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**A drama of love, life and death. Of the will to survive  
and the understanding among people, who lack the  
predisposition to do so.**

**Release: 31.8.2006**  
**Distributor: Bontonfilm**

**Writing Credits:** Jan Coufal a Marta Nováková

**Director:** Marta Nováková

**Producer:** Eva Pospíšilová, Marta Nováková

**DOP:** Matěj Cibulka

**Sound Designer:** Petr Kapeller

**Film Editor:** Šimon Špidla

**Produced By:** Fresh Films – Eva Pospíšilová

**Supported by** Státní fond ČR pro podporu a rozvoj české kinematografie

**Cast:** Petra Špalková (Marta), Jan Novotný (otec), Vojtěch Štěpánek (Marek),  
Tomáš Pavelka, Viktor Fatka, Jan Novák, Lukáš Vyržal

The movie tells a drama of three people. Marek lives out in the mountains with his half-disabled father, separated from anyone else. He survives by poaching animals. His father then trades the animals in the nearest village for the things they need to survive in the wilderness. Marek needs to stay in hiding, since it is a war and if found, he would risk being recruited in the army. His father wouldn't survive on his own. But then one day, an unexpected catch awaits Marek in one of his traps...

**CZ © Fresh Films, МАРФАФИЛЬМ, FAMU, Studio Mirage, Cinemasound, Tobogang  
2006, 77min, colour, 1:1,85, czech language, english subtitled, Dolby SR, 3 prints**

[www.martafilm.cz](http://www.martafilm.cz)



## ABOUT THE FILM

It's a war. It doesn't matter which one as it doesn't change the fact that people suspect, hate and kill each other. A fate - or a coincidence? - brings the father and his son living in the wilderness together with a wounded enemy female spy. All three of them find themselves at the doorstep of a new war; a worse war as it remains secret, undeclared. The war they all fight inside each other.

Psychological drama of the debuting author Marta Nováková, the student of film direction at FAMU, deceives by appearance. It is rigorous, almost brutally tight, close-tongued. However, under the minimalist cover lies hidden a fascinating richness of motives, meanings, happenings and contexts. With a cold-blooded mastery, the director leaves them to grow under pressure all the way up to the inevitable tragedy.

The war is in progress on all levels: everybody fights everybody, even his or her own self; together they all confront the world out there and must struggle with the nature as well. The female soldier Marta is fully dependent on the care of the father and his son, but simultaneously, she puts them both in danger of a death penalty if she is found. The disabled father sees her as the enemy, mainly because being a woman, she threatens to take his teenage son away from him, whom he certainly cannot survive without - that is the reason why he is shielding him from being recruited. And Marek - lost between being responsible for his father, young revolt, painfully awakened sexuality and his search for mother he never knew. Meanwhile, soldiers pass by their cottage and every day of the culminating fall is like a walk through a minefield.

The screenplay has been in the works for nearly two years under the pedagogical supervision of Karel Kachyňa, whose *Kočár do Vídně* (1966) could be seen as an older sibling of the so-delusive *Marta*. While Kachyňa looked for a relative point of view of a specific historical moment (WWII episode), *Marta* discomforts on a more general level. Simply because the story takes place in unnamed time and place, somewhere in the Slavic part of Europe. The shots taken from "God's perspective" may evoke Schorm's parable *Den sedmý, osmá noc* (1969) or a reality show eventually. The forest acts as a separate dimension, a place with its own set of rules - similarly as in *Zóna ve Stalkerovi* (1979) by Andrej Tarkovsky. The dark and animal side of human personality and the will to survive emerge here as in other war dramas and social utopias. And the way *Marta* handles the portrayal of traditional men's and women's roles also creates a material worth thinking about. The intentionally ambivalent ending then finishes the ultimate experience that will give viewers no sleep.

Marta's character has been written for Petra Špalková from the very beginning. Jan Novotný, a member of the National Theatre, plays the role of the father and his student, the graduate at the conservatory, Vojtěch Štěpánek, appears as Marek.



## **A graduate film summary**

Based on a story of the same name by Jan Coufal

It's a war. It doesn't matter which one as it doesn't change the fact that people suspect, hate and kill each other.

A father lives with his son in wilderness, somewhere in the mountains. The wife - or mother let us say - died during labour. The father rushed to get help, but seriously injured his leg and limps from that moment on. That happened 17 years ago. Marek has already grown into a young man. He grew up isolated from the world around him, only occasionally got down to the village. Now when there is a war, he is not allowed to go there ever as he might be forced to join the army. His relationship with his father has been shaped by the environment they live in, the harsh nature and the constant fight for survival. The father is strongly bound to the house he built up with his wife and the idea of selling it and returning back to the village he once ran away from is unthinkable for him. The father blames his son for his mother's death and his wound, tying the son to himself emotionally, as he would never survive in the mountains without him.

During the war (and most likely before the war as well) they live by poaching animals. In the village, they exchange the meat for food and other necessities they need to survive. The father exchanges, to be precise. Marek sets the traps and collects the prey.

One day, an unexpected catch awaits him in the biggest of his traps. Something, he did not expect to come over in the forest: a woman wearing an army uniform. The trap hurt her ankle badly, she is lying there in blood, unconscious. Marek keeps looking at her for a long time, gets down to body-search her and in the moment he touches the case on her neck, he feels a barrel of a gun next to his head. The woman wants to say something, but doesn't have enough strength and faints again. Marek is in doubt, but finally decides to save the woman's life.

All three of them (the father, Marek, Marta - that is the name of the woman, 25) find themselves at the doorstep of a new war; a worse war as it remains secret, undeclared. The war they all fight inside each other.

As it turns out, the woman belongs to the other side of the barricade. Her task was to deliver some important documents. The father sees her as the enemy not just because of her "uniform", but also for her femininity; she might take Marek away from him. But, her sexuality becomes his main weapon. He knows what it can do with a teenage, "unspoiled" boy. He needs to make him believe that lust is a disgusting

thing; he needs him to create a repulsion, almost aggressive, to her body. Moreover, only the father can talk to Marta as he knows her language.

Marek fights his own mind, the feelings he never knew, the new excitement. Marta's helplessness makes him feel responsible for her, her femininity awakes his sexual excitement he doesn't know how to handle. So many new things overwhelm him. Besides, he feels that not all the "new experience" is "a good one" (father's influence). He starts to feel embarrassed, silly, which provokes more aggression in him (towards Marta), who struggles with remorse.

Marta doesn't know what it feels like to be dependent on someone. In this case, totally dependent (she can't even go to a toilet on her own or take a bath...). She has to fight her aggression coming from how hopeless she feels. Moreover, she still has her mission, to deliver those documents.

Delivering the documents is a priority for Marta, which means that she must recover as fast as she can and leave. So she takes whatever comes her way. She accepts Marek's almost pathetic care, but knows very well that father is the one in charge here and who speaks her language above all. Therefore, Marta balances between a state of high alert and light flirting (or kindness at least), while the first takes a lot of energy and the second gets her on dangerous grounds.

The father almost looks like toying with her a little bit. He is aggressive and ruthless for one moment, but then he brings her a healing liniment from the village, offers a cigarette... he tries not to lead an open fight; puts his prey to sleep by occasional signs of attention.

When Marta starts feeling better and is apparent that she will be leaving soon, the father tricks her to get what he wants. He shuts the windows, locks the front door and pretends there are soldiers in front of the house (he has done this trick already once). He takes advantage of the fact that Marta can't scream (she is an enemy) and rapes her. When Marek returns from the hunt and realizes what happens, he brutally beats his father with his own walking stick; thus revolting against him definitely. Finally, he is free to go to places far from the front he only knew from his "observatory" high up in the tree, where he used to climb quite often. In his naivety, he presumes Marta is going to come with him. But Marta must finish her task, deliver the documents. Suddenly, she forgets all the weeks they spent together. She forgets that Marek saved her life. She must complete her mission! And so she stands there, leaning against the father's walking stick, waiting. She knows that she is not going to get far on her own, but she doesn't want to let it show. Marek hesitates. Marta starts walking into the forest, towards the front. Marek runs after her shortly. The father is left lying on the shed's floor. He watches his son leave through the open door.

Marek and Marta walk slowly through the forest. Suddenly, soldiers' patrol turn up behind their back. Marta panics and tries to run away. She even reaches for her weapon. The soldiers are young, maybe more scared than Marek is. They take out their rifles and start shooting. Marta dies immediately, Marek has time to notice the first snowflakes fall on the wet leaves on the ground.

The soldiers put their bodies together, cover them with branches and leave. They do not notice the case on Marta's neck.



# MARTA NOVÁKOVÁ

DIRECTOR

Born 4.4.1975 in Slavičín. After finishing Klvanovo gymnázium (high school) in Kyjov, she graduated from the Film school in Zlín by adapting A. P. Čechov's "Spát a spát" for a film. Later, she worked as a qualified assistant at the same school. In 1997-2005, she studied at FAMU in Prague, the faculty of direction, lectured among others by Jaromil Jireš, Karel Kachyňa or Saša Gedeon. In 2003, she spend half a year as an intern at VGIK in Moscow. *Marta* is her graduate and also her first feature-film. Currently, she is finishing her studies at philosophical faulty at Charles University, where she majors in Russian studies.

## Filmography:

**I want to sleep** (Based on a story by A.P. Čechov, B/W, 35mm, 17min, FŠZ 1996)

**Bez práce nejsou koláče** (Fictional document, color, Beta, 10min, ČT 1997)

**Deal of freedom** (Color, 16mm, 5min, FAMU 1998)

**Furnance** (TV microscene, color, Beta, 12min, FAMU 1999)

**The best reader in the world** (Atelier-scene, B/W, 35mm, 12min, FAMU 2000)

**Duše ruská** (Confession-document, color, Beta, 10min, FAMU 2000)

**In the night** (Inspired by a novel written by F.M. Dostojevsky „White nights“, color, 35mm, 12min, FAMU 2001)

**Million of red roses** (Music video for Ally Pugačeva, color, Beta, 5min, FAMU 2002)

**Marta** (Color, DV-transcript for 35mm, 77min, FAMU, FRESHFILMS, MARFAFILM 2006)

# SAŠA GEDEON ABOUT MARTA

## SUPERVISOR'S REVIEW

The graduate film "MARTA" directed by Marta Nováková is an example of approach rarely seen in contemporary cinematography and surprisingly is hard to find even among the FAMU student works. I write surprisingly, because a consistent, homogenous drama featuring a minimum of characters and maximum energy put in the elementary drama situation would seem like a perfect scheme for a student work. We may assign the scarcity of this type of narrative to the difficulty that a successful production brings along, especially on a longer time scale - which this work clearly represents. Three actors act in a more or less mono-thematic environment and within a closed time span. They act out a feature drama on a not so uncommon platform; a family situation in difficult conditions, which gets even more complicated by a "higher force" - the war. However, *Marta's* plot is unique and even multi-layered in the way it is being specific.

The father and his teenage son live somewhere in the wilderness, the mother died during labour. One day, they come across a wounded female soldier and decide to take care of her, thus creating a strange triangle of characters, in which the war acts as a fourth, virtually invisible, yet fatal, protagonist. The war works - through Marta's character - as the catalyzer of the tense, only pretentiously calm atmosphere between the father and the teenage son. Marta turns into a seductive trap the most innocent of them must eventually fall into.

Marta herself falls into a hunter's trap in the beginning, ending up badly wounded. Yet, it is the men who get caught by the trap of her charm; they are the ones trapped by the situation, while Marta escapes only because she doesn't let herself succumb to her female and human side. Marek tries to bring up; she remains a true soldier until the very end.

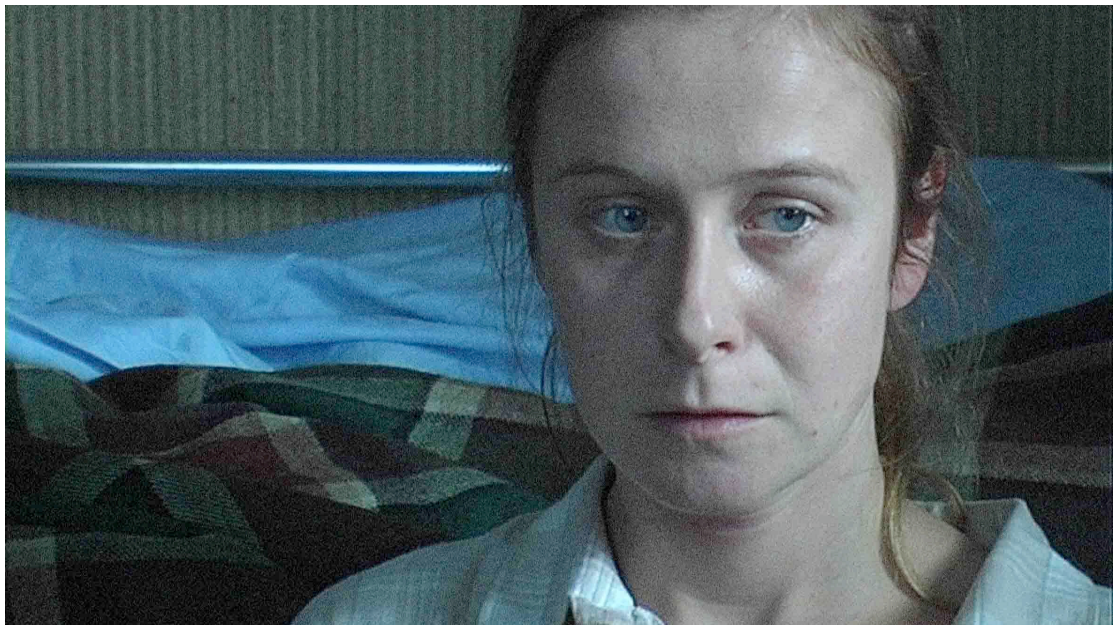
The director and script co-writer sketches her characters in gentle contours, without letting their ambivalence to sound out loud. The anti-psychology of the direction and her phraseology remain simple, functionally strict. The purity of the form convenes with the cunning simplicity of the topic. The majesty of the way she originally expresses herself together with the direction of well-casted actors is pleasing. An element of surprise is missing though, not necessarily in the storytelling itself, but rather in the way the characters behave in particular phases of the story. This relates mostly to Marta's character, who is struggling with a growing dilemma: either to remain a soldier until the last breath, or to let herself be overcome by her humanity - she is a little more clear in this. Simultaneously, the father-son relationship is a bit schematized, missing some gentle, therefore more positive moments. Generally speaking: the paradoxes and ambiguity of the dramatical situation could have been used to create a better impact and more variety in the characters' and situations' portrayal. The characters themselves could have started to act unexpectedly and paradoxically not only for the viewer, but for themselves - as we see it in Kachyňa's minimalist psycho-ballad *Kočár do Vídně*.

Nevertheless, this remark shouldn't be understood as a critique, but rather a contemplation and a feedback to otherwise perfect and mature work of Marta Nováková, which I consider to be highly above-average.





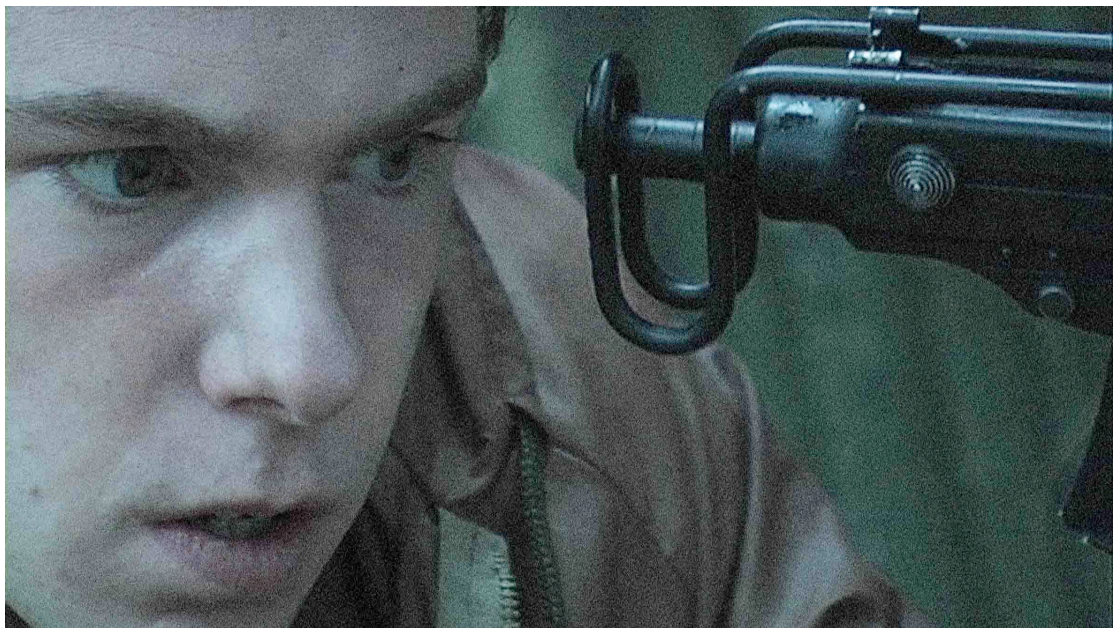
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