



Perfectly unpredictable: early work of Věra Chytilová in the light of censorship and production reports

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ABSTRACT

This study offers insights into films made by Věra Chytilová in the 1960s – *O něčem jiném/Something Different* (1963), *Sedmikrásky/Daisies* (1966), *Ovoce stromů rajských jíme/The Fruit of Paradise* (1969) and her unrealized projects from that period and from the beginning of the normalization era. It aims to reflect on the production background of these films with focus on censorship, internal approvals and evaluations at the Barrandov Film Studios as well as on key departments of the Czechoslovak Film which were closely connected to official censorship institutions. In doing so, the study also illustrates the way censorship affected the film production, it shows its influence on the style of work of Věra Chytilová and on her image as an unpredictable author.

KEYWORDS

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Czech New Wave
Barrandov Film Studios
Czech cinema of the 1960s
censorship

Introduction

Věra Chytilová loved telling the story of how she was granted permission for the script of her graduation film *Strop/Ceiling* (1961). The head of the Screenwriting Department at FAMU (Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague), František Daniel, did not initially approve of the screenplay as it was, in his opinion, too kitsch. Chytilová, however, refused to renounce her work. She asked her classmate, Daniel's favourite student, Pavel Juráček, to rewrite the screenplay in such a way that it would please the teacher. Once the new version was approved, she started to shoot the film using her original script (*Zlatá šedesátá* 2009). This anecdote depicts the courage and temperament for which Chytilová was famous, and at the same time, serves as an example of one of the many obstacles within the approval mechanism. In 1960s, Czech cinema was not quite as liberal as is often believed. Even though there was room for filmmakers to somewhat 'manoeuvre' through the system, they often had to go through complicated negotiations. If we want to ascertain how and to what extent it was possible to maintain at least partial control over one's project at the time of the socialist-state film studio system, Věra Chytilová's work represents very interesting study material.

Ever since her early work and for many years to follow, Chytilová was considered 'an unpredictable author' whose creations defied studio conventions and were quite hard to 'control'. Among other things, almost all of her films made in the 1960s (and later on) caused

trouble due to the difference between the visions and expectations with which they were made and their final form. However, so far nobody has tried to go beyond ‘anecdotes from the film set’ and reconstruct, using archive sources, the real position of Chytilová and her work inside the cinema structures that necessarily formed her films. This study focuses on the specific background to Věra Chytilová’s feature films produced during the 1960s with an emphasis on the process of approval within the Barrandov Film Studios (Filmové studio Barrandov – FSB) and the censorship institutions. Its aim is not only to reveal the actual procedures that conditioned the final form of the films, but also to assess the author’s position as it developed within the above mentioned cinema structures.

We will also try to provide a closer insight into Chytilová’s methods of work which were considered exceptional in the context of Czechoslovak state cinema and more than once resulted in conflicts and issues with the approval authorities. The scripts, or more precisely, their comparison with the final version of the films, will serve as the main source in helping us determine what changes were made to the projects – elements that disappeared, those that were added and others whose meaning was changed. The censorship files and production reports of Chytilová’s films from the 1960s – although they have not been completely preserved – enable us to at least partially deduce the motives for such changes and also to interpret them. They give us an idea of how Chytilová herself dealt with the adjustments in question and describe the reactions to the final forms of her films in relation to the authorities involved in the approval process.

We will therefore reflect on the questions of censorship that seemed to be an inevitable part of Chytilová’s public image. In one of her later interviews, she declared that when she worked at FSB, she often had a hard time justifying her intentions to the ‘censors of the regime’ (Bednářová 2008, 58). It is in this spirit that Chytilová is described as an author who always had the courage to rebel and to stand up for her artistic visions with barely any space for compromise. We have no wish to deny such an image; however, the widespread idea that Chytilová together with some of her colleagues from the circle of the Czech New Wave had to fight against or even fell victim to a hostile approval system is too limited. The stories of victims of and fighters against censorship are not quite accurate; especially, if we take into consideration the fact that censorship practice was not solely based on the principle of one-way bans and orders that the filmmakers should obey without exception (Skupa 2016, 44–85).

In simple terms – filmmakers were by no means defenceless victims of censorship. Various people, particularly those with higher posts in the leadership of Czechoslovak Film (Československý státní film – ČSF) and FSB, actively participated in the censorship negotiations and could affect the results both in positive and negative ways. Together with the authorities from the censorship offices, namely the Central Press Supervision Office (Hlavní správa tiskového dohledu – HSTD) and the Ideology Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Ideologické oddělení ÚV KSČ), they could make suggestions regarding individual projects. Such suggestions, if accepted, did not necessarily harm the film. On the contrary, they might bring a shift in meaning. In this respect, the work of Věra Chytilová offers a broad spectrum of materials – ranging from rejected projects to stimuli leading towards creative solutions and, in some cases, higher quality results.

She who works differently

Chytilová began in the Barrandov Film Studios as one who did not follow the working conventions. Her status was conditioned by two basic factors. First, there was the inevitable disproportion between the plan (approved screenplay) and the result (final cut), which her superiors eventually had to put up with. In the process of approval, both the ‘literary’ and shooting versions of the script were subject to the most detailed examination. After being approved by the studio representatives (not only by the chiefs of creative groups responsible for the production of particular films, but also the head of FSB or the director of ČSF), the script was examined by HSTD whose employees discussed possible reproaches or suggestions directly with the members of the Barrandov creative groups or the head authorities of FSB and ČSF. In the case of serious issues, the script would be examined further by the Ideology Department of ÚV KSČ. A similar course of approval also occurred during the phase of post-production where principal attention was focused on the so-called ‘service copies’ (servisní kopie) which could be additionally edited (Skupa 2016, 51–63, 75–81). However, the examination of the script was still of bigger importance – it was much easier to free the project of questionable themes at this stage and avoid later censorship complications and possible production holdups.

The role that the screenplay played in the process of Chytilová’s creative work is quite remarkable. For example, Otakar Vávra, Chytilová’s teacher at FAMU, said about his former student that, “She had never racked her brain over the narrative, she would set the film up only in the cutting room” (Chytilová and Pilát 2010, 96). Indeed, the films did not follow the written development word-for-word – her working process was rather a constant flow of thoughts inspired by the script. In one of her interviews she explained how the material kept changing in her hands:

The film director [Vladimír] Čech used to make films as follows: he would sit in his armchair with a sign ‘Director’, he would take a ruler, a few coloured pencils and after each shooting he would tick the parts of the script that were done. In the cutting room, they would simply cut the clapperboards out and stick the rest together. To me, however, the most interesting part of filmmaking is the editing. Physically, it is not so demanding. It is still pretty exciting, though, as there are so many versions that can come out of the same material. That is why I always film more variations. I know that I will make sense of it only in the cutting room. Sometimes, it will even come out as the exact opposite of what I had on my mind when I was shooting the scene. The trash will suddenly become a pearl and the shot that was supposed to be important will turn into a simple descriptive one (Motl 2000, 21).

Although Chytilová points out her preference for the process of editing, we can by no means say that she would rely on semi-finished scripts or that she would undervalue their preparation. On the contrary – the scripts of Chytilová’s films, often made by herself, are very professional and present a clear idea of what each of the scenes should look like. Nevertheless, her films differ from the original screenplays not only in dialogue, but also in the staging and editing of particular scenes, and, eventually, also in meaning. Needless to say such a phenomenon is not exceptional – it is quite normal for films to contain elements differing from the original intentions. However, in Chytilová’s case, it is one of the key trademarks of her work. Various comments of Chytilová’s superiors on the ‘unusual work of the director’ confirm such assumptions as well as the author’s own conviction that the script serves as a basic plan which we do not have to follow at all costs. The question

remains whether she also did it on purpose in order to outwit the censorship – to submit a script version that would change during production and post-production. Given the available sources, we cannot be hundred per cent sure the statement is true. However, there is a chance Chytilová deliberately used it as a strategy at least in the case of *Ceiling* and most certainly during her work on other projects from the 1970s and 1980s – the so-called normalization era.

The second factor that conditioned Věra Chytilová's status is closely related to the first one. From the beginning of her career she was associated with experimental work – since her school years, almost all of the projects she worked on were accompanied by uncertainty regarding the end result. In her recollection of the 1960s, the director says that there was not much room for improvisation during the filming because of the limited allocation of film stock (Cieslar 2001a, 21). However, as we will see later, a certain space for improvisation was already included in her scripts. This could be related to the fact that Chytilová liked to cast non-professionals and would set the plot of her films in an environment that either directly initiated or required some sort of improvisation. In her first works, she exploited the authenticity of non-professional performers and locations, which was perceived as the introduction of *cinéma vérité* to the Czech New Wave. Chytilová's experimental approach also extended to her anti-realistic works where it was reinforced by a radical formal stylization unprecedented in the context of Czech cinema even when compared to most of the Czech New Wave films. We will soon see that the experimental nature of Chytilová's work met with contradictory reactions from different participants in the approval process.

Finally, we must not forget one more trait that was necessarily determined by the two previous factors and leaving it out would make Chytilová's image incomplete. It was the status of 'troublemaker' that was attributed to her by both the cinema and censorship authorities. Beginning with her short film *Pytel blech/A Bagful of Fleas* (1962) – her very first work made in a professional studio – there is hardly any title in Chytilová's filmography that did not raise concerns regarding controversial plot lines and scenes or the overall meaning of the film. Even when discussed inside ČSF, her work was never accepted as spontaneously as the films of Miloš Forman and Jiří Menzel. She joined the group of 'troublemakers' side by side with Jan Němec and Evald Schorm whose work was labelled as the most 'problematic'.

Something Different: is this the way to film?

All the characteristics of the author's identity already manifested themselves in her first feature-length film *O něčem jiném/Something Different* (1963). Thanks to this film Chytilová gained the reputation of an 'unpredictable author' in the eyes of her superiors and colleagues. It was no coincidence that the movie was made by the Barrandov creative group Bohumil Šmída–Ladislav Fikar. This group strived for progressive dramaturgy; they engaged young filmmakers and partially became the seedbed of the New Wave. After the success of *Ceiling* and *A Bagful of Fleas*, Chytilová was offered the opportunity to direct František Kožík's script *Hořké Vavříny/Bitter Laurels*, a film with a sporting theme inspired by the life of the famous gymnast, Eva Bosáková – her career, personal crisis and a love triangle which involved her coach (Cieslar 2001b, 64). Chytilová departed from the original script and approached the story as simultaneously narrated episodes from the lives of the successful sportswoman Bosáková and an ordinary housewife Věra.

Consulting the archival fragments of the approval process, we may presume that, at least in the beginning, Chytilová's working methods must have created an uneasy atmosphere. Unlike the normal practice in FSB, it was quite unusual for the pre-production of a film to start without a 'literary script'. When the heads of the creative group were asked by HSTD why they had not submitted a 'literary script' for approval, they replied that there was none because of the rather documentary nature of the film (Cenzurní karta 1962). Chytilová later admitted that when she was supposed to go with the crew to film the World Gymnastics Championship, in which Bosáková participated in summer 1962, her script was far from complete and the group received only its draft version (Cieslar 2001b, 64). It is no wonder that the censorship file on *Something Different* contains a note about Chytilová's amateurism. Such an approach was quite rare in domestic studio practice.

When HSTD asked about the script once again, Fikar answered that consultations with the director were still going on and the screenplay would proceed further as soon as all the script problems were resolved (Cenzurní karta 1962). Unfortunately, we will never find out what problems Fikar had in mind. Nevertheless, two versions of the script were found that date back to 1962 and even the final shooting script contains drafts of situations that might have raised questions during the approval process – for example, the scenes with Bosáková which were meant to look authentic and which the director briefly referred to as 'documentary dialogues'. The shooting script eventually got to HSTD. Although it was authorized at the end of 1962, the script was, in general, not well accepted, as it gave the impression of 'an uncritical admiration for Eva Bosáková'. The insights into her private life were initially supposed to demonstrate her 'life sacrifice' in a negative way. The most important reproach was aimed at the theme of abortion which the script treated in a 'socially wrong way' since Bosáková sacrifices everything for success, even motherhood. The script reportedly glorified such behaviour as heroic, which is something to which the ethics of socialism was opposed (Denní hlášení 1962).

It is no surprise that this subject received the most attention – the themes and motifs related to 'physical intimacy' were specifically discussed during the censorship negotiations. In a short scene, Bosáková stands before the abortion committee whose chairman asks her to explain the reason for her decision. She replies: 'But I don't want to give it away! I want to keep it! I've always wanted a child. It's just that there is the World Championship in a few months. We've been preparing for it for two years... So what am I supposed to do?!' (Chytilová 1962, 56). Even though the verdict of the committee is not explicitly mentioned in the script, certain comments (some of which are omitted in the film) suggest that Bosáková underwent the abortion and the child is exactly what she lacks in her life. This scene was supposed to be followed by a reporter's visit and Bosáková's confession that, 'Nowadays, being a top athlete means giving up everything else.' In the original context, the complaint would have supported the initial idea. Also, in the scene right after Bosáková's victory at the World Championship, her husband comforts her with the words that she can finally do whatever she wants. But Bosáková sighs to herself: 'I know. Everything except that.' (125). In the film, however, she only says: 'I know.'

If the scene taking place at the abortion committee was eventually shot, it did not get into the 'service copy' of the film, since the HSTD approved it with no comments (Cenzurní karta 1962). This example certainly does not represent the only change made in comparison to the original intentions. Nevertheless, there is no need to attribute the other modifications

to pressure from the approval committees. It is a typical feature of Chytilová's work that the final cut differs significantly from the approved screenplay. Some parts of the script were rearranged in a different order (the film version works considerably more with a montage link of sequences from the life of Věra and the training of Bosáková), other passages either differ from the script, are cut, or are missing entirely. The script narrates in detail the plot line of Věra's love affair using a lot of dialogue with her lover. The film, on the contrary, presents this plot line in the form of hints using only the key moments and often without dialogue. In addition, even the dialogue differs at many points from the shooting script. In the overall context of the screenplay, the theme of abortion is secondary, yet very important. It could have brought a deeper meaning to the story of Bosáková and maybe averted some of the critics' objections that Chytilová should have depicted the athlete's personal life in greater depth.

Something Different also contributed to Chytilová's status as an 'experimenter'. In September 1963, three months before the official premiere of the film, a lengthy debate was organized among selected journalists, filmmakers and representatives of FSB (Chrastil 1963). They discussed Chytilová's unorthodox approach of juxtaposing documentary and staged scenes and whether it was actually right to make such a film. The discussion did not go without comments similar to those HSTD had previously mentioned – reporting that the film favoured Bosáková and her professional career to the exclusion of Věra and her role as a wife and a mother. The way Chytilová depicted the life of Bosáková was said to lack the comparison of values which she had intended to demonstrate with the two characters. The fact that Bosáková had to sacrifice something tragic in her life which is not shown in the film was also mentioned during the debate. Chytilová did not openly admit that an important tragic motif had been removed from the film. The filmmaker, however, revealed that she could not go public about everything from Bosáková's personal life and thus kept certain things secret (Chrastil 1963, 11).

In 1963, Chytilová's debut film won the Grand Prix at the International Film festival Mannheim-Heidelberg and was also successful in film export. This perhaps explains why she was the first among her colleagues of the Czech New Wave to start working on a new screenplay called *Posudek/Assessment* renamed later as *Rajče Matylda/ Tomato Matylda*. The project on which writer Ludvík Aškenazy and director Jiří Menzel worked together with Chytilová was initiated in 1963 by the same creative group Šmída-Fikar but remained unrealized (Chytilová, Aškenazy, and Menzel 1963). The story about a young student actress Matylda who was expelled from school due to 'inappropriate' behaviour and as a matter of correction was sent to spend a year as a worker in one of the Ostrava factories probably did not even pass through HSTD. It portrayed the real life experience of Chytilová's friend Helga Čočková who was arrested during a student demonstration in May 1962. As a result, the actress was expelled from DAMU (Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague) and sent to be re-educated in an Ostrava manufacturing facility working as an assistant electrician. The project was stopped in March 1965 by the cinema direction with a laconic note explaining that the decision was taken by 'higher authorities' who doubted the appropriateness of recounting 'such an issue' (Rajče Matylda 1965).

This was, however, quite an unexpected and radical shift of attitudes. In the FSB dramaturgy plan for 1964, the film was still described as one of the main projects of the year. Moreover, according to the policy pronounced at the 12th Congress of the Communist

Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), the film was supposed to ‘fight against the distortion of socialist ideology’ and show the conflict of the younger generation with the hypocrisy in society (Dramaturgický plán 1963, 3). In the 1965 plan, however, *Tomato Matylda* was set aside (Dramaturgický plán 1964, 7). This may have been influenced by the fact that Chytilová was busy working on *Automat svět/At the World Cafeteria*, one of the short films of the five-part anthology *Perličky na dně/Pearls of the Deep* (1965). Meanwhile, she also started working on the screenplay of *Sedmikrásky/Daisies* (1966).

Chytilová drew inspiration for the script of *Tomato Matylda* from the letters that Helga Čočková had been sending from her ‘working internship’. The filmmaker claims that she was not granted permission for shooting because of her intransigent decision to cast Čočková in the leading role (Kopaněvová 2001, 11). There is, however, a more credible version. The time when the project was definitively cancelled coincided with a much bigger censorship affair related to a group of so called ‘problematic films’, namely Evald Schorm’s *Každý den odvahy/Everyday Courage* (1964) or Pavel Juráček’s and Jan Schmidt’s *Postava k podpírání/Josef Kilian* (1963), which according to HSTD and the Ideology Department of ÚV KSČ created a false picture of both the socialist past and the present situation. As a consequence, the head of ČSF cancelled several projects that had the same sort of critical themes and risked receiving similar negative reactions (Skupa 2016, 104–115). *Tomato Matylda* was most probably one of them since it showed quite clearly that the working-class that was supposed to contribute to the heroine’s correction was not quite in a state to give lessons about one’s behaviour.

Nevertheless, the film would have fitted in to the accepted view of Chytilová and her style of work. The director’s explication reveals that parts of the script relating to the scenes in the Ostrava factory were intentionally incomplete as she was planning to work directly with the characters played by non-actors. There would have been space for their own suggestions on staging and authentic speech, since Chytilová did not want to misrepresent the environment of Ostrava. Meanwhile, her explication implies that she wanted to present this part of the story in a grotesquely exaggerated way (Chytilová, Aškenazy, and Menzel 1963), which is a strategy that further reflected Chytilová’s position and was typical of her later projects.

Daisies: to film or not to film?

Chytilová’s status as an unpredictable author was enhanced when she moved away from *cinéma vérité* poetics and set out on the path of more radical formal stylization and allegory. Whereas *Something Different* – ‘inspired by immediate present events’ – was qualified inside ČSF as one of the key projects of 1963 (Poledňák 1967, 9), *Daisies* was generally viewed as an example of an ‘experiment’ that Czech filmmakers should rather avoid. Speaking of this course of work, the evaluation of the Ideology Department of ÚV KSČ says: ‘Metaphorical language and allegory make space for ambiguous interpretations. [...] A work of art must speak for itself. If explanatory notes of an author’s intentions are needed, or instructions to understand them involve long discussions, there is probably something missing.’ (Auersperg 1967, 5). The headquarters of ČSF adopted a similarly distant stance towards the trend of film stylization and allegory. The general director of ČSF, Alois Poledňák, said: ‘It is not a sign of artistic potential in cinema but rather a lack of mental conviction, when the author

embraces the incomprehensible language of metaphor and allegory that obscures the real meaning of the film and allows multiple interpretations.' (Poledňák 1967, 11).

In the beginning, nothing suggested that *Daisies* would become such an ambiguously closely-watched film as well as one of the most discussed works of the entire decade. The synopsis and the film story written in 1965 under the name *Chudobky* (Czech synonym for the word *sedmikrásky*) have very little in common with the later versions of the script and the resulting film. The storyline was obviously set in the 1960s and was more realistic – it depicts two young girls killing time by indulging themselves in various adventures and pranks aimed mostly at men until the moment they decide to find out if there exists some 'nice person that they could respect and that would not seem ridiculous' (Chytilová and Juráček 1965). Pavel Juráček, who Chytilová worked with on the original film story, noted: '[...] when I think of how she would discuss my script with Suchý, Vyskočil and Krumbachová and ask them for a piece of advice and help, since I had written something that she obviously could not film, I see black spots in front of my eyes even now.' (Juráček 2003, 474).

The participation of Ester Krumbachová, a multi-talented artist and screenwriter, in the writing process fundamentally influenced the development of the script. Two young heroines were kept as the core of the narration. However, only fragments of the original plot development remained. The story unfolds around the game 'truth or dare' closely associated with the principle of destruction that accompanies the whole narration. In the introduction to the explanatory notes for the 'literary script' from June 1965, Chytilová points out that it does not represent a realistic picture of the lives of two young girls with conventional psychology. She defines her work as a 'grotesque philosophical documentary' aiming to criticize a lifestyle whose elements are more or less a part of each of us (Chytilová and Krumbachová 1965a, A–B). At the time Chytilová and Krumbachová were writing the script it was clear that the project *Tomato Matylida* would not be realized. At FSB, the consequences of the above mentioned censorship troubles with the 1965 'problematic films' became evident. People in dramaturgy and in charge of the approval process inside Barrandov became more careful. In the context of the new strict measures *Daisies* was no exception. The project was viewed as potentially problematic.

The cinema leaders started to have even more doubts once the HSTD provided an extremely negative opinion on the 'literary script' for *Daisies* that was also being assessed by the Ideology Department of ÚV KSČ. The latter even suggested that the project should be abandoned (Denní hlášení 1965). The general director of ČSF, Poledňák, explained in July 1965 in private correspondence with the leader of the Ideology Department of ÚV KSČ, Pavel Auersperg, that *Daisies* had been discussed at ČSF long before it became a concern for the censorship authorities. Poledňák said that Chytilová was persuaded to rewrite the script and it was, therefore, quite probable that the overall revision of the original film story she had written in cooperation with Juráček emerged from the request of her superiors. In the correspondence, Poledňák talked about the script as being a 'critique of superficiality and illusions about life' and an 'experiment in all aspects'. He also mentioned Chytilová's specific work: '[...] her scripts can't be read as a film. Her screenplays are written solely as a ground plan for the future film.' (Poledňák 1965).

Nevertheless, this time, Chytilová's typical feature of work received less indulgent supervision. The director was advised to do the following: specify the heroines' characters, remove vulgarisms, and describe in depth the background and personality traits that lead to 'the

indifference and lack of understanding of the values of life by a specific group of teenagers'. She was also supposed to erase all signs of the girls' behaviour that might suggest a lesbian subtext to their relationship. Poledňák implied that the final decision about the film's realization would be taken only after she submitted a new version of the screenplay revised according to the instructions. The director herself was also asked to state clearly the idea of the film (Poledňák 1965). The daily production reports show that the pre-production of *Daisies* was accompanied not only by pressure about submitting the final script but also worries about whether the film would be realized even though the preparations for shooting had already started. According to the report from 23 July 1965, Poledňák was going to read the script once again. If he did not approve, the work would be terminated. Poledňák also discussed *Daisies* with Bohumil Šmída, the production manager of the creative group Šmída–Fikar, who ordered that no more copies of the script were to be produced without the permission of the general director (Denní zprávy 1965).

If we compare the 'literary' and shooting versions of the script, they only differ in terms of the modifications required by the suggestions of Poledňák and the censorship authorities. The vulgarisms used in the dialogue do not appear in the shooting script. One part which included what is probably the most explicit lesbian subtext was also left out – one of the girls caresses the other until intimacy turns to aggression with a sexual overtone (Chytilová and Krumbachová 1965a, 60–62). Another scene depicting 'Socialist voluntary work' that HSTD was concerned about is also missing from the shooting script. A young man admits to the heroine that he does not work voluntarily or out of conviction, whereas another, a rather 'conscious' volunteer, offers to accompany the girl to the pool and lends her his pin, 'For a more beautiful Prague', which is awarded as a badge of honour. The girl then pins it on her bikini top (48–49). Thanks to Poledňák's negotiations, who convinced Auersperg that the film would give a wholly different impression once it was finished (even better than the script itself), the shooting script was eventually authorized (Kovářík 1967). In her interviews, Chytilová does not say much about the approval process of *Daisies*. She just briefly confirms what already emerges from the above details: at first, the cinema leaders did not want to give her permission, but in view of her previous work they decided to trust her with the script (Kopaněvová 2001, 11).

The post-production approval process was not spared complications. Not only was the first cut that Chytilová presented to the film authorities in February 1966 not approved, it also divided the chiefs of the creative group Šmída–Fikar. Bohumil Šmída says in his memoirs: 'At the time *Daisies* was made, I was not a fan of the symbolic film genre [...]. Due to my biased attitude, that might have been a mistake on my part. Especially when I had fought over the first cut with my closest and certainly more perceptive friend Ladislav Fikar' (Šmída 1980, 226). They recommended that Chytilová should make the 2580 metres long film shorter, since it was too protracted and required a revised cut. Together with Krumbachová, she started to work on a newly edited version (Hájek 1966). At this point, we should note the constructive effect of the approval process since it encouraged the authors to seek more creative solutions.

Certain passages that the censorship authorities were already concerned with during the early script approval process are missing in the final version of the film. For example, one of the key sequences at the end following the moment when the girls destroy the banquet, swing on the chandelier and fall into the water, was significantly modified. In the shooting script, the girls screaming for help are approached by a steamboat with dancing

holidaymakers and 'a man in black' who addresses them with a reprimanding speech. The girls cry that they do not want to be bad anymore and beg to get on board. The man, however, ignores their request – one must deserve to be on the board, only people who are nice and work hard can get there. Before the steamboat leaves, he recommends that they be nice and hard-working in order to be happy. As soon as they become better people and repair what they have done, they will be allowed to join the company on board (Chytilová and Krumbachová 1965b, 93–97). The HSTD assessment mentioned the symbolic figure of 'a man in black' and criticized the script for depicting a society that does not try to save the girls (Skupa 2016, 137).

In the film, we only see the shots of the drowning Marie and Marie who are trying to take hold of the poles on the steamboat and declaim a few of the lines from the original dialogue with the 'man in black'. In the scene that follows, the heroines try to fix the destroyed banquet while repeating parts of the sentences of the 'man in black' which they, however, modify to their liking ('If we work hard, we will be nice and happy', 'We have to work hard in order to be nice', etc.). The fact that the 'man in black' was cut out could be related to the possible metaphors it might represent and that did not please the censorship authorities. As the HSTD report suggests – the symbolism was too obvious in this case and could have provoked the image of a careless society. Compared to the final form of the scene, we must, however, state that dropping this overly instructive and moralizing figure at the end of the film was rather a good decision. Some of the sequences set at the pool were also cut out or cut short. For example, a scene referring to prostitution was definitively removed – an elderly man addresses one of the girls, noting that at the age of 19 she looks more like a 14 year old and encourages her to become an escort girl for a wealthy foreigner (Chytilová and Krumbachová 1965b, 49–51). This happens to be one of the few fragments of the original film story written by Chytilová and Juráček which was also accepted in the revised script.

According to the production report, the final length of the film was 1980 metres and confirmed what was already known – the result was significantly different from its script, especially in its experimental concept. Although the script indicated that *Daisies* would be experimental and non-realistic, the film surpassed all expectations. A lot of notes regarding the strategy of visual and montage conception were missing in the shooting script. Many sequences were enriched with inserted picture collages that enhanced the unique nature of the work and underlined the core motif of destruction. The idea of framing the film with images of explosions only came up during post-production. Poledňák approved the rearranged version in April 1966 (Hájek 1966). The decision-making screening of *Daisies* took place in the end of July 1966 in the presence of representatives from the Ideology Department of ÚV KSČ, Poledňák and other authorities of ČSF. Based on their final statement, we can presume the argument that contributed to the approval of such a problematic film was business – the film had already been sold to export markets at that time (Kovářík 1967).

The approval of the final copy did not bring closure to the case of *Daisies* – negotiations about film distribution to Czechoslovak cinemas started in the following days. The HSTD reports from August 1966 confirm that at that time it was still not clear when and how the film would enter into regular distribution. Without consulting the HSTD, the press was not allowed to publish any news about *Daisies*, including information about the reasons the film's exhibition had been delayed (Sešit HSTD 1966, 18). The premiere was scheduled for

the end of December 1966. However, in May 1967, the film was still being discussed by the Parliament and it turned out to be one of the most famous cases mentioned in connection with Czech film censorship during the 1960s. The deputy Jaroslav Pružinec then requested a distribution ban not only of *Daisies*, but also of *O slavnosti a hostech/The Party and the Guests* (1966) made by Jan Němec. Despite Pružinec's request, the films were not banned from distribution – in accordance with Poledňák's instructions, both *Daisies* and *The Party and the Guests* were only supposed to be screened in public in limited distributional circles, mainly in the film clubs (Skupa 2016, 141–142).

The Fruit of Paradise: filming it her way?

In the fall of 1967, Chytilová said in her interview with A. J. Liehm that she felt down after everything that had occurred around *Daisies* and implied that there might be more obstacles in her future work (Liehm 2001, 266). Her name appeared on a new project called *Jistoty/Certitudes* – a bitter narrative about an aging couple who do not want to consider the possibility of breaking up as their fear of solitude is much greater. According to the 1967 dramaturgy plan, the director was working on the script with Zdena Škvorecká. The project, however, never went further (Dramaturgický plán 1966, 5). Chytilová also admitted in the above interview that, together with Ester Krumbachová, they had finished a new script and were trying to get permission for its realization (Liehm 2001, 267).

Preparation for shooting the biblical allegory *Ovoce stromů rajských jíme/The Fruit of Paradise* (1969) started in July 1968. In this case, delays were not due to any approval complications but were linked to co-production issues. Chytilová had signed a contract for her next film with a Canadian production company before she and Krumbachová had even finished the script (Kunc 1968, 3). The co-producer eventually rejected the script and the authors had to deal with legal matters and find a different foreign partner – the Belgian company Elisabeth Films. As for the Czech side, a newly established creative group Pavel Juráček–Jaroslav Kučera, who had received an already approved script from the creative group Šmída–Fikar, took charge of the project.

Compared to Chytilová's previous projects, the production of this film was done under completely different conditions. In 1968, during the Prague Spring there were fewer restrictions in cinema. After several months of declining power within the censorship office, it was officially abolished in June 1968. At the end of January 1968, the 'literary script' of *The Fruit of Paradise* was approved by 'Ústřední publikační správa' (former HSTD). The examination was, nevertheless, simply a formality and there were no suggestions for modifications (Cenzurní karta 1968). This would hardly have happened a year before, if we take into consideration the attitude of the censorship authorities towards allegory. The project also received a completely different status due to the co-production. Cooperation with western cinemas was especially tempting for Czech filmmakers from a financial viewpoint; compared to the domestic cinema environment, it was a much more lucrative opportunity. However, in this particular case, we can take at least one other motivation into consideration. Since there was a foreign investment at stake, the approval process went on without major complications. Thus, we can assume that after the issues with *Daisies*, working in co-production was more convenient for Chytilová.

The Fruit of Paradise, therefore, avoided all the possible complications during the approval process. From our perspective, the work is worth mentioning for the fact that all of the

elements of Chytilová's identity as an unpredictable author were present in the film's production. With respect to Chytilová's working strategy and the experimental concept of the project both producers agreed on the script being only an 'outline sketch' of the film. The final form was to be designed exclusively by the director (Hulík 2011, 222). Also the director of Filmexport, Ladislav Kachtík, who was in charge of foreign cinema relations, confirmed that Chytilová had an unusual artistic autonomy specified in the contract with the co-production company (Skopal 2012, 165). Although the Belgian producer Bronka Ricquier later complained about production holdups, the director of FSB, Vlastimil Harnach, convinced her that there were no means of influencing Chytilová's work, since exerting pressure might lead to an undesirable outcome (Hulík 2011, 222).

Out of all of the films that we have considered so far, this one, above all, raises the question of how much the authors intended to change the meaning while working on it. A whole set of dialogue scenes is arranged so that we do not see the characters' faces. The camera uses either a full shot or a wide shot, where we do not focus on facial expressions or the movement of the lips. It is possible that these composition strategies were chosen in order to enable easier dubbing for the co-production market. However, it also made the dialogues more flexible and gave Chytilová the chance to change the meaning of some scenes. After all, she did not want to answer any questions about her personal intentions while filming the *The Fruit of Paradise*. In an interview for the magazine *Kino*, she stated that she was simply worried that the same situation would occur as in the interpretation of her previous films – a misunderstanding based on comparing the original intentions with the result (Tunys 1969, 4).

The director's silence could also have been related to an important turn of events – the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Warsaw Pact nations that occurred in August 1968. The film was still in the stage of preparation and Chytilová decided to partially change its meaning:

I adapted the film to the current situation as an allegory, obviously. [...] We wrote the script with Ester [Krumbachová] as a parable of the paradise from which we were expelled because we got to know the truth. Ester came up with the idea of basing the story on a real murderer of women that was published in the press. She came to the conclusion that we could apply in it some of the general questions of truth and lies, friendship and treason, which resonated through our society in 1968. There is an explicit rejection of accepting the experienced truth (Chytilová and Pilát 2010, 181–182).

According to Chytilová, following the events of August 1968, the main theme of the film was supposed to be treason. Even though we cannot say that there is a radical change of direction in the film compared to the script, the meaning of certain parts changed. It is no coincidence that this involved the scenes where the heroine Eva finds herself alone with Robert – a foreigner and a seducer who turns out to be a murderer of women. These dialogues reflect on topics that could align with the situation after the August invasion. A good example is a scene on a boat in which the dialogues were entirely changed – Eva is talking to Robert about truth and friendship which cannot exist without trust. In the final scene, Eva kills Robert with his own gun. Even though this sequence agrees with the script (Chytilová and Krumbachová 1968, 78–80), it was developed and given much deeper meaning – the words of deception and treason are openly pronounced in it.

Chytilová herself pointed out the particular meaning of the scene. It is a dramatic closure to the relationship between Eva and Robert, which is based on the issues of lies and treason

and set against an exterior carefully chosen to resemble (by its shape) the Czechoslovak border line. Chytilová complained that the main message – to which this scene offered a key – was not understood at the screening of the film at the Cannes IFF 1970 (*Zlatá šedesátá* 2009). It should be noted that the film received rather tepid reactions even from the Czech critics, who thought it too encrypted for anyone except Chytilová and Krumbachová who were said to have created the film only for themselves (Hrbaš 1970, 5).

Everything suggests that Chytilová made her last film from the 1960s the way she wanted. Censorship was established again in September 1968 but there was no longer an office designed especially for film production. As soon as the new normalization leaders took over, censorship mechanisms were reinforced directly through the film industry structures. Nevertheless, most of the work on *The Fruit of Paradise* had been done during the time of the former administration of FSB and ČSF. The film was completed soon after the change of cinema leadership and the official premiere was held in July 1970. Chytilová believed that, unlike some of the other films from the late 1960s that were put on the blacklist, this one was never banned because nobody understood its hidden meaning (Chytilová 2008).

Conclusion: six years of a silence

The background to the production of Věra Chytilová's feature-length films from the 1960s reveals what is otherwise somewhat concealed – how the approval of film projects worked in Czechoslovakia and how the results and also the final form of the film could be affected by the various elements involved in this process. The position of the authors themselves and their choices within the approval process – partially creative, partially accommodating the demands of others – were also uncovered. Chytilová's case is remarkable in that the unpredictability associated with the making of her films complicated this approval but at the same time provided an argument for defending the author's projects and their extraordinary or experimental status. Although a departure from the screenplays or intentions originally announced is not rare in normal film production, in the context of the Czechoslovak state cinema of the 1960s, this was an unusual phenomenon to say the least. Nevertheless, thanks to her position as a respected auteur with an ever growing international reputation, Chytilová's superiors learned to allow for and tolerate this feature of her work, even at the expense of possible problems.

However, Chytilová's first three feature films can also tell us something about the era of the 1960s, which continues to be associated with somewhat simplified ideas about the gradual loosening of the totalitarian regime and of its cultural and political system. What is referred to as the 'golden sixties' was in fact a very dynamic era, when relaxed years followed tight years in relatively quick succession. Between 1962 and 1964, when Chytilová made her first professional films without any significant problems, we can truly talk about considerably relaxed times which were manifested in the decentralization of dramaturgy, the dynamic arrival of the Czech New Wave and a preference for auteur film as a model for a successful festival and export product. Compared to this, after 1965 there was a revival of conservative political tendencies and conditions became more restrictive – cinema was not spared and as a consequence, the previous dramaturgy plans were revised. The termination of the project for *Tomato Matylda*, which seemed inappropriate in the given context, and, especially, the complicated process of approving *Daisies* in both the pre-production

and post-production stages provides evidence of this. In the year 1968, during what we call the Prague Spring and with the end of censorship, the situation changed again. Although censorship was restored again soon after the August occupation in the year 1968, as late as in the year 1969 there were still projects prepared by the 'old' dramaturgy, which continued to be developed under relatively autonomous conditions, including films that would have hardly been approved in the previous (and also the following) years. The parable *The Fruit of Paradise* is a prime example.

From about the middle of 1969, the situation was affected by measures promoted by the new people appointed to the leading positions at FSB and ČSF, who were loyal to the normalization policies and who saw cinema entering a 'new' era. In 1970, FSB introduced new measures – a so-called 'test of values and political beliefs' ('stranická prověrka') that labelled Chytilová as a persona non grata. Although Chytilová's films did not officially disappear from distribution, they were screened in public only sporadically in the following years. She only returned to the direction of feature films six years later, this time not to Barrandov, but to the Short Film Studios (Krátký film) where she was able to make *Hra o jablko/The Apple Game* (1976). Although Chytilová had planned to make several films during the previous years, none of them reached beyond script level. The fate of these projects belonged to a different era from the one considered in this study. But to conclude, we can discuss them briefly as they support the claim about the 'unpredictability', which continued to be a feature of her work in the normalization era.

In the early 1970s, the new dramaturgical group of Vojtěch Cach started to work on a synopsis for a project about Božena Němcová. The script for *Tvář naděje/Face of Hope* based on a detailed study of the legacy of the renowned Czech writer was written by Chytilová in 1972 (Hulík 2011, 223). *Smrt na inzerát/Ad of Death* was supposed to be an adaptation of a detective story written by Eva Kačírková and was offered to the group of Karel Cop in 1973. The main character is trying to remember through flashbacks the mysterious case of two deaths – that of her husband and a female friend – and discovers that the original target was herself (Kačírková 1973). In 1973, Chytilová worked on one more project for Cop – a comedy-musical called *Jak se státi mužem/How to Become a Man* in cooperation with Zdeněk Svěrák and Miloň Čepelka, performers from the popular Jára Cimrman theatre, who had just entered the world of cinema. It was the story of an ordinary young man who becomes a spoilt singer and experiences the two sides of fame. His hectic lifestyle is interrupted by a car accident which forces him to start again from scratch and hopefully in a different way (Svěrák, Čepelka, and Chytilová 1973).

For the rest of her career, Chytilová tried to carry through with the *Face of Hope*, unfortunately without result. *Ad of Death* was rejected with the words that there were too many detective stories in the dramaturgy plan that year (Cop 1973). The project of *How to Become a Man* was turned down because it was said that the authors had not submitted the first version of the script in time and, furthermore, that Chytilová had wrongfully requested her advance (Cop 1974). The involuntary six year gap endorsed her reputation as a filmmaker who refuses to compromise in order to be allowed to work. Nevertheless, some of her unrealized projects bring up something absolutely new – the author's unexpected attraction to genres which are more spectator-friendly and seemingly had the potential to give her the chance for a comeback. However, considering all that we have discovered about Chytilová's work, we can be almost sure that these rather conformist scripts would eventually look completely different on the film screen. The lack of support from the new cinema

leaders was obviously not caused by the scripts themselves but rather by Chytilová's method of work which, in the early years of normalization, did not receive the same tolerance and understanding as before.

Notes

1. Comprehensive assessment of the director's work from any stage of her career is still missing. Most of the published texts on Chytilová's films are more about aesthetic analysis and leave out the production point of view applied in this study. Within the Czech environment, several extensive monographs of various quality have been published. They are usually partly biographical and partly memoir books (Fryš and Gajdošík 2006; Lukeš and Lukešová 2009; Chytilová and Pilát 2010).
2. The so-called 'literary script' (literární scénář) was a Soviet-inspired format of a screenplay – a first version that preceding writing a shooting script.
3. The 'games' Chytilová played with the normalization approval system can be easily tracked down in both the pre-production and post-production stages of the film *Kalamita/Calamity* (1981) – she followed the instructions of the committee and removed certain themes from the script only to insert them back without their knowing (either by modifying them or moving them into another part of the script) (Podskalský 2015, 35–39).
4. 'Physical intimacy' refers here to motifs with relations to sexuality, eroticism or various intimate or taboo processes of the human body (including abortion). For more on this topic see Skupa and Frodlová 2014.
5. Between 1963 and 1965, the film *Something Different* was distributed in cinemas and television stations in 10 different countries (including Belgium, Norway, United Kingdom, Egypt and Lichtenstein) (Havelka 1975, 247).
6. Ostrava, where Chytilová was born, is an industrial city situated near the Polish border known for its strong dialect.
7. Jiří Suchý – a theatre director, actor, singer, composer, poet, writer and a co-founder of the Prague theatre, Semafor, which experienced a golden era in the 1960s. Ivan Vyskočil – a writer, playwright, actor, director, drama teacher and co-founder of a Prague theatre, Divadlo na zábradlí.
8. Zdena Škvorecká – a writer and translator, wife of writer Josef Škvorecký. After the year 1968, she emigrated and together with her husband, founded an exile publishing house '68 Publishers in Toronto.
9. Do not confuse the production manager Jaroslav Kučera with the cinematographer and Chytilová's husband of the same name whom she worked with on the films *Daisies* and *The Fruit of Paradise*.
10. Films made in the late 1960s that appeared on the blacklist were, for example, *Všichni dobří rodáci/All Good Countrymen* (1968), *Žert/The Joke* (1968), *Ucho/The Ear* (1969), *Zabitá neděle/A Squandered Sunday* (1969), *Skřivánci na niti/Skylarks on the String* (1969) and *Smuteční slavnost/Funeral Ceremonies* (1969). It was not until 1988 and 1989 that the ban on their distribution was being properly re-evaluated (Bláhová 2010).

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