

„ГЕРОИТЕ НА ШИПКА“

Марияна Пискова

Архивен прочит на един филм за Руско-турската война (1877-1878) от времето на Студената война

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АРХИВЕН ПРОЧИТ НА ЕДИН ФИЛМ
ЗА РУСКО-ТУРСКАТА ВОЙНА (1877-1878)
ОТ ВРЕМЕТО НА СТУДЕНАТА ВОЙНА



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“THE HEROES OF SHIPKA”

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На корицата: *Войници от поделение в Казанлък, участвали в заснемането на боевете на Шипка от 28 юли 1953 г. до 6 септември 1953 г. за филма „Героите на Шипка“. Снимката е от личния архив на един от участниците – Костадин Велков Иванов, роден през 1929 г. Предоставена е от студента в магистърска програма „Архиви и музеи. Опазване на културното наследство в информационното общество“ Любомир Димитров.*

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“The Heroes of Shipka”

An archive reading of one movie about the Russian-Turkish war 1877-1878 from the time of the Cold war

Abstract

“The Heroes of Shipka” is the first Soviet – Bulgarian movie about the Russian-Turkish war 1877-1878. It was created in the first half of the 1950s and was screened at the beginning of 1955. The movie strictly followed the requirements of the socialist art so called “socialist realism”. The joint production, directed by the famous Sergey Vasilev, was meant to serve as a model and school for the “young” Bulgarian cinematography it had to praise in cinematographic form the Soviet-Bulgarian and Russian-Bulgarian friendship.

In the time of Stalin to choose as a topic the Russian-Turkish war as a subject of a joint movie production was not only “right” but in accordance with the priorities of the Cold war. The clear parallel between the Russian and Soviet military force at the end of the movie was directed not only to the Bulgarian audience but to the others behind the iron curtain, to all Westerners. In the past the Russian army and the Bulgarian-Russian military friendship were decisive for the liberation of Bulgaria and now in the time of the Cold war the tanks toward Shipka forewarn and demonstrate power securing Soviet protection against the “enemies” of Bulgaria from the West. The last scene of the movie focused on the ceremonial placing of a memorial plaque of the “Heroes of Victory” 1877-1878 done by the victorious Red army and opened personally by the marshal Tulbuhin and directly suggested the idea about the Russians as “double liberators” of the Bulgarians. The movie provoked interest in Cannes and it was nominated for “Golden palm”; Sergey Vasilev got the reward for best director.

In the history of the Bulgarian cinema before 1989 “The Heroes of Shipka” was considered as an achievement and model for battle, historical movie about the Russian-Turkish war 1877-1878. Present authors consider the movie as etalon work

of “socialist realism” and as a product of cultural engineering, propaganda and legitimization of communist ideology.

The lack of research on the history of movie “Heroes of Shipka” based on archive documents provoked my interest. In Bulgaria most compact collection of archive traces of the movie are preserved in three archives: Central state archive, Bulgarian national cinemathèque and State military-historical archive in Veliko-Tarnovo. In the two central archives documents about the “Heroes of Shipka” are concentrated in 14 fonds of personal and institution origin including documents from the massive of the former Central party archive. About the dissemination of the movie documents from the State archive of Blagoevgrad have been researched.

In Russia archive traces about the shooting of the movie are divided between two big specialized archives about literature and art in Moscow and Sankt Petersburg.

I researched more than 8000 lists of archive documents which are situated in Bulgaria and Russia and provided information about them in the two chapters of the book.

The first chapter is a narrative about the history of the movie “Heroes of Shipka” based entirely on the archive documents. The second chapter is archive one and plays the role of finding aid. It is constituted of two finding aids – “ideal” inventory and subject survey. A documental collection of memories of Bulgarian volunteers from the end of 1940s recorded especially for the needs of the movie are also presented.

Nevertheless the researched archives of the movie have official character and use businesslike and euphemistic language they reveal many irregularities, disturbed technology of the cinematographic process, and waste of financial sources. The mistakes made the ministry of culture of the USSR Viktor Brjantsev to state clearly and shortly that “the forwarded Soviet experience by the movie “Heroes of Shipka” is rather how a movie should not be done”.

The official and standard businesslike documents contain many examples how the “Soviet” was used as a motive and argument in realization of different government decisions. The violated rule in documenting – the official forms of the docu-

ments testify about “Soviet – Bulgarian production” but the stamp under the official signature of the director legitimize them as “Bulgarian- Soviet production” – is not by chance. This violation speaks about the change in the accents in the process of shooting the movie as a result of the forwarding of the Soviet experience.

The official documents speak about the permanent control over the cinema and specifically over the work of this movie. The archive documents reveal the hidden “behind the screen” everyday life. They speak about the accidents during the shooting of the movie, two of them cost the life of two soldiers.

The archive traces permit a distanced reading which at the same time is maximally closed to the real conditions of creating the movie “The Heroes of Shipka”. The stenographic protocol from the official delegation of Sergey Vasilev back to Moscow speaks about how big is already the distance of time. The Bulgarian participants in the ceremony were consoled by the fact “That Moscow is only 6 hours by plane”.

The archives speak also about the perception of the movie “The Heroes of Shipka” in Russia: it was compared with famous movie of Vasilevi brothers “Chapaev” shot 20 years earlier. And even more - “Skobelev is grandfather of Chapaev”, “The heroes of Shipka” is the first series of “Chapaev”.