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Master's thesis

# Exploring partisan myth in totalitarian cinema

February 2014

Graduate School of Seoul National University

International cooperation, international studies

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Exploring partisan myth in totalitarian cinema



# Exploring myth of partisan in totalitarian cinema

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# Abstract

## Exploring partisan myth in totalitarian cinema

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The present thesis strives to discuss depiction of partisan movements in the cinema of Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and North Korea. It notably explains why the theme of partisans is critical to those regimes, how it became mythified and how the propaganda machine harnessed it to achieve each country's respective political projects. This study is not exhaustive and could serve as a basis to explore further the way partisan movements were utilized by several Socialist regimes (Cuba, People's Republic of China, Vietnam, etc.). It also discusses why cinema is the most efficient tool for mass indoctrination and how totalitarian regimes took advantage of it to convey their ideas and maintain their regimes.

The thesis analyses a corpus of nine movies representative of specific periods for each regime. For the Soviet Union, the focus is on the establishment and reinforcement of Stalin's rule, from the mid-30's to the end of the War. For Yugoslavia, movies studied concern the late 60's and early 70's when the regime suffered a lack of legitimacy and tried to compensate it with increased propaganda. North Korean movies are those that accompanied Kim Jong Il's emergence as a potential successor to his father in the late 60's.

In all three cases, movies were significantly backed by the regime and glorified leaders (past and current, directly and indirectly, with various degrees of personality cult), the Party and its ideology. The analysis focuses on the study of characters, cinematography, management of time and space and lastly on the way the political messages are expressed through movies.

Despite a lot of common points, notably due to the inherent logics of totalitarian art, we can observe different fashions of using the myth of partisans in cinema. The study explains the origins of these differences drawing on historical, political and cultural contexts and also according to the diverse political objectives regimes and leaders aimed at achieving.

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**Keywords:** partisan, totalitarianism, cinema, Korea, Yugoslavia, Soviet Union

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# Introduction

## Objective and relevancy

The purpose of this thesis is to compare and analyse the exploitation of partisan movies genre in different socialist regimes and to understand how they fit in the political projects of these countries. Partisan or guerrilla movements have been source of legitimacy not only for new states established in those countries (North Korea, Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and others former colonies or semi-colonies like China, Vietnam, Algeria, Angola, Cuba, Guinea-Bissau, etc.) but also for existing states that have been military occupied and liberated with support (real but systematically exaggerated, romanticised and idealised) of partisans' resistance activities (USSR). This study will focus on comparison of themes depicted in cinema of North Korea, Yugoslavia and USSR which share striking features.

Naturally, not only socialist countries used the actions of partisans as founding or rejuvenating symbols. France is good example of social democracy that still has his national psyche deeply affected by *résistance* to German occupation. This has been notably used to hide the cold fact that most of the population tried simply to live a normal life during this bleak period and that *résistance* had a very marginal concrete impact on daily life of laymen. Yet, *résistance* have been unfolded in literature and movies and a persistent cult around De Gaulle and other symbolic figures has been created and nurtured. However, the closer socialist countries leaned toward totalitarianism, the more art and culture were instrumental in forging identity of its citizens and their rapports with the state and the revolutionary process. Near "perfect totalitarianism" (Stalin's USSR, Kim Il Sung's DPRK, early Titoist period in Yugoslavia) harnessed culture to serve the promotion of state ideology through indoctrination of official truth to its population. Those regimes generally first benefited from a quite high degree of legitimacy, bestowed by their participation in liberation of motherland (from colonial or occupiers' yoke), when came to power.

In early stages, they might also have been popular through some progressive policies and relatively successful economic development at first. However, due the inherently inefficient nature of socialist economies in later stages, material comfort could not be achieved and could not be invoked to justify socialist system. This became notably even truer when compared to capitalist systems. This loss of legitimacy associated with other liberty deprivations of socialist systems had to be compensated with

reinforced propaganda<sup>1</sup> to maintain people's adherence to the regime. Topics of propaganda drew extensively from some early success and potential "golden age" (real or imagined halcyon days) rooted in the origins of these states. Creation and emphasis on a common enemy, absolute evil (namely bourgeoisie, landlords, imperialism or fascism), is also used to grant more moral and ethical credit to the socialist political systems. In DPRK and Yugoslavia, leaders emerged from armed struggles, in USSR Stalin reinforced his aura through it, and these themes are reflected naturally in their state-sponsored, party-backed production of cultural artefacts. We aim here at analysing some selected pieces of culture and attempting to draw common points and distinction according to their given political context. Despite obvious cultural differences between those countries, according to Igor Golomstock<sup>2</sup>, "totalitarian art" could transcend those distinctions to achieve what he calls a sort of "total realism" through which leaders are mythologized and a "top-down driven project"<sup>3</sup>, with its own sense of aesthetics and taste, is imposed by the state. Through this study we also intend to unveil some of the "universal mechanisms" embodied in totalitarian cinema of these states.<sup>4</sup> Also, art seems to be an ultimate driving force radically reshaping the societies throughout the different stages of revolutions (be they nationalist or socialist).

Cinema is particularly representative as it requires strong backing from the state to raise funds and obtain permissions for producing and screening whereas literature

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<sup>1</sup> KENEZ, Peter (1992). "Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin.", p1: in his introduction Kenez gives a very important point generally misunderstood in Western societies: propaganda in socialist countries is not hidden; Bolsheviks prided themselves of being propagandists as it does not bear anything "sinister" to them. It is simply a mean to convey to the people the ideological "truth" (of Marxism) in an educational effort.

<sup>2</sup> GOLOMSTOCK, Igor (2011). "Totalitarian Art: In the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy, and the People's Republic of China.", Golomstock came to write this book when he found out that it was not obvious for his children, educated in post-totalitarian societies, to distinguish art created during Nazi era from that of the Soviet era.

<sup>3</sup> Not only socialist regimes were interested in art, Hitler was an art student and used art, notably architecture to add grandeur to his projects (Berlin was to be reshaped to be similar to imperial Rome). Not to say that movie industry was also mobilized by Nazi and created some artistic jewels such as Riefenstahl's. Intellectuals like Edward Said demonstrated that culture and empire had a critical impact on each other in *culture and imperialism*. Mussolini's Italy showed also interest in different art movements such "futurist" and colonized Ethiopia had some city modified to embody some Art Deco feature (Asmara, current capital of Eritrea).

<sup>4</sup> Review of this book by Kanan Makiya, ***What Is Totalitarian Art? Cultural Kitsch From Stalin to Saddam*** in *Foreign Affairs*, Apr. 2011

and music creation are less dependent of regimes' largesse and authorisations<sup>56</sup>. Also, cinema appeals to masses thanks to its highly entertaining nature and little education (and literacy) is necessary to convey ideas and emotions through sound and images. Socialist regimes understood very early<sup>7</sup> the formidable power of cinema to educate the masses as Aleksandr Medvekin's "film trains" experiment epitomised<sup>8</sup>. In the very aftermath of Russian civil war, railroad was used to export revolution to immense Russian hinterland. Movie performances were to propagate reforms and successes of the newly established soviet state to an overwhelmingly illiterate peasantry. In socialist countries, the information and communication apparatus is directly dependant from the party central committee "agitprop" department<sup>9</sup>. In North Korea, for example, it is worth noticing work at the Korean Workers' Party agitprop department has been the first important position of Kim Jong Il, before his official anointment as successor to his father. His interests and patronising role in cinema are famous<sup>10</sup> and this position permitted him to establish his legitimacy. Tito backed certain pieces personally, notably the exorbitant partisan "super spectacle" productions of the 70's, his megalomania going as far as having at great cost Hollywood actor, Richard Burton, play his role in the *Sutjeska* (1973)<sup>11</sup>.

Among those regimes, only DPRK survives and its propaganda machine still uses regularly what Andrew Ludanyi<sup>12</sup> calls "partisan myth" to sustain its power. USSR and Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, both multi-ethnic, federal states (at least theoretically) collapsed and disintegrated in several sub-entities closer to the concept of nation-state, albeit far from perfect as turmoil and civil wars demonstrated, than their previous patchwork empires. Ironically, institutional assemblages of both USSR and SFRY were both aimed at making possible cohabitation of different nations

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<sup>5</sup> Most internal criticism of Soviet Union, for example could be done by books like Solzhenitsyn's or music like Vissotski.

<sup>6</sup> KENEZ, Peter (1992). "Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin.", p3 Kenez also mentions that even in the harshest time of totalitarian rule, people could resort to reading classical literature as an escapist attempt but in cinema and on TV the regime showed what he wanted them to watch.

<sup>7</sup> Lenin's famous "Of all the arts for us the cinema is the most important" is a good example of this recognition.

<sup>8</sup> See "Le tombeau d'Alexandre" by Chris Marker, 1993

<sup>9</sup> Agitprop departments in other communist parties are also to be found as these parties moulded their organization on that of the Soviet Union CP.

<sup>10</sup> Establishing movie studios, advising actors and directors, writing treatise on cinema, etc.

<sup>11</sup> Yugoslavia, paradise on earth, just a shame about the films:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2012/nov/16/cinema-komunisto-yugoslavian-film>

<sup>12</sup> LUDANYI, Andrew (1979). "Titoist Integration of Yugoslavia, The Partisan Myth & the Hungarians of the Vojvodina, 1945-1975.", p225-252

whereas the foremost objective of DPRK is unification of its own, split since liberation from Japanese coloniser. This paradox can certainly help to understand why some regimes failed and others survived. We do not contend that we can explain regime continuation based only on its capacity to have its population supporting it, as lot of exogenous factors also matter, but it is certain that if only coercion would be used over people, totalitarian regimes would be more fragile and would not last. National question was at the heart of USSR dismantlement; tragic wars in the Balkans, some of the most horrific ethnic conflicts of the second part of 20<sup>th</sup> century, have their origins deeply rooted in Tito's incapacity to create a system that survived his iron fist. USSR and Yugoslavia attempted to engineer a "new man", respectively the *homo sovieticus* and the *Yugoslav*, notably drawing on partisan myth to rationalise communist regime and "provides the country's numerous nationalities with historical self-definition and a sense of common destiny"<sup>13</sup>. This utopian social crafting ultimately backfired in ethnic frictions fuelled by economic discontentment<sup>14</sup> leading to civil war. Yet, the heirs of these federations still commonly refer to those resistance heydays ("Victory Day" of 1945 is still probably more celebrated in former Soviet republics than independence from USSR ; cinema of post-Yugoslavian countries also produce films about partisans) as part of their national mythology notably due to resurgence of jingoism subsequent to demise of empires.

Moreover, one can observe a sort of continuum over the "core partisan" period, its past and more recent history. For North Korea the theme of partisans is not limited to Kim Il Sung armed struggle in Manchuria (allegedly, from 1932 to 1945<sup>15</sup>) but can be traced back to pre-Kim resistance to Japanese imperialism and runs until current period. Since the Korean War, the main enemy is not any more the Japanese imperialist but the American one. This is also true for Yugoslavia, a state that first emerged in the aftermath of WWI from parts of defeated Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires and that exploded in the early 90's. In USSR, the partisan myth not only recalls Nazi aggression but also the Russian Civil War marred with foreign interferences. In the aftermath of *Operation Barbarossa*, when Germans were quickly gaining grounds in Russian, Stalin referred to the Great Russian nation that repulsed

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p238

<sup>14</sup> Balkans' conflicts are obvious examples but we should not forget previous and current ethnic conflicts in former USSR (Chechnya, Abkhazia in Russia and violent troubles plaguing Central Asia and Caucasus independent states)

<sup>15</sup> In some North Korean books, we can see it dating from 1926 onward (Kim Il Sung was then 14...), for instance in Kim Jong Il 's "On the art of cinema".

Napoleon to flatter Russian nationalism and entice people to fight back. This exploitation of history and blurring of memory are reflected in cinema production<sup>16</sup>.

## Existing researches

We can find different academic works related to the cinema, art and symbolism of those countries. Also, historical and political sources had to be used to craft background information about the War and partisan movements of the studied countries. I referred as well to some general theories related totalitarianism and nationalism. Lastly, in as much as possible, I tried to find some academic explanations of the movies I have studied to confront and combine my understanding with that of others.

The complete bibliography is available at the end of the thesis, I will draw here outlines of the main works that inspired me.

### History

I based my historical researches about scope and role of partisan movements from different sources, mainly relying on (SUH 1988) and (HARUKI 1992, HARUKI 1998) for information related to Kim Il Sung's Manchurian days. For more background information about North Korea, I also relied on (IM 1999, IM 1999). In order to understand the role of partisans in North Korean symbolism I drew on (CHO 2007, CHO 2012). For Soviet Union, I had chances to stumbled upon the work of (OVERY 1997) from which most information are drawn. (SLEPYAN 2006) was also a useful source for partisans' motivation and historical background. For Yugoslavia, I mainly picked up diverse sources, notably those quoted in articles related to cinema, for instance (CMOBMJA 1996), (PIRJEVEC 1988) and some accounts such as (WEST 1994).

### Cinema

I drew extensively from a host of sources and compiled them in this study. For North Korea, the most important ones are: (LEE 2005), (SCHONHERR 2012) both dealing with history of North Korean cinema, (ARMSTRONG 2002) for the early days of North

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<sup>16</sup> For example, USSR allocating sizeable budget to production such as Bondarchuk's adaptation of classical Tolstoy's « War and Peace » and supporting other "Easterns" movies depicting heroism during Russian civil war recall other fighting period such as the climaxing Great Patriotic War as Soviet called WWII (interestingly, similar term is used in the 3 studies countries, making this war as the "mother of all combats"). In Yugoslavia "Narodno-oslobodilacka borba" that is "National liberation war" and in Korean "조국해방전쟁" that is "Fatherland liberation war" that actually refers to Korean War.

Korean cinema, (KIM 2010) for the relation between cinema and its application to daily life, (KIM 1996) for the discussion about nation-building and for the concept of “fractured cinema”. I also inasmuch as possible, went through the primary sources offered by Kim Jong Il’s speeches and treaties on cinema. For Soviet Union, (YOUNGBLOOD 2001) was extremely useful for the depiction of War in Soviet cinema and (KENEZ 1992) for general considerations about cinema under Stalin, (MILLER 2010) for the portrayal of the War in cinema. With regards to Yugoslavia, I relied upon (BARIC 2001) for insightful information about a cinema I ignored totally, (BATANCEV 2013) a recent yet important work about the use of partisan in Yugoslav nation-building and, I, lately found (HORTON 1987), a first-class work related to the failure of the partisan movies to generate a nation. I also read a lot of shorter scholarly studies about one or few movies explaining their background, as there is a regain of interest in partisan and war movies in the recent years both in Ex-Yugoslavia and in Ex-USSR, attempting to situate old films in their post-empire national cinema (e.g. Byelorussian cinema, Bosnian cinema, etc.).

### **Totalitarianism, nationalism and partisans**

I borrowed liberally ideas from (HOBSBAWM 1990) and (ANDERSON 1983 (reviewed in 2006)) for nationalism and other of their works in passing. I also got inspired by the work of Walker Connor even though I do not subscribe to all his views. For totalitarianism, classical work such as (ARENDT 1958) seems to me still an important landmark. I also drew on (GROYS 1992, GOLOMSTOCK 2011) theories related to “totalitarian art” in order to apply it to cinema and notably to understand that for totalitarian regimes, art and politics were part of the same project. Finally, I relied on (SCHMITT 1931-1938, SCHMITT 1962) and his theory of partisan as a foundational work.

Also, it is noticeable that most scholars who worked on Soviet cinema are American or Russian (at least for literature available in English), whereas scholars dedicated to Yugoslavia or Korea tend to be from their own countries (for Korea, obviously from South Korea with most of ad-hoc work published in Korean and only more recently in English).

It seems that there are no attempts to compare these themes across countries. The novelty of this research would be to confront different cases of totalitarian regimes and their capacity to mobilise their population through cinema referring to this particular foundational myth. In a broader perspective, this study could be useful for further researches about “resistance as a factor of nation-building” in different contexts, not only for post-colonial studies but this also could be useful to understand



current situation of some multi-ethnic countries plagued by “national question” (of their lack thereof) issues<sup>17</sup>.

## Methodology

Purpose of this study is not to assess artistic merits or demerits of movies but to understand from which elements those movies draw their origins and how they contribute in legitimizing totalitarian regimes and how they are articulated with political projects. The corpus of movies studied is limited to nine movies that I deemed representative. Further explanations about the choice of periods and movies are developed in the study. In short, I attempted to keep coherence for each country's movies. I strived to ensure all movies of a given country would correspond to a specific period and its ad-hoc political project. Naturally, each piece is different, but the logics of totalitarian art, suppressing artistic creativity and harnessing culture to political projects, make them all look quite similar.

The studied movies are sieved in order to distinguish recurrent themes, iconography, roles and characters, cinematography, actions, time and space. I also pay attention to which symbolic elements those properties refer to. The analytical framework of movies' study is further elaborated in part 3.

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<sup>17</sup> Afghanistan comes to mind but other countries in Africa and Asia could correspond well to this definition.

# 1. Myth of partisans

*"A sculptor was living in the house next to ours. Stubble on his chin, his hammers slung from his belt like .45s, he used to sleep on a mattress at the foot of the statue he was working on: a bare-chested partisan, fist clenched round a machine gun. He was the richest man in the neighbourhood. Times had been kind to him; with monuments to the dead, red granite stars, effigies of resistance fighters battling against 125 mph winds, he had at least four years of commissions. It wasn't suprising; at first the business of secret committees, revolutions become established, ossify, and rapidly become business for sculptors."*

Nicolas Bouvier, *The*

*Way of the World*<sup>18</sup>

## 1.1 Who are the partisans?

Partisans can be alternatively called guerrilla fighters, *franc-tireurs* (mavericks) or *résistants*. In this study, I will distinguish slightly some of the terms. I give to the term *partisan* a connotation which is not only a military one. Civilians were among partisans and partisans were not full-time fighters. As Carl Schmitt puts it:

"If, as it has been said, total mobilization abolishes the separation of the soldier from the civilian, it may very well happen that the soldier changes into a civilian as the civilian changes into a soldier, or both may change into something new, a third alternative.<sup>19</sup>"

Mass of guerrilla fighters and civilians in exile can compose some partisan movements. *Résistants* and *partisans* have similar meaning. In Western Europe the main nuance is that partisans were often coloured in red<sup>20</sup>. Their nature can be described as that of a numerical inferior, irregular, non-professional troop waging war actions against an occupation, regular, professional and overwhelming army. The asymmetric dimension

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<sup>18</sup> This book is the chronicles of travels from Europe to India in the early 50's by the Swiss writer. This particular excerpt's background is Yugoslavia's capital, Belgrade, in 1953.

<sup>19</sup> SCHMITT, Carl (1931-1938). "Total Enemy, Total State, & Total War.", p2

<sup>20</sup> This is not constant and there are exceptions. Joseph Kessel, the author of the "chant des partisans", a "national" anthem of French *résistants* was anti-communist and French communist *résistants* (partisans) probably preferred the Internationale to this song.

of partisan engagements of the foreign army<sup>21</sup> is at the core of the partisan concept: waging a war against a more powerful party, the guerrilla has to employ specific tactics such as sabotage, assassinations, rapid skirmishes and “hit and run” actions. In Schmitt words this requires “agility, speed, and the sudden change of surprise attack and retreat – increased mobility in a word”<sup>22</sup>.

Partisans have seen their status in international law evolved. They were originally not recognised as a combatant party and therefore treated as mere criminals or marauders. Also, occupying armies had no guidelines dedicated to fight against them and their punishment in case of capture. They were considered to be under local police forces (generally police force of the collaborating state or puppet entity backed by the occupier force) and local court jurisdiction. This was not only true for the legal status but also for the military policies to be taken against them. For example, Nazis attacked Soviet Union in June 1941 but the first instructions about how to cope with partisans came only in October of the same year and it is not until 1944 that is one year before finale defeat, that Germany finalised special recommendation for the handling of “low-intensity warfare” in Soviet occupied territories<sup>23</sup>. Naturally, illegality does not mean that partisans have no legitimacy. They draw it from the actual fact of resisting against a foreign oppressor (again, as previously noted the foreign dimension is not mandatory, notably in socialist ideology where the concept of class can supersede that of nationality – but this is much more complex in colonial context).

The question of legitimacy for partisan movement is capital as without it these movements would simply be considered as criminal bands (needless to say that they generally were depicted that sort and that the limit has rarely been clear-cut). Legitimacy of partisans generally relies upon belonging to the local or national community. Partisans are part of the people and enjoy its support (moral or material through supplies, hideouts, etc.). Partisans present themselves as struggling to recover local sovereignty usurped by occupier and to avenge its abuses and misdeeds. In certain cases, such as Vietnamese guerrilla against French, partisans went as far as creating a new state within the state that could; for example, levy a “revolutionary tax” on population to sustain its operations; again, the boundaries between a tax and

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<sup>21</sup> The limit between foreign or not foreign army can become quickly blurry in case of civil wars. For example we cannot deny the partisan nature of Greek communist guerrilla during and in the aftermath of WWII but the enemy, in that case, was not of foreign nature. Similar case can be identified in China and Yugoslavia between communist and nationalist armies. The complexity in determining the “real enemy” is key to understand the partisan question, notably due to inherent interference of third-part Great Powers in civil wars.

<sup>22</sup> SCHMITT, Carl (1962). “The theory of the partisan.”, p11

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p23

racket is far from being clear-cut. Mao organised a *de facto* state that ruled over area he controlled during Chinese civil war. This partisan attitude can even be continued and encouraged after liberation; North Korean case is also particularly illuminating as it has been endeavouring to mobilise its population in what American historian Bruce Cumings calls “the most fully realised garrison state<sup>24</sup>”. After the country has been caught in a dilemma over the Sino-Soviet rift: workers were supposed to carry “in one hand a hammer and in the other a rifle”.

That is not to say that their role and actions are universally praised by local population. They can be considered as parasites (as they are generally not involved – or at least less - in productive economy and are therefore dependant on all sorts of supplies that civil population provides them with goodwill or forcefully). Also, local population generally pays the price of partisan resistance actions against occupier: as retaliation is carried out to the detriment of people under control of occupying forces. This might even be sought by partisans (or by the entity supervising them, as for the Soviet Union) as they attempt to stir up local population’s resentment towards occupiers. This is carried out through some strategies consisting in pushing occupying forces to resort to more callous actions in response to sabotage or other resistance actions. Besides, some elements of local population might collaborate with different degrees with occupier for different reasons (material benefit, ideological, little choice, coercion, etc.) and therefore opposed to partisans who might, in turn, engage in reprisals against collaborators, nurturing downward spirals of violence.

This rapport with localism is not only to be found with population but also with the geographical milieu. Schmitt insists on the *tellurian* aspect of partisan action that is the attachment to local soil (the motherland which is to be defended against others) which implies a limited action of partisans (not attempt to go through national / regional borders to pursue the enemy<sup>25</sup>). This relation to the soil is notably accentuated in the psyche of the partisans as they are to be hidden and therefore need to master surrounding natural elements. They have to operate from rear bases located in forest<sup>26</sup>, mountain or other local geographical specificities mostly rural

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<sup>24</sup> CUMINGS, Bruce (2013). "Lifting the veil on North Korea, a review of Andrei Lankov's "The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia"." The National Interest., p5: Cumings borrows the term, if not concept, of garrison state, first coined by American political scientist and sociologist Harold Lasswell in 1941.

<sup>25</sup> We do not consider here the case of international communist “professional revolutionary” whose objective (world revolution) has no borders.

<sup>26</sup> Partisan can be called “wood-goers”; in French, the most usual term to design them is “maquisard”, that is those who live in the “maquis” (dense woods). French expression “prendre le maquis” can be translated as “to join partisan groups”. In British-ruled Kenya,

(Vietnamese jungle or rice paddies, Manchurian taiga, etc.) but also in urban landscapes (Algiers' Casbah where separatists could blend in the local population, because *they were* the local population, Sarajevo, etc.) where a regular army would have the highest difficulties to extirpate them from<sup>27</sup>.

## 1.2 Origin of partisans<sup>28</sup>

In his *theory of the partisan*, Carl Schmitt tracks back the term "partisan" to a French decree of 1595<sup>29</sup> that mentions that in case of invasion of French kingdom by a foreign army, people should resist against the enemy. This is certainly no coincidence that this particular period, that is that of European Renaissance, has been labelled by Benedict Anderson<sup>30</sup> as the age of the "origin of national consciousness", notably thanks to the rapid increase of printed books and the coming to official status of vernacular "national" languages<sup>31</sup>. This is one the first raise to awareness of the national fact in Western Europe and its implication was that people would be expected to resist foreign invaders because of their non-Frenchness that is their non-belonging to the French national community.

However, modern nationalism is generally agreed to take its roots in the popular movements that emerged along with the French Revolution and the following Napoleonic wars in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries along with independence movements in the Americas. The term "guerrilla" derives from Spanish "guerra" (war). Modern guerrilla tactics were first experienced in Spain against Napoleon's army where 50 000 or less Spanish *empecinados* could harass and exhaust half of the "Grande Armée" which was more than five times bigger and better organised than their ill-armed opponent<sup>32</sup>. This type of struggle was so efficient that other European nations started to follow the Spanish example to fight back French invader; Austrian

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Mau Mau were calling themselves "forest fighters". They lived in the forest and had hideouts in caves.

<sup>27</sup> SCHMITT, Carl (1962). "The theory of the partisan.", p13

<sup>28</sup> The purpose of this paragraph is to give an historical background of partisan movements since first inceptions to the current cases studies (that is Yugoslavia, USSR and North Korea), we will therefore purposefully skip more recent partisan phenomena.

<sup>29</sup> Schmitt quotes work from Manuel Fraga Iribarne "Guerra y politica en el siglo XX" in Las Relaciones Internacionales de la Era de la guerra fria (Madrid : instituto de estudios politicos, 1962, 29 n. 62)

<sup>30</sup> ANDERSON, Benedict (1983 (reviewed in 2006)). "Imagined communities.", p37-38

<sup>31</sup> Anderson reminds us that François 1<sup>er</sup>'s « Edict of Villers-Cotterêt" imposes French as official language of the kingdom to the detriment of Latin as soon as 1539, only fifty years before the first occurrence of the term "partisan".

<sup>32</sup> SCHMITT, Carl (1962). "The theory of the partisan.", p4

started propaganda campaign against Napoleon translated some Spanish pamphlets and some famous publishers produced literature pieces against foreign conqueror ; this was also followed by Prussians in Germany. Schmitt argues that Clausewitz famous formula “war as a continuation of politics” is “the theory of partisan in a nutshell”<sup>33</sup>. But this is in Russia that Napoleon lost his war, an immense country where his troops got sunk literally in its soil. Fierce defence of Russians, their scorched earth warfare tactics, such as possibly voluntary arson of Moscow<sup>34</sup>, resulted in 1812 in the catastrophic retreat under constant harassment of Russian irregular units, or rather, more accurately to be described as a handful of illiterate Russian *muzhiki* (peasants, rural men), and ultimately led to the defeat of Napoleon by coalition forces in the following years<sup>35</sup>. As Schmitt puts it “the whole episode lasted not much more than six months but it was enough to supply an immensely effective historical precedent”. Russian victory over Napoleon will later be enshrined in the Leo Tolstoy’s classic *War and Peace*<sup>36</sup>, arguably one of the most grandiose epic *roman* of world literature, and, recycled later by Stalin who called Soviets (he actually referred to Grand Russian Nation, a rather non-communist concept) to repel German invasion during World Word II reminding them of their victory over Napoleon, 130 years before. This was also indeed in Russia that this asymmetric war idea came to fruition in the hands of Bolsheviks. Marx and Engels were economists and sociologists, that is theorists, but it would have to be a practitioner of revolution (a professional revolutionary as Schmitt calls him), Lenin, who could incorporate Marxism with guerrilla tactics to seize power. Lenin had studied Clausewitz<sup>37</sup> and used lessons from “On War” to foment the coup that would topple the tsarist regime. As we will see further, partisans played an

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p5: Schmitt notably mentions Heinrich von Kleist as the main writer in Berlin and goes as far as calling von Kleist main piece “Die Hermannsschlacht” as the “greatest partisan of all time”.

<sup>34</sup> Circumstances of the fire in Moscow remain obscure.

<sup>35</sup> Schmitt interestingly notes that while Great Britain was the single most powerful enemy of France at that time, kingdoms that defeated Napoleon’s army were all land forces.

<sup>36</sup> Ironically, Russian and German elite of the time were very Francophile and for the Russians aristocracy, French was the main court language (with German). Pierre Bezukhov, the main hero of *War and Peace* (which is partially written in French) was educated in French in France and is struggling to re-acquire his Russian national sentiment and language all across the book. In Schmitt’s words “[War and Peace] disposes of more mythic power than any political doctrine or documented history”. *War and Peace* was also to become a movie shot by Sergei Bondarchuk, of whom much will be discussed in this thesis.

<sup>37</sup> SCHMITT, Carl (1962). “The theory of the partisan.”, p35: Lenin’s *Tetradka* (notebook) refers to Clausewitz works.

important role of Russian civil war and as Anderson puts it “came to be remembered as *our war*”<sup>38</sup>.

Schmitt goes on noting that the two types of conflicts are particularly prone to rising of partisan movements: civil war and colonial wars. The logical next *guerrillero* had then to be Mao Tse Tung as the period encompassing end of Qing dynasty to the establishment of People’s Republic of China in 1949, can be described as both a civil conflict (nationalists versus communists) and a colonial war (China factions were opposed to both Japanese and other Western imperialist interventions). Emergence of Mao as an incontestable leader occurred during the harshness of battles waged during that period. Mao devised the concept of “people’s war” and that inspired further generations of revolutionaries (Cubans, Koreans, Vietnamese, for example). Also Mao’s rule of communists-occupied zones during those years and ultimate victory over Chang Kai Check has been his source of legitimacy and largely depicted in Chinese art<sup>39</sup>. Mao also tremendously influenced leaders like Kim Il Sung and his guerrillas<sup>40</sup> whose units were embedded with Chinese forces in Manchuria<sup>41</sup>. Xiao Kim (Little Kim) as Mao would condescendingly call him relied upon his war deeds (real or imaginary) to sustain his rule over North Korea. One part of a 20-volume<sup>42</sup> hagiographical narration of Kim’s partisans has been named the Arduous March, a name that goes not without evoking the epic Mao’s Long March. We could as far as stating that Mao served as role-model for young Kim, at least in the early stages of elaboration of his own myth.

World War II was a total war absorbing forces from all Great Powers of the time over all continents, all spaces (sea – both above and under, air, land) and also had a major impact on civil populations (who bore the brunt of violence and death toll) through bombings, genocides, sieges, assaults and reprisals while World War I was mainly a classical war between entrenched, regular armies. This total aspect of the war entailed enhanced participation of civil population to the war (resisting or collaborating with occupation forces), partisan movements are epitomising this extra dimension of the war, notably in the Balkans, France, Greece, Albania, Poland and Russia<sup>43</sup>. In Europe, the most famous and successful case has been that of Joseph Broz “Tito”.

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<sup>38</sup> ANDERSON, Benedict (1983 (reviewed in 2006)). "Imagined communities.", p202

<sup>39</sup> For instance the “Long March” is the theme of operas, plays, films, etc.

<sup>40</sup> CUMINGS, Bruce (2013). "Lifting the veil on North Korea, a review of Andrei Lankov's "The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia". " The National Interest., p5

<sup>41</sup> SUH, Daesook (1988). "Kim Il Sung, the North Korean leader.", p47

<sup>42</sup> Last one published in 2012.

<sup>43</sup> SCHMITT, Carl (1962). "The theory of the partisan.", p8

The war also stirred up national consciousness in colonised areas and international system set up by victorious nations led to further demands for independence from colonial yoke. Frustrated demands degenerated in decolonisation wars which by nature were intrinsically guerrilla warfare. Algerian and Vietnamese are excellent examples illustrating national movements that waged guerrilla war against its occupier. Both *Front de Libération Nationale* and *Vietmihn* were partisan movements fighting for essentially the same reasons French *résistants* had the very previous years against fascist Germany. Absurdity of these liberation wars reached its zenith when it involved former French *résistants*, some arrested and tortured by Nazis, who were to fight against indigenous *résistants*<sup>44</sup> (or rather labelled “terrorists”, or more recently “insurgents” such as in current days Afghanistan or Iraq, by occupying powers) to French rule the same way Germans chased them. After their liberation, both Algeria and Vietnam regimes leant toward leftist ideologies and the former became a pillar of Non-Alignment Movement, as Yugoslavia and later North Korea. We can argue that this farouche willingness of independence towards Bloc politics is to be sought in the earlier struggles of partisans.

## 1.3 Partisans in socialist culture

### 1.3.1 Etymology and use in socialist lexicon

If the word *partisan* is the French for proponent, it is also interesting to investigate further its etymology. Partisan derives from the French word *parti* (part or party) and used in the sense “take party for” (*prendre parti pour*) that is “stand with”. The same word *parti* also means political party and it therefore takes its full sense when associated with totalitarian ideology based on the rule of a unique party such as communism (but it also could be applied to other sorts of rightist authoritarian regimes). Clausewitz and other military theoreticians could hardly forecast the degree to which totalitarian ideology such as Marxism-Leninism could use the concept of guerrilla in its struggles. It is also worthwhile noting that in the three studied countries (but this is certainly the case in other socialist regimes stemming from similar situations) the word *partisan* has been used as is. That might be obvious for the Indo-European roots of Russian and Serbo-Croatian languages but it is also interesting to

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<sup>44</sup> Poignant testimonies of distressed former French soldiers and officers involved in Algeria about this comparison between the torture they suffered from and that they had to perform on Algerians are to be found in the documentary movie “l’ennemi intime” that has the merit to present different views of this “police operation” as the Algerian war was officially named in France until 1999.



note that North Korea also keep on using the phonetic for partisan (*ppalchisan*) in its official discourse despite a virulent cultural revolution that banned most loan words<sup>45</sup>.

### 1.3.2 Partisans in USSR

#### 1.3.2.1 Soviet partisans in WWII

The first stunning progresses of the Wehrmacht at beginning of the German aggression, trapped numerous troops behind the frontlines. The ruthless behaviour of Nazis towards Russians (and other peoples, such as Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Jews, and other minorities), notably animated by a racial sentiment of superiority and hatred of communism (associated with Jewishness) was translated in a fury of ferocious treatment of both soldiers and civilian population. One estimates than 2 million Soviet POWs in hands of German died out of harsh conditions in the first 6 months of the conflict<sup>46</sup>. Life of civilians in occupied towns and villages was no bed of roses either. German administration of civilian population was extremely severe towards *untermenschen*, summary executions were applied in case of perceived lack of collaboration, witch hunts against communists and Jews were systematic and indescribable terror was used to control every aspect of life. Savagery was authorised and encouraged at the highest level of Nazi decision-makers. Cruelty of Germans pushed a lot of civilians, notably Jews and communists to join bands of destitute Red Army's soldiers in the remote forests and marshlands. Most of this people was left without much choice and remaining alive is generally the first cause of escaping to the woods<sup>47</sup>.

Partisan units were thus composed of a ragtag mixture of spontaneously created groups of civilians and soldiers, poorly armed and ill-equipped, in permanent quest for food. Their organisation was extremely incoherent and primary objective was mere survival with limited engagement with German troops. Partisans had to live off civilian population to procure with food, walking a thin red line not always far from banditry. German propaganda used this image to urge civilians to denounce partisans. Also, retribution against civilians by German occupiers was extremely severe: for each

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<sup>45</sup> There are other terms used by the regime such anti-Japanese or anti-imperialism armed fights but the word partisan is still commonly used in the press and other official publications or cultural artefacts. Except few technical words borrowed from modern concepts (such as television or tractors) the regime strived to *purify* inasmuch as possible all foreign influences and words. Few political connoted words also remained (such as "kampania" borrowed from the Russian for "campaign"). According to Wada Haruki (1992:138), the term has actually be mostly used from 1948 onward.

<sup>46</sup> OVERY, Richard (1997). "Russia's war, a history of the Soviet war efforts: 1941-1945.", p147

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p143

German soldier killed by rebels, 50 to 100 civilians were massacred. This degree of strictness was stimulated by Hitler, personally. He instructed Germans not to have any mercy towards Soviets.<sup>48</sup>

Partisans were resented because of German retaliations whenever an action was carried out and food extraction (not to say looting<sup>49</sup>), but atrocities committed by Germans at an unprecedented level pushed more and more people to support and join them. According to Slepian, "authorities played vicious game of encouraging retaliation to fuel further spirit of revenge<sup>50</sup>" begetting thus a vicious circle of violence. Stalin preconized a policy of scorched earth, the same way Russians defeated French invader in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>51</sup>. Citizens of Soviet Union, particularly in the Western part had still in mind the forced collectivisation, purposefully crafted famine in Ukraine, breakneck industrialisation and campaigns of Stalinist terror, but, as one common joke of that time summarised it, "Hitler has managed to do something in 1 year Stalin couldn't do in 20 years: make [them] love Soviet Union"<sup>52</sup>.

Soviet leaders, Stalin notably, at first, did not much counted on partisans. They were distrusted and they operated not always in interests of the Soviet states. Some nationalist movements were even fighting against both the Germans and the Red Army, notably in Ukraine or in the Baltic states that had been annexed by Soviet Unions in the previous years and felt little or none affiliation and often loathing towards Moscow. They were then considered as not much reliable and of a limited efficiency at best and disloyal to Soviet Union prone to collaboration or to rebellion at worst.

Also, phenomenon of partisans in (greater) Russia had a long and tortuous history starting from the resistance against Napoleon in 1812. This history was romanticised notably by the great literature epic *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy<sup>53</sup>. But this is during

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p144

<sup>49</sup> SLEPYAN, Kenneth (2006). "Why they fought: Motivation, Legitimacy and the Soviet Partisan Movement.", p19-20

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p23

<sup>51</sup> In 1812, when Russian troops and Moscow population abandoned the city upon French arrival, the city burned extensively. Despite some conflicting opinions, the burning of Moscow has been attributed to Russian saboteurs as part of scorched-earth tactics against French.

<sup>52</sup> SLEPYAN, Kenneth (2006). "Why they fought: Motivation, Legitimacy and the Soviet Partisan Movement.", p31

<sup>53</sup> *War and Peace* has been directed as epic movie (1961-67 with one of the greatest budget for a movie produced in the USSR) by Sergei Bondarchuk notably, a famous actor (who played in Yugoslav partisan movies) and director (he directed a WWII movie *the fate of man* typical of the Thaw era under Khrushchev in 1959).

the Russian Civil War that the partisan concept took all its substance for Soviets. As mentioned before, civil wars are propitious for guerrilla tactics and partisan movements. Bolshevik's coup of 1917 was followed by several years of wars involving multiple camps, Reds, Whites and their international supporters (Western powers and Japan, mainly) but also a great deal of local nationalists or anarchists, from Ukraine (like Ernest Makhno) to Far East (some Cossack movements and the Czech legion in Siberia) without forgetting Caucasus and Central Asia where old nationalities both Christian and Muslims fought for their independence from the decayed Tsar's empire. The climate of anarchy that prevailed over this period was rife for partisan movements. The first generation of Bolshevik military leaders, such as Mikhail Frunze or Trotsky, naturally, had been eliminated in a way or another during Stalin's rise to power. All the great heritage of guerrilla warfare (caches, depots, doctrine, etc.) had been destroyed or dismantled during the 30's as Stalin wanted to be certain that no counter-powers remained home.<sup>5455</sup>

Stalin thus was at first quite reluctant to arm and support partisans<sup>56</sup>. Because number of partisans kept on growing and the Red Army was facing tremendous pressure from Germans, it has been decided to organise partisans, in a centralised way under Moscow's orders. In the six first months of the war, roughly 30 000 troops were dispatched in small units in places where partisans were thought to be; their goal was to find partisans and bring discipline among them. A lot were captured and killed by the Germans<sup>57</sup>. Lenin's manual on partisan warfare, presenting "terrorism as a legitimate instrument of class struggle" was parachuted to partisans. There are various sources, sometimes conflicting about number of partisans. Those conflicts are to be explained by the loose definition of partisans: were soldiers and civilians counted or only fighters? Some estimate that by June 42 they were approximately 70 000<sup>58</sup>, a number that reached 300 000 by the end of the year<sup>59</sup>. In spring of that year, a "central staff for partisan warfare" was created in order to marshal partisans. Party cadres and Red Army officers were to lead partisan groups (whereas previously leadership was more mixed and party officials not necessarily involved in it) and each cell "benefited" from at least one NKVD agent. The purpose of this was to rationalise partisan actions under a centralised leadership and even a certain planification

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<sup>54</sup> OVERY, Richard (1997). "Russia's war, a history of the Soviet war efforts: 1941-1945.", p143

<sup>55</sup> SLEPYAN, Kenneth (2006). "Why they fought: Motivation, Legitimacy and the Soviet Partisan Movement.", p7

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p8

<sup>57</sup> OVERY, Richard (1997). "Russia's war, a history of the Soviet war efforts: 1941-1945.", p144

<sup>58</sup> SLEPYAN, Kenneth (2006). "Why they fought: Motivation, Legitimacy and the Soviet Partisan Movement.", p9

<sup>59</sup> OVERY, Richard (1997). "Russia's war, a history of the Soviet war efforts: 1941-1945.", p147

(objectives of quantity of enemies or collaborators to kill was assigned to each partisan) was implemented. In 1943, some 22 000 experts were dispatched in order to train and support partisans on specific missions such as sabotage, demolition and communication (radio operators in order to strengthen links with headquarters and between units)<sup>60</sup>. The uniqueness of Soviet Union on the European war theatre was that the state had not been toppled like in other occupied territories. After the victory of Stalingrad, a boost in morale largely reinvigorated Soviet people and confirmed them that a Soviet victory was becoming more likely. So far, Soviet victory had not been guaranteed and a lot of people was doubtful about future of Soviet Union.

#### 1.3.2.2 Exploitation of partisans theme during the war

Partisans have been depicted Soviet Union's propaganda as "shock troops of the motherland" and as "heroes of the revolutionary struggle against the evil threat of Hitlerism"<sup>61</sup>. Needless to say that the reasons motivating partisans were, for most of them, not much inspired by any revolutionary ideals but by very pragmatic sense of survival. However, as Denise Youngblood put it: "Stalin was acutely aware of the opportunities that the war held to cement its regime"<sup>62</sup>. He therefore set out to utilise partisans to boost morale of his troops and encouraged further resistance towards Nazis. The image of partisans of the previous generation (that of the Civil War) had been already romanticised<sup>63</sup>, through movies notably such as *Chapaev* (1934), the current generation needed also some similar efforts.

A certain era of freedom characterised the period of the war. Stalin's rule was diminished obviously in the occupied territories but also a higher degree of liberties was allowed in the rest of the country. Stalin, in order to galvanise the population and have them resist the enemy made some concessions. For instance, a greater tolerance towards religion was permitted during the war as it could be used to have some citizens perceive the conflict as a combat of humanity versus inhumanity. Orthodox religion was still swaying a certain influence in Russia despite the Soviet attempts to destroy it. Also, more interesting perhaps is the references to nationalism. The national question has been a long time complex issue for socialists<sup>64</sup>. The long-term

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p150

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p143

<sup>62</sup> YOUNGBLOOD, Denise J. (2001). "A War Remembered, Soviet Films of the Great Patriotic War.", p6

<sup>63</sup> SLEPYAN, Kenneth (2006). "Why they fought: Motivation, Legitimacy and the Soviet Partisan Movement.", p15

<sup>64</sup> For instance, see Stalin's (aided by Bukharin) pamphlet "Marxism and the National Question" (1913)

policy of Soviet Union on this was to craft a new nation, the so-called *homo sovieticus*. If “nationalities<sup>65</sup>” were supported by the state (creation of academy of languages, of union of writers and other artists, development and rationalisation of languages, etc.), nationalism was reprimanded by and large. The press also celebrated some local national heroes, such as Byelorussian and Ukrainians poets and partisans during the Civil War in order to entice those peoples to fight against the enemy<sup>66</sup>. Another redundant theme supposed to strike a chord with partisans of all kinds has been the call for defence of the *rodina*. This term can be translated as motherland (or rather the “place where you are born”, “the place where your roots are”) but its proper definition is quite vague. When Stalin calls for the protection of *rodina*, does he mean Soviet Union? Obviously he does, but the term can be ambivalently – and the ambivalence here has been meticulously cultivated by the Soviet state during the war – understood as one’s motherland, one’s perception of what is motherland, including some ethnonational comprehension of the word – within Soviet Union (for instance fighting for independence of the Byelorussian SSR) or outside of it (fighting for a Byelorussia independent from Soviet Union). Ukrainian nationalists fighting against both Germans and Soviet power were also defending their *rodina*. It is also worthwhile noting that this telluric reference to motherland during war time is to be opposed on a general patriarchal vision of the land *otechestvo* (fatherland from *otec* – father). Stalin’s Soviet Union of the 30’s was a patriarchal society dominated by an omnipotent father figure<sup>67</sup>. The way WWII was called by Soviet power is Great Fatherland (or Patriotic) Liberation War<sup>68</sup>, using the *otec* root. This female *gendering* of the country is revealed in Soviet propaganda of that time when women at large, students, mothers, were called to fight for their country. Posters showing a woman, a mother, calling for preservation of the *rodina*, were used to urge resistance against the occupier<sup>69</sup>. This call was echoed in press and cinema as we will discuss it. Numerous movies were produced during the war period with female protagonists transformed by the horrors of the war in *avenging angel*. As Peter Kenez put it: “by showing the courage and

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<sup>65</sup> The concept of nationality was mainly associated with that of a spoken language rather than other ethnic related attributes. The Soviet project to educate everyone in Russian progressively was simply bound to let one single nationality exist, the Soviet one on the long term. On the short-term, the purpose was to break “panism” i.e. pan-Turkism or pan-Islamism. See Olivier ROY’s *La nouvelle Asie Centrale ou la fabrication des nations* (1997) for more information.

<sup>66</sup> SLEPYAN, Kenneth (2006). “Why they fought: Motivation, Legitimacy and the Soviet Partisan Movement.”, p17

<sup>67</sup> Stalin’s nicknames included “little father of the peoples” or “Papa Stalin”

<sup>68</sup> War against Napoleon was also called this way.

<sup>69</sup> YOUNGBLOOD, Denise J. (2001). “A War Remembered, Soviet Films of the Great Patriotic War.”, p3

suffering of women, these works aroused hatred for the cruel enemy and at the same time taught that men could do no less than women<sup>70</sup>".

These three aspects, Orthodox religion (opposed to Soviet atheism), Pan-Slavism (opposed to negation of nationalism and to universalistic concept of a soviet nation<sup>71</sup>) and appeal to women's efforts (opposed to a patriarchal society) have been used to mobilise occupied population (mainly located in Slavonic part of the USSR) against the enemy<sup>72</sup>. At the end of the war, this discourse reverted back to that of the hard-core period of *Sovietism* from the pre-war period until Stalin's death and the famous "secret" speech of Khrushchev during the 20<sup>th</sup> congress of the Party in 1956 and the subsequent *Thaw*.

### 1.3.3 Partisans in Yugoslavia

#### 1.3.3.1 Role of the partisans during the war and establishment of a socialist regime

It is not the purpose of this study to recount meanders of extremely intricate history of the Balkans. Here will be simply given as background information some brief chronicle related to the creation of the concept of Yugoslavia. Prior to WWI, Balkans were separated in different spheres of influences, mainly Austro-Hungarian Empire and Ottoman Empire<sup>73</sup>. The War is credited to have initiated after the assassination of Duke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo by a Serb nationalist<sup>74</sup>. After victory of allies, the treaty of Versailles, granted the Serb dynasty the creation of Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1919. This Kingdom survived until 1941 when Hitler and his allies attacked and decided to split it in different pieces.

Conversely to other Central and Eastern European countries that have been liberated by Red Army and that had communism imposed by Moscow, Yugoslav resistance to

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<sup>70</sup> HAYNES, John "Brothers in arm, the changing face of Soviet soldiers in Stalin era.", p6-7: quoting Peter Kenéz

<sup>71</sup> This is notably reflected in movies of the war time. According to Kenéz (1992, p149), emphasis was put on the importance for peoples to work together for the common good. He notably cites non-Slavic people such as Caucasian ones. The focus was probably put forward due to the vicinity of the front for those peoples too, as Azerbaijan was critical for Germany to obtain oil.

<sup>72</sup> HAYNES, John "Brothers in arm, the changing face of Soviet soldiers in Stalin era.", p15

<sup>73</sup> It is worthwhile noting that there were some guerrilla fighters struggling against these empires, the *hajduk*.

<sup>74</sup> But more than a single point in time, branded in the collective memory, WWI was a continuum and an expansion of an already existing conflict in the Balkans, stemming from the crumbling of Ottoman Empire, that was waged in 1912-1914 regionally.

fascist aggressors was the main factor of liberation, aid from both Western Allies and USSR coming late and in negligible quantity. Tito's partisans benefited of a great – and unique – prestige conferring them some legitimacy to establish a state at the end of the conflict<sup>75</sup>. At the end of the war partisans accounted for some 700 000 men and women<sup>76</sup>, among them 100 000 members of Communist Party of Yugoslavia (over roughly 140 000 members).

Partisans had not only to fight against Axis forces but also against competing national independence movements, such as Croatian *Ustashis* (backed by Axis forces) and Serbian *Chetniks*, loyal to the king in exile in London. Both movements were staunchly anti-communist and a complex intricacy of temporary alliances and fights to gain power between different movements and Axis forces started, to end only with the war and the Allies' victory. Wherever partisans liberated areas, they instituted some local committees to govern, basis of a later state. Nazis were conscious that resistance in Yugoslavia was a thorn in their foot and tried, in vain, through seven offensives to get rid of partisans. Tito's men received little support from Allies and Soviets and had to rely mainly on themselves; those streaks also forged spirit of independence and defiance towards Great Powers. Those episodes are portrayed in epic movies and are part of the national narrative of the regime and edification of Tito's personality cult<sup>77</sup>.

#### 1.3.3.2 Lessons to take into account to study Yugoslavian “narrative”

The Yugoslavian “grand narrative” finds its origin in the National Liberation Struggle waged by Tito and his partisans against foreign oppressors. The previously existing Kingdom of Yugoslavia was sent to oblivion of history and its proponents (those loyal to the king, for instance) were purged and obliterated in the first years of liberation. The morality of the fight was put forward as a combat between humanistic forces

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<sup>75</sup> The purpose of this part is to give a brief overview of Tito and partisans' role in the liberation and its aftermath, notably to perceive better how these deeds were later used in the propaganda machine. The argument is not much to assess to which extent Tito was legitimate to rule Yugoslavia after the war (there were other factions such as royalists and other nationalists that could have claimed power at independence; elections organized to establish the state were dubious in their conduction, there were massive purges of collaborators, capitalists, priests, etc.) but to put it in context relatively to other socialist regimes behind the Iron Curtain that were clearly Moscow's puppets. See PIRJEVEC, Joze (1988). "Tito's Stalinist years (1945-1948)." *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* **17.**, p5

<sup>76</sup> Cmobjmja, Mihailo. *The Yugoslav Drama*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996. in BARIC, Stephanie (2001). "Yugoslav War Cinema: Shooting A Nation Which No Longer Exists.", p21

<sup>77</sup> Numerous songs, streets, places were called after Tito; even a city was named Titograd (currently Montenegro's capital, Podgorica).

against barbarism, between human and unhuman<sup>78</sup>. This moral advantage was articulated nimbly with the traditional communist ideology of progress over backward, feudal and bigot reactionary forces. On the top of a classical classless society proposed by socialist systems, Tito strived, through the foundational character of the struggle, to forge a Yugoslav identity, transcending ethnicities and religions. The Party's motto, "bratstvo i jedinstvo" (brotherhood and unity) illustrated this ideal.

Naturally, not only cinema celebrated partisan movements: songs, literature, posters, and other graphic arts also played this role. In households, medals or equipment of father or grandfather that participated in the struggle also reminded people of this time. Countless monuments, some immense in critical places such as actual battlefields, some more unassuming commemorative stelas in streets or roads, are constellating the whole territory. During special dates (anniversary of a given events), pilgrimages were arranged in a quasi-religious way.

There are several interesting linkages to be done among these various aspects of *Titoism*. First, there is an obvious relationship between decentralising reforms (self-management) and the quest of reaching out non-aligned countries: the latter can be construed as an extension of the former on the international scene. Countries can be paralleled with self-management unit, without supervision of a central authority (i.e. one of the two superpowers). Naturally, in practice, self-managed units still had to respond to Belgrade. Second, there is also a clear connection between partisan struggle and the Non-Aligned Movement: Yugoslavia could boast of both having struggled against fascism during WWII and having resisted Soviet imperialism<sup>79</sup>. These elements can be traced in the movies objects of this study.

### 1.3.4 Partisans in North Korea

#### 1.3.4.1 North Korea's "revolutionary tradition"

The core of North Korea's propaganda efforts harks back to two main episodes of the country. First and foremost, it recalls the exploits of Kim Il Sung and his partisans against Japanese imperialism in Manchuria and in Northern parts of Korea during the 30's. Secondly, it addresses the "Fatherland Liberation War" as the Korean War is known in the North. Both episodes are relatively close on a time scale and their differences tend to be intentionally blurred by the official ideology.

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<sup>78</sup> KIRIN, Renata JAMBRESIC (2004). "The politics of memory in Croatian socialist culture.", p7

<sup>79</sup> NIEBUHR, Robert (2011). "Nonalignment as Yugoslavia's Answer to Bloc politics." Journal of Cold War studies, p18: Tito paralleled LCY struggle to that of colonized countries



The “grand narrative” is quite simple and insists on the independence of both the guerrilla fighters against the Japanese and the self-sufficiency of North Korea during the Korean War. If the resistance in Manchuria and Northern Korean had a real impact on Japanese imperialists and if Kim Il Sung was one of its foremost military leader, at least amongst those who survived, these different movements were not responsible for the liberation of Korea as it is claimed by North Koreans; the Soviet were and brought back Kim with them in Korea. Also, Kim himself was at times embedded with Chinese communist partisans<sup>80</sup> waging a broader war against not only Japanese but also Nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek. Both Soviet and Chinese involvements got at best downplayed in the first years after establishment of the North Korean state and progressively totally obliterated from its official history<sup>81,82</sup>.

This phenomenon of selective obliviousness is also to be found in the recounting of the Korean War: as Kim and his partisans liberated Korea from the “Japs’ yoke”, he “won” the Korean War despite the “Yankees’ aggression<sup>83</sup>”. If at first, tribute was paid to Chinese comrades who, sent under Mao’s impetus, some 300 000 “volunteers” to counter Americans and re-establish the balance of forces, quickly, mentions of this aid faded away in the official discourse. We could even extrapolate this attitude to all further development aid received by North Korea along its existence, from the reconstruction efforts in the 50’s when the country was granted industrial assets from fraternal nations such as Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union to the more recent days of the famine when Pyongyang was supplied with food to end the humanitarian crisis. North Korea would apply all necessary efforts to hide the origins of the aid or the reason it was given, arguing this are presents or tributes (to repay past deeds that afflicted the country if the aid comes from enemy nations.).

#### 1.3.4.2 Kim Il Sung and his partisans in Manchuria

The resistance to Japanese imperialism had not, naturally, started with Kim Il Sung, a relatively late comer to the cause. Japanese encroachments onto Korea were as old as the two nations themselves. In the more recent times, Japanese forays and raids into Korea date from late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Repelling of Toyotomi Hideyoshi by Korean admiral Yi Sunshin is part of the national history military highlights. An early tradition of “Righteous Army” (*euibyung*) has been established to resist Japanese invasions:

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<sup>80</sup>SUH, Daesook (1988). "Kim Il Sung, the North Korean leader.", p4

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p312-313

<sup>82</sup> In the 80’s, notably in cinema, more space was let to include Chinese and Soviet in the narrative. This can be particularly seen with co-productions between USSR and DPRK.

<sup>83</sup> The use of “Japs” and “Yankees” here is conform to the North Korean constant utilization of similar derogative terms in Korean.

“Korean people have inherited a unique tradition of forming a ‘righteous army’ in times of national crisis caused by foreign aggression<sup>84</sup>”. If the uniqueness does not apply, the phenomenon is ancient and referred to as a “tradition”.

This phenomenon appeared and disappeared by waves, sporadically, “each time the nation was in danger”. Pak Un-sik qualifies the Righteous Army of being the “very marrow of [Korean] nation”<sup>85</sup>. Even more recently, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Japan decided to modernise and to expand following Western powers example, Korea, “a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan”, was seen as a natural territory to control. This gave new momentums to Righteous Army activities, mobilising from few dozens to few thousands guerrilla troops composed mainly of peasants and led by Confucianist scholars. Disbandment of Korean army, under Japanese duress, in 1907 reinforced the Righteous Army and its activities went on the following years until fierce anti-guerrilla operations crushed the rebellion. Interesting, the Righteous Army sometimes punished feudal landlords, *yangbans*, collaborating with the enemy or for being too harsh with the peasantry<sup>86</sup>.

Domination of Korea took few decades and resulted in the annexation of the peninsula in 1910. By that date, all military operations from the Righteous Army inside Korea became quasi impossible and Manchuria and Siberia became the new sanctuary for armed struggle. Civil resistance then took place inside the peninsula, culminating with the 1<sup>st</sup> of March protest of 1919<sup>87</sup>. But, for our particular needs, let us focus on what happened in the northern part of Korea, and particularly in neighbouring Manchuria.

Incoming of Japanese settlers and confiscation of land hurled massive exodus of Korean peasants towards Manchuria<sup>88</sup>, a tumultuous area, reminiscent of the 19<sup>th</sup> *Far West*, in a chaotic China sunken in civil war. Manchuria is the main locus<sup>89</sup> where the armed resistance took place as the pervading turmoil there was propitious to violent rebellion against Japanese interests there. Japan finally invaded the area in 1931 and

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<sup>84</sup> Yong-ha, Shin (2010). "Modern Korean history and nationalism.", p145

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p145: quoting Pak Un-sik's *Bloody history of Korean independence movement*

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p182

<sup>87</sup> SUH, Daesook (1988). "Kim Il Sung, the North Korean leader.", p312: Suh notes that this major event is not any more celebrated in North Korea.

<sup>88</sup> WALES, Nym (1942). "Rebel Korea." *Pacific Affairs* 15(1): 25-43., p36: Wales notes that some were drawn also to Siberia and participated along the Bolshevik to the October Revolution and subsequent civil war bestowing them a certain esteem and later support from the Soviets.

<sup>89</sup> WALES, Nym (1941). "Song of Ariran, a Korean communist in the Chinese revolution.", p311

set up a puppet regime, pursuing its imperialistic ambitions. According to the biography of Kim San<sup>90</sup>, a high-ranking revolutionary involved in both Chinese and Korean communist movements, there was 7 000 Korean partisans in Manchuria (and 3 000 nationalist fighters) in 1937<sup>91</sup>.

In a similar vein to Tito's Yugoslavia<sup>92</sup>, the foundational myth of the North Korean regime is the guerrilla warfare waged by Kim Il Sung against Japanese occupiers. The main difference between the two partisan movements is that Tito actually with little support managed to create a mass movement of followers (both civilian and military and, too often, no strict limit could be applied between them) and liberate Balkans, by and large, although Kim Il Sung's actions were on a much smaller scale, resulting in attacks, such as the most famous one in *Poch'eonbo*<sup>93</sup>, in 1937, that would involve, at best, few hundreds men with him. It is also noteworthy that most of Kim Il Sung's feats of arm actually did not take place inside Korea but rather in vicinal Manchuria, another territory subdued by Japanese, offering numerous hideouts in its dense taiga.

*Poch'eonbo*, the "largest and most successful campaign Kim waged during his guerrilla days", is a town next the Manchurian border, where Kim and an estimated two hundred partisans took the city for a day, killing 7 Japanese policemen and setting fire to official buildings<sup>94</sup>. During a period stretching from 1937 to 1940, Kim's forces hassled Japanese in Manchuria and Korea; that made him the *bête noire* of Japanese that organised special troops to liquidate Kim. His exploits were known to Koreans and he acquired a certain notoriety among them as an able war lord. At the highest, Kim ruled over 300 men. In 1940, Japanese expeditionary troops sent to crush the rebellion gain in intensity forcing Kim and his men to withdraw further inside Soviet Union, a safe-haven for revolutionaries alike. Little is known about his time in USSR;

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<sup>90</sup> Real name of Kim San seems to have been Jang Jirak. His biography was written by Nym Wales, a pseudonym for Helen Foster Snow, the wife of Edgar Snow, a journalist who covered revolution in China. She met with Kim San and interviewed him extensively in Yanan.

<sup>91</sup> WALES, Nym (1941). "Song of Ariran, a Korean communist in the Chinese revolution.", p234: this figure is confirmed by the other Wales' article aforementioned. However, citing also Kim San as the source, she mentions a range from 50 000 to 70 000 partisans without explaining difference between those partisans and the 10 000 "volunteer troops".

<sup>92</sup> CUMINGS, Bruce (1997). "Korea's place in the sun.", p227: Cumings notes that the British Foreign Office had labelled Kim Il Sung a "Korean Tito" as early as 1948 and the CIA had found that North Korea had a "façade of autonomy more pronounced than in almost any other country in the Russian orbit" displaying some Asian nationalism comparable to Titoism.

<sup>93</sup> SUH, Daesook (1988). "Kim Il Sung, the North Korean leader.", p 319: Suh mentions at least 23 monuments in the areas of Poch'eonbo and Musan were built by time of his book.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p34-36

he and his men, allegedly joined the Red Army, and obtained the rank of major, until his come- back in Korea in 1945 as explained above.

Kim's deeds during this period are the basis of his legitimacy as a "liberator" and a ruler of the country. North Korean propagandist therefore drew extensively on these episodes to concoct an official history that would be derived in multiple cultural and educational products. This was notably more desirable to gratify partisans, as Kim Il Sung had to rely on his guerrilla faction against others (Soviet, Chinese guerrilla – the so-called *Yanan* group - and local communist, from both Southern and Northern part of the peninsula). The mythification of the partisans therefore was intended to consolidate not only Kim's legitimacy but also that of his supporters. The progressive elaboration of what Japanese historian Wada Haruki has called a "guerrilla-band state"<sup>95</sup>, became possible as "Kim elevated his comrades from the guerrilla days into positions of prominence, established his partisan struggle as the only correct revolutionary tradition in Korea, and began to mould the new Communist Man in the tradition of the partisans"<sup>96</sup>.

#### 1.3.4.3 Anti-Japanese struggle in North Korean propaganda

After the Korean War, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Congress, in Spring 1956, Kim "in an effort to revive the self-identity of the Korean people, [...] reiterated his plea to study more Korean history and repeated the twisted logic linking the Korean tradition and his own non-Korean partisan activities in Manchuria"<sup>97</sup>. The next decade would see a major turn in terms of creation of propaganda pieces related to Kim Il Sung and the partisans as Kim himself exhorted the cultural workers to do so<sup>98</sup>.

Between 1959 and 2012, North Korea published 20 volumes of the "memoirs of anti-Japanese guerrillas", an epic narrating the struggle of Kim Il Sung and his cronies from 1932 to 1945. This massive venture is naturally aimed at contributing to the legitimacy of Kim's dynasty. It has been derived in different cultural productions such as children's books, romans, epic poems, musicals, plays, operas and, naturally, films would be used as important study material for indoctrination of North Koreans<sup>99</sup>. The

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<sup>95</sup> HARUKI, Wada (1998). "Kita Chosen: yugekitai kokka no genzai [North Korea: The Guerrilla-Band State's Current Situation]."

<sup>96</sup> SUH, Daesook (1988). "Kim Il Sung, the North Korean leader.", p109

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p146-147

<sup>98</sup> IM, Yeongtae (1999). "Fifty-year history." 1., p396: Kim set 3 main objectives to the cultural workers of the *Cheollima* era: 1. Pieces reflecting construction of socialism, 2. Pieces praising the anti-Japanese armed struggle, 3. Pieces showing the plight of South Koreans.

<sup>99</sup> CHO, Eunhee (2012). "Political utilization of historical memory, an analysis of "a memoir of the anti-Japanese guerilla participants". " Reunification and peace 4(2)., p136

amount of production increased at the end of the 60's, that is to say the period when Kim Jong Il started to take over some propaganda organs. These *memoirs* would also be used to solidify Kim Jong Il's legitimacy<sup>100</sup>.

The culture of the partisans in North Korea did not only suffuse the artistic and education dimensions, it also pervaded in all the strata of the society and of the ruling organs. The military, for instance, is indoctrinated about guerrilla warfare<sup>101</sup>, in a similar vein as Yugoslav army was bathed in *hajduk's* spirit. Suh also highlights some less adequate lessons of the partisan strategy also applied to agriculture (small units instead of big ones were then favoured)<sup>102</sup>, daily life<sup>103104</sup>, the industrial production<sup>105</sup> or even the artistic sphere<sup>106</sup>.

Ironically, actual role of partisans in the North Korean regime would be restrained at the climax of the propaganda campaigns to glorify their action. The partisan's power actually became a threat to Kim as their role and aura were so magnified that they thought they could indulge too much into liberty. Not only, some of them did not support the transition to Kim Yong-ju or Kim Jong Il, but also they ventured in some dangerous enterprises that led to more international tensions such as the seizing of the USS Pueblo in 1968, the shooting down of an US spy plane the next year. Also, it is not totally clear who ordered the attempt of assassination of South Korean president Park Junghee and this could have been organised by some reckless partisan officers<sup>107</sup>. These elements resulted in the purge of the so-called *Gapsan* faction, concerning some partisans. Needless to say, this purge was not much publicised and the propaganda related to partisans could keep on being carried out to sustain Kim's legitimacy. In 1980, as Kim Jong Il officially succeeded to his father, the nature of propaganda changed. The objective was not any more to only legitimate the regime and the "monolithic ideological system" as it was in the previous decades, but rather to consolidate the succession. Kim Il Sung progressively retired from the political

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p126

<sup>101</sup> The tin cup used by soldiers bear the inscription "one against a hundred". This is also the title of a martial song used notably during military parades in Pyongyang.

<sup>102</sup> SUH, Daesook (1988). "Kim Il Sung, the North Korean leader.", p239

<sup>103</sup> HARUKI, Wada (1998). "Kita Chosen: yugekitai kokka no genzai [North Korea: The Guerrilla-Band State's Current Situation].", p142

<sup>104</sup> CHO, Eunhee (2012). "Political utilization of historical memory, an analysis of "a memoir of the anti-Japanese guerilla participants"." Reunification and peace 4(2)., p15

<sup>105</sup> IM, Yeongtae (1999). "Fifty-year history." 2., p87 "production, academia and our daily life should also be conducted in the way of the anti-Japanese armed guerrilla".

<sup>106</sup> KIM, Jong Il (1973). "On the art of the cinema.", p105: Kim Jong Il compare artists to "staunch fighters".

<sup>107</sup> IM, Yeongtae (1999). "Fifty-year history." 2., p54-55

scene and was seen as a paternalistic figure remaining aloof. Kim Il Sung became progressively deified and, relatively to the previous decades, the partisans ceased to be the only subject of North Korean propaganda.

## 1.4 Conclusion of 1<sup>st</sup> part: myth of partisans?

Why are we talking here about myth of partisans? The theme of partisan is shared by the three studied country and echoes deep in the past of the nation and its construction (fights against Napoleon, Japanese or Ottomans). Similar to that of revolution, partisan theme is particularly abundant with powerful psychological Romanesque elements such as sacrifice, heroism, idealism, epic deeds, justice, utopia and idyllic, bucolic life among others (life in the countryside, attachment to ones' motherland), that can be used as basis for weaving fantasized and overall *imagined* or *invented* stories. This set of stories nurture a "grand narrative" for each regime that came to power or reinforce its power through partisan movement. It also provides them not only with legitimacy but also with a "foundational myth" instrumental to achieve a national project. This is particularly true in totalitarian societies where the veracity of stories matters little and political project were top-down driven.

The national project, on the long-term, of the studied regimes can be summarized as following:

- The creation of a *homo sovieticus*, a Communist, deprived of ethno-nationality. This individual supports a regime ruling over the whole world as there are clear elements of global domination in Soviet ideology. For Stalin, the myth of the partisans intervenes little in this project: its use was restricted to some pure pragmatic and temporary considerations during the War period. For further leaders, the use of the myth is useful to cultivate a collective heroic memory, instilling a sentiment of pride, in order to draw attention away from stagnation and poor economic achievements.
- The creation of a *Yugoslav*, a Communist living in a carefree society, within a nation in which ethnicity matters little, in an internationally independent society. There are no clear element of global domination in Tito's project but there are attempts of exporting the political model abroad, for the glory of Yugoslavia on the international scene. This is particularly relevant as the country liberated itself alone (or at least, it is construed as they did so) and the myth of partisans is therefore a major force that drove Tito's ambition towards Non-Aligned Movement.

- The creation of a unified and liberated Korea where a *new communist man* can live freely according to the specific condition of its, ethnically-pure<sup>108</sup>, nation under the guidance of a magnanimous and eternal paternal figure. We can also distinguish some elements of “model export”, fostering revolutions and sponsoring *Juche study groups*, but no real attempts at dominating the world through it, rather preferring limited interactions with the external world.

We can therefore distinguish different purposes using a same myth. Among the three, only the Yugoslav one seems to be a full-fledge nation-building effort, although a relative obscure one<sup>109</sup>. Stalin was more concerned about having Soviet people revolt against occupier the time he could re-organise defence and counter-attack. The myth of partisan in North Korea is subtle and complex: it definitely is intended to ensure adherence to the regime and its leadership (notably to consolidate the legitimacy of the succession); whether it also involves a nation-building effort is more difficult to say as the nation, per se, had already been existing for “half ten thousand years” as Koreans like to say (this is also said by one of the protagonist of *Five guerrilla brothers*). At most, we can talk about nation-rebuilding or, nation-repairing from the wounds of colonisation, as overcoming national division is the ultimate objective of the regime.

Drawing on Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies*, Boris Groys asserts that myths are mainly a rightist phenomenon of “stolen speech” used by the bourgeoisie to deprive working class of their production. “Myth is the opposite of revolution, which returns language to its immediate function of ‘making’ things and the new world as a whole”<sup>110</sup>. That is the opposition is between the producing class and the non-producing class. In socialist regimes, we can also apply this dichotomy once the revolution degenerated and that “some animals [became] more equal than others”. This red bourgeoisie therefore needs to rely on myths to sustain its power as they are not any more on the side of the production, but parasites of the working class. That leads us back to the introductory passage of Nicolas Bouvier: “*at first the business of secret committees, revolutions become established, ossify, and rapidly become business for sculptors.*”

The purpose of the next part is not to discuss the business of sculptors but that of cineasts. As we will see, their role is critical in the propaganda machine of totalitarian

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<sup>108</sup> The work of Bryan Myers (2010) is compelling about this point.

<sup>109</sup> Tito’s principle of “organic nation” referred to an attachment to both ethnic identity and federal Yugoslavia.

<sup>110</sup> GROYS, Boris (1992). “The total art of Stalinism.”, p116

states and the corpus of partisan-related actions is a tremendous source of inspiration to buttress regimes, their leaders and national projects.



## 2. Totalitarian cinema

### 2.1 Totalitarian art

#### 2.1.1 Essence of totalitarian art

Totalitarian art encompasses all artistic production attached to a totalitarian political project. Its direction is therefore top to bottom, that is, from the leader to the masses, the party being a catalyst. Its effect is assessed according to its efficiency of reaching out the masses, meaning that art should not be elitist and be appealing to a maximum of persons, regardless of their level of education. Its ultimate purpose, is that of totalitarian regimes: forge not only a new society, but create a new man<sup>111</sup>, a new psyche<sup>112</sup>.

It would be a mistake to think that this vision of art was first formulated by totalitarian leaders themselves. It was rather artists themselves, inspired by the ideals of the revolution, who initiated waves of highly creative new sorts of art such as Constructivism and Futurism movements of the 20's in Soviet Union. Let us not forget that the term "social engineering" itself was coined by one of them, the avant-gardist poet Aleksei Gasteev<sup>113</sup>. They were total propagandist serving an ideal rather than an ideology. This would not last as the totalitarian state and its leader would take over and organise art as other industries: production being managed the same way other industries are, with planification and bureaucratic controls. Art then ceased to be innovative and started to become dull and similar regardless of the ideology as Golomstock argues all along his book.

People in charge of the cultural affairs were not any more artists or professionals versed in the cultural sphere but bureaucrats and, on the higher ranks, politicians. When Hitler, a former frustrated art student, coined "art as continuation of politics<sup>114</sup>", he was not doing an easy pastiche of Clausewitz but really had in mind a global artistic project. Furthermore, it is not only that cultural affairs were handled by politicians: military affairs were also in hands of artists, Albert Speer, the architect who was supposed to change Berlin in a new imperial Rome, was appointed minister of

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p37: Sergei Tretyakov, a Soviet avant-garde artists, believed that art permitted the production of a new human being. Art being one of the tools of such production.

<sup>112</sup> GOLOMSTOCK, Igor (2011). "Totalitarian Art: In the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy, and the People's Republic of China.", p26

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p26

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p256

armament during the War<sup>115</sup>. In Soviet Union, Boris Groys asserts that the fact that politicians were not art experts themselves was irrelevant as the only sort of art to be produced was Socialism itself<sup>116</sup>. Art was politics in those societies, both were total, so was the War they waged against each other.

Bureaucratization of art production provoked its degeneration. In Cassinelli's words: "banality of totalitarian art is notorious. This degradation prevents the artist from exercising his creativity – a technique supplemented by periodic arbitrary shifts in aesthetic standards – and it also shields audience from any ideas or presentations which might prove stimulating<sup>117</sup>". The change in orientation had to be felt by artists and propagandist and was totally orchestrated by the leader. Failure to grasp these changes could lead to camps or execution. As Groys puts it: "'The typical' of Socialist Realism is Stalin's dream made visible<sup>118</sup>" implying therefore a capacity for the best artists to anticipate swiftly changes of doctrine of the leader.

Another important facet of totalitarian art is the emphasis of the collective over the individual. Naturally, artists produce for different reasons, one of them being to express their personal point of view and to quench their quest for recognition. These reasons cannot be acceptable by a totalitarian ideology and therefore artists had to be shackled in a bureaucratic process of art creation. This bureaucratic system was not only aimed at controlling art before its initial production but also to annihilate any pretension of the artist and all flavour of its creation: "literary works as were re-written so many times in response to instructions from a variety of sources that they lost their individual authorship<sup>119</sup>".

This deprivation of authorship could take all its meaning for cinema, an art that required not only important budgets, but also control at all levels such as the script itself, the way actor would play, the soundtrack, the cinematographic effects, and so on. Moreover, the control could also be carried out more effectively afterwards through censorship of scenes and re-edition of movies. Also, distribution of films required approvals and could be revoked easily. Once a book was distributed, it was difficult to enforce censorship a posteriori<sup>120</sup>. Also, at least, home-made books

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p257, Golomstock also notes that Voroshilov, Soviet minister of war became cultural curator for the Central Committee of CPSU.

<sup>116</sup> GROYS, Boris (1992). "The total art of Stalinism.", p36

<sup>117</sup> CASSINELLI, C. W. (1960). "Totalitarianism, Ideology, and Propaganda.", p25

<sup>118</sup> GROYS, Boris (1992). "The total art of Stalinism.", p52-53

<sup>119</sup> , p71

<sup>120</sup> Although it was sometimes done in higher Stalinist time: some pages being removed in libraries, some new pages to be glued sent to purchasers of the books, some definitions scratched, etc.

(*samizdat*) could circulate among few people. For cinema, before the coming of video-recorder and other digital support, the state was in charge from A to Z and could therefore apply a total control. Finally, cinema, more than any other art, is the fruit of a collective effort, in which individuals matter little. It is therefore, not a incredible if in some movies, for instance North Korean movies, identification of director is difficult. This is an ideological choice<sup>121</sup>.

As Hoberman puts it, cinema was also perceived by artists as the most powerful mean to create the new society: "For a newer and younger generation of artists, inspired by the ideals of the October Revolution and dedicated to the construction of a new society and a new way of life, cinema was seen as 'the' art form with which to shape the new man<sup>122</sup>". As we are going to see in next part, all leaders of the studied states had similar views on the capacity of cinema to achieve their projects.

## 2.2 The case of cinema

### 2.2.1 Cinema in USSR: Wartime and post-War Stalinist cinema

#### 2.2.1.1 Birth of Socialist Realism

In 1930, to guide and temper turbulent directors, Stalin appointed Boris Shumyatsky as a chief of Soviet industry. Shumyatsky had no previous cultural affair management experiences but was faithful Party member who knew how the political machinery worked<sup>123</sup>. His mission was to struggle against the so-called "formalism<sup>124</sup>", a pejorative term, that is an emphasis put on effects (light, montage – a word first coined by Soviets, etc.) promoted then by the most influential directors. Formalism was construed by the regime as an elitist sort of art distant from the mass and therefore not catering to the whole of Soviet people. "Excessive formalism" took essence in the 20's and was not only represented in cinema but also in the other arts such as literature, theatre or poetry. Throughout the 30's, the previous degree of freedom was quelled and some artists persecuted for their aesthetic creations. Opposed to formalism, Socialist Realism was imposed from the top and Shumyatsky task was to ensure this new official norm within the film industry. This school of art

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<sup>121</sup> KIM, Sukyoung (2010). "Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea.", p50-51

<sup>122</sup> al., J. HOBERMAN et (1991). "Inside the Film Factory - New approaches to Russian and Soviet cinema.", p221

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p213

<sup>124</sup> Formalism is favouring the form (reproached to be too sophisticated and excessively complicated for the masses) to the detriment of the content (not down-to-earth enough according to canons of Socialist Realism).

aimed at “getting closer to the masses” through some less complex films emphasizing on social themes through “working class heroes” struggling in their daily life to achieve a better socialist world<sup>125</sup>. Movies and other pieces of art, were based on simplistic and redundant plots using main characters such as the hero (a simple person, a worker), an enemy (during the 30’s, interior enemies ceased to be important – like in the 20’s – and foreign saboteurs or agitators<sup>126</sup> became the main source of unrest in movies) and a party leader under which the hero receive guidance to fight against the enemy. Those movies also strived to be didactic towards its audience, inculcating faithfulness towards the regime and inciting them to combat against enemies<sup>127</sup>, archetypical movie of that period is *Chapaev* (1934), a highly successful piece that became extremely popular in Soviet Union and received marks of appreciation abroad due to its good technical prowess. *Chapaev* portrays a Red Army commander during the Civil War that fought against the evil White forces with the support of his political commissar<sup>128</sup>. Socialist Realism dominated the official art during the period that stretches from 1933 to the break out of War for Soviet Union in 1941<sup>129</sup>.

The other major task of Shumyatsky was to ensure a sufficient number of Soviet productions to cater to local audience as imports of movies were henceforth seen as more insidious and undesired. In order to do so, Shumyatsky planned to create a *kino-gorod* (a cine-city), on the model of Hollywood that he had visited in 1935<sup>130</sup> to take inspiration for a Soviet version of it<sup>131</sup>, but he mainly failed in his task as his project, dubbed “cinema for the millions”, was immoderate and could never been funded. Production of movies in Soviet Union drastically decreased during his tenure and, held

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<sup>125</sup> Also popular movies included “kolkhoz musicals” and movies showing life in factory (Kenez, 1992, p147)

<sup>126</sup> SHCHERBENOK, Andrey (2009). "The Enemy, the Communist, and Ideological Closure in Soviet." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* **10**(4). p2: this trend increased as the ineluctability of the war grew to prepare citizens to struggle against a foreign enemy. According to Kenez, from 1940 onwards, the internal enemy totally disappeared.

<sup>127</sup> KENEZ, Peter (1992). "Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin.", p143

<sup>128</sup> HAYNES, John "Brothers in arm, the changing face of Soviet soldiers in Stalin era.", p1

<sup>129</sup> KENEZ, Peter (1992). "Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin.", p143

<sup>130</sup> MILLER, Jamie (2010). "Soviet Cinema Politics and Persuasion under Stalin.", p31

<sup>131</sup> al., J. HOBBERMAN et (1991). "Inside the Film Factory - New approaches to Russian and Soviet cinema.", p233: Shumyatsky wanted to centralize the production of movie in the vicinity of Odessa where the climate was milder and outdoor shootings could be performed more often than in Russia.

as responsible and saboteur, Shumyatsky got executed during the peak of Moscow's trial in 1938<sup>132</sup>.

#### 2.2.1.1 The shock of the War and the victory of Stalin

The war period was, according to Peter Kenez's words "a small oasis of freedom in the film history of the Stalinist years"<sup>133</sup>. During the hardship of the War, Stalin allowed indeed certain themes to be discussed in order not to antagonise population that doubted about the outcome of the war after the dazzling German blitzkrieg. Among those themes, the role of women and religion in society reappeared in War time cinema. Also, a certain acknowledgment that some people disappointed by the socialist system is to be found<sup>134</sup>. Certain movies such as *The rainbow* (1944) or *She defends the motherland* (1943) are archetypal of this period as they show resistance to Nazi organised by women. During the war period, 70% of movies produced dealt about the war itself. Then, official myth was that of a uniform heroism and constant self-sacrifice that would achieve victory<sup>135</sup>. As soon as the victory became clearer, the regime progressively resorted to its previous methods. Movies to the glory of Stalin, such as *Ivan the Terrible*<sup>136</sup> (1944), commissioned by Stalin to Eisenstein; after the war, the epic *Fall of Berlin* (1950), one of the first colour movie thanks to Agfa reels confiscated to Germans during the Soviet counterattack, stars Stalin himself in a culmination of cult of personality. The after war period, until the death of the leader, was also rich in films related to the war, partisan movies being a sub-genre of war movies in USSR as the state had never been totally subdued, such as *The Young Guard* (1948), a two-part movie showing *Komsomol* (socialist youth) organising a network of resistance in occupied city, under the leadership of party cadre that went underground. During this period, Andrei Zhdanov, a close aid of Stalin, played an increasingly important role for cultural policies. He was appointed in 1940 to the cinema commission in charge of censorship and vigorously banned movies deemed inappropriate<sup>137</sup>. A stalwart supporter of Socialist Realism, "a combination of the most

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<sup>132</sup> KENEZ, Peter (1992). "Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin.", p3: in the 20's nearly 100 movies a year were produced (length of movies might have been shorter though), only 40 a year in the 30's and the nadir has been reached in the 50's with only 6 or 7 films a year.

<sup>133</sup> In Haynes, p12

<sup>134</sup> YOUNGBLOOD, Denise J. (2001). "A War Remembered, Soviet Films of the Great Patriotic War.", p6: after the war no more heroines are to be found in war movies.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p2

<sup>136</sup> Stalin admired the Tsar Ivan IV of Russia (aka, the Terrible) and clearly desired to be likened to him.

<sup>137</sup> MILLER, Jamie (2010). "Soviet Cinema Politics and Persuasion under Stalin.", p67

matter-of-fact, everyday reality with the most heroic prospects” in his words<sup>138</sup>, Zhdanov enforced its criteria during his stint. He then achieved the position of heading the whole culture policies of Soviet Union until his purge in 1948.

Death of Stalin and subsequent destalinization supported by Khrushchev resulted in the so-called *Thaw* which also has its sort of cinema much more liberal and coming back to the atrocities of the war in a much more balanced and nuanced fashion<sup>139</sup>. This period is perhaps to be compared with that of Black Cinema that characterised the liberal 60's in Yugoslavia. The similarity goes on as after the Thaw another harsher period of Soviet rule followed from the early 60's onwards.

## 2.2.2 Cinema in Yugoslavia

### 2.2.2.1 Birth of Yugoslav cinema

Once the country has been liberated, the new socialist state strived to imitate USSR and started to develop its own movie industry despite lack of funds and technicians. Similarly to the Soviet model, an agit-prop department (*odelenjenje za agitaciju i propaganda*) under the communist party has been established to oversee cultural production, including cinema. Then later, in 1946, a committee for cinematography has been dedicated to the seventh art<sup>140</sup>. In order to palliate the dearth of movies to screen, a lot of films were imported from USSR. This situation lasted until tensions rose between Stalin and Tito which resulted in Yugoslavia expelled from Cominform in 1948. Movies produced in Western countries started then to be displayed in Yugoslavian theatres.

First cinema studios (Avala Film, in “film city” next to Belgrade) were created in Yugoslavia's capital, then in Zagreb (capital of Croatian republic) to dispel any perception of favouritism between nations. First major movies produced, such as *Slavica* (1947) the first movie produced in socialist Yugoslavia, represented resistance and partisan actions against enemies (i.e. fascists and their bourgeois quislings) echoed the very fresh war history and put forward the newly established regime's

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<sup>138</sup> al., J. HOBERTMAN et (1991). "Inside the Film Factory - New approaches to Russian and Soviet cinema.", p144

<sup>139</sup> Movies such as Kalatozov's *The cranes are flying* (1957), Bondarchuk's *A man's fate* (1959) or Tarkovsky's *Ivan's childhood* (1962) are all masterpieces emblematic of this era of relative liberty.

<sup>140</sup> BATANCEV, Dragan (2012). "A Cinematic Battle: Three Yugoslav War Films from the 1960s.", p17

ideology<sup>141</sup>, that is to say the affirmation of a Yugoslav nation<sup>142</sup> despite some degrees of ethnic conflicts that marred the war period. Such movies, though naïvely describing heroes (people, proletarians) and villains (capitalist class, notables), cannot be labelled as a full-fledged pieces of propaganda as they recalled the very recent plight endured by most people. It is estimated that roughly 80% of movies produced by 1956 were related to Partisans<sup>143</sup>.

#### 2.2.2.2 Partisan super spectacle

A factor essential to the comprehension of the movie industry of this period is the role played by foreign productions shot in Yugoslavia. In order to earn badly needed foreign currencies, the regime started to welcome European and American film producers in its studios. These policies have been carried out after the nomination of Ratko Dražević, a former UDBA (state security apparatus) operative, as the head of Avala Film in 1962. Under Tito's auspice, he started to attract foreign actors, directors, technicians and funds. Those interactions contributed improving the country's reputation towards westerners demonstrating that the regime was willing to deal with them and capable of executing commercial commitments. Also, Tito understood that movies could be also exported to foreign markets, some were totally dedicated to this purpose, and that they could play a role to support his ambition as a Non-Aligned Movement<sup>144</sup> leader that struggled against fascism and that endeavoured to maintain a middle way between the two superpowers<sup>145</sup>.

Tito himself was a movie aficionado, it is reported that he watched over 8000 movies over a 30-year period, that is almost a movie per night. He sometimes commented on movie scenarios or edited some parts of scripts and enjoyed spending time in his Brioni residence located on an island off the Croatian coastal city of Pula that hosts an annual summer film festival. He personally backed some of the movies granting state funds and access to troops and military supplies to depict partisan movies (it is estimated that over 10 000 Yugoslav army troops were used as statists for a movie

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<sup>141</sup> BARIC, Stephanie (2001). "Yugoslav War Cinema: Shooting A Nation Which No Longer Exists." p5

<sup>142</sup> *Nation*, here is to be understood in its political dimension rather than in its ethnical one, although it could be argued that the Southern Slavs, in their whole, could be considered as an ethnic group.

<sup>143</sup> STOIL, *Balkan Cinema* in BARIC, S. (2001), p33

<sup>144</sup><sup>144</sup> BATANCEV, Dragan (2012). "A Cinematic Battle: Three Yugoslav War Films from the 1960s.", p51

<sup>145</sup> TURAJIĆ, Mila (2010). "Cinema Komunisto."

like *The Battle of Neretva*<sup>146</sup>. If his megalomania cannot be put at the same level of a Kim Il-Sung or Ceausescu, he certainly was not immune to his own glory.

These Hollywood-style movies were endowed with considerable budgets but their plots were too simplistic and Manichean, the characters were shallow, and the decades that separated audience from the war failed to convince<sup>147</sup>. However those movies encountered a certain success abroad, winning awards at international film festival, notably due to the participation of foreign stars and investors who promoted and distributed them in Western and Socialist countries (USSR and China).

After the death of Tito, in 1980, the country faced political and economic turmoil (raise of unemployment and growing inflation) due to massive foreign debts and mismanagements. Politicians increasingly resorted to nationalistic rhetoric and it became progressively evident that without Tito's subtle but strong rule, Yugoslavia could dislocate as it finally occurred. A certain degree of freedom, notably related to Tito's politics, also permitted cinema to discuss themes that were insofar taboo, such as violent purges of Stalinist elements in the immediate period after Stalin-Tito split and to social contemporary issues<sup>148</sup>. The country's situation then degenerated along with the collapse of international communist system and resulted in a civil conflict all over the 90's. The idea of Yugoslavia is now defunct and several (not all of them being unanimously recognised) independent states appeared. The country no longer exists but in its cinema<sup>149</sup>.

### 2.2.3 Cinema in North Korea

#### 2.2.3.1 From one occupation to another

After the Soviet invasion of northern Korea, most Japanese technicians went back to their country, the funds were cut and the industry had to be re-built under the Soviet guidance. Also major studios were located in the southern part of the peninsula. In the first years before the war, most southern artists involved in the film production

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> BATANCEV, Dragan (2013). "Partisan film and the Yugoslav national construction." GAZETA DE ARTA POLITICA., p1

<sup>148</sup> BARIC, Stephanie (2001). "Yugoslav War Cinema: Shooting A Nation Which No Longer Exists.", p60-62: it is during this era that Yugoslav famous director, Emir Kusturica made one his first internationally acclaimed opus *when father was on business trip* (1985), using as background the purges of Stalinist in the late 40's, early 50's

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p56-58



joined North Korea and a lot will be purged in the post-war period<sup>150</sup>. The newly established regime, following the example of Soviet Union, understood instantly the power of cultural propaganda and the foremost role of the cinema in attaining the masses. Soviets sponsored the industry very early and brought over specialists to train and educate North Koreans.

Among the diverse communist factions, Kim Il Sung and his followers were the less urbane and educated. It is therefore logical that the cultural affairs were mainly governed by Soviet Koreans who were then backed by the new occupation army. They started to produce educational newsreel to the glory of the new rulers of Pyongyang and to cope with the lack of cinemas in province, they even resorted to mobile film groups that reminisce the use of agit-trains in the early Soviet days. A film unit belonging to the propaganda department of the Korean Workers' Party was established as early as early 1946<sup>151</sup>.

Before the outbreak of the Korean War, only two feature films could be produced, whereas 123 films and 78 documentaries were imported, mainly from USSR. The first of these two films, *my hometown* (1947) was already movie to the glory of Kim Il Sung and his henchmen. He appears as liberating the country by himself and the Soviet troops are not even mentioned. It also insists on Korean nature, the forest and the Paekdu mount, the volcano laying between China and Korea, laden with mythical powers<sup>152</sup>. The content is overtly nationalist rather than socialist and heralds further developments in cultural production. The Soviet influence could be felt until the late 50's<sup>153</sup> but then waned progressively.

#### 2.2.3.2 Kim Jong Il and the "revolutionary tradition" in cinema

As evoked earlier, by the late 60's, Kim Jong Il emerged as a potential successor to his father. His positions in the propaganda apparatus from 1967 onwards gave him the opportunity to work considerably in the movie industry. Himself a movie aficionado<sup>154</sup>,

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<sup>150</sup> ARMSTRONG, Charles K. (2002). "The origins of North Korean cinema: art and propaganda in the DPRK." *Acta Koreana* 5(1): 1-19., p6

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p11-14

<sup>152</sup> The mount Paekdu is the highest Korean mountain; an extinct volcano, in its crater lays a beautiful lake. Tangun, the first Korean, is supposed to be born on mount Paekdu. So Kim Jong Il is according to North Koreans.

<sup>153</sup> Interestingly as late as 1957, a co-production between North Korea and USSR has been produced, *Brothers*, in which PRC and USSR are praised for their role in rescue of Korea.

<sup>154</sup> He is notably the author of "on the art of cinema" published in 1973 and of numerous speeches about the topic. He also developed the theory of the "seed", an impenetrable discourse on the importance of selecting proper seeds for proper movies.

he would dedicate most of his time to reorganise the production in North Korea. In September 1967, he set up the "Paekdu Mount Production Unit" a collective of cultural workers he supervised to produce epic movies and operas dedicated to the glory of his father<sup>155</sup>.

Kim Jong Il had his own ideas about the cinema, he was to implement them through Paekdu Mount Production Unit and other "studios". He was a staunch opponent to all sorts of formalism. North Korea never had real avant-garde or constructionist movements, though, like USSR had; but this was a way of disapproving all KAPF<sup>156</sup>'s related activities and to impose his own Socialist Realist aesthetics<sup>157</sup>.

It is difficult to assess the exact role played by Kim Jong Il, he is sometimes unofficially credited as the director of certain films, but in reality he was probably more acting like the head of a film studio. In the late 60's, the movie industry churned out big productions<sup>158</sup> dedicated to the anti-Japanese struggle. Some of them were qualified of being part of "immortal classics", such as *A sea of blood* (1968) or *Flower girl* (1972) both movies set in the 20's and 30's. This period of hard-core cult of partisan strategy was to last until the end of the 70's<sup>159</sup>. During the late 60's to the end of the 70's, the kernel of movies produced stressed on the collective effort of the partisans. The General Kim Il Sung is referred to constantly and his aura hovers over all the pieces but he is not portrayed directly in the movies. This changed with *The star of Korea* (1980) staging Kim Il Sung in his early Manchurian days<sup>160</sup>. This coincided with the official anointment of Kim Jong Il as successor to his father during the Sixth Party Congress in October 1980. Kim Il Sung could therefore be fully deified as he was progressively retiring to let his son takes the reins of the country.

#### 2.2.3.3 Beyond Kim Il Sung: the "revolutionary tradition" established

In the next decade, social themes were more often raised, also, kidnapped South Korean director, Shin Sangok<sup>161</sup> contributed in bringing fresh blood to the North

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<sup>155</sup> IM, Yeongtae (1999). "Fifty-year history." 2., p85-86

<sup>156</sup> *Korea Artista Proletara Federatio*, a leftist association of artists during Japanese colonisation

<sup>157</sup> KIM, Jong Il (1986). "Life and literature.", p79

<sup>158</sup> One should add here "big and long" as some of those productions can be declined in several parts totalizing four, five or more hours.

<sup>159</sup> LEE, Myungja (2005). "History of North Korean cinema.", p8

<sup>160</sup> SCHONHERR, Johannes (2012). "North Korean Cinema, a history.", p65

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p72-98: Shin was allegedly kidnapped under direct orders of Kim Jong Il and he managed to escape North Korea in 1986.

Korean movie industry. A certain laxity could even be felt at times. Heroes of movies would be more like normal people, the narrative putting forward “hidden heroes” in the daily life rather than military bravados. This latter genre is not totally forgotten though but deprived of political character. North Korea produced few action blockbusters mixing taekwondo and John Woo’s gunfight, such as *Order 027* or an adaptation of Korean’s Robin Hood *Hong Gil Dong*, both in 1986<sup>162</sup>. Those movies were extremely popular. Few co-productions with foreign countries were also ventured, mainly with Eastern European countries of Soviet Union. In 1987 was held the first Pyongyang Film Festival, then called “Pyongyang Film Festival of Non-Aligned and other developing countries”<sup>163</sup>. This event drew an international audience to North Korea and gave the chance for a selected part of the capital population to have a glance on foreign movies, produced in developed countries so that they could understand how lucky they were to be living in Kim’s version of Workers’ Paradise.

Despite severe hardships during the 90’s, the cinema was not neglected and production of movies kept on. After the demise of USSR and of international communism, North Korea legitimacy had to be shore up. The regime had little choice but to increase its tendency to self-reliance and boosted its nationalistic and isolationist stances. A long saga, intended to be composed of 100 pieces, called *Nation a Destiny* has been therefore initiated in the early 90’s. It aimed at portraying remarkable Koreans and notably their attachment to the North Korean regime and its leader. After the death of Kim Il Sung, more than never, the elite needed to justify further the regime continuation. The famine that stroke the country from 1995 to 1997 is known as the *Arduous March* alluding to a period of Kim Il Sung’s partisan dangerous marching period when he was escaping Japanese expeditionary force in the Manchurian mountains. A series of movies were even shot to recount this episode in order to boost courage and morale of North Koreans<sup>164</sup>.

## 2.3 Conclusion 2<sup>nd</sup> part: Totalitarian cinema

As we have seen in this part, totalitarian leaders and movements cherished cinema. They considered visual arts the most powerful tools of indoctrination thanks to the lasting effect they provoke. They understood the augmented effect of watching performances in crowd rather than alone. Cinema combines these effects and the

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<sup>162</sup> LEE, Myungja (2005). "History of North Korean cinema.", p153-156

<sup>163</sup> IM, Yeongtae (1999). "Fifty-year history." 2., p238: the festival was held every two to three years with the exception of 1994 due to Kim Il Sung’s death. It was later simply re-christened as “Pyongyang Film Festival”.

<sup>164</sup> SCHONHERR, Johannes (2012). "North Korean Cinema, a history.", p127: *The forest sways* (1997-2000) is composed of 6 parts.

capacity to be widely controlled and distributed around the country. In Socialist societies, cinema is used not only as leisure but also in school and education facilities. More interestingly, cinema is used on the work place, before or after work to “educate” workers. In the studied countries, and in others, the production of films is actually dwarfed by that of documentary movies. As we have seen, the boundaries between reality and fiction was often blurred in totalitarian societies, particularly in the way they handled official history. Talking about North Korean cinema, Kim Sukyoung argues that “Stalin’s dictum that ‘writers are the engineers of the soul’ is revised and expanded in North Korea so as to create a new equation: “performers are the trainers of political correctness<sup>165</sup>”. Even ethics and moral were therefore inculcated through movies, both fictitious and didactical.

This instrumentalisation of cinema was possible because of the capacity of absolutely subduing its creation and distribution. Cinema committees were under the central committee of the Party, keys organs and persons (the leader themselves but also other major politicians: Kim Jong Il, Lenin’s wife, for example) paid close attention to the seventh art. In a series of essays published in the late 30’s, a quarter of century before his theory of partisan, Carl Schmitt had already elaborated a relation between the total state (not yet called “totalitarian state”) and its capacity to wage a total war against a total enemy. To this triptych, Schmitt also alludes to the capacity of total mobilization of resources to achieve total war, that is, a complete and systematic annihilation of enemy<sup>166</sup>. In peace time, - but do totalitarian movements really consider the existence of peace time as long as their revolutionary struggle is not achieved? - total mobilisation of resources is translated in the capacity to wage a total cultural war. This war is waged to the detriment of other considerations, such as the economy for instance. The cruel famine in North Korea did not stop the movie production of the country, nor did the Nazi attack suppress that of Soviet Union in the 40’s. In periods of crisis, the art is even more mobilised to palliate difficulties and re-animate the revolutionary vigour of citizens.

Kim Sukyoung also explains that audience had to “re-enact the cinematic ideal in their daily lives through systematic educational and community activities<sup>167</sup>”. They therefore had to behave like movie heroes in their daily struggle to achieve revolution. Movies in totalitarian societies are created according to certain topics, notably the foundational myth. Characters of fictional (a blurred fiction) films were thus models for people in their daily life. As Groys tells us “‘invention’ and ‘reality’ lose their

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<sup>165</sup> KIM, Sukyoung (2010). "Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea.", p51

<sup>166</sup> SCHMITT, Carl (1931-1938). "Total Enemy, Total State, & Total War.", p1

<sup>167</sup> KIM, Sukyoung (2010). "Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea.", p41

traditional opposition and are united in dialectical synthesis; myth grows out of reality and its feature are already constrained in it<sup>168</sup>". People were, therefore, on their daily life, called to stage the foundational myth of their nation/state.

When we conflate this capacity of totalitarian cinema to forge a new man with the epic repertoire of the partisan myth, we can expect that the regimes and their leaders dedicated a particular attention and exceptional means to drive forward their respective national projects. The next part will, through the analysis of movies, attempt to explain to which extent they embody the official ideology and leader's project. Inasmuch as possible, we will try to understand – or, at least, speculate - the effects of those movies on the audience and which success and pitfalls they met.

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<sup>168</sup> GOLOMSTOCK, Igor (2011). "Totalitarian Art: In the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy, and the People's Republic of China.", p183

### 3. Study cases: USSR, Yugoslavia and DPRK

#### 3.1 Analytical framework

Characters	Form	Narration
Heroes	Realism	Plot
Villains	Style	Time
Leader		Space
Party		
Army		
Youth & elderlies		
Women		
Background		
		Political content
		Why they fought
		Ideologies

*Table 1. Studied attributes of movies*

I based my analysis of movies content on several aspects. I first paid special attention to what sorts of characters are to be found in the movies and how they are depicted. This stretches from heroes to villains but also encompasses also all the ancillary characters such as the regime's leader (is he glorified as we can expect from totalitarian ideology?), the Army (if existing), and other parts of the society that can interact or be part of partisan bands (being not only military groups but rather ragtag gathering of soldiers and citizens). As for the form, I strived to identify whether the aesthetics of the movies were corresponding of the so-called top-down driven projects of the regime, for instance to Socialist Realism for Soviet Union and its derived projects in North Korea. I also paid attention to the type of narration, notably with regards to the plot (how developed or simple it is) and the treatment of time (mythical or historical, reference to real events) and space (particularly relating to the so-called telluric aspect of partisan movements explained by Schmitt). Lastly, I tried to understand the motivation of partisans in the different movies (why they fought?), whether this desire was driven by necessity, ideology, vengeance, or a combination of those factors. I also highlighted ideological messages conveyed by the movies, either explicitly (declarations, reference to a doctrine or a leader's words, etc.) or implicitly (depiction of class warfare, of flunkeyism of bourgeoisie, etc.). In guise of conclusion of this third part, I wrapped up the results of my researches in several charts accompanied by explanations about the comparison of cinemas.

## 3.2 USSR

### 3.2.1 Choice of movies

In order to be consistent and to be able to compare similar eras, the selected movies were produced during Stalin's life, before, during and after WWII. A great deal of movies, some instrumental in forging partisan (and to some extent Soviet Union's identity) myth, have also been directed during the ulterior leaders' rules but are only mentioned by passing here. As we previously said, the concept of partisan for the Soviet state was already relevant before the War as the Civil War was a period suitable for such movement; *Chapaev* (1934) is the archetypical movie of this genre, an early totalitarian effort to sustain the role of the Party in winning Civil War while re-writing official history. However, it took all its importance not only after but also *during* the War as the Soviet state was never defeated. The cinema industry (equipment and staff) had been transferred far away from the front line, mainly in Alma Ata in current days Kazakhstan, in order to keep on producing films, mainly about the War, to boost morale of combatants and to praise partisans. It is noticeable that, as the war goes by, movies' theme and tone change. For instance, *She defends the motherland*<sup>169</sup> (1943) and *The rainbow*<sup>170</sup> (1943-1944) deal in a more open and frank tone about the War and the regime and are more nuanced than *the Young Guard*<sup>171</sup> (1948) directed after the War. It is also worthwhile noting that most movies produced during the two first years of the War put partisan actions forward and that this tendency wanes as the combats are progressively put under the umbrella of the Red Army / the Party. As indicated in the footnotes, three movies were re-edited in the mid-60's. I do not think that the editing job was significant for the two wartime movies. For *the Young Guard*, there could have been purging of references to high-pitched cult of Stalin, a phenomenon that was much softened during the War period. Yet, several academic works based on those movies do not present any considerable differences with my understanding of the movie and therefore modifications might be only formal ones.

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<sup>169</sup> The version I could obtain was re-edited in 1966, this practice seems to be quite common with Soviet movies. I am not certain what sort of modifications were brought but I could not see any major differences with my understanding of it and Youngblood's analysis of the film referred to in this part. The movie was released in the USA, then ally of Soviet Union, under the title "No greater love".

<sup>170</sup> This movie was also released in the USA and president Roosevelt is said to have appreciated to the movie and to have hoped it would be shown to American people. The film was also re-edited in 1966.

<sup>171</sup> In two parts, re-edited in 1964.

Still, doubt persist as an unabridged War movie similar in tone and in period presents a cult of personality at its zenith: *the Fall of Berlin* (1949).

### 3.2.2 Chapaev

*Chapaev* (1934) is perhaps one of the most significant Soviet film depicting the revolution<sup>172</sup>, if not of all times. Directed by two brothers, the Vasilyev, *Chapaev* draws on a book written by Furmanov in 1923. Furmanov's piece was inspired of his role of political commissar in the Red Army during the Civil War. He became appointed political commissar to the division led by Chapaev, a peasant-turned military commander and the book tells the story, by and large based on real facts and characters, of the relationship between Chapaev and Furmanov, the former being barely literate yet a formidable and charismatic leader, the latter a communist cadre, stern, disciplined but firm in his convictions and principles.

The relation between the two characters, as we can imagine, is at first difficult as Chapaev does not accept Party's guidance over his operations. He is the communist version of Montaigne's "noble savage", he is reckless and brave in action, moved by instinct, by a natural sense of justice persuading him that communists are on the right side but totally uneducated about the doctrinal aspects. To a peasant who asks him whether he supports Communists or Bolsheviks, he is unable to grasp the absurdity of the question. Neither does he know the difference between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Internationale. On the other side, Furmanov is the archetype of the Party young cadre, intellectually solid but requiring good officers such as Chapaev to win the war. In a very socialist realist fashion, Furmanov is an accomplished revolutionary and will mentor Chapaev so that he mature and become, by the end of the movie a new man, a faithful servant of the Party.

Along with Furmanov comes a detachment of volunteers, composed by intellectuals and women. They first have hard time to integrate the *muzhiki* (rough peasants) who are serving under Chapaev. Petya, Chapaev's orderly is to train a female fighter and a romance develops between the two secondary characters, as it can be observed in other Soviet movie (such as *She defends the motherland*); the protagonists are to absorbed by their revolutionary duties to have time and resources to dedicate to their sentimental life<sup>173</sup>. This union of intellectuals and class-conscious workers leading peasants to fight against the reactionary forces corresponds to the idyllic vision of

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<sup>172</sup> MILLER, Jamie (2010). "Soviet Cinema Politics and Persuasion under Stalin.", 159

<sup>173</sup> YOUNGBLOOD, Denise J. (2001). "A War Remembered, Soviet Films of the Great Patriotic War.", p4



history the Bolsheviks strived to put forward<sup>174</sup>. As we can expect, the enemies, the Whites, are a band of aristocrats, living in palaces and being served by poor and uneducated people. Petrovich, the orderly of the colonel in charge of annihilating Chapaev, decided to defect to the Reds after his brother accused of desertion is whipped to death. Ruthless, the Whites yet respect their adversary and understand their strengths and the reasons why they should go through an *aggiornamento* if they want to keep on ruling over Russia.

Throughout the movie, we can observe the transformation of Chapaev. If he remains reckless and keep his natural leadership qualities, through discussions and interaction with Furmanov he becomes more disciplined and endeavours to bridge his lack of knowledge. The turning point of the movie is when Furmanov arrests Chapaev's lieutenant who refused to order his men not to loot peasants. Chapaev is infuriated by this arrest, a clear encroachment upon his authority, and the situation is locked until peasants come to express their gratitude to Chapaev for returning the looted goods. Furmanov, had had Chapaev's lieutenant forcefully sign an order to his men so that they return their booty. During this passage, Chapaev asks to Furmanov: "Who is leading this division? You or me?" onto which Furmanov answers "You... and me". Then he explains where his authority comes from: his appointment by the Party and makes Chapaev understand that this is also the case for him. Chapaev begins then to act more responsibly and even chastises his aide for having poor dressing habits, the same way Furmanov had scolded him before.

What makes Chapaev a particularly interesting character is his proximity with his men. He eats and sings with them; they all live together in villages, in barns or very modest places and share the same fate regardless their rank. They all use the "ty" instead of formal "vy" and a certain warmth shrouds their camp and daily life. Chapaev can be harsh with them too when it is a matter of fighting and does not hesitate to execute coldly candidates for desertion. However, he is indulgent towards Petya, his aide, for not taking a poor White soldier as prisoner. He simply scolds Petya but does not go with further sanctions. This proximity is also meant to appeal to the audience; according to socialist realism canons, the hero is to be close and representative of the people by and large. Chapaev swears all the time and does not know who Alexander the Great is but he faithfully follows Lenin, Frunze and other revolutionaries unconditionally. This was the message expected to be conveyed to the masses.

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<sup>174</sup> KENEZ, Peter (1992). "Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin.", p156

At the end of the movie, the Whites launch a massive attack to annihilate Chapaev and his men once for all. Their night attack is a success and Chapaev, despite a desperate resistance, has to retreat. He is wounded by an armoured vehicle but manages to flee and reaches the river. He and Petya finally both get killed while crossing the river. A socialist realist movie cannot end on a tragedy as it has to embody hopes for a bright future. Chapaev and his men are therefore avenged by a late arrival of reinforcements who crush Whites' troops.

*Chapaev* success was formidable. For some, such as Boris Shumyatsky in charge of implementing Stalin's doctrine to cinema, the movie was simply "the best film produced by Soviet cinema". The movie opened the first Moscow International Film Festival in 1935 and won there the Grand Prize. Stalin himself was delighted by the movie and considered it as a model in a speech to film-makers for the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Soviet cinema<sup>175</sup>. The movie was archetypal of the Civil War movies showing victory of the Red Army over its reactionary opponents. This genre of Civil War movie was also composed of other later important pieces such as *We, from Kronstadt* (1936) or, "localised" partisans' movements such as *Shchors* (1939) depicting an Ukrainian Chapaev, backed directly by Stalin<sup>176</sup> and some other local versions such as movies shot in the Caucasus with Armenian Bolsheviks struggling against reactionary *Dashnaks* or Communists fighting against pan-Turkist *Bashmashi* bands in Central Asia<sup>177</sup>.

The films had indeed some merits and did not steal his success. The movie was technically impeccable for this era and was compellingly entertaining. It has been a rare case of a movie combining both strong ideological content and a real appeal to the people. Some fifty million tickets were sold within five years<sup>178</sup> and it is worthwhile noting that foreign dignitaries also remembered about this movie. For example, Kim Il Sung, visiting Moscow in the early 40's refers to the movie as an enjoyable one and mentions he had seen it several times<sup>179</sup>. Soviet cinema had impact on that of North Korea before the country was even established. As Millers put it, *Chapaev* was

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<sup>175</sup> al., J. HOBBERMAN et (1991). "Inside the Film Factory - New approaches to Russian and Soviet cinema.", p211-212

<sup>176</sup> MILLER, Jamie (2010). "Soviet Cinema Politics and Persuasion under Stalin.", p65

<sup>177</sup> KENEZ, Peter (1992). "Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin.", 147

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p155

<sup>179</sup> KIM, Il Sung (2003). "Kim Il Sung memoirs, with the century.", p2015

perceived as a “vehicle for mythologizing the Bolshevik victory<sup>180</sup>”, probably the most efficient and famous of all.

This “central myth of the revolution” in Kenez words, showing the Party as the leader of the Civil War and key of the revolution’s success, was rendered possible after two years of editing the original book to make the movie’s scenario. This long process of adaptation removed a lot of “un-totalitarian” streaks of Furmanov’s original piece published in 1923. Kenez notably mentions that Furmanov’s imperfections, such as his little practical military knowledge were stripped to let only appear a polished, surrealist, infallible political commissar: “historical accuracy did not much matter. What was far more important was depiction of Bolshevik understanding of higher historical truth”<sup>181</sup>. *Chapaev* clearly established the canons of successful totalitarian cinema. Further movies, particularly War Time movies, will be assessed in the light of *Chapaev*. This can certainly even expanded to all other totalitarian movies discussed in this study.

### 3.2.3 She defends the motherland

Fridrikh Ermler’s *She defends the motherland* (thereafter *She defends*) is a typical movie of that period depicting the desired role of women during the war. Other movies of this category, such as *The rainbow* (1943-1944) and *Zoia*<sup>182</sup> (1944) were popular during these years as the central power was axing its propaganda towards civilians, especially women, expected to contribute in the war effort, notably fighting against the enemy. Women, in these movies, are not merely relegated to nurses or school teachers taking care of the civilian population like it is shown too often in the Yugoslav case, they actually are called to take weapon against the aggressor.

“*She*” is Praskovia, a peaceful *traktoristka* that, as we are explained in the intro sequence, mother of a young child and happy wife. She likes joking, she enjoys life and everything is wonderful in her *kolkhoznitsa* life until German fascists suddenly attacked her country. Her husband quickly joins the Red Army and she helps her fellow villagers evacuate farther from the front. She is so dedicated to this task that she is finally caught back by attackers’ progresses. She also found out that her husband is

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<sup>180</sup> MILLER, Jamie (2010). "Soviet Cinema Politics and Persuasion under Stalin.", p94

<sup>181</sup> KENEZ, Peter (1992). "Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin.", p156-157

<sup>182</sup> GOLOMSTOCK, Igor (2011). "Totalitarian Art: In the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy, and the People's Republic of China.", p24: *Zoia* is a theme that has been exploited in different aspect of the cultural sphere (paintings, statues, books and a movie). Zoia Kosmodemyanskaya was a partisan, operating under the nom de guerre Tanya, and hanged by Nazis while she was 18. Allegedly, she had Stalin has last word on her lips.

wounded and dies in her hands while being transferred to a hospital. In the following scene, the horror is total and the contrast with the previous peace-time days could not be higher: Praskovia is captured with her young child and the latter is stripped from her hands by an eye-patched German who then throw him under the caterpillars of a panzer. Naturally, Praskovia is annihilated by this scene. Youngblood argues that she is probably raped in the next scene<sup>183</sup>, this is not clear but then, indeed, Praskovia is roving in the woods until she stumbles upon an encampment of distraught villagers. Then her metamorphosis starts, she covers her hairs with a black veil and picks up an axe. She then leads haphazardly a motley troops of villagers to ambush a squad of Germans with clubs, axes and few other weapons. At all odds the attack is a success and they are able to gather a good deal of looted firearms. Then the next half of the movie is portraying the band of villagers under the commandment of Praskovia – now called *Comrade P.* – carrying out roadside skirmishes, mining bridges and even capturing a German general. The camp is then informed that Moscow has been taken by Germans. Praskovia refuses to believe such news and then undertakes a campaign of information to all neighbouring villages, going herself to warn people that Moscow was still under Soviet control. She is taken prisoner by Germans, they find out who she is and sentence her to death penalty by hanging. Partisans find out about that and decide to mount an assault to free her and get rid of occupiers. The movie is concluded on their success and as they set out to go further in the West to free “all remaining villages”.

As other movies of this period and despite the simplicity of the plot, a certain degree of artistic liberty can be observed in *She defends*. The fact that partisans are portrayed as a hodgepodge of villagers, elderlies and whoever else, in total disarray, without any organisation nor supplies provided by Moscow is already bold enough to be noted. In further movies, the partisans are tightly under the control of the Party / Red Army and are not left alone. Also, during the discussions held by the “wood-goers”, that we cannot yet qualify partisans, some dissents are expressed about what to do: some complain about previous life in the *kolkhoz* and suggest to go back to the fascist-occupied village to resume a more or less normal life as they have “no bread, no commandant and no weapons” in the woods. Praskovia coldly murders the main traitor and appoints herself as the commandant: “we are going to hassle them, days and nights”. Another significant aspect of the movie is the use of religious symbols throughout the plot: at the beginning an old woman while being evacuated carry with her icons, different characters cross themselves and the tomb of Zhenia, a young lover

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<sup>183</sup> YOUNGBLOOD, Denise J. (2001). "A War Remembered, Soviet Films of the Great Patriotic War.", p4

executed by the Germans, is decorated with a Cross and a reference to God. This could not have been possible before or after the War. Lastly, the movie is dedicated to "Russian women", rather than Soviet women, thus pushing further the national trait of the struggle despite all pan-Slavic or communist tenets.

Similarly to Yugoslav movies, characters' psychology is little developed. Even the Praskovia remains shallow despite powerfully played: she is a simple woman driven by the folly of war to become a death angel, nothing more. Interestingly, we can access to some comments done by officials in charge of censorship and the comment about the film goes as following: "The film's main heroine Praskovia Ivanovna, a progressive Soviet woman in the authors' conception, is shown throughout the film to be a heartbroken mother who has lost a child and husband. The viewer feels pity and compassion rather than the idea of her as a conscientious soldier who defends freedom and the independence of the motherland. The film's director did not show quite convincingly why Praskovia became head of the guerrilla unit."<sup>184</sup> Indeed no mention why the *rodina* should be preserved, why the Soviet power should be protected and so on. That might sound obvious, indeed, but nothing is expressed about that in the movie. "They have been forced by circumstances to become partisans<sup>185</sup>", this decision is therefore not supported by some ideological fundaments. The censor also points out few inconsistencies and doubtful facts, but he above all emphasises on the poor ideological content. As censorship was much weaker during the war<sup>186</sup> and the movie overall positive, it did not affect its release. Other characters are even less developed. An interesting point, also noted by the same report is the burlesque of Germans: despite the atrocities they commit, their rendering is permanently ridicule: they scream, gesticulate, grim grotesquely, etc. This seems constant in different movies of the Stalin era and culminates with *the Fall of Berlin* where Hitler seems to be a reverse caricature of Charlie Chaplin's. The first attacks conducted with few farming tools and clubs is also criticised as unrealistic by the censor's report. The Red Army<sup>187</sup> and the Party<sup>188</sup> are also missing in the movies and

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<sup>184</sup> G. F. Aleksandrov, Report on the Film *She Defends the Motherland*. May 11, 1943, <http://www.soviethistory.org/index.php?page=article&ArticleID=1943alexshe1&SubjectID=1943film&Year=1943>

<sup>185</sup> YOUNGBLOOD, Denise J. (2001). "A War Remembered, Soviet Films of the Great Patriotic War.", p5

<sup>186</sup> For instance, the censor is not worried about people expressing their dissatisfaction about the Soviet regime nor about religious signs. He is mainly concerned about the lack of coherence and the paucity of the scenario.

<sup>187</sup> The army is shown at the beginning retreating and at the very end when planes come back and go to the West to take back lost territory.

<sup>188</sup> No direct references to Stalin are to be found in the movie.

the only reference to the take of Moscow reminds that the unit of partisans is not alone left in nowhere. The decision of Praskovia to roam in the surrounding villages to inform about German lies about the fall of Moscow<sup>189</sup> is extremely irrational and not only provokes her captivity but also strips the partisan movement of his head.

Life in the wood is characterised by a total destitution of people at first but then gets increasingly organised under the leadership of Praskovia, especially as they can loot Germans troops. People live in huts, life is rationalised: women work (sew) and young lovers even celebrate a marriage in the woods under Praskovia's benediction. The wedding demand is accompanied by a gift, a small gun for the *partizanka*. And wedding's present from Praskovia is a captured Nazi general. In the latter party of the movie as Praskovia is roaming to villages, winter and snow appear. Snow in Soviet Union's war and partisan movies is the main telluric dimension of this category, above the woods themselves. More than the mud that traps the Germans and their panzers, the snow recovers everything: snow storms recover footprints of partisans, corpses of assassinated Germans sentinels; it destroys supplies and make invaders shiver and drink schnapps despite their warm clothing whereas the accustomed tough Russian peasants are depicted at ease within their natural milieu<sup>190</sup>.

*She defends the motherland* is overall a dark movie, the black and white screenplay is reinforced by the contrast of the mourning black veil of Praskovia and the pure white snow covering the Russian plains, despite the gleam of hope at the end of the movie. Reproaches were made to signal flaws in terms of realism – ironically a constant issue, worrying the Party and Stalin himself, for so-called "Socialist Realism" art – notably about the fact that harsh life in the woods was too much idealised and softened. Violence is dominated by a fair sentiment of vengeance and reaches its climax when Praskovia finds back her toddler's butcher and rolls over him with a panzer, following Talion Law, rather than by moral or ideological grounds. As Slepian puts it: "the desire for revenge [was invoked as] the primary reason why people became partisans<sup>191</sup>". The propaganda was orchestrated around the theme of vengeance<sup>192</sup> but partisans, witnesses of Germans' atrocities needed little reminders of the reason of their fight.

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<sup>189</sup> "if there is no Moscow, how can we live?" she soliloquizes.

<sup>190</sup> Snow is notably omnipresent in other major post-Stalinist partisan movie *the Ascent* (1975)

<sup>191</sup> SLEPYAN, Kenneth (2006). "Why they fought: Motivation, Legitimacy and the Soviet Partisan Movement.", p17

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p17-18

As one of the few feature movies released during this period, its echo was important onto Soviet population despite its deficiencies. It followed the Party's line and was therefore deemed "useful" and approved for release.

### 3.2.4 The rainbow

*The rainbow* (1943-1944) is a Soviet movie praised not only in USSR where it received Stalin Prize but also in the West where it was screened and applauded in the USA<sup>193</sup> and UK<sup>194</sup>. American president Roosevelt was said to be a great fan of the movie and to watch it without subtitles or dubbings. The movie is considered as one of the most important War movie at that time, especially for those shot during the War. Its director, Mark Donskoy was no rookie and had already produced pieces based on scenarios written by the Russian writer Maksim Gorki during the 30's. These adaptations had pleased the higher spheres of the Soviet power and Stalin had himself Donskoy in great esteem.

The movie itself follows the canons set already by previous War opus such as *She defends*, that was shot and released a bit before. Some characteristics are common to both movies but *The rainbow* is certainly more powerful due to its higher artistic merits (cinematography, realism, depth of characters, overall message, etc.). The action is set during winter in a Nazi-occupied Ukrainian village as we learn it by the family name of protagonists and by the opening message referring to an old Ukrainian folk song, despite the fact all villagers speak Russian<sup>195</sup>. The plot is not linear and mainly revolves about the life in the village. The main axis is the arrival of a pregnant woman, Olena, a *partizanka*, who came on her own will to deliver her baby in the village as she cannot fight or live in the woods any more in her current state. She is interrogated by the captain Werner, the head of German army in the area. He

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<sup>193</sup> The New York Times review of 1944 is accessible there:

<http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=990ce7da1f3be433a25750c2a9669d946593d6cf>

<sup>194</sup> UK ambassador to USSR advises the movie to be sent to Churchill:

<http://www.soviethistory.org/index.php?page=article&ArticleID=1943rainbow1&SubjectID=1943film&Year=1943>

<sup>195</sup> Most movies produced during Soviet time dealing with the War were in Russian, even though a lot of them were shot in Ukraine or Byelorussia by these republics' "national" studios. A notable exception is the powerful partisan movie *Come and See* (1985) whose main language is Byelorussian. Interestingly, the main national trait aimed at distinguishing Russians from Byelorussians in the language (that follows the policies of "nationalities" of the Soviet Union) and the current regime (Lukashenko's) actually backed a partisan super spectacle movie in Russian: *Brest Fortress* (2010), for more information refer to LEWIS, Simon M. (2011). "Official nationality and the dissidence of memory in Belarus: a comparative analysis of two films." *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 5(3).

represents the archetypal German in Soviet movies: un-“Aryan” as possible (as Hitler was), with a moustache, a strand and an emaciated face. He cannot obtain anything from Olena and sends her to a barn where she is kept under arrest with vicious wardens who torture her to make her reveal information about whereabouts of partisans. Around this axis, other characters evolve such as Pusya, the mistress of Werner, who revels in luxury with her a lover as she thinks that Germans are here forever; she is hated by all the village and totally ostracised, waiting for Werner to take her to Dresden. Her sister Olga is “totally different”, she is school teacher and probably a communist. She despises her sister and refuses her “help”. Other secondary characters also gravitates in a further orbit and add richness to the story with their shared fate and interactions between each other.

A children is sent by his mother to bring bread to Olena and he is shot by Germans. His mother manages to sneak him off German hands and buries him in her house (ground is made of soil) with the dead boy’s siblings helping their mom to bury their elder brother and trample over his tomb to conceal it. Werner is mad that they cannot find the boy’s corpse and therefore unable to punish the people responsible for bringing food to Olena. He decides to convoke villagers to make them talk. As none talk it is decided to take several hostages that will be hanged unless information are reported to the German authorities. On her side, Olena gives birth to a boy, whose father is a head of a partisan platoon hidden in vicinal woods. She still refuses to inform fascists of the location of resistance - as she has other sons in the woods - and see her new born baby gunned down at point blank by Werner. She is then shot with her dead baby in her hand and pushed from a cliff. The movie, overall very dark and pessimist, offers and happy end with the partisans / Red Army arriving at the end to chase out Germans and release prisoners. The partisans capture a lot of Germans and a mob of old women rush to slaughter them with farming tools. An old woman then harangues those women explaining that they should punish Germans not by killing them instantly but in letting them live long to suffer from their fate. Clouds dissipate and a rainbow appears as a good omen after the old woman’s preach ending thus the movie. The symbolic of the rainbow had previously been used in the movie and seen by Werner as a bad sign and by a Russian woman as auguring well.

If the movie lacks of nuances, like others, this does not mean that characters are not developed, at least significantly more than in other similar pieces. Pusya, captain Werner’s mistress, is depicted as a blonde who sold herself to the occupier. She is nevertheless avoiding to inform her protector about her sister, probably communist. She is also harsh to her maid, trying to scare and blackmail her, as she “knows what she needs to know” about the maid’s comings and goings (communicating with



partisans). She also attempts after being forced by Werner to corrupt her sister, to buy her with food, and then, to scare her of being arrested. These vicious games are motivated mainly because she is lured to think Germans will be victorious and that one should accommodate with this reality. Another collaborator to Germans, the *starost*<sup>196</sup> (head of the community) is a dismal old profiteer who is the connection between Werner and the populace. He supplies Germans with list of hostile villagers proper to become hostages and conveys to the community the latest orders originated from the *kommandantur*. He ends up executed after a short revolutionary trial organised by the partisans in his own home. His death triggers further rage from Germans. As put previously, if their traits are caricatured, the degree of exaggeration is much lower than in other similar movies. Depicting them in a more human, in a less grotesque way, only strengthens the horror and atrocities they commit such as shooting on the mob that gathered to give bread to captured prisoners. Comical effects are still employed to highlight wickedness of the enemy, for example during a scene where a German soldier is retorting to mimic a cow and its mooing to ask children where he can find milk. He then threatens them with his rifle and leave the house shooting on a cuckoo clock, bursting into laughter sardonically. Germans are also stereotyped marching incessantly goose step, gorging delicatessen in penury-stricken Ukraine, drinking, etc. However, realism is not subdued to the volition of absolute derision. Werner, himself an ersatz of Hitler, shows signs of hysteria at times but this is nuanced by the excellent play of the actor.

Violence displayed in the film is subtler and generally more imagined than actually shown to the viewers. For example, killing of the new born baby is carried out off-camera, the focus is a close-up on Olena's expression of horror. In the streets, hanged people are often shown, from far, without any explanations, increasing the gloomy atmosphere of death wrapping the village. When Olena, pregnant, is forced to march to and fro barefoot in snow, under extremely cold weather, with screams of Germans soldiers pushing her back and forth until she falls, all villagers watch from their home with their children. The violence here is not much in the act itself – making a pregnant woman walk on snow – but rather in the frustration emanated from the incapacity of people to react to it. People are literally nullified by the Nazis as they are forced to wear around their neck a panel with a number and identify themselves not with their name but with this number, like mere cattle. One old man, playing fool we can assume,

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<sup>196</sup> KUROMIYA, Hiroaki (2005).

"The "Young Guard" (Krasnodon): Artistic Image and Historical Reality. (review)." Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 6(3): 657-664., p662: Kuromiya notes that not all *starosty* were outright collaborators.

finds the energy of being witty and also ties a panel around his cow's neck provoking rage of the *starost*.

The same old man interrupts a *starost's* speech in which the term *rodina* (motherland) is referred to. In the context of the speech, the meaning given by the *starost* is obvious. He refers to the land, perhaps to Ukraine itself. The old man naively asks which *rodina* is talked about as for him the term would apply only to his real motherland (i.e., Soviet Union) and naturally not to Germany nor even to Ukraine. This is particularly significant as the concept of *rodina* was kept intentionally ambiguous, especially in Ukraine and Byelorussia during the war as population of these countries were not all stalwart of Soviet Union. Some local partisan movements actually fought back Soviets like they did against Germans in order to regain national independence off the Soviet/Russians' yoke. In the movie, the concept of *rodina* is therefore not further detailed even though some few mentions to the Soviet power are. Similarly, the concept of "ours/our" is developed in the movie, meaning "our men" or "our army": "when ours will come they will punish you" without a precise notion of what is "our/ours". The motherland, whatever its clear definition is, still matters a lot as it is the real enemy to Germans: frost and ice are shown and Germans have to hop constantly to avoid dying frozen whereas locals cope with the situation. The final scenes, when Red Army / partisans attack, they are dressed in white camouflage uniforms and ride skis, adapted to the milieu, whereas black German uniforms are irrelevant and proper to an urban / European environment.

Ideological content is also more subtle than in other movies, the Soviet state is mentioned but conversely to *She defends*, *The Young Guard* or other war movies such as *The fall of Berlin* no halcyon days are shown as opening sequence: instead a hanged man on an electric pole is displayed with a mother recognising the corpse of her son. The Soviet time is referred few times, notably when soldiers torture Olena in the snow, a mother recalls that "these Germans are teaching us how to live and how [good] it was before in our country". Some of the hostages awaiting to be hanged also recall the old good days before fascists came and hope to live long enough to see all of them dead. Religious symbols are also quite tolerated in the movie as several people cross themselves (for example when a Soviet reconnaissance airplane is spotted), the *starost*, before his execution, turn to an icon in his home but partisans tell him: "this is not your god, it is ours; he hasn't sold us to the Germans!". He is then executed "in the name of the *rodina* and the government", as double justifiers of partisans' legitimacy. Other liturgical effects are noteworthy: Olena gives birth in a barn and the march of captured partisans along the village street can recall the Stations of the Cross

as some choir is heard in background. As they are heading to their martyrdom, children and old women bring them bread and are sacrificed being shot by Germans.

The depiction of partisans is blurry. They seem rather well-off with proper equipment and at least coordinated by Moscow, probably living in huts or caves. They have uniforms and weapons, contrasting with the ragtag crew of villagers led by Praskovia in *She defends*. During one scene, Ivan, the husband of Olena casts hopes about his future son, he shows the picture of Olena to his comrades in arm and we can observe several ethnicities, including people from Central Asia commenting on the beauty of Olena's picture. It therefore seems that they are embedded within the Red Army despite most of them having close connections with the province they are in. The distinction between Red Army and partisan detachment (*otriad* in Russian) is not clear cut and we do not learn in the movie how tightly connected to a central power the partisans are. The local commander is called comrade K. by the Germans, referring therefore to partisans and not to a full-fledge army commandant. Nevertheless, partisans have artillery at their disposal and probably wait Moscow's instructions to attack along with some more regular troops – with tanks - as it occurs at the end of the movie<sup>197</sup>. The message seems to be that partisans deserved glory but that they were under direct supervision of Moscow, and therefore commandant in chief, comrade Stalin.

*The rainbow* is a film noir despite, again, the light at the end of the tunnel epitomised by the partisans' taking back the village. This message of hope was necessary during war time and was buttressed by Red Army victories over fascists and the coming run to Berlin. Mobilisation of women, civilians and different nationalities was needed to ensure cohesion of the USSR and a more rapid defeat of Germany. Concessions made by the Party during the war were inevitable to aggrandise the spectrum of people fighting against the occupier. *The rainbow* perfectly fits this purpose and its popularity made it a very effective tool of propaganda, especially considering the dearth of feature films at that time in Soviet Union<sup>198</sup>.

### 3.2.5 The Young Guard

Stalin Prize-awarded *The Young Guard* is a film directed in 1948 by Sergei Gerasimov with a story inspired by the eponymous novel by Alexander Fadeev written in 1945 –

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<sup>197</sup> OVERY, Richard (1997). "Russia's war, a history of the Soviet war efforts: 1941-1945.", p150: Overy mentions that by the end of 1943 (the period of the movie), some partisan detachments – notably in Ukraine - were well equipped by Moscow with tanks, artillery, and even few planes.

<sup>198</sup> Only 7 or 8 films were produced in 1943.

the novel obtained the Stalin Prize the next year. The novel itself is based on real facts that occurred in Nazi-occupied Krasnodon, a small industrial town on the Russo-Ukrainian border during 1942-43. A group of youngsters, members of the *Komsomol* (communist youth), partook in partisan operations against Germans. Their deeds were relatively negligible in the sense they bore little consequences but their story has entered the official pantheon of great resistance movements in USSR: the publication of the novel itself was pushed by the higher instances of the Party, executed members of the Young Guard were posthumously granted highest honours (such as the title of “Hero of the Soviet Union”), a monument and a museum were created, and the name Young Guard used for towns, neighbourhoods, streets, hockey teams, etc. The size of the partisan group was next to 100, composed of mostly young people in their teens, and their feats in battle were quite limited but the myth created around this story makes it one of the inevitable movie to study. In Kuromiya’s words: “generations of Soviet youth were educated” by this novel that the Soviet regime accepted as official history<sup>199</sup>.

The film was shot after the War and therefore offers a great contrast with the two previously studied movies. It epitomises Socialist Realism and shows no degree of tolerance whatsoever to deviation from Soviet ideology. The studied version, like other Soviet movies discussed here, was re-edited in the late 60’s, it is difficult to know what the differences are; we can only presume direct mention to Stalin *could* have been expunged but this is not necessarily the case. The novel was also re-edited by the author in 1951 on the demand of the Party to reinforce the role of this latter in organising the partisans<sup>200</sup>. The movie already reflects in depth the role of the Party as instrumental to the supervision of the Young Guard. It has been produced probably more in accordance with the Party’s desires than the first version of the book.

The plot sticks to “the facts”, at least those presented by the novel. The little Soviet paradise of Krasnodon is swiftly invaded by Germans and most of the population strives to flee farther east. Some decide to stay with those who cannot be displaced but finally most of escapees return to the city as they could not cross the Don. Members of the Party manages to flee and to join free zone behind the front line. Before leaving, the commissar – played by the inevitable Sergei Bondarchuk - entitles Ulyana, a *komsomolka*, to be ready to take action against the occupier upon request. Germans then enter the city and start to confiscate houses and relocate their

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<sup>199</sup> KUROMIYA, Hiroaki (2005).

"The “Young Guard” (Krasnodon): Artistic Image and Historical Reality. (review)." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6(3): 657-664., p658

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

inhabitants. They party, drink, eat like pigs, and are noisy and rude. Germans start looking for communists, *stakhanovists* and other activists of the sort to arrest and execute them. While being machine-gunned, they burst into the *Internationale*, then still anthem of the Soviet Union (until 1944) and Oleg, one member of the *komsomol* witnesses the scene. When Oleg reports about what he saw, out of indignation, young friends pledge to struggle against German and create the Young Guard.

The organisation quickly recruits members and starts various anti-German actions such as hanging a collaborator, helping POWs to escape, hoisting Soviet flag on high building for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of October revolution or trigger an arson in the Labour Exchange where list of thousands of people to be deported to Germany were stored. The act of resistance are generally symbolic rather than extremely painstaking for the occupier. They host a party, gathering close to 20 persons which does seem very realistic in a Nazi-occupied small town, eat, sing and dance and it gives them the idea of preparing a spectacle for Germans so that it will be an alibi for the actions they will carry out concomitantly (notably the arson of the Labour Exchange).

Some members of the Young Guard are arrested and they understand that a traitor is among them. They panic and leaders start disbanding and escaping from the city, trying to cross the frontline. Some manage to join the Red Army but most are captured either in the city or while trying to escape. They are interrogated, jailed and finally executed, we can then hear a last chanting of the *Internationale*. The city is liberated few days later by a combined operation of the Red Army and the external partisans (those not in the city but probably in hidden outside of it). The movie concludes on the commemoration of the execution of the Young Guard, with a salvo, medals and a long speech from the political commissar dedicated to the courage of the young heroes.

From the historical background of the plot, we could expect a realist movie but the paradox of Socialist Realism is indeed to lack realism<sup>201</sup>. The various episodes narrated in the film are extremely pompous and the deeds of partisans lack spirit and wit: they act with a remarkable naïveté and every asperity that would give the movie genuine realism is bulldozed under the aesthetics of Stalinism. Expressions of actors are outrageously exaggerated, particularly that of Oleg, the main character whose face is so illuminated by fervour and contracted traits that it looks risible to the modern viewer. The youth is defiant toward Germans in their daily behaviour (screaming at

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<sup>201</sup> KENEZ, Peter (1992). "Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin.", p5: this lack of realism is actually an objective: "the primary social role of film in the age of Stalin was not to portray reality but to deny it".

German soldiers, mocking them overtly, etc.), although it is clear that in real situation, a tenth of this defiance would have led directly to summary execution. Violence and atrocities performed by Germans is almost absent except for executions. No hanging corpses in streets like in the two other movies. Arrested leaders of Young Guard appear before their death almost intact, only slightly beaten up and with torn off clothes although reality was much bleaker. In order to dismantle the organisation Germans tortured awfully dozens of its members<sup>202</sup> and threw them alive in a coal mine pit. All – real – concessions that were enshrined in the *She defends* and *The rainbow* about dissatisfaction about life in Soviet Union and naturally religion are obliterated from the film. More interestingly, there have been suggestion, albeit unlikely, that the Young Guard was actually a Ukrainian nationalist movement that would have fought back Soviet/Russians when they took back the city<sup>203</sup>. Accordingly, the concept of *rodina*, is not developed in the movie whereas it was important in the two previous ones. The motivation of Young Guard is simply vengeance and fidelity towards the Party and the Soviet regime, no telluric attachment whatsoever is expressed. This is reinforced by the urban setting of the movie. However the city is almost invisible, totally opposed of *Walter's* Sarajevo, as most episodes are at night and in-door. This area of Ukraine is surrounded by steppes, no woods to hide for partisans, hence they stay in the city. There are other partisans though formed out of remaining of the Red Army but we do not learn exactly where they are and what they do, except for a short scene of a train attack. Similarly to *The rainbow*, they seem “embedded” in the Red Army to certain extent.

The organisation is similar to that of other Party-engineered entities, it has its own commandant (a former Red Army soldier that managed to survive the debacle) and a political commissar (Oleg). It is very bureaucratic as members are registered, cards given to newcomers, etc. The cardinal value depicted here is the discipline of the Young Guard. The symbolism is also present during their operations: when they hang the collaborator, they previously carry out a brief on-the-spot trial to legitimise their action – in the name of the government and Soviet regime, no *rodina* is referred to here. Upon joining the organisation an oath of faithfulness is repeated. Again, like in *The rainbow*, the Talion Law is the basis of justice: “blood for blood and death for death”. Among the Young Guard, all ethnicities (“Muslims”, Ukrainians, Russians,

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<sup>202</sup> KUROMIYA, Hiroaki (2005).

"The “Young Guard” (Krasnodon): Artistic Image and Historical Reality. (review)." Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 6(3): 657-664., p568: torture included gouging of eyes, this violence is not displayed at all as we could have expected it.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., p663

Caucasians, etc.) are represented according to the general discourse about nationalities.

In the *The Young Guard*, the enemy is laughed at in a relationship of power totally typical of Socialist Realism: heroes are more powerful than villains. Of course, in the context of the war, this relationship had to be translated in symbolic power as the physical power balance was otherwise. Hence the necessity of some sort of humour, be it dull and unsurprising. Different samples of this humour are to be found in the movie, when youngsters stage the spectacle for Nazis, they are ordered to display a giant portrait of Hitler; the portrait is somehow ridiculous but when the curtains open, the whole audience stands up and bursts into *Heil Hitler* raising their arm. The synchronicity of the soldiers and officers alike and the awkward Führer drawing provoke hilarity for the members of the Young Guard getting themselves prepared backstage. Several other defiant acts, threatening to throw stone at Germans who crouch to protect themselves, also serve the general sentiment of Soviet superiority to the detriment of the enemy. Soldiers are seen looting food and clothing, being taken in picture for souvenir, but are not really perceived as a threat to the population. Interestingly, Nazi officers, if they arrive with pomp in a black car in the city, are less ridiculed than in other movies where they were all pastiche of Hitler: the emphasis is rather on their weakness at quelling Soviet resistance.

*The Young Guard* is an “ideological fantasy” which had a tremendous impact on Soviet Union’s viewers. Like other movies, it serves the ideology of its time which had changed from a Nazi-occupied Soviet Union to a Great Power with an all-mighty leader. Stalin’s aura gained during the war was also stretching far outside of Soviet Union’s borders. The controversies that surrounded the original novel about the identity and scope of treason of some of the Young Guard’s members did not matter then. Triggered by Khrushchev, then head of Communist Party of Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine, the State machine started to enshrine the Young Guard as an ideal movement as early as 1943 when Fadeev was dispatched in Krasnodon to investigate about the facts and create his fiction that was to become the official truth. Some of the alleged traitors were later rehabilitated and the city, located in current days Ukraine, saw different teams of investigators dispatched to delve further the topic not only during Soviet time but after the Union break up also. The novel was already written and re-edited, the movie was already shot and re-edited and the propaganda had already achieved its goal to make youngsters identify themselves with the heroes for the defence of the regime. The porosity of ideologies and deep entrenched Soviet mythology permitted Vladimir Putin’s political party, United Russia, to re-use the term Young Guard for a pro-Kremlin youth wing of the nationalistic party since 2005.

### 3.2.6 Conclusion USSR

It would be difficult to assert that partisan movies have constituted a real genre in Soviet Union comparable to those of Yugoslavia or North Korea. It is rather a sub-genre of War movies dedicated to the Civil War and the Great Patriotic War. However, most movies relating to the War produced during the War period are partisan movies<sup>204</sup>. This trend progressively waned after the end of the conflict to portraying the War more under a lens favourable to Red Army and centralised commandment. We can also observe this tendency in *Chapaev*. The propaganda shift is noticeable through the cinema industry: Wartime movies such as *She defends* or *The rainbow* are attempts to mobilize people to fight against the occupier whereas post-War opus *The Young Guard* is emphasizing the collective effort of resistance under the Party's umbrella. During an interview of Vera Maretskaia, Praskovia in *She defends*, after the War, the actress recalled that "I would say that in this picture, she won the war"<sup>205</sup>. This was the Wartime message calling the Soviet people to uprisings against German oppressor. After the victory over fascism, as briefly mentioned before, efforts of glorification of the regime and its leader were the new message to be conveyed by the propaganda machine, downplaying the role of partisans, such as the *Fall of Berlin* which puts the role of Stalin as real victor of the War.

Still, despite all these endeavours to put forward the role of the leader instead of that of partisans, it is certain that the collective memory has been deeply affected by the role and depictions of partisans to which the laymen could identify themselves or their ancestors "my father / grand-father was a partisan". Some people had even changed their name to *partizansk* in the late 30's, notably to hide noble origins. What Benedict Anderson writes about the Civil War can be applicable to WWII:

"The colossal class war that, from 1918 to 1920, raged between the Pamir and the Vistula came to be remembered / forgotten in Soviet film and fictions as 'our' civil war, while the Soviet state, on the whole, held to an orthodox Marxist reading of the struggle".<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Interestingly, few wartime produced Hollywood movies also dealt with Soviet partisans during the war. Soviet Union's clout over leftist American film industry and the War alliance against a common enemy made movies such as *The North Star* (1943), *Mission to Moscow* (1943) or *Song of Russia* (1944) possible.

<sup>205</sup> Quoted by Denise Youngblood in

<http://www.soviethistory.org/index.php?page=subject&SubjectID=1943film&Year=1943>

<sup>206</sup> ANDERSON, Benedict (1983 (reviewed in 2006)). "Imagined communities.", p202: Even the geographical aspect of this quote would apply to WWII as troops were sent from every corner of the empire to fight fascists.



If WWII was for Americans “the good war”, for Poles an occasion to reassert their victimisation in their national roman, for Soviet official history and mythology “none has made sacrifice and suffering Virtue”<sup>207</sup>.

Cinema industry in the after-War period got reinvigorated and harnessed to sustain the myth of invincibility of Soviet Union. A ministry of cinematography was inaugurated in 1946<sup>208</sup>, probably the first and only one in the world (this might have been mimicked in some other socialist regimes) dedicated to the 7<sup>th</sup> art. After Stalin’ death and the changes brought in by Khrushchev – during the so-called *Thaw* period that came along with de-Stalinisation, films about the War kept on being churned out, some being real cinematographic *chef d’oeuvre*, much more nuanced than those of the Stalin era. But, real masterpieces related to the partisan sub-genre emerged in the 70’s and 80’s becoming, arguably, some of the most important Soviet movies of those decades. Larisa Shepitko’s *the Ascent* (1975), and her husband, Elem Klimov’s *come and see* (1985) are both not only first-rate partisan pieces but first-rate movies. Both movies offer a stunning realism, contrasting with their Stalin era’s counterparts. Klimov spares no expense exposing Nazis’ unlimited violence, notably through a mass-murder scene in a church full of villagers torched by Germans. But the realism is not only about savagery of Nazis that was already mentioned to some extent in movies such as *She defends*. Rather, it is the depiction of jaded, amoral, degenerated people on both sides that was a novelty, including collaboration, desperation, suicide rather than unlimited heroism and sacrifice. The movie, shot in Byelorussia and one of the few not using Russian as main language, was commissioned to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the War. Byelorussia was an occupied territory longer than the other republics and known as the “partisan republic”, its cinema studio during Soviet time were nicknamed “Partizan film” and Minsk, its capital, honoured as a “Hero city”, like Kiev in Ukraine, Leningrad or Stalingrad in Soviet Russia among other occupied or besieged cities.

The connection of Russian (and by extension to Soviet people in general regardless their ethnicity) to their milieu is what gives to Russians its sentiment of “exceptionalism”. The extreme size of the country and its extreme conditions, notably with regards to the harsh climate and transportation issues, make it unique and Soviet people take a certain pride about that. As Youngblood puts it: “‘Special’ relationship

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<sup>207</sup> YOUNGBLOOD, Denise J. (1994). "Post-Stalinist cinema and the myth of world war II: Tarkovskii's 'Ivan's childhood' (1962) and Klimov's 'come and see' (1985)." Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television., p413

<sup>208</sup> al., J. HOBERMAN et (1991). "Inside the Film Factory - New approaches to Russian and Soviet cinema.", p235

to nature has been memorialised and mythologised in countless works of literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries”<sup>209</sup>. It is therefore logical that the telluric concept of motherland (*rodina*) is developed throughout the movies, particularly those shot during the War. The motherland itself also contributed in defeating the occupier.

Interestingly, the theme of partisans, similar to the Yugoslav case, has kept on being exploited after the break-up of Soviet Union. This is notably the case in Byelorussia, where an authoritarian regime uses the War as a key element of the “state-sponsored cult of nationality”. Lewis also notes the existence of a “top-down ideological framework” and discusses the way the Soviet past is recycled by Lukashenka’s regime. These elements can also be found to some extent in other post-Soviet countries where the Great Patriotic War is still considered as a one of the “most important historical period for collective memory”<sup>210</sup>. In a similar vein, Graffy notes that “interest in the Great Patriotic War has never waned and the [then] recent celebration of 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the War’s end has led to renewed scholarly interest in the films it spawned”<sup>211</sup>.

It is clear that exploitation of the war by the regime through propaganda resulted in “achiev[ing] the domestic political legitimacy that it had lacked before the war”<sup>212</sup>. This was made possible as art under hard-core Stalinist period is “counterfeit” and it changes “fiction in reality”, “its great power resided in its ability to exchange an artificial world surreptitiously for the real one”<sup>213</sup>. However, movies directed during the War period, while serving the regime’s short-term objectives of repelling fascists, “served as a ‘counter-history’ of the war that challenged official history, thereby subverting the state-sponsored cult” as they offer us, thanks to a historical perspective, to analyse variations of the ideology purported by the regime over time.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> YOUNGBLOOD, Denise J. (1994). "Post-Stalinist cinema and the myth of world war II: Tarkovskii's 'Ivan's childhood' (1962) and Klimov's 'come and see' (1985)." Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television., p413-416

<sup>210</sup> LEWIS, Simon M. (2011). "Official nationality and the dissidence of memory in Belarus: a comparative analysis of two films." Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema 5(3)., p1-10

<sup>211</sup> GRAFFY, Julian (2009). "Writing about the Cinema of the Stalin Years: The State of the Art." Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 10(4)., p12

<sup>212</sup> SLEPYAN, Kenneth (2006). "Why they fought: Motivation, Legitimacy and the Soviet Partisan Movement.", p6

<sup>213</sup> KENEZ, Peter (1992). "Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin.", p144

<sup>214</sup> YOUNGBLOOD, Denise J. (2001). "A War Remembered, Soviet Films of the Great Patriotic War.", p2

### 3.3 Yugoslavia

#### 3.3.1 Choice movies

The movies selected are all representative of a period during which the Party hardened its line and needed more propaganda to refresh a legitimacy decayed by growing socio-economic difficulties. Those troubles were also accompanied by some struggle for more ethnonational independence (Zagreb spring of 1971) and the idea of unity embodied by Tito and his partisans needed to be reasserted. As mentioned, the success of these movies is very mixed as they impressed more foreign audience than disillusioned Yugoslavs. As Horton puts it: "the legitimacy of the Yugoslav Communist Party has in large part depended on its self-perception of its unifying heroism during Second World War"<sup>215</sup>.

Two of the movies, *Sutjeska* and *Neretva*, correspond to the super-spectacle partisan era depicting grandiose battles with glitz effects and prohibitive budgets. However, it would be misleading to think of those movies only as battles as they also depict life of partisans, paternalistic figure of Tito and the "brotherhood and unity" ideology professed by the regime. *Walter defend Sarajevo* is a different film, not quite representative of other partisan movies due to its urban scenery and charismatic characters. Despite its difference it became an emblematic partisan movie.

#### 3.3.2 Walter defends Sarajevo

Produced in 1972 by Bosna Film studio, Hajrudin Krvacic's *Walter defends Sarajevo* (hereafter *Walter*), is typical partisan movie of that period. It portrays organised resistance to Nazi-occupied Sarajevo in the late war period, after the fall of Belgrade to Tito and Stalin's armies, before Germans withdrew from the city to defend their fatherland. Walter, played by Velimir "Bata" Živojinović<sup>216</sup>, is a mythical (but real) resistant chief that Nazi fails to capture for more than one year and he poses threats to a major convoy of fuel aimed at supplying a tank battalion heading north to the Reich. Nazis decide then to infiltrate the partisan cells with a fake Walter in order to get rid of the genuine one and to eradicate further resistance that could hinder this operation.

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<sup>215</sup> HORTON, Andrew (1987). "The Rise and Fall of the Yugoslav Partisan Film: Cinematic Perceptions of a National Identity." *Film criticism* 12(2)., p25

<sup>216</sup> Bata Živojinović is a Serbian actor who is particularly notorious for his roles in partisan movies. He plays some of the key characters of all the movies treated here and obtained several prizes for his performances.

*Walter defends Sarajevo* is a movie about tricks, sabotage and ambushes, about partisans and Nazis trying to outsmart each other by all means. The plot is relatively dense and complex in comparison with usual partisan movies that are generally less subtle. There is a succession of intrigues where partisans try to identify the fake Walter and above all the accomplices that helped him to join a partisan cell. Impostors are detected and eliminated and through a series of bold actions, Walter and his acolytes take control of the fuel train and destroy its cargo.

Conversely to most partisan movies, set in the mountains or forest, the urban environment of Sarajevo plays an important part. The city literally lives and, as the destitute chief Nazi grasps it at the end of the movie, the city *is* Walter, fighting back entirely against occupiers. The whole population is resisting in some ways, such as the railroad switch operator that hides partisans after a sabotage action, the tin artisans forging metal plates who hit harder so that noise impair Nazi's research of Walter in the streets or that mob, gathered in front of corpses of liquidated partisans, that comes bravely to pick up bodies of relatives despite obvious risk of being shot by Germans. The city is Walter, unified against the enemy regardless citizens' class distinctions or ethnic origin.

Characters are not extremely developed, though, and scenes of action are marred with gross exaggerations (e.g., a handful of partisans can outmanoeuvre dozens of German soldiers) and some simplifications (e.g., all partisans speak perfect German and cannot be identified when dressed in Nazi uniforms; similarly SS officers can speak perfect Serbo-Croatian). Walter himself remains mysterious along the movie both to other partisans (except his close lieutenant, Suri, no one knows who he is, where he is) and to the audience (no mention of any political background or link with some external resistance movements in the liberated areas of Yugoslavia).

Political content of the movie is also shallow as most partisans are not labelled as communists. They are rather simple inhabitants of Sarajevo resisting, together, against occupiers without any political motives. Some characters, such as Sead, a watchmaker, clearly belong to Sarajevo's "petty" bourgeoisie and are nevertheless involved against Germans. The main message seems to be an idyllic vision of "sacred alliance" (echoing the "brotherhood and unity" motto of Tito) to repulse the German oppressor. The name of Tito is also not evoked in the movie although it seems that Walter was one of the multiple pseudonyms he used when he was secretary of the

underground communist party before the War<sup>217</sup>. In the movie Nazi officers also doubt about the existence of Walter, whether he is really made of flesh and bones or whether it is a committee. The same cloud of mystery surrounded Tito at the beginning of the war when he was not yet known well by Germans and others<sup>218</sup>.

The violence is ubiquitous in the movie but depicted in a way that can be acceptable to a broad audience. Scenes of shooting are numerous but not shocking, little blood is spilled and a dehumanised score of German soldiers fall like dead flies; exaggerations make these scenes more bearable. Combats between partisans and Germans are ruthless with retaliations for each German killed and against disloyal partisans, such as Mirna, one of the two female characters of the movie who is revealed to be a traitor after having been tortured by Germans when arrested first. She is used to discover and assassinate her superior, a local collaborating with the enemy who gets shot in a gun fight. Mirna dies during the battle from bullets shot by other collaborators, leaving the possibility that benevolent partisans could have spared her. The other female character, Azdra, daughter of Sead, is a nurse who aids a surgeon to hide a wounded partisan detained by Nazis. She also dies in probably the most tragic scene when dozens of partisans got executed by Germans during a night operation that got uncovered by the fake Walter. She dies tragically while trying to protect her injured loved one.

Germans are described according to usual stereotypes, focused on their mission, not caring much about life for both partisans and Germans: the fake Walter has to kill several German soldiers to reinforce his credentials and wounded German soldiers are used to fake the fuel convoy as a humanitarian one to their detriments (they must quickly disembark from a train to be loaded to trucks regardless of harms endured).

Conversely to Germans' brutality, heroism and sense of sacrifice of partisans is a major theme of the movie. Walter himself contributes to rescuing several low ranking partisans at high peril. But it is in the character of Sead that commitment is best epitomized. When he discovered that, unbeknownst to him, he sent Walter to a trap laid by some fake partisans, he decides coldly to sacrifice himself going to the meeting point to murder the traitor thus uncovering the trap and avoiding Walter a certain death. Before meeting his death, Sead settles his debts, a gesture that evokes the self-proclaimed honesty and virtue of partisans, who were severely punished in case of

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<sup>217</sup> WEST, Richard (1994). "Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia.", p126: the name Walter (or Valter) is perhaps rather linked to Vladimir "Valter" Perić, a partisan who operated in Sarajevo during the war. It is not clear whether Valter was also a nom de guerre for Tito only.

<sup>218</sup> Ethnicity of Tito has always been debated and is still a topic shrouded by mystery: "Tito wasn't Yugoslav?" <http://www.oslobodjenje.ba/daily-news/tito-wasnt-yugoslav>

stealing or looting. Humour or rather light-heartedness is not totally absent through frank comradeship that develops among partisans, notably during the last scene where Walter, Suri and Zis play to deceive Germans to take over the fuel train.

The movie was quite successful in Yugoslavia, particularly in Sarajevo<sup>219</sup> and was exported to more than 60 countries, notably in China where it became extremely popular<sup>220</sup>. It insists mainly on the totality of the war, where no neutrality is allowed.

### 3.3.3 The battle of Neretva

Directed by Veljko Bulajic<sup>221</sup> in 1969, *The battle of Neretva* (hereafter *Neretva*), is the first mega-production of the partisan genre in Yugoslavia. This genre dubbed, half-jokingly, *Easterns* – notably because distinction between good and bad guys was as subtle as in most American *Westerns* but also referring to their Soviet counterparts about Russian civil war, counts also among typical productions, *The battle of Sutjeska*, also treated in this study. Both movies were made by Croatian directors with mix teams and actors, and with massive funding of the federal state, therefore being fully Yugoslav movies. The colossal budget (unknown but oscillating between 4.5 and 12 million USD) attests of Tito's megalomania and makes it one of the most non-American movie of its time. The international casting also indicates not only thirst for legitimacy at home but a willingness to export partisans' deeds abroad for the glory of the regime. Not only Hollywood actors flocked, for paltry acting in the movie but great pay, such as Yul Brynner and Orson Welles but also Italian star Franco Nero and Soviet famous actor and director Sergei Bondarchuk (who notably directed *Fate of a man*, a Soviet War movie, and the epic *War and Peace*. He also played in a host of movies including *The Young Guard*) participated to the movie along with thousands of Yugoslav People's Army troops<sup>222</sup> (more than 10 000 soldiers participated during 18 months) dispatched as extras for the battle scenes. Countless captured German panzers and Russian tanks got also destroyed for the sake of the movie along with mock up villages and a fortress. The climax of the movie occurs when a bridge on the river Neretva is blown up to prevent Chetnik troops to encircle partisans. The bridge was actually dynamited, re-built then re-dynamited for the movie. To crown the whole, the soundtrack was composed by Bernard Herrmann, famous for his collaborations with Alfred Hitchcock among others, played by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the film poster was painted by Pablo Picasso. This immoderation was possible due

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<sup>219</sup> DONIA, Robert J. (2006). "Sarajevo: A Biography.", p238

<sup>220</sup> IORDANOVA, Dina (2006). "The Cinema of the Balkans.", p108-115

<sup>221</sup> Also director of *Kozara* (1962), another grandiose partisan movie.

<sup>222</sup> BATANCEV, Dragan (2013). "Partisan film and the Yugoslav national construction."

GAZETA DE ARTA POLITICA., p2

to direct participation of Tito in the production of the movie as he edited some part of the screenplay and resolved not to have his character directly appear in the movie<sup>223</sup>. A noteworthy aspect of the movie funding is the fact that the 6 republics usually obtained their emoluments from the federal state and used it to produce movies in their respective republic and language. Through Tito's auspice, the production of *Neretva*, could tap in the 6 republics' fund, creating thus a full-fledged Yugoslav film. Batancev puts it as following: "by pushing this agenda, Tito's government (and Bulajić as its representative) tried to shape the workers' perception of WWII as a historical birth era of the socialist Yugoslav society."<sup>224</sup>

The movie takes place in Winter 1943<sup>225</sup>, when German and their allies (Croatian fascists, the *Ustashi*, Italians and, temporary allies Serbian nationalists, the *Chetniks*) decided to attack Tito's recently established "Republic" set in Bihac, in North Western part of Bosnia. "On 20<sup>th</sup> January 1943, four German divisions, including the 7th SS Prinz Eugen Division, four Italian divisions and two Croat divisions came together to start 'Operation Weiss'"<sup>226</sup>. Hitler believed that Allies might land in the Balkans rather than Italy or France and wanted to make sure this "soft underbelly of Europe" was within tight control of Axis forces<sup>227</sup>. Italians and Germans' opinions diverged on whether and how to use Chetniks against partisans and situation during the battle were extremely confused with that regards. This confusion is also well transcribed in the film with palpable tension between Nazis and fascist officers. Germans keep on criticising Italians, for their lack of precision and punctuality. Tito's troops take advantage of this lack of coordination between supposed allies and managed to get his troops escape crossing the Neretva, a major river located in Bosnia and Croatia.

The film is about moving and moving again. Partisans have to flee Germans' offensives and Italians' advances. They are stuck and have to keep on escaping further, in the mountain, in the snow, always carrying their wounded and above all civil population. The "telluric" aspect of the partisan psyche is fully infused in the story: the land belongs to them and they had to accomplish a "Long March" the year before to settle down and declare their "Republic" but again they have to move further under enemy pressure. Villages and small towns are occupied by partisans then attacked, then taken back while retreating and then destroyed. The river *Neretva* also plays a crucial

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p1

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p2

<sup>225</sup> During the so-called fourth offensive (out of seven) also called as "Cased White" while Sutjeska portrays events of the following offensive, also known as "Case Black".

<sup>226</sup> WEST, Richard (1994). "Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia.", p97

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., p100

role in the movie. It blocks partisans and civilians to retreat but above all it swallows everything: corpses, animals, trucks, canons, etc.

The climate, snowstorm, itself is a character, impeding both partisans and their enemies. It favoured the spread of epidemic of typhus, a disease that plagued awfully partisan troops and civilians. Numerous scenes depict wounded and sick people in delirium due to those bacteria. Partisans' constant need to further escape is motivated by the evident unbalance between Axis forces and Chetniks in terms of troops ("one to ten" they insist on) and equipment (partisans can only use weapons captured to the enemy it is claimed, stressing the fact that no or little external support was given) but also by the fact that they draw with them civil population, a burden, that obviously, professional armies do not have to take into consideration. The asymmetry between partisans' armament and that of their enemies is also illustrated by the numerous blind and savage air attacks conducted by Germans, bombing and strafing indiscriminately civilians, wounded<sup>228</sup> and partisan fighters.

Typical guerrilla tactics are also well represented with multiple ambushes to offset the asymmetry of means and material. These scenes are showing Vlado, played by Yul Brynner, laying explosives and traps after partisan and civilian columns have passed, in order to slow down progresses of Germans tailing them. According to Batancev, a total of 12 000 explosions gave rhythm to the movie. Hit and run warfare is put forward but partisans see their agility impaired due to the flows of wounded and civilians. Hot debates arise with regards to the loss of this major advantage but the "purity" and of the struggle is legitimised by the capacity of partisans to protect non-combatants. Heroic actions also punctuate the movie, notably through the sacrifice of Novak, played by Ljubiša Samardžić who was playing the character of Zis in *Walter* and who is also present in *Sutjeska*, who allows partisans to take Chetniks from the rear and rout them with little casualties. As one commander summarises the general strategy: "surprise is better than artillery".

This brutality of Germans and their allies is justified by the situation in the pure Machiavellian tradition. Put in the German commanding officer's terms "this not an orthodox war at all", "there are no rules", it is "a saloon brawl" where no mercy should be shown and no prisoners should be taken because otherwise "any partisan you're tempted to spare, will be glad to show you his gratitude with [...] a hand-grenade or a couple of well-aimed bullets". This "totality" of the war is well reflected in the action

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<sup>228</sup> JAKISA, Miranda (2010). "Down to earth partisan: fashioning of YU-space in partisan film." *KINO!*, p7: Jakisa justly notes that a wounded is not any more a combatant but also not a civilian; wounded indeed gathered both fighters and civilians and the pride of partisans not leaving wounded behind them prevented the partisans to become a regular standing army.



scenes. Cruelty of Germans is also equalled, if not surpassed, by that of other local enemies (Ustashi and Chetniks). Ustashi finish off captured partisans and hang them with awful placard around the neck while laughing; Chetniks are depicted as bigot, chanting the Lord constantly and barbarian, recklessly attacking rather than retreating contrasting in their disorder with partisans. Chetnik's senator, representative of the king exiled in London, played by Orson Welles, is assassinated coldly by his military advisor when he orders to retreat.

However, Italians are more moderated and the defection of Captain Riva (played by Franco Nero) who, after being subject to contention and scruple, makes the decision to desert, surrender and join the partisans because they are fighting a just cause<sup>229</sup>. Conversely to his superior, general Morelli, who commits suicide after being captured, Captain Riva's choice might be motivated by two different elements: the first one is the undisputed much milder occupation by Italian forces in Croatia<sup>230</sup> and the second might be to satisfy Italian investors that partially funded the movie<sup>231</sup>.

Political message the movie is more pregnant than in *Walter* as communist party and Tito are hovering over the movie constantly, despite absence of Tito himself<sup>232</sup>. Nevertheless, there are constant discussions before decision are made to highlight the democratic process under which most important decisions were made, both between fighting units and civilians. At once, a written message signed by Tito is sent from the head quarter to a cell of partisans and they all pass it over to read the chief's orders. Discipline is also strictly enforced, notably at the end of the movie when a maddened partisan shoots disarmed captive Chetniks. He is arrested and threatened to be court martialled. This strictness also appears in other movies such as *Partisan Stories* (1960), composed of two stories, one of them entitled "the red shawl" in which a young partisan is executed for having looted a shawl to protect from harsh winter<sup>233</sup>.

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<sup>229</sup> "they fight for the future of their country" (Captain Riva)

<sup>230</sup> WEST, Richard (1994). "Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia.", p94: Italians refused to hand over Jews to Croatian knowing the consequences they would face. This has been several times corroborated, notably by Hannah Arendt in "Eichmann in Jerusalem". Also there were a sizeable number of Italians against fascism, and the character of Riva also wants "an Italy without fascism".

<sup>231</sup> BATANCEV, Dragan (2013). "Partisan film and the Yugoslav national construction." GAZETA DE ARTA POLITICA., p3

<sup>232</sup> Batancev explains this absence by the prioritization of collective effort over the single person of Tito and by the international investors that would have probably not backed the movie otherwise fearing to be involved in communist propaganda

<sup>233</sup> BARIC, Stephanie (2001). "Yugoslav War Cinema: Shooting A Nation Which No Longer Exists.", p43

Civilians and partisans fraternise whenever possible, dance together when a battle is won over accordion music and looted alcohol. Wounded and civilians also song in a makeshift hospital arranged in a church and shelled by Nazis. Chants cover the noise of fighting and are heard not only by partisans but also by Germans who seem not to understand how this people can keep on singing under such circumstances. Germans are reinforced in their conviction of demolishing the religious building. Civilians also participate whenever they can to fights, for instance, cooling down canons with handkerchiefs and snow. A poet also recites his verses in glory of the struggle. A soldier is assigned to carry his books because "A nation without poets and a language cannot win freedom by fighting"<sup>234</sup>. Women are once again mostly related to professors, teaching children in liberated areas nurses and doctors. They still perform difficult tasks such as amputation of limbs. There are also some *partizanka* (i.e., female partisans) fighting and dying in heroic actions<sup>235</sup>. Communist ideology of equality between genders is therefore here well affirmed.

Characters are quite underdeveloped, notably foreign stars who appear on screen during very short periods and without deep psychological considerations. This is also the case of Yugoslav stars such as Bata Živojinović (*Walter* in *Walter saves Sarajevo*) who plays Stole, a chief partisan. Rather it seems that the real main character of the movie is the people of Yugoslavia, the crowd mixed of partisans and civilians that flee and fight collectively fascism following the "brotherhood and unity" slogan.

As Batancev affirms that:

"The partisan unity is based on Tito's concept of organic *Yugoslavism*, a would-be harmonious symbiosis of national specificity and affective attachment to the Yugoslav federal community. When reading a proclamation at the beginning of *Neretva*, a partisan greets his 'brothers, Yugoslav nations, Serbs, Macedonians, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins and Muslims.' Note how *Neretva* does not reflect an existence of the unified Yugoslav nation, but the right to diversity between nations, leaving a lot of space for the surge of nationalisms."<sup>236</sup>

However, the movie concluding voice-off states that "at the end of war, a new nation was born" which echoes to the partisan epic as a foundational theme of *Yugoslavism*.

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<sup>234</sup> WEST, Richard (1994). "Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia.", 89: the poet is Vladimir Nazor who actually joined the partisans, a Croatian that flew Ustashi regime, NDH. Tito liked to be surrounded by writers and poets.

<sup>235</sup> KIRIN, Renata JAMBRESIC (2004). "The politics of memory in Croatian socialist culture.", p4: Kirin explains main reasons that lead to idolatry for dead heroines

<sup>236</sup> BATANCEV, Dragan (2013). "Partisan film and the Yugoslav national construction."

GAZETA DE ARTA POLITICA., p3

The fact that several ethnicities are represented in the movie demonstrates that before the struggle, for the regime, the concept of Yugoslav was not yet clearly established and it acquires its essence through the national liberation combat.

The movie drew an incredible 3 million viewers in Yugoslavia over time only and has been distributed in more than 70 countries. It has been nominated for Academic Award and in a film festival in Moscow included in the list of the top ten most important movies about WWII<sup>237</sup>. Tito was present at the first screening and eulogised the film and actors, treating them at his personal residence. However, despite this certain success, amazing cost of production, partially swollen due to mismanagement and lack of professionalism, could not be reimbursed and a wave of criticism in the press accompanied the release of the film. 58 companies, all over Yugoslavia participated in the funding of the movie under Tito's impetus. They allegedly recovered their investment thanks to the movie's profits but the production costs were so high that it is very unlikely. This is perhaps a crying metaphor of the Yugoslavia's fate: in attempt to build something genuinely Yugoslav, the only benefit to share at the end were debts. Condemnations were also focused on the mere spectacular dimension of the movies, expensive actors and pyrotechnical effects were not replacing a deep scenario, a more nuanced approach of the war, and further development of characters. Still, the movie, by its grandiosity marked the younger generations that have not lived the war and is still perceived as a major oeuvre about this era.

### 3.3.4 Sutjeska

Directed by Stipe Delic<sup>238</sup> in 1973, *Sutjeska*, is a coproduction of different Yugoslav studios (Bosna Film, Jadran Film and Zagreb Film). Stipe Delic was second unit director on *The Battle of Nevečka*. Both movies share common characteristics such as a plot as close as possible of historical facts, characters (and actors), and formidable budget and means thanks to direct endorsement of the three pillars of Yugoslav power: Tito, the Party and the army.

The action takes place in South-Eastern Bosnia just after the previous attempt by Axis forces to quell partisan's insurgency during Operation Weiss (background of *Neretva*), in Spring of 1943. After retreating through the Neretva River, Tito's troops and

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<sup>237</sup> ŠKRABALO, Ivo (2011). "Croatian Film in the Yugoslav Context in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century." *KinoKultura*, p16s

<sup>238</sup> It appears that because controversy around the commensurate expenditures of *Neretva*, its director, Veljko Bulajic was not favoured to shoot the quasi-sequel, that is *Sutjeska*, and that rather, Delic was selected instead

civilians following them are anew encircled by German, Italian, Bulgarian, Ustashi and Chetniks forces. The encirclement is close to perfect and the disequilibrium between partisans and Axis armies is 6 to 1 (roughly 120 000 regular and crack men against 20 000 partisans); partisans also have to take care of the “burden” of thousands of wounded men and civilians (women, elderly, children). Under direct Hitler’s orders, Colonel General Alexander Löhr<sup>239</sup>, was to carry total annihilation of Tito’s followers. At great cost, one third of fighting units, columns of partisans and refugees succeeded in operating a breakthrough German lines and to escape to Eastern Bosnia where they could rest and recover. Role of partisan became better appreciated by Allies and different nations of Yugoslavia; the fiasco of fascists, incapable of crushing partisans entailed reinforcements of the latter, as they gained more credibility and glory and got rallied by more civilians disgusted by Axis and their allies. The battle of Sutjeska has been another major stepping stone in the cult of Tito and edification of partisan myth.

Despite limitations of *Neretva*, Tito was enthusiastic about this sort of super-productions and supported them in different fashions. He is notably credited to have participated in script editing and he is the one that chose American star Richard Burton to play his own role<sup>240</sup>. Foreign participations are limited to Burton, allegedly not to cast shadow on Tito’s role. It is noteworthy though to mention that Sergei Bondarchuk is again involved in the movie, this time not as an actor but as a script writer and possibly that of Orson Welles (though uncredited).

The story of *Sutjeska*, is closely linked to that of *Neretva*, and allusions to the latter are rife in the dialogues of the protagonists each time they recall some heroic action or plight they endured the previous winter. Actors and characters are also similar despite the fact that, all foreign stars disappeared to let Burton be the centre of the movie and that all local stars (for instance, Bata Živojinović and Ljubiša Samardžić) portray different characters. Role of Tito is much more put forward than in other movies. This is not only because he is played by Hollywood actor, but also because political messages of the movie are more frequent and often to be found in Tito’s words. He is portrayed as nonchalant chief benevolent to his men, in a very paternalistic way, never losing an occasion to pat them on the back, to inquire about their morale and health and to encourage them whenever possible. His role as a leader orchestrating troops and strategy is also emphasized through multiple meetings with his lieutenants all along the movie. Nevertheless, he is always on the frontline and takes physical risks to obtain proper intelligence about the situation and

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<sup>239</sup> Later imprisoned and executed in 1947 in Yugoslavia

<sup>240</sup> TURAJIĆ, Mila (2010). "Cinema Komunisto."

to motivate his men. Tito also appears to be leading all aspects of his followers, both military and civilians as a real head of state. When, anew, columns need to move through escape encirclements, he oversees himself doctors in charge of displacements of wounded. He orders them to wash bands and injuries and to get ready to march again, interfering with technical details. The whole microcosm, incorporating both civilian and military, created around his personality is to follow his orders. He is aloof, lonely in his chief position conversely to other characters whose sentimental lives are exposed, he is in relationship with his people only. Other characters, albeit key, are relegated as mere backers of Tito, such as Sava Kovacevic, a famous communist and partisan chief killed during the battle and glorified in the movie. He simply follows the leader's orders and fall heroically in the battle.

Tito's international role is reinforced by diverse factors. First he is to receive a delegation of British officers who are to assess partisans' reliability against Axis forces. Her Majesty's officers are parachuted next to Tito's headquarters and are astonished by the high level of resistance and discipline offered by partisans. The scenes depict reality as many Special Operation Executives were to join Yugoslavs during the war, especially by 1943<sup>241</sup>. In the movie, reality is reflected when a bomb kills one of the British officer, Captain William Stuart, wounding also severely Tito and the head of British mission, Captain Deakin<sup>242</sup>. The latter, first sceptical about partisans' capacity to repel Nazis and their allies (in the movie he asks Tito whether it is worth struggling against such a superior enemy and unsurmountable obstacles, Tito replies to him "I have no right to stop the people fighting for their freedom"), realises that the organisation, tactics, and morale of partisans prevail over number and armament of their enemies. Deakin later informs Tito that British headquarters wish partisans "good luck" in their fight but cannot support them materially, revealing tragicomically uselessness of Allies. Tito's answer: "it's maybe better like that. When the war ends, we won't owe anyone anything" is a remarkable symbol of independence that characterised position of Yugoslavia on the international chessboard. It is also part of the (prevalently true) myth that partisans liberated their country without international support. Secondly, relationship with Stalin is also rapidly evoked. Moscow informs Tito, in his embattled headquarters – on the wall hangs a portrait

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<sup>241</sup> A lot of them have written their memories, often lauding Tito and his men, some accounts can be found in English at znaci.net, such as those of Basil Davidson (*Partisan picture*, 1946) and Fitzroy Maclean (*Eastern Approaches*, 1949)

<sup>242</sup> William Deakin also recorded his days with partisans in *The embattled mountain* (1971); he has been instrumental in convincing Churchill to send further missions (that of Maclean in November 1943) and to give support and supplies to the partisans instead of the then-backed Chetniks. More information can be found in his obituary in *The Telegraph*: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1481924/Sir-William-Deakin.html>

drawn with pencil of Lenin, that Comintern is about to be dissolved and ask about his opinion<sup>243</sup>. Tito's answer is positive, yet he also puts that "the central committee of the Yugoslav communist party still supports the ideas of internationalism", asserting his persistent views about the question and laying basis for later policies of non-alignment. British officers, before being dropped also joke about the likeliness of Tito having a moustache "like Stalin". Contrast is stunning to them when they discover the charismatic leader for the first time.

Political content of the movie is more widespread than in *Walter* or *Neretva* which probably indicates its increased importance at movie's release time, in 1973. The apparition of Tito also reinforces this trend as most political messages are passed by Tito or in his presence. Prior to a major battle, Tito reunites his men and ask communists to do a step a forward. To that order, a man replies to Tito: "We're all communists, now, Comrade Tito. You never split us before, why now?". This challenges the orthodox view that communism is a political doctrine bound to a given ideology (Marxist-Leninist, Stalinist, etc.); it unveils the true nature of *Titoism* which is closer to Asian interpretations of communism (including fair doses of nationalism, stemming from the historical struggle against imperialism that characterised the Yugoslav case). For Tito, every partisan then became communist by his fighting essence rather by than his subscription to political ideas. Some political commissars are also present amongst fighters demonstrating that communist organisation is supervising the movement. Secondly, there are several mentions of religion that mainly were absent from the previous movies. An orthodox pope is dropping his crucifix to seize weapons and fight begging the Lord: "if you exist, be on our side; if you don't, we'll manage". In addition to this "comrade priest", and old veiled lady, appalled by the lack of faith of young partisans, asks to the priest: "if they don't pray, in what do they believe in?", "in themselves, in all of us" the pope replies. The old lady then tells him that she prayed for her wounded husband but that he did not recover; she later found a photo of Stalin under his pillow. Religion is mocked upon but not very vehemently, as opposed, for example to North Korea where it was perceived as an extraneous entity. Tito's Yugoslavia remained quite tolerant towards religious activities after the break with Stalin and purges subsequent to liberation (as Catholic and Orthodox churches had collaborated massively with respectively Ustashi and Chetnik movements). The complex ethnical puzzle of Balkans is mainly defined by

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<sup>243</sup> It is quite unlikely that Stalin asked his opinion to whomever about this sort of decisions. This scene is probably only intended to boast about Tito's role in the internationalist movement.

religion, all peoples are of Slavonic ancestries<sup>244</sup>, speak roughly the same language and are only identified by their belonging to a faith.

Enemies are once again carrying out a total war. Their orders come directly from Hitler and they must annihilate everything “that lives”. All stratagems are good for that purpose: “poison the well, kill the wounded”. They use dogs to attack partisans and wounded and also to torture prisoners. Whilst a German colonel is agonising he urges his aid to break the silence with canons and dies, appeased. However, Nazis recognised that partisans “fight like wolves” and are defeated in close battle with bladed weapons by enraged Yugoslavs. When British officer asks Tito: “where is the front?”, answer is “wherever Germans are”, he then asks: “where are Germans?”, automatic reply is: “everywhere”.

The totality is not only by war’s means but also by its geographical scope, the war occupies all spaces and no peaceful, civilian life is possible as long as the enemy is not vanquished once and for good. Violence is not only shown in combats. It is also omnipresent in civilians’ life. Old ladies have to wash bands of wounded in the river that becomes red of blood. Surgeries have to be performed without anaesthesia, by female doctors, but people can “fight with one leg”. Yet, life is making its path through chants and dancing against to ward off calamities and boost morale.

Movement is also prominent in *Sutjeska*, columns getting displaced between woods, mountains and caves constantly. One soldier, hearing the news of a new movement interrogates himself: “Departure? Do we have another order in that army of ours?” Movement is to the detriment of wounded naturally, but also to that of armament, like artillery that cannot easily be carried along troops, despite its major role in struggling against panzers. Canons are therefore either destroyed, burnt, or buried in expectations of a hypothetical return.

*Sutjeska* is quite a unique film in which a living president choses a Hollywood actor to play his role. As for *Neretva*, funding the film has not been a problem as the state was backing the production. No further movies of that sort have been done afterwards hinting that the political gain of this movie has not matched expectations. Political message and cult of personality could hardly have been more prevalent and probably little remained to be said.

### 3.3.5 Conclusion on the Partisan movies for Yugoslavia

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<sup>244</sup> Except Albanians (in Kosovo, mainly) and other minorities such as Hungarians (in Northern Serbia); both areas had autonomous status within Yugoslavian Serbian Republic.

In Yugoslavia, partisan movie was undeniably a full-fledged genre. Dozens of such movies have been shot from the very one in the late 40's to the break-up of the country in the early 90's<sup>245</sup>. Starting with *Slavica* (1947) to current days, for they keep on being produced in the post-Yugoslavian countries, notably relatedly to the ethnic conflicts that erupted after the collapse of Tito's system, they contribute to set an "instructive example of film makers generating a national identity and 'history' though the medium of cinema<sup>246</sup>".

The pieces studied in this thesis are limited to a specific sub-genre, that of the so-called *red wave*, heavily buttressed by the regime and aimed at embodying its *raison d'être*, *Yugoslavism*, through glorification of its army, party and leader. The socialist ideology of a classless and nationless society is reaffirmed along with the foundational myth of that accompanied the nation-building efforts of Tito. This nation was intended to be constructed through a common struggle for humanity and justice during the war time, caring for the wounded during battles likes in *Neretva* and *Sutjeska* for example. Here the revolutionary objectives have been accomplished throughout the war period. However, not all partisan movies were endorsed by the regime and certain, notably those produced in the 60's under the so-called *black cinema* wave, representing a pessimist vision of the war and a not always rosy picture of partisans. Some of those movies were shelved, censored or simply banned<sup>247</sup> but others could be screened (sometimes only in few movie theatres only for a short period or only at film festivals) during more liberal periods.

A successful aspect of studied movies is the reception abroad. Both in capitalist and socialist countries, these movies obtained awards and sparked some interests. *Walter*, astonishingly became a great hit in China where it was viewed dozens of millions times; *Neretva* and *Sutjeska* obtained fame both in Western countries and in Socialist bloc, notably thanks to the international casting and a glamorisation of the genre. Little data is available about international distribution, particularly in Third World countries, and the impact it had on viewers there. Yet, the intention to "educate the World" was instrumental to these projects. It is therefore not possible to assess whether or not these movies fulfilled objectives of popularising Yugoslavia abroad.

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<sup>245</sup> HORTON, Andrew (1987). "The Rise and Fall of the Yugoslav Partisan Film: Cinematic Perceptions of a National Identity." *Film criticism* 12(2)., p21: Horton estimates that 180 "war films" were shot between 1947 and 1982, that is 20% of the total production. Out of those "war films", 50% where centred on partisans.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p18

<sup>247</sup> BATANCEV, Dragan (2012). "A Cinematic Battle: Three Yugoslav War Films from the 1960s."



Yugoslav partisan movies studied here correspond well to the expected framework of imposed on “top-down driven” artistic projects cherished by totalitarian regimes. They do not only fit the aesthetic aspects of a grandiose spectacle, dear to megalomaniac leaders, they also deliver a political messages (direct or indirect) intended to make viewers adhere to the regime’s ideology (collective heroic efforts, transcendence of classes, ethnicities and religions, infallibility and magnanimity of the leader, etc.). Lack of finesse of those movies, and outdated clichés conveyed about partisans and the war failed certainly to offset the socio-economic problems that started to arise by the end of the 60’s. This is notably true in the lack of depth with regards to the development of characters. The emphasize is either put on the collective effort or on the leader himself, but few other characters, tormented by the woes of the war, are to be found in the movies. Instead, charismatic actors, both Yugoslav and foreigners, perform too polished, flat, heroes. Absence of subtlety characterises particularly those movies but not necessarily all partisan movies (those representative of black cinema, notably). Horton also argues that “the movies ceased to be Yugoslav” due to the intention of selling them abroad and presence of foreign actors, in which Yugoslav could not identify themselves<sup>248</sup>.

Rather than people, an expected exaltation of the land of Yugoslavia (cities, villages, mountains, forests, rivers, etc.) fulfils the telluric character of partisans. As Miranda Jakisa argues it, the endless marches operate a reconfiguration of the space.

“The partisan feature of ‘telluric’ (earth-close) warfare was translated into cinematic images and, once there, convinced representative of the official sphere [...] as well as broad audiences. Partisan film [...] re-configured the notion of homeland and of national territory from Slovenia to Macedonia by exploiting the motives of *partisan ground level movement* and of partisan *strategic edge of terrain knowledge*. The ‘telluric’ ideas presented in partisan films – such as originating locally from the country, defending one’s own homes from out of the underground and staying in touch with earth – were gradually expanded and adjusted to a bigger home unit named ‘Jugoslavija’, thus establishing and imagined common space.”<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> HORTON, Andrew (1987). "The Rise and Fall of the Yugoslav Partisan Film: Cinematic Perceptions of a National Identity." *Film criticism* 12(2)., p21-23

<sup>249</sup> JAKISA, Miranda (2010). "Down to earth partisan: fashioning of YU-space in partisan film." *KINO!*, p2 Italic in original text.

Specificities of the terrain and of the guerrilla tactics also got resonance on Yugoslav People's Army: despite the nature of the army (regular standing army), guerrilla tactics were favoured and *hajduk* got revered<sup>250</sup>.

Despite the mix reception and accusations of wasting state funds that welcomed the most expensive pieces, they contributed to shape the collective memory of this period, notably for the generations that have not endured the war. The representation of the war through lavishly and realistically reproduced battles has a tremendous impact on imagination; people that have not actually lived those events will remember it through this orchestration of spectacle. People who experienced the war first-hand have their reminiscence altered by the reproduction of these episodes on celluloid film<sup>251</sup>. In Yugoslavia and in "ex-Yu", the myth of partisan has been transcribed in a quasi "imagined community" with a reasonable success.

The combination of a defined "imagined common space" ('Jugoslavija') along with the attempt to forge an "imagined communities" of partisans (in the broad sense of the term, including both civil and military population under the rule of Tito while besieged by fascists) was the essence of Tito's *Yugoslavism*. This social construction failed to sustain the regime and make the people adhere to its ideology. This could only work under Tito's iron fist but the bases of the nation-making were too recent to maintain cohesion throughout social and economic challenges: tensions between republics and ethnicities stirred up, pointing out *the other* as culprit to problems.

The downfall of Yugoslavia and the subsequent civil wars are the ultimate evidences of Tito's failure to bring together peoples in an "artificial nation". Strangely, the concept of partisan and its representation in films did not die with Yugoslavia. Some movies use a parallel between WWII and wars in Bosnia and in other parts of the ex-Yugoslavia, for example, *the living and the dead* (2007) in which combatants of the civil war of the 90's live an experience similar to that of their grandparents during WWII<sup>252</sup>. Also, a great deal of academic literature has been published about cinema production of different nations, that is using the ethnic crucible to analyse movies

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid., p7: *Hajduk* were irregular fighters, sometimes mere bandits, struggling against Ottomans

<sup>251</sup> KIRIN, Renata JAMBRESIC (2004). "The politics of memory in Croatian socialist culture.", p9

<sup>252</sup> GILIC, Nikita (2011). "Kristijan Milić, *The Living and the Dead*." [KinoKultura](#).

produced during Yugoslavia and after its demise, notably relating to partisan genre, for example in Slovenia<sup>253</sup>, Croatia<sup>254255</sup> or Bosnia<sup>256</sup>.

### 3.4 DPRK

#### 3.4.1 Choice of movies

The two movies<sup>257</sup>, *The river flows* and *Five guerrilla brothers*<sup>258</sup> were selected for several reasons. The first one being based on pure pragmatic reason: accessibility. Most North Korean movies are hardly accessible despite several Seoul-based institutions such as the North Korean documentation centre hosted in the Central National Library or the North Korean department of Kyungnam University, among others. Even those places do not own some of the classical movies, not to say less famous pieces. Internet helped a lot as since few years a lot of movies are now available online either on mainstream video content sites<sup>259</sup>. Secondly, the movies were selected according to the particular period and conditions they were produced. Both films were directed in the late 60's, an era, as we have seen, that saw the appearance of the "rising son", as Suh Daesook half-jokingly calls Kim Jong Il. Both movies were also produced under Kim junior's direct influence according to his cinematographic tenets. Both share the same purpose of partisans' mythification, despite some nuances as it will be explained. They are part and representative of the efforts of establishing a "revolutionary tradition" in North Korea in order to consolidate leadership of the Kims. Also, if *Five guerrilla brothers* has a certain degree of fame it has been little studied broadly, whereas other canonical movies such as *A sea of blood* and *Flower girl* have been discussed in depth by scholars. As for *The river flows*, not a single study and only few references were found about this movie, despite its interesting features. Lastly, both depict partisans' life broadly, their time in the forest and camps and therefore are abundant in iconographic information.

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<sup>253</sup> STANKOVIĆ, Peter (2007). "Constructs of Slovenianness in Slovenian partisan films."

<sup>254</sup> ŠKRABALO, Ivo (2011). "Croatian Film in the Yugoslav Context in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century." KinoKultura.

<sup>255</sup> PAVICIC, Jurica *ibid*. "From a Cinema of Hatred to a Cinema of Consciousness Croatian Film after Yugoslavia."

<sup>256</sup> JOVANOVIĆ, Nebojsa (2012). "Bosnian cinema in the socialist Yugoslavia and the anti-Yugoslavia backlash." *Ibid*.

<sup>257</sup> I decided to only select two North Korean films rather than three for other countries due to the extreme length and riches of *Five guerrilla brothers*.

<sup>258</sup> Both movies' transcript of dialogue can be found in: 조선영화문학선집, 5

<sup>259</sup> such as Youtube or on North Korea-run website kmvc5.com where pay-per-download grants access to thousands of research material.

### 3.4.2 The river flows

Little is known about the genesis of *The river flows*, as is often the case in North Korea, we mainly have to speculate. No credits are given in the movie and few information are available in the literature. We only know that the plot has been written by Yu Jeong Hyeok and that the movie was produced in 1967 by the studio "2.8"<sup>260</sup>. The name of the director remains unknown and it is probably a collective work, probably under the direct supervision of Kim Jong Il. Yet, *The river flows* is a classical of Socialist Realism *à la* Kim Jong Il.

The story narrates the life of Seongnyeo, her progressive interest and understanding of the revolutionary spirit and her involvement in the resistance movement, notably joining a guerrilla camp nested in the mountains. The plot evolves according to the same old formula: the hero/heroine faces injustice due to imperialism/capitalism, meets a mentor already class-conscious who teaches him/her the basic tenets of the socialism and through work and struggle progressively becomes a revolutionary until he/she in his/her turn becomes the mentor of others.

The movie starts by a running Seongnyeo chased by a mischievous Korean landlord on a horse-cart. Seongnyeo is cornered and has little choice: she must perish jumping from a cliff in a river or surrender to the evil-intentioned landlord. She chose the first solution and we believe her dead. She is actually rescued and cured slowly by a gentle family of Korean peasants. Seongnyeo tells her plight to the careful Gumseon, who heads the family as her husband is missing. Through some well-managed flashbacks, Seongnyeo recalls the arrival and looting of Japanese that killed her father. She was then sold to the Korean landlord to reimburse her father's debts and escaped and finally jumped into the river. Gumseon takes her under her wings and starts teaching her about the general Kim Il Sung and the imminent Korean revolution. Gumseon is indeed a passionate revolutionary and involved in Korea's liberation actions.

The next scenes are catalytic of Seongnyeo's revolutionary awareness. She first goes and work in a pasture picking up herbs with Gumseon and other ladies, all of them extremely neatly dressed. The atmosphere is warm and joyous under a blissful sun. She then suddenly asks what gender equality means triggering some laughter from her peers. Gumseon explains her that everyone has duties in a revolutionary society, that the gender equality means that both men and women have to struggle to free their motherland. They then burst into a song, recurring in the movie, both sung and played as background music. The main refrain says: *In a rights-constrained capitalist*

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<sup>260</sup> LEE, Myungja (2005). "History of North Korean cinema.", p209

*societies, the red flowers of our youth cannot blossom* and keeps on a bit further on a similar vein: *we, women comrades, let us wake up and get rid of bourgeoisie*. The content of the theme is clear enough, really socialist-oriented and not much tainted with nationalism or even localism<sup>261</sup>, if one excepts Kim Il Sung as leader of the struggle. The second learning from Gumseon is that revolution can be waged by labour. Together with Seongnyeo, they remove the husk from the rice and Seongnyeo keeps on doing so until dawn singing the “red flowers” song. Gumseon found out at sunrise that Seongnyeo spent the night working and they enjoy together sunrise. Gumseon then tells that the general Kim Il Sung will come as sure as the sun comes every morning. Kim Il Sung is not the real name of the North Korean leader, as numerous partisans, especially in the secretive milieu of communists, Il Sung is just a nom de guerre chosen in the mid-30’s. “Il Sung” means “to become the sun” and the North Korean leader was also compared as the sun of the nation. The allegory is therefore very clear and quite heavy-handed.

Gumseon and Seongnyeo then go the city, a small neighbouring town, to visit a comrade, perhaps a party cadre. The contrast is striking between the village and fields, where purity and warmth of people is omnipresent, and the nasty and dirty city where Korean men are dressed in western costume, sport a moustache and women wear Japanese kimono. Seongnyeo spots the landlord she was sold to, a smoking dilettante in his horse-cart, on his way to meet the Japanese commander of the area. Japanese decided to mobilise local people to organise a festival with a wrestling tournament in order to address to them with a speech. We then find out that Gumseon is actually quite highly ranked in the local party and she decides to take advantage of this important rally to print and distribute pamphlets.

The festival is indeed a massive gathering of people and a good opportunity for communists to spread their message. They toss their propaganda tracts during the official speech provoking wrath amongst Japanese commandment. At the same time, an arson is committed in the town. Japanese try to arrest culprits but no one would denounce them; they therefore decide to take hostages and threaten to execute them. Gumseon finally admits her responsibility and shoots the Japanese officer. She then talks to the crowd and convince them that the general Kim Il Sung will come to free them; she compares the resistance as the flow of the river: it cannot be stopped and

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<sup>261</sup> The full text can be found there: <http://m.tongilnews.com/articleView.html?idxno=97873&menu=1>. This article says that the song was popular and could be heard often on the radio.

will keep on running. She is shot by Japanese shouting “Long live to Kim Il Sung, long life to Korean revolution” on her lips.

Seongnyeo is distressed by the death of her mentor and friend and decides to flee and join the partisans. She goes and meet a friend a Gumseon, Yoonsam, an herb dealer. He saves her from a trap and finally takes her to the forest where they finally arrive to a partisan camp. What strikes the audience at first sight is the high degree of organisation of the camp: children parade chanting everyone is neatly dressed with uniforms and well equipped with weapons. The head of the camp, a political commissar, allows Seongnyeo to stay but refuses her to go and take with her Gumseon’s young boy. We learn that the political commissar is actually the father of this boy. Seongnyeo becomes a full-fledge partisan, she is taught socialist theory and she is assigned to work on a sewing machine and at times collective laundry. Her metamorphosis is total, her long hairs are cut and her traditional Korean outfit, a *hanbok*, is replaced by a uniform and a cap.

The base is then attacked by Japanese forces and Seongnyeo manages to save and hide her sewing machine. She also creates a diversion and prevents Japanese from chasing her comrades. During a gallant fight she is wounded but this episode only confirms her faith in the mission to drive the occupier out. She gets back her sewing machine and her comrades thank her. More partisan forces had arrived and wiped out the Japanese platoon. Yet, they have to withdraw further in the woods.

The last part of the movie shows some disconnected voiceless actions with a lively musical background. We see partisans’ operations taking back villages and town, Seongnyeo in charge of education of peasants, printing more pamphlets and distributing them in factories and fields. She has become a new Gumseon. She accepts to seize the helping hand of Yoonsam while climbing some rocks. She had refused before becoming partisan. Through the fight and the guerrilla practice, she now had become the equal of men. The last feat is the capture of a cargo of rice from the landlord she was first sold to. The operation is a success but a collaborator warned the Japanese and a squadron of cavalry is dispatched to chase Seongnyeo. During the final battle, she executes the Japanese officer who falls in the river, the same place she did at the beginning of the movie.

As seen, the political message conveyed throughout the movie is unequivocal, it calls people – the populace –, to rebel under the guidance of Kim Il Sung to attain a liberated Korea, liberated not only from the Japanese yoke but also from the oppression of landlords and capitalist class. Seongnyeo’s awakening is archetypal of the genre; the only local touch is indeed the role of Kim Il Sung who is embodying the

revolutionary struggle. The reasons of the fight are obvious to the mass: it is a principle of sheer justice that drives them into armed struggle.

Characters are well divided with little room for nuances. On one hand, the people are united with their leader. Kim Il Sung himself does not appear in the movie but is hovering over all the partisan and populace actions. Elders discuss about him; his election as head of the regional partisan movement is celebrated in the forest; his name appears on pamphlets; and finally, his quasi-deification as the sun (a later movie will depict him as the Star of Korea). On the other side, there is no distinction between collaborators and Japanese. Both are equally despised and perhaps collaborators are even more vilified as traitor to the nation. No room for redemption is offered to them. Both the Japanese commanding officer and the Korean landlord will perish, shot by a revengeful Seongnyeo.

The Motherland is idealised and re-casted in a bucolic way. City is synonym to vice and perversion, we see charlatan at the market, elite class is gambling, smoking and drinking. City is the locus of Japanese and collaborators whereas countryside is that of peasant and populace. The river, and its extended metaphor along the movie (representing the combat, the virtuous struggle and the forces of History that cannot be stopped) also plays a major role: Seongnyeo's fall reveals her the way and her new life as a partisan whereas the enemies, such as the Japanese officer faces his death in the river. The forest where the partisans are hiding is across the river, a massive bridge has to be crossed to reach it. This river could be the border between Korea and Manchuria as partisans were often hidden in less tightly controlled Manchurian forests and occasionally indulged into incursions across the border. Nothing is sure about this though. The forest itself is used to protect partisans, to feed them, to train and get prepared for assaults. Life is clearly idealised and romanticised in the camp. A frank spirit of comradeship pervades. The camp itself is a utopia, a caricature of North Korea: people are to fight and work hard, a rifle always next to them. Life is pleasant but the enemy is next door.

One has little idea about the real effect of *The river flows* on the North Korean audience. This movie is representative of this period and we can only speculate it had a certain success. The effigy of Kim Il Sung is progressively being erected and its deeds, and those of partisans – whoever they were as no other historical figures are mentioned at all<sup>262</sup> - were mythologised.

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<sup>262</sup> Which is particularly important as at this period the Gapsan faction was being purged. Gapsan faction was composed of some of the Kim's partisans.

### 3.4.3 Five Guerrilla Brothers

*Five guerrilla brothers* (1968) is a six-hour epic produced directly under the umbrella of Kim Jong Il through the Paekdu Mount Production Unit. It seems that the movie has been directed by Choi Ik-kyu, one of Kim's favourite artist. Choi gradually, despite a rollercoaster career, rose the ladder and has been appointed in 2009 head of cinema department of the KWP to be dismissed and probably put in forced retirement the next year<sup>263</sup>. The movie, split in three parts (actually four as the second part is also composed of two sub-parts), has been praised by Kim Jong Il as a "masterpiece because [it] depict[s] the essence of the revolutionary struggle [...] following some historical events<sup>264</sup>".

Indeed the movie is staging the life of the five brothers Oh<sup>265</sup> during their anti-Japanese struggle from 1933 to 1939. The names are slightly different but inspired loosely on Oh Jung Hup's story<sup>266</sup>. Oh Jung Hup was one of the closest friend and ally of Kim Il Sung during the Manchurian heydays. He died in November 1939 during a raid. In his memoirs<sup>267</sup>, Kim Il Sung spares no praises about his faithful lieutenant, a model, always putting revolution (therefore Kim Il Sung) first and ready to sacrifice to protect and help his men<sup>268</sup>.

The movie itself is far too long to be fully recounted here. Also, it is worthwhile noting that numerous passages are repeated, if not ritualized. The movie itself is monotonous and lacks the vividness offered by *The river flows*. The whole story could have been condensed in two hours, if not less. This extreme length is probably related to the phenomenon of Kim Il Sung's *Memoirs*, an epic narrative of 20 tomes<sup>269</sup>, stretching over not less than two thousands of pages for its English version from 1932 to the end of the anti-Japanese war. As Carl Schmidt put it in 1962: "[War and Peace]

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<sup>263</sup> [http://unibook.unikorea.go.kr/?sub\\_num=54&sty=1&ste=%A4%BA&state=view&idx=374](http://unibook.unikorea.go.kr/?sub_num=54&sty=1&ste=%A4%BA&state=view&idx=374)

<sup>264</sup> KIM, Jong Il (1986). "Life and literature.", p79-80

<sup>265</sup> "Oh" is both the family name and also means "five" in Korean. There are indeed 5 brothers of the family Oh but this seems to be a coincidence as Sino-Korean characters do not match. This time, conversely to *The river flows*, "historic" figures such as Oh Jung Hup are mentioned but they had the modesty to be already dead.

<sup>266</sup> Oh Jung Hup's nephew, Oh Guk Ryeol was appointed in 2009 vice head of the National Defense Commission, the head was then Kim Jong Il.

<sup>267</sup> Memoirs is a fruit of a collective work, it is not really what we could call an autobiography.

<sup>268</sup> KIM, Il Sung (2003). "Kim Il Sung memoirs, with the century.". p1718-1729: Kim Il sung recasts memories of Oh Jung Hup.

<sup>269</sup> I refer here to an English edition published in 2003. 5 tomes out of 24 are counting Kim Il Sung's life prior to 1932. An extra tome has been published in 2012.



disposes of more mythic power than any political doctrine or documented history". He had not read Kim Il Sung's exploits.

## Part 1

*Five guerrilla brothers* thus tells us about the life of five brothers involved with some guerrilla group: Junha (rather a cousin than a brother), Junhyeok (the elder brother played by the iconic North Korean actor and director Eom Gilseon<sup>270</sup>), Junmin, Junho and Junshik. The film starts in woods surrounding a small and peaceful village, probably somewhere in North Korea. Junha, the head of a partisan detachment comes back from the headquarters, that is from Kim Il Sung base. The leader is never directly depicted in the movie but his name is constantly invoked and often we have these indirect accounts about him from all the characters that comes to meet him, bringing either news or conveying greetings from the General. We later come back often to this village as the father of the brothers resides there with his grandson and Junha's wife. Villagers live there in harmony, they are hard-working and organised but they lead a free and happy life. Children are militarized and parade chanting martial revolutionary songs under the guidance of Junshik, the youngest brother who teaches in the local school.

There are some political talks about repelling Japanese and the latest deeds of the General. Elders and community leaders are involved in the discussions. The sun rises in the morning, bringing hopes that the General will liberate the country. The village is known as a nest of rebels, Japanese therefore send a punitive strike on it forcing its population to flee only to come back later. Education is a recurrent theme of the movie, not only for children but also for civil adults and for soldiers. Education presents two main aspects: on the one hand, revolutionary and patriotic lessons (for instance, adults are invited to ruminate over the importance of Korean's earth and sea; children to chant songs to the glory of the General) and on the other, military training (adults learn how to shoot, to march; children also learn how to shoot and how to make guns).

Life in the camp and village are described broadly<sup>271</sup>, again idealized and aimed at bringing closer daily life in North Korea and the glorious struggle of General Kim Il Sung.

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<sup>270</sup> Part of the Paekdu Mount Production Unit, he kept on performing in major productions such as the 10 episodes of "The Star of Korea" in the 80's. He also directed some important movies such as *An Jung-gun Shoots Ito Hirobumi* (1979). He received Kim Il Sung prize in 1980.

<sup>271</sup> KIM, Jong Il (1973). "On the art of the cinema.", p43: Kim Jong Il insists on the importance of showing daily life of partisans rather than focusing on combats and marches.

Soldiers are picking up food (ladies and children), cooking, eating, even harvesting. This last episode is carried out with civilians as a *speed campaign* (*seokdojeon*). Again, the parallel with the daily civil life of North Koreans is palpable: the revolutionary struggle of the construction of Communism is equated to the anti-Japanese struggle. As Kim Jong Il put it in his treatise on cinema: “life is struggle and struggle is life<sup>272</sup>”. There are also a lot of details related to the dances and, above all, chants<sup>273</sup>. Partisans are also composed by a lot of women and children. The atmosphere is good-natured, people laugh, joke and imitate chiefs or Japanese. We are very far from the plight we imagine the partisans endured during their life.

The enemy is commonly mocked: Junhyeok, in a reckless move, manages to steal some rifles from a dumb Japanese soldier resorting to some cheap tricks. He is then scolded by Junha as he took risks without order. Discipline is put as a cardinal value for partisans. This can be perceived also as a way to inculcate it to North Korean in their daily life: do not take any responsibility, simply follow orders. Junhyeok is continuously being trained by Junha who is more class-conscious coming from a poorer background. We see him maturing through the movie and becoming a new Junha. This process is similar to the one of Seongnyeo replacing Gumseon. It is no coincidence Gumseon and Junha ends both executed by Japanese, both showing fidelity to the Korean cause and its leader until the last moment. The first part ends with the announcement of Junha’s death followed by the end of training of Junhyeok’s batch of partisans.

## Part 2

Part 2 of the movie is composed of two sub-parts. The narrative is very similar with the first part and it brings more in depth insights about the supposed life in camp, at least what the official history is about partisans’ struggle.

All the aspects mentioned in the first part are reiterated, such as the martial, military spirit (partisans remount weapons blindfolded, repel Japanese attack, and so on). The core of the plot is the attack and ousting of a Japanese garrison of the village. This is rendered possible, again, thanks to some festival of wrestling, a propitious moment to gather people. Partisans get disguised and after neutralizing the watchtower assail the town and get rid of Japanese.

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid., p41

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., p238: Kim Kong Il mentions importance of dance and songs. These songs became quite popular and were sung by people on various occasions.

Even more than in the first part, festivals, dances, playing of folkloric music and songs are portrayed in the liberated town. Atmosphere is joyful and even a soccer match is organised. One can only surmise about the reason of this soccer match, a not very orthodox “Korean sport” for the regime’s ideology which favours rather traditional, national sports such as wrestling. It probably sought to refer to the remarkable performance of North Korean team during the 1966 World Cup. The cheerful partisans flirt also a bit, try to capture a baby deer to amuse ladies and so on.

Tragic aspect is well too fast to surface: during the movie, a long excerpt of the play *A sea of blood* is performed in front of hundreds of villagers recalling their own martyrdom. *A sea of blood* is a classical play and opera of the revolutionary tradition (one of the great 5 operas), allegedly written by Kim Il Sung in the 30’s. It became the emblematic film of the late 60’s under the influence of Kim Jong Il. The first sub-part then is concluded by a short attack of Japanese swiftly repelled. They steal could burn the village and the young son of Junha disappeared.

The guerrilla is involved in reparation of the village, notably in restoration of the school. Pupils are told that the text books were even made by the partisans, fiction is not very far of truth in North Korea. Long scenes of amusements and flirts in the wood but they result only in bitterness due to flashbacks evoking pains inflicted by the occupier. Japanese and a landlord annoy the brothers’ father and Junha’s wife. Partisans come to rescue, sent by the General Himself. Back in the forest, life is simple but happy; men cut wood, women also work there, they sew, like Seongnyeo in *The river flows*. Upon a Japanese attack, they all strive to bring with them, at high risk, their means of production. They do some propaganda work, preparing and distributing tracts to people living in towns and villages. The second part ends with a decision to depart to join headquarter. We do not learn exactly where it is located but we can imagine it is farther in the mountain and forest.

### **Part 3**

The last part of the movie starts with the encouraging news of Kim Il Sung’s raid on *Poch’eonbo*. We mentioned this episode in the historical background part, though relatively modest, it is the single most important victory over Japanese by partisans. The news is spread through newspapers and talks. Then we are thrown back to the bucolic life in the camp. Long scrolling allows us to admire the beautiful and plentiful forest, an allegory to the country, literally a womb where people are protected and fed. The forest is also a giant outdoor factory where comrades work hard, women sew uniforms, men prepare dough for cooking; they also play and are cheerful, again the forest is represented as an ideal place where harmony and joy prevail. New women

partisans join and they need to get their hairs cut and change their *hanbok* for a military uniform. Back in town, the professor was telling his students that there are a lot of female comrades among the guerrilla, which is historically speaking a fallacy. Soldiers get some military and political training in a field. As it is too complicated to study canons of Marxism-Leninism, the commandant proposes to sing a patriotic song to the glory of the General, rather. Needless to say, all soldiers are glad to sing.

Then the action takes off: in order to lure the Japanese punitive forces far from the headquarters, a long march campaign is started. This episode, recalled as the Arduous March alludes to historical but distorted facts. The Arduous March was actually led by Kim Il Sung during the Winter 1938-39 when he was closely tailed by Japanese forces. He and his men managed to escape but a lot of them perished, notably due to the harsh Manchurian winter and the malnourishment. In the movie, the distortion is operated so that the Oh brothers actually go through the Arduous March also. They sometimes stop and take advantage of some informers to mount an attack against a regiment of Japanese, gorging and drinking in a close city. They then loot and distribute goods to the local inhabitants. During the ensuing battle with Japanese rescue forces, Junho is wounded. He will recover later thanks to the care of his family and friends.

The rest of the third part is composed of more marching in the snow with regular pauses and life in difficult conditions. They still have opportunities to get education, about geography notably and use it as a pretext to make pun and fun about the name "America" and "Canada". When in camps, humour is omnipresent, as soon as they are in contact with the city, Japanese are never far for too long. They then attack anew a village and withdraw back in the forest. Vicious Japanese try to poison them with salt. They also deport Korean people by train, back in the city. Again, the contrast forest versus city is blatant. A last attack carried out by the punitive forces is repelled thanks to the intervention of the headquarters. The victory is total and recast some part of historical truth. The different detachments meet and enjoy the end of the Arduous March. They then hold the May 1<sup>st</sup> festival, the only reference to the international revolutionary movement. Everyone is united and celebrate. Except the father who stayed with Junha's son, but "they are doing well". The General also is absent but without troubles. Junhyeok conveys to the assembly of partisans that they need to continue the struggle with the General until Japanese imperialism is defeated and the country liberated. The movie ends on flashbacks in Junhyeok's memory (Junha, his father, his brothers, the harvest, the days in the forest) while the song "under the red flag" is played. Junhyeok finally keeps on walking with his troops.

*Five guerrilla brothers* is an archetypal saga based on partisans' struggle. It received the People's Prize<sup>274</sup> and is mentioned as an example several times by Kim Jong Il in his speeches and treatises on cinema. The story of the Oh brothers is a good "seed" according to Kim's theory; and the partisans' heydays are full of such seeds capable of generating great pieces. The movie itself is more cheerful, full of humour (though, one might not find some humoristic attempts very convincing) than tragic and ripe with repetitions (of scenes, of dialogues and so on). This effect is not produced by chance: it is sought by Kim Jong Il's desire to represent mainly real life of people and not focusing only on military aspects of the struggle<sup>275</sup>.

The action and period are not extremely coherent as we do not see much characters grow older. The time scale is handled as a mythical time rather than a real one. The natural ageing is replaced by the revolutionary maturing of Junhyeok and his brothers. They became moulded as revolutionary men, avoiding their youth's insouciance and recklessness: several times they are chided because of some imprudent heroic action. These deeds are aimed at seizing weapons, mainly and are carried out in an individualistic fashion, without coordination and putting them at risk potentially. The more they mature, the more they understand the importance of collective actions under the leaders.

It is also worth noting the little reference to the class warfare in the movie. No "bad" Korean characters appear, conversely to *The river flows* that was showing a landlord and few other collaborators. The movie is more anti-colonial than communist internationalist<sup>276</sup>. The motherland is a sanctuary from where enemies (foreigners) should be expelled. In the movie, the forest and the camp can also be interpreted as an allegory for the motherland that feeds and protects you under the guidance of the Great Leader. This paternalistic figure is physically missing but his presence is constantly repeated. He gives orders and greetings by proxy: protagonists meet with him and report what he said. Finally, the main message is that of sacrifice for the General: the whole *Arduous March* is portrayed as a heroic decoy to protect the Great Leader, at high price.

#### 3.4.4 Conclusion for North Korea

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<sup>274</sup> SCHONHERR, Johannes (2012). "North Korean Cinema, a history.", p47

<sup>275</sup> KIM, Jong Il (1968). "A talk to the officials in charge of the cinematic art.", p2

<sup>276</sup> KIM, Kyunghyun (1996). "The fractured cinema of North Korea: the discourse of the nation in Sea of blood." in 'Pursuit of contemporary East Asian culture' (edited by Xiaobing Tang and Stephen Snyder), p99: Kyunghyun Kim remarks similar aspect in Sea of blood, perhaps the most famous classical movie of this period.

As Japanese leading historian on Kim Il Sung Manchurian days, Wada Haruki puts it: “anti-Japanese struggle in Manchuria is the alpha and the omega of DPRK ideology, official doctrine<sup>277</sup>”. The Biblical origin of this expression is certainly well-tailored to describe the quasi-religious aspects of North Korea’s relation with its leader. This deification of the Leader is tangible in the studied movies. Metaphor with the Rising Sun (Gumseon and Seongnyeo after a night of revolutionary labour) and the mystical aspect of all direct or indirect encounters with the leader (the Oh brothers) participate in the elaboration of a supernatural, infallible and infinitely benevolent, Supreme Being. Naturally, this supremacy was the reason a dynasty could be created, legitimating the filial succession. There have been several arguments about the Confucianist dimension (Kim Il Sung being an ultimate paternal figure for the whole nation) of the North Korean leadership and on the use, conscious or not, of Christendom’s elements in the North Korean ideology. Both supporting the messianic leader and the logical legacy of his lineage<sup>278</sup>.

These movies therefore contributed in the elaboration of a myth who is rather that of the leader than that of the partisans. The partisans being simply a background epiphenomenon: the myth could have been built (only) about the Korean War, had it be more appropriate. In order to have citizens adhere to this myth, an “invented revolutionary tradition” has been adopted and its cult routinized. Cinema being “a powerful ideological weapon for the revolution” as Kim Jong Il noted it<sup>279</sup>. In order to become full-fledge, convinced revolutionaries, North Koreans have to “mature” through struggle<sup>280</sup>. The transposition and replaceability of characters is achieved through revolutionary maturation: Junhyeok becoming Junha and Seongnyeo, Gumseon. This simple repeated message is buttressed by flashbacks, for example in *Five guerrilla brothers* where Junhyeok recalls fraternal teachings and heroic deeds of Junha.

The scope of struggle is not, naturally, only limited to military actions<sup>281</sup>. The primordial importance of labour in the movies shows the path to follow in order to become a real revolutionary. Not only women like Gumseon and Seongnyeo keep

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<sup>277</sup> HARUKI, Wada (1998). "Kita Chosen: yugekitai kokka no genzai [North Korea: The Guerrilla-Band State's Current Situation].", p37

<sup>278</sup> Kim Jong Il’s legitimacy is not only derived from that of his father; his mother, Kim Jong Suk, benefited of a dedicated cult also. She is the foremost female partisan character lauded by the regime, notably because of her fidelity and support towards Kim Il Sung.

<sup>279</sup> KIM, Jong Il (1973). "On the art of the cinema.", p2

<sup>280</sup> KIM, Jong Il (1986). "Life and literature.", p84

<sup>281</sup> KIM, Jong Il (1968). "A talk to the officials in charge of the cinematic art.", p2: it is rather the opposite, scenes of battles and of marches are quite limited, according to the tenets put forward by Kim Jong Il.

working both in the village and after having joined the partisan camp (daily tasks of Seongnyeo is to sew uniforms), but also men are not only soldiers: the Oh brothers participate in harvest, in cooking and in education of their peers, regardless of their military rank. The voluntaristic aspect of North Korean ideology shows that all men can change through struggle and labour. This probably can be applicable to all aspects of North Korean society and explain the belief in extreme methods such as permanent indoctrination and labour camps. A “new revolutionary man” can arise from anyone. Again, as Kim Jong Il told it to a gathering of officials in charge of the cinematic industry: “character is not immutable” and it can be modified, moulded, through “social praxis<sup>282</sup>”. We are here very close to Stalin’s “engineers of soul”. This notion of unlimited malleability of the human mind entails its replaceability as a “raw material” among others. Arendt notes justly that the impossible mission of the total domination is to engender identical human beings, that is to say beings reacting the same way and that can be interchanged infinitely. “The problem is”, she pursues, “to fabricate something that does not exist, a sort of human species that resembles other animal species and which only ‘freedom’ would consist in ‘preserving the species’”<sup>283</sup>. In the case of North Korea, that conflates with what Bruce Cumings deems to be the only right proper to North Korea, and which is denied in South, that of being Korean.

This right of being Korean is to be associated as the right to live in Korea. In partisan movies, the country is split in two: the city, occupied by Japanese and landlords (an allegory of today’s South Korea), full of vices and frustration for Koreans, and the forest, nestled in mountains: pure and where life is blissful (an allegory of North Korea). The forest is feeding, hosting and protecting Koreans under “the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader” as Bradley K. Martin put it. It can be compared to a womb where the nation is maturing before achieving its definitive birth. The problem is that birth is impeded by foreign forces: Japanese during the imperial time and Americans who are, according to North Korea, occupying the South until now. The result of the split-nation is what Kyunghyun Kim calls a “fractured cinema”<sup>284</sup>. An imperfect cinema where movies cannot end fully in happiness: the theme of Manchurian struggle never result in the total victory over the enemy. There are recurrent scenes of working people in the forest, especially in some makeshift factories (notably textile related tasks for women), this completes the allegory of the forest as North Korea: a utopian

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid., p2

<sup>283</sup> ARENDT, Hannah (1958). "Le système totalitaire (les origines du totalitarisme).", p243: Arendt notably quotes Hitler: “A fly lays millions of eggs, they all perish. But flies remain”.

<sup>284</sup> KIM, Kyunghyun (1996). "The fractured cinema of North Korea: the discourse of the nation in Sea of blood." in 'Pursuit of contemporary East Asian culture' (edited by Xiaobing Tang and Stephen Snyder)., p99

bucolic place where workers struggle and drill to achieve revolution; alas, some parts of the country are not fully liberated and this frustrates but also drives Koreans to sacrifice and fidelity towards their leader. The fact that this “autochthonous sentiment or the homeland<sup>285</sup>” is actually displaced in Manchuria matters little as the spatial and time dimension are mythical. It could even be a way to purify Kim Il Sung from the stains his Japanese-occupied country, as Kim Sukyoung puts it: “by deterritorializing the locus of the nation, Kim could disassociate himself from the national humiliation under colonial rule and place himself in diametrical opposition to the collaborators with the Japanese<sup>286</sup>”.

In North Korea “culture is approached exactly like industry, with great stress on productive output and bureaucratic control”<sup>287</sup>. The state owns not only the monopoly of cultural production but also of distribution, meaning that cinema and literature need to be endorsed by the regime to be watched or read. This helped to forge a *weltanschung* for North Koreans totally in agreement with the official ideology. Totalitarian ideologies cannot tolerate competition and there subtleties and nuances are totally banned. There is no redemption for enemies (Japanese or American). Permanent revisionism and rewriting of official history is operated to obliterate names of purged elements or according to current geopolitical situation. For example, the Korean War has been another element of traumatism for North Korea, ripe with “seeds” to vilify new enemies (Americans) and extol exploits of the Korean people and its leader. It is interesting to note that the theme has been blurred with that of the anti-Japanese struggle. This mixture, has, for instance, created some partisan movies related to Korean War. *Children Partisans* (1986) is an example where children are staged to build a resistance movement, similarly to the soviet movie *Young Guard*, against Americans during the Korean War. USSR and People’s Republic of China were victim of this censorship but later some movies were permitted to mention their role in liberation of Korea, although in an attenuated way, notably through co-productions like *From Spring to Summer* (1988) in which Russians help Koreans to thwart a Japanese machination.

If Armstrong sees in the anti-Japanese struggle the “foundational myth of the DPRK”, that is “the creation of an independent socialist state with little or no outside assistance, Kim Il Sung as agent and embodiment of Korean liberation”<sup>288</sup>, Kyunghyun

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<sup>285</sup> KIM, Sukyoung (2010). "Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea.", p48

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., p73-85: an interesting analysis of Manchuria as the locus of resistance.

<sup>287</sup> ARMSTRONG, Charles K. (2002). "The origins of North Korean cinema: art and propaganda in the DPRK." *Acta Koreana* 5(1): 1-19., p10

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., p19



Kim goes further and argues, talking about *Sea of blood*, that North Korean cinema's "effort to locate and resurrect a national identity is well reflected" and "project an imaginary of the unified and 'liberated' nation". In Kim Kyunghyun's opinion, there is therefore a full-fledge attempt of nation-building through the cinema, although this tentative is bound to fail as the "nation can only be *invented* and *imagined* as a result of the frustrating reality of national division"<sup>289</sup>.

### 3.5 Conclusion of 3<sup>rd</sup> part: studied movies

Movies from the three countries share striking similarities; I summarized them in tables to discuss them in a more convenient way.

- URSS: Chapaev (C), She defends the motherland (SDTM), The Young Guard (TYG), The rainbow (TR)
- Yugoslavia: Walter defends Sarajevo (WDS), Sutjeska (S), The battle of Neretva (TBON)
- North Korea: The river flows (TRF), Five guerrilla brothers (FGB)

#### 3.5.1 Characters

	<b>URSS</b>	<b>Yugoslavia</b>	<b>North Korea</b>
Heroes	Dark (SDTM, TR) Illuminated (TYG) Civilian (ALL) Cheerful (C)	Cheerful (ALL) Civil (ALL) Guerrillas (S, TBON)	Cheerful (ALL) Civil (ALL) Guerrillas (ALL)
Villains	Mocked upon (ALL) Exaggerated (ALL) Barbarian (ALL) Coward, venal (ALL)	Organised, respected (ALL) Barbarian (ALL) Value partisans (ALL) Bigot (TBON)	Exaggerated (ALL) Barbarian (ALL) Venal (TRF)
Leader	Formally absent (ALL), Evoked (C <sup>290</sup> )	Evoked (S), Present (TBON), Absent (WDS)	Invisible (ALL) Omnipresent (ALL) Deified (ALL)
Party	Organising (TYG, C) Insignificant (TR, SDTM)	Insignificant (ALL)	Organising (ALL)

<sup>289</sup> KIM, Kyunghyun (1996). "The fractured cinema of North Korea: the discourse of the nation in *Sea of blood*." in *'Pursuit of contemporary East Asian culture'* (edited by Xiaobing Tang and Stephen Snyder), p86: italic in original text.

<sup>290</sup> For Chapaev, the leader was still Lenin not yet Stalin

Army	Backing, liberating (ALL)	Partisans = army (ALL)	Partisans = army (ALL)
Youth & elderlies	Mobilised (TYG)	Following (TBON, S)	Mobilised (ALL)
Women	Leading (SDTM, TR) Backing (TYG, C)	Participating (ALL)	Participating (FGB) Leading (TRF)
Background	Shallow (SDTM, TYG) Developed (TR, C)	Shallow (ALL)	Developed (ALL)

*Table 2. Comparison of treatment of characters in different cinemas*

We observe striking similarities in representation of heroes in North Korean and Yugoslavia in their common cheerfulness while in their forest camps. They live there, work there and naturally, sometimes celebrate and party, dancing and chanting. Celebrations are rarer in Soviet Union's movies, there is the wedding in *She defends* but the scene is not extremely joyful. The party in *The Young Guard* is to commemorate the October Revolution, not a daily life event. Only in *Chapaev*, the Pre-War movie, we can find some elements of natural joy and cheerfulness. The protagonists actually live in the nature, their motherland, and recreates their society there. Conversely to Soviet Union, there were no halcyon days for them no ultimate liberation and the end of movies. That is why they kept on cultivating the partisan strategy even after establishing their respective states.

Also, the handling of leaders is actually puzzling. One could have expected a more laudatory treatment of Stalin; he is not even mentioned. At least one movie of the same period was dedicated fully to his glory, *The fall of Berlin*, in which he lands with his personal plane, clad in white in "liberated" Berlin (needless to say, he did not go to Berlin at this period). Tito's choice to select a Hollywood star to incarnate him in *Sutjeska* is also uncanny. Yugoslavia had his own stars who could have embodied Tito, we can think therefore the reason is mainly to pose for the international audience. As of Kim Il Sung, his character will not appear on celluloid before 1980. Yet, he is omnipresent, omniscient in the movies, indirectly, like a demigod figure. Heroes die with the revolution and Kim Il Sung's name on their lips while Soviet heroes only chant *the Internationale*.

Socialism invoked more equality between men and women, at least in theory as in practice it developed highly paternalistic systems. Movies show that women could not only get liberated but also contribute in liberating their motherland and build revolution with their male peers. This equality between men and women, younger

and elderlies is notably transcribed by the constant use of comrade (*dongmu*) in dialogues and songs in North Korean movies. It is also interesting to note that in movies in which women play a leading role, their character is generally more developed than male characters.

### 3.5.2 Form

	<b>URSS</b>	<b>Yugoslavia</b>	<b>North Korea</b>
Realism	Socialist Realism (TYG, C) Lesser realism (SDTM, TR)	Hollywood (ALL)	Socialist Realism (ALL)
Style	Dramatic (SDTM, TYG, TR), Epic (C)	Epic (ALL)	Epic (ALL) Melodramatic (ALL)

*Table. 3. Comparison of treatment of form in different cinemas*

The similitude between Yugoslavia and North Korea is also found in the epic dimension of the movies, this is reinforced by the locus of the action. North Korean movies are also emblematic of Socialist Realism as they apply the formula: normal citizen -> encounters with injustice -> is guided by an already matured individual -> gets matured through struggle -> becomes a revolutionary who can lead other normal citizens not yet conscious. This can be also observed in *Chapaev* and *The Young Guard* and to a certain extent (hence “lesser realism”) in other Soviet movies as the maturation is not achieved politically but through confrontation with the occupier. In Yugoslav movies, the process of maturation is not well narrated; it is only announced, without justifications, that masses composing partisans became communist through their plight.

### 3.5.3 Narration

	<b>URSS</b>	<b>Yugoslavia</b>	<b>North Korea</b>
Plot	Simple (ALL) Imagined History (C, TYG) Fictitious (SDTM, TR)	Developed (WDS) Simple (S, TBON) Quasi-historic (ALL)	Simple (ALL) Imagined history (ALL)
Time	Real (ALL)	Real (ALL)	Real (TRF) Mythic (FGB)

Space	Woods (SDTM) Rural (C, TR) Urban (TYG)	Woods/mountain (S,TBO N) Urban (WDS)	Woods/mountain (ALL) Rural (ALL) Mythic (ALL)
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*Table 4. Comparison of treatment of narration in different cinemas*

As we observed, most movies present shallow characters and plot. The importance of the theme seems to be self-sufficient. Stories are based on more or less realistic versions of history. Yugoslavia seemed to stick quite closely to reality shooting movies in actual places with sometimes actual population (as it was the case in *Slavica*, for instance) with a tendency to romanticise and glamorise epic scenes. The re-enactment of the battle scenes in Yugoslav were extremely realist (similar military equipment used, real bridge destroyed, scenes was on real location, etc.) but plots were feeble and simple. North Korea and Soviet Union (*Chapaev*, *The Young Guard*) have a very personal interpretation of history, vaguely based on reality and magnified by the needs to abide by artistic and political canons. This also can be found in *Zoia*, also released during the War and loosely based on real history of a young female partisan.

As movies are purported to represent a certain historical reality in order to entice viewers to adhere to the conveyed message, we can expect the time dimension to be reasonably realistic. This is confirmed with the exception of the North Korean's *Five guerrilla brothers*, a long fresco (6 hours) spanning over 6 or 7 years. The time is mythical there because, if we can see maturation of the protagonists, they physically do not age (there is no efforts whatsoever to make them appear older). This particularity of North Korea to modify historic dates to comply with the imagined history is not only applied to movies. Birth dates (and places) and early deeds of the leaders are also mythical. No urban environment is present in North Korean cinema, as the deeds of Kim Il Sung were restricted to forests and mountains of Sino-Korean border. However, cities are used for both Soviet and Yugoslav cinemas as locus of resistance to the enemy. For Soviet Union, the aforementioned concept of "city hero" was even created to award cities that showed intense resistance to the occupier. Cities like Leningrad and Stalingrad, both besieged and savagely attacked, were important symbol of opposition to fascism and easier to use for glorification as the role of the Party was stronger - it could go underground in cities if necessary and managed somehow to keep in touch with Moscow - than in the woods. For partisan-created states, woods and mountain had more resonance than cities though as we can observe in movies.

#### 3.5.4 Political content

	<b>URSS</b>	<b>Yugoslavia</b>	<b>North Korea</b>
Why they fought?	Revenge (TR, SDTM, TYG) Political reason (ALL) Defence of Motherland (SDTM, TR)	Defence of Motherland (ALL) Survival (ALL)	Defence of Motherland (ALL) Political reason (ALL) Revenge (ALL)
Ideologies	High (TYG, C) Moderated (SDTM, TR)	Moderated (S, TBON) Low (WDS)	High and loud (ALL)

*Table 5. Comparison of treatment of political content in different cinemas*

Last, but not least, political content offers an interesting basis to analyse how the political projects were integral part of the cinematic production. First, we can observe that in all the contexts, defence of the motherland (as a geographical entity) is a foremost reason to fight back invaders. Then, in the case of Soviet Union and North Korea, political reasons are equally instrumental. The occupier is to be fought back and annihilated but so are collaborators and “class enemies”. In Yugoslavia, it seems that the first consideration was of mere survival: cohorts of people were thrown in the woods and had to march continuously to simply keep on living. The cult of personality shrouding Tito was advanced but no real attempt of deification can be detected. Yet, Tito unifying and leading his people through mountains and forests could bear some comparison with Moses. Other political considerations are secondary to this first condition.

In studied pieces, there are different degrees of explicitness in order to convey ideologies. In North Korean cinema, ideology is extremely explicit and there are no attempts to obfuscate it in any ways. This can be understood the same way as for propaganda: it North Korean regime is proud of its ideology, it claims it high and loud, and does not see any problems about that. Soviet Union, in *Chapaev* and *The Young Guard* is also stating its project without nuances. During the War, though, concessions were done (to religion and nationalism, as we have seen) as the control was less tight and the urgency of the situation required a broader base of support. In Yugoslavia, ideology is also put forward but in subtler, less visible way.

Content of ideological messages is to be treated in the general conclusion, as the prime objective of this work is to understand to which extent the vehicle of cinema in totalitarian context was used to sustain respective political projects through the myth of partisans.

## Conclusion

Through this thesis, we have first analysed partisan movements, their historical roots, mythification and relationship with the political projects of the studied countries. Then, discussing the concept of totalitarian art and its application to cinema in the different countries, we have identified similar mechanisms related to the exploitation of seventh art for the purpose of attaining some political goals thanks to extensive use of myths. Lastly, dissecting a set of movies representative of the selected periods for each country, we have compared the depiction of certain iconographical attributes such as characters, time and space, narration and form.

In guise of a conclusion, I would like to see how we can conciliate the political projects with their representation in cinema. The three regimes have distinct objectives regarding the national question. They also all shared the common claim of attaining Communism.

### **Tito and the *Yugoslav* in cinema**

Among the three regimes, Yugoslavia had certainly the most ambitious goal: creating a new nation out of different ethnic groups, sharing a common language and space but separated by religions and histories. Tito hoped to be able to bridge these differences through the relative, but intense, collective momentum of the War. He truly managed to rally under his umbrella hundreds of thousands people and to make them accept to live together during the hardest conditions that could be imagined, hassled by Nazis, nationalists and other fascists. An able politician, he played the Cold War politics to his advantage and make his people benefit from his schemes. He enjoyed a sincere and deep support from Yugoslav because of the role he played during the War and because of his successes in making people live with relatively good standards and an acceptable level of freedom. This latter is the key of most problems: freedom meant a lack of ideological enforcement and, therefore, a room for contestation. As long as the system could offer decent economic performances, no problems were felt, but as soon as financial troubles were met, compensation with more intense propaganda, was resorted to, with little success.

Tito's propaganda in cinema, as we have seen, was mainly intended to legitimate and glamorise the partisan heydays. This had little effects: Tito had a certain legitimacy of ruling the country (this assertion can be challenged, naturally), at least at liberation time, as he and his men, achieved it independently, by and large. Once the regime had been installed, no one challenged Tito's role during the War, he did not need to magnify it further. This was of total futility. The second aspect that Tito wanted to

promote was his motto, that of an “organic Yugoslavia”: “brotherhood and unity”, meaning a harmonious society, in which everyone would be a *Yugoslav*, regardless of his ethnic and religious heritage. This making of a *Yugoslav*, a multi-ethnic nation, perhaps comparable to the Swiss nation (among others), would have as foundational myth the collective partisan movement. This effort is visible in the movies which were preaching characters with different ethnic backgrounds, though they were also showing Serb and Croatian nationalists. The super spectacle productions, with their crowd of foreign stars and monolithic plots, had some success because they were *genre movies*, impressive action movies, not because their political content was sufficiently robust. *Yugoslav* audience not only could hardly recognise itself in Hollywood stars but also were not indoctrinated sufficiently by political content in the movies.

When the patriarch passed away, tensions arose between communities that would not *imagine* themselves together as one. Tito’s plan suffered from an overly extended project without the political capacity nor willingness to enforce it. Himself a cornerstone of the project, he could maintain it while he was alive, aloof of ethnocentric nationalisms. As he could not secure proper leaders to ensure his legacy and implement a sturdy system capable to support massive stress, his national construction collapsed with the end of Cold War.

### **North Korea and its “fractured cinema”**

If Tito attempted to build a nation through cinema, Kim Il Sung tried to re-build one, broken and humiliated by imperialism and Cold War politics. Yugoslavia was to be a project of unification of peoples, North Korean ultimate project- at least during Kim Il Sung’s tenure - was reunification of one single people. Naturally, the theme of partisan cannot be overtly used to discuss this topic due to the gross anachronism it represents. However, a dichotomy between a laborious yet joyful camp nestled in a protective forest and a dirty town inhabited by destitute Koreans oppressed by landlords and occupying foreigners can be perceived as a frustrated attempt to reunify the country in the movies. No halcyon days and no total liberation at the end are possible in North Korean movies. The past is ignored or rejected as feudal, the present is not satisfactory due to the incomplete status of the nation.

Besides, magnification of the partisan movement through cinema assumed other more down-to-earth objectives. The first one was to embellish a foundational myth, not for the nation as in Yugoslavia’s case, but for the regime. Kim Il Sung, at liberation, was probably one of the foremost surviving partisan but his aura could not hold a candle to revolutionaries like Mao, Tito or Stalin when it came to rally followers.

Secondly, through the invention of a revolutionary tradition, Kim Il Sung wanted to solve the issue of his succession. Interestingly in studied North Korean movies, we can witness characters who become their mentor through revolutionary struggle. Characters are replaceable. We also can see the collapse of the “boundaries between the ‘national’ and the ‘personal’<sup>291</sup>”, the characters embody the nation and vice-versa. We can extrapolate this projection to the leader’s son becoming a new leader through his “revolutionary struggle” and “social praxis”, as described in the movies. Kim Il Sung himself became a revolutionary through his struggle against Japanese, his son can become his father through his artistic and political struggle as a revolutionary.

North Korea’s “success” in surviving the collapse of the International Communist System and reforms of most other Socialist states is the fruit of its implacable and systematic propaganda, cinema being one of its main pillar. The regime truly managed its totalitarian plan of creating a new man, of engineering souls so that they accept a counterfeit reality.

### **Stalin and the War cinema**

Soviet Union’s objective of generating a new man, is quite well perceptible in *Chapaev*, as the movie is mainly about the hero’s transformation through his relation with an accomplished revolutionary. However, the so-called *homo sovieticus*, is poorly represented in the two wartime movies as they had a more much down-to-earth objective: regime survival through total mobilisation against the enemy. Time was not for strong political messages, it was rather time for a display of fidelity towards the Soviet state. In the after-war movie, there is a come-back to hard-core Socialist Realism, with politically enlightened characters waiting their execution singing *the Internationale*. The shift would be accentuated with *the Fall of Berlin*, a war movie totally dedicated to Stalin’s cult. It is worthwhile noting that Stalin had to be incarnated in a war movie, not a partisan movie. Stalin wanted to differentiate himself from partisans and he did not want to bring his aura to this movement. Very quickly he dropped the genre in favour of full-fledged war movies. These latter would affirm the central role of the Party and its leader. In movies, partisans are seen to be controlled remotely by the headquarters, behind the front line, representing the central authority.

Partisans were not totally ignored but downplayed as a mere by-product of the War. They could not be mobilised further than offering a glamorous and heroic past;

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<sup>291</sup> KIM, Kyunghyun (1996). "The fractured cinema of North Korea: the discourse of the nation in Sea of blood." in *'Pursuit of contemporary East Asian culture'* (edited by Xiaobing Tang and Stephen Snyder)., p93



deleting the far too bleak dimensions of collaboration or leaning toward national independence for peoples that had been exploited and mutilated by the central Soviet power (*vlast*). Partisans were mainly a romanticised theme for a collective effort of forgetting the dim period of occupation. As Ernest Renan, put it, in his famous “What is a nation?” essay, “[f]orgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality.” Partisans in Soviet Union would be used in that way: their mythification could permit the forgetting of what happened and enable the reconciliation of the Soviet nation after the war under the Party, in surface, while operating purges of elements suspected of collaboration or “bourgeois nationalism” in the background.

Interestingly, for both North Korea and Yugoslavia, no “global domination” or even expansionist<sup>292</sup> ideological trait can be found. Both states and regimes were born out of partisan actions, more or less invented, but equally mythified. The locus of their struggle was therefore restrained to their national liberated territory, their motherland, and had no vocation to project its forces abroad. In movies, this is represented by no full-fledged armies supporting partisan movements, partisans are left alone. In Soviet cinema, liberation of towns is unfailingly performed by partisans accompanied by the Red Army. This latter was always “bound to Berlin”, the temporary objective of a global expansion.

### **Communism?**

The objective of reaching Communism in the movies is, at best, meagre. It is mention in passing, through songs, posters, in discussions, but we can feel that other goals were to be achieved (liberation, unification, state patriotism, succession) and that Communism remained a remote question. Movies for North Korea and Yugoslavia are more typical of national anti-colonialist struggle rather than international communism. Even for Soviet Union, there is little raise of consciousness in *the Young Guard*, in Stalin’s paradise everyone was deemed already convinced of the virtues of Communism, we do not observe any “character maturation” process related to class consciousness. The maturation is observed through the struggle against those who occupy the Motherland.

### **Project failures?**

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<sup>292</sup> We do not consider here North Korean attempts to subjugate the southern part of the peninsula, this is (or this was) their programme, from the very beginning.

We cannot attribute the failure or success of a political project, be it totalitarian, only through the prism of propaganda. However, we can remark that both USSR and Yugoslavia collapsed when they exerted weaker controls and that North Korea could – and can – go through tremendous pressure, notably thanks to its propaganda machine.

The theme of partisan, not only offers all the epic and heroic background we discussed before but it also gives the possibility to the audience to easily identify itself as partisans were not only soldiers but civilians at the same time. This theme is therefore much more efficient than regular War movies in which civilians are mere passive subjects, if represented at all. This is probably one of the reason of the success of this propaganda in North Korea, the “garrison state” in which every worker were supposed to carry “in one hand a hammer and in the other a rifle” and in which young children are quickly militarised.

Lastly, I would like to conclude this study by Renan’s ground-breaking work on nationalism:

“More valuable by far than common customs posts and frontiers conforming to strategic ideas is the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future, a shared programme to put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together. These are the kinds of things that can be understood in spite of differences of race and language. *I spoke just now of 'having suffered together' and, indeed, suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, grieves are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort.*”

Suffering, victimisation and martyrdom are perhaps a part of a myth even more efficient to draw upon in order to suffuse some collective attachment to a national community. Studying this mythified theme in propaganda of totalitarian states could probably shed more light on the reasons explaining their survival and perishing.

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## Filmography

Title	Director	Country	Year
The battle of Neretva (Serbo-Croatian: Bitka na Neretvi)	Veljko Bulajić	Yugoslavia	1969
The battle of Sutjeska (Serbo-Croatian: Sutjeska)	Stipe Delić	Yugoslavia	1973
Walter defends Sarajevo (Serbo-Croatian: Valter brani Sarajevo)	Hajrudin Krvavac	Yugoslavia	1972
Chapaev (Russian: Чапаев, translit. <i>Chapayev</i> )	Georgi and Sergei Vasilyev	USSR	1934
She defends the motherland (Russian: Она защищает Родину, translit. <i>Ona zashchishchaet rodinu</i> )	Fridrikh Ermler	USSR	1943
The rainbow (Russian: радуга, translit. <i>raduga</i> )	Mark Donskoi	USSR	1944
The Young Guard (Russian: Молодая гвардия, translit. <i>molodaia gvardiia</i> )	Sergei Gerasimov	USSR	1948
Five guerrilla brothers (Korean: 유격대의 오형제, translit. <i>Yugyeokdae ohyeongjae</i> )	Choi Ikkyu	DPRK	1968
The river flows (Korean: 강물은 흐른다, translit. <i>Kangmulen hereunda</i> )	Studio "2.8"	DPRK	1967

Table 6. List of studied movies

## Abstract in Korean

이 논문은 구소련, 구유고연방과 북한이 영화에서 빨치산 운동을 바라보는 관점에 대해서 논하고 있다. 특히 이 빨치산 운동이 얼마나 주제로서 중요한지, 어떻게 신화적으로 만들었는지, 또 어떻게 체제선전에 반영되었는지에 대하여 논하였다. 그리고 빨치산이 정치적인 목적과 어떠한 관계가 있는지에 대하여 논의했다. 본 논문에서 다룬 영화에 투영된 빨치산에 대해서 앞으로 많은 연구가 이뤄져야 하는 만큼, 다른 연구자들은 본 논문을 향후 연구를 위한 기반으로 사용할 수 있을 것이다. 다른 공산주의 국가의(예를 들어, 베트남, 중국, 쿠바 등) 영화에서도 빨치산을 영화 주제로 활용 하였다. 본 연구에서는 왜 공산국가들의 가장 효율적인 세뇌 도구로 영화를 사용하는 지에 대해서 설명하고, 전체주의국가들이 체제 유지를 위해서 영화를 어떻게 사용했는지에 대해서 심도 있게 논하였다.

이 논문에서는 각국의 대표적인 영화 아홉 편을 선택하여 중점적으로 분석했다. 구소련의 초점은 1930년대 중순부터 제2차 세계 대전의 종전까지 국가 설립과 스탈린의 정권 강화를 위해서 집중적으로 활용되었다. 구유고연방에 대한 분석을 위해서 1960년대 말부터 1970년대초까지의 영화를 집중적으로 다루었다. 이 당시 구유고연방의 체제는 정당성이 결여되어, 영화로 선전을 강화하였다. 북한 영화는 김일성의 후계자로서 1960년대 말에 등장한 김정일과 더불어 나타났다. 이들 세 국가에서는 공통적으로 체제가 영화 제작을 적극적으로 지원하였고 지도자, 당, 사상, 정치체제 등에 대해서 찬양했다. 영화를 분석하기 위해서 주인공, 촬영, 시간과 공간, 그리고 정치적인 테마에 초점을 맞추어 집중적으로 다루었다.

상기의 세 나라는 많은 공통점을 가지고 있지만, 전체주의 예술론에 내재된 논리 때문에 빨치산 신화와 영화를 활용한 방법에서 차이를 보인다.

본 논문에서는 이러한 차이의 원인으로 역사, 정치 및 문화적인 면과 체제의 정치적 목적 및 지도자가 이루고자 하는 바를 중심으로 설명하였다.

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**Keywords:** 빨치산, 전체주의, 영화, 북한, 구유고연방, 구소련

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