

**MUNI**  
**ARTS**

# **Czech New Wave**

## **CZS36 / CMA18**

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**Fall 2023**

**21. 9. 2023**

# MUNI ARTS

## ***Black Peter***

**Czechoslovakia 1963**

**(Černý Petr)**

**dir. Miloš Forman**

1. What do you make of the film's title?
2. How would you describe the main protagonists – Petr, Pavla, Čenda, father and mother? What does the film tell us about generational gap?
3. Why do you think this film was praised by state and party authorities as a great example of socialist cinema?

the hilarious debut feature from  
Academy Award®-winning director  
**Milos Forman**  
(ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST, AMADEUS)



# Black PETER

"A timeless comedy!"  
– NEWSWEEK

"Very funny!"  
– NY TIMES

# Petr x Čenda

Two portraits of period young masculinity

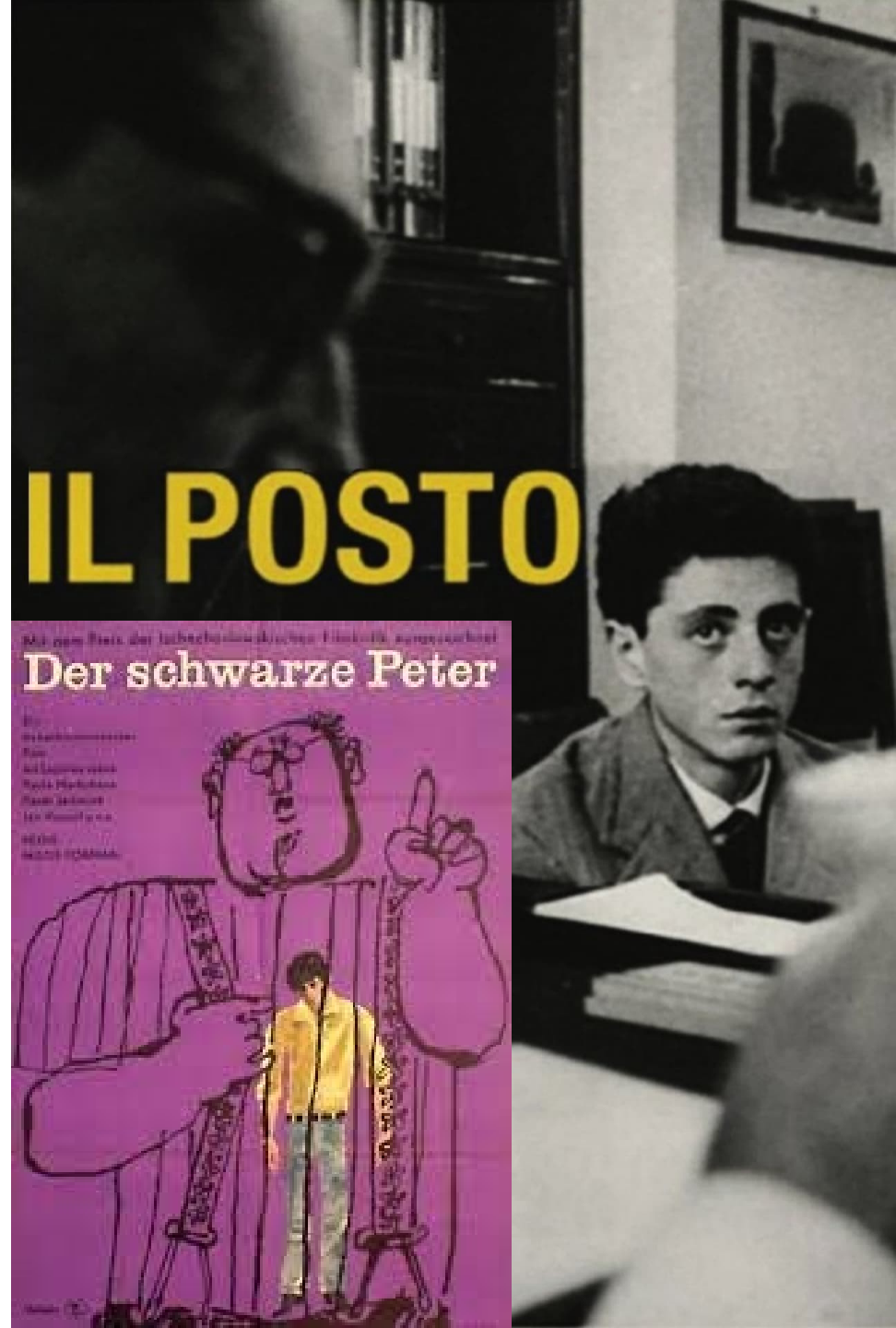


- Petr not a rebel, just a regular guy (clumsy, quiet, yet doesn't bend to the ideas of the older generation)
- Čenda – efficient and dedicated labourer, the film pokes a fun at him?
  - dynamic, loud, not smart

# MUNI ARTS

“A great example of  
socialist film art“  
WHY?

- Comedy
- Observation: almost no experiments with narration, style and/or ideological background X absorbing international influences and abrupt ending
- International success and visibility – various prizes at Venice, Locarno and Lisbon IFF



# Czech New Wave Course: Organization

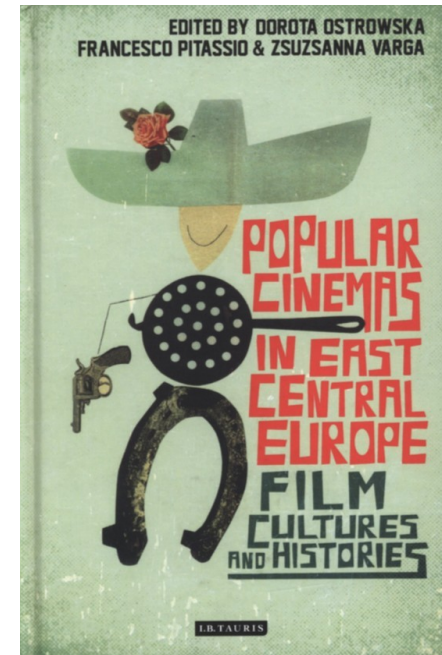
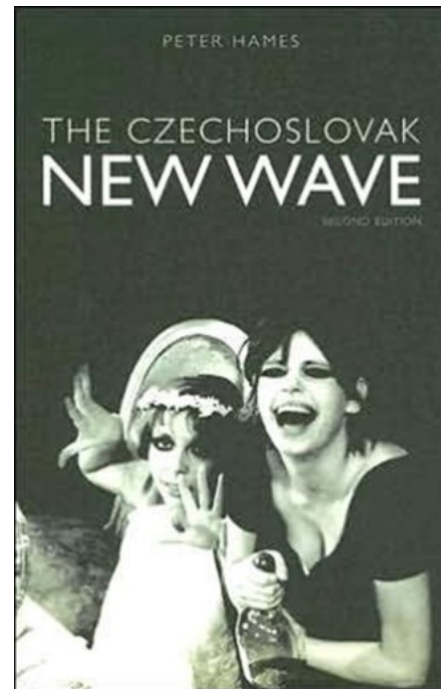
- Study materials will be provided every week – that is reading (chapters and articles), presentations and films (files or links)
- Each session will consist of a screening, followed by a discussion and a lecture on a film/topic/artist
- **Two stages of evaluation:**
  1. A written essay on the film *Cozy dens* (Pelíšky, 1999, dir. Jan Hřebejk). The paper should be three to five pages long and will have to highlight similarities and/or differences with selected New Wave films in terms of narration / settings / character construction / values / meanings. Deadline: Sunday November 19th.
  2. Oral exam – students have to provide a list of 10 films, with short abstract of 250 words, summarizing the story and highlighting any element they feel are worth discussing + summary of two chapters/articles provided by the teacher in the Readings file
- The dates of the exam TBA

# Recommended reading



Avant-Garde to New Wave  
Czechoslovak cinema, surrealism and the sixties

Jonathan L. Owen



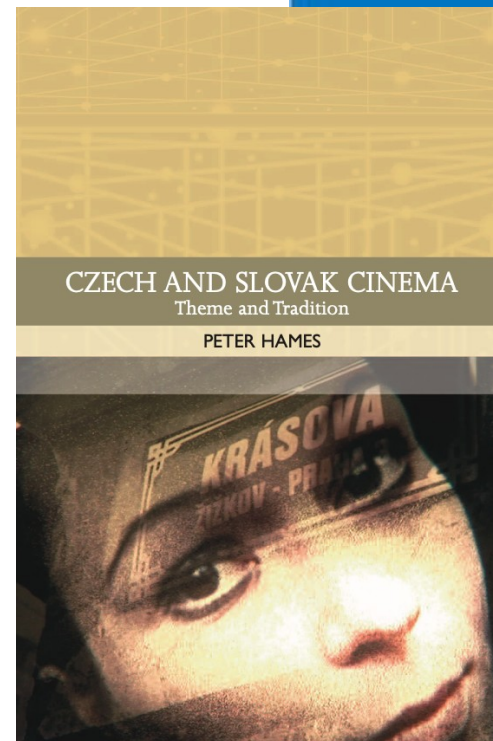
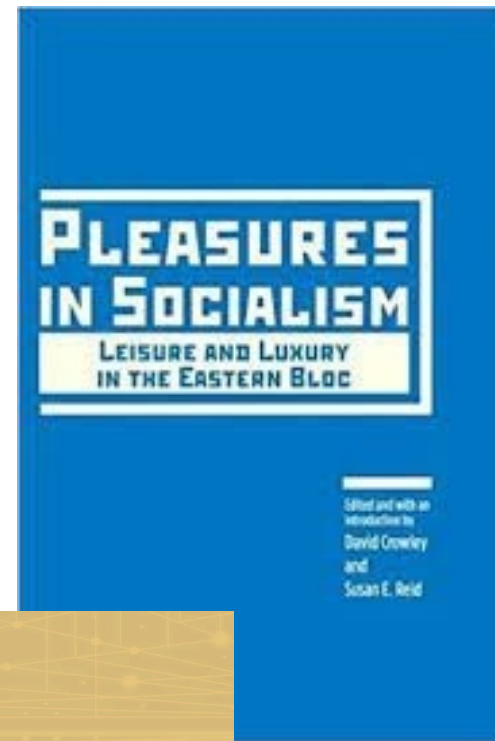
Databases, (S)VOD platforms and reading:

- **KVIFFF.TV and Netflix**
- **English friendly programmes in Prague cinemas such as Aero and Edison**
- <https://www.filmovyprehled.cz/en>
- <https://dafilms.com/>

# Reading: Week 1

CROWLEY, David and REID, Susan E. (eds.): Introduction: Pleasures in Socialism? In: *Pleasures in Socialism. Leisure and Luxury in Eastern Bloc*. Evanston IL, Northwestern University Press, 2012, pp. 3–51.

HAMES, Peter. *Czech and Slovak Cinema. Theme and Tradition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, pp. 1 – 14, 55 – 74 (Realism).





# Postwar Czechoslovak Cultural and Social History: A Brief Overview

—1945–1948: Third republic

## —BREAKS

- Nationalization of many industries, incl. cultural and media industries
- Cinema fell under the direct supervision of the state 11th August 1945
- Theatres could not be owned by a private entrepreneur since June 8th 1945
- Strong inclination towards communist ideology and Soviet Union

## —CONTINUITIES

- Culture and citizens used to a certain degree of discipline and control since the war years (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
- Leftist tendencies already present in the so-called First Republic era (1918–1938), although they were a minority
- Strong preferences for the working class



# 1948–1953: Forming the system and the first crisis

- 1948, February 17th–25th – the Communist putsch
  - Starting the era of a very tight and rigid ideological control in agreement with a larger society
  - Important formative years of the system
  - Top-down implementation of Soviet politics
  - Numerous clashes between party leadership and state government**
  - working class is the new domineering social class
  - Radical youth and female employment
- The „Sharp Course“ politics
  - socialist realism is the norm
  - revision of Czech cultural heritage
  - cutting ties with western influences and democratic tradition
- since 1951 stagnation and militarization of society: preparation for global conflict, “fight for peace”
- 1953 – death of Stalin and president Klement Gottwald
- The politics of New Course >> return of entertainment and commercial genres (operetta, satire)

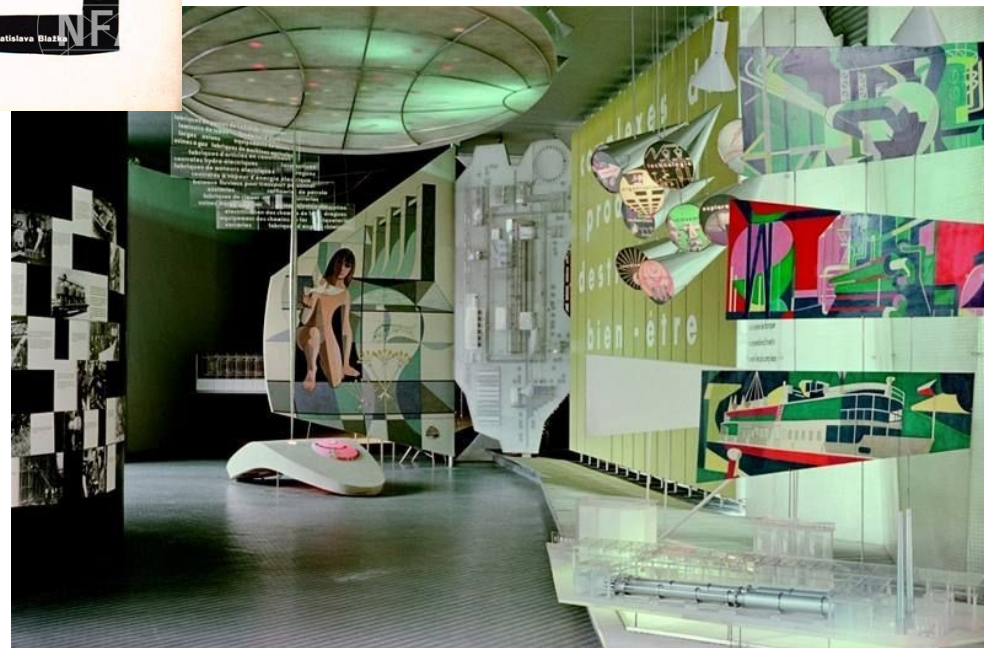
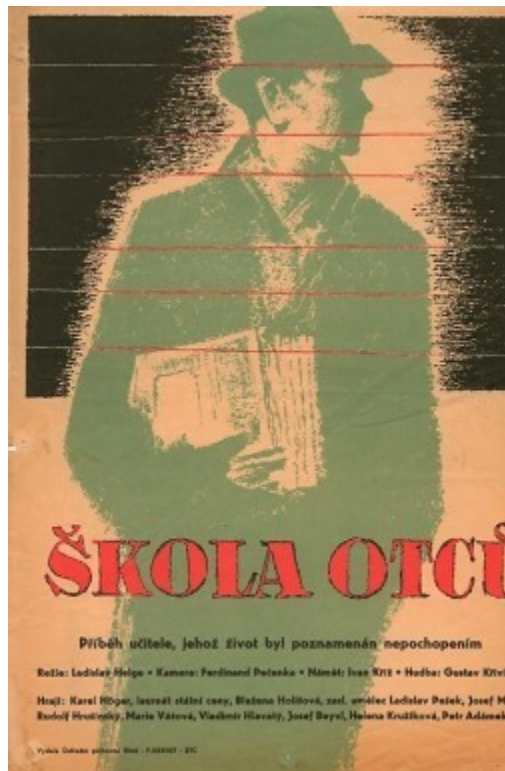


# 1954–1956: Changing priorities

# 1957–1960: Schizophrenia of the regime

- the foundation of modern socialist society
- Changing priorities >> securing a more comfortable life standard for Czechoslovak citizens
- socialist realism is not considered as a strict norm
- the country opens towards western influences
  
- In the second half of the decade a lot of opposing tendencies
  - the effort to finalize the cultural and ideological revolution and getting closer to communist utopia resulted in the tendency to weaken critical voices and renewed preference for ideological purity
  - X the regime was much weaker than at the beginning of the decade, bottom-up reaction on societal changes and trends**
  - Faith in technological progress / the return to world fashion in 1957 / Czechoslovak success at Expo Brusel 1958
  - the ideal of a regular citizen >> no more a worker, but a middle class, cultured person





# 1961–1963: Economical problems

## 1964–1968: Consumer socialism

- In the first half of the decade economical issues + global politics crisis
- new generation of top level politicians (generational shift reflected in cinema as well)
- the country is open to international influences (tourism, international students)
- In the second half of the decade the economic situation stabilized
  - Tolerance for western films, music, fashion, although not general (men with long hair, drug using)



# Key elements of cultural politics and socialist lifestyle 1948–1968

## 1. Democratization of culture

any citizen can participate on socialist culture, either as a consumer or as a producer

**Downsides** – culture was differentiated from ideological perspectives

- Luxury based on the difficulty of access: cars, electronics, fashion, food items

## 2. Ateistic propaganda and rationalization of life

Departure from religious traditions

New socialist citizen should be a fully formed person, acting in accordance with his or her rationality >> easier for planning standardization and distribution

## 3. Against petite bourgeoisie (lower middle class)

Wide, yet flexible category