

Projekt

**Sovietisation and Planning in the Film Industries of Soviet Bloc countries.
A Comparative Perspective on East Germany and Czechoslovakia,
1945–1960
(A Book Project)**

The communist regimes established in Central- and East European countries after WWII attempted to develop a film culture that should follow the model (and instructions) implemented by the Soviet Union. This process could be considered as arguably “new” and foreign with regard to the pre-existing indigenous cinematic traditions. However ineffective the attempt proved to be in many aspects, there is no doubt that a specific mode of film production, distribution and exhibition was established – a system which was highly specific in many of its features. Despite the fact that the efforts to implement norms, values, approaches and traditions on a massive scale hit a large part of Europe and affected hundreds of millions of people, our knowledge of the “socialist cinema culture” is surprisingly weak.

In our books *Leinwand zwischen Tauwetter und Frost. Der osteuropäische Spiel- und Dokumentarfilm im Kalten Krieg* (*The Screen between Thaw and Frost: East European Cinema during the Cold War*; ed. Lars Karl, Berlin: Metropol 2007) and *Naplánovaná kinematografie. Český filmový průmysl 1945–1960* (*Planned Cinema. The Czech Film Industry, 1945–1960*; ed. Pavel Skopal, Prague: Academia, will be published in 2012), we launched some explorations in this direction. The fact that research on the history of film industry in the GDR is by far the most advanced of the post-communist countries, and that significant historical work was done in the Czech Republic as well, offers a unique opportunity for a comparison. To take the inevitable next step for a more complex understanding of film culture(s) in communist countries, we invite interested researchers to adopt a “trans-national”, “inter-bloc” and comparative perspective to the topic and to answer the following questions:

- Which new norms and values were implemented to the process of filmmaking?
- What was the personal, structural, or value continuity concerning the war and pre-war tradition?
- How did the party apparatus try to shape the film industry and what were the main aims of the cultural policy?
- What kinds of distribution and exhibition quotas were applied and what were their sources and goals?
- How was the process of “cinefication” organized, and what was the ideological and economic role of permanent and travelling cinemas?
- What was the political, economic, ideological role of festivals and festivities on the international, national, or local level?
- What kind of alternative distribution circuits and tools existed, how were these tools ideologically supported and evaluated?

- What forms of censorship were applied to film production and distribution?
- What kinds of plans were applied to the film industry and how did its institutions react to the different temporalities of the state plan on one side, and of film production, economic values, technological datedness etc. on the other side?

We expect to segment the book into the following sections:

- I. General Historical, Institutional and Political Background
- II. Film Production
- III. Film Distribution and Exhibition

Each of the individual topics should be covered by corresponding studies on the situation in GDR, and in the Czech part of former Czechoslovakia, respectively. The common focus of the papers would be the process of Sovietisation (and/or “self-sovietisation”) of the respective film industries and film cultures, and the role of planning which was supposed to shape the film industry in all its aspects. This focus limits the time range to the years of the Stalinisation, the “Thaw”, and the conservative shift in the cultural policy at the end of the 1950s. The processes around an adaption of the Soviet model, as well as the implementation of the system of central planning, influenced the film industries of both countries on the organisational, infrastructural, and personal level and prescribed which values, norms, or practices should prevail. Research on the similarities and differences in these structuring demands could bring insights both into the way they were applied under different conditions and, above all, into particular reactions, caused mainly by specific national traditions and social milieu(s).

In the given context, we welcome papers on the following topics:

1. Cultural policy
2. Nationalisation and Soviet administration of film industry
3. Production culture in the film studios of DEFA and Barrandov
4. Short-film production
5. Film production for children
6. Co-productions
7. The system of distribution
8. Film festivals
9. Film acting and stardom
10. Cinema and/in television

The studies will be published in English in an edited book. Proposals of 400–500 words and a brief biographical statement should be provided in English. Please send proposals as email attachments to both skopal@phil.muni.cz and lars.karl@uni-leipzig.de until July 31, 2011.

Pavel Skopal – Lars Karl