

# REPRESENTATIONS OF THE COMMUNIST RESISTANCE IN ROMANIAN CINEMA. THE THAWING PERIOD

Antonela Gyöngy\*

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## Abstract:

*This paper intends to illustrate an often neglected, yet relevant aspect of the collective memory construction in communist Romania. In addition to other forms of collective remembrance, cinematic representations of the recent past have played a significant role for both the political regime and the Romanian society by providing political legitimacy as well as entertainment. The communist resistance was one of the most recurrent topos of collective memory, whereas underground party supporters – the so called “illegalists” – often had to be presented as figures of identification. The cinema permitted, however, a negotiation of the recent past on different levels. Starting from these considerations and focusing on the film production „Duminică la ora 6” (Sunday at Six, Lucian Pintilie, 1966), the paper brings into discussion the communist resistance discourse during the liberalization period.*

**Keywords:** *communist resistance, cinema, collective memory, communist regime, Romania, liberalization period*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with constructions of collective memory in Romania respectively with the communist resistance which emerged as an essential

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\* Antonela Gyöngy is lecturer at the Faculty of European Studies, Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. She studied Journalism and European Studies, followed by doctoral studies in sociology. In her PhD thesis, she dealt with cinematic constructions of collective memory. Her main research interests are: contemporary- and cultural history, memory politics in Europe, visual culture, media and communication, international relations. E-mail: gy\_antonela@yahoo.com

topos<sup>1</sup> or motif during the communist period. The main emphasis relies on its visual construction by Romanian filmmakers.

This topos has been constructed transnationally both in the Eastern Bloc and in the West, in the latter case, however, it has not been related to the communist party members. Unlike in the communist countries, this topos has not played such a large legitimizing role in the West, concentrating mainly on the anti-fascist resistance in conservative or intellectual circles.<sup>2</sup> Although communist resistance was in fact the most widespread, it was not discussed in the West during the Cold War. Highly influenced by politics, these constructions of the past were in a closer interstate and inter-Bloc relationship than one would assume.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, the changes in the political context are of particular importance in the investigation of the underground resistance.

Taking a step further and looking at the socialist camp, one can find similarities at first sight. In all these countries, the communist resistance was highlighted by the anti-fascist discourse. Historiography, history books, eyewitness accounts, conferences, as well as cultural products such as literature, film and theater have constructed communist resistance as a central theme throughout the communist period. Nonetheless, the socialist camp was anything but homogenous, and even if individual regimes had tried to create through the communist resistance a transnational basis of legitimacy and thus a common memory space, there were nevertheless temporal and spatial variations that reflected mainly the country's self-image and its relation with the Soviet Union. Countries such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and even the German Democratic Republic, which formerly had a stronger communist movement,<sup>4</sup> positioned themselves differently to this topos than, for example, Romania.

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<sup>1</sup> "Topos" is used in this article as a recurrent motif inherent in the collective memory formation.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Johannes Tuchel, "Zwischen Diffamierung und Anerkennung: Zum Umgang mit dem 20. Juli in der frühen Bundesrepublik" in *APuZ*, no. 27, 2014, pp. 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> Comparative analyzes refer in particular to the relations between East and West Germany. See, for example: Peter Reichel, *Erfundene Erinnerung. Weltkrieg und Judenmord in Film und Theater*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2007; Detlef Kannapin, *Dialektik der Bilder: Der Nationalsozialismus im deutschen Film. Ein Ost-West-Vergleich*, Berlin: Dietz, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Lucian Boia, *Strania istorie a comunismului românesc (și nefericitele ei consecințe)*, București: Humanitas, 2016, pp. 13-14.

Another difference may arise from the artistic freedom provided in these countries. This results in another peculiarity that makes up the artistic, or in this case, the cinematic work. The close connection between the cinema and the construction of social reality, and consequently of collective memory, has been recognized and exploited since the first film screenings at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The cinema rapidly developed into an industry shaped by the new structures of power. The socialist cinema represented a field whose power structures were based primarily on the institutional configuration. Because of the nationalization of cinema, both film production and the content were mostly politically determined. Unlike other media, film production itself is a collective activity involving ideas from multiple directions. Eventually, the film has still the capacity to externalize, store and distribute mental images on external media, whereby, through the film reception process, these images are in turn resumed and anchored in the social memory.<sup>5</sup>

Taking this into consideration, one can argue about an interpretation conflict emerging from the production and the reception of a film. Therefore, it is assumed that the cinematic construction of collective memory is by no means a one-sided communication, but presupposes a struggle for interpretation or a negotiation of the past, even if it might have been carried out more or less directly, given the more rigid memory politics in communist regimes.

Constructed as an identification figure and thus becoming part of the heroic self-representation of socialism, the topos of the resistance fighter has been furthermore assumed at different negotiation levels: from the level of film production over the moving image to the film criticism and the audience reception.

However, this paper will focus on the cinematic construction of the communist resistance during the liberalization period in Romania, trying to answer the question of how this topos could be negotiated through the medium of film? Considering this, the intention is not to evaluate or classify these cinematic representations as dissident, regime-critical or regime-friendly discourses, but rather to examine the negotiation of the past<sup>6</sup> between the actors

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<sup>5</sup> See the concept of “media of collective memory” in Astrid Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen*, Stuttgart/Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Negotiation implies at least two actors stating different opinions. Regarding visual representations, this could be explained in terms of pluri-semantic messages or a distancing film language.

involved. In order to answer this question, the paper continues in the next section with a short insight into the thawing period and the Romanian cinematographic context at the time. However, the main emphasis is placed on the film analysis *Duminică la ora 6* (Lucian Pintilie, 1965/66), which ultimately shows how representations of the resistance have been negotiated during film production.

### THE THAWING PERIOD IN ROMANIA

The different and often contradictory uses of the resistance topos in the construction of the regime's self-representation also meant redefining this self-image through the continuous negation of the „other” or the other's image. Consequently, the identity and orientation frames have been introduced in a renegotiation process. This resulted in both a content and a stylistic change in the cinematic representation of the communist resistance and thus a change in the self-representation of the regime. Elements of the other were gradually included in this topos, but not without encountering critical rejection at first. It may have been not just existing contemporary witness experiences or the different understanding of the past of the emerging filmmakers that played a decisive role, but also the political circumstances and the artistic freedom. Besides these determinants, which brought about a change of self-representations, there were primarily the turning points in the political course of the entire Eastern Bloc that required such a refiguration of the past, mainly because these changes generated oscillating decisions and instability of the entire political system.

Joseph Stalin's death was such a turning point that occurred internally within the Eastern Bloc, but it had a worldwide impact. Stalin's totalitarian regime and cult of personality, as well as the self-representations propagated during his regime had to be redefined by a new party leader. Nikita Khrushchev initiated a new political course at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: the de-Stalinization.<sup>7</sup> Here one can also point to the negation of a (past) “other” in the redefinition of the self-image. The period of “political relaxation”, carried out differently in the socialist

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<sup>7</sup> See about “Stalinization” and “De-Stalinization” in different socialist states in: Jan Foitzik, “Entstalinisierungskrise in Ostmitteleuropa”, in Roger Engelmann, Thomas Großbölting, Hermann Wentker (ed.), *Kommunismus in der Krise. Die Entstalinisierung 1956 und die Folgen*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008, pp. 35-60.

countries, was called according to Ilja Ehrenburgs novel the “thawing period”.<sup>8</sup> However, Khrushchev's politics proved to be contradictory: on the one hand, he initiated a period of liberalization that resulted in a cleavage in the cultural sphere between reformist and conservative artists; on the other, he tightened his political control to end the turbulences in the Eastern Bloc.<sup>9</sup>

In Romania, Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej reacted to this new course claiming that he carried out a so called “de-Stalinization” as early as 1952, before Stalin's death<sup>10</sup> (with the party exclusion of Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca and Teohari Georgescu).<sup>11</sup> But later, under the pretext of de-Stalinization, he initiated a new wave of purges within the party and the universities and tightened repressive measures against those who showed solidarity with the Hungarian uprising.<sup>12</sup> The contradictory remembrance politics and unilateral historiography evinced during the PMR plenary session of 9-13 June 1958, in which the party exclusion of the last former illegalists occurred. In the context of Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization course, they had criticized Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and questioned his role in the resistance.<sup>13</sup>

Only a few years later (1958-1964), after the unrest in the Eastern Bloc subsided, a de-Stalinization process was initiated in Romania, or even a “de-Russification” process, which led to the dissolution of Soviet institutions, the

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<sup>8</sup> See (comparative) studies in Dietrich Beyrau, Ivo Bock (ed.), *Das Tauwetter und die Folgen: Kultur und Politik in Osteuropa nach 1956*, Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1988; Engelmann et al. (ed.), *Kommunismus in der Krise*, 2008; Karen Laß, *Vom Tauwetter zur Perestrojka. Kulturpolitik in der Sowjetunion (1953-1991)*, Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Laß, *Vom Tauwetter zur Perestrojka*, pp. 44-98.

<sup>10</sup> Dan Cătănuș, “Regimul comunist și problema intelectualității 1956-1965”, in Dan Cătănuș (ed.) *Intelectuali români în arhivele comunismului*, București: Nemira, 2006, p. 50.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. document 124: “1956 octombrie 30, [Timișoara]. Memoriu manuscris ce conține cererile studenților din Timișoara, formulate cu ocazia mișcărilor studențești izbucnite în contextul Revoluției din Ungaria”, Source: ACNSAS, Fond Penal, dosar 799, vol. 5, ff. 5-6, here: pp. 538-539; document 127: “1956 noiembrie 23, București. Ședința cu instructorii teritorialii ai CC al PMR [...], here: pp. 544-556, etc. in Mihnea Berindei; Dorin Dobrințu; Armand Goșu (ed.), *Istoria comunismului din România. Documente. Perioada Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej*, București: Humanitas, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Alina Tudor; Dan Cătănuș (ed.), *Amurgul ilegaliștilor, Plenara PMR din 9-13 iunie 1958*, București: Vremea, 2000.

change of toponymy and also a turn in the memory politics.<sup>14</sup> This process ended in 1964 with the so called “declaration of independence” from the Soviet Union. Without going deeper into the political context, I would just like to recall this transitional unstable situation that occurred in the entire Eastern Bloc. The Romanian cultural policy wavered between liberalization and repression until another turning point was set in 1971, with the so called “July theses”.

In this circumstances, filmmakers and artists tried to distance themselves from socialist realism themes in order to pursue new artistic paths. In doing so, they turned to the aesthetics of Italian Neorealism or the French Nouvelle Vague.<sup>15</sup> Although the formalist criticism became loud again, the films were admitted anyway. This expressed the uncertainty and dichotomy in the cultural field. On the other hand, neither commissioned films nor inhibitory interventions were dispensed with, even if they could be partially evaded. A content or aesthetic related negotiation of the still rigid, heroic representations of the resistance – continuing to be a source for political legitimacy – was carried out hesitantly; critical voices were tolerated only in the later thawing period.

### THE NEGOTIATION OF THE PAST IN *DUMINICĂ LA ORA 6*

During this time, the Romanian filmmaker Lucian Pintilie (later becoming known for his regime-critical position) made his film debut with *Duminică la ora 6/ Sunday at six*. The film itself was his only one admitted by the censorship. Retrospectively, it received less attention compared to his later, more controversial productions, possibly because Lucian Pintilie adopted a

<sup>14</sup> Cf. document 185: “1963, septembrie 9, București. În contextul răcirii relațiilor dintre conducerile PMR și PCUS și al derusificării instituțiilor [...]”, Source: ANIC, Fond CC al PCR – Secția Propagandă și Agitație, dosar 9/1963, ff. 20-26, here: pp. 762-765; document 192: “1965 martie 8-9, București. Referat și situație statistică prezentate de Petre Lupu conducerii PMR privind aplicarea deciziilor de schimbare a numelor unor instituții, străzi, localități în contextul rescrierii istoriei partidului și al recuperării istoriei naționale pentru legitimarea acestuia”, Source: ANIC, Fond CC al PCR – Secția Administrativ-Politică, dosar 17/1962, ff. 59-75, here: pp. 784-788, in: Berindei/ Dobrințu/ Goșu (ed.), *Istoria comunismului din România*, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Thomas Heimann, “Erinnerung als Wandlung: Kriegsbilder im frühen DDR-Film”, in Martin Sabrow (ed.), *Geschichte als Herrschaftsdiskurs. Der Umgang mit der Vergangenheit in der DDR*, Köln: Böhlau, 2000, S. 37-85, here: p. 50; cf. Oksana Bulgakowa, “DEFA-Filme im Kontext der „neuen Wellen“ im osteuropäischen Film”, in Skyler Arndt-Briggs et al. (ed.) *DEFA international. Grenzüberschreitende Filmbeziehungen vor und nach dem Mauerbau*, Wiesbaden: Springer, 2013, pp. 73-91.

distant, even dismissive attitude towards the film story addressing the communist resistance.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, he has given this conventional film story a new dimension through the experimental film language, enabling new readings and challenging audiences' viewing habits and expectations. However, *Duminică la ora 6* differs from his subsequent cinema productions by its subject set in the recent past, and in particular by the experimental, unconventional film language. Lucian Pintilie's subsequent feature films emphasized on the one hand a realistic-critical approach in *Reconstituirea* [*Reconstruction*, 1969], on the other hand an allegorical perspective in *De ce trag clopotele, Mitică?* [*Why Are the Bells Ringing, Mitică?* 1979]. Without pursuing a unitary approach, these films reveal a critical dimension, which was in any case undesirable to party officials, mainly because of its more or less direct reference to the present (presentification). As Pintilie's only approved feature film, *Duminică la ora 6* appeared at the opportune time marked by a liberalized cultural policy. The late thawing period that briefly occurred between Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's purges and Nicolae Ceaușescu's national communism, turned out to be a fruitful period for Romanian artists and filmmakers. This short cultural-political transition reflecting however a wavering self-image of socialism, tacitly allowed a dissociation from socialist realism, and an approach to a relative large variety of styles. A stylistically motivated negotiation of the past again came to the fore, but this time not under the sign of earlier formalism, but under an expanding artistic approach.

In this context, Lucian Pintilie's film was nevertheless at a seemingly contradictory interface between domestic criticism and international recognition. That it belonged – along with the later feature films *Ediție specială* [Mircea Daneliuc 1977] and *Să mori rănit din dragoste de viață* [Mircea Veroiu 1983] – to those exceptions, that had not addressed the real issue, was discussed only after the communist regime.<sup>17</sup> These were issues that had been worked out in the cinema, without providing the required political homage.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The film critic Călin Căliman regards this as “stylistic exercise on a given topic” (“exercițiu stilistic pe o temă dată”): Călin Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc: (1897-2000)*, București: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 2000, p. 284.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. interview with Mircea Veroiu in: Ioan-Pavel Azap, *Traveling. Interviuuri cu regizori români de film*, vol. 1, București: Tritonic, 2003, p. 157.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

### *Reshaping the Cinematic Understanding of Resistance*

The film plot brings a love story in the foreground, which had to fail due to the political entanglement of its protagonists. The title *Sundays at 6* goes back to the appointment of the two main characters Radu (Dan Nutu) and Anca (Irina Petresu), who had to meet on a dance evening in order to plan and carry out a resistance action together. But the scheduled meeting was prevented by the riots of the right wing party followers – the legionnaires. They get to know each other by chance, and the relationship developed without them knowing anything about each other's political implication. However, by the acquisition of the multiplier, Anca proved to be the contact person to meet Radu on that dance evening. Her story, told as flashback from Radu's point of view, made a tragic turn: Anca was murdered by the police agents from the Siguranta and Radu was betrayed by another contact person.

The film story is traced back to the year 1940 when the Iron Guard came to power. Despite some evidence such as the appearance of the so called "Green Shirts", an explicit mention of political events was abandoned. Moreover, the political affiliation of the resistance fighters was reduced to the occasional use of the address form "comrade" and to Maria's statement about the potential emergence of socialism. Consequently, the resistance actions such as the provision of a multiplier or the workers strike are less politically substantiated, but rather in connection with the love story, set in an internal tension between private and public life. Renouncing at propagandistic statements, the visual representation of the resistance struggle takes, in contrast to the previous films, not a heroic, but a psychological, even defensive form. The danger to which the film characters are exposed by the agents of the Siguranță (Security Service), who track Radu in the city of Constanța, takes on a physical form – namely a direct confrontation – only at the end of the film. The legionaries, the factory director and the two agents who have broken into the couple's hideout can be reduced to functional figures, due to their one-time appearance. The de-personalization of the enemy shows a turning away from the hitherto cinematically used antagonistic representations.

Moreover, the resistance – especially after the conspicuous performance of the multiplier-action and after Anca's alleged interrogation [32,26-39,00] – is portrayed as a defensive, internalized struggle for survival, hampered by traumatic memories and insecurity. The resistance is turning, according to the screenwriter Ion Mihăileanu, into a "credo" and „above all, a protest. But not an impulsive, furious protest, but rather a way of life that penetrates into the

deepest resorts of individual psychology.<sup>19</sup> In addition, this introspective conception of resistance is reinforced by the expressive film language, be it in form of flashbacks, subjective camera, associative editing, or exposure and sound, thus overcoming the conventional narrative. According to Lucian Pintilie, the fates of the characters should evolve in a natural, everyday life. By the use of wide-angle lenses, a rigid character guide have to be avoided, thus permitting an unbiased acting of the protagonists.<sup>20</sup>

Besides replacing heroic characteristics of the protagonists with individualized and internalized visions of the outer reality, the film presents another novelty in the cinematic depiction of resistance, namely the central and active role of women and the youth, which are moved into the foreground of the film story. The inner tension of the two young protagonists is contrasted with the carelessness of the youth in the train station, both visually presented by cross-cuttings (or shot reverse shots) and in the dialogue between Radu and Maria.<sup>21</sup> The director also explains his film by referring to the young people who have chosen to fight.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, the role of the women is no longer that of an external supporter of the resistance struggle, but an active protagonist, even though with human weaknesses. Even the Communist Party is represented by the figure of Maria (Graziela Albini), of a woman who, as a "collective individual"<sup>23</sup> linearly exercises her representative function, communicating orders to Radu at regular meetings, and enduring his difficulties with perseverance. The relationship between the two young people and the party is thus simplified by Maria's linear evolution.<sup>24</sup> She puts Radu in contact with both Anca, a young Architect student who shows lack of

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<sup>19</sup> In original: "...și, mai ales, un protest. Nu un protest impulsiv, furios, mai degrabă un mod de viață care intră în cele mai intime resorturi ale psihologiei individuale." In: Alexandru Racoviceanu, "Dialog cu scenaristul Ion Mihăileanu" in *Cinema*, no. 3, 1965.

<sup>20</sup> Alexandru Racoviceanu, "Cît mai aproape de cotidian" in *Cinema*, no. 3, 1965.

<sup>21</sup> Maria emphasizes that Radu is not an average young man [19,11], whereas Radu also points to the carelessness of the youth, which might persist even at the rise of socialism [1,08,25-1,09,00]. See also Anca in the park [52,01-53,36].

<sup>22</sup> Bujor T. Rîpeanu, "Colocviu regizoral despre filmele noi" in *Cinema*, no. 11, 1964.

<sup>23</sup> Maria uses the "we"-form when she is taking Anca under protection [54,15].

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Arhiva Națională de Filme, „Duminică la ora 6” – archival materials: Călin Căliman, "Duminică la ora 6" in *Contemporanul*, no. 5, 1966, p. 5; Tudor Caranfil, "Duminică la ora 6" in *Tribuna*, 10, no. 4, 1966, p. 7. (Press articles and other materials from this archive are listed below under „ANF, D6.”).

experience, insecurity and fear, and with the woman from Constanța who has finally proved to be a traitor. Despite the cinematic narration based on Radu's retrospective view, Anca visually comes to the fore.

Radu becomes a reserved and tense underground activist. By perceiving the risks and dangers of a love affair between two illegals, his confrontational attitude towards Anca increasingly changed into a protective one. Since he could not prevent her tragic death, he approaches the fate of an anti-hero. Radu remains only with a traumatic memory, which he plays against the oblivion by passing on his experiences to Maria, before he finally falls victim to the security men in Constanța.

The representation of the main protagonists is thus less in line with the political demands of offering viewers a (heroic) identification figure. The emphasis on young people – namely on a young worker and UTC-member as well as an architecture student – meets the new requirements of the cultural functionaries. However, the film takes a certain critical distance both stylistically and by the tragic hopelessness of anti-heroes. According to the film review written by Călin Căliman in that period, the protagonists' entangled inner world faces an observed realism representing the anonymity of the strikers, the adolescents, the people on the street, and the society as a whole.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, this anonymous society is "presentified" (*vergegenwärtigen*) by a discrete reference to the clothing style of the 1960s.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the audience is offered the possibility to associate between past and present events.

Alternative film readings are also enabled by a film language which produces critical distance to the represented characters. In addition to the film story criticized as pessimistic and the content-related extension of this topos, the film language played for Lucian Pintilie a far more important role. Flashbacks, subjective camera or point of view-shots, cross-cuttings and associative montage or visual metaphors revealing a non-linear, non-classical narration with temporal ellipses should not lead to any identification of the audience with the main characters, but to a critical distance. This proved to be the main purpose of the film. The narrative perspective is counteracted by the camera. The film image creates an identification proximity to Anca, whereas Radu's voiceover, the montage overlapping different temporal levels, and the subsequent disrupted narration, as well as the use of visual metaphors, create a

<sup>25</sup> ANF, D6: Călin Căliman, "Duminică la ora 6" in *Contemporanul*, no. 5, 1966, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> See sequences: walk Anca and Radu [19,54-27,41] and Anca in the park [52,01-54,36].

critical distance to the narrated. Radu's traumatic recall – namely the image of people who are leaning on the balcony railing of an inner courtyard seen from the fixed point situated in an elevator going down, as well as the image of passing through a (prison) basement - interrupts the cinematic narrative,<sup>27</sup> tuning out to be sequences representing Anca's death as well as her imprisonment. Finally, these flashback sequences can only be traced back to Radu's last images of Anca. The protagonist's inner world imprinted with shock-like memories as well as the transitions between temporal planes are also marked by close-up framed faces appearing behind glass windows, wire fences or prison grids. All these aspects represent a dissociation from the outer world,<sup>28</sup> which also confer to resistance narratives an introspective dimension through film language.

### ***The Negotiation of the Past: Film Production and Reception***

*Duminică la ora 6* can be considered the artistic creation of a new generation of filmmakers, who seized the freedoms of the 1960s as an opportunity to experiment new stylistic paths. Both the director Lucian Pintilie, as well as the screenwriter Ion Mihăileanu – who himself was an illegalist<sup>29</sup> – and the camera operator Sergiu Huzum made their debut with this film and paved their way as critical artists. The film project was started in 1961 and had to be taken over originally by Iulian Mișu.<sup>30</sup> Although Lucian Pintilie initially appeared to reject the script as „unfashionable“, Liviu Ciulei persuaded him to first make an „unproblematic feature film.“<sup>31</sup> Already at the beginning, the director has turned away from a documentary-authentic reproduction of the past, which was expected at that time, and committed himself to an aesthetic negligence, which was unusual, above all, for an „antifascist“ film:

<sup>27</sup> [02,43-02,53 / 02,58-03,17 / 03,25-04,10]; [17,50-18,03]; [27,41-28,03 / 28,40-28,56]; [32,07-32,26]; [47,06-47,17]; [55,24-55,30]; [56,28-56,35 / 57,12-57,42 / 57,52-58,02 / 59,40-59,56 / 1,00,16-1,00,28]; [1,07,00-1,07,56].

<sup>28</sup> See for example [00,00-01,45 / 02,22-02,30]; [28,57-29,10]; [53,30]; [27,00]; [4,10-6,02].

<sup>29</sup> Căliman, *Istoria filmului românesc*, p. 280.

<sup>30</sup> Bujor Tudor Rîpeanu, *Filmul în România. Repertoriul filmelor de ficțiune românești, 1911-1969*, Vol. 1, București: Editura Fundației Pro, 2004, p. 131.

<sup>31</sup> „Notă cu privire la Liviu Ciulei și Lucian Pintilie“, 10.10.1963 in CNSAS, Dosar I 256686, vol.1, p. 98.

“I am not interested in the plastic, anecdotal outer re-composition of the epoch. We will not make any efforts to reconstitute it. The image will bear the mark of an intentional neglect, without great contrasts [...], by using mercury vapor lamps in illuminating, many “hand shots” and experimenting the “trans-trav”-method. Even in scenography we will not seek to insist on the detail of the epoch, but will place the action especially in expressive environments: wastelands, house facades, city fringes near the swamps [...].”<sup>32</sup>

Not only the street and its numerous exterior motifs contributed to the atmospheric depiction, but also the initially unplanned interior shots at original locations turned out to be atmospherically appealing.<sup>33</sup> In doing so, the filmmakers attempted to draw on the aesthetics of the Italian Neorealism, and also on the younger Nouvelle Vague.<sup>34</sup> The film narrative itself was originally based on a simple epic structure that Lucian Pintilie explicitly refused during the filming.<sup>35</sup> However, his free approach challenged him, as he had to reorganize the film footage. Finally, he regretted the fragmentation and dramaturgical “blanks” at which, in his view, the film had to suffer. But the improvisation and the discovery of the cinema image, as well as the need for a distant approach to the film characters led him to a rejecting attitude towards traditional narration. The suggestive power of film narratives seemed to him

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<sup>32</sup> In original: “Nu mă interesează recompunerea exterioară plastică, anecdotică a epocii. Nu vom depune eforturi de reconstituire documentară a acesteia. Imaginea va purta amprenta unei neglijențe voite, fără mari contraste [...], prin folosirea în iluminare a lămpilor cu vapori de mercur, cu multă „filmare din mână” și experimentare a procedurii „trans-trav. Nici în scenografie nu vom căuta să insistăm asupra detaliului de epocă, ci ne vom plasa acțiunea mai ales în ambianțe expresive prin ele însele: maidane, calcanele caselor, marginea de oraș ce se învecinează cu balta [...]” In Bujor T. Rîpeanu, “Colocviu regizoral despre filmele noi” in *Cinema*, no. 11, 1964.

<sup>33</sup> Only 3 of the original 18 planned stage sets could be realized in the studio, so that the film crew had to recourse to original interior locations. Cf. Alexandru Racoviceanu, “Cît mai aproape de cotidian” in *Cinema*, no. 3, 1965.

<sup>34</sup> The aesthetics of Italian Neorealism and French Nouvelle Vague also inspired the “black wave” of Yugoslav film, which seemed to have similarities with the Romanian film tendencies of the 1960s in terms of critical approach and lesser public support. However, the limited reach of this trend in Romania might be seen as a major difference. Cf. “Novi film” [<http://filmlexikon.uni-kiel.de/index.php?action=lexikon&tag=det&id=5521>] and “Schwarze Welle” [<http://filmlexikon.uni-kiel.de/index.php?action=lexikon&tag=det&id=5248>], 26. October 2015.

<sup>35</sup> George Littera, “Confesiunile regizorului la masa de montaj” in *Cinema*, no. 10, 1965.

much more important, and he intended to further enhance his cinema activity towards a protest against the subject in favor of the cinema image.<sup>36</sup>

*Duminică la ora 6* premiered on 10. 1. 1966 and recorded a relatively small audience success compared to other feature films of the 1960s addressing the communist resistance, but a larger audience compared to Pintilie's subsequent banned films, which continued to receive much more attention from the film critics.<sup>37</sup> These audience results might be traced back to Pintilie's uncomfortable attitude and provocative film language. The director himself points in his later memories<sup>38</sup> to the „cursed” recording of the feature film *Duminică la ora 6* by cultural and party officials, as well as to its international awards.<sup>39</sup> However, shortly after the film had been finished, the negotiation of the past revealed split attitudes which came to the fore in a debate of the Association of Filmmakers (Consiliul Asociației Cineaștilor - ACIN).<sup>40</sup> The critical remarks of several filmmakers (G. Saizescu, M. Drăgan, M. Iacob) were based largely on political arguments and concerned with, on the one hand, the „unrepresentative figures”, on the other hand, the inscrutable representation of the resistance in terms of its actors, goals and reasons. The film was considered “inappropriate” both in concept and “local color” (atmosphere). The

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>37</sup> Out of a total of 12 feature films dealing with communist resistance and filmed between 1960 and 1969, 8 feature films with over two million spectators were recorded until December 2013. *Duminică la ora 6* had 1,715,107 spectators. Lucian Pintilie's other films *Reconstituirea* and *De ce trag clopotele, Mitică?* reached, after their re-performance in 1990, 578,611 resp. 352.770 spectators. Cf. *Spectatori film românesc*, 2013 [<http://cnc.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Total-spectatori-film-romanesc-la-31.12.2013.pdf>], 19 October 2015.

*Duminică la ora 6* had reached 1.276.803 spectators by December 1967. Cf. ANF, Fișă filmografică, nr.I/89, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Lucian Pintilie, “Ca un bonjourist”, 1998, in Lucian Pintilie, *Bricabrac: [articole, interviuri, discursuri]*, București: Humanitas, 2003, p. 289.

<sup>39</sup> Worth mentioning here are in particular the awards of the International Youth Film Festival in Cannes 1966; the Golden Trophy “Cabeza de Palengue”, Acapulco, 1966; the special jury prize for the world's first interior lighting with mercury vapor lamps, UNIATEC Congress, Prague, 1966; the critics award of the Film Festival in Mar del Plata, 1966; special jury award and prize for the feminine role (Irina Petrescu) of the National Film Festival in Mamaia, 1966 etc. In: ANF, Fișă filmografică nr. I/89, p. 12; cf. Rîpeanu, *Filmat în România*, p. 132.

<sup>40</sup> Rîpeanu, *Filmat în România*, p. 131.

proponents (I. Mihu, M. Marcus, M. Ilieșu, D. Fernoagă, A. Miheleş, I. Grigorescu) stressed Lucian Pintilie's performance of stylistically approaching modern cinema.<sup>41</sup> Although admitted, *Duminică la ora 6* was contrary to the memory politics of that time, which can be shown by the later restriction of film distribution, as the number of spectators in Romania remained unchanged between 1971 and 1981 at about 1,600,000.<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, the negotiation of the past continued with the ambiguous reaction in the press. Film criticism oscillated between the stylistic renewals resulted from Pintilie's improvisation in the cinematic depiction of the resistance struggle and the confusion created by this film language itself. Pintilie's "tacit" intention to create its free scope for cinematic improvisation by emphasizing a love story, thereby avoiding the conventional subject without having to be exposed to the accusation of misrepresentation of the resistance, was addressed critically in the press. Accordingly, the lack of dramaturgical dynamics and the reduction of communist resistance to the transport of a multiplier were considered to be unacceptable. The countless flashbacks would also lead to confusion.<sup>43</sup> The disrupted cinematic narration through leitmotifs caused discontinuities and confusion, which would eventually transform the film into a "hybrid work" that was neither oriented to the "traditional" nor to the "modern", but rather reflected the director's "unfulfilled artistic ambitions."<sup>44</sup> Beyond "reminiscences of theatrical conventions and literacy"<sup>45</sup> traced back to Pintilie's film language, the film closing also drew the attention of the critics. The main protagonist's hopeless reaction to the agents of the Siguranță as well as his weakness turning him to an anti-hero, would remove any trace of optimism.<sup>46</sup> In this respect, the gloomy conclusion was regarded again as inappropriate for emphasizing revolutionary struggles.<sup>47</sup> However, the criticism of *Duminică la ora 6* was not used as a pretext for restricting the director's artistic freedom, as proved to be the case with his subsequent feature films.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> A possible explanation could be Pintilie's dissident attitude as well as Dan Nuțu's emigration to USA in 1979. Cf. Rîpeanu, *Filmul în România*, Vol. 1, p. 132.

<sup>43</sup> ANF, D6.: D.I. Suchianu, "Duminică șa ora 6" in *Gazeta literară*, 8, no. 4, 1966, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> ANF, D6.: Tudor Caranfil, "Duminică la ora 6" in *Tribuna*, 10, no. 4, 1966, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> ANF, D6.: Eugen Atanasiu, "Carnet cultural. «Duminică la ora 6»" in *România Liberă*, XXIV, no. 6609, 1966.

<sup>46</sup> ANF, D6.: D.I. Suchianu, "Duminică la ora 6" in *Gazeta literară*, no. 4, 1966, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> ANF, D6.: Călin Căliman, "Duminică la ora 6" in *Contemporanul*, no. 5, 1966, p. 5.

## CONCLUSION

The topos of communist resistance unfolded in the thawing period up to its introspective and everyday representation. This enabled new film aesthetics as well as a certain turning away from grand narratives. Consequently, the negotiation of the recent past was clearly evident on the production and visual level. The unconventional film language not only provoked the viewing habits of the audience, but also influenced the subsequent cinematic depictions of resistance. Following this pattern of introspective resistance which opened new stylistic directions, further films were shot in Romania until the mid-1970s, when action films and entertainment series attempted to overcome a certain saturation regarding this topos.

However, this critical, distance creating approach was still undesirable among representatives of the official memory politics. Moreover, in the negotiation of the recent past, Lucian Pintilie – unlike other filmmakers – generally took a different attitude towards party and cultural officials, which was not based on a consensus or compromising dialog, but on an outcry for artistic freedom:

„Then I perceived that dialog with censorship is excluded, because dialog is a vague form of normality; that aberrant situations must be aroused and exploited with coldness; and that, in general, relations of force, not of trading, must be used.“<sup>48</sup>

This determined attitude made him appear as a controversial personality and a banned filmmaker whose films were no longer allowed in Romania until 1989.

In conclusion, the thawing period reveals opposite discourses, which can be traced back to inhibiting stabilization attempts on behalf of the political decision makers, but also to the attempt of the filmmakers to break these rigid topoi in terms of their content - if the authors experienced directly the presented period, or aesthetically - when a young generation of filmmakers emerged. In the present case it has been shown that the thawing period in Romania revealed rather an aesthetically motivated negotiation of the past and an extension of the topos of communist resistance to everyday and introspective aspects.

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<sup>48</sup> In original: „Atunci am perceput că în relațiile cu cenzura dialogul este exclus, pentru că dialogul este o formă vetustă de normalitate, că trebuie pîndite și exploatare cu răceală situațiile aberante și că în genere trebuie folosite relații de forță, nu de tranzacționare.“ In Pintilie, „Ca un bonjourist“, p. 351.

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