

Apart from the prohibition of any openly nationalist politics, in the communist Yugoslavia ethnic identities flourished, framed by the concept of a cultural category that was fostered by some politically established institutions – cinema producers among them. As in other communist countries, which always made an effort to utilize the rhetoric and techniques of political populism, the Yugoslav government especially supported folklore and other aspects of “traditional” forms of popular culture. The effect of the prohibition of explicit nationalist politics did not equal censorship of ethnic identity in culture. On the contrary: culture was dominated by topics of national (i.e., ethnic) identity throughout this period. Two specific features of the ruling ideology in Slovenia were congruently verified by the very existence of the Slovenian nation (as ethnicity). The “mysterious” reason for the supposedly astounding survival of this ethnicity was (and still is in daily media speech) emphatically alleged to be its culture. The communist sovereign state, on the other hand, was legitimized by the fact that it brought this nation, which survived its fabled history thanks to its culture, to the highest degree of emancipation so far. In accordance with such *idées reçues*, politics took care of national cultural institutions in practical terms, and the authorities recognized the special calling of “cultural creators”. To give an example, cinematography would not even exist in a small nation without substantial governmental financing. It is understood that subsidies were granted according to certain criteria. Furthermore, it went without saying that projects on *nationally* (culturally and ethnically) *constitutive topics most often won subsidies*. From the very beginning of Slovenian feature film in 1948 (with *Na svoji zemlji* ‘On Our Own Land’ directed by France Štiglic) one can see the dominance of an at least mildly nationalist ideology in the declared politics concerning film production.

On the other hand, Yugoslavia was unique as a communist country in which modernist art in all areas was tolerated and even promoted so long as the ruling bureaucracy did not see any political provocation in artistic products or events. The place of modernist Yugoslav films in any classification or in aesthetic terms has yet to be determined, although I tend to agree with the following: “The cinema of the 1950s and early 1960s in Eastern Europe seems like a kind of ‘entre-acte’, a limbo – a transitory state. It is a stage in between the void and the blossoming; a period that itself does not bear meaning. Its meaning is in what comes next, in what is going to evolve from that point on” (Pavicic, 2008: p. 21).