

THE LOST ILLUSIONS OF THE REGAINED FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE POST-COMMUNIST CINEMATOGRAPHIC ART IN ROMANIA AS COMPARED TO HUNGARY, POLAND AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Cristina Nicolaescu*

chris2013x@yahoo.com

Abstract: *A question arises firmly: why can film makers create works in conditions of intellectual and social - political constraint and obstruction, while they cannot create them in conditions of freedom? Were these accomplished in total freedom? To answer this question, we shall select several illustrative examples for the above-mentioned countries. But, before this, let us show what the political and social context of the analysed communist period was, and what were the artistic performances of these film makers, not forgetting to mark and describe the mechanism of propaganda and communist censure. The differences of hues refer to the totally different way in which these countries perceived and accepted or not the communism and to the structure of the communist system varying from a regime to another. Compared to totalitarianism, dictatorship does not destroy any opposition; although it is a callous political regime using violent methods, dictatorship does not cancel any form of the civil society.*

Keywords: *cinematography, events, freedom, communism*

Freedom of expression

“Freedom of expression, of thought, opinion and beliefs, and freedom of creation of any kind, orally, by images, sounds and other public communication means, are inviolable. Censorship of any kind is forbidden. Freedom of expression will prejudice neither the person's dignity, honour, private life, nor the right to his/her own image. Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Romanian Constitution”. The same text, with small variations, is written in the fundamental laws of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. This is the legal fundamental according to which film makers from the central European space have been free to create valuable cinematographic works. But this legal fundamental had no factual coverage. The censorship of the communist system worked almost without fault, preventing hundreds of creators to express what they really thought

* Senior Lecturer PhD., “Dimitrie Cantemir” Christian University, Bucharest

and believed, in the art of filmmaking, for dozens of years. Let us see how George Orwell described censorship and duplicity:

«To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it; to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again»¹

Nevertheless, dozens of valuable cinematographic works emerged at the surface. Which was the secret of this guild amidst the intransigence and absurdity of a constricting and rigid system as the communist one? Assessing this period and its cinematographic masterpieces emerged from the slump and pain of the “*golden era*”, one can notice a paradox: there were more numerous and more valuable works then, than in the post-communist period, when freedom of expression was not restricted in any way. The 70's and 80's in communist countries, the most liberal decades from the political point of view, coincided with creating real film schools in almost all the communist countries. This is the period which makes the object of this analysis. The young Romanian, Polish and Czech film makers managed to "dribble" the rigours of the communist censure and offered the audiences valuable and original films. Tired of the communist censors, the young creators made great efforts to create as they thought and believed, wishing to avoid the appearance of a void of truth between what they thought and what their films showed. They imagined themselves and hoped to reach a time in which censorship would have totally disappeared. This time came immediately after 1989, the year of the revolutions and political changes from Central and Eastern Europe. But the regained freedom of expression, as man's fundamental right in a democratic and civilized company, has not led to the discovery and creation of great works of art. The exceptions were few and had almost nothing to do with those who were shouting their despair before 1989. In other words, no great film maker from the communist period managed to equal as value and appreciation the cinematographic work of that time, except for several cases, which can only confirm the rule. The regained freedom of expression did not trigger as a *sine qua non* condition the creation of real cinematographic masterpieces.

¹ George Orwell, 1984, (Bucharest, Univers Publishing House 1991), 34

From the cultural point of view, the 2nd day of November, 1948 was, for the Romanian cinema, the beginning of the *period of the socialist film* by the elaboration of the decree of the nationalization of the cinematographic industry and regulation of the trade with cinematographic products. The teaching of the great ideologist Lenin: “*The cinema is the most important art for us, as it is a propaganda instrument*” guided the cultural cinematographic policy of Romania until the 60's of the 20th century. The films had to reflect the *new man's* fight against the *retrograde* society, against *the society of man's exploitation by man*, to militate for the *realities* of the new society to be shown: *the gorgeous accomplishments of the working class allied with the working peasants*. Rare were the exceptions of cinematographic masterpieces as “The Lucky Mill” (in Romanian: “La moara cu noroc”) of Victor Iliu in 1958. The apparent liberalization brought by Nicolae Ceausescu starting with 1965 allowed the film makers to hope that the leading class of that time would perceive the film as a work of art. But things went in another direction. The two great political events (The Prague Spring of 1968 and the visits of Nicolae Ceausescu in China and North Korea of 1971) determined radical mutations in the cultural cinematographic ideology.

Aesthetics is once again required to have "educational" (i.e. Methodist) value, "ethical" (anti-bourgeois) quality and "militant" (activist - communist) feature; all under the dictatorial sign of the "national" (anti-cosmopolite and xenophobic) inspiration. As in all the radical variants of the communism of the 20th century, the nation comes to confound with the Great Ruler's image and policy. This last imperative appears in Romania in 1971 as a rough signal of establishing Nicolae Ceausescu's cult of personality.²

The cinema permanently developed its activity under the rigorous political control of the Committee for Socialist Culture and Education, so that neither of its products should have contained "dissonant" elements with the official ideology.

Of the 550 films of the communist period, approximately 222 (i.e. 40%) may be considered as having a political, propagandistic feature, the rest being entertainment, musical comedy, films for children ... With very few exceptions, the propaganda from the cinema

² Paul Cernat, Ion Manolescu, Angelo Mitchievici, Ioan Stanomir, *Explorations in the Romanian Communism vol.I* –, Chapter: *Communism at the 'Prosecutor's Office* by Ion Manolescu. *Adventure and Propaganda in Detective Film*, (Polirom Publishing House 2004), 286-288

*faithfully followed the political evolution lines of the Romanian Communist Party. It was first pro-Soviet, internationalist, anti-Romanian, then national-communist, anti-citizen, anti-intellectual, anti-occidental, vehicle of Ceausescu's cult.*³

How those films were, is expressed below:

*The works of literature and art are meant to show as faithfully as possible, in their own language, the accomplishments, preoccupations, aspirations, thinking and feeling of the large popular masses; they must be inspired permanently from the living spring of the social and national realities of our country.*⁴

Also, the feelings about film-making in that period are depicted as follows:

*After 1989, none of the Romanian film makers who had made film in the communism acknowledged his/her contribution to hatred, not to mention mea culpa.*⁵

Nevertheless, there were also films which made a gap in the ideological barrier. It is the case of the film "The Reenactment" (in Romanian: *Reconstituirea*), made in 1968, and directed by Lucian Pintilie, who also made "Why Do the Bells Toll, Mitica?" (in Romanian: "De ce trag clopotele, Mitica?") in 1979 – a film which was forbidden by the censure. "It is the first film, as work of art, which, in an ironical, cynic tone, introduces us in the Romanian moral and spiritual inferno, in the mockery labyrinth, the Romanian specific and degrading variant of the Balkan spirit", said Alice Manoiu, a film critic, in a cinema almanac. Then, Lucian Pintilie was allowed to emigrate to the West, his theatre mise-en-scenes provoking great political scandals. That is why he is not included in this

³ Cristian Tudor Popescu, *The Deaf Film in the Dumb Romania: Politics and Propaganda in the Romanian Fiction Film (1912-1989)* (in Romanian: *Filmul surd in Romania muta: politica si propaganda in filmul romanesc de fictiune*), (București, Editura Polirom, 2011), cover 4

⁴ The Programme of the Romanian Communist Party

⁵ Cristian Tudor Popescu, *The Deaf Film in the Dumb Romania: Politics and Propaganda in the Romanian Fiction Film (1912-1989)* (in Romanian: *Filmul surd in*

Romania muta: politica si propaganda in filmul romanesc de fictiune), (București, Editura

Polirom, 2011), 300

analysis, his work from the West having all the attributions of a total freedom of expression. The Romanian film generation of the '70ies had three remarkable representatives: Dan Pița, Mircea Daneliuc and Mircea Veroiu.

Dan Pița. His début was associated with a natural disaster - the spring floods of 1970. Together with several colleagues from his generation, among which Mircea Veroiu, he shot the Romanian full length documentary "Water Like a Black Buffalo" (in Romanian "Apa ca un bivol negru") (1970). The début in the fiction film occurred relatively quickly after graduation. Pița and Veroiu made together the famous "The Stone Wedding" (in Romanian: "Nunta de piatră") in 1972, quickly followed by "The Spirit of the Gold" (in Romanian: "Duhul aurului"). Having as their source of inspiration Agârbiceanu's works about the life of the inhabitants from the Apuseni Mountains, the two films surprised by their plasticity, narrative substantiality and the impression of strangeness they brought into the dull and conformist landscape of the Romanian film of that time. The films made by Mircea Veroiu, "Fefelega" and "Mârza" prefigured a hyperaesthetic and contemplative film maker, while "At a Wedding" (in Romanian: "La o nuntă") and "The Crate" (in Romanian: "Lada") made by Pița, revealed a dynamic and combative personality. Both films were bought by the New York Museum of Modern Art. After several episodes from the TV series "An August in Fire" (in Romanian: "Un august în flăcări"), distorted from the point of view of its history, made together with Alexandru Tatos and Doru Năstase, Pița made his début with the film "Philip the Good" (in Romanian: "Filip cel bun") (1974), a crude and sensitive scanning of the disorientation of a young man, typical for that time, too frail to face the moral degradation around him. About this film, its creator said:

The result was a good film which had much to suffer - it was practically maltreated by the censure. Dumitru Popescu (censor), who was nicknamed God, wrote scenes and invented personages which diluted the critical and polemical accent of the film directed to the Romanian society of 1974. They threatened me with the withdrawal of my name from the credits. The film remained in the drawer for a whole year, and my scripts and proposals were being rejected systematically. Time passing, I negotiated the type

*of changes [to be made] and accepted to make only those which seemed acceptable to me.*⁶

In "Tănase Scatiu" of 1975, Dan Pița developed the status of an image poet, in counterpoint with the portrait drawn in sharp lines of the arriviste Tanase Scatiu, interpreted by Victor Rebengiuc. Although its action occurs in the "regime of the bourgeois and the landowners" (filming fragments from the literary series of Duiliu Zafirescu), the film was not shunned by the "long arm of the censors".

*At "Tanase Scatiu" (1975), which was also censored by Ceausescu himself, the scriptwriter Mihnea Gheorghiu had to write a scene which we filmed and introduced between the two parts of the film "Life in the Countryside" (in Romanian: "Viata la tara") and "Tanase Scatiu".*⁷

"The Contest" in Romanian: "Concurs" (1982) makes, under the pretext of touristic orientation, a callous social and political satire of the communist times, a courageous film which proposed a veritable parable of the society ruled by Ceausescu, a horizontally radiography of the society, using daily events, characters and personages. Then, there were the filming of the psychological novel "Days of Sand" (in Romanian: "Zile de nisip") of Bujor Nedelcovici (who emigrated to Paris over four year), the film "Sand Cliffs" (in Romanian: "Faleze de nisip") of 1983, which visualizes in fact the inner conflict of an intellectual (Victor Rebengiuc) who, because of haughtiness and vanity, irremediably destroys the destiny of an innocent young man (Gheorghe Visu). The film unleashed a great political scandal, being forbidden. Although it does not make the object of my analysis, I return to the film "The Re-enactment" (in Romanian: "Reconstituirea") made by Lucian Pintilie, film analyzed by Anca Alexandru in a study of which I present several ideas:

Grandeur, obsession, egocentrism, persecution, finally resulting in the failure of the "electric man" to accomplish his target (in "Sand Cliffs"), prove the fallibility of the "machine man", concept promoted by Stalin in the 30's to describe the "ideal new man". The communist myth of egalitarianism is emphasized in the "Sand Cliffs" by means of informing on others and denunciation, and the dramatic tones similar with those from "The Reconstitution" of Lucian

⁶ Dan Pița, *Cinematographic Confessions* (in Romanian: "Confesiuni cinematografice"), (București, Editura Fundației PRO București, 2005), 19

⁷ Dan Pița, *Cinematographic Confessions* (in Romanian: "Confesiuni cinematografice"), (București, Editura Fundației PRO București, 2005), 21

Pintilie reveal the way the socialism imagines the intrusion in the citizens' private life, throwing them into the shade. The main conflict is based on the duel between "machine-man" (or the "electric man") and the "politically unengaged" citizen, who is capable to challenge the infallibility of the "re-educated man", conflict in which the intention of the latter to re-educate the former comes up (challenging by it the socialist ideological project) against the other's refusal to accept the exposure and to acknowledge guilt.⁸

"A Two Step Dance" (in Romanian: "Pas în doi") (1985) after the script "The Bachelors" (in Romanian: "Nefamiliștii") by George Bușecan is the following valuable film from Dan Pița's cinema. This film has content, force and style and offers a portrait of the young generation of that period, with the help of two young excellent actors: Claudiu Bleonț and Petre Nicolae. This film was to be nominated for the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 1986.

"The White Lace Dress" (in Romanian: "Rochia alba de dantela") and "November, the Last Ball" (in Romanian: "Noiembrie, ultimul bal"), both of 1989, and film versions of certain literary works are examples of aestheticism, artistic register in which the director seems to have withdrawn in that time, tired of the ideological censorship. This is mostly the artistic direction of the director Dan Pița until 1990, year in which, due to the political changes, freedom of expression became an obvious reality, which could not be denied, but not sufficient enough for substantial artistic accomplishments, or at least of the same value with those in favourable or even hostile conditions and circumstances. "The Way" (in Romanian: "Drumul") of Dan Pița was somehow saved by the film "Luxury Hotel" (in Romanian: "Hotel de lux") from 1992 awarded with the Silver Lion at the Venetian Festival. The film was a parable with notes of surrealism and expressionism, with a vertical construction, with hallucinating stills and with a rich symbolism, but excellently sustained. It is the parable of a totalitarian social and political regime which has, although it localizes in time and space the communist Romania, a generally universal dimension thanks to the approached topic: incommunicability, solitude, anguish, despair, intolerance, evil.

⁸ A volume coordinated by Viorela Manolache, *Beyond Propaganda: a Historical and Political Instrument of the Romanian Film* (in Romanian: *Dincolo de propagandă: un instrumentar istorico-politic al filmului românesc*), chapter *The Films 'Reconstruction' and 'Sand Cliffs' in the Romanian Cinema* (in Romanian: *Filmele Reconstituirea și Faleză de nisip în cinematografia română*), *Against a Potemkin City* (in Romanian: *Împotriva unui oraș Potemkin*), by Anca Alexandru, (Techno Media Publishing House, Sibiu, 2010), 112

The director, scriptwriter, actor and writer **Mircea Daneliuc**. After literary studies, he graduates in 1972, at the section film direction of the Institute of Theatrical Art and Cinema (in Romanian: IATC). "The Race" in Romanian "Cursa (1975), the debut film of Mircea Daneliuc, reveals the director's faith profession: the source of inspiration must be the reality, the individual's problems and desires as they are, with no make-up on. Two men and one woman are forced by circumstances to travel together hundreds of kilometres in the cab of a trailer transporting a giant part. The director refuses the idealization, the misrepresentation of a reality, showing it as it is: The films of Daneliuc, except for "Glissando", have the structure of documentary, of reportage. Mircea Daneliuc transforms the banal, the daily, an incident, in an aesthetic act, offering to the local meanings and significations of large horizons.

"Microphone Test" in Romanian: "Proba de microfon" (1980) tells the story of making a TV reportage at the Northern Railway Station. The film is the author's protest against the mendacious realities, the duplicitous mentalities of the dictatorship years. The personages, the television reporter, a cameraman and a young woman caught without ticket move with no direction in an amorous triangle. Mircea Daneliuc (scriptwriter, director and interpreter in this film) wants to undermine conformism, to destroy prejudices, to offer another vision on the Romanian world of the 80's.

"The Cruise" in Romanian: "Croaziera" (1981). A group of young people, winners of various contests from the scope of the "socialist competition", are awarded with a cruise in boats, on the Danube. Structured on the motive of the ship-like world, the film gradually changes into a discreet ritual of initiation in corruption, in blackmail, in hypocrisy. The director is the cruel man with reality and people, smearing it by greediness, cheating, hypocrisy, envy, evil.

"Glissando" was finished in 1982, after a harsh conflict with the political authorities, but the president Nicolae Ceausescu approving its broadcasting in the initial variant only after two years. Still, the film was censored, the premiere taking place on September the 2nd, 1984, in Bucharest, in the shorter variant. "Glissando", after an idea from the story "The Man from the Dream" (in Romanian: "Omul din vis") by Cezar Petrescu, is a parable about totalitarianism having in its centre the personal drama of a card player around whom the director develops a great fresco of a decaying epoch, marked by oppressive leaders. The action develops in a building with an uncertain identity, a hybrid among casino/tripod, bathroom, interrogatory room, torture room, library, concert hall, madhouse, barrack, conjugal universe. The intellectual and academic public received this film with great interest, film which

determined numerous debates at that time, terrifying the communist authorities. The film was selected in 1985 at "The Sample from Venice".

"Iacob" (1987) is the story of a miner from Transylvania and of his fight with the authorities accusing him unjustly of theft. As punishment, Iacob is transferred to another mine, far from home. In order to get back faster to his children, for Christmas, he sneaks into the cable car. But the electricity is turned off. Remaining at 200 metres above the abyss, Iacob must stand the cold ... Apparently, the action of the film happens in the '30s. But this is just a subterfuge to escape censorship, as Romania of the '80s, in which the cold, injustice, and evil were a State policy, forced each individual to fight exactly the same way as Iacob in order to survive.

After 1990, the film "The Snails' Senator" (in Romanian: "Senatorul melcilor") is a film which deserves all the attention due to the acuity of the critical observation, of the humour and the caustic satire addressed to a society lacking principles, menial and brutalized, groping desperately to find a sense which is not provided by the leading class. A senator arrives in a mountain locality to inaugurate a wind plant. Although he receives complaints from the peasants, annoyed for the way they have been put again in possession of the land, he pays no attention to them and accommodates in a villa formally belonging to Ceausescu, in which the French President, Charles de Gaulle, had also slept. So as to impress three foreign journalists, who were actually interested to buy a plot of land in the mountain, he orders ... "escargots" for them for the following lunch. But there are hardly any snails, as it is not their time.

Mircea Veroiu graduated from the Bucharest Institute of Theatrical Art and cinema in 1970, after attending the Institute of Physical Education and Sport. He becomes known in 1970 with the documentary about the floods from that year, "The Water Like a Black Buffalo" ("in Romanian: "Apa ca un bivol negru"), in collaboration with Stere Gulea, Pierre Bokor, Iosif Demian, Roxana Pana and Dan Pița, just to mention some of them. In 1974, he directs accompanied by Dan Pița the film "The Stone Wedding" (in Romanian: Nunta de piatră). He makes the film "Hyperion" (1975), followed by "Minia" (1977), "The Spirit of Gold" (in Romanian: Duhul Aurului) (1977), "Beyond the Bridge" (in Romanian "Dincolo de pod") (1977) and "Between Parallel Glasses" (in Romanian: "Intre oglinzi paralele") (1978). He directs two Romanian western films: "The Prophet, the Gold and the Inhabitants from Ardeal" (in Romanian: "Profetul, aurul si Ardelenii") (1979) and "The Artist, the Dollars and the Inhabitants from Ardeal" (in Romanian: "Artista, dolarii si Ardelenii") (1981), to turn back to his specific style with the "The End of the Night" (in Romanian: Sfarsitul noptii") (1982), "Waiting for a Train" (in Romanian: "Asteptand un tren")

(1982), "The Sign of the Serpent" (in Romanian: "Semnul sarpelui") (1984), ("Adele" (in Romanian: "Adela") (1985), "Fatally Injured by Love of Life" (in Romanian: "Sa mori rănit din dragoste de viață") (1985), "The Shadow of the Sun" (in Romanian: "Umbra soarelui") (1986). He received the Award of the San Remo Festival for "Adele". The Italian critics called him the 2nd Romanian Visconti, which tells a lot about the style and vision of the Romanian film author. In 1986, he emigrated in France and settled in Paris, where he made no film. After 1990, he turned back in Romania and made several films.

"The Sleep of the Island" (in Romanian: "Somnul insulei") (1994) is a meditation on the artist's condition and freedom of creation.

"The Debauchee" (in Romanian: "Craii de Curtea Veche") (1995) - film version of the novel with the same name, "The Debauchee", by Mateiu Caragiale. It is an intricate film, with a thick and hardly processed literary material for an appropriate cinematographic language.

"The Woman in Red" (in Romanian: "Femeia în roșu") (1997), a film version of the novel "The Woman in Red" by Mircea Nedelciu's eponymous novel, made by Adriana Babeti and Mircea Mihaies, describing the story of the Romanian who was an accomplice at the murder of her lover, the famous gangster John Dillinger, in Chicago.

From the parable film "The Eleventh Commandment" (in Romania: "A unsprezecea poruncă") (1991) by filming a Romanian fairy tale "Cough and Twinge" (in Romanian: "Tusea si junghiul") 1992), passing through the derisory and the ugly of a daily existence brutalized by vices and lack of hope, as well as in "The Conjugal Bed" (in Romanian: "Patul conjugal") (1993) and "This Disgust" (in Romanian: "Această lehamite") (1994), the director Mircea Daneliuc enters the political world with "The Snails' Senator" (in Romanian: "Senatorul melcilor") (1995), film nominated at Cannes. Afterwards, there came "Ambassadors Seek Country" (in Romanian: "Ambasadori, căutam Patrie") (2003) , "The Nervous System" (in Romanian: "Sistemul nervos") (2005), "The Foreign Legion" (in Romanian: "Legiunea Straina") (2008), "Marilena" (2009) and "Floating Things" (in Romanian: "Cele ce plutesc") (2009), chaotic films both technically and as script, in which Mircea Daneliuc seems to have decided to punish the public, delivering to it bizarre and intricate stories about imaginary ambassadors, about the avian influenza, about women who want to find a sense in life, but only succeed to complicate their lives by themselves, about consented rapes and denied loves, about business with guard dogs for exportation, with expelled gypsies in conflict with the citizens as dishonest as the latter, about sex and useless violence, in short, an ugly and sick world. This artistic confusion seems to have its source in the absence of a reason to protest, as, after 1989, freedom of expression

becomes a certainty, and there is no reason to protest any more. This may be an explanation, but it can also be the fact that he could not adapt to the totally changed conditions of the Romanian society after 1990.

As for Dan Pița, "Pepe and Fifi" (in Romanian: "Pepe și Fifi") – 1994, "I Am Adam" (in Romanian: "Eu sunt Adam") – 1996, "The Man of the Day" (in Romanian: "Omul Zilei") – 1997, "Second hand" – 2005, "Dream Woman" (in Romanian: "Femeia visurilor") – 2005 and "Something Good out of Life" (in Romanian: "Ceva bun de la viata") – 2011 represented rather mediocre films, in which the dynamism, the narrative substantiality, the incisiveness and even that impressing metaphorization, but justified, which consecrated him, were replaced by the lack of coherence, oddness, compromise with the facile and sketchiness. Elena Dulgheru wrote about Dan Pița referring to that period: "To create permanently can be as monstrous as to be permanently at a mating age." The physical and psychological ego cannot resist, the inner tiredness becomes more and more hidden and then everything has a false note: false enthusiasm, false revolts, covered in worn forms of the previous works." But I think this explanation can be applied also to the post-revolutionary artistic failure of Mircea Daneliuc. With an obvious inclination towards aestheticism and literature, the last films of Mircea Veroiu, "The Debauchee" (in Romanian: "Craii de Curtea Veche"), 1995 and "The Woman in Red" ("Femeia în roșu"), 1997 (he dies in December 1997), are overloaded with plasticity and bookishness. There is also their impossibility to adapt to the new way in which the film is watched as a phenomenon, after 1990, the allegorical film, metaphorizing, almost philosophically, is replaced, with few exceptions, by the minimalist and realistic film. Unfortunately, their films made after 1989 cannot but confirm the paradox stated by André Gide: "Art lives from constraints and dies from freedom".

The events from 1956 and the cultural vision of Hungary

Stalin's death in 1956 and the recognition of the excesses of the Stalinism encouraged the Hungarian opposition to ask for the man's rights to be observed, the evacuation of the soviet troops from Hungary, freedom of the press and the word, political pluripartitism, organization of general elections and change of the Hungarian bankrupt economic system. Street demonstrations begin, the Hungarian communist government cannot face them and asks for the help of the Soviet troops. Conflict appears between the demonstrators and the Soviet troops, the Soviets mime negotiations with the reforming Prime Minister Imre Nagy and occupy Budapest on November 3rd, 1956. Imre Nagy is arrested, and János Kádár shall be imposed as the leader of the Government. The insurrection ends with

thousands of dead and wounded, 16,000 persons are deported, over 100,000 are exiled. The Hungarian political authorities initiated certain small reforms taming the Hungarian communist intelligence system, allowing among its leaders many reformers (they even took over the power after 1989, leading successfully the transition to the market economy and democracy) and leaving some breathing valves for the Hungarian society. This is the political context in which a valuable Hungarian cinema school significantly consolidates in the '60s - '70s, if we take into account the great number of valuable directors and works of cinematographic art. István Szabó, Marta Mészáros and Miklos Jancso are perhaps the most representative directors of the Hungarian cinema before 1990, who also worked after 1990.

István Szabó (Budapest, February 18th, 1938) graduated from the Higher School of Theatre and Film of Budapest. He makes his début in 1964, with "Age of Illusions", a film which, together with "Father" (1966) and "A Love Movie" (1970), form an autobiographical trilogy. The climax of his creation is represented by "Mephisto" (1981), after the homonymous novel of Klaus Mann, winning the Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film, in 1982. "Mephisto" together with "Colonel Redl" (1985) and "Hanussen" (1988) form his second trilogy.

"Mephisto" (1981) is the story of a German native actor discovering success and satisfaction in the period in which the National Socialist Party comes to power. Exalted by glory, he denies the past and gradually submits to the Nazi power. A parable about power, the film is an analysis of the relationship between artist and power and of the condition of the artist in a totalitarian society.

"Colonel Redl" (Hungary–Germany, 1985), the Jury's Special Prize, and the Interpretation Prize for the actor Karl Maria Brandauer, and the Award of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, after the drama of the "furious young man" John Osborne, "A Patriot for Tomorrow".

Located in the epoch of the Austrian - Hungarian empire, the action carefully describes the evolution of Alfred Redl, a young man with modest origins, and his aspirations to the highest positions in the military hierarchy of the empire. Having reached this position, his unlimited ambition prevents him from understanding clearly the mechanisms of history, which is hitting him implacably, destroying him.

"Hanussen" (1988) - Hanussen's paranormal capacity draws the Nazis' attention to him, amplifying his fame and power, but he ends up being used by them, and the price of the pact he does with the Power is too big.

"Meeting Venus"- 1991, and "Being Julia" (2004), Szabo's films in English, critically describe the artistic world and benefit from the contribution of two great American actresses, Glenn Close and Annette

Bening. With "Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe" (1992), Szabó returns to Hungarian topics, more social than historical. In the centre of the story, there are two young teachers of Russian who face a new situation due to the lack of use of the subject matter they teach after the end of the communist government. The film wins the "Silver Bear" at the Berlin Festival of 1992.

Márta Mészáros was born in Kispest on September 19th, 1931. Marta Mészáros receives in 1952 a scholarship at Moscow Cinematographic Academy. Her films, "Free Breathing" (1973), "Beautiful Girls, Don't Cry" (1970), "The Adoption" (1975) and "Nine Months" (1976), are pervaded by warmth, lucidity, their dominant theme being "the search for the father". Not for the father as a physical presence, but as a moral, emotional landmark. However, the essence of her films is not to emphasize some conflict situations, but the woman's emancipation. The relationship between the director and censorship are presented by herself in an interview in the magazine *Senses of Cinema* 2002, called "Ordinary Lives in Extraordinary Times".

"Goodbye, Little Red Riding Hood" (1989), a Canada-Hungary co-production, received the Silver Award at „Ragazzi Bellinzono”, at the International Film Festival for Children, Switzerland. Using as a pretext the story of the Little Red Riding Hood, Marta Mészáros transposed it artistically by the cinematographic language, in a parable about the woman and her researches. There comes an autobiographical trilogy: in 1984 "Diary for My Children" - Winner of the Grand Prix Spécial du Jury at the 1984 Cannes Film Festival, in 1987 – "Diary for my loves" - Winner of the Silver Bear at the 37th Berlin International Film Festival and "Diary for My Mother and Father" - 1990, in which the scriptwriter seems to adjust the relationships with the history and herself. She makes a documentary film in 2004 about Imre Nagy called "The Unburied Dead."

Miklos Jancso was born in 1921 in Vac and has Romanian origins from his mother's part; after legal studies, he is awarded a diploma in film direction in 1950 at the Academy of Theatre and Film Arts of Budapest. In 1966, the first film from the epic trilogy appears: "The Hopeless Ones", nominated at Cannes for Palme d'Or. Then "The Red and the White" - 1967 and "Silence and Cry" 1968. His style is characterised by long, almost hallucinating, movements of the filming camera over the Hungarian steppe, following the personages seemingly overwhelmed by the hostile history. The allegory and the symbolism are elements which become style in the films from the communist time made by Miklós Jancsó, the films of the beginning of the '70s being witnesses to this end: "Elektra, My Love" and "The Red Psalm" (1972), which receives the Best Director Award in

Cannes. In 1978 "Hungarian Rhapsody" and 1979 "Allegro Barbaro" form the first two parts of a trilogy he does not manage to finish, as his films become too expensive productions to be filmed in Hungary. He makes several films in Italy, the most famous being "Private Vices, Public Virtues", his own interpretation of the Mayerling affair. "God Walks Backwards" (1991) and "Blue Danube Waltz" (1992) together with "The Lord's Lantern in Budapest" (1999) are the best films of the 90ies, the last one being a satire about violence, politics, business and religion in the Hungarian modern society.

"For me, life is a continuous philosophical and physical movement: the conditions are based on movement, movement of the ideas, movement of the masses", declares **Miklos Jancso**. Under this idea, his whole creation is constructed, the Hungarian history and its great battles and conflicts being a source of inspiration. The usual theme of his films is the abuse of power.

As a conclusion to Szabo's artistic evolution, we can say that, in the period before 1989, his films approached and analyzed either the individual's destiny in his evolution towards maturation, or his destiny within the historical and political context of totalitarianism. His films remained almost of the same value, only the approached themes being different.

The artistic destiny of Marta Meszaros had a balanced progress, her films always being landmarks for the Hungarian cinema. By analyzing the artistic evolution of **Miklos Jancso** we can state that she had small oscillations, but never sudden falls and spectacular involutions.

1. The Prague Spring and the cultural Czech Republic

The fall of the communist system in the Czech Republic was made by the so-called "*the velvet revolution*", a peaceful process by which the Czech Communist Party lost the political and administrative power of the country. The liberal reforms coming from the Soviet Union by the so-called Perestroika, lead by Mihail Gorbaciov starting with 1985, materialized in the beginning of the political reforms in its satellite countries. As it concerns the Czech Republic, a group of intellectual lead by Vaclav Havel published a manifest called "Charta 77" even from 1997, in which they expressed their disagreement to the new regime. On November 17th, 1989, in Prague, the police attacked thousands of students protesting against the communist regime. This event provoked the beginning of massive demonstrations. The Civic Forum was created and was lead by the playwright Václav Havel, who became the president of the country. A general strike took place on November 27th, 1989, the events escaped control, and the communist party, without the Soviet ally, had to give up power. These events were somehow announced as of January 1989, when

demonstrations were organized to celebrate the student leader, Jan Palach, who had set himself on fire, as a sign of protest to the suppression of the freedom of expression, twenty years ago, during the "*Prague Spring*". Prague is one of the most important European cinematographic centres. Here, they created the most famous Faculty of High Cinematographic Studies (F.A.M.U.) after the 2nd World War. Here again, the so-called "the Czech cinematographic school" was born in the '70s – '80s, school whose representatives are, for example: Milos Forman, Vera Kitiłova and Jiri Menzel.

Jirı Menzel (Praga, February 23rd, 1938), director and theatre and film actor, is an illustrious representative of this school. The film made in 1966, signed by Ivan Passer, Jaromil Jires, Vera Chytilov, Jan Neme, Evald Schorm and Jirı Menzel ("The Small Pearls"), may be considered the manifest of the new Czech wave of the Prague school. He made his dbut in 1966, with "Well Guarded Trains", the Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film in 1967. The film has at its basis the literary work of the prose writer Bohumil Hrabal, one of the most original and the most popular Czech writers from the second half of the past century. The action happens in an isolated railway station from the Czech Republic, during the Nazi occupation and follows the maturation of a shy adolescent named Miloš (Vclav Neck), recently employed at the railway station. An anti-hero by excellence, clumsy and inappropriate, Milos shall prove his courage as nobody would have expected.

"Capricious Summer", 1968, the Best Prize at Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, is the film version of the Vladislav Vancura's novel. The events from the summer of 1968 and the hushing up of the Prague Spring put him under brutal restrictions. He resumes his activity only in 1970, with the film "Larks on a String", stopped by the censure until 1989, receiving the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival in 1990. "Na samote u lesa" ("Seclusion near a Forest"), 1976, "Postriziny" ("Cutting it Short"), 1981, "Vesnicko m strediskov" ("My Sweet Little Village"), 1985, Academy Award nominalization; "Konec starych casu" ("End of Old Times"), 1989, are films made in the characteristic style, a combination of prosaism and poetry, of proverbs and philosophic ideas, of vulgarity and intellectual elevation. The film "Zivot a neobycejna dobrodruzstvi vojaka Ivana Conkina" ("Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin"), 1994, was awarded the Medal of the President of the Italian Senate, Venice, 1994, with the "Golden Charlotte" Award, 1994.

"I Served the King of England" (2006) starts from the homonymous novel signed by Bohumil Hrabal and presents the story of a waiter from

Prague during the first half of the past century, receiving a nominalization at the Golden Bear in 2007.

Milos Forman was born in Caslav, February 18th, 1932, and, as a film director, he makes his début with "Konkurs" in 1963, immediately followed by "If It Hadn't Been for These Small Pubs". In the same year, he also signs "The Ace of Spades", the Golden Sale Award and the Young Critics Award, Locarno, 1964. "The Ace of Spades" has in the centre of the story of a young man who cannot adapt to life, the family discipline. He makes "Love of a Blonde" in 1965. The CIDALC Award, Venice, 1965, and the Best Prize "Chrystal Globe", Paris, 1966. As in the previous film, the major theme of the conflict between generations, of certain states of uncertainty, can also be seen in this film. The small details, from clothes to emotional, psychological moods and mentalities, customs and conducts, the usual inter-human relationships, all forming a certain way of living after all, the director transforms them in cliché, stereotypes, to suggest a way of living with no prospective, aspiration, which is dull and sad. The events from the summer of 1968 find him in Paris, after which he settles in USA, where he makes his début with "Taking Off", 1970, the Grand Special Jury Prize, Cannes, 1971. He quickly integrates in the American atmosphere and, in 1973, the episode from "Visions of Eight" (the 1972 Olympic Games seen by eight directors), the part dedicated to the decathlon from the 1972 Munich Olympics. He directs the film "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" in 1975, the Academy Award for the Best Film and the Best Director, a film about the inner revolt of the free man against the totalitarian system.

"Amadeus" (1984) is rewarded with 7 Academy Awards. The atmosphere, the force to alternate humour with the profoundness of dramatism following the destiny of a genius as Mozart, transforms the film in a real poetical art. To be noted that the director returns to the Czech Republic especially to film. In Prague, the place where Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart conducted in premiere the opera "Don Juan".

"Valmont"(1989) after the "Dangerous Liaisons" by Choderlos de Laclos. The baroque France is the background of the amorous drama having Valmont in its centre, a guy prepared to seduce any beautiful woman, no matter her marital status or her social position. Together with the marquise de Merteuil, they arrange a seduction game, but they lose its control, transforming both of them into victims. After 1990, he made "The People vs. Larry Flint", in 1996, a biography of Larry Flint, a businessman with a scandalous reputation owed to the implication in the industry of publications and films for adults, "Man on the Moon", in 1999, with Jim Carrey in the leading role, film based on the spectacular life and career of

the comedian Andy Kaufman, and in 2006, “**Goya's Ghosts**”, having the famous painter Francis Goya in the centre of the story.

Vera Chytilová (Ostrava, Czech Republic, February 2nd, 1929) is a valuable member of the Prague school, together with Milos Forman, Jiri Menzel, Jaromil Jires, Jan Nemeč, Evald Schorm. Representative for this movement is the film collectively signed, “Perlicky na dne” (“Pearls of the Deep”), 1965, to which Vera Chytilová contributes together with Jaromil Jires, Jiri Menzel, Jan Nemeč, Evald Schorm.

“Sedmikrasky” (“Daisies”). Two adolescents with the same name, Marie, decide to make a number of farces destroying the world they consider rotten. The Government forbids this crazy farce in 1966. Her films were usually postponed or cancelled by the censure. She was forbidden for 6 years to make films. She writes an open letter to the president Gustav Husak in 1976, in which she describes to him her artistic position. Supported by a great number of persons, Chytilova is allowed to make a film with a reduced budget in 1977 - “Hra o jablko” (“The Apple Game”), for which she is awarded a prize at the Chicago Festival.

“Pasti, Pasti, Pasticky”(1998). A rape is the centre of this story, then the culprits' castration by the victim, both transformed in a parable about power, in a metaphor of the “will to power”, of “life philosophy”, treated in an absurd tone, in a grotesque tone, in a macabre tone.

Her films were appreciated for the visual experiments and for the courageous disclosure of the moral problems of the contemporary society. Her eclectic, feminist, intellectual, and cine-vérité style, always humorous, allowed the critics to read and construe the films on many levels of understanding.

Vera Chytilová and Jiri Menzel, who chose to remain in the Czech Republic after the Prague Spring had to face the strictness of the censure, but their films have not lost their originality not even after 1989, as it concerns the former, and their charm and poetry, as it concerns the latter, both remaining relevant landmarks of the Czech and world cinema. Milos Forman, settled in USA after 1968, had no harsh confrontation with the communist ideological censure.

2. The catholic communism in Poland

Massive rebellions broke out in March 1968 due to the interdiction to allow the representation of a play by Adam Mickiewicz at the Polish Theatre in Warsaw, the given reason being the anti-Soviet messages of the play. The Polish Authorities reproached these rebellions to the Zionists and used this incident to launch an anti-Semitic campaign at a broad scale: the Jew were forbidden certain rights, for example, to hold offices in the

public administration, to teach in schools and universities, the Jew organizations of any kind are shut down.

In Poland, the strikes of 1970 from the Gdansk Shipyard, the constitutional amendments of 1975, officially stating the monopoly of the *Communist Party* and proclaiming the “*irreversible*” alliance with the USSR were events with a decisive role, leading to the mobilization of the intellectuals and the student organizations and, eventually, to the end of the communist regime. One cannot neglect the message of the Catholic Church, amplified when Karol Wojtyła, archbishop of Cracovia, was elected Pope on October 17th, 1978, taking the name of Pope John Paul II. The famous words “*Do not be afraid*”, said when visiting Poland (April 1979), seriously shook the communist block. The Gdansk Agreements regulating new relationships between the State and the civil society, the recognition of the “*Solidarity*” independent trade union, the first free trade union from a communist country, and of its leader, Lech Walesa, were achieved by the general strike of August 1980. All these lead to the total and political discredit of the communism as ideology and practice.

The creation in 1943 by the director Aleksander Ford of a cinematographic sector and of “Film Polski” film House in 1945 represents the Polish cinematographic nucleus. The works of directors very different as style (Jerzy Kawalerowicz, Krzysztof Zanussi, Aleksander Ford, Andrzej Munk, Roman Polanski, who leaves Poland, making himself an international career, then Krzysztof Kieslowski, Jerzy Skolimowski) put the bases of the Polish cinematographic school ever since the '60s. This school is characterized by the specific qualities of the Polish culture, enthusiasm and passion determined by a self-pride with accents of pathos, of historical consciousness of the affiliation to a nation with a great and tragic past.

Andrzej Wajda, born on March 6th, 1926, in Suwalki, graduated from Lodz Film School, makes his début as a director of full length films in 1955, with “Pokolenie” (“Generation”), film which, with “Kanal/They Love Life”), the Special Jury Award, Cannes, 1957, and “Ash and Diamond”, 1958, FIPRESCI Award, Mostra di Venezia, 1958, form the Resistance Trilogy. He changes the historical register and goes to the everyday life making “The Ladies of Wilko” in 1979. As a style, he belongs to the symbolic realistic current, binding without being propagandist, undertaking a different theme, but essential (“I have always involved in the life of my country by the films I made”). The following films are as relevant: “Everything for Sale” (1969), “Birch Forest” (1970), “The Wedding” (1973), “The Man of Marble” (1976), “The Chronicle of Adolescence” (1986), “Danton” (1982), a co-production with France. The novel “The Idiot” by Dostoyevsky is transposed on the screen in 1994 under the name of

"Nastasija", underlining from the title the key personage of this film. "Pan Tadeusz", launched in 1999, is a historical film about the life of the poet Adam Mickiewicz. He receives an Academy Honorary Award in 2000 for "the recognition of five decades of extraordinary film direction".

"Katyn" (2007), a historical drama about the massacre of the Polish officers and intellectuals in Katyn Forest (where the director's father lost his life, too) is nominated for an Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film. The next film, "Tatarak" (2009), is a "film in film" drama about life and death. The film is structured around Martha, a middle-aged woman, married to a workaholic who rediscovers the pleasure to live by meeting a young man, exactly when it is too late for both of them. This film wins the FIPRESCI Award of the European Film Academy and is nominated for the Golden Bear at the Berlin Festival, and Wajda wins again in Berlin the Alfred Bauer Prize (for discovering new horizons in cinema).

Krzysztof Zanussi was born in 1939 in Warsaw, studied philosophy courses at the Jagiellonian University (Katowice) in Poland, physics at the University of Warsaw, film direction at Lodz Film School. Loyal to his studies, his first full length film, "The Crystal Structure" of 1969, analyzes the relationship between the scientific progress and the professional one, revealing the intellectual and aesthetical dimension of the daily life.

One of the early successes of Krzysztof Zanussi was "Illuminacja" (1973). This film tells the story of Franciszek, who is divided between a cold, analytical relationship with the world, of the physical science, and a close relationship by a love story with a young woman, Agnieszka. The title of the film refers to the moment in which the brain is able to see the truth clearly. His most known titles remain: "The Structure of Crystals" (1969), "Family Life" (1971), "The Constant Factor" (1980), "A Year of the Quiet Sun" (1984). Even after 1990, his films remain loyal to the desire to morally interrogate the individual, following him either at the end of his artistic life, as the old composer from "The Silent Touch", 1992, or in a limit situation, when choices are beyond diplomacy, as in "Persona non grata", 2005. He also makes "At Full Gallop", 1996, "Life as a Fatal Sexually Transmitted Disease", 2000. The films of Krzysztof Zanussi received many awards: the OCIC Award at the Berlin International Film Festival; the Jury Prize and the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury at the Cannes Festival, Silver Hugo Award at the la Chicago International Film Festival; the David di Donatello Award; the FIPRESCI Prize and the Golden Leopard at the Locarno International Film Festival.

Krzysztof Kieslowski was born in Warsaw on June 27, 1941 and graduated from the National Film School of Łódź in 1968. The daily life of

the citizens, workers and soldiers was an inspiration source for his early documentaries. The workers discussing the reasons of the strikes of 1970 from the television film "Workers '71" were the cause of his film being broadcasted under a censored form. "Personnel" (1975) and "The Scar" (1976) filmed in a documentary style, with many non professional actors, talk about the workers' life in a disastrous social and economic system. "The Camera Buff" (1979) and "Blind Chance" (1981) concentrate on the individual's moral and ethical destiny. The fact that Kiesłowski belonged to the movement of the Cinema of Moral Anxiety, together with other Polish directors, such as Janusz Kijowski, Andrzej Wajda and Agnieszka Holland (who emigrated in France in 1981) created him great troubles, as most of his early films were censored, filmed or mounted again, or simply forbidden ("Blind Chance" was launched in Poland only in 1987, about six years after its completion).

The political trials from Poland during the martial law (1980), seen from the view of the phantom of a lawyer and his wife, are the subject of the film "No End" (1984), who is the most obvious political film. It was severely criticized both by government and dissidents.

"The Decalogue" (1988) contains a series of ten medium length films, where action takes place in a block of flats from Warsaw, each film being based on one of the Ten Commandments. This film was created for the Polish television with German funds. The 5th and 6th episodes were transformed even in long length films and launched under the names of "A Short Film about Killing", respectively "A Short Film about Love".

The last four films of Kiesłowski were foreign co-productions, made partly with French funds, and they were by far his greatest commercial successes.

The dual principle of the modern world was the core subject of the mysterious philosophical drama "The Double Life of Véronique", with Irène Jacob in the leading role. "Three Colours: Blue" (1993) - the French national motto "Freedom, equality, brotherhood" inspires the first part of a trilogy signed by Kiesłowski, and its subject - freedom - is expressed in the heroine's attempt to offer herself a new beginning in life, far from suffering and restrictions.

"Three Colours: White" (1994) - presents the second theme of the trilogy, equality. Losing his wife and job, the protagonist, Karol, sets himself two targets: to take his revenge on his wife who left him, and to get rich.

In "Three Colours: Red" (1994) a young woman, a model, runs over a dog with her car; trying to find its owner, to make friends with him, she discovers what brotherhood is.

Many prestigious international prizes, the Golden Lion for the Best Film and the Silver Lion for the Best Director at the Venice Film Festival, the Silver Bear for the Best Director at the Berlin International Film Festival and three Academy Award nominalizations crowned his three films.

It is true that the Polish School, solid and creative as it was, managed to squeeze the best through the Caudine forks of communist censorship, also making many films in co-production with foreign partners, these being possible due to a relatively permissive political regime, meaning that the authorities had to accept a certain official dissidence of the artistic intellectuals.

CONCLUSIONS

Searching and studying the artistic progress of the filmmakers from Romania in the last part of the communist period, on one hand, and from Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland, on the other hand, we can state that Romania had no chance to create and consolidate a real film school. Among the causes that we could enumerate are: self-pride and lack of cohesion among the directors of the same generation, together with the incapacity of a common project to gather the same creating energies, as well as the huge obstacles created by the communist censure at the beginning and the ideational decay and change of the cinema paradigm after 1990. We could also add the features specific to certain advanced biological ages, although, if we compare the creators' ages from the analyzed countries, we can notice that in Romania, the directors we are talking about, were about 50 years old in 1990, the best age for creative maturity. Thus, the illusions of freedom of creation after 1990 have not come true. The really artistic works were made after 1990 only in a small measure and with rare exceptions, these being given in the analysis. The Romanian directors making the object of this analysis have not managed to transfigure the exterior reality, filtered by the artist's vision of imagination and power of expression, in a new reality, a true work of art. Benefiting from another political and social situation, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland allowed the creation of real film schools even before 1989, while the Romanians could not create and consolidate any school for the above-mentioned reasons. The artistic destiny of these Romanian directors may have been different after 1990, had Romania had a real film school before 1989. The existence and solidity of these film schools before 1990 allowed the Hungarian, Czech and Polish creators to develop

valuable, solid and coherently built films even at the age of their biological and artistic maturation.

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