

SELECTED ASPECTS OF SOCIALIST EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE LABOUR CLASS IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK CINEMATOGRAPHY IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

(Vybrané aspekty socialistickej každodennosti robotníckej triedy
v československej kinematografii druhej polovice 20. storočia)

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Abstract: The Communist Party, which was to be a representative of the working class after 1948 in Czechoslovakia, tried to control and customizes to their own image all spheres of public, political and cultural life, including cinematography. Historical period films represent a unique historical source, they show real everyday life. Film images bring a lot of new information and they are also images of the past. After the World War II, public interest in cultural events in Czechoslovakia was increased and culture began to develop more dynamically. Communists tried to use this situation to interconnect cultural values with the policy. Main aim of the Communist cultural policy was utilize growing importance of culture for their own propaganda. The cinematography became one of the biggest mass media in the second half of the 20th century. Through films and serials, people did not receive only fun, but they were influenced also by cultural and educational feature of films and serials. Aim of this paper is to show the issue of communists' workers' propaganda in selected Czechoslovak films. The paper also focuses on the image of the labour, their self-reflection and identification with film stories. Through films, people could create an alternative life, through which they could escape from reality. On the other hand, movies effort was to show what kind of life will people live in future according to Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Along with the political development of the Soviet Union progressed a historical development of Czechoslovakia too and this influenced another changes in the cultural sphere. This paper deals with transformation process of themes in movies according to the time of origin.

Key words: Labour class. Czechoslovak filmography. Propaganda. Films. Ideology.

Introduction – film as a history sources

Contemporary historical culture is cinematographic. According to the empirical research, a film is a medium that fundamentally shapes the historical consciousness of contemporary society.¹ Researchers that focus to memory studies point out the

1 ČINÁTL, Kamil – PINKAS, Jaroslav (eds.). *Dějiny ve filmu*. Praha: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2014, s. 6.

growing importance of film production in the process of socially and culturally shared remembrance. The film production creates our visions of the past.² We can perceive film production as a sites of memory. "Beside to physical 'places' in the form of buildings, monuments and memorials, also individual repeated acts, festivals, canonization of important dates, symbols, rituals, flags, songs, anthems, cultural objects, sets of material remains (museums, open-air museums, archaeological excavation), literary codification of memory (dictionaries, encyclopaedias, textbooks, popular press, folk reading) and finally mental sites of memory."³ The term "sites of memory" cannot be perceived only as geographical places. Sites of memory may be often a timelate – for example November 1989 or February 1948 – people imagine memories after listening to these dates.

A number of social and human sciences deal with film production – for example, media studies, sociology, aesthetics, historiography, film theory and others. Each discipline develops its own terminology. A wide range of images, which are assumed to mediate the past, can be considered as a historical source. At the same time, we refer to historical sources not only films with a programmatic focus on the reconstruction of the past, but also a popular films that do not strictly adhere to historical facts, but form shared ideas about the past. The film production study is a set of open possibilities. The plurality also characterizes the methods with which we can analyse the film. This study deals with the content analysis of Czechoslovak film production in the second half of the 20th century.

Determining the content elements of a film image and assessing their importance forms the prerequisites for asking further questions, analysis and subsequent interpretation. During the content analysis, it is necessary to focus on the film genre, its theme, but also the people who enter the story. The relationships between the individual characters are also important for the film story. A short film sequence can vividly convey a historical situation. In this section, the content analysis focuses on the event. In played historical films, the composition of the film's narrative also comes to the fore. An important element of film content analysis is also the analysis of film language. During the analysis of the language, it is also necessary to focus on the means of expression chosen by the creators. Symbols are also an inseparable part of content analysis. Between 1948 – 1989 communist symbols were typical in films – for example red stars, Labour Day celebrations, international singing, etc.). In connection with cultural tradition, the symbolic equipment of the film conveys the image of the past.

German pedagogue Christian Heuer characterizes the historical interpretation of film as an intersection of three areas: image, aesthetic values and mass communication. If we watch a film showing history, analysis and integration will focus on the

2 See below. ERLI, Astrid – WODIANKA, Stephanie (eds.). *Film und kulturelle Erinnerung: Plurimediale Konstellationen*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008.

3 RAKOVÁ, Svatava. Místa paměti na přelomu tisíciletí: Výzvy a proměny jednoho konceptu. In HLAVAČKA, Milan – MARÉS, Antoine – POKORNÁ, Magdaléna. *Paměť míst, událostí a osobností: historie jako identita a manipulace*. Praha: Historický ústav AV ČR, 2011, s. 22-23.

visuality, sound and plot of the film's narrative. According to Heuer, the film history represents a parallel to contemporary history.⁴

Historical background, cultural policy and censorship

Until February 1948, Czechoslovakia was the last country of future Eastern Bloc where communists did not rule over.⁵ After the World War II., interest of public in cultural events increased again and culture began to develop dynamically. Communist were trying to use this situation and to connect cultural values with political. Main aim of communist's cultural policy was to use of growing cultural importance for their own propaganda.⁶ Czechoslovak culture was used as a political ideology soon. Film industry was intended as a work of high artistic and ideological qualities.

Communist Party and its ideology benefited from the nation dissatisfaction and exhaustion. Communist Party tried to ingratiate people through its political and cultural program. Thanks to this fact, communists achieved citizen's influence. Communist cultural policy tried to stimulate the idea that the development of all Slavistics nation should be controlled and protected by the Soviet Union.⁷ Slavicity and folk traditions were one of the main pillars of this policy.

After February 1948, the state sought to submit publicly presented thoughts and ideas. Art was then understood as a political thing (people became accustomed to a more politicized culture). The actively involved artists should ideally form in favour of the regime. Art served to Communist leaders as a weapon. Communist Party tried to combine culture with so-called Marxist-political culture had to come, which, by using the idea of Slavicity, manipulated traditional values.

The new elite of the nation was formed by the most powerful workers, the so-called strikers, who regularly exceeded scheduled standards and often came up with various improvement proposals. The labour class at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s was a tremendous force that the ruling regime had to respect. Workers were able to achieve various advantages, or to keep those existing, even if the regime required their abolition or restriction.⁸

4 HEUER, Christian. Historienfilme. In FURRER, Markus – MESSMER, Kurt (ed.). *Handbuch Zeitgeschichte im Geschichtsunterricht*. Berlin: Schwalbach, 2013.

5 See below. CUHRA, Jaroslav. *České země v evropských dějinách. Díl čtvrtý od roku 1918*. Praha: Paseka, 2006, s. 156-159.

6 By propaganda we will mean the definition of Harold Dwight Lasswell: „*Propaganda is the expression of opinions or actions carried out deliberately by individuals or groups with a view to influencing the opinions or actions of other individuals or groups for predetermined ends and through psychological manipulations.*“ ELLUL, Jacques. *Propaganda : The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. New York: Vintage books a Division of Random House, 1962, s. xi-xii.

7 „*One of the main moments of communist cultural policy was to effort nation that its policy was a continuum with national history and communist ideals were only a result not a reversal of national shame, because its emphasized the importance of national traditions and recruited Slavicity, Hussitism.*“ KUSÁK, Alexej. *Kultura a politika v Československu 1945 – 1956*. Praha: Torst, 1998, s. 145.

8 KNAPÍK, Jiří – FRANC, Martin. *Průvodce kulturním děním a životním stylem v českých zemích 1948 – 1967*. Praha: Academia, 2011, s. 24.

Since the revolution in February 1948, the Communist Party has gradually sought to transform the culture and to use it to re-educate the nation. Especially it was necessary to transform the thinking of the masses and overcome it by communist ideology.⁹ This was one of the main points of the post-February cultural policy.¹⁰ The Communist Party dreamed of a complete interconnection of cultural sphere with political but this never happened, because during this process it was found out that culture was immune to some of these political aspects. The relationship between culture and politics had worsened over time. In the cultural sphere, there had come to ideology process, but not complete. Communists did not win the fight over the culture. They had to settle with socialist cultural operations.

Censorship played an important role in Communism as it served as a resource to maintaining political domination. In Czechoslovakia, it was partially used in the form of preventive censorship before the World War II. After the war, the Czechoslovak policy returned to the policy concepts of 1938, but the government did not restore the censorship. Censorship did not work in 1945 – 1948.¹¹

Since February 1948, Communist Party had been trying to most effectively grasp power in the country with the censorship help, which had functioned as a tool of power to control the media. In the first Communist Constitution of 1948, the state guaranteed freedom of the press. At the time of Communist rule, censorship continued constantly with certain changes. By the censorship, Communists preserved their ideology to prevent information that did not support their “seeing the world”. Media were monitored closely; the found mistakes were automatically considered as provocations.

Czechoslovak film and filmography

In the pre-war period, the film became an essential part of lifestyle and developed many of its functions: entertainment, educational, artistic, but propagandistic too. In the post-war period, the Czechoslovak film had a tendentious character typical for totalitarian regimes. The post-war era meant a boom for Czechoslovak film production – the cinema network expansion, film festivals development and the film hits creation of most viewed films of all time.¹² The films had gradually penetrated all social groups.

In the early 1930s, possible ways of state control and patronage over future liberated cinematography were considered. Film production was considered as a part of the nation’s cultural heritage. President Edvard Beneš signed a film nationalization decree in August 1945.¹³ Cinematography became the first nationalized state econo-

9 KUSÁK, Alexej. *Kultura a politika v Československu 1945 – 1956*. Praha: Torst, 1998, s. 229.

10 KNAPÍK, Jiří. *V zajetí moci. Kulturní politika, její systém a aktéři 1948 – 1956*. Praha: Libri, 2006, s. 29.

11 See below. KAPLAN, Karel. *O cenzuře v Československu v letech 1945 – 1956*. Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1994, s. 12.

12 See below. BILÍK, Petr. *Československá kinematografie 50. a 60. let*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2013, s. 5.

13 Proposals for nationalization were already during the World War I. But the producers didn’t have enough money. The nationalization concept of the film was prepared since

my in post-war history. In Slovakia was different situation because nationalization took place during the Slovak Republic era (1939 – 1945). The post-war situation in the Czechoslovak film meant a new rise of film industry, but it did not last long. The relationship between power and art began to deepen to the point that the film underwent political manipulation.

Czech and Slovak films developed differently. While the Czech post-war film was based on pre-war traditions and thematic variations, the Slovak film just arise. Czech filmmakers started to cooperate with Slovak cinematography, an example being the **Varúj!** movie from 1946. To the most important Slovak films of post-war era belongs **Vlčie diery** movie from 1948 about Slovak national uprising. Following years brought to Slovak cinematography phrase agitations with folklore background.

The important film of the post-war era was **Siréna** (1947). The preliterate was written by Marie Majerova, an exiled writer in Communist era, based on her stories from the labour class. *Siréna* tells the story of several miner generations. The film focuses on events around the 1889 labour strike. The image of the labour class is presented by collectivism, their hope for better tomorrow and is demonstrated as the only right one way. *The Strike* film became the first post-war film awarded abroad. The success of *The Strike* was used by the Communists to prove that the established revolutionary direction in art is being evaluated abroad, and *The Strike* became one of the models for socialist realism in the film.

Post-war films followed the style and themes of interwar and protectorate cinematography. Significant accent was added to the social drama legitimated by *The Strike's* success. The transformation of the political climate after February 1948 took a rapid fall. The structure of the national economy underwent a change. Film direction was focused on heavy machinery, metallurgy and the mining industry that began to dominate. The viewers loved these topics, because they knew them it. The new content was about to bring primitive schematism and propaganda. The period between 1948 and 1956 is regarded not only as an era of political Stalinism but also as the most difficult fall of science, art and culture. Film production was fully subjected to an ideological dictate. The paradox is that Czechoslovak film has become famous for these years.

The government decree from April 1948 and the speeches of government officials clearly stated that film art should be the house cleaner of ideology and should process the ordered themes in the prescribed manner. Movies had changed to the ideology (propaganda) views to socialism. The filmmakers resigned from creative freedom.¹⁴

Unpretentious agitations from the labour class with popular actors had become common part of the filmmaking. Favourite actors had been sometimes hired to attract viewers to cinemas for under-agitated movies (for example **Anděl na ho-**

1942. Important is, that the film nationalization wasn't a communist action. See below. Decree of the President concerning measures for the film industry from 11. 8. 1945. Decree number 50/1945.

14 See below. BILÍK, Petr. *Československá kinematografie 50. a 60. let*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2013, s. 26.

rách). Propaganda was applied in all film genres. Especially in adventure films, it had an exaggerated value.

At the beginning of the 1950s, the film was considered as the most important medium source because it easily controlled mass art. It was also understood as a mediator of the historical mission of the labour class represented by the Communist Party. The films were accompanied by peculiar phenomena of their time: comradesly collectivism and socialist cosmopolitanism. The present and future of socialist society should be portrayed in bright colors, everydayness and negative phenomena have been tabooed. The rigidity was slowly releasing, and the viewers had to wait for a brave satire, which refused to conform to the regime. State subsidies to the cinematography have further enhanced the thematic one-sidedness and extended the competence field of the creators conformed to the regime.

The beginning of the 60s in the Czechoslovakian film was marked by new filmmaker's generation. Their work brought new impulses and values in the Czechoslovak and international context and became the beginning of the most productive period of art. Several socio-political factors had manipulated the course of cinematography in this period. Elements of civilism prevailed. The filmmakers filmed the "ordinary day" of the main character. The shift in comparison with the 40s and 50s occurs, where elements of civilism, individualism and everyday life were not depicted.¹⁵

In the second part of the 60s filmmakers started to make many movie experiments. The film began to lose the borderlines between reality and fiction. Foreign actors could play in the movies, this was not possible in Czechoslovak cinematography of 40s and 50s, since only Eastern Bloc actors could take role.¹⁶ The possibility of democratic culture development appeared first at the end of the 60s (during the Prague Spring). The process had brought a chance for movies to be more than demonstration of totalitarian society. After the invasion in 1968, a twenty-year "prison" of Czechoslovak cinematography began, the criticism of which could be seen for the first time in 1988.

Between 1969 and 1970, the principles of control in force until 1989 were formed. It was also true that the most important matters were decided by the ideological department of the Central Committee of Communists, or by the secretary of the Central Committee's ideology. The most important for culture was the abolition of censorship in the Czechoslovak Republic under the law of 26 June 1968, which made censorship inadmissible. In the censorship system, after the censors were cancelled, the importance of self-censorship increased. It was no longer enough to persuade a person-censor to consent to the publication of the work, it was necessary to

15 CIEL, Martin. Súvislosti slovenskej filmovej teórie 1945 – 1971. In MACEK, Václav (eds.). *Slovenský hraný film 1946 – 1969*. Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 1992, s. 18; PAŠTÉKOVÁ, Jelena. Literárne impulzy v slovenskom hranom filme. In MACEK, Václav (eds.). *Slovenský hraný film 1946 – 1969*. Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 1992, s. 34-35.

16 PAŠTÉKOVÁ, Jelena. Literárne impulzy v slovenskom hranom filme. In MACEK, Václav (eds.). *Slovenský hraný film 1946 – 1969*. Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 1992. s. 34-35; BILÍK, Petr. *Československá kinematografie 50. a 60. let*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2013, s. 16.

consider all the possible and impossible reservations of the various persons who could come and lead to the prohibition of distribution, dismissal or retirement. This system has proven to be more effective than the previous one. As he paralyzed the work that, despite the creation of individual valuable works, the creative filmmaking euphoria of the 1960s never recurred until 1989.¹⁷

The development of the Czechoslovak film had delay for a long time after August 1968. In culture had begun the period of re-establishment of socialist ideas and demagogic ideology. The ordered uniformity of the scenarios had resulted in the omission of real-life filming. Marxist-Leninist methods became dominant in cinematography. In practice, it meant focusing on the actor's work and the camera composition, what was at the expense of the importance of the film. The dispositions of the characters were black and white which was typical in the 40's and 50's. In the 70's was an attempt to return to the schematics of the 1950s. But the difference between them was precisely in the 1960s, which made great progress for Czechoslovak cinema. This progressive period stayed in the people memory and hadn't been forgotten. That's why 70's had been perceived as hypocrisy, where nobody looked for new ways of filming.¹⁸

For 1980's are characterized a release not only in the culture sphere. Thanks to Perestroika could be projected all forbidden movie, especially from the 1960s. The most important criteria were if movie was succeeding in important European film festivals, not ideological criteria. The 1980's were a period of hopelessness and illusions characterized by very little production.¹⁹

Views of labour class in Czechoslovak feature films of the 40s and 50s

The movies from labour class theme were already filmed in the period before the Communist putsch. Immediately after February, there was an increase in this issue. Movie with labour class theme were called "agitated" because they supported communist propaganda. These films had become on television screens very early. Many unfinished projects had been finished, so that is why viewers could see movies typical of the previous period during 1949. The first feature film in Slovakia was the **Vlčie diery** from 1948 by Pavel Bielik. The film's story will lead viewers to the Slovak National Uprising. This movie was criticized for insufficient representation of Communist during the uprising.

17 MACEK, Václav – PAŠTÉKOVÁ, Jelena. *Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie*. Martin: Osveta, 1997, s. 265-306.

18 *Postav dom, zasad' strom* movie was doomed by an anonymous article which was published in communistic daily *Pravda* on May 1. CIEL, Martin. *Súvislosti slovenskej filmovej teórie 1945 – 1971*. In MACEK, Václav (eds.). *Slovenský hraný film 1946 – 1969*. Bratislava: Slovenský filmový, 1992, s. 19, 22.

19 MACEK, Václav. *Dlhých dvadsať rokov umierania: (metafora v slovenskom hranom filme 1970 – 1990)*. In MACEK, Václav (eds.). *Slovenský hraný film 1970 – 1990*. Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 1993, s. 42; OBUCH, Ondrej. *Zabúdanie a rozpamätávanie filmovej réžie*. In MACEK, Václav (eds.). *Slovenský hraný film 1970 – 1990*. Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 1993, s. 56.

Great emphasis had been put on ideologically educational projects - such **Anděl na horách**, **Železný dědek** or **Karhanova parta**. All these movies deal with labour class environment. Educational aspect had distorted movie genres. The position of a woman in society changed. While the older generation image of a woman was a woman-mother and housewife, after February 1948 the most important task of a woman was participation in communism. This phenomenon is very well seen in the movie **Usměvavá zem**, where the main heroine is quite positive, the young communist, but until the end of the movie, it turns out that she has not cared for her child for six years.

The aspect of collectivism appears in films - for example **Anděl na horách** movie. The political transformation in 1956 brought new possibilities in the movie development. The filmmakers did not had to film unilaterally oriented movies from labour class environment. In the 60s opened new doors, but they were still not democratic. Political change was a process that was essentially driven by Communist, but people started to let it go too far.

Many films were forbidden - the so-called safe films. Safe film saw contemporary society in a different way than Communist (for example, the **Konec jasnovidce** from 1957 in which is spoken about private business). The problem could be the cast. In **Tři přání** movie played a Yugoslavian actor that was problematic, because of the Soviet-Yugoslav rupture.²⁰

Pětistovka (Martin Frič) movie from 1949 is a typical agitation. The story of the film takes place between 1948 and 1949 in one race. For films of the 50s was typical mechanization. The film isn't only a typical example of the collective spirit of the workers, but also the image of one race. The labour class is depicted as a handy working part of society. The goal of the labourers is to build a new motorcycle from domestic sources. Workers wear a uniform, which points to uniformity. Factory labourers live in collective houses. Therefore, the house services are common – for example, telephone, laundry and so one.²¹ This should be a regular part of communist life in Czechoslovakia. In the movie, we can see two worlds. Labour world and the word of constructors. There are visible differences between these two worlds. The constructors are academically educated people; they use titles, wear white coats and smoke cigars – a kind of luxury. Labourers were overalls and use one's Chris-

20 More about Soviet-Yugoslav rupture see below CUHRA, Jaroslav – ELLINGER, Jiří – GJURIČOVÁ, Adéla – SMETANA, Vít. *České země v evropských dějinách. Díl čtvrtý od roku 1918*. Praha: Paseka, 2006, s. 183.

21 For example, Czech architect Josef Polášek created one of the largest examples of collective housing in Košice, the so-called *Masaryk colony of residential houses for bank officials* from 1930 – 1931. The apartments have many advantages of collective living – central heating, hot and cold water, shared laundry, central administration and common roof terraces. These were news that has brought benefits to collective housing. In the courtyard of the block there was a playground for children with a swimming pool and gardens for the homeowners. The entire complex is characterized by the functionality and simplicity of the shapes, with optimal proportions for the housing architecture. See below. MIŠKU-FOVÁ, Helena. *Češi v Košicích. Pamětní desky a sochy*. Košice: Slovensko-český klub, 2013.

tian name. In the film is also a picture of Christmas – the focus is again on collective experience, giving rewards to ambitious employees.

In the factory breaks a fire. New motorcycle is destroyed, so again appeals to the collective spirit of the workers to build a new Czech motorcycle in time. Of course, everyone is a sign – a picture of the workers' collectivism. The film ends with screaming everybody because their motorcycle wins in the race, which is the merit of labours. The film point is labour collectivism and mechanization. The image of the working class is positive because they are a good people.

The second film from 1949 is called **Pan Novák** (Bořivoj Zeman). The beginning of the film reflected the February coup of 1948. Mr. Novak as main character works at insurance company, therefore he belongs to a middle class of society. Thanks to The Communist party policy is the insurance company closed and subsequently Mr. Novak is no happier, because he becomes a part of labour class. He detests the salutation "comrade" how labourers call to each other and he cannot identify with calling somebody his Christian name in a company, where he has to work. (*"here we lose all our titles and they will thou us" "don't thou to me, even me and my wife don't thou to each other"*) Mr. Novak says he is a clerk all the time and the labour work means social degradation to him.²² The main character represents a satisfied man in all circumstances, until social conditions change. In the film it is possible to see opinion changes e.g. at first is an insurance company leader against the communist regime, but during the second day he explains, that it is natural for him to be a communist sympathizer, because his father was a labourer. The film also presents inter-generational differences between father (Mr. Novak) and his daughter. While he is against the communist regime, she is interested in pro-communist youth, she reads Lenin's papers and sings proletarian songs. During the film, you can see many agitation communist prospects. Mr. Novak's primary judgement about the labourers is bad, the film presents him as a saboteur. It is possible to see a fundamental change of his character, when a member of the middle class disdaining communism and proletariat becomes a labourer and it makes him happy. Period viewers could be able to identify themselves with the main character and change their thinking. As well as the previous film Mr. Novak is full of collectivism ideas e.g. many scenes showing boarding at an industrial cafeteria. Phenomenon of emigration is reflected in the film as well, but this act is regarded as negative. Further, we can see clothing uniformity in a company during the film. Labourers are considered as positive characters and manual skilled part of society. The film story lays emphasis on crafts in contrasts to the west democratic states, which give special importance to intellect. The conclusion of the film is followed by a proletarian song, which indicates the story happy end, because Mr. Novak realised that as well as the labour class is good for him it is good for the future of all society.

In 1950 **Zocelení**, the film by Martin Frič was awarded for the struggle for socialist progress in Karlovy Vary. The film deals with labourers from Karlova Huta, who

22 There were turnovers to manual work of the bourgeoisie members, clerks considered like purgatory. Because of their manual skills deficiency, they were sent to bad payed work places. KNAPÍK, Jiří – FRANC, Martin. *Průvodce kulturním děním a životním stylem v českých zemích 1948 – 1967*. Praha: Academia, 2011, s. 24.

fight against capitalists for the name of their company – Stalingrad. It is possible to watch the image of the labour class through newspapers that labourers read. The name of the newspapers is not surprising, it is called Daily labourer. The story takes place in the company during the world economic crisis, when it is necessary to fire many labourers. Leaders of the company want to replace labourers by cheaper workers from Sudety. Labour class collectivism spirit is possible to see through sudetian workers' rejection to get jobs in the company. One of the fired workers is an old man, who has a mortgage. The mortgage as the symbol of capitalism means insecurity of capitalism living system. The plot of Steel Town is a fight between the capitalism and the communist labour class. The negative aspect of capitalism is inability to provide security e.g. dismissals of innocent employees. Presentation of the labour class is positive, the employees want to, but they cannot. Theme and adaptation of the film fit in with the Czechoslovak cinematography after 1948.

Socialistic rivalry, the main theme of the film, is presented by Zdeněk Hofbauer's film **Karhanova parta** (1950). The story is very similar to Motorbike taking place in a factory, where is a fight between old and young labourers. Communist labour songs follow the film. There are some propaganda prospects used in this film e.g. "go for a holiday with the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement", "let's build the socialism together" etc. The aspect of the collectivism is visible during the film – answer to the question "you behave like owners of the factory" is unanimous, all the workers say "but it is ours". The film propaganda becomes evident by showing oversized communist leaders' pictures and paintings. There are also mentioned five-year plans. The Internationale song accompanies the end of the film, where the workers happily speak "We are not alone yet! This is our power! This is the power of the Party!"

The film **Zvony z rákosu** (1950) by Václav Kubásek deals with labour problems and it was used as means of labourers' education. The story takes place at the end of 19th century in a small town, where reed means their livelihood. The town authorities redistribute the reed to workers not pursuant to sedulity but according to their loyalty. If the men rebel, their families do not get the reed so they cannot make products for sale. You can clearly see the differences between the authorities and the labourers. While the authorities' image is not positive, because they rob the workers, the image of the labourers is perceived as positive. Through film scene, where a woman throws many coins from carriage, it is possible to see character of the authorities. Money means nothing to them, they disdain the labour class and live in luxury. It is showed e.g. in daily consumption of meat. Maids remark in one scene "Can you smell it? They are eating meat again." The labourers cannot afford eating meat every day. However, they realize that their strength is in the unity, so they found their own co-op to outbrave the authorities' exploitation. The main idea of the film is workers' independence thanks to the co-op, which signifies their better future while the town authorities lose their fight for supremacy over the labourers.

One of the most famous films of 1950s is **Rudá záře nad Kladnem** (Vladimír Vlček) based on the novel by the President Antonín Zápotocký. The main character of the film is a young veteran of the First World War coming back from Russia. According to Russian system, he wants to enforce the socialism in Kladno. His effort meets with resistance of capitalism leaders. The dismissals of employees phenomenon appears again in this film. Fired workers are disappointed from democracy

considering lack of work places and food. The society is divided into two categories – the leaders and the labours.²³ The rest of employed workers declare a boycott and stop working. Ministers give labours an ultimatum, either they start working, or they will be fired from work and have to leave their flats. Although some of the labours are frightened but they stay united. The spirit of collectivism is possible to see in coherence of proletariat, many other workers, miners and co-op members join to boycotting labourers. Grass roots win and the ministers have to retreat. There are many Russian symbols in the film, the Great October Socialist Revolution is often mentioned, one of the most important scenes of the film is 1. May celebration. Women wear folk-costumes, wave flags and sing proletarian songs. The mentioned scene presents a monumental celebration of the labour class. As far as leaders are concerned during the celebration they still sleep – the sign of sloth. The main character travels to Moscow for the Second International Congress. During leave-taking with his wife they talk to each other “*Look how beautiful Kladno looks like when it is red.*” “*You want the whole republic to be red.*” “*So do you. And I promise you it will come true, but all the workers have to contribute!*” Children and youth communist education is visible in the scene, where the main character-wife learns communist texts by heart and in the moment when she cannot remember part of the text, her children complete some missing words. Even the last scene of *The Red Glow over Kladno* manifests the proletarian victory through a great celebration.

The view at the labour class in films of 1960s

The Czechoslovak cinematography in 1960s is known as film miracle or new wave. Release of the regime is in films reflected by freedom of filming styles, experimenting with means of expression and themes variety. Showing the labour class in films is not obvious yet. During our research, we were looking for films dealing with the labour class at least. Besides imaging the labour class in 1960s, we can see influence of the period through stopping idealisation process of main characters and focusing on everyday life of real people in filmography.

Slunce v síti, directed by Štefan Uher in 1962, is considered to be the first film of the new wave. The story is based on Alfonz Bednar’ three novels and it predicates of authentic period of time. The film represents a kind of probe into life of individuals. Here comes perception change of the labour class, because it is no longer agitprop but the subject of interest. Living, feeling and moral values become the centre of attention. There are some differences between living in the country and the town. Technical progress, hurry and affectation mean living in the town in contrast to living in the country, where people lead simple and innocent lives. The film was marked as seditious aimed to destroy the socialist regime. The title was identified by comrades as “*communism in the net*”. Some signs were reportedly according to Karol Bacílek, the leader of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia, metaphoric – mother’ blindness in the film actually means blindness of the

23 The passage from the film: “*Do you think, that servants will order leaders about in the republic?*” “*We should bend knees and kiss their hands again; it will take much till this custom disappears.*”

Communist Party, solar eclipse should be explained as communism twilight and a boat on the mainland presents conditions of that time.

Havrania cesta (1962) by Martin Hollý jr. is one of the exemplary films of 1960s dealing with the labour class, high voltage fitters. The main characters acted by Júlíus Pántik and Štefan Kvietik are not black-and-white like it was before 1960s, but we can explore their psychic survival and moral dilemmas. *“The film is not only focused on fitters’ story – the same problem could be real among doctors or university professors. Careerism, human misery, placing obstacles in the way could be everywhere. I wanted to show it through the fitters... I have worked as a fitter, so I know their work. The aim was to show the truth.”*²⁴ The film signalises the progress in the filmography and therefore the thematic component liberalisation, which includes moving the accent from Marxist-Leninist agitation to social relations.

Experimental psychological drama **322** (1969) directed by Dušan Hanák shows one labourer’s life. The main character works in the kitchen, but in the past, he used to work as a clerk. Focusing on human intimacy of this film is the sign of progress and modernity typical for films from 1960s. The view of the labour class issue is marginal, often bitter but certainly not panegyric (like it was in films before 1960s). Great attention is devoted to daily life of socialistic citizen – State Security’s omnipresence, bribes, consumption and luxury. Throat cancer, the diagnoses number 322, have got people when they cannot express their opinion in public.

The view at the labour class in films of 1970s and 1980s

The Czechoslovak cinematography reflected political situation in 1970s again (as in 1940s and 1950s). Normalization process is visible on Vojtěch Trapl’s film *Člověk není sám* (1971). The collectivization idea typical for Marxist-Leninism could we notice on the film’s title that indicates the power of united labourers. Unfairly sentenced Jaroslav Král, a scientist, is the main character of *Man Is Not Alone*. He is not alone at all, in spite of arrest he is allowed to finish his research. The collectivization idea is intensive, people who help him are socialistic conscious citizens (his colleague and the State Security’s major) realizing the one and only aim of communist society – human’s prosperity. That is why Král’s research is so important to finish. On the mentioned example is possible to see tendentious processing of the film, a collateral film idea is to popularize the State Security’s activity through the major, who is a fair and reasonable man.

One of other agitations films of 1970s is **Cesty mužů** (1972) directed by Ivo Toman. Film makers’ aim is to show the fight against the collectivisation opponents. There is repeating the phenomenon of State Security’s positive character. Probably the most important moment of the film is the beginning scene of labourers giving their cattle to founding co-op agriculture voluntarily. There are lots of agitation symbols in the film e.g. happily dancing labourers in a screened film at the cinema, which indicates the better socialistic future.

Drama **Kronika žhavého léta** based on the Řezáč’s novel *The Battle* and directed by Jiří Sequens was filmed in 1972. The story records the effort to fulfil the Czech

24 Martin Hollý jr., the director of *Crows Fly Over*.

communists' vision to transfer the North Bohemian border to the Marx-Leninist ideology picture. Mr. Bagár, the main character tries to save the North Bohemian border from the capitalistic leaders, gold diggers and collaborationists. He is a perfect socialist district committee leader, self-sacrificing and helpful citizen. Plot of the film is to save a co-op agriculture and the factory from restitution after The World War II. Black and white character of actors is supported by costumes. There is a conversation between a sleek feudal and a ragged, hardworking comrade as labourers' representative. The victory of labourers at the end of *Chronicles of a Hot Summer* shows unanimous voting for factory's collectivization and leaving of socialistic enemies from the borders.

Miroslav Hornák filmed in 1974 **Ohnivé křižovatky** showing Eastern Slovakia industrialization on *East Slovakian Ironworks* example. Building of the Ironworks is led by many ideological statements e.g. *"You are building your own factory"*, *"It will be the largest building of the socialism."* Brothers Belušovci's father personates a nationally and ideal conscious person. He sends both sons to metallurgy's studies. Through the main theme of *Blazing Crossroads* Ondrej Beluš and Adela's love story we can see socialistic habits of everyday life e.g. putting flowers to the socialistic memorial during the wedding day. Thanks to Ondrej's studies in the Soviet Union's factory is visible ideology tendencies to show the USSR like a modern and perfect state. The first iron product made in the East Slovakian Ironworks is of course star, the symbol of the USSR.

In the film **Kto odchádza v daždi...** (Martin Hollý jr., 1974) is showed collectivisation process of 1947–1948 and the story is about servants who get their own land after the land reform. The controversial personality is personified in Mr. Haštiak. Haštiak as a collectivisation opponent stands up against a co-op agriculture foundation. His character with antisocialist opinions is out the ordinary of normalisation cinematography production. At the end, he has to leave defeated during the rain. On top of that, the film shows the story about Družko, one of the perfect socialistic men founding the co-op agriculture. Družko, thanks to his participation on the co-op agriculture becomes a successful labourer.

Despite of 1970s and 1980s normalization this period of time means for Czechoslovak filmography the beginning of many actor legends. Thanks to perestroika of 1980s was produced many debut films. It was filmed a lot of comedies and fairy tales in coproduction with German partners. Repertoire of films' themes was varied, but labour films were still appearing. The best examples are obviously films **Slunce, seno, jahody** (Zdeněk Troška, 1983) and **Vesničko má středisková** (Jiří Menzel, 1985).

The Czech comedy **Slunce, seno, jahody** made in 1984 regarded as one of the classics of the Czech comedy industry. It was filmed and set in Hoštice, a small rural village in the Czech portion of the former Czechoslovakia. It is a play on the perceived stereotypes of daily co-op agricultural' life in a village. The main theme of the film is the agricultural student Šimon Plánička's intention of trying out his experiment regarding the *"Milk yield of cows in regards to a cultural environment"*. Through the experiment is showed successful co-op agriculture's modernization.

An excursion to the social conditions of the Czechoslovak village provides the film **Vesničko má středisková**. Among other things, we can see the differences of

authentic living conditions of a socialist villager and a person who lives in a city in new modern blocks of flats. The main film characters are two labourers, working in a co-op agriculture's associated production. The film comedy sometimes bordering to satire we can observe on Otík character's behaviour. Otík's return from Prague to his home presents the happy end of the film, the value of the friendship and the society wins.

Conclusion

40 years of socialism in Czechoslovakia were reflected in Czechoslovak cinematography in phases, which can be called (1) agitation, (2) experimental-individual and (3) ideological-demagogic. Strict censorship, a slight relaxation resulting in film experimentation, or the fear that someone will notice some detail in your film that could easily cause your imprisonment – all this was part of the cinema of those years.

Based on our film content analysis we can say that despite the changing circumstances of the regime's rigor, the cinematography of real socialism was characterized by a propaganda highlighting the nation's new elite – the workers and their irreplaceable role in historical development, which was to be characterized by a modern and progressive elements.

The 1940s and 1950s films are classical socialistic agitation films showing the labourers only in positive way. Happy endings are typical for this period, the labourers always win and there is also a transgenerational problem. Youth is directed all the time procommunist and the oldest are sceptical of the new regime e.g. films as *Pan Novák*, *Karhanova parta* or *Zocelení*.

The films of 1960s are truly labelled as new wave or the Czechoslovak miracle of the 1960s cinematography. The international policy of 1960s influenced the Czechoslovak situation which resulted limited censorship and more filming freedom. These films were concentrated on different themes of people's daily individual lives, which have been processed by various experimental film techniques. Filmography at that time was focusing on the main character psychic and solving the moral dilemmas. In some films there are even symbols presented anti-communist opinions. Given films, were later put in safe and set free after 1989.

The occupation of 1968 started the normalization process therefore returning to the "communist normal" which influenced the cultural activities in recovering the censorship and schematism. The Czechoslovak cinematography progress was gradually stopped until 1989. The film themes of 1970s and 1980s are similar to 1950s – the labourers fight for their rights and the end of the film predicts the better socialistic future. Filmography returned to the ideological-demagogic processing.

The film content analysis can provide visual probe into the daily lives of people of the past, but it is necessary to take a critical approach to film analysis and try to look "under the surface". The "subsurface" result of our film analysis is chronological elaboration of the labour's propaganda degree in the film, which immediately followed the current socio-political domestic and foreign events and thus reflected the (required) reality through the film.

Films

- 322 (Dušan Hanák, 1969)
 Anděl na horách (Bořivoj Zeman, 1955)
 Cesty mužů (Ivo Toman, 1972)
 Člověk není sám (Vojtěch Trapl, 1971)
 Havrania cesta (Martin Hollý jr., 1962)
 Karhanova parta (Zdeněk Hofbauer, 1950)
 Konec jasnovidce (Ján Roháč, Vladimír Svitáček, 1957)
 Kronika žhavého léta (Jiří Sequens, 1972)
 Kto odchádza v daždi... (Martin Hollý jr., 1974)
 Ohnivé křižovatky (Miroslav Hornák, 1974)
 Pan Novák (Bořivoj Zeman, 1949)
 Pětistovka (Martin Frič, 1949)
 Postav dom, zasad strom (Juraj Jakubisko, 1979)
 Rudá záře nad Kladnem (Vladimír Vlček, 1955)
 Siréna (Marie Majerova, 1947)
 Slunce v síti (Štefan Uher, 1962)
 Slunce, seno, jahody (Zdeněk Troška, 1983)
 Tři přání (Ján Kadár, Elmar Klos, 1958)
 Usměvavá zem (Václav Gajer, 1952)
 Varúj.! (Martin Frič, Pavol Bielik, 1946)
 Vesničko má středisková (Jiří Menzel, 1985)
 Vlčie diery (Pavol Bielik, 1948)
 Železný dědek (Václav Kubásek, 1948)
 Zocelení (Martin Frič, 1950)
 Zvony z rákosu (Václav Kubásek, 1950)

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