

Haim Buzaglo: Time of the Cherries (The Cherry Season)

In the previous film, Zohar's *Every Bastard a King*, war was pictured like an absurd myth, series of unfortunate events that resulted in people dying for no proper reason, the idea of a „hero“ was being strongly questioned. Here in this film we go even further, even though probably in a slightly different direction – but still coming from the starting point of war being very absurd and not heroic at all.

Soldiers in *Time of Cherries* are anything but eager to fight or even die for the cause that is actually not very clear, let alone noble. Training seems like a high school gym class to them, they are joking around like a bunch of teenage boys. Even later, when people start dying (and again, like in the previous film, just like that) it is not getting any more realistic. War is becoming a surrealistic spectacle, a grotesque event, which is pictured at its very best in the scene of the night performance. At least in my opinion, that very scene captures the spirit of the whole movie, that is supported by other motives and storytelling tools on the way. Presence of the group joker, something like a modern Pierrot, a sad clown, is a sort of a given example of that.

Let's take a look at the protagonist of the film, Mickey. He is definitely not a hero. Charming and flirting, yet very caring „la dolce vita“ kind of man, working in advertisement business, making people believe that what they are offering them is what they actually need – like the war. For the new campaign they are choosing real people to advertise cigarettes – to persuade the public that this „toxic fun“ is something they should get desperate for. Because everybody can become a protagonist, or a hero, if we put it in other words. Mickey is also becoming a hero – of a documentary that should picture how the war is seen through the experience of an individual. A little show-off that he is, it looks more like a light reality show than a serious, life-altering experience. At least in the beginning. Even the film crew seems like they were shooting another routine task, being quite relaxed and easy about it.

Yet again we see a journalist, a female one this time, which gives us another perspective. Chance for a romantic plot is obvious, but there is something more in that. She (and her crew, of course) is present, she is there with the soldiers. Even though at first she is distant from the events, focused more on the video-recorded results than the actual presence of that very situations happening around her in real time. Easy atmosphere of „nothing's really going on“ is breaking little by little, and it is also this woman's reaction that makes us realise this actually IS happening. How would a male journalist react in her place? Again, in an „expected“- heroic way? She has been acting very bravely the whole time, but all of a sudden she bursts into tears and wants to go back. The thin line between just an observing role and an actual moral involvement that is always present in the work of a journalist is suddenly crossed.

Mickey is changing too, they all are. Death is almost inevitable. Balancing above the open grave then falling inside (again, in a good humour of his initial „unbearable lightness of being“ attitude), crossing the minefield carrying a helmet full of cherries, destroying a car that is a possible booby trap, changing places with a friend that gets killed, a bomb placed in a doves' nest, all of that are hints for that. Then the scene of the car crossing the bridge in background of the last words from the report is a moment when everybody knows – a clear sign both in storytelling and in cinematic language.

What strikes me the most is the lightness that comes from that all – what I mean is a natural human need to live, to feel good, to have nice time, to love, to drink, that is being shuttered by such an unnatural thing as fighting and killing.