

# Different Voices, Different Ages: The Holocaust in Czech Cinema

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## Preliminary considerations

IF ONE IS TO take into consideration the significant number of films dealing with various aspects of the Holocaust produced in Czechoslovakia and later, in the Czech Republic, one could argue that there is a genuine tradition of Holocaust cinema in this country, not unlike, for examples, the similar Polish or Hungarian traditions. This is rather unsurprising, given the fact that both the Czech Republic and Slovakia were under Nazi domination during World War II (the former experienced a more brutal occupation after the creation of the Bohemian and Moravian Protectorate, while the latter was a close ally of Nazi Germany through its puppet regime, without being formally occupied), an unfortunate experience that both filmmakers and writers sought to document after the war. Another possible explanation for the large number of Holocaust films produced here may reside in the fact that there was a strong Jewish representation in the Czech intelligentsia, including writers such as Jiri Weil, Arnos Lustig, Ladislav Fuks or directors such as Alfred Radok, Jan Kadar or Jiri Weiss.

The first celebrated representation of the Holocaust in Czech cinema belongs to Alfred Radok – *Distant Journey*, produced in 1948, a film made before the establishment of Soviet-inspired censorship and Socialist Realist aesthetic dogma. Radok, a Jew himself whose father and grandfather were both killed in the Terezin concentration camp, was influenced by the expressionist avant-garde tradition that had flourished in Germany and France in the period prior to World War II, as well as by Orson Welles's masterpiece, *Citizen Kane* (1941). His highly distinctive cinematic style did not meet the approval of the authorities who shelved the film for almost forty years (probably on account of the fact that the film shows not only 'the evil in others' – i.e., the Nazis, but also 'the evil in

us<sup>3</sup> – i.e., the more or less hidden antisemitism within the Czech people),<sup>1</sup> forcing Radok to give up filmmaking and move towards the theatre, where he was one of the driving forces behind the experimental *Lanterna magika* movement.

The production of Holocaust-inspired films was revived in the 1960s, after the emergence of the so-called New Czech Cinema; many of the representatives of this movement directed remarkable such productions. The New Czech Cinema spans the years between 1963 and 1967,<sup>2</sup> being quite heavily influenced by other notable European cinematic movements of revival, such as the Italian Neorealism or the French Nouvelle Vague. The international success of films made under the label of New Czech cinema (one of which, *The Shop on Main Street*, was the first Czechoslovak production to receive an Academy Award in 1966) testifies to the artistic and aesthetic value of these productions. The representatives of this trend (including Milos Forman, Jan Nemeč, Vera Chytilová, Jaromil Jires, Jiri Menzel, Ivan Passer, Vojtech Jasny), most of them young graduates of the FAMU school of film, shared conditions of work, thematic concerns and a desire to move beyond restrictive Socialist Realism formulas, rather than stylistic similarities.<sup>3</sup>

The most famous Holocaust films made during the 1960s (whose production largely overlaps the development of the Czech New Wave) include films made in a wide range of styles, from experimental to surrealist, and genres, from tragicomedy to horror: *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* (Jiri Weiss, 1959), *Transport from Paradise* (Zbynek Brynych, 1962), *The Fifth Horseman is Fear* (Zbynek Brynych, 1964), *Diamonds of the Night* (Jan Nemeč, 1964), *The Shop on Main Street* (Jan Kadar and Elmar Klos, 1965), *A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzová* (Antonin Moskalyk, 1965), *Dita Saxová* (Antonin Moskalyk, 1967) and *The Cremator* (Juraj Herz, 1968).<sup>4</sup> The basis for the production of these films had been laid in the previous decade, when many of the novels and memoirs upon which their script is based were published.<sup>5</sup>

Following this prolific period of Czech filmmaking, the number of films dealing more or less directly with the Holocaust decreased dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s, the most notable examples being Juraj Herz's *I Was Caught by the Night* (1985) and his English-Czech coproduction *The Last Butterfly* (1989). After the fall of communism, there were a number of Czech films set against the background of the Holocaust (such as two adaptations from Ivan Olbracht's collection *Golet in the Valley*, which were about Jewish life in sub-Carpathian Ruthenia). Zeno Dostal directed *Golet in the Valley* (1995) and Karel Kachyna made *Hanele* (1999), which was adapted from the well-known story *The Sad Eyes of Hanna Karajich*. The two most significant Holocaust films made in the Czech republic in recent years are Matej Minac's *All My Loved Ones* (1999) and Jan Hrebejk's *Divided We Fall* (2000).

After these brief preliminary considerations aimed at placing the two case

studies within the tradition of Czech Holocaust cinema, I would like to refer in more detail to two examples belonging to different cinematic ages and styles, *Distant Journey* and *Diamonds of the Night*; the hypothesis on which the analysis of the two films is based on the idea that perhaps the most overwhelming dimension of the Holocaust is trauma, something that lies deeply within all those who experienced the event. The traumatic dimension of the Holocaust, perhaps even more so than anything else, is likely to create empathy and identification in anyone who reads survivor memoirs or watches films inspired by their plight, the traumatic nature of the Holocaust being transmitted by means of memory rather than history. My argument is that artistic representations of the Holocaust – especially films, since film is such an accessible means and has the potential of reaching mass audiences – should first of all take into consideration how to depict this traumatic dimension. Starting from Freud’s application of the concepts of working-through and acting-out in psychoanalysis,<sup>6</sup> refined by Dominick LaCapra’s observations about texts that work through or act out trauma,<sup>7</sup> I would like to suggest a framework of analysis for Holocaust films whose focal point is the way in which the cinematic representations considered as case studies incorporate the traumatic dimension of the Holocaust either as a case of working-through or as one of acting-out. Such a model of analysis based on the representation of trauma would be, to my mind, a move beyond debates on what the ‘most appropriate’ type of representation would be or on whether historical representations are more valuable than artistic ones, debates that, more often than not, raise more questions than they manage to address.

**Daleka cesta / Distant Journey (The Long Journey) (Czechoslovakia, 1948)<sup>8</sup>**

Directed by Alfred Radok

ONE OF THE earliest cinematic representations of the Holocaust, Alfred Radok’s *Distant Journey* is still considered today a remarkable achievement.<sup>9</sup> Born in southern Bohemia, Radok saw most of his family perish in the Nazi concentration camps; in a sense, *Distant Journey*, the director’s first film, is the tribute he paid to the memory of the dead. The film focuses on presenting the life of the prisoners in the ghetto of Theresienstadt (Terezin), the “model ghetto” near Prague established by the Nazi to accommodate war veteran German Jews and deported Jews of distinguished social status (celebrated scientists, artists and musicians from all over Europe); during the war, this was the place where the Prague Jews were taken, most of them staying there temporarily en route to the death camps in Poland. The former garrison town designed

to house five thousand people was turned into an overcrowded concentration camp for sixty thousand prisoners; despite the gruesome conditions in which the prisoners were forced to live, the Nazis presented Terezin as a “gift from Hitler to the Jews” and as proof of their civilized treatment of the victims, thus deceiving several Red Cross delegations which came to visit the camp.<sup>10</sup>

The film’s structure includes two parts, the first presenting the love story and marriage of the Gentile Tonik with the Jewish doctor Hanna Kaufmann; the second part describes life in Terezin. The film’s beginning presents several well-known scenes from Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* featuring the passionate speeches of a few Nazi leaders, such as Goebbels, Hess, Streicher and Dietrich. Throughout the film, the director juxtaposes archival footage from newsreels with scenes presenting the events in the characters’ lives; these are included as insets against the background of documentary footage, suggesting, as Ilan Avisar points out, “the notion of a story within a story, or a story within history, reminding the spectators that the story and the individual cases Radok relates in this work should be viewed within the context of the more general and more bloody history of Germany and Europe in World War II”.<sup>11</sup> The second scene of the film emphasizes the virulent antisemitism present in the Czech society, as the signs of “Jews get out” are scrambled across many doors and walls. As a result of the anti-Semitic laws, Hanna, a talented doctor, is fired by her boss, an ugly-looking, disgusting old man who suggests that she would be better off doing another sort of job. Her lover, Tonik, hoping that she would be safer as the wife of an Aryan, asks her to marry him, while other members of her family, showing a touching naivety, discuss about leaving for other continents, an impossible endeavour, as thousands of other Jews line up the streets in front of foreign embassies. Radok’s film includes several scenes that will serve as inspiration for many other directors, such as Alain Resnais: the French director used the scene showing a small room overflowing with objects belonging to the deported Jews as inspiration for the famous shot in *Night and Fog* depicting piles of haircombs, shoes, suitcases and glasses to convey the sense of massive destruction.<sup>12</sup>

The Jews in the film start becoming aware of the fate awaiting them as whispered rumours about deportations to the East begin to spread; Hanna’s and Tonik’s wedding takes place in this gloomy atmosphere that culminates with the receipt of transport orders for Hanna’s family.<sup>13</sup> She is temporarily spared, but her life in Prague is increasingly isolated and desperate, as Tonik and his family are also persecuted;<sup>14</sup> Tonik himself is sent to Terezin for a short period of time and sees with his own eyes the horrible conditions in which the Jews were forced to live.<sup>15</sup> Hanna, believing that her husband is lost, tries to commit suicide by taking a lethal drug, but is saved by Tonik at the last minute; however, she is forced to go to Terezin herself, where she discovers that her parents were

taken to the gas chambers.<sup>16</sup> Commenting on the ghetto segment of the film, Ilan Avisar considers it

*an astounding cinematic tour de force in terms of representing the horrific conditions of the concentration camp universe. It features the first confusing moments of initiation, the constant hunger, slave labour, the fierce struggle to survive, exhausting roll calls, and the ultimate deadly selections. Without any clear narrative line, Radok composes a series of expressive pictures, brief episodes, and insightful dramatic moments to convey the ultimate horror.*<sup>17</sup>

The establishing shot of this segment is a memorable one: we see one row of people, being slowly marched through the gates of Hell, while another row of people exit, carrying coffins on their shoulders, suggesting the imminence of death for the newly arrived prisoners. Inside the ghetto, the camera uses long shots to show the unbelievable overcrowding of people and objects, the view being often obscured by iron nets, pieces of furniture and makeshift walls. Hanna is shocked to witness several cases of extreme dehumanization, such as an old man trying to steal whatever objects he can get his hands on, or an young girl who manages to hide a potato under her foot, an inestimable prize for which people are on the verge of killing one another; when the crazy potato chase ends, the girl crouches to the ground and hungrily devours the potato like a starved animal. The physical brutality of the Nazis is presented in a few very evocative scenes (the film as a whole includes few episodes of explicit violence): before a Red Cross visit, the Jewish women are forced to scrub the ghetto streets on their hands and knees, while a Nazi guard forces a kneeling woman to carry a bucket in her teeth; later on, another guard puts his heavy boot on a woman's neck, literally burying her face in the mud (this image becomes an inset against the background of archival footage showing piles of disfigured, skeletal corpses in a death camp); but perhaps the most touching image is that of the little children's choir, who are forced to practice for the entertainment of the guests.<sup>18</sup> Radok even deals with the ultimate step of genocide, the physical extermination of the Jews: after the scene showing the archival footage of death camps, several ghetto workers are constructing a building whose function mystifies them; its purpose is ultimately revealed, through expressive camera work that uses contrasts of light and darkness in a subterranean setting, when Hanna leads a group of terrified children from an eastern transport down the steps to a shower room, which closely resembles the gas chambers of Auschwitz; in order to alleviate the children's fears, Hanna turns on the shower and water, not gas (in a sequence reminding one of *Schindler's List*), pours down. However, the horrified children start running and screaming, while the people of the ghetto, equally terrified,

announce that they are building a gas chamber.<sup>19</sup>

The ending of the film shows the liberation of Terezin: a young woman sees the Russian troops approaching and runs to alert the other prisoners; one by one, pale, ghost-like figures emerge from the derelict buildings, as the woman furiously hits the chords of an abandoned piano and the survivors join in a frantic celebration. The last scene presents Hanna and Tonik, finally reunited, walking slowly through a cemetery with both Jewish and Christian graves, as Tonik solemnly announces, "Mankind has won" and then proceeds to recite, in a similar manner to the madman in the ghetto, the names of the Nazi concentration camps where, as he says, "seven million people died".

In addition to the expressive camera work, soundtrack plays a very important role in the film;<sup>20</sup> as I have mentioned before, many gifted Jewish musicians were sent to Terezin, where they played in the ghetto orchestra that even put on a performance of Verdi's *Requiem* for Eichmann. In Radok's film, this orchestra is replaced with a small band of old Jews (a rather grotesque representation of a Klezmer orchestra) playing the drums and the cymbals to accompany the row of prisoners being deported to the east. The piano is another dominant motif in *Distant Journey*, suggesting, as Avisar observes, "the idea of disenchantment with culture, showing how high culture betrayed its fundamental humanistic promises under the spell of Nazism".<sup>21</sup> During Hanna and Tonik's wedding scene, the only music heard is the one coming from a piano in a neighbouring apartment; the incongruous sounds, a special counterpoint effect produced by the monotonous repetition of scales practice, further underlines the contrast between the predicament of the Jewish victims and the normality of their Gentile neighbours' lives. In a later ghetto scene, the piano literally becomes an accessory to murder, as a Nazi guard pushes an old man who falls backwards on the heavy musical instrument and is immediately killed by the impact. In the end, the remains of the same piano are used merely as a tool to alert the others about the coming of the Russians, in a manner similar to the big gong in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (another expressionist masterpiece), which is used to warn the people about the disastrous flood.<sup>22</sup>

In terms of the visual style employed, Radok, unlike Nemeč in *Diamonds of the Night*, never favours aestheticism at the expense of the story or the character development; all the important moments in the fictional story are juxtaposed with scenes taken from documentaries, newsreels and archives, which indicates that the film is strongly rooted in the historical reality of the time. Radok's style can be characterized as expressionist, as the director frequently uses massive concentrations of people and objects in gruesome conditions, presented by long and slow camera movements, as well as distortions of time and space achieved by unusual camera angles, in addition to dark tones dominating many scenes,



individual pictures with strong evocative function and a loose narrative which often displaces conventional logic by juxtaposition.<sup>23</sup> Referring to the features of Radok's expressionism, Avisar writes:

*The great force of Radok's art lies in the employment of a certain degree of stylization to create a visual texture to enhance the impression of nightmarish reality without ruining the basic realistic effect of photographic verisimilitude. His film maintains a certain degree of realism by avoiding the excessive artificiality of the image created by means of heavy makeup, studio sets of distorted and painted background, and unrealistic contrasts of black and white. [...] Radok also displays a high degree of good taste by avoiding explicit graphic horror and visual gore. The film's acclaimed expressionism is ultimately rooted in the realistic impulse to recreate faithfully the authentic conditions in Terezin [the director actually filmed some of the scenes in the former ghetto].<sup>24</sup>*

The representation of trauma in Hanna's case (as she is the main protagonist of the film) presents an interesting combination of attempts to work through trauma with instances of acting it out: the scenes in which she is overcome by despair (for instance, when she attempts to kill herself, or when she refuses to hide in the house of some friends and prefers to go to Terezin instead) show that her determination to overcome the trauma she is living weakens, whereas the ghetto scenes in which we see her trying to help others by practicing medicine are an indication that she is trying to make efforts to survive the terrible ghetto conditions by focusing on something else than her own misery. Ultimately, the film does not answer the question of whether she and Tonik will eventually overcome their trauma: the final scene, which shows them walking in the cemetery, hints at the fact that the dead will always haunt that landscape, as well as their memories, representing an obstacle in the face of working through the ordeal they have endured. Even if they somehow manage to lead normal lives again, they will always remember the dead, their minds will always return to the dark, crowded, nightmarish spaces of the ghetto.

*Distant Journey* was screened in Czechoslovakia for a relatively brief period of time, before being withdrawn from public circulation; in 1950 it was shown in the United States, many critics giving it favourable reviews;<sup>25</sup> the Czech film critic Josef Skvorecky, in his history of the Czech cinema, argues that

*Radok's first film The Long Journey (1948) was so much a revelation to all of us as were the films of Věra Chytilová, Miloš Forman or Jan Němec fourteen years later. It was a tragically premature and anachronistic work of art. It dealt with the fate of the Jews in the Third Reich; as far as artistic influences are concerned one might*

*perhaps find traces of German expressionism. I am not aware of any comparable work created at that time in world cinematography. [...] It was simply not comparable to anything else produced at that time.*<sup>26</sup>



## Notes

1. Peter Hames, *Czech and Slovak Cinema. Theme and Tradition*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, p. 98.
2. It is quite possible that this innovative revival of European art cinema manifested in Czechoslovakia would have continued beyond 1967, had it not been for “the Soviet tanks invading Prague in 1968, a tragic cultural casualty of the fateful connections between film and politics.” (Ilan Avisar, *Screening the Holocaust. Cinema’s Images of the Unimaginable*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 54).
3. Kristin Thompson, David Bordwell, *Film History. An Introduction*, New York: McGraw Hill, 2002, p. 462.
4. Hames, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
5. For instance, *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* is based on Jan Otcenasek’s novel by the same title, published in 1958; Brynych’s *Transport from Paradise* was the first film adapted from Arnos Lustig’s stories, *Night and Hope* (1958); Jan Nemeč’s *Diamonds of the Night* is based on the collection of stories by the same title published by Lustig in 1958 (more precisely, on the novella *Darkness Casts No Shadow*); Bynych’s *The Fifth Horseman Is Fear* is an adaptation of a novel by Hanna Belohradská, *Without Beauty, Without Collar*; published in 1959; *The Shop on Main Street* is based on a novel by Ladislav Grosman, while both *A Prayer for Katarina Horovitzova* and *Dita Saxova* were adapted from works by Arnos Lustig.
6. See Freud’s articles, “Remembering, Repeating and Working Through” and “Mourning and Melancholia” in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1976.
7. For more details about LaCapra’s analysis, see his works, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998 and *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
8. *Distant Journey* (1948, Czechoslovakia). D: Alfred Radok; S: Erik Kolar, Alfred Radok, Mojmir Drvota; MC: Blanka Waleska, Otomar Krejca, Viktor Ocasek, Zdenka Baldova, Eduard Kohout, J. O. Martin.
9. Speaking about the impact of the film, Jiri Cieslar writes: “Alfred Radok’s *Daleka cesta* is something of a legend in the Czech Republic; despite during the forty-



year period when it was banned in Czechoslovakia, it remained in the collective consciousness as one of the country's film masterpieces." ("Living with the Long Journey: Alfred Radok's *Daleka cesta*", in Toby Haggith, Joanna Newman (eds.), *The Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representations in Film and Television since 1933*, London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2005, p. 217).

10. One of the most infamous Nazi propaganda films presents the Terezin ghetto as an ideal place for the Jews: *The Fuehrer Gives the Jews a City* (1944).
11. Avisar, *op. cit.*, p. 60. Annette Insdorf, in the third edition of her book (the only one which mentions Radok's film in a chapter suggestively entitled "Rediscoveries"), refers to this technique by observing that "This is an effective and appropriate technique that underscores how the fiction is contextualized by reality, literally taking place against the backdrop of Nazi doctrine, expressed by crowds, marches, and speeches." (*Indelible Shadows. Film and the Holocaust*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 255-256).
12. Resnais actually quoted Radok as one of the sources of inspiration for the style of *Night and Fog* on account of the latter's "formalism" which helps to tell the story. (See *ibidem*, p. 256).
13. This scene includes one particularly evocative image: when Tonik opens the wardrobe, the viewer sees a row of black coats, all bearing the yellow star; later on, the same image appears, only this time, only one coat remains as a silent witness to the death of the all the other coat owners. Radok often uses close-ups of objects that used to belong to the Jews in order to emphasise "the presence of the absence": we see Hanna's elderly uncle seated at his elegant desk, sadly contemplating his library, while the next shot focuses on the empty chair where the old man used to sit; before trying to kill herself, Hanna's gaze lingers on an empty balcony where a solitary football sits, a football that children used to play with.
14. It should be noted here that only Tonik's brother is not opposed to this marriage; his father is strongly opposed to his son marrying a Jewish woman. See Cieslar, *art. cit.*, in Haggith, Newman (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 222.
15. While there, Tonik is terrified to see a man who has obviously lost his minds because of the suffering and who is incapable of doing anything but stare and repeat obsessively "Oswiecim, Majdanek, Treblinka", which shows that the Jews of Terezin were acutely aware of the fate awaiting them.
16. In an earlier scene, we see Hanna's elderly father who asks her to send him a tin of black shoe polish, something that she finds rather odd; the significance of this request is revealed later, when we see the old man being forced to march towards the deportation trains in a pouring rain, with black shoe polish dripping down his face. His attempt to escape death by dying his silver hair black is futile, the former dignified businessman being reduced to a grotesque figure, a pathetic clown whose makeup is slowly washed away.

17. Avisar, *op. cit.*, p. 56. Cieslar observes that Radok created a vision of Terezin “as a large, crazy, grotesque railway station, a vestibule to the extermination camps, as a place of chaos.” (*art. cit.*, in Haggith, Newman (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 220).
18. Speaking twenty-five years after the completion of the film, Radok confessed in an interview that “There really was such a choir, you know; and when it had performed its duty for the commission, all the children, along with their choirmaster, were gassed”. (Quoted in A. Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, New York: International Arts and Sciences, 1974, p. 45).
19. The inhabitants of Terezin were fully aware of the fact that deportation to the east meant death; one of the final sequences of the film shows Hanna, standing alone in the middle of an eerily quiet street, watching a train filled with prisoners leaving the station; as the train approaches, she does not move, so that the viewer is given the impression that the train and smoke from the locomotive literally swallow her, as she seems to disappear in the smoke – an allusion to the fact that she may have lost her life in a gas chamber. However, the director chooses to let his heroine live, but is quite unambiguous about the fate of the other occupants of the train.
20. As Avisar observes, “One of the infernal disparities of the Nazi world was the use of music to accompany the slave labourers and those marching into the gas chambers”. (*Op. cit.*, p. 58).
21. *Ibidem*, p. 59.
22. Referring to the motif of the piano in this scene, Annette Insdorf writes: “The penultimate scene in Theresienstadt of a young woman banging the upside-down remnant of a piano to celebrate liberation is breathtaking: the dissonant gong perfectly encapsulates how much they have lost.” (*Op. cit.*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, p. 257).
23. It should be noted here that cinematic expressionist was born in Germany in 1919, being strongly influenced by expressionist painting and theatre. Radok’s style, as the French critic Andre Bazin pointed out, is closer to Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* than to Robert Wiene’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (“Le Ghetto concentrationnaire”, *Cahiers du Cinema*, 2:9, February 1952, p. 59). As Bazin argues, “The astonishing thing is that here [in Radok’s film] the most questionable traits of expressionism paradoxically regain a profound justification. All the features of those [classic expressionist] works which could be considered outdated appear here very logical, [achieving] the most necessary [style of] representation for the reality of nightmares. Out of internal and in a certain way metaphysical fidelity to the universe of the concentrationary ghetto, the film, unwittingly, no doubt, evokes the world of Kafka, and, more strangely, that of de Sade.” (p. 61). Here, I would argue that the film also alludes to Dante’s *Inferno*, a motif that is recurrent in Holocaust art in general (especially in literary representations).
24. Avisar, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
25. Bosley Crowther called it “The most brilliant, the most powerful and horrifying film

on the Nazis's persecution of the Jews", while a poll conducted at the end of 1950 ranked it as the best foreign language film. (*New York Times*, August 28, 1950).

26. Josef Skvorecky, *All the Bright Young Men and Women: A Personal History of the Czech Cinema*, trans. by Michael Schonberg, Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1971, pp. 40-41.

### **Abstract**

The present paper focuses on two well-known representations of the Holocaust in Czech cinema, Alfred Radok's *Distant Journey* and Jan Nemeč's *Diamonds of the Night*, belonging to two distinct periods and cinematic traditions: the former is an illustration of avant-garde expressionism, blending documentary footage and fictional events in a highly stylised production, while the latter is representative for the so-called New Czech Wave movement, developed in the at the beginning of the 1960s under the influence of Italian Neorealism, the French Nouvelle Vague and the surrealist tradition in cinema. The analysis of the films will deal with the representation of the Holocaust as trauma in the two productions, each of them in the context of its own age.

### **Keywords**

Czech cinema, Holocaust, Alfred Radok, Jan Nemeč, expressionism, surrealism

