post-war film is perceived through this union with politics and society, a possible conclusion is that it can be a relevant historical source, since as a subject of investigation it necessarily involves, in wider sense, the history of culture, ideology, and to certain extent, that of the society in the period between 1945 and 1958.

In order to reconstruct the tight connection between the cinema, and history and politics in the post-war Poland, it is necessary to introduce several theoretical concepts and relations: the link between film and history, the concept of war cinema, suture, and the Italian neorealism.

1.1 Film and History

Mark Ferro and Pierre Sorlin in 1977 took up a research proving that, with great historical competence cinema reflects reality at all levels.

For Mark Ferro cinema tells stories that play up certain of life's aspects and downplay others; it triggers reactions that clarify the ideological substrata of a given society. Ferro uses as evidence not just what a film says, but what it does not say, its style, the way in which it is read. He reconstructed Nazi obsessions through the editing of *Jud Suss*. He considered the change in social climate in pre- and postwar France by showing the different perception of the film *La Grande Illusion*.¹

For Pierre Sorlin the idea of mirroring needs to be broadened. A film, before showing us the interests and the orientation of the society shows us the horizon of thought along which it travels. Before telling us what a given society chooses to portray, a film tells us what is portrayable. Thus, Sorlin posits the ideal of *visible*, by which he designates what filmmakers consider easily presentable and what viewers can easily perceive. The result is to bring into focus both the kind of "image" a culture uses to portray reality and the idea of the "image of reality" a culture possesses. Sorlin applies this concept to Italian film and society in the post – World War II period. He shows which concerns seem to have obsessed both film and society and also which ideas determined by the way in which the world was portrayed. Sorlin then broadens his research to include all of post-war Europe. He lays out a series of recurrent themes, correlates them with each national culture, and places them in boarder frameworks of thought.²

There is the whole group of similar studies research that shows the ways in which a society *represents itself* in order to create a sense of belonging among its members, who

¹ See Casetti, Francesco. *Theories of Cinema: 1945-1955*; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999, pp. 176- 204.

² Ibid.

share common themes of discussion and models of reference. On the horizon are, naturally, the “histories of mentality,” which through an analysis of the text that circulate in a society (among them films) bring out that society’s ideological orientations, conception of life, and perceptions of the world.

Important aspect is the nature of relation between film history and history in general. It has been widely acknowledged that the former values the rethinkings that characterize the latter and the latter takes more and more into consideration the data brought out by the former. An awareness of moving within the same horizon is penetrating both sides. Likewise, the concept of films as a *historical source* has scholars in both fields, who often work side by side.³

Defining the role of cinema in history writing, Hayden White sets the main concern of the professional historians in this respect. It deals with the relative adequacy of what he defines as “historyophoty” (the representation of history and our thought about it in visual images and filmic discourse) to the criteria of truth and accuracy presumed to govern the professional practice of *historiography* (the representation of history in verbal images and written discourse). He poses a question whether it is possible to “translate” a written account of history into a visual auditory equivalent without significant loss of content.⁴

³ This field characterized by the increasing number of studies on historical films (that both write history and accumulate sources. Historical representation is at the core of G. Schmid’s *Die Figuren des Keleidoskops*, and is part of P. Ortoleva’s *Scene del passato*. Taken from Casetti, Francesco. *Theories of Cinema: 1945-1955*; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999, pp. 337.

⁴ White, Hayden. “Historiography and Historyophoty”, *The American Historical review*: Vol. 93, No.5, Dec., 1988, pp. 1193.

Another Historian, Robert Rosenstone further raises another question in this field. It deals with the challenge that presented by historyophoty to historiography.⁵ In this respect, Rosenstone confronts two radically opposed attitudes: the first based on theory of a historian and a strong advocate of putting history onto film, R.J.Raack⁶, and the second one based on the concept of a philosopher Ian Jarvie saying that the moving image carries a “poor information load”, suffers from a discursive load”⁷, and thus from any possibility for doing a meaningful history on film.⁸

The main flaw of the latter interpretation is that it rests on the idea that cinema serves only as propaganda and entertainment. He also does not differentiate different genres of films and different production countries and companies. This fact leads us again to above the discussed necessity of differentiating war cinema from historical cinema. In this context war cinema uses film aesthetics, that is, (as White mentions) sound, music, symbolizm in order to avoid the linear descriptive narrative and compensate what it lacks, not having footnoting system to defend its own and criticize opposite discourses. Besides, by involving observers’ emotions, film (primarily war cinema) as feminist studies in filmmaking say seriously bring into question historical representation and analysis that, while pretending to nothing more than “telling what really happened” effectively present a patriarchal version of history.⁹ Furthermore, using simplified stylistic references, film

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Raack argues that traditional written history is too linear and too narrow in focus to render the fullness of the complex, multi-dimensional world in which humans live....”Only film can provide an adequate empathetic reconstruction and recover all the past liveliness. Raack, R.J. “Historiography as Cinematography: A Prolegomenon to film Work for Historians”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, No. 18, July 1983, pp.416.

⁷ Jarvie, I.C. “Seeing Through movies”, *Philosophy of the social Sciences*, No. 8, 1978, pp.378.

⁸ Rosenstone, Robert: “History in images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 93, No. 5, Dec., 1988, pp. 1176.

⁹ White, Hayden. “Historiography and Historyophoty”, *The American Historical review*, Vol. 93, No.5, Dec., 1988, pp. 1183.

offers to wide masses of people a historical account that is more comprehensible than all discourses within modern historiography, which often, due to their elitist, highly intellectual nature limits their target-groups to a handful of historians. In addition to this, nothing guarantees the absolute relevance of the recognized scientific historical text, since they (like film) can also deliberately or accidentally omit the inclusion of some events or documents into their historical accounts. At the same time, there have been numerous cases that films or literary works initiate an ignored historical event that only many years later enters a discourse within modern historiography.

The content of my thesis will present how it was the case in post-war socialist Poland where some topics like Polish anti-Semitism, horrors of the Holocaust, and Warsaw Uprising were fully treated or at least hinted in several Polish films while the official national historiography was mostly silent about them (although both cinema and history writing were marked by the same burden of censorship). A parallel can be drawn with the West where the historical novels or films also raised certain issues before they became the concern of historiography. For example, hidden records about the past of certain high-ranking officials who used to cooperate with fascist regimes during WWII, facilitating finalization of different atrocities.¹⁰

1.2. Italian Neorealism

In terms of the newly emerged post-war film aesthetics, I will examine exclusively the influence of Italian neorealism on Polish filmmakers. It will include the innovations that

¹⁰ The examples can be the novel an Australian author *Raki* by B. Wongar dealing with Kurt Waldheim's nazi war dossier in the Serbian Balkans, and Liliana Cavanni's film *Night Porter* (1974). See Ljiljana

specificity and complexity of Poland conditioned and brought about. Cezare Cavatini came to the idea of the *integral realism* that implied direct observation of life, every-day facts and the engagement of actors who suffered the same things as the characters in the film. Italian film then was also *people's* and *national*. Thus, the topics that in the commercial pre-war cinematic atmosphere had been unimaginable became very popular. The artists were interested in people, historical events, uprisings, efforts and longings in the process of creation the modern Poland or Italy. That implies the *national* character of Polish or the Italian cinema. In addition to that, it stresses the advantages and importance of the state-monitored nationalization of cinema. Neorealist film is marked as *people's* because it looks for its heroes within much broader circle than it used to be before the war. The cinema, no matter how intellectual and alternative it seemed, was inspired by the passions and the hopes of the great mass of people. Neorealist cinema also interprets people's anti-fascist movements and their subsequent post war thirst for a juster political and social order. The then cinema also realistically depicts the actual conditions of people's lives. (I examined the features of the Neorealism mostly from the compilation of the essays from the journals *Cinema Nuovo* and *Cinema* edited by Sergio Turconni and books **Cinema Italiano (1903-1953)** by M Gromo, **Cinema e Realta** by B Rondi, and **An Aesthetics of the Reality**" by Andre Bazen)

1.3. Concept of War Cinema

War cinema cannot be established only according to a single person's own creative thought and will, but according to the will and need of those whose power it should

Bogoeva-Sedlar, "Mapping the Other Mapping the Self: B. Wongar's Novel Raki"; Nis: Facta Universatis

maintain and strengthen as well. Upon outbreak of a war the importance of such function of the cinema is multiplied, and the war cinema becomes a sort of “army formation” for fulfilling the patriotic and state’s objectives. In case it does not follow the state’s objectives, it loses the donations, or is simply banned. In the first years of the Second World War, the American government did not allow making even the pacifist films, since it presumed that they could serve to the enemy, and that people should not think about peace in the brutal war reality, but about war only. The dictum that unites all wartime films is “the love towards the homeland, the hate towards the enemy”.¹¹

The war cinema operates in the same way all over the world. It is misleading to think that there are different types of war cinema due to the differences of their production systems, or the official political or ideological systems of the society, or the country in which they were produced. In socialist countries marked by the state film production, film was subjected to the state control. In Western countries, in which the production belongs to a private sector, there is no a state-control, but there is another type of control which can be manifested in different other ways. The commonest among them are interventions of the religious organizations, boycotts of the distributors which refuse to put on screen the films they characterize as anti-state films, or official bans. Thus, when people mention the bans of already shot and censored films in the Soviet Union (Chukhrayev’s *Tryasina* [Quagmire], for instance), it is inevitable to mention also the

series: Linguistics and Literature, Vol. 2, No.9, 2002.

¹¹ Colic, Milutin. *Sta je ratni film* [What is War Cinema]; Beograd: Institut za film, 1989, pp.23.

American film *From Here to Eternity* by Fred Zinnemann which was being kept on the shelf for years before it was released.¹²

Then what is the universal definition of war cinema? Sometimes, it seems that the concept has been defined in different ways in Eastern Europe and in the West. Nevertheless, when we compare both types of interpretations (for instance, Susan Hayward's and Milutin Colic's theoretical definitions), it becomes clear that the crucial parameters of both concepts overlap. The main question both authors pose is whether war cinema includes only films that speak about fighting among people and nations, and have a war as a dominant theme. If it is so, then, can war cinema also be labeled as historical cinema? Is the war cinema only the cinema that treats the fight between the nations or fights *within* a nation as well? Does a war cinema necessarily imply any arm fighting, or even fighting without arm like the so-called "cold" fighting (Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*)? The war films are not only the films that have a war as their subject matter. The war cinema also can easily be mixed up with the science fiction (like George Lucas' *Star Wars*). The war cinema does not necessarily treat a particular historical event. Hence, there is difference between the historical and war cinema. There are war films whose action is poetically constructed and conceived, like the film *Devojka* (A Girl) by a Yugoslav director Purisa Djordjevic. The war cinema further includes the films whose actions take place after a war, during the peacetime. However, the consequences of the war in the form of material devastation and the psychology created by killing people are

¹² See Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concept*; London and New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 482-497 and also Colic, Milutin. *Sta je ratni film* [What is War Cinema]; Beograd: Institut za film, 1989, pp. 14.

present and the most dominant in such films (*Piatka z ulicy Barskiej* [Five from Barska Street] by Aleksander Ford to which I will refer extensively in the Chapter II)

In defining the war cinema time-criterion is also important. War cinema deals with the events and protagonists from the 20th century. All other films whose topic is a pre-20th century war are classified as historical films. Still, in the 21st century, there is a tendency to classify war cinema as a sub-genre of historical cinema, due to the fact that it always conveys history, regardless of the type of events or people it treats. Another distinctive feature of war cinema in this respect is the fact that, unlike historical cinema, it presents the war more dramatically, severely and alternatively. It feels deeply rooted in the real, and it is usually based on the personal experiences. While processing such material, the war cinema directors use the concept that is in film studies known as *suture* – stitching the spectator into the filmic text.¹³ A spectator, watching the film, becomes both subject and the object of the look. The film brings revelation. It is based on a past event, but simultaneously, it is deeply rooted in the present reality. On the other hand, historical cinema keeps a distance, at least to some extent, between an observer and his reality, and the reality of a particular historical film.

The war itself can be caused by different constellations of circumstances: social, political, religious, national, economic, so the war films differ from each other according to the circumstances they deal with although these circumstances are very often interwoven.¹⁴

¹³ As a critical concept, *suture* was introduced by the theorist Jean-Pierre Oudart in 1977, and was based on studies in child psychoanalysis conducted by Jacques Lacan in the 1960s. See Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concept*, pp. 404-405.

¹⁴ The civil war in USA is caused by the economic reasons, Spanish Civil War, the wars in the Latin America, Salvador, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia are of political nature, based on confronting two different

1.4 War Cinema as Part of Intellectual History, and Micro Approach in Interpretations of War Cinema

With the multitude of urges that lead to its creation (not only with its subject matter and means of expression) the war cinema has very often directed its observers outside of the closeness of the particular political systems or ideology. It has uniquely defined the systems within a society - their social, ideological and political aspects. That means that it tends to broaden the overall picture of a society, to break politically constructed taboos, and question the national or ideological myths and legends. In a word, war cinema has frequently endowed a society with the initiation of a new idea. Sometimes it could be a modification of a previous idea, but, at the same time, it might be unique and later further developed by means of some subsequent films, cultural manifestos, or literary and scholarly works. Thus, the war cinema in the post-war world became a very engaged, subtle means of communication between a film director and people. It loaded itself with the immense burden of responsibility. Its preoccupations are history, the truths, and the establishments that so much emphasize the importance of history using it as a means for achieving and maintaining their own moral and ideological orders. Reviving the recent historical events, the war cinema discovers, summarizes and expresses historical experiences, intending to deliver a moral lesson to the society in which a film emerges.

The war cinema as such is going to be of my particular interest in the further text. Being alternative, engaged, alarming, it stands for an integral part of a nation's

ideologies, but, at the same, time all those wars can have their social, economic, national or religious patterns. Consequently, it is the same with the films about them.

intellectual history. My intention here is to deal with it using the intellectual history's discourse. As I have already mentioned, if war cinema did not create, it accompanied the development and ubiquity of certain ideas that unnecessarily could comply to some extent with the official ideology.

On the other hand, war cinema (although in the cases of numerous films marked as artistically very powerful and independent) is tightly connected to politics. It always serves as a means or an argument of certain political discourse. It communicates and defends pros or cons for an idea, supports or develops love toward own homeland and nation, or hate toward someone else's homelands and nations, propagate national victories and some other nation's defeats. Such predetermination of war cinema can be seen throughout the whole history of the twentieth century.¹⁵ Its predetermination has been proved by the existence of various forms of censorship throughout the world.¹⁶ After the Second World War, the censorship (at least the state-censorship in Eastern Europe) ended up producing the counter-effect – craftily wrapped war films with an intelligent expression convenient for emitting “subversive” messages to the wide masses of people. Thus, such films and their authors, uncompromisingly striving for the autonomous working conditions and expression gained certain levels of independence from the state in a number of the former Eastern Bloc countries. However, on the other hand, the question remains how much independent from an opposition political option the authors can stay while fighting against the official one. Serving to a promotion and

¹⁵ The example of the censorship and cinema committees during the world wars in America, Germany, Japan, the Soviet Union which were entitled to “sell the war” to people of their country, and to motivate them to perceive the participation and dying in war as the sole heroic deed.

¹⁶ Arthur Miller told that it was dangerous to ascribe the supreme meaning to the war heroism since by listening to the music and reading books people can visualize whatever they want, but by watching the movie, they visualize what somebody else want.

development of an idea, always connected to an ideology or politics, undeniably prevents authors from having the absolute auteur independence.

Such position enables and entitles the film directors to create a parallel ideology to the official one. Its narrative neither totally describes society as it really looks like, nor it can be completely opposed to the official ideology since certain willing or unwilling compromises with the state are inevitable for making a film. Thus, war cinema, if regarded as a source in history-writing, must be more broadly contextualized, since behind it lies a complex network comprised of corresponding macro-historical context, cultural and intellectual trends and inheritance, and directors' personal urges. In a word, only an all-way scrutiny of the war films can deprive us of misleading conclusions to which the observers are easily subjected due to the strongly premeditated character of film in general and particularly the war cinema.

In the course of my thesis I will extensively present the case studies of two films. They can be perceived as Polish, Eastern European, European, or simply samples of war cinema. Nevertheless, my main concern is to show, descending to the micro level, how those films operated within a society, what was the historical trace they left in time, how they contributed to the development of a particular idea. Masterfully scrutinized and contextualized, the micro stories can stand for very potent and powerful metaphors of a whole historical period, usually casting a new light on particular historical events, revising the existing historical interpretations and, provoking catharsis and revelation-like sentiments.

CHAPTER 2 - Early Polish Post-War Film as an Intellectual History; Film and Ideology, Film and Sociology

2.1 Political and Intellectual Atmosphere in the Early Post-War Poland

2.1. 1 General Overview

The finish of the Second World War found Poland divided, disappointed and still rebellious. All-way, fundamental changes that spread through the whole society, the changes that were denominated by the increasing Soviet influence and the decreasing interest of the Western powers, divided Poles into three different groups, according to their political orientation and the vision for the future Poland. That happened in the very first post-war years already, and involved all strata of the society: from elites to peasantry. It is difficult to speak about percentage, or profile of people belonging to each orientation. However, what is evident is that, initially, a number of Poles were marked as the “hard-liners”, in a sense that they regarded the Soviets and the Red Army only as another occupying force equal to that of Germany. The second group of people showed readiness for certain compromises and peaceful, passive resistance to the aggressive Stalinization. The third orientation included people who regarded the communism as the only Polish path for the future. They facilitated implementation of the Socialist order into

the Polish post-war society, provoking the utmost rage among their arch-nemesis, who were living and operating as the war was still in progress.

The atmosphere in the Polish society immediately after World War II was significantly shaped by the following factors: the imposition of changes to the territory of the state; a new regime put in power by the use of force, dependent on outside forces, lacking wide public support, regarded as alien by a large part of the society; explicit involvement of the USSR into internal affairs and certain lack of sovereignty in foreign policy; mass repressions; the destruction of the country, dispersion of Poles outside of the country's borders; finally, the physical and mental exhaustion of the society, the destruction of many old structures and social groups, the drastic erosion of elites, which were the particular target of the Nazi occupiers, and the decimation of the most dynamic individuals who had been involved in the armed underground. The destruction of the society did not cease with the German occupation but continued in the post-war period. It began with the internment and subsequent deportation to the USSR of thousands of Home Army (Armija Krajowa) soldiers.¹⁷

Polish responses to the new situation initially rested on the interaction between two forces: the force of accommodation and the force of resistance that dismissed everything that threatened the community and its culture. The interplay of the two forces can be identified in the decisions of politicians and military leaders - in Poland and in London, in the choices made by intellectuals, and in the natural actions of millions of people. Social, ideological, and political affiliations also played a role, either facilitating accommodation or discouraging it. Accommodation and resistance grew from a single

root - the imperative to survive. It was not only the matter of the biological and cultural survival of the nation but also the survival of the Polish state as a protector of the material and cultural life of Poles.¹⁸

A consequence of the yoking of adaptive processes with resistance, be it passive or active, conscious or instinctive, was the appearance of a gap between ideology, the sphere of symbols and values, and everyday actions made necessary by the basic necessities of life. The coexistence between the two spheres, which influenced one another, characterized the attitudes and behavior of Polish society from the moment that the communists began to set up their rule. The relationship between the spheres was dynamic; it changed along with developments in Poland and the evolution of the international situation from the "Grand Alliance" to the Cold War. On the domestic scene, the events that had the most influence on the attitudes and behavior of the society, including its elites, were without a doubt the following: the Warsaw Uprising, the Yalta conference, the creation - after months of negotiations - of the Provisional Government of National Unity and Mykölajczyk's return to Poland, the annexation of the western lands and the great migrations that accompanied it, and January 1947 elections, which definitively confirmed the communists' monopoly on power, with all of its implications.¹⁹

2.1.2. What Were the Three Orientations?

As I already mentioned, the first orientation implied the inevitability of armed conflict between the USSR and the West as well as the impossibility of equal partnership with the

¹⁷ Kersten, Krystina. "Poles' Responses to the Realities of 1944-1947: Questions for Considerations", *Res Publica*, (transl.) Dawid Walendowski, February 1990.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Davies, Norman. *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 176

communists. It argued that political pluralism, coalition rule, and free elections could not be genuine in the presence of the Red Army. The consistent anti-communism of the spokesmen of this group allowed them to see that the concept of a truly independent Poland acceptable to the USSR was an example of wishful thinking. There are a lot of documents, statements by politicians, and press articles published in Poland and abroad affirming this orientation and showing its inevitability.²⁰ The chief advocates of not making compromises and waiting for the international situation to change were: President Raczkiewicz and the London government after Mykolajczyk's dismissal, Generals Anders and Sosnkowski, the majority of the intellectual elite abroad and a minority of it in Poland. Among the émigrés, this line was supported by nationalist parties - including the Stronnictwo Narodowe²¹ - but it also had support among socialists like Tomasz Arciszewski, Adam Pragier, and Adam Ciolkosz²². In Poland, the "no compromise" line was adopted by many politicians from the nationalist camp. It was these groups that in 1945 sharply criticized the Moscow agreement and Mykolajczyk's decision to enter the Provisional Government of National Unity.²³

According to this orientation, Poland was only passing through a short interwar period. The situation at the time was "an intermission" between the wars. Nevertheless, from today's perspective there can be no doubt that the model of struggle that included

²⁰ Kersten, Krystina. "Poles' Responses to the Realities of 1944-1947: Questions for Considerations", *Res Publica*, (transl.) Dawid Walendowski, February 1990.

²¹ The biggest pre-war Party in Poland which gathered most of the political opponent of the Poland's endecja (Narodowa Demokracja) faction. During the war they fought against both Germans and Soviets. After the war its members were persecuted or purged out of Poland. In London they started the émigré journal *Mysl Polska*. It was recreated in Poland after 1989.

²² Polish pre-war left-wing intellectuals who opposed Sanacja regime and mostly emigrated to the West during the war. After the war they strongly opposed Yalta Agreement.

²³ Davies, Norman. *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

certain compromises and non-violent resistance was more perilous to the system, which was based on atomizing the society and objectifying it, than aggressive armed resistance. Gradually, the proponents of the softer orientations as well as émigré politicians became aware of the threat of a potential arm conflict.

The psychological reflex to point out those responsible for disappointments and losses, as well as the need to rationalize and justify compromise, or even conformism, and opportunism, immeasurably encouraged the spread of an orientation that might be called *opposition within the Yalta framework*²⁴ in Polish society. This orientation, which combined compromise on the one hand and struggle for (broadly speaking) internal autonomy and the preservation of pluralism on the other, took many forms. However, at its foundation were the rejection of the communist-imposed order as contrary to national and social aspirations, and the conviction that Poland's external situation would not change in the foreseeable future. In connection to this, Czesław Miłosz wrote:

“Poland of the after-war period, represented by the Government in exile in London, and the Home Army suffered defeat, whereas the Communists, thanks to the Red Army, won with their program of transforming Poland. The émigrés believed that the Third World War would soon break out. The underground shared that belief in the country, which provided arguments against collaboration with the new powers that be. Who did not believe in the Third World War had to take for granted the new division of Europe and adjust to the new division of Europe and adjust to the new reality. Neither I nor my friends writers believed in WWII²⁵

The differences within the opposition orientation, which included the legal, Church, social associations and organizations, the underground, and millions of people not engaged in activity that was political per se, but who manifested their opposition to

²⁴ Kersten, Krystina. “Poles’ Responses to the Realities of 1944-1947: Questions for Considerations”, *Res Publica*, (transl.) Dawid Walendowski, February 1990.

²⁵ Miłosz, Czesław. *Captive Mind*; New York: Vintage International, 1962.

the new regime in various ways, were a matter of the forms of resistance and acceptable limits of compromise. There is no question that the popular support and influence of groups remaining underground were gradually decreasing. But it was not only fear that prevented people from reading underground papers. The language and tone of the underground press was out of step with attitudes determined by everyday life. Words like "occupation" and "collaboration" could not strike a chord with readers engaged in positive efforts, if only professionally, who were forced, willingly or not, to work together with the "traitors" and "foreign agents" who were often described in the underground press in more or less primitive, even vulgar, terms. There existed a widening common ground between "true Poles" - a term often used by the underground papers - and the communists condemned by that press. This common ground did not extinguish the fundamental conflicts seen by both sides, but took them to a different level.²⁶

The proponents of the third orientation were perceived as the capitulators. They, though hostile to the communists and distrustful of the USSR, decided in 1944-1946 that Poland's loss of independence was an unavoidable fact, and that, therefore, the limits of the freedom and independence that Poland could win were delineated by Stalin's will. They also considered that any effort to take power away from the communists, as would surely have happened in the event of free and unfettered elections, could result in the dismantling of the Polish state. This view was shared by many socialists and intellectuals, and some Catholic activists. People belonging to this orientation also wished to preserve what they considered to be higher values, but their resistance was very slight. They

²⁶ Kersten, Krystina. "Poles' Responses to the Realities of 1944-1947: Questions for Considerations", *Res Publica*, (transl) Dawid Walendowski, February 1990.

accepted the role given them by the communists. Those of them who came from left-wing backgrounds, such as the socialists, were absolutely positive that at the end of the process lay the socialist Poland of their dreams. The film directors who decided to be active during the process of initiating the national people's cinema were predominantly ones of them. The way they coped with the new circumstances in the first after-war years is going to be the main subject in the further text.

The Soviet Union exported the socialist-realistic war cinema into all countries which were under its political and ideological influence after Yalta Agreement. Essential part of indoctrination and dogmatization of the societies was cinema defined by Lenin as "the most important part". The cinema was the perfect means for glorifying the revolution and the process of building a new man. In the Soviet Union, the authors who initiated this socialist revolutionary approach were Pudovkin, Eisenstein, Vertov during the 1920s and 1930s.²⁷ In the post-revolutionary atmosphere in which the private property was abolished, the elitist civil class of the liberal-democratic or nationalistic orientations devoted to tradition and religion was destroyed, the new system of values and politicization of aesthetics were introduced. The film as a mass medium with an immense propagandist potential was particularly significant for that process. Thus, the film and all events connected to it (the press releases, the debates in schools and factories, distribution) could be valuable indicators of the political, social and historical processes, both official and sometimes the alternative ones. However, such concept was not originally a Soviet concept. Lenin allegedly proposed to the Russian film directors the

²⁷ This is the period when first serious films were created in Russia, and when the Russian avant-garde authors contributed to the development of the concepts and approaches in the world film aesthetic. Due to this tradition and success, the Eastern European film has remained until today tightly connected with the

film by David Griffith from 1919 called *Intolerance*²⁸ as a model in filmmaking, and for almost twenty years this film served as an inspiration for the Russian authors.

However, Stalin's ascent to power inevitably brought about the changes in cinematography. The collectivism and sacrifice in the name of the wise great leader became the main concepts of the Soviet cinema. It continued then during the war and after the war, and naturally spread to all other Eastern Bloc countries. Since the Soviet war cinema was very fruitful in shaping people's conscience and attitudes, the Soviet's exported its concepts into other satellite socialist countries. In fact, the Soviet Union would firstly present a film as a gift, and then send a film crew to shoot a film for a new socialist nation without any serious pre-war cinematic tradition. The film was meant to serve as the model in making the national future war cinema projects.²⁹ However, in the Polish case, such interventions were unnecessary, since a number of the most prominent and potent Polish film directors returned to Poland with the strong left-wing credentials, so they were allowed to initiate and organize their country's national cinema on their own.

leftist ideas. The reason is simple; the cinema was being created together with the enthusiastic introduction of the radically new ideology.

²⁸ This is a quite logical assumption since Griffith is regarded as the constructor of the whole concept of "cinematic processing history". See: Ljubojev, Petar. *Evropski film i drustveno nasije* [The European Film and Social Violence]; Novi Sad-Beograd: Prosveta, 1994, pp. 183-185; "The strong link between film and politics has long been established" ...Ristovic, Milan. *Film izmedju istorijskog izvora i tradicije* [Film between Historical Source and Tradition]; Beograd: Godisnjak za drustvenu istoriju, No. II/3, 1995, pp. 346.

²⁹ In May 1944, Stalin sent a present to Tito, who was in Eastern Bosnia with its headquarters and the allies' military missions. It was a pathetic propaganda film called *Zoe*. The main hero was a girl fanatically devoted to the Party and her homeland. The Germans captured her, and then after the long torture shot her, but she refused to tell them how to reach Stalin. Then in 1945, Stalin sent to his still great friend Tito a famous director Abraham Roma with a complete film crew to train a group of amateur Yugoslav filmmakers how to make a "good" movie. Roma's film was called *U planinama Jugoslavije* (In the Yugoslav Mountains). Film's most important thesis is that the Yugoslav victory in WWII was reached thanks to the Red Army. (See Miloradovic, Goran. in. *Istorija 20. veka*; "Staljinovi pokloni – Tematika jugoslovenskog igranog filma 1945-55" [Stalin's Presents – Topics of the Yugoslav Feature Films 1945-1955]; Beograd: No. 1, 2002. pp. 98-102;.

2.2 Conceit of the National Cinema in Poland

No matter how much it is in the service of the regime, film usually tends to give an alternative account of its society. Its objective could be to improve the condition of society or to undermine it, but, due to its eternal striving for autonomy and independence, it never absolutely complied with the regime in which it operates. That was the dominant common trait of cinema in post-war Eastern European countries. My statement from the last paragraph saying that the film directors active immediately after the war belonged to the socialist faction, does not imply that they were only Stalinist or “anti-Polish”. It implies that they praised revolution, the victory over Germany and fascism, and a vision of the socialist society which would provide equality and stability for all people. They supported the existing political situation, but at the same, time they wanted to improve it by means of the subject matters of their films.

It was completely natural that the only topic of the first films would be the war. Although it was finished, it still loudly reverberated throughout whole Europe. Apart from that, the film directors came back from the front, Nazi concentration camps, Warsaw Uprising or from the West where they mostly made war film chronicles. For majority of them it was the socialist revolution which brought the idea of national cinema in their country, and which incorporated its notion, its spiritual, aesthetic, social and human essence. They perceived such situation not only as the opportunity for getting benefits from conformism and opportunism, but for realization of their own revolutionary act and contribution. Their initial objective was not mythologization, but demythologization of the war and the past which led to the war.

The first post-war years were the period in which almost each national cinema celebrated the war victory. The films made in this period were tribute to those who died in war and alerting message for the generations that survived. The film directors' imperative was to maintain peace and glorify the victory and thus they made war films filled with heroic and romantic sentiments and characters.³⁰ "The world screens after the war showed almost the same hero, only in different uniforms and situations."³¹

Recounting the making-process of the first Polish post-war film in 1946, Andrzej Wajda notes:

...He wrote the outline of the script together with Andrzej Andrzejewski and took it to the Film Polski producers in the town of Lodz. The institution looked a little like a den of thieves, making diverse commodities, like movie equipment, houses, or cars, its managers in their Polish People's Army uniforms had plenty of practical foresight that could be born only of their recent Soviet ordeals. They robbed things from the UFA in Berlin. It became equipment. At the moment, directors were wanted not producers. Films whose directors would force the viewers to accept their taste were desirable. Artistic films were wanted. They wanted to make movies on cooperative basis. Everybody thought it was the most socialist of the ideas, like co-operative economy, for example, and those illusions persisted until 1949. Co-operative means making films by group of people controlled by an experienced director, with a writer among them who took care of scripts, a screen writer, that is, to take care of the literary material to be made into film; and someone to take care of production, organizing everything. The young were to join the group of their experienced senior colleagues by apprentices first.³²

This testifies about the opportunities that film directors initially had. Most of them returned to Poland. Many of them were honest, true socialist. They enjoyed strong

³⁰ Such sentiment was characteristic for each country. Each of them modified it according to its own mentality and needs. While the Poles synthesize the suffering in concentration camps and ghettos, the Soviets stressed the epics of patriotism. The American praised the triumph of strategy and chivalry of dying. The French-the alibi that after Paten's treason was brought by the resistance movement. In Yugoslavia – the praising the national liberation army.

³¹ Colic, Milutin. *The Yugoslav War Cinema*; Titovo Uzice; Ofset stamparija – vesti, 1989, pp. 172.

³² *Lekcja Polskiego Filma* (2002) by Andrzej Wajda.

privileges as leftists. They enthusiastically welcomed the opportunity to shift from mostly commercial and low-profile pre-war cinema to the new style – artistic and corresponding with the new world cinematic trends. New socialist state, obsessed with social changes and social mobility, financially supported and subsidized the projects of the filmmakers, and all that led to birth, or reincarnation of the Polish Cinema. Now, it was supposed to convey the authenticity of the Polishness in all its complexities, tragedy and absurdities. And the first movies provided an excellent starting point. Thus, as Wajda said: “In Polish hell, where everything used to fail, all of a sudden, a movie industry was miraculously made.”³³

As watching the European movies, Polish directors wanted Europe to watch theirs. As early as 1945, in the articles published in the Polish journals like *Kuznica* and *Odrodzenie* appeared a sort of programs and manifestos of the filmmakers of the time.

Film must provide people with the food for their thoughts. People should learn from it, and a film should point out something. [...] A film should not serve to entertain the viewers but to enhance their spiritual life.”³⁴
 “The huge responsibility for creating the film culture in the society lies in the directors: each Polish film, shown in the cinema theatres, should contain a specific burden of an authentic work and social right to survive, so that it could become the instrument for disseminating culture.”³⁵

The first act passed on cinematography by the Polish government was in respect of its nationalization. This took place on November 13, 1945 and by government decree all matters regarding the creation, production and distribution of a film were placed in the hands of the state agency Polish Film (Film Polski). Its first manager was Aleksander

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Toeplitz, Jerzy. “Novy Film Polski”, *Kuznica*: No.21, November 1945.

³⁵ Toeplitz, Jerzy. “Film instrumentem kultury”, *Odrodzenie*: No. 34, November 1945.

Ford.³⁶ Driven by his dictum “that the cinema cannot be a cabaret, it must be a school”,³⁷ he supported the social film industry idea, which he inherited from his pre-war days. In the establishment of the socialist order, Ford perceived the way of abolishing his pre war harshest enemy – commercial cinema, and possibility for introduction his concept of cooperative teams of filmmakers which would compete with each other, and would be financed by the socialist state. It is true that the decree nationalizing the cinematography stated that the main aim of producing and distributing films was the use of the film medium as a means of social education and the dissemination of knowledge and culture. The producer of films, the state, also became the patron of artistically ambitious and socially important creativity.³⁸ However, the decree completely excluded Ford’s concept of planned cooperative. Being an opportunist, Ford gave up his idea of cooperative, and in return the Party officials promised him the freedom to organize fully nationalized and state controlled production Film Polski on his own. Ford sustained the idea of cooperative in a sense that national cinema was in the hands of filmmakers whose mission was to recruit and apprentice the next generation. On the other hand, in order to comply with the Party which authorized him to be the pioneer of the new Polish cinema; he was obliged to set up internal forms of censorship, controlling all stages of filmmaking, starting from script writing. He banned some films from official distribution and closed down some

³⁶ Ford spent the war in the Soviet Union. He refused enlistment in the under General Anders who supported the Western Allies, and driven by his Marxist ideological background in 1943 he joined the Polish unit of Red Army formed under the supervision of the Soviet General Zhukov. Such biography recommended him strongly for holding the most important post in Film Polski

³⁷ Misiak, Anna. “Politically Involved Filmmaker: Aleksander Ford and Film Censorship in Poland after 1945”, *Kinema*; No.17, Fall 2005.

³⁸ Fuksiewicz, Jacek. *Polish Cinema*; Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1973, pp. 84.

independent cooperative Youth Film Workshops.³⁹ The first film magazine *Film* was also started as early as 1945.

The cinema was also institutionalized in 1948. The first State Film School was founded in Lodz. Despite the fact that only 2-3 films were made at that time in Poland, there were enough professionals whose task was to introduce the young apprentices into the filmmaking. Along with classes of practical nature like editing or scenario writing, there were lessons in visual art and film theory as well. Namely, Jerzy Toeplitz (who together with Aleksander Ford, Jerzy Bossak and Antoni Bohdziewicz laid the foundation of the Film School) brought from Paris the concept of “film avant-garde school” which Georges Sadoul prepared for the French Ideque Film School.⁴⁰

The School was supposed to control and censor the students’ short films. There was a general idea that it was better if the teachers controlled the students instead of somebody from the outside.⁴¹

Polish film did not run away from the important and difficult matters that were significantly connected with the lives of people. Polish cinema thus excelled, in that sense, both theater and literature.⁴² The films about the war presented the patriotism which is manifestation of various form of people’s resistance against fascism, courage in fight, love for the homeland, and desire for freedom. Film was an attempt to deal with the topics that after the war were fundamental from the point of view of ordinary people after the war. The issue of concentration camps, a picture made through the ordeal of one of its

³⁹ The first banned film was *2X2=4* (1945) by Antoni Bohdziewicz together with his Youth Film Workshop in Krakow. Nevertheless it has never become clear to what degree this decision had to do with the content of the film, and to the personal influence of Ford who did not appreciate Bohdziewicz because of his previous political rightist affiliations. Misiak, Anna. “Politically Involved Filmmaker...”

⁴⁰ *Lekcja Polskiego Kina* (2002) – a documentary film by Andrzej Wajda on the early Polish cinema.

⁴¹ Haltof, Marek. *Polish National Cinema*; New York: Berghahn Books, 2003, pp.76.

prisoners was treated in *Ostatni etap* (Last Stage) by Wanda Jakubowska. The topic of despicable cruelty towards the Jews in Warsaw ghetto, and the issue of anti-Semitism were presented in *Ulica Granyczna* (Border Street) by Aleksander Ford. It was the first time in the world cinema that somebody tried to convey the dimension of Hitler's crime.

The Polish cinematography established also close artistic co-operation with the authors from the other artistic disciplines. In completion of the first movies, the significant part took the composers like Roman Palester, Andrzej Panufnik, Tadeusz Szeligowski, Kazimierz Serocki. In this first stage there was not the same co-operation with the literary works and circles. Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Jerzy Andrzejewski and Igor Newerly will successfully cooperate only in the following period, in the mid 1950s. The value of the first wave of the Polish films can be confirmed by their popularity both in Poland and abroad. Seven films were made in the first few post-war years in almost to the ground devastated Poland. Three of them (*Zakazanie Piosenki* [Forbidden Songs], *Last stage and Border Street*) remained popular, screened and valued even two decades after their release, and they definitely deserve to be mentioned even today.

2.2.1 The Life of the First Polish Films

L. BUCZKOWSKI – PRE-WAR COMEDY-MAKER

The first post-war Polish film called *Forbidden Songs* by Leonard Buczkowski, was produced in 1947. Buczkowski had made mostly comedies before the war, but now he tried to find the way to shift from the entertaining commercial to the serious national cinema. Mira and Antonin J. Liehm wrote:

⁴² Fuksiewicz, Jacek. *Polish Cinema*; Warsaw, Interpress publishers, 1973, pp. 97

“When *Forbidden Songs* entered distribution, crowds of people rushed to the cinema theaters, and the long queues in front of the billet services could be seen long after the premiere. For people who had been threatened by extermination, the first Polish film stood for nothing else but a miracle”.⁴³

As I have mentioned, the common feature of this one and all other first post-war movies was the war-thematic. Their authors recollected their own experiences and struggles from the occupation time. They intended to examine them now from a new point of view; not from a position of a witness or a participator, but the artist and narrator. *Forbidden songs* depict the life in Warsaw under occupation. The collector of the songs about occupation is the main character in the film, a musician Roman Tokarski (Jerzy Duszyński). He recounts the history of the songs, describes the dramatic events that they evoke, and how they represent fighting with the occupiers. Roman Tokarski, together with his colleagues organizes the street, nomadic orchestra which sings on the stairs of the burnt Warsaw Philharmonic. The young people, Roman’s colleagues, gather in order to organize a resistance. Among them is also Halina (Danuta Szaflarska), Roman’s sister. They distribute weapons and underground newspapers and organize diversions and armed conflicts. Halina’s boyfriend dies in one of the battles. Roman plays over his grave on a mouth accordion a melody of a partisan song.

The narration line of the film is pretty frail. Apart from the story about a group of young people, the film also shows the episodes from the lives of other tenants of the building in which the Tokarsky family reside: cowardice musician Cieslik, a Jew who hides in the building, and a German informer. However, the main topic further becomes

⁴³ Antonin J Liehm and Mira Liehm. *The Most Important Art: Eastern European Cinema after 1945*; Beograd: Clio. 2006, pp. 165

the history of the songs on occupation. They acquired fairly significant place in the narrative frame of the film. Arranged chronologically, they give account of the history of the occupation of Warsaw in the form of separate episodes. There are fourteen songs which in diverse manners correspond each with different dramatic situations in the film. Thus, for example, a song *Siekiera-Motyka* was made for many characters whose class was dominant in the Polish “bourgeois” society shortly before the occupation. The song *Oj bida, bida wszedzie* tells about unbearable existential conditions during the war. *Rozsumivaly sie vierzby* is the song that accompanies the section of the film dedicated to the partisans and their fight.

Dramaturgical and musical opposing motif to the Polish forbidden songs is the melody of the march *Heili-Heilo*, and the tact of a grotesque song *Deutschland, Deutschland, uber alles*. Roman Palster, a composer who had occasionally cooperated on film making, was in charge of the music for *Forbidden songs*. The majority of the songs presented actually the authentic material. The exception is the song about Warsaw made for the girls from ghetto, resting on the melody of *Miasteczko Belz*.⁴⁴

Leonard Buczkowsky depicted in his film the life-style and the atmosphere of the urban environment of the time. The lyrics to some extent describe the city’s authenticity: grammatical and syntactic mistakes, naïve type of the education, typical local mood, and the way of the pronouncing words. The film script also includes the language typical for

⁴⁴ Mruklik, Barbara. “Revolucja i film” in *Historia Filmu Polskiego*, Vol. 3: 1945-1956. ed. Jerzy Toeplitz; Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1974, pp.146.

the occupied Warsaw. The inscriptions on the walls of the city buildings testify to the resistance of Warsawians and their hopes for surviving the occupier's terror.⁴⁵

The film received very positive and affirmative responses from both the audience and the film critics. Film's success was vividly depicted in the press by describing the queues in front of the cinema theatres as "Dantean scenes"⁴⁶ However, the journal *Kuznica* at one point initiated discussions about the film in the Lodz Pickwick Club and published several articles containing some very critical remarks about a number of scenes in the film. The reproaches partly referred to the stylistic characteristic of the film, which allegedly emphasized the pre-war bourgeois commercial cinematic features. In a word, the critiques revealed political lacks in the film.

Similar remarks occurred in some other journals as well. It was written that *Forbidden Songs* decreased the level of the German crimes. New and different interpretation of the occupation which would correspond with the memory about millions of killed people, and which will serve to the fortune and benefit of the remaining generations was demanded. The film was described as being short of realism. The journal *Trybuna robotnicza* published the article saying that in *Forbidden Songs* the members of Gestapo and German soldiers are shown in the manner that denies the brutality so characteristic of them, though the role of the Polish traitors and Nazi collaborators was stressed.⁴⁷

Under such pressures, the film was withdrawn from the distribution and was subjected to certain alteration. Thus the second "premiere" of *Forbidden Songs* was held

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ „Nasz obywatel – przedruk opinii o filmie z różnych czasopis”, *Film*, 1947, No.11.

in autumn, in 1948.⁴⁸ Introduced changes were supposed to make the film more alike the reality. Several scenes which depicted the bestiality of Germans were added (for example, the shooting of the young poet, the death-sentence for the Polish woman informer triggered by the act of denunciation she committed). The horrors of life under the occupation were shown by the scenes of street roundups. The narrative frame of the film was changed as well: the young heroes in the film now give account of the history of occupation to a young soldier, a repatriate who is England.

Alteration again failed to satisfy the critics who further reproached Buczkowski for dramaturgical banality – revival of the entertaining type of editing, fragmentation of the story.⁴⁹ The film was also perceived as the “description of petite-bourgeois atmosphere”, and the losses it lost in the society during and after the war.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the public did not share the same opinion with the impassioned critics and massively visited the increasing number of cinema theatres which were screening *Forbidden Songs*. It was more the case after the second premiere than after the first one, and every time when the film was re-screened (during the various retrospectives of films made in People’s Poland). Consequently, until 1968 the film was seen by fourteen million people.⁵¹

WANDA JAKUBOWSKA – A HOLOCAUST SURVIVER

⁴⁷ Mruklik, Barbara. “Revolucja i film” in *Historia Filmu Polskiego*, Vol. 3: 1945-1956. ed. Jerzy Toeplitz; Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1974, pp.146.

pp.148.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Plazewski, Jerzy. „Zakazanie piosenki”, *Odrodzenie*, No. 47, 1948. (taken from Toeplitz. *Historia Filmu Polskiego* pp. 149.)

⁵⁰ Toeplitz, Jerzy. „Granyca prawdy”: *Film*, No. 7 1948 (taken from Toeplitz *Historia Filmu Polskiego* pp. 149.)

The next Polish film which dealt with the horrors of the Second World War was *Ostatni etap* (Last Stage) directed by Wanda Jakubowska. The director wrote in her memoirs: “I wanted to make a film about an important issue like the concentration camp in Auschwitz is, since I lived there. But I wanted to restrain myself from exclusively personal experiences I had there. I collected everything that happened to me and the others as the documentation of a particular value.”⁵² Thus, this fragment of director’s memoirs already conveyed the concept of the future film. Namely it was not supposed to be the autobiographical film, but an endeavor to convey the insanity of the concentration camp. It was supposed to be an attempt to screen the synthesis of all the horrors that constituted Auschwitz’s reality. Jakubowska further wrote: “it only makes sense if you look at the facts that happened there through the eyes of the outside observer, without relying only on your own subjective experiences.”⁵³

Wanda Jakubowska and her friend from the concentration camp, a German communist Gerda Schneider, started writing the scenario soon after they left the camp, in 1945 already. Wanda Jakubowska described their work on the scenario two years after the premiere of the film in the columns of *Kwartalnik Filmowy*. She differentiated there three phases in the scenario writing process. The first one rested on recollecting what they simply could remember. The second one implied examination of the German documents that were found in the camps after they had been liberated, and the results of the trials to the Nazi leaders and bureaucrats. The third phase consisted of segregation of

⁵¹ Maly Rocznik Filmowi 1971; Warszawa: Filmowi Serwis Prasowy, 1972, pp. 133.

⁵² Jakubowska, Wanda. “Kilka wspomnien o powstaniu scenariusza (na marginesie filmu *Ostatni etap*)”, *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, No.:1, 1951, pp. 40.

⁵³ Ibid.

the bulky material they had examined, the choosing the most appropriate course of the final version of the scenario.⁵⁴

The film is still trying to develop a suggestive means of depicting the life in the camp in an authentic way. An actor from the movie told in an interview: “While the work on the film was in progress we were wearing the authentic prisoner’s uniforms on which the traces of blood of their previous owners were still visible. It left powerful impressions on us, and helped us a lot to imagine the psychological state of the prisoners. We were sleeping on the real bunks and under the same blankets that the prisoners used.”⁵⁵

The film itself is like a partisan socialist epic about the life and the fight in the camp, divided into several episodes. The first scenes of the movie introduce the crowd of the women after the rain has stopped. Some of the women are even kneeling with their knees deep in the mud, but the guardians of the camp do not save them. They swear them, and force them to dig. But as early as then, the episodes of the strong collectivity among the female prisoners is evident.

At one point, together with a group of the Jewish women from Warsaw transported to the camp came a woman called Marta Weiss. She receives the function of the interpreter and thus she will be particularly helpful to the female prisoners, setting the camp resistance movement. The resistance will later include the Yugoslav partisan woman Desa and Russians Nadia and Helena, whose child was killed in the camp hospital by a German doctor. In the end of the film Marta dies on the gallows at the moment when the planes of the allies began bombing the camp, before it would be

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Krawczykowski, Zbigniew. “Zbieg z filmowego Oswiecimia opowiada (Relacja Barbary Fijewskiej)”, *Film*, No.: 29, 1947.

liberated. This scene, that is, the film itself finishes with the over-theatrical and from today's perspective highly pathetic Marta's last words, which would become the motto and the main idea of the film written even on the film poster: "Do not allow Auschwitz ever repeat again."⁵⁶

The film has several aesthetic solutions that even today look powerful and striking. The main body of the film action takes place in the camp hospital. Then, there is a unique expression of the sinister scenery filled with the concentration camp barracks. The film photography reveals the romantic pathos on the prisoners' faces. The effect of the play with light in the mass scenes is very evident. There are constant rhythmic contrasts between black and white which contributes to the expressive artistic value of the film. The anthological mass scene, the assembly scene ascribe to the film a unique, powerful dimension from the very beginning: the prisoners are completely exhausted on the working site, tired of working in the mud, under the heavy rain and strong wind. Such sceneries are accompanied by masterfully shot panoramas of the Auschwitz area – mud, barracks, wires and crematoriums with the smoking chimneys. It seems like nature is quite cruel towards the man there, the sun burns the grass and stands only for thirst, the mud (there is more and more of it) just slows down already half-dead legs. All such effects contribute to the epic dimensions of the film. They convey how the existence in the Nazi concentration camps was highly limited. However, the film's dramaturgy still leaves no place for the psychological individual experiences and traumas the Nazi concentration camps recorded.

⁵⁶ Nie pozwolcie, zeby Oswiecim sie powtorzyl!

As a hard-line and devoted socialist, Jakubowska unfailingly wanted to depict the humanity and solidarity between the prisoners, the international character of the camp, and the international type of fighting against fascism in general. Thus, both the protagonists in the film itself and Jakubowska's cooperatives in the process of the film production belong to different nationalities.⁵⁷ "In the last stage, the director intended to show the human misery, not the Polish martyrdom."⁵⁸



Figure 1: a survivor's account of woman's life in concentration camps

⁵⁷ Mruklik, Barbara. "Revolucja i film" in *Historia Filmu Polskiego*, Vol. 3: 1945-1956. ed. Jerzy Toeplitz; Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1974, pp.150.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Being politically correct, after its premiere in 1948, the film attracted not only the attention of the film critics, but it was also discussed in the literary and political circles. The numerous letters arrived to all sorts of the newspapers in which discussions about the movies were opened. In 1948, *Last Stage* won Grand Prix on the international film festival in Karlovy Vary. It was the first triumph of the Polish national cinema. In the next decade *Last Stage* was distributed in 49 countries around the world.⁵⁹ The film was characterized as the work of the big format, and one of the greatest documents of the horrors of the Second World War. *New York Times* wrote: “It is not a puppet theatre – it is a documentation of a bitter truth of the moments which we are even not able to imagine.”⁶⁰

ALEKSANDER FORD – HEAD OF THE POLISH FILM UNIT “CZOLOWKA” ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT

The third and the last film of the early post-war Polish cinema I would like to refer to is *Ulyca Graniczna* (Border Street) from 1948 by Aleksander Ford.⁶¹ Following *Last Stage*, it was the second film that dealt with the horrors of the Second World War and, this time,

⁵⁹ Kolodynski, Andrzej. *Handel zagraniczny*; Warszawa: Wydanie specjalne Filmowego Servisu Prasowego, 1969, pp. 135.

⁶⁰ Quotation taken from: Mruklik, Barbara. “Revolucja i film” in *Historia Filmu Polskiego*, Vol. 3: 1945-1956. ed. Jerzy Toeplitz; Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1974, pp.150.

⁶¹ Ford had at least one eccentricity worthy of mention. He was Jewish and like many Jewish Poles he wanted to change his name. There is nothing remarkable in such a desire, considering the time and the place, but Aleksander Ford had the desire not once, but repeatedly. His original name was Liwyszyc, and he finally settled on Ford in 1927. As I have already mentioned, during the Second World War, as a devoted anti-Fascist and leftist, he took participation on the Soviet front, in the Soviet Film Units. After the war, he returned to Poland as a winner. In the late sixties he was harassed by the party bureaucracy and ultimately a victim of its purges. Unable to work, he became an expatriate in 1973 and went to Denmark. Buffeted from one country to another, this originally militant communist chose to settle in the United States, but in New York despair drove him to suicide. See Charles Ford and Robert Hammond, “Polish Film: A Twentieth Century History”; Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1989, pp. 122-123

the Warsaw ghetto. However, the film was innovative, since it was the first film which, applying the critical approach, touched the controversial Jewish-Polish relation during WWII. The action of the film takes place entirely in Warsaw, partitioned by the Germans into Jewish and Aryan quarters, and shows the most important episodes of the revolts against the Germans, as well as the anti-Semitic and the sentiment of solidarity between the Poles and the Jews. The author of the scenario, Aleksander Ford himself, used the occasion to stress the absurdities of anti-Semitism. The crossing of ethnic frontiers pervades the film. Good Poles gravitate towards, and are later reclassified as, Jews; malign ones claim German ancestry and toady to the occupiers. Wladek's Polish father (Wladek is one of the numerous children which appear in the film), a reserve officer in hiding after the Polish Army's defeat, shares the anti-Semitic prejudices of many pre-war Poles. He refuses to take the new clothes as a gift from Dawidek's Jewish grandfather. But when German soldiers march in, question the old man about the discarded Polish uniform, beat him yet extract nothing from him, the Pole is impressed. The ironic reversal whereby the Jew here conceals the Pole typifies the film's sense of the growing interchangeability of Poles and Jews, as both became victims. Wladek's father later tells him that there are Jews like Dawidek's grandfather and Poles like Kusmirak (Nazi collaborator who unscrupulously denounces Jews, and who at the onset of the German occupation affected Hitler-like haircut and moustache). Wladek's own prejudice, which turned him against a girl friend Jadzia, when he learned of her part-Jewishness, quickly evaporate. Separated at the outset, high and low, Poles and Jews, soon become one. The film has integrity and nobility. One can only echo its final hope that the man-made

barriers must fall, that truth has no borders. Ford soothes the pessimistic tone of the film with the edifying final voice-over urging the solidarity of all people.

Nevertheless, the film was shunned after the Congress in Wisla when socialist-realistic aesthetic and ideological patterns were exclusively imposed on the Polish National Cinema. Although it won the Golden Lion at the film festival in Venice in 1949, and brought another international recognition to the meager Polish national cinema, *Border Street* was banned in Poland as “it depicted Jews, rather than communists, as the heroes of anti-German struggle”.⁶²

2.3 Congress in Wisla – Official Introduction of Stalinism to Culture

The films I have analyzed are the main representatives of the first phase (1945-1949) of the Polish post-war cinema. The first period was in general the stage of rebuilding and restarting Poland after the war destruction, the stage of unification in a collective striving for the recovery from the war consequences. On the political surface, it was unification of the working party in accomplishing the single objective – realization of the three-year plan. In the history of the Polish cinema it was also the stage of revitalization and reorganization of cinematography. It was the cycle of the first attempts and first artistic successes. Congress in Wisla in 1949 initiated the second cycle in the development of Polish Cinema. It would last from 1950 to 1954 and I will refer to that period of Polish history in more details in Chapter II.

After overcoming the initial production difficulties and consolidation of the expression and subject matters of the national Polish cinema, the Polish authors opened

⁶² Coates, Paul. *The Red and the White*; London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2005, pp. 167

the road to treating various local war topics of people's general concern, despite numerous bureaucratic obstacles. Nevertheless, after Soviet Sponsored PRL (Polska Partia Robotniczna – Polish Workers' Party) took power in 1948 and after the last pre-war politician – Stanislaw Mykolajczyk fled the country, discourses of nationalism became subject to ban in Poland. Wladislaw Gomulka, the first governing Party leader, who had pursued relatively independent policies for several years, was placed under house-arrest⁶³, and Stalinist hard-liner Boleslaw Bierut took power. In such atmosphere, the mentioned congress of the filmmakers was held in Visla and the postulates of the socialist-realism were officially proclaimed and any further development of, at least semi-independent, Polish national cinema was violently interrupted. During this congress, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and Art, all post-war films were harshly criticized, especially *Boarding Street* and *Last Stage*. Italian neorealism was criticized as the film style which “did not correspond at all with the objective reality.”⁶⁴ Several film-shootings were cancelled, and some films had to be modified in order to send an adequate ideological message.

The socialist-realistic concept was epitomized in the Party literature of the time. The writer Jerzy Andrzejewski, one of the most devoted communist of the time published his famous pro-Party novel **Pepiol i diament** (Ashes and diamonds) in 1948. In the novel, the main character Maciek Chelmicki, the young AK partisan, who mistakenly assassinates workers rather than the newly installed Party leader he is charged with removing, is termed a “fascist” by a grieving soldier. Under the binary mentality of the

⁶³ Ibid. pp. 7-8

⁶⁴ Antonin J Liehm and Mira Liehm. *The Most Important Art: Eastern European Cinema after 1945*; Beograd: Clio, 2006, pp. 120-121.

“struggle for peace”, “he who is not with us is against us”⁶⁵. That is the idea that was a must for the war cinema of the period subjected to the severe propaganda, which was still in progress. Apart from Yugoslavia, which after Tito-Stalin clash adopted her independent path toward different type of socialism, the Stalinization was initiated in all countries in the region in the same manner.

Nevertheless, no matter how much the introduction of the socialist-realism shattered the further development of the Polish cinema, it is evident that the first Polish films enabled a good starting point for the Polish national cinema. They entered some controversial topics which were going to serve as a source of inspiration for many future authors, once Stalinization began fading away. In the following chapters we will see how the films of so-called Polish School created the unique discourse of Polish nationalism turning to the traditions of Italian neorealism which inspired the filmmakers’ of the first post-war films. *Last Stage* would get its more mature intellectual continuation in Andrzej Munk’s *Pasazerka*, which would result in initiating for the time a unique discourse on Holocaust. The inferno-like images and evocations of Warsaw ghetto shown in *Ulyca Graniczna* would reverberate even in the recent Polish films on the same topic⁶⁶. Thus, unlike some other nations in the region, Poland hold an advantage of having the early post-war tradition of self-examination, and moderate independence in tackling the issues and ideas outside of the sphere of the official ideology. The war cinema was not only the product of the post-world turmoil, but the war films themselves also significantly influenced the whole historical period. People would queue for a whole day in order to buy a ticket for a new film. The messages and ideas emitted from the screens in the

⁶⁵ Coates, Paul. *The Red and the White* pp.7.

auditoriums shaped their attitudes and stirred their subconscious. The moment when such situation became perilous and impairing for the existing political order, the war films were obliged to treat only state-censored topics, and the directors had only one choice if they wanted to resume the filmmaking – conformism.

CHAPTER 3 - The Film in Service of Stalinization

3.1 *Stalinization in Poland (1950-1955)*

After four post-war years of the gradual transitional period, whose ending was marked by Boleslaw Bierut's descent to power and in the case of film industry by Congress in Wisla (as I described in the previous chapter), Poland entered the phase of Stalinization. Apart from political, profound social changes also were introduced in form of collectivization and promotion of the social mobility. People regarded as of "low" class status now enjoyed access to posts in the state and Party apparatus, and the boards of nationalized enterprises. "The celebrated slogan: 'you may become an officer on the merit of earnest willingness, and not education' pertained also to other intelligentsia professions."⁶⁷ The industrialization programme, the development of the heavy industry, and reconstruction of the still devastated towns were of the supreme importance. They offered hundreds of thousands jobs to the rural poor. Fear of unemployment and hunger disappeared. An important legitimizing factor was the myth of the former German Regained Territories whose annexation was treated as an expression as historical justice and reprisal upon the "eternal foe".⁶⁸ State omnipresent propaganda, epitomized in Party controlled newspapers (Trybuna Ludu, Sztandard Mlodych among them), Polish Film Chronicles, and,

⁶⁶ One of the examples is *Korczak* (1991) by Andrzej Wajda.

gradually, social-realistic war-cinema and comedies, incessantly claimed that Poland entered a path of “rapid modernization”, that she was liquidating “centuries-old backwardness” and “catching up with Europe”. It was maintained that all these processes were accompanied by full respect of the principles of the social equality and justice. In cinema, music, poetry and theatre the idlers, the bourgeois, the kulaks, and the profiteers were condemned. In the Polish literature of the early fifties the main problem was the representation of the Home Army (Armija Krajowa).

Armija Krajowa could be called a reactionary force attracting the bourgeois elements; but this statement would imply that only the middle class people were fighting the Nazis in the first years of the occupation, a contention insulting to the broad Polish masses. Yet to admit that there were workers and farmers in the home army would be tantamount to suggesting that the Polish proletariat voluntarily joined the underground which was anti-Soviet as well as anti-German – an unhappy alternative. Faced with the dilemma, the novelists of the period (1950-1955) tended to ignore the role of the Home Army in the early war years and concentrated their attacks on the Home Army’s activities in the later years, when another, Communist underground force was already operating in Poland.⁶⁹

The situation recalled the one prevailing in other countries dominated by the Soviet Union, and ruled by the communists. On the other hand, differences abounded. The Polish authorities launched a rather late attack against the Catholic Church (the imprisonment of Primate Waszynski took place in September 1953, after Stalin’s death). State symbols remained unchanged (the medieval white eagle did not display a red star). References to national tradition were frequent; naturally, such fragments of the past,

⁶⁷ Paczkowski, Andrzej. “Poland 1945-1999: Servility, Misfortune, Liberation”; taken from www.info-poland.buhallo.edu

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Dadlez, Anna. *Political and Social Issues in Poland as Reflected in the Polish Novel*; New York: Columbia University Press 1989, pp. 78

which could be acknowledged as “progressive” (the Enlightenment as opposed to Romanticism, Positivism versus Modernism) were recalled more frequently.⁷⁰

The films of the period had to be unquestionably optimistic and didactic according to Lenin’s thesis saying that the film is the most important art. However, in Eastern European countries under Stalinization, this dictum never referred to the artistic component of a film. Social-realism then openly stated that the propagandist-indoctrinating function of film must be the only concern in filmmaking. A film was expected to embody the basic concepts of socialism, and praise the new order. However, its main and primary virtue rested on the ability to make people’s reality look better than it really was. Włodzimierz Sokorski wrote in 1950:

We talk about a very important fact that the art and the culture in a people’s democracy should fulfill primarily its ideological-educational function, which means that the culture and science play an important role in the crucial process of building a new man, a man of the socialist epoch.⁷¹

Tens of films supporting this concept appeared in the period 1950-1954. Most of them are not worth mentioning today. It was very difficult for the film authors of the time to transpose the ideological demands into the language of film and to provide the film with certain artistic value at the same time. Despite the official condemnation by the authorities, neorealism was still the unofficial model for filmmaking in a sense that it could inspire realistic or naturalistic description of the politically correct issues (approved by the official Cinema Censorship Committee) like the decadence of bourgeoisie, anti-fascist communist movements and social mobility of the working class. The bleak reality

⁷⁰ Paczkowski, Andrzej. “Poland 1945-1999”

and destitute that struck the miserable working class of the post-war Poland were unambiguously excluded topics.⁷²

The only country in the region whose cinematography took another path was Yugoslavia. After the clash between Tito and Stalin accompanied by harsh measures and political turmoil, Yugoslav war cinema adopted some slight differences. Firstly, even in the years that preceded the clash Yugoslav films never introduced the Soviet flag or Stalin's portrait in the Party headquarters or during official celebrations. The role of the Red Army during the war was minimized comparing to that of the Yugoslav Army. Unlike other Stalinized countries, Yugoslavia had only formal outside frames of the Stalinized countries while inside it used totalitarian means for building a new socialist Yugoslav man, mythologization of the National Liberation War, and building the cult of Tito. The war cinema naturally was the most dominant genre in the state owned cinematography. However, the war was not presented in the 1950s through the consequences it left in the post-war society, as it was the case in other socialist countries. The war was still recollected through the images of the war battles in which the united and good Yugoslav Army (comprised of all Yugoslav nations) defeats evil fascist and quisling enemy. The Yugoslav war cinema also adopted the stylistic patterns which were

⁷¹ Sokorski, Włodzimierz. „Sztuka w walce o socjalizm”, in *Sztuka w walce o socjalizm*, 1950, pp. 233. taken from Hendrykowska, Małgorzata. *Looking Back: Analysis and Interpretation of Polish Film*; Poznań: Publishing House of the Poznań Society for the Advancement of the Arts and Sciences, 2000.

⁷² Referring to compliance of the Hungarian cinema with the demands of the Stalinist type indoctrination, Gabor Kresalek and Janos M Rainer set the number of *theses* that the characters and their actions in each socialist-realistic film (not only in Hungary, but in all countries in which Stalinization was in progress) had to support. 1. Workers must possess only two values – *work achievements* measured in quantities in the first place, and unconditional *loyalty* to and *identification* with the leadership. 2. *Intellectuals, certain youth groups and so-called hooligans* belong to the categories of people who, even if they accept the fundamental values, do not *ab ovo* fit into the picture of society and, thus, have to be excluded. 3. The *enemy as the utmost obstacle* of the imminent realization of the picture of the society. The enemy is embodied in the old upper-middle class, aristocracy, capitalists who have lost their fortune, and kulaks. See Gabor Kresalek and

unique in the region. It clearly emanated new Hollywood-like sensibility and affirmation of the Western aesthetical and conceptual solutions, diametrically opposite to until recently favored social-realistic ones.⁷³

3.2 Five from Barska Street – Aleksander Ford’s Appeasement or Challenging the Socialist-Realism

After he was fired from the post of the director of Film Polski with the reasoning saying that he had made many ideological mistakes in supervision of the films, and that he was responsible for financial corruption within the state enterprise, the offended Ford moved to Czechoslovakia. However, it did not mean that all of a sudden Ford had moved to the opposition and had started the political adversaries of the system. Ford liked the power and was willing to do anything to regain his previous position. As a great opportunist and conformist, he decided to comply with the new politically trendy socialist-realism in order to make up for his previous failure. By conforming to the Party requirements while making the *Chopin’s Youth* in 1952 (in which the biography of the Polish piano composer was reduced to the image of a friend of the “friend of working classes), and by attending all the most important commissions, he sacrificed his personal vision, but he

Janos M Rainer. Hungarian Society in Film (A View of Societies, Its Values and Ideologies) 1948-1956; Moveeast, 1992, pp. 21-47.

⁷³ Zika Mitrovic, Hajrudin Krvavac and Veljko Bulajic are the main directors of this genre. Their war films facilitated the communist dictatorship of Josip Broz Tito which by the ideology of the Yugoslav nationalism confronted the challenges of the liberal-democratic tendencies and particular nationalisms in its attempt to prevent the further revanshism inside the country, and in the international framework it provided an alternative version of socialism which impaired the ideological homogeneity of the the Soviet lager, and which would later lead to cession of Unaligned countries. See Miloradovic, Goran. “Staljnovi pokloni – Tematika jugoslovenskog igranog filma 1945-55” [Stalin’s Presents – Topics of the Yugoslav Feature Films 1945-1955]; Beograd: No. 1, 2002, pp.97.

was again perceived as a good communist, and he found again his cozy room on the top.⁷⁴

His film *The Five from Barska Street* (1953), on the other hand, is a film that has remained. Today, naturally, there are people who would dismiss it as a non-value work. However, the film has been frequently characterized in the anthologies as a work of art, or an honest account of the lost war generation in poverty and war stricken Poland of 1940s and 1950s.⁷⁵ On the other hand, if we go back to the press of the early 1950s (*Polytica, Film, Nowa Kultura, Klub Literacki, Sztandar Młodych*), we can follow the course of two different arguments. The film was sometimes marked as NOT being realistic enough (in social-realistic sense) which implied that it was not ideological and educative enough. However, even back then, according to some other opinions, the film was still lagging behind its neorealist counterparts in Italy and other parts of Europe. According to this interpretation, the film was neither artistic nor trendy enough when compared to Western cinema of the period.

Before I move to a more detailed description of the discussions that marked the release and the life of this film, I will provide a brief synopsis of its plot, trying to avoid favoring any particular discourse.

The story of the film opens in Warsaw, at the end of 1947. Two years had already passed since the war came to an end, but at the same time that was not enough to enable the city,

⁷⁴ See Protokół z posiedzenia Komisji Ocen Filmów i Scenariuszy, 20 października 1954, Archive of National Film Library in Warsaw, No. A-214.

⁷⁵ Antonin J. Liehm and Mira Liehm. *The Most Important Art: Eastern European film After 1945*; Belgrade: Clio, 2006, pp.121-122. "Thematically, the film was close to many films of the 1950 which dealt with the juvenile delinquency. Nevertheless, what was an ordinary topic in the French or American was new and courageous in the Polish or Czechoslovak cinema, where, according to the official propaganda the delinquency did not exist. Ford's boys are brothers of Carne's and Bruks's protagonists. Their roots are slightly different only: young Poles still and rob, and eventually kill, because the war taught them that, and they never knew how to live otherwise."

eighty per cent ruined, to have shaken off the terrible heritage of war. Yet, though ruins and rubble were still omnipresent in Warsaw, the city was full of life. Half-a-million people had their homes among ruins, but they were already at work in reconstructed factories, already traveling by tram and by bus, already reading the newspaper printed in Warsaw, already studying in schools and academies, already buying in temporary shops. Numbers of houses and buildings had already been reconstructed, but the realization of the vast building plans had yet to begin. The first of such great undertakings was the construction of the East-West thoroughfare, link between the two extremities of the city and between the two shores of the Vistula River. The story of the leading characters of the film, the five boys from Barska Street, is closely bound up with that great constructional enterprise.

It was not only that the war transformed Warsaw into ruins, but also that had a demoralizing effect on people – and especially on certain less resistant section of the rising generation. There were, among young people who during their short lives had had personal experience of the sacking of the Ghetto, of the Nazi Concentration camps or the tragedy of the Warsaw insurrection, some too, who developed a taste for crime. Neither work nor studies interested them. These misguided young people organized robberies, assaults and even killings. They considered themselves much more sophisticated than those of their acquaintances who got down to work and on the building sites or to Academic studies. It all seemed to them to be their Great Adventure. The five boys from Barska Street went rapidly down hill, deep into banditry and diversion

But the Polish people, who had been aside by ruins, who had launched on the reconstruction on Warsaw, were not turned aside, either, by the demoralization of some of their younger citizens. They started an educational campaign, the target of which was the moral recovery of such young people.

*The five main characters of **Five from Barska Street** – Marek, Kazek, Jacek, Franek, and Zbych, represent young people of precisely that demoralized section. The theme of the film is the struggle to save them from the depth of banditry and to make of them valuable members of society.*

The boys have been arrested for robbery with violence and are placed by the Juvenile court under the care of a “guardian”. The guardian nominated is a bricklayer named Wojciechowski. He is a member of the Party who is working on the construction of the East-West thoroughfare. He throws himself wholeheartedly into his guardianship of the boys. For one of them he finds a place in a music school; for another a job as a messenger in a newspaper’s office; and the other three he employs on work connected with the construction of the East-West thoroughfare. The guardian is blissfully unaware that not only have the boys been burglars, but also have been – and still are – members of a band engaged in diversion and sabotage. The leader of that band is a led called Zenon, and it includes in its ranks another Barska Street boy, a faithful follower of Zenon, named Lutek. The struggle which now goes on concerns the question as to which side these boys are finally to take for good. Zenon conducts the struggle through methods of terrorism, blackmail and bribery. The guardian eventually succeeds in

making the honest life attractive to the boys; those on building work get caught up in the enthusiasm and sense of making a constructive contribution which is common to great construction sites. Marek becomes a popular favorite there. Kazek wins the love of Hanka. Meanwhile, Jacek enters more and more deeply into the work of the newspaper office and Zbych's enthusiasm for his music studies is boundless. It is only Franek who refuses to change course and who for his drinking bouts and his brawling gets sent to a House of Correction.

One of the workers on the East-West thoroughfare construction site, Macisz, carries on against Kazek a campaign of defamation, which comes to a head in the public denunciation of the boy's unhappy past. Embittered, Kazek throws up his building work and goes back to Zenon's band just at the time when that young bandit is organizing an act of sabotage to execute which he particularly needs the help of Barska Street Boys. He is planning, in fact, to blow up, on the eve of the great opening day, the East-West thoroughfare tunnel. But in the nick of time, the boys, including Kazek, refuse to commit the act of sabotage. In the ensuing pitched battle, Kazek is severely injured.

Bending over the prostrate body of her fiancé, Hanka cries out, "He must live" – and voices in those words the essential message of the entire film. People's Poland does not abandon young people set by war on the road to crime and banditry. Those young people, halted on their downward path and rehabilitated, will, in the towns raised from ruins, enter on a new, splendid and creative life with the entire population of the country.

The film demonstrates in an original and courageous way how People's Poland halted the Barska Street boys on their downward path, and portrays those boys coming to appreciate the attractions of the real Great Adventure which bears the name - New Life.

The film links the boys' story with that of building Warsaw. The story of the construction of the East-West thoroughfare, outlined in broad and masterfully handled mass scenes marks out the beginning and the end of the story, and intensifies the significance of the tale of the heroes of the film.

The film was screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1954 when it was nominated for the Grand Prize of the Festival. The director, Aleksander Ford, was awarded by a special mention for directing.



Figure 3: "He must live" – Aleksandra Slaska and Tadeusz Janczar



Figure 4: Boys from Barska Street in the neorealist setting.

“Everything that the first colored Polish film conveys can be seen from its visual absorbance. The dialogue, compared to it, does not have any huge significance. It is the best post-war world movie about the young who found themselves on the wrong way” This is a quotation from a short article in *Demokraten*⁷⁶. A journalist of *Toronto Star* reporting from the Cannes Festival commented that he did not “believe if Grace Kally, and Anna Magnani would manage to play a role of Hanka so splendidly like it Aleksandra Slaska did.”⁷⁷ Georges Sadoul (1904-1967), one of the leading European journalists and film historian of the time wrote:

The heroes of *Five from Barska Street* were born before the war and are moving towards different future than the five young guys from Andre Cayatte’s *Before the Deluge*. They also live in ruins, the same one as the whole Warsaw, but the five boys are recovering along with the city, represented through the progress in building W-Z thoroughfare. A. Ford, the author of *Chopin’s Youth* is a big romantic. He uses a lot of film-directing expressive means and introduces colors in order to recount a history marked by passion, humanism and love. The success of the film places A. Ford among the most appealing directors and the Polish cinematography in the highest rank of world cinema.⁷⁸

Those are only a few positive comments that occurred in the European press during and after the Cannes film festival in 1954. In the Polish press film was identified with Bela Balazs’s postulate saying that an artist who does not have anything to say is a bad artist, while the artist who does not want to say what he knows is a coward.⁷⁹ On the other hand, *New York Daily Worker* published an article saying that

Police censorship in the City of Chicago has forbidden the screening of the film *Five from Barska Street*. What is the reason for that? In the opinion of the police of Chicago, some lines from the film are “improper”. The

⁷⁶ *Demokraten* – Denmark; No. 125, June 28, 1954.

⁷⁷ *Toronto Star*; No. 167, May 26, 1954.

⁷⁸ Sadoul, Georges. *Less Lettres Francaises*; No. 511, April 8, 1954.

⁷⁹ Kuryluk Jerzy. *Stolica*, No.10, March 7, 1954.

police is worried that Ford's film could "insult and infuriate" the American public.⁸⁰

Film was circulated throughout all the cinema theaters in Poland to reach its target-audience, the youth of the same age as the protagonists of the film, as much as possible. According to the daily press, the film was generally received well. There was a common census that it was a success, and film critics ascribed to it immense political, social, and artistic values.

In late 1954, a discussion on the film was initiated in the daily newspaper called *Sztandard Mlodych*.⁸¹ The main point of the discussion was to involve the young into commenting on the issues addressed in the film. *Five from Barska Street* allegedly, without any stylization and refinements depicted the first post-war generation which found it very difficult to fit into the new reality after it had experienced all possible horrors of the war. The discussion was also meant to examine to what extent the film can be regarded as an "important didactic work"⁸². The majority of the readers who contributed to the debate were students, teachers, pedagogues, and members of ZMP⁸³. Here are some of the most frequent questions that occurred in the numerous published letters of the readers who belonged to different ages and professions: Has a righteous road for the society been lost? Is it allowed to renounce any segment of the young lost generation? Does the society invade one's life, or help, educate, and show the right essence of one's struggles, and one's place within the system? Should the society improve one's perspective and his possibilities? Does the film answer to those questions

⁸⁰ Taken from *Zolnierz Wolnosci* – Warsaw; No.120; May 23, 1955.

⁸¹ The newspaper meant for the Communist Youth

⁸² *Sztandard Mlodych* - Warszawa, No. 71; March 24, 1954 p. 34.

and, if does, is that answer righteous? How potent is the artistic strength of the film? Did the actors play their roles convincingly?

Sztandard Młodych stood for a typical Party-line propaganda project under severe censorship. Thus, we can only speculate today about the existence of any letters which expressed particularly negative attitudes towards the film. The general message that a two-month long discussion conveyed was that *Five from Barska Street* excelled as the first film which did not speak about common places, and shallow and banal topics, but about the row, real and severe life. The following quotation is an extract from a letter of a female student from Poznan.

It is a movie far different from all other Polish films. It is our own Polish film. ...In the concentration camps people seldom allowed to be convinced by rubbish. People brought home the things they had survived and experienced in their own interpretation. A men [Aleksander Ford] who survived the devastation of Warsaw can't feel anything else, but love towards the city. A film, like every art called people to find about experiences they themselves could not find out, or come across. It offered them to see for the moment fight of Stalingrad, suffering in the Auschwitz, and building of the thoroughfare E-W.⁸⁴

The role of the Party itself in Ford's film is domineering. However, he wanted to convey that the Party meant not only its General Secretary; it also implied the whole membership. The Party is the reason for initiating the healing process of the five delinquents in the film. It is transitory leader of the boys, because it wisely determines and imposes the life conditions for them. However, on the other hand, *Five from Barska Street* is a "proper" film although its action does not revolve around the Party solely and

⁸³ The Polish acronym for the Association of Polish Youth

⁸⁴ *Sztandard Młodych* - Warszawa, No. 72; March 27, 1954 p. 30

literally. The communist Wojciechowski is the only authentic and real representative of the Party.

Unlike other films of the period which are optimistic from the beginning till the ending, Ford's film is marked by optimistic ending.⁸⁵ Still, it is not Hollywood-like "happy end". The film is positive in a sense that, although it discretely dealt with the dark side of people's life, it did not shake the pillars of the socialist Polish society, but only contributed to making them more stable and justified.

Chepaev, one of the most beautiful Soviet films finished with the death of the main protagonist, but it did not at all diminish our faith in the power and joy of the future life, despite all plights and difficulties described in it. It is the same with *Five from Barska Street*.⁸⁶

Another important issue was based on comparing the film with the same-titled novel written by Kazimierz Kozniewski which served as Ford's inspiration. The attitudes were divided. Some characterized the film as more beautiful and more intelligent, others assured that the book contains the realistic content and thus it was more valuable. In Krakow, during the film-related discussion in the technical high school, it was stated that "one can see the art there, while the book remained unfinished".⁸⁷ The employed in the Polish radio stated the following: "If we talk about the scenario, from the dramaturgical point of view, it was more beautiful than the book."⁸⁸

⁸⁵ After the Juvenile Court decided not to imprison the boys, but to allocate them a guardian, they again mingled with Zenon's gang and killed a man after Zenon ordered them to do that. The spectator then watches the film under the constant gut feeling that the guys will once pay an enormous prize for committing and hiding the crime. However, the issue remained untouched by the end of the film, keeping the observers in a sort of suspense.

⁸⁶ *Sztandard Mlodych* - Warszawa, No. 71; 24.3 1954 p. 34.

⁸⁷ Warsaw Film Archives – "Wnioski ogolne z dyskusji o filmie *Piatkasz ulicy Barskiej*", 1955, pp. 1.

⁸⁸ Ibid. pp.2

Nevertheless, the issue of the highest concern for the participants was examining the socialist-realistic points of the film: the renaissance of the man, matters that impaired human condition during the occupation, pre-war bourgeois political adversities that demoralized people, and of course the potency of People's Polish Republic in turning the young delinquents back to the right road. The disputants also raised the issue of how educative the film was. They drew the conclusion that an authentic metamorphosis in the psyche of the five guys was unfolded in the film. It was claimed that the whole film "speaks about the ordinary people that we can meet every day in our lives. There is no any mold on which the film was made.Ford knows the psychology of the guys since he probably faced the same problems he shows in the film when he was of that age."⁸⁹ Many factory workers and students felt that the story was close to them in a sense that either they themselves experienced the same or they witnessed to the same stories in the families of their friends and relatives. The outcomes of the discussions generally proved that the supposed target-audience recognized themselves in the film and that the director himself, if he intended to do that, also to some extent fulfilled the basic demand of the neorealism⁹⁰, apart from that of the social-realism.

However, further discussions cast a sort of shadow upon such positive conclusions when the participants started to present what they considered as the flaws of the movie. Only then they radiate the level of indoctrination and the exposure to the

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ As the most dominant and potent cinematic style in Western Europe Italian neorealism was ascribed to Western culture only. Since it was based on pessimistic and nihilistic feelings which stemmed from the fact that Italy had participated on the defeated side in the war, it was not present during Stalinization periods in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the directors and film critics watched the neorealist films of the time since they, as loyal Party members, could travel occasionally to the West. They realized that they must follow the dominant world trends if they wanted to become part of the world cinema, and they wanted. The only problem was how to make the compromise with the officials at home.

numerous previous Party social-realistic films of the period. Such attitudes, once again proved how film as a medium is powerful and manipulative, for the socialist-realistic films after three-year expansion in Poland established the desirable and politically correct value system, and moral and aesthetics criteria among people. The quality of any new film was measured only when it was placed within the frame of reference of those criteria. Since the protagonist in the beginning of the movie kill an innocent man, which they never reported to the police, some participant remarked that the boys should have been trialed and punished for that misdeed. It was remarked that this way they did not differ from the constant hooligans in the film who were the members of the liquidated gang. One of the participants even mentioned how his mother had regretted watching movie since it was so unjust, immoral and how it was impossible that such a film could educate a single young person.⁹¹

Still, in the midst of such discussions throughout, at that time already numerous, Polish cinema auditoriums, high and advanced schools, and factories, a critical voice among the intellectuals emerged as well. That voice was actually epitomized in Zygmunt Kaluzynski. Kaluzynski had graduated from Warsaw University before the war, and after the war he became a distinguished film and literary critic in Poland, and a kind of persona who was always present everywhere to give his opinion on everything. Like many other intellectuals, he decided to join the soft accommodation forces, and make certain compromises with the Communist rule.⁹² In return he had opportunity to work more

⁹¹ Warsaw Film Archives – “Wnioski ogolne z dyskusji o filmie *Piatka z ulicy Barskiej*, 1955, pp. 3

⁹² There are numerous same stories in the biographies of many distinguished intellectuals of the time. Intellectual historian Andrzej Walicki, philosopher Laszek Kolakowski all made certain compromises in order to get grants for professional trips in the West were they got acquainted with the new trends within their professions. It was also the case with another film critic and theoretician Jerzy Plazewski whom I am going to introduce below.

freely and to travel sometimes abroad. Thus, he probably used such chances to watch some popular and artistically innovative films in Europe. As a person with a discerning eye and taste he was able to contextualize the Polish cinema in its attempt at being national and people's in away, for example, already mentioned Italian neorealist movies or Bunuel's *Los Olvidados* (1950), the films that Ford himself also had an exclusive opportunity to see as a Party hard-liner were.

In *Nowa Kultura*, a kind of liberal and high-brow journal of the time, Kaluzinski wrote an article tackling all problematic aspects of *Five from Barska Street*. Kaluzynski knew about Ford's intention and personal urge to establish himself among the world famous film directors. He knew what Ford posed in front of himself as a model in filmmaking and how fanatically and uncompromisingly he was striving to follow it. At the same time, Kaluzinsky was perfectly aware of difficulties a film director could encounter if he tried to alter the officially prescribed "hard-core" socialist-realist mode of filmmaking. Thus, his negative comments which undermined the essence of Ford's film can be interpreted in two ways. Namely either he wanted to challenge the border of permissible stressing the importance of film as an morally and socially engaged medium, or he just belonged to at the time increasing group of intellectuals which despised Aleksander Ford for his opportunism and conformism, and his knife-cutting artistic vanity.

According to Kaluzynski, the educational value of Ford's film, and the influence it had on the young generation was of little importance for a work of art. Kaluzynski also stressed uselessness of oversimplification and over-glorification in interpretations of the

film which appeared in “gutter press”⁹³ like *Sztandard Mlodych*. Then thousands of response letters to this statement followed, containing many derogatory and vulgar names that were ascribed to Kaluzynski.⁹⁴ *Nowa Kultura* then allowed that on its pages insulted entities pose a question asking who entitled Kaluzinsky to characterize the discussions organized for the Polish youth and the Polish working class as mediocre, irrelevant and unprofessional. Namely Kaluzynski wrote that “the voice of the unprofessional film critics – due to the mediocre reception of works of art – does not mention the lacks of the film, does not express any doubts, and does not question anything.”⁹⁵ Commenting on the literary source which allegedly Ford persistently followed, he emphasized that:

It conveys the same story like a hundred of other recently made books and films that tend to be educative. It has already become a type. Still, what makes *Five from Barska Street* an untypical film is only its spectacular story.... In that sense, the film does not distinguish from **The Adventures of Tom Sawyer**. Ford uses realistic descriptions, but only in a highly schematized way. There is nothing unique there. ...For example, there are stories with great potential that remained completely undeveloped like the character of the mother with her concern for her son who almost never come by home since he probably re-entered a local gang.⁹⁶

Using the same tone, Kaluzinski gave the remarks about the love story in the film (between Kazek – torn between true socialist and false underground life - and Hanka, strong, independent, intelligent young girl in service to the socialist mission to convert people from false to true), about the formalist type of the film-editing, topography, the characterization. The conclusion he drew was that *Five from Barska Street* essentially was a good film with certain potential, but the role and duty of the film critics and the intellectuals is to point out at its weak points, at things the film lacks to become a

⁹³ Kaluzynski, Zigmunt. *Nowa Kultura* – Warsaw; No.12; March 21, 1954. pp.6.

⁹⁴ In *Film* he was called a rough and scamp of the critic; in *Trybuna Mazowiecka* hooligan, tramp, cynic and inc-waster.

masterpiece. That was the way to explore the potential of the Polish film in general. Thus, he proposed films by Pudovkin, Donski, Trauberg, de Sica as the models for film-making in Poland.

We should try to excel these authors after we first realize our own cinematic potential.. However, we should bear in mind that over-celebrating, euphoria, and irrational enthusiasm just paralyze the development of our art. We should be persistent, self-critical and hard-working.⁹⁷

He concluded one of his articles on *Five from Barska Street* with a vivid anecdote.

We should not allow ourselves to finish like those two watermelon producers. All their lives they were so proud of their watermelons, firmly stating that they were the best in the world. Then they were sent to the competition, but they ended up on the 250 place, since 249 watermelons in the world were better than theirs.⁹⁸

Upon the release of Kaluzynski's articles, the series of subsequent all-way attacks on him followed by his colleagues – other film critics. The argument against him was of course the fact that the film got the distinguished treatment during the Cannes Festival which implied that the film was undeniably artistic achievement even in the world and European framework “The film is based on Chekhov's words. ‘A man it sounds so proud’ and such man is worth fighting for. Te film is different from the book. While the book remains in the thoughts, the film stays deep inside heart.”⁹⁹. The loudest and harshest criticism came from another distinguished film and literary critic, and famous

⁹⁵ Kaluzynski, Zigmunt. *Nowa Kultura* – Warsaw; No.12; March 21, 1954. p.6

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ *Sztandard Młodych* - Warszawa, No. 71; March 24, 1954, p. 34.

conformist of the time Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz who among all stated that Kaluzynski's critiques were only deteriorating for Film Polski.¹⁰⁰

Kaluzynski committed the "mortal sin" finding courage to challenge the social-realistic dogma in uncompromising, direct and arrogant way. He wanted Polish film to be "an abstraction and to undermine and diminish the true and unique value of the Polish socialist culture"¹⁰¹. He dared to scream DEFEAT instead of ACHIEVEMENT. He diminished the value and importance of the emotions of the enchanted workers and students in building-a-new-man-process by saying that the validity of their immature and shallow discussions was overstated, and he emphasized the value of the intellectual examination of the film. He tried to compare the film with its Western counterparts like already mentioned Bunuel's *Los Olvidados*, de Sica's *The Children of the Street*, Kayatti's *Without Pity* or even pre-war American films like *Boy's Town* in order to examine what it lacked to gain the same world fame instead of establishing its value according to the naïve estimations of how didactic and just it was.

However, at the same time, an intellectual counter-argumentation against the controversial Kaluzynski's remarks emerged. It was initiated by Jerzy Plazewski¹⁰². He also positioned Ford's film in the comparative perspective with some of the most prominent world war-films, directly confronting Kaluzynski's arguments. Plazewski's main point was that the Polish cinema must enhance and enrich the world cinema with authenticity coming from her historical and cultural heritage; it must not just plagiarize the Western styles. Plazewski mentioned how he once saw the Italian film *Senza Pieta*

¹⁰⁰ Toeplitz, Krzysztof. . "In Cinema and God Knows Where Else", *Nowa Kultura*; No.27; June 23, 1954.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

(Without Pity). The action of *Without Pity* takes place one year after the war, but “literally each scene in the film was screaming – look at the plights that remained after the years of the war”¹⁰³.

The film’s central point is a story about a girl from the countryside who came to a city to see her brother. But her brother, a member of a local gang, was killed. Homeless girl becomes a prostitute and dependant on the local gang to which her brother had belonged. The film’s pristine affair begins when the destitute signorina compassionately aids the Negro soldier¹⁰⁴ who was wounded by the bandits. It flourishes when he, resolute to keep her on the paths of righteousness and to take her out of Italy is incarcerated for stealing Army supplies. And, it reaches a climax when the girl is killed trying to protect him from the pursuing black marketers from whom he has stolen money.

The war captured the whole world and made a desolate place out of it. The material devastation at the same time brought about the suspension of all moral values. There were none of them both in Italy and Poland. After the war we read in the newspapers about a seventeen year old guy who killed his friend in the school toilet because he used his turn. Then we said “war” and thought that the seventeen-year-old guy probably had seen the horrors of the ghetto, and the uprising. However, the Italian reality photographed in the film *Without Pity*, and other countries’ realities captured wholeheartedly in the films like *Los Olvidados* and *On a Beautiful Small Beech* are sad and dark realities, and they differ essentially from our reality since they do not offer to a man an exit from his plights and unhappiness. After the artistic vision of those gloomy processes was shown in the West, now, we also use an artistic vision to epitomize our, in principle successful, but very difficult process of the rehabilitation of man.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² A world-wide known Polish critic and historian. In 1981, he presided over the jury at the Berlin film festival. He is still active as a film critic in Polish film magazine *Kino*.

¹⁰³ Plazewski Jerzy. “Oni musza zyc” [They Must Live]; *Zycie Literackie* – Krakow; No. 40; March 14, 1954.

¹⁰⁴ from the occupying U.S. troops

¹⁰⁵ Plazewski, Jerzy. “Oni musza zyc” [They Must Live]; *Zycie Literackie* – Krakow; No. 40; March 14, 1954,

In Kozniewski's book and Ford's film there are five boys who used to drink, steal and kill. However for the girl in *Without Pity* no one showed the slightest interest, but in Ford's film it was the society, who established particular institutions and individuals to return the post-war delinquents on the right way. They were led to the New Life.¹⁰⁶

The new thoroughfare they built, the euphoria after Marek broke the record in brick-laying, the happiness that Kazek felt when he learnt how to use a very complex machine on the construction site, New Marek's apartment, and above all, the love story which from a sparkle in the book grows into a flame in the film – they all epitomized the New Life.¹⁰⁷

Alexsander Ford himself, mysterious and unapproachable as he was did not almost at all respond publicly to all these debates and criticism. The only serious interview with him, where he touched the topic of *Five from Barska Street* was not published in the most popular weekly or daily newspapers, but in *Kwartalnik Filmowi*, a high-brow film monthly journal.¹⁰⁸ He was interviewed by Jerzy Toeplitz, the leading film critic at the time, and later the writer of the first history of the Polish cinema, and was talking mostly about the aesthetic innovations of his film¹⁰⁹, and his extraordinary cooperation with the film crew. Both Zigmunt Kaluzynski and the discussion in *Sztandard Mlodych* were touched only briefly and at the very superficial level.

Distancing from all comments of the time, an evident thing is that Alexander Ford always dealt with difficult and ambitious themes, and conflicts between people charged

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Toeplitz, Jerzy. "Razmowa z Aleksandrem Fordem o *Piatce z ulicy Barskiej*", *Kwartalnik fimowi*, No.17, September, 1954. pp. 3-15.

¹⁰⁹ It was the first, colored film in Poland. He used different type of editing, shorter scenes. He stressed the importance of indicative details in the scenes of his film.

with the maximum of dramatism.¹¹⁰ In addition to that, it is not a pure chance that in most of his films he used youth as the most dominant subject matter. What attracted Ford, as a hard-line communist who willingly complied to all social-realistic directives, in dealing with the youth were its nobility, innocence, sensitiveness, eagerness for searching justice, and committing heroic deeds. The youth is a stage of one's life which is violent, difficult and uncompromising, but it bears as well the most innocent humanistic charge. The contemporary reality and society, thus, could effectively be filtrated through depiction of the young generation in its formative years, describing its inner conflicts at their climaxes.¹¹¹ That is the *innocence-lost* concept that Ford apparently had taken over from neorealism and Western cinema. Complying with the social-realistic demands of the Party, or striving to establish himself as the inventor, not only as a good artisan, Ford broadened this concept with the inclusion of *innocence- regained*.

However, Ford often looked pathetic in his attempts to convey the intense passion of giving the moral lessons.

“Since the youth is very often pathetic, that is why pathetic scenes appear in all films of Alexander Ford. We already have seen it in his previous film *Chopin's Youth* where Ford stresses the pathos which accompanies a “form of love”. However, even there Chopin is not an ignorant, but a bohemian student in revolutionary Warsaw, a friend of the working class. Thus, Ford is a poet – poet of a screen. And poetry is often pathetic. In *Five from Barska Street*, Ford joins poetry and reportage, and such a symbiosis was not created by chance. It is there to facilitate the moral and educational functions of the film.”¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Even in the pre-war period Ford was a pioneer of the film underground movement in Poland. His first post-war film was, as we saw, a courageous treatment of the Polish anti-Semitism.

¹¹¹ See Konwicki, Tadeusz. “W prawie poezji”, *Kwartalnik filmowy*, No.17, May 1954.

3.3. Andrzej Wajda – Signaling the Emergence of New Generation of Filmmakers

Due to its intention to introduce and keep cooperative atmosphere among the post-war film workers, Wajda offered the scenario for his next film to one of his assistants during making *Five Barska Street*, Andrzej Wajda. It was scenario for *Pokolenie* (Generation) – the first Wajda's feature film from 1955. *Pokolenie* is a significant film primarily because it initiated the new phase in Polish cinema. Namely it was the first film made by a film director who had not worked before the war, who was a young adolescent during the war, and who actually matured in the post-war years. Then it was natural that Wajda's perception would be different from Ford's, and that his filmic focus would be shifted. *Pokolenie* still provided only the hints for subsequent Polish School whose atmosphere, as it will be presented in the next chapter, would be radically different from that in the Socialist realist films. The Party officials, thus, harshly criticized film for being pessimistic. The characters in *Pokolenie* were described as Lumpenproletariat rather than the idealist communist youth, fighting during the occupation.¹¹³

Wajda's film also tells about the youth and maturing in a very difficult time. The scenario was not different from others of the time since it was full of declarative lines which were far from conveying the real life of the Poles. However, thanks to the geography of the whole film (the plane with the straight of the chimneys on the brick factories, spiral staircase, the square in front of the church in a rainy Sunday afternoon, or a little tavern with a strange clock on a dirty wall) and several poetical climaxes ending with Tadeusz Janczar's suicidal jump from the top of the spiral staircase stitched up the

¹¹² Ibid. pp. 47.

¹¹³ *Lekcja Polskiego Kina* (2002)

observers in the filmic text and made, otherwise declarative and unconvincing lines, sounded more realistic.¹¹⁴

The breaking of the myth of a positive young man, who, thanks to the social mobility and benevolence of the Party could overcome all his plights, was already anticipated in the film in a mild and refined way. For that reason, the Polish film historians are often of divided opinions about whether *Pokolenie* should be taken as a zero point of the Polish School which, in the subsequent period would significantly mark the Polish cinema and Polish society.

CHAPTER 4 – The Role of the Polish School in Raising the National Sentiments in the 1956 – 1960 Poland

4.1 Social and Political Atmosphere – De-Stalinisation and Revisionism

In 1956, it appeared that the entire Stalinist construction facilitated by Boleslaw Bierut regime would collapse, and that the five-year-old socialist-realist dogmatization would prove to be a mere episode. In Poland the post Stalinist thaw assumed a specific form stemming probably from local tradition, including strong attachment to independence and

¹¹⁴ Vucicevic, Branko. "Filmovi Andrzeja Wajde", *Filmska Kultura*: Zagreb, No.6, Nov., 1957, pp. 53-54.

the anti-Soviet stand. Bierut, the “Father of the Nation”, died in March 1956, during the aftermath of the famous Twentieth Party Congress¹¹⁵, and de-Stalinization was accelerated and rendered more profound by the struggle for succession waged within the communist elite. The worker’s rebellion, which broke out in Poznan (28 June 1956), and was ultimately put down to the accompaniment of bloodshed, proved to be a stimulating factor. It was recognized not only as an additional impulse to the “war on the top”, but, as in the case of Polish national insurrections during the nineteenth century or the Warsaw Uprising, it became part of national mythology. In October 1956, a reform-promising Gomulka was re-elected after six years without the stamp of Moscow approval. This unheard of defiance elicited a visit of Khrushchev coupled with several armies massing at the Polish border, but Gomulka effectively deflected the threat. “However the openness and the reforms lasted about as long as any decent cynic would expect, and quickly enough, everything, went back to normal”¹¹⁶

“It appeared dubious to many people whether a regime based on hate, fear and violence could lead to a just fraternal system; whether in order to reach the idyllic communist society, one had to adopt such drastic measures. One could argue that since the goal of communism was the restraint of human destructive impulses, the power of repression, which is bound to leave its psychological imprint on the mentality of the population, should not be employed in the pursuit of the communist goals. The more so, the history tells us that degradation inflicted on people, no matter under what slogans, usually backfires and thus renders repression futile.”¹¹⁷

All these political events were not only objections against the regime in Poland.

The Party’s dogmatism and obstinacy drove away many of its original sympathizers; its

¹¹⁵ It was marked by a severe debate about the future continuation of the Polish socialist path after Nikita Khrushchev publicized the famous document which unmasked Stalinist crimes, and after he cancelled the leader cult.

¹¹⁶ <http://www.geopoland.com/history/h7.shtml>

simplistic view of the world and its tendency to recommend uniform and equal solutions for diverse problems, contributed to the Party reputation for attracting people without intelligence as well as character. These factors combined with the economic dissatisfaction in Poland, created few sincere supporters for the regime. In the middle fifties the alienation from the official ideology became widespread.

It is an interesting fact that the “thaw” which gathered such momentum in 1956 originated within the Polish Communist Party whose members had become gradually committed to a policy of relaxation which was welcomed by the people as a whole. Here is what one Party member said in the memorable October 1956:

The question whether the goal sanctifies the means has again been posed with all its sharpness in connection with the Hungarian tragedy....It places the communist movement ahead of the goal of humanitarianism. An atmosphere was created where black was called white, crimes-the class ethic; lies were clothed with the dignity of truth; the falsification of history and distortion of facts were called the Party line in learning....Man himself was most dangerously forgotten...Stalinism destroyed not only humanitarian ideas of communism, but also the normal principles of human intercourse free of fear and moral terror. It is impossible to have any policy without tactics; but selling ideals and morality for tactics subverts the Party itself and depraves its members.¹¹⁸

Such atmosphere consequently led to introduction of certain political and artistic freedom. It was not the Party which decided to change its policy, but the ubiquitous mass protests of all strata of society uncompromisingly struck by the very difficult political and economic situation in Poland. Intellectuals turned to Marxist revisionism¹¹⁹ and artists to

¹¹⁷ Dadlez, Anna. *Political and Social Issues in Poland as Reflected in the Polish Novel*; New York: Columbia University Press, 1989, pp. 120-121

¹¹⁸ Jadwiga Siekierska, “Czy Tragedja Optymistyczna?” (An Optimistic Tragedy?), *Po Prostu* (Straight Forwardly), No. 49; December 2, 1956.

¹¹⁹ “Thanks to the translations of some works on young Marx (H. Lefebvre, A. Cornu), as well as my conversation with Hessen, I soon discovered a ‘libertarian’ Marx, concentrated on the problem of liberating human beings from the degrading effects of alienation. Hence I was well equipped for defending myself

inventing the new aesthetics in their expression. Thus, the circles of people with a new alternative views were established. The strongest point they had was the absence of any elitism and self-closedness. They often served as mediators which instilled into ordinary people new hopes, catharsis, ideas. They reminded about the real purposes of the revolution and the war. They treated many taboos, especially those related to the civil war which in Poland was in progress during the Second World War. Thus, they led to formation of a national collective identity in Socialist Poland – identity which did not deny the importance of the socialism and its revolution, but which created an alternative to the rigid and degrading official Party politics. Film particularly was important. It could overcome the censorship by emitting subtle “subversive” messages through the images, and the expression of the filmmakers in general. Thanks to the organization of the Polish film industry which possessed certain level of independence¹²⁰, and the talent and solidarity among the new generation of filmmakers who served as the apprentices in the shooting of the first Polish post-war films, even a new cinematic style emerged. It was called Polish School and would become world-wide known. I will make an attempt to present the main concept and ideas of this school, focusing mainly on its formative and most famous film *Kanal* by Andrzej Wajda, and trying to contextualize it in respect to the

from against the increasing pressure of official indoctrination in Marxism-Leninism.” See Walicki, Andrzej. “Intellectual Elites and the Vicissitudes as ‘Imagined Nation’ in Poland” in: *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*. (eds.) Ronald Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy; University of Michigan Press, 1999, pp. 290-291.

¹²⁰ This is the period when “producer’s cinematography” appeared for the first time, and its antipode – auteur film which brought about a new dimension on the relation film-society. The director is not only a complete author of his film (the director, script-writer, sometimes composer, camera operator), but the producer of the film as well – in a certain way. “Auteur groups” were established throughout Europe. France, Poland and Czechoslovakia serve as the brightest examples of how successfully they could function.

other world and regional cinematic tendencies that emerged due to the new wave of geo-political changes in the post-WWII world.

4.2 Andrzej Wajda's *Kanal* on the Two Sides of the Iron Curtain – Collective Catharsis in Poland, Praises from Abroad.

Kanal was released in 1957 after years of ignoring the topic of Warsaw Uprising. The issue of the Uprising was not a complete taboo of the time since it was mentioned in the sequence of the film *Forbidden Songs* (1947). Nevertheless, everything was presented in an enigmatic manner; the trace of censorship was obvious, but the issue was somehow communicated to the audience to which it meant a lot. However, even the highly wrapped references became subdued during the socialist-realist period in culture. As we could have seen it in the example of *Five from Barska Street*, the topic of the Uprising could be present only in the form of the scenes with the dominant landscapes of devastated urban areas used for the post-war reconstruction propaganda. Warsawians, however, recollected the traumatic experiences watching those landscapes.¹²¹

The years between 1955 and 1957 in Poland released hopes for breaking through Stalinism's effects upon the country's social and political life. Sooner or later it also had to open a way to a different outlook on the most recent history; including the Warsaw Uprising. The shadows of people killed and murdered required a voice that could testify about the bitter experiences of Poles. That urge implied the dismissal of the prevailing doctrinal lines and restoration of the memory of the truth, about Poland's history – including, especially, the war time history regarding, among others, the September 1939

¹²¹ Hendrykowski, Marek. *Kanal*; Poznan: Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2007, pp. 18.

campaign, Armija Krajowa (loyal to the government in London), Katyn forest (where Stalin's NKVD¹²² murdered hundreds of captured Polish officers), the resistance struggles in the occupied country, the evacuation of Anders' army from Russia, and the tragedy of the rising.

A strong impulse towards truth was given by the famous article published in March 1956 in the magazine *Po prostu* entitled "To an appointment with the AK people".¹²³ After Stalin's death on the 5th of March 1953, the terror and dread omnipresent in PRL's¹²⁴ public life gradually gave way to the courage to speak about how Poles fought for their own independence. The wall of perennial silence and falsification of history erected for the benefit of the communist government fractured. Nonetheless, PRL's propaganda and censorship apparatus during the "thaw period" (from Stalin's death in 1953 to the Poznan Uprising in 1956 and the so-called Polish October of that year, when Gomulka took power) didn't intend to give up the field to the "revisionists", regardless of whom they might be: journalists, historians, politicians, philosophers or *filmmakers*.

Like many films of the Polish School, *Kanal* owes its creation to a literary inspiration. The epithet "literary" has in this case a specific sense. It doesn't relate to fiction writing at all. For, at the very beginning, the appearance of a documentary record originating from one man's experience was a great advantage. *Kanal's* scenarist was a

¹²² The NKVD (Narodny Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del) or People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs.

¹²³ Jerzy Ambroziewicz, Walery Namiotkiewicz, Jan Oszewski. "Na Spotkanie ludziom z AK.", *Po Prostu*, No.11, 1956.

¹²⁴ Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa (Polish People's Republic)

soldier of the Uprising. Jerzy Stefan Stawinski ¹²⁵(AK resistance alias “Lacki”) claims in his memoirs that it all began on a November evening in 1955. He writes:

...that evening I had decided to draw hardily from my own experiences, as the chances for publishing the topics thus far forbidden increased; before long I started writing, relying on my Warsaw Uprising experience – when, being a commanding officer of a communication company of the AK regiment “Basztka”, on the 26th September 1944, at 10 pm, I had seventy men into sewer hatch at Szustra Street 6 next to Pulawska Street in Mokotow District, and how I left the sewers at 1 pm. the next day with only five companions.¹²⁶

The author’s recollection includes a testimony which is of importance today. For it is generally considered that *Kanal*’s filming resulted from the Polish October. The premiere date of 20 April 1957 may also be misleading in the sense that it might be taken to indicate that *Kanal* was a post-October film. Agreed, if we take the premiere date into consideration, *Kanal* was first shown on movie screens six months after October. However, the entire making of the film takes place much earlier, and its historical context is the “thaw” context rather than the October context. Jerzy Stawinski’s story *Kanal* was written in 1955 and published in March 1956 in *Tworzosc* magazine. In August of the same year it was printed as a book in ten thousand copies by the National Publishing Institute.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Stawinski was a novelist and a script writer. As a young officer of Armija Krajowa he participated in the Warsaw Uprising. War experiences served him as the main source of inspiration for his novels and film scripts. His short stories further inspire the whole series of the Polish filmmakers. He wrote even three scripts for Andrzej Munk (*Człowiek na Torze*, *Eroica* and *Zezowate Szczescie*)

¹²⁶ Jerzy Stefan Stawinski. *Notatki scenarzysty* (The Scenarist’s Notes); Warsaw: FilMOTEKA Narodowa, 1988, pp. 3.

¹²⁷ Iordanova, Dina. *Cinema of the Other Europe: the Industry and the Artistry of East Central European Film*; London: Wallflower, 2003, pp. 176.

The first person to notice the filmic potential of Stawinski's story, long before its publication was Tadeusz Konwicki¹²⁸, a co-worker (and from 1957 the literary director) of the recently created (1 May, 1955) Film Unit "Kadr"¹²⁹. It was his initiative to create a picture based on the story. The oldest screenplay version, originally entitled "For Homeland's Glory", was swiftly created by the end of 1953.¹³⁰ Also, at that time, the project was filed for the evaluation by the film production authorities. Stenographic records preserved from the session of the Film and Screenplay Evaluation Board, dated the 24th of January 1956, testifies that the session was a dramatic process. The interesting thing is that the person who opposed the project most was the chairman of the Central Cinematography Department, Leonard Borkowicz – who several months later would make a politically tough decision to send *Kanal* to Cannes, and presided over the official Polish delegation to the festival. At this specific moment, however, during a fierce discussion, two opposing approaches clashed: on one hand, the standpoint of the cinematic authorities, and, on the other hand, the arguments of the filmmakers' production unit.¹³¹ *Kanal* was very important project for the film unit "Kadr", setting both a direction to aim for that the filmmakers associated with the story, and the general

¹²⁸ Konwicki initially was one of the leading advocates for Social Realism in literature. However, by the mid 1950s, he had become disillusioned by the communist regime in Poland and fell out of grace with the Party. His later works are mostly concerned with the author's childhood and the semi-mythical, romantic land of his youth. He is also famous as the author of one of the most famous films of Polish School *Ostatni dzien lata* (Last Day of Summer, 1958).

¹²⁹ Although it was still under the censorship of the Ministry for Art and Culture, the Polish film industry was decentralized in 1955. Eight independent film production units (Zespoly) were created and financed by the state. Each unit had a manager for the art sector, who usually was also the director of the unit, a scriptwriter and an executive producer. Each film unit was responsible for ordering the scenarios and organizing all phases of the film production. Thus, the authors of the same taste and attitudes would gather around the same film unit. See Stok, Danusia. *Kieslowski on Kieslowski*; London: Faber and Faber, 1993, pp. 11-12.

¹³⁰ Tadeusz Lubelski "50 lat szkoly polskiej: spory, emocje, konfrontacje", *Kino*; No.362, April 4, 2007.

¹³¹ Ibid.

level to which they aspired at the time. Generally speaking, the context of the political thaw and the increasingly fervent tone of the years from 1955-1957 favored the makers. Still, the fact of making such a film, after many years of silence aroused immense social expectations. The *Kanal* movie poster included an attractive, yet socially very obliging, slogan “The first film about Warsaw Uprising”. Unfortunately, in the near future, the statement would lead to certain misunderstandings.

Namely, the film entered the public space which, at that time, was still severely influenced and affected by the previous atmosphere of the harsh Stalinization of Poland. It would be interesting to imagine the responses to this film by the same audience which discussed *Five from Barska Street* three years before, claiming how it was not positive and realistic enough. Stawinski and Wajda were looking for some middle ground. On one hand, they tried to incorporate the specificity of personal and individual experiences in the film, and on the other hand, the film was an attempt to refer to the great tragedy of the city and several hundred thousands of the inhabitants. Fragmenting the film in this manner would threaten to exclude the bigger picture. Excessive generalization could lead to the trivialization of the film’s outlook, to a loss of all that was authentic, deeply experienced. Hence the choice: not anonymous insurgents shown as statues, but living people in the Uprising. This strategy was consequently followed throughout the whole film.

Thus, *Kanal* is a thaw period film through its origin. However, it first appeared on the screens after October 1956, which is the context of its social reception. It is also known very well what had to be omitted at the time: a complete and entirely independent film vision of the Uprising. The complex, twisted political context of Poland’s history

between 1955 and 1957 had an irresistible influence upon Wajda's work. We can today fully understand what was possible at that time, and to what extent the authors managed to push against previous barriers and censorship limitations built around that topic. The elements that finally found their way to the big screen ought to be perceived both as an expression of the artistic boldness and as the result of a compromise forced by the ideological circumstances; without a compromise *Kanal* could not have come to existence.¹³²

Regarding all these circumstances, it was so difficult to cover the topic. Hope intermixed with despair. The dying world of Warsaw oppressed by war and occupation, the Warsaw that was a normal European capital a few years back, living with its own development and perspectives, the Warsaw, that is now helpless and changing into the apocalyptic ruins. *Kanal* emanates internal energy. It tells a story of defeat, shows the disintegration of a world that inevitably submerges into total chaos. Yet when one analyses the film's realization, its production, and all what appeared on the screen, paradoxically, it proves to be a film that was perfectly organized. Shot during the summer of 1956, it came into being through an extremely intensive effort in a very short time. While on the film set, the crew needed to overcome countless obstacles and various, often

¹³² "The film directors were torn between the duties towards the state which provided us with the money for making films and the society to which we addressed. The compromise was to make a film which would bring a lot of money to the state after numerous screenings and huge distribution, and which would be, on the other hand, socially engaged enough, so that that it can also be socially useful. Thus, after making such a film, I felt like I did not owe anything neither to the state (since I return its money back) nor to the Poles since I made the films which did not communicate only with the empty cinema theaters and self-content state sponsor. " See Wajda, Andrzej. *Film zvani zelja* [Film Called Desire]; Belgrade: Institut za film, 1990, pp. 27.

down-to-earth, limitations. That effort to overcome these obstacles did not diffuse their focus; on the contrary, it transferred itself into the creative process' integral energy.¹³³

“We knew”, as Wajda said years after, “that we are voice of our dead, and that it is our duty to give testimony regarding those dreadful years, that dreadful destruction, the dreadful fate that happened to the Polish nation, to the best of us.”¹³⁴

The making of the film dealing with the Warsaw uprising in the fervent political situation mobilized many individuals, including those who had nothing to do whatsoever with film making. 1944 came back into existence on the film set. Outdoor scenes were shot in the authentic Warsaw locations, therefore, the city itself with its ruins, landscape and local specificity became an equal and rightful *personae dramatis* of this film. The personal experiences of the Uprising participants, Stawinski and Lipman¹³⁵ delivered an unusual devotion and commitment to all the crew members, and the crew in turn was helped with great generosity by Warsaw inhabitants, who assisted in *Kanal*'s making. Individual memories saved the collective one.

The narration of the film is as cold as knife and the film-makers consequently avoided pompous effects. They carried out the further adaptation of the neorealist style. Now when Stalinization was fading away, and the socialist-realistic molds for film-making could be avoided, the movies did not have to be primarily positive and didactic any more. The pessimistic and fatalist way of portraying the atrocities of the war and the absurdities of the 20th century's grim history belonged to the spiritual condition of Western Europe and its post-war emotional culture, creating a certain characteristic style

¹³³ See *Lekcja polskiego kina* (2002).

¹³⁴ Falkowska, Janina. *History, Politics and Nostalgia in Andrzej Wajda Films*; London; Bergham Books, 2006, pp. 234.

epitomized in the *neorealism*. As we could perceive it in the previous chapter, the socialist authorities and the majority of the Polish film critics maintained that the Polish film radiated positive prospects for the future that Poland was going to build with the help of the united, working Polish people. They proudly stressed the “advantages” their approach had when compared to the pessimistic one in the West. However, due to the changes in the general political climate, *Kanal* became something more to the Western world than just a novelty from behind the Iron Curtain. European artists intuitively found in it a confirmation of their own pursuit. Some of them, such as Lindsey Anderson and Francois Truffaut found in it even more: “a dream come true” about a new style, and the future potency of own film practice.¹³⁶

Resolute to enrich Western European neorealist style with the local Polish concerns, Wajda used many sources while shooting the film. He watched the insurrectional newsreels made by Jerzy Bossak in 1944 during the Uprising, and relied on them when he created the documentary actuality of the scenes representing the Uprising, especially in the introduction of the film. He also relied on the previous experiences from the Polish cinematography, since the scenes in the sewers had already been made by the camera operator of *Border Street* by Aleksander Ford. When speaking about *Kanal*, one can also name the specific self-inspiration the filmmakers (especially Wajda and Lipman) gained from their work on the making of *Five from Barska Street*. Lipman and Wajda put much effort and inventiveness into their artistic conceptions of the scenes located below ground in this film, and that resulted soon afterwards in the immensely refined

¹³⁵ Jerzy Lipman was the most talented camera operator at the time. He collaborated with Aleksander Ford on his first two post-war films.

¹³⁶ Andersen, Lindsey, “Fresh Talents at Cannes Film Festival”, *The Times* May 14, 1957.

poetics of such scenes in *Kanal* which actually absolutely dominate in the movie. Therefore, for *Kanal*'s makers, *Five from Barska Street*, in a sense, became a testing lab for a creative experiment, a specific general rehearsal enabling them to achieve very exquisite, innovative effects in setting, directing, illuminating and cinematography. Wajda openly stated in many interviews that the makers of *Kanal* and many other Polish films of the time, mainly adopted from the neorealist (especially Rosellini)¹³⁷ the newsreel reportage manner of arranging the striking, dramatic war images.¹³⁸ This again appears especially in the group scenes just before the entrance into the sewers¹³⁹.

As I have mentioned the film's premiere took place in Warsaw on April 20th, 1957. First reactions both preview ones (shown in the capital's film club Po Prostu) and post-premiere ones were widely diverse. Regarding the domestic critical commentaries, the film was received with suspiciousness, rather reluctantly, and with mixed feelings. That does not imply that it was not accompanied with interest. The first fictional film about Warsaw Uprising stirred the public, and to some extent it became a national issue. Several million people saw it in several months.¹⁴⁰ The attendance number proved that *Kanal*'s screenings all around the country were a great success from the opening night.

¹³⁷ Wajda's films can sometimes be classified as documents because they use the narrative characteristic for the documentaries or reportages. In *Rome an Open City* (1946), describing the shooting of the priest, Rosellini did not avoid even the least important trifle; without any subjective reshaping, phenomenologically. Camera records the whole routine of the shooting – fixing the chair for the convict, lining of the soldiers, and appearance of the convicted priest, and finally, his death. The effect which Rosellini achieved with this scene, Wajda achieved with the whole film. Such naturalistic description of the fictive situations which recalls the memory about the real and painful episodes in the national history was the hallmark of Wajda's films.

¹³⁸ Wajda is cited here from the documentary film on Polish School called *Lekcja Kina Polskiego*, (2005)

¹³⁹ Wajda uses here what is in the film aesthetics known as "predetermined plot" (see Jaques Aumont, Alain Bergala, Michel Marie, and Mark Vernet. *Esthetique du Film*; Nathan-Universite, 1999), which directs the story and the narrative. In the beginning of the film, we understand from the narrator's voice what is going to happen in the end – the death of all protagonists who will enter the sewers. Then the whole series of slowing-downs, ellipsis, and discoveries, inside what R. Barthes calls hermeneutic phase, follows in order to captivate the dramatic episodes in the last living moments of the participants in the Uprising.

Something different had been expected, however: A type of cinematic fresco that would “take care of the problem” and pay tribute to the Uprising at the same time. The reception’s temperature was high and the expectations were enormous. A single movie was unable to satisfy them. After the premiere a great number of public responses appeared in the Polish press. Reviews, discussions and also, letters from viewers were published, not only in the film periodicals, but in numerous newspapers, weekly magazines, and monthlies as well.

Almost everybody criticized, bridled and complained; only few defended Wajda’s film. Fundamentally different opinions clashed. There were also attacks manifesting either bad intentions or incomprehension. The situation even came to the point that both authors, the scenarist and the director, attempted to explain their own intentions regarding the film, using the press. They were both aware that *Kanal*’s internal artistic dynamic might not necessarily be able to defend itself when confronted with the enormous, external pressure of the social contexts resulting from the domestic situation at the time. The time to unfold the film’s deeper significance was still to come. However, all the time Wajda’s film was continuously screened all over Poland, and it evoked the vivid reception and interests of the domestic public. During the first year of screening a record number of 4.2 million viewers watched *Kanal* in Poland.¹⁴¹ Therefore, it would have been a full success if it weren’t for the misunderstandings and controversies mentioned above. As Jerzy Stefan Stawinski wrote,

Poles were waiting for a film about the Uprising. I could give a long scream on the street corners that *Kanal* is not supposed to solve the whole issue. Everyone had ideological claims toward the movie; the many realities of the

¹⁴⁰ Hendrykowski, Marek. *Kanal*; Poznan: Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2007, pp. 36.

¹⁴¹ Lubelski, Tadeusz. “50 lat szkoly polskiej: spory, emocje, konfrontacje”, *Kino*; No.362, April 4, 2007.

insurgency ruined us. Everyone had seen the Uprising through their own glasses, not even attempting to see our point of view. The majority wanted a bronze monument...A film expert cried in a newspaper: “We’re still waiting for a film about the uprising!” So am I.¹⁴²

The domestic discussion about *Kanal* was dominated by a violent debate regarding the historical truth about the uprising. Deliberations and passionate disputes about Wajda’s film became to some degree a substituted theme. The issue that was painful for the people was the collective trauma of the perennial propaganda lies about the uprising, not the film itself. A majority of the debaters treated it as a historical document and even – a move we may find very surprising nowadays – as a specific interpretation of the Warsaw Uprising, forgetting that they deal here with a fiction based on the insurrectional tragedy of a certain group of the people. The historical reading of the film occurred against the will of the film’s makers. Wajda wrote in the beginning of 1957 that “the content of this film is not a historical fresco but the experiences of a specific group of people. This is the only way to evaluate and interpret the film, if one strives to stay in accordance to the author’s intentions.”¹⁴³ Later he also said that the film was not about uprising and that he just wanted to deliver a dying process of the people sentenced to death.¹⁴⁴

Also, only a few people noticed in the film the qualities a work of art. The ordinary people (factory workers, students, bureaucrats), together with some film critics, writers and intellectuals were still looking for exclusively social-political references in the film and its righteous or unrighteous political message. If we recall the debates on *Five from*

¹⁴² Stefan-Stawinski, Jerzy. “Złoty sen przestepcy”, *Przegląd Kulturalny*, No.23, 1957.

¹⁴³ See Falkowska, Janina. *History, Politics and Nostalgia in Andrzej Wajda Films*; London: Bergham Books, 2006, pp. 201.

Barska Street presented in the Chapter II, and the general atmosphere of Bierut's years which preceded the thaw, it sounds logical that the same methodology will be initially applied to assessing the new wave of the films, no matter how much they challenged the borders of permissible. Stanislaw Ozimek wrote after many years that "hardly any people treated this film as the autonomous work of art, equipped with the right to an individual vision transgressing the annalistic record of a given event."¹⁴⁵

After the festival screening in Cannes and the awarding of the prestigious award soon after, this perspective became the main domain of foreign critics and commentators. Those who perceived this aspect, for example, Ado Kyrou, Andre Bazin and Georges Sadoul, were more inclined to believe that the screenplay was a suggestively created fiction and fabrication for the film's sake, and that the director's vision and Pandemonium were just an authorial metaphor having little to do with real history.¹⁴⁶

The following article shows the prevailing response in Poland to such interpretation.

"Are the international critics more discerning than those at home? The French and English critics, Aldo Kirou among them found out that the films like *Generation*, *Kanal* and *Cien* (Shadow) according to their artistic, aesthetic features, which are common, can constitute a monolith style called 'Polish Film School'. He wrote it in *Lettres Nouvelles* published also in the newest *Kwartalnik Filmowy*."¹⁴⁷

In Poland a political and ideological significance of the film was still prevailing, and had attracted the most attention of the reviews. In order to express the tragedy of the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

¹⁴⁵ Ozimek, Stanislaw: "Konfrontacje z Wielka Wojna" in *Historia filmu polskiego*, vol. IV: 1956-1961. ed. Jerzy Toeplitz; Warsaw, 1980. pp.29.

¹⁴⁶ *Glasgow Herald*; May 21, 1957

¹⁴⁷ *Glas Koszalin*, "Polska szkola filmowa", No.136; June 9, 1957.

Warsaw Uprising, Wajda used a usually competent manner, engaging for this task a specific type of expression available to cinematographic art. Its inherent means of expressions made the effects very suggestive. Here I will recall a famous scene where Daisy and the seriously injured Jack reach the bars of the sewers flooded with light, and they see the opposite Vistula shore. The metaphorical aspect of that scene contains not only the bars that, on a semicircular wall, resemble a spider's web. The expressive means of illumination, the figures of the actors positioned in a distinct contraposition, and perfectly chosen camera position make this vision especially dramatic. What we see are two characters "caught" in a deadly trap: a spider web of history. The image here tells the whole story, since the dialogue resembles the intimate conversation of two lovers caught off-guard by the dawn, after a night together. No authorial comments, no verbal proclamations regarding the Uprising. The element which could not have been told openly at the time in a film about the Warsaw Uprising, that is, the futile waiting of the insurgents for help to be delivered by the Russian Army stationed on the other side of the Vistula River, was nonetheless expressed differently using cinematographic art. The bars scenes prove to be so moving and so meaningful because it has been based on the purposefully utilized insinuation. The rule of the "inexpressible in the expressed", employed by Wajda while directing this stirring scene, simultaneously protected it from the censorship interference and opened it to the realm of the spectator's imagination. The spectators were expected to tell the rest of the story to themselves, by reading the indirect symbolic significance of the image that soon became the film's icon.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Hendrykowski, Marek. *Kanal*; Poznan, Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2007, pp. 47. See also Walker, Alex. "Packing the Winner", *Birmingham Post*: 20 May 1957, *Corriere d'informazione*: 8-9 May 1957, p. 17-



Figure 4: Teresa Izewska and Tadeusz Janczar

The turning point and the really breakthrough, took place after the memorable competitive screening during the Cannes film festival. The film was shown during two séances on May the 7th. First came an outstanding reception and many comments of appreciation, after that the verdict was announced by the jury's chairman Jean Cocteau: The Silver Palm and a real triumph. After acquiring the prestigious award, *Kanal* gained worldwide fame within days. Hundreds of comments, reviews and press notes were followed. Most prestigious newspapers and magazines, on both side of the Atlantic started writing about the film and its 31-year-old maker, among them: *The Times*, *The Observer*, *Die Zeit*, *Die Welt*, *Combat*, *Le Figaro*, *Liberation*, *Il Tempo*, *Il Giorno*, *Il*

18, and Vucicevic, Branko. "Filmovi Andrzeja Wajde", *Filmska Kultura*: Zagreb, No.6, Nov., 1957, pp. 53-54.

Messaggero, L'Unita, L'Humanite, El Pais, Litieraturnaja Gazeta, New York Times. This global response is enough to testify to the remarkable success of Wajda's work.

The foreign press generally wrote very well about *Kanal*. World-class film-art experts wrote about it, among them: Ado Kyrrou, Andre Bazin, Lindsey Anderson, and Georges Sadoul. After the memorable showing during the Cannes festival the film became a great export success for the Polish film industry. In the years 1957 and 1958 as many as 24 countries bought the rights to distribute it: France, the USSR, People's Republic of China, Italy, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Canada, Great Britain, Brazil, Japan among them. In September 1957 the film was shown at the Edinburgh festival. In 1958 it was being screened simultaneously in over one hundred British movie theaters.¹⁴⁹

4.3. Polish School as an Alternative Ideology – Accepting the Past, Facing the Presence

The film itself was a denominator for other films of the time made by Wajda and other famous directors like Andrzej Munk, Jerzy Kawalerowicz, and Wojciech Has. The war and German occupation was their main and own topic. There was also a coincidence that the films of the Polish School resulted from the fine literary material turned into scripts, written by writers who felt fully responsible for their treatment of a given topic. Those were short stories by the likes of Tadeusz Borowski, Zofia Nalbowska, Andrzej Andrzejewski, Kazimierz Brandys. The authenticity of this literature was that it told

¹⁴⁹ Lubelski, Tadeusz. "50 lat szkoly polskiej: spory, emocje, konfrontacje", *Kino*; ,No.362, April 4, 2007.

about past, it was dealing with the matters of the current interest, which were happening quite in the moment in which the corresponding films were being made.

Another characteristic feature of the Polish school was an enormous influence of the Italian neorealism under which actually stylistically different subgroups of films were created. Nevertheless, although the atmosphere in the films made by different authors sometimes differed, some typical common stylistic features can be drawn; the appearance of new, unknown actors, new concept of mise en scene and cinematography, many outdoor scenes, the plot being played against a vast landscape and amid a crowd of people. “Combination of Italian neorealist style and the world of German occupation, misery, gray existence and hopelessness we wanted to transpose into films, led to creation of our own Polish cinema. We were not baggage of the pre-war cinema”¹⁵⁰

As we saw it, already in his first film *Generation* from 1955, Wajda initiated the emotional and personal protest against the ruling esthetical normative of the social-realism. However, he felt liberated from the political restrictions only when he made *Kanal*. After breaking the first taboo – the Warsaw Uprising, Wajda continued to use his newly-adopted cinematic expression to convey the hopeless cruelty of the ambience, avoiding the practice of the earlier period when the reality was misused to prove or illustrate certain thesis. Wajda’s third film *Pepiol i Diament* (Ashes and Diamonds) from 1958 breaks another taboo and fulfills director plan to show realistically how people felt in all their plights during the first miserable post-war years. The whole film is interwoven with the tragic sentiment of the after-war time, and the wish for the final confrontation with the reality. Another taboo which Wajda broke here was the issue of Armija Krajowa.

¹⁵⁰ *Lekcja Polskiego Kina* (2002).

Who dared to mention it before when it was considered only as a group which during the occupation obeyed the demands of the government in exile, in London? As we could see it to certain extent from the previous chapters, AK soldiers were officially the traitors, and Wajda was the one who took over the whole responsibility for their rehabilitation.

What was present, however, was a record of the dire experience residing in the memory of millions of Poles. In the center of the film is Maciek, a twenty-three year old former AK soldier, who was supposed to kill the Party secretary. Such characters used to evoke only accusations or they were ignored in the previous period. But now Wajda uses such a character to depict in an alternative way the demise that struck people in Poland. He uses a lot of symbolism and metaphors to express his care about the man and his attitudes against the political repressions, and molds and schematism in art. Maciek is an incarnation of the lost youth. However, in the existing communist order the easiest thing was to prove that he was a bandit, murderer, and a contra-revolutionary. The question that Wajda poses here is whether his protagonist has any choice in front of himself. He turns into an antihero filled with the tragic sense of life and time. The love is useless in his life. It is enough to see him with a girl he meets by chance in a spooky, devastated church where the impaired crucifixion is turned upside down as an ugly symbol. Wajda does not deal optimistically with the social mobility and re-education of this young lost post-war generation. He rather appeals to his compatriots and film-goers to overcome any dogmatic self-determination, exclusiveness and continuation of the wars inside them. These messages are radiated actually from the images of the dirty provincial taverns, devastated churches, yards, horrifying closets, streets and all other purely illuminated and uncomfortable localities. Such ambient, characteristic for almost all films of the Polish

School, the directors perceived as the traumatized reality which presses people's subconscious which contained some highly important findings necessary for reaching the "own" truth about the war, about the cul-de-sac of the existing system and order, and the truth about the human nature generally.

However, depicting the misery of the existing order, the filmmakers of the Polish School did not want to encourage people to start a civil war, the Third World War, or a violent revolution. They were not trying to assure people that they were going to improve their life condition once they assassinate a Party Secretary. They wanted to emphasize the humanist nature of the society and its people, and motivate people to recognize it. *Five from Barska Street* glorified the Polish socialist society assuring how it undeniably had capacity to redirect the lost post-war youth to the righteous road, and to make stable pillars of the new socialist society out of them. Polish School, headed by Andrzej Wajda, stressed the quite opposite tendency of the society, and quite degrading pattern of the Polish people in the post-war years. It talks about the young who entered the wrong way; but instead of being helped out by the society, they were just cast into the further abyss, or to death. Wajda himself only implicitly referred to the young who had fought with the AK's units during the war, or who participated in the Warsaw uprising. Thus, Wajda belonged to the accommodation forces in the society. He tried to trace the roots of the chaos in the early post-war society which is supposed to embrace the freedom gained through the war and the revolution. He agreed with the socialist concept for the future, but before the truth about the complex recent history is achieved, the world cannot start off to such future. He wanted to figure out why the life was so unbearable, or why the

people acted either obediently or indifferently. He wanted the life, revolution and truth to be honored.

If one war is about to end, is it useful to start another one? Why any particular person or a group should possess the exclusive right to appropriate the victory and implement its subversive plans? Those are some of the important questions that the Polish School posed in its works. The films were shot in the exteriors mostly, attempting to show the surroundings naturalistically, suggestively and plastically, almost like documentaries, which evidently facilitated the observers to recollect and face the memories stored deeply in their subconscious in the years of the Stalinist-type indoctrination.

There are several different streams within Polish School. Wajda followed the patterns of so-called *romantic* and tragic war cinema. Other streams dealt with the *moral of the war*, the *war as a memory*, the *war as a satire*. Andrzej Munk was malicious and ironic, his film *Eroica* from 1958 debunked Polish heroism and patriotism. In another film, *Zeżowate Szczęście (Bad Luck)* Munk made a brilliant parody of the reality that promoted rather opportunism than stable political devotion. The conformist character called Piszczyk tries to be politically in tune, but he always finds himself on the opposite side from what he had initially planned. The message that film conveys is that the political swings in Poland under communist rule were often faster than any opportunist could follow. According to certain opinions Munk used Aleksander Ford as the model for the main character for the film.¹⁵¹ Wojciech Has was oriented towards the past French

¹⁵¹ Misiak, Anna. "Politically Involved Filmmaker: Aleksander Ford and Film Censorship in Poland after 1945", *Kinema*; No.17, Fall 2005.

cinema of Marcel Karne. His film *Petla (Noose)* was full of mystery and melancholy. Stanislaw Rozewicz showed the skill to combine documentary and feature filmmaking style, which was completely innovative from Poland. His film *Wolne Miasto* (Free City) in which he dramatically and naturalistically depicts the last stronghold of the local Polish fighters in the post office in Gdansk, immensely resembles again Rosellini's *Rome, an Open City*. Tadeusz Konwicki *Ostatni dzien lata* (The Last day of summer) provided an avant-garde account of the new post-war lost generation.

The film established the new relation with the war due to the changes in reality. However, the change was not only characteristic for Poland, determined and conditioned by the local social, political and moral circumstances. Other national cinemas in the region also changed the epic war narrative. The romantic vision of the war and the collective identity did not work any more. The whole Eastern-European region already faced various social problems, economic and political contradictions, and the consequences of the Stalinization and bureaucratization. It changed the psychology and spirit of the people. They turned to reality and numerous existential problems. Consequently, they liked to see those problems in films.

Other nations also began to release and address the burden of the recent past. After the events like the Revolution in 1956 in Hungary, the feeling towards past was significantly changed. People began to ask about the price of the recent triumphs. Iconography and the heroic evocations were not possible any more. "The realism of life seeks for type of art which would provide the truth about everything, even about the myths and legends."¹⁵² Numerous films questioned whether the current life was worth the

¹⁵² Colic, Milutin. *The Yugoslav War Cinema*; Titovo Uzice: Offset stamparija – "Vesti", 1989, pp. 189.

immense sacrifices people underwent during the war. The films like Czechoslovak *Romeo, Julia a tma* (Romeo, Juliet and Darkness) by Jizi Weiss, and Romanian film *Viata nu iarta* (Life does not Spare) by Iulian Mihu, tried to transpose the established mythology of victory into the care about man. In Hungary of the late 1950s, after the horrific experiences in 1956, Zoltan Fabri in his film *Ket felido a pokolban* (The Two Half Times in Hell) evoked the history through the darkest side of the Nazi violence, referring that it, in a way repeated over again in the “liberated socialist” history. Metaphors of Andrzej Munk’s parody of the revolutionary morale and false myths coupled with Wajda’s romanticism specially contributed to the gloom reminiscences of the Polish history. In Yugoslavia also, there were numerous films whose topics switched from the collective to individual stories. Rados Novakovic’s film *Daleko je sunce* (The Sun is Far Away), based on Dobrica Cosic’s novel treated the Yugoslav national-liberation war from the moral and psychological point of view. Joze Gale’s film *Tudja Zemlja* (Somebody Else’s Country) based on Mesa Selimovic’s novel depicts the war as a monster that strikes even the enemy, and encourages us to try at least to understand the enemy if we are not able to forgive him.¹⁵³

I mentioned in the first chapter that the war cinema is not always regarded as art. It has often served as a means for the indoctrination or dogmatization. That is why many war films remained forgotten or used only by the historians for reconstruction of certain political regimes. Nevertheless, the Polish School and many other socially engaged cinematic stiles of the 1950s, today also serve as the source for comprehending the

¹⁵³ Nevertheless, the Yugoslav authors still failed to address adequately Yugoslavia’s hardest burden of the recent history - the issue of the civil war between the Yugoslav constitutive nations that had struck the country during the Second World War, for the benefit of sustaining the brotherhood and fraternity concept.

intellectual and general atmosphere of their time. The war cinema in the case of Polish School was an alternative communicator of the state affairs in the decisive days for Poland. However, the war cinema of the Polish School was so potent and vibrant, and artistically powerful that it anticipated and motivated creation of some new national styles and schools, which all finally resulted in the so-called School of Moral Anxiety, one of the most critical, and socially and morally engaged cinemas in the world in the 1970s.

In political sense, these movies motivated the increase of the national sentiments. Once when rigorous Stalinization process started fading away, these sentiments were born in a form of a renewed idea, the new guiding star through difficult times. Thus, “Bread and Freedom” riots in Poznan in 1956 which threatened to undermine the communist hold in Poland, and the student and workers revolt in the 1968-1970 period led to 1980-1981 national upheaval unprecedented in the history of Communism.

Conclusion

Unlike in Poland, the issues of Serbian Home Army and Croatian concentration camps became present only in the 1980s, which appeared to be too late.

“Socialism is a type of society which can evolve and be corrected, even with the works of art.” – A. Wajda (b.1926)¹⁵⁴,

“It's very difficult mostly to find the money for films and to build a budget and a few months ago, I found the idea to make the film called 'no budget'. We have the high budget, low budget, but nobody made a film called 'no budget'. So that is the problem, to find money - especially for films that would like to tell something about the place and the time that are living in now... about nowadays, it's very difficult to find the money and the only sponsor and producer is television.” Robert Glinski (b.1957), film director.¹⁵⁵

“I have been on the Berlin Film Festival this year. It was the exhibition of different films from all over the world with countless authentic, stories. Our neighbors Czechs, Hungarians, Romanians also came with the intriguing films depicting their society. However, only a single short film presented the Polish cinematography. Does it mean that we do not have anything to say, and anything to change”. Bartosz Zurawiecki (b.1971), film critic.¹⁵⁶

In 1960, a resolution of the Central Committee Secretariat read: “Having assessed the releases of the Polish film industry of the past three years, we hold that the Polish cinema cannot be defined as one that unambiguously speaks for the socialist ideology. It does not properly meet the educational needs of the society, Party, politics and the state. It lacks commitment, ideology and educational assumptions, formulated by the Party.”¹⁵⁷ In practice, setting the new guidelines saying that film criticism should restore the ideological function and fight against subjectivism and aestheticism followed the resolution. Despite these constraints, the Polish cinema did not renounce subjective accounts and aestheticism, the model that was created by the films of Polish School which combined war thematic and aestheticism in order to describe the post-war society. I have already mentioned that such starting point naturally led throughout new generations of film authors to the world famous Cinema of Moral Anxiety. The entire

¹⁵⁴ Wajda, Andrzej. *Film zvani zelja* [Film Called Desire]; Belgrade: Institut za film, 1990.

¹⁵⁵ See <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/10507> June 28, 2001.

¹⁵⁶ Quoted from the TV show “Loza krytykow”, April 30, 2007

¹⁵⁷ quoted from *Historia polskiego kina* (2002)

time cinema operated inseparably from the society. It was still financed and subsidized by the state.

The artist of a Polish school was a spokesman for and conscience of the nation, what was a very dangerous and challenging function. It also prepared the upcoming Polish cinema for the battle against the surrounding reality, which had historical, social and moral significance. Such concept conceived after the Second World War and finally identified and defined in the late 1950s in form of the Polish School established as an imperative for the filmmakers to use their films to alarm, to call for an activeness, and for a change. Thus, from the above quoted statement we could see that among different generations of the prominent cinema workers in Poland, even today remains the expectation of something new from the debutants in Polish cinema. There is still the same hatred towards producers' entertaining cinema, which was victoriously abandoned and discredited by the directors' cinema, which always assumed risk and responsibility.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

1. *Birmingham Post*
No. 23, May 20, 1957.
2. *Corriere d'informazione*
No.17, 8-9 May 1957.
3. *Demokraten – Denmark*
No. 125, June 28.1954.
4. *Film*
“Nasz objektiv – przedruk opinii o filmie z roznich czasopis”, No.11, 1947.
Krawczykowski, Zbigniew. “Zbieg z filmowego Oswiecimia opowiada (Relacja Barbary Fijewskiej)”, No.29, 1947.
5. *Filmska Kultura*
Vucicevic, Branko. “Andzej Vajda: Pepeo i Dijamant”, Zagreb, No.12, Nov., 1958.
Vucicevic, Branko. “Filmovi Andrzeja Wajde”, *Filmska Kultura*: Zagreb, No.6, Nov., 1957.
6. *Glas Koszalincki*
Polska szkola filmowa”, No.136; June 9, 1957.
7. *Glazgow Herald*
Walker, Alex. “Packing the Winner” No. 17, May 21, 1957.
8. *Kino*
Tadeusz Lubelski “50 lat szkoy polskiej: spory, emocje, konfrontacje”, No.362, April 4, 2007.
9. *Kwartalnik filmowy*
Jakubowska, Wanda. “Kilka wspomnien o powstaniu scenariusza (na marginesie filmu *Ostatni etap*)”, No.1, 1951.
Toeplitz, Jerzy. “Razmowa z Aleksandrem Fordem o *Piatce z ulicy Barskiej*”, No.17, September, 1954.
Konwicki, Tadeusz. “W prawie poezji”, No.17; May 1954.
10. *Less Lettres Francaises*
Sadoul, Georges, No. 511, April 8, 1954.
11. *Kinema*

Misiak, Anna. "Politically Involved Filmmaker: Aleksander Ford and Film Censorship in Poland after 1945", No.17, Fall 2005.

12. *Nowa Kultura*

Kaluzynski, Zigmunt. *Nowa Kultura* – Warsaw; No.12; March 21, 1954.

Toeplitz, Krzysztof. "In Cinema and God Knows Where Else", No.27; June 23, 1954.

13. *Po Prostu*

Jadwiga Siekierska, "Czy Tragedja Optymistyczna?" (An Optimistic Tragedy?), No. 49, 1956.

Jerzy Ambroziewicz, Walery Namiotkiewicz, Jan Oszewski. "Na Spotkanie ludziom z AK", No.11, 1956.

14. *Przegląd Kulturalny*

Stefan-Stawinski, Jerzy. "Złoty sen przestępcy", No.23, 1957.

15. *Stolica*

Kuryluk Jerzy, No.10, March 7, 1954.

16. *Sztandard Młodych*

No. 71; March 24, 1954.

No. 72; March 27, 1954.

17. *The Times*

Andersen, Lindsey, "Fresh Talents at Cannes Film Festival", May 14, 1957.

18. *Odrodzenie*

Toeplitz, Jerzy. "Film instrumentem kultury", No. 34. November 1945.

19. *Kuznica*

Toeplitz, Jerzy. "Novy Film Polski", No.21. November 1945.

20. *Toronto Star*

No. 167; May 26, 1954.

21. *Trybuna Mazowiecka*

22. *Zołnierz Wolności*

No.120; May 23, 1955.

23. *Życie Literackie*

Plazewski Jerzy. "Oni muszą żyć" [They Must Live], No. 40; March 14, 1954.

Secondary Sources

24. Antonin J Liehm and Mira Liehm. *The Most Important Art: Eastern European Cinema after 1945*; Beograd: Clio, 2006.

25. Bazin, Andre. QU'EST –CE QUE LE CINEMA? IV Une esthetique de la realite: le neo-realisme; Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1962.
26. Bogoeva-Sedlar, Ljiljana "Mapping the Other Mapping the Self: B. Wongar's Novel Raki", Nis: Facta Universatis series: Linguistics and Literature, Vol. 2, No.9, 2002.
27. Casetti, Francesco. *Theories of Cinema: 1945-1955*; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999.
28. Charles Ford and Robert Hammond. *Polish Film: A Twentieth Century History*; Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 1989.
29. Coates, Paul. *The Red and the White*; London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2005.
30. Colic, Milutin. *Sta je ratni film* [What is War Cinema], Beograd: Institut za film, 1989.
31. Colic, Milutin. *The Yugoslav War Cinema*; Titovo Uzice: Ofset stamparija – "vesti", 1989.
32. Dadlez, Anna. *Political and Social Issues in Poland as Reflected in the Polish Novel*; New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.
33. Davies, Norman. *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
34. Falkowska, Janina. *History, Politics and Nostalgia in Andrzej Wajda Films*; London: Bergham Books, 2006.
35. Fuksiewicz, Jacek. *Polish Cinema*; Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1973.
36. Gabor Kresalek and Janos M Rainer. *Hungarian Society in Film (A View of Societies, Its Values and Ideologies)*, 1948-1956; Moveeast, 1992.
37. Haltof, Marek. *Polish National Cinema*; New York: Berghahn Books, 2003.
38. Hayden White. "Historiography and Historyophoty", *The American Historical review*: Vol. 93, No.5, Dec., 1988.
39. Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concept*; London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

40. Hendrykowska, Malgorzata. *Looking Back: Analysis and Interpretation of Polish Film*; Poznan: Publishing House of the Poznan Society for the Advancement of the Arts and Sciences, 2000.
41. Hendrykowski, Marek. *Kanal*; Poznan: Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2007.
42. Iordanova, Dina. *Cinema of the Other Europe: the Industry and the Artistry of East Central European Film*; London: Wallflower, 2003.
43. Jaques Aumont, Alain Bergala, Michel Marie, and Mark Vernet. *Esthetique du Film*; Nathan-Universite, 1999.
44. Jarvie, I.C. "Seeing Through movies", *Philosophy of the social Sciences*, No. 8, 1978.
45. Kersten, Krystina. "Poles' Responses to the Realities of 1944-1947: Questions for Considerations", *Res Publica*, (transl.) Dawid Walendowski, February 1990.
46. Kolodynski, Andrzej. *Handel zagraniczny*; Warszawa: Wydanie specjalne Filmowego Servisu Prasowego, 1969.
47. Ljubojev, Petar. *Evropski film i drustveno nasije* [The European Film and Social Violence]; Novi Sad-Beograd: Prosveta, 1994.
48. Madej, Alina. *Kino, Wladza, Publicznosc*; Warsaw: Prasa Beskidzka, 2002.
49. *Maly Rocznik Filmowi 1971*; Warszawa: Filmowi Serwis Prasowy, 1972.
50. Miloradovic, Goran, "Staljinovi pokloni – Tematika jugoslovenskog igranog filma 1945-55" [Stalin's Presents – Topics of the Yugoslav Feature Films 1945-1955], *Istorija 20. veka*; Beograd: No. 1, 2002.
51. Milosz, Czeslaw. *Captive Mind*; New York: Vintage International, 1962.
52. Raack R.J. "Historiography as Cinematography: A Prolegomenon to film Work for Historians", *Journal of Contemporary History*: No. 18, July 1983.
53. Ristic, Milan. *Film izmedju istorijskog izvora i tradicije* [Film between Historical Source and Tradition], Beograd: Godisnjak za drustvenu istoriju, No. II/3, 1995.
54. Rosenstone, Robert: "History in images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film, *The American Historical Review*. Vol. 93, No. 5, Dec., 1988.

55. Stefan-Stawinski, Jerzy. *Notatki scenarzysty* (The Scenarist's Notes); Warsaw: Filmoteka Narodowa, 1988.
56. Stok, Danusia. *Kieslowski on Kieslowski*; London: Faber and Faber, 1993.
57. Toeplitz, Jerzy. *Historia filmu polskiego*, Vol. 3: 1945-1945; Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1974.
58. Toeplitz, Jerzy. *Historia filmu polskiego*, Vol. 4: 1945-1945; Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1980.
59. Turconi, Sergio. *Neorealizam u italijanskom filmu*; Beograd: Kultura, 1961.
60. Wajda, Andrzej. *Film zvaní želja* [Film Called Desire]; Belgrade: Institut za film, 1990.
61. Walicki, Andrzej. "Intellectual Elites and the Vicissitudes as 'Imagined Nation' in Poland" in: *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*. (eds.) Ronald Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy; University of Michigan Press, 1999.
62. Youngblood, Denise J. *Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914-2005*; University Press of Kansas, 2007.

Filmography

1. *Avant le deluge* (Before the Deluge) by Andre Cayatte - 1954
2. *Boys Town* by Norman Taurog - 1938
3. *Chapaev* by Georgii and Sergei Vasilev - 1934
4. *Cien* (Shadow) by Jerzy Kawalerowicz - 1956
5. *Daleko je sunce* (The Sun is Far Away) by Rados Novakovic – 1953
6. *Devojka* (A Girl) by Purisa Djordjevic - 1965
7. *Dr. Strangelove* by Stanley Kubrick - 1964
8. *From Here to Eternity* by Fred Zinnemann - 1953
9. *Intolerance* by David Griffith - 1919
10. *Jud Suss* (Jew Suss) by Veit Harlan - 1940
11. *Kanal* by Andrzej Wajda – 1957
12. *Ket felido a pokolban* (The Two Half Times in Hell) by Zoltan Fabri – 1962
13. *Korczak* by Andrzej Wajda – 1990
14. *La Grande Illusion* (Grand Illusion) by Jean Renoir - 1937
15. *Lekcja polskiego kina* by Andrzej Wajda (The Lesson in Polish Cinema) by – 2002
16. *Los Olvidados* by Luis Bunuel – 1950
17. *Mlodosc Chopina* (Chopin's Youth) – 1952
18. *Ostatni Etap* (Last Stage) by Wanda Jakubowska - 1947
19. *Pasazerka* (Passenger) by Andrzej Munk – 1961
20. *Pepiol i Diament* (Ashes and Diamonds) by Andrzej Wajda – 1958
21. *Piatka z ulicy Barskiej* (Five from Barska Street) by Aleksander Ford - 1953

22. *Pokolenie* (Generation) by Andrzej Wajda – 1955
23. *Portiere di notte* (Night Porter) by Liliana Cavanni - 1974
24. *Rome citta aperta* (Rome an Open City) by Roberto Rosellini – 1946
25. *Romeo, Julia a tma* (Romeo, Juliet and Darkness) by Jizi Weiss - 1960
26. *Senza Pieta* (Without Pity) by Alberto Lattuada - 1948
27. *Star Wars* by George Lucas – 1977
28. *Tryasina* (Quagmire) by Grigori Chukhrai - 1978
29. *Tudja Zemlja* (Somebody Else's Country) by Joze Gale - 1957
30. *U planinama Jugoslavije* (In the Mountains of Yugoslavia) by Abraham Rom - 1946
31. *Ulica Granyczna* (Boarder Street) by Aleksander Ford - 1948
32. *Viata nu iarta* (Life does not Spare) by Iulian Mihu - 1957
33. *Zakazanie Piosenki* (Forbidden songs) by Leonard Buczkowski – 1946
34. *Zoya* (Zoia) by Leo Arnshtam - 1944