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# Politics, ideology, and programming practices: how the Yugoslav Documentary and Short Film Festival abandoned the idea of Yugoslavia

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## ABSTRACT

This article charts the history of the Yugoslav Documentary and Short Film Festival since its creation in 1954, comparing its development in two periods: firstly, the socialist Yugoslavia (1954–late 1980s/early 1990s), marked by the rule of Josip Broz Tito, and, secondly, the initial post-socialist period, marked by the nationalist politics of Slobodan Milosevic and the disintegration of the country and wars (the 1990s). The article shows the festival's transition from one which screened films from six Yugoslav republics and championed the Yugoslav revolutionary heritage and the concepts of workers' self-management and 'brotherhood and unity' into one which became a local Serbian–Montenegrin event, marked by Serbian nationalist discourse and a highly critical view of Yugoslavian socialism. Analyzing the changes in the festival's programming policies at the times of the country's political and ideological shifts, this article illustrates how political conditions influenced creative processes and exhibition patterns in the field of documentary film.

## KEYWORDS

Film festivals; programming; documentary film; socialist Yugoslavia; socialist cinema; Yugoslav wars

## Introduction

The creation of the Pula Film Festival and Yugoslav (now: Belgrade) Documentary and Short Film Festival in 1954 was one of the earliest of Yugoslavia's undertakings as a pioneering country in terms of cinematic activity in the post-World War II (WWII) period. Today, the two festivals are on the list of the oldest film festivals on the continent, together with Venice (1932), Cannes, Locarno, Karlovy Vary (1946), Berlin (1951), Oberhausen (1954), and Leipzig (1955). On a local level, Pula and Belgrade, both devoted to the 'official' national production (films produced by professional production houses, and

not by ciné-clubs), were the first film festivals in the former Yugoslavia, later followed by 'alternative' events such as the Genre Experimental Film Festival GEFF (1963, 1965, 1967, and 1970, Zagreb), the amateur film festival MAFAP (1965–1990, Pula),<sup>1</sup> and Alternative Film Video (1982–1990, restarted in 2002, Belgrade).<sup>2</sup> The Belgrade International Film Festival, FEST, which brought international feature films to local audiences, was started in 1971. Animafest Zagreb, among the most important international festivals dedicated to animation, was created in 1972.

Gathering various cinematic forms in the field of documentary and short film in a period that covers almost the entire existence of Yugoslavia as a republic and includes its different political systems, the state-run Yugoslav Documentary and Short Film Festival, while worthy of inquiry in and of itself, also provides a useful resource for the study of political regimes' influence on cultural production and programming practices. In the field of film festival studies, the relation between politics and programming has been researched by, among others, Caroline Moine (2014) who analyzes the Leipzig Film Festival in the context of the cold war, Andreas Kötzing (2013) who deals with the cold war period in his study on Leipzig and Oberhausen, and Stefano Pisu (2013) who discusses the presence of the Soviet Union at the Venice Film Festival. While significant scholarly work has been done on the history of Yugoslav cinema in general, especially concerning the periods of the 1960s and 1970s, studies dealing with Yugoslav film festivals are fewer. In addition, so far, there has been no academic study in English about the Yugoslav Documentary and Short Film Festival.

This article will compare the festival's development in two periods: firstly, the socialist period (1954–late 1980s/early 1990s), marked by the rule of Josip Broz Tito and Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY),<sup>3</sup> and, secondly, the initial post-socialist era, marked by the nationalist politics of Slobodan Milošević, the collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), and wars (the 1990s). Arguing that cultural production cannot be separated from its social/political context and that it always bears a certain political consciousness, this essay will illustrate how the political and ideological turn in the country and the specific context of war influenced the change in the festival's structure and programming policies, which led it to abandon its original Yugoslav profile turning instead to themes related to Serbian nationalist discourse.

This account draws on an analysis of the festival's documentation (catalogs, print materials, etc.), press coverage, and the films themselves. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a comprehensive overview of its programming practices. The article opens with a brief presentation of the festival's beginnings, explaining the aim of its creation and original organizational structure. It then proceeds to compare the two periods under scrutiny, with a particular focus on the transformation of the festival's structure and change of course in its programming policies at the beginning of the 1990s,

which coincided with the biggest ideological dismantlement in the country's history. Special emphasis goes to the documentary films screened, hence all the examples are from the festival's documentary section, unless otherwise stated.

## A Yugoslav festival

The history of modern Yugoslav cinema, according to film historian Dejan Kosanović, starts with the establishment of the new country, when Yugoslavia as a republic replaced the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (2013, 265). In 1943, when the country was still under the Axis occupation, the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia was proclaimed at the second session of the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ).<sup>4</sup> After the liberation and the full abolition of the monarchy, the country was renamed the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945, and a communist government was established. The new state adopted the name the SFRY in 1963. It comprised six republics: Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia. In addition, Serbia contained two provinces, Vojvodina in the north and Kosovo in the south, granted higher levels of self-rule under the 1974 Constitution. The partisan leader and the head of the CPY, Tito, ruled the country, first as prime minister (1944–1953), and then as president until his death in 1980.

At the conclusion of the WWII, despite the difficult financial situation, the new government started to systematically encourage and finance film production. As in Soviet Russia and other socialist/communists states (Hauser 1999, 243), the CPY quickly recognized the propagandistic potential of film. Documentary in addition had one more value – it could quickly produce historical records of the post-war reconstruction and development in the new country and in a timely manner promote the success of the new government. The State Film Company of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia was created in June 1945, and in the following year, The Committee for Cinematography of the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was established, followed by the creation of republic film production companies. In the beginning, the State Film Company remained in charge of the production of cinema newsreels, until the largest producer of non-fiction visual expression in Yugoslavia, Filmske Novosti, appeared – first as a part of Zvezda Film (1946) and then as a separate institution in 1955. These events define the beginning of systematic film production in Yugoslavia, organized with state assistance (Kosanović 2009).

At this time, Yugoslav filmmaking mostly focused on the production of documentary and short films. These grew rapidly in number; for example, in 1949, 166 documentary and short films were produced (Kosanović 2013, 265). Such a fast-growing production and a lack of exhibition opportunities led to the establishment of the Yugoslav Film Festival (YFF) in 1954 in Pula, in the Federal Republic of Croatia. The festival's aim was to showcase the entire

annual national film production (feature fiction, documentary and all forms of shorts) and to gather filmmakers and key staff from the production houses of all six federal republics in one place. It created a place where filmmakers, critics, and audiences could be informed of the latest cinematic achievements from the republics other than one's own (Jelenković 2013, 15; Kosanović 2013, 266). The festival regulations adopted in 1955 state:

The aim of the festival is to show the constant progress of the Yugoslav film art and industry. It will try to develop constructive relationships between film artists and producers, and propagate Yugoslav film industry achievements through international guests in all the appropriate ways across the world. (Article 1)<sup>5</sup>

After numerous requests from critics and short film directors who argued that the festival was putting short forms in the shadow of features (Kosanović 1958), in 1959, the event was divided into two: the *Yugoslav Fiction Film Festival* remained in Pula and the *Yugoslav Documentary and Short Film Festival* took place for the first time in 1960 in Belgrade.<sup>6</sup> The latter has always been financed by the state. A common institution named YFF managed both festivals until the mid-1970s, when the founding rights and authority over the festivals were transferred to the town of Pula and the city of Belgrade, respectively. Since then, Yugoslav Documentary and Short Film Festival has been organized by several public institutions, selected by the Council of the City of Belgrade, and some of them, such as Direkcija FEST-a, established by the city especially for the purpose of organizing film festivals under the jurisdiction of the city of Belgrade: Beograd publik (1975–1978), Sava Centar (1978–1991), Jugoslavija film (1991–2003), Direkcija FEST-a (2003–2014), and CeBeF (2014–today).

Under the SFRY, all the constitutive parts of the federation were represented in each of the segments of the festival's structure, i.e. juries, selection committees, and the Council each included delegates from all six republics and the two provinces. Participating films were also similarly selected. Production houses from each republic, all state owned, selected their best achievements and entered them in the festival. According to the festival documentation, this usually represented the majority of their production, as we can see from 1968, when there were 118 films sent to the festival out of a total of 157 produced that year (Catalogue 1968, 7), or 1961, when there were 90 submitted out of 138 produced (Catalogue 1962, 66). Out of that, some films took part in the competition, and the rest were screened in the non-competitive program, which means that the majority of the country's annual production was shown at the festival.

The festival, as much as possible, tried to follow the configuration of the country – both in terms of its organizational structure and in terms of its programming policy. More importantly, as an event run and financed by the federal state, the festival, as the other state institutions, reflected state ideology to a high extent and acted as its means of propaganda. Film production reinforced the country's official ideology – the festival, being organized as the mirror of the production, followed. On the other hand, such a vast production

inevitably produced, within the frame of what was possible, critical works as well. Some of them, therefore, as will be shown below, found their way to the festival and brought another dimension to its programming, making its history more complex than simply a mere propaganda tool in the hands of the state.

### Cameras also remember Tito

With the socialist Yugoslavia established as a result of military and class struggles led by the CPY in WWII, WWII became the basis of the Yugoslav constitutional myth. Tito, as the National Liberation Struggle<sup>7</sup> leader, was its central figure. The partisan struggle – a political supra-ethnic project that joined all Yugoslav peoples in a common goal – provided the chief narrative that strengthened the community (Čalić 2013, 251). Marie-Janine Čalić further explains that this narrative included:

all the important elements of a successful constitutional myth: the explanation of the origins of the nation (here, in WWII), personality of the father of the nation (Tito) and the motive of martyrdom (liberation struggle), and most fascinating of all, a miraculous rescue from the greatest trouble. (2013, 251–252)

Consequently, the memory of WWII, one of the main pillars of the cult of Yugoslavia, together with its principal elements such as the Yugoslav revolutionary heritage, anti-Fascist struggle, and the ideal of a classless society, emerged as the dominant theme in the festival programs until the late 1980s/early 1990s. The National Liberation Struggle had such an important place in the festival's history that until 1967, the theme even had its own section in the catalogs. The endeavors of Yugoslav partisans were memorialized in films such as: *Blood of Freedom* (Žika Čukulić, 1955), *Ten on One* (Bata Čengiđ, 1959), *The Grave and Its Glory* (Mihailo Jovanović, 1959), *Death to Fascism – Liberty to the People* (Aleksandar Ilić, 1962), *Red Snow in Pohorje* (Jože Pogačnik, 1974), *Four War Comrades* (Ljubomir Desantić, 1979), *The Battle of Sutjeska* (Vladan Slijepčević, 1980), and *At the Headquarters of General Rodić* (Mehmed S. Fehimović, 1983). The other sections included: 'social relations in our socialist reality,' 'material development of the country,' 'revolutionary past of Yugoslav people,' 'culture and art,' 'educational and instructional films,' 'information-propaganda-economy genre,' and so on.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, the festival officially marked most of the important dates of the Yugoslav socialist calendar, especially (but not necessarily) if they coincided with the dates of the festival itself. As we can see from the list, most of these events again related to commemorating anti-fascist resistance during the WWII: the 20th anniversary of the People's Uprising (1961), 40 years of Tito's presidency of the CPY (1977), 11th Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (1978), 60 years of the Communist Party, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Young Communist League of Yugoslavia and Class syndicates,

and 35 years of Yugoslav cinematography (all in 1979), 40 years since the end of the WWII (1984), and 40 years of 'Victory over fascism' (1985).

Tito represented the culture of cinema in Yugoslavia more than any other form of arts. A well-known film-lover, sometimes even directly involved in decisions related to national film production (script change suggestions, support of different co-productions, etc. – cf. the documentary *Cinema Komunisto*, Mila Turajlić, 2010), Tito attended Pula more than once and became the festival's official patron in 1955. After the separation of the documentary and feature fiction sections, the festival in Belgrade also took place under his auspices. It therefore continuously used the president as an overarching point of reference: apart from the films that celebrated his personality (further discussed below), Tito's photo featured on festival catalog covers (1986), his photos and his quotes on cinema appeared inside the catalogs (1957, 1979, 1980, and 1983), exhibitions took place in his honor (1977), the festival celebrated his birthdays (1977), and so on. In 1978, at the event's 25th anniversary, the Festival Council granted Tito, as patron of the event, the Golden Plaque in gratitude for his continuous help and support. The President did not make an appearance, but he did send an envoy (Report on the 25th Festival [1978], Catalogue 1979, 106).

Further, the personality cult of Tito, as the 'personification of the new Yugoslavia, the figure of father and god' (Čalić 2013, 251), appeared in the festival through numerous films dedicated to him including: *Tito and Pioneers* (Milorad Gončin, 1983) about 'Tito's worry for the youngest' (Catalogue 1983, 19), *Be Welcomed* (Stole Popov, 1979) about Tito's visit to the Republic of Macedonia, and *Cameras Also Remember Tito* (Dragoslav Mitrović, 1986), a collage of documentary footage featuring Tito in different situations. Often, several films of this kind screened in the same edition. For instance, 1963 featured *Tito and Youth* by Boško Mratniković, *Tito and the Economy* by Aleksandar Mitrović, *Tito Among the Youth* by Trajče Popov and Branko Gapo, and *Tito Among Us* by Trajče Popov.

Tito's role as leader of the National Liberation Struggle featured repeatedly. The synopsis of *Comrade Tito* (Vefik Hadžismajlović, 1979) quotes:

Following the paths of our President Tito, we walk along the paths of peace. [...] Yugoslav people are very proud of their President and what he did together with them during the National Liberation War and post-war period as well. [...] Thousands of pages are written, many songs composed about a *great man and revolutionary*. (Catalogue 1979, 54)

These examples illustrate that not only did the festival promote Yugoslav socialism, but it helped construct Tito's personality cult. In these films, Tito appeared as a leader adored and admired as a rebel and a savior.

Even though the memorialization of WWII was the central theme supporting the Yugoslav socialist narrative, others surfaced. The idea of *brotherhood and unity*, the guiding slogan of Yugoslavia as a multiethnic state, was portrayed sympathetically, for instance in *The Big Family* (Ivo Škrabalo, 1962) about the

village Crvenka in Vojvodina where ‘representatives of 22 nationalities live in happy unity’ (Catalogue 1962, 50), while workers’ self-management, one of the distinct features that marked the difference between Yugoslavia and Eastern Bloc countries, received appreciation in the film *Self-management – Hope* (Branko Bauer and Ljiljana Jojić, 1979) which showed the development of Yugoslav self-management through a collage of footage filmed over a six-year period.

Related to industrial concerns, another prominent example includes a series of utility films – commissioned documentaries that showed the development of factories and industry, as well as the ones documenting the construction of road and apartment blocks. These films, regularly screened at the festival, were intended to portray the progress that Yugoslav society experienced, i.e. the modernization potentials of Yugoslav socialism. Films such as: *125 Years of Belgrade Beer Industry – BIP* (Vaso Brajović, 1976), *BIP – Construction of the Fermentation Plant* (Vaso Brajović, 1976), *Chronicles of a Factory* (Đorđe Dedanski, 1979), and *Ship-builder* (Petar Trinajstić, Željko Luković, 1983) exemplified this tendency.<sup>9</sup>

The festival did accommodate critical works as well. Founded as a ‘state’ event, with a strong presence of members of the Party in its structures, what many consider the festival’s high point, somewhat paradoxically, occurred in the late 1960s, when a series of polemical films eventually labeled the *Black Wave*<sup>10</sup> (1963–1972) were screened. These films had a critical view of Yugoslav socialism, and highlighted various flaws and contradictions of the system, such as corruption, unemployment, and social inequality. The controversies reached a peak in the 1960s when the country faced its first big economic crisis, and cinema, against a backdrop of widespread popular protests throughout Yugoslavia, adopted a new, more critical expression. The most notable filmmakers associated with the *Black Wave* include Dušan Makavejev, Želimir Žilnik, Aleksandar Petrović, Lazar Stojanović, Karpo Godina, and others. They achieved great success on the international film festival circuit<sup>11</sup> but faced constant critique within the Yugoslav state – this period coincided with the most severe censorship in the history of socialist Yugoslavia.

Dozens of *Black Wave* films were ‘bunkered,’ i.e. not made available for public screening. For some, the only place where they could be seen before they would disappear from cultural life was the Belgrade festival, which, sticking to its policy to screen most of what production houses would send, showed a relatively high number of *Black* films. However, depending on who happened to be in the selection committee and/or jury, these films would be granted better or worse screening times, would be placed in or out of competition, or would be given more or less important awards. This period of the festival’s history therefore marked a distinct polarization of film artists and critics who supported two different cinematic and political concepts. One of the authors whose work often triggered controversy was Želimir Žilnik, whose debut *A*

*Newsreel on Village Youth, in Winter* (1967) about the pointlessness of leisure time in the lives of young people in villages in Vojvodina, caused controversy at the 1967 festival. Lazar Stojanović wrote: 'Averagely weak festival – the greatest failure of the jury was classifying the excellent *Winter Newsreel* by Žilnik out of competition' (*Student* 1967). At the final press conference, the president of the jury France Kosmač justified the decision by 'difficult work conditions, in which mistakes were always possible' (Jelenković 2013, 55). At the request of the people present, the film was screened again so that more people could see it. Other Žilnik films followed: the ironically titled documentary *Little Pioneers* (1968) recalled a well-known Pioneer song, but portrayed under-aged pick-pockets and prostitutes, *The Unemployed* (1968) criticized the growth of this problem in the country, and *June Turmoil* (1969) showed the development of the protests of 1968 including the rallying cries: 'Down with red bourgeoisie,' 'We need jobs,' and others. However, even if *Black* films were screened and not rarely awarded in Belgrade, an overall impression is that in terms of awards, critics, and general acceptance, it appears that the success they achieved at home pales in comparison to that from Oberhausen, where the names of Žilnik, Godina, and Makavejev still appear on the festival's official 'VIP filmmaker' list (cf. [www.kurzfilmtage.de](http://www.kurzfilmtage.de), accessed 14 February 2015).

Some films however never made it to the festival, as was the case with three works withdrawn from the 1972 program, after they were banned by the Committee for Film Review of the Province of Vojvodina: *I Miss Sonia Henie* (Karpo Godina et al., 1972), *Cross with a Star* (Karolj Viček, 1972), and *Women Are Coming* (Žilnik, 1972) (cf. Jelenković 2013, 79–84). This withdrawal marked a decline in liberalization and the regime's confrontation with artists. This tension, which peaked in late 1972/early 1973, ranged from the attempt to ban Žilnik's *Early Works* (1969), the removal of Dušan Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971) from the program in Pula to the final showdown with the *Black Wave*, Lazar Stojanović's arrest and seizure of his film *Plastic Jesus* (1972), and the exclusion of Prof. Aleksandar Saša Petrović from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in 1973. One by one, Petrović, Makavejev, Žilnik, and the directors who brought fame to Yugoslav film in the 1960s left the country. Among the most momentous years in the festival's history, 1972 marked a significant shift in the list of filmmakers who attended, and a regression to more conventional programming.

After 1972, the festival resumed the rhythm it had before the turbulence caused by the *Black Wave*. In 1973, it opened with a panegyric to Tito, the documentary *We Love You* (Božidar Martinović, 1973), filmed on the occasion of his 80th birthday. One of the biggest Serbian daily newspapers *Novosti* reported that the opening film showed the story of 'a friend and a hero' (Vitezica 1973) and that the *real* documentary form, which had been neglected in the past years, finally returned to the festival in order to 'bring us back to good old days' (Vitezica 1973). The magazine *NIN* published an article which proclaimed the festival 'healthy again' (Bogdanović 1973).

Even when they were critical, *Black Wave* films did not battle against socialism as such; rather, they showed an intention of *improving* it with their criticism. As Makavejev noted in 1963, regarding his documentary *Parade* (1962):

If I am criticizing my girlfriend for wearing an ugly hat it does not mean I don't love her. On the contrary, I want to buy her a nicer hat. And why not swear at my country when it is wearing peasant shoes. (Munitić 2005, 104)

Scriptwriter Branko Vučićević claimed in the documentary *Censored Without Censorship* (Dinko Tucaković, Milan Nikodijević, 2007) that 'Those were the films that called to the Communist Party to stick to its own program' and Žilnik remarked, 'The revolts in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia in 1968, in essence, constituted a call to restore socialism to its roots' (2009). *Black Wave* films, then, fit the context of the country in which they were conceived – despite the criticism that they expressed, they were not agitating for a different system (multi-party, Serbian national state), but argued for a better socialism and for reforms to the socialist state.

Overall, although the festival could accommodate a certain degree of criticism, most of its program in the first 35 years celebrated the specific nature of Yugoslav socialism and, to a considerable extent, acted as its means of propaganda. The new Yugoslav state used film as a means of affirming its new perspective of the world, and the festival, founded with the support of the state, in most cases eagerly followed. Not all the selected films necessarily praised the alleged success of Yugoslav socialism; yet, they all fit the Yugoslav socialist frame. If they criticized it, they were not opposing it as such or denying its absolute principles. This, however, changed at the beginning of the 1990s when the festival's programming took a radically different turn.

### 1990s: how the festival abandoned the Yugoslav idea

Soon after the deaths of one of the country's main ideologues, Edvard Kardelj (1979)<sup>12</sup> and President Tito (1980), Yugoslavia entered a decade of major political instability: an unprecedented economic crisis, numerous ethnic tensions, and clashes between Serbian and Albanian populations in the federation's poorest region, the province of Kosovo, which was, after being granted larger autonomy in 1974, demanding the status of a republic. A gradual rise of ethnic nationalisms in different parts of the country – that in the earlier period had been more successfully suppressed now, in new political circumstances (changes in international politics, culmination of the debate over the 1974 Constitution, and different structural changes – cf. Jović 2003) got into full swing creating a serious existential crisis for the state. Within the existing political structures, significant changes also took place, most notably with the emergence of Slobodan Milošević who, in 1986, became the president of the League of Communists of Serbia, then in 1989, president of the Presidency of

the Socialist Republic of Serbia, and, in the first multiparty elections in 1990, the first president of Serbia.<sup>13</sup> Two other influential nationalist leaders simultaneously emerged in power in other republics: Franjo Tuđman in Croatia and Alija Izetbegović in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Soon after, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and socialist/communist systems in the rest of Europe, SFRY broke-up in wars (1991–1999).<sup>14</sup> Serbia and Montenegro, the two republics that stayed together during the disintegration and fought on the same side in the wars that marked it, established the FRY in 1992.

The festival continued being held during this tumultuous period. It took place even during the NATO bombing in 1999 when, for the first time, not only was the country in which it took place at war, but Belgrade itself was being bombarded. Even though the SFRY ceased to exist, the festival continued being called *Yugoslav*, and only changed its name to *Belgrade* in 2004, a year after the disappearance of the last Yugoslavia, that is after the constitution of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (2003). In doing so, it demonstrated again its political nature – as an event under the jurisdiction of the city of Belgrade, it continued to express the position of the state – which was still officially ‘Yugoslav’ as expressed in the discourses of politicians in power and the name that the country consequently kept.

However, in spite of its official name, instead of being Yugoslav, the festival was reduced to a local Serbian–Montenegrin event already at the beginning of the 1990s, when its structure underwent significant changes. As certain republics left the federation – Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia in 1991 and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992 – they one by one dropped out of the festival. The Croatian magazine *Vjesnik* published an article in March 1991, just a few weeks before the festival, explaining why two Croatian Council members, Bogdan Žižić and Frano Vodopivec, and several production houses, starting with the biggest one Zagreb Film, decided to boycott it.<sup>15</sup> One of the stated reasons for this decision included the possible participation of Zastava Film, the production house of the Yugoslav People’s Army, which they accused of spreading propaganda at a sensitive political moment for the country (Somen 1991).<sup>16</sup> Since 1992, all the selected films – as well as the festival management – drew mainly from Serbia, and to a lesser degree, Montenegro.

Under the apparent continuity of the festival, however, a significant break happened – since state institutions regulated the festival, as the state’s structure and ideology changed, so did the content of the festival. Following the change in its structure, the socialist discourse of the multi-national Yugoslav state that once marked the program was gradually replaced by the Serbian ethnic nationalism that dominated the republic in the 1990s. The focus was now on the topics that marked a separation from the period of the federal state and emphasized Serbian national history – particularly the Orthodox Church and Serbian medieval culture and heritage. In the general spirit of historical revisionism (Kuljić 2011; Perica and Velikonja 2012), increasing numbers of

films showed disapproval of Yugoslav concepts and appeared to blame other constitutive peoples of the former country for different injustices throughout history, as outlined below.

This was also made possible by the fact that production changed completely: due to the reintroduction of the private sector, old Yugoslav production houses gradually withdrew (one of the biggest, Dunav Film, participated with a single movie in 1992) and there was a proliferation of new, smaller, private production companies, including Exp Produkcija, Viktorija Film, Film i ton, TRZ Fokus, and so on. The substantial reduction of the national film production (now limited only to two republics) and fast development of digital technologies characteristic of the 1990s made it possible for TV films to enter the festival for the first time, foremost the documentary programs of the state-run Radio Television of Serbia. This contributed significantly to the changed ideological orientation of the festival, state television being the main ally and propaganda tool of the regime of Slobodan Milošević (cf. Thompson 1999, 47–113; Vekarić 2011, 82–90).

Increasingly negative representations of Tito's personality and the flaws of Tito's Yugoslavia emerged in the festival. The personality cult of Tito was not only falling apart, it was rapidly taking on a completely opposite form. Among others, two films about Nikola Kavaja, a man who had tried to assassinate Tito and who was serving a sentence for terrorism in a Florida prison were featured: *The Man Who Could Have Changed History* (Milan Knežević, 1992) and *Terrorists or Patriots – Nikola Kavaja, Tito Hunter* (Milan Knežević, 1993). The synopsis presents the former president, previously idolized 'friend and a hero' and the admired festival patron in a revisionist light, saying: 'The history recorded several dozen assassination attempts on Tito, the leader of the Yugoslav Communist League and a *dictator*. [...] Kavaja goes to America hoping to change the course of his and *his people's* lives by assassinating Tito' (Catalogue 1992, 10). In the second version, Kavaja was equally represented as a hero, Serbian patriot ('member of the Serbian *Liberation* Movement Homeland' – Catalogue 1993, 9) and a freedom fighter. The filmmaker interviewed numerous interlocutors, but, in the documentary, not a single one, except for the American State Attorney, speaks negatively about the protagonist. As Pavle Levi points out, 'By the early 1990s, Tito may have been demoted from the foremost, untouchable national idol to the status of the heavily criticized and/or hated authoritarian' (2007, 123).

In the new ideological climate of the 1990s, the festival used the opportunity to screen several previously banned films; among them: the animation *The Way* (Stevan Živkov, 1978, shown in 1990), the story of a blind man followed by a crowd of people who could not agree on which direction to go, and *The Cross with the Star* (Karolj Viček, 1971, screened in 1993), a documentary about God and the Communist Party or people who could not tell the difference between a cross and a star, which were previously deemed problematic

because they contained scenes that could be interpreted as criticism of the Tito's regime. Particularly interesting is Ratko Ilić's *The Ambassador was Murdered in Stockholm* (1971), about the assassination of the Yugoslav Ambassador Vladimir Rolović by Croatian extremists on 7 April 1971. This film had not been made available for public screening at the time when it was made in order to not provoke nationalist tensions. In the context of the 1990s, this assassination, together with various crimes committed by Croatian extremist groups in the 1960s and 1970s, was deemed to depict Croatia as bearing the most blame for the war and disintegration of SFRY.

The images of the socialist revolution and WWII as the event that created the Yugoslav state went through the biggest changes (Pintar Manojlović 2010, 86). WWII, previously a recurrent theme, practically disappeared from the festival programs. When still featured, as in *Madonna, Queen of Croats* (Krsto Škanata, 1992), it was mostly as a reminder of the crimes of Croatian collaborators Ustashes<sup>17</sup> against the Serbs and not to celebrate the Serbian and Croatian joint struggle in the Yugoslav partisan movement, as had been the case before. The films on Ustasha crimes during WWII also screened in the era of socialism, such as *Jasenovac* (Bogdan Žižić, 1967) or *Jasenovac, the Cruellest Death Camp of All Times* (Lordan Zafranović, 1984), which was awarded the Grand Prix. However, compared to the socialist period, in the 1990s, the number of these films rose significantly. According to the festival catalogs, in the period of the war with Croatia (1991–1995), 15 films with this theme appeared in the programs. More importantly, the emphasis moved from an *anti-Yugoslav* character of crimes depicted in these films, which was the focus during the socialist period, to an *anti-Serbian* dimension of these events, which came into focus during the wars of the 1990s. This difference most obviously emerges from the rhetoric employed: while documentaries from the first period refer to Ustasha crimes as events in which 'Pavelić's Ustashes killed several hundred thousand of men, women and children from all parts of Yugoslavia,' as in the *Jasenovac* synopsis (Catalogue 1967, 139), the films from the 1990s refer to these events as genocide against the Serbs or, as in *The Pit – Grote Morta* (Milorad Bajić, 1991), as 'monstrous crimes of the Croatian Ustashes committed against the Serbs and Jews' (Catalogue 1991, 72). These films therefore form a part of the general victimization narrative that dominated the public sphere in Serbia in the 1990s (media cf. Thompson 1999, 58–103; history school books cf. Stojanović 2010, 111–113), characterized by a strong focus on Serbian suffering in the ongoing wars and throughout history.

As WWII (the central element of the Yugoslav constitutional myth) gradually disappeared from the festival's programs, Kosovo (the central element of the Serbian national constitutional myth) became one of the most recurrent themes. Among others, there were screened: *At Gazimestan* (Zvonko Mišić, 1990) commemorating the 600-year anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, *Kosovo, Inalienable* (Lidija Veljanova, 1990), about the history and political

problems in the province, or *Fear and Anxiety – the Milinchics* (Milenko Jovanović, 1993), about the sufferings of the Serbian family Milinčić. The synopsis of *On the Resurrection Day* (Branko Milošević, 1991), about the remains of Serbian Orthodox church St. Spasa in the town of Prizren in Kosovo, says that this church should ‘remind us that this place has always been a cradle and a grave for this nation’ (Catalogue 1991, 87). The film insists that Kosovo ‘historically’ belongs to Serbia, indirectly referring to the conflicts with the Albanian population that would finally result in Kosovo’s independence in 2008. By screening numerous films on the history of Kosovo, the festival joined the dominant trend in Serbian culture and media, which used the motive of Kosovo – characterized as the cradle of Serbian nationhood – as one of the key elements for nation-building in the 1990s.

Even when socialist Yugoslavia was not directly criticized, the festival promoted a different system of values. This is particularly obvious in documentaries about religious customs and traditions. A few films featuring these motives were also screened during the period 1954–1990, but in the 1990s, their number significantly rose and the focus of attention moved exclusively to the Serbian Orthodox Church. *Copper, Gold and Concrete* (Mina Stanojević, 1990) told the story of the building of the central dome at the Temple of St. Sava in Belgrade, *Serbian Rhapsody* (Mihailo Vukobratović, 1990) focused on Serbian monasteries and frescoes, and *A Prayer for Dead Souls* (Zoran Đorđević, 1993) featured an Orthodox church in Prague. Religion as a theme featured great differences in the two periods as we can see comparing the synopsis of the films *Anno Domini 1967* (Branko Gapo, 1968), about people gathered around a monastery in Macedonia hoping to be cured, and *Waiting for a Miracle* (Dragiša Filipović, 1991), about people who gather in a Serbian monastery where allegedly the Mother of God appeared. While the first states that ‘the ancient belief that monasteries have a power of healing mentally ill people has remained with *illiterate people* [...]’ and labels such a belief as *primitivism* (Catalogue 1968, 117), the second one approaches this theme without criticism and quotes: ‘The rising of the sun is the catharsis that produces different visions to all the believers’ (Catalogue 1991, 28). Science, one of the principal values of socialism, was supplanted by religion as one of the main values promoted in the 1990s.

The change in the festival’s programming took place gradually. The editions of 1990 and 1991 still included a few films that did not necessarily present the SFRY in a negative way, such as, for instance, *The Man that Created Systems* (Jovan Jovanović, 1990), about Edvard Kardelj and the fiasco of the socialist utopia that he tried to create. In addition, not all the films steered away from criticizing Milošević’s Serbia. Among others, the independent production company FREE B92 took part with several documentaries finding fault with Serbia’s role in the wars in the federation and showing the protests against Slobodan Milošević in 1996–1997. However, the majority of films fit the new cultural models of Serbia.

The approach to themes related to the latest political events (ongoing wars, tensions in Kosovo) and cultural issues (religion, the Serbian Orthodox Church) and the shifting nature of representations of certain events (WWII, history of the federal republic) exemplifies the transition from a pro-socialist festival to a largely pro-Serbian nationalist one. These changes were, in a specific context of war, part of a larger cultural and political process of moving away from the SFRY and justifying and supporting Serbia's role in its disintegration. Even if critical works were not new to the event, the criticism of Yugoslavia expressed in the films from socialist and the post-socialist periods had a completely different objective.

### Origins and trajectories

To conclude, the festival that was founded with the aim of uniting the cinematic output of the six Yugoslav republics and that was strongly marked by the socialist cultural and political contexts of the country in which it was conceived, at the beginning of the 1990s, rather easily abandoned the Yugoslav concepts that it had supported for decades. Continuing to exist under its original name until 2004, the *Yugoslav* festival paradoxically turned to values completely opposed to the socialist Yugoslav ones – and opened its doors to themes characteristic of Serbian ethno-nationalism. This change happened for two interconnected reasons – the change of the festival structure as a result of the disintegration of SFRY and the major ideological shift that was one of its causes.

Like the CPY in the post-WWII years, the regime of Slobodan Milošević also quickly recognized moving images as a powerful propaganda tool, which had wide popular appeal. However, the changed film production profile (less large state-owned production houses and more small private companies) made this kind of propaganda harder to control. That is why television documentaries produced by state-controlled media, which were now for the first time included in the festival programs, played a significant role in the promotion of the new government and its decisions. In a changed cultural climate, numerous film production houses – both state owned and private – also supported the new ideology and values.

The festival has never been a simple propaganda vehicle and, even if works that supported the regime in power appeared more frequently, both periods included significant critical films as well. However, an important change in film profile happened. While the films that supported the Yugoslav socialist concepts whether they praised or criticized and mocked their implementation marked the socialist period, the films that opposed socialist concepts as such mostly epitomized the immediate post-socialist period. In addition, while some of the old concepts and ideals (Yugoslav revolution, anti-fascist struggle, brotherhood and unity, etc.) disappeared, new ones, unthinkable in the socialist period, were strongly supported – anti-Croatian propaganda, criticism of former President

Tito, the Serbian Orthodox Church as a leading institution, and Kosovo as the central place of the Serbian national myth. The change in themes and their implementation closed the process of the festival's transformation and marked the real end of the *Yugoslav* festival era, more than a decade before its official end in 2004.

## Notes

1. Organized by the Belgrade and Pula ciné-clubs.
2. Organized by the Academic film club AFC in Belgrade.
3. In 1952, the Communist Party officially changed its name into the League of Communists in order to mark a distance from the Eastern Bloc.
4. In Jajce, on 29 November 1943, AVNOJ, the political organization of the Yugoslav resistance movement, created a federal Yugoslavia and named Tito Marshal of Yugoslavia and prime minister. The Yugoslav Government in exile was revoked, and the royal family denied the right to return to the country.
5. Unless otherwise noted, all translations to English are by the author.
6. The festival took place in Belgrade for the first time from 4 to 9 March 1960 as The First Yugoslav Documentary and Short Film Festival. In 1961, it resumed continuity from Pula under the official name The Eighth Yugoslav Documentary and Short Film Festival. The year 1954 is taken as the official year of its creation.
7. *National Liberation Struggle*, a term related to the *National Liberation War*, signifies the war of liberation of the Yugoslav peoples against the fascist occupation troops. It also applies to the revolutionary struggle social liberation that led to the creation of socialist Yugoslavia.
8. This changed in 1967, when the Council made a decision to classify the submitted films as: documentary, short fiction, animated, and utility films. The same Council established new awards: the Golden Medal Belgrade and the Silver Medal Belgrade.
9. Sometimes, however, critical and creative works came out of this practice, cf. *The Mallet* (Aleksandar Ilić, 1977).
10. The idiom *Black Wave* was coined by journalist Vladimir Jovičić in a text published in the daily newspaper *Borba* with the intention to express negative criticism, but instead it was accepted as a term of designation. For more on Black Wave, cf. De Cuir (2011); Kirn, Sekulić and Testen (2012).
11. Živojin Pavlović, *The Rats Woke Up*, Berlin: Silver Bear for Best Director (1967); Aleksandar Petrović, *I Even Met Happy Gypsies*, Cannes: FIPRESCI & Jury's Special Grand Prix Ex-aequo (1967), Oscar nomination (1967), and Golden Globe nomination (1968); Dušan Makavejev, *Innocence Unprotected*, Berlin: Silver Bear Extraordinary Jury Prize (1968); Želimir Žilnik, *Early Works*, Berlin: Golden Bear (1969), etc. In Oberhausen, in the period 1961–1975, there were 45 awards for Yugoslav film, and in 1967–1973, there were 26 (information on the number of awards collected from the publication on the 50 years of the Oberhausen Short Film Festival, cf. Cantz Verlag 2004).
12. Edvard Kardelj was one of the leading creators of the Yugoslav self-management and author of the 1974 Constitution.
13. Milošević was the president of Serbia (1990–1997), President of Yugoslavia (1997–2000), until overthrown on 5 October 2000.

14. The wars that disintegrated the former Socialist Republic include Slovenia (1991), Croatia (1991–1995), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995), Kosovo (1998–1999), and the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) (Serbia and Montenegro) (1999).
15. The festival catalog from 1991, despite the Croatian boycott, however, did state Vodopivec's name on the Council members' list, while Žižić's name is not there.
16. While the Belgrade festival was, although incomplete, still being held, the festival in Pula was canceled in 1991 in protest against violence and the war. The following year, 1992, it was renewed as the First Croatian Film Festival.
17. The Croatian fascist movement, Ustasas, temporarily ruled the Independent State of Croatia, a Croatian puppet state founded on 10 April 1941, after the invasion of Yugoslavia by the Axis powers.

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