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CINEMAS IN KOŠICE IN INTERWAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1919–1938)

Abstract

In the Interwar Period, there were several cinema theatres in Košice. Some of them existed prior to the foundation of Czechoslovakia and others during its existence. Their existence was influenced by many regulations. Every film screened in the cinemas had to pass through the censorship commission to assess whether or not it could be shown in Czechoslovakia.

Key Words: cinema, censorship, films, Czechoslovakia, Košice, film companies, producers.

Słowa kluczowe: kino, cenzura, filmy, Czechosłowacja, Koszyce, wytwórnie filmowe, producenci.

The existing research of municipal history in Slovakia has focused mostly on the political history or development of administrative, educational and other important municipal institutions. In Košice, as well as in other cities in Slovakia, we can find buildings, where many people spent their leisure time. Cinemas certainly belong among them. They were called Kinematograf or Biograf in interwar Košice. The cinema theatres and the matters related to the film industry at that time in Košice constituted a phenomenon to which we have to pay attention. Our research was focused on the following areas: cinema theatres and their owners, cinema companies, censorship of films and inspection of cinema theatres.

The first film performance in Slovakia took place at the Green Tree Hotel (owned by the Palugyay family) in Bratislava at 9:00 p.m. on 25 December 1896. After that, film screening gradually spread to other cities. In Košice, the first film projection took place in the great hall of the Schalkház Hotel on 16 September 1899. Initially, the film screenings in Slovakia did not take place in special cinema houses, but in rooms or halls of hotels, cafés or casinos. At that time, it was very popular to screen films during fairs and other cultural and entertainment events. We can say that in this initial phase there were only “travelling cinemas” –

those which travelled to the people. However, the situation changed rapidly. On 5 September 1905, Karol Palugyay established the first permanent cinema theatre in Slovakia, the 200-seat Electro-Bioscop seats in Bratislava.¹ It did not take long for the projections of films to start taking place in special rooms at a permanent address in many Slovak cities. This was the beginning of the second phase – “permanent cinemas”. The first permanent cinema operated in its own building in Košice was *Uránia*, which opened on 30 May 1909. Before the First World War, permanent cinema theatres had been set up in almost every major city in Slovakia, including Prešov, Zvolen, Nitra, Poprad, Ružomberok and Liptovský Mikuláš.

The expansion of the film industry in Slovakia continued after the end of the First World War in a new country, Czechoslovakia. In the first half of the 1920s, there were cinema theatres in many cities in Eastern Slovakia, such as Sečovce,² Bardejov,³ Prešov and Michalovce.⁴ The number of cinemas in Slovakia in the Interwar Period was not stable. It was the highest in 1930 with 210 cinemas, in 1923 with 106 cinemas, and in 1939 with 153 cinemas.⁵

Cinema theatres and cinema companies

In order to start operating a cinema theatre, a licence was required. In Czechoslovakia, there were several types of concessions: to rent films, to operate cinemas or to produce films. The Ministry with Full Power to Administer Slovakia was the authority responsible for granting cinema licences in Slovakia. Under Regulation 169/1919, all cinema licences expired on 29 December 1919. Holders of the issued authorisation had to file an application again to obtain a new concession. The conditions for acquiring this document were governed by Regulation No. 174/1919. One of the reasons for not granting approval to operate a cinema was that the ministry deemed an applicant “unreliable and unacceptable”. Cinema owners considered this step highly political. As a response, they established the Association of Cinematograph Owners, which defended the interests of cinema owners in Slovakia. Its first chairman was Dr Julius Zoltán Weichherz. One of the first steps of the organisation was a petition to the competent court to annul Regulation 174/1919. In 1921, the Supreme Court in Prague acknowledged the merits of the complaint and annulled Regulation No. 174/1919

¹ Peter Mihálik, *Vznik Slovenskej Národnej Kinematografie 1896–1948*, Bratislava, Kabinet Divadla a Filmu SAV 1994, p. 20.

² Štátny archív Košice – pobočka Košice (hereinafter SA Ke, branch Ke), collection Košická župa (Košice County) 1923–28 (hereinafter f. KC 1923–28), box (hereinafter b.) 68, document number (hereinafter d.n.) 286/1925.

³ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 68, d.n. 225/1925.

⁴ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 68, d.n. 287/1925.

⁵ Peter Mihálik, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

in Decision No. 1287.⁶ After the filing of the complaint, the association ceased to be active. The need for special interest organisations persisted.

In 1921, a meeting of new cinema owners who had been granted licences under Regulation No. 174/1919 was held in Žilina with the intention to establish a Union of Slovak Cinemas. In the meeting, Aurel Ruman and Ervin Spitz from Košice presented information that one association already existed in Bratislava that did not carry out any activities, but had a statute that could be used. In their opinion, it would be better to take over that association than to found a new one. The other participants agreed and established a new Association of Cinema Owners (*Spolok majiteľov biografov*).⁷ The newly established organisation managed to enforce that one of its members joined an advisory commission of the ministry responsible for granting cinema licences.⁸

In the Interwar Period, the following cinemas existed in Košice: Uránia, Central, Korzo (Tivoli), Forum (Capitol), Apollo (Elite) and Radio. Some of them, like Uránia, had existed prior to the foundation of Czechoslovakia, while others were set up during the existence of the republic. It is unfortunate that archives have preserved relatively little material about the Košice cinemas. That is why it is very difficult to understand the complete history of each cinema in Košice.

The oldest permanent cinema in Košice was Uránia. The licence holder for this cinema was the Society for Beautification of Košice (*Spolok pre skrášľovanie Košíc*).⁹ It was located in the area of the current AUPARK shopping centre. The first film about Košice, *Korzo mozivásznon Kassai* (Main Street of Košice on the Theatre Screen) was shown there on 3 August 1909.¹⁰ There is no doubt that it was a big event in the life of the city and its citizens. A notice about the filming was published in all local newspapers and invited the residents of the city to participate. The date of shooting was set for 25 July 1909 (a Sunday). Everybody who was interested and wanted to be a part of the film shooting could choose one of the following locations: at the Royal Café, at St Elisabeth's Cathedral and in front of the kiosk in the City Park.¹¹

Another permanent cinema was Korzo, established in 1914 and located on Hlavná street. It was renamed Tivoli in 1934.¹² In 1925, Aurel Roman was its director, while the city of Košice was the licence holder.¹³ On 25 December 1926, another cinema was opened in Košice. It was called Apollo and was located in

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 39–40.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 47.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 47.

⁹ Ičo T i b o r, *Pribeh Kina Uránia, February 26, 2011*, Accessed June 13, 2013 <http://icotibor.blogspot.sk/2011/02/pribeh-kina-Urania.html>

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ P. M i h á l i k, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

¹² Ján G a š p a r, *Pohlady do História Mesta*, Poprad, Región Poprad 2011, p. 60.

¹³ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, p. 65, d.n. 1928/25.

the Christian and Social Party House on Moyzesova street. Later it was renamed Elite.¹⁴ In 1927, a branch of the Czechoslovak Red Cross in Košice was the holder of the cinema licence.¹⁵ Another cinema called Forum was established in a new building on Hlavná street in 1927. The building was designed by the famous architect Ľudovít Oelschläger¹⁶ and built by the company of Hugo Kaboš. The total construction cost was 2,000,000 Czechoslovak korunas. An auditorium had 734 seats and was one of the biggest in Košice. It has been used since 2 November 1927, and the first performance took place on the next day. In 1933, it was renamed Capitol.¹⁷ The first holder of the cinema licence was the East Slovak National Theatre in Košice.¹⁸

Moving images – the term used for early films – fascinated many people and it was the same in Košice. Many contemporary reports mention that the people of Košice were fascinated and enchanted by film. Pursuant to the known information, we can say that visiting a cinema theatre was not a privilege of a small population in the city, but a normal part of the life of all social groups.

Students and youth represented a very interesting group. The film projections were a part of the learning process. Many educational films, mostly about the lives of important politicians such as Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Edvard Beneš and Milan Rastislav Štefánik, were screened for students at schools. The cinemas also held special school performances for scholars with films about nature, geography or history such as *The Secrets of Africa*, *Baghdad*, *Migrant Birds* or *Around the Republic*. They were also dedicated to current political figures and events. About thirty special student performances were screened in Košice in 1924 with an additional five performances in the first three months of 1925.¹⁹ Given the fact that students attended the school projections, it is not surprising that they were among the permanent visitors at regular performances. Some of them liked watching films so much that they secretly took money from their parents to be able to pay for cinema tickets.²⁰

We could also find a passion for the films in the middle class and high society, who previously would attend classical theatre performances. In 1901, there was a statutory regulation that prohibited organising of “any attraction” during the theatre season. The screening of films was one of the forbidden activities.²¹ Archival reports also tell us that film projections were accessible even for the lowest social group of the population, as demonstrated in an inspection report from the Uránia

¹⁴ J. Gašpar, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

¹⁵ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 245, d.n. 14373/5/1925.

¹⁶ Ľudovít Oelschläger – he is one of the figures of Košice – European Capital of Culture 2013.

¹⁷ J. Gašpar, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

¹⁸ ŠA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, š. 245, d.n. 14373/5/1925.

¹⁹ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 65, d.n. 1925/25.

²⁰ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 65, d.n. 673/25.

²¹ J. Gašpar, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

cinema (2 January 1922), which says: “*a large number of some kind of second class people attended the film performance*”.²²

As we could see, there was a great interest in the film projections in Košice. And if there was a demand, there had to be a supply. The world of cinema offered a good business opportunity, and so some individuals and companies decided to take advantage of that opportunity.

Cinema companies

Slovensko Film and Limbora were among the significant companies in Slovakia. The former was founded on 10 July 1920 and was managed by Dr Milan Ivanka and Karol Fiala. The main goal of the company was to establish cinemas and rent films. The latter was established on 1 December 1921. The founders of the enterprise were Jozef Žuffa and Aurel Ruman. Although Limbora had great difficulties in obtaining a licence, it became very strong after its foundation and gradually took over cinemas from Slovensko Film.²³ The battle between the two companies was evident in Košice.

Slovensko Film operated the Central cinema in Košice. However, the company and its cinema in Košice were taken over by Limbora on 1 November 1924. In the same year, Limbora relocated its headquarters from Liptovský Mikuláš to Košice. Following this, Limbora acquired a strong position in the Košice cinema business, and the police suspected that it had become a monopoly and started to investigate the situation.²⁴ The monopoly was ill-conceived, as it had reduced the selection of films and affected the quality of the provided service.

On the basis of the police investigation, we can see the ownership structure and the board of some cinema theatres in Košice. In the preserved reports, we can find a reference of the fact that Limbora was given a new name, Union Film, in 1927. Ervin Spitz was the director of the company. There was a suspicion that Spitz and Ruman managed the following cinemas: Forum, Korzo, Radio and Central. At the time of the investigation, the Central cinema was already closed. In the police reports, there are arguments that indicate how Spitz and Ruman could have taken control over the four cinemas in Košice. It was so in spite of the fact that Limbora (Union Film) did not have a licence to operate a cinema, but only to rent films. The scheme to take control over the cinema was simple, and can be illustrated by the example of the Forum cinema. Spitz was given the vice director position at Forum under the agreement with the licence holder, the East Slovak National Theatre in Košice. It was stated in the agreement that Limbora would rent films to the East Slovak National Theatre in Košice, only if Spitz

²² SA Ke, branch Ke, f. Abovsko-turnianská župa (Abov-Turňa County, hereinafter ATC) 1919–22, b. 303, Kontrola kinematografu v Košicích dne 2. ledna 1922 – Cinema Inspection in Košice on 2 January 1922.

²³ P. Mihálik, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

²⁴ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 65, d.n. 673/1925.

would become the vice director.²⁵ Another partner of Limbora, Aurel Ruman, was the vice director at the Korzo and Radio cinemas.²⁶ According to the police report, Ruman was only “a paper director”, because Spitz was the actual manager. At that time, there was only one cinema that was not personally linked with Limbora – Apollo. This monopoly position of one company had an impact on the overall situation in Košice. The cinemas did not hold mandatory performances for students. There was no wide selection of films. The cinemas did not screen as many new films as before.²⁷

Limbora applied an aggressive business strategy throughout Slovakia. In 1926, it took over Slovensko Film.²⁸ But that was not an end to its “predatory” policy. In 1927, Limbora along with another company called Reduete Film²⁹ were suspected of creating a trust that strove to acquire a dominant position in the Slovak cinema industry.³⁰ Both companies attempted to develop a strong position in the market by putting pressure on cinema owners to rent films only from them. Otherwise, they would be competitively destroyed.³¹

According to the police headquarters in Košice, an attempt to become a monopoly was not accepted by the State. Such practices contradicted to the contents of the granted licences and were also in conflict with the applicable legal rules. If it was proven that a company had done so, it could lose the licence.³²

The cinema business was not an easy one and some entities were closed down. We know that the following cinemas in Košice closed their cinema halls: Central, Apollo and Uránia. The main reason was the economic aspect. The Central cinema was closed as the first one on 30 October 1927³³ because it was not able to prosper. The next one was Apollo, which was wound up on 1 March 1937.³⁴ The main reason was that it projected only silent films and the audience preferred sound films at that time. Similarly, technical reasons caused an end of the Uránia cinema. The exact reason is unknown. We may only assume that after the initial fascination with moving pictures, the audience asked for a better quality and comfort later on, and that was the weakness of Uránia. The inspection report (film: *Ariel Acosta*, 1 January 1922) informed that “the lighting of the projection wall is so poor that many scenes are completely unclear and blurred. The operator could not fix the problem, because the projection wall was too far.”³⁵

²⁵ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 245, d.n. 14373/5/1925.

²⁶ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 65, d.n. 673/1925.

²⁷ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 65, d.n. 673/25 – answer.

²⁸ P. Mihálik, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

²⁹ The company was not established in Košice.

³⁰ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 245, d.n. 14373/5/1925.

³¹ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 245, d.n. 14373/5/1925.

³² SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 245, d.n. 14373/5/1925.

³³ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 245, d.n. 14373/5/1925.

³⁴ J. Gašpar, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

³⁵ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. ABC 1919–22, b. 303, Kontrola kinematografu v Košicích dne 2. ledna 1922 – Cinema Inspection in Košice on 2 January 1922.

Censorship of films and inspection of cinema theatres

Each film screened in Slovakia in that period had to pass through a censorship commission, which reviewed its content. Every film received a special censorship card that contained the date of submission, film title, type, length and additional information, for example, if the film was suitable for children and youth or if it was a cultural or educational film. The censorship commission deemed the most important to review films in terms of two considerations: appropriate content and suitability for young people.

Pursuant to the known decisions, we can see that some films were marked as inappropriate for the projection in cinema theatres first. Their projection was allowed after certain modifications. The factors that influenced the commission were the country of origin or persons that appeared in the film.

Some films were reviewed more strictly due to their country of origin. It was not rare that the origin was an aggravating factor in obtaining an authorisation for the projection. Russian films were typical examples. In the 1920s, the censorship commission banned the screening of 19 Soviet films, which represented 25% of all Russian films screened in Slovakia. The negative opinion towards Soviet film was influenced mainly by political reasons. Certain negative decisions made by the censorship commission resulted in an active resistance of professionals. For example, after the ban of screening of *Battleship Potemkin*, G. A. Medrický published an article in the *Cinema* journal, where he expressed his opinion that the decision of the commission had been influenced by the political context.³⁶ In 1930, the film finally received a positive verdict and was added to the list of “appropriate” films. In 1932, the censorship board made a few more interventions in the film.³⁷

That does not mean that only Czechoslovak films were screened in Czechoslovakia – the opposite is true. In the archives, there are some preserved programmes of Košice cinema theatres. In the lists of 50 unique films that were projected in the three Košice cinemas Korzo, Radio and Central in June 1924, we could find details about producers and country of origin for 34 films – see Annex A. Only one of those films was made in Czechoslovakia. It was in particular the work *Južné Čechy* [Southern Bohemia] produced by Vesna Film in Prague. The other 33 were produced by 23 companies from 5 countries. The list clearly shows that the most films came from America (15) followed by Germany (11) and France (4). In the list, we can also find films from Israel and Denmark. The

³⁶ G. A. Medrický: “Boj okolo uvedenia filmu je charakteristikou v akom prepolitizovanom a nervóznom ovzduší žijeme, keď ešte aj historický film dáva podnet k politickému šermovaniu.” [The struggle accompanying the film is symptomatic of how politicised and nervous the atmosphere we live in is, when even a historical film provides a reason for political games]. In P. Mihálik, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

³⁷ P. Mihálik, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

most films were made by Universal Film followed by Pathe Cinema, Camount, Promo Films, Emelka Koncern and Paladium Film.

The censorship board intervened in Slovak films as well. We can mention the film *Pribinova oslava v Nitre* [Commemoration of Pribina in Nitra] as an example. A part of the film was Andrej Hlinka's speech, which was cut out by the censorship board.³⁸ This intervention was very radical, for the speech constituted the most important part. The decision to cut out the Hlinka's speech was influenced by the opinion of ruling politicians, who deemed his address dangerous in terms of maintaining the common state of the Czechs and the Slovaks.³⁹

Here, it is necessary to mention that films were produced in Czechoslovakia at that time as well. For example, we can mention *Jánošík* (directed by Jaroslav Siakel', 1921), *Zem spieva* [The Land is Singing] (director Karol Plicka, 1933) and *Za Slovákmi od New Yorku po Mississippi* [Tracing Slovaks from New York to the Mississippi] (director Karol Plicka, 1938).

Together with the film production, the first restrictions and bans pertaining to the filming came into effect as well. Certain things could be filmed only upon notification and receiving permission. The restrictions were applied mainly when filming natural beauties and military objects. It was particularly difficult to get a licence for filming of the military objects.⁴⁰

If the film passed through the censorship commission in terms of its content, the next step was to consider if it was suitable for young people. Youth inappropriate films were those, whose content was defined as "frivolous, morally repugnant or immoral".⁴¹ Films that were suitable for youth had to be screened times so that they would finish by 8:00 p.m. The border between the juvenile and adult viewers was 16 years of age. In addition, films that were not suitable for young people had to be clearly labelled as "not for young people and school age children".⁴² An effort of the State to protect young people against inappropriate content was obvious. At that time, the *Česká Osveta* [Czech Enlightenment] journal was published in Czechoslovakia, which was supported by the Ministry of Education. This journal included a list of good films. Every cinema theatre had to keep records of screened films. It was one of the criteria for extending the cinema licence. If a cinema did not project a reasonable number of films with "informative content", it could lose its licence.⁴³

³⁸ The ruling politicians deemed Andrej Hlinka an autonomist, who sought to destroy the common state of the Czechs and the Slovaks.

³⁹ P. Mihálik, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁴⁰ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b. 19, d.n. 9712 odd.adm.V.

⁴¹ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b. 19, O dozore nad kinematografickými predstaveniami – *On Supervision of Cinema Performances*. d.n. 5.416/1931.

⁴² SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b. 19, d.n. 5.416/1931 prez.

⁴³ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b. 19, Kinematografy, predvádzanie poučných filmov – *Cinemas, Projection of Instructive Films*. d.n. 300/23 odd.adm.V.

The censorship commission also paid special attention to the film text – the subtitles. Under the applicable regulations, every film had to have Slovak subtitles. There was one exemption for films released before 1923, which allowed for translation into the Czech language.⁴⁴ When a film passed through the commission, it was marked as “text examined” and could be screened in cinemas.⁴⁵

Commercials were a part of cinema performances. Longer commercials in film form had to go through censorship process. If a commercial did not have an official certificate, it could not be screened, and those who violated this rule could be sanctioned.⁴⁶ Given the possibilities of the technology, the projection of commercials and political, cultural or other information was not only used in cinema halls, but also in public places in Košice.⁴⁷ The aforementioned standards regarding the content and Slovak subtitles were applied in these cases as well. Sometimes it happened that some censorship cards were counterfeit. After this finding, a new type of censorship cards was issued in May 1922, which were more difficult to falsify.⁴⁸

Once a regulation was issued, compliance had to be monitored

The police headquarters in Košice had a special section dedicated to leisure-time activities: the Department for Press, Associations and Public Entertainment Affairs. Cinema theatres were controlled by the police and cultural inspectors. The cultural inspector could be anyone who complied with the conditions and was proposed by the Ministry with Full Power to Administer Slovakia. It was a part time job. The majority of cultural inspectors were employed in educational institutions as teachers, headmasters or administrators,⁴⁹ while some of them were notaries⁵⁰ or had other kind of job. It is paradoxical that the costs of inspection had to be paid by the cinema operators. Moreover, it was normal that rates were not the same and some economically weak cinemas had problems paying them. In 1924, a guideline was adopted that established the following fees: 7 Kč for a policeman and 16 Kč for a cultural inspector per performance.⁵¹ Charity perfor-

⁴⁴ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b. 19, Text vo filmoch – *The Film Text*, d.n. 5354/1923.

⁴⁵ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b. 19, Text vo filmoch – *The Film Text*, d.n. 5354/1923.

⁴⁶ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b. 19, Reklamy v kinematografoch – *Commercials in Cinema Theatres*, d.n. 3492/1923.

⁴⁷ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b. 19, Premietanie denných správ – *Projection of Daily News*, d.n. 5592/1923.

⁴⁸ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b. 19, Filmová cenzúra, nové lístky – *Film Censorship, New Censorship Cards*, d.n. 7928/adm.

⁴⁹ For example, in the Gambirinus cinema in Michalovce. Likewise in Košice, where František Černoša – a teacher – and Jozef Varádi – a pedagogical administrator of J. A. Comenius Institute in Košice – were the cultural inspectors in 1928. SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 265, d.n. 14.757/5/1927.

⁵⁰ A notary was a cinema inspector in Vyšný Svidník. SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 68, d.n. 1890/1925.

⁵¹ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b.19, d.n. 24.553/24.

mances were charged half.⁵² Initially, the cultural inspectors had a reserved seat in the auditorium on each performance, then only on a selected day – for example, on odd days.⁵³

The inspectors had to verify predominantly whether or not the projected film had passed through the censorship commission and had Slovak subtitles. If the film was not suitable for young people, they verified whether or not it was projected after 8:00 p.m. and whether or not young people were present.

Violations of rules regarding the screening and labelling of the selected films that were not suitable for youth was one of the most common infringements. Deficiencies of this kind were determined by a cultural inspector, Jindřich Nentvich, in December 1921. It occurred during the screening of the film *Zlomena Kariéra* [Broken Career], which had been flagged as inappropriate for youth on the censorship card, but was not labelled as inappropriate for young people in the cinema programme and on the posters at the cinema's box office. The inspector determined the violation of the regulation on two days.⁵⁴

Inspectors pointed out certain tricks used by the cinema operators to circumvent the regulation pertaining to the Slovak subtitles. Sometimes it happened that a person authorized by the cinema owner retold the content of a film or a summary of a film in the Slovak language was shown at the beginning. Another option was that a film contained a different Slovak text, not the one that had been approved.⁵⁵ These tricks were employed when the film did not have the Slovak subtitles, did not pass through the censorship commission or the audience consisted of a nationality other than Slovaks. In connection with the nationality, we may mention an application for a permission to screen a film with Hungarian subtitles in a cinema in Snina. The application said that up to 60% of all the moviegoers spoke Hungarian.⁵⁶ Inspectors' reports even mentioned cases when a programme indicated different films than the ones that were actually screened. All the violations can be attributed to the efforts of cinema owners to have a full auditorium because they could not survive without spectators. And as we can see, there were many opportunities to spend leisure time in the city of Košice. For example, in June 1925, 42 events such as dance parties, concerts, football matches and various lectures were held. Film projections were not on this list.⁵⁷

⁵² SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b.19, d.n. 24.553/24.

⁵³ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 234, d.n. 20.840/1927.

⁵⁴ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. ATC, b. 303, Kontrola kinematografu v Košicích dne 2. ledna 1922 – Cinema Inspection in Košice on 2 January 1922.

⁵⁵ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b. 19, Filmy, správnosť slovenského textu – Films, Correctness of Slovak Text, d.n. 6897odd.adm.V.

⁵⁶ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b.19, Žiadosť o povolenie interpretujúcich nápisov v maďarskej reči – Application for Authorization of Subtitles in the Hungarian Language.

⁵⁷ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 499, Výkaz zábav koncertov, futbalových zápasov, prednášok a iných rôznych atrakcií usporiadaných v mesiaci jún 1925 – List of Dance Parties, Concerts, Football Games, Lectures and Other Various Attractions Held in the Month of June 1925.

When an inspector determined significant deficiencies, the performance had to be cancelled.⁵⁸ Penalties for the failure to comply with the statutory requirements were stringent and could result in a withdrawal of the cinema licence.

The development of cinemas and film represented an impulse for founding of newspapers and periodicals dedicated to this topic. In 1924–25, a bilingual (Slovak-Hungarian) cinema journal the *Mozi Világ* [Cinema World] was published by Limbora in Košice. Its main goal was to inform about new films that were being played in Slovak cinemas. Programmes of eastern Slovak cinemas in cities such as Levoča, Prešov and Košice were a part of each issue as well. It is interesting that the journal also included the cinema programmes of Ruthenian cities such as Berehove, Mukacheve and Uzhorod.⁵⁹ In connection with the development of film press in Košice, it is necessary to mention an endeavour of Zoltán Libertíny, who published the *Zvukový týždenný spravodajca* [Audio Weekly Newsletter] in 1931. It is known that this newsletter was published only once.⁶⁰

In conclusion, it can be stated that the cinemas were an integral part of life in Košice in the Interwar Period and were among the popular forms of spending the leisure time. After the initial euphoria of films and cinemas, we can see that several cinemas did not manage to keep the interest of the spectators and their operation became unprofitable. Although there were several cinema licence holders in Košice, the police suspected that one company controlled all the cinema theatres in Košice through its partners. The monopoly position was unacceptable in those past times. The film censorship and control of film projections constituted an integral part of the cinema world. Every film that was screened had to pass through the censorship commission. The cinema inspectors monitored the compliance with the regulations. They were mainly interested whether or not the screened film passed through the censorship commission or whether or not the subtitles were in the Slovak language. They also monitored the presence of young people at the performances that were identified as inappropriate for youth and children.

Although none of the cinema theatres referred to in this paper operate in Košice today. Some of the cinema halls are utilised for other purposes (the Forum is used for special meetings of the City Council). Modern cinemas have their doors open for everybody who is fascinated by moving pictures. That is one thing that has not changed: a cinema theatre cannot survive without people.

⁵⁸ A Ke, branch Ke, f. PH, b. 19, Cenzúra filmového textu – Censorship of Film Text, d.n. 8624 adm.V.

⁵⁹ P. Mihálik, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

Annex A

List of producers and number of films screened in three Košice cinemas in June 1924⁶¹

Producer	Country	No. of films	Producer	Country	No. of films
Pathe Cinema	Paris, France	2	Ambrozio Film	New York, USA	1
Camount	Paris, France	2	Metro Pictures	New York, USA	1
Aafa Film	Berlin, Germany	1	Paramount Pictures	New York, USA	1
Hagenbeck Film	Berlin, Germany	1	First National	New York, USA	1
Promo Film	Berlin, Germany	2	Urban Production	New York, USA	1
Max Film	Berlin, Germany	1	Universal Film	New York, USA	5
Fern Andra Film	Berlin, Germany	1	United Artist	New York, USA	1
Emelka Konzern	Berlin, Germany	2	Pat Sullivan Garizon	New York, USA	1
Joan Film	Berlin, Germany	1	Interocan	New York, USA	1
Deda Bioskop	Berlin, Germany	1	Metro Film	New York, USA	2
Morra Film	Munich, Germany	1	Paladium Film	Copenhagen, Denmark	2
Kerek Kajamomoth	Jerusalem, Israel	1	Vesna Film	Prague, Czechoslovakia	1
Total		16	Total		18

⁶¹ SA Ke, branch Ke, f. KC 1923–28, b. 348, Programy kín Korzo, Radio a Central, jún 1924 – Programmes of Cinemas: Korzo, Radio and Central, June 1924.

Annex B



SOURCE: Ičo Tibor, *Príbeh Kina Uránia*, February 26, 2011, Accessed June 13, 2011 <http://icotibor.blogspot.sk/2011/02/pribeh-kina-Urania.html>

Fig. 1: Uránia Cinema



SOURCE: Gašpar Ján, *Pohľady do histórie mesta*, Poprad, Región Poprad 2011, p. 60.

Fig. 2: Korzo Cinema in 1915



SOURCE: Gašpar Ján, *Pohľady do histórie mesta*, Poprad, Región Poprad 2011, p. 98.

Fig. 3: Forum Cinema in 1930

Henrich Hrehor

KINA W KOSZYCACH W OKRESIE MIĘDZYWOJENNYM (1919–1938)

Streszczenie

Pierwsza projekcja filmowa miała miejsce w hotelu *Zielone Drzewo* (będącym własnością rodziny Palugyay) w Bratysławie 25 grudnia 1896 roku. Pierwszym kinem działającym w Koszycach było kino Uránia otwarte 30 maja 1909 roku. W okresie międzywojennym w Koszycach funkcjonowały następujące kina: Uránia, Central, Korzo (Tivoli), Forum (Capitol), Apollo (Elite) i Radio. Do prowadzenia kina potrzebna była odpowiednia licencja, którą należało uzyskać w odpowiednim ministerstwie. Wśród firm prowadzących kina należy wymienić *Slovensko film* oraz *Limbora*. Druga z nich nawet przeniosła w 1924 roku swoją siedzibę do Koszyc z Liptowskiego Mikulasza.

Wszystkie filmy trafiające do dystrybucji musiały przejść przez kolaudację i uzyskać zgodę cenzury, natomiast same kina kontrolowane były przez policję i inspektorów kultury.

W Czechosłowacji produkowane były już różnorodne filmy, jednak większość pokazów w Koszycach stanowiła produkcja zagraniczna. Rozwój sztuki filmowej stymulował również powstawanie gazet i periodyków poświęconych filmom. W latach 1924–1925 jedno z filmowych czasopism, *Mozi Világ* [Cinema World], wydawane po czesku i węgiersku przez wydawnictwo Limbora, publikowane było w Koszycach.