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MANIFESTATION OF HUMANITY AND HUMANISM IN CZECHOSLOVAK CINEMA 1949 -1953

by

SELMA ROCKOVA

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

MANIFESTATION OF HUMANITY AND HUMANISM IN CZECHOSLOVAK CINEMA 1949 -1953

by

SELMA ROCKOVA

Adviser: Professor Morris Dickstein, Ph.D.

The period 1949-1953 was one of the most inhuman times in Czechoslovak history. Almost immediately after the Communists violently took over the country in 1948, the Communist party started a campaign of terror in order to spread fear. It made the society weak and obedient. The terror never disappeared completely but it lost its enormous intensity after Stalin's death in 1953.

The end of 1940s and beginning of 1950s was a time of political trials with the party insiders. The false accusations and executions of the innocent people were used to demonstrate to the Soviet Union the power and loyalty of the Czechoslovak Communist party's hard core.

As this thesis focuses on manifestation of humanity and humanism in Czechoslovak cinema 1949 -1953, it is crucial to define the terms humanity and humanism to make clear the target of this thesis research.

It is also necessary to describe the time period between 1945 and 1948 in terms of changes within the film industry to understand the events happening in the industry after the Communist putsch in 1948.

It is believed that the films between 1949 and 1953 only present shallow stories supporting the pillars of the Communist ideology. It is also commonly assumed that people in the film industry were paralyzed by the fear of losing a job or, in the worst case, of a ruined life so they did not attempt to create something else than propaganda films. However, the common belief about the Czechoslovak cinema in

the 1950s is that it didn't bring out anything valuable, because the government's censors controlled it; this thesis assumes that is not the whole picture.

There were certainly propagandistic films using schematic characters and situations, but there were also films made in the period that are more than that.

In line with the foregoing, this thesis concentrates on the films' genre, theme, plot, characters, denouement and, most importantly, the message. Then it is able to recognize what are the forms mediating humanity and humanism in the films.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is devoted to a search for “Humanity and Humanism in Czechoslovak Cinema in 1949 – 1953”. At the core of my work was a desire to learn if there is any manifestation of humanity in the films of the period and, if so, what are its representations.

It can be said that the most inhuman period in my country’s history sparked my interest in trying to find any remnants of humanism in films made under the former communist regime, as film is capable of capturing and carrying humanity better than any other art form.

There were four main and mutually blended layers, which I needed to explore and describe to be able to reach any conclusion as an answer to my base question. The layers were the historical time period, the ideology of the period, humanity and the particular films themselves.

I have previously called the period between 1949 and 1953 “the most inhuman period in my country’s history”. It was a period when political trials took place. They are also often called Monster Trials because they resulted in persecution of thousands of people. Innocent people, who became inconvenient for the regime or represented a danger as political opposition, were accused, “tried” and then either executed or sent to forced labor camps for many years. Hundreds of convicted people did not even join the political opposition. They only were in the bad place at the bad time. Communist representatives simply needed to show results in fighting the opposition to their Soviet overlords, as well as spread fear amongst the people.

No matter how enormous the inhumanity perpetrated during the World War II was I consider the time of political trials more inhuman because Czech people suffered from injustice

and cruelty imposed on them by other Czech people. Even worst, the politicians who were in charge of protecting the population systematically decimated it instead.

The largest trials took place from 1949 to 1953 and reverberated on a smaller scale until 1956.

The terms humanism and humanity presented the following problem to examine: I started working with an assumption that it is commonly clearly understood what humanity means; I learned that the reality is quite the opposite. Ironically, it is easily understood what “inhumanity” as I have used it above means. No one would doubt that during “the most inhuman period in my country’s history” the cruel, torturing and murderous practices, which caused enormous suffering, were used against human beings. Inhuman always means something as bad as it is difficult to imagine it happening to a living creature (animals included) or as bad as it is difficult to imagine it being done by a human being.

There are at least two meanings of the term humanity. The first one, the more general one, is even present in the name of my own major. Liberal arts, which are also called “the humanities”, examine, explore and describe all disciplines touching on human beings’ activities and processes – from emotions, art, and music to languages and literature to history. In different words, it can be said that the humanities deal with the humans’ inner world while, conversely, exact sciences deal with the external world. They measure, calculate and observe the physical world around us. According to this definition, “humanity” is everything connected to the activities and inner processes of human beings. However logical, it is not the antonym to the term “inhumanity”.

So there is the second and very frequently used meaning of humanity that explains it as everything good in peoples' character or actions such as help, mercy, love, solidarity, empathy, etc. It can be said that the term humanism would fit such a definition of humanity but, not conveniently, there is a complication with the term humanism, which as a philosophical movement mixes the qualities of human element with an approach to religion. To define the terms humanity and humanism suitable to the phenomenon researched in the Czechoslovak cinema between 1949 and 1953 was quite challenging.

The films of the period as well as of the following years are viewed as propaganda only. This part of the film history is usually skipped with a mere note that nothing remarkable was made then. The deeper I went in my research, the more I realized how little my generation (raised during the 1990s) was taught not only about the films but, more importantly, about the whole period. Communists were an indistinct crowd of "them" for us. The explanation can be that it was too early to discuss the past 45 years as our history. It was a rather recent past which was still fresh and delicate. While the past is comprised of any events that have already happened; only the selection, order and interpretation of such events can be called history. Conveniently, nowadays a sufficiently long time has elapsed since the Velvet Revolution (1989) and researchers can better interpret the events from a distance and from a perspective free of the trauma caused by personal experience and memories, which obstruct our parents' generation. The position of young researchers today can afford an approach to comparing and interpreting the historical events and context from a philosophical and theoretical perspective rather than from a personal point of view. Doing so, one can obtain a more complex picture of the problem

and achieve a more general understanding of it; however, the answers discovered can be uncomfortable for older generations.

I'm not implying that this research and the conclusions resulting from it are going to be uncomfortable for the older generation of Czech researchers, but it might happen. I just would like to stress that no Czech researcher would look for humanity where everyone else would expect only the opposite - in the official film production of the period. Such an idea occurred to me personally only because of my studies abroad. In New York City one is in touch with a range of people coming from around the world and hears their personal histories and their countries' histories as well as their current political and social problems on a daily basis. With such international experience and from a more general point of view, I couldn't look back at my own country's history with a common belief that something so precious and natural to human beings such as humanity just disappeared completely from the former cinema. Since film is capable of capturing and carrying humanism better than any other art form, as claimed above, I wanted to find any, even small or hidden, manifestation of humanity in the films that are my field of professional interest.

First of all, I have watched every single film made between 1949 and 1953 to make my own analysis and form a professional opinion. Then I researched the conditions in the film industry focusing on organizational changes in the filmmaking procedures resulting from the growth of the ideology impact.

I sectioned the text by relevant years. In each year's production, I explored the actual manifestation (representation, presence, reflection) of humanism in the films' topic, story, message, emotional impact on audience (by actors' performance) or the complex feeling from the film. I assessed the findings while comparing them with the defined meaning of the terms

humanism and humanity. To support my thoughts, I use the examples of selected, best suitable, films. The only exception is the first year of the examined period – 1949. In addition to the described procedure, I provide a full description of all films produced that year. I find it necessary to describe the films' topic, plot, and message to completely orient readers in the material that was created in Czechoslovakia in 1949. I find that crucial for understanding the text since the films are commonly known neither in the United States nor in the Czech Republic. Moreover, 1949 serves as a source point for analyses of the following years that work with the information from the year 1949.

This thesis thus works with both analytical and comparative methods of research. While looking for any manifestation of humanity, this thesis attempts to take into account all points of view and layers of truth and it makes an effort to interpret them thoroughly.

Historical / Political point of view – historical events and political goals make an important frame to any other action.

Philosophical point of view – the ideology of the period relates to humanity very much; the problem is how the representatives holding the political power used it.

Artistic point of view – the film craft professionalism was forced to forget the universal resources and procedures of art and instead serve the ideology.

Human point of view – everything has been done by individuals; there is never an indeterminate crowd of “them”.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In February 1948 the Communist party took over the country. It did not happen overnight. In fact, the putsch had been planned from the end of the World War II in 1945. The Soviets provided great support for the Czechoslovak Communist party in order for it to succeed in the political battle with democratic parties. As the country, which had liberated Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union pushed forth its interests within the realm of influence given by the Allies' agreement. According to the oral testimony of living contemporaries, 300 Soviet agents operated in Czechoslovakia after 1945. Unfortunately, there is no written documentation supporting this statement because the agents' mission was unofficial.

Communists were a regular part of the Czechoslovak political scene. The party representatives were elected in democratic elections in 1946. The power arrangement between democratic parties and the Communist party was equal so neither side had enough power to fulfill their visions and establish the state according to their beliefs. It was commonly understood that the 1950 election would be decisive. While democratic parties did little to protect democracy in Czechoslovakia, the Communist party worked hard on consolidating its position and power across all layers of public life. Naturally, the Communists started from the bottom – with workers; and continued through students' organization, city hall offices, and ended up at the highest political level in the government. The democratic parties underestimated the power and the danger of the Communist party. They did not have any strategy beside the regular procedures of democratic rule. Moreover, they were not unanimous. In 1948, twelve democratic ministers resigned from their office because they wanted to end the stalemate situation. Most likely, they expected President Benes to accept their resignations and to announce early elections.

What happened was something absolutely different. Immediately, Communists took over the abandoned ministries. They also armed all members of workers' unions in factories around the country. They used Czechoslovak-made guns. Their influence was strong enough to get access to arsenals and provide guns for party members. The armed men were organized in troops called People's Militias and demonstrated their power by marching on the streets of towns. In February 1948 a general strike was held in all big factories and businesses in support of the Communists. The work in industries stopped. Under such conditions, an aging and sick President Benes was considering whether to accept the resignation of those twelve ministers. President Benes was no longer the man from 1938. He did not have enough energy to fight the coming catastrophe. Moreover, he was alone. As it was said before, the democratic parties were not united while the Communist party was well organized and controlled from Moscow. When the Defense Secretary told the President, who was the head of the army, that "the army will go with the people" Benes gave up and signed the resignation of the ministers. By doing so, he probably prevented civil war, but he also handed the country to the Communists without elections. The next elections were held in May 1948 and were completely under the Communists' control. Although the elections looked democratic, the new voting system guaranteed victory to the Communist party. There were only two options for the voters. The first one was a collective list of candidates called the National Front, which contained only Communists or their supporters. The second option was to put a blanket sheet of paper into the ballot box. According to this system, voters could only express whether they agreed or disagreed with the direction of events that had happened in Czechoslovakia but they did not have any alternative to it. Moreover, this yes/no system served as a tool to mark enemies - "who is not with us is against us". Not surprisingly, the Communists won the elections completely by

receiving 99% of the votes. It must be added that this voting system was not an original idea of Klement Gottwald, who proposed it. The Prime Minister and future president had only copied Hitler's method of winning the elections securely while keeping an illusion of democratic process.

Communists began to implement their ideas and theories how to manage a country immediately. The party started to organize and control all aspects of peoples' lives. To make most of the people obey, the Communists created and spread an atmosphere of fear. There was a party organization in each factory or enterprise. Its members screened all employees as to whether they were trustworthy and could continue to hold their current job positions. Hundreds of people were dismissed, assigned to a lower position or arrested as public enemies. Expropriation of not just large or strategic businesses and industries, but also apartment buildings, villas, etc., was also a significant target of the Communists' efforts, as well as forcing smaller farmers and traders to participate in self-imposed collectivization of their properties. Above all, the Communists started a controlled persecution and liquidation of the opposition, including potential opposition, and capitalist middle and upper classes, as the class war was the main pillar of their ideology.

Among their powerful tools were Mass Trials or Monster Trials. As described in the introduction to this thesis, hundreds of people were accused and judged together within one trial. Usually, the trial was named after a well-known person, but criminal charges were brought against a whole group. The trials served as a platform for physical liquidation of a large number

of enemies as well as a deterrent example to the public. That is why regular sentences were death penalty or dozens of years of forced labor in uranium mines.

The trials were staged as a manifestation of the party's infinite power, yet those who orchestrated them went to great lengths to make them look like fair trials in a civilized country. The hypocrisy of the new political system was devilish in the way that the party committed crimes against the population, but everything looked lawful on the surface. Instead of putting prisoners in front of the wall and shooting them, while taking the responsibility for the murders and thus becoming criminals, the Communists preferred to stage the trials as theatrical plays. Each word of accusation and defense speeches was written in advance and precisely rehearsed with all participants of the particular trial. Usually, the defendants confessed everything and asked for the highest punishment in their learned speeches. They did not dare claim differently after weeks or months of being tortured in prison.

The first trial was the trial of General Heliodor Pika in the spring of 1949. He was accused of espionage for the British army, which never happened, arrested without a warrant and hanged for high treason on June 21st 1949. The truth behind the official story is that Pika was a prominent member of the Czechoslovak resistance movement on the Eastern Front during the World War II. He was a diplomat and army officer sent by President Benes to the Soviet Union. Benes and the entire exile government operated from London during the war. Pika's problem was that he had not accepted an offer to join the Communist party. Moreover, Bedrich Reicin, who was responsible for a purge within the Czechoslovak army after the Communist putsch, personally hated him since his own youth and from his exile in the Soviet Union. It was Reicin who ordered Pika's execution.

At the end of 1949, Rudolf Slansky, the General Secretary of the Communist party, signed and sent an official request to Moscow to send Soviet advisors to Prague.

Their main creation was the trial involving Milada Horakova. In fact, it was a trial of the political opposition. The accused people were members of the democratic parties, many of them Members of Parliament before 1948 like Horakova. She was a Social Democratic party member, Vice-chairman of the Political Prisoners Association after the World War II. She was also active in the Women's Association.

As a member of the resistance movement, she was arrested by Gestapo and sent to the Terezin Ghetto and then to a number of prisons in Germany during the war. She survived and kept being politically active after the war. In the Parliament, she stood for observance of a lawful way of dealing with and judging people accused of collaboration with Germans. She was an open critic of the Communists' approach to this issue. She also held an opinion that Czechoslovakia should not isolate itself from the rest of the world by orienting exclusively on the Soviet Union. That was completely against the Communists' directions. In March 1948, when former Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Masaryk was killed, Horakova resigned from her position in the Parliament. She continued to work in the same mode as during the war – unofficially. She was helping the families of the people arrested before her, listening to western radio stations, etc. She refused to emigrate as some of her colleagues did. The sum of these and other activities brought her in front of the tribunal. Interestingly, her investigators had no idea what they would accuse her of when they arrested her. They found a reason after a number of interrogations. Eventually, Horakova and others from her group were accused of conspiracy against the republic. Although the trial was rehearsed and broadcast with a few-minute delay, Horakova managed to defend herself with her own words. She did so even though she knew well that it wouldn't help her. To

the contrary, the torture in prison had to be even worse. She was sentenced to death. She was a mother, yet she surrendered her right to ask the President of the republic for a pardon of her death sentence. Her father did so in her name. Although people like Churchill and Einstein signed a petition to save her life, President Gottwald after a short hesitation did not sign her pardon. Horakova was hanged and took 15 minutes to die on June 8th 1950. She is the only woman executed for political reasons in Czechoslovak history.

The Soviet advisors did not stop their effort to catch all offenders after the Horakova trial; however, the opposition had already been destroyed. That happened for the following reasons:

The official rhetoric started to express an idea that the most dangerous enemies of the party and of the new order were hidden within the party. The new goal was to find, reveal and destroy them. By 1949 the party had already accepted and precisely followed the Soviet model and instructions for dealing with potential oppositionists within the Communist party itself. Even where there was no opposition, the comrades were supposed to find some to show the Soviets that they were serious about the Communist revolution. The orders resulted from Stalin's paranoia, which caused the death of millions of people not only in the Soviet Union, but also in the satellite countries.

The logical reflection of the Communist leaders was that if there were some failures in the socialist building of the country, such as problems with the rationing system, a weak currency, slow agricultural collectivization, etc., people responsible for the situation were certain members of the party who did their job wrong. Because an enthusiastic Communist could not do

his job badly, it meant that these certain comrades did it on purpose, thus they were hidden saboteurs.

The investigators started to look for just such Communist party members and worked with tips accusations from a Communist collaborator Mrs. Taussigova. She gave them names to follow, but the jobs or political positions of these people were not high enough to stage “show” trial. So Taussigova and others dared to go higher and higher, until they reached the top of the Communist party. The next trial is known as the Rudolf Slansky trial. Rudolf Slansky, the then General Secretary of the Communist party, author and establisher of a majority of the new rules and initiator of the previous trials was sacrificed to appease the Soviets. Stalin wanted one of the two main leaders of the party and country dead – either President Gottwald or General Secretary Slansky. The decision was made in Moscow. Slansky was chosen because of his Jewish roots. Interestingly, Reicin, who was responsible for Heliodor Pika’s trial and death, as well as for the persecution of many others, was executed in the Slansky trial too. They were arrested in 1951 and hanged one and a half years later.

The end of the Monster Trials was facilitated by both Stalin’s and Gottwald’s deaths in 1953. In spite of that, some less significant trials went on until 1956.

DEFINITION OF HUMANITY AND HUMANISM AND ITS CLASH WITH COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY

Before turning to an analysis of films that were created in such political and social climate, it is necessary to define humanity and humanism, as it is a crucial point of this thesis.

There is more than one point of view from which to define humanity. Although people rarely distinguish between experiencing manifestations of humanity in their real lives or when conveyed through art, they use different explanations and examples when they describe the meaning of the word. It is the same with both ordinary people and scholars as well as with philosophers.

As a very general term, humanity is defined as everything related to the lives of human beings. All strong human emotions, such as love, fear, anger, jealousy, desire, pity, mercy, sorrow, etc., are contained in the broad definition together with personality traits such as honesty, fairness, wisdom, naivety, will to survive, etc. Additionally, it encompasses all human experience, for example: meeting death, first love, overcoming a number of obstacles to reach or lose a certain goal, one's whole life of learning about himself, or simply human destiny. The manifestation of humanity is then any manifestation of an individual's inner process as an answer to his experience during his life journey.

Another definition is more specific and works with an assumption that humanity is that better part of the human being that elevates mankind above animals or computers. However, people differ from animals also in bad characteristics such as hatred, cheating, revenge,

insidiousness, etc. This definition suggests that human beings can choose to exist and make decisions based on noble principles rather than on primary and primitive instincts like animals, rather than on the negative characteristics listed above, or rather than on pre-programmed decisions as computers. According to this definition, the act of choosing the noble principles, values and characteristics such as truth, fairness, honesty, dignity, wisdom, hope, love, forgiveness, help etc., makes a person a carrier of humanity.

Humanity defined in this way can be called humanism, as humanism believes that every human being is good in his core. Unfortunately, Humanism, as a philosophical movement, deals, beside this assumption, with the relationship between a human being's free will and religion. For the purpose of this thesis, the word humanism is understood as the above described definition of a positive part of humanity, excluding the topic of religion.

Combining both previous definitions, it can be said that to perceive something as humanity strongly depends on a difference between emotions and actions.

While an entire range of emotions, including the most negative ones, are considered to be human, any negative action against another human being is understood as inhuman. Even negative human emotions are included in the term humanity because they are something that every human being, even the best one, experiences during his life. It is different with negative/wrong actions. Interestingly, as long as someone suffers from his own wrong decisions or actions, it is considered human – human destiny, human tragedy, etc., but as soon as someone consciously causes someone else to suffer, it is classified as inhumanity. Conversely,, doing good is humanity.

So it can be said that weakness, anger, desire for revenge, fear, etc. are understandable emotions of human beings, therefore they are a sign of humanity. But what is not human is exacting revenge, physical or psychic torture of someone else, or any other attempt to deprive a human being of dignity.

Another point of view from which humanity and humanism can be defined takes into account life conditions – everyday life and inhuman life conditions.

It is not a common phenomenon to notice the manifestation of humanism in people's everyday life. With all the buzz, deadlines, tasks, work and rules people easily lose touch with their own essence – humanism. Unfortunately, people who keep their connection are still valuable exceptions.

There is an example from real life that can serve as a case study for the definition of humanism in the everyday life. There was a student who was considered one of the best students of his specialization for more than 7 years. He was under huge stress caused by his personal life and he cheated in his last seminar paper. It was not just his personal failure, but also an official problem. His professor learned that the paper was not written by the student – he translated someone else's work and the professor found the original on the Internet. The professor faced a huge dilemma. According to the University policy he was supposed to expel the student from the school. Even though the professor believed in the rules, he hesitated to expel the student. He knew that the student had been an honest and hard-working person for 7 years. He knew him very well. The student was supposed to take his final exams and be done with his studies. The professor's decision could destroy the student's life. Yes, he did make a giant mistake. He did

and he knew it. But it is human to make mistakes. The question here is, and the professor asked the question himself: Isn't a destroyed life too high a price for one mistake?

The professor's rational brain suggested following the rules, but the humanism inside his heart suggested giving the student one more chance to write his paper and let him finish his studies.

That is one of the manifestations of humanism. It is more about what people feel is right in the heart rather than knowing it in the brain. If a computer considered the situation, it would result in the student's expulsion.

As was said above, people don't appreciate fully the power of humanism in their everyday lives. To the contrary, whenever the conditions of life become inhuman, humanism immediately gets contrasted with the inhuman life conditions, thus everyone can recognize humanism more clearly.

Humanism is thus defined through inhumanity - as its opposite. This is demonstrated in a book by Tzvetan Todorov "*Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps* (1991)". People imprisoned in concentration camps lived and gradually began to behave as animals in an attempt to survive. They stole food from each other, reported each other to guards, etc. They were not bad persons; they just needed to survive at any cost. That is human, although it is not a representation of humanism.

Sharing the last piece of bread, supporting someone during the labor and not letting him collapse from exhaustion because that would mean certain death, and many other actions helped people in concentration camps survive. As it can be concluded from Tzvetan Todorov's work, if someone survived, it was always because of help from others. The ones who helped did so

disregarding the danger for their own lives. They did not think about the possible causes, but they bravely refused to abandon their humanism.

In conclusion, it can be said that to be full of humanism means to understand all bad and good human feelings, life events and decisions. Sympathy and love are the strongest signs of humanism. If humanity is honestly felt and lived through emotion, then humanism is empathy for any other person's humanity.

Such a definition and, in fact, all definitions discussed above are in direct contradiction with the Communist regime that was established in Czechoslovakia in 1948, as well as with the whole Communist ideology.

The Communist Manifesto written by Marx and Engels in 1848 openly claims that there has been a class war for centuries and that the Communist demands are only the natural evolution of the war where one class wins and rules over others. Marx and Engels articulate their opinion that the next ruling class is the working class – the proletariat. (Actually, in their proposed social system everyone would become a worker so the whole society would become one big working class with no difference between people).

The authors stress that the proletariat is kept on the edge of survival by the capitalist system. The system pays them only as much as needed to stay alive but nothing more that would provide a decent life. As a solution, the authors call for complete destruction of the bourgeois class and its economic and political system based on private ownership. There are ten points listed in the Manifesto, which should help achieve the intended goal; including abolition of ownership of land, progressive income tax, abolition of the right of inheritance, confiscation of

the property of all emigrants and rebels, centralization of credit in a national bank, equal obligation of all to labor, free education for children in public schools, extension of factories owned by the State.

On the one hand, it must be mentioned that Marx and Engels don't call for a totalitarian government that controls all aspects of people's lives. To the contrary, they expect and predict a society "where the free growth of an individual is a condition of the free growth of all". It seems that they believe that the system will work naturally, with no need of control or coercion from above.

On the other hand, they call for a revolution – for a battle with guns. They understand revolution as a natural step in historical changes. They use the French revolution as an example to justify and prove the idea that it is right to fight and kill people who are obstructive to freedom of the majority.

The history of many countries proves that the Communists' demands for human conditions for workers can be achieved within the capitalist system and democratic principles as well. So there is no need of executions, collectivization or persecution to gain freedom and decent life for workers. Interestingly, the ideology that has appeared as an answer for inhuman treatment of people advocates as a way of ending inhumanity committed against one group to create inhuman conditions and life threat for another group of people. It must be concluded that such fact makes the ideology inhuman.

It must be taken into account that an ideology and interests of a real political power are not always congruent. Although an ideology can become official rhetoric of a certain political party or government, the government does not have to be interested in fulfilling the claims of the ideology. In different words, totalitarian governments use carefully selected points of the

ideology to usurp and keep power and to justify their crimes. Unfortunately, that was the reality in Czechoslovakia. The Communist party took over the republic exactly 100 years after Marx and Engels wrote their Manifesto. Naturally, the Communist Manifesto was a cornerstone of the Communist party program, but it was already improved and supplemented with Soviet practical experience including the influence of Stalin's paranoia. Czechoslovak Communists followed the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism with all brutality of the Soviet totalitarian regime. It was a tyrannous regime that did not fight in any open battle with guns in hands. Instead, the regime insidiously destroyed not only the people who openly disagreed with the Communist ideology, but also the people who recognized the lies and hypocrisy of the new regime. To maintain power and remain trustworthy for a certain part of the society, the government needed to silence those idealists who recognized that the ideology proclaiming human ideals of work, solidarity, truth, help, etc. got abused by a group of individuals aiming to usurp political power.

Everyday balancing on an invisible line between truth and what was presented and promoted as truth became a new reality. This atmosphere of lies and hypocrisy surrounded and became a part of all aspects of life. There were five types of people creating that atmosphere: The first type was militant Communists who called for death of bourgeoisie and revenge. Another type, included people using the new rhetoric only as a tool for achieving their career goals, own enrichment, and exacting personal revenges or for helping the less flexible people to survive. They did not believe in the ideology, but were able to adapt to the new rules. There were also people believing in the idea of social equality and fairness and they honestly believed that they could reach it under the Communist governance. Then, there were people recognizing the cruelty and the danger of the Communist party, but they chose to be invisible and quiet to survive. The last group comprised people who couldn't remain silent while witnessing injustice

and inhumanity. Usually, those people paid for their attitude with their life or, at least, their freedom.

The contradictions described above were omnipresent as well as the five types of people. The life events and twists depended fully on the character of the people who were in charge of deciding about them. It is because those are individuals who administer the state and who interpret a certain ideology or an official rhetoric. They do so within borders defined by their characters and beliefs. That enables a diversity of approaches from demagoguery to humanism while using the same rhetoric within the same ideology. The film industry was no exemption. Thus the films were a result of an everyday struggle between the ideology, the official rhetoric and particular interests of individual human beings.

SITUATION IN THE FILM INDUSTRY PRECEDING THE COMMUNIST PUTCHE IN 1948

It could be mistakenly assumed that changes in the film industry started in 1948 while the Communists were taking over Czechoslovakia, but they had started even earlier. The Communists had a huge influence on the industry already in 1945 because they were part of the post-World War II government from its very beginning. One of the Communist government members was Vaclav Kopecky, a Communist journalist, one of the founding members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1921, a leading ideologist and propagator of the Communist party in Czechoslovakia, who was exiled in Moscow during the Second World War where he established a personal relationship with Stalin and remained Stalin's firm defender even after Stalin's death. Kopecky, who supported following of the Soviet example and who actively contributed to the staging of the political trials, was the head of the Ministry of Information that supervised a cultural department including the film industry from 1945 to 1953, when the ministry was closed. Then he became Minister of Culture from 1953 to 1954.

However, it wasn't just the Communists who promoted expropriation of Czechoslovak cinema. This idea was in vogue even before the war. Many filmmakers held an opinion that they could make films more artistically valuable if the producers did not depend on profit. The filmmakers were aware of an unpleasant truth, which is by the way still valid nowadays, that Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic) is too small a market to be able to finance an epic movie demanding a big budget. That is why they called for nationalized cinema. They believed that the state could handle the financial burdens better than private producers who needed a profit to survive.

After the war the government took over all factories and businesses that were under Germany's control. Naturally, those were the strategic industries, including the film industry. If the former owners proved that they did not collaborate with Germans, they received their property back. If not, the property remained a state property. Although the law seemed to be fair, it opened a space for its abuse due to personal matters such as revenge and/or one's enrichment.

The situation of Barrandov Studios and many others large factories was clear. The Germans made the former owners sell their factories to them. The same was done by Milos Havel (the uncle of Czechoslovak and later Czech President Vaclav Havel) with his 51% share in the Barrandov Studios. He did so after many years under pressure. Not surprisingly, after the war he was denied the right to get his assets back. The opposite situation occurred with his production company LucernaFilm. As a wealthy man, Milos Havel was accused of collaborating with the Germans even though he saved many people from forced labor assignments in Germany or being sent to concentration camps. The fact that his case was dismissed in 1947 for lack of evidence does not remedy the fact that he lost his LucernaFilm. LucernaFilm was expropriated in 1945.

Under such circumstances it was not difficult to organize Czechoslovak cinema as a nationalized industry. As has already been mentioned, the idea had grown amongst people within the film industry for more than two decades. Moreover, the Communists, whose goal was to expropriate all industries, including all private businesses, even small ones,, had already gained a huge influence in public life. On top of that, the Czechoslovak intelligentsia felt betrayed by France and Great Britain, who both had signed the Munich Agreement. Also, it can't be disregarded that it was the Soviet army that liberated Prague from the Nazis (those days no one had any idea that it was a part of the Allies' agreement and that the American army was

waiting in Pilsen for four days with an order to stay put and allow the Soviets get to Prague first). That is why a majority of people did not think about the Soviet Union as a threat. To the contrary, they were thankful and looked for an inspiration there. Not for long, though.

The combination of all these events and streams resulted, beside others, in a smooth nationalization of Czechoslovak cinema. The organization remained practically the same as before and during the war. There were two big production companies in Czechoslovakia before the war. The one already mentioned was LucernaFilm and the other was NationalFilm. In the nationalized cinema, two “Production Groups” were established. Karel Feix, former CEO of NationalFilm, led the first group, and Zdenek M. Reimann, former head of production in LucernaFilm, led the second group. “Organizational rules of production units defined them as ‘self-managed entities’ similar to firms. Even though the central office of National Feature Films Production governed them, they still possessed a large amount of day-to-day autonomy. They prepared annual production outlooks and budgets, managed allocated resources, sought and adapted themes (in coordination with higher dramaturgical offices: the Creative Collegium, Central and National Dramaturgy), chose casts and crews and supervised all parts of the production. Some other competences were shared with the central office of National Feature Films Production: concluding employment contracts, managing contractor relationships, approving of budgets, screenplays and casting; and its various departments (props, costumes, make-up, transport).”¹

As noted, the superior administrative body was “National Feature Films Production”. It managed all other film departments such as administrative-economic department, “creative committee”, props and costumes department, dramaturgy department, make-up department and

department of key creative workers of a film crew (architects, composers, DoPs, screenwriters and editors).

“The first two years of the nationalized cinematography can be described as a sort of continuance of the system that developed during the First Republic but mainly during the Protectorate, though under new political and legal circumstances. The nationalized cinematography had taken over existing companies with most of their employees and projects in progress, and even though it exploited the partial centralization, the individual units were to a certain level autonomous without strong centralized leadership. Key positions of delegates and managers of production groups were occupied by senior film administrators. Professional hierarchy within production units and operational processes stayed intact and employees (at least on the surface) were optimistic towards professional self-management and development of art free of commercial pressure.”²

It must be said that not only the Communists in general, but most importantly the members of the Communist Party’s enterprise organization at Barrandov Studios were not satisfied with the new system. They criticized the similarity of the two Production Groups’ work style with private business practice. Lubomir Linhart, the first Central Director of nationalized cinema, said “[The production groups] must not exhaust themselves with sophistry and wire-pulling trying to gain something at the expense of others and also must not consider themselves autonomous [companies], fighting for employees.”³

That led to important changes at the beginning of 1947. Six Production Groups were set up and there was no longer a tandem of producer and director heading the group, but the director

alone became a superior above all. This position was called Art Director. “Directors and managers of production groups in general had never before in the history of nationalized film production such strong position as in art directorship. They managed both artistic and economic aspects of the production, they answered only to the minister and not to the management of the Czechoslovakian film company. As a result, their competence resembled that of independent filmmakers. However, documents found among Martin Fric inheritance show that they were not really sure how to cooperate according to their new structure. The arrangement that was supposed to subordinate economical interest to the artistic ones changed not only the competence division but also personal relationships within the group. One of the most experienced managers of the production group Zdenek Reimann complained to his new superior that he regards the exchange of their roles as “degradation and kick in the nuts to say the least, especially when we managed to organize to production in such a way that the stages are short of vacancies”.⁴

The Communist putsch in February 1948 accelerated the process of centralization. The Production Groups were replaced with eight “Creative Collectives” in November 1948. Directors, writers or screenwriters were a head of the collective that functioned as a dramaturgical body only, meaning they retained supervision of films in terms of searching for themes, writing synopses and screenplays, but were not involved in their production. The members of the collective had to be employees – there were no external workers allowed any more. Gradually, around one hundred new people were hired as screenwriters or dramaturges; however, those people had no education or experience in the field. What they had was a correct ideological attitude. These new one hundred people were employed between 1948 and 1950, while the older and professional workers stayed. In addition, two control bodies were established and reestablished: the Film Council of the Ministry of Information and the Central Dramaturgy.

“Creative Collectives showed different levels of results and productivity. That always depended on a head of the collective and a fluctuation of the employees. CC did not meet the expectation by far, but became a platform for political and personal squabbles. Newly appointed communistic editors (CC of Jiri Hajek, Miroslav Galuska and Jan Kloboucnik) advocated radical view on social realism without much success. Kopecky’s faction in the party and the company accused them of “leftist extremism” and experienced film-makers headed by Vavra accused them of amateurism. This led to dissolution of the collective of radical leader Hajek and later his fellows as well. Screenwriter Vladimir Valenta and director Frantisek Sladek, who at that time worked on adaptation of Branald’s Severni nadrazi (Northern station) for CC of Elmar Klos, were found guilty of treason. Nonetheless, Klos filed their new version of adapted story for approval a week before their sentencing trial. He was then labeled a hard hat and relieved of his leading post in the CC.”⁵ “Valenta and Sladek were sentenced to 12 years in prison for distribution of prints made by revolutionary group Za pravdu (For the truth). They stayed there till 1956. Their revolutionary activity with which Valenta was associated most likely only due to false testimony did not relate to film per se, nevertheless it contributed to dissolution of CC of Elmar Klos.”⁶

In terms of films, 1948 was a year of transition when the production teams mostly finished the films that had already been approved for production in the previous year and the Creative Collectives started to prepare new material that went into production in 1949.

SITUATION IN THE FILM INDUSTRY 1949 – 1953

1949

Seventeen feature films were made in 1949. They can be divided into five groups.

First group – this group can be called art films. There is no evidence of Communist ideology.

The group contains two films.

Second group – films featuring historical moments. Although there are no blatant lies in the narration, the narrator's point of view is more or less distorted by the Communist or at least socialist ideology. The group contains four films.

Third group – films in this group are clear propaganda serving the new political order. Such films are called Building drama. The group contains six films.

Fourth group – there are three comedies and one parody included in this group. The film settings, excluding the parody that is set in the First Republic, are all the same as the film settings of the previous group. Meaning, the narration is set in the environment showing the new order of organization in building the Communist state as it also is in the "Building drama". The most common environments are factories, fields, agricultural cooperatives, etc. As regards genre sorting clues, this group of comedic films differs from the previous one because of its genre.

While in the Building drama the center of the story lies in the environment and the consequences ensuing from such surroundings, in the comedies the surroundings serve only to provide the environment for the personal story of the characters. In other words, the surroundings themselves are a serious topic and determine the story in Building drama, but they are not that serious a topic in the comedies, which rely on humor arising from the characters' personal situations.

Fifth group – this last group contains only one film. It is a film for children. The genre of children’s movies did not exist yet in 1949, but blossomed enormously in the following years.

First group – The art films

“The Long Journey” is a highly artistic film shot in expressionist and surrealist esthetic. The film language uses not only contrast in lighting - working with shadows on walls, but also shows contrasting situations – it cross-edits Hitler’s speeches, happy family life, war combat, people in concentration camps at the beginning of the film. Doing so, it evokes an uncomfortable feeling of seeing “the whole picture” before the people in danger recognized their danger in reality.

The film narrates a story of two families during the Nazi occupation. One is a Jewish family, which ended up in a concentration camp. Their daughter, a doctor in a hospital, did not have to leave home with her family because she got married. Her husband is her former colleague from the hospital who loves her very much – he marries her when it is clear that it can be a dangerous decision. Although they remain free for a few years, they are both eventually arrested. She as a Jew is sent straight to a concentration camp. He is sent to prison because his brother was executed as a member of the Resistance Movement. It is one of the first Czech films showing the horrifying life conditions in concentration camps, however through an artistic lens. In spite of all danger, the couple survives and reunites at the end of the war. Both are the only members of their respective families who survived the war.

The film met many difficulties before being put into production and shown in movie theatres. The Creative Collective did not appreciate documenting the recent history without showing the party’s and Soviets’ role in it. The story of the Jewish family as a story of human

suffering with a clear message at the end of the film wasn't sufficiently politically interesting for the party. The film ends with a voiceover saying: "The human being has won" and then continues with listing the names of 7 million victims who died in concentration camps while the camera pans across white crosses symbolizing their graves.

The film wasn't prohibited completely but it was allowed to be screened only in theatres outside of Prague. In his memoirs, film director Otakar Vavra answers the question why he did not support this unique film, which he could as a powerful head of the Creative Collective. His opponents accuse him of siding with the Communist party and sharing their values and ideas. Vavra explains that he did not find the film unique. He says that he has seen many films of such style even before the war. Being older and knowing what happened in the 1950s, he would not be so critical. Unfortunately, he can't go back in time.

"Wild Bara" is a story written in 1856 by the most famous Czech female writer Bozena Nemcova. It used to be narrated to children as a fairytale, but the film is considered a drama. It is a drama showing the conflict between the "simplicity" of village people and the pure heart of an individual who is not willing to fit into the crowd.

Bara is different from the regular village people. She is not scared by thunderstorms, she can swim and she is always on the side of truth even if the truth differs from what is commonly considered as the truth. The village people hate her because she scares them. She scares them because they don't understand her. They try to silence her because she is not like them.

A certain parallel can be recognized between the film message and the reality of Czechoslovakia in 1949. Fortunately, no one from the political representatives and censors realized the similarity. Both the film and the novel have been and still are viewed as an important part of Czech culture.

Bara eventually wins because her love to a man respected in the village triumphs over the villagers' hostility.

Second group – The films in the middle

“We Want To Live” is a film about a basic wish mutual to all human beings. During the economic crisis in 1933 a young couple wants to get married but they can't afford to live together, let alone to have a family. One day the girl disappears. Later the audience learns that she went to have an abortion because she knew they wouldn't be able to feed the baby. She is a seamstress and he is a glassblower. In spite of all obstacles, their love is strong and he finds his lover and convinces her to stay with him. They struggle in poverty, both trying to find a job. Even if they get some work they are paid poorly despite working hard.. There is a moment when the girl must pay the rent with her last good dress. Later she says to her lover: “I wish you don't have to suffer from hunger. I wish no one does”. When the man wants to join a strike in a factory and support the Communists, she is against it, arguing: “What is solidarity? It doesn't feed us!” Any human being understands such feelings and situations. It can be said that the story makes us understand the circumstances under which the generation of our grandparents could easily begin to believe the Communist party promises.

What is tendentious about the film is that only its main characters – the couple- have depth and color. The rest are black and white. Namely, the factory owners are completely bad and inhuman. In contrast, all people's struggles are solved thanks to the Communist party and its humanism. The film ends in 1949. There is a parade of all workers walking down the street with banners in their hands. They all are happy. The couple even holds the baby that they finally could have.

“Silent Barricade” tells a story of people in a Prague neighborhood during the very last days of the Second World War. That period is called the Prague Uprising. Ordinary people including women and young boys built barricades all over the city overnight. They fought with anything they had found and made it impossible for the German army to flee through Prague. The goal was to keep Prague safe until the Soviet army reached the city.

Such extreme circumstances serve as a very good background for observing individuals’ behavior. Or it can be said that the director tells a story of one of the very important events of Czechoslovak history not through the behavior of masses and political representatives that can sometimes feel distant, but rather that he does so by composing a mosaic from the stories of a variety of individuals, which makes the film feel more personal, more human, more real.

The manifestations of humanity in the film are the relationships between people under one of the most inhuman circumstances. A mother who prepares food for the fighters loses her son. A very moving scene occurs when her friend brings her the boy’s hat. The moment is even stronger because this man has been shown being afraid of losing his own son. He wants to keep his son at home but the boy escapes and joins his father on the barricade. It is a moment when the father accepts his son as a man who is not a child anymore. Another character is a man scared to fight and die, so he just disappears. Later he displays a white flag on his house. Director Otakar Vavra shows everything – bravery, solidarity, love, parent/child problems, fear, one’s weakness. He creates a believable world and makes the audience feel like being on the barricade.

The problems of this film are the same as the imperfections of the previous one. All good between people during the film is claimed to be the good of the Communists - the solidarity, the bravery on the barricades, etc. It paints a picture that all people in Prague were conscious communists. A statement made in the film, “This revolution is red. Why are we doing this?”

Why? Because we want to work for ourselves” is complete nonsense. It overlooks the historical fact that the Communists were just one of the groups fighting the Germans. Moreover, the Communists were not one solid group during the war. People sharing these ideas were merged with other resistance groups and movements. The beginning of the film where the actions are taken only by the Communist party and there is no other leadership makes this historical film deliberately historically inaccurate.

The director has confessed the compromises he had to make due to official directions for picturing the end of the war. He also said that it was more important to him to shoot a film about the bravery of the Prague people while accommodating the compromises than not to shoot it at all.

“Mr. Hrabetin is leaving” is again a film that tries to rewrite history. In this case it is not a historical political fact that is twisted and its history is rewritten, but a social problem.

First of all it shows Mr. Hrabetin’s life as a case study of all factory owners. It imposes an idea that all business owners have gained their properties fraudulently. It is this elementary “truth” that gives workers the right to take Hrabetin’s property from him. In 1948 the Communists practically stole the factories from their owners with guns in their hands. This film tries to justify such behavior and explain why it was the right thing to do. The party needed sympathy of other social groups. There were many people beside those two most exposed groups, i.e. workers and bourgeoisie. If Communists wanted to keep power they needed to show they were not criminals, at least in films. What is different in this film is that it attempts to show Mr. Hrabetin as a human being with good and bad qualities, not only as plain evil. Actually, it shows him as a poor man struggling to make a living honestly. He fails and he sums up his

experience musing that: “it is impossible to become rich by work so I tried it the different way.” He becomes very rich, pays all his debts and buys a factory. He does not lay off an old doorman from the factory, even though the man is not very useful. During the Nazi occupation he argues with his son who wants to attend a funeral that is considered a demonstration against the Germans. Mr. Hrabetin worries about the factory and his family and forbids his son to attend. The son calls Hrabetin a coward. Later Hrabetin finds out that there is a resistance movement against the Germans in his factory. He does not report his workers. It is not clear if it is so because he agrees with them or if he counts on this advantage, which can help him after the war. And eventually it does. After being accused after the war, he is acquitted and officially proclaimed a Resistance movement supporter. One worker, who hates Hrabetin from the time he was young, tries to set other workers against him. He argues that Hrabetin is a collaborator and that he paid for his freedom. The workers take over the factory with guns. Their excuse is “The workers are always right when in argument with a capitalist and collaborator.” Hrabetin’s lawyer advises him to leave. He is caught when taking his stashed money and jewelry he has hidden to help Jews. So Hrabetin combines both good and bad qualities and that makes him very human.

“The 1848 Revolutionary Year” was made more than 220 years after the Czech Kingdom lost a war with Austria. At the beginning of the 19th century the Czech Revival Movement comprising writers, language scientists and patriots begins to grow but it is not cohesive.. The younger generation is more radical and is supported by workers and rural people. These groups speak Czech and maintain Czech traditions. To the contrary, the older and more restrained generation supports the bourgeoisie. The wealthier and educated bourgeoisie still speaks German. The revolution in Paris in 1848 inspires the movement to act self-confidently. The

Revival representatives send a list of Czech requirements to the government in Vienna. Metternich resigns but the Czech requirements are dismissed. The people of Prague build barricades. They fight against Austrian soldiers. Accidentally, the General's wife is shot. The rebels can't resist the enemy's superiority. Members of the older generation of the Czech Revival Movement make a deal with the government representatives behind the young generation's back. The younger generation is disappointed by this act because they have been fighting on the barricades. Many of them get arrested or are sent to exile.

It is the desire for freedom, bravery, courage, as well as the never-ending collision between young and old generations that makes this film full of humanism. The film carries it well, although it mixes a class war with a national war. "The babbitts have sold us again!" can be heard at the end of the film. The film implies that the middle class has always acted against the best Czech interests during our history and that it is the working class that must keep the political power to be able to do the best for the Czech people. Once again, young, left-minded and naïve people, workers and ordinary people carry all noble ideals. All the weak characteristics such as fear, pliability, corruptibility, etc. belong to bourgeois and wealthy people. The message of the film is that these weaknesses are historically proved and that makes the new order of things legitimate. Meaning, the party can save human ideals by destroying the wrong higher society.

Third group – Building drama

Building drama appeared as a result of political demands on film. Rather than art, the purpose of film and other art disciplines was, first of all, to educate and motivate people to be enthusiastic members of the new society - meaning to be hard-working and obedient workers who can be proud of themselves and their new perfect society. An important tool of this

educative mission is a storyline that brings an unconvinced Comrade to understand the importance of his free participation in a united group. Only such group can work the best way to achieve all goals for the new state to prosper. The message also contains a demand for an individual to give up his needs for the good of the group.

Secondly, the stories send a clear message that any deviation will be punished. The film served as an intimidating tool. Almost always, Building drama works with a motive of a collective enemy. Most commonly it is a saboteur who wants to disrupt the collective work and then escape. The plot tends to be very schematic, naive and doesn't make much sense. If the second group of films (film in the middle) was historically inaccurate, Building drama rewrites history with no inhibitions.

All described motives and plot points are included in "DS-70 Does Not Move Off". Miners changed their mind and agree to be moved from their homes in the name of extending a strip mine. They sacrifice their homes for mining results believing that it is the best thing for the society. There is also a saboteur in the story. Not surprisingly, he is revealed and defused.

The director of the film, Vladimir Slavinsky, was a well-known director in the 1930s and 1940s. His films were so-called salon films. They were full of beauty, wealth and pleasure. The world of workers and socialist ideals were far away from his world. He died two years before the film's theatre release.

"Thirst" is a story set in 1947 when enormously dry weather caused problems in rural areas. People have no water in their wells either for themselves or for their cattle. They regret they didn't support the Communist National Committee chairman's idea to build a public water

pipeline the previous year. The chairman begins to organize the construction, looking for volunteers and preparing the legal documents needed to solve the serious problem. Only two larger farmers have enough water. One wants to help the villagers, but others talk him out of it arguing that he would have to pay for the public pipeline. The second large farmer pretends to be helpful but he sabotages the construction. Moreover, he doesn't give any water to people who come and ask for it. Humanity is embodied here in the basic need for water as well as very common short-sightedness of ordinary people. What makes this film a propagandistic and shallow poster is the schematic characters and plot points that result in an easily predictable ending. There is also a familiar situation, which practically became a new cliché, that the large farmer must be a beast so it is acceptable to take his property from him a few years later. One new theme that occurs is that the Communists bring progress to the backward countryside. Their mission is difficult because the people are not open enough to progress.

The film "Motorbike" is a typical Building drama showing life in a factory through pink glasses. This film is a poster where situations and characters are purely good or bad.

There are two prototypes of a motorbike engine to be manufactured in the factory. According to advice of a new engineer, one of the engines has been approved to be finished for a test run by the factory management. The engineer is using his experience from abroad. That in itself is suspicious. It basically means that he is against workers because everything from abroad except the Soviet Union is wrong. Naturally, the workers don't agree with the engineer's work but can't oppose the decision of the factory management. They work together and also develop a second prototype for a motorbike race. They do it during nights and in their free time. The reason is that they believe the second prototype – the Czech-made one - is better and cheaper than the

foreign one. As soon as they reach their goal, another obstacle appears. The motors are destroyed in a fire started due to a failure of a drunken factory watchman. In spite of all difficulties the workers finish four engines for the test run and their motors win. The factory management decides to put them into production.

Apparently, the message of the film is that friendship and good work can overcome all obstacles. It is a very noble idea, unfortunately much abused and outraged by propaganda. The real message of the film is that only workers at the lowest positions are able to convey these noble values and that educated people in leading positions are not capable and qualified.

It is not surprising that the film was made by an agitprop group of film employees as a gift on the occasion of the 9th Czechoslovak Communist Party Congress.

“The Big Opportunity” is a film telling a story of a young boy who gets another chance from society. Jenik used to be a worker at Bata’s shoemaking factory. He knew about a planned strike against Bata and he revealed it to his father who worked for Bata too. Jenik’s colleagues stopped trusting him and even during the war no one from the resistance movement wanted to share secrets with him. Later, Jenik went to prison for beating up his former friend from Bata’s factory. He narrates his life story to his new boss who is curious why Jenik wants to get a construction job instead of going back to his previous work. Jenik wants to redeem his misdemeanor and the boss gives him a new chance and a job. Moreover, Jenik catches a saboteur and regains his value and prestige again.

Propaganda didn’t want only to intimidate. It also wanted to show that if an individual confesses his faults he would be forgiven. That’s how good the party was! Yet, such a person

must almost humiliate himself to be allowed to join the collective. An individual does not have any value, only the collective does.

“Two Fires” and “Today at Half Past Twelve” are both made in the same format as the previous films. The setting of the first one is a factory producing bricks. The second one takes place in a construction company. Both owners are greedy, dangerous and all bad. They are both defeated by good and nice workers. Then the factories are passed on to the workers and they create goodies for all people there.

Fourth group – Comedy

“Mr. Novak” does not care about politics. He works in an insurance company in an accounting department and he is happy with his lower middle class life and might dream about becoming a head of department. He is not a worker and he is not a master either so the class war does not interest him. He does not even notice the political changes in 1948. One day he receives an offer to become the new head of the department. His wife is very proud of him and he is also happy. He understands the promotion as an appreciation of his life work. He is a person of a certain time period living and understanding certain values. That is why he does not accept the new position. He can't accept the condition for the job that is joining the Communist party.

There are fifty percent more employees in offices than needed and thirty percent less workers in factories than needed. Mr. Novak has to leave the office and find a job as a worker as do many others. This flips his life upside down. He does not understand the new order. He feels betrayed and humiliated. He gets sick and does not want to go to the factory. His doctor calls him a lazy, malingering man.

Until this plot point there is a strong human story. One loses his world as he knows it and he must deal with the loss. But the film's storyline and narration turn into a poster film. Mr. Novak eventually starts working in a factory. Naturally, he is not good at manual work as is the case for many other men who were sent to the factory from offices. It is time for conscious comrades to take care of the former office employees and help them become part of the team. These workers teach the office people the craft as well as the idea that working with their hands is the only happy and satisfactory human activity because one creates something. It is a nice idea, but it is abused in the film. Similarly, help provided by the other workers would be a nice human act but its form in this film - collective organized help - is very unnatural and feels insincere. On top of all of these positive messages Mr. Novak finds out that he is not tired if he works with happiness in his heart and he also finds out that he has changed from a useless figure to a real man who is even able to fix a door at home.

The film was also made by the agitprop group of film employees as a gift on the occasion of the 9th Czechoslovak Communist Party Congress.

“The Village Revolt” is a simple story depicting a much deeper problem. There is an agricultural exhibition in Prague. The people of a small village, Cira, visit it and it brings a change into their quiet lives. Women want to buy a washing machine while men want to buy a tractor plow. However, the money in the communal safe is not enough for both. While men ploughed with the help of horses until now, women have to do washing by hand. There are many arguments about it in all families. Men share the idea that it is a women's duty to do all the work around the house. Because there are only male members of the Communist National Committee, it is decided to buy the tractor plow. It is a comedy, so the village women call a strike. They

move out of their homes and men must do everything alone. They learn how hard housework is and agree to build a washing machine cabin.

A sign of humanity can be considered the desire for equality between sexes. It is still surprising for today's generation that only a few decades ago women did not have the same position as today.

What serves the regime is the fact that the only wise person in the village is the National Committee chairman. Other people just perpetuate the problem. There is also a storyline of a large farmer. It turns out that he keeps secret supplies under his shack. Once again the wealthy man must be bad.

“The Family Problems of Clerk Triska”, as the name of the film indicates, it is a family comedy. The large Triska family goes together for a vacation as the doctor recommended it to their father. They get to a small village, Kysice, where the National Committee chairman accidentally employs them thinking they are the expected harvest volunteers. After many difficulties everyone is happy in the village. The daughters find love there. The father accepts the wish of the first one to stay in Kysice as well as the wish of the second one to marry a soldier. Mr. Triska becomes a relaxed and nicer person thanks to the work and calm of the village.

“The Poacher's Foster Daughter” is a parody of on kitsch and melodramatic films from the First Republic. Although it is clear that the film was made on a political order, the parody is very well done and funny even today. Actually, it was made by authors who made dozens of films of the former genre in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s for Czech and later for German audiences.

The story is simple. A poor talented girl finds fortune in love with a young, handsome and nice millionaire. Naturally, she has no idea that he is rich. They have to overcome many obstacles and misunderstandings before they get married. It is a kind of fairytale. That is why the topic worked and was approved in a Creative Collective. Only in a fairytale can the millionaire be a good person.

Fifth group – Children’s film

“A Magic Ball” is a nice children’s story about one’s self-belief, friendship and fairness devoid of ideology – for the time being.

As can be concluded from the films described above, 1949 was a year when some non-ideological streams could still survive. It was because 1949 was the year of ongoing transformation. Even though ideology had already become a major influence in filmmaking, it was somehow possible for the directors and writers to push the first group of films (art films) through some Creative Collective into production, although the films (The Long Journey and The Wild Bara) do not deal with the ideology at all. Naturally, that was not without obstacles. Similarly, production of the second group of films (films in the middle) was not smooth in terms of the approval process.

The ideology definitely established itself as the sovereign power in May 1949 when the 9th Czechoslovak Communist Party Congress was held. Minister of Information Kopecky presented there a paper introducing new roles and goals for all branches of art, namely literature and film. He claimed: “The criterion of the artistic work has changed significantly. The criterion is now relation to the ruling working class, relation to the proletariat, relation to socialism. We influence the artists, so that they utilize their creativity to serve the people, to provoke each and

every one to build the new life and on their path to socialism to become dedicated heralds of the bright future. The authors want to write their pieces in the closest connection with life, in the direct connection with the world of socialistic building. Visiting factories and rural areas, they search for new heroes, heroes of work.”⁷

After this official proclamation there was practically no option to portray, discuss or narrate a story that would not serve the proclaimed goals. The new political needs caused the rising of a new genre - Building drama (the third group of films). Building drama became the major, practically only genre. Even other genres, such as comedy (the fourth group of films) or later detective genre, work with the tools and rules of Building drama. A very small range of environments such as factory, village or mine was permitted, as well as a poor variety of topics – fulfilling a plan, becoming a shock-worker, getting properties under workers’ control, convincing uncertain or lazy persons that the only way to live a happy life is to become an active member of the new society. Usually, these films are based on just a single plot – there is a production problem and workers save the day by working extra hours and making some improvements they invented themselves. The message of the films is clear without much thinking. There can’t be any doubts about what is right and who is good in the story. The message says that the Communists create a nice world for all people and everyone should happily join them since the Communists bring progress, Comrades are always an example of humanism - helpful, supporting solidarity, understanding of one’s weaknesses, optimistic, hardworking, fair-minded, etc. In contrast, any other character that is not a worker - members of bourgeoisie, factory owners or office workers - is shown as a useless, but more often as an inhuman individual. Such portrayal serves to justify the new social order that results in collectivization and expropriation of privately owned properties.

Ideology and ideological films twist the truth of humanism by oversimplifying reality, pretending that humanism is only and exclusively on the side of the Communists. Thus ideology usurps the values of humanity and humanism and puts them in service of political needs. Moreover, abused manifestations of humanity and humanism are pictured in a schematic, oversimplified and shallow way and they seem to be empty, cheap and ridiculous.

The answer to the question as to why various manifestations of humanity shown in ideology-based films, such as friendship, help, solidarity, good feeling from the creative process, desire for life without hunger, fear of the new, rebellion against inhuman pressure, etc., do not appeal to the audience lies in the following explanations.

First of all, Minister Kopecky defined another rule for Czechoslovak art in his speech at the 9th Czechoslovak Communist Party Congress. Whereas the previously described rule covered the content of art, this rule dictated the art form. Kopecky talked about the leading creative method in the Soviet Union that resulted from Marxism-Leninism and that was accepted in Czechoslovakia as an official art method. The method was called Social Realism. Kopecky explained: “The method of social realism means to create art realistically in the spirit of socialism.”⁸

While it is not precisely clear what was meant by such a vague definition, it could be assumed that the word “real” plays the crucial role. The demand on the artist was to create art that is real, meaning as close to real life as possible. Social Realism aims to portray reality by showing real people, places and events, but in fact it creates a complete opposite to it. As much as themes such as factories, collectivization or fulfilled plans originate from real life topics, it is impossible to consider them a full picture of real life. It can be said that the ideology rather creates a virtual reality composed only of those aspects of life that are important to the goals of

ideology. That virtual reality is then presented as reality itself. The official rhetoric called propaganda keeps repeating such hypocritical versions of the “truth” until no one dares to express themselves differently. Such virtual reality reduces the world and human beings to a small number of issues or topics such as fulfilling the plan, heroism of the Communist party during the war, etc. Any other, deeper human issues are not allowed to be spoken or examined, as they are considered useless for reaching Communist goals. As a result, the films feel rather claustrophobic when compared to films portraying a broader spectrum of real life.

Moreover, there is the matter of how people perceive art. While watching the Building drama films, the feeling of connecting with real experience is missing. To arouse the feeling of the real – to mediate a human experience - it is necessary to pass a complex experience from the film to the viewers. Two main channels are used by a viewer to perceive any film. The first channel is work of the mind. It is a conscious comparing of one’s experience and knowledge with the situation on screen. Working in parallel, the second channel is an unconscious process including the impact of emotions and other inner experience such as catharsis. These effects on the audience are created by interaction of of topic, plot, characters, message and, very importantly, by actors’ performances.

The main problem of Building drama is that it addresses audience only through the first – conscious mind channel. It focuses on transfer of information more than on the emotion. Thus the inner emotional process remains unengaged as it is considered unimportant. If the tools that mediate reality and humanity are abandoned, the reality and humanity disappear from the films. What remains is a canvassing poster. The artistic and human depth of things is reduced to a flat picture that is just a fragment of real life.

All of the previously described factors prevent the audience from identifying with the characters. As previously mentioned, the actor's performance is a crucial condition of establishing a relationship between a viewer and the character. Also, such a relationship enables the film to impact the viewer and mediate the human experience and humanism. The difficulty of the audience's being able to identify with the characters results mainly from actors' performances based on either weak or hard to understand motivations of the characters, predictable plot points, less sophisticated dialogues, superficial problems and inhuman characters. The characters are inhuman because they are only black or white, meaning good or bad. It is impossible to picture reality in such a way because real life is much more diverse. That is why, for example, Shakespearian characters have been believable up to this day. They are universal characters dealing with universal human issues and problems. They have depth and breath as real people, while they embody certain characteristics. In contrast to Building drama, where characters are only shadows of real people, the Shakespearian characters carry and mediate humanity and arouse humanism in the audience. That is why the viewers can identify with the Shakespearian characters, but can't identify with the characters of Building drama.

Another very important matter is the matter of beauty. Art as beauty that appeals to people, once again unconsciously, and has a singular reason - to please - is considered an antiquated form of beauty associated with the bourgeoisie. Social Realism attempts to create beauty without beauty. It is saying that beautiful is only what is useful. The absence of beauty is absence of another tool that could carry humanism in the Building drama films. All films are very well crafted but they completely lack the beauty of cinematography.

It should also be mentioned that the zero art quality of the films was influenced by lack of time during the preproduction and production phases as the Communist leaders pushed the

production crews to have the films ready for the occasion of the 9th Czechoslovak Communist Party Congress. The time pressure was compounded by many personnel changes in the film industry, etc.

To conclude, the Building drama art results don't correspond with Minister Kopecky's proclamation: "Social realism does not seek banality, drabness and soulless materialism. On the contrary, it seeks action, juicy depiction of the true nature of the object perceived through the soul, expressed ideologically and intensified by emotions thanks to imagination that is guided by understanding of the law of evolution."⁹ The proclamation is in direct contradiction with the created films.

As has already been mentioned, the first group of films (art films) does not meet the requirements of the 9th Czechoslovak Communist Party Congress related to art whatsoever. First of all, the films do not convey any ideology at all. They are concerned with universal human problems and values such as love, will to survive, family relations, courage, war crimes etc. The two mentioned art films encompass humanity in all its aspects - topic, storytelling, message, characters' actions and motivation, actors' performances. They also employ beauty in particular shots. Additionally, they talk to the audience through both channels – mind and inner emotion. Thus they mediate humanism. As such, they are called art films in this thesis. They are the exact opposite to Building drama.

The second group of films (films in the middle) is a very interesting group in terms of issues analyzed above. On the one hand, the influence of ideology is clearly noticeable. On the other hand, the films are still capable of carrying humanity and instilling the feeling of humanism in the audience. Thus they feel more as real life than Building drama, however, real life shown

only from one point of view. “We want to live” serves the ideology in terms of the topic. The film portrays how poor workers used to be and how Communist activities solved all their problems.

“Silent barricade” serves the ideology by adding a few lines of dialogue proclaiming Communist mottos, which do not match the rest of the film. These parasitic lines in the dialogues impose a message that only the Communists fought on the barricades against the Germans. Other freedom fighters are overlooked while the Communists take the credit for saving Prague. This message is supported by the historical fact that the Soviet Red Army was the one that liberated Prague.

“Mr. Hrabetin is leaving” is a film supporting an ideological claim that factory owners and other members of the bourgeoisie are not decent people. They do not act humanely toward other people if they do not profit from it. They collaborated with Germans. They are selfish, greedy and exploitative. That gives the proletariat the right to take the bourgeoisie’s property by force.

“1849 Revolutionary Year” serves the ideology by creating a form of an historical parable. The parable suggests that the national revolt against the Habsburg monarchy is similar to the proletariat’s revolt against the bourgeoisie. At another level, it goes even further. It accuses the bourgeoisie of not joining workers and left-thinking intelligentsia on barricades and, even worse, yielding Czech interests to the Austrian government. This makes bourgeoisie responsible for a painful moment in Czechoslovak history – the failure of the revolution in 1848 due to their inertia and short-sightedness. The film provides proof that the bourgeoisie has always been the enemy of national, i.e. ordinary people’s interests, no matter how far from the truth it was.

Interestingly, the topics of the foregoing films suit the ideological goals, but they also deal with the universal subject of humanism and humanity free of ideology. What also makes all four films in the group mediators of humanity and humanism is a good screenplay, meaning believable plot points, understandable motivations of the characters and, most importantly, actors' performances and cinematography. The pictures are visually appealing. The directors narrate through the pictures. They do not use them as a mere addition to the dialogues. The characters are sophisticated, colorful, interesting to watch and they are not predictable.

The fourth group of films (comedies) has already been analyzed as a version of Building drama. In spite of that, there are two films worth mentioning in terms of their topic and humanity. "Mr. Novak" tells a story of a man who lives his life outside of politics and ideologies. He is absolutely unaware of the social changes that have taken place. The film shows Mr. Novak's struggle to understand the changes and to adapt to them. It is a portrait of a human being who loses all security in his life – values, social rules, expectations placed on him - that have created a frame to his life. Such loss is very stressful for Mr. Novak.

"The Village Rising" deals with feminist topics such as the role of women and men in household, their duties and rights. Gender equality contains humanity in itself.

Although both films tackle a serious theme, unfortunately the politically and ideologically agile endings make from "Mr. Novak" just a little bit more interesting Building drama and leave "The Village Rising" a bitter comedy.

The fifth group contains only one film. "Magic Ball" could be included in the first group of films as it lacks an imprint of ideology while it mediates humanity. Because it is a first film targeted at children, it represents a separate group. Children's films as a genre were developed a

few years later. Unfortunately, ideology and propaganda eventually penetrated them as well.

1950

In 1950 the reformed Central Dramaturgy and Film Council decided to start a thorough screening of all Creative Collectives. The screening did not end until 1951. “The audit, according to Director General Oldrich Machacek, revealed a low production rate of the collectives, submission of unfinished or “immature” screenplays, “unhealthy friendliness and cronyism” and “selfish economic interests” (charging cash fees for obviously unworkable synopses, short tales and screenplays).”¹⁰

Eighteen feature films were produced in 1950. The Communist ideology was already strong and omnipresent. Film was expected to exclusively serve propaganda needs.

This could lead to an assumption that all 18 films were Building drama. Surprisingly, there was no clear Building drama shot in 1950, no matter how illogical it may seem. The structure, topic, message and role of Building drama were taken over by the Comedy genre. The resulting new genre could be called Building comedy, but such term has never been coined. Of the eighteen produced films, six were comedies. The reason for this trend lies most likely in the fact that humor helps mediate even heavy topics. In Building comedies humor stems from family affairs, love rigmaroles and generational differences. Those are the areas allowing experiencing humanity and humanism. Using family and love affairs as settings for building topics makes the propaganda message of the film more easily digestible by the audience.

It can be said that if there is a sign of humanism in some of those six films, it is because comedy itself is a representation of humanism. Making fun of topics that people find uncomfortable, serious, painful, etc. brings some relief. And it is mutual to all human beings.

A good example of “Building comedy” is the film “It Happened in May”. The film opens and closes by picturing a parade on May 1st. The International Workers’ Day (Labor Day) was an organized public celebration of work as a crucial point of the official agenda. While the initial parade shows a worker, Sebesta, as a cranky and uninvolved member of the marching crowd, a year later Sebesta is marching happily under a banner of shock-workers and improvers. It is not just his uncomfortable shoes that bother Sebesta and make him disinterested in the opening scene. He is an old-fashioned worker who likes his tempo at work. He does not easily accept the new order with all the buzz and cheering in parades. He resents the pressure on workers to become shock-workers - meaning to voluntarily keep improving the products while significantly shortening the production time, simply because he does not believe that it is possible. In contrast, a young shock-worker, Brejcha, firmly believes that those targets can be met. He keeps motivating the other workers by proving his words. The workers soon accept him as one of them. Only Sebesta still dislikes him. Moreover, when Sebesta learns that his daughter wants to marry Brejcha, his resentment grows even stronger. The whole factory over-fulfills the plan except for Sebesta’s unit. When even Brejcha admits that there is nothing more that can be improved, Sebesta, provoked by such statement, attempts to find his own way to increase the production. A year later he marches in the parade side by side with his son-in-law Brejcha, as was mentioned above.

The story serves to assert that the Communist party has not forced anyone to do anything. The young shock-worker over-fulfills his work plan voluntarily because he is aware of the positive impact of his attitude on the whole society. He consciously helps build the new state and, using his own example, tries to motivate others to do the same. However, the reality was quite different. The director, Otakar Vavra, recalled in his autobiography that workers asked a

television crew visiting their factory not to put them on TV news and present them as shock-workers. They were afraid that their coworkers would be angry with them for being too active and pushing the standards. But Brejcha is just a film character, so he can afford to over-perform. Moreover, his relationship with Sebesta's character serves in the film's message as a parallel to the universal generational gap. The film plot implies that Sebesta appears lazy and less flexible not because he is necessarily a bad worker, which would make him a class enemy, but because he is an obstinate, ageing man with strong habits. Brejcha helps him understand and accept the new and the young without talking politics. Only the audience can read between the lines that the new and the young embody the propaganda goals.

What makes this film watchable is the performance of Jaroslav Marvan as Sebesta. Marvan is considered one of the best actors in Czech film history. He builds his character on believable and understandable human motivations and actions. Marvan presents a realistic and deep character just the way he exists in front of the camera. Marvan's Sebesta becomes a shock-worker as a result of getting provoked by Brejcha's statement, most likely because he is an ageing man whose ego has been teased rather than turning into a conscious Communist. The "ego motivation" includes the desire to be respected at work as well as in his family. Such motivations are universal human desires. They can be perceived, together with Marvan's performance, as rare representatives of humanity in this group of films.

Similar to "It Happened in May", "Karhan's Team" depicts topics of how to be innovative at work, become a shock-worker and heal the generational gap.

Two other comedies focus on work ethics and wedding issues. In the film "Mr. Racek Is Late" the main character Racek almost ruins his personal life by nearly missing his wedding due to voluntary work in mines. Conversely, in the film "Steam Above a Pot" engineer Kohout gets

his life back on the right track thanks to his wedding. The marriage saves him from drinking and being late at work, so he can help fulfill the plan.

In “Merry Duel” a young female company doctor makes a great effort to gain respect among male workers and inspire them to start some sporting activities on a regular basis. Thus she fulfills the Communist party requirements to maintain collective health and engage in sports programs.

The last comedy, “The Hen and The Sexton”, serves as a perfect example of how dangerous comedy can be in the hands of propaganda as this genre is seemingly intended for amusement only. The film uses the comedic tools for not only twisting the truth as comedic hyperbola, but for downright lying. The danger is grounded in the fact that a lie presented in a comedy is not taken seriously. The message of the film hidden beneath the comedic mask spreads its lies easily without being apparent. But a picture of the lie is already imprinted in viewers’ minds.

“The Hen and The Sexton” covers all issues of the former life in rural areas, such as the presence of a priest uncomfortable for the anti-religious Communists, villagers refusing to join collective agricultural cooperatives, denigration of large farmers, etc. Not surprisingly, a large farmer is pictured in this film as a bad character that attempts to disrupt the convenience and achievements of the agricultural cooperative. He pays the local sexton to carry out incidents of sabotage and makes it look like Tonek has done it. Tonek is not a member of the cooperative because his wife refuses to join, so he may be suspected of being the saboteur, although he is not. Local people like him and trust him.

The plot implies that the large farmer wants profit and a comfortable life (water piping) only for himself. He is portrayed as a hindrance to other people’s progress and better life. To the

contrary, the agricultural cooperative is shown as a magic place uniting all good and hard-working villagers who achieve prosperity together. They are happy, they don't begrudge each other anything because they share all goods, and they go about their daily duties singing and working and living a heavenly existence. Even when an older woman objects to working in the fields at night, saying it is against God, the idyllic world does not disappear. The woman's different opinion is presented as a clash between young and old generations and their approaches to farming rather than as a conflict between ideology and religion. Quite shockingly, it is said in a dialogue in the film: "Does anybody prohibit you from going to church? No one, right?" In addition to the unusual display of religious tolerance, the priest is shown as a modern priest who tries to convince people to join the cooperative.

The reality was very different from this picture. People who refused to join the cooperatives were sent to prison for many years and most of them were forced to hard labor in mines. Their farms and other property were expropriated. Others, who were too afraid to end up as political prisoners, sold their properties below market price under huge pressure and became employees of the cooperative. But the cooperative in the films acts like a cooperative of free farmer co-owners. Nothing like it existed in Czechoslovakia during the Communist rule. Additionally, priests were arrested or forced to collaborate with State Secret Security. People who attended church services were at least monitored and/or persecuted. No large farmers existed in 1950 any more. All large farms had already been expropriated in 1948.

The third group (Building drama) disappeared as has been mentioned before. The same happened to the fifth group (Films for children), except for the film "The Little Partisan" shot in

1950. The main character, Jenik, is a boy who defeats Germans and in the process saves a group of partisans. The film is considered a war film in expert literature.

Naturally, the previously described first group (art films) disappeared completely. Interestingly, a touch of visual art can be traced in all other groups of film. It is not to suggest that the eighteen films are masterpieces of cinematography, but some important visual changes are noticeable.

Firstly, the changes result from the extension of environments. Beside factories and fields, there are other locations such as airport for sport flying, doctor's office, motorbike race, or at least a different historical period.

Secondly, almost all the films were made as big productions, using numerous extras in crowds, copies of historical costumes, architecture and equipment, animals, cars or airplanes and exteriors. That allowed the camera to take wide shots and bring some space into the frames and visual narration.

Beside the group of comedies described above, there are four additional groups of films made in 1950, more or less thematically similar to the second group of films (film in the middle).

The first group derives thematically from "The Silent Barricade" and "Mr. Hrabetin Is Leaving". The films of this group portray the role of the Communists in war combat with the Germans and the role of the Communist Party and workers in factories at the end of the war. But whereas "Mr. Hrabetin Is Leaving" was able to convey some manifestations of humanism, "The Last Shot" contains propaganda only. The plot of the film is about Germans wanting to increase production at a steel factory even though the war is almost over. The Czech workers make subversive attempts to reduce production. One furnace is hit during a bomb attack. The workers

go home happy that the furnace won't work for the Germans. Only the Communist leader thinks of the future and stays at the plant to repair the furnace. As the frontline is approaching the town, the Germans are keen to destroy all of the furnaces, but the workers prevent them from doing it. Soon everyone happily welcomes the Soviet army and the damaged furnace is working again.

The theme of the second group of films is rooted in the topic of the film "We Want To Live". These films can be grouped in a social drama genre. The plot focuses on the social situation of workers in the past and on the history of their increasingly revolutionary attitude. The films show how badly the workers were treated, how poorly they were paid, how miserable were their life conditions, and how the socialists and first communists struggled to make things change and how they were persecuted. The stories are usually placed in a period between the end of the 19th century and World War II.

"Getting Steeled" attempts to explain some semi-twisted historical events with no mediation of humanity, in terms of perceiving humanity through art. The film tells the story of an unsuccessful strike in 1931. Some weak members of the strike, who are too hungry and poor to hold the strike, cause its failure. The film shows that even if the strike was not successful, the huge crowd of the unemployed participants explains and symbolizes a future victory for the Communist party.

"Reed Bells" and "The Case of Doctor Kovar" both convey some signs of humanity, but the film plots misuse them to show business principles as wrong and factory owners as bad characters. People are very poor in "Reed Bells". They lose their jobs. Moreover, the grocery store owner stops giving groceries on credit. Somehow, the poor and starving villagers manage to obtain a permit to open their own grocery store. A shoemaker provides his life savings to place

a first order for the store. A positive part of the film message is that even dependent poor people can stop their exploitation if they stick together. What is pure propaganda is that the plot and picturing of events and characters imply that the business principles are immoral. The grocery store owner is shown as bad and greedy just because he doesn't want to feed the whole village. The viewers never learn how business looks like in the new grocery store. The film ends. Most likely, the villagers won't have money for a next order, but the propaganda is not concerned about the lack of logic in the plot beyond the "happy" end of the story.

As much as the name of the film "New Warriors Will Arise" sounds as pure propaganda, the film carries human values such as human dignity, right to make a free decision, solidarity, self-respect, love. The cinematographic tools imply that the audience might experience some manifestations of humanity while watching the film. Once again, that is made possible by the main actor's honest performance and also because the film's plot is not violent. The story begins in 1884 when the Social-Democratic Party was prohibited and its members were sent to jail or exiled out of Prague. A former party member, tailor and journalist Budecsky, is forced to move to a small village. People first don't accept him. He cannot get a job. The situation changes when his wife arrives. The women from the village give her a job because she is handy. One tells her: "You know, every man has something. One drinks, another beats his wife, and yours is a socialist." It is a moment of female solidarity. A worker from the factory has an accident in which he loses his hand. Budecsky tries to help him by teaching his family and others to stand up for their rights. He recommends to the worker that he sue the factory. The ruling people are outraged by the idea. The poor people are also angry with Budecsky, because they are afraid he will only cause them problems. But when a caretaker rapes a young woman, the high and mighty decide to marry her to a milkman. The arrogance and hypocrisy of the wealthy and church are

too much. The poor villagers start listening to Budecsky and learning social and human ideas from him. Also, the gentle and loving relationship between Budecsky and his wife is shown to enhance the story. Otomar Krejca, who portrays Budecsky, acts practically only through his deep and gentle eyes. When he speaks, he does not preach. He does not raise his voice. He is full of understanding, love, and empathy toward other human beings. He does not talk against the masters. He only wants people to stop acting like resigned sheep and teaches them to take responsibility for themselves and for their lives even though that can mean having problems with the unsympathetic and unfair masters. There is one very touching moment in the film. An old farm helper who loves a bullock he takes care of explains to the bullock that if there is a general strike, he will not be able to come and feed it. Later he gets upset that it is not the bullock's fault being part of the large farmer's property. That is also a manifestation of humanity - to be sympathetic with an animal that is absolutely dependent and that has no understanding of people's notions such as a strike.

There is one more film worth a closer examination within this group: "The Confession". The plot starts in 1945 in a factory. There is a very good worker but it turns out that the name he uses is not his real name. Severa is suspect and has to come in front of the company's council to explain it. He confesses his life story. It is a story of a person who lived comfortably during the First Republic (between the two world wars) until he lost his small son who fell under a train. His wife died soon after the accident. He moved to another town and had another relationship but the girl left him. In the 1930s he worked in a factory where the owner made a decision to stop the production. He was not honest with the workers – he did not want to pay them. The workers discovered that the owner prepared a relocation of the factory equipment and tried to thwart his plans. They were arrested. A very long sequence of the trial with Severa takes place. He is

convicted and sentenced to ten years of labor camp prison. When the Germans took over the country they moved the prisoner to Germany to work there. After the war he made it back home under a different name – the name of a dead prison inmate. He was afraid that he would have to go back to Czech prison to finish his 10-year sentence if he revealed his identity. The company's council is moved by his story and considers him an honest person. He can stay at the factory under the new name.

The plot, which attempts to cover the whole life of one individual, can be considered a device to carry humanity in this film. A portrait of a human being's life experience such as struggle, loss, love, fear, hope or will to survive serves as a mirror to impersonal political and social events. The human being attempts to hold on to his humanity while being dragged along by the political and social events.

What is the most interesting about this film is the trial with Severa. It is an obvious parallel to the political trials that took place in those times. The director spent too much time on this part of the film. It feels as terrifying as the real trials staged with Horakova and others. That leaves an impression that the screenwriter and director are attempting to discourage the viewers from believing the trials. If that is true, that would be a certain gamble with their lives. Another explanation is that they use the trial sequence to justify the current trials as a revenge for the injustices of the past. Yet, that does not look to be the case.

The third group of the films draws inspiration from historical parables, as did "1849 Revolutionary Year".

"Darkness" is a story set in the 1720s. Jesuits, the radical Catholic priests, travel through the Czech countryside and search for forbidden books. They burn them. The gamekeeper

Machovec owns such books as a Czech Brethren (Protestant) church member. He must escape to Poland, and his children Helenka and Tomas are sent to serve a wealthy Prague family. Later Tomas manages to escape and join his father. Helenka does not leave with her brother because she is in love with the family's son Jiri. He flirts with her, but he rejects her true love and considers her a heretic. Eventually Helenka leaves the wealthy people's house as well and seeks her family. At the end she finds her brother and father safely.

The family love and cohesiveness, as well as faith, hope and bravery to protect freedom, are definitely manifestations of humanism. It is paradoxical that Communist propaganda allowed the making of a film about the Czech Brethren believers who fought for their freedom to choose a religion and beliefs. That was most likely because the Communists repeatedly pointed out a parallel between the Hussites' ideals and their own. It is claimed in the film: "Jesuits know well why they burn the Hussites' books. There is a seed of revolt against masters in there." The propaganda implied, not only in this particular case, that the Communist ideals go back as far as the Hussite Wars. The Hussites were Utraquists who wanted freedom of religion. The official religion was Roman Catholicism. The Habsburgs, seated in Vienna, did not want to grant the Czech people such a right. That led to the Hussite Wars fought for religious freedom and for the return of the Czech Kingdom's autonomy. The Czechs ultimately lost these wars in 1620. It was the most disastrous defeat in Czech history, which had the cruelest impact on the Czechs' national sense of self. The intelligentsia and aristocracy were executed or sent into exile. The Communist propaganda in the film makes the aristocracy and bourgeoisie responsible for the lost wars because the aristocracy was not united.

At the end of the film, there is one more universal human truth portrayed. It is demonstrated that the tools and methods of those who are taking over the power never change.

There are pictured children singing new proper songs with Jesuits while inappropriate books are burned and statues replaced. Such pictures show that the totalitarian regime is the same regardless of what ideology it is based on. This film could also be considered as mirroring the crimes committed by the Communists, but in fact the propagandists dictated a different interpretation and use.

The fourth and last group of films is two films of the detective/spy genre. “In The Penalty Area” is a regular detective story based on murder and fraud. It does not comprise any other layers. It does not even convey any ideology during the whole film. Only at the very end there is an image of a flyer placed in the briefcase with stolen money that opposes Integrated Sport and Physical education promoted by the Communists, which undoubtedly testifies to the thief’s bad character.

“The Trap” would be an ordinary spy movie if there were spies instead of regular Czech people who worked against the Germans in the resistance movement. The film shows the courage and loyalty of Czechs during the war. It is easy to identify with Ruzena because she is a Czech patriot defending the Czech country against the Germans. Thus she is definitely an embodiment of humanism and humanity fighting inhumanity.

There is one very strong human moment at the end of the film. The main character, Ruzena, shoots the actress who works for the Germans and is supposed to bring Ruzena to the Gestapo. Ruzena is horrified by the fact that she killed a person – she took the life of another human being. The comforting words of her friend that the Germans kill many more Czech people don’t help relieve her sense of guilt.

It can be said that the propaganda in films focused rather on universal stories and genre structures and attempted to produce films somehow appealing to the audience while keeping the major role of the ideology and its goals.

1951

The discovery of systemic dysfunctions during the audit of the Creative Collectives that almost caused the industry to collapse led to more changes in 1951. The Central Dramaturgy and Creative Collectives were dissolved. 108 of 120 writers who were hired between 1948 and 1950 for ideological reasons were dismissed. A new and sole controlling body, the Collective Management, was established. It contained five members who had to decide unanimously about all aspects of filmmaking from treatment, screenplay, cast and choice of director to the finished movie. In other words, they collectively decided about both artistic and economic aspects of filmmaking.

The main problem of the nationalized and centralized Czechoslovak film industry was that the Communists made an effort to apply heavy industry management and methods, such as a 5-year plan. Simultaneously, systemic changes were implemented almost every year between 1948 and 1951. The duration of film production from a treatment to a final film was around two years. The productivity of the system was thus very low. Still, the Collective Management system was retained until the end of 1953. Then it was replaced by gradual decentralization.

Due to the financial problems, as well as additional problems relating to the topic selection and approval process, only seven films were produced in 1951. Four of them were made in the spirit of the film groups established in 1950.

Only one film, “Action B”, was made within the fourth group (detective/spy films), but it introduces a new phenomenon that will grow even stronger across the genres in the following years. It is a phenomenon of spreading paranoia to evoke fear for life in people as well as

slandering and accusing western countries and the USA of everything. This message is not hidden between lines; to the contrary, it is openly articulated within the dialogues and actions.

“The Murderer’s Gorge” meets two criteria of its group – i.e. the first group (war films). This film deals once again with the topic of collaboration with the Germans, but it does so from a different perspective. The perspective itself is a sign of humanity. It can be compared with a Greek drama. The film tells a story of a father who helps people hide from the Germans while his son collaborates with them reporting the wanted persons. When the father learns the truth, he brings his son onto an old rope ladder knowing that it will fall down under their weight. To save his honor, the father commits his suicide and his son’s murder together.

“The Pike in a Fish Pond” is a clear Building comedy not deviating from the genre. Similarly, “Mikolas Ales” as a representative of the third group (Historical parables) fulfills the criteria of the group. “Mikolas Ales” is a biographical film about a famous Czech painter. As such, the film conveys numerous manifestations of humanism, such as Ales’s relationship with his wife or a scene where Ales forgives his old rival in art for his unfair behavior. The only flaw of the film is that propaganda makes Ales look like a victim of the bourgeoisie class that, unlike the common people, was not able to recognize Ales’s talent.

Interestingly, there was no film made fitting the second group (Social drama films from the recent history).

After a yearlong break, Building drama re-emerged. The topics remained the same as notoriously known: joining an agricultural cooperative, fulfilling a plan and dealing with saboteurs. What changed was the rhetoric and message of the genre. It was closely connected to the genre of spy movies. Those two types of films stopped being dumb and naïve and got radical.

In the Building drama, the saboteurs are no longer a threat just to the equipment and results of the hard work; in addition, they become a threat to people's lives. The death of innocent people, even children, starts being present on screen. As was mentioned above, it was intended to spread fear. Additionally it probably served to justify the political trials. In 1951, Slansky was arrested and Horakova was already executed. The films of these two manipulative genres share the absolute lack of humanity and humanism while spreading paranoia, fear, stupidity and lies.

“The Emperor's Baker – The Baker's Emperor” is a film not fitting any of the defined groups. It is a pure comedy free of any ideology, political or other. Additionally, the story is set in Prague Castle of Rudolf II in the 16th century. Thus the film uses all visual aspects, such as costumes, props, or set pieces to please the eyes. In this way the film provides a welcome contrast to the previous films.

The story is based on exchanged identity of the emperor and the baker. One actor, Jan Werich, plays both characters. Werich was one of the few kings of comedy in Czechoslovakia. He was popular regardless of the time and political situation. He ran a theatre that was prohibited first by the Germans and later by the Communist party. Significantly, both regimes closed the theater because of the same play. Werich's personality and performance is always a guarantee of experiencing humanism and humor. Most likely, that is why “The Emperor's Baker – The Baker's Emperor” has been popular and screened up to this day. In spite of some reproving comments that the end of the film, where Golem and his power are used for baking bread for all people in the kingdom, serves the propaganda values, it must be said that such a small touch of socialist ideas is nothing to endanger humanism, unlike the previous group of films.

1952 and 1953

The results of filmmaking in 1952 and 1953 were practically identical. Sixteen films were made in 1952 and eleven films in 1953. The groups of film were the same as established in 1950 and extended and shaped in 1951. That means that there were six groups of films - War film, Social drama (recent history), Historical parable, Detective/Spy movies, Building comedy and Building drama.

The themes, plots, characters, environments, problems, messages, ideological impact or rhetoric remain the same according to the relevant group. The paranoia and radical aggression become more prominent, notably in Building drama and Spy movies, compared to 1951.

One film particularly targeted at children was produced in 1952 called "The End of Ghosts". It features two brothers around 10 years old. The other classmates do not accept them because they fail to fulfill the tasks required by Little Pioneers, such as collecting scrap paper and bringing it to school. The class does not win a scrap paper collection competition due to the brothers' irresponsibility. First, the Little Pioneers do not accept the brothers into the group as a punishment. (Little Pioneers was an organization serving to unite and ideologically educate youth and children in the former Czechoslovakia. Later, it became compulsory to join the organization.) Eventually, the brothers are accepted and cherished for catching a German spy who stole a plan for making steel glass from the nearby factory.

The film is awful in that the propaganda tools directly target children who are more vulnerable. Moreover, children of such age knew only the world created by the Communists and could not compare the presented truth with another reality. That is why this film can be considered as a brainwashing tool, and that is far away from any manifestation of humanity or humanism.

Although it was a tough time for any reflection of humanity and humanism, there were exceptions from the defined film groups in the two years that carried a big dose of humanism.

One was a fairy tale “The Proud Princess” made in 1952, followed by two stories made in 1953, “A Tailor’s Tale” and “Moon Over the River”.

The film “Moon Over the River” is uniquely without any sign of ideology, political or propaganda rhetoric. It is a pure story about an important human moment. Two aging former friends are visiting each other on the occasion of their class reunion. The arriving friend sees the town of their studies for the first time in many years, while the other friend has been living there the whole time. They reminisce about their youth. They compare their respective current situations with the ideas about their future they shared in school. Their almost adult children, who are at the beginning of their own life journey, are the witnesses of the men’s life review. There are many moving moments in the film.

“A Tailor’s Tale” is a touching story about a retired man who lives alone. He visits the memorial of his son, who died during the war, and places there a flower arrangement. He feels very lonely and does not want to end up on a bench in a park like other men of his age. He starts working in a tailor’s shop. Although the boss gives him only repair jobs, believing that the man is too old to work fast on regular orders, the man is happy there because he spends his time around young and friendly people. The younger coworkers love him and he helps them with sewing for the regular orders, since he is quite experienced. When the whole group gets an offer to start a new tailor’s shop in a different city, the old man refuses to go with them, even though they want him as their boss. He does not want to leave his son’s memorial. One day, he sees a nice girl placing flowers on the memorial, too. He understands that she will take care of the memorial and joins his friends and coworkers in the different city. He is not lonely any more.

CONCLUSION

The most confusing issue about the representations of humanity and humanism in the Czechoslovak cinema between 1949 and 1953 consists of the crucial contradiction within the Communist ideology, as it was the superior influencer of filmmaking during this period.

While the official rhetoric used all elementary humanist values, such as love, friendship, solidarity, help, empathy, fairness, mercy, happiness, absence of hunger, fear, life threat, etc., to present the Communist Party as a carrier of such values, the Party's activities absolutely differed. It can be said that the reality was 180 degrees different from the proclaimed slogans. If someone acted in line with the demands of the Party and according to its expectations, that person was safe but never experienced the manifestations of humanity as promised. If someone did not act according to those expectations or even against them, that person was severely punished; indeed some were liquidated. Even in the film stories it can be sensed that the humanist values are used to motivate and push people to help implement the Communist Party's plans for achieving its goals.

As a result, a devaluation of values naturally occurred within the society. Efforts to remedy the consequences of 45 years of the resultant schizophrenic atmosphere have continued until today. The proclaimed terms and phrases like solidarity, help, hard work, happiness from good work, etc. were abused for such a long time and in such intensity that they became only empty words.

Similarly, the films based exclusively on the ideology and its official rhetoric and not incorporating any other artistic method but Social Realism, such as Building drama or Building

comedy, are only grey ghosts next to the limitless possibilities of more broadly based films; possibilities measured in terms of capturing and carrying humanism and humanity. Instead, the “grey ghost” films mediate pretended or abused manifestations of humanity to create a false and lying picture of reality. In other words, the problem is not in the absence of humanity or humanism, but in the way the Communist ideology abuses them. At the end of that path the only thing remaining is an empty motto on a monochrome poster. Such shallow messages can’t reach into the hearts of the audience; they can only offend its real humanism.

Fortunately, the practice was not the only reflection of humanity and humanism within the film production of the period. As this thesis has evidenced, there were also honest representations of humanism and humanity in spite of the presence of ideology in the film, or even in its absence, although the last mentioned films were clearly in the minority.

The tools which mediated the experience of humanity or humanism in the films were at least one or more of the following – topic, plot, characters, characters’ motivations, message, cinematography, and actors’ performances. The last tool proved to be the most important one. Actors like Marvan or Werich were able to create and deliver to the audience a believable and human character the viewers could identify or sympathize with even if the story and/or the message of the film was far from being considered a manifestation of humanism.

Interestingly, it can be said that the more ideological films became, the more radical deeper films conveying humanism seemed. For example, no film completely free of ideology was produced in 1950, but these ideological films were not so radical, aggressive and violent yet. It was not until 1952 and 1953 that radicalism and violence became more prevalent in films aimed to deliver the Party’s ideology, but as this occurred, more ideology-free film(s) began to

emerge as a rare island of comforting humanism within the darkness.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Szcepanik, Petr. “Machři a Diletanti.” *Naplanovaná kinematografie*. (Praha: Academia, 2012)

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Kopecký, Václav. “A Report on Education and Culture.” *Protokol IX. radného sjezdu komunistické strany Československa*. (Praha: Ústřední Výbor KSČ, 1949)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Szcepanik, Petr. “Machři a Diletanti.” *Naplanovaná kinematografie*. (Praha: Academia, 2012)

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