Armenia, 2006

A Story of People In War and Peace

by Vardan Hovhannisyan

In A Story of People in War and Peace, the tension between self-defence and obligation towards one s motherland is admirably shown. The director, Vardan Hovhannisyan, was a soldier and a journalist. The war happened in Armenia in 1994, against Azerbaijan. Here the director mixes war sequences and contemporary scenes, showing on one hand the reality of war, and on the other what becomes of war memories in the present, and how they change mentalities. People were fighting willingly, fighting simultaneously for the war and to stop it. Nurses, teachers and postmen, neglecting their modest daily lives, went into the battle.

The main interest remains the question of memory. When the war on the battlefield is over, the consequences will always stay in people s minds, whether they like it or not. Bodies and minds have memories : amongst the old soldiers, some are in psychiatric hospitals, others are getting prepared for another war, and the last ones are trying to prevent new mistakes, such as the director himself. As a matter of fact, each war, each conflict, ends with negotiations. The spirit of revenge can be dangerous after an armistice… and love, as much as hate, is transmitted from one generation to another.

Inevitably, war is still present. War wants players and players don t want to forget their achievements. Nobody can explain the war better than them. We can only watch from the sidelines and try to understand what these people feel. The director obviously wants us to know that war doesn t select by name, nationality, or money, and to make his country s political issues - which rarely make the headlines of prime-time news bulletins - known. The film is thus a commemoration of the dead and a lesson for the future. This is probably why Vardan Hovhannisyan dedicated his film to his newly born son as a symbol of hope.

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