

2017

SPECIAL EDITION OF THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE ON SLOVAK CINEMA

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- ▶ 5 October
- ▶ A Hole in the Head
- ▶ The Teacher

INTERVIEW

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2016 IN SLOVAK FILM

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THE SLOVAK FILM
INSTITUTE

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EDITORIAL

"Merciful memory will let all the bad sink to the bottom and the good float up to the surface," as Monika Kompaníková says in her novel *She's a Harbour* (Piata loď). We can view contemporary Slovak cinema from a variety of different aspects but if we try to do so cognisant of the state it was in ten to fifteen years ago, then we cannot fail but to be optimistic. The film *Little Harbour* (Piata loď) based on the novel referred to above is another one of those films that bring us optimism. It is a new film by director Iveta Grófová who made her courageous and ripe début five years ago with *Made in Ash* (Až do mesta Aš). Her *Little Harbour* has just received its world première at the 67th Berlinale, being screened in the Generation Kplus section. And thirdly, there is also Agnieszka Holland's film *Spoor* (Pokot/Cez kosti mŕtvych) which is in the Festival's main competition. These three films just confirm the positive changes in the state of Slovak cinema. And, in addition to the variability of contemporary domestic production, they also reflect the persisting co-production overlaps with the Czech Republic.

The separate studies devoted to Slovak feature, documentary and animated films of the previous year, the three published reviews and the article about premières prepared for 2017 testify to the likelihood of even more of this variability.

If memory works in the manner described in the opening quotation, it can be merciful. However, when speaking about Slovak cinema as a whole, it is better to revive the memory and to try to map out history in a more complex manner. That it can bring about interesting results is endorsed by the articles dedicated to the memory institution which also publishes *Film.sk* – the Slovak Film Institute.

► Daniel Bernát (Editor-in-Chief)

The History And Present of Film.sk

Film.sk is a monthly about film events in Slovakia published by the Slovak Film Institute. It has been published since January 2000 and up to 2010 it was the only film periodical in print in Slovakia. The magazine's editor-in-chief Simona Nôtová was present at its birth and she managed it until September 2012. Naturally, the monthly has undergone conceptual changes over the course of its existence but it was always based on the principle of the provision of a broad range of information on the events in the local film and audiovisual milieu.

At present, *Film.sk* is comprised of permanent sections: the Interview, Topic and Review which are complemented by further regular and irregular sections. These include current film events, reports on film festivals and film presentations in Slovakia and abroad, evaluating reflections on important events, an overview of distribution premieres in the given month but, in addition, the glosses or comments of experienced film journalists, contributions by filmmakers who respond to questions about the projects they are currently working on, profiles of personalities of Slovak cinema, separate texts about new Slovak films based on the accounts of directors and producers, presentations of inspirational new books from the area of film literature and several other sections. *Film.sk* also contains attachments which chart the annual results in one of the areas of Slovak cinema and provide valuable statistical data.

One of the regular attachments brings a report summarising Slovak cinematography for the previous year, divided into a number of chapters: Legislation, Financial Support, Film Education, Film Production, Film Distribution, Cinemas, Multiplexes and Film Clubs, Film Festivals and Film Screenings. The study of Czech cinematography, which is also published as an attachment to the monthly magazine, takes on a similar structure.

Contemporarily, *Film.sk* is a well-established film magazine capable of appealing to film experts, filmmakers, students and the wider public alike. The website www.filmsk.sk has supported its printed version since 2001. ◀

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The Slovak Film Institute (SFI) is the sole state-funded memory and archive institution operating in the area of audiovision in Slovakia. The National Film Archive and the National Cinematographic Centre are the SFI's basic organisational units. The SFI is a member of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP), European Film Promotion (since 2006); it functions as a service workplace for the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) and the Council of Europe cinema support fund – Eurimages. Creative Europe Desk Slovensko is also part of the Slovak Film Institute.

► The Film Institute in Bratislava was established on 1st April 1963 and it was placed under the directorate of Film Production and Distribution (Filmová tvorba a distribúcia) in Bratislava. The film archive also became part of the Institute; it was established in 1958 by the film historian Ivan Rumanovský at the Slovak Film Distribution Company (Slovenská požičovňa filmov).

► In 1970, the SFI was presented with a copy of the first Slovak full-length feature film *Jánošík* (Jánošík, dir. Jaroslav Siakel, 1921) which was later restored, provided with a soundtrack and in 1995 UNESCO placed it among the world cultural heritage.

► In 1972, the Film Institute came under the Central Office of Slovak Film (Ústredie slovenského filmu).

► By the end of 1976 the Film Club of the Central Office of Slovak Film was opened in Bratislava; at the present day, Cinema Lumière, belonging to the Slovak Film Institute, is located on its premises.

► In July 1989 the SFI came under the state organisation Slovak Film Production Bratislava – Koliba (Slovenská filmová tvorba Bratislava – Koliba) up to 1st January 1991 when, by decision of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (MC SR), the Slovak Film Institute – National Cinematographic Centre was established as an independent public contributory organisation managed by the MC SR. Hence, by delimitation, the SFI also acquired producer rights to the archived films which were made before 1991 by Slovak Film Production.

► The Slovak Film Institute played a part in the preparation of the extensive publication entitled *History of Slovak Cinematography* (Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie, 1997); the second, updated issue of the book is currently being published.

► In 2001, the SFI became a full member of the prestigious International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP).

► In 2002, the SFI published its first DVD (*Pictures of the Old World/Obrázky starého sveta*, dir. Dušan Hanák, 1972); since then it has published dozens of other DVDs in over 500,000 copies.

► In 2002, the SFI started to implement the long-term integrated audiovisual information system project, SK CINEMA, for processing, storing, interconnecting, organising, searching and presenting information from the SFI's individual departments.

► In 2006, the Government adopted the draft Project of the Systematic Restoration of Audiovisual Cultural Heritage with the objective of rescuing cinematographic and audiovisual works and gradually making them accessible to the public. This is the SFI's long-term priority project.

► In 2008, SFI's shop Klapka.sk was opened. It presents a broad offer of filmological literature, DVDs and CDs and other materials.

► Since 2011, in association with the Radio and Television of Slovakia, the SFI has implemented the national project entitled Digital Audiovision in order to systematically digitise the audiovisual heritage and make it accessible. Two specialised digitisation workplaces are part of the project. SFI's digitisation workplace is located in the basement of Cinema Lumière in Bratislava. The national Digital Audiovision project was concluded on 30 November 2015; however, it will be retained until 2020.

► In September 2011, Cinema Lumière was opened in Bratislava. The cinema is operated by the SFI. ◀

Who Is to Blame?

► Jana Dudková

After the first five successful years since the Slovak Audiovisual Fund was established, Slovak cinema appears to be consolidated; the individual trends do alternate but they, nevertheless, remain quite stable on a broader time-frame. Nor did we experience any marked surprises in feature film in 2016, either.

It was probably *The Red Captain* (Červený kapitán, dir. Michal Kollár) that deviated most from the current forms of feature film in Slovakia, not only by focusing on a historical period quite untypical for Slovak film but, in particular, in the visual treatment and the extent of the use of special visual effects. Their appearance has been considerably professionalised since *Immortalitas* (2012) was made hence the audiences of *The Red Captain* could delight in a Bratislava which, to all extents and purposes, was not adequately captured in film due to the rapid decline in film production in the early 1990s.

But can we consider *The Red Captain* to be a surprise?

This paper includes a review of six Slovak and majority Slovak films or equal co-productions that were released into general distribution over the course of the previous year (including Nvota's fairy tale *Johanna's Mystery*/Johankino tajomstvo which actually received its première at the end of 2015 but it was screened exclusively in Cinema Lumière in Bratislava and was only distributed to other cine-

mas last year). Almost all the films from the six under review move consistently along one of two lines: either along the anti-communism line or the social drama line. The first is represented by *The Red Captain*, *Agave* (Agáva, dir. Ondrej Šulaj) and *The Teacher* (Učiteľka, dir. Jan Hřebejk), and the second by *Little Feather* (Pirko, dir. Lucia and Petr Klein Svoboda) and, in part, also by *Stanko* (dir. Rastó Boroš). With a little exaggeration we could state that this collection (in which only *Johanna's Mystery* diverges) plays into the hands of all the opponents of the current political regime. But in reality, nothing is ever that simple, so one should rather ask what the reviewed films really say about our past and present times. Do their images possess any power? And if they are to be critical (and most of them are), is their critical scalpel really constructive?

Of course, another question is what we understand as critique: conventional condemnation of what should be condemned or the process of reevaluation and raising doubts. For instance, the teaching monster in Hřebejk's film lacks almost any

good qualities, the film underscores the abomination of communism and the snares of the Stockholm syndrome which is fully manifested in the scenes of the teacher-parent meeting based on the principle of a model little morality where the destroyed victims, a flippant rebel and a number of hesitant parents are supported mainly by obviously corrupted individuals.

The critical attitude of *Little Feather* is of a different nature. The motifs of two films – *The Miracle* (Zázrak, 2013) and *Made in Ash* (Až do mesta Aš, 2012) – come together in the film, and there is an evident effort to move them to a new stylistic form. However, while a certain stereotypicality of the plot-line in *The Miracle* and *Made in Ash* was redeemed by the emphasis on narrative by image, this attempt did not deliver so well for *Little Feather*. A visually and narratively refreshing digression from the usual Slovak variations of social drama, which looks promising, mars its reputation with the gaudy and too illustrative use of music and, at the same time, with the indeterminate moral attitude of its authors and the unclear border

between condemnation and romanticisation (of drug addict outsiders and the world of luxury prostitution), or between demonisation (the sleazy hairy backs of old men raping the angelically alabaster heroine) and innocuous caricature (the strange hot-dog seller with excessive overbite).

The metaphor of a plant that blooms once in a lifetime and then dies finds its parallel in the destiny of the heroine of *Agave* who is to get to know love for the first and last time in the summer preceding "Victorious February".¹ However, the question arises as to whether such a metaphor is sufficient if we do not learn from the film what the values of the old world, which is about to be so bitterly destroyed, consist of – except for sitting at wine and verbally declaring one's spontaneous relation to women. While *The Teacher* focuses on the abominable dimensions of communism as a system in which Party affiliation determines who gets to wield power and which establishes the predispositions for manipulation, *Agave* perceives communism as a metonymy, a foggy apocalypse to follow after a temporary idyll. Condemnation is

here a matter of societal consensus and the cultural cliché familiar from fairy-tales and stories about wars and disasters where an apocalypse always follows such an idyll.

Even though Slovak filmmakers usually do not fail to agree that communism is a condemnable ideology, trivial anti-communism also causes harm – many currently criticise it for a dearth of sober arguments, the inability to separate the failings of actual communist regimes from the positive aspects of the idea of a social state, but also for the fact that simple and superficial anti-communism works to favour conspiracies and often deflects attention toward solutions that border on extremism. The blatant demonisation of *The Teacher* in this context will not serve any cause, but the melancholic fatalism that Ondrej Šulaj was inclined toward in his directing début might also appear as ineffective. *Agave* seeks to evoke a sensual atmosphere with colours and sounds, but it pays the price for the over-stereotypical image solutions, the “paper” dialogues and the scarcely credible acting performance of the main protagonist. Here and there the tragedy of human fates flashes through the narrative but only occasionally, as if the film needed to assure the viewer too much on which side evil crystallises.

Perceiving communism as a metonymy of the fictitious story is also characteristic of *The Red Captain*. This stifling detective story calls attention to the survival of communism even after its fall and to the efforts of the State Security to keep on controlling the seemingly democratic system – for instance via the corruption of the church. Thus, it develops a conspiratorial dot from the ending of *The Teacher*: the thesis that the rotten communism survives even today and uses the same manipulative practices.

However, most of the above films refer rather to mistrust in state institutions than to anti-communism. This also relates to the Slovak variations of social dramas from recent years; of the films under review it is, in particular, *Little Feather* where the mistrust is expressed by the heroine’s rejection of assistance from the state and the decision to live on the fringes of society. Thereby the heroine rejects the clearly demonic form of the state, represented by the staff of the children’s home, and also the kind face of the state which lifts the

heroine from out of the pimps’ den, rehabilitates her, provides her with accommodation and a job – but does not ensure for her the adequately luxurious life that she still yearns for.

In essence, out of the films reviewed, only the road movie début *Stanko* sets itself apart from the tendentious romanticisation of everything that is outside the control (of state or patriarchal) power. And this is simply done: the question of the struggle with power is just not raised at all in this film. Instead, *Stanko* offers the story of a maladjusted petty fraudster and a Roma girl abandoned by her mother; they are on the road between Slovakia and Italy. The colour toning of the film in the style of the golden age of American road movies verges on kitsch, but the film wins through with its consistency of image and music dramaturgy, and also with its non-typical hero who may be understood as a symptom of the period (without the filmmakers looking for those who are to blame for the period).

I regard *Stanko* and *The Red Captain* as the most valuable Slovak feature films made last year. It is not difficult to come up with such a contention not just due to the unwillingness of the makers of those two films to clearly blame others (or the system) for everything bad that occurred to the protagonists, but also due to the fact that both films bet on much more credible narration than their competitors. If we were to evaluate Slovak film on the basis of *The Teacher* or *Agave* we could easily get the impression that it had returned to the era of schematic dialogues that are difficult to be played at a level higher than that of the actor’s first reading (as eventually *The Teacher* also shows illustratively). If we were to evaluate Slovak film on the basis of *Little Feather* and *Johanna’s Mystery* we would gain the impression that its sense for music dramaturgy is excessively conservative, even aesthetically so. Moreover, the last-mentioned film suffers from the illogicality of the story or the motivations of the characters, and from the lack of imagination which is crucial for the fairy-tale world.

However, the value of *The Red Captain* and *Stanko* lies not only in a higher degree of inner consistency or a lesser degree of triviality, but also in the way they face up to the world and the message they bear for the viewer. While the other films nudge the viewer toward a passive drowning in helplessness



and condemnation, or (like *Little Feather*) they offer an implausible rapid transformation from victim to manipulator, Kollár’s film emphasises the role of the individual, the personal enthusiasm or courage on which the rescue of moral values of the collective depends. Even though poor articulation of the dialogues does not increase the film’s comprehensibility and some characters might seem to be under-motivated, this message can be important if we do not just confine ourselves to comfortable identification with the hero searching for the truth, who will do “all the work” for us.

In turn, *Stanko*’s value consists in how the film smashes the usual image of the Slovak anti-hero from the periphery who takes life’s hard knocks with a poker face. Instead, Rasťo Boroš offers the image of a neurotic whose fear of failure is almost tangible throughout the entire film. Even though this might be unattractive or even tedious for the audiences, the film tries to arouse compassion for the hero, but also to teach him empathy. It does not seek to find out the roots of his misfortune or blame the system, it builds on basic human values. And so the maladjusted petty criminal Stanko shakes off his fear at the end of the film and, al-

beit belatedly, he refuses to accept the fact that he has betrayed an innocent girl. Because the way out of the crisis of humanity that most of the films in question point to is neither to blame the others or the state, nor to voluntarily accept the role of a predator. Both approaches would, rather, be a route leading to new totality. And the way the domestic political situation is currently developing could be a warning for us.

This work was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under Contract no. APVV-0797-12. ▲

¹ The 1948 Czechoslovak coup d’etat in which the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia assumed undisputed control over the government of Czechoslovakia. (translator’s note)

Films Labelled “2016 Documentary”

► Marek Urban

The 2016 distribution year ushered in eleven films which were labelled as “documentary”. We will pose a simple question when analysing them: How do they extend our experience with film or documentary film as a form of art?

According to John Dewey, art can be defined by the premise that it extends our experience. If we take a closer look at this assertion, we arrive at the perception that anything can be art: a urinal exhibited in a gallery, just like Rothko's paintings, the fourth part of *Transformers* or *Okhwan's Mission Impossible* (Okhwan na ceste za slobodou). Dewey did not generalise, he did not create distinctions between a lower and higher art, he did not talk about types or genres. The basic condition of his philosophy is simply the extension of experience.

However, if we ask how many films extend our experience and how, we find ourselves in a difficult situation. A film may be “boring” for one person (i.e. it lacks stimuli) while someone else may see an “apparition” in it. That is because each and every one of us evaluates the extension of experience within a different context or narrative. Someone might evaluate the extension of their subjective experience, for instance they can comprehend

something in the film which they did not previously know about themselves. Someone else might evaluate the extension of experience with film as a medium – the film may have no interest for them as a viewer but it may play an important role in the development of film aesthetics.

I would like to open the analysis with *Okhwan's Mission Impossible* (dir. M. Mackovič) the style of which, paradoxically, is unified by not being unified by anything at all. The simple narrative of the motif of a journey does not form any more pronounced dramatic arc, hence the viewer's attention is held by constant alteration of the film style. The style frames the perspective from which we observe the main protagonist: slow-motion close-ups of the face alternate with wide shots with many figures, static shots alternate with shaky shots from a hand-held camera, archived childhood shots alternate with dynamic shots from the GoPro camera. Sound effects at one point illustrate the narrative just to

have the image immediately put in sharp contrast with the account. Some shots are just a simple depiction of the word (slow-motion shots of a body while washing during a monologue on sexuality), while others shock with their explicitness (fingernails being pulled out). *Okhwan's Mission Impossible* is a film consistent in its variability, it consistently surprises with new stimuli and introduces new contexts within which we repeatedly recognise the main protagonist.

If continual change is the unifying principle of *Okhwan*, total stylistic coherence is the unifying principle of *5 October* (dir. M. Kollar). Just like *Okhwan*, this film also takes the form of an account of a journey; however, it thematises, in particular, the closeness and ubiquity of death which is represented by the tumour growing within the protagonist. Static very wide shots depicting circling ravens, rain, mud, decomposing potatoes, factories tinted in grey, and all that without any alleviating commentary, immerse the viewers quite indiscriminately in a situation where they have to face up to the following dilemma: without surgery the probability of death is ninety-two per cent, with surgery fifty-fifty.

While in *5 October* static shots supported the main theme of the film, in *Steam on the River* (Para nad riekou, dir. R. Kirchhoff, F. Remunda) the style is in conflict with the protagonists. Ageing jazzmen deal with the proximity of death each in their own way: they curse, they are cynical, they demonstrate their spontaneity and defiance whenever the opportunity presents. As viewers we probably suspect that dying, ramshackle hotels and audiences reminiscent of zombies are hardly the most joyous ones; however, in its style the film always adds something – a shot of fish bones, flies, broken walls. The attempt to add seriousness paradoxically decreases the seriousness of the film, it mellows the contrast between the life energy of the protagonists and the situation in which they find themselves.

The documentary *IMT Smile and Lúčnica: Made in Slovakia* (IMT Smile a Lúčnica: Made in Slovakia, dir. P. Janík) is constructed as a concert recording where performances of IMT Smile alternate with performances of the Lúčnica folk ensemble, and these again with the comments of the organisers. The performances themselves impress with their energy, while Ivan Tásler's broad smile is disarming. However, the film's simple dramaturgic prin-

ciple is exhausted by continuous repetition; the three levels of the film do not mutually create new meanings nor do they complement each other. For instance, the performances of Lúčnica either literally illustrate the content of IMT Smile's songs or they altogether fail to correlate with the songs. Moreover, the comments of the organisers remain at a declarative level: Ivan Tásler repeats several times that he was mostly afraid that the connection between the two ensembles would not make sense, and his comments conclude with his assertion that it did make "sense". Did it?

The problem of unsubstantiated assertions appears more expressively in *Tatras: The New Story* (Tatry, nový príbeh, dir. M. Romeo Dvořák). It is based on commercial aesthetics of time-lapse shots of clouds, aerials of free-runners leaping over obstacles or on mutually unrelated accounts by respondents who present their unconditionally positive relation to the Tatras. The objective is to present a kaleidoscope of personalities – a sort of "Tatra elite" which, according to the film, should create the new story of the Tatras and that we should want to join: for instance, to leave Canada for the Tatras, just like one of the respondents who the filmmakers consistently present to us as a role model. However, the film itself does not accomplish its objective, as it depicts its respondents with a certain (unintentional) subversive quality. For instance, the commentary claims of the young free-runners: "They don't suffer from any inferiority complex whatsoever as a result of coming from small villages below the Tatras," which, however, appears to be quite the opposite based on the tone of the scene. And the respondent who expresses her relation to the Tatras is, in turn, shown in the jacuzzi half-naked, which reduces her to just another untrustworthy advertising object.

Freedom under Load (Sloboda pod nákladom, dir. P. Barabáš) is another film returning to the construction of the "Tatra elite". It talks about the community of Tatra porters, but it does not restrict itself to interviews – with its structure, the documentary mediates their experience. On the one hand, there are the accounts of the porters and their constant references to numbers – who transported how many kilograms to what altitude – which should demonstrate the exceptionality of this community, but they tend rather to induce smiles on our faces.

On the other hand, with its slow progress, framing its respondents in solitude, as they face up to the majesty of the high mountains, the gales and the downpours, the film renders it possible for the viewers to experience the ascent up the high mountains themselves. But, in the end, the intensity of the experience is the greatest winner and, at the same time, the greatest loser of *Freedom under Load*: the experience of the film is so live that it remains accessible to only a closed group of people. The detachedness, the sweat, the overcoming of one's own limitations are all within reach, but is that what we want?

Whilst *Tatras: The New Story* does not accomplish its objective, *Acceptance* (Akceptácia, dir. J. Matoušek) is emblematic as its makers are unable to set an objective. On the one hand, they want to talk about the mystery of death in the Tatras, on the other hand, they want to tell the story of climbers who have decided to attempt to break a longstanding record – and eventually, they want to allow the audience to experience what it means to teeter along a mountain ridge. However, the dramaturgy of the film does not permit any of that: the filmmakers work with the topic of death at random, the story about breaking the record does not contain the leitmotifs necessary for building tension (for instance, we lack information about the deadlines) and the music, which is largely at odds with what we see, does not allow the audience to become immersed in experiencing the film (the wild music does not allow the viewers to merge with the graceful downhill run, whilst, in turn, a slow composition does not match the experience of an adrenaline-fuelled ascent).

The Final (Finále, dir. P. Korec, D. Milko) finds itself in a similar situation as regards the uncertainty of its objectives: the authors do not know to what extent they would like to render the social situation of older footballers and to what extent to celebrate the younger ones uncritically. With regard to the older protagonists, they highlight only those moments where their social status is manifested in a negative manner: excessive boozing or them being reduced to the need to sell books "door to door". Conversely, the younger generation is depicted only positively: smooth shots from the steadycam shooting the football players from below imitate the aesthetics of corporate promo-

tion videos and give the impression of it being a commercial for a Slovak football team.

The authors of *When Land Is Looking for Its Heaven* (Zem, ktorá hľadá svoje nebo, dir. E. Praus) work openly with the ambition of social overlapping – they construct the image of a small village in the Upper Hron River Region and let its inhabitants talk about their social situation. Their film should be a synecdoche pars for this, the stories of the individuals aspire to represent the entire "Slovak countryside". Nostalgic memories of socialism, folklore, racism towards the Roma, the representation of the countryside as a place where people help each other (in contrast with the avaricious inhabitants of the capital, Bratislava), the reluctance to move to a different town for work, shifting the responsibility for one's own discomfort in life onto the authorities – but all this has long been a part of the Slovak media and film universe. Accordingly, the film just replicates the established media stereotypes, it makes no attempt to examine the allegations of its respondents, it does not make a problem out of them, it assumes their perspective non-critically; however, by doing this, the film does not allow us to understand them. For instance, it displays the Roma as smiling workers in activation jobs. Why does the population of the country then perceive them as a threat? We do not learn which role these stereotypes play in the lives of people and, as the respondents are defined exclusively through the constantly repeated stereotypes, they also lose their uniqueness.

Where *When Land Is Looking for Its Heaven* non-critically accepts the perspective of its respondents, *Difficult Choice* (Ťažká voľba, dir. Z. Piussi) assumes the opposite position. The aim of the film is to deconstruct the media campaign of presidential can-

didates by showing what was going on behind the scenes and how the media images of the individual personalities were created. The film maintains a distance from its respondents, it approaches them as the subject for analysis – however, it fails to keep this distance in the "expository" line where it assumes the perspective of "non-voters" and "experts", thereby implicitly condemning the management of political campaigns. This is stirring stuff – the deconstruction has been successful – but it does not raise any question or point to any direction we should take and thus leaves the audience in uncertainty. Should we condemn all our politicians? Demand authenticity from them? Or should we cancel political campaigns? Or democracy?

Richard Müller: Unknown (Richard Müller: Neznášaný, dir. M. Remo) eventually uses the deconstruction potential to completely reframe what we know about the main protagonist; however, the deconstruction itself is not sufficient, the film goes further. *Richard Müller: Unknown* chooses to ignore the limitations set by the rules of the chosen art form: documentary. It exceeds the common practice of what a film can do with the representation of its protagonist, it creates new rules and opens up new perspectives. After ripping the protagonist out of all known contexts, it creates his new image, new representation, freed of all burdens of the past, with the ambition of creating a new quality, of capturing a sort of general feature, comprehensible to all. While it is common practice that films related to reality draw their strength from the reality in front of the camera, in the case of *Richard Müller: Unknown* it is the other way round: the film gives a new meaning to the reality itself. It opens up options. ▲



Okhwan's Mission Impossible ■ PHOTO: ASFK

Mimi & Lisa • PHOTO: Fool Moon

Decline of Animation?

► Eva Šošková

2016 did not bring any big numbers, themes or technical challenges to Slovak animation. However, we should not forget its highpoint – the Christmas première of the TV series *The Tots* (Drobci) and some minor distribution successes. While 2015 was characterised by several premières of short films without releasing them into distribution, last year the situation was quite the reverse.

It was possible to view several new films in the traditional way at the Áčko and Fest Anča Festivals. The Student Film Festival Áčko exclusively presents the production of the last completed school year, the Slovak film competition at the Fest Anča International Animation Festival presents films from the last two to three calendar years. As the deadline for film applications at Fest Anča is usually in the first quarter of the year, films made in the current year do not have much of a chance of taking part in the respective edition of the festival. Maybe that is also why last year there was only one film with a 2016 copyright at Fest Anča – *Occupation* (Okupácia) by Martina Mikušová, which also competed in the Áčko Festival. *Occupation* and also Mikušová's next film *Chilli* (2016), the animated film which won the Áčko Festival, have become part of the – so far students' – "dark poetry wave" represented by Marta Prokopová (*White Forest*/Biely les, 2014; *Mila Fog*, 2015) and foreshadowed, for instance, by Júlia Koleňáková's *Suitcase* (Kufor, 2012). A common feature of these films is

the depiction of the dark side of partner relations by means of a correspondingly dark film style. *Occupation* metonymically represents a man and woman by means of hands and cells. It is a film about the physical and mental abuse of a woman, just like the figurative film *Chilli* where the woman is hunted like an animal by her brutal partner. Prokopová's *White Forest* depicts Emil, a man suffering for love both mentally and physically, and *Mila Fog*, in turn the immersion of a woman into herself, whereby the anticipated reason for her turning into herself is men. There are differences between the individual authors, especially in the colours and the animation technique which also express the authors' relation to the animation medium. Prokopová's films are monochrome, made by combined animation techniques and they are something of a sacred temple devoid of film self-irony. Mikušová's films are created by means of aggressive combinations of colours in computer-generated 2D animation. Physical violence in the form of cut-off fingers or the penetrated palm of

a hand is depicted simply in terms of graphics, unrealistically, even comically schematically. The films do depict the uneasy theme of violence against women, but all that aggression is borne only by "some sort of drawn figures".

In addition to the already mentioned winner of Fest Anča, *Mila Fog*, and *Star Taxi* (Hviezdy taxí) and *Brother Deer* (Braček jelenček), which received their premières two years ago, there was another film in the festival competition that was also made in 2015 – the PhD. film by Martina Frajšťáková *Balloon Girl* (Balónové dievča). Just as in her Master's degree film, *Terra Nullius*, so also in this case, the film delivers a very clear linear story based on a simple initial metaphor. *Terra Nullius* visualises the phrase "Mother Earth" and derives further meanings from it. *Balloon Girl* is based on the metaphor presented at the very beginning of the film – a balloon flies away from the girl and she is so frustrated that a black hair with a balloon at its end grows on her head. Long hair represents the flowing of time, the heroine's mane becomes thicker and thicker and causes further and further problems, leading to an ever greater frustration and new balloons. And so, just as the girl's hair grows thicker, so also does the film – by way of its further meanings.

In addition to Martina Mikušová's films, several others were presented at the Student Film Festival Áčko: *The Beauty and the Knight* (Kráska a rytier, 2016) by Matej Babic, *Scandinavia* (Škandinávia, 2016) by Katarína Kočanová and the non-competition *Redemption* (Spasenie, 2016) by Marek Jasaň. There was only one Bachelor's and one Master's degree work in the competition, all the rest being exercises.

In 2016, a Slovak minority co-production also had its première – a short film by the Hungarian director, Luca Tóth, *Superbia* (2016). Luca Tóth reverses the men-women stereotypes in a comic way in a surreal fluid world. Just as in Slovakia, Hungary also has a strong generation of women authors of animated films. While the heroines in Slovak animated films are mainly sensitive filters drawing on the personal experience of the authors in the area of human relations, Hungarian films act as the means for a social or feminist appeal.

Unlike 2015, which was a fallow year in terms of distribution, last year several projects were screened in cinemas: *Star Taxi* (dir. J. Krumpolec, 2015)

together with *Operation Arctic* (Operasjon Arktis, dir. G. Bøe-Waal), *Brother Deer* (dir. Z. Žiaková, 2015) with *5 October* (dir. M. Kollar) and *Cowboyland* (Kovbojsko, dir. D. Štump, 2015) with *Far from Men* (Loin des hommes, dir. D. Oelhoffen). A bedtime story in cinema distribution was quite a novelty of 2016 – the successful TV series *Mimi & Lisa* (Mimi & Líza) by Katarína Kerekesová was presented in a block of seven episodes. However, the full-length *Murderous Tales* (Smrteľné historky, 2016) by Czech filmmaker Jan Bubeníček was also released in distribution; this was made in a Slovak minority co-production.

After Katarína Kerekesová, another animator of the younger generation – Vanda Raýmanová – is coming up with a new TV series. Her project *The Tots* broadcast by RTVS over Christmas has links with her short film *Who's There?* (Kto je tam?, 2010). While, according to the press-kit, *Mimi & Lisa* is made for children aged five to seven, *The Tots* is aimed at younger viewers – the Slovak Audiovisual Fund registration system mentions the three-to-six age category. The style of this series is a bit slower, the meanings are reduced and the structure and the puns of the stories are more didactic. Some sort of lesson is always stated by the protagonists themselves at the end of each episode of *The Tots*, such as "I won't be bad again, but I will do this or that". The story is also summarised at the end of each episode of *Mimi & Lisa*, albeit not so explicitly, by enhancing the ethical and moral position of the characters – they never fail to do so. The aim of this summary is mainly to calm the small viewers down following an adventure and, at the same time, to summarise the experience that helps the friends to get to know each other and to know the world from the other's perspective. *Mimi & Lisa* is not primarily intended as an educational TV series but it is particularly receptive. However, both series duly react to the needs of their target audiences.

2016 was meagre in terms of production and, for distribution, it lived off the production of the previous year. Let us hope that this is not an indicator of a substantial change but "just" a coincidence or the frequently referred-to "concurrent production" of several projects.

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2016: We've Never Had Anything Like This Before

► Miro Ulman

2016 ushered in further records for Slovak cinemas. The gross box office taking grew by almost 23% year-on-year and totalled nearly 30 million Euro, which is the highest figure since Slovakia became independent. The total cinema attendance increased by 23.4% to almost 5.7 million viewers and was the highest since 1994. And the share of domestic films in last year's total attendance was nearly 7% once again. *The Red Captain* (Červený kapitán) was the best attended domestic film.

Michal Kollár's thriller *The Red Captain* was seen by 87,224 viewers hence, overall, it became the thirteenth most highly attended film of 2016 and the eighth most successful domestic film since Slovakia gained independence.

As regards production, the previous year was only two films behind the record number of films made in 2015. Twenty-eight full-length Slovak and co-production films were made (of these only nine were minority co-productions). However, the production of Slovak majority feature films declined dramatically, since only six were made.

There was a record number of premières. Twenty-six Slovak full-length films were released in cinemas – thirteen feature films (of these, seven were minority co-productions), twelve documentaries (of these, only one was a minority co-production) and one minority animated film. These were complemented by the re-release of Martin Šulík's *Everything I Like* (Všetko čo mám rád, 1992), a block of animated films by Katarína Kerekesová *Mimi & Lisa* (Mimi & Líza) and the mid-length documentary *Life in the Clouds* (Život v oblakoch, dir. Erik Baláž). In addition, four short animated films were released in cinemas and screened before the main films: *Brother Deer* (Braček Jelenček, SK, 2016, dir. Juraj Krumpolec), *Cowboyland* (Kovbojsko, SK, 2015, dir. Dávid Stumpf) and *Superbia* (Hungary/Czech Republic/Slovakia, 2016, dir. Luca Tóth).

Freedom under Load (Sloboda pod nákladom),

made by Pavol Barabáš, was the best attended domestic documentary with 15,283 viewers and, as regards minority co-productions, Tomáš Hoffman's comedy *Stuck with a Perfect Woman* (Bezva ženská na krku) was most successful with 46,568 viewers. Thanks to this comedy and also a comedy made by another débutant, Radek Bajgar, *The Tiger Theory* (Teória tigra), the share of minority co-productions in the attendance at Slovak films also increased once more after many years.

Slovak films were distributed to cinemas by eleven distribution companies – the Association of Slovak Film Clubs was once again the most active with nine domestic premières – and three production companies (Arolla, Art4, JM film) released their films directly into cinemas without the mediation of any traditional distributors.

The average attendance per screening of a 100 percent Slovak film or majority co-production increased from 30.26 viewers in 2015 to 31.83 in the previous year. Altogether, 377,072 people came to cinemas to all the domestic films screened, not just those that received their première, which makes a 6.6 percent share of the total attendance. *Tatras: The New Story* (Tatry, nový príbeh, 62.29 viewers) and *Life in the Clouds* (62 viewers) had the highest average attendance among documentaries, *The Red Captain* (45.81 viewers) and *The Teacher* (Učiteľka, 41.58 viewers) were the most successful among feature films. ▲

The Red Captain ■ PHOTO: Forum Film

Distribution of Premiered Slovak and Co-Production Films in Slovakia in 2016

SLOVAK TITLE / ENGLISH TITLE	DIRECTOR	YEAR OF PRODUCTION	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	RELEASE DATE (DD-MM-YY)	NUMBERS OF SCREENING	ADMISSIONS	GROSS BOX OFFICE (EUR)	AVERAGE ADMISSION PER SCREENING	AVERAGE TICKET PRICE (EUR)	DISTRIBUTOR
1. Červený kapitán / The Red Captain	Michal Kollár	2016	SK/CZ/PL	10-3-16	1,904	87,224	461,580	45.81	5.29	Forum Film
2. Učiteľka / The Teacher	Jan Hřebejk	2016	SK/CZ	21-7-16	1,426	59,292	284,956	41.58	4.81	Forum Film
3. Ptiko / Little Feather	Lucia Klén Svoboda, Petr Klén Svoboda	2016	SK/CZ	06-10-16	84.0	21,724	110,404	25.86	5.08	Bontofilm
4. Sloboda pod nákladom / Freedom under Load	Pavol Barabáš	2016	SK	01-9-16	383	15,283	44,026	39.90	2.88	ASFK
5. Agáva / Agave	Ondrej Sulaj	2016	SK	31-3-16	588	10,790	52,215	18.35	4.84	Continental film
6. JMT Smieľa a Lúčnica: Made in Slovakia / JMT Smile and Lúčnica: Made in Slovakia	Pavol Janík	2016	SK	10-11-16	54.2	7,651	35,784	14.12	4.68	Continental film
7. Richard Müller: Neznámy / Richard Müller: Unknown	Miro Remo	2016	SK/CZ	17-11-16	333	6,838	23,808	20.53	3.48	ASFK
8. Všetko čo mám rád / Everything I Like	Martin Šulík	1992	CS	23-6-16	123	2,549	4,092	20.72	1.61	Garfield Film
9. Zen, ktorá hľadá svoje nebo / When Land Is Looking for Its Heaven	Erik Praus	2016	SK	07-7-16	138	1,925	4,509	13.95	2.34	ASFK
10. Okhwan na ceste za slobodou / Okhwan's Mission Impossible	Marek Mackovič	2016	SK/CZ	09-6-16	116	1,658	3,612	14.29	2.18	ASFK
11. Para nad nekou / Steam on the River	Robert Kirchhoff, Filip Remunda	2015	SK/CZ	19-5-16	92	1,405	3,094	15.27	2.20	ASFK
12. Stanko / Stanko	Rasto Boroš	2015	SK	14-4-16	16.9	1,395	5,071	8.25	3.63	Continental film
13. Akceptácia / Acceptance	Jaroslav Matoušek	2015	SK	03-3-16	20	877	2,485	43.85	2.83	JM film
14. Mimi & Líza / Mimi & Lisa	Katarína Kerekesová	2014	SK	03-9-16	28	849	2,504	30.32	2.95	Art4
15. 5 October / 5 October	Martin Kollar	2016	SK/CZ	06-10-16	61	706	1,352	11.57	1.91	ASFK
16. Ťažká voľba / Difficult Choice	Zuzana Pussi	2016	SK/CZ	25-2-16	32	694	2,082	21.69	3.00	FILMTOPIA
17. Život v oblakoch / Life in the Clouds	Erik Baláž	2016	SK	09-12-16	10	620	2,186	62.00	3.53	Arolla
18. Finále / The Final	Dušan Milko, Palo Korec	2016	SK	24-11-16	154	612	2,795	3.97	4.57	Continental film
19. Tatry, nový príbeh / Tatras: The New Story	Michal Romeo Dvořák	2016	SK	27-9-16	41	504	1,770	12.29	3.51	Itafilm
20. Masaryk / A Prominent Patient	Julius Sevcík	2016	SK/CZ	15-12-16	7	436	1,744	62.29	4.00	Garfield film
Sub-total	100% Slovak films, majority co-productions and 50/50				7,007	223,032	1,050,069	31.83	4.71	
1. Bezva ženská na krku / Stuck with a Perfect Woman	Tomáš Hoffman	2016	CZ/SK	20-10-16	1,419	46,568	244,973	32.82	5.26	CinemART SK
2. Teória tigra / The Tiger Theory	Radek Bajgar	2016	CZ/SK	14-4-16	961	28,497	131,467	29.65	4.61	CinemART SK
3. Anjel Pána / An Angel of the Lord 2	Jiří Strach	2016	CZ/SK	08-12-16	695	11,314	51,543	16.28	4.56	Magic Box Slovakia
4. Trabant do posledného dychu / Trabant - From Australia to Bangkok	Dan Píháš	2016	CZ/SK	12-5-16	309	8,363	26,197	27.06	3.13	ASFK
5. Ja, Olga Hepmarová / I, Olga Hepmarová	Petr Kazdla, Tomáš Weinreb	2016	CZ/PL/SK/FR	14-4-16	198	6,024	16,210	30.42	2.69	ASFK
6. Rodinný film / Family Film	Olmo Omerzu	2015	CZ/DE/FR/SK	16-8-16	33	1,500	3,000	45.45	2.00	FILMTOPIA
7. Červený pavúk / The Red Spider	Marcin Koszałka	2015	PL/CZ/SK	24-11-16	61	371	1,081	6.08	2.91	ASFK
8. Smrteľné históry / Murderous Tales	Jan Bubeníček	2016	CZ/SK	14-9-16	8	359	1,436	44.88	4.00	PubRes
9. Ani vo sne! / In Your Dreams!	Petr Oukropec	2016	CZ/SK/BG	01-9-16	52	149	287	3.83	3.83	Magic Box Slovakia
Sub-total	Minority co-productions				3,736	103,145	476,477	27.61	4.62	
TOTAL	All premiered Slovak and co-production films				10,743	326,177	1,526,546	30.36	4.68	
TOTAL	All Slovak and co-production films screened in 2016				11,868	377,072	1,672,428	31.77	4.44	

* re-release / note: Films are ranked by admissions / source: Union of Film Distributors of the Slovak Republic

Disease, Face, Country – 5 October

► Mária Ferenčuhová

There are themes that we, as viewers, are generally not much in the mood for. They render us uneasy, disturb us, and highlight our own mortality. They require neither our civil attitude nor, in effect, our opinion. Solely acceptance. Maybe that is the reason why serious diseases, mostly with drastic treatment and not infrequently with a fatal end, do not very often make an appearance in auteur documentaries in Slovakia.

The fact that I have made use of the general notion of "disease" is actually very typical. Cancer, as one of the most frequent causes of death in the civilised world, but also as a temporary life-feature of many of those who have been cured, continues, in a certain respect, to be a taboo in Slovak society. The vagueness of the term "disease" not only bears witness to this fact, but also abets it.

Thereby, information about cancer research carried out in laboratories and pharmaceutical companies, about the affair of a hospital which recently came to light where the staff sold chemotherapeutics abroad which were intended for Slovak patients, but also reports about alternative and non-toxic methods of treating oncological diseases, leap out to confront us from all the mass media. But it is precisely this information that makes cancer somewhat matter-of-fact, sanitised, and removed from what the sick person has to undergo.

Few filmmakers venture across this border from the zone where the disease is rendered matter-of-

fact and its treatment sanitised. Only a very few target the theme precisely, do not avert their gaze and, at the same time, sensitively accompany the diseased for as long as possible, sometimes to the very end, such as for instance the "thanatographic" documentaries *Epilogue* (2011) by Manno Lanssens or *Farewell to Hollywood* (2013) by Henry Corra.

In Slovakia, the photographer and director of photography, Martin Kollar, quite recently sought to sensitively capture the way in which a person with a tumour perceives and experiences this disease in his full-length documentary directing début *5 October* – in the portrait of his brother who goes on a cycling tour lasting several months prior to the planned surgery.

However, *5 October* is not thanatographic. It just follows a period of time: the period before the surgery. Hence, it captures a man who is still living the life of a healthy person and clinging on to life very much, even though he carries his tumour everywhere like a living knapsack. Little by little he

plucks up the courage to live the life of a patient, according to the diary almost five months after being diagnosed. We don't know why it takes him so long, we don't even know for sure whether the tumour is malignant, we just learn from the diary that the surgery will increase the man's chance of survival from eight percent to fifty percent.

In his film, Martin Kollar does not crush the social taboo of cancer. He does not speak about it, he does not name it; in this case, cancer is not the film's theme. However, Kollar works with the most distinctive visual indices of the "fatal disease" in a targeted manner: he films his brother's deformed face, the magnetic resonance examination, he adds a comment to the diary on the surgery with the survival prediction. But, at the same time, he also offers the audiences other, more significant indices, i.e. indices of the perception of the disease by the protagonist. They are two-fold: anxiety about the disease becoming matter-of-fact (and thus anxiety arising from its "treatment", or fight against it) which

is manifested in the initial hospital scene by the protagonist's posture, and a certain mundanity of living life with a tumour that we see virtually in all the other scenes. These indices of the perception of the disease are the ones that determine the film's theme: the perception of the surrounding world is rendered more acute, vigilant, almost zen-like; experiencing every moment as if it were the last.

Such a perception is typical for someone who, under the influence of the disease, is more urgently aware of his mortality than others would be. It is also typical for photographers (and artists in general) or philosophers. The author of the film, Martin Kollar, is, first of all, a photographer. Hence, the film offers a two-fold perception: it seeks to mediate the sensitivity of the protagonist through the sensitivity of the photographer.

The basic structure of *5 October* consists of a minimalistic narrative about a healthy man with a tumour who is to be transformed into a patient. But the live body of the film is created mainly by

photographic images of the countryside, more or less affected by civilisation. Kollar offers us beauty in its pure state, scenes of the country with a literally metaphysical extension – from aerial vortices on the surface of the sea through choreographies of a flock of migrating birds in the wind to the “Solaris-esque” weeds in the water. At the same time, he carefully takes notice of happy and sad encounters and collisions of nature with human activity – cows curious about the tent, a dead fox that ended as a bas-relief on the road, seagulls tearing French fries straight out of the hand, and the ground transformed into an artefact by the use of synthetic cloth. Kollar consistently juxtaposes nature with artificial elements: the river with the factory, the horizon with industrial buildings, the hill with a zig-zag road. Or he compares the degree of artificiality of two artificial things: a model of a highway and a “real” highway which, however, is controlled by a dummy worker waving his artificial hand.

Just as he is seeking out visual contrasts and analogies in the visible world, he raises them inconspicuously with regard to his brother's disease. Just as the country accepts the interventions of human activity, so also the protagonist is plucking up the courage to accept the interventions of medicine in his body.

The metaphors used by Martin Kollar (or his brother) with regard to the disease, are not military metaphors of fight against a malign enemy attacking, deploying his forces on the main front, or even in concealed positions, or the need to bombard the enemy with gamma rays or to destroy him with chemical weapons, as Susan Sontag pointed out in her book *Illness as Metaphor* (1977). He does not even use the metaphors of secret services hunting down enemies within their own lines which medicine uses today, for instance when describing oncological immunotherapy. Instead, there are natural metaphors of growth and decline, metaphors of the changing face of the countryside, metaphors of expectation or symbiosis – according to the drawing in the diary, quite literally pregnancy! Hence, metaphors in which the tumour is perceived as part of the body and the disease as part of the life of the affected person. Susan Sontag writes that

the militant terminology of permanent threat and calls to “combat” the patients' disease necessarily exhaust the patients just as war wears down the entire country. Kollar's metaphors of gestation, growth and subsequent “C-section” are, conversely, signs of acceptance of the disease and a fortifying for the encounter with civilisation, for the encounter with medicine which, as he is well aware, could destroy the country of his body or could also rescue it before ruin. And all that despite their biological inadequacy and the disconcerting natural scene where Kollar's brother, a small figure in green, wanders through the hilly forest and half terrified, half resolute, finally looks into the camera.

5 October is an exceptional film in a number of aspects. Not only is it the work of a photographer with a unique eye but it also ushers in a paradigm shift in the perception of diseases as it emphasises the perception of the patient who lives with the disease more than dying from it. This inconspicuous change in orientation, this focus on the acceptance of the disease as a part of life – a part that has got out of control like a river out of its channel – is for me just as important as the transformation of the protagonist from a shaggy cyclist with a Marxist beard to a charismatic man in a hat. ▲

The text was originally published as a blog on the web portal of the International Documentary Film Festival in Jihlava, Jihlava www.dokrevue.cz.

► **Martin Kollar** (1971, Žilina)

He studied Cinematography at the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. He issued a number of photographic publications (for instance *Nothing Special, Cahier, Field Trip*). He worked as director of photography on, for instance, *66 Seasons* (66 sezón, 2003), *Cooking History* (Ako sa varía dejiny, 2009), *Velvet Terrorists* (Zamatoví teroristi, 2013) and on Ivan Ostrochovský's film *Koza* (2015) which won the national Sun in a Net award and special Camera 2015 award in the feature film category. *5 October* is his directing début. Its mid-length version received its world première last year at the 45th International Film Festival Rotterdam.

5 October (5 October, Slovakia/Czech Republic, 2016)

_DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY, SCRIPT, DIRECTED BY: Martin Kollar **_EDITED BY:** Alexandra Gajdíčová, Marek Šulík **_MUSIC:** Michal Novinski **_CAST:** Ján Kollár, Vladimír Kollár, Barbora Katriňáková, Ján Doboš **_LENGTH:** 61 min.

A Hole in the Head, a Film about Memories

► **Martin Ciel**

Human memory acts as a processing instrument for retaining experience. It consists of recollections, something similar to rumours in the brain. It is not a very precise instrument. But it remains important, even though it often displays a tendency to create its own fictitious worlds of the past. “*The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.*” (L. P. Hartley) *A Hole in the Head* (Diera v hlave) is about memories. Concentrated memories of the Roma Holocaust, the mass murder which took on monstrous dimensions during World War 2 into almost indescribable cruelty.

Diversity, both formal and semantic, is the basis of *A Hole in the Head*. Various characters and bizarre figures reminisce. Roma living on rubbish tips. Roma women lecturing in universities, wealthy Roma in garish palaces. French, Czechs, Serbians, Croatians, Poles, Slovaks, Germans. It is a trip across contemporary Europe, starting quite merrily and in a carnival manner, but gradually becoming more and more horrible and morbid. More and more impressive and emotionally urgent. You will not be bored. Thereby, in essence, it resembles a standard documentary with “talking heads”, the expressive component of the film sometimes creates this feeling. But it is not like that, because there are many formal peculiarities here. These are almost surreal

scenes and shots which have no actual part to play in a documentary as traditionally understood. They are uncompromisingly present here and elevate the entire basic structure to the level of some sort of essay without comments which begins to express itself by way of image from time to time in order to disrupt the usual course of the narrative, its continuity and linearity. This results in a curious atmosphere and an interesting formal harmony.

It is a jigsaw puzzle made up of events in time, various changes from the initial state to the final state which happen in the accounts of the individual figures. And there are not that many of them. Everything starts in France; it didn't have to be that way, but the logic of this beginning becomes

clear in the end then, via the Czech Republic and Serbia, we return to France, then we go through Poland and Croatia and again France, Germany, then Slovakia and again Poland, Croatia, Poland and France... The characters do not change, each remains in their own country, each one tells another story which gradually builds, approaches its high point and in the end the stories intertwine like a plait of hair, they are menacingly and dangerously similar, and gradually they are transformed into one single story. The individual parts/memories do not tie up chronologically, they tie up by stories, they skip and leap-frog over each other. It turns out that each country had Roma concentration camps, that local police forces collaborated everywhere, that the murderers used almost identical methods... Or not? Isn't it so that, after many years, a kind of collective Roma memory of the Holocaust has emerged, that the stories wander and migrate in memories and that other memories accrue to them constantly? Even the Roma themselves sometimes doubt the stories: he couldn't have remembered that, it couldn't have been like that... But it doesn't matter precisely how it happened, because it just did happen, unfortunately. The characters in this film are not fictitious constructs like in feature films, these are carefully selected people whose memories make sense. And it is not just a rough version of the sense, it is as precise and sharp as a sword. Even though it doesn't always have to be flawless and perfect. Because memories may well be rumours of the brain, but first they act as an interpretation. And, in the case of this film, it is a trustworthy interpretation, without pathos, without loftiness and nonsensical ceremoniousness. That is very important, this getting rid of the platitudes and clichés which often agglomerate around this theme in the common mainstream. The horrific recollections of a woman with a hole in her head, a man in a wheelchair and others carry the film on their own, they do not need any stylised aids. Work with the sound has been adapted to this; it is brilliant and it merits a separate study of its own. Consequentially depathetised music and sound effects which sometimes fade away in the next frame, strange, logically non-motivated music expressions of characters directly in the shot, all that gives the film, from its initial parts and then suddenly right before the end, a certain circus, gyp-

sy tone and dimension of a circus tent where we probably feel good but we know that something is not quite in order.

The feelings of vigilance and danger mix with exotically merry explosiveness, sad melancholy and gloomy abhorrence.

Of course, the Roma Holocaust, more specifically the memory of it, is the main motif of the film. Mapping out and examining this relatively unknown part of the history of our reality. There are several, miscellaneous secondary motifs of significance, from problems with the current police in France through the issue of identity in Serbia (Bill Clinton was a Roma!) to a pig farm in the Czech Republic. The referential link to reality is very strong here, even intensive, thanks to the obvious earnestness and frankness of the characters. That is why scenes which are evidently staged or initiated also work.

There are several good definitions of a documentary, one of them, for instance, formulated by Bill Nichols: *"A documentary is a film form which concerns itself with real events and situations. It depicts specific people (social actors) who introduce themselves in stories expressing a credible point of view or perspective of the lives, situations and events under consideration. The stories are formed by the opinion or view of the lived world directly from a clear position on the part of the filmmaker who, instead of creating a fictional allegory, sticks to known facts."* A documentary is simply such a film which records or reconstructs events that actually happened. If this is true, and in my view it definitely is, then *A Hole in the Head* is an exemplary documentary. However, it also has something more.

The image itself does not carry any specific meaning, it acquires meaning only when we see it in context. The expressive component of *A Hole in the Head* works accurately within this premise. The visual context is very important here, hardly anything is extraneous. Big visual plans, big shots are being worked with here to a great extent. In no cases are these some intimate accounts of figures sitting in semi-close-up in front of a library. At times the entire documentary resembles a big film, the compositions fill out the entire screen. It is a cinema film. The big introductory shots of places, small figures in huge meadows, journeys through a deserted forest, monstrous constructions and frequent trains or railways, all these are interconnected and

these individual elements play the role of supporting the testimony of the whole brought about by the puzzle of the memories of the individual characters. Even though the film is based on diversity, it is structured in such a way that the result reveals a certain unique compactness. The dramaturgy, editing composition and consequential timing of shots of the right length provide this, even if not altogether fully realised. In the third quarter, the film becomes monotonous and displays a certain redundancy of expression. But the conclusion, I mean the last three relatively short episodes (Poland, France, Serbia), sets things right, the pace and the rhythm are back.

Two visual motifs are remarkable, although the first one cannot even be called a motif, because if it could, it would be disjointed and incomplete. The individual countries are characterised by animals in the introductory episodes – it is not quite a metaphor, the motif of animals is based on quite specific contexts. The first episode dedicated to France has horses, the Czech episode has pigs and the Serbian one chickens. But later and in other countries animals are not used any more. However, all the more mesmerising is the second visual motif which gives the film a comprehensive atmosphere and of which, when watching the film for the first time without quite being focused, the viewer might even be unaware. It is snow. It is present from the beginning to the end, the frost is there, subconsciously getting under our skin. Thousands of snowflakes fall onto the slow-flowing river, they fall on the extensive forlorn fields, the snow-covered trees in the forest, the characters carry umbrellas protecting themselves from the falling wet snow, the snow-covered

commemorative plaques that need to be cleaned of snow, the dangerous snow at monuments that people can slip on. It is not happy snow, Christmas snow, it is not a beautiful countryside covered with dense white flakes. Something of the country always shows up and protrudes through the extremely thin snow cover, either mud, grey stones, a dump or vilely smoking factory chimneys. Shots with snow are used in the film also as punctuation marks – they would be fine even on their own, thus a fascinating short experimental film would have been made.

Well, fine, in the end we return from the snow to *A Hole in the Head*, not quite an ordinary full-length documentary about what the Roma survived (if they survived at all) over the course of World War 2 and to the fact that no one actually knows very much about it. It is an auteur work; director and screenwriter Robert Kirchhoff made this comment about the film: *"A Hole in the Head as a physical scar and scar on our historical consciousness."* ▲

► **Robert Kirchhoff** (1968, Nitra)

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He studied Documentary Film and Dramaturgy at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. He established the atelier.doc production company mainly focusing on documentary and TV films. He made, for instance, *Hey, You Slovaks!* (Hej, Slováci!, 2002), *Normalization* (Kauza Cervanová, 2013) – the national Sun in a Net award for Best Documentary, *Steam on the River* (Para nad riekou, 2015, co-director: F. Remunda) and he also took part in several TV projects. He worked as producer/co-producer on *Blind Loves* (Slepé lásky, 2008), *Disease of the Third Power* (Nemoc tretej moci, 2011) and *Made in Ash* (Až do mesta Aš, 2012).

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A Hole in the Head (*Diera v hlave*, Slovakia/Czech Republic, 2016)

_SCRIPT AND DIRECTED BY: Robert Kirchhoff **_DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY:** Juraj Chlpík **_EDITED BY:** Jan Daňhel

_CAST: Raymond Gurême, Fata Dedić, Nadir Dedić, Toti Dedić, Ladislav Welward, Ján Končík, Krystyna Gil, Karol Parno Gierliński, Rita Prígmora, Philomena Franz and others **_LENGTH:** 90 min.

About the Queen of Local Power

► Eva Vženteková

Even if, despite their much-appreciated efforts, domestic filmmakers have, to date, not been altogether successful in their feature expeditions into the communist period, it is wholly understandable that the well-proven Czech creative team of Jan Hřebejk and Petr Jarchovský should have grasped the topic of the past in their film *The Teacher* (*Učitelka*) made in a Slovak majority production.

Hřebejk's valued directing craftsmanship was able to deal well with Jarchovský's sophisticated script set in the last decade of our joint "Czechoslovak Socialist Republic" and to avail itself of its federal potential. The film memory or return awakens the interface of identical perceptions of the socialist past by both the states making up the federal republic.

History is tarnished in the film by means of a model situation depicting the practices of those in power and the increase in resistance against them. It does not show any dissident activities, images of heroes or victims (except for the daughter of the Kučera family who are the first to revolt) or any demonised likeness of the former totalitarian regime. Everything is set in deep quotidian mundanity, the banality of the regime; the filmmakers have modelled the mannerism of the power applied on this basis, in particular in the distinctive area of education and training. The protection of the children against their teacher – a "queen" of the local power with a Party background – reveals the main principles by which the parents abide – taking advantage of personal benefits as against highlighting the social responsibility entailed in the teacher's

position. The position afforded by the state and used to develop private power depicts the tentacles of social evil in the character of the teacher, as well as in the psychologically authentic semblance of the frustration of a childless and prematurely widowed woman and the charm of her manipulative games.

It is no coincidence that opposition towards this main protagonist develops mainly in those who are unable to play these "games" – an insignificant accountant, the gruff and boorish sports coach and the ailing astrophysicist. The wonderful scene showing the accountant Kučera's attempt to smuggle the teacher's cakes onto a plane is an example. The encounter with one's own inability to craftily integrate within the mutual "assistance" service evokes a sense of humiliation in the above three heroes and activates their inner resistance. It is an important psychological motive, a mental turning point in their ascent towards their reclaiming their own dignity. The role of the former regime features only marginally but, essentially, the film is a social image of its stability strengthened by the historical role of monopoly power. Not even the teacher's superiors can intervene and act in order to protect

the students against the arbitrary behaviour of their subordinate, because the "higher power" of the totalitarian diktat and the concomitant fear it imbues are omnipresent.

The image of the different behaviours pertaining outside and at home evokes the rule of double-standard manners. At school, the accountant Kučera offers to drive the teacher in his car, whilst in private he rails vehemently against her practices. The images of enforced and accepted subservience are not linked solely to the experience with the past regime, even though it was a big help. The filmmakers perceive them as being a living psycho-social phenomenon. The contrived ending to the film depicts the character of the teacher as being fully adapted to the new conditions and prepared to again search for grounds for a mutually advantageous business arrangement (the parents pandering to the teacher in return for good school grades for their children). Despite the fact that, nowadays, the weak economic functioning of the former regime, which established the "community" system of its substitute servicing, somewhat caricatured in the film, is no longer a problem, the hydra of conformism and unwarrant-

ed advantages remains a temptation which is directed personally straight at the audiences at the end of the film.

The inner conflict of the story about the general acceptance of injustice culminates in the fight to turn the core of those who are in favour of punishing the teacher into a majority that can no longer be overlooked. Figuratively, the mechanism of the making good of society by means of individual actions is captured here. In the film, the men-fathers are the first ones to revolt against the beneficial loyalty. The wives-mothers follow them only after trying unsuccessfully to exert pressure on their husbands to make them change their attitudes and not to expose their children to the teacher's revenge. However, the two women in the position of the teacher's superiors are in a well-constructed contrast in "gender" terms; they clandestinely join forces with the rebels to find support for sanctioning their perfidious subordinate. The image of this fight comes from the bottom, from the dark corners of the privacy of the apartment, where one can act openly, having been suffocated by the inability to do so in public. Awarding school grades



as a counter-value for services, not for knowledge, however, not only vitiates the grading regime, but eventually also one's own productiveness. Quite typically, the majority support for the teacher disintegrates only after statistical data are revealed which disclose the real "benefits" of her grading of students. The transformation of the minority into a majority is bridged by a metaphorical ellipsis and a lightly stylised image of characters emerging from the darkness in the depths of the shot to sign a protest petition. This is crowned by the film disclosing the necessity to block individual acts when eliminating despicability. Even though its renewed attack is permanently imminent.

In *The Teacher* parents teach their children by way of their own deeds. Hence, a drive to conform is inherited and any thwarting of this drive appears initially impossible. A representative of the oldest generation, raised before the totalitarian regime, typically presents himself with rhetoric about social good, good manners and the role of the school. The conviction of the other characters – the "communist" generation of parents – of the correctness of their attitudes does not have any ideological form. The resistance against the abuse of the teacher's post grows into open confrontation only after tragedy in the family; it is not the result of conscious (dissident) opposition against evil and injustice.

Unlike the *Hostage* (Rukojemník), in *The Teacher* the parents are the hostages of their children as they are trying to achieve good grades for them. However, both films have one thing in common, i.e. the final evasion into a sentimental position, which is something of a let-down in *The Teacher*, especially in the cheap scene where the astrophysicist says good-bye to his son at the airport.

The imagery of quotidian drabness and mundanity in the film will be familiar to the audiences. The symbiosis of stereotype and breakage created an attractive epic-dramatic ritual in *The Teacher* which the filmmakers mastered this time without any superfluous situation descriptions and with a striking emotional charge. The director's narrative is comprehensible, illustrative, fulfilled in acting terms, dynamic, efficiently rhythmised by the skilful editing. The linear unity of place and time is enterpris-

ingly split by semantic rather than by chronological retrospectives. Accordingly, we quickly become acquainted with many characters. We get to know their motivation in tandem with the developing story without ever becoming even briefly impatient with the cumbersome or descriptive story.

The ability to adjust the acting performances in such a large number of characters points to Jan Hřebejk's directing privilege, but Zuzana Mauréry confirmed her reputable standard by her disciplined, guarded profiling of the main protagonist. Ondřej Malý, Attila Mokos, Ěva Bandor and Judita Hansman also performed the volume of their roles in equally standard quality, whilst the precise Ina Marojevič-Gogálová in the role of the principal should also not be overlooked. Csongor Kassai as Kučera did not surprise with his excellent performance.

This skilfully well-mastered film, however, falls somewhat short of being a masterpiece. If some reviews reproach it for having something of a televisual format, this does not mean that the story's being located mostly "between four walls" is viewed as an impediment. Time probably played a more important role, as insufficient time was allotted to prepare the film in cinema-directing terms. The accelerated model nature of some scenes sometimes overruns their completeness and depth, the identification of the topic with its staging is sometimes replaced by instant realism. Thus, despite our being grateful for *The Teacher*, *Walking Too Fast* (Pouta) by Radim Špaček still reigns over the image of the 1980s in Czechoslovakia. ▲

► Jan Hřebejk (1967, Praha)

He studied at the Screenwriting and Dramaturgy Department of the Film and TV Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague and has collaborated with screenwriter Peter Jarchovský since he was a student. He made his debut on the silver screen with the musical *Big Beat* (Šakalí léta, 1993) which won four Czech Lion Awards from the Czech Film and Television Academy. Other successful films include: *Cosy Dens* (Pelišky, 1999), *Divided We Fall* (Musíme si pomáhat, 2000), *Pupendo* (2003), *Up and Down* (Horem pádem, 2004), *Beauty in Trouble* (Kráska v nesházích, 2006), *Kawasaki's Rose* (Kawasakihno růže, 2009) and *Innocence* (Nevinnost, 2011).

The Teacher (Učitelka, Slovakia/Czech Republic, 2016)

_DIRECTED BY: Jan Hřebejk **_SCRIPT BY:** Petr Jarchovský **_DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY:** Martin Žiaran **_EDITED BY:** Vladimír Barák

_MUSIC: Michal Novinský **_CAST:** Zuzana Mauréry, Csongor Kassai, Zuzana Konečná, Peter Bebjak, Martin Havelka, Ěva Bandor, Tamara Fischer and others **_LENGHT:** 102 min.

Our Films in the Programme of World Cinemas

► Zuzana Sotáková

At a time when lively discussions on distribution are held in the film industry, some Slovak and co-production films are also making their way onto the screens of world cinemas.

The Teacher (Učitelka) directed by Jan Hřebejk, *Koza* by Ivan Ostrochovský, *I, Olga Hepnarová* (Ja, Olga Hepnarová) by the directing duo Tomáš Weinreb and Petr Kazda, the block of bedtime stories *Mimi & Lisa* (Mimi & Líza) by Katarína Kerekesová and *The Red Captain* (Červený kapitán) by Michal Kollár – these are a few of the films made recently that have been shown to foreign audiences, not just at festivals. However, festivals are important for Slovak films and they can play a role in their further life beyond the borders. This is confirmed by the producer of *The Teacher* Lubica Orechovská from PubRes, when she talks about how a film might successfully break into foreign distribution: "It definitely has to be a competitive film, you need to have a suitable and experienced sales agent who chooses the correct approach to the film and it has to receive its première at a credible international forum, ideally linked with a film project market.

The Teacher's success at the Karlovy Vary IFF definitely helped it to a great extent, whether with reference to the interest of audiences, the Best Actress Award (Zuzana Mauréry – editor's note) or media responses, especially positive reviews from abroad."

Co-production can also contribute to the success of a film abroad. The Slovak-Czech-Polish crime thriller *The Red Captain* was the best-attended domestic film in Slovak cinemas last year, but it was also screened in all three co-production countries. In turn, the existential drama *I, Olga Hepnarová* (sales agent Arizona Films) is a Czech-Polish-Slovak-French co-production and it was screened in all four of the above countries. But there are other countries in play also. "So far, the licence was provided to France, the USA, United Kingdom, Brazil and Ireland and other licences are related to dis-

tribution of the film in other forms, such as television broadcasting, VOD and S-VOD," said Marian Urban, director of the ALEF FILM & MEDIA production company last November, when he also mentioned that talks were underway about cinema distribution licences in other countries. At the same time, Marian Urban added that the film was presented at so many festivals, won so many awards and was sold to quite a large number of countries thanks to the fact that it opened the Panorama section at the Berlinale a year ago.

As for the film *Koza* (sales agent Pluto Film) released into Slovak distribution in autumn 2015, according to last year's information rights were sold to Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Albania, Kosovo and The Netherlands. Other countries have licences for presenting the film on paid TV or VOD. Equally, the film drama *The Teacher* (sales agent LevelK) had several cinema distribution contracts concluded last year, in more than twenty countries in Europe and Asia, but also in Australia, USA and New Zealand.

The animated TV series for children *Mimi & Lisa* (sales agent Planet Nemo Animation) by animator and director Katarína Kerekesová also managed to get into cinemas beyond the borders of its home country. So far, a block of six short episodes has been distributed in France and Belgium. The series was dubbed into French which will also be used to present it in Luxembourg – it will be a minor distribution via the Centre National de L'Audiovisuel. "We will see what lies ahead of us, but we definitely reckon on the presentation of a further block of episodes of *Mimi & Lisa* in France," concludes Katarína Kerekesová. ▲

A Prominent Patient • PHOTO: Garfield Film

Berlinale with Slovak Films

► Zuzana Sotáková

While the burly bear sauntered toward Berlin, representatives of Slovak cinema also headed to the 67th edition of the prestigious Berlin International Film Festival. The drama *Little Harbour* (Piata lod) by director Iveta Grófová will receive its world premiere there, Agnieszka Holland's *Spoor* (Pokot/Cez kosti mŕtvych), with participation from Slovakia, is in the main competition and the Festival is also showing the Slovak-Czech film *A Prominent Patient* (Masaryk) directed by Julius Ševčík.

Little Harbour looks at the world of adults through children's eyes; it will be presented in the Generation Kplus competition focused on children and young people. "We thought about showing the film to children's audiences from the moment we started developing it. We don't embellish anything in the film but, at the same time, we aren't explicit either. We look at the things that happen in the story through the eyes of the child heroes. And the difficulty and cruelty of the situations are mellowed to a certain extent when viewed at that naïve level," explains Katarína Krnáčová from Hulapa film, the producer of the film. Ten-year-old Jarka is the main character of the drama, based on Monika Kompaníková's novel. Neglected by her mother, she is desperately looking for love which she finds by chance when she walks away from the train station with a pram with two babies. Together with her friend Kristián, she creates a child family in the garden cottage, hidden from the eyes of adults. "I already thought the story was very

powerful when I read the book for the first time. I really liked its atmosphere. After my first full-length film (*Made in Ash/Až do mesta Aš* – editor's note), I wanted to make something visually interesting. And the world of children offers that," says director Iveta Grófová. According to Krnáčová, presenting *Little Harbour* at a prestigious festival is a very good start. "There is a huge film market at the Berlinale so, with a view to the film's potential at other festivals or possible sales to foreign cinema distribution, it is an ideal place to launch a film. I am very happy that we've managed to give the film such a chance. And, of course, it is an important source of satisfaction for the three years of work of our entire team."

The co-production drama *Spoor* directed by Agnieszka Holland is another film that will receive its world premiere at the Berlinale, and straight away in the main competition. "Despite entering the project quite late and with the smallest co-production contribution, our participation is quite

marked," explains Slovak producer Jakub Viktorín from nutprodukcia. "Tomáš Juríček worked on the film as second unit cinematographer, Martin Točka as Steadicam operator, we used shots of wild animals from successful filmmakers from Arolla Film, there was a film crew in Slovakia – the so-called wild unit – that was in charge of shooting the hunts in our territory needed for the atmospheric shots in the film. Recording the film music performed by the Slovak Radio Symphony orchestra was also a very important contribution." Five countries collaborated on *Spoor* as co-producers. "It was necessary in order to ensure proper financial, subject-matter and human resources for the production of the project. On the one hand, it was great that a lot of funds were funnelled into the project but, on the other hand, coordinating all five countries proved quite a complicated business," clarifies Viktorín. "For my part, I think that the film's strength lies in the strong, in some ways even provocative, story which raises many questions relating to the current problems of our society. Agnieszka mentions in her interviews that this film could be called 'No Country for Old Women' which insinuates something about the main character, Janina Duszejko – an outsider who is definitely not one of the quite typical main characters but who, despite this, manages to make you like her. Not to mention that the film non-traditionally merges several genres, hence it also works at a certain experimental level. It manages to not only maintain the suspense from the initial scenes to the closing credits, but

also to provide several unexpected surprises for the viewer," adds Jakub Viktorín.

The Slovak-Czech historical drama *A Prominent Patient* is to be shown in the Berlinale Special programme section. It returns to the 1930s through the diplomat and Bohemian, Jan Masaryk. The film was directed by Julius Ševčík, with Karel Roden cast in the title role. "The film, set in a period context, revolves around events which substantially influenced the emergence of modern Europe. However, at the same time, it offers a timeless reflection on an individual's responsibility and his conduct in favour of the state and nation, often at his own cost. Masaryk was a man experiencing a major internal struggle between his sensitive artistic soul and his sense of responsibility and self-sacrifice to the benefit of social targets. And, in this respect, international audiences can also understand it well," explains producer Rudolf Biermann from IN FILM.

Slovak production is also represented at the Festival by the young animator, Marta Prokopová, who will present her project *Wild Beasts* (Divoké bytosti) on the Short Film Station 2017 platform within the Berlinale Talents.

During the Festival, Slovak cinema is presented on the Central European Cinema stand which also serves as a meeting point for film professionals. It operates under the aegis of the Slovak Film Institute which has prepared the catalogue of *Slovak Films 16–17* and an English edition of *Film.sk* for the Festival. ▲



Little Harbour • PHOTO: Hulapa film

PHOTO: Miro Nôta

I Sought Something Poetic

► Mariana Jaremková

Director Iveta Grófová made her debut with the full-length feature film **Made in Ash** (Až do mesta Aš, 2012) which the Slovak Film and Television Academy selected as the national candidate for the Academy Awards. Her next film, the adaptation of the book **Piata loď** (She's a Harbour) was an eagerly anticipated new film. It will receive its world première at the 67th Berlin International Film Festival.

After auteur films, here you are with a free adaptation of the successful novel *She's a Harbour*. However, you got to know the author of the book, Monika Kompaníková, thanks to a documentary.

– First I made a TV documentary about Monika entitled *The Diary of Monika Kompaníková's Cruise* (Denník plavby Moniky Kompaníkovovej). This project was initiated and produced by Petr Minařík, a book publisher. It was actually a road movie compiled from Monika Kompaníková's book-reading tour. I got a very good feeling from our communication during the tour and I became enthusiastic about her book *She's a Harbour*. It was just before the première of *Made in Ash* in Karlovy Vary in 2012 and without much further thought I decided to try to make a film based on this book.

What was your main trigger? *She's a Harbour* is but also isn't a book for children, which also makes it interesting.

– There were several reasons but, yes, there is this inherent contradiction that attracts me. It is an original game played with the reader and I hope, subsequently, also with the audience. The book has a very powerful emotional plot capable of readily drawing the readers in and not letting them go up to the very last lines. At the same time, I found many layers in it which were also a challenge for me. Because, on the one hand, we look at the moving story of two children who try to take care of babies as best as they can but, on the other hand, there is an inner tension, a concern for the lives of the babies, beneath all this. Balancing between the positive aspect and the inner tension, even fear drew me to the book.

Is it a true adaptation or did the book rather serve as a basis? How big is the shift in the film?

– The book has several time levels and it would be difficult to capture all of them in a single full-length film. At the same time, it is based rather on what the main protagonist is undergoing internally than on marked twists in the story-line. This book was allegedly also used by students of the Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague as a screenwriting exercise. I saw this aspect, that of the demanding basis of the book, as something of an advantage right from the start, as something of a challenge that I could bite into. In tan-

dem with screenwriter Marek Leščák, we had long discussions as to how to encompass the whole thing. Several versions of the script were made, in one of which we even included a story that was not in the book at all. It was as if another story shedding light on the story had ended up in the book. It reflected what would have happened in the real world – the main protagonist would have probably been referred to a children's diagnostic centre. Eventually, we scrapped this idea as social dimensions of this kind had already been adequately captured in Slovak films. We mostly focused on the story of ten-year-old Jarka and her younger friend Kristián and their little adventure. What they did was a childish authentic attempt to put right the world of adults by pretending to be the family they would like to have. At the same time, I inclined more toward psychological themes; for instance, I consider the motif of transferring an emotional family trauma from one generation to another generation to be very strong and of significant interest. Jarka plucks up the courage to do something with it and she copes with family trauma in her own, highly original way. I also consulted the script with the experienced psychologist, Zlatica Bartíková.

Those are also reasons why the book and film are transferrable beyond the borders of Slovakia. It is not just a local theme.

– Yes, the theme of family relations from the perspective of children is quite universal; this premise is in there.

Like several other filmmakers, you also cast non-actors in most of the roles. The main role – little Jarka – was played by ten-year-old Vanessa from Bratislava who had absolutely no experience whatsoever with acting. It must be very demanding to direct children and you have to have your own methods of doing it.

– The most important thing was to find a really talented little girl. Her role required deeper psychology in the acting performance and, at the same time, I looked for a certain spark, a temperament within her to make the character of Jarka interesting for audiences. And I found this girl in Vanessa. The most difficult thing was motivating the children to make them want to shoot the film

and to make them enjoy it. Once something became routine to them, it wasn't so easy to figure out how to continue effectively. Of course, making the child characters credible was a great challenge. We took a big chance because the main heroine really is in almost every shot and she has to carry the entire film. And we also know that adult audiences have difficulties in identifying with a child in the title role. I tried to do my best to avoid feeling somewhat embarrassed from the child-acting performance.

Monika Kompaníková is a visual artist and you originally studied animation at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. Hence, if we speak about specific visual treatments, weren't you tempted to also use elements of animated film?

– After *Made in Ash* I was looking in particular for something nice and artistic. And Monika has that on every page of the book. I didn't have to stick to the locations that are described in the book to the last pebble in the road but, in the end, I shot the film primarily in the same places, because they were the most photogenic. And as for animated elements, I explicitly forbade myself these. Essentially, I rescued the inter-genre film *Made in Ash* with animation, because working with authentic people was very lively, a lot had happened during the filmmaking and I needed to find a way out to make the film work as a whole. Animation linked everything together. *Little Harbour* (Piata loď) is a pure feature film and I think it doesn't need animated elements.

So you started with animated film, then you switched to documentary at the Academy of Performing Arts and now you've made a feature film. What took you away from animated reality to the real one?

– I think that I searched for myself for three years at the Animation Department of the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts. This also concerns themes that I would like to bring. And I found them in documentary film. Paradoxically, then I was again attracted to animated film which I combined with documentary. If I were now to find a theme requiring animated form, I would try to create an animated film.

What kind of director are you when you make a documentary?

– I'm not the kind of director who captivates everyone around them with their charisma when making a documentary. I tend to allow others to express themselves, to show what they're made of, and to feel natural. Even though I seek out non-comfortable authentic situations for whatever reasons, I don't exactly feel like a fish in water in them. But when I know that those people trust me and devote all their time to me, then it works.

Who formed you mostly in the beginning?

– It was Dušan Hanák in the Documentary Department. It was very important for me to be in his class. I felt support and it moved me forward. Film is a thing of total importance for him and it was good to work in such an atmosphere, especially in a period when you are just trying to do something and it is not quite clear whether it will be good for anything.

Before last year's Documentary Film Festival in Jihlava we talked with Andrea Slovákovičová about the fact that female documentary filmmakers are the ones who go into dangerous, controversial or conflict issues; at least that was what the festival programme showed. Are women more courageous?

– I am surprised that the boys at the school who had such predispositions did not find the courage to get into bolder projects. They even moved away from documentary and turned to commercials or TV series. I think the reason for this lies in their motivation. That is because the conditions are not ideal. I even had a semi-mafia story from the Czech-German border as work in progress, but ultimately only a short film for the *Slovakia 2.0* (Slovensko 2.0) project was made. As if there was always something in the air. When I started working on *Made in Ash* Slovak films irritated me because they seemed to me to be removed from reality. There was a wave of lyrical realism at that time and I wanted to disrupt it, to make my film in an absolutely different way. Paradoxically, other films made in this way followed after my film. Now, they are the waves. Now we are going to have more films with a child hero. Of course, this is also related to the number of films made in our country – three films made about children are enough to have this fact pointed out.



■ PHOTO: Miro Nôta

Documentary filmmakers reach for feature elements if, for instance, they need to solve a certain ethical conflict because they can afford to go much further in a feature film. Is that how you felt it too?

– I thought it would be like that but it wasn't. It is precisely working with children, even if in a feature film, that has a lot of borderline moments. Moral conflicts are linked with work with children, about how to communicate with them, how to motivate them, when to be strict and when to be a friend. It is also about experience. Maybe I was sometimes unnecessarily soft, I should learn to be more uncompromising in some matters. Paradoxically, it was rather *Little Harbour* that strengthened me, not *Made in Ash*. I think that I'm not so tender-hearted any longer (laughter).

Documentary filmmakers from Generation 90 frequently help each other at various levels. For instance, Ivan Ostrochovský and Robert Kirchhoff helped you, while, at the same time, you keep on working with Marek Leščák...

– I am certainly grateful to this generation for taking me in. I learned a lot. And now I invite the younger generation to join in collaboration too. *Little Harbour* was made in my production company to which I devote a lot of my time. I've been able to capitalise on what I've learned from others. ▲

► **Iveta Grófová** (1980, Trenčín)

She studied at the Animation Department and Documentary Department at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. Initially she made short documentaries: *At Least That Way* (Aspoň že tak, 2003), *The Politics of Quality* (Politika kvality, 2005), *Goodbye Party* (Nazdar partička, 2005), *Guest Workers* (Gastarbeiteri, 2007) or the short animated film *There Were 11 of Us* (Bolo nás 11, 2004). In 2012, she made her full-length debut with *Made in Ash* which received its international premiere at the IFF Karlovy Vary – it opened the East of the West section at the festival. In 2014, she participated in the omnibus film project *Slovakia 2.0* for which she made the short film *Discoboj* (Discoboj).

Support for Audiovisual Industry in Slovakia

► Daniel Bernát

Support for Audiovisual Industry is a programme launched by the Slovak Audiovisual Fund in autumn 2014 with the aim of inducing interest in making audiovisual works in Slovakia, supporting the development of infrastructure of the Slovak audiovisual industry and increasing its international competitiveness. Modifications to its basic conditions are currently under consideration.

The main idea of the programme is that, if the producer invests at least 2 million Euro in Slovakia in making the work, he may be retrospectively granted a sum of up to 20 percent of the eligible costs. Several productions, predominantly foreign projects, have expressed their interest in this programme to date. In 2015 the first to be registered was the second season of the well-known series *Marco Polo* produced by The Weinstein Company, for which the Slovak Audiovisual Fund has already disbursed the grant. (Funds are only earmarked once information on the amount actually invested in the project is confirmed.) Last year four titles were added to the list. According to the information from the Slovak Ministry of Culture, the American company Lionsgate has expressed interest in making the adventure film *Robin Hood: Origins* in Slovakia under British director Otto Bathurst. The cast of the film includes such actors as Taron Egerton, Jamie Foxx and Eve Hewson. Two television projects have also been registered. The co-production two-part historical film *Maria Theresia* to be made by director Robert Dornhelm will capture the life of the Austro-Hungarian monarch. Slovak public service TV (RTVS) has already enlisted in the project, Slovak filmmakers are to collaborate in its making and part of the film could be made this year in Bratislava. The second project is *Inspector Max* (Inšpektor Max) produced by Trigon Production, a Slovak production company, in collaboration with RTVS and Czech Television.

In addition, the Ministry of Culture also referred to interest expressed by the British company Fourth Culture Films in making two feature films in Slo-

vakia – *Consider Yourself* and *Maestro* which have been registered in tandem. The first film is a biography of the author of musicals, Lionel Bart and, for instance, Geoffrey Rush was mentioned as possibly being cast in the film. The second project should illustrate the stirring fate of Eduard Keller, the Viennese piano virtuoso.

After the Support for Audiovisual Industry programme was launched, Slovak producers objected that the condition to invest a minimum of 2 million Euro is too high a demand and excludes domestic productions from applying. In this respect, the Director of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund, Martin Šmatlák, stated that the Ministry of Culture is the one making decisions on the above condition, because all the basic conditions of the programme are determined by legislation, not the internal regulations of the Fund.

Last year, the Ministry of Culture addressed this issue and announced amendments in the basic setting of the programme. *"We seek to attain a level affording us a higher degree of flexibility for the entry of non-state investments in film production in Slovakia,"* declared the Ministry in August 2016, stating that its ambition is to increase the attractiveness of the programme for both foreign and domestic filmmakers. In January this year, when the English edition of *Film.sk* was completed, this process had not yet been concluded. *"The Ministry of Culture is currently dealing with this issue; we anticipate that the support for the audiovisual industry will be amended in the first quarter of 2017."* ▲

Advice to Filmmakers, Educating Young Audiences

► Daniel Bernát, Zuzana Sotáková, Monika Mikušová

Slovakia collaborates on several international workshops and training programmes for authors of audiovisual works. Below, we provide brief information on at least some of them. At the same time, we indicate the current state of film education for children and young people.

Several international workshops are (at least in part) organised in Slovakia and they deal not only with the various phases of work with film, but also with various types of projects. The MIDPOINT programme focuses on the development stage. Last autumn, the MIDPOINT TV Launch workshop was organised in Banská Štiavnica; it focused on the development of TV series that aspire to be of high quality or have a more artistic aim. This programme is intended for teams of screenwriters and producers and it is directed at Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Baltic countries. In 2017, the event will continue with further phases at the Finále Plzeň Film Festival in the Czech Republic and at the Sarajevo Film Festival. Another workshop from the MIDPOINT programme, Intensive SK, was also organised in Banská Štiavnica in November 2016 when scripts of full-length feature and animated films were analysed.

The DOK.Incubator workshop is directed toward documentary filmmakers. It aims to assist its participants with their projects at several levels, including preparation of an adequate distribution strategy and investigating possibilities for finding a place for the work in the international context. Last July one of the three workshops was organised in Slovakia in Smolenice; it should take place here again this coming summer.

In Bratislava last year, internationally renowned filmmakers Agnieszka Holland, Fridrik Thór Fridriksson and other prominent guests shared their experience with participants of the networking and educational event, Visegrad Film Forum (VFF). The event is held at the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts and works by students of film schools from the Visegrad Four countries are also presented there. This year the VFF will be held on 25-29 April.

The Visegrad Animation Forum (VAF) focuses on animated production within the V4 countries; the event culminates each May at the Anifilm International Festival of Animated Films in Třeboň, Czech Republic, and it is co-organised by the Slovak Association of Animated Film Producers.

The above events are primarily intended for film professionals or students of film schools, but how does audiovisual education of students of primary and secondary schools fare in Slovakia? The range of projects in this context is gradually extending, but an overall film or media education concept is still lacking within the education system. That is why teachers of the Audiovisual Studies Department at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava have prepared a motivational project – Film Education for Secondary School Teachers and Students. In addition to lectures for secondary schools, a major component is a film education handbook for secondary school teachers.

The civil association Boiler is behind several activities within alternative and informal education for young audiences. Its members familiarise secondary school students with Slovak cinema by means of interactive lectures with film excerpts.

The popular-educational series about the history of cinema, The Film Cabinet, organised by the Slovak Film Institute in collaboration with the Association of Slovak Film Clubs, consists of screenings with lecturer introductions and discussions with the filmmakers; it is intended both for students and the general public. In turn, the Film Cabinet for Children is intended for pupils of grades 1 to 5 of primary schools and their teachers; it allows the youngest audiences to view the world of animated film by means of screenings and captivating lectures. ▲

Kidnapping • PHOTO: JMB Film & TV Production

In the Sign of Dynamics

► Zuzana Sotáková

Last year brought not only a genre variability into Slovak cinema but also several successes at festivals and for some films also a place in foreign cinema distribution. The current year promises titles that could well continue in this trend.

A film drama inspired by the much-praised book by Monika Kompaníková *Little Harbour* (Piata loď) will be presented at the prestigious Berlin International Film Festival. In this film, director Iveta Grófová focuses on the world of children which, in many aspects, is far from carefree. Little Jarka – the main hero of *Little Harbour* – has problems mainly arising from the unstable and emotionally cold family background, which is why she “plays” mother herself when she abducts two babies under strange circumstances and decides to take care of them in a garden cottage. Grófová’s film will have its Slovak distribution premiere in March.

In the same month, the biography *A Prominent Patient* (Masaryk) will be presented to audiences; it also has been allocated a place in the Berlin Film Festival programme. The Slovak-Czech co-production directed by Julius Ševčík takes note of the fates of the official, diplomat and Bohemian Jan Masaryk whose death remains shrouded in mystery. A brilliant orator and bon-vivant, he also had his dark side and his escape from responsibility, his colleagues and himself also gets into the story. Karel

Roden, a Czech actor with international experience, plays the title role.

The much anticipated genre films include the thriller *Kidnapping* (Únos) directed by Mariana Čengel Solčanská which is set in the wild 1990s just like *The Red Captain* (Červený kapitán, dir. Michal Kollár). *Kidnapping* revolves around crimes in which the state and its branches of power played a significant role. The protagonists of the story become entangled in a net of events which in some cases result in destroyed lives. The film with the tagline “To learn the truth always means to forfeit illusions” talks about the political morass of the first years of Slovakia’s independence and it will be distributed in cinemas at the beginning of March.

The full-length documentary *A Hole in the Head* (Diera v hlave) by renowned director Robert Kirchoff features the racial persecution of the Roma in Central Europe during World War II. The essayistic fresco, made without using archive materials, was presented last year at the DOK Leipzig festival and at the Jihlava International Documentary Film

Festival. This year it was also presented at the Trieste Film Festival and its distribution premiere is planned for the end of March.

The mid-length *Hotel Sunrise* (Hotel Úsvit) by young filmmaker Mária Rumanová is a success of Slovak documentary filmmaking; it received its premiere in November 2016 at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA). However, it would be misleading to refer to *Hotel Sunrise* as a pure documentary. In her film, Rumanová depicts the small town of Čierna nad Tisou in Eastern Slovakia. It used to be regarded as the golden gate of socialism, but today it is just a smuggling one-horse town on the Slovak-Ukrainian border. Four protagonists alternate in visually impressive shots – they strive to escape the endless round of peripheral stagnation and life experience that brings them down, equipped mainly with the yearning for a bit of happiness.

The full-length drama *Filthy* (Špina) by young director Tereza Nvotová dealing with the issue of growing up and rape, received its international premiere at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (Bright Future section) at the turn of January and February. It is the story of a sensitive girl who has to face up to her trauma, while the one who caused it wins the love of all her loved ones.

The new film by world-renowned filmmaker Agnieszka Holland *Spoor* (Pokot/Cez kosti mŕtvych) represents one of the most interesting co-productions. An atypical heroine – an elderly animal protector, Janina Duszejko, who lives alone in the Klodzko Valley, where a series of mysterious crimes are committed within a short time, takes the lead in this Polish-Czech-German-Slovak-Swedish drama based on Olga Tokarczuk’s novel. Janina is convinced that she knows the perpetrator, but no one believes her. *Spoor* will receive its premiere in the main competition of the Berlinale and it will be released in Slovak cinemas in April.

As for this year’s other premieres, let us not omit the thriller by one of the most productive Slovak film and television directors, Peter Bebjak, *The*

Line (Čiara). After last year’s presentations within the industry programmes of several festivals, his new film should be finished and released this year. The story is set on the Slovak-Ukrainian border where the daughter of the head of organised crime, Adam Krajňák, marries the local thief, Ivor. However, Adam has to deal with his Ukrainian partner Jona who is beginning to rebel and, moreover, a new type of goods appears on the border – narcotics.

This year also *Nina* should be released in cinemas – another view of the world of adults from a child’s perspective. Nina is eleven years old and the life she had known previously is falling apart. She does not understand her parents and their decisions, she feels lonely and deceived. Her only certainties are swimming and childhood dreams. The film was made by director Juraj Lehotský, who also made *Blind Loves* (Slepé lásky, 2008), a film successful at festivals which received several international awards.

As for Slovak minority co-productions, for instance, *Ice Mother* (Bába z ledu/Baba z ľadu) directed by Bohdan Sláma should be released, as well as the final project by Jan Némec – a significant Czech filmmaker, a representative of the Czechoslovak new wave of the 1960s, who passed away last year – *The Wolf from Royal Vineyard Street* (Vlk z Královských Vinohrad), *Little Crusader* (Křižáček/Križiačik) by Václav Kadrnka who attracted with his previous film *Eighty Letters* (Osmdesát dopisů, 2011) and *Freedom* (Freiheit/Sloboda) by German director Jan Speckenbach. Also two well-known Czech filmmakers have new films: Jan Svěrák will present the result of his further collaboration with his father Zdeněk Svěrák *Barefoot on Stalks* (Po strništi bos/Po strnisku bosý), and Jan Hřebejk, who made *The Teacher* (Učitelka) in Slovakia last year, is preparing the film trilogy *Garden Store* (Zahradnictví/Záhradníctvo) in a Slovak co-production.

All that is just a selection of the films planned for distribution; in reality, the 2017 cinema year in Slovakia should be even more lively and diverse. ◀

Filthy • PHOTO: BFILM

New Management of the Film Centre and the Film Archive

► Daniel Bernát

The organisational structure of the Slovak Film Institute (SFI) consists of National Film Archive (NFA), the core unit in the area of audiovisual heritage protection and restoration, and the National Cinematographic Centre (NCC) as the core unit for public access to the audiovisual heritage and current cinema. Recently, both of the units have gotten new managers.

For years, you could have met Alexandra Strelková, the Director of SFI's NCC, at world film festivals, showcases, film markets and other events, including the priority presentations at the European Film Market in Berlin and the Marché du Film in Cannes. Strelková was NCC Director from 2005, but last year she decided to leave this position and the SFI introduces Rastislav Steranka as her successor at the current film market in Berlin.

There are several departments under this organisational unit of the Slovak Film Institute: the Film Events Department, the Audiovisual Information Centre, the Publications Department, which also covers the staff of this magazine. When Alexandra Strelková started working for the SFI, the NCC was a newly created unit within the Institute. "In part, I was familiar with the activities of film centres from Karlovy Vary where I previously worked as the Festival's liaison with European Film Promotion within the Variety Critics' Choice project. So I started out by thoroughly studying EFP members and I thought that the NCC must be one of them," Strelková recalls the first initiatives that she succeeded in performing one year later when the SFI was accepted as a member of EFP at the Berlinale 2006. "After my first trips to Cannes and Karlovy Vary, having "scanned" the field, I started to prepare plans in two areas – how to keep pace with the EFP partners and how to extend the presentation of the SFI's archive

films." Understandably, this did not prove to be easy. "The establishment of the NCC meant a huge increase in work but the working team was not extended, hence it was necessary to adopt a certain system and to gradually make it work. That required time and intensive communication and the collaboration of many people. And also the necessary funding." Consequently, in 2009 the SFI started implementing the project titled "Presentation of Slovak Cinema and Audiovisual Art Abroad", with financial support from the Slovak Ministry of Culture.

Strelková started out as NCC Director at a time when the current Slovak cinema was not in the best condition; however, this situation gradually changed and improved in several aspects. "The gradual opening up to the world was equally new for Slovak filmmakers; they also had to learn how to function in this new reality – to get used to travelling more, to networking, learning languages, understanding that you have to make an earlier start on working with the film internationally, not just after the Slovak première of the film, taking into account that promotion costs something and merits expert attention, and so on. This is where we strove and are still striving to help the most," says Strelková and continues her account: "At the same time, the environment as such was gradually created in Slovakia and is still being formed and standardised, a suitable model for funding films, sources of mo-

ney were sought, professional associations were established and are still being established, they are seeking out methods of joint communication and collaboration, some of them are even opening up more to the international environment. Unfortunately, in my view, film festivals which I see as being an important part of the film environment in the international context are not growing in Slovakia; we have not yet managed to create an event that would attract more attention in the international world."

Alexandra Strelková knows very well that the demanding work in the NCC is not for everyone; nevertheless, she defends this work as beautiful and in evaluating the period spent within the Institute as well as the development of Slovak cinema, she states: "I definitely consider the time and development as positive; indeed, we have managed to achieve and progress in so many things! I've experienced Slovak films in Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Toronto, Rotterdam... Beautiful premières of restored films, Slovak films receiving awards, films sold abroad... I quite immodestly think that the NCC contributed to this progress and to rendering Slovak cinema more visible and I hope that our environment perceives this in the same way. And I definitely regard as positive that steadily more and more things are happening in Slovakia even without the active involvement of the SFI. The ground is created."

Alexandra Strelková's successor says that he has taken over the NCC and its team in an excellent shape. "I just jumped onto a well-functioning express train. That is why I have great respect for this important position," states the current film centre's director Rastislav Steranka who didn't enter an altogether unknown environment, as he previously worked in the Creative Europe Desk (CED) Slovakia, also an independent unit within the SFI. "Without my previous experience in the CED Slovakia office, I would not even dare to take up the position of SFI's NCC Director with a remit for the promotion of Slovak cinema. The years previously spent in the EU MEDIA programme and the related travelling to European film festivals, markets or industry events have shown me not only how the entire film promotion process works, but also the actual international festivals and platforms for film professionals."

The NCC collaborates in the organisation of events not only with its external partners, but also of cour-

se with the SFI's National Film Archive. Last year, Marián Hausner became the director of this main organisational unit of the SFI for audiovisual heritage. In performing basic tasks related to the care of collections and funds consisting mainly of cinematographic and other audiovisual works, but also materials in written and graphical forms, et alia, related to their production, distribution, archiving and reflection, the NFA can base its work on legislation and priority projects which are long-term. "Preservation starts with acquisition which was systematically determined by the Audiovisual Act (Act No. 343/2007). This Act defined the deposition obligation and acquisition activities and these have continued in force in the current Audiovisual Act (Act No. 40/2015)," explains Marián Hausner. He continues: "Filmographic activities and the cataloguing of collections and funds form part of the SK CINEMA Information System Project implemented since 2002. The databases and knowledge of Slovak cinema are available via the film portal at www.skcinema.sk. Film conservation and restoration form the main parts of the Systematic Restoration of the Slovak Audiovisual Heritage Project adopted by the Slovak Government in 2006. Films are currently treated in the film laboratories in Zlín. The film heritage was successfully digitised and digitally restored within the Digital Audiovision national project in 2011 to 2015 and now the project is in its sustainability phase. In 2014, a top-level digitisation workplace was built in the SFI within the project." All the a.m. projects also create the conditions for access to the audiovisual heritage. This is, for instance, achieved by means of services provided by the individual NFA departments, SFI's publication activities or screenings in Cinema Lumière, especially within its programming component, the Filmothèque, which presents cinematographic works in the SFI's study screening room on 35mm copies, largely from NFA collections. "As regards film events, colleagues from the NCC perform invaluable work as they focus on the presentation of not only contemporary Slovak films but also those that have already become a part of the audiovisual heritage," concludes Marián Hausner, Director of the NFA. ▲

(in collaboration with Alexandra Strelková)

Through the History of Film, Both on Paper and Digitally

► Zuzana Sotáková

The extensive publication *History of Slovak Cinematography 1896 – 1969* (Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie 1896 – 1969) is already available to readers. The Slovak Film Institute (SFI) had a part in its publishing. The SFI also plans to extend the collection of Blu-rays and DVDs issued.

The Head of the SFI's Publications Department Marián Brázda designated the *History of Slovak Cinematography* by Václav Macek and Jelena Paštéková as the key project of recent years and Peter Dubecký, Director of the SFI, confirmed this. "This is a project which took six years and the result will, hopefully, be acceptable not only to experts but also to the general public. We hope to issue the second volume in 2018 or 2019." The current first volume of the *History of Slovak Cinematography* is divided into six chapters defined by years: 1896 – 1918 (An Attraction in Each City), 1919 – 1938 (Slovak Film on the Horizon), 1939 – 1948 (We Have Feature Film), 1949 – 1955 (Building Utopia and Retouching), 1956 – 1962 (Thaw), 1963 – 1969 (Film Ripples).

As regards digital media, last year the 10 Blu-ray collection *Slovak Film* (Slovenský film) took precedence; this was issued within the SK PRES project on the occasion of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union. "The collection was put together over four years in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture. I consider it a presentation of Slovak audio-visual at the highest level. The selection included five significant Slovak films with copyrights held by the SFI, and we succeeded in concluding agreements with independent producers and also presenting five films made after 1989," explained Dubecký. The first five films in the collection were *The Sun in a Net* (Slnko v sieti, dir. Š. Uher), *The Boxer and Death* (Boxer a smrť, dir. P. Solan), *Birdies, Orphans and Fools* (Vtáčkovia, sирoty a blázni, dir. J. Jakubisko), *I Love, You Love* (Ja milujem, ty miluješ, dir. D. Hanák) and *A Path Across the Danube* (Chodník cez Dunaj, dir. M. Luther); the other five films were *Everything*

I Like (Všetko čo mám rád, dir. M. Šulík), *Paper Heads* (Papierové hlavy, dir. D. Hanák), *The Power of Good – Nicholas Winton* (Sila ľudskosti – Nicholas Winton, dir. M. Mináč), *Blind Loves* (Slepé lásky, dir. J. Lehotský) and *Soul at Peace* (Pokoj v duši, dir. V. Balko). "Both of these key activities required a huge effort from the Publications Department and the entire Institute. All departments played a part in them – in addition to the Publications Department, the Documentation Department and the Archive also, as the films in the collection were restored and digitised," stated the General Director of the SFI. While the ten Blu-rays referred to above served primarily for the presentation of Slovak cinema abroad, the SFI recently issued two more Blu-rays, *Lady Winter* (Perinbaba, dir. J. Jakubisko) and *The Fountain for Suzanne* (Fontána pre Zuzanu, dir. D. Rapoš) which did not serve this purpose; however, these two films are among the most popular in Slovakia.

This year, the SFI will issue further films on Blu-ray. The main project will be a three-part collection devoted to the extensive works of the legend of Slovak animated film, Viktor Kubal, who you can read about on the following page. In addition, a DVD with Miloslav Luther's *Forget Mozart* (Zabudnite na Mozarta) will be sold and two SFI co-production projects are in preparation: the 2-DVD *Magical World of Animated Film* (Čarovný svet animovaného filmu) and the 5-DVD documentary series *The First* (Prvá).

As for publications, Marián Brázda referred e.g. to the title in preparation *Invisible History* (Neviditeľné dejiny) from the publicist, screenwriter, dramaturologist and director, Rudolf Urc. In his text he will provide information on a number of documentary filmmakers with whom he collaborated. ◀

We Have the Year of Kubal

► Rudolf Urc

It is twenty years since the legend of Slovak animation, Viktor Kubal, passed away. The Slovak Film Institute has issued a calendar for 2017 dedicated to Kubal's works and it is also preparing a 3-part Blu-ray collection with his animated films – including two full-length films (*Brigand Jurko* and *The Bloody Lady*/Krvavá pani).

Kubal (1923 – 1997) is one of the most prominent personalities of national cinematography. He became the founder of Slovak animated film with his *The Well of Love* (Studňa lásky) released in 1944 and, even though he had to suspend his film career for the following twenty years, his experience as an illustrator and caricaturist rendered it possible for him to return to film in the 1960s with an admirable series of animated black-outs for the cinema journal (*Mr. Homo*/Pán Homo). Here he demonstrated his feeling for a humorous even satirical perception of social phenomena which marked the whole of his subsequent animated production. In *Earth* (Zem) he expresses critical views of environmental issues. He mocks human stupidity (*Selection*/Selekcia), careerism (*The Ladder*/Rebrík), corruption (*The Present*/Prezent), red tape (*High Noon*/Na pravé poludnie), nepotism (*The Only Child*/Jedináčik), the unhealthy business environment (*Cinema*/Kino) and many other suspect phenomena in human relations. This is where he applies the temperament of an experienced caricaturist, the precise structure of the story and burlesque animation game. In *Chess* (Šach) and *Idol* (Idol) he touches upon the fundamental questions of human existence in an unfree, totalitarian society.

A substantial portion of Kubal's filmography consists of fairy-tales for children, solo stories and series of stories with little heroes (*Peter/Peter*, *Puf and Muff*/Puf a Muf, *Valibuk*/Valibuk, *Dita/Dita*) beloved by several generations of children. Two full-length animated films based on historical stories represent the pinnacle of his oeuvre: *Brigand Jurko* (1976) with the legendary folk hero – brigand Jánošík as the main protagonist, and *The Bloody Lady* (1980) about Countess Báthory who allegedly bathed in the blood of young girls. Both works attracted interest with their unique parodic content and satirical flogging.

Viktor Kubal excelled with an incredible breadth of interests – from working for newspapers and writing books, from performing in cabarets and talk-shows to acting in films. And he wrote, directed and animated all the more than two hundred films that he made. World cinema has known very few such universally talented filmmakers.

His works contain elements of comedy and tragedy, irony and good-hearted humour, buffoonery and fairy-tales. Master Kubal purveyed all this in spades – i.e. with the whole of his multi-faceted talent. ▲

Sun in a Net National Film Awards

The Sun in a Net National Film Awards granted by the Slovak Film and Television Academy (SFTA) were dominated last year by *Eva Nová*, the feature début by documentary filmmaker Marko Škop. This drama about an ageing actress, who became an alcoholic, became alienated from her family and now wants to get close again, won the Award not only for Best Feature Film but also for Directing, Script, Best Actress (Emília Vášáryová) and Best Actor (Milan Ondřík). *So Far, So Near* (Tak ďaleko, tak blízko, dir. J. Vojtek) became the Best Documentary and *Fongopolis* (dir. J. Kožuch) won out of the animated films. Altogether, the SFTA gave awards in thirteen categories and also declared director Juraj Jakubisko and cinematographer Igor Luther to be holders of the Sun in a Net Award for exceptional contributions to Slovak cinema. The Sun in a Net Awards date back to 2004 and formerly were awarded once in every two years. However, from now on they will be awarded every year in connection with the screening of domestic cinema – Slovak Film Week. The awards will be presented at a ceremony on 7 April.

MEDIA Was Generous to Slovakia

Last year Slovak entities received support amounting to 273,224 Euro within the Creative Europe support programme in the Culture sub-programme and 1,034,420 Euro in the MEDIA sub-programme. Production companies were exceptionally successful last year in the MEDIA sub-programme – they received a total of 190,000 Euro in the Support for Development of Single Projects scheme; of that, 60,000 Euro was for a single animated film (BFILM) with *Heart of a Tower* (Srdce veže), 80,000 Euro for two feature films (D. N. A. with *Message/Správa* and HITCHHIKER Cinema with *Waiting/Čakanie*), and 50,000 Euro for two documentaries (atelier.doc with *Dubček*, Peter Kerekes with *Occupation*

1968/Okupácia 1968). For the first time, a Slovak entity received support for TV broadcasting of 145,000 Euro (Fool Moon with *The Websters/Websterovci*); Slovak production companies received altogether 335,000 Euro. Distributors have traditionally received the largest amount of support – 67,100 Euro within the Distribution – Selective Support scheme and a record 403,090 Euro within the Distribution – Automatic Support scheme. Three Slovak companies formed part of consortia supported within the Support of Audience Development and Support of Training Programmes schemes. The total support for Slovak entities amounted to a record 880,397 Euro within the MEDIA sub-programme and, together with indirect support within the Europa Cinemas network (154,023 Euro), it amounted to 1,034,420 Euro, which is the best result since the Slovak Republic became a Member State of the MEDIA programme.

Slovak Films with Eurimages Support

Last year, the Council of Europe's cinematographic fund also supported several Slovak co-production projects. Most of the funds – 280,000 Euro – went to Jan Švankmajer's full-length film *The Insects* (Hmyz) in a participation of the Slovak company PubRes with the Czech partner Athanor. The Slovak-Russian-Czech project *The Cellar* (Pivnica) directed by Igor Voloshin was also successful; it received 200,000 Euro and Furia Film is its Slovak producer. The Czech-Slovak-Polish film *Garden Store: Deserter* (Zahradnictví: Dezertér/Záhradníctvo: Dezertér) with the participation of the Slovak company SOKOL KOLLAR was successful also. This is the second part of the planned trilogy directed by Jan Hřebejk and the film received support of 132,000 Euro. Eurimages approved 170,000 Euro for the Czech-Danish-Italian-Slovak film *Barefoot on Stalks* (Po strništi bos/Po strnisku bosý) made by the renowned director, Jan Svěrák. Slovakia is represented in the co-production project by the NOVINSKI production company.

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