

DIALECTIC ANTI-PATRIOTISM

A theatre critique

Jeton Neziraj, *One Flew Over the Kosovo Theatre*, directed by Blerta Neziraj

Qendra Multimedia, Pristina

Zlatko Paković

There is only one proper definition of patriotism. Namely, there is only one definition which defines patriotism as a truly valid intention and a thoughtful human endeavour. However, it is more correct to say the following: a definition which is determined by such an experience of an individual's humanistic dedication, on account of which he is prepared to sacrifice his privileges, if he is in possession of any, his comforts, if he enjoys them, his honour, if it is based on lies, prejudice and deceit, as is usually the case, or, simply put, if he is prepared to sacrifice his personal possessions and existence. And that definition goes as follows: a patriot is a person who in the name of moral principles and without compromise opposes immoral and retrograde politics which govern a society and a state at a particular historical moment.

One day, and that day will have to come eventually, the patriots' efficiency in Serbia will have to be measured according to this definition, a country where today patriotism is the most profitable branch of economy and a basis for political analysis. In fact, the truth of the above stated definition of patriotism will finally be revealed in accordance with the effects of those patriots who spread like wildfire after the war, and it will be clear that the actual patriots, both amongst men and women, have been those people who for decades have been persecuted as anti-patriotic, mondialist, Western, Yugonostalgic, communist, Sorosian, fifth columnist and, above all, as anti-Serbian elements who, according to patriot Ćosić, destroy the very essence of the "ontological creature of the Serbian nation" from the inside, and not those men and women who used to say that for Serbian borders, which stretch as far as Serbian graves are to be found, as Matija said, even the lives of 250,000 young Serbs isn't a huge price to pay. This

is what patriot Ekmečić said, which means that before they end up in a grave they take at least double the number of dead young men from different parts of their homeland with them, for which they had no idea was not theirs in the first place. So, one day, all the spilled blood and corpses of all age groups, all the pillaged properties and all the impoverished people, all the lies, idiocy, slyness and deceit, all the patriotic corruption and patriotic murders will be reflected in the truth of the opinions expressed and actions taken by that minority which opposed them. That is the dialectics of history. Patriotism is when the future and life move the present, and not when it is governed by the past and death.

In the sense of this definition which awaits its fulfillment, we can say that Jeton Neziraj, whose “antipatriotic” Greek comedy *One Flew Over the Kosovo Theatre*, directed by Blerta Neziraj, we had a watched two nights ago at the Centre for Cultural Decontamination is a patriot and a writer. In this text and performance, the author ironically opposes the power of patriotic thoughts and patriotic feelings, which are emitted at the highest levels of the Kosovan government, against the people who, while sinking deeper and deeper into poverty and helplessness, accept it with delight.

This is not a play which criticises Kosovo's statehood, the making of which bore a huge number of victims. Therefore, this is not a play which questions the very meaning of those victims, rather it questions the set meaning of statehood, which should represent some sort of freedom and opportunity for its citizens and not additional lies and more misfortune. The Nezirajs show all of the decorum of patriotism and all of the civility which the government must act out according to the rules of European and American sovereignty controls (and it should be noted that the Pristina premiere of this theatrical performance, on 5th December at the National Theatre of Kosovo, would not have taken place without the intervention of several Western European ambassadors), the mask of civility and the face of patriotism without pulling any punches, in its true genre, as a farce, and, at the same time, in its natural setting, as a comedy of the absurd.

The play's title alludes to the cult 1975 American film “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest” by the famous Czech director Miloš Forman, therefore suggesting that the plot takes place in a psychiatric hospital, where the craziest people are in fact the administrators, whilst the patients, who are healthy, are forced to receive therapy. This hopeless ambience of the play was realised by Zuzane Majer-Staufen who set a cage grid above the entire performance space.

The live performance by Gabriele Marangoni, who composed the music for the show, and Susanna Tognella, in the joint sounds of the harmonica and the violin, which recreated famous melodies from films about the mafia, put an accent on politicians' appearances on stage. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister of Kosovo issued a directive to the National Theatre to prepare a play which would mark the independence celebration in Pristina, but it is not known when that will be. It is important that the Prime Minister's speech be integrated into the play, however, the speech has not been written yet. The absurdity of this situation, of course, reminds us of *Waiting for Godot*. Moreover, two million Euros has been set aside for the celebration but most of that money ended up in the wrong hands and was used for private purposes.

When, at the end the main actor, who needs to feel honoured about being chosen for the main part, steps out onto the scene to deliver the prime minister's speech, belated and hastily learned by heart, something happens which shatters the patriotic facade into oblivion. As he recites the text which he has learned the words escape him, the actor faltering, stammering, and falling silent, only to then speak again in his own name and in the name of all those people who he can truly represent! The actor has a responsibility for every word uttered in a play, a personal responsibility! This was what Branko Gavela said. That responsibility, on stage too, is the truth of patriotism.

The sentence which shines above this theatrical show after it is finished, just like the cage grid above the stage and in the end falls like a mouse trap, uttered by the brilliant tragedy performer Bajrush Mjaku is a question: "What kind of a shit country is this when the parliamentarians receive a salary which is ten or twelve times larger salary than mine, and I've been an actor for over thirty years?"

This particular performance emerges from a sketch which was performed last October, also at the Centre for Cultural Decontamination. Back then we wrote about that sketch here (*A Sketch as a Work of Art*, 17th October, 2011), and the audacity of the author's attitude was already very clear in it, however, today, now that the entire performance has seen the light of day, it is evident that, alongside the aforementioned Mjaku, the actress Anisa Ismaili and actors Adrian

Morina, Adrian Aziri and Ernest Malazogu, under the directorship of Blerta Neziraj, have devised an uncompromising aesthetic correlation to that uncompromising political attitude.