

BOGUMIŁA FIOLEK-LUBCZYŃSKA

(University of Lodz, Poland)

ORCID: 0000-0001-9180-7237 

Hyperbole as a Rhetorical Strategy in a Documentary Film *Defilada (The Parade)* by Andrzej Fidyk¹

Abstract

The aim of this article is an attempt to analyse the world-famous documentary film entitled *The Parade* (Polish title *Defilada*). The film has a unique narrative structure, as it belongs to the performing arts, and makes use of hyperbole which represents one of rhetorical tropes. Thus, the narration of the film is characterised by a specific rhetorical order which follows the rules of composing a text about art, culture and other phenomena. The result is often art itself. At the level of creative intention, Andrzej Fidyk's films constitute spectacles which have to be appealing enough to attract the attention of a contemporary viewer. Thus, spectacularity of this film is not only a feature directly related to audiovisual art. It constitutes an aesthetic value as well, and the spectacle appears as a parade in honour of the country's leader. Research methods include two types of text analysis, i.e. the rhetorical analysis, and the analysis based on film studies. The neo-rhetorical (i.e., argumentative) approach to the cinematographic text is visible in studying *The Parade* as a documentary which was created under conditions of full control over the director, together with lack of access to information. Perversity is a deliberate argumentative strategy, as Fidyk uses it in order to explain to the viewers the reality of the visited country.

Keywords: Andrzej Fidyk, documentary film, hyperbole, North Korea, totalitarianism

¹ Translated from Polish by Joanna Retman-Wieczór, proofread by Mikołaj Rychło and Penny Shefton.



The aim of this article is to conduct a qualitative analysis of the world-famous documentary film, which has not been a subject of an in-depth analytical description yet. The film distinguishes itself by a unique narrative structure, which has been described by Małgorzata Pietrzak. In her opinion, the performing arts such as drama and film have a specific narration, which in turn can introduce a specific **rhetorical order**.² Such an order results from the use of composition rules regarding creation of a text concerned with art, culture and other phenomena, which is often art itself. The rhetorical order of the documentary film *Defilada (The Parade)* by Andrzej Fidyk is built on a hyperbole. At the level of creative intention, Fidyk's films constitute a spectacle which manages to attract the elusive attention of contemporary spectators. This assumption makes the director create all of his works in such a way that they make a huge impression on the viewer. Fidyk has admitted that:

A documentary has a great power (which distinguishes it from a fiction film) that appeals to viewers' emotions. And I, fully consciously, deliberately, enjoy making use of it, that is, playing on viewers' emotions. (...) emotions have always been important to me, I have always wanted to make my films some kind of a spectacle.³

Fidyk multiplies spectacular appeal of his films by frequently introducing extracts of other spectacles. As an example, two films about North Korea can be mentioned: *The Parade* (1989) and *Yodok Stories* (2008). *The Parade* is a contradictory film, as its production was reliant on the authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It was created because during the proceedings of the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the DPRK Fidyk filmed only what Korean 'guardians' consented to. As a result, he created a picture which in the eyes of North Korean propaganda praised Kim Il-sung's rule. For the rest of the world, however, it has been a grotesque revealing pretentiousness of the eponymous parade and other pageants glorifying the Leader. *Yodok Stories* is a totally different kind of a documentary film. It constitutes a warning to the world and shows what the development of dictatorship in a politically, socially and culturally isolated country may lead to. The director could not directly film the North Korean concentration camp so he made use of interviews with former prisoners who managed to escape. *Yodok Stories* is a film in which accounts of former prisoners of Yodok concentration camp are presented partly directly and partly through filmed extracts of a musical. The musical was created to tell the world about the hell of North Korean labour camps and about the country which is not ready for a transition. Consecutive party leaders exercise dictatorial power and separate the country from the rest of the world by violence. They demand almost godlike reverence. This is why Fidyk did not stop at *The Parade*, and in order to provide a wider picture of the divided in half Korean country and nation,

² Małgorzata Pietrzak, *Retoryka. Narzędzie w twórczej komunikacji. Teatr i film*, Warszawa 2012, p. 175.

³ Wojciech Michera, 'Sztuka opowiadania', *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 23 (1998), p. 116.

he made *Yodok Stories*. It was shot in South Korea, as it was the only place where a musical about North Korean concentration camps could be made. The musical staged in Seoul did not achieve expected success. In *Yodok stories*, the narrator informs that South Koreans “do not know” or “do not want to know” what happens north of their land, behind high barbed wire fences.

Award-winning *Defilada* was shot in totalitarian Korea.⁴ Obligatory „guardians” of the Polish film crew precisely planned their itinerary which they had to follow when moving across the country. They also decided what could be filmed. Thus, out of necessity, the crew had to work under the directorship of bossy officials. Andrzej Fidyk has highlighted on numerous occasions that even the camera angle was checked by Korean ‘guardians’. If, for example, the camera operator placed the camera so that it captured the world from a worm’s eye view, a Korean would come and squat next to it, in order to check what the camera covered at a given moment. While the camera is filming the monumental memorial of the Great Leader Kim Il-sung, the first guide of the Polish delegation explains, how the director should film the figure of the Leader. As a result, the shot is marked by a contrast between the huge monument and a small figure of a man. At the same time, the translation of the Korean guide’s⁵ words about the “Beloved and Respected Comrade Kim Il-sung” is heard:

Our Beloved Leader says that art has to be subservient to politics. A film director has to be an ideological leader of the film crew, he has to be responsible for ideological morality of all co-workers. Under capitalism, a director is only a paid agent who has to be at capitalists’ beck and call. Under socialism, a director is an independent artist accountable only to the party.

The opening scene of *The Parade*, which is followed by the proper opening credits, is a coverage of the first historical visit of the Leader, who “arrived at this place and initiated the construction of the film studio”. The place is marked by a memorial. The important part of this opening is the Korean’s words describing the great love of the Great Leader for filmmakers. The verbal description of the statue of Kim Il-sung, which is shown from the worm’s eye view, right from the beginning sheds light on the way the North Koreans worship the Leader. The filming of the monument is accompanied by the words characterizing Kim Il-sung, entitled *The Poem*.

He, who bears the fate of our nation on his shoulders, the winner of the holy anti-Japanese revolution brought into this land the holy spring of national revival. The great Sun of our Nation, Comrade Kim Il-sung.

⁴ ‘Andrzej Fidyk’, Viewed 12 January 2022, <www.filmpolski.pl>.

⁵ In the closing credits the author of the film explains that all of the translations which appeared in the film had been taken from the books and the press. They concern all spheres of life in North Korea described by the propaganda, thus it was easy to find passages referring to the museum, the monument, nursery school, etc.

If the eastern and the western sea turned into ink, and the largest tree in Korea turned into a pen, it would still not be enough to describe the magnitude of love which our Great Leader bestows on our filmmakers. Thanks to countless invaluable guidelines given by the Great Leader and the Dear Leader, our films reached a very high ideological level.



Figure 1. The monumental statues of the Great Leader Kim Il-sung and his son.

Source: licence Fotolia.pl

The visualization of the monument, together with the guide's description, creates a hyperbolic description of the glory which the nation bestows on the Korean leader. For the Great Leader is not a human, but one of the Olympic gods. In *The Parade*, hyperbole accompanies the "description" of the country governed by the dictator.⁶ Visualization together with the audio creates an image marked by exaggeration.

At this point, it is worth reminding of a specific variation of anthropology which refers to worshipping people elevated to the position of gods. One example of anthropolatry was monarch cult in antiquity (e.g., of Roman emperors). However, in North Korea in the 20th and 21st century, anthropolatry refers to the Leader, whose "divinity" is indisputable. Anthropolatry is a metaphor, since it projects divine features onto a human. It is a rhetorical figure, which extends the significance of Kim Il-sung's divinity onto the whole creation.

⁶ Hyperbole is the main creative method employed in *Defilada*. Hyperbolizing accompanies Korean propaganda in the all spheres of life. At this point, I would like to refer to an interesting comment made by Guy Debord, who claimed that hyperbolizing is typical of the society and culture of the spectacle. After all, the cognitive apparatus of contemporary people, including contemporary viewers, works quicker and more effectively in absorbing exaggerated and reinforced information. The source of the spectacularity in media lies also in hyperbolizing of topics and problems. It applies to the formal attractiveness of contemporary media genres as well. Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*, Paris 2019.

Hyperbole together with anthropolatry, presented by means of words and pictures, is the main rhetorical strategy employed in *The Parade*, thanks to which the director constructed a universal work. Worshipping the Great Leader, to whom divinity and holiness are ascribed, and who fought in defence of the country and the nation in the “holy anti-Japanese revolution”, is something perfectly natural and understandable. Nevertheless, a viewer from another country, whose political system does not indoctrinate all citizens equally and allows them to think critically about political rituals, may feel the absurdity and ridiculousness of observed situations. Fidyk’s film successfully falls into the communicative system between the addresser and the addressee. Communicative efficiency of *The Parade* proved successful already during the Kraków Film Festival in 1989. At the beginning of the film, the viewers responded to the presented scenes with laughter.⁷ Among the majority of the audience, the way of worshipping the Great Leader met with disbelief. The intensity of laughter weakened before the end of the film, when the worldly part of the audience began to realize the presented truth.⁸ Ridiculousness gave way to embarrassment and fear. The immediate trigger of viewers’ reactions was exaggerated behaviours of Koreans (hyperbole) of various ages and professions, and types of objects presented in the documentary film (e.g., monuments, poems in honour of the Leader written on the rocks, songs glorifying Kim Il-sung, etc.). The film was edited in such a way to make the audience feel the accumulation of the mentioned objects which leads to a sense of absurdity of the presented situation. A case in point is celebrations of Kim Il-sung’s 70th birthday and construction of the Tower of the Juche Idea, that is a philosophy created by the Leader himself. The camera shows a tall, concrete tower which seems ordinary until the guide starts talking about it.

This is the Tower of the Juche Idea. Juche is a philosophy created by the Great Leader Kim Il-sung. He made it by creatively developing Marxism and Leninism. The Juche Tower is a monument built on the occasion of the Great Leader’s 70th birthday in order to commemorate his difficult lifepath and his revolutionary struggle. It is the greatest monument in the world. The tower is 170 meters tall and at its top there is a flame, which weighs 45 tonnes. The flame shines even at night, as it is connected to the electricity grid. The construction of the monument was our Beloved Leader’s initiative and it was realized according to his wonderful project. Since the monument was built on the occasion of our Great Leader’s 70th birthday, it consists of 70 enormous granite blocks. Because our Great Leader on the day of his 70th birthday had lived for 25,550 days, the outer walls consist of 25,550 small granite elements. On this plate, at the base of the tower, are written mottos taken from a poem commemorating

⁷ The information comes from an interview with A. Fidyk conducted by B. Fiolek-Lubczyńska – Warsaw 2013.

⁸ School students and students of philological departments still respond to Fidyk’s film with disbelief. The less students know about totalitarian systems, the stronger their reactions are.

the Leader's revolutionary contribution. The plate is 15 meters wide and 4 meters high because our Great Leader was born in 1912. On the occasion of the Great Leader's 70th birthday, the monument is adorned with 70 flowers, 35 of which are magnolias, which are the Great Leader's favourite flowers, and the rest are *Kimilsungia*, which are flowers named after Kim Il-sung.



Figure 2. The monument dedicated to Kim Il-sung on his 70th birthday.
Source: licence Fotolia.pl

The Great Leader is beloved, adored, respected but also creative, as he can design a wonderful structure by himself. He is wise, righteous and caring. He developed his own philosophy, he writes numerous books, he loves children (paintings and book illustrations picture the Great Leader accompanied by a bunch of smiling children) as well as adults. One of the guides of the Polish crew says to the camera that “thanks to the love (of our Great Leader) we can work without a single inconvenience. Honestly, if I were to convert everything I get into money, I would have to pay for it a mountain of gold in capitalism. Thanks to the fact that so much love can fit in one chest of our Great Leader, we can all live trouble-free, just like children. That is why everyone who works here considers our Leader the Father of the Nation. Thanks to him, our life flows like a song. We are happy”.⁹ Kim Il-sung is also brave and appreciated by other heads of state, such

⁹ The Koreans who work in the capital city are in a good financial situation, as compared to the inhabitants of other areas of North Korea. It is a paradox but the standard of living beyond the capital city and upcountry areas is terribly low. The level of development of North Korea is visible on satellite maps. While looking at the map, one can notice that the only point in North Korea illuminated at night is the capital city. The protagonists of *Yodok Stories* (dir. A. Fidyk) clearly state that large areas of the country are concentration camps and villages, in which people live in poverty.

as presidents of Russia and the USA. He is friends with presidents of other countries, who send him presents, which are kept in the showcases in the International Friendship Exhibition. The camera shows presents, such as a car, a railway engine, huge elephant tusks and stops for a while at a gift from Bolesław Bierut. It is a truly Polish touch in the film. This friendship was important because the affection shared by the communist countries led to the invitation of the Polish delegation to Pyongyang.

The film presents a model of propaganda which begins at early school age. In one shot the camera records the preschoolers who learn about “the childhood of the Beloved Leader”. This scene is preceded by the presentation of a teacher who, while standing on a stage of a little theatre for children, theatrically welcomes Polish guests. She delivers a speech learned by heart concerning the inauguration of the institution conducted by Kim Jong-il, the son of the Great Leader, who opened the preschool in person. In the Korean preschool, girls learn about the revolutionary family of the Beloved Leader.¹⁰ They learn how to adopt a special pose to appropriately present the members of the family. Students as well as preschoolers do not go back home after the classes, they visit their parents only during weekends. Such a strategy certainly makes it possible to form young minds more effectively. Children in German Hitler Youth Movement were raised in a similar manner in the spirit of believers in Hitler and Nazi Germany. In another school, the film shows the young people learning how to handle a gun. It is an extract from a film which presents the military potential of North Korea. The atmosphere is escalated by the scenes shot in the auditorium of the Korean parliament. The reception of Kim Il-sung takes place among people wearing uniforms with numerous orders. The parade itself is accompanied by the rhythmical music of a march and martial-like shouts. These are manifestations of military ritualization of the Korean nation. Perversely ironic is the scene on the state border between the two Koreas. The guide talks to the Polish crew about inconveniences of life in South Korea. He claims that people escape from the South to the North (even though it is widely known that the situation is reverse), that South Korea builds a wall in order to separate itself from North Korea and that even animals cannot cross this border. The guide also talks about poverty and terrible life conditions in South Korea. He claims that South Korean authorities do not allow the use of the Korean language. These are the absurdities which are presented in the film just before the scene picturing children assembling guns. The ending of the film is not grotesque but rather frightening. The scene takes place in the evening. The parade draws to an end and the parading people do not hold artificial flowers but torches. The camera shows the crowd of Koreans, who flow like a river of light. It resembles a dream, evokes a feeling of unreality. It seems to foreshadow long continuance of this state of consciousness among the North Koreans. The policy of worshipping the respected and “beloved” leader seems to have no end. And this is what happens. After the first Great Leader came another – Kim Jong-il, and after him another one will come.

¹⁰ Schools and halls of residence are not coeducational in North Korea.

The documentary reached also the indoctrinated part of the audience, as a North Korean delegation arrived at the Kraków Film Festival. Members of the delegation perceived Fidyk's film as an artistic appreciative anthem praising the Great Leader and the North Korean nation.

The Parade consists of sequences put together by means of horizontal montage. It was the director who decided on the type of montage, the way of combining the shots and the order of the scenes. Fidyk works at the production of his films from writing the script to montage. The net result is the text of *The Parade*, which consists of eighteen designedly chosen extracts of the recording brought from Korea. Quotes from the parade celebrating the foundation of North Korea and worshipping the man, to whom the title of the Father of the Nation is attributed, appear eight times and separate sequences presenting monuments, museums, works of literature and political works, places which are important for Kim Il-sung and the house in which the Great Leader was born. What happens, is an alternate combination of the parade "in honour of DPRK" and idolatrous praise "in honour" of the Leader. There are no individual characters in the film, except for those who present the figure and accomplishments of Kim Il-sung. Thus, the composition of the film focuses on the relations devoted to one person.

Mythologizing power in North Korea provides the answer to the question why Kim Il-sung, the beloved Leader, is appreciated by the whole North Korean nation. Features of the Great Leader, according to the national propagandists, are not acquired but inborn. He and his whole "royal" family deserve respect. In North Korean books concerning Kim Il-sung's biography one can read that the Great Leader possessed leadership qualities already in his childhood. He was a prodigy. At the age of eight, while playing with his friends, he would think how to lead a revolution and liberate his country from the oppression of inimical emperors. This fact is also emphasized during trips to Kim Il-sung's place of birth.

Fidyk recorded a guide of such a trip, who said:

As a child our Great Leader climbed this tree in order to catch a rainbow shining above the Teadong River. That was when his far-sighted thought was born about the revolution and deliverance of his country. (further about the family) This well was sometimes used by the revolutionary family of the respected and beloved comrade Kim Il-sung. (...) While playing on this rock in a shape of a warship, the Great Leader used to think about future banishment of Japanese imperialists and liberation. While jumping off these rocks with his friends as a child he sharpened his mind.

There is more of such absurdities in *The Parade*. Brian R. Myers describes the mythologization in *The Parade* in the following words:

(...) the North Korean cult derives Kim's from his embodiment of ethnic virtues: he is the most naïve, spontaneous, loving, and pure Korean –

the most Korean Korean – who ever lived. As one propagandist recently put it, Kim Il sung is “the symbol of the homeland”.¹¹

In this quotation, we can clearly see how communism refers to nationalism and racial purity and how fascism influences the North Korean ideology. In his book, Myers explains influences of Marxism and Leninism on the system of the country, which after 1945 was created by the Soviet and Chinese propaganda. He also explains that Kim Il-sung became his country's leader accidentally. Russia wanted to make North Korea a country similar to Poland and East Germany. However, Kim Il-sung backed out of recognizing the communist authorities of USSR. He gained power and became a ruler who was above other communist leaders. Interestingly, after the Soviets left the Korean Peninsula (1948), Kim started isolating his country and the propaganda, for example, forbade, staging of plays in Russian. The number of translations of the Great Leader's works into foreign languages was also reduced. North Korea began to isolate itself, despite the ideological influences of the Soviet Union and China. Myers, together with his South Korean students, studied history of North Korea and the biography of the Great Leader. The propaganda changed not only the history of Korea but also the Leader's biography. It is true that he was born in the capital city but most of the war and revolution he spent at the rear of the battlefield of the Soviet Union and he distinguished himself neither by political qualities, nor by his will to fight. He was not an educated, well-read person and he definitely was not able to write works concerning party ideology. One can read that Kim Il-sung was the least educated leader of the Communist Bloc. Since he could not measure up to the figure created by the propaganda in revolutionary qualities and in wisdom, he could at least live up to the image of a spontaneous and loving father of his nation. In all the paintings (there were hardly any photos, and if there were any, they were retouched so as to make all persons unrecognizable), Kim Il-sung is a warm, good, beloved, fatherly leader to all the people who surround him. He usually embraces the weakest citizens and children. In the book illustrations, the Great Leader smiles sincerely but does not get above himself, as he does not want to diminish the role of his subordinates. He is free from pride, as such an attitude would not be worthy of the respected and beloved comrade Kim Il-sung, who is full of love to his nation. The mythologized figure of the leader in the film is a man who loves his nation. It is a reference to the father figure.

In book illustrations, Kim Il-sung and his companions smile. The beloved Leader is never pictured as a thinking man. Naivety, purity, spontaneity, thoughtfulness – these are Kim Il-sung's features, and all that could hurt this image is marginalized and ignored. As Myers emphasized, “(...) true Korean spontaneity ends where an intellectual expression begins, Kim is never shown thinking”.¹² All of the features of the Great Leader create

¹¹ Brian R. Myers, *The Cleanest Race. How North Koreans See Themselves – And Why It Matters*, Brooklyn–New York 2010, pp. 78–79.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 79.

certain infantilism coming from the fact that the Leader – in a sense the parent leader¹³ – is not presented as a typical ruler. He has all of the features of a naïve, spontaneous and carefree child. This is the image of Kim in Korean media created for propaganda purposes. The nation – children, women, and men – have their ideological Father. Thus, it has to possess all features of infantility. Jadwiga Hučková wrote about the Korean nation: “an engulfed in spiritual infantilism mass of people takes part in the great parade. It forms colourful ornaments, it performs the same gestures while standing on the giant maquettes of work stations passing before the Leader”.¹⁴ North Koreans unthinkingly carry out orders given by the officials as if they learned the prepared propaganda formulae by heart to take part in this clinical theatre. This behaviour results from mythologizing of Kim Il-sung’s role and from crediting the Korean nation with features of the “pure race”, untainted by the imperialism. The film presents faces from the crowd, which resemble masks, as they lack any signs of emotions. This is their role in “the Great Theatre of the World”. Here, it is important to mention Balthasar’s vision of the divine theatre of the world.¹⁵ Kim Il-sung is worshipped in Korea like Light. In 1946 the propagators created a new image of the Korean Leader. They pictured him as the “Sun of the Nation, a beautiful new red star in the sky”. The Radiating with Light Marshal, both during his rule and after his death, was called “Son of the Sun, Sun of the Nation, Great Sun of the 20th Century, Red Sun of Pyongyang, Scarlet Sun Brightly Illuminating Asia, Africa and Latin America”. The rule of the Leader-Sun over the chosen nation resembles the theatre of God’s creation, in which God sacrifices his own son to redeem the mankind. This kind of ruling the chosen nation was – before the war – characteristic of Hitler and fascism. In Fidyk’s film, there is a scene which ends the “mystery of light” in the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the state’s founding, i.e. the march with torches. Similar rites,¹⁶ that is spectacles of light, were organized in honour of Hitler¹⁷ in Germany.

Sun of the Nation, which loves its country, is known for descending from the sky and visiting its believers to “supervise them on-the-spot”. Advice given by Kim Il-sung to numerous comrades was trivial and banal. Such advice was often published in newspapers and books. Stories about Kim Il-sung’s visits in various places told by guides showing the Polish film crew around the capital city and place of the Leader’s birth are a good example. A viewer learns on numerous occasions that the beloved Leader arrived and helped “on-the-spot”. For a European viewer it sounds ridiculous when, for example, waitresses boast that the Great Leader gave them “on-the-spot guidance” concerning the arrangement of spoons in the restaurant and tasty meals, and that in the hotel he shifted

¹³ Ibidem, p. 75.

¹⁴ Małgorzata Hendrykowska (ed.), *Historia polskiego filmu dokumentalnego (1896–1944)*, Poznań 2015, p. 448.

¹⁵ The conception introduced by Michał Legan, according to which God, by sending Jesus to Earth and letting him die on the cross realizes his vision of *Theatrum Mundi*.

¹⁶ Performances directed by Hitler in Nazi Germany were filmed by Leni Riefenstahl, who was known as “the most talented of her cult’s priestesses”.

¹⁷ Cf. Monika Milewska, *Bogowie u władzy. Od Aleksandra Wielkiego do Kim Dzong Ila. Antropologiczne studium mitów boskiego władcy*, Gdańsk 2012, pp. 283–284.

the bed away from the window “with his own fair hands” to prevent the cold air from blowing upon tourists’ heads. Myers writes that “the content of Kim’s guidance is not as important as the time and effort he takes to administer it”.¹⁸ One of the frequently mentioned events is giving an elderly woman a lift home. Beloved and respected Kim Il-sung stopped, got out of the business car and offered her help. Among propaganda pictures there is also one in which the Great Leader is shown on the front line as he smiles while talking to a young adjutant. The girl listens to his “on-the-spot guidance” in a thankful pose.

Driven to the point of absurd, the totalitarianism of Kim Il-sung’s leadership demanded from the society idolization of the Leader. Everything had to be subordinated to this expectation. The producers of the documentary about North Korea had no choice but to film what the Korean “helpers” wanted to show them. Moreover, they had to do it in such a manner so that the effect could be accepted by the local censorship.¹⁹ As a result, an extremely perverse documentary was created. It can be associated with a hagiographic work, in which the North Korean leader is worshipped in a godlike manner. This “hagiographic quality” of *The Parade* was addressed to the censors and the indoctrinated part of the Korean society. For a European viewer,²⁰ this film carries a totally different meaning: it is a grotesque, and rhetorically, the narration is built upon a hyperbole. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms (Słownik terminów literackich)* emphasizes the provocative attitude of a grotesque towards the presented reality, together with the absurdity resulting from the “lack of a consistent system of rules governing the diegetic world”, “a mixture of elements of comedy and tragedy” as well as satire and aestheticism.²¹ It is a specific kind of aestheticism. Wolfgang Iser termed it as aestheticization towards a superficial

¹⁸ Myers, *The Cleanest Race*, p. 85.

¹⁹ “We had two guardians. One of them translated into Russian while the other pretended that he did not know any language but it quickly turned out that he was perfectly able to understand Polish. Initially, they were highly vigilant. They thought we would try to show some hidden agenda. (...) But later they were happy that we were the most disciplined crew in the history”. ‘Pjongjang czy Phenian – która nazwa stolicy Korei Północnej jest poprawna?’ Viewed 10 April 2020, <http://www.mowimyjak.pl/newsy/fakty/pjongjang-czy-phenian-ktora-nazwa-stolicy-korei-pn-jest-poprawna,22_54644.html>.

²⁰ “It was a perfect moment for it. Communism was breaking down, the Berlin wall was falling, and at this time in these countries a film was screened which showed the totalitarian system in the purest form. *Defilada* won, for example, a festival in Leipzig in East Germany. It was an old communist festival. East Germany was dying but the authorities still tried to defend themselves with propaganda claiming that shortages in shops were caused by Poles. When I was thanking for the Golden Dove – the main award – I expressed a protest against blaming Poles for the lack of shoes in shops. The audience decrypted the film construction perfectly. During the first half, there is a lot of laughter, as this propaganda works against itself. But as the film draws to an end, even though the same funny things are shown on the screen, there is less and less laughter. People start to understand how terrible truth must be hidden between the lines. Not all of them, naturally. A boy from West Germany asked at one of the meetings: <If the system is so bad, why won’t they change it?>”. ‘Pjongjang czy Phenian – która nazwa stolicy Korei Północnej jest poprawna?’

²¹ Janusz Sławiński (ed.), *Słownik terminów literackich*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź 2008, p. 188.

beauty.²² This term adequately captures the conception of presenting the reality depicted in Fidyk's film, as this kind of artificially stylized beauty is what the Korean guides showed to the crew. However, the presentation of the authentic parade organized on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of foundation of the DPRK is slightly different. This parade appeals to the spectacular character deeply rooted in tradition of Far East. In its Korean counterpart, the artificiality characteristic of surface aestheticization is absent. It is a beautiful, clearly rhythimized musical performance including interesting choreographies. Participants of the stadium show which graced the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the DPRK wear wonderful colourful costumes. Fidyk surrendered to the beauty of this spectacle and called it "the best directed spectacle of the world".²³

The director filmed in North Korea everything that his camera could grasp. He arrived in a country which is not known to the people from the outside. When he was travelling to Pyongyang – the capital city of North Korea – the director knew very little about this country. In an interview, he said:

In 1988 we were still an official friend of North Korea. There was even an official agreement concerning cooperation of TVP (Polish Public Television) with the North Korean television. Friends told me: go there, this country suits your sensitivity. At the time the Koreans were preparing for the 40th anniversary of their country so we went. Before the journey I received propagandist materials from the embassy. I looked through them and thought that maybe in Korea the propaganda is effective but outside the country it is perceived totally differently. If we film it – we'll get Orwell.²⁴

The film outgrew the producers' expectations, received numerous awards, both in Poland and abroad, and became an identification mark of the Polish director. Thanks to *The Parade*, the world heard about the North Korean reality. Fidyk would return to this country after many years in order to make a documentary about the camp in Yodok, since *The Parade* does not show what really happens in North Korea. In the film we observe only the superficiality of the Korean reality created "for export".

²² Wolfgang Welsch, *Estetyka poza estetyką. O nową postać estetyki*, Katarzyna Gucałska (trans.), Krystyna Wilkoszewska (ed.), Kraków 2005.

²³ The words are taken from the introduction to the film *Yodok Stories*.

²⁴ An interview with a journalist Witold Szablowski, 'Andrzej Fidyk, wybitny polski dokumentalista, reżyser słynnej „Defilady” dokumentującej obchody 40-lecia proklamowania KRLD'. The interview with Andrzej Fidyk was published in "Duży Format" of *Gazeta Wyborcza* on August 27, 2009.

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