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## **SOCIAL DEVIATIONS AND DEVIATIONS OF SOCIALISM: CRITICAL CINEMATOGRAPHY OF THE YUGOSLAV BLACK WAVE**

### **Abstract**

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*The aim of this paper is to investigate the connection between the Yugoslav black wave and social deviations, with the primary goal of considering the security perspective and security challenges of black wave cinematography in relation to Yugoslav society. It was pointed out that the phenomenon of the black wave in its socio-political perspective and function can be seen in three ways: 1) as a subversive attack on socialist Yugoslavia; 2) as an artistic document about the “dark side” of Yugoslav socialism; 3) as a state project of the Yugoslav authorities. It has been observed that the relationship between the black wave and social deviations represents a variable category that is conditioned by opting for one of the three offered perspectives. The same regularity was noted regarding the security situation related to black wave cinematography, where, depending on the chosen perspective, the black wave is shown as: 1) a subversive mission aimed at undermining socialist Yugoslavia; 2) valuable testimony about systemic deviations and systemic security challenges that were present in socialist Yugoslavia; 3) a fictitious or at least tolerated state*

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*project of the Yugoslav authorities, which was aimed at strengthening the socio-political and security situation in SFRY.*

**Keywords:** *black wave, Yugoslav cinematography, film and politics, social deviations, security.*

## THE BLACK WAVE IN A SOCIO-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Black Wave, understood in its totality of artistic, but also a series of socio-political implications, leaves room for different interpretations depending on contextual, ideological and numerous other factors. Arising in the 1960s and dying out already in the early 1970s, this segment of Yugoslav post-war cinema managed to leave a significant mark not only in the artistic field, but also on a much wider socio-political plan during its short existence. Among the basic characteristics of the black wave, it is usually mentioned (although not without challenge by some critics) its realism in an effort to portray the Yugoslav social reality without beautification and other distortions. Likewise, the pessimistic tone is also considered as one of the “trademarks” of black-wave films.

Another important feature of the black wave stems from this thematic and ambient determination: the focus on topics from the social margins, including various social problems and social disorders.<sup>1</sup> It is precisely this feature of the black wave makes it suitable for study from the point of view of its connection with the sphere of social deviations. The term social deviations usually refers to various phenomena whose common feature is a deviation from a certain social norm or standard in the domain of social functioning. In accordance with the above, but also respecting the specific needs of our research, by social deviation, we will refer to both those phenomena that are regularly mentioned under the mentioned term, as well as some phenomena that can be considered as social deviations in a broader sense. Accordingly, under social deviations we will include those components that are regularly included in the typologies of social deviations, such as criminality, alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, prostitution, vagrancy, idleness, begging, suicides

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<sup>1</sup> G. J. DeCuir, 2019; M. Nikodijević, 1995; V. Radosavljević, 2019.

and suicide attempts.<sup>2</sup> However, under the term social deviations we will mean a number of additional phenomena concerning various disorders with social implications. Poverty, unemployment, homelessness, other forms of social vulnerability, social and educational neglect, social problems related to dysfunctional families, as well as other dysfunctional micro-social and macro-social environments are just some of them. Likewise, social problems and disturbances in the functioning of the socio-political system as a whole or its constituent elements will be taken into account, with a special emphasis on government structures. Such social problems and disorders can be collectively defined as systemic deviations.<sup>3</sup> Finally, an important segment of social disorders that will be considered are “anti-systemic deviations”,<sup>4</sup> which can be defined as different forms of endangering the state order and ruling regime, as well as other forms of endangering valid socio-political values.<sup>5</sup>

In accordance with the chosen direction of this research, one of the basic problems that we will try to study are the security aspects of the black wave, i.e. its relevance to the security situation in SFR Yugoslavia.<sup>6</sup> Analyzing the previous approaches to the study and understanding of the black wave, we can observe it threefold: 1) as a subversive, counter-revolutionary attack on the Yugoslav state and the values of Yugoslav society; 2) as a valuable artistic direction that faithfully portrayed the “dark side” of the reality of life in socialist Yugoslavia; 3) as a constructed, pseudo-subversive trend that actually had its foothold in the Yugoslav government. Respecting the needs of this research, in the following sections we will try to shed more light on each of the listed perspectives.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> M. Bošković, 2020; V. Jakovljević *et al.*, 1984; J. Špadijer-Džinić, 1988; I. Janković & V. Pešić, 1988. In domestic and Yugoslav literature, see also: Lj. Bavcon *et al.*, 1969; M. Đurić, 1961; R. Lukić, 1976; V. Najman, 1985; M. Milosavljević, 2003; Z. Šeparović, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> I. Janković & V. Pešić, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> A. Matković, 2021a, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> For the concept and characteristics of social deviations, social disorganization, social problems and other related concepts in classical sociological, criminological, social pathology and social psychology literature, see e.g.: R. G. Brown, 1942; R. A. Cloward, 1959; M. A. Elliott & F. E. Merrill, 1950; E. M. Lemert, 1951a, 1951b; I. A. Berg & B. M. Bass, 1961; H. A. Bloch, 1952; B. Wootton, 1959; A. K. Cohen, 1959; R. K. Merton, 1957, 1961; E. H. Sutherland *et al.*, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> On the basics and various general aspects of security studies, see e.g.: A. Collins, 2022; S. Mijalković & M. Popović, 2016; C. Peoples & N. Vaughan-Williams, 2020; V. Stajić, 2021; P. Vilić, 2012. On national security, see C. R. Neu & C. Wolf, 1994; J. J. Romm, 1993; M. Sheehan, 2018; D. M. Snow, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> On the general relationship between art and social deviance, see A. Matković, 2017, 2022.

## THE BLACK WAVE AS A SUBVERSIVE ATTACK ON SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

In terms of the first perspective, it was the initial narrative that was created about the black wave in the late 1960s and early 1970s and which shortly afterwards led to repressive measures that effectively ended this phase of Yugoslav cinema. According to the common opinion, the official beginning of accusations against the black wave is taken to be a newspaper article from the newspaper *Borba* published in 1969,<sup>8</sup> in which a series of criticisms were made against the new tendencies within the so-called new (Yugoslav) film.<sup>9</sup> This text was followed by a series of similar defamations in the Yugoslav press, as well as in various forums of Yugoslav society, all of which followed a similar ideological pattern. According to this starting point, the black wave represented a subversive activity that aimed to undermine the post-war Yugoslav state and Yugoslav society, as well as to jeopardize the Yugoslav socialist order and its values. As part of this narrative, one could also encounter claims about the connection or stimulation of the black wave by foreign power centers opposed to socialism and communism (for example, through the praise that the foreign press and art critics directed at the account of Yugoslav black wave achievements, through the awarding of prestigious awards to black wave films and their authors, etc.). Based on the above, the position of the black wave can be interpreted from a security angle. Namely, according to this narrative, the black wave represented a significant security challenge for the Yugoslav state and Yugoslav society, with assumed foreign support and the potential to seriously threaten order within the SFRY. In addition to the presented political accusations, as part of this anti-black wave rhetoric, objections were also highlighted against the artistic quality of the films in question, including their complete disputing as artistically worthless.

Evaluating such ideas and thoughts, even though they have been mostly abandoned for decades and even though they have become extremely unpopular, for the sake of truth, it is necessary to allow for the possibility that at least one part of them could be based in reality to some extent. This, for example, refers to the possibility of a tendentious portrayal of socially deviant phenomena to a greater extent than they were actually present in Yugoslav society; then, to the possibility of

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<sup>8</sup> V. Jovičić, 1969.

<sup>9</sup> V. Radosavljević, 2019; B. Tirnanić, 2011; B. Zlatić, 2020.

planned selection of subversive themes as a strategy for greater success on the foreign (i.e. Western) market, to various objectively conceivable self-promotion attempts of individual authors, as well as to other hypothetical forms of causing a shock effect or calculative approach when making and marketing films. In any case, with the passage of time, the described anti-black wave starting points were almost completely abandoned. With the change in socio-political circumstances and the accompanying social climate, there were radical changes in the prevailing attitude toward this segment of Yugoslav cinematography. As part of such a new point of view, the protagonists of the events surrounding the black wave experienced rehabilitation and social recognition, while the black wave films received a new evaluation and energetic reaffirmation. All this led to the formation of a completely different picture regarding the black wave. Expressed graphically: from that time, the black wave was no longer seen as a 'black hole', but as a 'black gem' of Yugoslav cinema.

When it comes to socially deviant aspects within this paradigm, they can be expressed in two directions: as social deviations related to the black wave films themselves, as well as social deviations related to the creators of the black wave. In the extension, we will consider both of these starting points.

Regarding the first starting point (black wave films understood as deviant content), the key issue to be considered concerns the censorship of black wave productions. In this regard, it is important to distinguish between formally banned films and those films whose ban was informal, i. e. factual. The only work of the black wave (as well as the entire Yugoslav cinematography) that was officially banned was the omnibus film *Grad* from 1963.<sup>10</sup> The film in question was prohibited by the decision of the District Court in Sarajevo – a decision that was valid until 1990.<sup>11</sup> As for informal forms of prohibition, the known method of censorship was the so-called "bunkering", understood as *de facto* preventing the public showing of the disputed film. In the period between the early 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, dozens of films were hidden from the public eye using the bunkering method.<sup>12</sup> In this way, it was achieved that, in the words of R. Zelenović and M. Nikodijević (1995), they became "banned without a ban".

<sup>10</sup> M. Nikodijević, 1995; V. Radosavljević, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> M. Nikodijević, 1995; B. Tirnanić, 2011; V. Radosavljević, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> M. Nikodijević (1995) and V. Radosavljević (2019) point out that the total number of bunkered films was around 40.

To illustrate the functioning of this censorship mechanism, we can mention several examples. D. Makavey's *Parada*, shot in 1962, was not approved for release until several controversial shots were removed from it. Another Makavejev film, *W. R. – Misterije organizma* (1971), after many years of bunkering, was shown to the Yugoslav audience for the first time only in 1987. Ž. Pavlović's *Povratak* was filmed in 1966, but it was approved for screening only two years later, and only after the insertion of additional scenes and the opening part, which significantly changed the context of the film. Due to a politically problematic topic – namely, because of the topic of the Cominform – *Sveti Pesak* (1968) by M. Antić was also placed in the bunker. The same fate befell Antić's film *Doručak sa đavolom* (1971), which was bunkered due to critical scrutiny of the KPJ and the Yugoslav socialist authorities. Although Žilnik's *Rani radovi* (1969) was not formally and permanently banned in court, the film remained bunkered until 1982.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, as another informal and indirect form of suppressing the production and distribution/screening of black wave films, we can mention critical texts in the media and announcements of various social organizations. These texts were aimed both at contesting the artistic value of films and at criticizing their ideological dimension. In order to understand the scope of this form of stigmatization of the black wave, it is important to bear in mind the extraordinary impact that such critical texts had on the emergence and further development of the anti-black wave climate in Yugoslav society. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account the alleged connection between certain texts and the state and party leadership as possible commissioners of their creation.<sup>14</sup> Finally, in addition to preventing the actual showing of films, it is necessary to mention the methods of sabotage by which the showing and viewership of certain films were tried to be reduced to the smallest possible extent. The following are mentioned as the methods by which this saboteur practice was carried out: one-time screenings of films solely for the sake of form satisfaction; broadcasting films in small or otherwise unsuitable halls, in a short period of time, in few or isolated settlements; release of films in the cinema's 'dead season' and the like.<sup>15</sup>

As for the second starting point (authors of the black wave understood as social deviants), it can be considered through the analysis of

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<sup>13</sup> G. J. DeCuir, 2019; M. Nikodijević, 1995; V. Radosavljević, 2019; B. Tirnanić, 2011; P. Volk, 1986.

<sup>14</sup> M. Nikodijević, 1995; B. Tirnanić, 2011; V. Radosavljević, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> M. Nikodijević, 1995.

the repression suffered by individual authors involved in the creation of 'black' films. Certainly, the most drastic sanctions were felt by director Lazar Stojanović, who was sentenced to two years in prison in 1973 for his graduate film *Plastični Isus*. This was the only case of a criminal conviction, and therefore the only case of a prison sentence imposed on a Yugoslav filmmaker due to his professional involvement. In addition to Stojanović, as a result of the *Plastični Isus* affair, other individuals connected with the creation of the aforementioned film also suffered certain sanctions. Namely, director Aleksandar Petrović – Stojanović's mentor – was expelled from the Belgrade Faculty of Dramatic Arts, after which he left the country and moved to Paris, while Tomislav Gotovac, as an actor in *Plastic Jesus*, also suffered certain forms of sabotage and mistreatment.<sup>16</sup>

Due to a foreign interview of Dušan Makavejev related to the turbulence surrounding the film *W. R. – Misterije organizma* and the active role played by SUBNOR in that process, members of this association of fighters filed a criminal complaint against him. Seeing Makavejev's statement as an insult to themselves, members of SUBNOR accused him of attacking the achievements of the national liberation struggle, but also the overall values of socialist Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav self-governing society.<sup>17</sup> Although Makavejev was not convicted in the criminal proceedings (which were suspended after only one hearing), he nevertheless suffered certain formal sanctions, since he was expelled from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in February 1973.<sup>18</sup>

Another example of court proceedings in which an author of the Black Wave was involved (in truth, not as a defendant, but as a legal representative) is the trial regarding the film *Rani radovi* (1969) by Želimir Žilnik, under the charge that this film led to a serious violation of social and political morality.<sup>19</sup> A lawyer by training, Žilnik took an active part during the court proceedings, trying to refute the accusations, which ultimately bore fruit.<sup>20</sup> However, although it was not banned by the court, the controversial film remained in the "bunker" for years, while Žilnik also suffered personal sanctions: he was labelled an "anarcholiberal element" and was expelled from the League of Communists.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> D. Gulding, 2020; M. Nikodijević, 1995; B. Tirnanić, 2011; V. Radosavljević, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> M. Nikodijević, 1995; B. Tirnanić, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> V. Radosavljević, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> B. Tirnanić, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> G. J. DeCuir, 2019; M. Nikodijević, 1995; V. Radosavljević, 2019; B. Tirnanić, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> G. J. DeCuir, 2019; M. Nikodijević, 1995.



In addition to the filmmakers who suffered some form of formal sanctions, it should be noted that those authors who were exposed to repression in an unofficial, i. e. non-institutionalized form, were significantly ahead in number. Such repressions encompassed a wide range from the informal banning of the films of which they were the authors, through making it impossible or difficult to continue their professional career, up to various forms of personal disqualification and stigmatization.<sup>22</sup> As a result of such a newly created atmosphere, a part of the authors emigrated from Yugoslavia, thus acquiring a kind of (semi)disident status.<sup>23</sup>

## **THE BLACK WAVE AS AN ARTISTIC DOCUMENT ABOUT THE “DARK SIDE” OF YUGOSLAV SOCIALISM**

As for the second perspective, i. e. an understanding of the black wave as an artistically significant movement that reflects the reality of Yugoslav society, this is the prevailing opinion in artistic and general social circles today.<sup>24</sup> Beginning approximately in the 1980s and continuing until today, this orientation represents the point of view according to which, contrary to earlier interpretations, the black wave is perceived as a phenomenon that expresses its qualities both on the artistic and on the general social level. In the case of the second (i. e. regarding social level in general), according to the proponents of this perspective, it is particularly evident in the presentation of a series of undesirable (from the position of the then government) aspects of life in socialist Yugoslavia. Also, the general social qualities of the black wave are recognized in terms of the socio-political context in which the black wave filmmakers expressed their artistic ideas, especially bearing in mind the various repressions that were expressed against their films, and sometimes against the authors themselves.

Regarding the socially deviant aspects of the black wave that arise from this perspective, they primarily concern the depiction of deviant phenomena on the big screen, i. e. cinematographic treatment of various social deviations in Yugoslav society. In accordance with the above, below we will consider the portrayal of social deviations through the

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<sup>22</sup> G. J. DeCuir, 2019; V. Radosavljević, 2019; B. Tirnanić, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> V. Radosavljević, 2019; see also: A. Matković, 2021b, 2022.

<sup>24</sup> G. J. DeCuir, 2019; D. Gulding, 2020; M. Nikodijević, 1995; A. Petrović, 1988; V. Radosavljević, 2019; B. Tirnanić, 2011; D. Unterkofler, 2012.



filmmaking of Purisa Đorđević, Živojin Pavlović, Aleksandar Petrović, Dušan Makavejev, Želimir Žilnik, Đorđe Kadijević, Miroslav Antić, Jovan Jovanović and Lazar Stojanović.

As part of his long and fruitful career, Mladimir Puriša Đorđević distinguished himself as a director and screenwriter of several famous black-wave films. Among them is a kind of cycle of four connected films: *Devojka* (1965), *San* (1966), *Jutro* (1967) and *Podne* (1968). As for the socially deviant aspects within them, we can single out the depictions of various socio-political problems in the context of the NOB and the establishment of the post-war government, as well as a critical review of the ideology of socialist Yugoslavia, with a touch of irony – which was a very controversial and daring move at the time. By the way, *Podne* is considered to be the first film that thematized the conflict between Broz and Stalin, that is, the break between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

Živojin Pavlović dealt with a number of socially deviant phenomena in his works. On the one hand, it is possible to observe numerous classic social deviations, such as different types of crime (crimes against property, violent crimes, sexual crimes) and specific criminal phenomena related to them (pimping, criminal association, criminal gangs, juvenile delinquency). This also includes other socially deviant phenomena in the narrower sense: alcoholism, prostitution, gambling, vagrancy, etc. On the other hand, it is possible to see examples of somewhat different social problems, such as: dysfunctional families, difficulties in resocialization and social adjustment of a person after serving prison sentences; problems of unemployment, homelessness, etc. Also, Pavlović deals with controversial social problems and disorders on the interpersonal level in the context of NOB. Films in which it is possible to recognize such themes are *Kapi, vode, ratnici* (1962), *Grad* (1963), *Povratak* (1966), *Buđenje pacova* (1967), *Kad budem mrtav i beo* (1968), *Zaseda* (1969), *Crveno klasje* (1970).

When we talk about Aleksandar Petrović's work, one of the main peculiarities of his style was the depiction of social deviations among certain marginalized social groups, especially among members of the Roma national minority. For example, the film *Skupljači perja* (1967) shows an extraordinary diversity of sociopathological phenomena: from different spheres of crime (property crimes, violent crimes, including domestic violence, violence against women, violence against children), through prostitution, vagrancy, begging, sexual deviations (incest, pedophilia), up to the problem of dysfunctional families, marginalization

and endangerment of certain communities, discrimination on the basis of nationality, general attitude towards national minorities, etc. Also, it is important to note Petrović's presentation of deviant phenomena not only in the urban (as more typical) environment, but also in the rural environment. In addition to *Skupljači perja*, Petrović's black-wave oeuvre includes the following films: *Dvoje* (1961), *Dani* (1963), *Tri* (1965), *Biće skoro propast sveta* (1968), *Majstor i Margarita* (1972).

In the films of Dušan Makavejev, it is also possible to recognize the depiction of various social deviations. These include, among others: violent crime (including family violence and inter-partner violence), property crime, alcoholism, as well as certain sexual deviations. It is precisely the sexual theme (and with it sexual deviance) that represents one of the most famous specificities of Makavejev's black wave work. Also, other social problems are mentioned in his opus, such as social vulnerability, poverty, poor living conditions, etc. Finally, there is also a critical attitude towards the Yugoslav socialist system, as well as towards socialism and communism in general. The mentioned phenomena are visible in the following films: *Parada* (1962), *Čovek nije tica* (1965), *Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice PTT* (1967), *Nevinost bez zaštite* (1968) i *W. R. - Misterije organizma* (1971), as Makavejev's most controversial work.

In the work of Želimir Žilnik, one of the founders of the docudrama genre, a wide range of social deviations are shown in documentary form. Among other things, these include juvenile delinquency in the broadest sense, property crime, violent crime, endangering public order and peace, (minor) prostitution, vagrancy, begging, alcoholism, and suicidal tendencies. Also, other social problems are present in Žilnik's opus, such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness, dysfunctional families, inadequate actions of the police and other authorities, citizens' dissatisfaction with socio-political conditions, etc. The phenomena in question were shown in particular in the following docudrama productions: *Žurnal o omladini na selu zimi* (1967), *Nezaposleni ljudi* (1968), *Pioniri maleni, mi smo vojska prava, svakog dana ničemo ko zelena trava* (1968), *Lipanjaska gibanja* (1969), *Crni film* (1971). However, the greatest social turbulence was caused by the feature-length film *Rani radovi* (1969), which is primarily devoted to the depiction of various socially undesirable phenomena in the very functioning of Yugoslav society and state.

Undeniably famous as a director, Đorđe Kadijević is not always mentioned as one of the authors of the black wave. Nevertheless, several

of his early films from the 1960s (*Praznik* from 1967 and *Pohod* from 1968) are considered achievements that correspond to this epoch of Yugoslav cinematography in terms of time and style (Kadijević & Ognjanović, 2017). These were films that depicted the Second World War and social conditions in the war-torn Yugoslav territory in a realistic manner – from the perspective of an ‘ordinary man’. According to the above, the deviance they show could be subsumed under the systemic deviations associated with war events and the Yugoslav people’s liberation struggle.

Although he certainly did not remain the best known filmmaker of the black wave era, Miroslav Antić also contributed to the diversity of social problems that this cinematography dealt with. The film *Sveti pesak* (1968) is important as one of the earliest examples of depicting the theme of Cominform, while in *Doručak sa đavolom* (1971) the focus was on social problems in Vojvodina during and immediately after the Second World War (abuses related to the compulsory purchase of agricultural products from peasants, the refusal of the locals to hand over their products to the authorities and the conflict with the representatives of the authorities, the dissatisfaction of the population with the newly established socialist government, etc.).

Author Jovan Jovanović contributed to the black wave with a pioneering and certainly very daring portrayal of some truly controversial phenomena on the screen. Such phenomena include, among others: the beginnings of youth drug addiction in Yugoslavia, the development of the Yugoslav criminal underworld, the beginning of cooperation between domestic security services and members of the criminal milieu, indications of domestic terrorist activities, suicidal tendencies among young people, etc. Also, in Jovanović’s works there is a lot of direct criticism and parody of Yugoslav society and its values, holders of the political power and state structures. In addition, using film language, Jovanović also pointed to a number of other negative phenomena in the social life and functioning of the SFR Yugoslavia. Such deviations can be seen in the films: *Studentski grad* (1964), *Kolt 15 GAP* (1971), *Izrazito ja* (1969), and especially in the feature film *Mlad i zdrav kao ruža* (1971).

Despite the fact that he contributed to the black wave with only one feature film – his graduate work *Plastični Isus* from 1971 – Lazar Stojanović undoubtedly belongs to the most controversial authors of the black wave, while the aforementioned film is undoubtedly one of the most famous and problematic representatives of the black wave. In *Plastični Isus*, it is possible to single out various deviant phenomena (both

sociopathological and psychopathological). However, the mentioned film is best known for its anti-systemic connotations, especially regarding the parody of Josip Broz, as well as for alluding to the totalitarian nature of the Yugoslav regime.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, as we noted earlier,<sup>26</sup> due to its extremely provocative content, the film *Plastični Isus* can actually be viewed as a kind of anti-systemic deviation in its entirety.<sup>27</sup>

As noted, everything shown profiles the black wave as an important indicator and valuable testimony of the presence of systemic deviations and systemic security challenges that existed in socialist Yugoslavia. Seen from this angle, the black wave becomes a kind of collective historical document about the external and internal security problems that shook the Yugoslav society and the state from the beginning of the National Liberation Struggle, until the early 1970s – i. e. until the effective end of black wave cinematography.

## THE BLACK WAVE AS A STATE PROJECT OF THE YUGOSLAV AUTHORITIES

When it comes to the third perspective, recent years have seen the formation of a new tendency in which the black wave is presented as a kind of state project that had the support of the Yugoslav authorities. According to this approach, the subversive character of black wave cinematography is being contested, while at the same time, this cinematography is being attributed to completely different goals and purposes. Among such, supposedly real goals of the black wave, stands out the (alleged) intention of the black wave authors and the state commissions or approvers of black wave films to create an impression of a high degree of democracy in Yugoslav society and the liberality of Yugoslavia as a state to the world through the production of apparently critical films.<sup>28</sup> According to somewhat more moderate starting points, the black wave is treated as a phenomenon that had the indirect or at least tacit support of the authorities as long as the films did not touch on essential socio-political problems, but only on topics from the social.<sup>29</sup> In any case, within such narratives, it is possible to notice a series of bold claims (one can freely say – accusations) against a number of authors

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<sup>25</sup> V. Radosavljević, 2019; B. Tirnanić, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> A. Matković, 2021b.

<sup>27</sup> See also: Matković, 2021b, 2022.

<sup>28</sup> S. Cvetković, 2021.

<sup>29</sup> B. Zlatić, 2020.

who contributed to the black wave: ranging from moderate and mostly well-argued claims that some of them enjoyed significant support from the state and from the film companies, through complaints that they enjoyed various benefits, insinuations that they were close to the centers of socio-political power, up to open accusations that they worked for one of the services of the Yugoslav state apparatus.<sup>30</sup>

If such considerations were to be adopted, the conclusion would be imposed that the black wave did not, in fact, represent any security challenge for Yugoslavia, but quite the opposite – a skillful manoeuvre by the state authorities aimed at strengthening the socio-political and security positions of the SFRY. Evaluating these starting points, it is possible to notice how part of them is truly based (at least partially) on factual statements. This refers, among other things, to the indisputable circumstances that the black wave films were financed from the state budget, as well as that they were produced and distributed by the state companies. It also refers to the allegations that many of the authors of the films in question enjoyed a significant social reputation and were involved in various prestigious professional, educational and other social institutions of the SFR Yugoslavia. Furthermore, for certain authors, it is possible to confirm the accuracy of the insinuations that (at least in some period of their career) they were close to certain centres of socio-political power in Yugoslavia (ranging from ordinary membership in the Communist Party, all the way to higher positions on party and social ladders).

Finally, for some persons involved in the process of creation of black-wave productions (primarily, film company managers), it is even possible to confirm the accuracy of the allegations that they cooperated in a certain form with the intelligence agencies of the Yugoslav state.<sup>31</sup> Viewed from another angle, although there are no exact data as evidence

<sup>30</sup> B. Munjin, 2010; B. Zlatić, 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Certainly, the most striking example is the case of Ratko Dražević, a participant in the National Liberation War, an operative of the UDB and later the director of Avala Film. A controversial figure in many respects, and according to his statements, a person who had nothing to do with the field of cinematography before joining Avala film, Dražević is associated with various affairs, claims and anecdotes with the common denominator – cooperation with the state security service. Among numerous examples, it can be singled out that Dražević was the organizer of UDB's liquidation groups, but also a participant in a series of illegal activities for the benefit of the state – ranging from espionage to smuggling of goods. Also, Dražević's claim that he killed 2,000 people and slept with the same number of women is very illustrative. Although they probably did not have as colourful biographies as Dražević, there were undoubtedly controversial executives in other Yugoslav film companies as well (see V. Radosavljević, 2019).

for this, with a sufficient degree of probability one can also speculate on the possibility that the state really tolerated the black wave as part of a strategy to demonstrate its liberality and democracy to the international community.<sup>32</sup> However, it seems very unlikely that the Yugoslav government would support or favourably tolerate those excesses of the black wave that attacked the basic socio-political values of the Yugoslav socialist society. Accordingly, if some kind of tolerance of the authorities towards the black wave truly existed, in all probability it had to be limited only to the presentation of peripheral social problems within post-war Yugoslavia.

As for the authors of the films themselves, it can be accepted as certain that many of them (more precisely, almost all of them) had to make various creative concessions and agree to various compromises with representatives of the film industry, but also with the centres of party and political power. Namely, in the conditions of dependence of Yugoslav cinematography and general Yugoslav social circumstances, such a flexible approach and willingness to compromise were, in fact, basically the only way to secure permission for filming and the necessary financial resources. This circumstance was confirmed by some creators of the black wave themselves,<sup>33</sup> which is why it should not cause major dilemmas. On the other hand, all speculations against the film artists themselves (from the directors and screenwriters to the actors) which imply making serious personal accusations, and at the same time do not offer adequate evidence in support of such allegations, must be taken with the utmost caution. This refers both to speculations in (mainly popular) literature and to certain examples of accusations made by the protagonists of the black wave themselves, including mutual accusations between creators.<sup>34</sup>

Likewise, speculations according to which the entire black wave represented a kind of well-thought-out conspiracy at the state level that had the function of masking and encoding a series of ideas and projects related to the creation, existence and final disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia must be taken with caution.<sup>35</sup> Without disputing the possibility that some of the listed allegations are potentially true, it is necessary to keep in mind that without access to reliable evidence that would raise

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<sup>32</sup> This position is supported even by some authors of the black wave – see M. Nikodijević, 1995.

<sup>33</sup> M. Nikodijević, 1995.

<sup>34</sup> For examples of such accusations and mutual attacks, cf. B. Munjin, 2010; M. Nikodijević, 1995; V. Radosavljević, 2019.

<sup>35</sup> B. Zlatić, 2020.

such claims to the level of facts, and not just speculation, it is not possible to consider them on a scientific level. Due to the above, all listed statements must, for now, be accepted exclusively as interesting, but scientifically unvalidated ideas. This is especially true if we bear in mind that such unvalidated statements can arise from very diverse motives: ranging from sincere scientific curiosity, over speculations of a popular/non-expert character, arbitrary commenting and handling of unsubstantiated data, all the way to knowingly stating untruths with the intention of defamation and disqualification of individual authors or their films. Due to all of the above, against the currently available factual situation, this perspective still does not allow for a more detailed analysis that would be based on objective and strictly scientific criteria.

## **DIVERSITY OF SOCIAL DEVIANT AND SECURITY PERSPECTIVES OF THE BLACK WAVE PHENOMENON**

Taking into account all of the above, we can state that the black wave phenomenon in the most general perspective can be viewed in two ways: as a strictly artistic phenomenon, on the one hand, and as a broader social phenomenon, on the other. Among the social phenomena that were recorded on the film strip of black-wave productions, special emphasis was placed on those phenomena that can be characterized as socially deviant. This includes both social deviations in the narrow sense of the term, as well as a number of other social problems that we have labelled as social deviations in a broader sense. Comparing the social reaction to different deviant content, it can be noted that the depiction of social deviations with political connotations was subjected to the greatest repression. Such depictions included, among others: a critical and/or revisionist interpretation of Yugoslav history before the Second World War, the activities and achievements of the NOB, the functioning of the Yugoslav (and not only Yugoslav) socialist system, the Yugoslav authorities, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia – all the way to explicit and intentional political provocations with the aim of causing a shock-reaction.

Also, films that thematized the dissatisfaction of various categories of members of Yugoslav society (workers, students, youth, etc.) were exposed to censorship and other pressures as well – that is, films that thematized deviations that directly threatened the survival of the then ideology and the ruling regime. Finally, an important taboo topic of the black wave was the contents of sexual connotation, since some of the



biggest controversies of the black wave were connected precisely with the sexual contents in the film – true, primarily if such contents were combined with political implications. On the other hand, socially deviant phenomena in the narrower sense were much more tolerated since their film presentation, although certainly undesirable, was still prevented and sanctioned to a lesser extent. This points to the conclusion that the state and party structures primarily sought to suppress those film productions that threatened the basic ideological elements on which socialist Yugoslavia rested, including endangering optimistic visions of further progress and a bright future for the SFRY and its citizens. Contrary to the above, it is noticeable that cinematic social deviations in the narrower sense were less often under the attack of the Yugoslav power structures, apparently being evaluated as less subversive and therefore less dangerous for the ruling order and its ideology.

It can be seen that the relationship between the black wave and social deviations is a variable category that is conditioned by opting for one of the three offered perspectives: 1) the black wave as a subversive attack on socialist Yugoslavia; 2) the black wave as an artistic document about the weaknesses of Yugoslav socialism; 3) the black wave as a state project (or at least as a project under the control) of the Yugoslav authorities. The same regularity can be seen with regard to the security situation related to black wave cinematography where, depending on the chosen perspective, the black wave is shown as: 1) a subversive mission aimed at undermining socialist Yugoslavia; 2) a valuable testimony about systemic deviations and systemic security challenges that were present in socialist Yugoslavia; 3) an artificial or at least tolerated state project of the Yugoslav authorities, which was aimed at strengthening the socio-political and security situation in SFRY. Although the available data still do not allow a final assessment of each of the offered perspectives, the parallel consideration of these perspectives is very useful for understanding different aspects of the black wave phenomenon, and especially for insight into the multiple faces (and reverses) that this phenomenon apparently possessed. Summarizing everything presented, it can be observed that the relationship between the black wave and social deviations, as well as the relationship between the black wave and the sphere of security, are shown to be interactions of variable meaning that are conditioned by opting for one of three extremely different perspectives. All this leads to the conclusion about the multidimensionality

of the social deviance of the black wave phenomenon,<sup>36</sup> but also about the multidimensionality of its security-related positioning.

Understood exclusively as art, as a witness of the time in which it developed, as a harbinger of future geopolitical interventions on the Yugoslav terrain, as an indicator of various social deviations within the Yugoslav socialist society, or as a kind of deviation of Yugoslav socialism in itself, it is undeniable that the black wave arouses research curiosity and raises a number of questions that still await a satisfactory answer. Precisely in these circumstances lies the reason why the black wave can be considered one of the starting points that must not be neglected during comprehensive interdisciplinary studies of conditions on Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav soil. Certain steps have been taken, mainly in the domain of history and sociology, where the black wave (truthfully, still quite sporadically) is sometimes given the importance of a social factor with certain implications for the wider condition of the state and society.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, the sciences that deal with the study of social deviations, as well as security sciences, cannot boast that they have so far recognized the importance of the black wave as an influential social factor. In the hope that this and previous<sup>38</sup> initial steps can serve as an incentive for further related studies, we once again emphasize the inextricable connection of social factors that shape the totality of a socio-political climate – including those factors that concern the artistic and wider cultural life. Confirmation for this is best provided by the phenomenon of the black wave, as a factor that, regardless of the chosen security and socially deviant point of view – or precisely because of such a diversity of possible viewpoints – undoubtedly had to play an important role in the overall socio-political scene of Yugoslavia and its successor states.

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<sup>36</sup> A. Matković, 2021b, 2022.

<sup>37</sup> S. Cvetković, 2011; S. Lazarević Radak, 2016; V. Neimarević, 2021; M. Pekić, 2018; R. Vučetić, 2012.

<sup>38</sup> A. Matković, 2021b, 2022.

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