Milja Radovic

Framing the War: THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (YU 1932/1940)

Innovation, Faith, History in the Early Documentary Film

Abstract

This article examines early documentary film from the Yugoslav space, assessing the innovative deployment of film language to communicate faith and history in the context of the First World War. The pioneering work involved in developing war cinema in the Yugoslav space has been largely overlooked by scholars. The research introduces readers to the rich heritage of such documentary film and encourages new approaches to researching history and religion through this medium. The article is a case study of the documentary film THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (GOLGOTA SRBIJE, Stanislav Krakov, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1932/1940), which was assembled from various forms of footage and is regarded as the best documentary made in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia prior to the Second World War. Incorporating different modes and codes of representation, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA is a milestone in the development of film language. How the author(s) saw and framed faith and history within the context of the war resulted in a unique cinematic space, in which on-screen and off-screen spaces are (re)negotiated. To examine the language of film is to study film as a historical document, and in this sense this article approaches film as a primary source. Its overarching goal is to advance and enrich scholarly inquiry into early cinema and to introduce novel avenues for accessing documentary film.

Biography

Milja Radovic is a scholar of religion, media, culture, and the arts. Her primary focus has been on film, history, nationalism, religion, acts of citizenship, and Orthodox theology. She has published two monographs with Routledge, *Film, Religion and Activist Citizens: An Ontology of Transformative Acts* (2017) and *Transnational Cinema and Ideology: Representing Religion, Identity and Cultural Myths* (2014), and she lectures internationally. She has also served as a jury member with Interfilm, the International Interchurch Film Organisation, at international film festivals (Berlin, Cottbus, Karlovy Vary, Locarno, Oberhausen, St. Andrews). She is Principal Investigator for the Project "Reframing Space: Film as History" at the University of Vienna.

Introduction

With their depictions of faith, history and war, the first makers of film in the Yugoslav space[1] exhibited remarkable originality and innovation. To date, however, this superb contribution has been neglected by scholarship on world cinema. Similarly, pioneering efforts in war cinematography, impelled by historical circumstance, have been largely overlooked, yet the birth of war cinema is above all associated with the Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913, when, on the initiative of Duke Živojin Mišić, a "Film Section" was established within the army of the Kingdom of Serbia. With an emphasis on historical material, historical truth, and historical memory,[2] this article discusses the war film GOLGOTA SRBIJE (THE CALVARY OF SERBIA, Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), which reflects the evolution of the documentary over the decades.

THE CALVARY OF SERBIA is held by many to be the best documentary produced in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The article considers its depiction of faith and history within the context of the First World War. Serbia entered the war with the Austro-Hungarian Empire's declaration of war on 28 July 1914.[3] The ideas of Pan-Slavism were widespread among the South Slavs, leading to the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in

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1   This article is dedicated in loving memory of Marko Jovičić and of Stevan Jovičić (1936–2018), a film historian and head of the Film Archive of the Yugoslav Cinematheque.
    I wish to express my gratitude to the Österreichischer Wissenschaftsfonds FWF, University of Vienna, Sigrid Müller, Kurt Appel, Claudia Bernal Diaz, and Božidar Zečević; my special thanks also to the Yugoslav Cinematheque, Aleksandar Erdeljanović.
    I use the term "Yugoslav space" to refer to the geographical space known for most of the 20th century as "Yugoslavia". The films I focus upon were produced mainly by local filmmakers who rose from the grassroots level in the area in which the "Land of the South Slavs" was formed: in 1918 as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and from 1929 as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (after the Second World War Yugoslavia became a Socialist Republic). Some film societies and production companies were using the name "Yugoslavia" by 1918. The term "Yugoslav space" reinforces the focused approach to this specific geographical area and to the local filmmakers of diverse backgrounds who worked continuously in this geo-cultural space of changing borders.

2   According to Božidar Zečević "historical material" refers to the fabric of film, to film stock, and does not necessarily contain the "historical truth"; "historical truth" is a factual event, in early film usually shot in one take (or with necessary montage); "historical memory" refers to remembering or reconstruction. Historical material, historical truth, and historical memory constitute a historical film. Professor Božidar Zečević, personal interview, Belgrade, 27 September 2023.

3   While the causes of the Great War, such as the contemporary geo-political reconfiguration,

1918 – the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, formed in 1929, represented its practical realisation. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia gathered all South Slavs into a single state, along with other ethnicities, nationalities, and religions that had existed in this area prior to its formation.

This research enriches scholarly understanding of the documentary film THE CALVARY OF SERBIA, its historical significance and the language deployed within the cinematic space. In examining the framing of the Great War within the film, this article asks specifically (1) how is faith conceived and transcended within the cinematic space? and (2) how is faith represented within the context of the Great War? The analysis is conducted through the "frame" method: the frame contains the cinematic space and through frame we can validate the film as a historical document. The relationships between film and history and between film and religion date to the birth of cinema. Film has long provided historians with access to how history has been read, and they have explored how and whether cinematic visions of history are valid in scholarly terms. Matters are somewhat different in the field of religion and film, where scholars have developed diverse approaches in their examination of religion and early cinema, generating a rich body of scholarly literature on areas ranging from the early Hollywood era to world cinema. We still lack, however, scholarly research on faith, history, and innovation in the early cinema of the Yugoslav space.[4] The majority of existing work, largely by domestic authors, has focused on production and the history of the medium and has tended to remain untranslated. Most recent

have been much discussed by historians, the specific motive for the declaration of war was the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria on 28 June 1914 in Sarajevo.

4   Early cinema in the Yugoslav space has been addressed by domestic authors such as Dejan Kosanović, Stevan Jovičić, Petar Volk, and Bosa Slijepčević, but international scholarship has exhibited little to no interest in this subject; see Kosanović 2011; Jovičić 2019; Volk 1996; Slijepčević 1982. The Routledge *Encyclopaedia of the Documentary Film* states that "documentary production was very lively" in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia but neither provides further details nor explores the rich documentary heritage prior to 1918; see Aitken 2005, 1495. The *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema* summarizes cinematic developments in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Romania on one page; see Abel 2010, 58. Daniel J. Goulding and Pavle Levi begin their research with the socialist period and omit the pre-1945 period from their analysis; see Goulding 2002; Levi 2007. Other focused research on Yugoslav cinema also remains limited to the socialist and post-socialist periods and thus lacks critical study of its beginnings. The bulk of scholarship focuses on either post–Second World War feature films or on films made at the time of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, exploring industry, festivals, or subjects such as political ideologies, nationalism, ethnic conflict, and the mythological representations of the Balkans.

work has considered religion, faith, history, and film in Yugoslavia (and the Balkan peninsula) of the post–Second World War era. Studies of early film from the Yugoslav space that depicts expressions of faith and history have been lacking. This article seeks to fill that gap.

The territory that for most of the twentieth century was known as Yugoslavia provided a home for many roving cinematographers and was the birthplace of a unique cinematic culture. The first film screening on the Balkan peninsula took place on 6 June 1896 at the Golden Cross on Terazije Square in Belgrade, Kingdom of Serbia. "Moving images" aroused great interest amongst people of different backgrounds and professions, who often operated independently and at a grass-root level. This freedom resulted in the development of film language and innovative techniques to record "reality". In the Yugoslav space, documentaries that explored life in times of war and times of peace developed distinguishing characteristics, such as converging narratives and deep focus cinematography. Early film makers and writers[5] understood cinematic space as a space of truth-telling, in which they could depict facts and reality with film language. Reality, often conveyed poetically, unfolded through multi-layered stories, the merging of past and present, and negotiation between on-screen and off-screen spaces. The writers held that film language and film space could convey both historical reality and ontological enquiry.

The Calvary of Serbia itself has an interesting history: its final form, on the eve of the Second World War, was a product of various distinct stages and had emerged from changes in title and censorship. The film was inspired by Léo Lasko's documentary Der Weltkrieg (DE 1928) and by The Balkan War (Balkanski rat, YU 1928), assembled by Josip Novak and Milan Hofman from archive footage by the film pioneer Đorđe Bogdanović.[6] Andreja Glišić and Zarija Đokić, who had founded the production company Artistik Film in 1926, invited Stanislav Krakov[7] to make a homage to the Serbian people and their struggle

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5   The Manaki Brothers, Kosta Novaković, Josip Novak, Miodrag Mika Djordjević, Stevan Mišković, Žarko Djordjević, Andrija and Zarija Djokić, Đorđe Bogdanović and Svetozar Botorić, Mihajlo Al. Popović and Aleksandar Lifka are some of the most important creators of early film.

6   Paraphrased, Erdeljanović 2015, film essay in The Calvary of Serbia, DVD Edition Film Pioneers Vol. 4, Beograd: Jugoslovenska Kinoteka.

7   Krakov was invited as he was a well-known author, journalist, and filmmaker who had received 18 war medals. Erdeljanović 2015.

in the Great War.[8] On 1 May 1930 the documentary was released under its first title, For the Fatherland's Honour, as a silent film. However, that version lacked original material from the Great War that had been lost or destroyed, and to address that issue the producers engaged Stevan Mišković and Andreja Glišić to reconstruct some of the events.[9] Nonetheless, Krakov continued to travel, collecting material from around the world that by 1932 had enabled the creation of what we today know as The Calvary of Serbia, later with music by Milenko Živković and a number of folk songs from the time of the Great War.[10] The film was initially banned in 1940, postponing its premiere to August that year, but after alterations and revisions that addressed, for example, the role of Bulgaria in the Great War, The Calvary of Serbia, alternatively titled Balkans Burning, was screened throughout the country.[11]

With the German occupation in 1941, the film was hidden. It was unearthed after the war, and banned footage was returned to it in the 1970s, when the film was restored by experts led by Stevan Jovičić, a film historian and head of the Film Archive of the Yugoslav Cinematheque.[12] The film had been hidden, Petar Volk argues, not because of the idea as such but rather because of the "politicisation of the film", which required its reduction to "pure factography", with the past detached from any emotional memory.[13] The spiritual dimension related to suffering in war was not permitted, although in fact Krakov had been interested not in victimisation but in the idea of sacrifice rooted in a desire for freedom.[14] When factuality is reduced to factography,[15] it loses not just artistic impact but also its historical meaning. For the purposed of this article "factuality" is used to describe the depiction of a historic event in association with personal and emotional memory. "Factuality", then, is not symbolic, for it is precisely the image, the "everydayness" in effect, that can transcend the ontological.

8   Erdeljanović 2015.
9   Scenes reconstructed with the help of soldiers made available by Army Minister General Stevan Hadžić depicted the legendary crossing of the Albanian mountains, the entry of the troops into liberated Belgrade, and everyday life in occupied Serbia. According to Erdeljanović, no amateur eye would recognise that the footage is not original; see Erdeljanović 2015.
10   Erdeljanović 2015.
11   Erdeljanović 2015.
12   Erdeljanović 2015.
13   Volk 1996, 56.
14   Paraphrased. Volk 1996, 56.
15   Professor Božidar Zečević, personal interview, Belgrade, 27 September 2023.

Approaches and Methods to the Interaction between Film and History

In scholarly investigation of the reality created within the cinematic space, film can be understood as a primary historical source. This article examines the elements of film language that contain and compose the cinematic space.[16] Historian John E. O'Connor developed four major approaches to film and history,[17] and Robert Rosenstone examined how historical films convey the past[18] through six "codes of representation" in mainstream film and in experimental film.[19] While Bill Nichols was concerned with modes of documentary, Rosenstone identified two prevailing approaches: explicit and implicit.[20] The existence of key differences between Nichols and Rosenstone[21] is indicative of the need for further investigation of documentary film, in particular its ability to present reality in a unique and factual way. Rosenstone's has called for the creation of a new frame,[22] and this article proposes a focus on the language with which history is written upon the reel as a method of analysis. Examining *how* something is framed communicates both the historical context (off-screen) and the capacity of the director to negotiate the on-screen (what we see) and off-screen (what we do not see) spaces, allowing the filmed subjects and the immediate conditions in which they are filmed to meet. In this sense, this article proposes a novel category: history *as* film language – an overarching category, with film language central for both historians and documentarists. History and historical content (including the actual events recorded by the camera, such as war, the people, and diverse religious and ethnic communities, events and celebrations) are expressed by the film language. Only if they

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16 For discussion of modes and codes of representation see Nichols 2001; Rosenstone 1995; 2012.

17 O'Connor 1990.

18 Rosenstone 2012.

19 Rosenstone 1995, 9–10.

20 According to Rosenstone, the explicit approach "takes motion pictures to be reflections of the social and political concerns of the era in which they were made", while the implicit approach "essentially sees the motion picture as a book transferred to the screen, subject to the same sorts of judgments about data, verifiability, argument, evidence, and logic that we use for written history". Rosenstone 1995, 5–6.

21 Thus Rosenstone, unlike Nichols, has argued that Leni Riefenstahl's work cannot be considered poetic cinema. Robert Rosenstone, personal interview, online, 11 December 2022.

22 Rosenstone 1995, 6.

understand the film language can historians fully assess the on-screen and off-screen realities.

Film language shapes the filmic space, separating what we see from what we do not see. This article considers the continuity of space achieved through fine interactions between physical spaces and the camera, between the on-screen and off-screen spaces. The *who* of this investigation concerns the subjects represented – here individuals and groups in the case of human persons, sacred vessels and religious symbols in the case of objects, and places of worship and public gatherings in the case of physical spaces – while the *how* is the way in which the content is "framed" by means of the film language: narrative, sound, mise-en-scène, camerawork, montage, sound, and editing, for example. It is the "how" that facilitates the reading of the historical and the ways in which content and historical context correspond.

Early film makers developed notable methods for depicting reality and historical events, methods that included unconventional perspectives (found, for example, in the military newsreel), meta-cinematic technique,[23] deep focus,[24] converging narratives, crane photography, an informal approach to formal events, spontaneity, and a multilayered storyline. The way directors built the cinematic space reveals artistic development and the recognition that film language could express what no prior medium could communicate. Their approach, often poetic, revealed emotional and historical realities and their relationship to their subject(s). Nichols noted that "polished artistic expression" might be sacrificed for the sake of actual "history in the making".[25] This is a paradox of "observational documentaries",[26] where camera movement might be not a sign of artistic expression but a consequence of a real-time event, on the battlefield for instance. Although the filmic frame separates "what we see" from "what we do not see", it therefore often includes, implicitly or explicitly, the surrounding context.

23 Zakletva regruta Vardarskog puka (Oath of the Vardar Regiment Soldiers, Đorđe Bogdanović, Cvetković Brothers and Slavko Jovanović, SR 1914).

24 Pogreb potporučnika Živojina Marinkovića (The Funeral of Lieutenant Živojin Marinković, Đorđe Bogdanović, SR 1913).

25 Nichols 1983, 20.

26 Nichols 1983, 20.

The Calvary of Serbia

The Calvary of Serbia's inclusion in the "List of Film Material of Exceptional Significance" is evidence of its great significance for the history and culture of Yugoslavia.[27] On the basis of the extant film material and additional research, Stevan Jovičić was able to reconstruct the banned version of the film, using missing sequences that had been preserved during the Second World War and were in the possession of Đokić's family.[28] No material depicted the scenes of the army's great retreat through Albania and the entry of the army into the liberated capital, but they were reconstructed and added subsequently by Stanislav Krakov and cameraman Stevan Mišković, filmed on authentic locations and with the help of survivors.[29]

For the explanatory intertitles Krakov chose the words of statesmen, historians, and military observers in order to preserve a certain objectivity.[30] The film's opening, with shots of sky and nature creating a sense of peace, is followed by the words of British stateman Edward Grey about "the international skies seemingly looking brighter at the beginning of 1914", so after the Balkan wars. But it cuts immediately to 28 June 1914 and panoramic views of Sarajevo including mosque and city hall, with the change in music an ominous sign of the war to come. The film displays the document containing the Austro-Hungarian Empire's ultimatum of 23 July, followed by intertitles with Edward Grey's commentary and images of clouds enveloping the sky. Intertitles quoting Nikola Pašić, the prime minister of the Kingdom of Serbia – "we do not want the war […] we will not allow them to represent Serbia as a murderous nation" (00:04:49–00:05:03) – cut immediately to preparations by the Serbian army and the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers in Belgrade. The stormy sky is symbolic of the development of the crisis, with the intertitles quoting the telegram sent on 24 July from Regent Aleksandar to the Russian tsar, Nikolai II, and his reply on 27 July[31] and images of Tsar Nicholas II Romanov with the Imperial Russian army and the flag depicting the Icon Not-Made-By-Hands (fig. 1 and fig. 2).

27 *Službeni glasnik SRS* 19/80 in Erdeljanović 2015.
28 Erdeljanović 2015.
29 Erdeljanović 2015.
30 Erdeljanović 2015.
31 "In no case will Russia be indifferent to the fate of Serbia" (DVD Edition), 00:05:32.

Fig. 1: Tsar Nicholas II, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:05:43. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Fig. 2: Icon and soldiers, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:05:54. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

The intertitles tell viewers of the declaration of war on 28 July with the words of Count Berchtold, "Austria-Hungary considers itself to be in a state of war with Serbia from this moment on" (00:06:03), contrasted with images from newspapers and the message from Regent Aleksandar, "Serbs, defend your hearth and the Serbian people with all your might" (00:06:17). The close-up of soldiers with trumpets and drums, accompanied by music, announces the beginning of the Great War, which will spread to the rest of the world.

The war on the horizon is communicated by the dynamics of the composition: the trumpets and drums, the trenches, the Kalemegdan fortress,

the soldiers on the move are all connected by eclectic montage,[32] which anchors the quick response of the people to the Regent's call. The Battle of Cer is assembled as befits one of the most important battles in Serbian history: the Serbian army forms a human wall, standing before the much stronger enemy (fig. 3), the troops move onto the battlefield (fig. 4), and artillery blasts are seen (fig. 5). The portrayal of the battle ensure the viewer experiences the resolution and perseverance of the unit in challenging circumstances. The army's relationship to the terrain is mapped by means of a remarkable wide shot in which which the soldiers appear to sink into the earth. The shots of the blasts offer a visceral account of the horror of the battle, which consumes people and nature, day and night, in what appears as total destruction.

After what can be considered the first chapter of the story, on the outbreak of the war and the first victory, the film moves on to the counterattack in 1915 and Wilhelm II inspecting his soldiers and to the retreat of the Serbian army and Serbian people following the invasion. The image of a train (fig. 6) conveys the powerful military invasion, displayed through the visual invasion of the frame, with the steel and engine workings entering the shot and consuming the space. That consumption signifies the consumption of the land by the powerful army.

The retreat of the Serbian army, described in the words of Lieutenant-Colonel de Ripert d'Alauzier as "the most difficult in known history" (00:11:21, fig. 7), is depicted by means of a long shot of a bridge. Rising in the background, the mosque is rather a part of the mise-en-scène, and communicates the diversity of religions in the region. The idyllic scenery is ruptured by the soldiers in retreat. This shot is followed by a series of similar crossings: through continuous movement and anticipation of bridges to come, the continuity of space and a sense of uninterrupted time are achieved.

The patriarchate of Peć, the heart of Serbian statehood and faith, is framed by the army and the mountains. Placed behind smoke and with soldiers in the foreground and high mountains rising in the background, the silhouette of the patriarchate is merged within the space (fig. 8). The shot conveys the sanctity of the space (the whiteness and stillness of the build-

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32 Unlike the rhythmic montage of Eisenstein, here the montage concerns the dynamic connection of images. It does not connect the shots conceptually but instead has diverse images speak to one another through a masterful tension between movement and stasis and an often-surprising order.

Fig. 3: A human wall (restaged), film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:07:00. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Fig. 4: The battlefield (restaged), film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:07:14. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Fig. 5: The blast, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:07:21. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Fig. 6: The invasion, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:09:51. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Fig. 7: The retreat (restaged), film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:11:28. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

ing) in which the soldiers seek refuge, but it serves simultaneously as an image of Golgotha, or Calvary, that is, of trials yet to come.

The film includes the retreat across the Albanian mountains, restaged because no original film was available. Kravoc re-enacted the event with the help of survivors and the military.

The film captures the horror of the "Albanian Golgotha" in one particular shot: a commander inspects frozen soldiers on the mountain; finding no one alive, he pauses, removes his hat, and crosses himself, before continuing farther with his own men (fig. 9). Framed on a steep terrain and contrasted

Fig. 8: The Serbian patriarchate of Peć (restaged), film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:13:37. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Fig. 9: "Albanian Golgotha", film still (restaged), THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:15:26. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

with the whiteness of the snow, the image of the stillness of the commander above the dead soldiers transcends the ontological, binding together life and death. The shot provides a poetic negotiation between on-screen and off-screen spaces: on the one hand it provides a durational experience of horizontality, with a stream of soldiers moving through the frame, carrying their experience of war into the shot, where they come face to face with death, and then onward, out of the shot; on the other hand, the shot lyrically goes beyond verticality, with the immensity of the mountain whose ascent awaits the soldiers beyond the screen.

The film follows historical events chronologically, moving on to shots of the Thessaloniki front and to the island of Corfu, showing surviving soldiers, their recuperation, and their activities. The images are followed by the Serbian folk song "There, Faraway" ("Tamo daleko"), which was composed on Corfu in 1916. Inducing a slower pace and introducing a sense of the sacred, the images of the soldiers and the scenes in which they appear create a country life, with the focus on the faces of the children conveying a memory of home. Here the director achieves a continuity of space, in which image, time, and memory merge.

Here the core of the film is created through the integration of the sacred into a story of the Great War. The Easter Troparion, sung during religious services, conveys the resurrection of the spirit of the survivors of the Albanian Golgotha. Faith is expressed as a source of life and strength for the "peasant-soldiers" and is strongly connected to the idea of home. Krakov includes the traditional Serbian *Slava*, a celebration of the patron saint of each family and a commemoration of the living and the dead.[33] The preparation of the food and the ceremonial prayer (fig. 10) in the presence of Regent Aleksandar (fig. 11) provide an almost unique cinematic record of the importance of wartime religious ritual in the life of Serbs. This material, particularly the Slava celebration, is significant both for ethnologists and historians in presenting a formative aspect of Serbian Christian Orthodoxy in a time of war.

Lacking any sense of spectacle and pietism, this footage, which is neither staged nor manipulated and has the camera moving seemingly "without a plan" (as is often the case in early cinema from this region), shows exactly what is happening – a religious ritual that embeds a memory of life and death within Orthodox Christianity. Yet while the Slava celebration is shown as an actual event, it is given an ontological dimension within the film, for inserted in the midst of the battles (chronologically), it provides a certain silence and stillness to the action. This footage, which contains historical factuality, serves as a metaphor for memory (the custom of Slava as memorial of the living and the dead) and in a broader sense functions as historical material, for it contains the story of the calvary. The filmmaker(s) thus sidestep ideological pitfalls, and through this observation of a religious custom Krakov further contemplates the suffering of war.

This ceremony serves as a depiction of the life of the survivors between battles. Slava is cerebrated in a foreign land, but it is a feast tied to the

33   The Slava traditionally marks the day on which a family ancestor was baptised, a moment that is then passed down from generation to generation. It forms an image of the Eucharist, see Paković 2015, 128.

Fig. 10: Celebrating Slava during the war, film still, The Calvary of Serbia (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:22:05. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Fig. 11: Regent Aleksandar and Slava prayer, film still, The Calvary of Serbia (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:22:07. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

family home. Slava, a domestic-religious event and deliberate act of commemoration, is depicted as integral to life, as a source of inner strength and motivation. The shot is followed by music, with the national anthem and the Troparion of the Holy Martyrs.[34] The review of the reinvigorated army by Regent Aleksandar in 1916 is illustrated in his own words: "May the great and powerful Yugoslav Empire be realised" (00:23:46). The Regent

34 The Troparion of the Orthodox Church, celebrating the 40 Holy Martyrs of Sebaste, is sung at weddings and in Serbian tradition also at Slava celebrations.

Fig. 12: "The French boat is sailing" – Serbian soldiers, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:27:30. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

is filmed in close proximity as he interacts with the soldiers who surround him, standing as one of the people. The film then follows the assembling of various army groups from Corfu, which prepare for battle in Old Serbia.[35]

The departure of the army on the sea, waving to the camera, provides an iconic image (fig. 12) that transcends other meanings of departure to suggest departure from this world, the final farewell. It depicts the historical context and the soldiers themselves in Thessaloniki, as would be described in many poems and songs in the decades to come. The inclusion of the song "The French boat is sailing" ("Kreće se lađa francuska") in the sound version reminds the viewer of the friendship and common struggle of the Serbs and the French,[36] but it is essentially a dirge for the fallen soldiers buried in the "blue tomb".[37] Krakov takes his time composing the soldiers at sea, paying great attention to detail. He contrasts the scene with the battle of Jutland (fig. 13), where soldiers sang "It's a long way to Tipperary" as their ship went down, an excellent example of parallel montage in documentary film.[38]

35 "If the direction is Old Serbia, the Serbian army will rush into battle with zeal." Quote by General de Mondesir in the film (DVD Edition), 00:26:23.

36 This Serbian war song, included on the DVD, was sung at the harbor at Thessaloniki; its author was Branislav Milosavljević (1879–1944), a poet and an officer.

37 "Ode to a Blue Sea Tomb" was written during the First World War by the Serbian poet Milutin Bojić (1892–1917).

38 "While the ship was sinking, the crew sang a famous song 'Tipperary.'" Quote by H. W. Wilson in the film (DVD Edition), 00:30:38.

Fig. 13: "Tipperary" – The Battle of Jutland, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:29:57. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Fig. 14: Thessalonica Camp, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:33:21. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

The film takes us back to "solid Balkan soil", showing the completion of the disembarkation of 118,000 Serbs.[39] It shifts from the depiction of the camp (fig. 14), to the arrival of the Russian troops, to the night attack in Thessaloniki. The depiction of the famous battle of Kajmakčalan is unique: the soldiers are hidden in the trenches with their rifles perched above ground and leaning on a wall that stretches across the frame, with a white stone church standing above it. The wall punctuates the visual divide between earth and sky, life and death (fig. 15).

39 Quote by General Sarrail in the film (DVD Edition), 00:32:53.

Fig. 15: The church and the soldiers, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:38:59. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Fig. 16: The fallen, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:42:54. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

The scenes from the battlefield include depictions of the cavalry, the conquering of the top of Kajmakčalan, nighttime battles and a panning shot of the mountain swathed in the bodies of fallen soldiers (fig. 16).

The film includes the unique filmic record of King Petar I at Khalkidhiki (fig. 17), followed by shots of destroyed structures at Bitola, which are connected by panning shots, the remarkable continuity giving the impression of one continuous take. This continuity is punctuated by a contrast shot of the mosque and the people who emerge from the destruction. Krakov opens a "new chapter" with the American entry into the war. For five minutes he goes to great effort

Fig. 17: King Petar I of Serbia, film still, The Calvary of Serbia (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:49:21. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Fig. 18: The Memorial, film still, The Calvary of Serbia (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 00:57:55. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

with a combination of wide shots of challenging ascents, close-ups of military action, night photography, and intensive parallel editing. The film returns to Thessaloniki and in a highly succinct fashion, with just three successive shots, shows the commemoration of fallen soldiers in a Serbian camp behind the frontline: a monument, a soldier, and a plaque bearing the names of the fallen. Together they convey a palpable and dynamic connection between the living and the dead, a technique that had first been displayed as early as 1913 (fig. 18).[40]
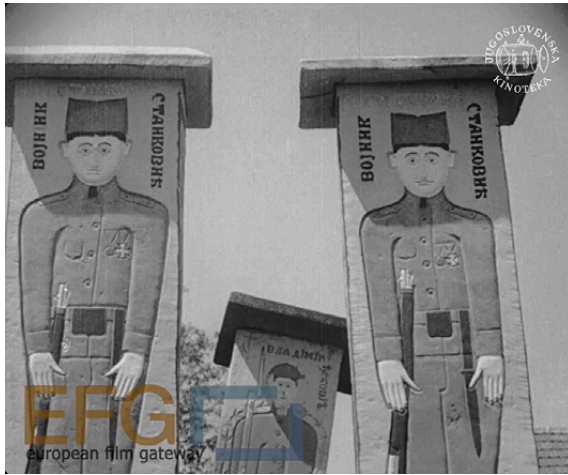
40   Radovic 2023, 16.

Fig. 19: Krajputaši, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 01:03:26. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

The final year of the war starts with preparations for the counteroffensive. Here Krakov uses staged material – he lacked original film that portrayed everyday life at home – that positions the efforts of the peasant-soldiers that the viewer has seen thus far as a struggle for the preservation of home. The inclusion of Krajputaši – roadside stone memorials to fallen soldiers, carved with soldiers and bearing an epitaph, is an early cinematic depiction of, and thus also recognition of, the unique decentralised cultural memorials erected across the land in remembrance of the Great War (fig. 19).

Krakov connects the images of Krajputaši (fig. 19) – the dead keepers of the land – with soldiers in action,[41] as if the deceased soldiers are looking on at those still alive and continuing their fight, thus connecting the spaces of the past and the dead with the spaces of the present and the living (fig. 20). The successive images of the battle are connected by images of the Regent at his post. The battles connect with images of devastated landscapes, villages, and towns that the Serbian army encounters. Footage of post–First World War Prilep, a lively picture of the town, is contrasted with further difficult progress through steep and poorly passible terrain, "without rest, with the last strength of both men and horses"[42] (fig. 21).

41 *Solunci*, or Thessalonians, is used in the intertitles to denote the soldiers who survived the "Albanian Golgotha" and the Thessaloniki front.

42 Quote by Franchet d'Esperey in the film (DVD Edition), 01:13:08.

Fig. 20: Soldiers in action, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 01:03:43. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Fig. 21: Advancing through enemy lines, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 01:13:10. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

The film continues with shots of liberated places such as Kavadar and Skopje, displaying buildings with the Allies' flags, and the capitulation of Bulgaria. The liberation of Niš is depicted through "still shots" of crosses that emerge from nature and the stonework to affirm both suffering and sacrifice as landmarks of the new life that will emerge after Calvary (fig. 22).

The film closes with reconstructed shots of the entry of the Serbian army into Belgrade (no original film material was available). The last shot, of a soldier with a half-torn flag in fade-out (fig. 23), is a simple shot that con-

Fig. 22: Liberation of Niš, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 01:17:52. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Fig. 23: A soldier with a torn flag. Fade out, film still, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA (Stanislav Krakov, YU 1932/1940), 01:20:41. Courtesy of Yugoslav Cinematheque.

veys the endurance of a people and the emergence of a new country from the ashes.

Conclusion

THE CALVARY OF SERBIA was initially conceived as a compilation of predominantly foreign film material about events between the Sarajevo assassination, in June 1914, and the entry of Serbian troops into Belgrade, in October

1918.[43] The film speaks from the position of the Allied powers, focused primarily upon the Serbian army. The director's primary concern is the meaning of the suffering of Serbia, but he also progressively introduces into the film the struggles of South Slavs for their liberation. Krakov's patriotism, Pan-Slavism and understanding of nationhood, Serbian and Yugoslav, and stance on the First World War must be located within Krakov's own time. They should not be misread, nor should they be miscontextualised by being loaded with the meanings of the Balkans that emerged especially with the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Krakov planned to show the events chronologically and accurately and to claim objectivity, to which end he used the words of generals, army officials, and kings as intertitles introducing, explaining, or connecting scenes and spaces. Later, in the version of the film with sound, Krakov used the score as a form of narration, with the music related to specific events and including a number of songs that originated during the war, and its tempo, including changes in pace, following the montage.

The composition of the film, including the use of intertitles and music, makes evident the director's capacity to construct a full-length documentary film by bringing together historical footage. This single-part documentary of 140 minutes, assembled from original material and reconstructed scenes, demonstrates artistic achievements from the previous decades: deep focus, active panning shots to connect the spaces, people, and objects, parallel editing, spontaneous camera work, informal approaches, long tracking shots that convey the wholeness of spaces, shifts from close-ups to wide shots, people themselves contrasted with the bird-eye perspective and panorama shots; taken together they they create a dynamic aesthetic unique to the documentary film. The attempt to achieve an accurate picture of these events is supported by Krakov's negotiation of on-screen and off-screen space(s), with his personal approach to a specific historical event unfolding subtly and poetically. His framing of the war by juxtaposing sequences of the stillness of nature, on one hand, with battles, crosses, and broken objects, on the other, introduces a certain contemplation of war as a common tragedy.

What kind of documentary is The Calvary of Serbia? The film merges a poetic approach to factual reality (the historical events), intertitles with

43 Kosanović 2011, 131.

quotations that avoid generalisations, observation and "empty" time,[44] presence on the battlefield (through cameramen), realism – how the past actually felt – and makers of different footage to foster participation in the events depicted. The film offers historical evidence and insight into values of the past.[45] The process whereby the film was made was experimental, and the filmed spaces, geographical and physical, "become history because of what they mean to people of a particular time and place".[46]

The film is not explicitly concerned with religion. Krakov is interested in religion only as a part of the story, and religion as shown in the film is neither decisive nor inspirational for the war. But the film *is* concerned with expressions of faith and their role on both personal and communal levels. The explicit approach to the sacred through depictions of religious celebrations and customs such as prayer, commemoration, and the sign of cross (people cross themselves in both tragic and celebratory moments) makes religious faith a source of meaning and strength, a memory of home, and a contemplation of life and death. The memory of home is contextualised within the sacred through group celebrations. By framing the custom of Slava in the midst of the war, the film connects spaces (Greece, where the army is, and Serbia, where Slava is traditionally celebrated). An additional implicit approach to the sacred is present in the film language: the continuity of space produces a continuity of time, in which the memory of home evoked by a sacral event gives past and present an ontological and eschatological dimension. By connecting past and the present, as in the example of the Krajputaši (fig. 19) and the living soldiers (fig. 20), Krakov locates suffering within the sacred and liturgical realty of "timeless time". Overall, Krakov uses the capacities of film language for representation and contemplation of the meanings of faith for the people involved.

An exceptional historical document about the Great War, THE CALVARY OF SERBIA has much to contribute to research into documentary cinema, war cinema, and the history of this geographical area. It unites historical facts (events), historical material (including the reconstruction of some events), and historical memory. The facts and material serve to tell a story, but memory, skilfully contemplated through the cinematic space, serves to relay a tragedy. Although imbued by patriotism, the film de-romanticis-

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44   Nichols 2001, 112.

45   Welsh 2004, 10–12.

46   Rosenstone 1995, 1–2.

es war and transforms the experience of war, perhaps for the first time on the screen when it comes to feature-length war documentaries. By personalising the human tragedy Krakov shifts away from the heroic story to draw attention to the human condition. His last shot conveys victory, but at the same time it communicates loss and suffering on a far more poetic level. In depicting the Great War, The Calvary of Serbia provides a vivid experience of the past that makes it a vital source for both film and historical studies.

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