

## Outline

Thesis: The movie *The Battle of Algiers* is historical and propaganda. This film shows the events of the war in Algeria, which are depicted quite real. This research is aimed to find out if the thesis statement is right. This movie is historically based and biased, because it shows the point of view of only one party. Moreover, this is propaganda, because it shows the war and its consequences. All these controversies are to be considered during this research.

I. Description of the movie. Is the movie historically based? We will research every date, events, and individual depicted in the movie to determine if the movie accurately depicts historical events and individuals.

1. The historical basis of the movie.
2. The events in the movie.
3. Individuals in the movie.

II. Analysis of the movie. Exposition, Flashback, Characters, Imagery, Rising, Action, Climax, Falling, Action and Resolution – all these parts of the movie should be analyzed.

1. The start of the movie.
2. Characters of the movie.
3. Climax of the movie.
4. Colonialism, propaganda, torture, independence, urban warfare, liberation in *The Battle of Algiers*.

III. Argument in defense of thesis.

1. It is historic movie.
2. It is propaganda.

What do we know about the movie *The Battle of Algiers*? This is the film about the events of the Algerian fight for independence between 1954 and 1960 years, which are depicted through the memories of the main character, who is now in prison. This movie is based on the memories of Saadi Yasef, who was one of the leaders of National Liberation Front (NLF). This movie was directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. It was awarded the highest prize of the Venice Film Festival, which is called the *St. Mark Golden Lion*. Its release on the screens in 1966 became one of the loudest

cinema scandals of the decade. The theme of the film is the war, which is shown from the both sides. French Foreign Legion before this was withdrawn from Vietnam after being defeated there and now its fighters have something to prove. Meanwhile, Algerians seek independence. Collision of these forces causes an explosion. The French used tortures against the revelers, while Algerians explode bombs in the stores. War is shown as a disgusting thing to spot anyone who participates in it.[1]

When watching the film of this famous Italian director Gillo Pontecorvo, sometimes you are struck by the level of cinematic skill and at the same time puzzled: is it just a play? After all, the event featured in the film is so authentic and realistic that there is an idea, though the entire movie from accidentally found documentary chronicle of the Algerian events later assembled and voiced. In addition, the veracity of events can not be doubted, as the film is based on a memoir of Saadi Yasef, who was one of the leaders of the National Liberation Front, and he eventually even played himself. The plot the movie is quite simple. Movie begins from the end. We see Ali La Pointe and his friends in arms, caught in a trap. He is waiting for either the arrest or death. There is a close-up full of fire and hate in Ali's eyes and we begin to observe his history from the beginning.

In the process of watching the movie it is very difficult to form your personal attitude and unable to take someone's position. The film covers events from different perspectives. So we see a scene beating an innocent Algerian boy at the stadium after the explosion and in the instant killing of innocent French people on the streets. People are swallowed up by this war. They forgot what they are fighting. They possess the desire to take revenge and bloodlust. This vicious circle is closed and evil begets more evil.

The director brilliantly reflects the all-consuming fear that reigns in the city. French officers have been attacked; the Algerians do not feel safe even under the roofs of their homes. Ali was born in Kasbah, which is the traditional Muslim part of Algeria.[2] A young laborer and a boxer, being a juvenile delinquent, faces the participants of the underground organization against French colonialism, the National Liberation Front. He is being checked, in fact, unarmed he fights against the police bullets, but he gets out of scrapes dashing affair deserving trust. Next part is shown from his eyes, partly through the eyes of the omnipresent and indifferent cameraman, which shows daily news of the war to defeat. Impressive diary of observations of the Civil War: approximately alternate titles of the time are changed, as the dead bodies. The attack on police station, automatic guns on street patrol, shooting on the bridge, people in uniform, men in civilian clothes, people sprawled on the ground and people running with guns – this is a state of emergency in the Muslim Casbah, city surrounded by military police, the woman goes indignantly turning hands, which she stretches when the police tries to search her, but after a few minutes from the gun she kept under the hijab another officer will be killed. Handguns in urns, in trays of fruit are everywhere, where the reveler goes. Periodically, the authorities seize the leaders of the national movement. But the system is built so that there is no top of the movement. It's a chain, each link of which knows only the previous and subsequent. The chain has formed a network, and its links meet and they do not show this connections. Urban warfare means the bombs blast in the city, disfigured corpses litter on the sidewalks in front of pretty tiny cafe. The van with the Arabs rush on the evening Avenue, pouring machine gun fire to the crowded sidewalks. This is revenge for the torture in prisons.[3] The voice of Colonel Mathieu, who is paratrooper, reporting directly to General Jacques Massu, who was given special powers by the Prime Minister Guy Mollet, sounds. Mathieu says: “Should we remain in Algeria? If you answer “yes”, then you must accept all the necessary consequences.”

Illiterate Arab, who is almost a beggar, Ali poured into the National Liberation Front of French Algeria, and he is gradually becoming one of the rebel leaders.

In the film, there is no romanticizing of heroes: both sides (as insurgents Arabs, and the military-French) are shown the extremely cold and unbiased. Leaders of NLF full of their personal ideals and lofty goals, in fact, do not shun the most vile and despicable ways of fighting: killing of the policemen to seize their weapons; Muslim women who have bombs in their handbags (and then they blow themselves up in the most crowded places); children who do not read French, but already know how to handle guns. In a nutshell, it was the real terror.

French troops, lead by Colonel Mathieu, must execute the order and destroy the criminal organization. Quickly realizing that the old methods of counter terrorism were useless, the colonel goes to the most brutal elimination of terrorists. The tortures of the caught criminals without a trial of their cases (the abusive interrogation, for example, is not different from tortures shown in *Rome, the Open City* directed by Rossellini) and the explosions of people, who had refused to surrender, is quite a common thing. But the colonel is not an animal and not a sadist, but the exacerbated situation requires the intervention of the cruel methods (or the underground organization can not be beheaded). In a dialogue with journalists he clearly explains: "Regarding to our methods, you can judge our results." In conclusion of the film the French decapitating the National Liberation Front of Algeria did not achieve complete success. People still continue to struggle. In 1962, Algeria receives freedom. The director focuses not on any main character; he tries to show the mood and the tragedy of people in general. And he makes it indeed possible.

Despite the unilateral pathos of a left parties, Pontecorvo`s film not only calls on rebel lawlessness and atrocities of the French command. This reconstruction of the logic of civil war is a minimal in form and maximal in event saturation. Of course, there is the one who started the first, in this championship and mixed trauma of white Europeans. But those, who yearn for freedom for their homeland, has already divided the government portfolios and do not hide what they think primarily about themselves and their security. They need to keep a peaceful life. Heroism is for teens, enthusiastic singles who feel themselves members of a powerful team. The concept of "Divide et impora" no one has yet banned, when it goes about every freedom. In the best tradition of neorealism the attraction of the director is on the side of ordinary people of Algeria, dancing in front of the cordon with the banned flags in their hands.[4]

The main characters are Ali La Pointe, the guy, who is in the start of the film, El-hadi Jafar, NLF military commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Mathieu, French paratrooper, Petit Omar, a NLF messenger, Larbi Ben M'hidi, top opposition leader, Djamila, Zohra, and Hassiba, women of NLF, who affect attacks. All of them play their personal roles. The NLF activists are counteracting the French police, which is represented by the Colonel Mathieu. The reality and fiction are intertwining. The military commander El-hadi Jafar is fictional, the image was taken from Saadi Yasef. Colonel Mathieu is a collective image of French officers, especially Jacques Massu. The dates actually coincide almost everywhere in the movie with the dates of the real war. The Battle of Algiers itself took place in 1957 on the initiative of NLF.[5] The movie starts from the point, when Algerian guy tells to Mathieu who is Ali La Pointe and where to find him, it is 1957. They catch Ali with three other activists. There is a flashback used in the movie, and Ali starts to tell his story, back in 1954. The exposition of the story is in the explanation of the conflict in Algeria. Imagery of the story is real to life, cruel and straight. The rising is when the attacks are becoming more frequent and climax is when the growing military terror and the failure of the general strike, announced by NLF, leads to hard consequences and the rebellion is suppressed in 1957, which is falling of the scene. And the

action resolution is with the image of not pacified Algerians, but with the beginning, a few years later, of mass demonstrations and renewed rebellion, which eventually forced France to sign the Evian Agreement, March 19, 1962, and to cede power to NLF.

To defend the thesis, I should say that the movie is historical, because it is based on the real facts, and it is also propaganda of peace through the prism of war. Some may say that here there is the resemblance with the Nazis. It is an absurd to hold here the analogy with Nazism. Colonel is a former member of the French Resistance, he fought against Nazism. He is a patriot and soldier of his country. He simply protects the part of France, Algeria, and, accordingly, all French citizens in Algeria as a whole. Are the blasting bombs really humane?

Nevertheless, marveling at the cruelty of people to each other, we are recalling the genocide by Nazi Germany with respect to many peoples (Slavs, Jews, Gypsies), and the artificial division of the Arab and the "prosperous" regions of Algeria, which is essentially a modern ghetto. For the French people Algeria was only a colony (although legally it was considered as a part of the Fourth Republic), and the Algerians as people of the third kind, which must be satisfied by the fact that they belong to the great French. Any country in the world does not like to lose possession, which belongs to it historically, logically defending its geopolitical interests (interestingly, that only in 1999 the National Assembly of the French Republic recognized the events in Algeria as a war, while all previously believed that it was only the "restoration of public order"). But people are facing the questions how to be and what to do when the interests of the people confront and it leads to the bloodshed. This moral is of the kind, which people have not yet learned and hardly ever learn.[6]

The end of the 50s of the twentieth century was marked by a struggle for the liberation of Algeria on the French doctrine. Monstrous, bloody drama, played out on the African continent has become a topic for a very pretentious creation of Gillo Pontecorvo.

I am sure that Pontecorvo immediately puts the main task for his team's desire to show all without undue indulgence in one or the other way, to look into the very depths of origin of the revolution, to understand and to open to the viewer the real life of Arab areas, shocks experienced by a person upside down representation, understanding of life. The director shows a truly terrible things perpetrated by terrorists and the French police.[7]

The mutual antipathy of Arabs and the French Algerian is disclosed in the course of the film in the darkest tones: if the Arabs built for themselves the image of the Frenchman as the last villain, sinking the country into the dirt and corruption, ignorance and poverty, believe that in the eyes of the other world, they are the third-rate people, than have their own truth, then look at the episodes with the old man in the French Quarter and the boy on the racetrack, the French are more than confident in their beautiful and peaceful ideals, they see the occupation of a great favor by the French people - all of Algerians should be grateful for the opportunity to live with the sounds of the Marseillaise. And what terrible consequences of such views in an atmosphere of revolution are inevitable, and even if it is salvation for the people, then how much they have to do in their future... It's hard to start a revolution, even more difficult to continue it, and most difficult is to win it. And only when we win and the real difficulties begin...

The director does not try to divide the movie into good and evil, though he is watching from the sidelines and shows us what he saw. As a result I have not had the clear sympathy nor to the rebels nor overwhelming. The film has not the selected main characters: very vague, generalized images of fanatical radicals and their leaders to counter them with a glorious French army's commander Colonel, voiceover that accompanies us throughout the show as a military chronicle. In those turbulent years the director had a huge expanse of choice for Independence wars in the world and I'm sure that Pontecorvo's structured world would fit to any of them.

My personal point of view is that this movie is really propaganda and historical film. The background for the increasingly growing tension, the unfolding struggle, daring step of Algerian radicals, in response to which it was quite logical to restrict the freedom of life and existence of the steps by the French administration, is a terrific soundtrack that permeates the heart of classical Ennio Morricone`s sketches, which worth the best western detective dynamic track tapes, then my favorite army skillful drumming, and most importantly is how correctly every time and place the music lies on what is happening. It is a great merit of the sound makers.

The film will be relevant until in the dictionaries of modern languages there will disappear the concepts such as poverty and injustice, violence and terror, occupation and extremism.

Unfortunately the list ends not in a single page. And I really hope that there will come a time when all of *the Battle of Algiers* will be nothing more than a demonstration of our unfortunate past and the tremendous creative talent of the creators.

## Glossary of key terms

Battle of Algiers is the military operation organized by National Liberation Front in 1957 against French colonialism.

National Liberation Front is social political party in Algeria, which was fighting against French colonialism in Algeria from 1954 till 1962. NLF received power in 1962.

Colonialism “is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another.”[8]

Propaganda “is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.”[9] Torture is “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him, or a third person, information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in, or incidental to, lawful sanctions.”[10]

Independence is the condition of the country, when it has self-government and sovereignty.

Urban warfare “is combat conducted in urban areas such as towns and cities. Urban combat is very different from combat in the open at both the operational and tactical level.”[11]

Liberation is the freeing of some place from tyranny.

Evian Agreement is the agreement between Algeria and France, signed in March 19, 1962, giving the powers to NLF.

## Appendix

Why the director decided to create this movie? What he want to accomplish with this movie? This movie shows us the horrors of war. The director Gillo Pontecorvo made this film for the spectators`

feelings of injustice, struggle for motherland and belief in the better future, stepping through the dead bodies of civil people, who suffer the hard times of war and died because of this injustice.

For eight years the French army and its armed assistants killed nearly a million of Algerians. In Paris the government socialists under the leadership of Guy Mollet held a *Law on Special Powers Act*, giving the army a free hand in Algeria. Assassination of political opponents, torture and rape have become commonplace. As later boasted one of the French generals: "We are allowed to do whatever we deem necessary." [12]

Tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children were tortured, and only in Algeria more than 3000 arrested by French troops were missing. The French campaign appeasement include the expulsion of the homes of two million Algerians, for the most part in the concentration camps behind barbed wire, and the destruction of more than eight thousand villages.

In this conflict, attended by more than two million French soldiers, including the ruling president Jacques Chirac and Jean-Marie Le Pen, head of the racist National Front, Le Pen was accused of active involvement in the torture of prisoners at the infamous Villa Cecina in Algiers in 1957. [13] That's why the director chose this war for depicting, because this was really horrible fight.

Pontecorvo is ruthlessly honest in the depiction of NLF attacks against French citizens of Algeria, but, nevertheless, rejects any tries to establish a political or moral equivalence between the bloody terror of resistance and the French army.

The Battle of Algiers shows that it was for the inevitable consequences. The scenes of torture of prisoners by the blowtorch, electricity, and semi-flush were cut in Britain and the U.S. during the first screening of the film. The new version, however, includes these chilling pictures.

The film uses innovative for that period feature film technique, and the first inhabitants of North Africa are portrayed seriously, not as ridiculous or suspicious types, as in previous European and American films. His creation of pseudo documentary, with narration in the spirit of newsreels, using 16-millimeter cameras, and official military messages of NLF and the French army, were extremely innovative and have made a terrific film.

The spectators were taken to the narrow streets of the impoverished Casbah, with accurate reproduction of political repressions and racist violence, which ultimately led to the rebellion. Mass demonstrations involving hundreds in the last part of the film amazes and their impact is impossible to repeat any computer methods. The dramatic realism of the film is so convincing that the authors had to explain in the opening credits that the film did not use any real footage of news.

It is remarkable that the film was shot on 800 000 dollars and only with the participation of nine qualified technicians, including the operator Marcello Gatti. Jean Martin (Colonel Mathieu) included in the blacklist of French theater in the 50s for supporting the Algerian resistance, was the only professional actor. Others were found in Algiers.