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KACHYNA

K a c h y ň a

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Complete Filmography

Colophon

Personal Introduction

I want to tell you in a couple of sentences something about me and my films. But before I start, I first want to thank the organisers for making this retrospective programme possible, for providing a cross-section of my whole life's work. I appreciate it very much, while I must agree that nobody is recognised as a prophet in his own country, because back home nobody ever organised such a representative programme about me. I am sure it will be interesting and even surprising - for me as well - to see my films made in a period stretching from the first unsteady film-maker's steps through the adult years up till the present day, as my personal and professional life gradually comes to its end.

If somebody asked me what the ideological basis of my films is, I would say it is a caring interest in the ordinary man. The person you could meet every day in a city street or at work and especially in the countryside. I want to see him having a good time or crying, to witness how he deals with his fate on this planet from the cradle to the grave. And in doing so I always think about my own fate and try to compare it with that of others. I come from a small town and though I have lived in Prague since I was twenty, I consider myself a man of the country. I love the countryside, landscapes, sun and rain, an atmosphere of mists, sunrise and sunset, the wind in the grass and the branches, the calm surface of grey ponds and rivers. And I love those ordinary people who inhabit the landscape: for their warmth and directness, their open look and behaviour, an openness that most of city-dwellers lost long ago.

And maybe this is also the source of my interest in the world of children and young people. They have quite a different scale of values than adults. They are not interested in property, career or a high army rank. Their relationships are more pure and they seem to me to be also more human than in the adults' world. I like to recall my own childhood and I can remember almost everything of that blessed period. The scents of those times constantly give me a new inspiration, emotional impulses and comfort. It's no coincidence that Sigmund Freud saw childhood as the father of adulthood and maintained that the first couple of years of human life are determinate for its future shape.

When I look back on my work, I realise that those films that I built on my own feelings, where I fully used my own experience and tried really hard to grasp life's truth, worked well.

I often read confessions by people who were very important and who, in looking back at their lives, maintain they would not hesitate to live it the same way if they could live it over again.

I must say I am jealous of them. I have quite the opposite feeling. I have sinned a great deal in my life and, if I could change it, I would find it a great privilege. If I could be born again I would certainly change and repair many things almost every step of the way. What a pity that is impossible. My films would have much less mistakes and I would surely improve my private life a lot. Unfortunately life has taught me it is too late. And life - in my case mercilessly bound to film-making, in spite of all traps, pains and obstacles, which it purposely and ruthlessly put in our way - is beautiful.

So what can I say? I will again put the yoke on my back, like Adam in *The Cow*, and try to bring a bit of a good earth up to the fruitless land. Because, that is the fate of a man on this Earth.

Karel Kachyňa
Prague, 30.11.94



Films as Moments of Happiness in Karel Kachyňa's Life

A year ago, when Karel Kachyňa told journalists that there are only few moments of a real happiness in a human life, he must have been referring to his films.

Since his first feature film in 1950 he has made more than 50 pictures (including two TV series) and many of them have been highly regarded at international festivals... But did the director mean that these moments when he puts on his smoking and bow tie were the happiest ones?

I remember visiting his house a couple of years ago, when the destiny of our country changed in such a propitious way. I realise, not without surprise, that there were no shining metal or crystal cups there, or diplomas in gilded frames hanging on the wall. He must have had them in a suitcase somewhere...

In general it was a rather strange visit and I had to adapt to the ruling habits of the house. The cosy house was situated on a slope under the royal castle, with fields of healthy vegetables grown for the castle kitchen under its windows. A lovely view. I asked about the history of the house. 'Plague morgue', Karel Kachyňa said dismissively and scrutinised the unexpectedly fresh-looking vegetables. 'This used to be a cemetery...

It is not always simple to recognise the typical ironic humour behind his words. I tried to look understanding and make a favourable impression on a dog who lay at his place and observed me watchfully as if knowing that my nosiness could disrupt order in the house. The house actually belongs to the dog, it is just formally registered in Kachyňa's name. I fawn on the dog and produce various comforting sounds, which he proceeds to ignore. He is not here as a watch-dog. He is a lector. When he notices that Kachyňa seizes up at his desk, the dog stands up and walks over to his chair. Kachyňa sighs and they go for a walk. Three times in the afternoon. Twice at night. Early in the morning. Towards noon. It depends on how work goes.

There are several rooms in the house. Seemingly they are for living in, but actually only films live in them. Each film has its own room. In one room the walls are covered with costume drawings, pictures of actors and quick sketches of new ideas. Pages of notes, magazines and encyclopedias are neatly piled by the typewriter. The dog knows that the work goes smoothly in this room and they do not have to go for a walk too often when here. Another film is living in the next room. Kachyňa is writing the first version of the script. A neat table again, but piled high with literature and dictionaries. A pile of books with bookmarks on a window-sill. The dog does not like this room so much. Work often grinds to a halt and they have to walk to Hradčany or Pohorelec at night. Nights are dark and cold here.

The dog is old and sometimes bad-tempered but does not protest. Film is a difficult thing. And there are just a few moments of a real happiness.

The other room is in fact the kitchen and the dining corner is used for the third film, which is already being shot. Instead of the books there are recordings everywhere. And many imperative messages with names, telephone numbers and dates. 'Hana - Song!' 'Esther - costumes!'

It is mail written by Kachyňa in the kitchen to Kachyňa in the living-room, which he delivers to himself. I study the messages and the dog snarls nervously - why should I pry in other people's mail. I anxiously mumble something as if he was a big dangerous dog - he is actually only a small terrier - and stretch my hand towards him.

'Don't stroke him', says Kachyňa who sees everything.

I obey, though I thought stroking is a good thing.

How to Introduce a Czech Master in a Foreign Country

It is very difficult to give a foreign viewer a satisfactory picture of Karel Kachyňa with all the humour, grief, education and joy he can experience from such simple things as a tree, a cloud or earth in such a limited number of his films. Maybe it is better to add a couple of words about his biography, as I do not believe Kachyňa will give any details about himself when he comes to Holland. It would not be like him. So, he made his first film in 1950, but because he was already 26 then and it was his final work at the Film Academy I have to start with his birth (1924) in a Moravian family from Vyškov. In this part of Moravia everybody paints and sculpts, all the houses are beautifully decorated and every village has its experts on painting Easter eggs. Kachyňa painted and photographed more and more eagerly. He always finished every work he started. But when you are 16 and the schools are closed because of Hitler's occupation and you have to do forced labour in a German factory, a future as a photographer seems very far away. But he was determined...

After the war he went to study at the new Academy of Arts, serving the most attractive of the Muses, film. He studied both camera and directing with another Moravian, Vojtěch Jasný. They graduated with a film they made together. The optimistic title *It is not Always Cloudy* exactly expresses the mood of the picture. In a semi-documentary story, professional actors and students act with the real workers on a farm somewhere near the border where, after the war, after the deportation of Germans, various adventurers and half-criminals but also enthusiasts started a new life.

The message of the film was optimistic, and had to be, in an age when pessimism was politically incorrect. František Daniel, who studied at the Moscow Film Academy cooperated with Kachyňa and Jasný on scenario, Kachyňa and Jasný directed, shot and cut the film (two men of this trio have been teaching for years at American film schools).

In those days they were the first post-war graduates and they were rather older than present ones - having lost a year or two at the front or, if they were lucky, in a labour camp. Jasný and Kachyňa continued to work in tandem. Their optimistic films were about people who wanted to do a productive work in the first years of liberty. The productivity was a subject of conversation of their young heroes even while making love, or rather instead of it, because love was seen as something so private and even reactionary that it did not belong in film. The young female members of Communist youth organisation helped to combat sexuality by wearing flat shoes, blue boyish shirts and being politically conscious.

Today, people laugh at it all. And that's a good thing. But sometimes I also witness real indignation. How does Kachyňa react to it? He never gets upset - he just nods. It is the nodding of a man who can not be surprised by any disaster because he has always expected it. It is also a certain type of humour, not too loud, or showy. It is the humour of the silent voice and exact, simple sentences. If I did not know that Kachyňa comes from the country of wine and ornaments, I would say his humour has very British dimensions.

The dog bit me because I *did* stroke him.

Sometimes, when Kachyňa films abroad or takes his film to some festival, the terrier goes on holiday. The dog jumps into the back of a little Fiat and the driver heads for the South. Two hours later they arrive at the Cabrádeks summer house. It is a real holiday. The dog does not have to wander through Hradčany with Kachyňa, at night he can sleep and forget all about films.

A long time ago, when he didn't yet own a dog, Kachyňa got 'chits' allowing him to shoot films (the chits were most important under socialism; Miloš Forman, who only had chits for writing scenarios, could not get a camera from the studio and had to shoot his first film with his own equipment). He went to China with Vojtěch Jasný where they shot - on the orders of the Czechoslovak Army - a series of reports about our brothers - Chinese soldiers - on how they do folk dancing and send us their greetings. They made several films full of Socialist clichés but also with beautiful visual compositions. When the Chinese soldiers ceased to be our beloved brothers, the films were all banned at once. But nobody would use the word 'banned' then. The films were simply withdrawn from circulation. Everything was so simple. From the moment the film industry was nationalised (as the first of all branches of industry, as early as 1946) all activities connected with film were centralised. This centralisation made it possible to keep everything under control. Not only the distribution of finance but also every written word and every meter of film. That was the beginning of directive aesthetics. A megalomaniac apologist for Soviet schematism, Mikhail Chiaureli, arrived at a film city above Prague (Barrandov) to make his *'Fall of Berlin'*. In this light Kachyňa's and Jasný's *It is not Always Cloudy* looked like a fresh gust of cinema vérité or maybe Italian Neo-Realism. The freshness of view was only later deformed, said a young film critic at the time, under the pressure of a drama of pathos. Pathos has always been a foreign element in Czech theatre and film. Czechs had no use for bunting, because the flags we had to honour were not our own but usually those of our larger neighbours, whether we liked it or not. So Czech art had to find various ways to communicate very intimately with the audience: mystification, parody, demythologisation of big concepts...

The educative function of art was overestimated under socialism or even promoted to its main aim. 'Film is the most important of all arts', V.I. Lenin is said to have said and our general director of the state film had this slogan on the head of his writing paper.

One can hide a lot behind such a slogan. The market value of film was suppressed (only in capitalism does one measure art in terms of money) and the small national film industry produced films of 'greater importance' which nobody wanted to see.

I am still rather angry when I think about that dog, though he has now been in a dogs' paradise for years.

I woke up in the morning and did not feel like getting up yet. The terrier came to my bed and I thought it was his way of saying good morning and that I should be friendly. I mumbled some servile 'come on, nice dog' and wanted to scratch him behind his ears. And then it happened. The movement of his head was faster than lightning. My finger was bitten before I started. He did it without any warning.

The wound started to bleed immediately. 'You little shit', I said with surprise and got out of my bed. He stayed calm, did not flinch. When we were preparing our breakfast with Kachyňa I showed off a bit with my bandaged hand. Kachyňa did not say anything, but he seemed to be nodding his head a bit. I was irritated.

'The monster bit me', I said.

It did not make any impression on him. 'Did you touch him?'

'I did, but...'

'I told you not to stroke him. He is a Prague stray and he always takes care of himself. You know how: by stealing. He knows that when they touch his neck they want to catch him and it can cost him life. And he has a defensive reflex.'

I was ashamed to ask whether I should look for a doctor. Or at least some iodine. Prague stray! Kachyňa should have bottles of iodine everywhere.

We did not talk about it any more.

A terrier with the experience of being an outlaw should understand that a man like me has no bad intentions.

Some reflex! It was bleeding all morning.

Jasný and Kachyňa split up; the era of heroes is over

Kachyňa and Jasný split up in the late fifties and each of them went his own way. Were their concepts and directions completely different? I do not think so. I think Karel Kachyňa tends to work as a couple and likes the tension of support and control between the partners. Nevertheless he needs to be the one who gives the film the final shape. He actually needs a literary partner, who can guard the ground plan of the building, who can write firmly hewn and still innerly rich characters.

Since 1959, when Kachyňa made his famous *King of Šumava*, he was always a co-writer of the scenario but directed himself. Jasný was himself an independent and ambitious director and could not play the role of Kachyňa's literary collaborator for ever. When the years of disciple were over, they split up.

Kachyňa soon found his new theme and became famous through his *King of Šumava*. It was a cult film for the young generation whose idols were denied to them – the scout-organisation was declared an enemy movement, Westerns disappeared from the cinemas. And here they saw a thriller about men guarding the borders, without political phrases. Romantic hero, wild nature, well dosed tension. The frantic success of the film lasted for many years.

King of Šumava already has the features of Kachyňa's method. He is in his element when he can rely on the script (he has never written his own story). He not only modifies another writer's text, he often even changes it completely, he often visually feels scenes written as dialogues. Kachyňa likes a sequence of film images which can do without verbal stuffing. He is extremely strong in the scenes when images move the story forward.

Sometimes, the critics blame him for being too obsessed by this visual expressiveness. They blame him for hiding weak parts of a scenario by visual ornaments – could it be the influence of Moravian ornamented houses and Easter eggs? But actually Kachyňa only plays visual tricks in those moments of the film where the script wears thin. In his best film you would never find a single ornament which would hamper the story or will only try to please the viewer. Kachyňa hates to repeat things; he tries to avoid it even by not automatically casting an actor to a role he was once successful in; he is a screen-test fanatic. He does them even with the most famous actors – who have more than fifty films to their name. Or a hundred. Some of them, whose every wrinkle is known and loved by the audience, do not understand. They seem to think: 'Doesn't he know my films, isn't this director crazy?'

One of Kachyňa's students at the Film Academy was making a film. His professor asked how it was going. The student said with fear in his eyes: 'It is not going well.'

It's out of control. The master plays... well, he simply plays something else.'

Kachyňa nodded of course. 'Did you do screen tests? I always told you to do the tests'.

The young talent clips his swollen eye-lids. 'How could I? With the master!'

'Yes, precisely with him,' Kachyňa said. 'You should always do the tests. With everybody!'

'I will, I will for sure,' the young man repeats. 'But what to do now? Could you please...'

Kachyňa nods. This habit must be quite irritating for some people. 'You must tell him you made a mistake. That you need a different actor!'

The young man refused to consider such a situation. 'Tell the master...'

'Yes' said Kachyňa a bit impatiently. 'Tell the master or whoever plays it. It is your film, isn't it? You must be satisfied with it. Always start with the tests. Go to him and stop being mad at him and me, we are not to blame!'

Of course, in the late fifties, when Kachyňa celebrated the success of 'The King of Šumava', he did not yet teach at the film academy. At that time he started his series of films for children - the theme which returns regularly in his films. It was a time when a classical hero of socialist films was gradually replaced by an anti-hero. One could see less and less of those healthy athletes who live to a happy ending. They were replaced by real people with real problems. As if the authors ceased to be obsessed by the world around us and started to scrutinise the world within ourselves. Surely, there were many external influences which contributed to this change, beginning with the political turn after the revelation of Stalin's crimes, through the cultural situation in Europe and the birth of the French Nouvelle Vague.

Our participation in the Brussels EXPO in 1958 was also very important. Zeman's *Invention of Destruction* won the Grand Prix and *Laterna Magica* and *Polyecran* by the brothers Alfred and Emil Radok brought them a lot of success. Before their exile the brothers Radok, personalities of great creative and technical inventiveness, managed to help Miloš Forman and other talents, at least those who did not have to emigrate as well. Czech art has always been connected by an umbilical cord with its exiles. And there were always enough of them.

At the end of the fifties the situation in Czechoslovak film worsened because of a cruel decree by the so-called State conference, at which several films were banned for political reasons. But on the other hand, this nonsensical, publicly proclaimed ban united many film-makers to protest.

And that was when Karel Kachyňa met Jan Procházka.

Ten Years of Cooperation: 12 Films

Jan Procházka (1929–1971) was of a Moravian agricultural stock and was an enthusiastic functionary of the Communist Youth organisation, a builder of collective farms. His first book of reports describing this milieu was a disaster. After this failure he was silent for years and his next book published in 1960 won him a literary prize. Procházka soon started to write film scenarios. The first film he made with Kachyňa, *The Bounds*, was not a success, but soon after that they started a remarkable series of lyrical films about young girls growing up. The most successful of them was *Suffering* (1961).

Hope (1963), a shocking and exceptional film at the time, started a so-called black series of films which were openly critical of society. *Hope* is a story of two outcasts – who officially did not exist under Socialism – an alcoholic and a prostitute. Procházka found a little spark of light in their hearts which society always quenched and which he kindled with such a care as any – even the smallest hope – deserves. A tramp, Lucin Šavliř – a living chronicle of Socialist building sites and plants – is an unreliable old lag. His counterpart is the half gipsy Magdalena, whose house serves as a refuge for lonely pub deserters. Their love story is as thin as a curl of smoke from a smouldering rag. Lucin humiliates Magdaléna because others humiliate him. Will he come back to her? The film does not give an answer. Maybe only by its promising title. For the leading roles Kachyňa chose a great character actor, Rudolf Hrušínský, and a singer, Hana Hegerová – a very unconventional combination.

For ten years Kachyňa filmed only scenarios by Procházka who, being incredibly productive, not only supplied other film directors with his themes but also published his own books, wrote critical articles for youth newspapers and still managed to be active in politics.

But Karel Kachyňa worked exclusively with him for ten years and the films they made together were strikingly better than those Procházka made with other directors.

In the 20th-anniversary year of the liberation of the Czechoslovak Republic by The Red Army, they made a film *Long Live the Republic!* (1965). In those days, anniversaries were used to make a big film (especially in the Soviet Union; Eisenstein could only work within that framework).

However, *Long Live the Republic!* was a very exceptional and un-conventional case. The title is intended ironically. Procházka's most important text up to that point reflects his own memories of childhood, together with the scepticism of a 36-year-old writer. The story demythologises the legend of victory. It is narrated by a 12-year-old outsider, despised by other children for not belonging to the caste of rich farmer families.

His own father thinks it is necessary to beat him every day...

Maybe I should explain how it was possible for the strict censorship to be so tolerant of this creative couple. Procházka's political authority certainly played an important role here: he was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, where he made it to the top thanks to his articles and his popularity among young people. He was even a friend of the president, Antonín Novotný, who used to invite him for chats at Prague castle, whenever the party got into trouble with writers or film-makers. But the general climate could also be described as a 'thaw' of the hardest icebergs. More and more reformists were appearing at the top of the communist party.

Fighting with problems, often close to a catastrophe and a ban on working, the artistic level of Kachyňa and Procházka's next few openly-critical films increased. In 1966 they made *Coach to Vienna*, their most controversial film, which dealt with a subject which was always a strict taboo in socialist Czechoslovakia: the darker side of the guerilla movement during World War II.

The film was discussed at the top and was banned during shooting. But Procházka pressured the president to let Kachyňa finish his film. At the Karlovy Vary Film Festival, there was complete silence during and after the screening and the audience seemed shocked. Without any trace of the liberating humour of the previous film, the ambiguous truth of *Coach to Vienna* resulted in disillusionment. The critics could not accept it. Only Polish critic Michalski underlined the general validity of this film, which is about morals - not only in connection with a concrete story from the Second World War but about war as such in which everybody is necessarily a victim.

In their best films, Procházka and Kachyňa revealed the truth about their country and people on the wrong side of official dogmas. And the right side looked shabby and false in their films.

Outsiders definitively replaced heroes.

Because all the nation was an outsider.

In 1967 the series continued with another critical drama, built as a biblical legend - *Holy Night*. Both authors returned to the theme of forced collectivisation of agriculture, which they once portrayed with such a naive optimism some years before. Risking their professional future they managed to clear their names with this mature film.

It Will Always Be Cloudy

'The weeks of higher pill consumption, the nights of the long cigars are here.' (Procházka). In that period Kachyňa probably got used to troubles and learned to accept them with a shrug. During the day he was shooting, at night he was in the mixing room waiting for Procházka's telephone calls. 'They said... They concluded... It is not completely lost yet... In any case you should finish it, then we'll see...'

They were not alone though, the movement of the Czechoslovak new wave was at its zenith, uniting various generations of film-makers and writers. It seems this narrow connection between film and literature had several motifs: film-makers needed the exact formulation of moral problems of their time. Writers met this wish because they found out that film interpretation helped to create a wider audience for their work.

In 1967 Václav Havel was asked by a group of film-makers to read a protest letter at the session of the Association of Czechoslovak writers. Some MP said of them that they were the enemies of 'working people' because their films were unintelligible or offensive. Film-makers defended their right to free expression...

A so-called Prague Spring soon followed, resulting in the invasion of the 'brotherly armies' on 21 August, aiming to defend Socialism against counter-revolution.

Kachyňa and Procházka made two films which are among the best of that period.

Funny Man was finished after the invasion and was only distributed for a short period. A 60-year-old cybernetician, who used to be imprisoned in a concentration camp under Stalinism, undergoes heart surgery. He can live again but has no hope of getting his work and family back. A bitter film which ends with a hopeful message.

The Ear was the last film in the series of the authors' intimately-stylised allegories. It was immediately banned and only premièred when the 20-year-old 'normalisation' regime of Gustáv Husák fell apart.

Procházka was deprived of an opportunity to work and fell ill. Their last joint film, an adaptation of a children's book by the Australian writer, Alan Marchal, could not appear under Procházka's name. Ota Hofman, their mutual friend and colleague was credited as the scenario writer of *Jumping Over Puddles Again*. The film was successful in many countries though the foreign viewer must have had missed the feeling of identification with the main character, a disabled boy. After the events of August, the Czechoslovak viewers felt that the boy believing in his recovery was a metaphor for all of us.

There were many more film stories found in Procházka's legacy, but Kachyňa had to wait for another 20 years to be allowed to use them...

Kachyňa was fired from the Academy due to a tragi-comic event. One of his students made a film titled *Uninvited Guest* about an alien man who disturbs the life of a married couple...

It was soon after the invasion of 1968. The irresistible actor Pavel Landovský played the leading role and the audience was having a good time. The only problem was that Kachyňa was the professor of the talented young director, and he was invited to come to the Police who were governed by the KGB in those days. They pointed out that the uninvited guest was a reference to the presence of foreign troops. Despite the fact that Kachyňa pointed out to the police that the script for this film already existed long before the invasion, and the reference was only coincidental, this didn't convince them. Of course, Kachyňa was unable to teach any more.

The next film Kachyňa was to make after the incident was a costume biography of Alexandre Dumas. In the introductory comments to the script we can read: 'Dumas' characters are honest, straightforward and brave'. We can also read that good always prevails over bad and life over vanity. And also that Dumas' men do not know what scepticism or nihilism is. They are not afraid of obstacles and fight for justice...

Still this wasn't playing it safe enough. The actor who played in it fled the country (just like so many other actors, film directors, camera operators, writers, doctors, technicians) and as soon as a name of an emigrant appeared in the credits, a film was put on ice. Sometimes, exceptionally, it could be screened without credits - but only when it was possible to cut the whole role of the emigrant out of a film.

Encyclopedias and monographs published at that time by the Film Institute simply left out many films and film-makers. Such books left out two of Kachyňa's films, in others some actors are missing...

When the exhausted Procházka died, Kachyňa started to look for a new partner, but cruel fate took one after another from him. He lost Ota Pavel, Rudolf Kalčík and Dušan Hamšík. He outlived Jan Otčenášek and Ota Hofman; death took them away and took his wife as well.

It seems quite incredible that in this difficult period he made several national films, which stood out over the film production of many years. *Loves Between Raindrops*, and two films after stories of Ota Pavel, *Golden Eels* and *The Death of the Beautiful Roebucks*, film versions of Adolf Branald's *Attention*, *Doctor's Round* and *The Nurses*.

The New Situation Called Czech Film-making

It is probably not necessary to say that after the victory of democracy by the Velvet Revolution of November 1989, Kachyňa was offered a job at the Film Academy again and that all his films were taken off ice (together with films by Jiří Menzel, Pavel Juráček, Jaromil Jireš, Vojtěch Jasný, Jan Kádár and Elmar Klos, Alfred Radok, Věra Chytilová, Miloš Forman, Ivan Passer, Zdeněk Sirový and others; Hynek Bočan could even finish his incomplete films after 20 years) and that everything returned to normal. But was it really normal?

Many artists returned from exile (excluding Forman, Kundera or Jasný), many were rehabilitated. In this connection I have to recall a curious story of a man, who emigrated to Holland as an expert on nuclear chemistry and appeared in his home country 20 years later as the film director of an excellent film, *Wings of Fame*, with Peter O'Toole and Colin Firth. This Otakar Votoček graduated at the Film Academy in Amsterdam which, considering the result, must be a very good school.

After the revolution it was important to abolish the colossal state organisations, which hampered a real enterprise and made the development of market economy and a necessary competition impossible.

In 1990 the central management of Czechoslovak film was abolished and the avalanche it caused broke the film industry in no time. Film production was separated from distribution, several small studios and new organisations were founded and the whole structure fell apart without any replacement. The whole process was further complicated by all kinds of political changes, long-lasting negotiations about new laws concerning privatisation and finally the unfortunate division of the republic.

The present situation could be described as follows. Cinema attendances dropped radically, film material, technical equipment and various services became increasingly expensive, the invasion of American action films which we have had to consume for the last three decades now fill the gaps in our education, and finally new and poor television stations are being founded hoping to get rich by broadcasting very cheap American pulp.

The annual film production fell from 35 by approximately half, but films are still made, although nobody understands where the money comes from.

However, the system of state grants has already started and audiences are getting fed up with car chases and space inhabitants so feel like enjoying a good film again. In 1990 Kachyňa could finally make his Czech-French co-production film *The Last Butterfly* about Jewish prisoners and especially about children in the Teresienstadt

concentration camp. This is an unusually big production for Kachyňa and deals with a painful subject, which had been tackled in Czech films at least twice before: in Radok's genial *Long Journey* (*Daleká cesta*, 1949 - which has practically not been screened for 40 years) and Zdeněk Brynych's *Transport to Paradise* (*Transport do ráje*, 1962).

Both films mentioned had big problems with distribution. The Communist regime was just as anti-semitic as the Nazis, though it had never been officially admitted. In political processes which were set up according to the Stalinist model in the early fifties in Bohemia, the accused person was described as 'an offender of Jewish origin', as we can see in Costa Gavras' *The Confession* (1970).

The next Kachyňa film, *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town* was financed by Czech television. It was a scenario found in Procházka's legacy and Kachyňa was supposed to have made it 20 years earlier. A warm story of an outsider as young as Olin (*Long Live the Republic*), rootless like Lucin Šavliř (*Hope*) takes place in a hospital (like *High Wall*, *Funny Man*, *The Nurses* and many others). A hospital always hosts a lot of outsiders. This one is of a fighting kind, and, always expecting a trap, he bites even the hand that wants to stroke him. But he also helps the weaker ones, a Robin Hood in pyjamas. Despite the competition of talented débutantes and intriguing post-modernists who have invaded our cinemas, the film was at the centre of critical attention thanks to its artistic qualities.

Several projects were waiting for its realisation in Kachyňa's house. He managed to find a new partner in script-writer Karel Čabrádek, who is strong in lyrical stories about relationships and nature.

Now he could start with another scenario Procházka prepared for him years ago. It was an adaptation of an old story with a strong humanistic impact. He called it *The Cow*. Kachyňa and Čabrádek adapted the scenario and again made the film with television money. This time Kachyňa chose young people to co-operate: a very talented Petr Hojda as director of photography, Radek Holub, the actor from avant-garde Prague theatre, and the occasional actress Alena Mihulová, who created a very demanding leading role of a contemporary girl living her life without happiness.

The Cow is a simple story about the hard life of poor people and about the beauty and cruelty of nature. *The Cow* is not only the most mature and stylistically most pure of Karel Kachyňa's films. It is also a reminder for a society which once promised to leave the overcrowded waiting-room of Socialism for a better future suddenly found itself on a messy market-place passing itself off as an international trade centre.

For Karel Kachyňa, *The Cow* has a double significance, because a woman of great talent, Alena Mihulová, soon after became his wife. Years before, he had entrusted her with the leading role in *The Nurses*, which substantially contributed to its huge success.

Paradoxically a newly-founded institution, *The Czech Lion*, whose one hundred jury members annually present awards for the best Czech films, did not include Kachyňa's *The Cow* in their voting list, the reason being it was a television production. Therefore this megalomaniac imitation of the American Academy denied the Czech cow a Czech Lion.

It is still very difficult to find money to realise upcoming projects. Kachyňa plans to film *Julia* after Bohuslav Martinů's opera and *I was Waiting on an English King* based on a book by Bohumil Hrabal. Although the scenarios are already worked out to the last detail and have already made their journey from the living room to the kitchen, their realisation was delayed.

In 1994 Kachyňa made a 5-part television series *Swell Season*. The book was written by one of the most important Czech post-war authors, Josef Škvorecký as a bundle of autobiographical short stories about his youth as a jazz musician and a student always in love in a small town during the German occupation. Because the main character in the book, Danny Smiřický, is not only autobiographical but also appears in Škvorecký's most important novel *The Cowards*, Danny is very popular in Bohemia.

A festive première of the serial before it was broadcasted on television was in a cinema in Nachod, where the exile writer Josef Škvorecký came to celebrate his 70th birthday.

The film director also attended and probably nodded his head when the mayor of the town presented the famous writer with a saxophone, which Mr. Škvorecký immediately tried out.

Maybe I should explain why I stress Kachyňa's nodding in the situations when there is no reason to nod at all, maybe more to shake one's head.

No, it is not a tic. To really enjoy this sceptical nod, you should see Kachyňa-the-actor. I don't mean someone running across the screen like Hitchcock used to do, but Kachyňa's episodic roles of stern sceptics in other directors' films: as a censor in the absurd comedy *Unsure Season* or in *Elementary School* (by Jan Svěrák, nominated for an Oscar in 1991) where he plays a role as a school inspector who comes to check the functioning of a problematic teacher. There is a lawn behind the school where boys play football under the supervision of a new teacher. The director of the school and inspector observe the game.

'There have been no problems with him up till now,' the director says servilely. 'He has a discipline...'

The inspector, who knows better, puts his lips together, nods, and replies:

'Keep him in a boys' class!'

The director: 'Yes.'

The ball rolls towards them. The teacher is encouraging the boys.

The director can not hide his curiosity: 'He is said to have taught music at a girls' school. Is that so?'

Inspector: 'It is.'

Director: 'So he came here for punishment?'

The inspector does not answer, but repeats: 'Keep him in a boys' class...'

Maybe I described Czech film-making as if it were the centre of artistic Europe. That would be untrue and exaggerated picture - but theatre and film are truly much more than just entertainment for us, because so often they served as a mirror in which we could see the picture of our real morals.

We once had a great author, Karel Čapek, who died exhausted just before the war when he was nominated for the Nobel Prize. Many years after the war his books couldn't be published. As late as 1953, his *Pictures from Holland* appeared and I read that Capek gave Dutch society as an example to us, because the Dutch understood one very important fact. The difference between a big and a small country is not in the dimensions of mind or land. A small country must do better work because it has no room for rubbish. I did not understand everything yet, because I was always taught that the only good thing come from empires.

Then I participated in some film festival where I saw Bert Haanstra's *Glass*. When we left the cinema our glory was quite faded. So many sharp observations about human work, so much poetry! And all that without a single word. In this light our documentaries looked like radio lectures. Then in that theatre, I understood what Čapek meant.

That is why I am glad the Dutch will see *The Cow* on the screen. Mr. Hojda, the cameraman of this film, also deserves it.

Boris Jachnin

Painful Departures from a Childhood Paradise

At the very beginning of his own directing career, when he made adventure films about manly soldier-heroes, the director *Karel Kachyňa* decided to picture something so fragile and serene as a child's soul. It was a grand gesture by the author, because *Karel Kachyňa* devoted all his creative ingenuity to children's films as well. In his attempts he was aided by his harmonious cooperation with the scriptwriter *Jan Procházka*. Very specific works arose that way, and with their poetry and lyrics they also cast a spell on adult viewers. For them these films revealed that a child has his own big problems too, the problems that see a child through the period of his adolescence and maturity and often speed it up. Departures from a childhood paradise are usually very painful indeed. And that is not only linked to the horrors and fears of wartime, or when a young hero is distressed by the personal tragedy of a cruel illness.

'War is unnatural for men,' said *Karel Kachyňa* when he was shooting his first children's film in which he deals with a theme that common not only in Czech cinema: the relationship between a child and war. The film *Práče* (Fighters) from 1960 is an adaptation of *Jan Mareš*' book published one year before the film was shot. In his book *Jan Mareš* examined his own experience from battles of the Czechoslovak unit founded in Russia to fight alongside the Russian army. The author identified with the character of the soldier *Krupka* who, after the restoration of peace, remembers the fortunes of a young boy who was liberated by the soldiers from a concentration camp and looked after by laundry staff.

There is no narrator in this film: everything the little boy experiences (and he is really still a child) is seen through his eyes. That's why the reflected reality is not cruelly naturalistic but poetic, also thanks to the work of cameraman *Josef Illík*, who was to become *Kachyňa*'s resident director of photography. This method made it possible for young viewers to identify more easily with the fortunes of the film hero - their contemporary.

Shots and scenes are not boringly similar: some of them are dramatic and thrilling, others lyrical, almost moving, and there are also scenes in which there is no lack of humour. The same can be said about the performance of the actor playing the main character, *Michal Koblic*, whose acting also corresponds with this variability. His talent can best be seen in those moments when the little boy wants to persuade his adult uncles that they are not right in seeing him as a little boy. He tries to form the most adult facial expression (which creations are of course appreciated by adult viewers only).

But the little boy is going to find out that military laundry deep behind the front-line is also part of major military events. The boy decides to go and practice shooting in an open place. When he's successfully hit the target several times, enemy artillery starts up. The sight of a child shaking with fear of an unknown, almost apocalyptic horror, is one of the most moving scenes ever made denouncing military might. The camera looks down from on high and follows the child among exploding shells. The characters of adult soldiers are, thanks to their actors, also remarkably featured. For adolescent viewers it is important that these soldiers have some visible and audible features of identification: one of them is fat, another one has glasses, the third one stutters, the fourth is a temperamental Slovak mountaineer, the fifth, also temperamental, has also the gift of witty eloquence.

The little boy doesn't remain the only child with the soldiers for long. A little Slovak girl loses her way and crosses the border looking for her cow. Our hero is not very enthusiastic about the presence of the girl - only men fight wars, don't they?

At the premiere of this film it was clear that Karel Kachyňa's creativity was success. In the wave of Czech films about children as helpers of the partisans and Russian films about little boys really fighting in the first line alongside partisans, Karel Kachyňa's film was the only one to succeed in showing a child at war with great understanding for a child's inner feelings. For Russian films always pathetically stressed the responsibility with which children became fighting soldiers.

And what is our hero doing? At the end of the film we follow Czech soldiers as they cross the border of their republic. The old soldier who takes care of both children is touched. The children are aware of the importance of the moment too. But when they notice a pear tree standing in the field, they begin to run there. Little František immediately takes off his military shirt with badges fastened on it, and climbs the tree. His masculine nature tells him to throw one of the pears at the girl. The natural behaviour of the little fellow gives the film an incredibly human dimension. For it is also very good for adult viewers to realise that a person wearing a uniform - however old he might be - is just a person longing for the sweet taste of the fruit of paradise.

Four years before the film *Práče* (Fighters) was shot, an autobiography appeared in Melbourne by the well-known Australian writer Alan Marshall: a story of a boy who bravely conquers the effects of a cruel illness - polio. In 1971 Karel Kachyňa filmed the book with the title *Jumping Over Puddles Again* (the screenplay was written by Jan Procházka, but after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia his name could not be mentioned on the credits). The story was moved by the authors from the grassy expanses of Australia, where herds of horses roam free, to turn-of-the-century Bohemia.

This was then still the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire called the 'Belle Epoque': a little town with a famous stud-farm, horse-races and horsemen in jolly uniforms, promenade concerts by an army ensemble, showy officers' uniforms, black dinner suits of honourable men and long robes of pink ladies, the arrival of the first clumsy automobile... The period of Art Nouveau: elegance combined with quietness and harmony.

All these images are reinforced by pictures of a blue sky dotted with clouds, green meadows and yellow cornfields, glistening horses' backs as they bathe in the river at dusk. And in this setting, a little boy whose dream it is to become as famous a jockey as his father, until his dream is tragically cut off by evil virus.

A strong inner power however enables the little boy to overcome the obstacle in his life - in the saddle of his beloved horse. Again Karel Kachyňa interweaves the scenes of the boy's suffering and pain with lyrical passages of life-giving nature, pictorial expression of the boy's feelings, fantasies and longing for space and freedom. And no filmic reflection of that space and freedom is more impressive than the wild galloping of the horse and the horseman towards the boundless horizon...

In this way the film moves from cruel reality to a lightened, dreamy level. The artistic poetry of the pictures is reinforced by music. For the viewers, following the heroic fight of the boy is a catharsis. It is very gratifying that the creators of the film have achieved this without sentimentality or exaggerated pathos.

The relationship between child and horse is a theme which appears more often in the world's cinematography. Perhaps it has been most passionately expressed in the post-war poetic film *White Mane* by Albert Lamorisse. The conclusion reached by the French director at the polemical end of the famous film is cruel: according to him, we can find beauty and freedom only in death, which we are able to accept from our own will. Kachyňa's film *Trápení* (Suffering, again made with Jan Procházka) rejects the idea of Lamorisse and says something else: it is necessary to save life in the name of love. The film is a lyrical story about a girl going through the emotional confusion accompanying that permanently repeating and yet so unusual transformation into a young woman. Emotional pressure finds a peculiar way out: an affection for a black horse, a poor thing which only gets hatred and beatings from people. Both creatures are equally alone, equally pushed aside for their refractoriness and intractability.

Kachyňa admirably succeeded in depicting the fragile fibre of the budding emotional relationship and the excitement with which the girl approaches the horse at the beginning. The shyness of the girl, her fear, but also her insuperable and urgent desire to touch the wild stallion and maybe to subdue him too, is impressive because it is so natural (Jorga Kotrbová who was chosen for the role of young Lenka later became a professional actress).

The film also has dramatic parts, especially at its end which reminds us of the end of *White Mane* (Kachyňa quotes this film in the way that Lenka watches it on tv). Along with Lenka 'the black mane' runs away towards the river. But he stops in time and relaxes. Life overcomes death.

The reflection of the emotional confusion of a girl attaining maturity does not exclude strong contrasts. Lenka can still play with boys, while at the same time longing for affection and an emotional relationship. The little girl Lenka still walks into a brook and runs around in a meadow, but the same young girl wears modern clothes and secretly tries to walk on her mother's high-heeled shoes. But what becomes the biggest contrast is that awakened feeling, until then strange and unknown, which brings tears to her eyes and causes her to see the world differently from her girl-friends.

The director, with cameraman Josef Illík, again showed his feeling for lyrical nature. We become aware of this while watching the takes of dawn and dew, glowing summer days and evenings or moonlit nights. It is pure poetry conjured up with the help of modern cinematography. The makers did not once spill into superficial attractiveness or kitsch.

In the next three years Karel Kachyňa, together with Jan Procházka, made two more films on the theme of girls attaining maturity, and so they set the seal on the 'emotional' trilogy. The oldest of those girls is Božena, the main character of the second opus called *Závrat* (Vertigo); she is already so 'mature' that she falls in love with an older, more mature man who, of course, is not interested in her. The purity of the girl's affection is even more transparent because the story is situated in the mountains, with a group of workers. The girl, the daughter of an innkeeper, is hurt by unrequited love and also because the beloved man is 'unfaithful' to her. The flow of the girl's affection and her desire contrast with the deserted location where only wind blows and electricity wires buzz monotonously. One cannot help thinking of the film *Trápení* (Suffering), its populated village full of its citizens action!

Of all three parts, the closing part of the trilogy, the film *Vysoká zed'* (The High Wall), contains the youngest character - the eleven-year-old Jitka. This is a Prague film, the capital of Czechoslovakia playing a major role. For in a big city, in its streets and on its corners, the lonely little girl gets even more lost. She too is insubordinate and unsubmissive, often appearing boyishly rapacious. She is a prisoner of the bizarre and sombre world of an old block of flats. Jitka runs away from the empty yard to climb over the walls, so the malicious and unfriendly caretaker tries to stop her by fitting barbed wire.

But one day Jitka can climb even the highest wall ever seen, the wall which protects a hospital with its big park from the outside world. Without realising it she finds herself

in the world of adults which can really do harm. In this way the film *The High Wall* becomes a lyrical, poetical expression of the inner feelings of a little being tossed about in the snares of emotions and longings. Little Jitka does not know, as opposite to the older Božena from the *Vertigo*, that her suffering has got an exact name: love. We have to understand the title of the film *The High Wall* in a symbolic sense too, unlike the titles of the two preceding parts of the trilogy.

The three films, shot in a short time and with similar themes, were too much for some critics. So some said *The High Wall* 'instead of enforcing the whole trilogy, is only a variation on the theme known from the film *Trápení* (Suffering)'.

The High Wall is not as dynamic as *Suffering*. The narrative is slow, it has a lot of pauses and delays. The objective world is again seen the subjectively through the main character. Jitka's climbing of the walls is steady and slow, as well as her later overture and befriending with a patient, a young man confined to a wheelchair. The shots of the young man, who emerges from his apathy in the young girl's presence, and who for this reason decides to fight with his own immobility, are made in a documentary way, with factual objectivity. Yet the seemingly non-dramatic scenes have their own inner tension. The expected fulfilment of the happy ending does not come, since beyond the high wall, which every one of us will climb one day, a bitter disappointment awaits us.

Jan Procházka introduced his screen-play with a motto: 'We still remember our high wall. And also the day when we climbed it for the first time, full of curiosity. The grief of the discoveries of those years seemed destructive to us. And later we were surprised how quickly we could forget them.'

Anyway, little Jitka has only come closer to the threshold of maturity. She still has to make some more steps. For her trip over the wall was more or less a coincidence. She still can come back, even though with a bitter feeling about what she experienced. She can come back for a while. But one day there will not be any come-back for her any more. She will become an adult.

More tragic is the discovery of the monstrously hypocritical and cruel world of adults by a boy called Olin, the main character of Jan Procházka and Karel Kachyňa's next film *Long Live the Republic!* His child's view of the last moments of the war in his native village, on the behaviour of the people, including his parents, which forms such a contrast with empty words about moral and humanity, is of course stylised, but in no way distorted. Procházka and Kachyňa do not, on the threshold of their creative maturity, hide their scepticism and disillusion with modern national history. Nor do they hide their annoyance at the betrayal of ideals and basic values of life, which cripples children's souls and which is unpardonable even in a tragic period of war.

This village boy is also affected by a horse. He goes through happy moments with it, especially when he rides the horse in a wild gallop, in the open country, towards

freedom and hope. It turns out that reaching this end was beyond their common power. If the little František from the film *Práče* (Fighters) is saved in his personal conflict with history, little Olin only watches, poor and slender, how history rushes along and kills his belief and hope in a new society.

Mainly thanks to the fact that the witness of events is a child, the authors could create the allegory which expresses the idea that a man is more like a grain of sand than a co-creator of history. That's why it is even more necessary, according to both authors, that art fulfils its human mission with its emphasis on love for the human being and compassion with his pains and troubles. And every adult man would be wrong if he thought that children's troubles and their pains are less than theirs.

Karel Kachyňa, alongside with Jan Procházka, came to such a mature recognition also because they both got to understand that for the making of films about children, one needs the same artistic potential as for making films for adults. That's why Karel Kachyňa has already become the living classic of children's film makers, and not only in the Czech cinematography.

Suffering

> *Czechoslovakia, 1961*

Screenplay: Jan Procházka, Karel Kachyňa

Director of photography: Josef Illík

Editing: Jan Chaloupek

Cast: Jorga Kotrbová, Jaroslav Nekočný, Milan Jedlička, Zora Jiráková, Pavel Bártl

The story of this lyric tale is set in the impressive South-Bohemian landscape. In a way the film is an homage to Albert Lamorisse's *The White Mane* (1952), which is quoted both in its story and visually. In *Suffering*, the symbiosis of man and nature is symbolised by a friendship between twelve-year-old Lenka and Prim, a black stallion.

Lenka's parents work all day in an agricultural cooperative and the girl, not yet aware of her womanhood, makes friends with the village boys and joins in their games. Just like them, she can catch fish with bare hands, walk backwards on a railing and ride a bicycle. Then one day she is enchanted by the black stallion Prim, considered by everyone to be untameable. But Lenka understands that his wildness and treachery are caused by maltreatment. She knows, that the horse can't be tamed by force, but only with loving affection. One day, after Prim runs away and is punished cruelly, a real friendship emerges between the horse and Lenka. She steals food for him and spends her spare time with him. When she overhears the new manager saying the horse is worthless and should be slaughtered, as soon as the farm gets new tractors, Lenka feels sorry for Prim and tries in secret to improve his life. This doesn't go unnoticed by the manager. He warns Lenka's parents and she must promise not to come close to the dangerous horse any more. However she can't keep her promise. She is convinced by now that the affection is mutual.

Prim falls ill. No one dares to approach him, only Lenka takes him out of his stable and keeps him moving, the only possible way to save his life. She leads him on a long leash, makes him run outside the stable, sensing no fear. At home, her escape is discovered. By then, Lenka, clamped to Prim's mane, flies like an arrow, away from the people. The whole village is looking for her. Finally they find an excavator in a sand-pit. The cured Prim is tied to it, Lenka is asleep inside the cabin, happy and more mature now.

Lenka's tale is narrated with an exceptional stylistic unity. Both critics and spectators, children or adults, appreciated the subtle way of capturing the conflict between a growing girl and the adults who, having lost their link to the nature long ago, consider her sensitivity rather as silliness or disobedient defiance. Besides, the theme of sexual maturation was attractive to young spectators. The film won prizes at the festivals of Cannes, Venice, Mar del Plata etc.



Vertigo

> *Czechoslovakia, 1962*

Screenplay: Jan Procházka and Karel Kachyňa

Director of photography: Josef Vaniš

Editing: Jan Chaloupek

Cast: Eva Šolcová, Petr Skála, Karel Hospodský, Oldřich Velen

A psychological study of a country girl, Božka, growing up and experiencing her passionate first love.

A team of geologists led by the engineer Perníkl is looking for tin. Five days a week they live in a country hotel managed by Božka's father. Impressively empty landscape is accentuated by drilling rigs the geologists use for their research.

Božka helps her father with cooking and cleaning and tries to keep secret her love for the wildest of them, driver Gába, who disappears with his truck every evening to see one of his mistresses. One day the engine of a drilling rig breaks down and everybody looks in vain for the driver and the truck. Gába is gone again and only Božka has any idea where he could be. She finds him with one of his ladies and kidnaps him.

On one occasion Božka provokes Gába so much he kisses her. However, alarmed by her youth and spontaneity he leaves again and spends the night with a girl. However, this new escapade gives him no satisfaction and he returns to the hotel in bad mood. Amidst Božka's young merry friends having a party in the hotel, he suddenly feels old and worthless. He retires to his room where a real surprise waits. Using the pretext of bringing him a cake, Božka is waiting for him there. Her whole attitude shows her love for him. Gába has to admit now he is in love with her too, but he controls himself and sends her back to her friends.

After waking up in the morning he finds the hotel silent and empty. Everyone is at the station to wave goodbye to Božka before she leaves to study in Prague. Gába now understands that the girl came to give him her last night. He hurries to the station to say goodbye, but he's too late. They might never see each other again.



The High Wall

> *Czechoslovakia, 1964*

Screenplay: Jan Procházka

Director of photography: Josef Vaniš

Editing: Jan Chaloupek

Cast: Radka Duliková, Vít Olmer, Helena Kružíková, Václav Lohniský, Josef Koza

A lyric tale of a eleven-year-old girl experiencing her first emotional turmoil. The story is set in Prague. Lessons are over, the children get out into the streets. Near to the bridge, Jitka separates from the other children and runs along the river. These are her favourite spots. In one of the huge piles of sand she has her own pit where she can dream; there are plenty of interesting pebbles around. She picks up a couple of them and walks home. Her family lives in an old apartment building. Her noisy return irritates the surly doorkeeper as usual. She intentionally brushes along the grid with a piece of iron and makes a huge din. She would like to disappear again, but is caught by her mother and sent shopping.

Jitka walks on the top of the walls and across the rooftops until she reaches a wood store. A high wall divides this world from a hospital garden. We see a nurse pushing a wheelchair. She leaves the patient in the sun near to the wall. This is what both, Jitka and the young man, wished. They start a conversation over the wall. It isn't the first time. Jitka climbs on the wall so that they can see one another. Now she can give him her present - the pebbles.

The young man is paralysed from the waist down after a car-crash. He should exercise his seriously-injured back, but he seems to lack the will. Jitka makes him walk. Yesterday he took six steps - why can't he do more today, ten maybe? However, one of the later attempts to walk fails and the man falls. He turns his helpless anger against the girl. The quarrel seems to turn the girl's sentiments from pity into a first, unconscious love. The young man is not aware of her feeling and a couple of days later when she comes to see him again, he sees him sitting on a bench in an intimate conversation with a young woman. They even kiss...

Jitka is so shocked she even can't cry. The tears come only when she is back on her side of the wall. Nevertheless, it's obvious that her youth will soon help her to overcome this sorrow.



Long Live the Republic

> *Czechoslovakia, 1965*

Screenplay: Jan Procházka, Karel Kachyňa

Director of photography: Jaromír Šofr

Editing: Miroslav Hájek

Cast: Zdeněk Lstibůrek, Naděžda Gajerová, Vlado Müller, Gustáv Valach, Juri Nazarov

1965 was the year of the twentieth anniversary of the liberation from Nazi occupation. That was a good occasion to make a film or write a book. Most of the works were solemn and glorifying, depicting the arrival of the Red Army. The novel 'Long Live the Republic' and its film adaptation, both by Jan Procházka was an exception. Procházka's story doesn't try to capture 'historically-objective' events. Instead, it depicted the liberation of a small Moravian village as seen through the eyes of a twelve-year-old boy whose system of values differs greatly from the one of the adults. The reality and dreams mingle in his mind and in this light the world looks quite bizarre. Kachyňa purposely does not distinguish the scenes of dreams and recollections by cinematic means, for instance by over exposure, as he did in the High Wall, which has surprising and often comic effect.

The story begins in the spring of 1945, when Olin Vaverka, called Pind'a, is at school. Other boys keep their distance, Pind'a's family is too poor to belong to the local farmers' caste. At home it is not better; his father certainly doesn't pamper him and at times only his mother can protect him from beating. The only Pind'a's friend is Cyril Vitlich, a groom from the local estate, with whom they share a common passion - dogs.

One day, Pind'a is sent out to cement for his father who wants to write TYPHOID on the gate - to repel either the Nazis or the approaching victorious army that is now within earshot. Pind'a hides all his treasures in the osiers. Here he sees many strange, for him inexplicable things: a fireman making love to a girl and German soldiers changing their uniforms for civilian clothing, in order to desert. When rumour spreads that the Russians are going to confiscate the horses, Olin tries to hide his father's horse and cart in the woods, but the Germans seize both. Pind'a's friend Cyril Vitlich is accused of collaboration with Germans and runs for his life. In desperation, he jumps into a well.

The story ends as it started: the boys are molesting Olin and the little outsider flees again to escape a superior power.



Holy Night

> *Czechoslovakia, 1967*

Screenplay: Jan Procházka, Karel Kachyňa

Director of photography: Josef Illík

Editing: Miroslav Hájek

Cast: Jana Brejchová, Mníslav Hofman, Gustáv Valach, Josef Kemr, Josef Elsner

This dramatic ballad is situated in a Moravian village in 1950, two years after the Communist take-over, when agriculture was subjected to forced collectivisation.

On a cheerless rainy day, watched by the armed 'People's militia', the farmers bring their cattle into the collective stables. The chairman Picin holds a solemn speech about the bright future, reminding propaganda films from Soviet Union.

Suddenly the gathering falls silent, hearing several gun-shots. The militia people run to Jan Konvalinka's farm, but it's too late: he lies dead amidst his cattle. He had shot them too rather than give them to the collective farm. At the same moment, Konvalinka's daughter, a nun called Miss, is walking from the station to the plundered farm where only a slightly backward groom by the name of Ambrož is left.

The farmers shirk work at the collective farm. The apparent armistice between both parties is only illusory. The farmers still keep hunting rifles they are supposed to hand over...

The Miss works as a pig-feeder. In her solitude, the young woman remains a mystery to everyone. With Christmas coming, she decides to go to church traditionally, on a decorated sleigh. The frightened priest tries in vain to dissuade her from doing so, afraid of the consequences of a forbidden mass. But her fanatical faith remains unshakable and she even makes Ambrož take a purgative bath. She herself puts on a clerical garb. Pious women wash the antique sleigh. Throughout the village a wave of religious exaltation arises. It starts to look like political resistance when the men decide to harness the 'collectivised' horses to the sleigh.

Picin, already helpless, calls for armed assistance. The crowd worships the Miss like the Holy Virgin. She blesses the people until finally the priest, offended by such a blasphemy, chases her from the temple into a snowstorm. Picin, blinded by fury, shoots a farmer: offer the village must pay for its resistance to the enforced 'shiny future' with a new death sacrifice. And it won't be the last one...

Next morning the militia leaves the village. On the white fields a black spot is seen - perhaps the nun's garb.

The film won the CIALC award in Venice 1967. Two years later it was banned and spent the following 20 years in a safe.





The Ear

> *Czechoslovakia, 1970*

Screenplay: Jan Procházka

Director of photography: Josef Illík

Editing: Miroslav Hájek

Cast: Radoslav Brzobohatý, Jiřina Bohdalová, Jiří Císler, Miloslav Holub, Milica Koloříková

Ludvík, a deputy minister, and his wife Anna are taken home by a chauffeur-driven car from a reception given by the President at Prague castle. Topsy Anna does not want to share Ludvík's anxiety about being followed, probably by the limousine with its lights out. A conjugal quarrel breaks out when the husband can't find the keys of their house. Strangely, the door-bell doesn't work either and the lights are cut off.

In the government residence next-door, odd things are happening, yet local people have already grown accustomed to black cars coming and going with strange visitors, mainly at night.

Inexplicably, the keys are found in the lock on the inside. Anna goes on drinking. She refuses to succumb to Ludvík's unease about an omnipresent 'ear' - a bug that could have been installed in their house without them knowing. After all, they got this luxury governmental house as a token of Ludvík's promotion not a long time ago.

Ludvík learns that his superior has been arrested and hurriedly looks for compromising documents to destroy them. Anna doesn't want to admit the presence of the Ear. She goes on talking with contempt about the 'Comrade' - as the president is called by his colleagues. When suddenly the bell rings, Ludvík prepares for his arrest. A group of drunken secret agents break in, a friend of Ludvík from the military service among them. The visitors behave very rudely. Anna locks herself in a room, while Ludvík forces himself into a friendly chat in which he learns that their task was only to arrest their neighbours. As soon as the house is quiet again, Ludvík and his wife want to make love. But the nervous strain has been too strong and the phobia of the Ear can't be suppressed easily. The excitement turns into a fight.

When the morning breaks, they crouch, tired to death, on the balcony, probably the only 'ear-free' place in their house. The phone rings: Ludvík was just appointed as a new minister. Only now a real horror takes possession of Anna ...

This film, banned immediately after it was finished, was only released in 1990.



Loves Between the Raindrops

> *Czechoslovakia, 1979*

Screenplay: J. Otčenášek, V. Kalina, K. Kachyňa

Director of photography: Jan Čuřík

Editing: Jiří Brožek

Cast: Vladimír Menšík, Lukáš Vaculík, Jan Hrušínský, Zlata Adamovská

The story is set in Žižkov, one of the Prague's working-class suburbs in the thirties, the time of a futile struggle by the petit bourgeoisie against competition from mechanised large-scale factory production. It is in this setting that the story of the shoemaker Vincenc Bursík is told. His family moves to the city from the country. For his wife, the change is too much and she dies soon after. Věra, the eldest of the children, leaves home, two sons, Pepan and Kajda, deliver the mended shoes to customers and collect small amounts of money. But business is going downhill and soon the bailiff knocks on the door. Bursík is forced to send Kajda to a second-hand shop to sell his dead wife's dresses. Kajda falls in love with the owner's pretty daughter Pája. To impress the girl, Kajda tells her he can walk between the rain-drops.

The old Bursík has also a new girl-friend. But when she sees the poverty in his house she refuses to live there and leaves him. In the meantime he undertakes one of his protest actions: he sets up a stand with his hand-made shoes in front of a shoe-shop selling cheap factory-made shoes from the giant Bata factory. His prices, of course, cannot compete.

Finally, Bursík goes bankrupt, his workshop must be sold and, as if that weren't enough, he finds out that his daughter works in one of the Bata shops.

The political situation in Europe worsens, Austria is annexed. Czechoslovakia is threatened, too. Kajda tries to make some money by giving private lessons. He introduces Pája to his brother. These two start dating as well. Such a matter can be resolved only by a duel. The brothers fight behind the fence where they used to play together in the lovely days of their childhood. Kajda fights bravely, he knows the right is on his side, but Pepan wins. Pája is desperate, she is pregnant, her father chased her out of the house. The defeated Kajda lets her have his room in the house. All three protagonists of the story see a much bigger threat. On 15 March 1939 German army units roll into Prague, the Nazi occupation begins...



The Death of the Beautiful Roebucks

> *Czechoslovakia, 1986*

Screenplay: Karel Kachyňa

Director of photography: Vladimír Smutný

Editing: Jiří Brožek

Cast: Karel Heřmánek, Marta Vančurová, Rudolf Hrušínský, Jiří Krampol, Lubor Tokoš

Ota Pavel (1930–1973) was a well-known sport reporter. Just before his premature death, his autobiographical short novels, describing his youth in a Jewish family, were published in book form. They were a revelation to every one. The most unforgettable in Pavel's stories is the character of the father with his insatiable zest for life. He never gives up, his ideas on how to get money are always brilliant, only quite often they get him into trouble. Around him is a colourful mixture of charming characters from the pre-war era. However, a great drama emerges from this idyllic life: defenceless little people are going to be devoured by the Nuremburg anti-Jewish laws.

Leo Popper is exactly such a father. He becomes a commercial traveller selling Elektrolux vacuum cleaners. He hopes to enter in the wealthy ranks of the Prague society and make some more money for his family. He indeed makes himself very popular among rich ladies and becomes the most successful salesman of the company. His old dream, to buy a pond for carp, can come true now.

One day, in Leo's favourite pub, he hears about the Nazis establishing a 'Protectorate' of Bohemia and Moravia. This turns the new fortune of the Jewish family upside down. The director of the company is forced to fire Leo. He offers him a job in Rio de Janeiro instead but father Popper refuses. His home is here. In the meantime their pond has been confiscated by the army. However, before Christmas Leo with his youngest son make a hole in the ice and catch all the carps.

When the two elder boys obtain an order for transport to a concentration camp, the father decides to find some good food for them – they should get stronger before they leave. But the fish won't even bite in his favourite river Berounka. He begs the poacher Prošek to get him a roebuck, but he's no longer interested in his hobby. The death penalty applies for poaching, after all. In the end, contrary to all principles of nature-loving people, they get some roebuck meat. Just as the Nazis burn down the village of Lidice and massacre its population, the father returns with his contraband. Then a farewell begins.



The Last Butterfly

> *Czechoslovakia - France, 1990*

Screenplay: Ota Hofman, Karel Kachyňa

Director of photography: Jiří Krejčík

Editing: Jiří Brožek

Cast: Tom Courtenay, Brigitte Fossey, Ingrid Held, Freddie Jones, Milan Křásko, Josef Somr

The title suggests the famous act of a butterfly dying and reborn as performed by the French mime Antoine Moreau. During the war an artist performs in a cabaret, visited by German officers. At home he shows his act to his young Jewish lover Michèle.

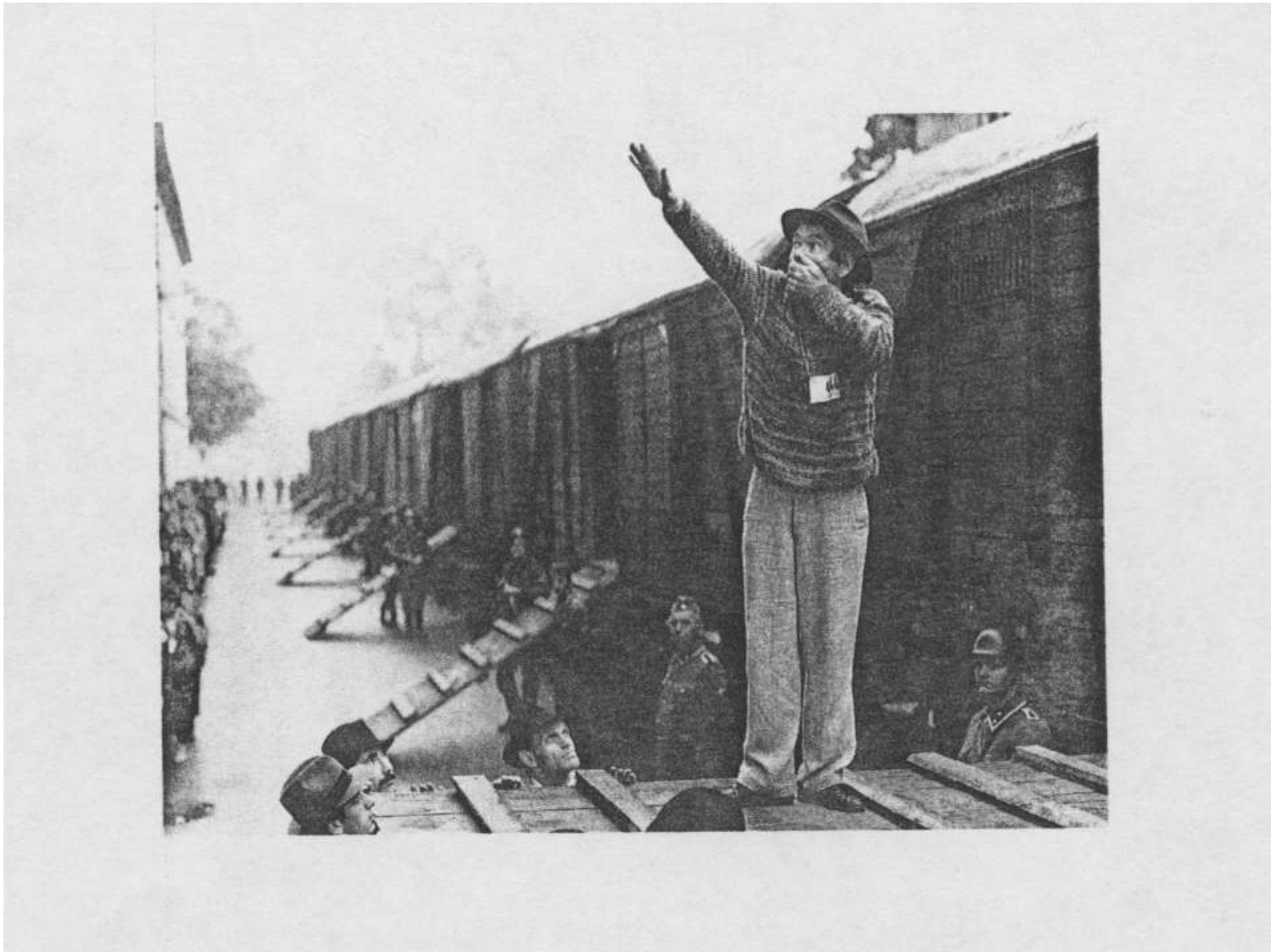
The Gestapo breaks in his house. Michèle, trying to escape, kills herself. Antoine is arrested and tortured. A high ranking German officer who has once seen his parody of Nazi salute offers him freedom if he performs for the children in the ghetto.

He is not the only artist in the ghetto. In a hotel cellar a symphonic orchestra conducted by a former conductor of the Viennese Opera, Rheinberg is rehearsing. Some excellent musicians play in the orchestra. Antoine gradually becomes acquainted with life in the ghetto. He cashes some outdated money at the bank and he is beaten by the ss-men. He is not a Jew, so the Council of Elders mistrusts him. The commander Gruber refuses his request to return to Paris; he insists on producing the play 'Babes in the Wood'. The musicians are appointed and he can choose the children himself. One part will act, another will be the audience and the rest is assigned for the transports. Antoine refuses to take part in this selection, but later he agrees to organise the performance. He wants to use it tactically for the prisoners. During his visit to the ill wife of the virtuoso Stadler he understands that he is becoming a part of a huge fraud. The Nazis had to agree to a Red Cross commission visiting the ghetto. They intend to put on a merry afternoon with a theatre show and well-fed, cheerful children. Antoine hesitates no more, he decides to help all the children. He agrees to smuggle a list of twenty thousand victims when he will leave the ghetto. And he intends to use the theatre performance to make clear to the international Red Cross commission what is really going on in the ghetto.

The well-staged scenes of daily life are so deceptive that the members of the commission are inclined to believe in the 'cosy family life' in the camp. The following performance by the children's theatre is a shock for them as well as for the Nazis.

Both Antoine and his new girlfriend Věra are put on the next death transport.

They leave, remembering the happier days of the past.



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The Cow

> *Czech Republic, 1993*

Screenplay: Karel Čabrádek, Karel Kachyňa

Director of photography: Petr Hojda

Editing: Jan Svoboda

Cast: Radek Holub, Alena Mihulová, Valerie Zawadská, Alois Molčík, Alice Dvořáková

The original theme was found by Jan Procházka in a social-rural story written by Catholic priest Jindřich Šimon Baar (1869-1925). However, Procházka took over only some aspects of the characters, especially their unceasing effort to get out of their misery.

Adam, the illegitimate son of a poor peasant, sells a cow - their only possession - to buy medicines for his mother. But the mother dies. She leaves this world with a feeling of remorse, since, as we see in several flash-backs, she believes she neglected the boy. He is slightly retarded and inaccessible, but he stubbornly insists on staying in the secluded house and taking care of himself. The lively Róza, a housemaid at the butcher's, encourages him when her master tries to cheat him. Once she comes to wash and cook for him, but Adam keeps rejecting and offending her. One night he finds her crouching in his house, frightened of the storm outside. They have a fight and he rapes her. The next day he regrets what he's done; now he doesn't chase her away. When he returns home from his work he brings a present for her. They push the beds together... Róza takes a job in the stone-pit where Adam works. They often count their money, earned by the drudge in the pit. Their dream is to buy a cow. Their life now is not just a misery, the playful Róza tells Adam fairy-tales, she even makes him laugh like a child. Although Adam is always very tired after his work, he drags earth up to the house in order to grow a little corn on the rocky ground. Róza sells a ring she has kept secret so that, at last, they can buy the cow. Coming back with the cow, they seem to be freed of all the burden of the life. They make love in the nature. It's as if their real love would start only now. They bring the cow to a bull and in the church they lit a candle to assure there will be a calf.

Róza gets pregnant and they get married. In the shed a calf is born and soon after, Adam gets a son too. But Róza is ill. Adam has to sell the cow to be able to buy medicines. It is too late again. Róza dies. Adam cares for the child himself.

One day, a new woman, Anežka, comes to his house. She isn't young any more, or pretty. Her care makes Adam sad, he gets drunk and breaks the furniture.

Next morning he finds the woman and the baby hiding from him in the woods.

He comes home with a new calf. Perhaps life can begin once again.



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A Swell Season

> *Czech Republic, 1994*

Screenplay: Karel Čabrádek, Karel Kachyňa

Director of photography: Andrej Barla

Editing: Jiří Brožek

Cast: Petr Kroutil, Anna Geislerová, Václav Chalupa, Táňa Vilhelmová, Andrea Elsnerová, Zuzana Karpenková, Alexandra Karpenková

Josef Škvorecký (1924), the author of *Swell Season* is one of the most popular Czech writers in exile. In 1969 he emigrated to Canada. He is a professor of literature at the University of Toronto and the founder of the Sixty Eight Publishers, that has published 225 books mainly works by Czech authors who were banned in their own country.

The highly autobiographical character of Danny Smiřický appears in several of Škvorecký's stories. So he is the protagonist of a collection of short stories called 'Swell Season'. Danny's further amorous mishaps are depicted. He is a sax-player with the local jazz-band and he tries to seduce every pretty girl in town one by one. For the virgin boy, all Kostelec girls seem to be beauties. Strangely, all his less sophisticated friends seem to be luckier in love than he.

Karel Kachyňa has worked with his regular screenwriter Karel Čabrádek since the end of the seventies. They created a series in five parts, the main motif of which is Danny's amorous failures in the years of the German occupation. The first part ('The Winter Event') introduces Irena, 'Kostelec's prettiest girl'. She is the most constant object of Danny's desire. He once again fails to attain his goal, but he doesn't give up easily. The second part ('Oh Maytime Witch') tells the tale, unlikely at first and later completely explained, of a strange and beautiful girl Danny meets on the main square of Kostelec. Falling in love with her is even easier when Danny discovers that the girl is an excellent musician. When he introduces her to the other members of the band, every one is enchanted. Yet there is something rather weird about her, there are some inexplicable coincidences. Danny gets very confused. The third part ('Charleston Behind the Bars') describes the difficulties the band faces during the Protectorate 'Böhmen und Mähren', in the times when jazz was considered as a music hostile to the Third Reich. The censorship is carried out by the German commissar Kühl. Because of him the students have to invent German names for American jazz compositions they want to play. When Charleston must be renamed, Kühl involuntarily helps them: he himself invents the name Ländler! During the show the dancer Kristýna lifts her crinoline to show off her legs - there is nothing to be seen but the lattice construction giving shape



to the crinoline. A Charleston behind the bars... In the fourth part ('The Hotel for the Sisters') Danny tries his luck with Irena again. He invites her for mountain climbing, but Irena gets injured and doesn't even want to see Danny any more. So, at least, is the message her younger sister delivers to him, for she is in love with him herself. 'The Cheerless Autumn Blues' is the last part of the series. One year in the life that started so full of promises in the winter, carried on through the May intermezzo, leading to the summer fiasco, has terminated. The impersonator of Danny, a conservatoire student Petr Kroutil, can get back to his studies again and forget the filming...

Filmografie

Není stále zamračeno / *It's Not Always Cloudy* (1950, doc)
Věděli si rady / *They Knew How* (1950, doc)
Za život radostný / *For a Happy Life* (1950, doc)
Neobyčejná léta / *Extraordinary Years* (1952, doc)
Věda jde s lidem / *Science Goes With People* (1952, doc)
Vítězný pochod / *Victorious March* (1952, doc)
Lidé jednoho srdce / *People of One Heart* (1953, doc)
Stará čínská opera / *Old Chinese Opera* (1954, short)
Z čínského zápisníku / *Of a Chinese Notebook* (1954, short)
Dnes večer všechno skončí / *Everything Ends Tonight* (1955)
Ztracená stopa / *The Lost Trail* (1956)
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Pokušení / *Temptation* (1957)
Čtyřikrát o Bulharsku / *Four Times Bulgaria* (1958, short)
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Kráľ Šumavy / *The King of Šumava* (1959)
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Pouta / *The Bounds* (1961)
Trápení / *Suffering* (1961)
Závrat' / *Vertigo* (1962)
Naděje / *Hope* (1963)
Vysoká zed' / *The High Wall* (1964)
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Kočár do Vídně / *Coach to Vienna* (1966)
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Naše bláznivá rodina / *Our Crazy Family* (1968)
Vánoce s Alžbětou / *Christmas with Elizabeth* (1968)
Směšný pán / *A Funny Man* (1969)
Ucho / *The Ear* (1969)
Už zase skáču přes kaluže / *Jumping Over Puddles Again* (1970)
Vlak do stanice Nebe / *A Train to Heaven* (1972)
Horká zima / *A Hot Summer* (1973)
Láska / *Love* (1973)

Pavlinka (1974)
Robinsonka (1974)
Škaredá dědina / *An Ugly Village* (1975)
Malá mořská víla / *The Little Mermaid* (1976)
Smrt mouchy / *Death of a Fly* (1976)
Čekání na déšť / *Waiting For Rain* (1978)
Setkání v červenci / *Meeting in July* (1978)
Lásky mezi kapkami deště / *Love Between Raindrops* (1979)
Zlatí úhoři / *Golden Eels* (1979, TV)
Cukrová bouda / *Sugar Hut* (1980)
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Poslední motýl / *The Last Butterfly* (1990)
Městem chodí Mikuláš / *Santa Claus Is In Town* (1992, TV)
Kráva / *The Cow* (1993, TV)
Prima sezóna / *A Swell Season* (1994, TV)

Colophon

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