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Mera Spored Mera
(Measure for Measure)
(BULGARIAN-COLOR)

Sofia, Oct. 24.

A Bulgarofilm production, Suvremenik Film Unit, Sofia. World rights, Bulgarofilm, Sofia. Features entire cast. Directed by Georgi Dyulgerov. Screenplay, Roussi Chaney. Dyulgerov, based on motifs in Svoboda Buchvarova's book "Liturgy for St. Elijah's Day;" camera (color), Radoslav Spassov; art direction, Georgi Todorov; music, Bozhidar Petkov. Reviewed at Bulgarofilm Screening Room, Sofia, Oct. 24, '81. Running time: 300 MINS. Dilber Tanas Roussi Chaney Hristo Chernopeyev ... Stefan Mavrodierv Apostol Grigor Vachkov Slava Katya Ivanova Tasha Tsvetana Maneva Tsilka Roumena Trifonova

Not Shakespeare, Bulgarian-style, as the title hints — but the finest Bulgarian film ever made. The length and breadth of Georgi Dyulgerov's "Measure for Measure" score in its favor: it's an exceptional feat of film art by any standards.

The only difficulty for foreign critics will be to comprehend the full political, historical, and sociological implications behind this epic, three-part, five-hour "lesson" set at the dawn of our present century in that part of Macedonia known today as Greece.

The epic has been produced in conjunction with the on-going 1300th anniversary of the founding of the Bulgarian state in 681.

For those not familiar at all with the Macedonian Question (Macedonians live today in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Greece), that problem can be somewhat surmounted by studying the events depicted in the film rather closely. There, too, lies a problem for those familiar with the background and its traditions: Dyulgerov has employed a Macedonian dialect, one that is quite difficult to understand, even by the average Bulgarian, whose language is similar although not identical. The element that irons everything out is the narrative style: the director has so utilized film expression that reality and myth, fact and metaphor, event and symbol has been integrated into a profound and challenging whole. This is a film that should not be missed by the film and history buff.

First, the historical details. When Bulgaria was liberated from the Ottoman Turks in 1878, the western part of the former Bulgarian Empires of the Middles Ages, the area known as Macedonia, still remained under Turkish rule. Dyulgerov's Part One, chronicling 1878 to 1903, deals with the country's awakening to a national identity, the result of which was the 1903 uprising on St. Elijah's Day on August 2nd. It is about this event that Buchvarova's book, "A Liturgy for Ilinden," deals with essentially.

Part Two covers 1903 to 1906, when the fighting was at its worst

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and the Macedonians carried on the revolution alone from mountain hideaways. Finally, at the moment when the Young Turks under Ataturk overthrew the ruling sultan in Istanbul, the Young Turk officers sided momentarily with the revolting Macedonians and even granted some parts of the country conditional freedom, but under Turkish police jurisdiction. Some Macedonians, in fact, journeyed under certain leaders to Istanbul to participate in the overthrow of the old regime.

Part Three chronicles the final years of revolution from 1906 to 1912, when freedom from the Ottoman Turks was achieved. But by this time Macedonia was claimed by many side: Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria — the First Balkan War of 1912, followed by the Second Balkan War of 1913, and then the First World War, only served to complicate the issue. Today, the Macedonian Question is still a highly controversial one.

It is difficult to describe and analyze a 5-hour epic of this complexity in a few words. Suffice it to say that the first part deals with an illiterate shepherd in the mountains who slowly awakens to the revolutionary spirit about him by simply being thrust into a maelstrom of activities without his consent and often against his will. The use of a "journal frame-of-reference is most appropriate, particularly as Dyulgerov has made several tape-recordings with aged veterans of the Ilinden Uprising, and this is a condensed version of their oral reports.

During the first segment, the regular changing of the season and the anti-hero's pagan, superstitious existence set the tone of the film — the average Macedonian, like Dilber Tanas, who later revolted were hardly very informed on what was going about them, save for the few legendary leaders of the Macedonian Revolutionary Movement.

Our shepherd lad, Tanas, attends a meeting of the Macedonian outlaw bands in a mountain village. When the bandit leader proclaims that it's time for several in the area to marry, Tanas is about to become one of the "victims" when a rifle is thrust into his hands and he, quite comically, kills the marrying orthodox pope by accident. His punishment is to be thrown into a quarry-dungeon, from which he prays to St. George for deliverance — it happens, and thereafter he is himself a revolutionary. The Ilinden Uprising shortly thrusts him into the middle of his country's fight for freedom.

The brutal facts of the uprising form the second part of "Measure for Measure." The Ottoman Turks respond by sending an army of some 30,000 men to the Macedonian districts in uprising, putting the rebels on the run while burning villages and taking revenges on the population. This went on until 1908, when Ataturk (with the help of the Turkish army stationed in Macedonia) revolted, and the new constitution then makes Tanas, our erstwhile hero, a civil servant with political clout under a friendly Turkish police officer.

It is here that the story develops a twist. Tanas has become weary of fighting and bloodshed, yet he knows that his country is not yet free. The revolutionaries and bandits who were formerly his friends now turn against him and prepare his assassination — he is saved, however, by a believing and faithful young wife, whose love he has never fully returned during their brief relationship. His fate at first, is death — in fact, an angel of death appears in his room and is prepared to take Tanas with her (she is depicted as an aged woman). The young wife, however, fights for his life and soul — and wins. Tanas is reprieved just as his country is able to throw off the yoke of oppression.

All the credits — direction, script, camera, thespis, decor, music — are top-grade, which is enough to suspect that "Measure for Measure" will turn up in some shortened form in the near future at an international film festival. Even more amazing, is the brilliant manner in which history is synthesized into a dynamic metaphorical context. *Holl*