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Czech Film After 1989

by Jiří Voráč

During its hundred-year-long history, the Czech film survived five different social systems. Its origins (the first films on the Czech soil were presented by Jan Kř_í_enecký in 1898) are rooted in the era of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After the First World War, it continued its development in a free and democratic Czechoslovak Republic which was after two decades destroyed by the Nazi Germany. A fundamental systemic change occurred in 1945 when the Czechoslovak film was nationalized i.e., that the state (and after 1948 the Communist establishment) completely controlled all film activities in the entire country.(1) After the demise of the Communist dictatorship in 1989, a democratic regime was reestablished and with it the market economy; the film production was privatized and returned to the hands of private producers and distributors.(2) This dependency of the Czech film production on external conditions which were preventing the natural, continuous and intrinsic development of the film art was intensified by a specifically Czech cultural tradition which often preferred the social and educational function of art over its aesthetic function.

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