

Luboš PTÁČEK

The Sudetes in Czech Cinema – a Political Space Trapped by National and Class Stereotypes*

Abstract: The theme of Czech-German co-habitation in the Sudetes, from where over two million German citizens were uprooted after the Second World War, has become one of the most politicalised themes in Czechoslovakian and then Czech cinematography.

In this study, the analyses are primarily focused on motifs linked with representation of historical and present Sudetes, and development of Czech-German relations. Concretely, it focuses on nationalistic actions, the escalation of Czech-German relations after Hitler's coming of power in Germany, conceding the Sudetes to the Reich, expelling the Germans after World War Two, the arrival of Czechs after the war, fate of ethnically-mixed families, and protection of national borders.

The aim of the study is to describe changes in the discourse of film and television representations of history in Czech society following the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 until the present day, and interpret these in the context of political changes. In particular, I will focus on the reasons which caused the deformation and silencing of historical events linked with those in the Sudetes. The analyses conducted along the diachronic axis should prove the hypothesis that changes in the representations of history and present Sudetes correspond with changes in society, and strongly present the contemporary Czech(oslovakian) position to the 20th century history.

Keyword: Sudetes, history and film, Czech-German relations, Czech cinema, ideology.

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Luboš PTÁČEK

Palacký University
lubos.ptacek@upol.cz

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Methodology

The methodology is based on representing history in film in Robert Rosenstone's books *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (1998), and *History on Film/Film on History* (2013). The author interprets history in a poststructuralist manner: classical historicists lock down history into narrative units based on ideological and political programs. Their structure does not form the objective data, but rather linguistic rules and ideology, considering history as always being just an interpretation. Postmodern history attempts to make rules of the construction more apparent, and incorporate them phenomenologically in the analyses of historians.

According to Rosenstone, visual media is a legitimate way of representation and interpretation of history. Historical film cannot be considered on the basis of comparison with written history (according to criteria of legitimacy), but as a different way to narrate the past with its own rules, similarly to re-personalisation and mediation of an emotional experience. The key element of these historical films is the relation of past to present (3). In other words, historical events are always interpreted from the point of view of the present moment.

In the chapter "Engaging the Discourse," Rosenstone analyses a chosen selection of films on the theme of the Holocaust, and explores to which extent can a selection of films, similar to a selection of written works about history, be capable of presenting a wider look on historical themes. He asks in what ways these films connect to the wider discourse, and how they should be commented on and analysed (134).

In a similar manner (interpretation of the present through reception of the past in film), I will approach history in this study, by mainly focusing on conventional historical film, as an overwhelming majority of films from Sudetes is shot in a conventional mode, which I also consider symptomatic. On a conceptual level, I will assume that ideological arguments used in deformation of history are formulated more explicitly in conventional than in art films.

History of the Sudetes

The Sudetes is the border mountain range in Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic) where, from the Middle Ages until the year 1945, prevailed a German ethnic minority (in 1930, around 3.2 million inhabitants considered themselves of German nationality) (Majewski, 217).

The first modern transformation of relations arose with the formation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 when the Germans suddenly became a repressed minority in a country they did not want to live in. The situation escalated after Hitler came to power (1933), and peaked during the signing of the Munich Agreement (1938), when the Sudetes were relegated to Germany. After the war followed a spontaneous and illegal expulsion (masked by agreements of the winning parties) based on the principle of collective guilt. The post-

war position of ethnic Germans and Hungarians was legally defined by the Benes decrees,¹ resulting in confiscation of property, loss of Czechoslovakian state citizenship, annulment of the German university and German technical colleges. Citizens of German nationality could only keep the Czechoslovakian citizenship if they proved they had never caused harm to the Czech and Slovakian state, actively participated in the fight for freedom, or had suffered under Nazi terror.

Between 1948 and 1989, the Czech closed-off borders created, alongside the Federal Republic of Germany, a part of the Iron Curtain between the eastern and western political blocs. The historical context is described by many historians, namely Adrian von Arburg (2001), and František Čapka, Lubomír Slezák, and Jaroslav Vaculík (2005). Fear of German revenge due to the expulsion was an important part of communist propaganda, similarly to the vision of a new “better” life, which should have happened after the German expulsion and communist takeover. After the repression of Prague Spring in 1968, one of the key ideological arguments became the threat of “German revanchism,” formulated in an ideologically binding text *Lessons of Crisis Development* (1988), which justified the presence of Soviet armies in Czechoslovakia and emphasised the justness of the ideological dogmata: the undeniable leading role of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) within society.

The history of the Sudetes before and after the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 is not recorded by Czech historical films; instead, a smaller group focuses on the actions in 1938 before and after the Munich Agreement.² The largest group of films (and later television series) focuses on events linked to the exile and expulsion of Germans after the end of the war, with the arrival of new settlers and security at the western border. In films shot right after the war, the past and present of the war merge, but after the war and the expulsion of the Germans, they are presented as historically definite, closed events.

The films about the Sudetes starting from 1918 until the present day can be divided according to discursive changes of history representation to the following periods:

- Films before the German annexe of the Sudetes (1938);
- Nazi films after the annexe of the Sudetes (1938–1945);
- Films justifying the expulsion of the Germans (1945–1948);
- Dogmatic communist films emphasising a class viewpoint over the nationalistic, and focusing on the ‘threat of German revanchism’ (1950s);
- Allegorical revisionist films (shot in framework of the communist system, 1960s and 1980s);
- Neo-dogmatic films (confirming, occasionally varying themes of dogmatic films, mostly films shot in the 1970s during normalisation);
- Freely revisionist films shot after 1989.

During the 1930s, several films were shot contemporarily in the Sudetes, where filmmakers chose one of two locations: wild mountainous areas and spa cities. The Czech

film from borderland mountains *Ze světa lesních samot* (*From the World of Lonely Forests*, dir. by Miroslav Josef Krňanský, 1933), linked Czech-German village melodramas shot in Czech and German versions *V cizím revíru / Der Wilderer vom Egerland* (*On A Foreign Ground*, dir. by Vladimír Majer and Walter Kolm-Veltée, 1934); *Jana / Jana, das Mädchen aus Bobmerwald / Jana, a Girl from the Bohemian Forest*, dir. by Emil Synek and Robert Land, 1935). The bilingual setting is portrayed as culturally united. An attractive spa backdrop of the town Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad) appears in a co-production Czech-German comedy *Tisíc za jednu noc / Tausend für eine Nacht* (*Thousand for One Night*, dir. By Jaroslav Svára and Max Mack, 1932); Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) appears partially in the comedy *Uličnice* (*Hoyden*, dir. by Vladimír Slavínský, 1936). German-Czech relations are not considered; they are situationally interchangeable comedies from higher societal classes, and Sudetes spas only create an attractive international background.

Between 1938 and 1945 there were no Czech films situated in the Sudetes. The cohabitation of Czechs and Germans from the perspective of a German national socialism is shown through a melodrama of a prominent pro-Hitler director Veit Harlan's *Zlaté město / Die Goldene Stadt* (*Golden City*, 1941–1942). The father of the protagonist, following the tragic death of his wife, marries a Czech servant, despite the dissuasion of German neighbours; she does in fact care only about the property. The film occurs in the Bohemian Forest, and the Czech-German Prague is portrayed as a symbol of decadent infection threatening the German people. The pregnant protagonist, who was seduced by her Czech cousin in Prague, commits suicide by drowning in a swamp. The tragic death is balanced with the effort of a German engineer, who prepares to dry the swamp and turn it into an agricultural area.

The film recorded large audience satisfaction in Germany, but was not shown in the Protectorate (*Mareš Zlá krev*). It was shot in the genre of Heimat film, which is based on a Herderian approach of national romanticism and focuses on the myth of German blood, a metaphor for German soil, and justifies the annexation of land in the east needed for the natural expansion of Germany. In an inverse perspective, Czech post-war films justify the expulsion of Germans.

The first two Czech films about the Sudetes, Jiří Weiss' *Uloupená hranice* (*The Stolen Border*, 1947) and Jiří Krejčík's *Ves v pobranici* (*The Borderland Village*, 1948), were created before the communist takeover in February 1948, and present a view of Germans in the spirit of the Benes decrees, simultaneously containing motifs and visual interpretation that defines the appearance of most films from the Sudetes until 1989.

Uloupená hranice shows the actions in the borderland right before the Munich Agreement in 1938. The film ends with acceptance of the order to leave the borderland, though the Czech units had won the previous local shootout.

The tragic fate of a German-Czech family called Langers is at the centre of the event. The children of the Czech mother and German father chose different national identifications.

Hans (Jan) actively joins malicious actions with Germans, and dies during an attack on a Czech gendarme station. Anna Marie, who is the sole survivor of the family, warns the gendarmes of her brother's action, and calls the Czechoslovakian army for help.

The film showcases “loyal Germans,” by which it argues for their expulsion after the war. For example, a hesitating postmaster is waiting to be promoted in the service, and becomes the only German after the mobilisation to stay in the village, for which he is suddenly rewarded by German authorities and the Imperial Area Leader for his bravery. Only the adjutant Mahler does not sympathize with the Nazis because his fiancée, who moved to Prague out of fear, is Jewish. Mahler burns in the cellar (the fire was started by Hans), where he had been unjustly locked by Czechs.

National identity breaks natural social relations. German forest workers refuse to collaborate with Czechs.

Ves v pohraničí portrays the colonization of the Sudetes in the summer of 1945. The only people Germans could interact with were members of the police and army. A Czech gendarme explains the expulsion in a train. “That was a pretty nest. I have this as a memento (shows bandaged hand). However, you know the Germans; they misbehaved there, so we had to move them out in the moment” (0.2.32–0.2.39). The new Czech arrivals are met with chaos; the village appears bleak and neglected. In the following films depicting postwar Sudetes, this image becomes iconic.

The new settlers, despite there being just a few, refuse to help the Germans during the harvest. The only one to help is the sawmill manager – a German Nazi, who pretends to be a Czech he had murdered. The Germans participate in smuggling scarce goods (the source, from a devastated Germany, is not mentioned). The smugglers find a track that leads them to the German engineer. The leader of the gendarme thinks in the terms of the presidential decrees that every German who cannot prove his innocence is guilty. “And would you know it, men, something about it appears that one of the engineers is German” (1.03.14–1.03.19). This idea is immediately confirmed by a phone call to the station.

The only connection between the arriving Czechs and displaced Germans is a broken statue of Jesus Christ that the Czechs had found while cleaning a horde of items reminiscent of Hitler. In *The Stolen Border*, the constantly praying Langerová reminds of the religious nature of the region, which would not have been possible in films shot after 1948.

In postwar films, representation of Czech-German relations was strongly affected by attitudes of Czech citizens, which mirrored events linked with the occupation (injustice, oppression, repression, imprisonment, execution), but also covered the conscience (social passivity, lack of interest in the resistance, collaboration, immediate post-war revenge on the defenceless). Films were utilised in propaganda as an argument for the expulsion and its severity, and occasionally excused the excessive nature of the exile. The explicitly named criminal, political, and moral guilt of Germans holds a collective character.

Films shot after February 1948 emphasise the class viewpoint. The KSČ changed national politics after 1948, according to Tomáš Dvořák, due to pressure from Moscow that ordered middle-European communist parties to return to Marxist ideology of proletariat internationalism (230). Dvořák states that the turn in “German politics” dates back to beginning of 1950, when in light of official convergence between Czechoslovakia and East Germany, the president Klement Gottwald used the motto “There is no German like a German.” In response, the declaration by then leaders of East Germany accepted the legitimacy of the postwar expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia (231). This reconsideration was presented as a necessary measure to ensure international peace. According to Dvořák, “reactionary elements, a common enemy of working Czechs and Germans, were also established as the culprit of all postwar violent excesses and mainly injustice towards the innocent, or most prominently towards German anti-Fascists” (231).

These changes are explicitly shown in the film *Nástup* (Parade, dir. by Otakar Vávra, 1952), which captures the expulsion of Germans and colonisation of the town Grunbach/Potočná in the Ore Mountains. The film introduces three new motifs: it shows an armed resistance of the Germans after the war,³ portrays the positive characteristics of an anti-Fascist German, and captures displacement of the Germans, without mentioning their expulsion. As an example, the film fulfils the criteria of a social-realist film as the class aspect is set above the national, and the new Czech director of textiles, Trnec, is presented as an antagonist. On the other hand, German communist Palme helps the Czechs several times, calls the Red Army for help, tracks out a fanatic Nazi, and voluntarily leaves so that he could aid in the creation of a new Germany in the occupied eastern zone.

After the communist takeover, several films displayed concerns with protection of the western border. Therefore, the focus shifted to the border between the Bohemian Forest and the Federal Republic of Germany. The ideological context of these films is captured by the prologue from a story-telling film *Vstup zakázán* (*No Entrance*, dir. by František Vlácil and Milan Vošmik, 1958), which begins on a wooded hill with a pathetic speech by the narrator: “The Bohemian Forest, along which the ridges of the hills carry a thousand year old border of our land. In hidden corners, there live people like us. Their lives, however, are a life by a border. Both tell stories of that.”

Suddenly, shots are heard, followed by a camera zoom and a cut to a man wading through snow, before the voice of the narrator continues. “At the end of 1950, the first-time units of border control were first deployed in the most difficult conditions to fight for safety” (0.0.37–0.1.12).

The first story *Pronásledování* (*The Chase*, dir. by František Vlácil), set in 1950, follows two border guards in harsh winter that hunt an ‘intruder’ in the middle of an empty and snowed-in landscape. The intruder is shot after a fight on the train, where his identity is revealed only with the last question of a long interrogation (a symptomatic reference to

the paranoid atmosphere of the 1950s, and the manner of interrogation during political procedures). The second story *Bloudění* (*The Wandering*, dir. by Milan Vošmik) occurs five years later in summer, in a prosperous borderland village where life is blooming, and the family of an officer lives in a cottage with modern furniture. An alarm sets off because of a lost child.

The contrast between the two stories demonstrates changes in life in the border area and in society. Vlácil's strange approach underlines the tense atmosphere heading into the Cold War. Conventional approaches in the second story reference the normalised situation, where border guards (synecdochally representing the whole regime) have the situation tightly under control.

A fan-favourite⁴ borderland film was *Král Šumavy* (*King of Bohemia*, dir. by Karel Kachyňa, 1959), set in 1948. The protection of the border is presented as a difficult and harsh service, in which border controllers risk their lives, something their partners do not understand. German characters do not appear in the film, and the King of the Bohemian Forest, who leads people across the border, is revealed as Czech. Raw images of the borderland (fog and rain dominate in terms of weather) in the Bohemian Forest complete the sketched psychological profiles and, at places, showcase a naturalistic way of filming.

A Sudeten German character appears in the film *Noční host* (*The Night Guest*, dir. by Otakar Vávra, 1961), where war memories from the past play an important role by confirming stereotypes representing Western Germans in the 1950s. A German glass merchant, whose origin is Sudeten, stops at a motel due to a car malfunction, and arrogantly displays his wealth. The Czech manager of the hotel recalls memories from a concentration camp where he was tortured. A drunken guest questions the horror of World War Two, denies moral blame, and emphasises the postwar economic prosperity of Germany.

A substantial critical revision starts in the perspective of the Czech protagonists. The class viewpoint that had been emphasised in films in the 1950s is pushed on the backburner; Czech characters stop representing official ideological opinions, and instead focus on their own subjective views. Political blame is not fully stated as open portrayal of conditions in Czechoslovakia (poor choice in restaurants, amazement of youth towards western music and technology), and brings forth the question as to why the country that's spent twelve years of effort building a socialist society is economically worse off than the capitalist Germany. The Sudeten German character, despite being portrayed negatively, acts as an allegorical mirror to reflect Czech society fifteen years after the end of the war and the expulsion of the Germans.

At the beginning of the 1960s, three films portrayed the theme of postwar colonisation of the countryside in the Sudetes. The films *Všude žijí lidé* (*People Live Everywhere*, dir. by Štěpán Skalský and Jiří Hanibal, 1960), *Neschovávejte se, když prší* (*Don't Hide When It Rains*, dir. by Zbyněk Brynych, 1962), and *Zelené obzory* (*Green Horizons*, dir. by Ivo Novák,

1962) visualise a building ethos of the youth generation that grew up and studied during the socialist regime. After starting their roles, the hardworking members are confronted with fatigue and disillusion of postwar immigrants. The films emphasise greater realism by introducing more authentic characters and credible surroundings, as well as a modern way of film style and narration.

The films manage to discuss the borders without being intrusive; the expulsion of the Germans is remembered as faraway history. A dismal state of the borderland is the result of personal failure and bad conditions of collective agricultural plans; the critical view does not portray systematic shortcomings of the communist regime.

The only film about immediate postwar history in the 1960s is František Vlácil's *Adelheid* (1969). The protagonist Viktor Chotovický, a lieutenant of the British army, arrives to a village in Jeseníky in the autumn of 1945, where he was put in charge of a property previously owned by a Jewish family. The protagonist suffers from stomach pain and grief after losing his family, which reflects in his depressive state. Adelheid Heidenman, a daughter of the previous German owner, joins him in order to help him out. The shy couple slowly get to know one another, and after a night they spend together, the girl discovers that her father had been executed. Her brother (a member of the so-called Nazi werewolves, a paramilitary movement operating in the area) murders a sergeant and prepares to kill Chotovický, too. Although Adelheid saves him by killing her brother, she immediately hits him with a metal rod, and after imprisonment, hangs herself in a cell.

The creators show for the first time the illegal behaviour of the Czech Revolutionary Guard members, and do not present the Sudetes as a poor and neglected place. Punishable, moral, and political blame stops being seen in black and white of the collective. The protagonists are prominently marked by war-time events, and despite tense national hatred and language barriers (the couple cannot understand each other), they form a relationship, which of course ends tragically.

The history of the Sudetes has become one of the main themes in heavily censored films from the so-called normalisation period of the 1970s, following the suppression of Prague Spring in 1968 by the Soviet army. Revisionist films like *Adelheid* stopped being shown, while artistic films were declared as decadent bourgeois art. New films were shot in a style reminiscent of the social realism of the 1950s. Films from the Sudetes returned to two basic themes of the 1950s: colonisation of the Sudetes by the Czechs, and protection of the borders from western German intruders. *Kronika žhavého léta* (*Chronicle of a Hot Summer*, dir. by Jiří Sequens, 1973) is set in 1947 and ends in February 1948. The epic drama loosely links to *Parade* (both films were created based on connected novels), some characters and setting are taken from the film, but what changes are the personalities of the characters, as well as roles of the Germans. The main conflict arises between Czech communists and Czech “reactionaries.” Throughout the film, a considerable number of Germans appears in

episodic roles (despite the expulsion having taken place). Daughter of Palme (here an episodic character) ran away after the “displacement” from Nuremberg back to Czechoslovakia, because she did not want to become a prostitute to American soldiers. The Germans are employed as workers in textiles, peasants, servants (they always have a Czech boss, whose orders they conscientiously fulfil). Auxiliary car mechanic Fritz fulfils the role of a comedic character (including garbled, but understandable Czech). The Germans are loyal, they will help solve problems with drying wells as they are knowledgeable of the local countryside, and the Nazi werewolves are not mentioned. The borderland (especially the condition of buildings) creates a stronger feeling of neglect and dilapidation than in *Parade*, which most likely was not the artistic intention of the creators, but a sign of real poverty caused by communist economic measures. The bankruptcy of the land is also clear in other films shot during normalisation.

A significant shift appears in films from the 1980s. *Zánik samoty Berbof* (*Demise of the Lonely Farm Berbof*, dir. by Jiří Svoboda, 1983) was filmed in a Czechoslovakian-Polish co-production. The plot is set in Jeseníky in the autumn of 1945. An old pub in the countryside is owned by a Czech called Halbiger, whose German wife and teenage daughter had just died. The characteristics of Czechs and Germans are not stereotypically linked with nationality and class. Sadism in German boys is presented as a result of the war.

In the film, punishable, moral, and metaphysical guilt are separated. Political guilt remains singularly with Nazi Germany that had begun the war. Moral guilt is relativized and covers punishable guilt that certain people carry. For example, a Czech financier discovers Halbiger was looting, but instead of telling him off, reminds him to take care of his daughter. Majority of the main characters share existential crisis resulting from war experiences, which are even more profound than in the case of protagonists from *Adelheid*. Tiredness and emptiness are pronounced, as well as emotional disbalance: the moments of anger intertwine with those of guilt or laughter. The protagonists are tired; they feel emptiness, display emotional disbalance, and shift quickly from anger to guilt or laughter. The postwar atmosphere reflects a post-apocalypse state; none of the characters feels happiness or even relief from the end of the war and look toward the future with fear. Mostly they act automatically out of duty, which they focus on in order not to fall completely into disillusion or insanity.

A specific cluster of films from the period between 1948 and 1989 about the Sudetes is set in the regional spa cities. Compared to comedies about higher social strata from the time of the First Republic, spa cities such as Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně become suspicious places where bourgeois lifestyles prevail. During the 1960s, detective stories with spy themes occurred in these cities like *Transit Carlsbad* (dir. by Zbyněk Brynych, 1966), as well as detective film critiquing the lasting bourgeois lifestyle *Kde alibi nestačí* (*Where Alibi is not Enough*, dir. by Vladimír Čech, 1961). In *Mravenci nesou smrt* (*Ants Bring Death*, dir. by Zbyněk Brynych, 1985), Karlovy Vary is presented as a city of vices, western agents,

and international dealerships with narcotics. In Věra Chytilová's satirical comedy *Kopytem sem, kopytem tam* (*A Hoof Here, A Hoof There*, 1988), the role of the city shifts, and becomes a symbol of immorality. The film tells a moral story of promiscuous recessionists infected with AIDS spreading from the West. The panorama of the city, shot by a moving camera, becomes a claustrophobic space – a funnel from which there is no escape. In all films, the city is presented as purely Czech; the danger is formed by surviving bourgeois elements of western clients, predominantly German.

Most films from the Sudetes take place in the countryside or spa cities, while the importance of industry in the region remains ignored. The only exception to this seems to be the building drama *A Warning* (*Výstraha*, dir. by Miroslav Cikán, 1953) features heavy industry. The film begins with an American bombing of a chemical factory near the town of Litvín/Leutensdorf at the order of a Swiss firm which want to eliminate postwar competitors. During the war, based on the outside reports of the surrounding areas, a hundred Czech workers were drafted to work in the chemical factory, and with help of the Red Army, they managed to save it from exploding. After the war, one German army prisoner remains – an ex-director who as a specialist engineer overlooks the reconstruction, while aiding Czech intruders.

The industrial landscape began to appear more systematically from the 1970s, and the second half of the 1980s (after “glasnost,” a policy introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev allowing critique of the communist regime). The film voices criticism over the devastation of nature due to heavy industrialisation. The heavy industry was portrayed by two films based on the novels by a popular writer Vladimír Páral. *Mladý muž a bílá velryba* (*The Young Man and Moby Dick*, dir. by Jaromil Jireš, 1978) takes place in a chemical factory in the northern Czechoslovak city Ústí nad Labem. The building theme intertwines with complex love affairs and the travel of protagonists through untouched beauty of natural landscapes. *Muka obraznosti* (*Agony of the Vision*, dir. by Vladimír Drda, 1989) captures life of a young chemist in the northern Czechoslovak city Liberec in the year 1957, with an emphasis laid on the motif of devastation of nature by the industry, which is completely lacking in the previous film. The presentation of history is greatly weakened, as seen through social and personal relations, themes of plundered surroundings and dialogues concretely referencing the end of the 1980s. The psychological story *Uzavřený kruh* (*Closed Circuit*, dir. by Václav Matějka, 1989) takes place on the background of an argument of technological nature during the construction of new metallurgical engineering. The young protagonist promotes a more costly option with non-waste technology that is environmentally friendly, in this way reflecting the fact that during the 1980s a prominent part of the forest was affected by an ecological disaster due to coal, electric and chemical industry.

The Sudetes after 1989

After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, relations between Czech and Germany began to improve, beginning with an apology by the newly elected president Václav Havel for the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans, a decision heavily criticised across the political spectrum? The process peaked with signing a Czech-German declaration of mutual relations and their future expansion in 1997.

Films and television series shot after 1989 approach the taboo theme of violence⁵ committed upon Germans after the end of the war. Within the Czech post-1989 cinematographic context, the film *Marta a já* (*Martha and I*, dir. by Jiří Weiss, 1990) takes a unique position, as it was created in co-production among Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Austria, and Italy. The film was unique because of its international cast, a director of left political leanings (beginning in the 1990s, most Czech artists labelled themselves anti-communist), and personal memories, which made him aware of his Jewish origin. Weiss reasoned the rise of Nazism in the Sudetes was mainly due to poor social conditions, which for instance was the theme of his previously mentioned film *Uloupená hranice*. Furthermore, he set the minor motif of a Czech-(Jewish)-German marriage from that film as the main theme. The story is told from the perspective of adolescent Emil – a nephew of a rich Czech Jew – and gynaecologist Arnošt Fuchs, who, after discovering the infidelity of his young Hungarian wife, divorces her in order to marry his German servant Marta. Her brothers' arguments summarise the position of the Sudeten Germans toward Czechoslovakia, and the reasoning behind trusting Hitler, who had offered a solution to national and social problems by separating the Sudetes. The families of both brothers financially improve after joining the Reich.

Motifs of Czech-German relations slowly take over motifs linked to the fate of Jews. From the Fuchs' family, only the nephew survived the war and subsequently emigrated. Weiss sees the national seclusion as the main cause of the problems in Czech-German relations, along with the inability of Czechs and Germans to communicate (fight at a wedding), and in transformation of social problems into national ones, which suited German and Czech politicians. However, Weiss only implies these issues without mentioning them explicitly. The metaphysical guilt is not as explicit as in films *Adelheid* and *Zánik samoty Berhof*; instead, it treats the fact that something like this could have happened with embarrassment and surprise.

The postwar Sudetes become a setting for critically acclaimed television series *Zdivočelá země* (*The Wild Land*, dir. by Hynek Bočan, 1997-2004) based on the novels of Jiří Stránský, and several other historical dramas, for instance *Der Lebensborn – Pramen života* (*Spring of Life*, dir. by Milan Cieslar, 1999); *Krev zmizelého* (*Bonds of Blood*, dir. by Milan Cieslar, 2004), *Alois Nebel* (dir. by Tomáš Luňák, 2011), *7 dní hříchu* (*7 Days of Sin*, dir. by Jiří Chlumský, 2011). The drama *Habermannův mlýn* (*Habermann*, dir. by Juraj Herz, 2010) is shot in German-Austrian co-production. It portrays life in the Sudetes from prewar events to its liberation. The theme of Czech-German cohabitation also appears as a minor motif in

two historical films with distinctive comic elements *Musíme si pomáhat* (*Divided We Fall*, dir. by Jan Hřebejk, 2000), and an adaptation of Bohumil Hrabal's book *Obsluhoval jsem anglického krále* (*I Served the King of England*, dir. by Jiří Menzel, 2006).

All of these works offer interpretation that the expulsion of Germans opened the path toward the communist coup in 1948. The motif of reconciliation newly appears in *Marta a já*, or in the documentary *Denně předstupuji před tvoji tvář* (*Daily I Stand Before Your Face*, dir. by Drahomíra Vihanová, 1992). In most films, a distinct motif of the tragic fate of the Jewish population also appears.

Authors place more emphasis on individual guilt (and bravery), as these characteristics do not relate to national or class origin, but instead they relate to individual personalities.

A distinct and repeated procedure is the layout of story into a longer period, which allows confrontation of individual moments of Sudeten history. This element can be interpreted as an attempt of a more complex understanding of history, or as telling history not as a mechanic causality of cause and consequence. Films shot before 1989 portrayed only the consequence from the Czech point of view, while the German cause was taken as automatic and unmistakable, which aligned with the communist ideological view that presented western Germany as a national enemy. The films *Marta a já*, *7 dní hříchu* and *Habermannův mlýn* also portray the problem of Czech-German cohabitation from the view of the Germans.

Concerning social, economic, and moral consequences of the expulsion of Germans and the helplessness of Czech as to how to deal with these problems, are much more strongly addressed (although often implicitly) by films and television series occurring in present day that capture larger audience and critical acclaim than the previously mentioned historical films. In post-1989 films, the Sudetes are presented as a harsh and exotic land on the periphery (as in aforementioned films from the 1960s), which does not prosper economically or culturally, and whose inhabitants live without any life perspectives. The traumatic experience of being associated with the land, from which majority of inhabitants had to leave and the new ones (now spanning generations) do not fully identify with, is fully shown. In Bohdan Sláma's *Divoké včely* (*The Wild Bees*, 2001) and *Šťěstí* (*Something like Happiness*, 2005), Germans are not mentioned, but it can still be felt that the devastated land, as well as neglected and dilapidated buildings are a result of the expulsion. Similarly, *Mistři* (*Champions*, dir. by Marek Najbrt, 2004) portrays a nameless village in the borderlands in which lives a group of outsiders without jobs and perspective on life, meeting up in the local pub during the hockey world championship. In the depopulated village also lives an old German named Ziege, a returnee from Germany, who takes care of German gravestones and an abandoned church. After a conflict, Ziege digs up a crate from the war filled with bottles of alcohol and a grenade. With the help of alcohol, he tries to reconcile with the Czechs and, at the end of the film, while alone in the pub, he sets off a grenade. One of the

characters is of Roma origin, which he tries to deny as the others make fun of him. Inter-ethnic conflicts among Czechs, Germans, and Roma, as well as Czech hockey nationalism result from frustrated social, but partially also existential condition of the protagonists. National jingoism is then the easiest solution.

The film *Grandhotel* (2006) by David Ondříček is uniquely set in a larger city (Liberec). The protagonist Vlasta Fleischman, whose parents defected to Germany before 1989, helps in exchange for money a local German native Franz disperse the ashes of his German classmates.

In the tragicomedy *Díra u Hanušovic* (*Nowhere in Moravia*, dir. by Miroslav Krobot, 2014), an aging German from Munich arrives for the funeral of his sister to a neglected village in the Czech eastern mountains Jeseníky (similar to *The Wild Bees*) where he meets the nurse Jaruna, who is planning to move to his place. After visiting Munich, Jaruna compares living in the two countries: “I’m happy that I’m home, but it was pretty there. Munich is pretty. The older people there look younger than here” (1.13.20–1.14.03). Even though interethnic hatred is not explicit in the film, the Czechs view the well-off German pensioner with suspicion and jealousy.

Similarly, Czech-German relations were outlined in Štěpán Altrichter’s debut *Schmitke* (2014). A middle-aged divorced German engineer, who is unhappy at work and has frequent misunderstandings with his daughter, arrives to the Bohemian Forest to fix a wind power plant. The motif of Czech-German relations is viewed realistically; however, they create a backdrop for an explicit existential motif linked with the protagonist’s search for identity.

Two out of four German characters commit suicide; Ziege and Franz consider the return as a way of reconciling with history and their personal lives. The other two characters, whose arrival is not linked with the history of Sudetes (work, funeral), reach an unexpected conclusion: Schmitke discovers himself existentially, Hans finds a partner.

Although Czech protagonists live in difficult situations, they do not complain about the current regime, and they do not expect help from the government (like in films from the 1960s); instead, they fall for personal illusion that they will escape the tricky situations themselves. Only a few of the many protagonists find a way out, like Nebel (*Alois Nebel*) or Fleischmann (*Grandhotel*), who overcome their travel phobia and leave the city, and Jaruna (*Díra u Hanušovic*), who prepares to move to Germany for her partner.

In films and television series from present day, the distrust between Czechs and Germans persists with jealousy towards better living standards, which in *Mistři* overgrows into open hatred, and the Germans are still tagged by some Czechs as Nazis (*Mistři*, *Grandhotel*), although in *Grandhotel* the relation between the Czech protagonist and the German character Franz is friendly. The representatives of younger generation do not suffer from communist propaganda reminiscent of war stigmas, but see opportunity of Czech Sudetes collaborating with the German border (*Schmitke*, series *Rapl*).

Conclusion

The analyses prove the original hypothesis that changes in discourse of film and television representation of Sudetes faithfully copies the changes in political regimes in Czechoslovakia and then the Czech Republic. The results also confirm Robert Rosenstone's argument that historical films are equal to written history, and express the theme from the point of view of the present moment). His method of analysis and interpretation can also be used on the group of films shot in conservative style in the mode of classical narration.

Films about the Sudetes follow, with few exceptions, contemporary aesthetic canon in terms of style and narration, including the neo-dogmatic return in the 1970s to the principles of social realism. An occasional use of innovative procedures is not linked to revision of ideological dogmata; this connection only occurs in *Adelheid* and *Zánik samoty Berbof*.

Classic dramas shot after 1989 portray the previously censored theme of violence linked to expulsion of the Germans. Most of these films suffer from unconvincing artistic communication, possibly due to their didactic attempt to show "real" history.

The consequences of the expulsion of Germans from the Sudetes are most faithfully portrayed implicitly in films from present day shot after 1989, in which history of the land is not mentioned. These films reveal that the economic and social impacts of the German expulsion is impossible to fix even seventy years after its events. Most of the displaced areas in present day are, according to Czech official statistics, the economically weakest places, and are socially uprooted due to high unemployment, the lowest number of college-educated citizens, the heaviest debt, and extremist political parties on the upswing.

Films from the present day admit this state explicitly, which can be interpreted as film representations of the Sudetes that have for the first time since 1938 been fully free of ideological bondage. This is also shown by the transformation of understanding blame from the point of the Jaspers division. From black-and-white portrayal of politics, punishable and moral collective blame from the Germans, they are slowly being individualised and assigned to Czechs as well. From the 1960s, the feeling of metaphysical blame has appeared in Czechs. Films shot after 1989 represent metaphysical blame of the devastation of the Sudetes as nationally undividable.

End Notes

1. Beneš decrees are legally declared laws published in exile by the president of Czechoslovakia Edvard Benes during the Second World War and shortly after its end when it was not possible to enact legislative acts through parliament (all the decrees were successfully ratified by a newly elected parliament).
2. According to Czechoslovakian official statistics, in September of 1939 the total number of refugees from occupied places reached 193,000 people, among them approximately 25,000 Germans (and only a few thousands of them returned to the borderland) and 20,000 German-speaking Jews (Majewski 379).

3. The films shot before 1989 very often emphasized the malicious activity of werewolves in comparison with the official reports. This alleged activity served often to justify Czech excesses and, politically, to add pressure on the Allies to allow the expulsion of the Germans. Official reports stipulated that ‘an open or hidden resistance of Germans’ was not and would not have been possible for a long time.’ (Arburg and Staněk 154).
4. 4,100,916 cinema goers so the film (Březina 188).
5. According to the preliminary conclusion of the Czech-German (and Slovak-German) commission of historians, around 15,000 to 16,000 people died in the years 1945 and 1946 through the forced journey, in concentration camps, in work, directly or indirectly due to expulsion – approximately 6,000 cases are unspecified, probably most of them suicides. This number presents only the lower margin of possible victims. The upper margin, according to the commission, could be up to 30,000 cases. (Arburg and Staněk 29).

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