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How Many Steps to the Shooting Script? A Political History of Screenwriting

> The scenarist could be controlled more easily than the director.
> One-dimensional meaning can be conveyed more easily in words than in pictures.
>
> Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin*

Perhaps more than any other aspect of the film production process, screenwriting has been the subject of political conflict and debate. In this respect, political authorities wanting to control film production are presented with two options: they can either censor the finished product or they can exert their influence on which films are approved for production and by whom these films are produced. In the case of the latter, political agents usually focus on the selection and development of story ideas rather than on the ways those ideas are staged, enacted, and shot.

A purported lack of "good" screenplays and screenwriters has been one of the most politicized problems in both Eastern and Western Europe, from the early 1920s through to the present day. In fact, attempts to modernize, subsidize, and pre-censor national film productions under various political regimes and production systems were regularly confronted with what has been labeled a "screenwriting problem" or a "screenplay crisis".[1] Even today, both the European Union and national subsidy programs aim to support development by increasing the international competitiveness of European films.[2]

Bureaucratic reformists have repeatedly tried to introduce organizational measures to professionalize, standardize, stimulate, and ideologically control screenwriting. They could hardly interfere in the everyday activities of directors, cameramen, production de-

1) Isabelle Raynauld has sketched historical cases of this eternal "crise du scénario" using French examples from 1908 to 1985. See Isabelle Raynauld, 'Le scénario a toujours été "en crise"!', *CinémAction: L'enseignement du scénario*, vol. 61 (1991), pp. 22–27.

2) See for example the "Midpoint" workshops in the so-called Visegrad countries of East-Central Europe.

signers, editors, or even actors, because their work is too technical to be controlled efficiently by outsiders before the results of their efforts are presented on the screen. All that can usually be done is to oversee who is awarded such positions, rather than to determine how these individuals go about their work. Bureaucrats are not interested in studying budgets, shooting plans, rehearsals, continuity sketches, dailies, or shooting scripts, but they are eager to read and comment on screenplays, although even here they are seldom able to achieve what they deem to be a satisfactory levels of control. Screenplays are at the center of political debates about film production not only because they often represent the first stage of a prospective film, but more specifically because they are the most accessible, complete, and, at the same time, most negotiable and malleable aspect thereof. This situation is exemplified by Josef Goebbels' pre-censorship activities — the concept of Vorzensur, as it was institutionalized in Germany in the mid 1930s — or by the convoluted pre-censorship methods that were introduced by the Stalinist regimes of Eastern and Central Europe in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Screenplay development became an over-determined site of ideological control in the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and elsewhere.[3)]

For Stalinist apparatchiks, film was primarily a screenwriting art, a pseudo-literary form destined to deliver prefabricated ideas and topics, not, strictly speaking, an audiovisual medium. In 1950s Czechoslovakia, the single most influential document relating to official film policy was a manifesto published by the Communist Party's Central Committee in April of 1950. It did not mention specific filmmaking issues except for its relatively detailed discussion of screenplay development, and its organization, personnel, and formats. According to the manifesto, the main strategy for improving the quality of films was systematic collaboration between the Party and prominent literary writers, and the establishment of a film section of the Writers Union.[4)] The other strategy used at this time was to install pro-regime writers and script supervisors directly into film studios in order to ensure the implementation of socialist-realist dogma. The new communist management hired dozens of inexperienced writers and communist journalists to replace established informal collaborative networks with new ones. These novices were supposed to become a new type of "proletarian" film artist, one working alongside other studio personnel in a factory-like system. Yet, in reality, their lack of practical knowledge, combined with this newly bureaucratized pre-censorship system, would push national film production to the brink of collapse. The filmmaking community was forced to act defensively and to articulate otherwise tacit principles of creative work and professional identity: the importance of technical knowledge, of informal networks, of personal trust, and so on. After three years, most of these radical "dilettantes", as they were called by seasoned filmmakers, were ousted by an opportunistic alliance of veteran professionals and communists. No other professional group in the history of the Czech film industry was so embroiled in political disputes as writers.[5)]

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3) See Maria Belodubrovskaya, 'Politically Incorrect: Filmmaking under Stalin and the Failure of Power' (PhD Dissertation: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2011); Edward Zajiček, *Poza ekranem. Polska kinematografia w latach 1896–2005*, 2nd edition (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Filmowców Polskich — Studio Filmowe Montevideo, 2009).

4) See 'Za vysokou ideovou a uměleckou úroveň československého filmu', *Rudé právo*, 19 April 1950, pp. 1, 3.

5) See Petr Szczepanik, '"Veterans" and "Dilettantes": Film Production Culture vis-à-vis Top-down Political

It is well known that the politicization of screenplays in the former Socialist countries of Eastern and Central Europe proceeded primarily from direct, ideologically motivated interventions into content tailoring through so-called thematic planning, which was intended to foster preferred topics, or pre-censorship aimed at avoiding subversive subjects, or broader campaigns promoting socialist realism as an official aesthetic doctrine. However, in this article I do not wish to ask the standard political-historical question posed by studies of film production in totalitarian and authoritarian regimes: how did direct ideological indoctrination and censorship shape films and screenplays? Rather, my interest here is in what I see as a more fundamental aspect of politicization — the politicization of screenwriting as a component of the field of film production or more specifically of its practices and conventions. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, I build on the assumption that external political influence on film production is never straightforward; that it is invariably "refracted" through the internal structure of the relatively autonomous professional field.[6] The late 1940s and early 1950s — the period of late Stalinism or Zhdanovism in Eastern and Central Europe — offers an exemplary case-study of how the field reacted to the brutal interventions of political authorities and of how it struggled to regain its relative autonomy.

External political authorities, mainly the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, used screenwriters as what Bourdieu calls "enemy agents"[7] or "Trojan horses"; individuals who could change the internal logic of the field from within by replacing the "holders of a specific authority in the field" and by transforming "internal interest into external 'missions'" of communist propaganda and socialist realism.[8] Although there were virtually no open dissidents among filmmakers at the time, and although most film professionals adhered to general political directives, as a structure and as a "production culture",[9] the field of film production remained largely resistant and immune to these attempts at top-down reorganization. After a relatively short period of initial subservience to political authority, the field began to reinstate its internal hierarchy and rejected the opportunity to trade its specific capital of recognition for heteronomous power.

I use the term "micro-politics" here to refer to the power relations that exist at the level of basic creative groups, in this case to power struggles between literary writers, screenwriters, and directors. Their everyday conflicts, fluctuating careers, and shifting positions within their professional hierarchy were interrelated, but also differed significantly from the macro-political struggles taking place at both the national and international level.[10]

Changes, 1945–1962', in Pavel Skopal and Lars Karl (eds), *Sovietisation and Planning in the Film Industries of Soviet Bloc Countries: A Comparative Perspective on East Germany and Czechoslovakia, 1945–1960* (Berghahn Books, forthcoming).

6) See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 220–221.

7) Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 41.

8) Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 281.

9) See John T. Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

10) In the current ethnographically-informed political sciences, micro-politics refers to the inner workings of politics, to the everyday practices of decision-making that occur in political organizations. Micro-political studies focus on the organizational contexts and organizational cultures that determine both the possibilities

Micro-politics is a specific power game within the film production field — one that is closely related to what Steven Maras has called "particularist games" or to what cultural anthropologists have dubbed "boundary work".[11] To acknowledge the different political dimensions of screenwriting, I differentiate between top-down political initiatives that attempted ideologically to reform cinema via controlling screenplays, on the one hand, and, on the other, the micro-political behavior of communities of practice, which were largely resistant to those initiatives: I focus on the intersections of the two.

The screenplay is in many ways a paradoxical text. At once literary work and production blueprint, it provides a link between cultural politics, a production system, and everyday production routines. It therefore serves as a site at which habitual thinking interacts with formal organizational principles. I will use one concrete example to illustrate the process whereby the field of film production refracted and resisted macro-political influences: the introduction of the "Literary Screenplay", a new screenwriting format that was inspired by the Soviet literary scenario, and its appropriation by the production community in Prague in the 1950s (and beyond). While an analysis of concrete projects and of related decision-making processes would likely show us how this new format influenced the aesthetic and ideological characteristics of ensuing films, such an analysis is beyond the scope of this essay. Accordingly, I focus on the ways in which the Literary Screenplay was intended to serve as an instrument of top-down control, on how it was designed to change creative practice and interrelations between those agents involved in screenplay development, and on how it was eventually used to serve practical needs.

Methodologically, this essay is inspired by Janet Staiger's conceptualization of the Hollywood Mode of Production and the role of the screenplay therein,[12] while also building on my own work on the "State-socialist Mode of Production", which is to say the management system and division of labor utilized in Czechoslovakia and the other former socialist countries of East-Central Europe.[13] In what follows, I begin by outlining those theoret-

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and the constraints of such decision-making on the level of smallest units of action, and on the way these allow for groups to reach a consensus and to deviate from formal rules and officially determined goals. See Roland Willner, 'Micro-politics: An Underestimated Field of Qualitative Research in Political Science', *German Policy Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3 (2011), pp. 155–185. Relatively autonomous micro-political processes in concrete local settings, and the ways in which they "not only reflect larger political processes and national-level conflicts, but may contribute to them" have been studied by political anthropologists. See for example John Gledhill, *Power and Its Disguises: Anthropological Perspectives on Politics*. 2nd Edition /London: Pluto Press, 2000/, p. 128. They have also been studied by ethnographers of power struggles in the art world. See for example Maruška Svašek, 'Styles, Struggles, and Careers: An Ethnography of the Czech Art World, 1948––1992' (PhD Dissertation: University of Amsterdam, 1996).

11) Steven Maras, *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice* (London: Wallflower Press, 2009), p. 157; Tejaswini Ganti, *Producing Bollywood: Inside the Contemporary Hindi Film Industry* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

12) See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Janet Staiger, '"Tame" Authors and the Corporate Laboratory: Stories, Writers and Scenarios in Hollywood', *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, vol. 8, no. 4 (Fall 1983), pp. 33–45.

13) See Petr Szczepanik, 'The State-Socialist Mode of Production and the Political History of Production Culture', in P. Szczepanik and Patrick Vonderau (eds.), *Behind the Screen: Inside European Production Cultures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 113–134.

ical concepts that allow us to account for screenwriting formats as conventions, and screenplay development as institutionalized collective practice. From there, I use the example of Czech cinema to sketch the changing historical position occupied by the screenplay and the screenwriter in Europe, and then in the State-socialist Mode of Production. More detailed analyses of the development of formats follow, in which I focus on the genealogy of the Soviet-inspired Literary Screenplay in order to demonstrate the political significance of screenwriting conventions within the Czech production system. In the last section, I return to the issue of the relative autonomy of the field of film production. The changing status of the Literary Screenplay illustrates how the field refracted political influences through its internal dynamics. This essay therefore concludes with the claim that eventually this small nation's cinema — understood here as a specific field or production culture — resisted political interventions, and repeatedly pushed against the norms imposed on it, in an effort to preserve its habitual operations.

Screenplay formats as conventions, or tools of political control

The formal conventions, protocols, and formats that both structure and facilitate collaborative creative work do not usually originate from the top-down directives of cultural institutions and policy-makers. As sociologists of art have shown, these forces are in fact embedded in everyday practice and are constantly re-negotiated by production communities or by art worlds, in the broader social sense. According to Howard Becker, conventions enable efficient collaboration among artists, support personnel, and eventually consumers. With conventions embodied in material, equipment, sites of production, systems of notation, and training, Becker suggests that "decisions can be made quickly, plans made simply by referring to a conventional way of doing things, [and] artists can devote more time to actual work".[14] They are not based on any immutable formal rules, but on what he describes as "understandings people hold in common and through which they effect cooperative activity";[15] and these are open to negotiation and subject to change. Screenwriting's structural rules, procedures, and formats are illustrative of Beckerian conventions insomuch as they have always been vital for film-production systems to stabilize and to innovate output, to draw new story ideas from the outside world, and to process them into standardized and filmable "blueprints".[16]

When studying the state-socialist cinemas of Eastern and Central Europe we face a different situation however. The entire field of film production was pressed to become more formalized and controllable, and to be open to the outside field of politics. The state and the Party attempted to directly regulate the formats and standards of screenplay development, so that these would better serve Communist propaganda and the Socialist-Real-

14) Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 30.

15) Ibid.

16) Examples of conventions in screenwriting include anything from the standard length and page format to the three-act structure and the system of "slug lines" or master scene headings. See also Janet Staiger, 'Blueprints for Feature Films: Hollywood's Continuity Scripts', in Tino Balio (ed.), *The American Film Industry*, 2nd ed. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 173–92.

ist aesthetic doctrine. Such attempts to control and to change deeply-embedded, habitual practices met with passive resistance from the informally functioning production communities, which eventually managed to cushion the impact of many of them.[17] Among those conventions and formats that were, for political reasons, implemented via top-down directives and provisions from either outside the field of film production or the art world of cinema, one stands out: the so-called Literary Screenplay. The Literary Screenplay, implemented in the USSR in the late 1930s and in Czechoslovakia in the late 1940s, amounted to a set of conventions that were intended to facilitate communication, not so much between members of the same field of practice but between the worlds of politics and film, as well as between film and literature. The thousands of Literary Screenplays preserved in Czech archives provide us with an opportunity to conduct empirical research into screenwriting and to grasp the distinctive features of the State-socialist Mode of Production and the related institutionalized practices that set them apart from those of either Hollywood or Western Europe.[18]

European screenwriting histories: The reign of the director

Little has been written on the history of screenwriting practices in Europe, and especially not on those of East-Central Europe. The role and professional identity of screenwriters in European cinema has always been insecure and problematic. Directors consistently held a dominant position in various national production systems from as early as the 1910s, and never more so than from the 1920s. Kristin Thompson showed that the fragmented and decentralized European production systems of the 1910s to the 1930s implied the director's control over the whole creative process, from story development to production and post-production, as well as a lack of separation between screenplay development and shooting — or, to use Staiger's neo-Marxist terminology, between "conception" and "execution". This stood in contrast to the Hollywood studios, which, since the mid-1910s, had separated development, shooting, and post-production, and which had used detailed continuity scripts as standardized blueprints which directors would then execute.[19] Hollywood switched in the early 1930s from what Staiger has called the "Central Producer System" to the more flexible "Producer-Unit System", with vast story departments and specialized staff writers churning out hundreds of scripts to be shot by directors.[20] Conversely, Thompson argues that European production companies were still mainly using

17) See Szczepanik, "'Veterans" and "Dilettantes'".

18) Almost 10,000 items from the early 1910s are included in the Czech National Film Archive's collection of screenplays (3,500 literary screenplays, 4,900 shooting scripts, and various development formats and unproduced screenplays). I am grateful to Pavla Janásková, the head of the NFA's library, for providing me with this data and for giving me access to this collection. The classification used in the collection's inventory does not fully reflect the historicity of the screenwriting terminology or the textual types themselves. Other screenplay collections are housed in the Barrandov Studios Archive (2,500 film titles), and at The Museum of Czech Literature.

19) Kristin Thompson, 'Early Alternatives to the Hollywood Mode of Production: Implications for Europe's Avant-Gardes'. *Film History*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1993), pp. 386–404.

20) See Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*.

the Director-Unit System that had been typical of Hollywood in the early 1910s.[21] It was only during the 1930s that a more centralized producer-based system with a stricter division of labor made inroads into European cinema.

Focusing on Germany and Austria, Jürgen Kasten has shown that professionalization of screenwriting in the late 1910s first brought dozens of mostly "subliterary authors" to cinema.[22] Then, during the 1920s, the standardization process, which was accompanied by the publication of a lengthy series of manuals and textbooks, led to an indispensable, medium-specific shooting script in a regulated shot-by-shot format. This "komplexes poetisch-technisches Kompendium" was valued for its ability evocatively to convey narration, pacing, and action, and for its concrete and precise visual imagination, but it was nonetheless considered a general guide that made possible arbitrary changes throughout the production process.[23] Paradoxically, the same development resulted in the structurally conditioned isolation, functionalization, and subjection of the screenwriter, who became more and more detached from shooting and overshadowed by the director, a leader of sorts who needed to manage an increasingly complex industrial processes and to efficiently market a new product through the internationally recognizable label of the star-director.[24] This structurally based "taming" of writers made it easier for subsequent totalitarian regimes to adjust film production to the needs of propaganda.[25] In political-historical terms, Kasten emphasizes a series of stylistic and thematic conventions in German and Austrian cinema that ran from the 1930s up into the early 1960s thanks to so-called "Altautoren" — routinists who adapted to different political regimes and industrial cultures, until their position was finally shattered by the New German Cinema auteurs who wrote their own screenplays. Although different national systems demonstrated a degree of variation, there existed a pan-European trend in the mid-1920s to standardize screenwriting practice and to elevate the director as the author of a film, thereby granting him or her a dominant position that remained largely unchallenged in subsequent decades.[26]

In the Czech production system — itself something of a hybrid due to Austrian, German, Soviet, and American influences, but always embedded in the locally specific conditions of a "small nation cinema"[27] — directors held a dominant position as early as the 1920s. Until 1945, as was the case in Germany and Austria, screenplays were mainly writ-

21) Thompson, 'Early Alternatives'.

22) Kasten's typology of screenwriters comprises six groups: light literature writers, often female; journalists; writers coming from theater; writers-directors; silent film divas; and a handful of highbrow literary writers. See Jürgen Kasten, *Film Schreiben. Eine Geschichte des Drehbuches* (Wien: Hora, 1990).

23) Kasten, *Film Schreiben*, p. 113.

24) Kasten discerns this change of power relations between directors and writers in the opening credits of films and in the materials advertizing films: by 1924/1925, the announcement of a "Drama in 6 Akten von…" followed by the name of a writer is eventually replaced by "Ein film von…" followed by the name of a director. See Kasten *Film Schreiben*, p. 109.

25) See Staiger, '"Tame" Authors and the Corporate Laboratory'.

26) For example, Ian W. Macdonald argues that by the mid-1920s British screenwriters had lost ground to directors after attempting to "secure their status as the 'author' of a film" throughout the 1910s", and that numerous British directors wrote their own scenarios in the 1910s and 1920s. See Ian W. Macdonald, 'Screenwriting in Britain 1895–1929', in Jill Nelmes (ed.), *Analysing the Screenplay* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 44.

27) See Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie, 'Introduction', in *The Cinema of Small Nations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 1–22.

ten by popular literature authors and playwrights, journalists, lyricists, and actors; only a handful of prominent writers tried their luck at penning film scenarios. Up to forty-five percent of screenplays were written or co-written by directors, and their position did not weaken after the nationalization of the industry in 1945 or after the Communist putsch of 1948. Between 1945 and 1980, directors wrote or co-wrote a significant majority of screenplays: more than seventy percent to be precise. In the 1960s, their contributions were at their greatest, reaching almost eighty-five percent. Such accounts may appear odd, but they reflect the ways in which professionals themselves discussed the micropolitics of screenwriting at this time. During the big screenwriting debate in 1956 (elucidated below), one critic compared all foreign films shown in Czech theaters between January and August 1956 with Czech movies produced in the previous year. The result was that forty-two percent of imports had been written or co-written by directors; compared to seventy-one percent of the Czech sample (these figures are almost identical to my own calculations for the whole decade).[28] It would appear that the predominance of directors and the complementary marginalization of screenwriters constitute fundamental features of the production system, ones that cut across both political changes and attempts to recalibrate the professional hierarchy.

The State-socialist Mode of Production and the structural position of the screenwriter: Units and dramaturgy

To understand the position in the professional hierarchy of professional screenwriters (employees of the state-owned studios) and "writers" (outsiders writing for the screen), it is helpful to sketch the key features of the production system and the social milieu in which these individuals worked and lived.[29] Elsewhere, I conceptualized the State-socialist Mode of Film Production by distinguishing between, one the one hand, the strategic management of the state and Communist-party representatives in the studios, and, on the other, the tactical management that was developed both to supervise film production and balance central ideological oversight with limited product differentiation: the so-called "units". The "units", which were established in Prague in 1945 and later in other Soviet-bloc countries, managed screenplay development as well as day-to-day collaboration between writers, screenwriters, and directors. Despite fulfilling pre-censorship functions, they also allowed creative work to be conducted efficiently, and allowed a measure of creative autonomy to be preserved amid top-down political control, wherein the state itself was ultimately seen as the only legitimate producer of films.[30]

28) See Antonín Malina, 'Tvůrčí odvaha, scénář a dialogy našich filmů', *Film a doba*, vol. 2, no. 11 (1956), pp. 728–734. My calculations offer an impression of directors' involvement in screenwriting. They are based on authoritative filmographies published by the National Film Archive in Prague, and they take into account the authorship of the last screenplay version preceding the director's version, i.e. the shooting script that was usually written by the director — a draft called the Literary Screenplay after 1948, and simply the "screenplay" or the "scenario" before that date.

29) Like Staiger, I distinguish between a general mode, which is to say the State-socialist Mode of Film Production, and its historical and national variations, which I term "production systems".

30) See Szczepanik, 'The State-Socialist Mode of Production and the Political History of Production Culture'.

In the Czech production system, the theory and practice of screenplay development was called dramaturgy. Dramaturgy meant two things at this time. First, it was a theory combining classical rules of dramatic construction with socialist-realist doctrine.[31] Second, it referred to the practical management and supervision of not only script development but of the whole creative process. In terms of the latter, dramaturgy was organized in a complex hierarchy of institutions, with the state or central dramaturgy at the top and with units at the bottom. From the perspective of communist ideologues, the raison d'ĕtre of dramaturgy and the units was to ensure the ideological conformity of film production without destroying its commercial viability and cultural relevance: after a period of radical centralization was followed by a major production crisis from 1948 to 1954, the Party realized that it had no other efficient means of practical supervision than the units, which had been suppressed from 1948 to 1951 and dissolved over the next three years. There was no other organizational body between bureaucratic top management, which lacked necessary knowledge of film practice, and a resistant and politically unreliable filmmaking community that could be used to facilitate the transformation of official cultural policy into day-to-day creative work. Surprisingly, as far as the apparatchiks were concerned, the very same units, which were reestablished in 1954, would eventually become centers of cultural resistance and key nodes in the informal networks that were behind the subversive filmmaking of the late 1950s and 1960s.

Each Czech unit consisted of a group of around four dramaturgs and was usually led by a chief dramaturg and a production manager.[32] The dramaturg, or, the artistic head of the unit, was a virtual equivalent of the pre-state-socialist hands-on "producer", albeit without the usual financial, green-lighting, and marketing responsibilities, which were instead held by the state's or the Party's representatives. The dramaturgs and the units oversaw story development and the recruitment of casts and crews. In some historical periods, they also oversaw shooting and post-production, and, on occasion, distribution as well. Unlike the more narrowly defined script supervisors and editors that were common to other production systems, dramaturgs oversaw a project to completion. They acted as intermediaries or brokers between studios and the political establishment, between upper studio management and creative teams, between writers and directors, between directors and crews, and between wider political and cultural trends and filmmaking practice. Units supervised a standard number of screenplays at different stages of their development. For example, at the height of the Czech New Wave in 1966, each unit reported a monthly overview of approximately seven films in production, ten completed screenplays pending approval, fourteen "short stories" (treatments), ten synopses, and seven story ideas.[33] Each unit held regular formal meetings, while operating a network of semi-permanent collaborators. They also boasted a fairly distinct creative profile and characteristic style of dramaturgical work. Where some units used so-called individual dramaturgy, whereby a specific dramaturg was assigned to work on a project, others had a reputation for being

31) See for example a series of handbooks written by the Barrandov dramaturgs František Daniel and Miloš Kratochvíl, beginning with *Cesta za filmovým dramatem* (Praha: Orbis, 1956).

32) In other production systems in East-Central Europe, units could include other professions, especially directors.

33) National Film Archive (NFA), f. ÚŘ ČSF, k. R5/A1/1P/6K.

team-based. Similarly, some were seen as flexible and others bureaucratic, and some were associated with conservative filmmaking when others were renowned for formal experimentation. However, in reality, the units were pragmatic bodies that did not maintain such clearly defined profiles for long periods of time. Rather, distinct combinations of these traits characterized each unit.[34)]

While similar units or "groups" functioning as middle managers, ideological supervisors, and cultural mediators were established in the other Soviet-bloc countries of East-Central Europe, especially after the late 1950s, dramaturgy was a key concept only in Czechoslovakia and in the GDR.[35)] The reason for this was historical: in both countries, dramaturgy had a long tradition in legitimate theater, and their respective nationalist cultural policies of the 1930s and 1940s were quick to adapt this tradition to the needs of film production.[36)] To "improve" the artistic and ideological qualities of films, these two states took steps to regulate film production not only retroactively via censorship but preemptively during script development. Much like the insitutionalization of Goebbels' Vorzensur in 1934, the Czechs attempted to institutionalize dramaturgy in the mid 1930s.[37)] In the Czech lands, the mature form of film dramaturgy took shape during World War Two, when Prague became an important production center for the German film industry and when an analogy to the Reichsfilmkammer (National Film Chamber) was established in order to centralize and standardize the domestic film industry.[38)] In both Czechoslovakia and the GDR, dramaturgy represented a form of continuity between the prewar and postwar development of production systems, political differences between the Nazi and the socialist regimes notwithstanding.

After the nationalization of the Czech film industry, and especially after the Communist putsch, the previous external forces pressuring screenwriting to standardize were joined by internal ones:[39)] organizational and legal measures represented by the permanent employment of writers, and by collective contracts, working rules, the operation of

34) See Szczepanik, 'The State-Socialist Mode'; see also Szczepanik, 'Between Units and Producers: Organization of Creative Work in Czechoslovak State Cinema 1945–1990', in Marcin Adamczak, Piotr Marecki, Marcin Malatyński (eds.), *Film Units: Restart* (Kraków: Ha!art, 2012), pp. 271–312.

35) In the other countries, units were mainly headed by directors, and the dramaturg was not recognized as a specific and important profession.

36) On the concept of dramaturgy in the history of European and American theater see Mary Luckhurst, *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

37) The political functionalization of film dramaturgy as Vorzensur had its precedent in the 1934 amended Reichslichtspielgesetz, which introduced the "Vorprüfung" of screenplays, and which granted the newly appointed "Reichsfilmdramaturg" the authority to supervise the various stages of a screenplay's development. See David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933–1945* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), p. 14. The Soviet Stalinist production system used its own form of pre-censoring screenplays that were in development. See Natacha Laurent, *L'œil du Kremlin: Cinéma et censure en URSS sous Staline* /Toulouse: Privat, 2000). This would become an explicit model for Czech policy only after 1948, by which time dramaturgy was already an established discipline.

38) See Tereza Cz. Dvořáková, 'Idea filmové komory. Českomoravské filmové ústředí a kontinuita centralizačních tendencí ve filmovém oboru 30. a 40. let' (PhD Dissertation: Charles University, 2011).

39) Screenplay practices and conventions had been subject to a degree of standardization since the 1920s, and especially since the mid 1930s, due to state subsidy programs, which demanded the submission of treatments, due to educational initiatives that offered courses in screenwriting, to manuals, to scenario contests, and even to critical discourse lamenting the perpetual screenwriting crisis.

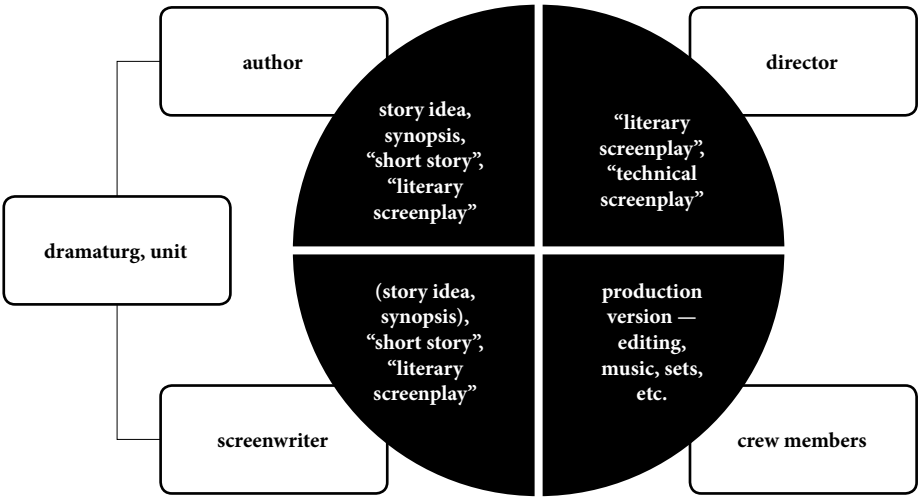
units, and of bureaucratized procedures of story development and screenplay approval. Only a month and a half after the putsch, new studio management started systematically to recruit young screenwriters called "adepts of screenwriting", even though writers had never been permanent employees of the studios. Soon after, a committee of production unit artistic chiefs was formed to select ten exemplary step outlines and ten "short film stories" which could be used to train unit members in screenwriting techniques.[40] However, the new pool of permanent staff writers proved to be extremely inefficient. Screenwriting practice remained largely informal, thereby allowing directors to write or to co-write their screenplays and shooting scripts as they collaborated with external literary writers rather than the professional screenwriters who were employed by the studios.

Professional screenwriters had never had a well-functioning organizational platform or firm status within the nationalized studios. During periods of liberalization and increased creative freedom — 1945–48 and 1955–69 — they were dispersed among units as "adepts" or dramaturgs or "reviewers", and were allowed to build informal partnerships with other writers, directors, and dramaturgs. In times of tighter political control and oppression, there were repeated attempts to establish a separate screenwriting department. This happened in the early 1950s, when such moves were inspired by the Soviet model of the "Screenplay Studio", which was itself an attempt to emulate Hollywood's system of story departments.[41] It also occurred in the early 1970s, during a period of so-called "normalization" that was characterized by political tightening following the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. All of these attempts were largely unsuccessful however; something that was acknowledged openly, even by studio officials. Screenwriting departments were never a major source of story material, leading their employees periodically to be criticized for their inefficiency. Similarly unsuccessful efforts to group and regroup screenwriters were attempted by the Communist party organization located within the film studios. Distinct professional groups were repeatedly relocated from one "basic cell" to another in order that they could be combined with, or separated from, other professional groups.

Screenwriters proved to be the most unpredictable and individualistic of all film professions. A centralized production system and top-down political control never managed to streamline their creative work and professional lives. For example, in his diaries, Pavel Juráček detailed his experiences as a prominent screenwriter: marginalized by directors, demoralized by the approval processes, and spiritually broken by the political changes that took place after 1968. Despite being a permanent employee of the Barrandov studios throughout the 1960s — first as a unit dramaturg then as a unit head in 1968 and 1969 — his day-to-day creative work was anything but regular, virtually unaffected as it was by central production planning, and was quite detached from the internal operations of the unit of which he was a member. Nevertheless, he was able to make a comfortable living, less from his low salary than from the relatively high fees paid for the development of screenplays, starting with a synopsis and ending with a Literary Screenplay.[42]

40) NFA, f. Frič Martin, k. 5, sign. 269, Zápisy z pracovních porad uměleckých šéfů dramaturgických skupin.
41) See Belodubrovskaya, 'Politically Incorrect'.
42) Pavel Juráček, *Deník (1959–1974)* (Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2003).

Figure 1: The Micro-politics of screenplaydevelopment



It is important to distinguish between several types of writers for the screen. First, literary authors delivered a story idea, a synopsis or a treatment, or supervised the adaptation of their existent works; some of these were able to pen complete screenplays, thus becoming semi-professional screenwriters. Otherwise they wrote screenplays with directors. Then there were directors and dramaturgs who wrote original screenplays or adaptations. The last category was comprised of rank-and-file in-house screenwriters who remained a necessary but rather neglected group. As such, theirs was something of an invisible profession. In terms of production credits, these writers were quantitatively overshadowed by freelance authors of literary fiction, by directors, and by dramaturgs, who together fashioned most screenplays. Professional screenwriters proper were somewhat dismissively termed "processors" (zpracovatelé), insomuch as they developed or processed story ideas or pre-existent literary works into screenplays. They earned lower salaries than dramaturgs and directors, they were marginalized by the official writers' organization, and, most of the time, they did not even have a stable and separate organizational body in which to work, their status as permanent employees notwithstanding. As Juráček noted in 1959, "[i]n Czechoslovakia, there is not a single screenwriter with a good reputation. There is just a pack of almost nameless people who are able to stitch together a screenplay. They are processors — in a proper sense of that beautiful word cited in contracts".[43] By contrast, compared to directors, authors or unit heads, experienced rank-and-file screenwriters were rarely subjected to politically motivated interventions. They often kept a low profile, working for decades under various political regimes and countless ideologies. For example, the most prolific writer of Czech cinema, Josef Neuberg, worked continuously from

43) Juráček, *Deník*, p. 89.

1920 to the early 1960s, often on highly successful comedies; he never become a public figure, with the only article about his work being his obituary. Neuberg was never persecuted or criticized by the Nazis or the Communists.[44]

Dramaturgy, as a technique of story development, and the units, as managers of creative labor, are central to understandings of the history of screenwriting as a set of institutionalized practices within the Czech production system. They accompanied writers and directors on their journey from story idea to screenplay, translating their own views on "good" screenplays and official directives into instructive notes, and assisting the project through various approval procedures. The units were responsible for integrating writers into creative teams which usually consisted of a writer, an appointed unit dramaturg, a director, and sometimes an in-house screenwriter. Such team-based practice can be understood in terms of what Ian W. Macdonald has called the Screen Idea Work Group, a "flexible and semi-formal work unit" that centers on a shared "screen idea" as manifested in various stages and versions of the screenplay rather than in any one specific text.[45] The power relations in these groups, and the individual steps they went through, need to be understood in the context of the State-socialist Mode of Production, which introduced a closer relationship between the field of cultural production and the field of political power than say the British industrial practice that Macdonald has studied.

Stages of development: the political history of the Literary Screenplay

This section moves from the structural position of screenwriters to screenplay development, in particular to one of its final formats — the Literary Screenplay — and its roots in the cultural politics of late-Stalinism. To understand the political importance of the Literary Screenplay we must first appreciate its genealogy. In contrast to the shooting script or "Technical Screenplay", which did not change significantly after 1930, and which was considered to be the responsibility of film specialists (see table 1), intermediate screenplay formats were more unstable and were heavily influenced by external political and cultural forces. Some of these influences were more obvious than others. For example, it is easy to understand why split-page, two column shooting scripts were introduced in 1930, immediately after the coming of sound: to separate visual and audio sections. Yet, it is more difficult to explain why numbered shots, as opposed to just numbered scenes, became the standard in 1935. On the whole, the greater longevity of the shooting script, as compared to other formats, is a significant indicator of how the production culture was divided internally. On the one side existed a core of professionals comprising film crews and their enduring working habits, and, on the other, were the upper layers of writers, directors, and

44) It was quite common for "bourgeois" professional screenwriters of the 1930s and the war years to continue working into the 1950s and occasionally even into the 1960s. This was similar to the situation in the GDR where former UFA writers continued to pen screenplays throughout the 1950s: twenty-two percent in 1956. In West Germany, this figure was as high as sixty-five percent. See Kasten, *Film Schreiben*, p. 131.

45) Ian W. Macdonald, '"…So It's not Surprising I'm Neurotic": the Screenwriter and the Screen Idea Work Group'. *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2010), pp. 45–58.

Table 1: The sequence of screenplay development formats in Czechoslovak cinema after the 1930s.[46)]

format	Function and Parameters	Periodization and historical context
Theme	In Czech "Téma", later "Ideový náčrt": up to several dozen sentences; a written equivalent of a verbal pitch.	Although mentioned in a screenwriting manual from the 1930s,[47)] formalized only in relation to the systematic production planning after 1945, especially in so-called thematic and dramaturgical plans.
Story idea (exposé)	"Námět": in a general sense, any story material — original or for adaptation; in a narrow and formalized sense, a description of key story idea and its characters, 1–3 pages long.	In the 1920s and 1930s, an original story idea was presented verbally as an informal pitch, often in cafés (if it was not based on a pre-existing work). As a written form, it was partially codified during WWII by German contracts and then again in the late 1940s; interchangeable with more common "synopsis".
Synopsis	Summary of the main story line and characters, no dialogue, foregrounds the cinematic potential of the story, 5–10 pages (occasionally longer).	Used occasionally from the early 1920s, but often skipped in practice (in 1930s, producers commissioned treatments on the basis of oral presentation). After 1945, the first remunerated format.[48)]
"Film Short Story" / Treatment	"Filmová povídka": story structured like the subsequent screenplay and the final filmic form, covers both main plot and subplots, and characters, only key dialogue, 25–70 pages; "Treatment": similar to the Short Story, but closer to scenario in its filmic form, 25–50 pages.	"Treatment" used circa 1935 to 1945; used in applications for state subsidies as well as in contracts between writers and producers (allowing them to decide whether they wanted to invest in a final screenplay); "Short Story" prevailed after WWII and is still used today.
Step Outline	"Scénosled": numbered paragraphs\ scenes, more detailed depiction of all plot lines and scenes, could have more dialogue, very close to the subsequent Literary Screenplay, 30–100 pages.	Used sporadically from circa 1943 to the 1950s.
Literary Screenplay	"Literární scénář": an author's version type (before: "libretto" which was more loosely related to the subsequent film); master-scene format (the unit of segmentation: numbered scenes); definitive visuals, dialogue and sound; specification of location, sometimes exterior/interior, time of day. There were two basic variations of LS: the split-page (2-column) format which dominated the 1950s, and the full-page format that subsequently gained preeminence.	From circa 1949 to the present day; formally introduced by the first collective contract between the Writers' Syndicate and the state-owned studios in April 1947.

Table 1:

format	Function and Parameters	Periodization and historical context
Technical Screenplay	"Technický scénář": shooting script; a director's version; in the early 1950s called the "Director's Screenplay" (in the 1920s and early 1930s "scenario", "working scenario", then simply "screenplay"); split-page, numbered shots format,-standard technical appendices and parameters for each scene and shot (camera angles, movements, etc.); also known as the "literary screenplay".	Used from 1930 to the present day, the term itself has been used from circa 1949 until the present day; its format, including numerous appendices, was strictly codified in 1950 according to Soviet "production norms".
further production and post-production versions	Further production and post-production derivatives, co-written by other crew members: "director's book" (including elements of storyboard), musical script, set version (called "guts"), cutting continuity, etc.	Individualized or firm-specific until 1945, then standardized to the internal formal and informal rules of the state-owned studios.

dramaturgs, who were more exposed to politically motivated top-down reorganizations and to broader socio-cultural phenomena.

The Literary Screenplay, which was introduced around 1949 by the new post-Communist-putsch studio management headed by director general Oldřich Macháček, was similar to what Steven Price has described as the "author's version".[49] It boasted a master-scene form, and was supposed to include definitive visuals, dialogue, and sounds. There were two basic variations of the Literary Screenplay: the split-page or two-column format, which was the dominant variant of the 1950s, and the full-page format, which gradually superseded it in the 1960s.[50] The Literary Screenplay was introduced for two main reasons:

46) For information about who was responsible for individual formats, see Figure 1. This table omits older formats of screenwriting, especially the "libretto", which was prevalent in the 1920s and the early 1930s, and which was comparable to the later "treatment" or "step outline" (in its form) and to the Literary Screenplay. The English terminology is loosely adopted from Steven Price. See Steven Price, *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010). Data are based on an extensive survey that I conducted of both primary and secondary sources. Estimates of the typical lengths of individual formats are based more on secondary sources such as manuals, regulations, and critical discourse than on precise quantitative data; in practice, these formats were somewhat variable and interchangeable.

47) Otakar Vávra, 'Práce na scenariu zvukového filmu', in *Abeceda filmového scenaristy a herce* (Praha: [s.n.], 1935).

48) In the first Czech book-length screenwriting manuals, "synopsis" is already prescribed as a condensed draft of libretto or scenario. See Karel Lamač, *Jak se píše filmové libreto* (Praha: Karel Lamač, 1923); V. A. Jarol, *Jak psáti pro film?* (Praha: Jarolímek, 1923).

49) See Price, *The Screenplay*, pp. 69–70.

50) Based on the preliminary conclusions of a survey of a sample of 100 screenplays from the NFA's collection, approximately forty percent of literary screenplays from the 1950s to the 1980s were formatted in two columns, in the same way as technical screenplays. Until the 1960s, manuals recommended the split-page

1) Organizational and Economic: to better divide labor between writers and directors, i.e. to clearly separate screenplay development or "literary preparation", as it was called at the time, from pre-production; to define fees for each stage of development; to standardize the final product at the literary stage, before the director and his/her crewmembers input details into the Technical Screenplay.

2) Political-ideological: to introduce a full account of the story with a final version of the dialogue, similar to an "iron script", that could be evaluated and pre-censored by central approval boards; to isolate the "artistic" Literary Screenplay, which would determine a film's ideology, from the messy production process that articulates this position; to promote screenwriting as a respectable literary discipline, and thus to attract prominent pro-regime writers; to eventually allow for the straightforward ideological and aesthetic reform of national cinema through the direct influence of political bodies on the selection and development of story material.

As early as World War Two, critics started to demand a separation of the Literary and the Technical formats in order to provide an "ideal format for film poets", one that would be unburdened of the ballast of technical detail.[51)] However, the Literary Screenplay was not officially introduced until the first collective contract was signed in April 1947 between the Writers Syndicate (later called the Writers Union) and the state-owned studios,[52)] although it took another two years for this arrangement to be implemented and to acquire the full political meaning being discussed here. This contract codified the Literary Screenplay as a distinct stage of the production process, and specified that a fee be paid to the writer regardless of whether the film was actually shot. According to the contract, it was supposed to "convey the *entire action broken into scenes* with a list of locations, sets, and characters, and with indication of sounds, music, and *dialogue in their final version*"

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format. A newer manual recognized that the full-page format was more comfortable for readers. Today, the split-page format is again common in television series screenplays. See František Daniel and Miloš Kratochvíl, *Základy filmové dramaturgie (praktická scenáristika)* (Praha: Filmová a televizní fakulta AMU, 1963), p. 95; Miloš Kratochví and František A. Dvořák, *Jak psát hry pro film a televizi: rukověť filmové a televizní dramaturgie a scenáristiky* (Praha: SPN, 1981), p. 67.

51) See Antonín M. Brousil, 'O ideální formu pro filmového básníka', *Filmový kurýr*, vol. 17, no. 17 (23. 4. 1943), p. 3. The term was also mentioned by the director-screenwriter Otakar Vávra. See Jiří Kolaja, *Filmová režie. Zásadní poznámky s názory několika českých režisérů* (Praha: Knihovna Filmového kurýru, 1944), p. 24. There are also sporadic examples of screenplays from the war and immediate postwar years that are similar to the later "literary screenplay" insomuch as they cover all scenes and dialogue but are not broken down into numbered scenes; they feature a list of characters but not the two-column presentation. Written before the shooting script, both versions were called simply "screenplays": Hotel Modrá hvězda (1941); Nezbedný bakalář (1946); Průlom (1945) has numbered scenes but resembles rather step outline. The screenplay for Jarní píseň (originally entitled "Mámení jara", 1944), which boasts numbered scenes, two columns, and even slug lines indicating location, exterior/interior, and time of day, is virtually identical to the 1950s Literary Screenplays. There are even earlier examples that are similar to the later Literary Screenplay. These include the "libretto" for C. a k. polní maršálek (1930) in master-scene format and the "screenplay draft" for Zborov (1938), which is not broken into scenes.

52) Archiv Barrandov studio, a. s., f. Barrandov historie, k. 1945/3, Smlouva ředitele výroby dlouhých filmů se Syndikátem českých spisovatelů, 19. 4. 1947. See also: NFA, f. ČFS, k. R12/A1/1P/3K, Důvodová zpráva ke smlouvě s autory a zpracovateli námětu.

(emphasis added).[53] A month later, an internal report on story development practice, which was written by a young screenwriter, was already specifying that the "screenplay (literary)" be fragmented into scenes, characterized by unity and completeness, and that "each of its sentences conveys concrete shot possibilities". The document stressed that this screenplay was central to the approval process because it "rounds off the abstract existence of film work", while the Technical Screenplay provides a bridge to a film's realization.[54] The finality of the Literary Screenplay reflected the controlling bodies' pipe dream of fixing a film's meaning prior to production in a screenplay that, once approved, was not to be changed; this supposed finality distinguished it from a treatment, which, in the old system, represented the final literary stage prior to the shooting script. Its master-scene format distinguished it from the numbered shots presented in the Technical Screenplay; a screenplay that was not exactly user-friendly as far as external writers, reviewers, and controllers were concerned. The real difference that came with the Literary Screenplay was not so much its textual features, which were in many ways similar to earlier librettos, scenarios, treatments, and step outlines, but its supposed completeness and strict differentiation from the Technical Screenplay. For this reason, we cannot appreciate the historical significance of the Literary Screenplay only by examining screenplays themselves.

The concept was modeled on the Soviet "literary scenario" (литературный сценарий, *literaturnyi stsenarii*), a preeminent form of the late 1930s that served as a transition between the so-called "iron scenario", which was criticized for hindering creativity, and the "emotional scenario", which was seen as too abstract and formal — both of which had been tested unsuccessfully in previous years. The compromise form that was the literary scenario was supposed to be both creative (as was the emotional scenario), workable, and "censorable" (as was the iron script).[55] According to Maria Belodubrovskaya, Moscow chose this model as an alternative to the Hollywood-style story department with which it had also experimented in the 1930s. It was expected to elevate the screenplay to the level of an original literary work authored by a single writer, as opposed to the collaboration central to Hollywood's division of labor. It was also expected to attract literary writers to work in cinema by granting them a stronger sense of authorship, in a manner that separated conception from execution without hindering the creativity of either writers or directors. At the same time, it was designed to facilitate censorship procedures — a screenplay stripped of technical detail could be easily changed multiple times before filming — and to encourage directors closely to follow censored scripts. According to Peter Kenez, the cultural politics of late Stalinism privileged screenplays over films because "[t]he scenarist could be controlled more easily than the director. One-dimensional meaning can be conveyed more easily in words than in pictures".[56] However, as Belodubrovskaya concludes,

53) The Technical screenplay was standardized in 1949/1950, based on Soviet norms. For detailed instructions about the kind of information that was recommended for inclusion and in particular its structure see *Instrukce o práci výrobního štábu v jednotlivých etapách výroby filmu* (Praha: ČSF 1949); see also "Instructions about director's script", 1950, in NFA, f. ČSF, k. R9/A1/4P/8K.

54) J. A. Novotný, 'Filmový námět a jeho zpracování'. In Archiv Barrandov studio, a. s., f. Barrandov historie, k. 1947/4.

55) See Belodubrovskaya, 'Politically Incorrect', p. 176

56) Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin* (London: I. B. Tauris,

despite all efforts, the literary scenario failed both ideologically and organizationally as a means of streamlining the centrally planned, mass-production of films, and as "a reliable contract between the censors and directors on the content of the [ensuing] film".[57)]

Historians of Soviet cinema call this late-Stalinist period, when the Literary Screenplay was being adopted by the Czechoslovak production system (1947–53), *zhdanovschchina* or Zhdanovism. It is characterized by both cultural tightening and aggressive campaigns that were intended to foster the idealized image of Soviet life and to fend off foreign influences on, or "ideological errors" in, films and screenplays. The term is derived from Andrei Zhdanov, the Central Committee member who was responsible for Soviet cultural policy. He posited a theory of quality over quantity in relation to films produced after 1948, which accounts for a rapid drop in output that saw production shrink to about ten to fifteen titles per year until Stalin's death, and which was in part caused by an extremely complicated and centralized process of approving screenplays in development.[58)] Leonid Heller has claimed that, during this period of "film anaemia" (*malokartin'e*), screenwriting paradoxically flourished as a focal point for those ideologues, censors, and film executives who were attempting to reform the collapsing cinema via its literary dimension. Heralded as the ideological and artistic basis of any film, and granted its own organic integrity and the prestige of a legitimate literary genre, the literary scenario was published and promoted in an unprecedented number of books and journals as the only way to improve the quality of Soviet films. The subordination of film to the screenplay, of cinema to literature, and of the image to the word related to the broader Zhdanovian strategy of "littératuritation" (*oliteraturivanie*) of the visual arts, which presupposed their common discursive character and dismissed the specificity of individual arts.[59)] Looking at the Stalinist period from a media-theoretical perspective, Oksana Bulgakowa notes that this reductive perspective defined film as a mere derivative or amplification of an existing literary text.[60)]

In Czechoslovakia too the introduction of the Literary Screenplay coincided with a massive campaign to improve the ideological content of films by attracting prominent pro-regime writers. In this context, the Literary Screenplay can be understood as a carrot intended to attract to the field established writers; writers who were traditionally suspicious of film's industrial and technical character, of others rewriting their work, and of the increasingly contingent, bureaucratic, lengthy, unpredictable approval processes. At the same time, prominent writers were encouraged to join some of the dramaturgical, approval, and pre-censorship boards in order to supervise screenplays that were in development.

2001), p. 219. For a detailed account of how post-1946 literary scenarios were subjected to obsessive multi-level pre-censorship procedures (*sur-censure*) see Laurent, *L'œil du Kremlin*, p. 175.

57) Belodubrovskaya, 'Politically Incorrect', p. 282

58) A simultaneous decline soon occurred in other Soviet-bloc countries as well. In Czechoslovakia, fiction feature film output fell from twenty-four films in 1950 to eight in 1951.

59) Leonid Heller, 'Cinéma à lire. Observations sur l'usage du "scénario litteraire" à l'époque de Jdanov', in Natacha Laurent (ed.), *Le Cinéma "stalinien": questions d'histoire* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail – La Cinémathèque de Toulouse, 2003), pp. 57–70.

60) Oksana Bulgakowa, 'Ton und Bild. Das Kino als Synkretismus-Utopie', in Jurij Murašov (ed.), *Die Musen der Macht. Medien in der sowjetischen Kultur der 20er und 30er Jahre* (München: Wilhelm Fink 2003), pp. 173–186.

With the master-scene format of the Literary Screenplay, writers — or so it was claimed — would feel at home and would not be embarrassed by their failure to understand either technical terminology or the highly fragmented form of the Technical Screenplay, whether as authors or controllers. According to a prominent 1950s novelist, a writer "loses grasp of his own story as soon as it is fragmented into lots of numbered scenes and shots".[61] His younger colleague went even further, explaining his fear of the Technical Screenplay thus: "[w]hen I first saw a Technical Screenplay, it looked extremely complicated and no more artistic than a tax-return form. It seemed to me that the amount of numbers and codes could be dealt with only by a bookkeeper".[62] It is therefore unsurprising that, while screenwriting manuals from the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s stressed the technical aspects of screenwriting formats and the necessity to understand the practical limitations and potential of the visual medium,[63] their post-1948 counterparts transferred the screenplay into the literary field and constructed screenwriting as the heir to classical drama and the nineteenth-century realist novel.[64] Since the mid-1950s, the new screenwriting discourse has been personified by František Daniel, an early FAMU graduate who also studied in VGIK (1949–53), and who, in the late 1950s, was a teacher of Czech New Wave screenwriters such as Pavel Juráček and Antonín Máša.[65]

Relative autonomy regained: the Literary Screenplay loses its heteronomous power

The political meaning of the Literary Screenplay, as it was projected by the post-1948 management and by Communist intellectuals on dramaturgical boards, did not influence production in a straightforward manner. It had to be "refracted", to use Bourdieu's term, through the structure of the field of film production. According to official directives, the

61) František Kožík, 'O podílu dramaturgie', *Literární noviny*, vol. 4, no. 36 (3. 9. 1955), p. 4. The explanation that the literary screenplay offered a way of pleasing freelance writers was even advanced some forty years later by the experienced screenwriter Václav Šašek. See Miloš Petana, 'Jak (to) bylo a jak to je. Rozhovor s Václavem Šaškem', *Scéna*, vol. 13, no. 25–26 (14. 12. 1988), p. 9.

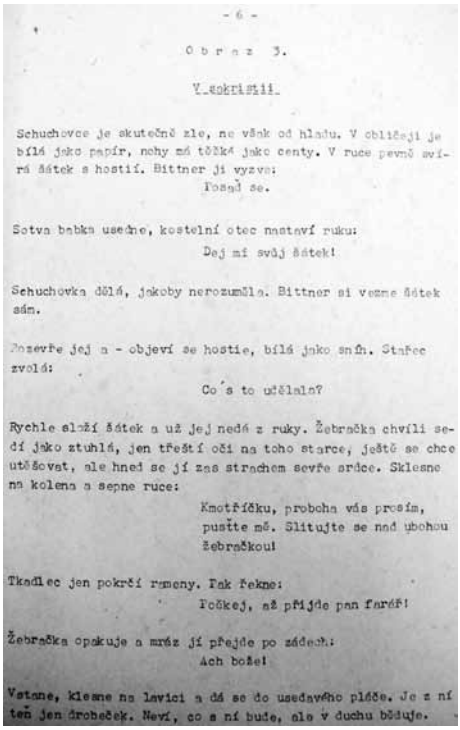
62) Lydie Tarantová, 'Rozhovor s Ludvíkem Aškenazym o scénářích a ještě o ledačems', *Film a doba*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1959), p. 82.

63) See for example Lamač, *Jak se píše filmové libreto* (1923); Vávra, 'Práce na scenariu zvukového filmu' (1935); Karel Smrž, *Od filmového příběhu ke scénáři: přednáška ze semináře pro filmové autory* (Praha: Knihovna Filmového kurýru, 1943).

64) Daniel and Kratochvíl, *Cesta za filmovým dramatem* (1956); Daniel and Kratochvíl, *Cesta za příběhy* (Praha: SPN, 1964). While older manuals were inspired by German ones, after 1948, it became commonplace to refer to Soviet handbooks and manifestos, some of which had been translated into Czech. Most importantly, a book-length collection of translated essays from 1952 entitled *Soviet Film Dramaturgy* (in Russian "dramaturgy" meant screenwriting) included an essay by the prominent screenwriter and VGIK professor Mikhail Papava, which posited the literary screenplay as "the most difficult and demanding genre of Soviet literature" and as "the ideological and artistic basis of the film", and also concerned training aspiring screenwriters. See Marie Benešová (ed.), *Sovětská filmová dramaturgie: sborník statí* (Praha: Československý státní film, 1952).

65) The Film Academy in Prague opened a screenwriting and dramaturgy program in its first academic year: 1946–47. Although some 1950s and 1960s directors such as Jiří Weiss, Ladislav Helge, and Věra Chytilová considered Daniel to be a hard-line Communist, he became a world-famous screenwriting guru known as Frank Daniel after emigrating to the United States in 1969.

Literary Screenplay was not supposed to change during production; in 1948, a central dramaturgical body even proposed sanctions against those directors who deviated from approved screenplays.[66] But in reality it often changed significantly: first, in the process of transforming into the Technical Screenplay, which was considered to be the first stage of production, and then during shooting and post-production. The main reason for this coalescence of conception and execution was the dominant role of the director, who seldom viewed Literary Screenplays as final, especially when they were delivered by freelance writers without proper knowledge of screenwriting or filmmaking.



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O b r a z 3.

V zákristii.

Schuchovce je skutečně zle, ne však od hladu. V obličeji je bílá jako papír, nohy má těžké jako centy. V ruce pevně svírá šátek s hostií. Bittner ji vyzve:

Posaď se.

Sotva babka usedne, kostelní otec nastaví ruku:

Dej mi svůj šátek!

Schuchovka dělá, jakoby nerozuměla. Bittner si vezme šátek sám.

Rozevře jej a - objeví se hostie, bílá jako sníh. Stařec zvolá:

Co´s to udělala?

Rychle složí šátek a už jej nedá z ruky. Žebrnčka chvíli sedí jako stuhlá, jen třeští oči na toho starce, ještě se chce utěšovat, ale hned se jí zas strachem sevře srdce. Sklesne na kolena a sepne ruce:

Kmotříčku, proboha vás prosím, pusťte mě. Slitujte se nad ubohou žebráčkou!

Tkadlec jen pokrčí rameny. Pak řekne:

Počkej, až přijde pan farář!

Žebračka opakuje a mráz jí přejde po zádech:

Ach bože!

Vstane, klesne na lavici a dá se do usedavého pláče. Je z ní teď jen chrobeček. Neví, co s ní bude, ale v duchu běduje.

- 14 -

O: 5
Z: 4
M: 25

O b r a z 9.

Sakristie
Ref1

P.D. 52

Bittner říká Schuchové a nastaví ruku:

Bittner:
Dej mi svůj šátek!

Schuchová dělá, jako by nerozuměla. Bittner si vezme šátek sám. Rozvíře jej a -

D. 52

Objeví se hostie. Stařec zvolá:

Cos to udělala?

P.D. 54

Schuchová je zle, ale ne od hladu. Chvíli stojí jako ztuhlá a mlží. Bittner rychle složí šátek a už jej nedá z ruky. Je důležitý a přibližuje. Řekne mstivě:

Počkej, až přijde pan farář

Žebračka se dá do pláče. Přerývavě oznamuje:

Schuchová:
Já jsem nic neprovedla - já jsem nic zlého nechtěla -

Sepne ruce:

Proboha vás prosím, pusťte mě!

Stařec krčí rameny.

Vchází farář, babka klesne na lavici a dá se do usedavého pláče:

- ach, bože!

Farář se zeptá Bittnera s pohledem na žebračku.

Schmidt:
Co tu dělá?

Bittner ukazuje hostii v šátku a šeptem ho informuje.

Farář vykřikne na stařenu.

Co to má znamenat?

Schuchová se mu vrhne k nohám.

Figures 2 and Figure 3: Examples of the Literary and Technical Screenplay formats. Sample pages from Literary and Technical Screenplay of the 1969 film *The Witch Hunt* (*Kladivo na čarodějnice*; Literary Screenplay written by Otakar Vávra & Ester Krumbachová, Technical Screenplay and direction by O. Vávra). As opposed to the Literary Screenplay, the Technical Screenplay is stripped of many psychological details. It is formatted into two columns (visuals left, audio right), and it includes the numbers and technical parameters of individual scenes and shots, including locations, shot types, and length.[67]

66) 'FIUS zasedá', *Filmové noviny*, vol. 2, no. 6 (1948), p. 3.

67) In other cases, the technical screenplay also included additional details such as camera angles and movements, and editing markers.

Paradoxically, after the introduction of the Literary Screenplay, directors would contribute increasingly to the writing process. They co-wrote and re-wrote screenplays while enjoying all the social and financial perks of screenplay authorship. Even Juráček and Máša, the best known screenwriters to have been schooled by Daniel in his soviet-inspired methods, eventually switched to directing their own screenplays, changing them significantly in the process, and, in so doing, adapting to the auteurism of the 1960s.[68]

In the mid 1950s, the Literary Screenplay was central to the "screenwriting debate", a wide-reaching and animated public discussion among writers, screenwriters, directors, dramaturgs, and critics. At that time, these groups still largely agreed that the real basis of film art was the Literary Screenplay, that the new socialist film should be a "screenwriting art"[69] rather than a filmic art, and that literary writers as opposed to professional screenwriters or directors should be the driving creative force behind film production — even though production and the crediting of authorship leaned heavily toward directors. At the same time, this debate was clearly influenced by post-Stalinist revisionism, wherein the Zhdanovian rejection of the concepts of individual arts' specificity and artistry had already been abandoned, and in which ideological control had started to be decentralized. At the aesthetic level, the debate concentrated on classical questions concerning the specificity of writing for the screen and on the cultural status of the screenplay as an autonomous literary form, as opposed to a mere blueprint for production. On the macro-political level, however, it questioned the over-complicated, unpredictable, and largely anonymous approval procedures, and the relation of screenplays to official Party ideology. With regard to micro-politics, the debate highlighted the power dynamics and "border disputes" that existed between the main agents involved in screenplay development: freelance literary writers, professional screenwriters, directors, dramaturgs, and the units.[70] Among those, the most pressing concerns proved to be writers' sense of isolation, "filmofobia",[71] and screenwriting incompetence, as well as directors' disregard for writers, and their tendency to write, re-write, or co-write their literary screenplays.[72]

The debate showed that the Literary Screenplay had not died with Stalin. It had in fact been revitalized as a field of cultural negotiation and innovation, a status that was cemented during a series of collaborations between progressive writers and young filmmakers in

68) See the statistical data quoted above: directors involvement in writing screenplays increased in the 1950s and skyrocketed in the 1960s.

69) Jaroslav Boček, 'Jde o scénář', *Literární noviny*, vol. 4, no. 36 (3. 9. 1955), p. 4.

70) Maras, *Screenwriting*.

71) This term refers to a writers' dislike of approval procedures, the collaborative aspects of filmmaking, and alleged financial and crediting discrimination. See Jiří Mařánek, 'Základní požadavek: kolektivní spolupráce', *Film a doba*, vol. 1, no. 5–6 (1955), p. 211.

72) The debate was obviously modeled on Soviet examples (the Soviet journal *Iskusstvo kino* published a yearlong series of contributions about screenwriting in 1952), and was the culmination of wider developments. The first Czech screenwriters and filmmakers conference was organized in 1952 by the Screenwriting Circle of the Writers Union, and similar meetings followed. In 1954, the head of the Writers Union's Film Section, which had been established in 1950 in response to a Central Committee resolution to recruit prominent literary authors, the well-known writer Jiří Marek, became the director general of the Czechoslovak State Film. Between July 1955 and April 1956, the most prominent film and literary journals, *Film a doba* and *Literární noviny*, in conjunction with the Writers Union, published forty contributions to what remains the biggest screenwriting debate in Czech cinema history.

the late 1950s and 1960s. Where gathering writers, dramaturgs, and directors around the Literary Screenplay was often based on a top-down administrative decisions in the early 1950s, it increasingly became a matter of personal choice based on informal networking, long-term loyalty, and on a sense of community born out of shared taste. Writers of the 1960s were drawn to penning Literary Screenplays not by the central dramaturgical boards but by informal networks of like-minded filmmakers.

The institutionalized format provoked some of these writers to experiment with literary technique. When in the second half of the 1960s Juráček underwent a profound professional transformation from screenwriter to director he publically distanced himself from the kind of Literary Screenplay that Daniel had once trained him to write, noting:

> All Literary Screenplays are essentially architectural plaster models of a future film, and as such, they have only one function: to convey to the reader in the most illustrative way how the film will look. But what is it good for? Every model lies because it cannot yield any truly important information. It is created intentionally to deceive and therefore has no real value for the author.[73)]

Originally an avid defender of the literary values of the screenplay, and of screenwriters' rights, Juráček realized that the supposed completeness and self-sufficiency of the Literary Screenplay was not a product of the practical needs of filmmaking. Instead, he concluded that it was derived from heteronomous political logic: the necessity to write for readers who did not understand real "architectural plans" but only "plaster models". He also realized that, as he needed to write for himself, a more appropriate technique was to disregard the split between writing and directing, to forget about literature, and to simply register his personal associative instructions for filming concrete scenes, as inspired by his favorite genre of writing: the diary.

The end of Stalinism therefore did not result in the disappearance of the Literary Screenplay. It was only partly freed of its original censorship and ideological functions, which could be reinstated when necessary. Just such a thing happened during the so-called normalization of the early 1970s, when Literary Screenplays became a focus of the re-installed central approval board and of the ideological strategizing that was implemented by the newly appointed "central dramaturg", Ludvík Toman. Toman, a typical heteronomous figure — or "Trojan horse" in Bourdieu's terminology — reestablished the screenwriting department and thus separated screenwriters from dramaturgs and directors in order to disconnect informal collaborative networks and to strengthen political control over creative workers.[74)] When, as Toman's power was fading in 1980, the prominent unit head Ota Hofman asked studio management to return to pre-1945 practices by replacing the perceived outdated Literary Screenplay with treatments as a basis for approving films, he was turned down;[75)] perhaps not so much for political reasons but because this format

73) Juráček, *Deník*, p. 430.

74) See Štěpán Hulík, *Kinematografie zapomnění. Počátky normalizace ve Filmovém studiu Barrandov (1968––1973)* (Prague: Academia, 2011), p. 167.

75) NFA, f. ÚŘ ČSF, k. R14/A2/2P/1K, Návrh nového způsobu schvalování literárních předloh, 1980.

was already too ingrained in the everyday workings of the production system. Seven years later, in another effort to reform the screenplay development system, studio management formally acknowledged that, under certain conditions, authors could skip the synopsis or even the treatment and move on to the Literary Screenplay without losing pay.[76] At the same time, this new directive gave the Literary Screenplay an even more complex administrative status. From this time on, it needed to be supplemented before undergoing the approving procedures of the central "Dramaturgical Board", by dramaturgical and directorial "explications" that specified its ideological, artistic, and production dimensions. Overall, the status of the Literary Screenplay remained unchanged for forty years, until the end of the regime; yet, where it rapidly became an industry standard in the 1950s, it never received levels of broader public recognition on a par with those of the Soviet Union in 1949. There were no attempts to publish screenplays in any systematic manner,[77] and, in directives pertaining to the structure of a film's opening credits (1952, 1965),[78] the Literary Screenplay and the Technical Screenplay were not mentioned as separate items, although the authorship of the Literary Screenplay was occasionally identified in the film credits.[79]

While the "literary scenario" was understood as an explicitly ideological construct in the Stalinist Soviet cinema, in Prague's studios it soon became functionalized and standardized as a practical production tool. As a consequence, we need to differentiate between its "strong" ideological impart, which was prevalent in the late 1940s, the early 1950s, and partly in the 1970s, and its "weak" pragmatic sense, which survives today. As was the case with other Soviet models and regulations replicated in Czechoslovakia, the Literary Screenplay was not adopted verbatim: while the Soviet literary scenario only used the full-page format and was closer to classical literature, the Czech one, especially its split-page variant, was derived from the 1930s German Drehbuch, included additional technical details, and was closer to the shooting script. While the Soviet literary scenario was expected to be an original literary work, the Czech literary screenplay could also be an adaptation. The supposed Sovietization of Czech cinema should perhaps be termed "self-Sovietization". As in other areas of cultural life such as higher education, there were no long-term Soviet advisers to specify exactly how mandatory imitation should take place, which resulted in peculiar hybrids of older, domestic, and foreign influences.[80]

76) This new directive was intended to prevent the common practice of retrospectively producing synopses and treatments for financial reasons. See Směrnice č. II-24/1986, 1. 1. 1987. NFA, f. ÚŘ ČSF, k. R12/B1/3P/3K.

77) There were some exceptions: excerpts from screenplays were commonly published in film journals. For a collection of edited literary screenplays by New Wave directors see Jiří Janoušek (ed.), *3 1/2* (Praha: Orbis, 1965); Janoušek (ed.), *Ewald Schorm, Ivan Passer, Jan Němec, Karel Vachek* (Praha: Orbis, 1969). In the following years, the key terms of this debate were raised time and again. See for example Jaroslav Boček, 'Literární scénář — svébytný slovesný útvar', *Film a doba*, vol. 2, no. 10 (1956), pp. 661–666; Vítězslav Kocourek, 'Otázky, nad kterými je třeba se ještě zamyslit (Poznámky na okraj úvah o literární samostatnosti filmového scénáře)', *Film a doba*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1957), p. 78.

78) *Příručka základních norem ve výrobě uměleckých filmů* (Prague, 1952); Harnach to Poledňák: Úprava úvodních titulků, 29. 1. 1965. NFA, f. ÚŘ ČSF, k. R5/A1/1P/3K.

79) On the 1950s see for example Botostroj (1954).

80) John Connelly, *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech and Polish Higher Education, 1945–1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 45.

Conclusion

Although no comparative empirical research has been conducted, the formalization and bureaucratization of screenplay development formats seems to be one of the key characteristics of the production systems of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes.[81] Those regimes tend to regard screenwriters and screenplays as channels of both propaganda and subversive criticism. For this reason, screenwriting development rose to prominence after 1939, after 1948, and also after 1969 when New Wave screenwriters were accused of being the main sources of revisionism.[82] Yet, in practice, the preparatory forms of screenplays often played other roles than those initially intended. For example, they offered an important incentive to under-paid writers because the state production system allowed fees to be charged for film synopses and treatments that never made it to the Literary Screenplay stage let alone shooting. Dramaturgs in the creative units utilized intermediate formats to test the ideological acceptability of subversive subjects and, especially after 1969, even used them to secretly support blacklisted writers whose screenplays had no chance for being produced on political grounds.[83]

Not only filmed stories but also screenplay formats and other institutionalized conventions need to be understood as products of power relations, both at the level of the micropolitics of production communities and at the level of the macropolitical history of the film industry. This applies especially to the Literary Screenplay, a format that was established for external political reasons, and which was not linked directly to either the practical needs of the development processes or of production personnel.[84]

The Literary Screenplay, which was implemented after 1948 and based on the Soviet model, was supposed to fix in place in literary form all of the visual and auditory components of an ensuing film, as far as such a thing is even possible, but, at the same time, it was not immediately filmable and still needed to be rewritten by directors. It was intended to attract prominent writers and to elevate the screenplay to the level of legitimate literary work, but in reality Literary Screenplays were never treated in this way: they were routinely altered during production and seldom published or appreciated as literary texts. In effect, the Literary Screenplay became the main focus of most of the debates and controversies that orbited screenwriting, and a link between filmmaking communities, external writers, and controlling bodies. By contrast, the Technical Screenplay was considered part of execution, rather than conception, and, unlike the literary screenplay, was not usually subjected to pre-censorship. The division of the Literary Screenplay and the Technical Screenplay was extremely important in political, organizational, and semantic terms, and as such characterized the Soviet-bloc production systems, representing national and his-

81) This suggestion is for example made by Ivan Klimeš. See Ivan Klimeš 'Filmový scénář', in *Encyklopedie literárních žánrů* (Praha; Litomyšl: Paseka, 2004), pp. 194–203.

82) The two most prominent victims of the post-1968 purges at the Barrandov studios were the screenwriters Pavel Juráček and Jan Procházka. See Hulík, *Kinematografie zapomnění*.

83) These informal tactical or even subversive practices are well documented in the National Film Archive's collection of oral history transcripts.

84) Before 1948, directors were perfectly happy working with treatments or step outlines and with turning them directly into shooting scripts, either on their own or with the help of screenwriters.

torical systemic variations of the State-socialist Mode of Film Production, as opposed to their Western European and American counterparts.

As a screenplay always consists of a dossier of documents rather than a single text, scholars have recently started to apply new critical methods to explore its multifaceted nature.[85] However, if we want to understand the screenplay's processuality, its transitoriness, and its multiplicity — what Steven Maras has termed its "object problem"[86] — in terms of its relationships to specific production systems and communities, we also need to look at institutionalized practices of development and at the cultural and political background against, and through, which screenplays take shape.

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85) See for example Steven Price's proposal to employ French genetic criticism. See Steven Price, 'The Screenplay: An Accelerated Critical History', *Journal of Screenwriting*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2013), pp. 87–97.

86) Maras, *Screenwriting*.

SUMMARY

How Many Steps to the Shooting Script? A Political History of Screenwriting

Petr Szczepanik

This essay explores the inner workings and power dynamics involved in story development in the history of Czech cinema. It focuses on the political history of screenplay development practices and formats, especially on the "Literary Screenplay". This Soviet-inspired screenplay type was introduced to Eastern Europe in the late-Stalinist era to attract literary authors to write for the screen, to elevate the cultural status of the screenplay, and to facilitate pre-censorship. The primary means by which communist ideologues sought to reform screenwriting was the dramaturgy, organized in a complex hierarchy of dramaturgical institutions with the state or central dramaturgy at the top and "units" at the bottom. In the state-controlled system of production, the dramaturg or unit head supervising four dramaturgs was a close equivalent to a producer albeit without the usual financial, green-lighting, and marketing responsibilities, which were held by the state or by the Party and its representatives. The units oversaw story development, the selection of casts and crews, and, in some historical periods, shooting and post-production, and occasionally even distribution. This essay shows how uncovering the logics of institutionalized practices of collaborative creative work that took place under the influence of political forces can help us to make sense of the vast screenplay collections housed at Prague archives. The essay combines production studies and political history of the production system to reveal the differences between the production modes and the screenwriting practices of Hollywood and Europe, and between the Western and the Eastern halves of this continent. It is based on an analysis of 100 Czech screenplays from the 1920s to the1980s, and of records of their development, as well as on oral history and institutional history.