

# Cinema Under Political Pressure

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## CINEMA UNDER POLITICAL PRESSURE: A BRIEF OUTLINE OF AUTHORIAL ROLES IN POLISH POST-WAR FEATURE FILM 1945-1995

Before the spread of television in the middle of the Fifties, film -- the Tenth Muse -- was the light in the eyes of politicians who recognised its communication, entertainment and artistic values, and before all, its ability to create a feeling of reality in viewers minds. Not accidentally the leaders of the world powers and countries conducting colonial politics called it "the most important of all arts" (Lenin), "a great means of mass propaganda" (Stalin), "the strongest weapon" (Mussolini) and "the chronicler and commentator of contemporary events" (Hitler). The cinema, as in a distorting mirror, has always reflected ideologists' utopian visions of the world. Film's ideological stance continued to be cultivated after World War II; in several countries (including Poland) it efficiently limited the natural process of film art development.

In 1945 Poland found itself on the side of the nascent Iron Curtain where the Communists were getting ready to seize power. Consequently, the country's cinematography was put into a straitjacket of ideological restrictions which lasted until the success of the political opposition at the end of the cold war in 1989. The existence of preventive censorship efficiently barred the film directors' road to creative freedom; it also forced particular models of analysis and evaluation upon the researchers of the history of the Polish culture. The film historiography was limited to pointing out only individual phenomena such as the film plot<sup>(1)</sup>; seldom did it try to analyse more extensive periods which would provide illustrative patterns enabling to show the patterns of the changing structure of reality.

This article intends to portray the historical explanatory mechanisms shaping artistic programs and artistic attitudes of feature film directors under ideological pressure in Poland. To reach this goal we will use the term "strategy" which reaches beyond individual ways of filmmaking. In other words, the cinema is treated as a set of audio-visual works connected by the "authorial roles" developed by directors in a wider social context. Since Polish filmmakers have usually assumed a distinctive position in their country's social consciousness, special interest is paid to the authorial strategies<sup>(2)</sup>.

In fact, a communicative relationship exposing the "I" of a speaking subject in the form of a primitive ideological declaration had already appeared in Polish cinema in the period when the model of the national culture was still hotly disputed. Between 1945-1948 only four feature films were made: *Jasne łany* (*Bright Fields*) by Eugeniusz Cękański (1947) -- a story about changes taking place in villages after liberation; *Zakazane piosenki* (*Forbidden Songs*) by Leonard Buczkowski -- an anthology of popular songs forbidden by the Germans in the time of World War II (1947); *Ostatni etap* (*The Last Stage*) by Wanda Jakubowska -- a semi-documentary reminiscence about a Nazi concentration camp and *Stalowe serca* (*Steel Hearts*) by Stanisław Urbanowicz -- a story showing scenes from the battles of Silesian workers with Nazi invaders (both 1948), exposing war experiences of the Polish people.

Their directors used, in an ideologically tendentious way, the "strategy of the witness," emphasizing the importance of the event presented on the screen and their authority to report such events. Facts and incidents from the past as well as fragments of the current reality recorded by the camera were given although they were not reported first-hand. An exception was the film about the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp by Jakubowska -- a credible story, but one which did not involve the viewers in any interpretative effort.

These films paved the way for Polish cinema to the poetics of realism, a kind of "naked truth of everyday reality" (which was also a principle for the Italian neo-realists). When in 1946 Władysław Gomułka, the secretary of Polish Workers Party appealed to the artists: "Give the nation a culture rooted in Polish reality!"<sup>(3)</sup> -- some of them believed they were able to reach this aim. The greatest optimists, including the Catholic journalist Jerzy Turowicz were even deluded into believing that they would be able to begin "implicating [...] masses to the process of creating the culture in the character of the subject [...]"<sup>(4)</sup> But the dreams about "stream of life" flowing from the screen were broken in 1949 when the Communists, as the

result of a powerful political battle, subdued their opponents. In meetings of artistic circles they pronounced the so-called Socialist Realism as the only method of making art acceptable in the country. Thus culture in Poland entered a period of childish schizophrenia. For the first time, directors and viewers tasted the bitter flavour of ideological indoctrination and encountered the exhausting syndromes of dissociation.

The normative poetics of Socialist realism were shaped according to the Soviet model of making art; this model was based on Lenin's theory of reflection (claiming that the image of the world is an illustration of social classes struggling with one another). It was saturated with narrative, iconographic and formal schemes. The worker, a representative of the class which was supposed to defeat the capitalistic tyrants (the dictatorship of the proletariat), filled with ideals of efficient work for the good of society and country, and of fighting for the victory of socialism all over the world, appeared frequently on the screen. He was putting the slogan "Proletarians of the world, unite!" into life. In effect, this utopian vision of reality was a didactic and boring story promoting the rightness of communist doctrines. The cinema became tendentious and presented a false image of the country as being well managed and developed under the guidance of the "leading power of the nation," the Polish United Workers Party. Cinema became an instrument of ideological manipulation.

Polish directors often performed their so-called civil duties without any particular conviction, making films based on external directives. The excessive use of ideological content, however, neutralized the "truth" of the screen images; the feeling of reality soon lost its magic power to influence the recipients. In spite of Turowicz's expectations, the viewers became passive partakers of film communication. Their subjective functions were reduced to the minimum by artists using the "strategy of the agitator," whose aim was to gather followers for particular ideas and political purposes. The "strategy of the witness" was thus tossed out. For example, the young married couple in the comedy *Skarb* (*The Treasure* -- 1949) could finally enjoy their lucky love since they were given a dream flat.

In the period of the early socialist realism, or so-called realism, (1949-1950), cinema was controlled by "soft" agitators who tried to convince those, in their own words, "still not convinced" about the necessity of building the social order according to the Marxist-Leninist tenet. This phase of production included *Za wami pójdą inni* -- *Others Will Follow* by Antoni Bohdziewicz, *Dwie brygady* -- *Two Brigades* -- a film made by students, and *Miasto nieujarzmione* -- *Unvanquished City* by Jerzy Zarzycki. None of these films found favour with the party dignitaries, who demanded greater political engagement from the artists, something which presented no difficulty for aggressive or "hard" agitators.

When the Stalinists introduced the socialist government in Poland, the cinema found itself in the hands of these aggressive agitators (1951-1954). These people did not even mind involving into the contemporary political strife the figure of a 19th century Romantic composer (*Młodość Chopina* -- *Chopins Youth*, 1952, directed by Aleksander Ford). The main representatives of this stream were, excepting Ford, Jerzy Kawalerowicz (*Gromada* -- *A Group*, *Celuloza* -- *Cellulose* and *Pod gwiazdą frygijską* -- *Under the Phrygian Star*), J. Rybkowski (*Warszawska premiera* -- *A Warsaw Premiere*, *Pierwsze dni* -- *First Days* and *Autobus odjeżdża o 6:20* -- *The Bus Leaves at 6:20* -- the story of a woman who mends her broken marriage, thanks to her ideological maturity) and Zarzycki (*Uczta Baltazara* -- *Balthazars Feast*). Fortunately, only nineteen movies were made in that period; but the twisted truth they presented gave poor marks to this period of the Polish cinema and history.

A few years after Stalin's death in 1955, political thaw began. Polish directors made fifteen films in two years trying to restore the equilibrium between texts and contexts. They used the "strategy of the mediator" which was a kind of compromise between the old and new times. These mediators tried to preserve the position of an impartial witness and the status of a friendly agitator. At the same time they looked at reality through the prism of Western cinema which did not avoid elements of deformation, expressive formal elements and thinking in the categories of philosophical existentialism which had been forbidden in Poland. This strategy gave birth to *Pokolenie* (*The Generation* -- 1955) by Andrzej Wajda and *Człowiek na torze* (*A Man on the Track*) by Andrzej Munk, works which splendidly illustrated a crucial moment in the post-war days of the country at the river Vistula, saddled by internal conflicts.

In his film, Wajda showed the town's dirty lanes, frame-houses, gutters and heaps of rubbish. Against this background, boys played war games; some became real heroes and communists (read: agitators). The process

of the hero's political maturing found a special expressive value on the screen, thanks to the revealing images taken through the bottom of the bottle, from a window, from the frog-perspective (from the bottom) as well as to the usage of 360 panorama shots<sup>(5)</sup>.

On the other hand, Munk borrowed inspiration from the great masters of the world cinema: Orson Welles (*Citizen Kane*, 1941) and Akira Kurosawa (*Rashomon*, 1950). The screenplay about an old engine-driver (symbolizing the pre-war, capitalistic socio-political system) who died in a railway crash, was arranged in a meaningful order of contradictory reports. In this way the director destroyed one of the basic determinants of the "productive" work of art poetics -- the omniscience of the narrator-ideologist and the omniscience of the hero-communist<sup>(6)</sup>.

The premiere of *A Man on the Track* took place in 1957 but it had been produced before the 1956 revolt. When the film appeared on screens next to Wajda's *Kanał* (*Canal*) and *Zimowy zmierzch* (*A Winter Dusk*) by Stanislaw Lenartowicz (about the generation conflict), the old-fashioned style of political discussion of its heroes grated upon the ears of viewers and critics alike. Undoubtedly, Munk and the director of *The Generation* anticipated in their movies the emotional, intellectual and aesthetic conditions of the "Polish film school" -- a movement which appeared when cinema began to be re-defined almost everywhere thanks to the rise of national new waves.

The "agitators" started quickly leaving their sinking ship and chose the "strategy of the clown," such as Rybkowski (who produced the first part of a comic triptych under the title *Kapelusz pana Anatola -- Mr. Anatols Hat*) and A. Bohdziewicz (he made *Zemsta -- The Revenge*, based on a play by A. Fredro, the great 19th century Polish playwright of comedies); or the "strategy of the friendly teacher" with an affectionate tilt for social realism which was the case of Zarzycki (*Zagubione uczucia -- Lost Feelings* and *Ziemia -- The Earth*) and Kawalerowicz (*Prawdziwy koniec wielkiej wojny -- The Real End of the Great War*); or the "strategy of the helpless employee" as in L. Buczkowski (*Deszczowy lipiec -- Rainy July*).

But the real renewal of Polish cinematography was begun by those directors who practiced the "strategy of the psychotherapist." Film historians have often listed their works next to the masterpieces of the French *nouvelle vague*, English Free Cinema, Czech new wave, New American Cinema and Brazilian cinema novo. These directors belonged to the Polish School. It differed from other "new waves" by its tendency to face up to national complexes, the results of tragedies which touched the whole society in a not very distant past. There is no doubt the premiere of *Canal* opened this chapter in the history of Polish cinema, but it is hard to set the caesura closing that period. Film critics usually place the end of this artistic phenomenon in 1963 when Wojciech Has finished the production of the drama *Jak być kochaną* (*How to be Loved*) dealing with the reminiscences of an actress leaving her motherland, thus completing a "self-examination" of her life in Poland during the war and in the period of socialist realism<sup>(7)</sup>.

Between 1957-1963, 138 feature films appeared on the screens of Polish cinemas, but only 30 of them have belonged to the "Polish School." It was mainly Wajda and Munk who employed the "strategy of the psychotherapist" with the consciousness of executing a specific mission. Both tried to overturn taboos by exposing many national obsessions: the "complex of September 1939" (the defeat by Germany) shown by Wajda in *Lotna* and Munk in *Eroica*, the "complex of the Home Army"<sup>(8)</sup> expressed through the dilemma of Maciek Chelmicki in Wajda's *Popiół i diament* (*Ashes and Diamonds*). In this film, partisan Maciek is ordered by the underground army command to execute a local communist leader one day after Liberation. Finally, the "complex of the Warsaw uprising" (the motif of the senseless fight against the Nazi invader) shown in Wajda's *Canal*. In these well-focused complexes, the Polish dramas evolved into a drift of meaningless history. The pictures of both directors deeply influenced the communal consciousness since they helped to free the national mythology from mystification and lies, typical of social realist poetics.

Of course, censors did not look kindly on these "psychotherapists" who had shaken the foundations of Marxist-Leninist's ideology and tried to hinder them from continuing to do so. The directors defended themselves against repression by using metaphors borrowed from the Polish Romantic and Neo-romantic literature. For example, the final impasse of the heroes of *Canal* was symbolized by the polonaise dance; the motif of the vicious circle was shaped into the figure of helpless posturing; and the white horse motif in this film was supposed to recall the old, pre-war Poland. The filmmakers also tried blurring the lines between realism and symbolism of the characters, events, landscapes and objects on the screen. Even nowadays, the

historians of cinema still dispute on the truth hidden beneath the images produced by the Polish film school; but they all agree that the directors' method of expressing ideological reflection -- such as leaving the most important element "between the lines" -- became a dominant artistic device in the following stage of the national psychotherapy, that is, in the 1970s and 1980s.

Apart from Munk and Wajda, anti-heroical characters presented in an ironical mode also appeared in the works by W. Has (*Szyfry -- Codes*) and Tadeusz Konwicki (*Salto -- The Somersault* and *Zaduszki -- All Souls Day*), two directors who, in suffering from the "Polish Romanticism disease," preferred to use the "strategy of a loner." They pretended to be amateurs who ignored the existence of genre conventions, styles and poetics. They behaved as directors exploring the language of the art from its origins. Both of them belonged to the small group of artists which formed the Polish authors' cinema. Konwicki received an award in Venice for his first screen experiment (*Ostatni dzień lata -- The Last Day of Summer*, 1958) depicting an accidental meeting of a man and a woman on a beach, who, in spite of their feelings, cannot find the way to each other. Has and Konwicki have remained "loners" to this day. The exclusive artists' club was joined for a short period of time, in 1961, by Roman Polanski who made *Nóż w wodzie -- Knife in the Water* (a film showing the "eternal triangle" as a metaphor for a conflict between the older generation of Poles with the "banana youth" -- the rebellious young generation of the late 50s). Polanski then left Poland and started his artistic career abroad. In the following years his place was taken over by Jerzy Skolimowski (*Rysopis -- Identification Marks: None* and *Walkower -- The Walkover*, 1965 and *Bariera -- Barrier*, 1966).

After the dusk of the "Polish film school," the national cinematography found itself under strong political pressure again<sup>(9)</sup>. Władysław Gomułka, the Secretary of the Party, wanted artists to help him build a socialistic country. However, the economy was in the meantime ruined; most Poles were discouraged from social participation and were also fed up with everyday problems. That is why the directors, cramped by censorship and self-censorship, did not touch topics with contemporary problems. The situation in Poland was splendidly illustrated by the title of a drama, written by one of the greatest Polish modern playwrights Tadeusz Różewicz -- *Swiadowie, czyli nasza mala stabilizacja* (*Witnesses, or Our Little Stabilization* -- 1964). Those directors who went through the apathetic state of mind invented the "strategy of the poser," used for putting a good face on bad business. They made unnecessary and unhappy pictures, showing every-day life within the framework of artificial genre conventions. Several dozens of dull comedies were produced in those times, recalling to mind the lyrics of the popular Polish song "Good night, my darling motherland, its time to sleep" There were also whodunits featuring a vague "crime in a Polish way" in which all the moral arguments were on the side of brave militiamen who hardly ever used deductive reasoning in their work and who acted intelligently only with help from the Communist Party.

Trying to fight social apathy, politicians were anxious to prepare a new model of ideological propaganda which would offer a faithful interpretation of the positive side of "real socialism" as the system was then called. They were frantically looking for ideas to point the way out for people from their grey reality. This then was the task given to ambitious artists as well as to submissive members of the Party who found themselves in the situation described by Sławomir Mrożek in his *Tango* (*Tango* -- 1964). A hero in the film put it this way: "No one will leave until we have invented an idea." A Polish playwright, Mrożek has been living abroad for many years now and is currently based in Mexico.

The modernized idea finally took the shape of megalomania and other sorts of mystification. Politicians decided to fulfill, at least partly, the filmmakers' dream of a "Polish Hollywood" and gave them the opportunity of making so-called representative works. In this way huge productions and new screen versions of national history were made and placed on the obligatory "viewing list." From among the long list of pictures produced by Party members, it is enough to mention only *Barwy walki* (*Colors of War* -- 1965) by Jerzy Passendorfer who efficiently employed the "strategy of a witness-deceiver," thus enabling him to tell a story of communist soldiers in the western-style.

Much better results were achieved by artists who adapted novels written by the greatest 18th, 19th and 20th century writers: Henryk Sienkiewicz, Jan Potocki, Bolesław Prus and Stefan Żeromski. Using the "strategy of the historian-agitator," Alexander Ford impressed Polish viewers when he made *Krzyżacy* (*Teutonic Knights*, 1961), a fairy-tale vision of a Great Poland set at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Wojciech Has preserved the "strategy of the solitary." In his film *Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie* (*The Manuscript Found*

in *Saragossa* -- 1965), he used the box-in-a-box technique (a story contained in another which is found in yet another etc.). His film related the adventures of a Walloon Guards captain travelling in Spain who enters into the world of fiction. Kawalerowicz, the author of the film *Faraon* (*Pharaoh* -- 1966) chose the "strategy of the historian-interpreter;" he commented on the power struggle in ancient Egypt and the mechanisms enabling one to reach the political goal while using ideological manipulations.

The work of the ex-social realist caused wide interest. However, a real "civil war," lasting more than 3 years, broke out in the papers after the premiere of Wajda's *Popioły* (*Ashes* -- 1965), a gloomy epic showing Poles fighting for the liberation of their country abroad, on the side of Napoleons army. J. Putrament, a writer connected with the Communist Party, declared the appearance at long last of "one of the political movies we should be proud of since it determined the battle for the national soul."<sup>(10)</sup>

But negative opinions about this motion picture predominated; politicians, historians, critics, teachers and even students accused the director of making fun of Polish heroism and of falsifying the greatest events in their history. The emotional ebullition over the adaptation of Żeromski's novel generated hysterical demands to "burn Wajda to ashes for his *Ashes*" (a title of a newspaper article) as well as gratitude directed to the artist for having created the Polish version of *Birth of a Nation*. In a completely different atmosphere, dispute arose over the ideological side of *Pan Wolodyjowski* (1969) by Jerzy Hoffman, a loose screen version of one of the parts of Sienkiewicz' *Trilogy* (colourful and idealized stories about 17th century Polish life).

Wajda, keeping a significant silence, listened to these polemics and went on to realize his "psychotherapeutic" strategy. In 1969 he shot *Wszystko na sprzedaż* (*Everything for Sale*) a kind of auto-therapy, presenting in this film about a film (and film inside a film) the uncertainties a modern film director goes through, being with the rest of society on the "Polish way leading to nowhere." This work was also the artists homage to the actor Zbigniew Cybulski who had starred in the role of Maciek in *Ashes and Diamonds* and who had met a tragic death. In the film, Wajda created a symbolic character of Actor (Daniel Olbrychski) who expressed the desire of the younger Polish generation to live in freedom.

In following decades Polish cinematography changed its face, mainly influenced by government's political strategies such as the building of "socialism with a human face" and "the society of prosperity." At a time when Western countries were experiencing student revolts and the movements of youth contestation, Poland saw the persecution of Jews -- this was obviously not recorded on film. Yet these resulted in the transformation of social consciousness.

After the bloody events at the Polish Baltic sea-coast the Communist leader Gomulka was replaced by Edward Gierk who asked all Poles for help in mending the system. Positive answer came also from the most complaisant artists. Thus since the middle of the 1970s, in the course of dynamically developing production (over 30 features annually), the support of Party leaders was given to directors practicing the "strategy of the submissive servant."

Despite the period of relative prosperity achieved through foreign loans, the tendentious, historical films including Ewa and Czesław Petelscy's (*Jarzębina czerwona* -- *Red Mountain-Ash* and *Kopernik* -- *Copernicus*), Bohdan Poreba's (*Prawdziwe oczy* -- *True Eyes* and *Hubal*) and Ryszard Filipiński's (*Orzeł i reszka* -- *Heads or Tails*) did not bring about the desired effect. People preferred watching satirical scenes based on everyday life, such as *Rejs* (*The Cruise*) by Marek Piwowski; these movies, however, were given a very limited distribution. Works by several solitary masters became artistic events: Konwicki's (*Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko* -- *How Far It Is and Yet How Near*, 1972), Haś (*Sanatorium pod klepsydrą* -- *Sanatorium Under the Hourglass*, adaptation of the dream-like prose by Bruno Schulz), Wajda's (*Brzezina* -- *The Birch Wood* and *Krajobraz po bitwie* -- *Landscape After the Battle*, 1970; *Wesele* -- *The Wedding*, 1973); *Ziemia obiecana* -- *The Promised Land*, 1975).

There were well-received screen ballads by Kazimierz Kutz (*Sól ziemi czarnej* -- *The Salt of the Black Land*, 1970, and *Perła w koronie* -- *Pearl in the Crown*, 1972), harking back to the period of insurgencies and strikes by Silesian workers in Southern Poland in the 1920s and 1930s. Only very few viewers could see the début film by Andrzej Żuławski entitled *Trzecia część nocy* (*The Third Part of a Night* -- 1973) which presented the apocalypse of human civilization based on the story of World War II. Not surprisingly, its young director was discriminated against and soon left the country. He successfully filmed his surrealistic and psychoanalytic

visions in France. Another director who brought a waft of fresh air into the Polish cinema was Krzysztof Zanussi (*Życie rodzinne -- Family Life*, 1971; *Iluminacja -- Illumination*, 1973 and *Bilans kwartalny -- A Woman's Decision*, 1975). Zanussi used the "strategy of the moralist" in his film essays on contemporary reality in the spirit of Catholic ethics.

Of course, most of the early 1970s films were superfluous, but since 1975, when most Poles realized that those great socialist achievements were castles built on sand, even directors of insignificant movies used allusions, suggestions and subtexts to expose the weak foundations of prosperity.<sup>(11)</sup> What they talked about silently, resounded loudly and clearly from Wajda's and Zanussi's films in 1977. In *Człowiek z marmuru (Man of Marble)* a woman-director ventures to make a documentary about a workers' leader, a hero of the social-realistic mythology. An honest man, the worker finds himself in a treacherous situation through the politicians manipulations. On the other hand, Zanussi presented in *Barwy ochronne (Camouflage)* the struggle of two moral states: an honest young research worker trying to preserve his independence in every possible situation and a cynical professor making his career according to the rule that the end justifies the means. Premieres of both films made a sensation and in comments in mass media, people found the truth about their real lives.

Syndromes of the Polish social disease were presented in detail by the "cinema of moral concern" which made use of the "strategy of the contesteer," a group comprising mostly of young directors collected around Wajda in the Production Group "X." This group included Agnieszka Holland (*Zdjęcia próbne -- Trial Shots*, 1977; *Aktorzy prowincjonalni -- Provincial Actors*, 1980, and *Gorączka -- The Fever*, 1981); Piotr Andrejew (*Klinch -- Clinch*, 1970, and *Czule miejsca -- Sore Spots*, 1980); Feliks Falk (*Wodzirej -- Dance Leader*, 1977; *Szansa -- The Chance*, 1979, and *Był jazz -- It was Jazz*, 1981); Krzysztof Kieślowski (*Przypadek -- Blind Chance*, 1981); Janusz Kijowski (*Indeks -- A Course Book*, 1977; *Kung-fu*, 1979, and *Głosy -- Voices*, 1980); Wojciech Marczewski (*Zmory -- Nightmares*, 1978, and *Dreszcze -- Shivers*, 1981); Barbara Sass (*Bez miłości -- With no Love*, 1980, and *Debiutantka -- A Debutante*, 1981); Janusz Zaorski (*Pokój z widokiem na morze -- Room with a View of the Ocean*, 1977) and Edward Żebrowski (*Szpital Przemienienia -- The Transfiguration Hospital*, 1978, and *W biały dzień -- In a High Day*, 1981). The films of these directors exposed all the superficialities of the social realistic culture based on lies, political ambitions, self promotion and newspeak.

The only ones who could openly write about the "cinema of moral concern" were the critics and intellectuals belonging to the Party. Censors meticulously monitored the texts to be printed. The opinions of reviewers were quite explicit. In Czesław Dondziło's words: "In all cases," he maintained, "there is a deeply and clearly articulated exhortation to pay respect for human individual sovereignty and freedom and an admonition against the powers which can limit this freedom [...]. At the same time young directors made many mistakes and ran aground in posing questions without being able to give any logical and credible answer."

It was only in 1985 that Maria Kornatowska was able to comment on the "cinema of moral concern" from a different point of view. (She published a book about it after the political changes in Poland.) "Conservatism," she wrote, "was the background of the cinema of the moral concern. The contemporary order was criticized and it was contrasted with old moral principles, since no one believed that from the chaos a new moral order could appear. However, there was nothing strange about the fact that the post-September renewal [in 1980 -- T.M.] put on its flags the relationship with tradition, bringing back and preserving old values. Recovering the past became one of the most important things. The 1970s passed under the necessity and the need of presenting the "not presented world. [...] The cinema of moral concern brought the canon of describing realism to its limits."<sup>(12)</sup>

The period of the cinema of moral concern was concluded in a symbolic way by its own inventor Wajda, who was preparing to make the film *Człowiek z żelaza (Man of Iron)* during the strikes in Gdansk's Shipyard in 1980. This film presenting the fall of Gierek's era and the birth of the Independent Workers Union "Solidarity" was made by the artist using both the "strategy of the psychotherapist" and that of the "clairvoyant," since he questioned the indissoluble nature of the social agreement signed by the government with workers. Unfortunately, the worst predictions were realized in a very short period of time. On 13th December 1981, the group of generals under the leadership of Wojciech Jaruzelski imposed martial law in Poland. The most gloomy period in Polish post-war history began. Some artists were imprisoned, others went into creative decline or took up the unequal battle with censorship. Only a few directors gave their support to socialisms

defenders who aimed guns and rolled tanks against their own people. The Tenth Muse fell into the clutches of "real-socialism" again.

This national drama was especially painfully experienced by Ryszard Bugajski, the director of *Przesłuchanie* (*Interrogation*), a film showing the tragedy of innocent people in the hands of Security Service just before the martial law. In the late 1980s, the exiled director visited Poland for his films premiere. It was clear that those political events had radically changed the artists' life. The film's plot refers to the period of his parents' youth seen from the perspective of the "sons' generation"; the same events also warped lives of many artists of the older generation -- in some cases simply by accident.

For example, Tadeusz Konwicki completed his adaptation of *Dolina Issy* (*Issa's Valley*) by Czesław Miłosz in 1981; he even appeared on the screen in the role of a witness of the "fathers' generation." But the premiere of his film took place a year later -- after the imposition of the martial law. Thus, the director and writer who not so long before had published dissident ("underground") literature became, against his own will, a hero of an artistic event at a time when many Polish artists ostentatiously refused to take any part in public cultural events. It made him feel like a strike-breaker.

In the period when Polish society was already suffering from schizophrenia of maturity, destiny spared no one. The filmmakers practicing the "strategy of the collaborator" or variations on the "strategy of the agitator," did not enter upon any sort of a dialogue with the society. Works by E. and Cz. Petelscy (*Boldyn*, 1982; *Kamienne tablice -- Stony Boards*, 1984, and *Kim jest ten człowiek? -- Who's That Man?*, 1985); B. Poręba (*Katastrofa w Gibraltarze -- A Disaster in Gibraltar*, 1984); Franciszek Trzeciak (*Punkty za pochodzenie -- Points for ones Descent*, 1983; *Diabelskie szczęście -- The Diabolic Luck*, 1985, and *Na całość -- Going All the Way*, 1986); Roman Wionczek (*Godność -- The Dignity* and *Haracz szarego dnia -- The Tribute of One Small Day*, 1984, and *Czas nadziei -- The Time of Hope*, 1986); Andrzej Piotrowski (*Zasięki -- Wire Entanglements*, 1983); Roman Załuski (*Rdza -- The Rust*, 1982); Mieczysław Waśkowski (*Czas dojrzewania -- The Adolescence*, 1984) and Janusz Kidawa (*Ultimatum*, 1984) were shown in empty cinemas.

Most movies of this period were influenced by the strategy of "escape from the reality." They did not however win the audiences' and critics approval. Exceptions were the comedies by Juliusz Machulski inspired by the American genre films (*Vabank*, 1984; *Seksmisja -- Sexmission*, 1984 and *Vabank II, czyli riposta -- Vabank II so the Return*, 1985) and a few films by other directors. During the 1990 Meeting of the Polish Film Makers, director W. Marczewski (the "silent" artist of the martial law period) asked his colleagues: "Did you really have to make *all* those movies?" -- no one in the room answered.

In the 1980s, only a few Polish directors reached artistic excellence. Films which will keep their place in Polish film history include *Austeria -- The Inn* by Jerzy Kawalerowicz (1983, about Polish Jews), *Nadzór -- The Surveillance* by Wiesław Saniewski (1985 -- exposing the experiences of women in a Polish prison), *Ręce do góry -- Hands Up* by Jerzy Skolimowski (1985 -- a metaphor of the "lost hopes" society) and *Matka Królów -- Kings Mother* by Zaorski (1987 -- a drama of a royal family involved in politics). The economic situation of the Polish film production was improved by adaptations of famous historical novels by S. Żeromski (*Wierna rzeka -- The Faithful River*, 1983, directed by Tadeusz Chmielewski; premiere -- 1987) and Eliza Orzeszkowa (*Nad Niemnem -- At Niemen Bank*, 1987, directed by Zbigniew Kuźmiński).

The best artists were looking for inspiration abroad. Andrzej Wajda made only two pictures, *Danton* (Polish-French co-production, 1983) and *Kronika wypadków miłosnych -- The Chronicle of Love Affairs* (1986). Krzysztof Zanussi realized *Rok spokojnego słońca -- A Year of the Quiet Sun* (1985, Polish-West Germany-American co-production). The "strategy of the moralist" helped to launch the world-wide success of Krzysztof Kieslowski, the author of *Krótki film o miłości -- A Short Film on Love* and *Krótki film o zabijaniu -- A Short Film About Killing* (1988, both are parts of *Dekalog -- Decalogue*).

Those serving the Tenth Muse did not notice that martial law was over; they failed to record on film the takeover of government by the political opposition in Poland<sup>(13)</sup>. The defeat of the "real-socialism" was a surprise even for Tadeusz Konwicki, the author of the novels *Kompleks polski -- Polish Complex* and *Mala Apokalipsa -- A Small Apocalypse*. Konwicki, who in 1989 started his work on adapting the masterpiece of the Polish Romanticism *Opowieść o "Dziadach" Adama Mickiewicza -- Lawa* (*A Story on "Dziady" by Adam Mickiewicz -- Lava*), terminated the period of the national discussion on the existing values of Polish

Romantic tradition. In this film, Konwicki had used the "strategy of the psychotherapist." However he could only feel symbolical satisfaction; after the ceremonial premiere of the film in Vilna and Moscow, the film had fallen through at the Polish box-office. Romantic ideas ceased to address the Polish viewer.<sup>(14)</sup>

In the new political situation, the society has been trying to create a true democratic order; most of the filmmakers' strategies appeared to be useless. *Incipit vita nova!* Will the filmmakers know how to use the freedom of speech now? It is still too early to answer this question clearly, but undoubtedly there are several dangers which they face. Director Wojciech Marczewski has reminded his colleagues of these dangers, urging them to look at themselves honestly and to keep from moral compromises. The heroes of his *Ucieczka z kina "Wolność"* (*Escape from the "Freedom" Cinema* -- 1990) illustrate that a man who is given freedom, after having been a captive of an ideology, often experiences the "censors complex;" he wishes to escape from this freedom. Does the Polish cinema really need a psychotherapy again? Surely yes, but wrong ways of cure have been already used in Wajda's film *Pierścionek z orłem w koronie* (*A Ring with the Crowned Eagle* -- 1991). This was to be a continuation and a squaring up with the Polish film school, but no one was interested in it. Instead, commercial success favoured Wladyslaw Pasikowski's films *Psy 1* (*Dogs 1*) and *Psy 2* (*Dogs 2*), about the corruption of the authorities, gang warfare and terrorism despite the fact that those pictures were more American than Polish. In Poland it is widely thought that the cinema is now waiting for its Godot but this may only be the typical Polish scepticism which is not going to last.

(Translated by Andrzej Cimała)

## Notes

1. All the fundamental works dedicated to the history of the Polish cinema can be criticised at this point. See W. Banaszkiwicz, W. Witczak, *Historia filmu polskiego, 1885- 1929* (*The History of the Polish Cinema, 1929-1965*), vol. 1. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1966; B. Armatys, L. Armatys, W. Stradomski, *Historia filmu polskiego, 1930-1939* (*The History of the Polish Cinema, 1930-1939*), vol. 2. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1988; J. Toeplitz, ed., *Historia filmu polskiego, 1940-1960* (*The History of the Polish Cinema, 1940-1960*), vol. 3. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1974; A. Iskierko, A. Kossakowski, I. Nowak-Zaorska, S. Ozimek, D. Palczewska, J. Siekierska, J. Toeplitz, *Historia filmu polskiego, 1957-1961* (*The History of the Polish Cinema, 1957-1961*), vol. 4. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1984 and R. Marszałek, ed., *Historia filmu polskiego, 1962-1967* (*The History of the Polish Cinema, 1962-1967*), vol. 5. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1985. The dates of all the volumes testify that owing to the intervention of censorship the publication was late and they appeared on the market not in a chronological order. The last one published to date was vol. 6 in 1994 (R. Marszałek, ed., *Historia filmu polskiego, 1968-1972 - The History of the Polish Cinema, 1968-1972*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe) written in 1988 and changed somewhat after the political breakthrough which held back its publication for 6 years.
2. The category of "strategies" was introduced to the researches on our national cinema by Tadeusz Lubelski (*Strategie autorskie w polskim filmie fabularnym lat 1945-1961 -- Author Strategies in the Polish Feature Film between 1945-1961*. Krakow: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellonskiego, 1992). From his conception I borrow only the "strategy of the witness," but I changed its functional range and bring about its different characteristic.
3. Quotation from: W. Gomułka, *Artykuły i przemowienia (I 1946-IV 1948)* (*Articles and Speeches [January 1946-April 1948]*), vol. 2. Warszawa 1964, p. 134.
4. Jerzy Turowicz, "Kultura i plan" ("The Culture and the Plan"), *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1947, No. 46.
5. Innovatory character of this movie, as well as other works by this director, I discuss in detail in a book *Inspiracje plastyczne w twórczości filmowej i telewizyjnej Andrzeja Wajdy* (*Fine Arts Inspirations in Film and TV Works by Andrzej Wajda*). Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1987.
6. See E. Nurczynska-Fidelska, *Andrzej Munk*. Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1982.
7. A detailed characteristic of this issue was performed by J. Trzynałowski (ed.) in: *Polska szkoła filmowa*.



*Poetyka i tradycja (Polish Film School. The Poetic and Tradition)*. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1976.

8. The Polish Underground Army of the Resistance Movement during the Nazi occupation whose commander-in-chief was in exile in England.

9. See T. Miczka, A. Madej, ed., *Syndrom konformizmu? Kinematografia polska lat szesdziesiątych (Conformity Syndrome? Polish Cinematography in the 1960s)*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1994.

10. Quotation from "Stenogram z posiedzenia Komisji Ocen Scenariuszy w dniu 18.01.1966 roku" ("A report from the conference of the Commission of Screenplays Appreciation, January the 18th, 1966"), *Iluzjon* 1990, No. 3-4, p. 38.

11. Different models of "schizophrenical culture" were described by Michał Glowinski in the following books: *Nowomowa po polsku (Newspeak - The Polish Version)*. Warszawa: PEN, 1990; *Marcowe gadanie: komentarze do słów 1966-1971 (March Talking: Some Comments to the Words in 1966-1971)*. Warszawa: Pomost, 1991; *Rytuał i demagogia: trzynastu szkiców o sztuce zdegradowanej (The Ritual and Demagoguery: 13 Essays on Degradated Art)*. Warszawa: OPEN, 1992 and *Peereliada: komentarze do słów 1976-1981 (PRLs Carnival: Some Comments to the Words 1976-1981)*. Warszawa: PIW, 1993.

12. M. Kornatowska, *Wodzireje i amatorzy (Dance Leaders and Amateurs)*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1990, p. 263-264.

13. The political breakthrough became an important turning point in the history of the Polish post-war cinema which is taken into account even by the authors of lexicons. Compare S. Janicki, *Polskie filmy fabularne 1902-1988 (Polish Feature Films 1902-1988)*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1990.

14. I wanted to prove this thesis in my book entitled *Wielka improwizacja filmowa - Opowieść o "Dziadach" Adama Mickiewicza - Lawa Tadeusza Konwickiego (Great Film Improvisation. "The Story on 'Dziady' by Adam Mickiewicz" by Tadeusz Konwicki)*. Kielce: Wydawnictwo Szumacher, 1992.

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