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**FILM IN THE 1940s – 1960s IN THE USA AND
CZECHOSLOVAKIA**

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci zpracovala samostatně, za použití uvedené literatury a přispění vedoucího bakalářské práce.

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Abstract

This work deals with films made in the 1940s – 1960s in Czechoslovakia and the USA. It is concerned with the historic events during this period of time. Moreover, it describes the political background in the USA and Czechoslovakia at that time in order to find out if it influenced the film industry. This thesis focuses on a brief description of film genres during the 1940s – 1960s. Furthermore, it mentions the most famous actors, actresses and directors who became symbols of their time and it also provides research in form of a questionnaire which shows if university students are interested in the films from this period of time.

Key words: film industry, 1940s – 1960s, actors, directors, history, the USA, Czechoslovakia, genres of films.

Abstrakt

Tato práce se zabývá filmy vytvořenými v Československu a USA ve 40. – 60. letech 20. století. Zaměřuje se také s historickými událostmi této doby. Dále popisuje politické pozadí USA a Československa za účelem zjistit, zda ovlivnilo filmový průmysl. Tato práce poskytuje krátký popis filmových žánrů ve 40. – 60. letech 20. století. Dále zmiňuje nejznámější herce, herečky a režiséry, kteří se stali symboly své doby, a také zaměřuje na výzkum ve formě dotazníku, který ukazuje, zda se studenti na univerzitách zajímají o filmy z této doby.

Klíčová slova: filmový průmysl, 40. – 60. léta 20. století, herci, režiséři, historie, USA, Československo, filmové žánry.

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1 Introduction

This thesis deals with films in the 1940s – 1960s in the USA and Czechoslovakia. The topic was chosen because the author likes black and white films from this period as well as Czech prominent personalities during the Second World War and the way their lives were influenced by historical and political events. It is also interesting to observe how their career was affected by the new regime in the 1950s. Moreover, the author had a strong desire to learn more about American film in the 1940s – 1960s.

To begin with, the period of the 1940s in Czechoslovakia was very insecure due to the beginning of the Second World War. Similarly, Americans did not experience a better situation since they were recovering from the Depression during the 1940s.

As a matter of fact, the period of the 1950s meant the start of the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union. At the same time, Europe was regenerating from the Second World War. Communist parties were gaining power especially in Central and East Europe. The regime in Czechoslovakia was strict and cruel to people who protested against the government and fought for freedom.

In the 1960s Czechoslovakia remained under the rule of communists. On top of that, in 1968, Soviet army invaded Czechoslovakia in order to protect the regime and prevent counter-revolution.

The above-mentioned historic events bring us to a question whether they influenced films, genres, contents of films, lives of actors, actresses and directors at that time or not.

The topic of the thesis is still up-to-date owing to the fact that it is possible to watch films from this period on various TV channels every week. In fact, they help us understand the history of these countries. Moreover, they show their viewers the clothing, lifestyles and habits of that time.

The aim of this work is to briefly introduce genres, actors, directors of American and Czech films during the 1940s – 1960s as well as to examine what the most favourite genres in the 1940s – 1960s in Czechoslovakia and in the USA were, whether films reflected the political situation in Czechoslovakia and in the USA during the 1940s – 1960s and to find out if university students are interested in films made in the 1940s – 1960s.

This thesis is divided into four sections. The first section is the introduction, which informs about the topic of this thesis and describes its aims. At the beginning of the second section, there is a brief explanation of the term *film* and its short history. In fact, it also comprises a description of the political situation in the 1940s – 1960s, and explains what the most favourite genres in the 1940s – 1960s in Czechoslovakia and in the USA were, and whether films reflected the political situation in Czechoslovakia and in the USA during the 1940s – 1960s. The third section provides research in form of a questionnaire and shows if university students are interested in these films. Finally, the conclusion of this thesis is presented in the fourth section.

2 Film and its beginning

To start with, this chapter clarifies the term *film* and describes its beginning. Furthermore, it provides a brief introduction of the political background in Czechoslovakia and the USA. Apart from that, it focuses on the film genres and publicly known personalities connected with film industries between the 1940s – 1960s.

In fact, not only is film an instrument of entertainment but also one of the most powerful instruments that can influence a great number of people as it can be presented all over the world on televisions or in cinemas.

The history of film commences in the late 19th century, at the time of great inventions. Also, these days meant the end of the Great Industrial Revolution, which started in the previous century and culminated in the second half of the 19th century. Film symbolised one of the inventions that changed the world as well as Alexander G. Bell's telephone (1876) and Thomas A. Edison's electric lamp (1880). In addition, they changed lives of people, reduced barriers in communication and made life easier.

The invention of film was a long complicated process. "The technology of the motion picture came about through an accumulation of contributions. These came primarily from the United States, Germany, England, and France" (Bordwell and Thompson 7).

The first film attempts took place in France. The Lumière brothers are considered to be one of the first founders of film. "They invented a projection system that helped make the cinema a commercially viable enterprise internationally. Their family was the biggest European manufacturer of photographic plates. (...) Soon they had designed an elegant little camera, the Cinématographe, which used 35mm film" (Bordwell and Thompson 9). In 1895, their first film

was released in Paris. Cafés and theatres were places, where people sought entertainment. For that reason their first film called *Workers Leaving the Factory* was screened in Grand Café (Bordwell and Thompson 9). Their work was presented abroad and on 15th July 1896 “the first Lumière screening in Czechoslovakia takes place in the Casino in Karlovy Vary” (Bordwell and Thompson 15). Between 1896 and 1897, their program was seen in Europe, South America and in Asia (Bordwell and Thompson 15).

The epoch of Czech film began at the end of the 19th century. As a matter of fact, the very first Czech film was introduced by Jan Kříženecký in the second half of the 19th century. One of his first films was called *Dostaveníčko v mlýnici (Date in a Mill)*. Furthermore, the films by Kříženecký were made with the help of Lumière’s invention. One of its protagonists was Josef Šváb-Malostranský, who worked with Kříženecký on other films as well (Bartošek 26 – 33).

The era of American film started “after the first New York presentation of Edison’s Vitascope in April 1896, film exhibition spread rapidly across the country” (Bordwell and Thompson 20). In fact, vitascope was a film projector. Moreover, American films in the 1920s were without sound. They gained popularity abroad owing to the fact that viewers did not need a language to understand. Films were based on visual experience which entertained them and that is the reason why viewers all over the world loved watching Hollywood stars (O’Callaghan 94).

To sum up, this chapter focused on the first film attempts which took place on the turn of the 19th century. Since then the invention of film is understood as a significant landmark in history because that movies can influence people around the world. Furthermore, the main founders of cinematography were introduced.

2.1. Political background in Czechoslovakia during the 1940s – 1960s

To begin with, this chapter presents the political situation in Czechoslovakia during the 1940s – 1960s. It also tries to give a short description of three decades in Czechoslovakia in order to point out historic events and conditions under which films were created.

First of all, the social and political situation in the 1940s – 1960s in Czechoslovakia was full of changes, fear and insecurity due to the Second World War. During the 1930s – 1940s, a German dictator Adolf Hitler influenced most of Europe with his anti-Semitism politics. In May 1945, Germany was defeated by the Western Allies. As a consequence, Czechoslovakia got rid of the German power in that year. After the Second World War, new political parties were established. One of them was the Communist party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). On one hand, it became the most powerful one, won the election in 1946 and gained over one million members (Kuklík and Kuklík 130). The nation expected that this political party would bring wealth to the country. In the second half of the 1940s, the degree of unemployment was high and people suffered from lack of food, clothes, etc. On the other hand, at the beginning of 1948, non-communist parties showed their disagreement with several investigations of political affairs and protested against the increasing power of the Communist party of Czechoslovakia in the National Security Corps. In fact, nobody reacted to these protests and therefore ministers from non-communist parties handed in their resignation. It was supposed that the president would not accept it yet he was worried about the possibility of Soviet invasion or civil war and as a result he accepted the resignation (Kuklík and Kuklík 130 – 133), which meant the end of democratic power in Czechoslovakia.

During the 1950s, the KSČ accepted neither critic nor protests. As a matter of fact, it controlled security, army, international policy and jurist diction. The press and radio “became a mere propaganda instrument of the new power” (Kuklík and Kuklík 144, as translated by Simona Matějčková). Moreover, the aim of the party was to raise fear in the country and to persecute not only dissidents but also their own members in order to increase its power. Books, television, the educational system were controlled and censored as well as Czech culture.

Nonetheless, at the beginning of the 1960s, people and various institutions wanted an agricultural reform of the system which would improve people’s lives. Surprisingly, censorship in press, on TV and radio was abandoned. The country and its state organs underwent changes which led to more freedom. Furthermore, many institutions were freed from the political power of the KSČ. These events disturbed the Soviet Union and on 20th August 1968, it invaded Czechoslovakia in order to suppress changes which might lead to democracy (Kuklík and Kuklík 177).

2.1.1. Film in the 1940s

As far as the film in the 1940s in Czechoslovakia is concerned, this chapter introduces the political situation which film industry had to face. Then it is concerned with popular genres and film personalities in this period of time.

Czech film suffered since Germans took over both the Barrandov studios and the Hostivař studios. “The number of Czech film premieres declined from 41 in 1939 to 9 in 1944” (Dvořáková and Horníček 67, as translated by Simona Matějčková). The German regime introduced censorship which prohibited 113 Czech films from 1939 to 1944. Despite this, during the Second World War

the attendance of cinemas rapidly increased. People wanted to get away from the terrifying reality. Czech viewers preferred Czech films to German ones (Dvořáková and Horníček 67 – 68). Additionally, Germans were persuading Czech filmmakers to work for German cinematography. As a matter of fact, no one dared to refuse since the consequences could have been extremely dangerous.

With regard to this political situation, many great actors and directors were forced to leave the country because of their Jewish origin: Hugo Haas, Jiří Voskovec, Jan Werich, Jaroslav Ježek and many others.

It might seem that Czech cinematography did not reach high quality under many strict laws, restrictions, censorship but the opposite appears to be true: the filmmakers stressed quality of preparation for a particular film and thus they created intelligent and humorous films (Dvořáková and Horníček 69 – 70).

The main genres included comedies, films with patriotic themes and films for children.

Comedies were by far the most popular genre with the audience which needed to relax and forget at least for an hour or so about reality. That is why they were not intellectually demanding. In fact, they were intended for the middle class and were based on parody, irony and black humour. The main protagonists were often rich owners of factories who had no real problems. The most famous actor, who usually enacted this type of character, was Oldřich Nový. His popularity increased after a film called *Kristián (Kristian)* (1939) directed by Martin Frič. Frič worked with Nový on other films such as *Hotel Modrá Hvězda (The Blue Star Hotel)* (1941) and *Roztomilý člověk (A Charming Man)* (1941) (Hudec and Novobilská 278 – 279). Nový was not the only cause why these films were perceived by the audience with great enthusiasm. Nataša Gollová appeared in them

beside Nový, added her charm and her excellent acting talent. Nový and Gollová created a couple which brought success to these films. Also, *Příteľkyně pana ministra* (*A Girlfriend of the Minister*) (1940) was popular because of beautiful and talented Adina Mandlová: she enacted a poor secretary, who fell in love with the owner of the company she was working for. The owner was played by Oldřich Nový. Furthermore, *Zlaté dno* (*Skill of Gold*) (1942) was a comedy made by Vladimír Slavínský, who elaborated every shot in his films and preferred working in ateliers, where his work would not be disturbed (Formáčeková and Kabátová 124 – 127).

Films with patriotic themes were based on various well-known books by Czech authors and important historic events. Their goal was to raise awareness of national history and celebrate Czech famous personalities as well traditions. *To byl český muzikant* (*That Was a Czech Musician*) (1940) and *Advokát chudých* (*Lawyer of the Poor*) (1941) are typical representatives of this genre (Dvořáková and Horníček 67 – 81).

Films for children started to be made in the 1930s and 1940s. The first one named *Ztratila se Bílá paní* (*The White Lady Is Lost*) (1937). “This film tells an adventure story of five boys from a village who decided to find a stolen picture of White Lady and its thieves” (Kovaříková 357, as translated by Simona Matějíčková). In addition, Václav Krška made a lyrical comedy *Kluci na řece* (*Boys and the River*) (1944) (Kovaříková 357).

Actors who wanted to work had to change their names, thus Zita Kabátová changed into Zitta von Buchlow, Nataša Gollová became Adu Goll, Martin Frič was Martin Fritsch (Motl 131).

The early 1940s were in token of the above mentioned actors and many others yet as a result of the political situation, all actors who had a connection to Jews were persecuted. For instance, Adina

Mandlová became a target of the regime. “The attacks of the fascist press are the worst. They always remind her of her beginnings, recent times, all her Jewish and half Jewish friends and lovers. They publicly call her a white Jewess and doubt her accomplishments and publicly proclaim that her surname sounds very Jewish” (Tabášek 54, as translated by Simona Matějčíková). As a consequence of all accusations, Mandlová tried to kill herself (Tabášek 54). Her desperate act does not only show her situation, but also the condition of many people living in this terrifying time.

The second half of the 1940s did not appear to be better for filmmakers, actors and all the people who were popular during the war. The new regime wanted to punish everybody who had something in common with the Nazis. Consequently, in 1945, Adina Mandlová was arrested and accused of collaboration. Although, it was proved that she was hiding Vladimír Šmeral from the Nazis, it was not taken into consideration. In the end, she was sentenced to pay a 100 000 Kč fine and to be publicly rebuked (Tabášek 87 – 131). This was not the only example of revenge to known people for their achievements during the war period.

In order to summarize this decade in the Czech film, it is essential to highlight that the 1940s meant radical changes. Firstly, the Second World War forced the Jewish filmmakers to emigrate and many great talents spread all over the world. Secondly, the era of the new regime in the second half of the 1940s did not create better conditions for film industry either. Owing to the significant turnovers in the politics, it is necessary to divide the decade into two periods.

The first period lasted from 1940 – 1945 and at this time, films were censored by the Nazis. Nonetheless, directors worked on many movies and the most popular genre was comedy due to its humour, which was needed during the war. Other popular genres included films with patriotic themes and films for children.

The second period is characterized by the rise of communism in 1945 – 1949. The new regime accused publicly known people during the war of collaboration and many other deeds. In fact, most of these imputations were made up in order to satisfy the nation which was very angry after the war.

2.1.2. Film in the 1950s

As for the film in the 1950s in Czechoslovakia, this chapter draws attention to the political situation which had an impact on film industry. Then it points out the most popular genres, successful actors and directors.

The 1950s were considered to be the decline of culture, art and science in Czechoslovakia. On top of that, films were used as an instrument of communist propaganda. Scripts for films had to be examined so as not to express anything against the regime. Moreover, they had to have a didactic message. The number of released films increased, yet their quality worsened (Bilík 100). Only a few filmmakers and actors were allowed to work. Their working-class origin was one of the requirements they had to meet in order to have a job. Simultaneously, there was a desperate need to enrich the cinematography by new people.

The main genres included comedies, films for children, historical films, and cartoons.

Dovolená s Andělem (Vacation with Angel) (1952) and *Anděl na horách (Angel in the Mountains)* (1955) were films where Jaroslav Marvan played the main role of a rude and unsatisfied inspector. In fact, these films were directed by Bořivoj Zeman, who experienced great accomplishments during the 1950s. The ideologist cliché was a part of films *Císařův pekař* and *Pekařův císař (The Emperor and the Golem)* (1951). The viewers were taken into the century of Rudolf II.

It was Jan Werich who enacted the main role (Hudec and Novobilská 282 – 284). In addition, the songs of the films are based on communist ideology and celebrate the working class.

Films for children were made by directors like Bořivoj Zeman and Karel Zeman. The former's first film was *Pyšná princezna* (*The Proud Princess*) (1952). The role of the king played by Stanislav Neumann symbolized the end of capitalism. *Byl jednou jeden král* (*Once Upon a Time There Lived a King*) (1954) is based on two outstanding actors who played the main characters: Jan Werich and Vlasta Burian. As a matter of fact, it was inspired by Božena Němcová's fairytale called *Sůl nad zlato* (*The Salt Prince*). The film adaptation of Drda's stage play *Hrátky s čertem* (*Playing with the Devil*) (1956) was popular thanks to actors like František Filipovský and Jaroslav Vojta (Šidláková 341 – 342). Furthermore, Karel Zeman introduced his technically demanding film for children *Cesta do pravěku* (*Journey to the Beginning of Time*) (1955). In fact, it is an adventure story about a group of boys who went back in time and met prehistoric animals, experienced various adventures and learnt in an attractive way about the history of the Earth, animals and plants (Bilík 116). *Princezna se zlatou hvězdou na čele* (*The Princess with a Golden Star on Her Forehead*) (1959) is a film which never grows old and is popular even now. It is written in verses and accompanied by nice songs. However, it is a typical example of a traditional fairytale where a princess is rescued by a prince from a terrifying king who wants to marry her.

As a matter of fact, the history of Czechoslovakia was falsified or edited in order to create films which would glorify the working class. *Anna Proletářka* (*Anna the Proletarian*) (1952), *Jan Hus* (*John Hus*) and *Jan Žižka* (*John Zizka*) are historical films which celebrate the history of the nation. *Tanková Brigáda* (*The Tanks Brigade*) (1955) is a film which shows falsification of history. Furthermore, Jiří

Weiss directed a film based on Otčenášek's novel called *Romeo, Julie a tma (Romeo, Juliet and Darkness)* (1959) (Bilík 87 – 130). It takes place during time when all Jews were being transported to concentration camps. This story introduces love of two people in the time of fear and insecurity: a Jewish girl is being protected by a boy Pavel, who hides her from the transport. It became popular.

In the 1950s, cartoons were made; they remain popular even nowadays. For example, Zdeněk Miller created *Jak krtek ke kalhotkám přišel (How the Mole Got His Pants)* (1957). Its main protagonist is a groundhog, which makes sounds and gestures like children in order to simulate children's behaviour (Polenská 402).

To sum up, the 1950s stand for communist propaganda that was presented in all media. On one hand, the number of released films was rather high but on the other hand, the quality declined because of the ambition to create movies in favour of communism.

The genres comprised comedies, films for children, historical films, and cartoons. All the released films underwent elaborate examinations and were censored. Also, the aim of the regime was to produce films celebrating working class people and the Czechoslovak history. In other words, the historical films served the needs of the government: they displayed famous personalities and events which should restore the national pride. However, they did not mind falsifying history in order to fulfil the function of this genre. Furthermore, some of the comedies offered humour but it was always accompanied by a touch of propaganda. A genre which was not fully freed from oppression of communist propaganda yet it tried to keep its quality, was the film for children. Cartoons were considered as a new genre which slowly developed in the 1950s.

2.1.3. Film in the 1960s

With regard to the film in the 1960s, this chapter makes reference to the political situation which the film industry encountered. Then the typical film genres and personalities of the 1960s are presented.

Czech film underwent significant changes in the 1960s: people who were not actors appeared in films, black and white material was used, directors participated more on the script. Besides, the didactic message disappeared from the films and the support of the communism also passed out of sight. These particular features appeared in films made by Chytilová, Forman, Menzel and many others (Bilík 121 – 122). This period is called the New wave.

The topics of films changed from obligatory optimism into scepticism (Ptáček 134). The 1960s meant a great variety of genres. The most popular were comedies, historical films, films for children, cartoon, and documentary.

Černý Petr (Black Peter) (1963), *Lásky jedné plavovlásky* (1965) (*Loves of a Blonde*) and *Hoří, má panenko (The Firemen's Ball)* (1967) are films directed by Miloš Forman. *Černý Petr (Black Peter)* tells a story about students who want to be respected by adults. *Hoří, má panenko (The Firemen's Ball)* is a comedy about firemen's ball which stands for the whole society. The organizers (firemen) represent stupidity which leads them into many embarrassing situations (Ptáček 147 – 148). *Bílá paní (White Lady)* (1965) is a film realized by Zdeněk Podskalský and based on Karel Michal's short story. The film displays a critique against bureaucracy. The main role was enacted by Irena Kačírková. *Starci na chmelu (The Hop Pickers)* (1964) represents the first Czech film musical with comedian features. It is built on a love story and accompanied by topics such as an individual relationship to society (Hudec and Novobilská 288 – 289).

Although, there were not many historical films made during the 1960s, their quality improved. *Ďáblova past (Devil's Trap)* (1961), directed by František Vlácil, took its viewers into the 18th century and told the story of free millers. It avoided the social point of view but concentrated on personal experience. In addition, *Markéta Lazarová (Mareta Lazarova)* (1967), inspired by Vladislav Vančura's novel, did not express the superficial and objective view of history since it focused on subjective narration. All parts of the film including music, speech, picture, etc. were used in order to evoke emotions (Hudec and Václavková 322 – 323).

“The free political atmosphere of the 1960s provided space for a change” (Šidláková 339, as translated by Simona Matějčíková). The films for children were not influenced by the political regime. *Tři zlaté vlasy děda Vševeda (Three Golden Hairs of Grandfather Vseved)* (1963) represent a ballad film which was not received by the audience with enthusiasm. Nonetheless, Bořivoj Zeman gained popularity with his film *Šíleně smutná princezna (The Incredibly Sad Princess)* (1968) (Šidláková 339). Its success was achieved by a great cast of characters, melodic songs and plot.

The cartoon in the 1960s is represented by *Pojďte, pane, budeme si hrát (Sir, Come, We Will Play)* (1965 – 1967). Břetislav Pojar created two bears that met near Kolín and got rid of the adult view of life which approached him closer to children (Polenská 407).

Documentary during the 1960s underwent significant changes. Furthermore, improvisation was used in order to bring authenticity into films (Michalská 446 – 451). The most interesting theme was the occupation of the country in 1968. *Zmatek (Chaos)* was a documentary about Prague occupation. In addition, there were shots of wounded people accompanied by the music of P.I. Čajkovský (Michalská 451). “The film records the development of August and further events which took place in Prague streets and also records the

act of Vysočanský congress” (Michalská 451, as translated by Simona Matějčíková).

To conclude, Czech film industry experienced more freedom in the 1960s and led to the creation of a new film generation, called the New wave. Besides, films were set free from political pressure and the themes of movies rapidly changed. The most popular genres included comedies, historical films, films for children, cartoon, and documentary. In addition, the quality of historical films improved since the 1950s. Films for children and cartoons met with success and differed from the previous decade since they contained neither a didactic message nor politic propaganda. A relatively new genre of documentary appeared after the occupation in 1968. Filmmakers wanted to give a view of the real social situation. It was usually accompanied by music in order not to distract the audience and keep the authenticity.

2.2. Political background in the USA during the 1940s – 1960s

In this chapter, attention is paid to the political situation in the USA during the 1940s – 1960s. What follows is a short characterization of three decades in the USA in order to introduce historic events that had an impact on conditions under which films were created.

The social and political background of the 1940s – 1960s in the USA was diverse. Furthermore, people were not interested in entertainment during the 1930s and 1940s due to the fact that they were still recovering from the economic crisis. “Between 1930 and 1945, the United States suffered a severe Depression” (Bordwell and Thompson 233). The collapse of economic stability in the USA came on 24th October in 1929. This day is called Black Thursday. However,

Americans had a high standard of living and this event meant that their lives changed completely. In fact, the amount of unemployment was extremely high. Suddenly, they were not able to pay their bills. As a result, many people committed suicide (O'Callaghan 97). As a matter of fact, this difficult financial situation influenced the economy of the USA and had a negative economic and political impact on Europe.

The Second World War started in 1939. "In 1941 the United States joined the war itself and unemployment disappeared" (O'Callaghan 103). Americans worked in factories which produced weapons for countries fighting against Hitler. The reason for joining the war was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Indeed, Japan and Germany were allies and the day after the attack the USA declared a war on Japan. "Since Germany was Japan's ally, Hitler then declared war on the United States" (O'Callaghan 105). The Second World War lasted until 1945.

In 1945, the USA was the most powerful country in the world. Its economy was getting strong. In addition, it had a huge army, navy and owned atomic bombs. The Soviet Union and the USA were fighting together against Germany during the Second World War. However, after the war their unity disappeared. Both countries were distrustful to each other. On one hand, the Soviet Union was afraid of American atomic bombs and on the other hand, the USA worried about the possibility of spreading communism by the Soviet Union (O'Callaghan 116). The friction between these two rivals did not result in an armed conflict, nevertheless the enmity, inability to cooperate, the opposing views of communism and capitalism led to the so-called Cold War.

The 1950s and 1960s were connected with the war in Vietnam. The power of communism in Vietnam was increasing and "Americans were especially afraid that communist China might try to take control

of Southeast Asia as the Soviet Union had done in eastern Europe” (O’Callaghan 125). However, Americans did not agree with it and they prepared many demonstrations against this war.

To summarize, the beginning of the 1940s was very difficult for Americans. As a matter of fact, they were recovering from the economic crisis. Yet their situation improved when the USA joined the Second World War as it meant that new jobs were offered. After the war, the USA had a strong economy and owing to the fact that it was a powerful country it experienced a conflict with the Soviet Union. In addition, it resulted in the Cold War. Since the American government was worried about the rise of communist power in Vietnam a war was declared.

2.2.1. Film in the 1940s

As for the American film in the 1940s, this chapter presents innovations in film industry (e.g. television), technical changes in movies (such as sound in films). Moreover, it refers to the Second World War in Europe which made talented people abandon their home countries and win recognition in the USA. Furthermore, attention is paid to a wide range of genres which were popular in this period of time.

During the 1940s – 1950s a new American film era started. Almost two hundred thousands of families had their own television and their life took place in a living room. Viewers could watch “comedy and game shows, stories about policemen and detectives, the adventures of fictional western heroes” (O’Callaghan 136).

The American film changed since the era of silent film. It was possible to record sound but some actors were against. One of them was Charles Chaplin, who thought that filmmakers would not be able

to control sounds in film and that is the reason why he did not see future for sound films “A simple family dinner sounded like the rush hour in a cheap restaurant, and the pouring of water into a glass made a peculiar tone that ran up the scale to high C” (Chaplin 351). However, Charles Chaplin was able to make a film without his own voice. All he needed was just music and he is widely recognized as a star of the silent film. One of his famous films was “*The Great Dictator* (1940), a comedy on the unlikely subject of Nazi Germany” (Bordwell and Thompson 248). Chaplin was worried about what was going on in Europe and wanted people to know about the situation. Although he had to face several problems with censorship while writing the story, he did not stop and Chaplin says “I was determined to go ahead, for Hitler must be laughed at.” (Chaplin 425).

As a result of the political situation in Europe, many filmmakers moved to the USA where they had better conditions for their work. One of them was Alfred Hitchcock. In fact, he won a prize for his first American film, which was called *Rebecca*, made in 1940 (Bordwell and Thompson 252).

Billy Wilder and Otto Preminger came to Hollywood from Germany. Wilder was awarded an Oscar for his film *The Lost Weekend* from the year 1945, which was based on a novel and the main theme was alcoholism. Otto Preminger was Jewish and it was necessary for him to escape from Germany. He became a famous director in the USA during the 1940s (Bordwell and Thompson 252).

As the techniques and innovations in films developed, various genres of films were introduced. Viewers were offered the following genres: musicals, screwball comedies, horror films, social problem films, film noir, war films and cartoons (Bordwell and Thompson 253).

The musical was one of the most popular genres during this period. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers gained adoration as actors and dancers. Gene Kelly was considered to be a MGM star, “whose dance style was often boisterous and athletic, as in the *Make Way for Tomorrow*” (Bordwell and Thompson 254).

Moreover, the screwball comedy is usually based on two people who are in love. This genre was well-liked between the years of 1934 –1945. The themes included unemployment and the Great Depression. As the genre developed, the themes evolved as well. Famous films were *The Lady Eve* from the year 1941 and *Ball of Fire* (Bordwell and Thompson 255).

Walked with a Zombie or *Cat People* were labelled excellent horror films. “*Cat People* (1942), the heroine is obsessed with a black leopard in the zoo and seems to have inherited a supernatural ability to transform into a killer cat” (Bordwell and Thompson 256).

The social problem film was based on events that Americans experienced. The Great Depression was a favoured theme for this kind of film until the USA declared a war on Japan. People had jobs, their standard of living improved, and the viewers were not interested in this genre anymore. The comeback of the social problem film was made after the Second World War with films such as *Gentleman’s Agreement* and *Crossfire*. Both of the films were released in 1947 (Bordwell and Thompson 257).

The Film noir “was a term applied by French critics in 1946 to a group of U.S. films made during the war and released abroad in quick succession after 1945. Noir means black or dark” (Bordwell and Thompson 258). Film noir was often considered to be a mixture of a violent gangster film and a social problem film and it appears that there is no clear barrier between genres. Additionally, it was inspired by German Expressionism and French Poetic Realism. One of the first

examples of film noir was a movie called *The Maltese Falcon* (1941). Similarly, the film *Laura* directed by Otto Preminger is yet another example of the film noir era. Its plot is centred around a detective and his murder investigation. Furthermore, Billy Wilder, originally from Germany, met with success in the film *Double Indemnity*. Both films possess similar signs such as plot connected with murder and flashbacks (Bordwell and Thompson 259).

Heroism, fear, fight, death are what characterizes the war film of 1930 – 1945. The American war film was influenced by the First World War, the Second World War and the attack on Pearl Harbor by Japanese air forces. Its example includes *They Were Expendable* (1945) (Bordwell and Thompson 260).

Cartoons reached their popularity in the 1940s. The Walt Disney Studio created *Pinocchio* and *Dumbo* in this period of time (Maltin 32 – 49). Disney's films were appreciated due to his creativity, ideas and improvement of camera, which allowed various effects. "The multiplane camera enabled the Disney staff to make their cartoons look more realistic" (Maltin 12).

In conclusion, the 1940s stood for great improvements in films such as sound in movies and various technical effects. Not only did the film industry experience a great technical development, but it was also enriched by talented Europeans, who wanted to escape the Second World War.

The most popular genres which entertained audience in the 1940s included musicals, screwball comedies, the horror films, social problem films, film noir, war films and cartoons were the most popular ones.

2.2.2. Film in the 1950s

The aim of this chapter is to outline the political situation in the USA which influenced movies in the 1950s as well as to introduce, popular genres and personalities of the American film.

The beginning of the 1950s was connected with the start of the Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union. Filmmakers who were considered to be communists left for France and England (Bordwell and Thompson 373).

Film did not experience success in the 1950s. As a matter of fact, it was the end of golden age of American movies. Grounds for their decline were connected with film export. “Many countries passed protectionist laws, establishing quotas, production subsidies, and restrictions on exporting currency” (Bordwell and Thompson 374). Other reasons for the end of the golden age are connected with the change of lifestyles: people were highly selective with films they wanted to see. “They would choose an important film – one based on a famous literary work” (Bordwell and Thompson 375).

In the early 1950s, televisions were black-and-white and not very big, thus filmmakers wanted to improve quality of films in order to get back people into cinemas. Colour films were only seen in cinemas, which was the advantage of movie theatres at the beginning of the 1950s (Bordwell and Thompson 376).

The main genres of this time comprise cartoon, comedy musical, western film, drama, and horror film.

Disney, an important representative of cartoons, reached an incredible accomplishment with his TV series as well as with his films such as *Cinderella*, released in 1950 (Maltin 93). Its main visual and emotional effects make you feel that you are a part of Cinderella’s story. “The stepmother’s face is always seen in the shadows,

particularly striking when her beady eyes are highlighted” (Maltin 96). On the other hand, *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), against all expectations of critics, was received positively. It was based on a novel written by an English author Lewis Carroll and illustrated by Sir John Tenniel (Maltin 101). It is always difficult to make a good film out of a classic novel. “The artists and animators consulted Tenniel’s work and came up with free translations of his characters, close enough to the originals to be identifiable, distinctive enough to be recognized as Disney creations” (Maltin 102).

Nevertheless, the symbol of the American comedy during the 1950s, Marilyn Monroe, started her career as a model and continued as an actress. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *How to Marry a Millionaire* are movies from 1953 in which she played a blonde who was trying to get attention of a rich man in order to marry him (Melley 95 – 97). Both films made her famous. Also thanks to them she was registered by the audience as a beautiful, funny, silly blonde with a beautiful body. However, Monroe was never unable to get rid of this label. Moreover, *Some Like It Hot* (1959) is a comedy starring Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis, who saw a crime, had to run away and met Monroe. Even though Monroe gained weight and was not in a good mental and physical condition, this film was one of the best comedies which were ever filmed (Melley 123 – 124). However, Monroe wanted to be taken seriously but “not even as president of her own film company could she find a role in which her proffered body did not determine her character and her fate” (Melley 22). The opposite of Monroe, Grace Kelly, was perceived differently by the audience and press. Not only did they admire her beauty, but they also respected her for her talent (Spencer 48). She did not get stereotyped roles as Marilyn. Grace Kelly appeared in many film genres from western films to comedy musicals such as *High Society* (1956). These actresses have in common their beauty and acting skills which made

them the symbols of Hollywood. Monroe and Kelly dictated the fashion and make-up to women all over the world.

Musical of the 1950s is represented by *Singin' in the Rain* (1951), which makes fun of Hollywood and early musicals.

John Wayne and James Stewart were stars of western films. The former was very conservative and not interested in shows on Broadway and TV series. During the 1950s he made *The Searchers* (1955), directed by J. Ford. In fact, it was one of the Ford's first movies which showed Indians not as murders but pointed out their honour, dignity and pride in being native inhabitants of America (Svoboda, *John Wayne* 3 – 26). *High Noon* is an American western film with Grace Kelly and Gary Cooper which obtained great achievement in 1952 (Svoboda, *Gary Cooper* 22).

Furthermore, Marlene Dietrich, the sex symbol since 1930s, appeared in the late 1950s in a drama called *Touch of Evil*. She was originally from Berlin but moved to the USA, where she performed in many films (Zaoralová 4 – 23).

One of the most popular horror directors was Alfred Hitchcock. “Many critics found Hitchcock's postwar work to be his finest. *Strangers on a Train* (1951) employs taut crosscutting to divide our sympathies between hero and villain” (Bordwell and Thompson 398). A mixture of comedy and thriller is represented by a film called *To Catch a Thief* (1955) starring Grace Kelly. Gary Grant appeared in this movie as well and enacted “a retired burglar who helps capture a thief who is imitating his style and bringing him under suspicion” (Eyles 39).

To summarize, the American film experienced difficult times in comparison to the previous decade owing to the fact that some talented communist filmmakers left the country. In addition, film

export declined and was not as profitable as it used to be. However, the production of movies did not stop, it just slowed down its development.

Genres, which were popular in the 1950s and included cartoon, comedy musical, western film, drama, and horror film.

2.2.3. Film in the 1960s

This chapter focuses on typical film genres and personalities of this decade in the 1960s.

In fact, famous Hollywood studios did not produce many new films at the beginning of the 1960s and that was the reason why independent production started to be successful (Bordwell and Thompson 380). One of the biggest independent firms was United Artists. Otto Preminger released “through Columbia and United artist such adaptations of best-sellers as *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), *Exodus* (1960) and *Advise and Consent* (1962)” (Bordwell and Thompson 380).

Documentary, cartoon, TV series, horror, musical, historical film, and comedy were popular film genres in the 1960s.

American film was influenced by the war in Vietnam. As a consequence, many students started to make films in order to protest against the Vietnam War (Bordwell and Thompson 643).

In addition, cartoons became an integral part of American film. Walt Disney produced *The Jungle Book* in 1967. He was not afraid to base his film on a well-known book after the success with *Alice in Wonderland*, which is considered as a good film but often criticized for absence of action. On the other hand, the film is valued for its animation effects (Maltin 255).

Hollywood had to adapt itself to television, which provided entertainment for people at home. The first film series called *Saturday Night at the Movies* was produced by NBC. “After the first few years, the Hollywood firms as corporate entities did not suffer from the competition with television. They simply adjusted by expanding their activities to encompass both entertainment media” (Bordwell and Thompson 388).

The film period of the 1960s was characterized by horrors by Alfred Hitchcock. For instance, *Psycho* (1960) became legendary since there is “an almost instantaneous change in Hitchcock’s sensibilities. Of all his films, *Psycho* is the most famous – and the most shocking for audiences” (Spoto 448). Hitchcock wanted the viewers to be undisturbed while watching this film and for this reason, no one was allowed to enter a cinema after the film had begun at his request (Spoto 456). Furthermore, Hitchcock wanted to reach the same level of success with his next film *The Birds*, sometimes called a cinematic poem due to characters several words by (e.g. “You see” or “I see”) which “are like a refrain punctuating every stanza” (Spoto 490). It was not a regular horror with great effects but in fact, it is Hitchcock’s personal fight with the fear of birds and it reflected his own life (Spoto 491).

As far as the musicals on Broadway are concerned, they were favoured by audience and film studios decided to produce films based on the most popular ones. *West Side Story* (1961) was distributed by United Artists and dealt with W. Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. *My Fair Lady* (1964) was inspired by G.B. Shaw’s novel called *Pygmalion* (Bordwell and Thompson 393). Walt Disney created *Mary Poppins* (1964), a film musical, which makes use of a combination of animation and a regular film with live actors. *Mary Poppins* is a film which does not grow old. The plot, performance of Julie Andrews, animation effects and songs created a musical film which earned \$45

million. On top of that, it won five categories in Academy Awards (Maltin 230 – 232).

Cleopatra (1963) is a historical film based on history of ancient Egypt, starring Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra.

To sum up, the 1960s were in token of independent production firms, the most successful company being United Artists.

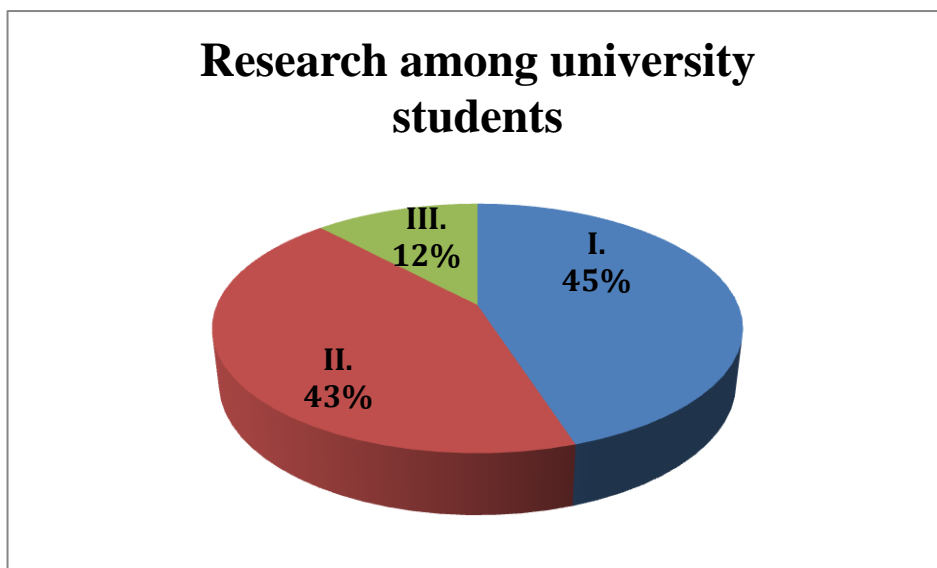
As for popular film genres, there was not a big change in comparison with the previous years. Documentary, cartoon, TV series, horror, musical, historical film, and comedy amused audience in the 1960s.

3 Research

In order to find out whether Czech university students are interested in old American and Czech films which were made in the 1940s – 1960s, quantitative research in form of a questionnaire was carried out.

249 students, studying at private and state-owned universities from various cities, between the age of 19 – 25 years were asked 15 questions concerning films, directors, actors of the above mentioned period of time.

This research shows that 45% (I.) of the students know American and Czech cinematography very well. They easily recognize famous actors, directors and various film genres between the 1940s – 1960s. Moreover, it was found out that 43% (II.) of the students are partially aware of the American and Czech films in this period of time. However, 12% (III.) of the respondents have a very limited knowledge of cinematography between the 1940s – 1960s in the USA and Czechoslovakia.



4 Conclusion

Concerning the first aim, the most popular genres during the 1940s – 1960s in Czechoslovakia were comedies, films for children, historical films and cartoon. As a matter of fact, comedy allowed people to survive difficult times and was well-liked ever since the film started. Filmmakers paid attention to children films mostly in the 1950s and 1960s. Also, historical film was a part of cinematography from the beginning and it reminded of important historic events of the nation. Cartoon was very favourite during the 1960s when *Pojďte, pane, budeme si hrát* (*Sir, Come, We Will Play*) was released.

The genres of American films during the 1940s – 1960s were wider and often overlapped one another. The most appreciated genres included horror films, cartoon, comedies and musicals. American horrors were successful due to Alfred Hitchcock. The American cartoon as we know it today was born in the studios of Walt Disney. Furthermore, musicals were brought into films from stages on Broadway and obtained popularity.

As for the second aim, the study of film history obviously proves that the movies reflected the political situation. To start with, during the 1940s, Czech film was strongly influenced by the Nazis, who took power all over the country and introduced censorship. The actors as well as filmmakers were persuaded to take part in German films and many actors agreed in order to survive. In addition, some of them had to change their names in order to sound more German. However, viewers started to go to cinemas more often since they wanted to amuse themselves and forget about the war at least for a while. The 1950s meant a change in the regime. Yet the films were under power of the regime. Censorship was an integral part of the film industry. Furthermore, communist propaganda appeared in all film

genres from movies for children to comedies. On one hand, this new regime punished actors, filmmakers and everybody who seemed to get ahead in life during the war period by accusing them of collaboration. On the other hand, the 1960s meant more freedom and for this reason more films were released. However, their quality improved and the impact of communists disappeared at least until 1968.

The political situation in the USA was not so dramatic like in Europe yet it affected the film industry during the 1940s – 1960s. Because of the Depression people were not interested in entertainment and did not go to cinemas very often. Furthermore, the political situation in Europe had an effect on the American film when Hitler gained power: Charlie Chaplin made a comedy *Great Dictator*, which laughed at Hitler. Besides, the themes of the films in the 1940s were Depression, First and Second World War as well as the attack on Pearl Harbor. Although, the American film in the 1950s was not as much influenced by the Cold War, the lives of actors and filmmakers rapidly changed. People in the film industry who considered themselves communists had to either leave the country or work under a pseudonym. The war in Vietnam became a theme of documentaries during the 1950s – 1960s.

As far as the third aim is concerned, the most significant films, actors and directors were briefly introduced.

The 1940s in Czechoslovakia were represented by Oldřich Nový, and Martin Frič. Stars of the 1950s included Jan Werich, Bořivoj Zeman and Jaroslav Marvan. Helena Vondráčková, Václav Neckář and Miloš Forman were representatives of the film during the 1960s.

In the USA, the most important people in the film industry during the 1940s comprises Charles Chaplin, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. The film in the 1950s gained its success thanks to the

comedies where the main role was enacted by Marilyn Monroe. Besides, Walt Disney released many cartoon films during the 1950s. The main star of the 1960s was Alfred Hitchcock.

The last aim of the thesis was connected with research among university students; it tried to find out whether they were interested in Czech and American films from the 1940s – 1960s or not. The result of this research proves that 45% of the respondents are familiar with American and Czech cinematography and they know most of the films, genres, actors and directors. Furthermore, 43% of the students can partly identify American and Czech films of the above mentioned period of time. However, 12% of the university students have difficulty recognizing Czech and American actors, directors, films, genres which were popular during the 1940s – 1960s.

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