



History of European Cinema

Intercultural Perspective

editors

Michał Dondzik
Michał Pabiś-Orzeszyna
Bartosz Zając



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Introduction

This volume gathers together proceedings of the international conference „History of Central-European Cinema. Intercultural Perspective” held from November 5th to 7th, at the University of Łódź, Poland. The conference provided a forum for experts from different methodological fields linked with the interest in transnational dimensions of cinema history.

Until recently the notion of Central-European cinema has been dominated by the national perspective, or the one concentrated on the relations with the Western cinema industries. The new impulse emerged recently as a response to the changes taking place in the modes of film production and new strategies of film distribution. Equally important are the new methodological approaches, especially the historiographic ones – which compel us to reconsider many cinematic phenomena surveyed in the past. Significant role here plays the so-called “return to the archives” and “new cinema history”, challenging the great canonical narratives, which for many years has been reproduced by the film-history scholarship.

The most of the nine delivered papers presented empirical case studies. Authors tackled various topics showing that intercultural aspects of Central European cinema is a fascinating challenge to the contemporary cinema studies. Andrzej Dębski in his article demonstrates transnational background of early cinema business in Poland while Urszula Biel provides a profound analysis of distribution and reception of Polish films in Germany in 1920s and 1930. Together with Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska piece on audience practices in postwar Berlin and Tomasz Rachwald analyses of Polish postwar press, these articles proved how methodologically fruitful archival research and non-filmic sources can be.

In turn, Tomasz Kłys provides historically situated analysis of the German movie about Polish national uprising “Ritt in Die Freiheit” (1936) showing how central European national cinema reflected political and cultural changes in Europe. The problem of national identity has been also examined by Magdalena Wąsowicz who highlighted political dimensions of Hungarian rock-opera genre. While if it comes to the issue of Central-European states and audiences attitude towards foreign film industries has been addressed directly by Piotr Zwierzchowski who focused on Polish film critics discussions on Hungarian movies and by Ewa Ciszewska who traced Polish-Czechoslovak film co-production strategies. Her conceptualization serves as a productive background for Mikołaj Góralik piece on Polish and Czechoslovak science fiction movies.

Thus the goal of this book was to introduce reflection on historical phenomena that require perspectives transgressing national paradigm in studying film history (it is co-productions, cinemas of communist block and films produced under a significant “cold war” pressure and – last but not least – issues related to transnational distribution and reception). And although the attempt to reconstruct transnational history topography seems to be obviously impossible to realize in one volume, we believe, this publication provide and inspiration for broader discussions and research projects.

Michał Dondzik, Michał Pabiś-Orzeszyna, Bartosz Zając

Andrzej Dębski*

Film screenings in the “Polish territories”¹ in 1896 and their international context

In 1995, the “Film History” journal published Deac Rossell’s chronicle of cinema, 1889–1896.² What matters is that his attention centered not only on the inventors and their patented innovations, but also on film exhibition practices. Consequently, Rossell brought back to life lost memories of dozens of pioneers and their achievements that influenced the emergence of the film industry, and provided us with a primer of early film screenings understood on a global scale. He also opened up new possibilities for discovering a number of new facts, context and involved characters. Even though Robert Paul, who delivered his theatrograph, can be found on a list of pioneers well known to cinema historians, it is Rossell who pointed out that Paul’s cinematograph had been used outside UK and France (in Spain, Portugal, Russia, Italy, Sweden, South Africa and Australia) earlier than Edison’s and Armat’s vitascope was used anywhere outside the USA. Meanwhile, Mme Olinka had been rescued from complete oblivion. Olinka, arguably the only European woman involved with travelling film screenings in 1896, was a Polish lady who organized shows in the Netherlands and Germany and in the “Polish territories” (in Poznań) using Hermann Foersterling’s cinematograph.

What attracted my attention in particular in Rossell’s account were the screenings in the “Polish territories”, especially when one notices the source he used, namely Małgorzata Hendrykowska’s research:³

- Warsaw: 18 of July, Unidentified apparatus;
- Łódź: 1 of August, Unidentified apparatus;
- Lvov: 13th of September, Unidentified apparatus;
- Łódź, 7th of November, Edison Vitascope;
- Kraków, 14th of November, Lumière Cinématograph;

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¹ Because these territories were divided between three different countries I will be using this term in quotation marks.

² See *A Chronology of Cinema 1889–1896*, ed. D. Rossell, “Film History. An International Journal” 1995, no. 2.

³ See M. Hendrykowska, *Śladami tamtych cieni. Film w kulturze polskiej przełomu stuleci 1895–1914*, Poznań 1993; eadem, *Film journeys of the Krzemiński brothers, 1900–1908*, “Film History. An International Journal” 1994, no. 2, p. 206–218.

- Przemyśl: 22nd of November, Unidentified apparatus;
- Poznań: 23rd of November, Kinematograph or H. O. Foersterling & Co.⁴

As you can see, although Rossell used a Polish scholar's account to establish dates, he did only rewrote two names of the apparatus used (in the case of the second screening in Łódź and the first show in Kraków). Also let's not forget that traditional Polish historiography most often links Thomas Edison's apparatus with almost all the screenings in the "Polish territories" (Cracow figures as the only exception). Meanwhile, Rossell attributed Foersterling's apparatus to the show in Poznań and described the other ones using the term: "unidentified apparatus". There are two reasons for this kind of historical interpretation: certain advertisements in Poznań and the vitascope's limited distribution in Europe.

In Hendrykowska's book, *Śladami tamtych cieni*, one can find a reprinted advertisement informing us that "living photographs" were presented using "Ideal Edisona" ("Edison's Ideal").⁵ And this particular sentence explicitly clarifies that Foersterling's apparatus was here the case. In the latter half of 1896, Foersterling was among the most prominent figures in the Berlin cinematograph market. He effectively challenged figures like Oskar Messter. Foersterling's company Helios Berliner Industrie-Anstalt (Foersterling and & Co.) was engaged in the production and sale of phonographs and optical equipment and went into film business very early on. It was in August 1895 that Foersterling received an order from Ludwig Stollwerck (the very one who had imported Edison's kinoscope's and Lumière's cinematographs to Germany⁶) who commissioned recording kinoscope movies with Birt Acres camera. In May 1896, Foersterling sold the first cinematograph of his own production based on Acres Kineopticon and named Biomotograph. In June 1896, he introduced a new type of projector equipped with a five-armed Maltese cross copied from the Parisian version of Pierre-Victor Continsouza's cinematograph (one of the many French pieces of equipment that did not fall under German copyright law). In extensive advertising campaigns in the trade press, Foersterling called it "Edison Ideal" and counted on brand success fostered by the fame of Edison (a number of other European entrepreneurs used similar practices, which is the reason why one can find a multiplicity of advertisements using the famous inventor's name). Foersterling sold his projector for 1,200 Deutschmarks and this price was significantly lower than the price for Messter's Kinetograph (2,000 Deutschmarks). Dutch exhibitor, Christiaan Slieker had already bought it in June or July 1896 and had been using it for at least six years, which shows it's high quality (today this particular copy is on display in a museum in Drachten).⁷ Rossell's chronicle implies that in 1896

⁴ See *A Chronology of Cinema...*, p. 158–160, 165, 172, 174.

⁵ M. Hendrykowska, *Śladami tamtych cieni...*, p. 22.

⁶ See M. Loiperdinger, *Film & Schokolade, Stollwerks Geschäfte mit lebenden Bildern*, Frankfurt am Main–Basel 1999.

⁷ See D. Rossell, *Jenseits von Messter – die ersten Berliner Kinematographen-Anbieter*, "KINtop. Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films" 1997, no. 6, p. 172.

Foersterling's apparatus had been used in Leeuwarden (15.07: Slieker), Hamburg (27.09: Olinka), Kiel (2.10), Munich (3.10: Jean Dienstknecht), Görlitz (4.10: Olinka), Zagreb (8.10: Samuel Hoffmann), Litomice (9.10: Oeser brothers; in the first days of November they organised shows in Brno, then in Olomouc, Šternberk, Jihlava and Svitavy), Essen (17.10), Basel (22.10: Bartling), Amsterdam (25.10: Olinka), Bremen (27.10: Dienstknecht), Prague (3.11), Hague (14.11: Olinka), Rotterdam (16.11: Olinka), Poznań (23.11), Utrecht (29.11: Slieker) and in Oldenburg (8.12: Friedrich Gröning).⁸ This list covers only identified screenings. The real number is presumably higher.

Vitascope was severely limited in Europe. The first screening advertised as “Programma Edison” and treated by Rossell as a “probable” use of this particular apparatus took place on the 24 of October in Udine. Subsequent shows were organised in Bologna (8.11, “probably” vitascope) and in Pilzno (27.11: Josef Hoffmann; 1.12: Georg Kemp).⁹ In this context, it seems clear why Rossell noted the screening in Łódź (1.08) as being an “unidentified apparatus” but in the case of the second show (7.11) he agreed that it could have been a vitascope. Although in August the availability of this equipment was limited, in November there was such a possibility. Nevertheless, one has to remember that because the very practice of impersonation was popular, the presence of Edison's name in Łódź advertisements does not prove that vitascope was actually in use.

It is worth indicating to what extent was cinematography recognized in 1896. Obviously, it's impossible to recount here the whole richness of Rossell's account. Therefore, I will only show Warsaw screenings and their international context covering the three days before and after 18 July (the dates below concern opening screenings; within these dates other screenings also took place, the ones that did begin before 15th – the account below does not cover these).

1. Leeuwarden: 15.07, *Kinematograph of H. O. Foersterling & Co*;
2. Bourg-en-Bresse: 15.07, *Lumière Cinématographe*;
3. Karlowe Wary: 15.07, *Lumière Cinématographe*;
4. Vienna: 15.07, “*Kinematographe*”, *Unidentified apparatus*;
5. Porto: 17.07, *Theatograph of R. W. Paul*;
6. Nantes: 17.07, “*Cinéphotographe*”, *Unidentified apparatus*;
7. Mariańskie Łaźnie: 18.07, *Unidentified apparatus*;
8. Saint-Etienne: 18.07, *Cinographoscope of A. and J. Pipon*;
9. Warsaw: 18.07, “*Kinematograf Edisona*”, *Unidentified apparatus*;
10. Middlesbrough: 19.07, *Theatograph of R. W. Paul*;
11. Newport: 20.07, *Lumière Cinématographe*;
12. Ottawa: 21.07, *Edison Vitascope*;
13. Stockholm: 21.07, “*Paris Cinématographe*”, *Unidentified apparatus*¹⁰.

What is worth taking into consideration is not only the frequency of the screenings but also the diversity of the equipment used. As regards the

⁸ See respective dates in *A Chronology of Cinema...*

⁹ See respective dates in *A Chronology of Cinema...*

¹⁰ See *A Chronology of Cinema...*, p. 157–159.

quantitative approach, we know that the 300 Continsous's apparatus, 200 Paul's, 63 Messter's (42 in Germany) was sold in Europe until the end of 1896.¹¹ Apart from that, one should acknowledge the quantity of other cinematographs sold in Paris, London or Berlin that it is impossible to estimate.¹²

What seems interesting against such a backdrop is the Lumière's situation, since their business strategy was to sell licenses, and in 1896 their cinematographs and movies were unavailable for regular free trade. Moreover, the Lumière's movies were on a 35 mm filmstock. However, because of the patent law their perforation differed from the one used by Edison. Naturally, there were a number of film formats available in those days, but it was Edison's that proved to be the most popular and the one used by a majority of projectors. The reason for this was simple: large quantity of movies for kinetoscope appeared when kinetoscopes were leaving the market. In the latter half of 1896, Lumière's license system began to crash because a number of less expensive apparatus had emerged. In January 1897, Lumière's cinematographs acquired by Ludwig Stollwerck were put on sale in Germany for 4,000 Deutschmarks and this happened just a few months before Société Lumière sold its patents to Pathé Frères in May.¹³ From that moment on, Lumière movies were sold with Edison's perforations, which may be an interesting thread for a discussion on the development of cinematography. Pradoxically, Lumière brothers did not beat their competitors because of the improved equipment. On the contrary, they were under pressure from their rivals having no being unable to adjust to the changes in the dynamically emerging cinema market. In Rossell's opinion, they "didn't manage to capitalize on the fame of their own apparatus".¹⁴

When I began writing this essay, I was asking myself the question as to whether it is possible to identify the actual projection apparatus that had been in use in 1896 in the "Polish territories", but elsewhere than in Kraków or Poznań? And what can we say about the quality of these apparatus on the basis of press accounts? The latter questions seemed especially intriguing to me, since one can trace a kind of "Lumière-centrism" in Polish film studies.

¹¹ See M. Loiperdinger, "Viel Geld zu verdienen". *Ein internationales Angebot von Kinematographen und "Films"*, [in:] *Geschichte des dokumentarischen Films in Deutschland, Band 1: Kaiserreich 1895–1918*, ed. U. Jung, M. Loiperdinger, Stuttgart 2005, p. 64.

¹² Rossell lists companies in London W.C. Hughes, Prestwich Manufacturing Company, J.W. Rowe, Haydon & Urry, R.R. Beard that were competing with Paul and Acres; Parisian enterprises owned by Continsousa, François Parnaland, George W. de Bedts, Henry Joly, Clement & Gilmer that competed with Charles Pathé; Berlinian companies Philipp Wolff, Arnold Hesekei, Romain Talbot, Oskar Ney competing with Foersterling and Messter. Meanwhile in Berlin one could easily buy French cinematographs: Hesekei was selling de Bedts' apparatus, Talbot offered vitagraphs by Clement & Gilmer and Wolff opened his shops in Paris and London and in January 1897 advertised in Berlin "the biggest store with film stock to every projection apparatus" (see D. Rossell, *Jenseits von Messter...*, p. 167–184).

¹³ See M. Loiperdinger, *Film & Schokolade...*, p. 178.

¹⁴ D. Rossell, *Die soziale Konstruktion früher technischer Systeme der Filmprojektion*, "KINtop. Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films" 1999, no. 8, p. 72.

Congress Poland

The very first advertisement for “Edison’s kinematograph” (“today and everyday”) appeared in “Kurier Warszawski” on the 17 of July 1896 and was reprinted one more time on the following day.¹⁵ Subsequent announcements were not published and it is difficult to estimate how many days screenings were run for (they were introduced as a “short run”). On the 19 of July, a short article on how the cinematograph worked had been published. The article also informed readers that: “Despite the fact that the thing itself is quite extraordinary, very interesting and worth admiration, the apparatus used by Warsaw entrepreneur is not functioning well”.¹⁶ It also said that the cinematograph is a “combination of color photography and electricity”, which suggests that coloured movies might have been a part of the programme. We cannot say much about the screenings themselves apart from the fact that they depicted “wagon and pedestrian street traffic; a scene of fire brigade rescuing people from a conflagration; people dancing; a duel; cats playing etc.” Nonetheless, one should remember that although this was the very first screening in Warsaw, people were very familiar with the movies they already knew from everyday kinoscope projections. Kinetoscopes were available for a short time in the premise near Niecała street 1/33 (January)¹⁷ and for much longer in the Mach brothers’ Panopticum near Krakowskie Przedmieście (opened 15 of March, closed 30 of June and opened again 20th of September). In the Panopticum, apart from the seasonal phenomena (“33 Dahomeyan Princesses”, “Three tiger girls” and the Andersen sisters) one could see a permanent exhibition of wax figures, panorama, stereoscopes, 30 microscopes, kinetoscopes, phonographs, automatic musical instruments, comic mirrors, rogue gallery and other automata.¹⁸ In the end of April, when “Kurier Warszawski” announced The Great Industrial Exhibition in Berlin, it emphasized that in Berlin one can see a cinematograph¹⁹ that “uses a complicated combination of mirrors and lenses to display full scale moving images and replay them *en miniature* kinoscope that you know from Warsaw shows”.²⁰

Meanwhile, the apparatus used from 8 of December by Ciniselli Circus from Petersburg (conducted by Aleksander Ciniselli) seem to be easily identifiable.

¹⁵ See advertisements in “Kurier Warszawski”, 17.07.1896, 18.07.1896.

¹⁶ *Cynematograf*, “Kurier Warszawski”, 19.07.1896.

¹⁷ See announcements in “Kurier Poranny”, 23.01.1896, 25.01.1896.

¹⁸ See announcements in “Kurier Poranny”, 15.03.1896, 11.04.1896, 11.06.1896, 28.06.1896, 20.09.1896.

¹⁹ This apparatus was Isolatograph bought in Paris from Isola brothers, in fact George Méliès and Lucien Reulos cinematograph imported to Berlin by Deutsche Kinematographische Gesellschaft representatives. From 25th of April this company organised film screenings near Unter den Linden 21 – see J. Goergen, *Der Kinematograph Unter den Linden 21. Das erste Berliner “Kino” 1896/97*, “KINtop. Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films” 1997, no. 6, p 143–152.

²⁰ *Wiadomości zagraniczne (Wystawa – Kinematograf)*, “Kurier Warszawski”, 30.04.1896 (no. 119), p. 3.

Ciniselli Circus came to Warsaw every winter and was very popular among patrons. Its advertisements were promoting the Chronophotograph²¹ – a 58 mm projector that Léon Gaumont acquired from George Demeny.²² Rossell's chronicle indicates that in 1896, the Chronophotograph had been used in Munich (11.06), Milan (26.07), Vienna (3.09), Amiens (4.10), Sydney (7.11), Havre (14.11) and in London (9.12).²³ "Kurier Warszawski" (10.12) published reports explaining how the chronophotograph worked, as well as some impressions from the screening: "However, Chronophotograph from Ciniselli Circus still needs some improvement because of the flickering light (which for sure can be easily fixed by improving the mechanism that shifts the images), it gives us a complete overview of this wonderful turn of the century invention. The photographs are projected on a large screen, taken from the camera with the help of an electric light. We can see here: a train arriving at a station; it stops, the conductor jumps off and opens the carriage doors; passengers leave; then the doors close and the train moves on. Also delightful is the image of shoreline with breaking waves and bathing children. Next is the duel scene, horse rides, military maneuvers, automobiles cavalcade (automatic vehicles) and cyclists and lastly, Loie Fuller dance (colored photography). "Living photography" is worth seeing".²⁴ One should also notice that the movies made with filmstock wider than 35mm looked better in large projection rooms (i.e. circus) and that was the reason for the later popularity of the 68 mm Biograph system in Europe.

Hanna Krajewska suggests that the cinematograph used in Resursa Obywatelska in Warsaw could have been relocated later to the luxury Helenów in Łódź where film screenings were organized from the 1st of August.²⁵ German-language journals in Łódź were announcing the "Edison's full-scale living photographs".²⁶ Among the "huge" pictures that one could see on a screen were: "Turkish harem women dancing, the dances of wild tribes, scenes from famous operas and operettas, adventures with wild animals, big city streets and squares with their colorful crowds etc."²⁷ Initially, screenings took place in the Helenów's lower room but on the 19th of August they were moved to the equally prestigious Zgromadzenie Majstrów Tkackich (Spinning Foreman Assembly). The press informed readers that especially the latter shows were "frequently visited by audience".²⁸ An advertisement from 20 of August announced a few titles: *Fabriksbrand in Chicago! Die Feuerwehr rettet zwei Menschenleben aus den Flammen, Szene bei einem Friseur in New-York!, Orientalischer Harems-Tanz!, Kriegstanz der Sioux-Indianer in Nord-Amerika!*²⁹

²¹ See announcement in "Kurier Warszawski", 8.12.1896 (no. 340), p. 1.

²² See M. Loiperdinger, "Viel Geld zu verdienen"..., p. 66.

²³ See respective dates in *A Chronology of Cinema...*

²⁴ *Chronofotograf*, "Kurier Warszawski", 10.12.1896, p. 5.

²⁵ See H. Krajewska, *Życie filmowe w Łodzi w latach 1896–1939*, Warszawa–Łódź 1992, p. 18.

²⁶ See announcements from the 1st of August in "Lodzer Zeitung" i "Lodzer Tageblatt".

I thank Łukasz Biskupski for making the copies of them available for me.

²⁷ *In Helenhof*, "Lodzer Tageblatt", 1.08.1896, p. 3.

²⁸ *Der Kinematograph*, "Lodzer Tageblatt", 19.08.1896, p. 3.

²⁹ *Kinematograph* (advert), "Lodzer Tageblatt", 20.08.1896, p. 6.

The juxtaposition of the coverage of the Łódź and Warsaw shows that in both cities we could see scenes from the streets, dances and animals (information not clear enough to make any assumption) but also – presumably the only movie that indicates the link between the projections – a movie about a rescue by fire-brigade. Knowing that in Warsaw this cinematograph was only for a short period, fosters the probability of the following hypothesis: entrepreneurs stopped by in Warsaw on a way to some other city, perhaps to Łódź. The titles from Łódź suggest that the films were Edison productions: *Fire Rescue Scene* (1894), *The Barbershop* (1894), *Turkish Harem Scene* (1896), *Oriental Dance* (1894), *Sioux Ghost Dance* (1894) or *Buffalo Dance* (1894).

It is impossible to determine what kind of equipment had been used in Warsaw and Łódź. Film titles, Edison’s name and the information that “full scale” images were projected is insufficient to formulate any hypothesis. However, if I could nonetheless try to do so, I would use the knowledge about the “large” images presented. Although “full-scale” is widely adopted as a slogan in trade commercials, fostering this quality with additional catchwords was a rather uncommon practice. While doing research in Wrocław, I encountered only one announcement underlining the large size of the image in press from the period 1896–1897. In the beginning of April 1897, in the *Harmonie* theatre programme, one could see Robert Paul’s “giant animatograph”, the one that was described as the cinematograph with “the best quality achievable nowadays”, which was highly recognized by audiences (i.e. school and families screenings were organized).³⁰ Early in 1894, Paul familiarized himself with Edison’s kinesiograph which he used as a basis for his own apparatus. Inspired by the Lumière cinematograph, he also worked on a projector. The first screening with his own (not patented) theatrograph took place on the 20 of February 1896 in London. On the 2 of March, he patented an improved version with seven-armed Maltese cross. From March on, these apparatus were used for movies projections, although sometimes the name “animatograph” was also used (for the first time on the 22nd of March during the show at the London Alhambra theatre). But let’s enumerate the examples of using Paul’s equipment outside the UK: Paris (4.04: Méliès), Madrid (7.04), Johannesburg (9.05), Moscow (26.05), Lisbon (18.06), Porto (17.07), Stockholm (1.08), Milan (2.08), Espinho (12.08), Figueira da Foz (15.08), Melbourne (17.08), Sydney (17.09), Montreal (30.09), Toronto (8.12), Hobart (12.12).³¹

Kinesiograph movies and “giant” screenings as well as the very use of theatrograph in mid- 1896 in Europe and various regions around the world make its presence probable also in the “Polish territories”. This assumption is hypothetical and highly speculative. Nonetheless, it is still more plausible than the presence of Edison/Armat’s vitascope in Łódź and Warsaw. Certainly, the

³⁰ See *Riesen Animatograph* (announcement), “Schlesische Zeitung”, 1.04.1897; *Theater Harmonie*, “Breslauer Zeitung”, 8.04.1897. “Giantness” refers here to the images projected on the screen – presumably of bigger size than in case of other apparatus that supported 35 mm movies.

³¹ See respective dates in *A Chronology of Cinema...*

limited information available does not allow us to suppose which apparatus was in use in Łódź on the 7 of November when near Piotrkowska street 17, “Edison’s greatest and latest invention” was announced.³²

Galicja

Concerning Galicia, even establishing the date of the first screening appears to be difficult. The first announcement in the daily press we know was published on the 13 of September (it was reprinted several times in different newspapers over the following month). However, we also know that screenings began before that date. The standard form informed us that every day in the Hausman passage 8 in Lvov a “Polish company” presents the “Edison’s wonderful living images”. In addition to providing the screening hours and the price, the announcements also reveal that the shows were enriched with music played by a “graphophone”.³³ As early as on the 15 of August the bi-weekly “Dźwignia” published an article on how a cinematograph worked.³⁴ Then on the 29 of August, two other newspapers (“Kurier Lwowski” and “Dziennik Polski”) reprinted vast parts of it.³⁵ All these newspapers emphasized that the apparatus had been imported by “a company of Poles” and not by “some foreign intruders” who usually come to town only to “make pockets full of money and leave”. “Dźwignia” and “Kurier Polski” wished these Poles “good luck with these useful and educational cinematographic shows that are soon going to take place in Lvov”.

An advertisement of the screenings that used “Edion’s Ideal” (which in fact indicates Foersterling’s apparatus) appeared in “Dźwignia” on the 1st of September. The announcement said that “living images” that are “very popular in London, Paris, Napoli and Vienna” are to be shown each day in the Hausmann passage on the first floor. The list of titles included: *Okręt na morzu*, *Prześladowania Chińczyka*, *Pociąg kolejowy*, *U dentysty*, *Taniec dzikich*, *Park dziecięcy w Paryżu* as well as “pictures of incredibly fast movements: *Taniec szkocki*, *Taniec serpentynowy*, *Akrobatka* and other, even more astonishing images of natural size and colours”.³⁶ These movies were beefed up with

³² *Kinematograph*, “Lodzer Zeitung”, 7.11.1896, p. 5.

³³ See announcements in “Dziennik Polski”, 13.09.1896, 16.09.1896, 18.09.1896, 20.09.1896, 22.09.1896, 24.09.1896, 9.10.1896, 11.10.1896; “Kurier Lwowski”, 13.09.1896, 14.09.1896, 17.09.1896, 19.09.1896, 22.09.1896, 25.09.1896; “Gazeta Narodowa”, 17.09.1896, 18.09.1896, 19.09.1896, 20.09.1896, 22.09.1896, 25.09.1896, 29.09.1896, 3.10.1896, 4.10.1896, 9.10.1896, 10.10.1896; “Gazeta Lwowska” didn’t announce any screenings and these dates concern all press advertisements announcing film shows that I found in four above enlisted newspapers from September to October 1896.

³⁴ See *Kinematograf – fotografie ruchu i życia*, “Dźwignia Przemysłowo-Handlowa Ilustrowana”, 15.08.1896, p. 113–114. I would like to thank Jurij Romaniszynow for making the scans of “Dźwignia” from Biblioteka im. Stefanyka in Lvov available for me.

³⁵ See *Kinematograf*, “Kurier Lwowski”, 29.08.1896, p. 5; *Kinematograf*, “Dziennik Polski”, 29.08.1896, p. 3.

³⁶ *Ideal Edisona!* (advert), “Dźwignia Przemysłowo-Handlowa Ilustrowana”, 1.09.1896, p. 124.

graphophone music (turned on during the intervals). “Dźwignia” was a newspaper established by a part of Towarzystwo Kupców i Przemysłowców (Society of Merchants and Industrialists) and Towarzystwo Kupców i Młodzieży Handlowej (Society of Merchants and Mercantile Youth) in Lvov. These associations probably shared the belief that through these kinds of announcements they could strengthen their own business profile. This hypothesis can be reinforced when we consider the actual location of the screenings: near the aforementioned passage one could find “trendy shops, attorneys offices, tailors, shops with cloths and furs, two ‘European’ laundries, a photographic shop ‘Rembrandt’, famous library ‘Vita’ and J. Friedmann’s printery etc.”³⁷ Among the newspaper’s readers one could also find potential contractors from Galicia (possibly interested in hosting the company representatives and their apparatus). Since the bi-weekly “Dźwignia” usually came out on the 1 and 15 day of each month, the day the announcement appeared does not state clearly that the actual day the screening took place was also the 1st of September. Nonetheless, we can easily imagine that since no other date has been published, any possible time lapse would have had a negative influence on the company image (the first patron would probably leave in disappointment). After a dozen or so days of screenings, the organizers decided to publish announcements in daily newspapers to attract audiences from “behind passage socialite” groups and those patrons not among “Dźwignia” readers.

The first coverage from the film show appeared as early as on the 3rd of September in “Gazeta Lwowska”: “A company owned by our country’s citizens, Poles, is going to promote the newest inventions here and in the province, among various audiences. At the moment, they are screening in Lvov – in the Hausman passage – cinematograph, which is an apparatus used to picture live scenes from nature in movement, i.e., chase scenes, rough sea etc.”³⁸ This very reference seems to prove that by that day the screenings were running.³⁹ Further coverage appeared on the 11 of September revealing that the cinematograph “is already in Lvov and its respective productions began in the ‘Workers house’ near the Hausman passage”.⁴⁰ The author of that coverage had managed to see the show and listed eight film titles: *Szermierze, Na bulwarach, Taniec szkocki, Taniec węzowy, Bokserzy, Okręt na morzu, Scena w domu obłąkanych, Zabawa dzieci w Tuillerjach*. He also claimed that in the next article he would not only think about the cinematograph but also about “the social phenomenon of Edison’s fame” and the respective exaggerated “aureole of adverts”.

³⁷ B. Gierszewska, *Kino i film we Lwowie do 1939 roku*, Kielce 2006, p. 80.

³⁸ *Spółka*, “Gazeta Lwowska”, 3.09.1896, p. 3.

³⁹ Małgorzata ska claims that the first screening in Lvov took place on the 3rd of September (see M. Hendrykowska, *Kronika kinematografii polskiej 1895–2011*, Poznań 2012, p. 12). Meanwhile Andrzej Urbańczyk writes in conformity with mentioned coverage that on that day “film shows in Lvov were already on”, although he do not pinpoint the very date of the first screening (see A. Urbańczyk, *Kinematograf na scenie. Pierwsze pokazy filmowe w Krakowie XI–XII 1896*, Kraków 1986, p. 30).

⁴⁰ *Kinematograf edisonowski*, “Kurier Lwowski”, 11.09.1896 (no. 253), p. 4.

It is this particular context, in which we should interpret the widely known and cited fragment of the article “*Cud XIX wieku*” (19 Century Miracle) and its author’s words on the audience that took boxers for fencers, a sea ship for a boulevard and a scene from a psychiatric hospital for a Scottish dance. It was not by accident that the author put his title in quotation marks – that way he marked it with a hint of exaggeration and a lot of sarcasm. He mocked the fact that everyone knew Edison’s name (“No doubt Edison is the most famous name on Earth”), although only a few knew who had invented the telephone or the sewing machine. In his opinion, one should acknowledge two reasons for Edison’s fame: Edison entertains his audience and the audience “praises those who entertain rather than those who make their life easier”; Edison has “enough money and cleverness to enroll any serious scholars to write peans in praise of himself”.⁴¹ He treated the cinematograph and the phonograph (“this time named ‘graphophone’”) as “toys” and he did not ascribe to them any kind of usefulness.⁴² What may seem a bit startling is that this very article written by a journalist from Lvov began to function as historical proof of the Lumières’ apparatus’ advantage over Edison’s equipment.⁴³ On the contrary, it seems unreasonable to seriously treat the author who claims that the better way to evoke graphophone sounds (“hau! hau! ohuaj! ohuj! juoj! juoj! juoj! hau!”) is to step on a dog’s tail!”⁴⁴

The methodology of historical research suggests that one should confront different sources. Luckily, the afore-mentioned author was not the only one who shared his impressions with readers of that time. On the 23 of September, more coverage appeared, this time published in “*Gazeta Narodowa*”. The author of that article praised the combination of “perfect graphophone” and cinematograph that had not only triggered “unusual attention among visitors who came to see that invention” but had also impressed the journalists.⁴⁵ Movies like *Na bulwarach*, *Zabawa dzieci w Tuillierjach* and *Taniec węzowy* were described as “simply excellent” and that was why journalists encouraged their readers to pay a visit to the “educative and amusing” cinematograph. One day later, similar coverage appeared in “*Gazeta Lwowska*”, in which the movies were recognized as being “excellent”.⁴⁶ On the 15 of October, the same newspaper published another article which informed readers that the cinematograph is to be displayed in Lvov only or a few days and then it would move to the provinces. It stressed that “an army of viewers attends each screening and tiny room appears to be too small for them”. Beside a remark on “the early stadium of apparatus development” and an observation that “with time and after some improvements it will recreate through

⁴¹ See “*Cud XIX wieku*”, “*Kurier Lwowski*”, 15.09.1896, p. 2.

⁴² What may seem interesting the article’s author at the same time praised Bell’s telephone and mocked graphophone invented by Bell himself (since graphophone was created in Volt’s laboratory founded by Bell, and then commercialized by American Graphophone Company).

⁴³ See T. Lubelski, *Historia kina polskiego. Twórcy, filmy, konteksty*, Katowice 2009, p. 20–21.

⁴⁴ See “*Cud XIX wieku*”..., p. 3.

⁴⁵ *Kinematograf*, “*Gazeta Narodowa*”, 23.09.1896, p. 3.

⁴⁶ *Kinematograf*, “*Gazeta Lwowska*”, 24.09.1896, p. 3.

photography the full scale of life and movement”, the Berlin scene *Unter den Linden* had been described as “marvelous” and the graphophone was recognized as a “very good way to reproduce arias and scenes from operas sung in Paris, Milan etc.”⁴⁷ Andrzej Urbańczyk assumes that the Lvov screenings lasted until the 20 of October (which is probable if we take into account the information published in “Gazeta Lwowska” on the 15th of October). Then these shows were available to audiences for more than six weeks.⁴⁸ Barbara Gierszewska correctly points out that in Lvov the cinematograph “quickly became an irresistible attraction”.⁴⁹

What is worth noticing are the titles of the movies mentioned in Lvov newspapers. *Taniec węzowy* is most probably a version of the very popular *Serpentine Dance*. The first movie from this genre was shot by Edison in 1894. Until 1896, similar scenes were a part of repertoire offered by Jenkins and Armat, Skladanowski brothers, Isolta brothers, Demenÿ and Gaumont, Paul, Messter or Lumière brothers. The connection with the movies of the latter can be traced together with titles like *Zabawa dzieci w Tuillerjach* or *Unter den Linden*. The former title may refer to *Bassin des Tuileries* (1896), the latter one connotes *Sous les tilleuls* (1896) shot by Charles Moisson at the turn of April and May.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, one should remember that since the Lumière brothers’ movies were unavailable on the open market, the Lvov audience could see their illegal copies provided with Edison’s perforations (or simply remakes shot by some other directors, since remaking of popular titles was a widespread practice).

During an archival research, my attention was attracted by one more fact: that a graphophone was in use during the musical or vocal parts of the show. Meanwhile, apart from a number of electrical devices, Foersterling announced his “phonographs and graphophones” in the trade press in 1896. In November, he also advertised in the Berlin journal “Tägliche Rundschau”: “the newest cintematographical-graphophone show”.⁵¹ This strongly reinforces the hypothesis that Polish entrepreneurs imported their cinematic and musical equipment from Berlin, where they bought it from Foersterling.

Entrepreneurs from Lvov names are unknown apart from Mme Olinka – one of the first businessmen that got involved with the travelling film industry in 1896, which is much earlier than the famous Krzemiński brothers. Their path is not known – its reconstruction demands a very precise archival analysis of a number of local journals. What we can assume, though, is that they did also organize screenings in the city of Przemyśl. On the 15 of November, an

⁴⁷ *Produkcje kinematografu*, “Gazeta Lwowska”, 15.10.1896, p. 3.

⁴⁸ See A. Urbańczyk, *Kinematograf na scenie...*, p. 35.

⁴⁹ B. Gierszewska, *Kino i film we Lwowie...*, p. 83. Gierszewska – presumably inspired by announcements in the daily press – suggests that shows in Lvov ran from 13th of September to 10th of October (ibidem, p. 79).

⁵⁰ M. Loiperdinger, *Film & Schokolade...*, p. 218.

⁵¹ J. Goergen, “Sensationellste Schaunummer der Gegenwart!”. *Zeitungsinserate des Berliner Filmpioniers H. O. Foersterling von 1896*, “KINtop. Jahrbuch zur Erforschung des frühen Films” 2000, no. 9, p. 111, 114.

advert appeared in “Kurier Przemyski”, informing readers that “next week” in the smaller room at the Sokół, a cinematographic show is going to be organized “by a Polish company from Lvov”.⁵² On the 22 of November, a playbill was published which contained the programme of “graphophone” and “pictures”. Among the latter one could find titles like: *Paryż na bulwarze*, *Akrobatka z kryształowego pałacu w Londynie*, *Prześladowany lichwiarz*, *Scena w domu obłąkanych*, *Bokserzy*, *Spotkanie Napoleona z Józefiną* and *Taniec serpentynowy* (in 24 colours) – frequent program changes were also announced.⁵³ The coverage from this show appeared on the 26 of November. Its author wrote that the cinematograph “deserves all round approval” because it “recreates scenes from life and not only amuses, but also educates”. On the other hand, the author indicates that “the enterprise is not very popular” perhaps because of the company’s name: “I assume the problem is that ‘kinematograf’ (cinematograph) is owned by a ‘Polish company’! Then we may expect a number of visits from school youth or soldiers”.⁵⁴ And that was the last information on the cinematograph.

Screenings in the “Polish territories”

Now, let us go back to the chronicle of screenings in the “Polish territories” in 1896 and fill it in with the information from my research:

- Warsaw: 17 lipca, *aparat niezidentyfikowany* (teatrograf Paula?);
- Łódź: 1 sierpnia, *aparat niezidentyfikowany* (teatrograf Paula?);
- Lvov: 1 września, kinematograf Foersterlinga;
- Łódź: 7 listopada, *aparat niezidentyfikowany*;
- Kraków: 14 listopada, kinematograf Lumière;
- Przemyśl: 22 listopada, kinematograf Foersterlinga;
- Poznań: 23 listopada, kinematograf Foersterlinga;
- Warsaw: 8 grudnia, chronofotograf Gaumonta / Demenÿ’go.

Two things ought to be said here.

Firstly, from the audience perspective, movies projected on a big screen in 1896 were nothing new. Viewers identified it as another piece of equipment used to produce the optical illusion of movement. In Warsaw, where movies were literally linked with kinetoscopes, people had been watching had movies in the Mach brothers Panopticum continuously for almost 15 weeks (15.03–29.06). But kinetoscopes were not the only connotation. In the coverage from screenings in Resursa, the author underlined that the image movement happens “with a little help from a sort of a magic lantern”.⁵⁵ In the article on

⁵² *Kinematograf w Sokole*, “Kurier Przemyski”, 15.11.1896, p. 2.

⁵³ *Kinematograf* (advert), “Kurier Przemyski”, 22.11.1896, p. 3.

⁵⁴ *Kinematograf*, “Kurier Przemyski”, 26.11.1896, p. 3.

⁵⁵ *Cynematograf...*, p. 4.

Ciniselli Circus, its author outlined that the chronophotograph ("also known as cynetograph or cynetoscope") is in fact an amplification of the well known 'magic wheel' or 'stroboscope' described by physicists".⁵⁶ On the other hand, journalists in Łódź emphasized that the images in movement shown "on a rolling glass or on a strip that rolls quickly are perhaps well known to our readers", nevertheless, in the cinematograph, the rule of the movement had been "improved in the best way possible".⁵⁷ Commentaries published in "Kurier Lwowski" were quite similar: "the very idea is not very new. Everyone of us can remember toys like 'praxinoscopes', 'zoescopes' and the cheerful laughter caused by a horse jumping over an obstacle or the old lady beating a child with the rod".⁵⁸ Małgorzata Hendrykowska points out that "on the roads of all annexed Polish territories one could meet a dozen or so entrepreneurs presenting images and the like from a magic lantern, which at that time could perfectly imitate movement".⁵⁹ A very interesting analysis of the visual "culture of attractions" in Łódź is also made by Łukasz Biskupski.⁶⁰ This proves movies did not appear on the big screen out of the blue box. On the contrary – the audience interpreted them in the context of its own rich visual experience.

Secondly, a few words ought to be said about the Lumière brothers and their initiatives. When on the 26 of March, Stollwerck signed a license agreement with Lumière's representatives, Weill-Martignan and Silvain, the financial conditions were as follows: 60% of gross went to the Lumières, 10% to their agents and from the remaining 30% Stollwerck must have covered all necessary expenses (that is room rental, employees, adverts, electricity etc.). In return, he did not have to pay for either the cinematographs, nor for the movies. Thus, his business depended only on the number of viewers. But from October to November, new conditions had been introduced due to the changing situation on the market: when their equipment lost its prestige and Lumière demanded 3,600 Deutschmarks monthly in order to be independent from the audience choices. Stollwerck decided to withdraw. He bought licensed cinematographs only to sell them in January (this is how he anticipated the upcoming events: from the 1 of May 1897 the apparatus and the movies made by a French company were available on the free market).⁶¹ Screenings in Kraków took place when the golden age of Société Lumière entered its final phase. Nevertheless, the brand was still well recognized. Urbańczyk puts it in these words: "In Autumn 1896, the Lumière's agent was looking for new outlets and he met a man who badly needed an attraction that would be able to draw attention away from his theatre problems".⁶² It appeared that Eugène Dupont's

⁵⁶ *Chronofotograf...*, p. 5.

⁵⁷ *Kinematograph*, "Łódzki Zeitung", 2.08.1896, p. 4.

⁵⁸ "Cud XIX. wieku"..., p. 2.

⁵⁹ M. Hendrykowska, *Początki kinematografii polskiej. Pierwsze dwie dekady*, [in:] *Kino okresu wielkiego niemow. Część pierwsza: początki*, ed. G. Grabowska, Warszawa 2008, p. 9.

⁶⁰ Ł. Biskupski, *Miasto atrakcji. Narodziny kultury masowej na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa 2013.

⁶¹ See M. Loiperdinger, *Film & Schokolade...*, p. 109, 133, 175–180.

⁶² A. Urbańczyk, *Jak Kraków i Lwów kinematograf witały*, "Życie Literackie", 9.11.1986, p. 3.

and Tadeusz Pawlikowski's business matters intertwined and owing to that, the audience of Teatr Miejski in Kraków could see the "images projected on the screen installed on a curtain", usually shown at the end of plays.⁶³

Traditional Polish film historiography often links the first screenings in the "Polish territories" with the date: 14 of November 1896 and a certain informal agreement. That date marks the beginning of the Polish film industry. This interpretation is sometimes enforced with the assumption about the presumably excellent quality of Lumière's equipment (in comparison with other "primitive" apparatus). On the basis of the data I have provided, one should acknowledge that this hypothesis is not sufficiently proven. A sort of assessment of Lumière's apparatus had been made by Antoni Krzemiński who bought an American projector in 1901 and highlighted its advantages compared to the Lumière's one: "projected images were very bright and sharp, and there was no flickering; but most importantly, the film perforations did not break; shifting filmstock through the frame happens with the help of the reel, not with pins".⁶⁴ Also it is worth pointing out that audiences in Lvov, Przemyśl and Warsaw could have seen colored movies (technologically more advanced than those shown to the viewers in Kraków). But something else is even more important: the rich economical, sociological and cultural context connected with the global emergence and spread of cinematography, which means also in the "Polish territories".⁶⁵

Trans. Michał Pabiś-Orzeszyna

⁶³ *Kinematograf*, "Czas" (Dodatek poranny), 17.11.1896 (no. 265), p. 1.

⁶⁴ A. Krzemiński, *Jak powstało pierwsze kino w Polsce. Jego dalszy rozwój w Polsce jak i w Rosji Carskiej*, [in:] *Kino okresu wielkiego niemowy...*, p. 94.

⁶⁵ The extended version of this article appeared in Polish as Międzynarodowy kontekst projekcji filmowych w 1896 roku na dawnych „ziemiach polskich” i współczesnych ziemiach Polski, [in:] KINtop. Antologia wczesnego kina, cz. II, ed. A. Dębski, M. Loiperdinger, Wrocław 2016, p. 289–339.

Urszula Biel

The Place of Polish Films on German market between 1920s and 1930s, with special emphasis on Borderlands

In the last few years there were few publications on Polish-German film collaboration during the interwar period, especially regarding years 1934–1939 when these mutual relations served political agenda.¹

Special emphasis has been put on coproduction and distribution of German films in Poland. This paper considers reverse side of these relations, which is the presence of Polish films in Germany during the interwar period. The main source for this study will be the diplomatic and governmental correspondence of both countries during the mentioned period.

In order to situate the place of Polish cinema in Weimar Republic and the Third Reich one must keep in mind huge disproportions between the two cinematographies, in both qualitative and quantitative terms. In 1918 Germany was second film industry in the world market, with the production of 340 films,² whereas slowly developing Polish branch reached only seven movies.³ During the next few years these numbers changed, but the proportions still reflected great differences in the potential of both cinematographies. After the World War I many countries boycotted German films. As a response the government of Weimar Republic blocked import of these states national production. German cinematography not only survived almost three years of isolation, but ended up more powerful than before. In order to fulfill the programmes of cinema theatres the production of national cinema increased from 470 films in 1919 to 510 in 1920.⁴ In 1921 Berlin opened up to other countries movies, but finding way to Reich's screens was still very difficult.

¹ U. Biel, *Polsko-niemiecka wymiana filmowa w latach 1933–1939*; K. Pryt, *Polsko-niemieckie koprodukcje "August Mocny" i "Dyplomatyczna żona" w służbie nazistowskiej polityki wschodniej w latach 1934–1939*, [in:] *Polska i Niemcy. Filmowe granice i sąsiedztwa*, ed. K. Klejsa, Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut, Wrocław 2012; U. Biel, *Kino w obszarze szczególnej troski: filmy niemieckie na ekranach województwa śląskiego w latach 1932–1939*, [in:] *W drodze do sąsiada. Polsko-niemieckie spotkania filmowe*, ed. A. Dębski, A. Gwóźdź, Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut, Wrocław 2013.

² H. Prinzler, *Chronik des deutschen Films 1895–1994*, Metzler, Stuttgart 1995, data from 1918.

³ M. Hendrykowska, *Kronika kinematografii polskiej 1895–1997*, Ars Nova, Poznań 1999, p. 66.

⁴ H. Prinzler, *Chronik...*, data from 1919, 1920.

The gateway which could clear the passage from Warsaw to German market seemed to be the Polish minority being the largest national Group in Weimar Republic. This part of German audience might want to watch Polish movies because of cultural reasons. A survey conducted in 1925 indicated that even though a part of eastern territories together with Polish speaking population were lost, among the German population of 60 million, 900 thousand knew Polish language, which meant that it was the most frequently used foreign language in Germany. The second foreign language was French, used by only 10 thousand people. On the other hand region with the biggest percentage of population using language other than only German, was Upper Silesia. Among these 900 thousand more than a half – 542 thousands – live here, and at the beginning of the twenties this population outnumbered German-speaking people.⁵

If we take into consideration also issues regarding 1922 plebiscite – that was meant to judge to which country will Upper Silesia be annexed (consequently homogenic region was divided between Poland and Germany, see the map) and heavily influenced the awakening of national identity among inhabitants – it becomes obvious that this region can be seen as mostly absorptive of Polish films. This is why in the analysis of the mentioned problem I will concentrate mainly on Upper Silesia.

Plebiscite period (1918–1922)

German audience could see Polish movies for the first time in 1919–1922, the time when Polish-German borders were *in statu nascendi*. Young Polish cinematography, thanks to the government support, produced few films that were meant to awake the national spirit. There were three short movies (*Tańce polskie*, *Tam na błonię błyszczy kwiecie*, *Zakochałem ci się aż po same uszy*, probably made in 1920) and a fiction film *Pan Twardowski* (1921), all made by popular actor and director Wiktor Biegański.⁶ As an answer to German cinematic propaganda, there were also two longer feature films produced considering Upper Silesia: *Nie damy ziemi, skąd nasz ród* (also known as *Męczeństwo ludu Górnśląskiego* or *Krwawa walka na Górnym Śląsku*, dir. Władysław Lenczewski, 1920) and *Dwie urny* (dir. Cezar Rino-Lupo, 1921).

It is difficult to determine if and eventually where films mentioned above were screened on daily basis. There is a possibility that the cinema owners in Upper Silesia and east Germany could order them in Aurora film-booking office. Its owner, Konstanty Wysocki had his shares in a few Silesian cinemas (in

⁵ *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*, Band 1928, p. 20; *Historia Górnego Śląska*, ed. J. Bahlcke, D. Gawrecki, R. Kaczmarek, Dom Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej, Gliwice 2012, p. 203.

⁶ W. Rzepka, *Film na Śląsku w okresie powstań i plebiscytu (1919–1921)*, "Zaranie Śląskie" 1979, no. 2, p. 243–254.

Katowice, Gliwice, Nysa, Jelenia Góra) and published a magazine “Kinematograf Polski”. The journal was addressed to the developing Polish cine-market, but its multilingualism – information were also put in English, German, French and Italian – indicated the ambition to reach allied soldiers that stationed than at Upper Silesia region, and who could visit cinemas for military (Feldkinos).

In May 1919 issue of “Kinematograf Polski” Aurora published an advertisement of Polish film called *Halka* (director unknown, 1913), with annotation: “exclusive right on prewar German Reich territory”.⁷ Another proof that Wysocki’s agency made efforts to reach German market was his own announcement bought in an address-book of cinema theatres which was published in Berlin (Reichs-Kino-Adressbuch) and distributed to all kinds of cinematic companies in whole country.⁸

Aurora had also in its offer local actualities like *Powstanie Polskie na Górnym Śląsku*.⁹ Even though there is no evidence that these films were a part of daily programmes, they were certainly screened in Upper Silesia, for example as a part of travelling screenings organized by Cultural and Educational Department of a Polish Plebiscite Committee (Wydział Kulturalno-Oświatowy Polskiego Komitetu Plebiscytowego).¹⁰

Land unterm Kreutz cesura (premiere: March 1927)

If we believe in available statistics, spectators of Weimar Republic lost contact with Polish films after laying out borders. Alexander Jason claims that after 1925 only one feature film (2,000 m length) was bought (which stood for 0,2% of a German market).¹¹ Unfortunately we don’t know its title, although it could be *Iwonka* (dir. Edward Puchalski, 1925), because in the correspondence of Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1926 there is a request to the consultants asking them to help distributor in communication with local cinemas regarding conditions of screenings.¹²

It is possible that some Polish films, not necessarily fictional feature, but travelogues or short films, emerged on the screens of the Upper Silesia province even though there is no sign of it in the statistics. The November revolution of 1918 abolished censorship in Germany for a while so the state lost its control over cinemas repertoire. Indeed, the cinematic act from 1920 restored

⁷ AURORA department commercial, “Kinematograf Polski” 1919, no. 4, p. 23.

⁸ AURORA department commercial, Reichs-Kino-Adressbuch, Berlin 1918/1920, p. 456.

⁹ Advertisement, “Kinematograf Polski” 1921, no. 2, p. 24.

¹⁰ U. Biel, *German and Polish Agitation through Travelling Cinemas in the 1920s in Upper Silesia*, [in:] *Travelling Cinema in Europe*, ed. M. Loiperdinger, “Kintop 10”, Frankfurt 2008, p. 157–161.

¹¹ A. Jason, *Handbuch des Films 1935/36*, Hoppenstedt, Berlin 1935, p. 109–110.

¹² National Archive in Opole (further: ANO), Records of Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Opole (further: CGORP), sign. 191 (microfilm), Political Department from 6.03.1926.

the censorship, but for few more years release prints from the previous period could circulate in cinemas. Polish-German border at the Upper Silesia was traced late, that is in 1922. Previous to that moment it was untight which made smuggling very easy. A lot of German films prints were left in Poland. Similarly, there could be some Polish films left in German part of Upper Silesia where they did find their way to the screen.¹³ But even if such incidents did happen, they were a part of what we would today call a “grey market”.

In the legal realm cinema followed a complete stagnation. Private producers and distributors of Polish films were unable to sell their titles. Their poor offer didn't survive concurrence with powerful German cinematography. Finally it became clear that the government had to begin participation in promotion of domestic production abroad.

This necessity was proved by world-wide resonance following premiere of *Land unterm Kreutz* (*Kraj pod krzyżem*, dir. Ulrich Kayser, 1927). This famous Kulturfilm's production was Upper Silesia presidents' private initiative. He convinced mayors of the main local cities and national authorities to finance this film. Realisation of this project was undertaken by the large company Deulig Film based in Berlin. The context of this enterprise launch was of great importance – fifth anniversary of plebiscite which was associated with the loss of the part of the region on behalf of Poland. The movie alone was meant to publicize negative consequences of the division of Upper Silesia. Additional importance was granted by the success of Weimar Republic at the international conference in Locarno in October 1925 where inviolability of border with Poland was not admitted. Germany intended its revision from Upper Silesia and *Land unterm Kreutz* proved to be the perfect propaganda tool of this policy. Numerous, solemn screenings of this film transformed it into a specific tournée all over Reich's cinemas, German speaking countries and those befriended, which lead not only to the international renown of the movie alone but of the whole region, and what is most important – the cause.¹⁴

Polish consulates carefully observed this actions, passing detailed accounts to the MFA Ministry and after observing how Germany realize its policy through cinema they started to take up similar actions. Since the export of feature films seemed to be difficult, they decided to reach for travelogues with positive image of the country. In 1927 the Interministerial Touristic Board was created. A special sub-commission worked on selecting films from domestic production eligible to be screened abroad. Next to the movies about Wilanów, Puławy, Łowicz and Warsaw, the chosen titles included *Polska Odrodzona* (dir. Zygmunt Wesołowski, 1924) and *Śląsk żrenica Polski* (dir. Włodzimierz Wyszomirski, 1927). What is worth mentioning, the last title – recognized by the commission as the best among all proposed films – was produced as a response to the

¹³ U. Biel, *Śląskie kina między wojnami, czyli przyjemność upolityczniona*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Śląsk, Katowice 2002, p. 236.

¹⁴ Eadem, *Płonące premiery. Z dziejów polsko-niemieckiego pogranicza filmowego na Górnym Śląsku*, [in:] *Kino niemieckie w dialogu kultur*, ed. A. Gwóźdź, Rabid, Kraków 2004, p. 315–332.

Land unterm Kreutz.¹⁵ It has been recommended to the General Consul in Bytom, however its screening in Upper Silesia province seems rather unlikely considering Polish the very perspective in depicting Upper Silesia which was undermined by the Reich.

At the end of 1929 MFA continued promoting Polish national character through film and send detailed inquiries to diplomatic missions in Germany asking what has been done to this date, did Polish films found their way to the local cinemas repertoires and if so, what was their reception. There was also a request for some data on specific consultant expectations – what kind of scenes they prefer: exclusively Polish, folk with traditional dresses, traditional forms of entertainment, hunting or rather capturing the development of fatherland, including images of harbour in Gdynia, expansion of air transportation, radio in trains, more neutral ones, considering sport activities, or maybe completely different that take into consideration specific needs of Polish micro-communities. This reconnaissance meant to be discrete, preparing ground for activities of private film companies.¹⁶

The response that came from Opole¹⁷ revealed the local post office have no Polish films, however they plan to apply for such, including prints with Polish subtitles in order to show to the members of the Union of Poles in Opole. Local cinemas screened two travelogues about Polesie, one about duck hunting and the other about Warszawa and Wilno. The second picture was criticized by the one of consultants because. In his opinion it didn't have any artistic value and its content could have had detrimental effects (the poverty and backwardness of eastern borderlands could negatively influence the audience feelings). In contrast to the similar German Kulturfilms that glorified prosperity and progress of filmed locations, emphasizing lack of material culture in this Polish film had depressing effect on Polish minority.¹⁸

However Ufa cinemas screened one fiction feature film, *Policmajster Tagiejew* (dir. Juliusz Gardan, 1929) based on Gabriela Zapolska novel. The reception of this movie by German critics was very positive including those from Upper Silesia. Although, as noted in the correspondence, subtitles were intentionally prepared in a way that made it very difficult to guess that it is actually a Polish movie.¹⁹ It can be confirmed by advertisement published in widely read daily paper "Der Oberschlesische Wanderer". Film was screened under the title *Polizeimeister Tagejeff*, but had also the undertitle *Der Sittenpaß*. In

¹⁵ ANO, CGORP, sign. 191, Minister of Public Works from 30.07.1927.

¹⁶ Ibidem, MFA Political Department from 3.12.1929.

¹⁷ During the interwar period Consulate General of Upper Silesia at first operated in Opole (1920–1922), than it was moved to Bytom (1922–1931), just to be moved back to Opole; Lech Krzyżnowski, "Kondycja narodowa" ludności polskiej na Śląsku Opolskim w latach 1922–1931 w opinii urzędników konsulatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Bytomiu, [in:] *Konsulaty na pograniczu polsko-niemieckim i polsko-czechosłowackim w latach 1918–1939*, eds. Marek Masnyk, Ryszard Kaczmarek, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2004, p. 74–89.

¹⁸ Archive of New Acts (further: ANA), MFA, sign. 8369, Consulate General in Opole from 17.10.1930.

¹⁹ ANO, CGORP, sign. 191, Consulate General to MFA from 24.01.1930.

Helios cinema announcement in Zabrze, the titles were switched presenting the undertitle as the main one.²⁰

The consultant also shared his opinion on images that would be best for local audience. For Polish minority he suggested films showing actual conditions of life in the country, also national appeal and films presenting its development as a great power (that is reinforcing sense of national spirit), whereas for German spectators advisable would be travelogues and films depicting sporting successes (that is neutral ones, at most promoting physical strength and beauty – motifs popular in Weimar Republic).²¹

Much more active was the consultant operating near the border area, in Bytom. Despite the tense situation after each of the *Land unterm Kreuz* screenings, during autumn of 1927 the agency attempted to show in Ufa theatres few travelogues about Tatry Mountains and Zakopane city.²² Back then Ufa had seven theatres in the four biggest cities of Upper Silesia (Bytom, Gliwice, Opole, Zabrze). Despite concern-type structure during Weimar Republic period Ufa's managers had relative freedom in terms of directing their units according to local specificity. Even though programmes were determined in Berlin, cinema owners could include other titles as long as it followed by additional costs. It was also encouraged by fairly liberal censorship. After the cinematic law entered into force in 1920 the right to give permission on distributing films was entitled only to departments in Berlin and Munich, possessing equal rights. However local authorities (district) could give entrance to newsreels commercials and travelogues. Consultant in Bytom took advantage of this opportunity. Because of the prestige Ufa shared – not only in Germany but in the whole Europe – screening films in its theatres ennobled them and could function as an example for other cinema owners.²³

Also consultant from Bytom perfectly understood the nuances that had to be taken into account if he wanted to screen the movies in German part of Upper Silesia. The office searched for the adequate pictures independently of collections prepared in Warsaw. In 1929, together with Chorzów-based production company Pegaz they compiled an offer including sport materials shot among beautiful Polish landscapes: ski races in Zakopane, rowing races in Warsaw and international motorcycle races in Upper Silesia. Regarding the last theme, showing Silesian province in German part of the region was particularly undesirable but because the race was won by German competitor, it gave a great pretext to show the film.²⁴

Summing up, both offices independently worked out on inscribing promotional content into the frame of Weimar Republic's concept of leisure as physical

²⁰ Helios cinema advertisement in Hindenburg [Zabrze], "Oberschlesischer Wanderer", 22.10.1929, no. 247; Schauburg cinema advertisement in Gliwice, "Oberschlesischer Wanderer", 1.08.1930, no. 178.

²¹ ANO, KGORP, sign. 191 (microfilm), note to MFA from 24.01.1930.

²² Ibidem, letter to Polish Union of Cinematographic Industry from 12.09.1927.

²³ Ibidem, Consulate General in Bytom to MFA from 9.11.1927.

²⁴ Ibidem, W. Wyszomirski to Consulate General in Bytom from 26.11.1929.

culture.²⁵ They advanced with great care in order to avoid being accused of disseminating propaganda. In consequence of “*Land unterm Kreuz* incident” in August 1928, during an international congress of cinema-owners in Berlin, delegation from Warszawa announced project of declaration against screening of inciting films (*Hetzfilme*), which was supported by representatives of all European countries that came to the congress.²⁶ This is also why Poland couldn’t afford any actions that would risk accusation of spreading confrontational propaganda.

Introduction of sound (beginning of 1930s)

Subsequent attempts to show Polish films on German screens came in the sound introduction period. When actors begun to speak loud film traders had to look for new technical solutions in order to be make them understood by international audience. On the other hand, for the governments of nationally conflicted Europe language in cinema became a political issue. After sort time of experiments and problems solving efforts it was decided that films are going to be shown in original versions with additional subtitles or dubbing. The latter practice was especially popular in countries where totalitarian tendencies spread (Germany, Italy, Spain)²⁷ or in rich countries, since sound-synchronization appeared extremely expensive and technically difficult. Although in Poland distributors were encouraged with tax reliefs,²⁸ dubbing was did not meet acceptance. We can see its consequences in today’s cinemas where films are projected in subtitled versions.

In 1932 Germany initiated discussions on increasing movie export to Poland in order to help domestic companies to extend their markets. But the issue wasn’t only to show movies in cinemas, but to screen them in German-speaking versions with subtitles. The majority of European countries, including Poland, perceived Weimar Republic as a thread and bought German films in French or English dubbed versions. The beginning of negotiations between Berlin and Warszawa was widely commented by press. German expectations that spectators in Poland will watch movies with German dialogues was immediately followed by the same condition on Polish side. Negotiations were heated by sanatory circles of Silesian province. They demanded that Berlin should not only buy Polish movies, but also present them in original speaking

²⁵ A. Gwóźdź, *Obok kanonu. Tropami kina niemieckiego*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut, Wrocław 2011, p. 117–119.

²⁶ W. Jewsiewicki, *Historia filmu polskiego. Wprowadzenie do historii polskiej kinematografii*, Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna i Filmowa im. L. Schillera, Łódź 1959, p. 233.

²⁷ J. Garncarz, *Untertitel, Sprachversionen, Synchronisation. Die Suche nach optimalen Übersetzungsverfahren*, [in:] *Babylon in FilmEuropa. Mehrsprachen-Versionen der 1930er Jahre*, Hrsg. J. Distelmeyer, Edition text + kritik, München 2006, p. 9–18.

²⁸ Cinemas who’s programme consisted of 10% of Polish films a year could recon on reduction of dubbed foreign films tax even by half. *Film News Calendar*, Warsaw 1938, p. 48b–48c.

version, especially in regions inhabited by Polish minority like Rejencja Opolska (Regierungsbezirk Oppeln).²⁹

In January 1933, after broad consultations with departments in Opole and Katowice German embassy in Warsaw noted in report to Auswärtiges Amt (German Ministry of Foreign Affairs) that if it is a common priority to show German films in their original versions and to normalize Polish-German relationships than German government should not only be prepared to import all language versions of Polish films, but also to protect their screenings with police units if necessary.³⁰ Simillar instructions were given to police units in Katowice, when first Austrian films in German speaking versions were projected to the audience.³¹

First years of the Third Reich (1933–1935)

Hitler's rise to power begun extremely confrontational politics against Poland. Consequently, negotiations were interrupted and as a result not even one Polish film was bought in 1933. After signing non-aggression pact in 1934, which also resulted in Reich's cultural policy turn, negotiation process was reopened straightaway and it seemed that intense discussions will finally lead to the agreement on mutual exchange of films. Finally it resulted with unofficial agreement (25.05.1934), according to which the exchange had to be preceded with 5:1 proportions, that is for export of five movies to Poland, Germany obliged to buy one.³² Further course of events exposed how instrumentally this whole deal with Polish film trade was treated. Every political swing casted a shadow on the openness declared officially.

As a result the number of Polish films in German cinemas didn't increase. Big advertising campaigns (like for *Wyrok życia*) organized in best cinemas in Berlin didn't increase the number of spectators because even if Germany bought some film it didn't mean that it will be widely distributed in cinemas. In May 1936 Ministry of Propaganda made an evaluation of the Polish films presence on German market. Since the starting of negotiations there were only five films distributed in Germany which brought very little income: *Czy Lucyna to dziewczyna?* (dir. Juliusz Gardan, 1934) – 50,500 RM, *Śluby ułańskie* (dir. Juliusz Gardan, 1934) – 50,000 RM, *Wyrok życia* (dir. Juliusz Gardan, 1933) – 44,350 RM, *Pieśniarz Warszawy* (dir. Michał Waszyński,

²⁹ *Podstępna oferta, która musi być odrzucona*, "Polska Zachodnia", 24.12.1932.

³⁰ Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amt (Political Archive of International Affairs Department in Berlin, further: PA), folder Warschau 196, report from discussion of Deputation to Auswärtiges Amt, 17.01.1933.

³¹ National Archive in Katowice (further: NAK), Lublinieckie Starosty, sign. 125, telephonogramm to District Police Headquarters, 1.03.1934.

³² PA, folder Warschau 196, reports from travel of German delegation to Poland, 20.04.1934, 2.06.1934.

1934) – 6,600 RM, *Czarna perła* (dir. Michał Waszyński, 1934) – 8,600 RM.³³ Bearing in mind that the average price of a ticket was 0.73 German RM, one could assume that the best selling title was seen by approximately 69,000 patrons, whereas average German film was seen at that time by two or three million spectators.³⁴

This data indicates how limited was the resonance of Polish films, even though the distributor Rejo Film took care to prepare German dubbing. Beside Berlin, where Polish premiers were widely advertised in order to convince Poles of German's good will and realization of the contracted agreement, Polish movies were screened for a short time and in a few places.³⁵ We know that in Breslau there were two of the mentioned films: *Wyrok życia* and *Czy Lucyna to dziewczyna?*,³⁶ and in 1935 *Śluby ulańskie*.³⁷ In "Oberschlesischer Wanderer's" Kunstleben column article about *Wyrok życia* premiere in Berlin informs that even though the movie wasn't dubbed, this festive screening was conducted in original Polish version with German subtitles. It was presented in the same way in Upper Silesia and police in Opole instructed their local units to check where exactly the screenings took place.³⁸

Quoted income of *Wyrok życia* clearly indicates that even screening the film in Polish language version did not stimulate the minority to actually watch the movie. How to explain such a low market demand for Polish movies in a region inhabited by the biggest group of Polish people in Germany? Perhaps president of the Uppers Silesia province, asked for opinion by the Berlin MFA, was right when he predicted this situation back in 1932? In an extensive report he stated that there is no need to show films in Polish language versions since in the cities in Opolszczyzna region there aren't many Polish-speaking citizens and so cinema owners don't include such films in cinema programmes.³⁹ Even putting aside political pressures, president's assumptions were still accurate. In Opolszczyzna province it was usually in the village and administrative districts where people spoke Polish, while in the cities – where cinemas were concentrated – German language was dominant. Potential spectators for whom Polish movies, irrespectively of their artistic standards, should be important because of their cultural value, did not demonstrate their will and determination to see them which would work on frequency success and finally – prepare ground for another Polish titles.

It also seems that occasional presence of Polish films in Opolszczyzna province didn't encourage native population to search for Polish films behind the border, while such practice might be seen in Silesian province. Pro-sanatory

³³ PA, folder Warschau 197, report of Ministry of Propaganda, 22.05.1936.

³⁴ See H.H. Prinzler, *Chronik des deutschen Films 1895–1994*, Stuttgart 1995.

³⁵ K. Pryt, *Polsko-niemieckie koprodukcje...*, p. 82.

³⁶ A. Dębski, *Polskie wątki filmowe w prasie wrocławskiej w okresie polsko-niemieckiego zbliżenia 1934–1939*, [in:] *W drodze do sąsiada...*, p. 287–289.

³⁷ Cinema programme, "Oberschlesischer Wanderer," 22.10.1935, no. 246.

³⁸ ANO, Krapkowice City Files, sign. 2018, Police in Opole, 7.02.1935.

³⁹ PA, folder Warschau 196, *Oberpräsident der Provinz Oberschlesien*, 4.11.1932.

daily paper "Polska Zachodnia" criticized people of Katowice, that during boycott of German films they travelled to Bytom, Zabrze or Gliwice to see them.⁴⁰ The only example of "spectators emigration" that was observed here was in case *All Quiet on the Western Front* (dir. L. Milestone, 1930), movie that was initially blocked by German censorship. Cinema owners in Katowice and Chorzów knew it very well, so that when the movie turned up in the repertoire they bought larger advertisements in "Oberschlesischer Wanderer" published in Gliwice.⁴¹ This succeeded not only among Opole province inhabitants. German Consulate General, in a report to Auswärtiges Amt, wrote that he heard from trustworthy person that 500 tickets for this title were ordered from Wrocław.⁴²

After Józef Piłsudski's death (II half of the 30s)

Seeing hard it is for Polish films, in spite of German Declarations, to cut through German market, Warsaw changed its tactics. Titles mentioned above not only didn't succeed but also caused some iconic concerns. Those poor quality comedies encountered such a critic that consul of Königsberg suggested they shouldn't even be screened abroad.⁴³ Polish MFA decided to promote only selected films which content corresponded with Polish reason of state. MFA also instructed individual offices to discreetly help in reaching those titles to minorities abroad in order to strengthen national spirit, especially in the face of growing activity of Hitler's party.

Consequently Berlin censorship agreed on distribution of *Młody las* (dir. Józef Lejtes, Pl 1933), *Płomienna serca* (dir. Romuald Gantkowski, Pl 1937) and *Sztandar wolności* (dir. Ryszard Ordyński, Pl 1935). The biggest response followed the last title projected in Germany in slightly different version and modified title *Marshall Piłsudski*. Berlin premiere of this film took place in Ufa am Kurfürstendamm cinema on 19.12.1935.⁴⁴

It is possible that Nazis' respect for Marshall contributed to organizing few months later, on the first anniversary of his death. On 10.05.1936 *Marshall Piłsudski* was screened in Opole. Adjusting to instructions prepared by Polish MFA ambassador Józef Lipski and authorities of I District of Union of Poles in Germany (Związek Polaków w Niemczech, ZPwN) together with Arka Bożek. Ufa made available one of their halls in Kammerlichtspiele cinema in Opole. It was decorated with white and blue roses and over 20 flags of minority unions; scouts came with banners, Polish eagle was placed on the wall

⁴⁰ *Nieobywatelskie postępowanie naszych obywateli*, "Polska Zachodnia", 15–16.02.1932, no. 37.

⁴¹ Rialto cinema advertisement in Katowice, "Oberschlesischer Wanderer", 16.03.1931, no. 63.

⁴² PA, folder Warschau 198, Consulate General in Katowice to Auswärtiges Amt, 21.03.1931.

⁴³ ANA, MFA 8367, Consulate General in Królewiec [Königsberg], 20.12.1935.

⁴⁴ ANA, RP Embassy in Berlin, sign. 2461, correspondence from 1935–1936.

and singing groups “Lutnia” and “Echo” under the baton of Polish conductor performed occasional songs. Ceremony was completed with speeches about Józef Piłsudski and documentary footage from funeral ceremonies in Warsaw, Wilno and Cracow. Over 600 people took place in this event. It was definitely an unprecedented spectacle of Polishness in the whole interwar period in German part of the region.⁴⁵

Movies about Marshall were also presented in Zabrze, Bytom, Dobrodzień and Strzelce Opolskie (here visited by consul Bohdan Ostoja-Samborski). Unfortunately, it can't be confirmed if the screenings were held in cinemas or other kind of facilities. However they were all organized by ZPwN, and they always attracted few hundred spectators. They were also monitored by secret police, whose reports are one of our primary sources of information. Names of activists taking part in specific projection were always mentioned together with the most important issues of their speeches, titles of performed Polish songs and the course of the event.⁴⁶

The willingness of cooperation declared by Third Reich, followed by obstacles meet by Polish films on German market, motivated by German's with their poor artistic quality, resulted in some co-productions initiated by German side and even few German films which included Polish plots: *Walc pożegnalny* (*Abschiedswalzer*, dir. Géza von Bolváry, 1934), *August Mocny* (*August der Starke*, dir. Paul Wegener, Stanisław Wasylewski, 1935/1936), *Der Bettelstudent* (*Student żebrak*, dir. Georg Jacoby, 1936), *Ku wolności* (*Ritt in die Freiheit*, dir. Karl Hartl, 1936/1937) and *Dyplomatyczna żona* (*Abenteuer in Warschau*, dir. Carl Boese, 1937), to name just a few. They were produced in order to neutralize grown conflicts, at least at the governmental level. However, when they entered the cinemas in 1937, in short periods of time, the ignited a lot of controversies in various circles. It resulted, at least partly, from chill in Polish-German relations which came after expiration of Upper Silesian Geneva Convention. One of the most important paragraph of this document signed in 1922 for next 15 years was legal protection of minorities on both sides of the border, protection which expired. In order to keep privileged status of Germans settled in the region, Third Reich started haunting Poles living in the province to show what effects lack of this protection could have. Silesian sanitation hit back intensifying anti-German course, for example by polonization of all aspects of life. Significant illustration of local mood of that time became a mass procedure of changing spelling of names on both sides of the border.

This atmosphere was encountered by movies mentioned above. What's interesting, just like in Upper Silesia where conciliatory politics of Warsaw towards Germany was not approved, province also represented different

⁴⁵ ANO, Opole Region: General Department, sign. 2150, Preussische Geheime Staatspolizei report, 14.05.1936

⁴⁶ Ibidem, report from 24.07.1936.

perspective on Polish-German relationships than Berlin. Its expression became opinions in secret police's reports. Officers penetrating whole province maintained that German part of local community is irritated by projections of *Bettelstudent*, which run was repeatedly extended. Also *Abschiedswalzer* seemed very inappropriate in boarder area. The most harmful politically of all Polish-German Gemeinschaftsfilme was however *Ritt in die Freiheit* about the November Uprising. Additionally irritating for Germans were commentaries in Polish daily paper "Nowiny Codzienne" published in Opole. Account from premiere of the last of above mentioned films was entitles "Berlin lernt polnisch-Heldentum kennen" (Berlin learns Polish heroism).⁴⁷

Appeals of local security services achieved positive effect. Even though mutual relationships seemed to be warmed up again as a result of signing minority's law and concluding an official cinematic agreement (28.02.1937), according to reports of Polish MFA from Upper Silesia, Prusy Wschodnie and borderland territories starting from 1938 all German productions containing Polish threads disappeared.⁴⁸ Of course it also concerned Polish movies. Warsaw-Berlin conflicts culminated to such a degree, that on 1.10.1937 Poland terminated recently signed film contract.⁴⁹ On December same year Germany leads to resigning it.⁵⁰ It didn't help much. Although they bought 2 films, *Jego wielka miłość* (dir. Alicja and Anatol Stern, 1936) and *Znachor* (dir. Michał Waszyński, 1937), only the first title was actually distributed in whole Germany, together with regions inhabited by Polish minority.⁵¹ It was probably projected only near Rhineland-Westphalia, where Polish people also lived.⁵² Polish diplomatic and police services reported in 1938 that there wasn't any screenings of domestic movies in the region of Opolszczyzna.⁵³

Certainly because of this lack of Polish titles in regular cinematic circuit ZPwN wanted to proceed with organization of screenings for minority similar to those devoted to Józef Piłsudski. But here appeared an important formal obstacle. Together with creating Reichsfilmkammer (RFK; Film Chamber of the Reich) in 1933, every subject on the market, in order to be an active participant of the cinematic trade, had to join this chamber. As long as ZPwN organized occasional screenings this membership wasn't necessary, but regular activity required full membership. ZPwN didn't agree to this, unlike other micro-societies, for example evangelical or even Jewish. Their organizations decided to be subjected to RFK's control in order to be able to realize their

⁴⁷ *Berlin lernt polnisches Heldentum kennen*, "Nowiny Codzienne", 19.01.1937, no 6.

⁴⁸ ANA, RP Embassy in Berlin, sign. 2467, MFA document, 8.01.1938.

⁴⁹ ANA, RP Embassy in Berlin, sign. 2363, RP Embassy's in Berlin note, 1.10.1937.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, sign. 2464, agreement 22.12.1937.

⁵¹ PA, folder Warschau 197, Ministry of Propaganda from 26.04.1938.

⁵² Ibidem, German Embassy to Auswärtiges Amt, 4.10.1938.

⁵³ ANA, RP Embassy in Berlin, sign. 2464, information from 10.10.1938; ANO, Opole Region, General Department, sign. 1936, police report from 22.10.1938.

statutory objectives through film in the Third Reich.⁵⁴ Without RFK's membership Poles deprived oneself of a possibility of regular screenings. Instead ZPwN returned to lectures with slides (*Lichtbildvorträge*) popular in 10s and 20s. They brought ORNAK's collection of 100 slides presenting various Polish cities and regions. It would be difficult to expect that this form of spectacle would still be attractive for weakly motivated audience. We know from German reports that those lectures didn't enjoyed great attendance.⁵⁵

The only places left where screenings of Polish films could still take place were diplomatic facilities. In 1939 consulate in Opole organized projections twice a month – at first only for activists and later for all members of Polish minority. Only few tens of people could take part in those screenings since space was very limited. They presented not only travelogues but also fiction feature films like *Halka* (dir. Juliusz Gardan, 1937). Information on these events can be found in consul's Jan Małeczyński memoirs and secret reports of German police.⁵⁶

Conclusions

How than can we evaluate situation of Polish cinema in Germany during 20s and 30s? Its presence on screens was determined by actual political issues. During the 20s anti-Polish revisionism dominated. After 1933 officially declared cooperation was interrupted time and again under any pretext. It seems though that despite those difficulties during the Third Reich period more Polish films were bought than in times of Weimar Republic (see the table).

Of course politics wasn't the only context in which Polish films can be examined. Their artistic and market potential, or lack of it, also had fundamental importance. Regardless of officials' intentions Polish films had little chance of success in German cinemas and their presence was possible thanks to diplomatic aid. The only name that could be sold on German market was Gabriela Zapolska; *Policmajster Tagiejew* based on her drama found its way to cinemas without any governmental assistance. What's more, two times Germans alone filmed *Warszawska cytadela* (*Die Warschauer Zitadelle*, 1. dir. Jakob i Luise Fleck, 1929/1930; 2. dir. Fritz Peter Buch, 1937), and cinemas screened it eagerly.

⁵⁴ See U. Biel, *Życie kinowe społeczności żydowskiej na terenie Górnego Śląska w okresie międzywojennym*, [in:] *Żydzi na Górnym Śląsku w XIX i XX wieku*, ed. B. Kalinowska-Wójcik, D. Keller, Muzeum w Rybniku, Rybnik–Katowice 2012, p. 243–256.

⁵⁵ ANO, Opole Region, General Department, sign. 2150, Omak's register of film-slides from 10.02.1937; documents of region's president from 8.07.1937, 31.08.1938.

⁵⁶ J. Małeczyński, *Moja praca w Konsulacie Generalnym Rzeczypospolitej w Opolu*, Instytut Śląski, Opole 1980, p. 50; ANO, Opole Region, General Department, sign. 2107, secret police report from 30.04.1939.

It demonstrates the role of national specificity and local market as a crucial barriers blocking film's success abroad. It is especially noticeable from contemporary perspective. Over two decades of good Polish-German relations and overcoming political bias didn't lead to the increase of Polish films in cinemas of our neighbours. Number of films distributed in Germany today isn't bigger than before World War II. Only through extending festival infrastructure, organizing retrospectives and conferences which creates a cultural space for films and their potential audience, could Polish cinema succeed abroad.

Trans. Bartosz Zając

Tomasz Kłys*

The Third Reich's Pean of Praise for the November Uprising's Glory: Karl Hartl's *Ritt in Die Freiheit* (1936)

Ride to Freedom (*Ritt in die Freiheit* / *Ku wolności*, 1936) is a very surprising film, particularly for the Polish viewer in the context of dramatic experience of Poles with the Third Reich; made for Ufa in 1936, in a way in the apogee of Nazi state, it seems not to contain at all the venom of Nazi propaganda and ideology. On the contrary, for a nowadays viewer this film must appear as even pro-Polish, and with no restrictions or inverted commas. Then, in what context was this film made?

Context

The Weimar Republic, afflicted with trauma of the lost war, huge war reparations for the victorious allied states, hyperinflation and the lose by Germany of significant part of territory from before 1914 (particularly for the benefit of Poland, reactivated after 123 years of political non-existence), has definitely hostile attitude towards the Second Republic of Poland (1918–1939). This hostility explicitly manifested itself in German films made in the 1920s to which sticked the name of *Hetzfilme* (what could be translated as *instigating* or *inciting films*). It is symptomatic that today this epithet is being used in reference to the infamous German anti-Semitic films, like Veit Harlan's *Jud Süß* (1940) or Fritz Hippler's *Der ewige Jude* (1940).¹ Among authors who were writing about German anti-Polish *Hetzfilme* from the 1920-s are both Urszula Biel² and Eugeniusz Cezary Król.³ They mention such titles as *Kulturfilme* Heine Herald's *Burning Land* (*Brennendes Land*, 1921), Ulrich Kayser's *Land under Cross*:

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¹ Cf. Christian Hardinghaus, *Filmpropaganda für den Holocaust? Eine Studie anhand "Der ewige Jude" and "Jud Süß"*, Tectum Verlag, Marburg 2008.

² U. Biel, *Polsko-niemiecka wymiana filmowa w latach 1933–1939*, [in:] *Polska i Niemcy: filmowe granice i sąsiedztwa*, ed. K. Klejsa, Schamma Schahadat, Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, Wrocław 2012, p. 31–50.

³ E.C. Król, *Nierówne partnerstwo: polsko-niemieckie kontakty filmowe w latach trzydziestych XX wieku*, [in:] *Kino niemieckie w dialogu pokoleń i kultur: Studia i szkice*, ed. A. Gwóźdź, Rabid, Kraków 2004.

Film from the Hardest Time of Upper Silesia (*Land unterm Kreuz: Ein Film aus Oberschlesiens schwerster Zeit*, 1927) or collective film made for the order of municipal council of city of Königsberg *The Island East Prussia* (*Die Insel Ostpreußen*, 1928), and also narrative films: James Bauer's short fiction *Fight for Homeland* (*Der Kampf um die Heimat*, 1921) or Erich Waschnecks's feature fiction film *The Burning Frontier* (*Die brennende Grenze*, 1926). Urszula Biel mentions in this context also Emmerich W. Emo's farce *Polish Order* (*Polnische Wirtschaft*, 1928)⁴ which is an adaptation of Jean Gilbert's operette. However, in comparison with the aforementioned titles this film is different in character – intentionally, it is not straightforwardly anti-Polish as for its political significance, referring instead to the fixed stereotype of Poland as “disorderly”, “anarchic” or “lawless” country; the change of title for distribution in Poland for *Involuntary Casanova* (*Casanova mimo woli*) and removing epithet *polnisch* (Polish) from all the intertitle plates, allowed, as is pointed out by Eugeniusz C. Król, introduction of the film into the Polish theatres.⁵ Anyway, political scandals around the premières of these films caused that Polish delegation for the International Congress of Film Exhibitors in Berlin in 1928 presented the project of the resolution against *Hetzfilme*, supported by all other delegations.⁶ Generally, during the Weimar Republic era there were no collaboration and almost no exchange between German and Polish film industries, and in German films there were present numerous anti-Polish elements; both these phenomena were result and expression of very cold political relationship between two countries.

Situation after taking of power in Germany by national socialists in 1933 seemed to be even worse, what could be testified by the wire sent 10 March 1933 by the president of Ufa, Alfred Hugenberg, to Gdańsk: “Kein polnischer Film im deutschen Kino” (result of it was the restriction of access of Polish films to the Freie Stadt Danzig / Wolne Miasto Gdańsk),⁷ or by the boycott of German films by Polish producers, distributors and exhibitors, among which there were a lot of Jews, what makes it understandable in the light of introduction in Germany of anti-Semitic laws.⁸ This situation changed a bit after signing 26 January 1934 German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact: since this moment to, more or less, the end of 1938, both film industries make attempts to create conditions for collaboration within the field of film exchange (although succeeding trials of various arrangements and agreements define those conditions shockingly assymmetrically what in turn resulted from the huge difference of potentials of both film industries). I would not like to repeat here published studies of Eugeniusz Król and Urszula Biel, excellently supported by their

⁴ U. Biel, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁵ E.C. Król, *op. cit.* Król evokes in this place research of Bogusław Drewniak presented in his book *Polen und Deutschland 1918–1939: Wege und Irrwege kultureller Zusammenarbeit*, Droste, Düsseldorf 1999, p. 321–322.

⁶ Cf. W. Jewsiewicki, *Historia filmu polskiego: Wprowadzenie do historii polskiej kinematografii*, Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna i Filmowa im. Leona Schillera, Łódź 1959, p. 233; and citing this book: U. Biel, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁷ Cf. U. Biel, *op. cit.*, p. 35; E.C. Król, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁸ Cf. U. Biel, *op. cit.*, p. 36; E.C. Król, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

archival research.⁹ In any case, one of important aspects of this collaboration are several film productions and the change of image of Poland (for better) in some German films from 1930s. Among these productions are: first German-Polish co-production *August the Strong* (*August der Starke* / *August Mocny*, 1935), having its première in Dresden 17 January 1936, made in two different language versions directed, respectively, by Paul Wegener (German) and Stanisław Wasylewski (Polish)¹⁰, series of German sightseeing *Kulturfilme* made in Poland for Ufa, like Wilhelm Prager's *The Old Royal Town Cracow* (*Die alte Königstadt Krakau*, 1935), *Warsaw* (*Warschau*, 1936), *Vilnius* (*Wilna*, 1936) and *Polish Peasant Feasts* (*Polnische Bauernfeste*, 1936), or Ulrich K.T. Schulz's *Between Black and White Czeremosz* (*Zwischen Schwarzem und Weißem Czeremosz*, 1936) and *Mountaineers' Land* (*Heimat der Goralen*, 1935), and, finally, series of costume historical films with Polish (or even pro-Polish) accents: film about Chopin distributed in Poland as *Chopin, piewca wolności* (1934), made in two language versions: German *Abschiedswalzer*, directed by Géza von Bolváry, and French *La Chanson de l'adieu*, directed by Albert Valentin and Géza von Bolváry, Carl Lamac's *Polish Blood* (1934), made also in two language versions – Czech (*Polská krev*) and German (*Polenblut*), Georg Jacoby's *The Beggar Student* (*Der Bettelstudent*, 1936) or at last Gustav Fröhlich's *The Adventures of Young Gentleman in Poland* (*Abenteuer eines jungen Herrn in Polen*, 1934).

These films were received in Poland with mixed feelings.¹¹ Either Polish audience reacted alergically for national and cultural negative stereotypes, or found in their narratives historical and ideological falsehood what together with boycott of German films by Jewish owners of the theatres and restricted range of distribution ordered by the state censorship caused that generally they were not great attendance successes.¹² This lack of book office success is also the case of Fritz Peter Buch's film *The Warsaw Citadel* (*Die Warschauer Zitadelle*, 1937) – made already after the *Ritt in die Freiheit*; this is the third adaptation of Gabriela Zapolska's play *That Other Man* (*Tamten*), anti-Russian drama staged in Berlin theatre already in the first decade of 20 century just as *Die Warschauer Zitadelle*.¹³ During the First World War *Die Warschauer Zitadelle* was in 1916 staged in Vienna, and with great success (380 spectacles) in

⁹ Cf. U. Biel, *op. cit.*, p. 37–50; E.C. Król, *op. cit.*, p. 71–82.

¹⁰ The context of making of *August der Starke* is described by Karina Pryt in the article *Polsko-niemieckie koprodukcje "August Mocny" i "Dyplomatyczna żona" w służbie nazistowskiej polityki wschodniej w latach 1934–1939*, [in:] *Polska i Niemcy: filmowe granice i sąsiedztwa*, *op. cit.*, p. 75–80. Cf. also: E.C. Król, *op. cit.*, p. 76–77.

¹¹ Cf. A. Dębski, *Polskie wątki filmowe w prasie wrocławskiej w okresie polsko-niemieckiego zbliżenia 1934–1939*, [in:] *W drodze do sąsiada: polsko-niemieckie spotkania filmowe*, ed. A. Dębski, A. Gwóźdź, Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, Wrocław 2013, p. 302–303; U. Biel, *op. cit.*, p. 45–47.

¹² Cf. U. Biel, *op. cit.*, p. 45–47.

¹³ Cf. Z. Raszewski, *Zapolska – pisarka teatralna w latach 1898–1904*, [in:] G. Zapolska, *Dramaty*, vol. II, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Wrocław 1961, p. XI.

Berlin.¹⁴ Also in 1916 was made the first adaptation of Zapolska's play, titled *Der 10. Pavillon der Zitadelle* and directed by Danny Kaden; the second one, from 1930, was made by Jakob and Luise Fleck.

As Andrzej Dębski points out, intention of these "pro-Polish" films from the Third Reich period could be similar to that of German propaganda films from the First World War: their aim was gaining ally – the ally submissive and in fact incapacitated.¹⁵ Gaining Poles as Germany's allies seems to be grounded, first of all, on pointing out the enemy common for Germany and Poland, i.e. Russia – of course, in 1930s this enemy was Soviet Union but tsarist Russia was simply earlier avatar of hostile empire with the same, in fact, identity as the bolsheviks' state. This is the reason of presence of strong anti-Russian accents in such works as *Abschiedswalzer*, *Die Warschauer Zitadelle* or *Ritt in die Freiheit*. One should not to forget that these pro-Polish and anti-Russian titles inscribe themselves into the whole series of films made earlier in the Third Reich, having anti-Russian/anti-Soviet message – like, e.g., Franz Wenzler's *Hans Westmar: One of Many* (*Hans Westmar: Einer von Vielen*, 1933), Hans Zöberlein's and Ludwig Schmid Wildy's *For Human Rights* (*Um das Menschenrecht*, 1934), Gustav Ucicky's *Fugitives* (*Flüchtlinge*, 1933), Peter Hagen's *Friesens' Distress* (*Friessennot*, 1935), Karl's *White Slaves* (*Weisse Sklaven*, 1936). One should remember that 25 November 1936 Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Komintern Pact to which one year later (6 November 1937) join Italy, creating Axis Rome–Berlin–Tokyo. Within the context of such intensive anti-communist and anti-Soviet politics of the Nazi Germany such particular "wooing" or "courting" of potential ally in common anti-bolshevik case should not be surprising at all – the more so that anti-Russian direction agreed with both general historical politics of Poland during all her history and current foreign politics of the Second Polish Republic in the 1920s and 1930s.

Andrzej Dębski discerns one more context for such film as *Ritt in die Freiheit*, *Abschiedswalzer* or *Die Warschauer Zitadelle*. Namely, these are "insurgent" and "pro-freedom" films, affirming struggles for national independence and uprisings or rebellions of certain nations against various oppressors, invaders or colonizers – on the condition that non-Germans.¹⁶ Germans made in the Nazi era (or just before it) more similar films, referring to the history of other oppressed, invaded or colonized countries: Finland [Paul Martin's *Black Roses* (*Schwarze Rosen*, 1935)], Italy [Luis Trenker's and Werner Klingler's *Condottieri* (1937)] or Bayern in the Napoleon era [Luis Trenker's and Kurt Bernhard's *Der Rebell* (1932)¹⁷]. This last film is pointed out by Goebbels himself

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. XXIX.

¹⁵ Cf. A. Dębski, *op. cit.*, p. 303–304; as for the pro-Polish German propaganda from the World War One era, see B. Braun, *Film niemiecki w walce o polskie serca w latach pierwszej wojny światowej*, [in:] *W drodze do sąsiada...*, p. 241–257.

¹⁶ A. Dębski, *op. cit.*, p. 303–304.

¹⁷ Co-director of Luis Trenker, when making the English-language version *The Rebel*, was Edwin H. Knopf. During the World War Two Max W. Kimmich – nb. Goebbels's brother-in-law – would make two films about Irish national heroes fighting against English oppressor: *The Fox*

as one of exemplary to be followed at the meeting of Reichspropaganda Minister with the filmmakers and other workers of German film industry at Hotel Kaiserhof on 28 March 1933. Idea of "sacrifice", "devotion" or "dedication" – "for the Case", and particularly resignation in the name of it from love and personal happiness, naturally affirmed in the patriotic art and literature of every nation and country, was easily congruent with the axiology of national socialists, what could be testified by three "brown" heroic epics, inaugurating in 1933 Nazi propaganda cinema: Franz Seitz's *SA-Mann Brand*, Hans Steinhoff's *Hitlerjunge Quex* and already aforementioned Franz Wenzler's film *Hans Westmar: Einer von Vielen*.

Film crew of *Ritt in die Freiheit*

Ritt in die Freiheit was produced by Ufa – then the largest and the most powerful film company in the whole Europe – and its co-producer was Warszawská Kinematograficzna Spółka Akcyjna, in fact the secret representative of Ufa in Poland.¹⁸ Perhaps this was the reason that despite German proposition the Poles did not want to recognize officially the film as co-production (this should not be surprising the more so that till March 1937 when Ufa was taken over by the Nazi state with the help of a front, Max Winkler, president of company was Alfred Hugenberg, hostile to Poland). Despite this distantiation Polish Ministry of Military Affairs gave to the German filmmakers' disposal the 5 Regiment of Zaslów Uhlans.¹⁹ This is not unimportant fact – one of the spectacular attractions of the film is, particularly in the introductory part of narrative, charm of the cavalry: picturesque horse exercise, uhlan manoeuvres, rescue with which the river ferry having on the board princess Katerina Tschernikoff is saved by the squadron of Rittmeister Jan Wolski. Location shooting took place on the Narew river banks near Ostrołęka although historical action is situated in Grodno and in places around this town, thus – on the banks of river Niemen. Apparently the film crew made also espionage recognition of the area, utilized later by Germans in September 1939.²⁰

Among the crew we find the true celebrities of German cinema in the 1930s. The director, **Karl Hartl**, was one of the most commercially successful German filmmakers during this decade. In 1930 he made his debut, musical comedy *The Boy's Song from Heidelberg* (*Ein Burschenlied aus Heidelberg*), and after it directed such hits of German cinema as historical Bergfilm *Doomed Batalion* (*Berge in Flammen*, co-directed by Luis Trenker, 1931),

of *Glenarvon* (*Der Fuchs von Glenarvon*, 1940) and *My Life for Ireland* (*Mein Leben für Irland*, 1941). They both intended to persuade Irish nation and Republic of Ireland to support the Third Reich in the Second World War against their "common" enemy: Great Britain.

¹⁸ B. Drewniak, *Teatr i film Trzeciej Rzeszy*, Wydawnictwo Morskie, Gdańsk 1972, p. 207.

¹⁹ Ibidem, E.C. Król, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

²⁰ Cf. B. Drewniak, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

escapist self-reflexive comedy with Brigitte Helm *Countess of Monte Christo* (*Die Gräfin von Monte Christo*, 1932), spectacular action film *F.P. 1 Does Not Answer* (*F.P. 1 antwortet nicht*, 1932) about sabotage at the great floating airport situated on Atlantic, with such stars as Hans Albers, Sybille Schmitz and Peter Lorre, science-fiction thriller *Gold* (1934) with Hans Albers and Brigitte Helm, historical melodrama from the Napoleon era *And So Love Ends* (*So endet eine Liebe*, 1934) with Paula Wessely, Willy Forst and Gustaf Gründgens, operette *The Gypsy Baron* (*Der Zigeunerbaron*, 1935) with handsome amant Adolf Wohlbrück, and intelligent, narratively very intricate, sophisticated and a bit surrealistic crime comedy *Man Who Was Sherlock Holmes* (*Der Mann der Sherlock Holmes war*, 1937), with Hans Albers as supposed Sherlock and Heinz Rühmann as would-be Watson. Till today this is a cult movie of German cinema, often shown in contemporary German television; apparently it belonged to the favourite films of Hitler himself. Karl Hartl, similarly as Willi Forst or Gustav Ucicky, was Austrian, born in Vienna. He was not the member of NSDAP (Nazi Party) nor was compromised by directing overtly propagandist *Staatsauftragsfilme*, thus after the war he could in denazified Austria take position of general manager of Neue Wiener Filmproduktionsgesellschaft and make films until 1961. However, some shadow on his reputation is taking the management of the Wien-Film company after the Austria *Anschluss*, and the fact he was producer of one of the most abominable of Nazi narrative films – anti-Polish *Heimkehr* (1940), directed by Gustav Ucicky and made after the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact. Was this production Goebbels' proposal not to be refused? I ask this question since Hartl's participation in making both the most pro-Polish and the most anti-Polish among German films from Nazi era may testify about his conformism and submissivity to Nazi power.

Among two cameramen of *Ritt in die Freiheit* (**Günther Rittau**, Otto Baecker) – the first one is truly great personality of German cinema. He is author (or co-author) of shooting to such classics as Fritz Lang's *Die Nibelungen* (1924) and *Metropolis* (1926), Joe May's *Coming Home* (*Heimkehr*, 1928) and *Asphalt* (1929), Josef von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel* (*Der Blaue Engel*, 1930), Robert Siodmak's *Storms of Passion* (*Stürme der Leidenschaft*, 1932) or Paul Martin's *Blonde Dream* (*Ein blonder Traum*, 1932). Before *Ritt in die Freiheit* he collaborated with Karl Hartl as director, making such films as *F.P. 1 antwortet nicht*, *Gold* or *Der Zigeunerbaron*. Rittau gained his fame as cameraman particularly due to invention of very clever optical special effects – e.g. in such masterpieces of picture as *Die Nibelungen*, *Metropolis* or *Asphalt*.

Among the cast with the greatest brightness shine two amants in the roles of two friends, Polish Rittmeister Jan Wolski and count Julek Staniewski. Count Staniewski is played by **Willy Birgel**, Rittmeister Wolski – by **Viktor Staal**. Birgel made his debut in 1934 with the role of English commandant of camp for interned civils in Paul Wegener's patriotic epic from the years of World War One *Towards Germany* (*Ein Mann will nach Deutschland*). Other important his roles are Russian governor Avarov in Paul Martin's *Black Roses*

(*Schwarze Rosen*, 1935), city's commandant La Trémouille in anti-British historical epic about Joan of Arc, Gustav Ucicky's *Das Mädchen Johanna* (1935), agent Morris in anti-English Karl Ritter's spy drama *Traitor* (*Verräter*, 1936), conductor going through marriage crisis in Detlef Sierck's melodrama *The Last Accord* (*Schlußakord*, 1936). One should also remember about his participation in some important films made already after *Ritt in die Freiheit*, like Detlef Sierck's *Towards New Banks* (*Zu neuen Ufern*, 1937), Viktor Tourjansky's *The Blue Fox* (*Der Blaufuchs*, 1938) and Carl Froelich's *Queen's Heart* (*Das Herz der Königin*, 1940) – in all three he was the partner of Zarah Leander herself: the greatest and the most beautiful female star in the cinema of the Third Reich. He played also in Erich Engel's *Hotel Sacher* (1938), Eduard von Borsody's *Kongo-Express* (1939), and – what a shame! – the most abominable (together with *Heimkehr*) anti-Polish film made after the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact, Victor Tourjansky's *Enemies* (*Feinde*, 1940).

The other man star, Viktor Staal, although played in films already since 1934 and *Ritt in die Freiheit* is his sixth film, seems to get in it his first really important role in his actor's career. Handsome Aryan-like fair-haired amant after it was partner of the most popular female stars of Third Reich cinema: Swedish beauty Zarah Leander [Sierck's *Zu neue Ufern*, Rolf Hansen's *The Great Love* (*Die große Liebe*, 1942)], half-English, half-German Lillian Harvey (Karl Ritter's *Capriccio*, 1938) or masterly dancer, Hungarian Marika Rökk [Georg Jacoby's *One Night in May* (*Eine Nacht in Mai*, 1938)].

Among two writers of the film persona with definitely greater achievements was Walter Supper, author of screenplays to such hits as aforementioned Paul Martin's *Schwarze Rosen* and Hartl's *Ziegeunerbaron*, or to excellent Carl Froehlich's film about school milieu *Ripening Youth* (*Reifende Jugend*, 1933). The more important, however, seems to be contribution of Austrian Pole, Edmund Strzygowski, for whom this was the first and also the last-but-one screenplay. It is highly probable that just his sensitivity and knowledge of Polish culture is the origin of genuinely Polish ambience of Hartl's film, evoking great works of Polish literature and theatre. Drama of involuntary treason of homeland, redeemed later with fight and heroic death, evokes dilemmas of Kmicic, the hero of Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel *The Deluge* (*Potop*). The ball at governor's palace resembles both Warsaw Salon and Vilnius Salon from Adam Mickiewicz masterpiece romantic drama *Dziady*, Part III (the more so that both Hartl's film and Mickiewicz drama refer to the November Uprising of 1830). The scenery of night battles of Poles in the uhlan post-Napoleonic uniforms seems to bring to mind historical plays of Stanisław Wyspiański, *November Night* (*Noc Listopadowa*) and *Warsaw Song* (*Warszawianka*), and also great romantic drama of Juliusz Słowacki *Kordian*. And general post-Napoleonic aura (costumes, patriotic fever) for Polish viewer could evoke also classic Polish novels about Napoleonic era: Stefan Żeromski's *Ashes* (*Popioły*) or Wałław Gąsiorowski's *Hurricane* (*Huragan*) and *1809* (*Rok 1809*).

Narrative and film form

Form of Karl Hartl's film is truly masterly – story, giving impression of national epic, is condensed in 1.5 hour of screen time. Narratively film *syuzhet* comes very close to the “well made play”, in three acts; each of them comprises one day of action. Act I takes place on some day in the beginning of November 1830. Events of act II occur some three weeks later, near the end of November or in the beginning of December 1830 (viewer, having elementary knowledge of Polish history, could easily infer approximate date) and comprise about 24 hours (day and night of governor's ball). During the immediate 24 hours after governor's ball (day and night) the events of act III take place. Act I lasts about 18 minutes of screen time. Act II, the most intricate and the most extended, takes place between 18. and 55. minute of film. Act III is shorter, although longer than introductory act – spreads from 55. minute till the end of film (about 86. minute at the print of film at my disposal). Two main characters are cavalry captains, commanding squadrons of Polish uhlans, being at the Russian service in Polish Kingdom (Królestwo Polskie), founded after Congress of Vienna in 1815 (Polish Kingdom was not Kingdom of Poland – independent state, as before 1795; instead, it was only province of Russian Empire, admitted with certain – not great – degree of autonomy at the Congress of Vienna).

Within the act I take place with a following succession: duel of Rittmeister Jan Wolski (Viktor Staal) with Russian Rittmeister of cossacks, Saganov; Russian colonel's reprimand to the officers of his regiment for incessant duels (he is discontented with fact that again and again they are won by Poles); rescue which Wolski and his uhlans bring to the ferry, carried off by the strong current of the river – on the board of ferry in danger travelled princess Katerina Ivanovna Tschernikoff, sister of Grodno's Russian governor. Wolski tries to flirt with beautiful lady but from her greetings and friend's reaction understands that she is an old flame of count Julek Staniewski (Willy Birgel), his colleague-Rittmeister.

Act II starts some day three weeks later. This day in the evening the governor of Grodno gives ball at his residence. In the morning, however, his occupations are quite different – he destroys the letter with complaint of town councillors against the drunkards' excesses of cossacks, listens to the report informing him about common horse rides of princess and Staniewski, and after it talks with her sister, intending to persuade her to leave Grodno for Petersburg where good marriage awaits her. In the meantime Wolski tells Staniewski that is glad that his friend still has not proposed to Katerina because marrying Russian princess would threaten him with denationalization. To the village some hours of ride from Grodno courier from Warsaw has come to bring to uhlans in Grodno message about the outbreak of November Uprising. He asks Poles for fresh horses and baffling his Russian pursuers. In the evening Wolski exchanges banter with Janka Kozłowska, Polish girl

enamoured with him and very jealous. Julek is disturbing them in order to inform his friend about intention to propose to princess this evening; assures him that despite marrying Russian woman, himself "he will stay Pole" and after it runs in a hurry to the governor's ball. Some time after aforementioned messenger brings to Wolski the order of insurgents' authorities to both Rittmeister to bring their squadrons to Warsaw. Courier immediately leaves further for Vilnius and Janka assures Wolski about her prayer. Wolski arrives at the governor's ball, ordering Polish officers immediately but discreetly to evacuate and appointing them meeting in the pavillon near gate. Some moments after he informs Staniewski about the situation and requests from him to report in the pavillon what Julek promises to do. But feverish after earlier proposal and confused with new state of affairs demanding from him unambiguous choice, Julek is not able to extricate himself from Russian chains and stays at the ball. Wolski and other Poles in vain waiting for him in appointed place decide to leave without him. There is too late, however – on the bridge guarded already by Russians takes place the fight between uhlans and cosacks: four Polish officers are killed, two other arrested, Wolski escapes and in the meantime Staniewski dances with Katerina the last mazurka. Wolski secretly sneaks to Julek's room to accuse him for betrayal of homeland for woman and to blame him for his companions' death.

Act III presents events of the day after ball. Staniewski after his morning arrival to the regiment is the only Pole there – from Russians he learns about death of his four compatriots and imprisoning three other (among them Wolski who let to get arrested after his conversation with the count). Colonel orders to hide from Julek that all Poles will not be shot but hanged – although does not conceal from him that they all are sentenced to death. According to order the next day Staniewski has to leave for Kiev. Colonel informs him also that in the afternoon he has to report himself at the governor's "in the private matter" – suggesting that the reward for his loyalty to Russia may be the princess's hand. Russian officers invite Julek for "breakfast" which transforms itself into a drunken orgy with women. During it he learns from the drunken ensign about the disgraceful kind of death which is prepared to his compatriots. In the meantime Wolski and lieutenant Malinowski conform ensign Milewski despaired by the shame of gallows that this is not disgraceful death – as a death for homeland it makes way for future generations fighting for independence which sooner or later will come true. Staniewski is soon visited by Janka in despair who wants to know about the fate of Wolski. After dramatic conversation during which he revealed to girl his suicidal intention after his shame, Janka persuades him to believe that not everything is lost and that he still could save his friends' lives. At the governor's when he reports himself just after this talk, Julek does not mention at all about his intention to marry Katerina but only asks for pardoning his condemned compatriots. Governor refuses, Julek leaves and the princess suspecting his brother of refusing her hand to Pole could not conceive that her sweetheart has not told even one word about yesterday's proposal... In the evening Staniewski with his uhlans frees the prisoners who

immediately leave for Warsaw, and himself with his men keeping long under fire the gate of barracks heroically holds Russians back from taking the immediate pursuit after fugitives. Finally, staying alone after death of all his men, is killed by the Russian bullet, redeeming by his heroic last battle his earlier fault of indecisiveness between homeland and woman.

I have made such a detailed summary of film's plot with premeditation since both in Poland and Germany (and the more so in other countries) this film is nowadays practically unavailable and unknown, and the only recapitulation of its story in Polish in otherwise excellent and revealing article by Eugeniusz Król²¹ makes us suppose that author did not see the film, having only the second hand knowledge of it. As for the form of this work, clearly visible aspects of it are **dualism**, masterly use of **alternate editing** (in the function of both **simultaneous editing** and **parallel metaphorical editing**), and the excellent use of **depth of field** together with the **change of shots within long takes**. Dualism presents us two reciprocally impenetrable worlds: Russians and Poles, what is obviously connected with the idea of the film according to which the conquered nation should keep away from the occupant and colonizer. This topic is already set up in the credits sequence: the background of the credit titles are two plates alternately following one after other – they show, respectively, two-headed black eagle of Russian Empire and white eagle in the crown being the emblem of Poland (two-headed Russian eagle is placed also at the gate of barracks; opening this gate by fugitives – Wolski, Malinowski, Milewski and others – in the film's final is beginning of their "ride to freedom", the title's *Ritt in die Freiheit*). Russians and Poles are separated ones from the other also in the credit titles: after the title announcing film's cast at first follow plates with the names and portraits of Russian characters and actors playing them, and just after them – plates with the portraits and names of Polish characters, and their players. As film's narration follows in most of scenes we generally see Poles and Russians **separately** (of course, there are some exceptions to this rule, like scenes with Julek Staniewski and princess Tschernikoff or common briefing at colonel's for Russian cossacks and Polish uhlands; later, however, groups of characters of given nationality are shown separately in the alternating editing). Such presentations of both nations separately and alternately, firstly, puts into relief the impossibility of "being together" by Poles and Russians, secondly – inclines to comparisons. And so, for example, Poles in their private lives are characterized by certain nonchalance and carelessness (Wolski's amorosity, easiness to fall in love; his debts), but also by gentlemanly, gallantry towards women (Wolski's action for princess's rescue) and obeying social forms. The expression of cultural Polish "refinement" is also mazurka at the governor's ball – dance of the conquered and occupied nation culturally "conquered" the invader and oppressor. Russians in turn are characterized by the monstrous drunkenness (with pouring out the sea of vodka over great glasses on the table during "breakfast") and wild orgy with women of dubious *conduite*. Both nationalities are contrasted

²¹ E.C. Król, *op. cit.*, p. 80–81.

also by musical motifs – melancholic and nostalgic “dumkas” of cossacks clash with the dignit music travestyng motif of popular Polish song *Geese behind Water* (*Gęsi za wodą*) and with the impetuous dance of mazurka at the ball; and among dances written in the *carnet de bal* there are mazurka, polonaise and polka – this last one, despite its Czech origin, in its name itself has inscribed Polish connotation.

Poles are also characterized by patriotism, love of freedom and persistence in tending to it – it is almost impossible task for invaders to get them russified. We know about this from talks in the arrest between uhlan's condemned to death, Warsaw courier's relation about brutal repressions, like sentencing 14-years old boys to Siberian exile just for singing Polish songs, and letter censored by the governer in which uhlan's wife informs her husband that their children hate Russian school. Except Julek who unluckily chose the object of his love, Wolski and other Poles immediately are ready to obey the orders of insurgents' authorities from Warsaw. Russians, quite contrary, do not value freedom high and in the occupied country they suppress it with severe punishments, censorship of private correspondence, numerous death sentences, breaking the Polish unity (colonel says that Polish troops should be divided, separated, sent into different places in order to prevent them from plotting and rebellions). Not accidentally, Julek Staniewski, who as Pole is unreliable to Russian authorities, is to be sent by colonel possibly furthest from central Poland embraced by the battles of November Uprising; far east to Kiev.

Russians and Poles (and particularly women of both nationalities) differ also in their attitude towards questions of relations between the private and the public, particularly between love and Homeland Case. The princess Tschernikoff could not conceive that something like national question could be the obstacle for love, whereas Janka Kozłowska, although terribly jealous of Wolski's affairs with other women (“I'll scratch out your eyes – and theirs as well”), immediately capitulates when her rival is Homeland: just after getting the news about the uprising's outbreak she promises Wolski her prayers for him, and afterwards, in desperation, just she causes her sweetheart's rescue, persuading traitor Staniewski to redeem his guilt by action.

The alternating editing serves in Hartl's film not only for comparisons but fulfils also the function of simultaneous editing, taking viewer from one scene or line of action to the other, happening at the same diegetic time. Due to it there was possible to contain so much of narrative events so easily in so (relatively) short screen time, and despite merely three days of action drawing the film's plot almost to the neoclassical rule of three unities, the film as well makes impression of **historical epic**, presenting fates of certain characters on the wide background of historical events (although the November Uprising itself seems to be almost absent in the film). The simultaneous editing in a particularly brilliant way collides the last mazurka at the governor's ball with the massacre of Polish uhlan's on the bridge, or, in the film's final, runaway of Wolski and his companions with the heroic action of Staniewski and his men at the barracks' gate preventing Russians from pursuit after fugitives. It is interesting that in this – at first glance filmed in classical way – sequence of simultaneous

editing happens something quite reverse than in the final sequence of David Wark Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915), analyzed by David Bordwell in his excellent *Narration in the Fiction Film*:²² cuts to the Julek's action at the gate prolong this action (similarly as they prolong the siege of Camerons' cabin in Griffith's film), but cuts to the uhlans' ride fulfil different function than cuts to the Ku-Klux-Klan in *Birth of a Nation*: there they shorten the ride, in Hartl's film they prolong fugitives' ride, giving viewer impression (and hope) that riders "rode distance as long as possible". The reason for that is that in *Ritt in die Freiheit* characters ride **from** the place of simultaneous action, not **towards** it as in Griffith's film.

Reception

We have testimony in Goebbels' diary that independently of propagandist efficiency appointed by Reichspropagandaminister to *Ritt in die Freiheit* and similar "insurgent" and "pro-freedom" films, Karl Hartl's film gained his approbation: "Well made. With reasonable story, mise-en-scene, characters and acting. I am glad that I have contributed to making of it".²³ From opinions expressed by Goebbels in different places of his diaries about various films one could come to conclusion that he really was film connoisseur. The all-Germany première took place 14 January 1937 in the prestigious theatre Ufa-Palast am Zoo in Berlin. From the article of Andrzej Dębski one could infer that film's reception in Germany, at least in Schlesien (Silesia) and particularly in Breslau, was excellent.²⁴ This text mentions also French version of the film titled *La Chevauchée de la Liberté*, apparently, according to the newspaper "Czas", screened with huge success in Paris cinema Gaumont-Palace.²⁵ However, according to information which I have found at the portal Encyclo Ciné, it results that there were no separate "French version",²⁶ but screened then in Paris was simply described above German film directed by Karl Hartl, presented in France just under such title – no other source, among them such competent as Filmportal.de, informs about existence of separate French version of the film; it neither does not figure in filmography of Karl Hartl whose other films as *F.P. 1 antwortet nicht* or *Gold* have indeed versions in other languages.

²² D. Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1985, p. 84.

²³ *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels. Sämtliche Fragmente. Aufzeichnungen 1921–1941*, München–New York 1987, Bd. 2, p. 701, note from 19 October 1936; quote after: E.C. Król, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

²⁴ A. Dębski, *op. cit.*, p. 300–301.

²⁵ *Filmy o tematach polskich podbijają Francuzów*, "Czas", 24.10.1937 (quoted after: A. Dębski, *op. cit.*, p. 301).

²⁶ As in the case of certain German films made simultaneously in MLV-s (multi-lingual versions) – as, e.g., George Wilhelm Pabst's *Die 3-Groschen-Oper / L'opéra à quat' sous* (1932) or Fritz Lang's *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse / Le Testament du docteur Mabuse* (1933).

As for Polish reception of *Ku wolności* – as Hartl's film was titled in Poland – one could suppose that it could be rather better than other “pro-Polish” films made in 1930s in Germany. Quick research made by Andrzej Dębski – for whom I feel very indebted – confirmed, indeed, such a state of affairs. Short review, strongly recommending Hartl's film to Polish viewers, appeared in Częstochowa daily newspaper.²⁷ It contains summary of film's plot and interesting information that film was dubbed into Polish. Even more interesting is information published in Warsaw nationalist weekly “Myśl Narodowa”, recommending to Polish viewers film *Ku wolności*, screened in June 1937 in Warsaw theatre “Hollywood”. Author of the note, generally praising “tact” of German filmmakers in presenting Russians in not too black colours (due to it, film is historically credible), is at the same time suspicious that Germans have so keen interest in Polish patriotic topics such as uprising of 1830. It seems that author has clear consciousness of contemporary political situation in which Germans make such pro-Polish historical film in order to persuade Poles A.D. 1936 to join the Third Reich in common anti-bolshevik front. Despite the general tone of praise, review strongly criticizes – not mentioning his name – the leading actor, Willy Birgel, in the role of Polish officer, as completely badly cast, praising instead – not mentioning the film's title – his suggestive role as conductor of symphonic orchestra in “intelligent and good film drama” (the film mentioned here is Detlef Sierck's *The Last Accord /Schlußakkord/* 1936).²⁸

Andrzej Dębski pointed out to me interesting references to Hartl's film also in “Orędownik”, illustrated catholic and national daily newspaper published in Łódź. Advertisement, placed 26 April 1937 announces “great première in the representational cinema Rialto” with following words: “The greatest hit of the season! Heroic rhapsode of the November Uprising! *Ku wolności*. Heroic, rehabilitating act of Polish uhlan-officer who by his love to the Russian aristocrat woman caused the imprisoning of his comrades in arms”. There follows information that film was made with the support of Historical Bureau in Polish Ministry of Military Affairs and the participation of the Regiment of Zaslav Uhlan.²⁹ Even more enthusiastic is advertising note from the same newspaper four days later: “The great feast of film art in representational theatre! “Rialto”, Łódź, Przejazd 2, has honour to present great super-film *Ku wolności*. The greatest film masterpiece of all times! Drama of Polish officer from the era of Uprising 1831 which must arouse interest of every Pole! Excellent cast of the best European artists: WILLY BIRGEL (count Staniewski), URSZULA GRABLEY (princess Czerkow) [*sic!* – TK], WIKTOR STAAL (Rittmeister Wolski), HANSI KNOTECK (Janka)”.³⁰ Such emphasis and exaggeration in advertising seemed to be, however, effective, since in other Łódź newspaper we find the

²⁷ *Na srebrnym ekranie*, “Goniec Częstochowski”, 16.11.1937, no. 263, p. 6.

²⁸ *Kandyd*, “Film”, “Myśl Narodowa”, 13.06.1937, no. 24, p. 382.

²⁹ “Orędownik”, 26.04.1937, no. 96, p. 2.

³⁰ “Orędownik”, 30.04.1937, no. 99, p. 6. Original spelling as for polonization of names and capital letters.

information that Hartl's film was still shown in this city, although in another theatre, "Przedwiośnie", almost eight months later.³¹

Such popularity of *Ritt in die Freiheit* among Polish viewers in 1937 could have also another source. In official bulletins of school administration for Lwów and Katowice districts we could find ministerial recommendations of Hartl's film for pupils of secondary schools.³² It is almost certain that similar recommendations could be found in decrees published by school authorities in other regions of Poland since their source was central, Ministry of Religious Confessions and Public Education. However, the main reason of this unexpectedly good reception in Poland of this unexpectedly pro-Polish film is that despite the country of production (Third Reich) and political intention behind making this film, it inscribes itself very convincingly both in Polish cultural and literary tradition, and the historical politics of Polish state.

³¹ "Echo", 10.12.1937, no. 344, p. 5.

³² "Dziennik Urzędowy Kuratorium Okręgu Szkolnego Lwowskiego", Lwów, 29.05.1937, no. 5, p. 349; "Gazeta Urzędowa Województwa Śląskiego. Dział Administracji Szkolnej", Katowice, 28.05.1937, no. 5, p. 131.

Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska*

Cinema programs as a source for research on historical film audiences. Berlin 1945–1949¹

The term “cinema programs” has two meanings. On the one hand, it refers to combining different films into one screening or the repertoire of a film theatre, which has become a significant field of research in recent years.² On the other hand, it denotes printed information about the program of a particular cinema, i.e. flyers or booklets containing a list of titles screened over a certain period of time; usually a week or month, as well as short descriptions of the films. In this paper, I focus on the latter understanding of cinema programs (the German equivalent being: *Kinoprogramme*, sometimes *Filmprogramme* or *Hausprogramme*). Figures 1–4 show two typical examples of cinema programs in Berlin during the late 1940s.



Figs. 1–2. Cinema program from Corso film theatre, 14–20 January 1949, cover and inside

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² See A. Haller, *Das Kinoprogramm. Zur Genese und Frühen Praxis einer Aufführungsform*, [in:] *The Art of Programming. Film, Programm und Kontext*, ed. H. Klippel, LTI-Verlag 2008, p. 18–52. In the context of the early post-war period in Berlin see W. Mühl-Benninghaus, *Die zweite Stunde Null des deutschen Kinos. Alliierte Kinoprogramme in Berlin 1945/46*, [in:] *Die Spur durch den Siegel. Der Film in der Kultur der Moderne*, eds. M. Hagener, J.N. Schmidt, M. Wedel, Bertz 2004, p. 207–225.



Figs. 3–4. Cinema program from KSB (= Kammerspiele Britz) film theatre, 13–19 June 1947, front and reverse side

Such materials have existed since the early days of cinema, yet the tradition of printed programs for theatrical or operatic performances dates back even further. Today, cinema programs have largely been replaced by digital media. However, printed programs are still in use, especially in small cinemas offering less popular films. In contrast to other types of film promotion, which distributors are often fully in charge of,³ materials produced by cinemas are especially interesting in the field of audience research since they are addressed to local cinemagoers. Obviously, cinema programs do not only supply information as such – they are also one of the “routine procedures for creating consumer identification of [...] theatres to attend”.⁴ Thus, they contain additional elements such as information on the location of the film theatre, its logo or sometimes even a picture of the place. For example, the cover of the Corso theatre program (fig. 5) depicts its façade (in a later version it displays a rather symbolic version of it – see fig. 1.), the cover of the Neue Scala program (fig. 6) depicts its silhouette with the characteristic two towers at Nollendorfplatz in Berlin.



Figs. 5–6. Covers of Corso theatre programs, 4–10 June 1948 (left), and Neue Scala theatre, June 1947 (right)

³ See J. Staiger, *Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising*, “Cinema Journal” 1990, vol. 29(3), p. 3–31.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 4.

The emergence of cinema programs in Germany

The earliest programs contained a list of films, the names of the performers and musicians who accompanied the screenings and sometimes additional information about the artists and the theatre itself. Once the concept of film projection had changed and feature films had become the main part of the show, printed programs focused on weekly screening schedules rather than on one particular evening. Apart from information about the titles of films, many programs contained other materials addressed to local viewers such as messages from cinema owners or ads for stores, restaurants, bars etc.

In German, programs ads appeared around 1920. In the 1930s and early 1940s they became a less common part of the programs. After World War II, cinema programs were re-established in some film theatres as early as the fall of 1945 and in 1946 they became very popular again. From then on, one could hardly find a program without ads. One of the reasons for this change might have been the high cost of paper, which was a product in short supply,⁵ so the ads helped to offset and reduce the printing costs. Starting in the early 1950s, ads in cinema programs became less and less popular until they almost completely disappeared in the 1960s and 1970s. One point should be added, though: in most cases it was external companies, not the cinema owners themselves that were responsible for receiving and designing the ads as well as for printing the programs (figs. 7–8).



Fig. 7. Ad for a company that designed and printed cinema programs. Taken from the program of the Neue Alhambra theatre, 20–26 February 1948

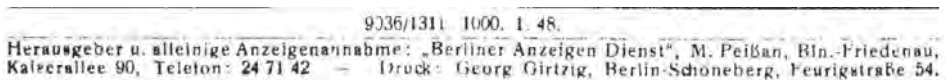


Fig. 8. Upper row: permission number, circulation (1,000 copies) and date of printing (1.48). Bottom row: information about the company responsible for receiving the ads and printing the program. Taken from the program of the Die Kurbel theatre, January 1948

⁵ W. Benz, *Auftrag Demokratie. Die Gründungsgeschichte der Bundesrepublik und die Entstehung der DDR 1945–1949*, Metropolis 2009, p. 149.

It also seems intriguing to look at what was not included in the programs, such as information about newsreels and / or additional documentaries, which were screened before the main film – even though they were an inherent part of the shows. There may have been two reasons for this: firstly, the presence of newsreels was obvious, so they did not need any additional announcement; secondly, most of the cinemagoers did not like them,⁶ so advertising for them would have been counterproductive. Moreover, an analysis focused on the question: what kind of ads accompanied which films would be of no use since the same ads had usually been printed for many weeks or months, next to information about very different films.

Cinema programs in Berlin 1945–1949

In my paper, I analyse programs from cinemas in all four sectors of occupied Berlin from 1945 to 1949. I focus primarily on ads. Looking at cinema programs allows me to conduct research on local audiences by taking into consideration the social structure of the German population under occupation, the Berliners' mobility between the sectors and – if possible – the viewers' habits before, during and after the screenings.



Figs. 9–10. Cinema program from Mila Lichtspiel-Palast in Berlin (Soviet occupation zone), 27 Feb.–4 March 1948, front (upper) and reverse (upper right)

Fig. 11 (bottom). Cinema program from the Babylon film theatre in Schönhauser Allee in the Soviet occupation Zone. 1–9th September 1948

⁶ J. Fay, *Theatres of Occupation. Hollywood and the Re-education of Postwar Germany*, University of Minnesota Press 2008, p. 55.

The analysis is based on research done at the archives of the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek in Berlin. The programs collected from the SDK are not representative in terms of statistics, though. The SDK owns programs from 44 Berlin cinemas from the years 1945–1949 (unfortunately all incomplete) making up approximately 20 percent of all the cinemas in the city during that period.⁷ As a result, I examined about 400 programs.⁸ Unfortunately, cinemas from East Berlin are underrepresented in this sample. However, those programs from East Berlin cinemas that are available prove that, with the exception of other titles that were screened in the Soviet zone, the eastern programs did not differ much from the western ones and also included a lot of commercial content (figs. 9–11).⁹

Apart from that, the division into East and West Berlin film theatres is more complex than it seems at first sight. Until 1961, Berliners could move more or less freely between the sectors and thus attend film theatres in other districts. There were exceptional theatres, like the Mercedes-Palast in the French sector, which screened Soviet films delivered by the Soviet distributor Sovexport.¹⁰ Furthermore, in the summer of 1948, a new phenomenon was born: “border cinemas” (*Grenzkinos*), i.e. film theatres in the western districts that offered special screenings for viewers coming from East Berlin¹¹ as well

⁷ The number of cinemas in Germany increased rapidly in the period between 1945 and 1949. In the western zones, 1,150 stationary film theatres were reopened by the end of 1945 and by the end of 1949, there were 3,360 cinemas (see J. Hauser, *Neuaufbau der westdeutschen Filmwirtschaft 1945–1955 und der Einfluß der US-amerikanischen Filmpolitik*, Centaurus-Verlags-gesellschaft 1989, p. 676). In 1947, 217 cinemas were in operation in the four sectors of Berlin (see A. Bähr, *Der Wiederaufbau: von der Illusionswelt zur Filmkunst*, [in:] *Kinoarchitektur in Berlin 1895–1995*, eds. S. Hänsel, A. Schmitt, Reimer 1995, p. 17), 133 of which were located in West Berlin (see G. Bentele, *Berlin als Film- und Kinostadt: eine Bestandaufnahme in Daten und Fakten*, [in:] *Medienstadt Berlin*, eds. G. Bentele, O. Jarren, Vistas Verlag 1988, p. 430–431). In the Soviet occupation zone, there were 1,324 cinemas in the summer of 1946 (yet only 497 were screening daily. Hence, we can assume that many of the rest were travelling cinemas) and 77 cinemas in East Berlin (72 screenings daily) (see K. Enz, *Entwicklung der Filmwiedergabetechnik und des Filmtheaternetzes in der DDR von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, DEFA 1982, p. 40). The approximate number of cinemas in Berlin from 1946 to 1949 can thus be estimated at about 200–270. The situation in 1945 was rather exceptional, as the number of cinemas was rising rapidly, so an average number, which would be correct for the whole seven months between May and December 1945, cannot be given. Already on May 15th, there were 17 working cinemas in Berlin (“Tägliche Rundschau”, 15th May, 1945, cited [in:] M. Hanisch, *Um “6 Uhr abends nach Kriegsende” bis “High Noon”. Kino und Film im Berlin der Nachkriegszeit. 1945–1953*, Defa-Stiftung 2004, p. 13.) and two days later 30 cinemas (“Tägliche Rundschau”, 17th May, 1945, cited ibidem).

⁸ An exact number cannot be given as in some cases a precise date is lacking and we can only speculate whether the program represents the analysed period.

⁹ Further research on this subject can be done on the basis of the collections at the Landesarchiv Berlin and the Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv in Berlin, although, unlike SDK, they do not specialize in collecting cinema programs.

¹⁰ M. Hanisch, *Um “6 Uhr abends nach Kriegsende”...*, p. 15.

¹¹ See n.n., *Kalter Kinokrieg – Entstehung und Entwicklung der Berliner Grenzkinos*, http://berliner-grenzkinos.de/grenzkinos_geschichte.html, official website of the project “Berliner Grenzkinos 1950–1961” [“Berlin border-cinemas 1950–1950”] realized among others by the Alliierten Museum, Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek and HFF Potsdam Babelsberg) (22.01.2014).

as the possibility of paying for tickets in East German marks. Therefore, cinema-going practices in both West and East Berlin during the early post-war period should not be considered separately.

In the late 1940s, cinema programs were either free of charge or cost a symbolic price of 10 to a maximum of 30 pfennig in both West and East Berlin. In some cases, they were sent by mail to audience members loyal to a particular film theatre, though, usually, they were available in the cinema itself. They functioned alongside other advertising materials offered by the distributors, such as posters, portraits of actors as well as handbills devoted to particular films. Hence, they were an obvious and natural part of the cinema's public sphere.¹² Their circulation varied greatly and, in those cases where we know actual numbers, it does not seem to be very informative. To give an example: the program of the cinema theatre, Die Kurbel was printed in a circulation of 1,000 copies (fig. 8). Presuming that they offered approximately 20 screenings a week (which can be estimated on the basis of the program), we can easily deduce that they sold approximately 50 programs per screening. Since there were over 500 seats in this cinema in those years,¹³ it either meant that every tenth viewer bought a program or, which is rather unlikely for this period, that the tickets never sold out. At the same time, though, the similarly big Rheinschloß-Lichtspiele theatre printed its programs in a circulation of 3,000 copies. Hence, we cannot draw any concrete conclusions about the popularity of the programs merely on the basis of their circulation. It rather seems that the circulation depended on the funds of the theatre, access to paper or the cinema owners' marketing strategies.

Most of the research done on advertising in cinemas comes from later periods and focuses on ads screened before the main film. Researchers usually emphasize that they are perceived in the special context of entertainment.¹⁴ Looking at audiences through commercial material also involves the concept of film viewers as consumers.¹⁵ In the very case of early post-war Germany, however, the theoretical models of cinematic consumer and entertainment culture cannot be implemented directly, seeing as this period represented a shortage-culture rather than a typical consumer-culture. The well-known

¹² For the notion "cinema's public sphere" see C. Müller, H. Segeberg, "Öffentlichkeit" und "Kinoöffentlichkeit". *Zum Hamburger Forschungsprogramm*, [in:] *Kinoöffentlichkeit (1895–1920) / Cinema's Public Sphere (1895–1920)*, eds. M. Corinna, H. Segeberg, Schüren Verlag 2005; M. Hansen, *Early cinema, late cinema. Permutations of the public sphere*, "Screen" 1993, vol. 3(3), p. 197–210.

¹³ S. Hänsel, A. Schmitt (eds.), *Kinoarchitektur in Berlin 1895–1995*, Reimer 1995, p. 51.

¹⁴ See: F.-G. Amberg, *Werbung im Filmtheater*, Kulturbuch 1956; J. Allen, *Film Viewer as Consumer*, "Quarterly Review of Film Studies" 1980, vol. 5(4), p. 481–499; K.F. Johnson, *Cinema Advertising*, "Journal of Advertising" 1981, vol. 10(4), p. 11–19; B.B. Austin, *Cinema Screen Advertising. An Old Technology with New Promise for Consumer Marketing*, "Journal of Consumer Marketing" 1981, vol. 3(1), p. 45–56; J. Phillips, S.M. Noble, *Simply Captivating: Understanding Consumers' Attitudes toward the Cinema as an Advertising Medium*, "Journal of Advertising" 2007, vol. 36(1), p. 81–94.

¹⁵ See J. Allen, *Film Viewer as Consumer...*; M.B. Hansen, *Early cinema...*, p. 85, 112–115.

model of “film viewer as consumer” introduced by Jane Allen underlines the cooperation of film and the product industry in the United States. While it focuses on ads screened in cinemas and product placement and therefore on a rather expensive type of advertising, the concept I develop here concentrates on local audiences and local targets within a shortage-culture as well as on cheap types of advertising.¹⁶



Fig. 12. “outside it says: The film is most warmly recommended

Source: “Film-Echo” 1947, no. 1.

Living conditions in occupied Berlin were undoubtedly very hard and going to cinema theatres was one of the most popular leisure time activities. One of the newspaper surveys, which were very common in those days, claims that 77 percent of all Berliners frequented cinema theatres at least once a week,¹⁷ although the number is certainly too high as participation in the survey was voluntary. Bettina Greffrath cites more credible surveys conducted by the American military government, which resulted in the figure of 54 percent of West Berliners attending cinema regularly.¹⁸ This percentage was significantly higher than in the rest of Germany.¹⁹ Some film scholars claim, seeing as the winter of 1946/1947 was one of the coldest in the whole century, that the possibility of spending two hours in a warm room was one of the reasons why people frequented cinemas.²⁰ It even happened that viewers were requested to bring coal briquettes in order to arrange the screening.²¹ Apart from this

¹⁶ One of the programs at SDK contains hand-written notes on prices: an ad of about 28 square centimetres cost 21.6 RM, yet we can only speculate whether it was the price for a single edition or a longer period of advertising [Blücher, 8–28th Aug. 1947]. References in square brackets refer to cinema programs available in SDK.

¹⁷ H. Müting, *Deutsche Filme bevorzugt*, “National-Zeitung”, Dezember 8th 1948.

¹⁸ B. Greffrath, *Gesellschaftsbilder der Nachkriegszeit. Deutsche Spielfilme 1945–1949*, Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft 1995, p. 124.

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ R. Shandley, *Rubble Films. German Cinema in the Shadow of the Third Reich*, Temple University Press 2001, p. 19.

²¹ P. Gleber, *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen. Film und Kino im Nachkriegsjahrzehnt*, [in:] *Nach der Suche nach der neuen Identität. Kultur in Rheinland-Pfalz im Nachkriegsjahrzehnt*, eds. F.-J. Hayen, A.M. Keim, Hase & Koehler Verlag 1996, p. 32. Reprinted: <http://www.lmz-bw.>

interesting, albeit rather marginal motivation, it should be noted that watching movies was a cheap and thus easily available leisure time activity as an average ticket cost 1 RM,²² which was comparable to pre-war prices. Nevertheless, the cinematic experience was a different one, since screenings were often cancelled or interrupted by power cuts,²³ which explains the Kreuzberg Blücher theatre's proud announcement: "Blücher-screenings as on schedule. No power cuts." [Blücher, 12–23 December 1947].

Cinema programs and audience structures

Apart from the aforementioned fact that ads were an obligatory part of all cinema programs in the late 1940s, another reason for choosing this period for my analysis was the abnormal social structure of the German population. Since many men had been killed during the war and many others were still prisoners of war, there was a huge surplus of women in the population²⁴ and hence in the audiences.²⁵ This can also be easily proven on the basis of ads printed in film-magazines, which contained even more typically female-addressed ads targeted at women than women's magazines. The magazines "Filmpost-Magazin" (West) or "Film von Heute" (East) printed many ads for hygienic articles (e.g. sanitary towels, body powder, figs. 13–14.), baby-food or baking powder.²⁶

de/fileadmin/user_upload/Medienbildung_MCO/fileadmin/bibliothek/gleber_nachkriegsfilm/gleber_nachkriegsfilm.pdf, p. 1–65 (access: 12.02.2014).

²² R. Shandley, *Rubble Films...*, p. 36; T. Brandlmeier, *Von Hitler zu Adenauer. Deutsche Trümmerfilme*, [in:] *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen. Westdeutscher Film 1946–1962*, eds. H. Hoffmann, W. Schobert, Deutsches Filmmuseum 1989, p. 34. In his study on Leipzig audiences (Soviet occupation zone), Pavel Skopal writes that ticket prices varied from 0.60 RM to 3 RM [P. Skopal, "It is not enough we have lost the war – now we have to watch it!" *Cinemagoer's attitudes in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany (a case study from Leipzig)*, "Participations. Journal for Audience and Reception Studies" 2011, vol. 8(2), p. 489–521]. An average ticket in the Western zones after the currency reform cost 0.67 DM (1949) (Spitzenorganisation der Filmwirtschaft (1950). *Filmwirtschaftskrise und Filmtheater-Eintrittspreise*. Schriftgutarchiv Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, N424_Na_02.). In comparison, the official average price for a pound of butter was 2 RM, the black-market-price reached 350 RM and a loaf of bread officially cost 40 pfennig and 20–30 RM on the black market (J. Echternkamp, *Nach dem Krieg. Alltagsnot, Neuorientierung und die Last der Vergangenheit. 1945–1949*, Pendo Verlag 2003, p. 24).

²³ W. Mühl-Benninghaus, *Die zweite Stunde Null des deutschen Kinos. Alliierte Kinoprogramme in Berlin 1945/46...*, p. 210.

²⁴ H.-U. Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Vierter Band. Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten 1914–1949*, Verlag C.H. Beck 2003, p. 961–962.

²⁵ J. Fay, *Theatres of Occupation. Hollywood and the Re-education of Postwar Germany*, University of Minnesota Press 2008, p. 149–151, P. Skopal, "It is not enough we have lost the war – now we have to watch it!" *Cinemagoer's attitudes in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany (a case study from Leipzig)*..., p. 501.

²⁶ For a study on female-addressed magazine ads in the context of cinema and the United States in the 1940s see M. Renov, *Advertising/Photjournalism/Cinema: The Shifting Rhetoric of Forties Female Representation*, "Quarterly Review of Film and Video" 1989, vol. 11(1), p. 1–21.



Fig. 13 (left). Page from “Filmpost-Magazin” 1948, no. 6, containing ads for suitcases (upper left-hand corner), cosmetics for men (upper-right hand corner), an auction house (bottom left hand corner) and sanitary towels (bottom-right hand corner)

Fig. 14 (right). Ad for body powder from “Filmpost-Magazin” 1947, no. 5. Caption: “Powder as a bathing substitute. Try out the refreshing effect of body powder, if you cannot have a normal bath...”

However, the surplus of women was not solely a German phenomenon. Discussing Hollywood, Mary Ann Doane states that “the war served to reinforce the view that the spectator to be addressed is female. The film industry tended to operate under the assumption that the audience was composed primarily of women”.²⁷ The “shortage” of men (and of apartments) becomes apparent in a rather exceptional announcement in a Blücher theatre program: “Marriage? Yes! Find the right husband with a flat with the help of M. Burkhardt, Mehringdamm 23, front III” [Blücher, 23 April 1948]. While at first glance most programs contained many ads for female products or services (perfumeries, chemist shops, hairdressers, beauticians, repair shops specializing in repairing household equipment etc.), their approximate number was not significantly higher than in the years before (fig. 15). This only confirms that watching films had been a rather female than male form of entertainment in the early years of cinema, as Emily Altenloh had already noted in 1914,²⁸ and remained so after World War II. Besides, ads for perfumeries, chemists or shops selling stockings and gloves could have been addressed both to women and men, who bought gifts for the former. Seeing as some of the ads in cinema

²⁷ M.A. Doane, *The Economy of Desire: The Commodity Form in/of the Cinema*, "Quarterly Review of Film and Video" 1989, vol. 11(1), p. 27.

²⁸ E. Altenloh, *A Sociology of the Cinema: the Audience*, "Screen" 2001 [1914], vol. 42(3), p. 249–293.

programs from the American and British sectors were printed in English, they must have also been addressed to foreigners, most notably allied soldiers (fig. 16). Speaking of which, some programs contained ads for language courses and translation services especially for English, French and Russian. Since these ads were written in German, they addressed a German audience who needed or wanted to communicate with foreign soldiers [“Kronen”, April 1947; “Palladium”, September 1947].



Fig. 15 (left). Kronen-Lichtspiele program, ca. 1925. There are ads for a shop selling stockings, jackets and baby-products (upper-left hand corner), floor care products (upper-right hand corner), a watchmaker and a jeweler (left side in the middle) or a gallery and portrait painter (bottom-right hand corner)



Fig. 16 (right). Ad for a souvenir shop in a program of the Neue Scala theatre (June 1947). Caption (in English): “We have a fine assortment of souvenirs and gifts. Visitors welcome”

For the same reasons as for the surplus of women, there were also proportionally many children and teenagers in the population. Their presence in the audiences cannot be deduced from the ads, though. Nevertheless, the fact that youth frequented cinemas is reflected in other announcements. The 1946 pre-Christmas program of the KSB theatre in the American sector included an announcement that children and teenagers would not be allowed to attend the afternoon screenings on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day [KSB, 13–19 December 1946]. The same concerned screenings on Easter until at least 1948. This ban probably resulted from the belief that on such holidays children should be at home with their families (if they had any). In contrast to this situation, we can occasionally find special screenings for children, usually at weekends.

Another factor typical of early post-war society was the high level of social stratification. Few people had a permanent place to live in ruined cities. For the first years, food as well as other basic products were available for ration coupons, the rest was accessible on the black market only. Although in other parts of West Germany the situation soon improved after the currency reform in June 1948, in West Berlin it became even worse since the reform ended with

an almost yearlong blockade of the city. The result of the post-war shortages was a very rigid class structure. Apart from the vast majority of Germans, who had lost their goods or houses, a small but influential minority used the circumstances to enrich themselves, primarily through the black market.²⁹



Figs. 17–18. Tickets from Film-Bühne-Wien theatre, 29 October 1947. Front (left), reverse side (right). On the reverse side there is an ad for a store selling “gifts”, “fashion” and “perfumes” at Kurfürstendamm (Ku’damm), about 300 metres from the cinema

This stratification is reflected in the programs, of both luxury cinemas (e.g. Neue Scala or Film Bühne-Wien) and modest district theatres (e.g. Kammer spiele Britz or Palladium). The differences resulted not only from the cinema’s location or size but also from their repertoire as luxury theatres were allowed to screen premieres. This was not only a matter of prestige but also of quality; the longer a copy of a film was screened in other cinemas the worse the quality of this copy became. Unfortunately, we can hardly confirm the differences between the theatres by comparing ticket prices since they were neither printed in the programs nor on the tickets themselves. Speaking of which, some tickets also displayed ads on the reverse side, as can be seen on an example from the Film-Bühne-Wien theatre.



Fig. 19. The program of the Neue Scala theatre from April 1947, inside (left) and cover (right)

Film-Bühne-Wien as well as some other theatres at Ku’damm and streets nearby belonged to so-called “pleasure-palaces” (*Vergnügungspalast*).³⁰ Many of them contained ads targeted at the upper classes and foreigners. The

²⁹ W. Benz, *Auftrag Demokratie. Die Gründungsgeschichte der Bundesrepublik...*, p. 110.

³⁰ S. Hänsel, A. Schmitt (eds.), *Kinoarchitektur in Berlin 1895–1995...*, p. 42.

program above presents the repertoire of the Neue Scala theatre in the American sector (fig. 19). It contains ads for oriental carpets, pianos, gramophone records with dance music, a jeweller, a portrait painter (ad in English) and luxury draperies – all products for wealthy clients. The carpet shop and jeweller were in walking distance from the theatre, the piano shop and the drapery shop were located further away. The ads also include telephone numbers, which contributes to the thesis of their being addressed to a wealthier public, since private telephones were available to only a few Berliners in those days.

Many of the announcements in cinema programs, especially those of less luxurious theatres, contained the word *Ankauf* (acquiring) rather than *Verkauf* (selling), which allows us to conclude that commonly, cinemagoers were people who wanted or needed to sell their goods rather than to buy them. However, jewels, porcelain, ivory figures or antiques were not the only goods to be acquired. A Palladium theatre program contained the following announcement (fig. 20, circled): “Selling on commission: dresses, coats, costumes, underwear and shoes, men’s coats and suits, underwear and shoes”. Even used underwear could have been sold, here mentioned twice, to differentiate between women’s and men’s clothes. The most significant example of the presence of lower class viewers in the audiences, however, were ads for pest-control companies, shops offering dresses made from old clothes or barter businesses: two rolls of toilet paper for one kilogram of waste paper, for instance, or a towel for one kilogram of rags (fig. 21).



Fig. 20 (right). Cinema program from the Palladium theatre, 6–12 February 1948
Fig. 21 (left). Ad for a barter business on the front of the KSB theatre program, 13–19th June 1947. See also fig. 3

Over the years, the drastic social stratification of the audience became less and less visible. Ads for barter shops or pest-control companies almost disappeared. Especially the programs of western cinemas showed more signs of prosperity. More and more ads for department stores or household equipment

stores were addressed to cinemagoers. Finally, in 1950, ads for the Volkswagen-Beetle – the very symbol of the West German economic miracle – appeared [Cosima, 9–12 June 1959].

By the end of 1949, the Rheinschloß-Lichtspiele theatre in Berlin-Friedenau (American sector) started to print an ad for moving services, saying the company would move customers' goods to the West. Since the cinema was not close to the Soviet sector and thus probably not frequented by East Berliners, this ad addressed West Berliners who wanted to move to West Germany. Yet it also makes us think of mobility within Berlin and especially among cinemagoers. Until the Berlin Wall was built, people could move more or less freely between the sectors,³¹ even during the blockade of 1948/1949 although they were not allowed to transport any goods.³²



Fig. 22. A Humboldt Lichtspiel-Bühne program, 23–29 April 1948. The cinema was located in the French occupied zone, even though it contained an ad for a shop for stamp collectors in Pankow, a district in East Berlin

The emergence of the Cold War in Berlin had another impact on film audiences – the aforementioned border cinemas. Behind their appearance lay both political and economic reasons. On the one hand, they were a tool of western propaganda trying to convince the East Berliners of the benefits of liberal values and capitalism.³³ On the other hand, they were a way to attract new viewers after the number of cinemagoers in West Berlin had rapidly decreased in the summer of 1948.³⁴ After some time, even film theatres located in deeper parts of West Berlin joined the idea. For example, the Film-Bühne-Wien theatre organised special screenings for viewers from East Berlin only [Film-Bühne-Wien, 26 August 1950].³⁵ Signs of watching films “between the

³¹ Gerhard Klein presented the topic of teenagers from East Berlin frequenting West Berlin cinemas in his film *Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser* (1957).

³² Speaking of the blockade, there are significantly less programs from this period, which is not only due to the incomplete collection of Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek. Many cinemas closed or screened less than before because of power cuts.

³³ n.n., *Kalter Kinokrieg – Entstehung und Entwicklung der Berliner Grenzkinos...*

³⁴ A. Bähr, *Der Wiederaufbau: von der Illusionswelt zur Filmkunst...*, p. 18.

³⁵ It is worth mentioning that the film to be screened was *The Third Man* (1949, dir. Carol Reed) – a well-known feature about a divided Vienna.

sectors” can be found in many programs, primarily in ads for stores located in other sectors than the given film theatre (fig. 22). This concerns programs of both western and eastern cinemas. Reassurances in some ads that both currencies would be accepted can also be treated as evidence of the audiences’ mobility.

Furthermore, some programs contained ads for screenings from other sectors. Having mentioned the phenomenon of border cinemas and viewers from East Berlin watching films in western cinemas, I would like to point out that contrary situations happened too, though rarely and – at least on the basis of the programs in the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek – before the Berlin blockade. In April 1948, the Blücher theatre printed a program that announced the screening of the film *Straßenbekanntschaft* (1948, dir. Peter Pewas) at the Markgrafen-Lichtspiele theatre in East Berlin [Blücher, 23 April 1948]. The film was an educational feature about venereal diseases, produced in the soviet zone. Similar announcements can be found in earlier programs of this cinema too.

Cinema programs and screenings

Besides insight into audience structures, cinema programs offer useful information about the shows themselves. On this basis, we can see that most titles were screened twice a day, seven days a week, from Friday to Thursday. On weekends, additional screenings in the early afternoon were offered. Some cinemas also organized night screenings, which started at 10 p.m. or even later. The most favourite films were screened on special occasions – Christmas, Easter, the cinema’s anniversary etc. In late 1947, the Blücher theatre conducted a survey in which audiences were asked whether they would like to have a “day-cinema” (*Tageskino*) established, i.e. screenings on weekday mornings. A questionnaire was included in the cinema program [Blücher, 28th November 1947]. The responses were very positive (of 830 votes only 9 were against it). Some viewers argued that there were many people who worked in the afternoons and evenings and thus could not attend regular screenings [Blücher, 6th February 1948].

Most programs also contained information about ticket pre-orders: Tickets were not only sold in the cinemas themselves, but at special points too, so-called *Theaterkassen*. The fact that it did not suffice to come to the cinema a couple of minutes before the screening in order to buy tickets only proves how popular films were in the late 1940s in Germany. The photographs below, both by Gerhard Gronefeld, show a queue in front of the Tivoli cinema³⁶ (left) before a screening of *Operette* (G: 1940, dir. Willi Frost) as well as a sign in front of the

³⁶ However, it was not the famous Tivoli theatre in Berlin-Pankow where Max and Emil Skladanowsky presented their first Bioscope moving images, but the Tivoli theatre in Berlin-Tempelhof (see www.allekinos.com [access18.02.2014]).

Film-Bühne-Wien theatre (right) saying that tickets for *Große Freiheit Nr 7* (G: 1944, dir. Helmut Käutner, starring Hans Albers) were sold out.³⁷

Source: Deutsches Historisches Museum.



Figs. 23–24. Photographs by Gerhard Gronefeld, Berlin. Left 1947, right 1945 (the premiere of *Große Freiheit Nr 7* took place on 6 September 1945)

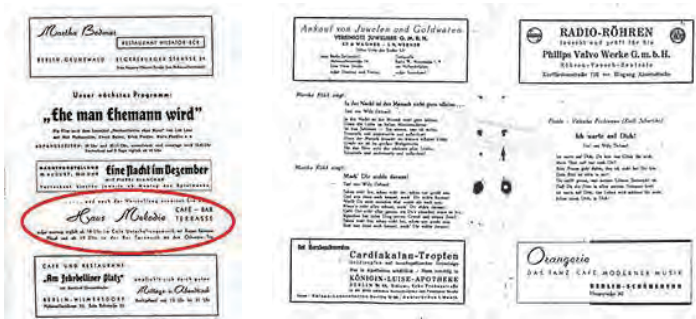


Fig. 25 (left). Page from the program of the Melodie-Lichtspiele theatre in Berlin Grunewald, August 1947. Circled in red is an ad for a café licensed for dancing. The inscription says, “and after the screening we welcome you at Melodie Café – bar and terrace. Daily from 6 p.m. light music in the café with Eugen Reimann at the piano and from 7 p.m. dancing music in the bar with the Ochsmann trio, except on Mondays”. As the name of the café is the same as that of the theatre as well as the lack of information concerning its address, let us assume that the café was located in the same building as the theatre

Fig. 26 (right). BTL (= Biophon Lichtspiele-Theater) program (inside) from 15–21 March 1946 containing song lyrics for the blockbuster *The Woman of my Dreams* (*Die Frau meiner Träume*, 1944, dir. Georg Jacoby)

The programs allow us furthermore to draw conclusions about the audiences’ habits after the show. Many programs contained ads for pubs, bars and restaurants licensed for dancing (fig. 25). These places were usually located

³⁷ In fact, the film by Käutner was the first film to be played at the Film-Bühne-Wien after the war. Its first post-war program was devoted to *Große Freiheit Nr 7*, containing a letter from the cinema’s director who thanked the allied forces for their help in re-establishing the cinema.

close to the cinema and reflected the social stratification of the audience too. There were both luxurious restaurants, especially at Ku'damm, and modest pubs offering cheap beer. Unfortunately, we know little about the audiences' habits during the show. Since the Film-Bühne-Wien theatre promoted their screenings in an open-air cinema by writing that smoking was allowed [Film-Bühne-Wien, 26 August 1950], we can assume that it was prohibited in ordinary theatres. Better sources to confirm this assumption are the memoirs of former cinema workers.³⁸ Contrary to some programs of the 1920s, in which the ladies were asked to take their hats off [Rheinschloß-Lichtspiele, 13–19 February 1920], the programs of the early 1940s did not contain any evidence of how the cinemagoers were to dress or what they did during the screenings. An interesting phenomenon, though, are song lyrics occasionally published in the programs (fig. 26), which leads to the conclusion that at least part of the audience might have sung along during screenings of musicals.

Conclusions

From today's perspective, cinema programs are not the best source for researching former cinemas' repertoires – that being their original purpose. Cinema repertoires can be better studied on the basis of announcements in local newspapers for instance. However, cinema programs are a good source for investigations in the field of audience studies. As this case study of Berlin 1945–1949 has shown, printed programs can be useful in analysing audiences in terms of class and gender stratification. In one case only, they gave evidence of the audience's possible political sympathies, since programs of the Blücher theatre often contained ads for the leftist newspaper "Der Sozialdemokrat". Even though cinema programs cannot replace typical archival documents or – if available – interviews with former cinemagoers, which in many cases would be treated as additional material rather than the main source, they offer interesting insights into local aspects of the theatres. In contrast to ads printed in newspapers and magazines, including film-magazines (figs. 13–14), which were addressed to a broader public and thus gave evidence of a more general consumer-culture, ads in cinema programs referred to the very local context of each theatre. While ads in the press promoted products (diverse brands of cosmetics, food products, cigarettes etc.), cinema programs contained ads for particular shops or department stores where these products could be acquired. Hence, ads for luxury shops, jewellers or expensive restaurants were printed in programs of "pleasure-palaces" like the Neue Scala or Film-Bühne Wien, whereas ads for barter businesses or cheap bars could be found in programs of ordinary district cinemas.

³⁸ P. Gleber, *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen. Film und Kino im Nachkriegsjahrzehnt*, p. 32.

Using cinema programs as a source for research on historical film audiences requires further methodological development. In order to get a deeper perspective on the audiences, we could, for instance, consider comparing ads published in programs with ads published elsewhere during the same period. That would allow us to differentiate between cinema audiences and the rest of the population. However, as of now, this would be the subject for a future research project.

*Tomasz Rachwald**

War film as a political problem in Polish press 1945–1949

While studying the usage of mainstream cinema as a medium for propaganda in early era of post-war People's Poland,¹ I have encountered the necessity for taking under consideration the significance of specific articles in the cultural press of the time. Since socialist realism was not inducted in Poland as an obligatory style of art before 1949,² there is a four-year gap between forming the Ministry for Information and Propaganda in Provisional Government of National Unity and that. That, as described in Czesław Miłosz's *The Captive Mind*, was used not only for eliminating opposition, but also for gathering support through positive propaganda and temporary loosening state censorship.

Introducing ideas of socialist realism to the public was one of the elements of this propaganda. Though not yet enforced, the new role of state-funded film industry had been emphasized since the beginning of the Polish post-war press, as I will show in the examples from periodicals such as "Film" and "Kuźnica". As time passed, the number of socialist realism-related articles increased, building a clear path from the dismissal of the pre-war free market film industry, through the introduction of the newest accomplishments of Soviet cinema (along with dismissal of its experiments of the silent era) to the full acknowledgment of its greatness and rejection of every form of non-Soviet film art (including Italian realism).

In such conditions, every critique and reaction to then-produced war films has its own significance. Reacting to most recent history was a political as well

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¹ This period has been studied thoroughly by Alina Madej in *Kino – władza – publiczność: kinematografia polska w latach 1944–1949*, Prasa Beskidzka, Bielsko-Biała 2002. See also: J. Lemann-Zajicek, *Kino i polityka: polski film dokumentalny 1945–1949*, Dział Wydawniczy PWSFTviT, Łódź 2003; E. Zajicek, *Poza ekranem: kinematografia polska 1918–1991*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa 1992, p. 35–87; A. Misiak, *Kinematograf kontrolowany: cenzura filmowa w kraju socjalistycznym i demokratycznym (PRL i USA)*, Universitas 2006, p. 71–102. See also eadem, *Aleksander Ford and Film Censorship in Poland*, "Kinema", Fall 2003, p. 19–31.

² I treat Congress of Filmmakers in Wisła (October 17th–20th 1949) as a symbolic borderline, remembering, that matter-of-factly socialist realism was known and used in Polish cinema before that meeting – which first and foremost goal was to discipline filmmakers and scriptwriters (see A. Madej, *Zjazd filmowy w Wiśle, czyli dla każdego coś przykrego*, "Kwartalnik Filmowy" 1994, no. 5.)

as psychological must-do. As the state funded film industry of the time was under direct supervision of Ministry of Propaganda, one of its goals was to provide the expected interpretation of the years under German occupation, the existence of death camps and the activities of the Polish underground resistance. The demand for war stories was undeniable – all that was needed was a direction.

A great example for such conducted demand was one of numerous commentaries to Wanda Jakubowska's *Last Stage* (*Ostatni etap*, 1947) printed at the time when this first feature movie about Auschwitz was still in production. Krystyna Żywulska's article published in bimonthly, "Film" was entitled: *For those who do not know. Reflections on Auschwitz*.³ Żywulska was then known as a writer of the memoirs: *I survived Auschwitz*⁴ as well as several camp-related poems – thus her opinion on forms of representation of camp life would have been publicly recognized. Her main voiced concern was that any such representation needs to have a certain meaning. Its purpose is to inspire the same disgust for war that camp survivors feel. The need for such message is emphasized by the writer's argument that the recently acquired peace is endangered by countries involved in the reconstruction of the German state – with the exception of the Soviet Union. In such circumstances Żywulska creates a necessity for a politically committed message about Auschwitz; a message that would not only be able to express the horror of the death camps but would also point towards the proper culprits.⁵ A year after publication of her memoirs, Żywulska in this article about the movie in production is mostly concerned about the usage of film as a medium for propaganda. This is what she expects from the first fictional film about a death camp and that is what she will get. *The Last Stage* certainly was a message which first function was persuasion, not reflection. A publically expressed demand was fulfilled.

It is important to remember though, that certain voices and opinions were published and others were not – that was a tool used for engineering the sense of consensus. Discussions in the press did not reflect the whole spectrum of reactions to the notion of soviet cinema as the highest form of film art. But it is worth mentioning that cinema had essentially different status than forms of art that did not involve similar financial commitment to produce it (like literature or sculpture). The transformation from the pre-war commercial film industry to a state-funded model reactivated the idea of film as a work created to serve society which funded it through taxes and ticket costs. Reading "Film" periodical from years 1946–49 leads me to the conviction that many parts of this medium were used to inform at first, and then to convince readers, that socialist realism was the finest and most responsible form of art.

³ K. Żywulska, *Dla tych, którzy nie wiedzą. Refleksje na temat Oświęcimia*, "Film" 1947, no. 31/32. All press articles titles and citations if not mentioned otherwise are translated by me.

⁴ *Eadem*, *I survived Auschwitz*, trans. K. Cenkańska, Dom Wydawniczy tCHu, Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, Warszawa–Oświęcim 2004.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

First months of “Film” periodical

The aforementioned bimonthly was created within the structure of the monopolist which controlled Polish film industry. “Film Polski”, as it was named, was a company created in 1945 to gather every aspect of film production, distribution, and screening under its supervision. Reading the articles in the first issues of “Film” shows that the main goal of this periodical was, to publish news about successful implementations of the company’s strategies, plans for film production several years ahead and, most of all, polemics with criticism printed in several other newspapers.

“Film Polski”, managed by Aleksander Ford (1945–1947) was a target of criticism from multiple angles. None of them was a critique of direction in which post-war Polish cinema was heading – that is the nationalization of the industry and recreating it as an instrument for propaganda. Among the loudest critics of Ford’s management were Jalu Kurek and Antoni Bohdziewicz. In 1946, Kurek, a former futurist, writer, translator and occasional filmmaker [OR – *obliczenia rytmiczne* (Rhythmical Calculations), 1933] published a series of questions to “Film Polski” management in “Dziennik Ludowy” (PSL’s, agrarian opposition party’s newspaper):

- “Why there are no new Polish films in cinemas, while Italy and Czechoslovakia, who started after us, have already launched their production?”;
- “Why doesn’t Aleksander Ford practice filmmaking, and Stanisław Wohl practice cinematography?”;
- “What happened to the film *2*2* by Antoni Bohdziewicz and why is the screenplay by *Robinson warszawski* by Jerzy Andrzejewski and Czesław Miłosz not in production?”;
- “Why there is still no film about Warsaw, nor one about war partisans?”;
- “Why there are no travelogues about the beauty of Polish mountains? No documentaries about [...] the industry of reclaimed Silesia nor about the widened coastline?”;
- “Is there any film about land reform? About village children learning in schools created in noblemen’s palaces?”.⁶

Those questions, immediately answered by Jerzy Bossak in “Film”, show leftist artists’ expectations as well as Ford’s “Film Polski” politics and its consequences. Post-war cinema was supposed to be useful – thus it should have produced films about social and political changes in People’s Poland and about the past war. Kurek criticizes Ford’s inability to fulfill these expectation. Critics agreed that the director’s talents would have been better exploited if he rather focused on film-making. Ford proved to be an inept administrator,⁷ not

⁶ J. Bossak, *Falszywa troska o film*, “Film” 1946, no. 2.

⁷ E. Zajiček, *op. cit.*, p. 61–66.

able to deal with the day to day paperwork.⁸ Another problem were the massive delays in film production caused by the indecisiveness of people hired to evaluate scripts and the constantly changing ideological specifications of central government. Thus was the case with *2*2=4* (1945, dir. Antoni Bohdziewicz), which was permanently excluded from public screening and of Andrzejewski's and Miłosz' script which was rewritten until it was unrecognizable by its authors and finally made into a film in 1950 (*Miasto nieujarzmione*, dir. Jerzy Zarzycki).

Bohdziewicz's feud with Ford and other 1930s START (Society of the Enthusiasts for the Artistic Film) veterans (Cekalski, Toeplitz, Jakubowska) was on the other hand used by editors of the weekly "Kućnica", where he published his criticism of "Film Polski". The earliest example of their discord was in 1935, when a series of articles were printed in other "Film" periodical, controlled by START followers, condemning Bohdziewicz's 'harmful', as it was described, work as state censor.⁹ Differences that could have been washed away by war and the occupation of 1939–45 had in fact become more acute because of Bohdziewicz's involvement with the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) and making newsreels during the Warsaw Uprising 1944 – activities that were condemned by representatives of the new reign supported by the Soviet Union (part of which was Ford). Considering that circumstance one must realize how bold Bohdziewicz was being when he criticized Ford personally in print and think of the Marxist newspaper's agenda when it came to the usage of AK veteran as a weapon against the unpopular head of the film industry.

The criticism of the director of *2*2* was strictly organizational. In the first in his series of articles (incidentally printed in the same month as one of Aleksander Ford's rare publications in his own defense¹⁰) Bohdziewicz proves that the assumption distributed by "Film Polski" – everything the Polish cinema needs to ensure a high artistic level is a modern operational – is wrong. He emphasises the need to educate new generations of film makers.¹¹ In his next article, Bohdziewicz criticised Toeplitz and his ideas for evaluating film scripts.¹² In 1947, he began a frontal assault by claiming that for two years "Film Polski" had been unable to form any kind of plan of production.¹³

⁸ As Zajiček claims in an unpublished interview from 2013, main reason for dismissing Ford from his position was inability to prepare documentation for film industry's involvement in three-year plan in 1947.

⁹ J. Reichman, *Cztery oblicza cenzora Bohdziewicza*, "Film" 1935, no. 3. Other article on same subject is mentioned, supposedly published in no 1,2/35, unfortunately that issue is lost. In no 3/36 there is an anonymous note: "With sincere satisfaction we inform that mr Antoni Bohdziewicz, member of Evaluation Commission [...] whose harmful activities we have been fighting in series of articles has left his position. We wish him good luck in different fields of work".

¹⁰ A. Ford, *O Filmie Polskim i jego krytykach*, "Kućnica" 1946, no. 8.

¹¹ A. Bohdziewicz, *Film Polski na cenzurowanym!*, "Kućnica" 1946, no. 10. It is worth mentioning that film workshops for youth conducted in Kraków by Bohdziewicz and Wohl have been closed few months before this publication while Film School in Łódź was not opened until 1948.

¹² Idem, *Gdzie filmowy Achilles ma pięte?*, "Kućnica" 1946, no. 25.

¹³ Idem, *Filmowe marzenia i sny*, "Kućnica" 1947, no. 17.

In such circumstances, the periodical “Film”, founded in 1946, initially had one specific goal: to answer criticism. Thus in the first issues Jerzy Bossak, its editor-in-chief, published two extended articles¹⁴ that recaptured the basic assumptions that were foundations for the development of a nationalized cinema and disproved every imaginable criticism both from radical and conservative side. Much of the criticism was dealt with by discrediting the critics,¹⁵ and through satire.¹⁶ Only after that was dealt with, did propagating socialist realism become the publishers’ first goal.

New cinema, new theme

Even before “Film” bimonthly was created, several hints about how the development post-war film industry was to be managed are to be found. On July 1945, Jerzy Toeplitz explained in “Kuźnica” what the goals of new Polish cinema would be. After denouncing pre-war film as worthless ideologically as well as formally, he expressed his wishes: *“These days, newspapers and schools these days cannot function like grocery shops, places of merchandise and profit for the private owner, however, film, the greatest instrument of influence on the masses, cannot be treated like this. Let’s emphasize this: new Polish cinema will be a tool for purposeful propaganda”*.¹⁷

What is “purposeful propaganda”? It is worth pointing out that Toeplitz uses that phrase with positive connotations. One needs to remember that the START’s original name was supposed to be the Society for the **Propaganda** of the Artistic Film.¹⁸ What Cękalski, Toeplitz and Jakubowska were propagating was called “useful film” (*film użyteczny*).¹⁹ I believe it is fair to point out that their main concern was not realism in film art but rather its utility. This was to materialize in fictional film the main goal of which was not to realistically reflect the world, but to show the world as it should look like – in one’s ideological view.

Before any example from Polish feature film could have been made, there was a need to look for outside examples. Soviet cinema was an obvious source of inspiration though not the only one. 122217611 The first to describe it

¹⁴ J. Bossak, *op. cit.*; idem, editorial, “Film” 1946, no. 1.

¹⁵ Anonymous, *Książka zażaleń*, “Film” 1946, no. 2, photo of a big house with caption: “Villa bought by Minkiewicz with money from jokes about *kinofikacja*” (term used to describe an action towards increasing number of cinemas in small towns).

¹⁶ Idem, in which a character of humble civil servant Puciolek, inventor of the word *kinofikacja*, was created.

¹⁷ J. Toeplitz, *Nowy film polski*, “Kuźnica” 1945, no. 2.

¹⁸ Name never used in the thirties because the usage of the word “propaganda” prevented the Society from being registered.

¹⁹ In most post-war memoirs, the idea was being called *film społecznie użyteczny* – socially useful film. In fact though word “socially” was added *post factum* to increase the idea’s timeliness in late forties and fifties: A. Mucha-Świeżyńska, *Powikłane drogi. Rozmowa ze Stanisławem Wohlem*, “Kino” 1984, no. 11.

appeared in *The Turning point* (*Velikiy perelom*, 1946) by Fridrich Ermler – cited as a point on a road towards “true artistic film about war, treating its greatest problems deeply”.²⁰ But in the same issue Jerzy Giżycki made just as enthusiastic notes about *In which we serve* by David Lean (1942).²¹ Also, several articles in “Film” throughout the first year of the magazine’s existence were devoted to praising and analysing the Swiss production *The Last Chance* (*Die Letzte Chance*, 1945) by Leopold Lindtberg.²² This film, which portrayed the escape of a group of Allies from a prison camp in Italy, was even shown as a model way of depicting camp life in an emotionally engaging way, for Jakubowska’s later made film about Auschwitz.

In the same year, 1946, “Kućnica” published an article: *New ways of soviet film* by Czesław Miłosz. It contains the earliest (which I have found) use of the term “socialist realism” in the Polish post-war press with reference to film. Miłosz begins with a brief history of soviet cinema beginning with Dziga Vertov and film editing theorists, with a turning point in which formalist art was condemned and replaced with this new realism:

Formalistic leaning had been violently condemned by Russian art and was replaced by the principle of socialist realism. The principle was correct even if the right expression of realism was not found immediately. Associated arts [*sztuki relacjonujące*] such as literature or film indeed have to establish their roots into life, they need to be witnesses to their era or will wither in ivory towers. [...] But it is easy to be led astray to the opposite extremity, wherein lie dangers of naturalism.²³

Further on he quotes Eisenstein from before 1939: his criticism of both the notion that montage is “everything” and “nothing”, which dialectically leads to the halfway point, where editing is just one of the elements of the film. Next Miłosz concludes that soviet realism is not as orthodox as it used to be and as such can be accepted. As a piece of art made, he says, on public order, realistic film has its place in the new society, and is excused for using “primitive catches”.²⁴

None of the newspapers known to me discussed changes in national cinema. “Dziennik Ludowy” focused on, as I said, criticizing the lack of progress in moviemaking. In the same manner, Antoni Bohdziewicz was using “Kućnica” as a battle arena for his fight against Aleksander Ford personally. What should be mentioned is the long-lasting campaign in “Tygodnik Powszechny” concerning realism in literature. Its highlight was in my opinion Stefan Kisielewski’s bold defense of entertainment. Countering the common conviction that literature’s first post-war duty is to make a testimony of recent horrors he wrote:

²⁰ Anonymous, *Wielki przełom*, “Film” 1946, no. 3.

²¹ J. Giżycki, *Nasz okręt*, “Film” 1946, no. 3.

²² J. Toeplitz, *Powojenne oblicze filmu*, “Film” 1946, no. 1: “May the fact that it [Lindtberg’s film] is distributed by American company Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer vouch for its weight”.

²³ C. Miłosz, *Przemiany w filmie radzieckim*, “Kućnica” 1946, no. 31.

²⁴ Ibidem.

I do believe that in this case, artists need to be guided by the specific instinct of the masses of receivers. The receiver first of all wants relaxation, then he wants to gain his area of psychological freedom. Only after that does he want art. [...] I do realize that the slogan “Art for art’s sake” meets with outrage today. It is the outcome of improper expression: it is certainly not art for art’s sake, but art for the building of human culture, for the enrichment of the human psyche. [...] For sure the exact description of torture or operations is always shocking and depressing. It is especially so for those who survived it. But would that be an artistic action? Certainly not!²⁵

Film, yet, seemed not worthy of his concern. Only a text concerning film production (excluding a few reviews) was published in May 1945, written by young Leszek Krówczyński (one-time collaborator who happened to become a well-known pharmacologist later). Krówczyński, who wrote as a spokesman for the generation of conservative ‘twenty-somethings’ from Kraków, contrary to Toeplitz and Bossak pointed at some formal values that Polish pre-war film might have had (like good cinematography in Testament profesora Wilczura, 1939, Buczkowski), but agreed with them on the necessity for nationalizing the film industry and the implementation of censorship. Moreover yet, he demanded: “*Show us the real face of a peasant, worker, and the common man. Do not give us degenerates and antiques from the past – no more aristocrats. Do not encourage the youth to follow criminal paths by showing them the underworld. Show us healthy people – as the majority is **and as everyone should be** [put in bold by me – TR]. Film should be a teacher, because it has a tremendous influence on viewers, especially the young*”.²⁶

This quote shows, I believe, the wide consensus on the usage of state-funded cinema. It also falsifies the claim that the reason why the Polish film industry was developed in Łódź, not in Kraków, was because of the inborn aversion of its conservative middle class to propaganda.

Change coming

From 1947, the tone of articles started to change. First, there was criticism towards *Forbidden songs* (*Zakazane piosenki*, 1946, Buczkowski). Adam Ważyk in “Kućnica” wrote that this movie did not capture the meaning of the transformation of society during the occupation.²⁷ Jerzy Bossak called it a failure, but also a necessary step towards changes.²⁸ The soon released *Jasne Łany* by Eugeniusz Cękalski was met with similar reservation. Then came criticism from the newspaper “Głos Robotniczy” – which was accusing editors of “Film” of “lacking a strong ideological spine and a healthy approach

²⁵ S. Kisielewski, *Tematy wojenne*, “Tygodnik Powszechny” 1945, no. 9. It is worth noticing that Kisielewski’s article ended with an appendix: “Editors’ board do not share all of the author’s convictions”.

²⁶ L. Krówczyński, *O przyszłość polskiego filmu*, “Tygodnik Powszechny” 1945, no. 8.

²⁷ A. Ważyk, *Pierwszy pełny metraż krajowy*, “Kućnica” 1947, no. 4.

²⁸ Anonymous, *Dyskusja o pierwszym filmie*, “Film” 1947, no. 12.

to questions of film”.²⁹ After that warning approach the periodical has indeed become more direct. In May, Leon Bukowiecki in article *Social tendencies in movies* was criticizing American cinema (with exceptions for Charlie Chaplin and Frank Capra), Jean Renoir’s *Grand Illusion*, and emphasized the development of social tendencies in soviet cinema.³⁰ In the same issue, Zofia Dąbkowska in her review of *Nepokoryonnye* by Mark Donski (1945) explained, how socialist realism dialectically is the highest peak in the development of Russian culture, combining the “psychological realism of Tolstoj and Czechow, the prometheistic messianism of Puszkina and Lermontow, and finally, Majakowski. These tendencies were joined in the works of Maxym Gorki”.³¹ Two months later, Jan Łęczyca explained the history of soviet cinema in similar manner – denouncing its formalist period as a “litany of mistakes”.³²

Once, socialist realism was regarded the peak of the development of soviet cinema; there was time to juxtapose it with other tendencies visible in global contemporary cinema. In September 1948, Leon Bukowiecki published his *Three aspects of war film*, in which he analyzed different approaches to Second World War themes, by dividing them according to directors’ nationalities.

First on his list was a “mass production”. In his interpretation, war for capitalists, specifically American capitalists, was an occasion for making money which was the reason for the production of entertaining movies that were “ideologically hollow”. As an example, he used *Air Force* by Howard Hawks (1943). These productions, Bukowiecki said, met with severe reactions in Europe.

This mentioned reaction formed into, what he called, “Franco-Italian realism”. Bukowiecki decides to treat French and Italian films such as Rene Clement’s *Batallie du Rail* (1946) and *Les Maudits* (1947) and Roberto Rossellini’s *Paisà* (1946) as one phenomenon. What they have in common, says the writer, is a realistic approach to war and to Nazi occupation, but on the wrong side, they lack any proper interpretation of both. They “lack the right approach towards society and do not underline the right cause for fight” and that makes them unnecessarily pessimistic.

The third and final type of war film Bukowiecki calls a “creative school”. Without giving any titles, he cites soviet films as being as spectacular and precise as those from the United States, but showing real soldiers and leaders conscious of their goals. “Those films distinguish themselves with conscious realism, but they avoid the defeatism and pessimism typical of even the best western-European productions”.³³

In November 1948, Stanisław Grzelecki explained in “Film” the differences between Soviet and American film on basis of the portrayal of love affairs.

²⁹ “Film” 1947, no. 15.

³⁰ L. Bukowiecki, *Tendencje społeczne w filmie*, “Film” 1947, no. 17. Since that year reviewers such as Bukowiecki and Jan Łęczyca, specializing in soviet cinema, have become frequent contributors in “Film”, while Bossak ceased to publish. Soon Bossak was replaced as editor-in-chief of this magazine, and Aleksander Ford ceased to be the head of “Film Polski”.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² J. Łęczyca, *Festiwal kina radzieckiego*, “Film” 1947, no. 25.

³³ L. Bukowiecki, *3 aspekty filmów wojennych*, “Film” 1948, no. 48.

As he said: “Soviet film is not interested in psychological analysis of its heroes. Its goal is to create a healthy citizen in perfect psychic balance, aware of his role, free of inner conflicts. That is why we do not see any complications and love dramas, the basis of most American and western-European scripts”.³⁴

In 1949, just before the Congress in Wisła, all that could have been done was to compare every newly produced Polish film with perfect idealization of Soviet one. And so Leon Kaltenberg was trying to prove that *Treasure* (Skarb, 1949) by Buczkowski was a socially useful comedy.³⁵ Jerzy Kuryluk, when referring to Ford’s *Border Street*, he notices the director’s effort to include the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising into the Polish canon of insurrections, but argues, that the film favors the positive approach of the young self-aware Jewish freedom fighter and criticizes the passivity of old Lieberman.³⁶ Despite reviewers’ efforts both films will be condemned during the Congress.³⁷

Since the Congress of Filmmakers was only a formality which main goal was to discipline film industry workers, times between 1945 and 1949 were very significant. It is possible to witness slow, but well conducted process of implementing socialist realism through the lecturing of the Polish press. It should come not as a surprise that articles written by film makers who were also state officials did promote treating cinema as a tool for propaganda. It may be observed though, that this notion met no opposition in a newspaper devoted in its opposition to the communist state: “Tygodnik Powszechny” funded by the Catholic Archbishop of Kraków. It is visible that in a country where the government decided to put the film industry under the supervision of the Ministry of Propaganda there was general consensus that film is not an artform but a popular medium that may, and should be used for educational purposes. The Ministry treated it as such.

³⁴ S. Grzelecki, *Pocątunek...*, “Film” 1948, no. 52.

³⁵ L. Kaltenberg, *O skarbach fałszywych i o “Skarbie”* zwyczajnym, “Film” 1949, no. 59. That was last article on this feature published in “Film” – there never was any review.

³⁶ J. Kuryluk, *Za wolność waszą i naszą*, “Film” 1949, no. 59.

³⁷ See also A. Madej, *op. cit.*

Piotr Zwierzchowski*

The reception of Hungarian cinema in Polish film criticism 1945–1989

In the years 1945–1989, a reader interested in Hungarian cinema could learn a lot about it from the Polish press, not only film-specific, although the number of publications devoted to this subject differed across time. The most prolific period was the sixties and seventies, mainly due to the contemporary achievements of the Hungarian cinema, as well as Polish critics' enthusiasm for it. It is not difficult to notice certain recurrent phrases and motifs etc. Hungarian cinema gained acclaim several years ago, but how is it thought of today? Historical and political themes, as well as comparisons between Hungarian and Polish cinema have been noted.

Hungarian movies were frequently part of a special pool whose outlets included studio cinemas and film societies. On the one hand, it had limited access, but on the other, they reached those who were truly interested. Critics realized that not all films were intended for wide distribution¹. In such a situation, it is no wonder that Hungarian cinematography was extensively discussed by "Kultura Filmowa", and later "Film na Świecie", magazines connected with the Polish Federation of Film Societies (these were often reprints of Hungarian magazines). The role of the Hungarian Institute of Culture, which willingly provided copies of films, was also significant.² Hungarian filmmakers often visited Poland and meetings with them were very well attended.

On the other hand, it is worth remembering that Hungarian cinema was highly appreciated by both movie critics and film societies' participants, but not by general audiences.³ Krzysztof Mętrak, in admiring Hungarian cinema, notices the high acclaim it attracted amongst critics, but also notes indicates its low popularity with audiences. "European Festival successes do not appeal to the mass audience; the specific, slowed down rhythm of narration of these

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¹ A. Lipiński, *Przyjemnie jest, spokojnie jest*, "Ekran" 1981, no. 10.

² See also: "Czasem nawet plakatów nie było..." Rozmowa z Andrzejem Wernerem o recepcji kina węgierskiego w Polsce, [int. Robert Kardzis], [in:] *Złota era kina węgierskiego*, eds. R. Kardzis, J. Topolski, Kraków 2009, p. 112; A. Horoszczak, *Recepcja powojennego filmu węgierskiego w Polsce*, [in:] *Film węgierski w Polsce*, eds. A. Horoszczak, A.M. Rutkowski, Warszawa [1981], p. 4.

³ R. Cieśliński, *Ekran dla widza*, "Trybuna Ludu" 1981, no. 42.

films often seems somewhat boring; political and social problems – resulting from local circumstances – are not always clear to the casual observer”.⁴ Mętrak’s concludes that this does not change the fact that Hungarian cinema is by all means noteworthy and has acquainted Polish viewers with still more movies.

This cinema surely provided fascinating subject matter for discussion on aesthetic, viewpoint, or political subjects, conducted after showings organized by DKFs (Dyskusyjne Kluby Filmowe – Discussion Film Societies); moreover, as Andrzej Werner notices, it could simply – be just aspects like aesthetic qualities which attract viewers to these showings.⁵ Such deliberations and reflections previously had no hope of appearing in the columns of papers. Not without reason, reviews and articles devoted to Hungarian cinema were to a great extent generalized and dominated by aesthetic problems. Obviously, excellent texts concerning historiosophical, political and current issues appeared many times. They avoided precise reference to the situation in Hungary, however, putting trust in the reader’s ability to read between the lines. It must be noted that for most Polish critics of the sixties and seventies, the time when Hungarian filmmakers were most successful, the aesthetic context bore fundamental significance.

Hungarian cinema was widely written about. Not only were reviews published by specialists or social-cultural magazines, but also by the daily newspapers.⁶ Various information, topical and review articles appeared. Interviews with both creators and representatives of film industry officials were keenly published. Hungarian cinema was also discussed on the occasion of various reviews, however, the most common chance to take a look at this cinematography, not only through the prism of individual movies, were Hungarian-organized film festivals which were visited by numerous Polish critics and resulted in correspondence from Hungary which presented reviews of new work. *Film węgierski w Polsce*, a book by Adam Horoszczak, one of the greatest popularizers of Hungarian cinema, and Andrzej M. Rutkowski, which was part of a series devoted to the presence of socialist countries’ films on Polish cinemas’ screens, published by Zjednoczenie Rozpowszechniania Filmów, is also worth mentioning.⁷ It contained a short introduction concerning the reception of Hungarian cinema in Poland, its concise history and – like all books in the series – a treatment of films, as well as profiles of screenwriters, directors, cameramen and actors.

It is hard to encompass all the themes touched on by contemporary

⁴ K. Mętrak, *Filmowy Budapeszt*, “Literatura” 1981, no. 27, p. 6. Several years later Krzysztof Kreutzinger wrote about Hungarian cinematography that “It is differentiated and different from its common understanding, especially when formed in discussion film societies. »Jancsó school« is almost entirely lost, the personal impressionism of picture and strange aesthetics of sense, there are so few references to these experiences”. K. Kreutzinger, *Błysk w szarości. Korespondencja w własna z Budapesztu*, “Film” 1985, no. 14, p. 16.

⁵ “Czasem nawet plakatów nie było...”..., p. 120.

⁶ Of the latter see M. Walasek, *Film węgierski – awangarda i reszta*, “Kino” 1967, no. 4.

⁷ A. Horoszczak, A.M. Rutkowski (eds.), *Film węgierski w Polsce...*

literature, not to mention individual movies or creators. What is more, Hungarian cinema had its own admirers and critics who wrote about it willingly and frequently. It boasted the opinion of being highly artistically tasteful. It is no wonder that the names Miklós Jancsó, András Kovács, Zoltán Fábri, Pál Sandor, Istvan Szabó, Peter Bacsó, Ferenc Kós, Istvan Gaál, or Károly Makk were most often mentioned.

For Polish critics, Miklós Jancsó⁸ was no doubt the most significant Hungarian filmmaker and point of reference at the same time, although his individual movies were variously received.⁹ He was written about even when he was not making a film, as an introduction to discussions and analyses of other directors' output¹⁰, although he was considered too distinct to talk about the school of Jancsó.¹¹ Not once, of course, were the wise and in-depth analyses of *The Red and the White*¹² author's aesthetics or outlook published. He inspired ambiguous emotions,¹³ but his influence on Hungarian cinema, regardless of how it was perceived, was commonly regarded as undisputable.¹⁴

The output of Jancsó, highly regarded as an example of artistic cinema, was often a point of reference for the evaluation of Polish filmmakers as well. On the occasion of Jancsó's films review, which took place in "Kwant" DKF in 1972, Krzysztof Mętrak wrote about "the Hungarian Wajda", unfortunately, a more original cinema artist,¹⁵ although he also noticed dangers in the Hungarian director's work: multi-layered symbolism turns at times into "ambiguity and insipid metaphysics (*Agnus Dei*), or folkloristic, in the somewhat propagandist folk allegory (*Red Psalm*)". Konrad Eberhardt compared *Agnus Dei*, which he criticized for importunate stylistics and over-aesthetism, to *The*

⁸ Bogdan Zagroba wrote about the complex of Jancsó. B. Zagroba, *Kompleks Jancsó. Nowe kino węgierskie*, "Film" 1977, no. 24, p. 20–21.

⁹ An interesting example are three opinions about *Red Psalm*: a positive one by Jerzy Płażewski and two strongly negative by Czesław Dondziłło i Anna Tatarkiewicz. *Spór o Jancsó*, "Film" 1973, no. 12, p. 6–7.

¹⁰ Z. Pitera, *Sokoły i czterdziestolatki. Korespondencja własna z Budapesztu*, "Film" 1970, no. 19, p. 12–13.

¹¹ A. Helman, *Język filmowy Miklósa Jancsó*, "Kino" 1973, no. 3, p. 55.

¹² A. Werner, *Cisza i krzyk czyli historia i świat wartości w filmach Miklósa Jancsó*, "Kino" 1973, no. 3, p. 46–49. Miklós Jancsó was one of Konrad Eberhardt's greatest film loves, although he was able to be critical about his films. See K. Eberhardt, *Jancsó*, "Ekran" 1969, no. 16, p. 15. Compare P. Zwierzchowski, *Wiluzjonie Konrada Eberhardta*, [in:] *Konrad Eberhardt*, eds. B. Giza, P. Zwierzchowski, Warszawa 2013, p. 136.

¹³ Bogumił Drozdowski strongly rejected his output, writing for instance: "One thing is encouraging: in Hungarian films of the second half of 1976 I haven't recognized any more gestures borrowed from Miklós Jancsó's philosophy of history choreography", though he realized that his text could be perceived as "a lone crusade against the established values of Hungarian film". B. Drozdowski, *Kiedy zastygają fale. Korespondencja własna z Budapesztu*, "Film" 1977, no. 2, p. 14–15. The author was more than once critical, or even malicious, of the Hungarian's films (see B. Drozdowski, *Matnia. Korespondencja własna z Węgier*, "Film" 1987, no. 34, p. 16), it was a rather singular voice, however.

¹⁴ B. Zagroba, *Jancsó i inni*, "Film" 1976, no. 14, p. 17; J. Skwara, *Tradycje i poszukiwania. Korespondencja własna z Węgier*, "Film" 1976, no. 30, p. 20–21.

¹⁵ K. Mętrak, *Fascynacja*, "Kulisy" 1972, no. 49, p. 5.

Round-Up, considered by the critic to be the Hungarian director's ultimate masterpiece. In the latter, he noted the crudity of image combined with "the cruelty of human (and historic) situations". What is interesting, however, through Daniel Olbrychski's role among others, is that he noticed similarities to Wajda's *The Wedding*, noting at the same time that "Jancsó peeking at the romantic stylistics of Wajda is hardly acceptable".¹⁶ On the other hand, Zbigniew Klaczyński, a critic connected mainly with "Trybuna Ludu" in his article printed in "Kino" saw *The Round-up* as a film which was neutral from the historic perspective for viewers who were not immersed in Hungarian culture, which included the Poles.¹⁷

Polish titles and names were mentioned more than once in reviews of Hungarian author's films or output. In an interview concerning the reception of Hungarian cinema in Poland, Andrzej Werner said about the texts published in "Film" that the magazine "confronted certain cultural realities with our own cultural and social circumstances [...] The relation of Hungarian cinema to our world, to our culture was discussed...".¹⁸ Such a situation did not regard "Film" only, of course. It was one of the most frequent threads in Polish film literature devoted to Hungarian cinema – regardless of the decade, the situation both in Poland and Hungary, of the magazine and critic. In his statement declaring his faith in Hungarian cinema, Konrad Eberhardt wrote: "So what do I appreciate Hungarian film for? Mainly for what Polish cinematography has not been able to achieve, authenticity. No, not for the authenticity of problems which our films cover; the landscape which appears there; the mentality of characters and their silhouettes we watch in these movies. I appreciate it for its authenticity in a still more general, more profound sense. Should I write that Miklós Jancsó, András Kovács, Istvan Gaál and Ferenc Kosa make use of authentic, flat landscape immensely typical of this country – I would be narrowing down the issue. [...] The fact that these vast spaces and plains exposed by these films are simultaneously 'mental zones', that they legitimize, condition, or even to a certain extent create an internal climate, mentality and the characters of people who enter into the camera's field of view. [...] Hungarian cinematography is merciless, disillusioning, but at the same time, due to such frequent oscillations on the verge of definitive conclusions, it is emboldened by the climate of its own greatness. At the same time, it is a cinematography completely devoid of the complexes of the intelligentsia and nobility. I shall restate it: it is the complexes, not intelligence or certain spiritual nobility, as these are utterly different things. Hungarian directors operate in an elegant, or even sophisticated style, but this does not pose a difficulty for them to move from Budapest to the country or from a traditional drawing room to an old hovel or

¹⁶ K. Eberhardt, *Trzy razy Jancsó. Korespondencja własna z Budapesztu*, "Ekran" 1971, no. 48, p. 11. A report from the set of *The Wedding* can be found in the same no of "Ekran".

¹⁷ Z. Klaczyński, *Miklósa Jancsó opisanie świata*, "Kino" 1968, no. 2, p. 44–45, 48. However, the author stressed the importance of dramatic construction, the philosophy of human history, poeticism of his outlook on the world.

¹⁸ "Czasem nawet plakatów nie było..."..., p. 117.

cottage. [...] Contemporary Hungarian cinema stems from a deep understanding, experiencing the past [...] Of course, our cinematography also refers to the past, particularly through the national-martyrological threads. The scope of this reference is, however, narrower and more fragmented. The two cinematographies are not uniform in this respect. From Hungarian films we learn a lot about the origins of national consciousness, the present-day aspirations of the Hungarians; for them our movies constitute an almost illegible record”.¹⁹

I quote this lengthy excerpt not only because it was written by one of the greatest Polish critics who was also a great admirer of Hungarian cinema, but also because it is quite characteristic of a certain style of writing about Danubian cinematography, especially until the mid-sixties. Due to both its popularity among critics and noticeable similarities of the national experience, Hungarian cinematography often posed a point of reference for Polish cinema. It concerned individual filmmakers, movies, motifs, as well as organizational and institutional activities. One might sometimes get the impression that the Hungarians were often portrayed as a paragon, confirming that a tiny cinematography is capable of creating great films.²⁰

Comparisons between the two cinematographies may already be observed in the initial post-war lustre, however, their character was slightly different. Most often discussed, apart from Soviet cinema, of course, was Czechoslovakian cinematography. Hungarian film was virtually non-existent. It was particularly visible in “Film’s” “Foreign review” column. The first, longer text devoted to Hungarian cinema and its problems appeared in the 20 issue of 1947. It pointed to “a country, which, contrary to other governments of Eastern-European states, completely underestimates the importance of film”.²¹ The first movies of private producers were criticized,²² and not a single word about Hungarian cinema is uttered in an interview with Béla Balázs,²³ A remarkable change of tone takes place after the nationalization of Hungarian cinematography.²⁴

In the first half of the fifties, reviews were as schematic as the movies themselves. Zbigniew Pitera pronounced that *Treasured Earth* by Frigyes Bán was a giant step forward of Hungarian cinema and a piece of art realizing the goals of the new epoch.²⁵ The review was published after a conference in Wisła and

¹⁹ K. Eberhardt, *Za co cenimy film węgierski?*, “Ekran” 1971, no. 42, p. 15.

²⁰ J. Płażewski, *Nad Dunajem – dobre filmy. Korespondencja własna z Budapesztu*, “Film” 1972, no. 3, p. 12.

²¹ W. Wieromiej, *Film węgierski w impasie*, “Film” 1947, no. 20, p. 11. Witold Wieromiej, an author of numerous correspondence, was a translator and an author of books on Hungarian cuisine.

²² Idem, *Węgierska kinematografia wchodzi na rynek (Korespondencja własna “Filmu”)*, “Film” 1948, no. 5, p. 7.

²³ Béla Balázs w Warszawie. *Rozmowa z nestorem węgierskiego filmu*, interviewed by. L. B. [Leon Bukowiecki], “Film” 1948, no. 8, p. 10.

²⁴ W. Wieromiej, *Jako siódme państwo w Europie Węgry upaństwowiły kinematografię* (Korespondencja własna “Filmu”), “Film” 1948, no. 20, p. 5.

²⁵ J. Łęczyca [Zbigniew Pitera], *Pięć ziemi. Znakomity film, który czeka na ciąg dalszy*, “Film” 1950, no. 5, p. 4–5.

a noticeable change in "Film" itself. After that, all appraisals and comparisons had a political and ideological aspect to them. *Egy asszony elindul* (*A Woman Sets Out*), for instance, was described as the first film about the role of women in the new epoch in socialist democratic countries.²⁶ The review of *Forró mezők* (*Flames*) by Imre Apáthi was accompanied by a political comment on "reaction-type" organizations which "assumed the mask of 'democracy' to join the people's front and do their mole's job not worse than Mikołajczyk's PSL".²⁷ Sometimes comparisons to Polish film were straightforward. Such is the character of information about Frigyes Bán, who was not only taken away in the direction of *2x2 néha 5* (*Sometimes 2x2 is 5*), which was given to G. Révész, but also punished by being deprived of director's rights and fined.²⁸ The criticism of Bán in Hungarian press was also related to this. To finish with, the situation was compared to *Niedaleko Warszawy* – the Hungarian movie had been going to be equally bad, but there were forces, which opposed that.

In the middle of 1956, the opinions about Hungarian cinema were divided. On the one hand, rather disapproving appraisals appeared,²⁹ on the other, Hungarian cinematography was considered the most interesting among socialist democratic states,³⁰ however, this did not result in a higher number of texts. What is more, in the second half of the year, Hungarian cinema was not written about at all. In film literature, there were no mentions of the Hungarian Revolution whatsoever. An item of correspondence from Budapest appeared in January 1957. The editorial staff reminded readers that the tragic events of 1956 influenced cinematography as well. The Vice-Director of the Film Institute in Budapest, Janos Tarnok, asked for a statement, mentioned the destruction of infrastructure and negatives, as well as the plans of Hungarian cinematography.³¹ Only brief mentions and reviews would appear until the end of the year. Andrzej Werner justly notices that the awareness of the 1956 revolution influenced the interest in Hungarian cinema, although it would not have had such importance, had the films not been good.³²

Polish critics were fascinated by the way history and contemporary times were pictured in Hungarian films. In a search for the aesthetic essence of Hungarian cinema, Bolesław Michałek wrote: "It would thus be an exceptional epic: it does not nourish the contemporary with shards of a myth it affirms, but with elements of reality it uncovers".³³ Zygmunt Machwitz referred to films "talking about reality in a concise and metaphorical way, through a parable

²⁶ K. Mirski, *Kobieta wyrusza w drogę, aby z ludem węgierskim dojść do socjalizmu*, "Film" 1951, no. 5, p. 10.

²⁷ J. Jurata, *Plomienie demaskują wroga*, "Film" 1950, no. 16, p. 10.

²⁸ *Sprawa Bana*, "Przegląd Kulturalny" 1954, no. 50.

²⁹ See Z. Pitera, *Kłamstwo Judyty*, "Film" 1957, no. 24, p. 5.

³⁰ W. Leszczyński, *Karuzela miłości*, "Film" 1956, no. 33, p. 4.

³¹ J. Tarnok, *A jednak się kręci, czyli dzień dzisiejszy filmu węgierskiego (Korespondencja własna "Filmu")*, "Film" 1957, no. 3, p. 7.

³² "Czasem nawet plakatów nie było..."..., p. 112.

³³ B. Michałek, *Mit i odkrywanie rzeczywistości. Młode kino węgierskie*, "Kino" 1968, no. 3, p. 19.

or grotesque” as “specialité de la maison”.³⁴ Authenticity, merciless settlement with ordinariness, the reflection of transformations in Hungary were written about. However, mainly due to censorship reasons, the actual political context appeared relatively seldom. Only very rarely was “the tragic threshold of 1956”³⁵ mentioned. Although it was allowed to write about the Stalinist period in Hungary, the events of 1956 had to be passed over in silence. The book *Film węgierski w Polsce* (Hungarian film in Poland) the period after 1956 is referred to as a “severe creative crisis”.³⁶ Wojciech Wierzewski, then, wrote about the time of “breaking the Leninist principles of law and order”.³⁷

Year 1956 was a drastic turning point, so it is no wonder – also in the context of the state’s cultural policy – that it was seldom discussed in Polish film publications, and if it was, it was done in a very general way. Nevertheless, it also concerned broader, systemic issues. At the end of the sixties, János Kádár, having engraved his name on the nation’s memory so adversely after 1956, began to win society’s favor. Hungarian authorities undertook actions aimed at indicating a new stage in building “a socialist society”: the possibility of repatriating people who had left the country after 1956, greater opportunities for foreign travel, a vast (though selective) amnesty, or new electoral law, among others.³⁸ As the central control of the economy and collectivization of agriculture had resulted in poor economic effects in the second half of the sixties, the authorities were forced to introduce a new economic agenda, bringing about an increase in affluence in society. Changes came into view in science and culture as well, with Hungarian cinema experiencing an enormous bloom. The intelligentsia could believe that the scope of their creative freedom had been vastly widened.

We will not find a reflection of the Hungarian intelligentsia’s dilemmas in film literature, however. In 1970, Zbigniew Pitera wrote that during his visit to Budapest he asked creators about the Hungarian cinematography system. No-one had replied that it was good, but “none mentioned a single project worth-mentioning, whose realization would not come to effect; they did not indicate any film which would be “put on the shelf”³⁹ after having been produced”. The article is more informative about Polish literature, than Hungarian cinematography. It instantaneously raises the question about *The Witness* by Peter Bacsó, which had been created a year earlier and was not approved for screening, or Zoltan Fabri’s movies.

Kádár eventually succumbed to the pressure of Brezhnev and, starting from 1972, the situation began to escalate. The Hungarian economy had to

³⁴ Z. Machwitz, *Węgry '86. Kino na zakręcie*, “Literatura” 1986, no. 7/8, p. 55.

³⁵ Z. Pitera, *Węgierska koniunktura. Korespondencja własna z Budapesztu*, “Film” 1972, no. 9, p. 12.

³⁶ A. Horoszczak, *Recepcja powojennego filmu węgierskiego...*, p. 4.

³⁷ W. Wierzewski, *Węgrzy górą! Nowe kino*, “ITD. Ilustrowany Magazyn Studencki” 1967, no. 49.

³⁸ See J. Kochanowski, *Węgry. Od ugody do ugody 1867–1990*, Warszawa 1997, p. 171.

³⁹ Z. Pitera, *Sokoły i czterdziestolatki...*, p. 12.

resign from market elements and there was a return to far-fetched centralism.⁴⁰ A re-organization of Hungarian cinematography followed these changes, which were widely observed in the Polish press. Articles on this issue appeared in the columns of "Trybuna Ludu"⁴¹ and "Głos Pracy"⁴² – non-film titles, among others. They discussed institutional changes and particular solutions connected with them, while than systemic transformations were seldom paid attention to. In 1981, Jerzy Robert Nowak explained the decision to re-organize with the necessity to ensure profitability.⁴³ It was not an accidental argument, however. Already by the beginning of the seventies, low interest in Hungarian cinema had been noticed in Hungary.⁴⁴

Let us return to the frequently discussed motif of settlements with contemporary history, which is so significant for Hungarian cinema. The Stalinist period was paid attention to. The problem of the Hungarian's collaboration with Hitler was relatively rarely referred to, also in the Hungarian cinema of the time. Tadeusz Olszański wrote about the film *Eye in Eye* by Zoltán Várkonyi and the novel *Cold Days* by Tibor Cseres (a film based on the story was also made) as examples of competently settling with a difficult past.

Olszański stresses that Cseres could write about the praiseworthy events from the history of Hungarian resistance, mainly of communist origin, but "The Hungarians do not exaggerate these facts. They are proud of their tradition of combat, but remain humble and economical in its presentation. I have the impression that in their opinion fundamental settling with history, clearing the field, crossing out what was obscure in the past bears much greater significance".⁴⁵

In 1981, writing about the settlement current in Hungarian cinema, Jerzy Robert Nowak points to the crimes of Rákosi government in the years 1949–1956, but devotes only a few words to the bitter lesson of 1956. Moreover, one may form the impression that it is a consequence of the past period, not an individual event. What is more, he does it in the context of the problem of memory in the statements of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, noting that talking about the past is possible thanks to the wise cultural policy of the state. He also mentions censorship, although he does so without mentioning the word, recalling the premiere of *The Witness*, which was delayed ten years.⁴⁶

A certain paradox is evident here – essentially only at the end of the eighties was Hungarian cinema was discussed in a wider context and the untold events of recent history were openly mentioned (the gloomy aspect of not only 1956, but also the period following was remembered), and the changing cultural agenda of the authorities was indicated. Critics wrote about the aforementioned settlement motifs in Hungarian cinema numerous times later on, in

⁴⁰ J. Kochanowski, *Węgry...*, p. 174.

⁴¹ W. Urbański, *Jakość i poziom*, "Trybuna Ludu" 1972, no. 217.

⁴² *Zmiany w węgierskiej kinematografii*, "Głos Pracy" 1972, no. 127.

⁴³ J.R. Nowak, *Uparty rozrachunek*, "Kino" 1981, no. 6, p. 32.

⁴⁴ Z. Pitera, *Węgierska koniunktura...*, s. 13.

⁴⁵ T. Olszański, *Węgierska wiosna. Oko w oko*, "Sztandar Młodych" 1970, no. 97.

⁴⁶ J.R. Nowak, *Uparty rozrachunek...*, p. 31–32.

different contexts,⁴⁷ noting the more and more visible departure from political settlements.⁴⁸ The theme of breaking subsequent taboos, not only in cinema, but also in other areas of cultural life, appeared.⁴⁹ The role of documentaries concerning the recent history of Hungary, revealed its most dismal face, mainly in the Livia Gyarmathy and Géza Bösörényi *Recsk 1950–1953, egy titkos kényszermunkatábor története*, was stressed. Especially in the context of documentaries, the political involvement of cinema in the context of changes and publicness was brought up.⁵⁰

There were still understatements, however. Adam Horoszczak wrote almost blatantly about András Kovács *The Lair*, which takes place in the middle of the 19 century, that to some Hungarians, the final scene, “where the husbands’ horses tread down the grave of an executed insurgent, Captain Batisza, conceals an allusion to the nameless 301 quarter in the Budapest Rakoskeresztur cemetery. I don’t know... Maybe?”⁵¹ For those who know Hungarian history at least superficially, an association with Imre Nagy, the Hungarian leader executed after the revolution in 1956, was obvious. The name itself does not appear in the text directly, although earlier demystification of the past, so characteristic of contemporary Hungary, is mentioned.

Looking at the whole period of Polish People’s Republic, it is noticeable that critics frequently searched for some generalization when writing about the political and historical. Of course, it did not necessarily stem from non-film reasons. Reflection on the aforementioned themes constituted a never-ending inspiration for Hungarian filmmakers. Not without a reason did Bolesław Michałek write that “the real, great theme for this cinematography are the Hungarians themselves, this ‘Hungarian way’”.⁵² Almost ten years later Adam Horoszczak, one of the greatest popularizers of this cinema, pointed to the same feature: “With all the differences regarding the genre, style, and generations, Hungarian cinema is characterized by certain self-interest, the belief in responsibility for the country, its presence, the past and a longing for

⁴⁷ One of them was for instance a reference to the characters and films of Márta Mészáros. When *Diary for My Children* was to enter Polish screens, Waldemar Forysiak noticed that the movie marks the beginning of a new stage in Mészáros’ output, simultaneously noting, that in the context of other settlement films, such as Sándor Sára’s *The Upthrown Stone*, Péter Bacsó’s *The Witness*, Pál Gábor’s *Vera Angi*, András Kovács’ *The Stud Farm*, she will find it difficult to retain originality. W. Forysiak, *Świat samotnych kobiet*, “Film” 1985, no. 32, p. 10. It is worth mentioning that the specifics of Márta Mészáros’ work disturbed Polish critics. Adam Horoszczak wrote about her “feminist belligerence”. See A. Horoszczak, *Dziewięć miesięcy*, “Film” 1977, no. 1, p. 21. Leszek Armatys also noted feminism. He indicated that the director takes to female cinema, but it cannot be the sole reason for praise. L. Armatys, *Wszystkie kobiety dzienne sprawy... (o filmach Mártty Mészáros)*, “Kino” 1979, no. 2, p. 28–29.

⁴⁸ A. Horoszczak, *Kino refleksji obywatelskiej*, “Rzeczpospolita” 1986, no. 120; K. Kreutzinger, *Błysk w szarości. Korespondencja w własna z Budapesztu*, “Film” 1985, no. 14; Z. Machwitz, *Węgrzy ’86. Kino na zakręcie*, “Literatura” 1986, no. 7–8, p. 54.

⁴⁹ R. Nowak, *Znikające tabu*, “Przekrój” 1988, no. 10., p. 6–7.

⁵⁰ A.M. Rutkowski, *Wymiatanie spod dywanu*, “Film” 1989, no. 16, p. 17.

⁵¹ A. Horoszczak, *Nowy stan skupienia? Węgry – film i społeczeństwo*, “Odrodzenie” 1989, no. 13.

⁵² B. Michałek, *Węgierski dialog*, “Kultura” 1979, no. 10.

a wonderland stability”.⁵³ Tadeusz Sobolewski wrote in a similar manner: “In the films watched in Budapest, the presence of the ‘Hungarian complex’ is strongly felt – in this respect their films are close to literature, poetry. They express the awareness of a nation which has gone through the ordeal of history, a nation knocked senseless, but one which has enough courage and sense of security to ponder over the dimmest pages of its history”.⁵⁴

Particular pressure put on historical and political questions brought the two cinematographies closer. It is worth going back to the period between the end of the fifties and the turn of the next decade. The Polish film school and Hungarian new wave of the sixties were connected by the themes of national identity, reflection on moral choices often made in the circumstances of limited freedom, making use of the recent past to talk about contemporary times, or the desire to analyze the relationships of an individual with their actual environment, as well as the author’s perspective. Polish and Hungarian directors, Andrzej Wajda and Miklós Jancsó to name but two, frequently analyzed the specifics of Middle-European history. Among the common points of Polish and Hungarian cinematographies, I would like to concentrate on two films. *Bad Luck* by Andrzej Munk was created in 1959, and *The Witness (A tanú)* by Péter Bacsó ten years later.⁵⁵ They both portrayed, in a grotesque form, a little man attempting to adjust to circumstances he does not understand. They referred to the specifics of time and space of Middle-Eastern Europe. Each of them showed the world in a grotesque turn, referring to the history of their countries, whilst also commenting on the present.

While pondering on the space where *Bad Luck* and *The Witness* could be placed, it is worth asking whether the stories of Piszczyk and Pelikán could have happened somewhere else? The experience of absurdity present in *Bad Luck* and *The Witness* results from Middle-European reality, hence none of the films could have been created in a different space. Jerzy Stefan Stawiński, the screenwriter of *Bad Luck* realized that and, when getting down to work on the *Bad Luck* screenplay for *Bad Luck*, looked for a point of departure in the experience of a inhabitant of this part of Europe: “Were we not all slightly unlucky in Poland? Had I been born the son of a French shopkeeper before the war, I would have learnt the trade, collaborated during the occupation, not more than necessary, inherited the shop from my father and would be still be running it now, despite the war and all the transformations in the world. And

⁵³ A. Horoszczak, *Tęsknota za wunderlandem. Współczesne kino węgierskie*, “Odrodzenie” 1988, no. 15.

⁵⁴ T. Sobolewski, *Rozmowy węgierskie 1988*, “Przegląd Katolicki” 1988, no. 16. It is also worth quoting other words of Sobolewski, written five years earlier: “The dilemma: to defend honour or to defend illusions, is still being shown anew. The aim of such ‘opening old wounds’ is nothing else than receiving consolation, finding the dignity of an individual living in a nation which have not won any war or uprising for 150 years”. T. Sobolewski, *Gdzieś w Europie. Budapeszt 83*, “Kino” 1983, no. 2, p. 40. Although the statements are similar, the accents are distributed slightly differently.

⁵⁵ I make use of my own paper *The Man Towards the Absurdity of Reality: Andrzej Munk’s “Bad Luck” and Péter Bacsó’s “The Witness”*, presented at *Polish Cinema in International Context* conference in Manchester, December 2009.

here? It's funny to think. The position of a French shopkeeper seemed to me a constant, to which one should compare the amplitudes of our ill fortune".⁵⁶

With reference to the protagonist of *The Witness* it is worth quoting yet another text, though it is just a fragment from a review of another Hungarian movie, made two years earlier, but one which confirms the conviction of Stawiński and Toeplitz that life in this part of Europe is specific. "Maybe, the morality of a French or Scandinavian burgher, whose lives were not full of trials and tribulations, which did continuously force them to make the most difficult choices; maybe the moral identity of such a character is completely categorized in the present time, in one dramatic test. Meanwhile, Hungarian filmmakers seem to say that in their geographic region, where history has quickened in pace, where one change follows another, where a man has to face the most difficult choices every now and again, choices which must be made and cannot be evaded; that here, simple trials and simple terms are not adequate. If one wants to say who the protagonist really is – a contemporary living Hungarian, one must see who he was yesterday, who he was twelve and fifteen years ago".⁵⁷

This is what Konrad Eberhardt wrote about István Gaál's *Christening Party* (*Keresztelő*, 1968), but I suppose the sense of this excerpt relates to the situation described in *The Witness*. These words were published at the beginning of 1969, the year when Péter Bacsó made his movie. The task Eberhardt wrote about, the necessity to look back at the past, may be set when watching the final scene of *The Witness*. Both the excerpts quoted by the screenwriter of *Bad Luck* and the Polish critic writing about Hungarian cinema, express the conviction that life in this part of Europe is distinctive.

Of course, critics were able to find differences between the two cinematographies as well. Bolesław Michałek, writing at the end of the sixties about new Hungarian cinema, noted the difference in mentality or the state of mind, conditioned by tradition and national myths. He indicated the Polish affirmation of myths which emphasize fatalism, show a lack of belief in the effectiveness of actions, as well as the Hungarian cinema of resistance, but also of responsibility.⁵⁸ Several years later, Tadeusz Sobolewski compared the Polish mentality, stuck in the realm of romantic myths, to the Hungarian one, which orders the character to step back from great history.⁵⁹ At the end of the eighties, the same author, commenting on Hungarian documentaries which made use of favorable political circumstances to reveal the most depressing pages of post-war history, could already write openly about the difference resulting from contemporary history:

⁵⁶ J.S. Stawiński, *Notatki scenarzysty*, wyd. II uzupełnione, Warszawa 1988, p. 215.

⁵⁷ K. Eberhardt, *Węgierskie retrospekcje*, "Film" 1969, no. 1, p. 5.

⁵⁸ B. Michałek, *Mit i odkrywanie rzeczywistości...*, p. 13.

⁵⁹ T. Sobolewski, *Gdzieś w Europie...*, p. 40. Zbigniew Pitera, looking for the source of success of Hungarian films, wrote about the quest for internal balance, the motif of escape, particularly to the country, as the basis of order, but first of all about passionate struggle with national legend, about history seen through individual tragedy. Z. Pitera, *Powrót do gniazda*, "Film" 1968, no. 14, p. 12–13.

"These films make one realize the difference of our experience: on the one hand, the magnitude of terror which Hungary went through from 1944 and 1958 and on the other, a long period of stability, which allowed one to peacefully ponder and reflect on the past".⁶⁰ What is equally important, however, is that at the same time, Sobolewski claimed, that Polish cinema could envy its Hungarian counterpart the position it had in national culture, indicating that the Polish film school had used this to play a similar role.⁶¹

Polish and Hungarian cinema were frequently compared, with multiple titles and names mentioned. A debt which Hungarian directors had to the Polish film school was pointed to, as well as the influence of Hungarian cinema on Krzysztof Kieślowski.⁶² The activity of Bela Balazs Film Studio, which contributed to the successes of Hungarian cinema, was aptly mentioned, noting, that Polish filmmakers were not interested in the pattern,⁶³ but already in the eighties mentioning Karol Irzykowski Studio on this occasion.

At the end of the eighties, the popular opinion of Hungarian cinema was no longer so enthusiastic. It was perceived as biased in favor of festivals.⁶⁴ Economic reform had an impact on the situation of the cinema which was fully subsidized – expenditure cuts came to effect. Moreover, it was written that Hungarian films were not popular among the audience, did not bring profits.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, critics were able to find points of reference to Polish cinema, aimed mainly at criticizing it. Adam Horoszczak, who wrote about Hungarian cinema most often in that period stressed in 1989, that the quality "somewhat appeases the fears of local creators that the hydra of the market would deflower the purity of film art".⁶⁶ At the same time, he admired Hungarian filmmakers, who created national cinematography, with its obsessions and motifs, for having more character than ours.

The Polish reception of Hungarian cinema in the context of political and historical themes brought about numerous articles, reviews, and interviews. I am thus aware that the above text may only be considered an attempt of reconnaissance, drawing attention to several remarkable issues. What seems interesting, however, is how frequently Polish cinema was referred to on this, and other occasions, and how often, though not always, naturally, these comparisons had the qualities of an assessment.

Trans. Krzysztof Józwiak

⁶⁰ See T. Sobolewski, *Rozmowy węgierskie 1988...*

⁶¹ Idem, *Węgierskie cinéma-vérité. Budapeszt '88*, "Kino" 1988, no. 9, p. 39.

⁶² A. Horoszczak, *Recepcja powojennego filmu węgierskiego...*, p. 5.

⁶³ K. Eberhardt, "Mrowisko", "Sztafeta" i Studio B.B. (*Korespondencja własna z Budapesztu*), "Ekran" 1971, no. 49, p. 11.

⁶⁴ B. Drozdowski, *Matnia...*

⁶⁵ B. Zagroba, *Wymuszony zwrot. Korespondencja własna z Węgier*, "Film" 1986, no. 18, p. 14.

⁶⁶ A. Horoszczak, *Nowy stan skupienia? Węgry – film i społeczeństwo*, "Odrodzenie" 1989, no. 13.

Ewa Ciszewska*

Socialist film co-productions

The case of the Polish-Czechoslovak film co-production

***What Will My Wife Say to This?* (1958) by Jaroslav Mach**

It is an established fact that co-productions were part of the post-war landscape of film architecture in socialist states. The function and consequences of co-productions made in the Eastern Bloc were considerably different from those made in Hollywood or Western Europe, owing to the idiosyncratic conditions of the Central European national film making industries: they were indeed nationalised and as such politically subordinated to the centre of power in Moscow. The film-making Europe of the 1920s sought to face the challenge of the global Hollywood primarily by means of distribution contracts and quotas, whereas co-productions played a minor role in this endeavour¹. The so-called international productions were one way of grappling with American competitors; at this particular instance it is worthwhile to note at least these three institutions: the Swedish Svensk Filmindustri, the German Westi, and the Viennese production studio Sascha Film. The selection of topics and the international cast resulted in the production of 'continental' films, which were supposed to epitomise the cosmopolitan character of Europe and remain unattached to any specific nationality². After WWII, the co-productions made by France and Italy were aimed at giving a competitive edge to European films and thus broadening their impact on the market. To quote but one example, more than a half of the film productions in France in 1957 involved a co-producer from abroad (63 films out of 127)³.

Soon after the war ended, most of the Eastern Bloc countries signed bilateral contracts with their socialist neighbours delineating the shape of their cultural co-operation. Despite their fairly general character, these documents

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¹ K. Thompson, *Narodziny i schyłek filmowej Europy*, transl. T. Klys, [in:] *Kino Europy*, ed. P. Sitarski, Rabid, Kraków 2001, p. 31.

² A. Kołodziejczyk, *Współpraca międzynarodowa w dziedzinie kinematografii*, PWSFTviT im. L. Schillera w Łodzi, Łódź 2004, p. 51.

³ A. Jäckel, *Dual Nationality Film Productions in Europe after 1945*, "Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television" 23, vol. 3, p. 231–243 quoted from: P. Skopal, „*Svoboda pod dohledem*“. *Zahájení koprodukčního modelu výroby v kinematografiích socialistických zemí na příkladu Barrandova (1954–1960)*, [in:] *Naplánovaná kinematografie. Český filmový průmysl 1945 až 1960*, ed. P. Skopal, Academia, Praha 2012, p. 103.

mentioned international co-operation in film making, while more detailed declarations stipulated that co-producing was supposed to be one of the elements aimed at strengthening mutual relations. These co-productions were to be a manifest sign of brotherhood, a testimony to the close relations between the countries involved. It might have seemed that these circumstances were more than sufficient to make a co-production possible, not least because of the political situation which was favourable for such undertakings as it guaranteed the viability of film budgets (provided that the films were bound for distribution).

These plans, however, were being stalled by the policy of the USSR until about 1956. The policymakers from Russia looked suspiciously on the attempts at co-operation between socialist and capitalist countries (which is self-explanatory), but – what must have come as a surprise – voiced their disapproval of the planned common initiatives of the Eastern Bloc, which, they argued, resulted from their concern for the ideological quality of these projects⁴. The policy of cultural isolation, pursued in Soviet Russia since 1948, had an impact on the situation in the whole of Central Europe, not to mention the USSR itself, where the ambitious plans of Mosfilm were quashed: the minister of cinema production Ivan Bolshakov and his deputy Mikhail Kalatozov planned that the Moscow studio should take the leading position in the European cinema and produce 80–100 films per year, partly owing to co-productions, both with socialist and capitalist states.⁵ As a result of the hard-line policy and lack of support from the Soviet authorities, the documents concerning the co-operation in film production between the Eastern Bloc countries could be implemented only in the late 1950s, which was because of the fact that by that time the bureaucratic system had become more liberal and less strict in hampering contacts with the West.

The brief discussion above clearly indicates that the independence and self-reliance of the national cinema markets in Central Europe was illusory, since they heavily depended on the course of policy established by Moscow. For this reason the observation of Pavel Skopal seems well-founded, namely that the film culture of the Eastern Bloc was a global system within which parallel phenomena were taking place in the national cinema industries.⁶

Co-production as a process of negotiating meanings

Every co-production results from a process of negotiating conflicting interests which reveals cultural tensions and stereotypes. A particularly telling example of this phenomenon is the Polish-Czechoslovak co-production *What Will My Wife Say to This?* by Jaroslav Mach (1958; Polish title: *Zadzwonienie do mojej żony*, in Czech: *Co řekne žena*). The history of its making and reception

⁴ P. Skopal, *op. cit.*, p. 109–110.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 105.

can be reconstructed and analysed on the basis of archival material which provides an insight into the entire production process, beginning with the approval of the idea, the changes introduced in the subsequent versions of the script, and the circumstances of the actual film making, and, finally, the reception of the film in Poland, Czechoslovakia and other countries. Following this observation, I will concentrate in this article not only on the film in its final shape, but also on all of its potential versions. I am firmly convinced that this particular case study of Polish-Czechoslovak co-operation will illustrate that it is both justified and advisable to adopt a transnational perspective on the history of Polish and Czech cinema and that a parallel reading of archival material offers a number of advantages.

The film *What Will My Wife Say to This?* is important on several accounts. First of all, it was historically the first Polish-Czechoslovak co-production after WWII and the second after the 1933 film *Twelve chairs* by Michał Waszyński and Mac Frič. Secondly, both countries were involved in the production at all stages of the process. The fact that it was their first post-war co-production was a guarantee of receiving a considerable budget and all the other privileges assigned to 'priority' productions, which on the other hand obliged the film makers to adopt the 'correct perspective' and get across an appropriate ideological message. We have to admit at the very outset that this film left much to be desired from the artistic point of view, but it is nevertheless worthy of attention because of the fact that it illustrated Polish-Czechoslovak relations by referring to an image of a loving relationship, so characteristic of the socialist co-productions from that period⁷. Considering the prestigious character of this co-production, the image of both nations and their mutual relations presented in the film may be seen not only as a comprehensive illustration of the contemporary knowledge and stereotypes concerning the neighbouring countries, but also as a manifest sign of the official cultural policy⁸.

Polish-Czechoslovak co-operation in 1945–1957

It may seem surprising that it took over a decade from the Polish-Czechoslovak agreement of the year 1947⁹ before the first post-war production actually took place, in spite of the fact that the first co-production of a feature film

⁷ Skopal notes that this motif appeared in six out of eight co-production films made in Baranov before 1960; *ibidem*, p. 112

⁸ It received a 'B' category in Czechoslovakia, which means that it was regarded as a film of exemplary ideological value. Distribuční list 119/58, 21 července 1958, file no. 703, Národní filmový archiv.

⁹ See *Deklaracja Czechosłowackiego Towarzystwa Filmowego i Przedsiębiorstwa Państwowego "Film Polski" o współpracy polsko-czechosłowackiej w dziedzinie kinematografii*, 8 November 1947, Warszawa, [in:] *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-czechosłowackich*, vol. I, 1944–1960, part I, 1944–1948, ed. W. Balcerak, Polska Akademia Nauk i Czechosłowacka Akademia Nauk, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź, 1985, p. 295–296.

was scheduled for 1948¹⁰. Having said that, it does not mean that during those ten years nothing happened in the cultural relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia. In that period cultural contacts took the shape of a residency programme for writers, visits of musical groups and theatre performances, and the publishing of translated literary works. All these activities were official in character and the cultural figures who could benefit from the opportunity to travel abroad had to subscribe to the policies of the ruling party¹¹.

The Polish-Czechoslovak co-operation thrived despite the fact that as yet not a single film had been produced in co-production after the war. The Polish film industry practically disappeared in the wake of the war; film people were dispersed and most of the educational and organisational initiatives planned before the war could not come to fruition. In the rebirth of Polish cinema it was indeed a salutary opportunity for Polish film makers that there appeared an opportunity to co-operate with film colleagues from abroad, a circumstance which helped in the process of rebuilding the institutional and personal structures of the cinema industry in the country. The Polish-Czechoslovak relations in the very first years after the war were clearly lop-sided, with Czechoslovakia being clearly the giver and Poland the recipient. These uneven proportions can be observed in the programme of common activities in the field of cinema planned for the year 1948, where Czechoslovakia was obliged to offer support to Poland, not least in the form of scholarships to be funded by the Czechoslovak Film for Polish film students and practitioners, running film training for a group of Polish colleagues in Zlín at the film summer school, and reserving a few subsidised places for Polish students in the Faculty of Film at the Academy of Arts in Prague. Polish Film (Film Polski) was not obliged to carry out any particular actions¹².

It is beyond all doubt that the most characteristic example of the post-war Polish-Czechoslovak co-operation was the joint effort of the Polish director Aleksander Ford and the Czech cameraman Jaroslav Tuzar in making these three films: *Ulica Graniczna* (*Border Street*, 1949), *Młodość Chopina* (*Chopin's Young Age*, 1952) i *Piątka z ulicy Barskiej* (*The Five Boys of Barska Street*, 1954)¹³. In addition to that, the Czech director Bořivoj Zeman made in Poland

¹⁰ See *Plan pracy Komisji Mieszanej Polsko-Czechosłowackiej do realizacji umowy o współpracy kulturalnej między Rzeczpospolitą Polską a Republiką Czechosłowacką na rok 1948*, 9 February 1948, Warszawa, [in:] *Dokumenty i materiały do historii stosunków polsko-czechosłowackich...*, p. 334.

¹¹ For more on this topic see A. Szczepańska, *Warszawa-Praga 1948–1968. Od nakazanej przyjaźni do kryzysu*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Szczecin 2011, p. 200–246; for literary contacts see D. Bielec, *Sprawy czeskie w polskich drukach drugiego obiegu*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2008, p. 15–29.

¹² *Plan pracy Komisji Mieszanej Polsko-Czechosłowackiej...*, p. 334.

¹³ For details about this co-operation see: P. Bergmannová, *Vzájemné česko-polské vztahy v oblasti filmu po 2. světové válce (... a první česko-polský film Hraniční ulička/Ulica graniczna)*, [in:] *Rozumíme si navzájem? Možnosti reflexe minulosti v současnosti v české a polské literatuře, jazyce a kultuře 20. Století*, ed. L. Martinek, Slezská univerzita v Opavě, Opava-Opole 2011, p. 131–140 and P. Bergmannová, *Poválečné česko-polské filmové kontakty v letech 1945–1949 do*

the film *Powrót* (*The Return*; or, alternatively: *Ślepy tor*; *Cul-de-sac*, 1948) based on an idea of Tadeusz Kański. It is also worth noting the unrealised plan for the feature film *Jeden więcej* (*One more*; or, alternatively: *Autobus*; *The Bus*), based on the idea of Jan Kadar and Bořivoj Zeman. The plot of the film, drafted by Kadar and Vratislav Blažek, followed the production pattern whose main theme was the hunt for a saboteur who fomented conflicts between Polish and Czech bus mechanics. The introduction to the script begins with the following statements: *We decide to choose contemporary topics as opposed to historical (the latter are always riddled with pathos). It is decidedly on purpose that we avoid topics from the recent past (the pre-war years), which in a similar way to the period of occupation are devoid of the slightest touch of humour, a humour that we need to build a friendly atmosphere of mutual trust and kind-heartedness*¹⁴. The draft for the script authored by Stanisław Dygat did include this indispensable 'touch of humour', but remained within the schematic constraints imposed by the framework designed by Kadar and Zeman. It is perhaps fortunate that this initiative foundered and ended with just two drafts for the script and a résumé, which are held in the collections of the FilMOTEKA Narodowa (National Film Archive) in Warsaw.

The Polish-Czechoslovak co-operation in the 1950s was not as lively and intense as it had been straight after the war. The Polish cinema industry was becoming increasingly self-reliant and the newly built halls of the Feature Film Studio in Łódź made it possible to produce films without the need to use the services of the Prague Barrandov Studio, where the above mentioned films by Ford were produced. At the same time one can observe the increasingly formal nature of mutual relations and the emphasis on fulfilling the officially accepted plans. One of these was launching a co-production initiative, i.e. producing a film involving both partners with regard to its artistic shape and financial backing (Ford's films with Tuzar, who participated in the venture as the cameraman, were in fact Polish productions). This initiative could be launched only in the late 1950s, when it took the form of the film by Jaroslav Mach titled *What Will My Wife Say to This?*

The fortunes of the script examined by the Script Evaluation Committee

The script for the film *What Will My Wife Say to This?* was on the agenda of the meeting of the Script Evaluation Committee held on 26 April 1957 and presided over by the chairman Leonard Borkowicz¹⁵. Apart from Borkowicz,

premiéry prvního česko-polského filmu Hraniční ulička, "Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis. Facultas Philosophica. Philosophica – Aesthetica". Kontexty II. Literaria, Theatralia, Cinematographica 22 – 2000, ed. M. Sýkora, Univerzita Palackého, Olomouc 2000 (2001), p. 87–99.

¹⁴ *Jeden więcej*, według pomysłu Jana Kádára i Bořivoja Zemana. Projekt scenariusza filmowego, 12 November 1948, FilMOTEKA Narodowa S-181, p. 1.

¹⁵ FilMOTEKA Narodowa, A-214, poz.75.

the Committee was composed of 17 members, listed alphabetically in the minutes, including writers and screenwriters (Jerzy Andrzejewski, Romant Bratny, Stanisław Dygat, Ludwik Starski, and Ścibor-Rylski), directors (Antoni Bohdziewicz, Jerzy Kawalerowicz, Jan Rybkowski, and Jerzy Zarzycki), representatives of the production division (Edward Zajiček) as well as the 'representatives of Czech cinema' (who were not mentioned by name, but certainly included Jaroslav Mach, the director of the film).

The discussion began with strident criticism, with Bohdziewicz arguing that the script was 'an illustration of pathological obsession with erotic innuendos', characterised by 'an unsavoury taste' and 'an anachronistic type of humour, obsolete and dry'. Other remarks criticised the characters, who were 'one-dimensional and identical' (Bohdziewicz), and demonstrated that there was 'a fair number of untruths concerning Poland and Czechoslovakia (Kawalerowicz). The criticism was bolstered by Andrzejewski, Bratny, Braun, and Toeplitz and it seemed that the case was decided and that the script would not be accepted for production. However, there were also the dissenting voices of the members who advocated a change of perspective and emphasised the ideological purport of the film instead of its artistic value. No one attempted to praise the script as all agreed that it would require substantial changes – but there appeared an argument emphasising the importance of launching the first post-war Polish-Czechoslovak co-production. The most vociferous advocates of this project were Ścibor-Rylski, Zarzycki, and Ludwik Starski. The latter went as far as to put forward the argument that the committee was not infallible and drew attention to the fact that it had enthusiastically embraced and supported ideas which resulted in poor quality films. Starski was the only one among the committee who referred to arguments in favour of this particular co-production which were not concerned with the public image or ideological content of the film. He reminded the members of the economic aspect, which indicated that the cost of the co-production to be covered by Poland was 'a mere 2.5 million zlotys'. In addition to that, Starski pointed out that 'the Czechs will be publicising this film for their audience', a perspective which undoubtedly increased the chances of the international success of the film.

The statements from the 'representatives of the Czech film industry' clearly demonstrate puzzlement at the hard-line approach of their Polish colleagues, which was followed by outright exasperation: the arguments about the effort which had been made towards bringing the project to that stage were soon coupled with others, such as the argument of authority ('the script was written by a well-known Czech satirist') or the suspicions of Polish resentment towards co-operation with the Czechs. They saw the critical remarks about this particular script as a sign of disapproval of the whole idea of co-productions. Confronted with such arguments, the committee had no other choice than to express their willingness to co-operate with their fellow film makers and accept the script on the proviso that it would be changed under the supervision of Ludwik Starski, who offered his 'disinterested co-operation

in producing this film'. The corrections were made at a brisk pace, for the shooting began no later than in May 1957 and ended in February next year. The film premiered on 26 September 1958 in Czechoslovakia and on 20 December 1958 in Poland.

The metamorphoses of the script

The favourable argument concerning the quality of the text submitted to the Committee consisted of the view that 'the script had been reviewed a number of times and the authors had been working on this since last year'. Indeed, the surviving archival material includes several version of the text, preserved both in the Polish (the National Film Archive) and Czech archives (the Barrandov Studio Archive and the National Film Archive in Prague).¹⁶ Contrary to the view of the authors, who wished to present these versions as an indicator of the high quality of their work, the texts are testimony to the attempts at reconciling numerous interests, which were at times contradictory: on the one hand, there was an evident inclination of the text towards the bureaucratic comedy and 'communal satire'¹⁷, while on the other one could not miss the ambition to create a sort of romantic comedy where the actors who performed the roles of the two lovers represented the two countries – Barbara Połomska for Poland and Josef Bek for Czechoslovakia. There were thus two aspirations which collided in the script: the satirical and the representational; the task of the latter was to offer a favourable portrayal of the two 'lovers'.

Taking into account both the literary material and the film text, I shall analyse and interpret the changes introduced into the subsequent versions of the script. In doing so, I will use the actual film as the main point of reference and demonstrate places where the changes were substantial, without however ignoring others which were only slightly modified. I do not intend to provide a meticulous and comprehensive analysis of the introduced changes, but rather to emphasise the motifs and themes which constituted, as it were, 'trouble spots', characteristic for their moral, social or political aspects.

¹⁶ I wish to express my gratitude to the Barrandov Film Studio for their help in preparing this article.

¹⁷ The communal satire (*komunální satira*) was concentrated on various inconveniences which citizens had to face in their daily life: insufficient supplies, loafing at work, inefficient administrative staff and bureaucracy. This was the dominant genre of humour in the magazine 'Dikobraz' ('The Porcupine'), whose editor-in-chief in 1954–1957 was Václav Jelínek, the author of the script for *What Will My Wife Say to This?* See the entry *Dikobraz*, [in:] J. Knapík, M. Franc et al., *Průvodce kulturním děním a životním stylem v českých zemích 1958–1967*. vol. I, Academia, Praha 2012, p. 250–252.

Why did Adam Mickiewicz prove to be a better lover than Władysław Jagiellończyk?

Irena and Tůma, the protagonists of the film, engage in a flirtatious relationship, which leaves much room for a potential love affair. With this in mind, Irena promised his guest that during his visit to Cracow she would show him her first great love. She is married, but the fact that she had been previously in love with other men than her husband gives Tůma some grounds for hope, at least at the very beginning, that his advances may prove successful. This hope, however, was soon lost, as Tůma realised that there was little room for another man at Irena's side, given that she was in relationships with both her husband and the 'lover'.

The first version of the script takes the two characters to the Wawel, the burial place of Polish monarchs, where Irena wants to introduce her 'lover' to the guest. They enter the cathedral and stand in front of the tomb of Władysław Jagiellończyk, who turns out to be her young love. *At every break I would run away from school, whenever I had a moment I would talk to him for hours on end... Such a patient lover...*¹⁸. As she looks on the countenance of the king, the face of Tůma appears on it. At the same time Tůma comments in his inner monologue: *She is so sweet... and so impractical... she lives in a people's democratic state and falls in love with a king.*

This 'impracticality' of choosing a member of royalty as a lover led to a change in the later versions of the script: the king was replaced by Adam Mickiewicz - a poet, and, more to the point, a revolutionary. The fact that Jagiellończyk had ruled over Bohemia proved insignificant - his social background made him unfit for dating Irena, a socialist beauty. Unsurprisingly, the fragment where Tůma addressed his guide as 'Irena Jagiellońska' was similarly expurgated. The new lover, Adam Mickiewicz, whose statue towers over the Market Square in Cracow, was much better at meeting the criteria expected of socialist lovers - in addition to the Romantic and platonic character of the relationship, he evoked revolutionary connotations related to his participation in the Spring of Nations. There might have been another factor in changing the object of Irena's affection. Not long before the script was submitted to the committee, in 1955, Poland saw the grand celebrations of Mickiewicz's anniversary, an occasion which was a major challenge for the Polish authorities who tried to harness this event to serve their propaganda. That year saw also the publication of 'legitimate' anthologies and translations of his poems as well as two types of monographs devoted to his work: one addressed to the capitalist readership and the other for the people's democratic states¹⁹.

¹⁸ A literary script [*Literární scénář*]: *Píseň o věrnosti*, Václav Jelínek, Jaroslav Mach, October 1956, The Czechoslovak Film [*Československý státní film*], A Creative Group [*Tvůrčí skupina*] Bohumil Šmída - Vladmír Kabelík, 1977-56-mr, Národní filmový archiv, S-114-TS, p. 121.

¹⁹ A. Lisiecka, *Działalność Komitetu Współpracy Kulturalnej z Zagranicą w latach 1950-1956*, [in:] M. Brodala, A. Lisiecka, T. Ruzikowski, *Przebudować człowieka. Komunistyczne wysiłki zmiany mentalności*, ed. M. Kula, Wydawnictwo TRIO, Warszawa 2011, p. 254-255.

What a bureaucracy! Nothing of this sort would have happened in Poland!²⁰

The viewers of the film could have come to the conclusion that Poland and Czechoslovakia were entirely different as regards social and political life. Poland might have seemed like a Central European version of the West, with its light-hearted atmosphere reverberating with jazz and 'big-beat' music (a 'politically correct' term for rock music), and the freedom of travelling, unimpeded by any sort of bureaucratic nuisance. The troubles which Tůma had to cope with while in Prague (getting his passport stamped or buying a ticket) make one think of Czechoslovakia as a bureaucratic nightmare, particularly cumbersome for the average citizen. Interestingly, the earliest versions of the script are more caustic on the topic of bureaucracy and officialdom. Suffice it to quote three scenes located in Poland which did not make it to be included in the film.

The first of these takes place at a railway station in Łódź, where Irena fills in the forms necessary for sending on her luggage. Tůma carries on with his inner monologue: *the official papers nag at me and remind me of my home country... For instance, I have not sent my personal questionnaire to the union, the opinion on Robert's book still rests on my desk... I have not filled in the form for social insurance... I have not returned the declaration that I will not take part in the survey concerning the preparations for harvest with the rapeseed combines*²¹. One other scene has Tůma's guide, Rybińska, informing him that she will provide him with statistical data about developments in construction work in Poland. This prompts Tůma to comment: *Papers, again! It seems that their forests grow thinner, just as they do back home*²². Later on, after a tiring day which ended with a visit to the radio station, the man says: *I spoke on the radio and hoped that no one would be interested, just as it is back home*²³.

Václav Jelínek, the author of the script, was well-known for his acerbic wit and uncompromising satire, which was aimed mainly at the absurdities of life under socialism. Even though the early 1950s in Czechoslovakia were characterised by relative tolerance for artistic freedom, Jelínek did not go unscathed after his plays were staged, where, as it seems, the humour went too far. The Czech historian Jiří Knapík argues that the criticism of bureaucracy expressed in Jelínek's play *Skandál v obrazárně* (*The Scandal at the Gallery*, 1953) gave a pretext for negative reviews of the performance²⁴. Also his work

²⁰ The exclamation of Tůma when confronted with the formalities at the Czechoslovak Foreign Office. The script for *What Will My Wife Say to This?*, Polish version, according to the script by Jelínek and Mach, edition[?]: Jan Fethke, dialogues: Zdzisław Skowroński; [no date], FilMOTEKA Narodowa, S-16541, D326/74, p. 4.

²¹ The script for *What Will My Wife Say to This?*, Vaclav Jelinek, script: Vaclav Jelinek, Jaroslav Mach, Zdzisław Gozdawa, Waclaw Stępień; ZAF "Iluzjon" Warszawa, Tsurci Skupina Smida-Kabelik, Praha 1957; FilMOTEKA Narodowa S-16541, D/94/78, p. 62.

²² Ibidem, p. 21.

²³ Ibidem, p. 26.

²⁴ J. Knapík, *V zajetí moci. Kulturní politika, její systém a aktéři 1948–1956*, Libri, Praha 2006, p. 237.

as a satirist for “Dikobraz” became a source of trouble, while the magazine itself was subjected to the scrutiny of the Department of Propaganda in 1954²⁵.

It seems that also in the case of *A song on fidelity*, as the script was initially titled²⁶, the conclusion was that the author took too much liberty while writing a text which contained so many mocking remarks and was so scathing with regard to social life under socialism. The fact that Jelínek had made these observations on his own while visiting Poland a few years earlier was considered irrelevant: (...) *he could scarcely have missed some of the ridiculous practices of our dignified institutions established to foster international co-operation in culture and... research. Nor could he ignore some of our customs and various manifestations of the Old Polish hospitality which is still practiced today*²⁷. It turned out that criticism is acceptable, provided that it is administered in a reasonable amount.

Polish-Czechoslovak brotherhood? Yes, but only to a reasonable extent

One other scene has Irena say to Tůma: *Look there, there is another proof of the companionship of our countries*. According to the script, there was a young girl approaching, who was wearing colourful national dress (in the ‘Łowicz’ style) and riding a motorbike, a ‘Jawa’, which was a popular motorbike brand manufactured in Czechoslovakia. There follows a comment in the script, unattributed to any particular personage: *Our people on your motorbikes*²⁸.

Both the literary material and the film itself contain a number of scenes intended to emphasise the affinities of the Poles and the Czechs, particularly with regard to knowledge about cuisine, alcohol varieties, tourist attractions, literature, and sport personalities of the other country. The overly friendly portrayal of Polish-Czechoslovak relations was toned down in the final version of the script so that the viewers could not interpret these scenes in a satirical sense, including the one mentioned above with the girl on a motorbike. The ‘brotherly vignettes’ were usually coupled with the inner monologues of Tůma, who commented bitterly on the ongoing events. In many instances over the course of work on the script the scenes as such were preserved, but were rid of those ironic comments. One should note for example the sentence with a comment from Tůma who recalled a carousing evening spent with a Polish

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 245.

²⁶ There is no direct indication of why the initial version of the title was abandoned. We may suspect that one argument in favour of changing the title was the earlier use of the phrase *A Song on Fidelity* as the title of a poem celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Píseň o věrnosti. Baseň k 30. výročí KSČ*, Jindřich Hilč, 1951) and the title of the novel by Václav Řezáč (*Píseň o věrnosti a zradě*, Václav Řezáč, 1956), which was published soon after the author’s death.

²⁷ An advertisement leaflet in Polish, The National Filma Archive, Materiały CUF 703.

²⁸ The script for *What Will My Wife Say to This?*, p. 87.

cloakroom attendant: *And thus a brotherhood was established between the representatives of Polish and Czechoslovak peoples with regard to one of the important aspects of our lives*²⁹. In a similar vein, Tůma commented on the fact that he gave his hat as a gift to the attendant: *and thus it had led to establishing a brotherly friendship between the representatives of the Polish and Czechoslovak peoples*³⁰. Neither of these comments appears in the film. These episodes purged of the ironic comments of Tůma lost their satirical, incisive and ironic overtones. They became 'genteel' manifestations of the Polish-Czechoslovak brotherhood.

Also the fragments on the duplicity of socialist culture were removed. This can be illustrated by another episode which was not included in the film: the main characters pay an unannounced visit to a cultural centre in Łódź. They see a group of musicians, who were playing jazz at that moment. Embarrassed by the unexpected visitors, they immediately change musical instruments, pick up their folksy pipes and start playing Slavonic folk music. Tůma comments with a smile, saying: *It is just as it is back home*³¹. Later on in the same episode the characters look at a painting in the socialist realism style depicting tractors, combines, and men and women with rolled up sleeves. When Tůma asks the question whether the lady likes the painting, the answer is uncompromisingly negative.³²

Why is it that there are no ruins in Warsaw? Or that there are no factories in Łódź?

The film was not, at least officially, a cogwheel in the mechanism of strengthening the tourism potential of Poland and Czechoslovakia by means of the common effort of the tourism and film industries. Neither of the two national tourist agencies – Orbis and Čedok – was involved as the commissioner of or a partner in producing the film, but undoubtedly the aim of this co-production was to encourage the citizens of Czechoslovakia to visit Poland. This intent did not escape the attention of many reviewers who referred to the favourable portrayal of both countries as an undeniably positive feature of the film - or, in fact, the only positive feature. As Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz pointedly commented on the film:

We have made a film with no artistic advantages to either of the two involved parties - neither the Czech, nor us. It is to be hoped that at least Orbis could gain some advantage, for the only

²⁹ The literary script [*Literární scénář*]: *Píseň o věrnosti*, p. 33–34.

³⁰ The script: *Co řekne žena...*, Václav Jelínek; The Literary Script [*Literární scénář*]: Václav Jelínek – Jaroslav Mach – Jan Fethke, Dialogues: Václav Jelínek – Zdislaw Skowroński, technical script: Jaroslav Mach, June 1957, Československý film Praha, The Creative Group [*Tvůrčí skupina*] B. Šmída – V. Kabelík, Film Polski Zespół Autorów Filmowych 'Iluzjon', 1264–67, NFA, S-114-TS-2, p. 55.

³¹ The literary script [*Literární scénář*]: *Píseň o věrnosti*, p. 78–80.

³² Ibidem, p. 80.

*positive feature of this film is the fact that it gives a portrayal of some parts of Poland and Czechoslovakia as regards the opportunities for tourism. And if it had been Orbis or its Czech equivalent who stood behind the production of this film as their advertisement, I would not say a word. But given that it is shown to us as a result of artistic co-operation, I have to say that the film is, regrettably, a dud*³³.

Today, over fifty years after the premiere of the film, we may notice a striking similarity (obviously with certain limitations) between this production and such European films by Woody Allen as *Vicky, Cristina, Barcelona* (2008), or *Midnight in Paris* (2011), where an important part is played not only by the storyline, but also the scenery in which the action takes place. The aim of the film, in addition to making an emotional impact, is to publicise the charms of the portrayed places. Thus the film *What Will My Wife Say to This?* may be viewed in the perspective of 'film-induced tourism'. This particular notion involves enhancing the attractiveness of places long-established as potential tourist destinations; there seem to be two approaches to dealing with this: one is focused on the classic tourist sights (as it is in Allen's *Midnight in Paris*), while the other ventures to promote unusual tourist trails. A case in point for the latter approach is the film *Samotáři* (*Loners*, 2000) by David Ondříček, where Prague is portrayed without the well-known sights of the Castle and the Charles Bridge. The film by Jaroslav Mach seems to have adopted both approaches, as it bolstered the tourist potential of the classic destinations such as Warsaw, Cracow, and Sopot and promoted new alternative ones such as Łódź.

I am going abroad! – Tůma shouts gleefully while leaving the Foreign Department in the Foreign Office of Czechoslovakia. His excitement must have been readily understood in Poland and Czechoslovakia, for it was not an easy task to get a travel permit, even for visiting other communist countries. In order to receive a visa, one had to follow procedures which could take several months, and to meet a number of requirements expected of all citizens wishing to travel abroad. No wonder then that Tůma is so happy; it also seems that he does not care so much about the destination – all that counts is that it involves crossing the border. Another scene, set on the stairs leading to the Foreign Office, is also intended to present Poland as an attractive destination: Tůma runs into a turban-clad man, clearly coming from the Middle East. The clash of these two elements, 'travelling to Poland' and 'an exotic character', leads to the obvious conclusion that visiting a neighbouring communist country may be an adventure just as exciting as travelling in the Middle East.

Also the selection of places to be visited by Tůma serves the purpose of bolstering the image of Poland as an attractive tourist destination. The character will visit the following cities in that order: Warsaw, Łódź, Cracow, and Sopot. The image of Polish cities in the film by Mach is subject to the 'tourist glance' which ignores problematic places on account of their complicated history or the ideological aspect. The cities portrayed indicate selected positive features

³³ K. T. Toeplitz, *Zadzwonście do mojej żony*, „Świat” 1959, no. 5, no page number [the folder with clippings from *Co řekně žena*, NFA].

of Poland, taken with a stereotypical approach. Thus, Warsaw embodies modernity and progress, Łódź is a city of art and sport, Cracow is an epitome of tradition, and Sopot is shorthand for taking a rest in beautiful scenery.

Łódź is perhaps the most striking element in the series, given that even today it is only very rarely included in international travel guides. The characters of the film visit a painter's studio and a cultural centre. It may have been surprising to the Polish viewers that in *What Will My Wife Say to This?* the artistic traditions of Łódź are in the foreground as opposed to its industrial image. It was on account of its strong workers' movement that Łódź was known across Poland as the 'red' city, with its characteristic chimneys of cotton mills. But here, instead of factory halls, the characters visit artists' ateliers. We may suspect that the decision to disregard the workers' theme (even though there are some traces of it in the General Film Plan³⁴) was intentional and aimed at avoiding episodes which might have evoked the motifs known from socialist realism. The film by Mach was supposed to become an example of socialist entertainment cinema, purged of all unnecessary didactic overtones (which in fact turned out to be unavoidable) and emphasising the joyful moments of life in a socialist country – the hard toil at the spinning machines was certainly not of this sort.

There might have been also practical reasons for placing Łódź on the list of places visited by Tůma. After WWII the most important institutions related to film production were located in Łódź; hence the nickname of 'HollyŁódź' earned by a city of cotton mills. The Polish partner in producing the film was the 'Iluzjon' Film Authors' Team; the management of the process was assigned to the Feature Film Studio at 29 Łąkowa Street in Łódź. The atelier shots for *What Will My Wife Say to This?* were taken in the film set halls of this studio. It may be concluded that placing Łódź on the itinerary of the Czech tourist was a favourable circumstance for the budget and the management of this production.

The portrayal of Warsaw is no less problematic than that of Łódź. The images which appear in this portrayal include the modern residential district of Mariensztat, the imposing Palace of Culture and Science, the brand-new Tenth Anniversary Stadium, and the reconstructed Old Town Market Square. There is no indication whatsoever that WWII had ended a mere twelve years earlier and that at the moment of making this film Warsaw had its fair share of destroyed buildings – these are clearly noticeable in the documentary film *Warsaw 1956* by Jerzy Bossak and Jarosław Brzozowski, who confronted the Warsaw of conspicuous social realist buildings and the gloomy pictures of ruins not far away from the city centre. By contrast, the film by Mach carries no hint that Warsaw was a city of ruins, either on the visual, or on the aural level. It is nevertheless significant that one version of the script included

³⁴ The background actors' payroll and list of episodes (*Wykaz zatrudnienia statystów i epizodów*) includes the entry *Montaż łódzki 38a*, which portrayed, among other places, the cotton mills. Plan generalny filmu *Zadzwońcie do mojej żony / Co řekne řena...*, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi [The National Archives in Łódź], nr akt 636.

a scene where Rybińska and Tuma looked at the city from a terrace atop the Palace of Culture and Science; there the woman showed Tuma a postcard depicting Warsaw soon after the war. It was a picture of ruins, charred houses, and growing stacks of bricks.³⁵

Conclusions

Film co-productions made in socialist countries betray numerous tensions resulting from the process of negotiating between the rules of entertainment cinema and the cinema subjected to ideological requirements. In the case of *What Will My Wife Say to This?* it is difficult to identify direct decisive impulses which led to eliminating or adding particular scenes to the script. This is perhaps true of all film productions. The introduced changes resulted from popular convictions about what was allowed or forbidden, what it was acceptable to show in the film and what should be avoided. In its subsequent versions, the script for *What Will My Wife Say to This?* was becoming more and more 'genteel' (the satirical elements were removed) and 'tourist-oriented' (Poland was portrayed as a country of modern architecture and luxury leisure resorts, without any references to the industrial landscape of Łódź or that of Warsaw shattered by war).

From today's perspective it is difficult to track and analyse the financial aspects of film co-productions from communist times in Poland, owing to the lack of material documenting the production process, and the fragmentary character of testimonials from the people involved. Edward Zajiček, the head of the production team for *What Will My Wife Say to This?*, noted that it was very common for co-productions to generate similar costs to a single-handed production for either of the involved parties, even though these costs were supposed to be shared between two or more partners. This situation resulted from the fact that co-productions involved a number of the so-called ineffective expenses, which cannot be detected in the final product, i.e. on screen. The costs rose because of the longer preparation time, larger personnel, travel and lodging expenses, sound engineering for the purposes of every partner involved, and a greater number of release prints, etc.³⁶

The co-production was advantageous as it gave grounds for hope that the film would be distributed on a larger scale (at least in two countries). The film *What Will My Wife Say to This?* was distributed in the German Democratic Republic and Bulgaria (in addition to Poland and Czechoslovakia). The advertising materials were prepared also in English and Spanish, but there are no records of the distribution of the film in other countries than the four mentioned above.

³⁵ Scenariusz literacki [*Literární scénář*]: *Píseň o věrnosti*, p. 38.

³⁶ E. Zajiček, *Poza ekranem. Kinematografia polska 1918–1991*, Filmoteka Narodowa, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa 1992, p. 178.

The popularity of the film must have been boosted by the fact that parts of the film were shot in attractive locations (it was hardly a coincidence that most photographs prepared for advertising in Czechoslovakia presented Poland's seaside) and that actors from abroad were involved in the production. The Czech viewers were familiar with both Barbara Połomska (who featured in the film *Syrena Warszawska* by Tadeusz Makarczyński which was shown at the festival in Karlovy Vary in 1956) and Hanna Bielicka, who performed in the play *Z naší domoviny* (*From our own garden*), in Prague in 1955 while on tour with the 'Syrena' Theatre. Władysław Szpilman gave a series of concerts for Czech audiences in 1956. Polish viewers knew both Josef Bek [*1948: A Revolutionary Year* (*Revoluční rok 1848*), *Anna the Proletarian* (*Anna proletářka*)], and the director Jaroslav Mach³⁷ – at the time when the film *What Will My Wife Say to This?* was premiered, Polish cinemas showed the novel film *Supernatural stories* (*O věcech nadpřirozených*), where one of the novels was directed by Mach. Five years later Polish cinema lovers could see the comedy *Women keep their word* (*Slovo dělá ženu*, 1953) produced under his direction.

When seen through the prism of culture and production, studying the co-productions made in the times of communist Poland reveals the transnational character of at least some Polish films. Such an approach makes it possible to read the history of Polish cinema as a field of competing trends and short-term interests.

Summary

This article offers an analysis of the Polish-Czechoslovak co-production *What Will My Wife Say to This?* (*Co řekne žena*, 1958, directed by Jaroslav Mach) as seen from the perspective of production-related and cultural factors. It provides a methodological background useful for the study of co-productions made in communist countries and presents the general circumstances of Polish-Czechoslovak co-operation in 1948–1958. The analysis of the film – the first Polish-Czechoslovak post-war co-production – shows the process of production as a field of conflicting goals and interests.

³⁷ This might have been owing to a misunderstanding as the name of the director might have been confused with that of Jaroslav's elder brother, Josef Mach, who directed the film *Nikdy nic nie wie* (*Nobody knows anything*) which won much acclaim in Poland.

*Mikołaj Góralik**

Sci-fEAST: Science fiction genre in Polish and Czechoslovakian cinema

This article is based on research done as part of *Sci-fEAST: the Science Fiction Genre in Central and Eastern Europe* project initiated by the students of Charles University in Prague and continued also by the academic staff of the University of Łódź since September 2012. The goal of the project was to create a comprehensive database of science fiction films specific for particular national cinemas and so far all of the Czech and Polish full-length feature films have been collected. It is planned that the Hungarians and Slovaks will join the project as well, adding to the database both works of Hungarian cinema and films made after the Dissolution of Czechoslovakia. The <http://www.sci-feast.eu> webpage, also available in English, is being gradually updated as new TV-productions as well as short-feature films are added. The latter, especially in the case of Polish cinema, constitute a significant part of all the works of the genre. This freely accessible database provides descriptions of the films together with technical data and a short synopsis of the plot, but its intended purpose is to be a discussion platform (of thought exchange) between the particular universities and scholar communities. Additionally, the database includes articles on Middle-European science fiction cinema and is a place where information concerning lectures and conferences on the science fiction genre as well as science fiction themed screening programs at film festivals is gathered. In one of his articles, Alexandr Jančík¹ tries to discuss the phenomenon of online databases, and includes works of Czech audiovisual culture from Artyčok.TV, the internet television website, which presents archive works, the artlist.cz webpage, which gathers written and visual sources and the portal jlbjlt.net whose goal is to provide information on a wide variety of cultural events. According to the author, at present, this form of presentation of audiovisual works promotes them better and more efficiently than any anthology or encyclopaedia. At the same time, Jančík observed that paradoxically, none of the websites concerned motion pictures, only. In his article from 2010, this Czech film scholar wished that an online platform such as Sci-fEAST

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¹ A. Jančík, *On-line databáze českého audiovizuálního umění*, [in:] *Současný český a slovenský film – pluralita estetických, kulturních a ideových konceptů*, ed. L. Ptáček, Palacký University, Olomouc 2010, p. 127–139.

had existed before – an internet database devoted to films of one genre only, presenting a full picture of the development of science fiction cinema looking back over decades of film history. It is no coincidence that the project concerns countries of this region, which are thoroughly analyzed in *Visegrad Cinema: The Points of Contact*. Furthermore, within science fiction cinema one might observe different attitudes to the genre presented by Middle-European and Anglocentric filmmakers. I do not intend to analyse the methodological problems which have emerged during a phase of constructing a consistent definition of the science fiction cinema, thanks to which it is possible to decide which of the films should be added to the database and which of them should be rejected as they do not meet the criteria of a science fiction film (this issue is discussed thoroughly on the previously-mentioned webpage of the *Sci-fEAST* project). Instead, I would like to use an already finished list of Czech and Polish science fiction films in order to present one of the possible views on Middle-European cinema – an intercultural perspective. The idea of an internet film database, based more on a spatial than chronological arrangement of its contents makes it possible to juxtapose all the films available in a few seconds and in different configurations, with the use of a selective browser, which makes it user-friendly and encourages people to want to use it. If, in addition, science fiction which, according to Roger Caillois, is the third – apart from fairytales and fantasy stories – imaginative genre presenting the changeable situation of mankind on the planet,² becomes a subject for examination, films of this genre seem to be a perfect example of double meaning. When theses formulated by Caillois related to literary works are transferred to the field of the cinema, one might observe that science fiction has always been a genre which has enabled authors to present themes which would have been impossible with the use of other genres, e.g. the well-known case of the invasion of Mars with the Red Planet standing as an example of a visual representation of the danger of communism. These films form a kind of alternative history: fears which are not presented directly are hidden behind the facade of the genre, which is constructed from concealed messages, warnings, and themes veiled by allegorical convention. According to Tadeusz Lubelski, this perspective is especially useful when constructing a film history.³ The basic difference is that in comparison with a non-existent history, these films were actually produced, but among other works of Polish cinema, (apart from a few exceptions) they are now totally forgotten or treated as single texts, out of context, and do not function in relation to other works of this genre. However, when it comes to Czech cinema, as a result of a hybridization of a genre, i.e. a blending of different styles in one work, science fiction films are, for instance, received as comedies in a science fiction convention. The science fiction genre is usually unappreciated or films of this kind are only exceptions in filmographies

² R. Caillois, *Science fiction*, [in:] *Spór o SF. Antologia*, eds. R. Handke, L. Jęczyński, B. Okólska, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 1989, p. 179.

³ T. Lubelski, *Wstęp: pokusa historii alternatywnej*, [in:] *Historia niebyłakina PRL*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2012, p. 14.

of particular authors. The examples of the films which I would like to present are obviously of my choice. Nonetheless, I believe that on the basis of a list of all the Polish and Czech science fiction films, I made a selection which reflects the actual possibilities of these national cinemas, whilst at the same time, choosing those titles which make it possible to formulate a general view on the themes and problems discussed by the filmmakers. The main goal of this article is to show that Middle-Eastern European cinema should not be treated as one single entity in relation to the Western film industry as even Polish and Czech films differ from each other to a great extent. As the subject of my work suggests, I intend to focus on Czechoslovakian films. Considering the fact that before the creation of Czechoslovakia, i.e. till 1918, not a single science fiction film had been made, and the cinema after 1989 is not a subject of my interest here and the article does not concern those films created after the Dissolution of Czechoslovakia. I believe that when political censorship was lifted, despite the presence of social censorship and economical obstacles determining the final shape of the films, the science fiction genre lost its function of commenting on the political situation, and has become a marginal and uninteresting phenomenon in both of the two film industries. Before that point, however, many interesting films were produced; I do not assess their artistic value, formal aspect nor the way they are structured. Instead, I will do a kind of review of the most interesting visions concerning space missions, Homunculi, time travel experiments and attempts to change the course of history presented in Czech and Polish films.

Where Can You (Time) Travel in the Czechoslovakian Science Fiction Cinema?

During the interwar period, Czech filmmakers released only two films alluding to the imminent danger of fascism which was inevitably leading to the next military conflict. The first one of the two was *The World Is Ours* (*Svět patří nám*), a 1937 film based on *Rub a líc*, a theatrical play by a famous comic duo – Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich. The second film, produced in the same year, was *The White Disease* (*Bílá nemoc*) by Hugo Haas, the first Czechoslovakian science fiction work, which was an adaptation of Karel Čapek's novel of the same title. Haas, an actor of Jewish origin, until then associated with light comedy roles, decided to direct a film about a deadly disease which was a punishment for the wrongdoings of the people. He also played the leading role of Doctor Galén who finds an antidote to the disease but refuses to cure the rich as long as they do not bring about peace in the world. *The White Disease* is another example of a film portrayal of a dictator in the history of the cinema.

The answer to the question if there was a war is that it would be a sin not to let it break out as the country (the action takes place in a fictional state) has an excellent leader and a huge army. The film ends with the lynching of

the protagonist who tries to avert the conflict but war breaks out because the fanatical leader of the nation, who is also infected by the disease, assumes it is a message from God and, in the last moments of his life, decides to sign a truce. Nevertheless, actual reality turned out to be far worse than the film, as war broke out soon after and Haas, because of his Jewish origin, had to go abroad where he successfully continued his career as a Hollywood filmmaker.

The first post-war science fiction film, *Krakatit* (1948) directed by Otakar Vávra, was another adaptation of Čapek's prose. Once again, the protagonist is a scientist. This time, an engineer called Prokop who, instead of an antidote, possesses knowledge of a formula for an explosive substance which puts mankind in danger. As a screen-caption suggests, the story takes place between reality and the dreams of an unidentified man suffering from a fever. The sequence of events, beginning with the scene in which he arrives at a hospital, constitutes the narrative structure of the main story about the invention of *krakatit*. The audience find themselves in the middle of a story where Prokop is delirious and suffering from partial amnesia and gradually becomes conscious of the detrimental effects of his invention. It turns out that the only solution to the problem is to get rid of all the remaining *krakakit* which has fallen into the wrong hands. The film was created in the critical year of 1948 when the socialist realism was announced and the government imposed strict censorship on all screenplays which had to adhere to communist party guidelines from then on. Nevertheless, *Krakatit*, which Vávra had planned to adapt a long time before then, remained free from ideological interference with the film's plot. As Mariusz Guzek correctly observes, the director incorporated two different narratives styles into the film – a literary and a journalistic one. The first derived from Čapek's novel, the second was a result of the experience of the last war, focusing mainly on the perspective of the mass destruction caused by a nuclear bomb.⁴ After some years, Vávra returned once again to Čapek's *Krakatit*, directing *Dark Sun* (*Temné slunce*, 1980), a film loosely related to its literary model, but indisputably alluding to the climate of Cold War tension. According to Guzek, by setting the action in an undefined future and surroundings similar to the one of the *crazy comedies* (*bláznivé komedie*), Vávra unintentionally created a comical effect. Science fiction enabled Czechoslovakian comedy writers to produce work in a period of normalization and discuss issues such as bribery, consumerism and abuse of power, which they could not have done outside this genre.⁵ Nevertheless, the tone of the two Vávra pictures was definitely serious.

The Man in Outer Space (*Muž z prvního století*, 1961), a comedy by Oldřich Lipský, is chronologically the third film which I would like to discuss. The film is intriguing to such an extent that even nowadays critics have different opinions on its nature as to whether it was a parody of the communist system or just

⁴ M. Guzek, "Krakatit" i "Ciemne słońce" – adaptacje prozy Karela Čapka autorstwa Otakara Vávry, [in:] *Hrabal i inni. Adaptacje czeskiej literatury*, eds. E. Ciszewska, E. Nurczyńska-Fidelska, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2013, p. 14.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 25.

the reverse, its apology. What is interesting is the fact that the film's protagonist, Josef, once again finds himself in a situation where he might actually change the course of history. Moreover, at the beginning, Josef has no idea that he has travelled to the future. He discovers that nothing reminds him of a beautiful Czech landscape from the past and he cannot adapt to a world without money, where everyone is equal, and social hierarchy is no longer significant. The scientists from the future are amazed by the way he acts – Josef wants to own everything, which seems to be unconventional behaviour in a perfect communist system. Subsequently, Josef discovers that the only place where he feels good is in the museum of the 20 century. Josef has moved to the future by accident and he now pretends to be someone special who is endowed with exceptional wisdom as a representative of humanity from the past (but it is no accident that he has Czech nationality!). Finally, his real identity is revealed and he has to escape back to the past. In the last scene, men from the future, who represent a modern progressive society, look directly into the camera and warn us: "People, be aware that he is coming back". On the day of the premiere, the film was widely commented on in the press. Journalists focused mainly on the attitude of the protagonist. What is interesting is that none of the reviews focused on the critique of the current political system depicted in the film: why do people from the future not understand Josef's great fear of his boss; they are surprised that it is important for him whether he is in Eastern or Western Europe; finally, they do not understand his obsession with being followed.⁶ According to Petra Dominková, the critics ignored this undertone in the film as they just could not have coped with it. In one of the interviews Lipský, the author himself, commented on this situation as follows: "The fear which concerned the people from the future was already visible during the meeting of the committee approving the screenplay. It was obvious that one should not make fun of the future".⁷ In my opinion, behind the facade of the inevitable compromises which the scriptwriter must have made at the beginning of the 1960s, the film, especially its ironic ending, definitely ridicules and does not glorify the political system of that time.

Next, I would like to focus on the article *Legally Seeking a Better Future* by Martin Mišúr, in which the author creates a typology of Czechoslovakian films concerning the Third Industrial Revolution.⁸ The utopian vision of the future presented in *The Man in Outer Space* is not treated by the author as an obvious representation of paradise. What seems to be significant is that almost every one of the films selected by Mišúr which focuses on this theme is a comedy and none of them is a critique of the vision of the future.⁹

⁶ P. Dominková, *K interpretacím "Muže z prvního století"*, [in:] *Interpretácia a film*, ed. M. Kaňuch, Asociácia Slovenských Filmových Klubov, Bratislava 2008, p. 115.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 116–117.

⁸ M. Mišúr, *Dovolené hledání světlých zítřků – československé filmové sci-fi v reakci na koncept vědeckotechnické revoluce*, <http://www.sci-feast.eu/index.php?page=text&id=49> (access: 20.05.2014).

⁹ Ibidem.

One of the Czech members of the *Sci-fEAST* team did not take into account a 1966 science fiction drama *The End of August at the Hotel Ozone* (*Konec srpna v hotelu Ozone*). This film by Jan Schmidt, based on Pavel Juráček's screenplay, was produced during a specific period of the political thaw of the first half of the 1960s along with the whole formation of the Czechoslovakian New Wave. Most of these films, such as works by Menzel, Forman and Passer, are treated nowadays as extremely accurate representations of past times with ordinary characters with their own down-to-earth problems. Schmidt, on the other hand, offered a vision of the world after a nuclear apocalypse, which is traversed by eight young girls led by an old woman, the only person who remembers the world before the explosion. Her goal is to find the men who survived the catastrophe and to repopulate the planet. However, while wandering on their search, they meet only an old man who is then killed by the wild girls. He is shot after he refuses to give away a gramophone, the only object which connects him with the old civilization. The women, however, continue their wandering in the wild. In the case of this film, it is worth mentioning its formal aspect. Jiří Macák observes the actions of the characters through the eye of the camera from the distance, which intensifies the catastrophic vision of the film (the director engaged only non-professional actors to play the roles of the women; as a result, in a way, they discover what they are able to portray in front of the camera on their own).

Then, after 1968, when a two-decade-long period of normalization began – that is the consolidation of a system connected with the fact that censorship was once again tightened – the previously mentioned *crazy comedies* dominated the science fiction cinema. They are all based on a similar plot development – the Czechs surprisingly became responsible for the lot of the whole world. The following work with its narrative structure is an example of such a film. A film directed by Jindřich Polák in 1977, *Tomorrow I'll Wake Up and Scald Myself with Tea* (*Zítřka vstanu a opařím se čajem*) also focuses on the problem of a possible nuclear attack; in this case, time travel to the past might help Hitler win the Second World War. The plot is ambiguous: the main villain, Klaus Abard, is the leader of a Nazi group which wants to deliver a nuclear weapon to Hitler using a method invented in the Czech Republic.¹⁰ A travel agency called *Universum*, which organizes holidays into the past, is located in Prague. The dialogue in the film emphasizes that it is the Czechs, not the Americans, who are the pioneers of this kind of travelling. What is more, the American couple who appear in a supporting role, are portrayed as silly, naive people who treat the hijacking of the spaceship as just another adventure.

¹⁰ Paulina Haratyk gave a lecture entitled *An Atomic Bomb – “One of the Most Beautiful Views in the World”*, at a conference during the Political Cinema Week (Tydzień Kina Politycznego) on 16th May, 2014, in Cracow. She presented interesting ways to diminish the effects of using nuclear weapons. A picture presenting a test explosion on Bikini Atoll became an inspiration for, e.g.: the organization of the Miss Atomic Bomb contest with hairstyles in the form of a mushroom cloud resulting from an explosion, cakes in the same shape and propaganda films of different kinds.

Prague in the future looks pretty much the same as the contemporary capital of the Czech Republic – the future makes it possible to travel in time and brings a few other inventions, but it is not a vision of radical changes (as it was in *The Man in Outer Space*). It is a classic comedy of misunderstanding – the main characters arrive at Hitler's bunker three years earlier than they expected so it is hard to convince the Führer that he will shortly be defeated. As the German army after another victory is already near Moscow, the travelers from the future are treated as liars and sentenced to death. The only thing that might help them survive is a movie released in the future presenting the forthcoming events. In a very unusual sequence for a comedy genre, one might see Hitler watching a film presenting his own collapse: the Nuremberg trials, the capture of the Reichstag, etc. In addition, it reflects a hybridization of the Czech cinema, as more important than the form of the films is the fact that behind the facade of an entertaining cinema they tried to convey a certain ideological meaning and furthermore, the films were unappreciated by the critics but highly popular with audiences. Although one might have doubts about their artistic value, they are an important phenomenon in the Czechoslovakian cinema, which should not be forgotten when discussing the elements of the science fiction genre.

On the Margin of History – The Polish Science Fiction Cinema

The tradition of the Polish science fiction cinema is not as rich as that of the Czechoslovakian film industry. In the *Sci-fEAST* database there are only about fifty Polish films of this genre and over twice as many Czech films. It is worth remembering, though, that Polish filmmakers touched upon similar subjects – in their productions one might see a reflection on that time; however, their perspective on the issue is totally different from Czech directors. It is worth mentioning *A Spy in a Mask* (*Szpieg w masce*, 1933) by Mieczysław Krawicz rather more as an item of curiosity than a film meeting the requirements of the genre. However, when *The White Disease* was produced at the River Vltava, Krawicz made a film in which a similar question is discussed: “The forthcoming war is going to be the collapse of humanity”, and one of the scientists works on a device which will make it possible to stop enemy tanks and planes. The scenes set in a laboratory are only a background for spy intrigue in which foreign agent, Rita Holm, played by the Polish singer and actress, Hanka Ordonówna is engaged. The woman tries to seduce the scientist's son in order to come into possession of the plans for an invention. The intrigue is a pretext for a melodramatic thread during which Ordonówna shows off her acting and singing skills by performing her biggest hits. Unfortunately, an interesting science fiction concept does not end with a moral. In the last scene, Rita Holm dies in the arms of her beloved, but the audience do not learn

anything about the future of the invention nor if it would have changed the course of history.

It was not until the 1960s that production of post-war science fiction films began. In 1959, *The Silent Star* (*Milcząca gwiazda*), a coproduction of the Polish and the German Democratic Republic producers directed by Kurt Maetzig, was released. However, the Polish producers did not play an important role in the project and the coproduction of the film was a ‘propaganda exercise’, this is why I will not focus on this work. One of the first attempts of this type was made exclusively by Polish producers – a science fiction series produced in the Studio of Small Film Forms SE-MA-FOR. Short films such as *Associate Professor H.* (*Docent H.*, 1964) and *The First Pavilion* (*Pierwszy pawilon*, 1965) were produced in the days when, as director Janusz Majewski says, the Polish science fiction cinema was developing and “special effects” were created in the completely amateur conditions of SE-MA-FOR’s trick workshop.¹¹ The two films conveyed a hidden message against totalitarianism and the incredible story in the end turned out to be yet another dream of Professor Fos. The more interesting *The First Pavilion* concerns experimentation with the miniaturization of people; the idea being that when natural sources are shrinking, breeding a new dwarf race will make it possible for people to survive. Those selected to participate in the experiment are not aware of the situation and are kept in the first pavilion by a crazy scientist. The effect of miniaturization of the characters was produced solely with the use of perspective and special lenses. After some years, Majewski returned to the science fiction genre subsequently producing a series of films entitled “The Incredible Stories”.

While the Czech cinema is famous for its adaptations of Čapek’s prose, Polish filmmakers usually allude to Stanisław Lem’s stories, even though the writer was very critical of attempts at film adaptations of his works. The only film accepted by Lem was *Roly-Poly* (*Przekładaniec*, 1968) by Andrzej Wajda, a little more than twenty-minute film, based on a short-story “Do you exist, Mr. Jones?”.¹² This grotesque comedy tells the story of a racing driver, Richard Fox (excellently played by Bogusław Kobielą) who because of road accidents has a series of transplantations. As a result, his body is built of many parts and a growing number of donors. Consequently, many legal problems develop – on one hand he cannot get insurance after his brother dies as his organs have also been transplanted to his body and from a legal point of view, the person whose organs are alive is treated as the one who lives, no matter in

¹¹ J. Majewski, *Retrospektywka*, Wydawnictwo Literackie Muza S.A., Warszawa 2006, p. 207–208.

¹² Then, Wajda planned to film *The Futurological Congress* by Lem but the writer did not approve of the idea, as he thought that in those times animation techniques were not developed enough to produce good effects. cf. A. Wajda, *Kino i reszta świata. Autobiografia*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2000, p. 252. What is interesting, in 2013 Lem’s story was presented in *The Congress* by Ari Folman in which he uses an advanced technique of linking together digital pictures with classic animation. Polish filmmakers also took part in this multinational production.

whose body they are placed. Furthermore, it complicates Fox's personal life as well, as for his late brother's wife he is simultaneously a brother-in-law and partly a husband. Crowds of people gather outside the front of the institute's building where these incredible transplants are being carried out, ready to sell or trade any of their own organs. Wajda's film touches upon the issue of interference with human nature often discussed in science fiction films. The reason why Lem approved of the film was the fact that it was a comedy which enabled the viewers to take a futuristic stage design with a pinch of salt. The writer believed that the economic restrictions imposed on the Polish cinema would make it impossible to produce real and ambitious science fiction films. It is difficult not to agree with the author of *Solaris*, as to a great extent, national science fiction productions from this time were usually black and white, simple and used only a few actors, or television productions usually with no special effects, not to be compared with high-budget projects. The exception are those films whose goal was to compete with Hollywood such as another coproduction of Polish and East German Republic producers, *MMXX Signals* (*Sygnaly MMXX*, 1970), treated as a response to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* released two years earlier.

The last short-length film which is worth mentioning is *Through the Fifth Dimension* (*Poprzez piąty wymiar*, 1973) by Marek Nowakowski as it deals with a rare subject in the Polish science fiction cinema – time travel. In comparison with the Czech cinema, however, where the characters travel to the past in order to e.g. kill Einstein to stop the development of nuclear physics so that scientists would not be able to make an atomic bomb,¹³ in Nowak's film, based on a literary short story by Konrad Fijałkowski, the concept of changing the course of history was not taken into account. As a result of an experiment, the main character time travels only a few days into the past and does not interfere with an alternative reality but merely writes down his experiences while the existence of a fifth dimension is explained to the audience in a really simple and straightforward way.

When it comes to full-length films, *On the Silver Globe* (*Na srebrnym globie*) by Andrzej Żuławski is an exceptional project both from the point of view of the author's vision and of the scale of the production. The production was stopped in 1976 when the most of the film had already been shot. As a result, when production resumed over a decade later (it was completed in 1987), it turned out to be impossible to continue the project in the same form. Some of the props and sets had been damaged; what is more, it proved to be impossible to shoot additional scenes of a multi-threaded plot. It was an open secret that Żuławski was withdrawn from the film production because he significantly exceeded the budget (a completely unprecedented situation in socialist cinema) as his epic was filmed in several different places – Poland, Mongolia

¹³ I.e. a comedy *I Killed Einstein, Gentlemen!* (*Zabil jsem Einsteina pánové*, 1969, directed by Oldřich Lipský).

and Caucasus. It is an exceptional example of a film whose formal side is not integral as the fragments added in 1987 present Warsaw of that time. For instance, the scene going down to a laboratory was filmed in a long hall of an underground passage, and an over-diegetic commentary adds the information which originally was to be filmed. With regard to the plot, the narration takes the form of the vision of the director from 1976, i.e. a complex philosophical story about a few generations of space castaways on a planet populated by savages, this is why I put it in chronological order before the films of the 1980s.

Piotr Szulkin in *War of the Worlds – Next Century* (*Wojna światów – następne stulecie*) who set the story in the year 2000, saw for himself how dangerous the creation of a future reality was. The director described a world ruled in a totalitarian way and made television the main medium of propaganda. The film was completed in 1981 but its premiere was postponed for two years so that the film would not allude to the martial law which had been introduced in those times in Poland (December 13, 1981, lifted on July 22, 1983.) Szulkin dedicated his film to George Orwell and the film alludes to his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Human beings are categorized by identifiers implanted in an ear; the iconography of science fiction intermingles with socialist realities, as the population records are evidence of friendship with mysterious Martians, and the committee before which the protagonist, Iron Idem, stands alludes to a socialist system. An allegorical vision of a society manipulated by the government also comes back in other Szulkin science fiction-stylized films.

In the same year as the premiere of *War of the Worlds*, cinema audiences were able to see one more metaphorical science fiction film, this time in the convention of a comedy and probably the most popular film of the genre *Sexmission* (*Seksmisja*, 1983) by Juliusz Machulski. The director used the science fiction/fantasy comedy genre many times. The most interesting example of this is present in two of his works from the 1980s (in 1987 he also produced *King-sajz*) as there is a hidden meaning in them. In *Sexmission*, two volunteers, Max and Albert, decide to take part in a ground-breaking experiment during which they are put into hibernation. While they are asleep, a nuclear war breaks out which is why they are woken up half a century later when, as becomes apparent, only women have survived on the Earth and Her Excellency rules them in an absolute way. The men cannot adapt to a feminine futuristic world, which is a source of many humorous situations, however, the finale provokes deeper thought. The heroes manage to make their way to the surface where normal life is still going on and everything that they treated as a new apocalyptical reality turns out to be an enormous illusion made up by Her Excellency who in fact is an impotent man. When taking into account the hidden message of this production, and bearing in mind which former political system it alludes to, one might observe that of all Polish science fiction films, this vision, even though presented in a serio-comic manner, might be treated as the most daring.

An Attempt at Comparison

The previously mentioned titles were selected from a few dozen science fiction films which I watched as a part of the work on the *Sci-fEAST* project. In my opinion, they present the most interesting, from the point of view of plot, as well as the most representative examples of the issues dealt with by filmmakers of these two Middle-European cinemas. They are an example of the science fiction genre – a ‘genre facade’ behind which filmmakers worked in order to allude to the socio-political situation with which they were familiar, often trying to diagnose it, even though they did not regard their films as purely science fiction. On this basis, a distinction between Czech and Polish films is clear to see. In the Czech films, the main narration is based on the assumption that the Czechs might actually change the course of history as e.g. all the ground-breaking inventions are made in Prague. The Czechs with the use of the science fiction genre try to heal the complex of a minor and insignificant nation, which does not often play an important role in world history. This is why I believe that in science fiction films the filmmakers were trying to change this image. Even though the characters are still awkward and helpless, reflecting the typical attitude of “a small Czech man” (Čecháček), the most typical example of which is the soldier Josef Švejk, at the same time, they are no longer consigned to the margins of history. In each film, the story points to a moment when the Czechs have a real influence on the future of the world. Especially when they are able to save the planet from destruction. An important trend of the science fiction genre was also the comedy convention which empowered authors to dream about the Czech contribution to the future history of mankind. However, taking into account the past regime, day-dreaming about the future seemed to be risky – one should travel in time to the past only. Stories of this type were not a point of interest for Polish science fiction authors – it is hard to find any films in which the Polish people could influence the future on a global scale.¹⁴ They rather tend to convey universal meanings and create allegorical plots, developed in television and later presented in full-length feature films. While the Czechs tend to put themselves in the centre of history, Polish filmmakers rather stay on its margins, usually making films concerning a reflection on a development of technology, not related to the Polish nation only. The second important trend concerns those films which are an allegory of a political situation. Nonetheless, these allegories either glorified the communist ideology (mainly the co-productions which

¹⁴ E.g. a contemporary comedy *Ambassada* (2013, directed by Juliusz Machulski), in which the inhabitants of one of the tenement houses unwillingly travel in time to the year 1939 when the German Embassy was located in their house. In contrast to the films concerning the dictatorship of an entity, made before the war and which attempted to diagnose the current situation, and not only to describe it, Machulski’s film is only an example of a repetitive usage of a popular alternative history theme.

I did not take into account) or conveyed an opposite but thoroughly hidden message, which in order not to bring to mind direct associations with a political system were transferred to the area of a completely different time-spatial reality. If the critique of the political system was too obvious, as in Szulkin's work, the films, due to censorship, were prevented from being released. Polish science fiction filmmakers did not make science fiction comedies as often as the Czechs did. Till 1989, simple individual films were far more popular than productions made for a wide audience. It is of course only a general and demonstrative representation of the genre to which there are many exceptions. I believe, though, that they do not change the perception of the history of Czech and Polish science fiction presented in this article but even make it more interesting.

Magdalena Wąsowicz

István, a király: Rock-Opera As an Expression of Hungarian National Identity

Despite its popularity – or perhaps because of it – musical is considered, more often than not, an undemanding movie genre. It is usually associated with pure entertainment. While there is little doubt that musicals can be classified as a part of popular culture, the conviction that they only about entertainment is not entirely true. Their success stems not so much from their spectacular nature, but from the fact that they perfectly fulfil the needs of modern audiences and, among other things, are capable of creating a sense of belonging to social groups, that is – a sense of identity.

This idea may seem far-fetched, but only at the beginning. The idea that an addressee can mediate his or her identity through products of popular culture is by no means new. It has already been raised by several scholars. In *Understanding popular culture* John Fiske remarks that popular culture is, just like any other, a culture – *the active process of generating and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social*.¹ He also points out that all available commodities can be used by consumers to form meanings of self, social identity, and social relations.² But there is also a darker side to it: cultural commodities, Fiske claims, bear within them traces of power relationships and reproduce the ideology of the system that produced them. This means that they are never ‘innocent’ or meaningless, but epitomize ideology. Yet at the same time they also carry marks of the struggle between domination and subordination. This is because popular culture is, on one hand, the culture of the authorities, but on the other, the culture of the subordinated who use it to construct their own meanings that often go against official interpretations. It seems then that popular culture contradicts itself, being on one hand the culture of the authorities, but on the other, that of the oppressed society.

But if popular culture is to be popular, it has not only to provide certain ideas, but, more importantly, to be relevant to the immediate social situation of the people, to comfort to their demands and needs.³ Among them, as Fiske believes – to their need to create a sense of self. Similar ideas can be traced in Marek Krajewski’s views on popular culture. What is most significant is his

¹ J. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, Routledge, London 1995, p. 23.

² Ibidem, p. 11.

³ Ibidem, p. 25.

claim that the identity of an individual or of a social group is not given but always created and built upon culture. In modern society it is often mediated through products of popular culture.⁴

If this mode of thinking is taken into account, it is possible to think of the musical as a way of constructing and expressing (individual or social) identity. Examples of such well-known movies as *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Hair* or *Rocky Horror Picture Show* support that thesis. Their commercial success was accompanied by ideological movements and general changes in America society, such as the expansion of counter-culture and fascination with hippie culture. *Rocky Horror Picture Show* was – and still is – immensely popular among eccentric communities and we might even say that RHPS has encouraged the creation of its own subculture. Moreover, these movies had an ability to bring their enthusiasts together.

If these movies had so great an appeal as to encourage people to form and maintain fan groups, it might be speculated that a similar mechanism would work on a much larger scale, such as a whole nation. After all, culture and narrative has always been concerned with creating identity. It is also known from the works of such scholars as Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Anthony D. Smith that national identity is not a natural, inborn feature but a social construct.⁵ It is always mediated through culture: be it religion, rituals, art, literature or cinema. In academic discourse it is usually high culture that is taken into account, yet reflections of such scholars as Fiske or Krajewski have proven that popular culture can also be used as a tool for the creation of identity. And if popular culture, in general, can, then the musical – as a product of popular culture – also can.

This notion is confirmed by Raymond Knapp's work on American musicals. Knapp, a musicologist from UCLA, believes that the American musical always takes on a formative, defining role in the construction of a collective sense of 'America'.⁶ He explains that this defining role stems from two factors. Firstly, American musicals play to American audiences "who will be acutely aware of anything that challenges their notions of what or who America is or stands for, or of its place in the world".⁷ Secondly, the need to define and refine what it means to be American has always been a great concern of American culture in general. The musical is a specifically American art form which, being available and comprehensible for all social groups, proved to be particularly effective in explaining the concept of 'America'.

Musicals are not, of course, restricted to the United States. The genre emerged in America and was quickly assimilated by other cultures. Yet the social context in which these musicals were played was completely different

⁴ See M. Krajewski, *Kultury kultury popularnej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2003.

⁵ See: B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London 1991; E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1983 and A.D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism. A critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism*, Routledge, London 1998.

⁶ R. Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2005, p. 103.

⁷ Ibidem.

now. These musical were no longer being played for American audiences, so they had to be reinterpreted to cater to the needs of non-Americans. I am convinced that one of the most interesting assimilations of the genre took place in Hungary. It is particularly visible in the case of one of the most famous Hungarian musicals, rock-opera *István, a király* (*Stephen, a king*).⁸ I find it particularly interesting because of two factors. Firstly, by creating a vision of what it means to be Hungarian, the movie is an open expression of national identity. Secondly, the movie epitomizes the struggle between domination and subordination (as described by Fiske). As I will later show, the fact that it was filmed in 1984 when the Socialist Worker's Party ruled Hungary, had a strong influence on the meaning of the movie.

István, a király, a rock-opera about Stephen I, was created in 1983 by Levente Szörényi and Sándor Bródy. At the beginning it was a stage show but it became so popular That in 1984 it was filmed by Gábor Koltay. The plot of the rock-opera refers to historical events, namely to the emergence of Hungary as a Christian state and to the early years of the reign of Stephen I (also known as St. Stephen of Hungary).

According to Waclaw Felczak, Christianity was known in Hungary from quite an early stage thanks to contacts with Byzantium and Slavs. For a certain period of time, missionaries from both the east and west had an influence on the Hungarians. In 983, Prince Géza, father of St. Stephen, invited German and Italian monks to the country. In the same year, he and his family were christened. Géza's son, Vajk, changed his name to Stephen. Yet that act was not tantamount to christianisation of the whole country. Most Hungarian tribes still worshipped pagan gods and despite the help of German monks and soldiers, Prince Géza did not manage to unify Hungarian tribes. Just before his death in 997 he appointed, as was custom in western hereditary monarchies, his son heir to the Hungarian crown. His decision ran against tribal law according to which the oldest male member of the family should succeed the dead leader. Géza's brother, Koppány, the oldest member of the Árpád family, rebelled against Stephen. Thanks to the support of the German army, Stephen defeated his uncle at the Battle of Veszprém in 998. Koppány was captured and killed, his body quartered and displayed upon the walls of the most important Hungarian castles as a warning for other tribal chiefs. Stephen secured his position and in 1001 he was crowned the first king of Hungary. The process of unification of the country was finally completed.⁹

The plot of *István, a király* is based on this period of history and faithfully follows the events that I have presented above. The movie draws extensively on a whole set of collective notions about the past, referring to the Hungarian psyche and national symbols. All elements of the show, such as music, lyrics,

⁸ I treat rock-opera as a subgenre of musical, even though some critics prefer to see it as an independent genre. To learn more about problems with terminology see M. Bielacki, *Musical. Geneza i rozwój formy dramatyczno-muzycznej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 1994.

⁹ All information based on: W. Felczak, *Historia Węgier*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1983, p. 21–26.

choreography and stage design contribute to producing a meaningful whole; a whole which is prone to multiple interpretations and revisions which reflect the present situation of the audience. History as presented in *István, a király* is but a pretext to show the values which are important for the whole nation. Historical events are depicted in such a way that they become symbols of the Hungarian psyche and invite the interpretation of *István, a király* as an expression of motifs which were formative for Hungarian culture and Hungarian national identity.

First and foremost, the fight between Stephen and Koppány is presented as a conflict between tradition and modernity. This conflict is a leitmotiv of the whole musical and it manifests itself on all possible levels: on the level of the story, music, stage-design and costumes. It is worth noting that rock-opera alone can be described as a genre positioned on the borderline between tradition and modernity. Rock-opera is an attempt at bringing together traditional conventions of opera, rock music and modern technology. As a result, songs in *István, a király* are characterised by stylistic pluralism. Each group of characters is characterised by unique music. In Stephen's case, it is melodious pop music – meddled with, and at the end of the movie, the tune of the Hungarian national anthem. Priests and monks sing songs akin to Gregorian chants, pagans and Koppány – dynamic rock numbers, three Hungarian nobles – vaudevillian-like songs.¹⁰ These types of music often interact with each other in order to deepen the meaning of particular scenes. For example, during Géza's funeral, a traditional Hungarian folk melody is firstly blended into, and then vanishes behind, Gregorian *kyrie eleyson*. This blending expresses the imminent change; the introduction of Christianity and the transition from the old rituals to the new ones. Moreover, in the movie, historical characters appear together with modern people. While the main characters such as Stephen, Koppány and Stephen's mother are dressed in costumes which are based on medieval designs, the choir and dancers wear regular t-shirts, jeans and pleated skirts. This coexistence of two types of characters demonstrates the connection between the historical, almost mythical past, and the present condition of the audience.

The tension between past and present is also reflected in the antagonists. Stephen can be read as a character that symbolises modernity while Koppány personifies tradition. By doing so, these characters do not just act out the conflict, but also present what it means to be Hungarian.

Koppány is an advocate of the old ways and claims that converting to the new religion would be tantamount to servitude and losing the sense of what it means to be 'Hungarian'. Laborc, one of his staunch supporters, points to it by shouting in one of his songs:

¹⁰ See: *István, a király*, <http://www.zikkurat.hu/istvan/index.shtml> [access: 23.01.2013] and M. Bielacki, *Musical. Geneza i rozwój formy dramatyczno-muzycznej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 1994.

*Nem kell olyan isten, aki nem tud magyarul (We don't need a God who does not speak Hungarian)
Szabad magyaroknak nem kell ilyen úr! (Free Hungarians don't need such a lord!)*¹¹

The song emphasizes the importance of language and Hungarian gods; that is – the significance of national culture which is under a threat from foreign influences. On a symbolic level, Koppány embodies tradition and freedom, as well as such values as courage, loyalty to the old faith and determination. It should be pointed out that in Hungary – a country which was for a long time occupied by foreign forces – these values were always held in very high esteem. Koppány also personifies the stereotype of a proud rebel who is ready to sacrifice his life for the independence of his fatherland.

Stephen represents modernity and Christianity. He is presented as a character who is torn between his duty (that is – putting down the rebellion) and his conscience which tells him that he should not kill his uncle, nor other rebels who are, after all, Hungarian people. Still, he realises that the only hope for Hungary to survive is Christianisation (as he sings – *Nincs más út, csak az Isten útja* [*There is no other road but God's road*]) and, to achieve it he must be a strong leader who will unite quarrelling Hungarian tribes. That is why he does not shrink from cruelty and orders to kill Koppány and to quarter his body. Stephen feels, above all else, responsible for his country. That is also why he fights for power – not for power itself, but for the good of Hungary.

One may wonder which of these characters is positive and which negative. This is actually a tricky question, since both Stephen and Koppány are treated on more or less equal terms. They are presented in a way that makes it impossible to talk about them in terms of good versus evil. They are both characterized as patriots who assume responsibility for the well-being of Hungary. The only reason for their conflict is the difference in their visions of Hungary's future. Nevertheless, it does not come as a surprise that most fans of the movie sympathize with Koppány rather than Stephen. It is only natural that rebellious characters are usually more memorable. It is also Koppány who sings the most dynamic songs of the whole movie and, what is more, he is the one personifying universally acclaimed values. On the other hand, the storyline lays bare the shortcomings of this system of values: because of his blind loyalty to tradition Koppány is unable to see that the only way for Hungary to maintain relative independence among Christian countries is Christianisation and renouncement of paganism. At the end of the day, the movie shows, it was Stephen who was right.

The analysis of *István, a király* clearly shows that historical events are interpreted from the perspective of the 20th century. Since, as Fiske claims, popular culture has to be *relevant to the immediate social situation of the people*¹² and since the rock-opera is highly symbolical, it is possible to see it as an allusion to the political situation of Hungary in the early 80s. Such an interpretation

¹¹ *István, a király* (1984). All quotes in the paper are translated by me since the movie was never officially translated into English.

¹² J. Fiske, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

would not only explain how a movie about The Middle Ages can construct modern national identity, but also why the communist authorities agreed to screen a movie that reminds its audience about the Christian roots of the Hungarian state and which glorifies rebellion against the official regime.

In the early 80s, Hungary faced a serious economic crisis. To overcome it, János Kádár introduced one economic and political restriction after another, in an attempt to reorganize and centralize the country. It was vital then to show the people that restrictions were necessary. His situation is reminiscent to a certain degree of the circumstances Stephen finds himself in in *István, a király* and one can actually think of Stephen as a figure standing for János Kádár and Koppány as a personification of the Hungarians.¹³ It is not only the main traits of both characters that make such an interpretation possible, but also the fact that throughout the movie Koppány and his supporters constantly emphasize the fact that Christianity is a foreign religion which is being forced on the Hungarian people. They are highly critical of Stephen who accepts the presence of German soldiers and priests at the king's court and complain about the foreign ideology that is taking over Hungary. Summing up, these elements can be – and were actually seen by the Hungarian¹⁴ – as an allusion to communism and the Soviet Union army which was stationed in Hungary.

Koppány, as I have already said, represents the stereotypical rebel. His hopeless fight against foreign rule harkens back to the Hungarian uprisings of 1848 and 1956. The association between Koppány and the heroes of these uprisings becomes evident when he sings his manifesto, *Szállj fel szabad madár*. The refrain goes as follows:

*Csak annyit kérdezek, a válaszra várva: (I ask only one question, and wait for an answer)
Rabok legyünk vagy szabadok? (Shall we be slaves or free?)*¹⁵

These words are strikingly similar to the lines from Sándor Petőfi's *Nemzeti Dal* (National Song):

*Rabok legyünk vagy szabadok? (Shall we be slaves or free?)
Ez a kérdés, válasszatok!*¹⁶ (This is the question, choose!)

This is an important detail. Petőfi, who died during the uprising in 1848, is one of the most important poets of Hungarian Romanticism. He wrote the *National Song* to encourage the citizens of Budapest to join the fighting. Every Hungarian knows the poem, so the words sung by Koppány are instantly recognisable. Together with this recognition, comes an identification with the character and his glorification.

¹³ K. Milun, *Rock Music and National Identity in Hungary*, <http://www.pum.umontreal.ca/revues/surfaces/vol11/milun.html> (access: 23.01.2013).

¹⁴ See D. Matalin, *A magyar rockopera: István-az első és utolsó*, http://nol.hu/kultura/20100821-istvan_az_elso_es_utolso-779481 (access: 15.06.2014).

¹⁵ *István, a király* (1984).

¹⁶ S. Petőfi, *Nemzeti dal*, [in:] *The Lost Rider. A Bilingual Anthology*, Szekszárd 2007.

If we were to treat Stephen as a character that represents János Kádár and Koppány as a symbol of opposition against his regime, then the story would bring to mind the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 which is still one of the biggest traumas in Hungarian history. Also the final coronation scene brings to mind this analogy. In this scene, Stephen is crowned king while Koppány's quartered body represented by red sheets is exposed in the background. The solemn atmosphere of this scene is disturbed by the fact that the new order was built upon the bodies of the rebels.

In *Understanding popular culture* Fiske points out that popular culture must contain both the forces of domination and opportunities to speak out against them, to oppose or evade them from subordinated but not totally disempowered positions.¹⁷ *István, a király* provides these opportunities. From the point of view of a dominant, state-regulated culture, it can be seen as a movie which supports the politics of the ruling class. However, from the point of view of the people, it is a story about freedom, respect for tradition and about a failed rebellion, that is – a story which is very close to their own experience. *István, a király*, then, contradicts itself – it is a very ambiguous show which on one hand glorifies tradition and the fight for freedom but, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of looking forward to the future. After all, despite the fact that Koppány's ideals were worth admiration, it was Stephen who created Hungary as a state.

It is fascinating that *István, a király*, even after thirty years, is still an important part of Hungarian culture. This rock-opera has not – and most likely will never – become dated. It is still watched and the stage show is still staged in theatres across Hungary. What is more, it is always an occasion to manifest patriotic feelings, especially in the final scene when the national anthem is played. The audience stands up then and listens in solemn silence. Many people bring Hungarian flags to the shows which take place in the open air. This behaviour shows how much *István, a király* has become a part of national culture. Nowadays, the conflict between the main characters can also be seen in terms of, for example, the tensions between Hungary and the European Union or the clash between regionalism and globalisation. It would not be an exaggeration to say that *István, a király* makes it possible to understand the present by referring to the mythical past. The movie presents themes which are not only universal, but also crucial for the process of building Hungarian national identity, such as the myth of origin, the insoluble conflict between the past and present, Christianity, and the valour of the fight for freedom and respect for tradition. These motifs make *István, a király* worth watching not only for Hungarians, but also for all non-Hungarians who desire to understand the culture of Hungary. For them, *István, a király* will be an invaluable insight into the Hungarian mind.

¹⁷ J. Fiske, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

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