



# Osteuropäischer Partisanenfilm – Widerstand im Rückblick

Vorlesungsreihe zur Viennale Retrospektive 2019  
O partigiano! Pan-Europäischer Partisanenfilm

23.10.2019, 16:45–18:15 Uhr

Film museum, Augustinerstr. 1 (Albertina)

Jurij Meden (Österreichisches Filmmuseum)

## **Similarities and Differences of Pan-European Partisan Movements on Film – Programming the *O partigiano!* Retrospective at the Film Museum**

In the aftermath of World War II, several (especially newly formed) European states started reconstructing and reimagining their identities and recent histories through a vast production of films that celebrated and commemorated their guerrilla struggles against fascism. These films ranged in scope and ambition from intimate psychological dramas to overblown military spectacles, from elegiac remembrances to pure pulp fiction. Particularly in former socialist federations of Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, they performed a significant role identical to the one the American western played in constructing and whitewashing United States of America's sense of history. Similar to westerns in Hollywood, partisan films were for a long time the major defining genre of socialist film industry. Much like westerns, partisan films were proclaimed dead a long time ago: both genres were swept aside by contemporary approaches to historiography, which – at least seemingly – evolve our sense of history through deconstructing ideological simplifications of the past. Both genres produced and reinforced myths about the formation of a community, and both performed their ideological operations on the backdrop of a concrete "landscape in turmoil" that needs to be either "civilized" (the western) or liberated (partisan films). Moreover, in the late 60ies and early 70ies, both genres reinvented themselves and underwent a political revision that ended the "classical period", steering the western away from its racist, genocidal roots and slightly more towards liberalism, and complicating the partisan narrative by pointing out that not everything was so simple under the overbearing blood-red ideological umbrella. There is no – and there can't be any – single all-encompassing definition of partisan film as a genre, much like the actual armed resistance against fascism took many different shapes in various locations and under various regimes of occupation and levels of oppression. It is also apparent that contrary to popular belief Eastern Europe was not the sole producer of partisan films, albeit it remains by far the most prolific. Italy and France produced some of the finest examples of partisan cinema (some of which we have been considering as neo-realist masterpieces alone), and even though the armed populace did not call themselves "partisans", countries like Denmark or Norway celebrated the same stories of armed grassroots resistance.