

32. Schuyt and Taverne, 1950, p. 69.
33. Frank Inklaar, *Van Amerika Geleerd: Marshall-hulp en Kennisimport in Nederland* [Learned from America: Marshall Aid and Knowledge Import in the Netherlands] (Den Haag: Sdu, 1997), pp. 83–104, 129–30.
34. Marja Roholl, “‘We’ll Go on Trial at the Fair’: het Amerikaanse paviljoen op de EXPO ’58 in Brussel”, *Groniek* no. 146 (October 1999), p. 33.
35. This wide range echoed president Truman’s 1945 statement that foreign information programmes present ‘a full and fair picture of American life and of the aims and policies of the United States government’; quoted in Richard Dyer MacCann, *The People’s Films: A Political History of US Government Motion Pictures* (New York: Hastings House, 1973), p. 175.
36. Schuyt and Taverne, 1950, pp. 70–1; Inklaar, *Van Amerika Geleerd*, pp. 341–5.
37. Roholl, ‘Uncle Sam’, pp. 146–9. Dizard even anticipates that USIA’s activities ‘will be forever unmeasurable’ (*Inventing Public Diplomacy*, p. 5).
38. See *Amsterdam to Tokyo* (1958) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6Dwkq1kx8>. This promotional film, although similar in editing style to the *New Horizons* films, differed in image ‘idiom’ as it didn’t skirt the downsides of life in the Japanese capital.
39. Dierikx, *Blauw in de Lucht*, p. 154. In 1962, a regional Dutch newspaper reported that Pan Am’s in-flight *Clipper Magazine* listed KLM as the airline with the third-longest network, longer than that of Pan Am and TWA combined; see *Leeuwarder Courant*, 28 December 1962 <http://www.dekrantvantoen.nl/vw/article.do?id=LC-19621228-15007&vw=org&lm=klm%2Cluchtlijn%2Clengt%2CLC>. Although the news item admitted that the significance was promotional rather than anything else, it does indicate the success of KLM’s exploitation of the right to carry passengers or cargo from second to third countries through Amsterdam.
40. Telephone interview with IFS director Erik Padding, December 2010.
41. For membership lists in this period, see NBB Archief [Papers of the Dutch Association of Cinema Theatres], Box #626, Folders 366–71 and Box #627, Folders 372–7, EYE-Nederlands Film Instituut, Amsterdam. Non-theatrical venues were prevented from becoming members, as they couldn’t be expected to conform to the association’s regulatory stipulation of showing films between a minimum of fifty-two and a maximum of 124 days a year; see: *Algemeen Bedrijfsreglement* [General Company Regulations] (Amsterdam: Nederlandsche Bioscoop-Bond, January 1960), pp. 4–5, NBB Archief, Box #624, Folder 311b. Throughout the 1960s, this stipulation was reaffirmed in the regulations’ reprints of August 1961 (pp. 4–5) and March 1967 (pp. 4–5), *ibid.*, Folders 311c and 311d.
42. *Film: Orgaan van de Nederlandse Bioscoopbond* [Organ of the Dutch Association of Cinema Theatres] vol. 24 no. 227 (March–April, 1962), p. 288.
43. *Bedrijfsbesluit in zake Zogenaamde Smalfilms* [Company Ruling in the Matter of So-Called Small-Gauge Films] (Amsterdam: Nederlandsche Bioscoop-Bond, August 1958), p. 3, NBB Archief, Box #625, Folder 339.
44. Telephone interview with IFS director Erik Padding, December 2010.

## 9

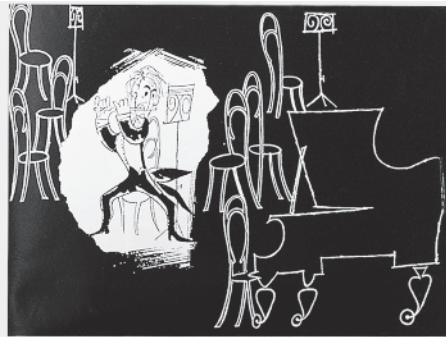
### The Five Year Plan on Display: Czechoslovakian Film Advertising

Lucie Česálková

The economic and political situation in Czechoslovakia during the first decade after World War II pushed the advertising of consumer goods out of public discourse. In the early years after the war, models of supply and organisation of services were restored. Giving priority to the production side of the national economy, the Communist Party that ascended to power in 1948 suppressed the significance of consumption as a factor in the standard of living. Socialist consumer culture in Czechoslovakia thus began to develop at the end of the 1950s and in the early 60s in the context of political liberalisation. This early phase, the phase of alignment of the socialist practice of advertising, is very important for several reasons: it established the basic models of organisation and several practices typical of socialist advertising in the coming years; it allowed specialisation in certain sectors of short film production, mainly to distinguish popular-scientific and educational film from advertising; it also created a space for the experimental practice of authors of the later, visually attractive genre features of the 1960s (mainly musicals). A key factor fundamentally affecting advertising in Czechoslovakia during the entire socialist period from 1948–89 was the existence of a market in which there was no competition. Thus, instead of promoting brands, advertising promoted commodities. The study of socialist advertising is, therefore, not possible without taking into account connections between the advertising industry, the national economy and domestic trade, as well as considering the impact of ideological concepts of a (healthy) lifestyle on socialist consumer culture.

The magazine *Reklama* (Advertising), the official journal defining key concepts and practices of advertising in Czechoslovakia during the second half of the 1950s, worked with a specific format of adverts for advertising media. These advertisements showed state enterprises how and why it was possible to advertise goods and services and demonstrated the role and functions assigned to a particular media in comparison with others. One of the advertisements on advertising film showed a flute player abandoned in an orchestra and ran with the following copy:

He cannot perform a symphony alone. This requires strings, brass instruments, drums and a perfectly harmonious orchestra. It is likewise with advertising. Only a perfect promotional campaign will produce the results and the effects. The reliable axis of any well thought-out campaign, its impressive solo part, is an advertising film.



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●●●●● S A M S Y M F O N I I N E Z A H R A J E ●●●●●

K TOMU JSOU JESTE TREBA SHYCCI, PLECHY, BICI NASTROJE A CELY DO- KONALE SEHRANY ORCHESTR. TAKOVE JE TO I S REKLAMOU. VY- SLEDKY A UCINEK MA JEN DOKONALA REKLAMNI AKCE. SPOLEHOU ODSOU KAZDE DOBRE PROMYSLENE KAMPA- NE. JEJIM PŘOŠOBYM SOLOVYM PARTEM. JE REKLAMNI FILM. FILM – REKLAMA PRO STATISTICEI

REKLAMNI FILMY I CELE REKLAMNI AKCE ZAJISTI REKLAMNI PODNIK STÁTNÍHO OBCHODU REVOLUČNÍ 25, PRAHA 1, TELEFON 624-95

The orchestra metaphor for advertising was a good illustration of the situation in socialist Czechoslovakia and reflects the key aspects of socialist advertising: its central organisation in the coordination of state, state enterprises and producers of promotional materials, as well as the need for the differentiation and interplay of particular tools and instruments in broader advertising campaigns. The orchestra is a traditional, familiar cultural element and advertising tools should, in the socialist trade, be naturalised and have specific functions, forms and mutual relations. The orchestra is also based on interplay according to a prescribed score: it assumes the central management and coordination of particular instruments. Following this metaphor, in this chapter I will introduce the organisational model of advertising film production in Czechoslovakia at the level of institutional relations while also showing how film functioned in relation to other means of advertising. I will, furthermore, present the style of contemporary advertising and explain the reasons why the first advertisements in the 1950s were very similar to popular-scientific films and point out in which ways they began to differ in the early 1960s. I will also use a specific example to analyse joint advertising campaigns as model types of socialist advertising.

## ADVERTISING IN A PLANNED ECONOMY

Czechoslovakian socialist film advertising – and the ways it changed during the centrally controlled system of planned production of the 1950s – was significantly influenced by the requirements of state ideologues who strived to regulate the market movements of goods and services and, in connection with production planning, to plan consumption as well: ‘The business plan adapts to trade production needs and the

production plan, on the other hand, adapts to the business plan.’<sup>1</sup> The Five Year Plan functioned in socialist Czechoslovakia as the doctrine of production and consumption, expecting cooperation between individual economic components: ‘The specific structure of socialist society allows the plan to be instrumental in the coordinated campaigns of economic entities, the alignment of their interests, and the determination of a preferential scale of objectives in the form of their hierarchical structure.’<sup>2</sup> Plans for advertising activities also originated in direct correlation with production planning and market-movement predictions. The relation between advertising and the Five Year Plan was, figuratively speaking, that between master and servant – advertising should:

influence sales of goods according to strict directives of the national economic plan, exercise active influence on the development of consumer demand, contribute to the transformation of obsolete patterns of consumption and the creation of new ones, and effectively assist in the rapid introduction of new types of consumer goods.<sup>3</sup>

From a critical historical perspective, it is thus possible to understand socialist advertising as a visualisation of the economic plan priorities accompanied by their verbal condensation into a punchline.

Until 1955, an average of roughly twenty-five advertising films a year originated in Czechoslovakia,<sup>4</sup> and the reason for this and also for the significant increase in the years to follow had much to do with the organisation of state trade during that period. Long after the end of World War II, domestic trade still suffered from an immense lack of domestic market goods. Both the demand and purchasing power of the population exceeded the possibilities of production, limited by small stocks of raw materials and the country’s labour force. Therefore, the market operated on a basis of regulated rations. In parallel with the ration (ticket) economy of the tied market, a free market also existed where purchase of more expensive products for the state-set unified prices was allowed.<sup>5</sup> This is why all advertising produced under these conditions in Czechoslovakia was, in fact, intended for export only – promoting export goods to customers abroad.

The need for domestic advertising began to rise after 1953, when the rationing system was removed as part of fiscal reform. Persistent supply problems became partially solved by the supervision of pricing, which enabled the state to modify the availability of certain kinds of goods, and therefore the demand for them. From 1953 until the end of the first Five Year Plan in 1955 and during the announcement of the second Five Year Plan (which, due to the events of 1956, took place in 1958),<sup>6</sup> the importance of advertising increased in tandem with the increasing volume of goods stocks as well as wages. Consumer demand trends were changing too – both spending on paid services and the value of deposits in savings banks were rising.<sup>7</sup> Given the fairly low quality of household goods, advertising proved to be quite an effective means of directing consumer demand to specific commodities. Even at relatively low costs of advertising, sales showed increases of up to 15 per cent between six-month periods.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of the Czechoslovakian economy and advertising, 1957 was a groundbreaking year as it started the reform of the centrally controlled economic structure by redistributing the decision-making powers from state ministries to state companies, thus transforming them into independent economic entities.<sup>9</sup>

The significance of this action for advertising was mainly in giving greater authority to an umbrella body in the form of the Reklamní podnik (State Advertising Company). The purchasing power of the population and the rising quality of household goods as factors that strongly differentiated consumer interests of individual social classes, however, continued to play an important role during that era.

The contracting authority for marketing in socialist Czechoslovakia was not a private enterprise, but, at the lowest level, the Reklamní podnik, or Reklama obchodu (Business Advertisement Company), which typically represented state-owned enterprises (e.g. the Food Trade Association, National Insurance Company, Association of Oil Industry, etc.) or research institutions (e.g. the Institute of Health Education). These institutions further derived their orders from national plans of goods and services promotion produced in cooperation with production planning and market regulation at the level of ministries – for instance, the Ministry of Food Industry, Ministry of Light Industry, the Ministry of Internal Trade, Ministry of Foreign Trade, etc. The responsibility for this task belonged to the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee for the Management of Promotional Activity.<sup>10</sup>

The producer of an advert was usually the Advertising or Promotional Department of constituent state media institutions – Publishing Trade, Czechoslovak Radio, Czechoslovak Film and Czechoslovak Television. Advertising films were produced by the Short Film Company, an institution focusing on short film production (including newsreels), which was part of Czechoslovak (State) Film (controlled by the Ministry of Information until 1953, and later by the Ministry of Education).<sup>11</sup> Advertising films were, from the point of view of Short Film, understood to be custom-made productions, created at the instigation of, and in communication with, the contracting authority (the Advertising Company or other institutions) while the funding was provided not by Short Film but rather by the contracting entity. The Advertising Company itself functioned as an intermediary. It worked in response to the thematic, promotional plans coming from the different ministries (or the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee) – which were, in the words of the trade, the Company's customers. And since it was financially demanding, film was definitely not the most sought-after means of advertising – and there were doubts, moreover, about any actual impact on consumers of advertisements screened in cinemas (with their ever-declining attendance).<sup>12</sup>

The goal of an advertisement in a system with no competition between different brands or companies was not to increase profits. Production in individual economic sectors, carried out by specialised state-owned enterprises (dairies, canneries, soda factories, etc.), was subordinated to central state planning. Advertising, then, was envisaged primarily as a means of stimulating interest in the goods, which, furthermore, had a scheduled sales priority. At the same time, the advertisement should, by targeting a particular type of good, cover the shortage of another type of good on the market. As such, it functioned as an educational regulator and took over responsibility for shaping consumer behaviour – first and foremost, the taste and lifestyle priorities of Czechoslovakian society of the late 1950s and early 60s.

Hence, in the spirit of educational imperative, ideal advertising should not focus solely on the products or services themselves, but set them in a wider cultural and social framework and take into account, for instance, their importance for health and hygiene, working conditions and so forth. In the eyes of the socialist ideologues of

advertising, non-economic factors influencing consumer behaviour appeared particularly problematic. These ideologues were especially allergic to 'fashion trends' that could threaten Czechoslovakian consumption from abroad. They therefore strove to balance such an impact with advertising campaigns in which they directly set not only the parameters of good nutrition, but also of what in the noble educational spirit was called the 'culture of living' or 'culture of clothing'.

Introducing new products to the Czechoslovakian market happened in direct conjunction with plans to increase the level of material culture and public facilities. Advertising, therefore, focused on just those kinds of goods and products which were permanently abundant, as 'the promotion of goods which are scarce on the market causes more political harm than good'.<sup>13</sup> For example, due to the lack of fresh food, a result of fluctuations in agricultural production and supply, food advertising was supposed to focus on durable goods: fruit juices and syrups, baby food, dairy products, pasta, frozen and canned products (such as fruit and meat) and convenience foods (soups, etc.). Outside the food sector, industries focused on goods for female consumers, and one of its priorities became the promotion of products that facilitated housework for employed women.<sup>14</sup> These mostly comprised various types of domestic equipment which facilitated the processing of raw food (such as blenders), the storage of groceries in the home (refrigerators and freezers) and other electrical household appliances, which had just begun to appear on the Czechoslovakian market of the late 1950s. The advertising plan in this regard fully replicated the production plan with the aim to support product introduction on the market.

Film advertising was rather specific in this respect. Considering the costs and time requirements of its production, a film advertisement (which had to undergo a multiple-phase approval process) was not always completed within the expected schedule in order to promote the goods in question – this often influenced the market in 'unplanned' ways. An example of such an incompatibility of film advertising with planned economy forecasts was the role of film to support the sale of Loden coats. Around 1954, while wholesale warehouses were filled with plenty of Loden coats that did not sell for the next two years, the advertising film *Pro každou příležitost (For Every Opportunity, 1954)*, managed to increase the coats' marketability in a very short time and in such a way that some varieties and sizes of the coat became virtually impossible to obtain, with customers looking for them long after the warehouses had been emptied. Hence a legitimate question often resounded from the mouths of consumers: 'Why do they offer it, then, if they don't have it?'<sup>15</sup> This paradoxical case of film advertising, whose unexpected success surprised the planned economy and changed the market situation, aptly illustrates the lack of coordination in planning, advertising and consumption. Advertising efforts in the end worked against the manufacturer, who, in turn, was confronted by disgruntled consumers.

## EDUCATIONAL TRAINING OR ADVERTISING?

For its interconnection with the national economic plan regulations, socialist advertising resembled state propaganda rather than commercial advertising in free-market economies. Although similar devices of visual and verbal persuasion were



employed, it was nonetheless the result of a complicated hierarchical planning structure in which the commission and its funding were conducted by state authorities and the government budget, respectively. Contemporary discourse, then, defined 'socialist promotion' in contrast to 'capitalist advertising' in the sense that the socialist model is rationalised; customers are neither deliberately deceived nor left unaware of the important facts, and most importantly, it is not about profit.<sup>16</sup>

However, the dissociation of the term 'advertising' and its replacement by 'socialist promotion' in contemporary discourse was mainly a rhetorical ploy of the communist idiom. The need to distinguish between advertising and promotion became noticeable in 1961. This rather vague transformation was apparently related to the need to postulate new ideological concepts for the third Five Year Plan (1961–5), which tried to distinguish itself from the previous, economically unsuccessful phase, by establishing radical 'new' trends. In the case of promotional activities that was meant as a 'transition from commercial advertising to informing and educating consumers',<sup>18</sup> although the educational aspect of promotion had already been emphasised in the previous period.

'Socialist promotion' was supposed to be 'serious and true, and unlike its capitalist counterpart should not target instincts and desires'.<sup>19</sup> Its essential features should include 'ideology, truthfulness, concreteness, deliberateness and planning'<sup>20</sup> and together with campaigning it was supposed to be one of the key means of 'mass political work'. However, while promotion was meant as an activity to popularise a certain topic so that recipients were better informed (with the help of facts and information based on science), campaigning was seen as an activity conducted in order to win the masses by persuasion, using illustrative examples from life, and not through factual data.<sup>21</sup>

Still, promotion and agitation used similar means of mass political work, be they posters, stickers, picture boards, band slogans, charts, displays, picture books, thematic corners, photographs, slides, slide films, radio programmes, films, TV, or theatre shows.<sup>22</sup> Both forms were subject to governmental control, and therefore the activities of promotional as well as campaigning bodies were heavily politicised. The concept of consumer education, however, did not serve only as a rhetorical differentiation of capitalist and socialist practices; it also, in the case of advertising film, fundamentally predetermined its early institutional integration and, with it, also its form.

Advertising film as an activity within the umbrella production company Short Film went through several phases in the late 1950s and early 60s. Until 1957, the production of these films was provided by the Studio of Popular Scientific and Educational Films. An independent studio, Propagfilm, specialising in 'advertising, promotional and instructional films',<sup>23</sup> did not become operational until 1 July 1957. However, the final organisational independence of advertising film came as late as 1964, when the original Propagfilm was subdivided into two separate departments: Promotional Film and Educational Film.<sup>24</sup> Thus, until 1957 advertising films were produced as an offshoot of the popular-scientific and educational genre; even after the establishment of Propagfilm, production of advertising film was still not fully separated from that of instructional films on workplace safety, fire protection, or sport, or of recruitment films inciting citizens to settle in the borderlands and lecturing about the mission of industry, agriculture, health care, etc. This organisational background corresponded to the prevailing concept of advertising as a tool for

the education of citizens, yet it significantly influenced both the thematic focus and the stylistic rendition and rhetoric of advertising films.

Moreover, this gradual detachment of advertising film from scientific and educational films was not accompanied by changes in personnel. On the contrary, directors of advertising films were in most cases the same people who had also directed popular science films or propaganda pieces in the Popular Scientific and Educational Films Studio. One of the most productive advertising film-makers of the early 1960s, Milan Tichý, had worked for Short Film since 1952 and his filmography prior to the establishment of Propagfilm had included educational propaganda<sup>25</sup> and propagandist reportages.<sup>26</sup> Ladislav Rychman had made, before 1957, such films as *Umělé osvětlování pracovišť* (*Artificial Lighting of Workplaces*, 1951) and *Nové využití propanu-butanu* (*New Use of Propane-Butane*, 1952); Oldřich Mirad had directed *Konzervování ovoce a zeleniny I–IV* (*Canning of Meat and Vegetables I–IV*, 1951), *Stavíme z oceli* (*Building with Steel*, 1954) and *Dechové hudební nástroje* (*Wind Instruments*, 1955). Likewise, the creators of animated films prior to their engagement in promoting goods had focused on the public awareness of educational concepts – Václav Bedřich had filmed with Jaroslav Možíš the medical and educational shorts *Kašláni a kýčání* (*Coughing and Sneezing*), *Mouchy* (*Flies*) or *Neviditelní nepřátelé* (*Invisible Enemies* [about germs]) (all 1951), before he made award-winning advertising films such as *Sedací nábytek* (*Seating Furniture*, 1959), *Skříňový nábytek* (*Cabinet Furniture*, 1959), *Kovolesk Druchema* (*Metal Polish Druchema*, 1960), etc.

The indistinctiveness of the advertising genre and its links with educational films were clearly factors that directly influenced its form. The persisting tendencies were towards a presentational/informational mode of communication, documentary production interludes and a product parade at the end of the film. An advertisement for nylon goods (*Silon/Nylon*, 1954) is thus framed by examples of stockings shown on a model looking at herself in the mirror. After a poetic introduction describing nylon as 'the fairytale reality of today' and a wonder 'cracked from Cinderella's nut', the short switches to practical and descriptive comments on scenes from a shop and the factory, demonstrating various ways of washing and drying nylons, and a warning that nylon goods should not be ironed. Only at the end does the short return from its documentary instruction to its advertising message and, with the model as the central figure, the key slogan, 'Light as a breath, soft as a breeze' appears in the frame.

In *Nylon*, just like in the film *Svět o nás ví* (*The World Does Know about Us*, 1960; an advertising short about JAWA motorcycles), advertising merely constitutes the framework of the film. *The World Does Know about Us* combines not only sports coverage of motor racing and industrial footage about the production of motorcycles, their testing etc., but also the practical application (their use by a mailman or a housewife taking home her purchases from the local shop). The advertising role here is basically limited to slogans only ('Elegance – Speed – Reliability – Made in Czechoslovakia') and examples of the product's easy manoeuvrability and usefulness for the masses.

The number of rhetorical modes combined in the films was related to the original idea of the widest possible spectrum of applicability, in the spirit of which Short Film produced its films until 1957. This broad category was exemplified in the production of the Popular Scientific and Educational Films Studio, where even advertisements employed a scientific rhetoric and were primarily designed to transmit accurate

information about the advertised product. The reason why the product was popularised, or why it was this particular product and not any other, was related to whichever kind of market supply was taken into account by the economic plan and what the expected consumption in a given region was. The main function of the film, however, was to inform viewers about the existence of the goods and their properties.

Still, the contemporary ideologues of advertising hoped for success in portraying the educational intention of the advertisement in an original way, at the same time hoping that the experimental aspect would not impede comprehensibility. Many films from the 1950s and early 60s were, nevertheless, retrospectively criticised as being too simplistic, unimaginative with regard to the possibilities of innovative practices and techniques and devoid of the possibilities of film advertising shortcuts or anecdotes. In contrast to this, films combining feature footage and animation, working with split-screen techniques or with artistically elaborate scenes, or films rhythmically synchronising the footage with music were all highly valued.

The lack of communication between film professionals and contracting authorities also remained a long-term problem. One historical joke about the allegedly typical manner of formulating the order was, 'Sit down here and bring me a nice idea about how to advertise watches tomorrow.'<sup>27</sup> Because of such attitudes, advertising film production failed to be properly aligned either with the ideas of the Advertising Company and individual ministries or with economic interests. This failure is further demonstrated by the fact that we could search the production of the Popular Scientific and Educational Films Studio or the later Propagfilm in vain to find any emphasis on the key promotional priorities, which were, as mentioned above, the campaigns for the sale of Loden coats, hats, syrups and juices, dairy products, pasta, rice, coffee and tea. Films with these topics did exist, but only in limited quantities – say, two to three per subject. At the same time Propagfilm, in the years between 1957 and 1963, produced about seventy-five advertising films a year<sup>28</sup> and, outside of the focal sector, it was intensely engaged in the promotion of industrial and chemical goods (tools, equipment and chemical cleaners), cosmetics, motorcycles and cars, dry cleaning services, insurance and repairs of clothing and appliances and, despite a nationwide campaign to combat alcoholism, filmed advertisements stating that only beer can quench thirst (for example, *Pilsner Urquell* [1961] by director Karel Pechánek).<sup>29</sup>

Contracting authorities also complained that films often did not contain the information that the film-makers were supplied with and that the films did not lead viewers towards proper consumption or to the right way of life.<sup>30</sup> This problem began to be resolved in 1961, when a more sophisticated control of promotional materials in all media through a new body, the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Management of Promotional and Advertising Activities in the Field of Production and Sale of Consumer Goods and Services, was installed.<sup>31</sup> Definition of the main tasks of the Committee, however, did not differ much from the mission of its predecessors: it should be a central, coordinating body that would map out prospective promotion plans in relation to the priorities of the economy and education in new ways of living. The only change in approach was a stronger emphasis on determining and coordinating the distribution of responsibilities and the financial involvement of the individual participants in a promotional campaign – or, in contemporary parlance, 'promotional action'.

From 1961, films began to be categorised not with regard to their length and adaptation techniques (fiction, cartoons, puppetry), but according to economic sector. Altogether, there were eight of these categories: industrial goods, food products, textiles, tourism, eating, cosmetics, services and propaganda – the latter differed from the others in that films included in this category were not intended to encourage proper consumer habits, but other socially beneficial routines (collection of paper, or the planting of various crops, herbs, etc.).<sup>32</sup>

To justify the changes in the categorisation the organisers stated that the previous system was taken from international competitions and festivals and their considerations of film as an art object abroad. Yet, rather than attracting foreign festival juries films should be functionally incorporated into promotional campaigns, whether for the domestic or the foreign product market.

This categorisation deprived Czechoslovakian film advertising in the late 1950s and early 60s, both rhetorically and officially, of a place in film discourse and assigned advertising film to the role of a mere assistant in the complex system of economic plan implementation. Its effect within individual campaigns was to become the main priority of supervision. Only from this experience should any lessons about what means of expression to choose from for specific kinds of goods and corresponding methods of promotion be derived. Hence, it could be said that the specifics of the Czechoslovakian film advertising genre within the socialist economy started to be delineated only in the first half of the 1960s, based on a more sophisticated control of real relationships between promotion and trade. This system in turn fostered a specific mode of production in which the film topic was defined by planned instructions and the style of execution determined by market research and public opinion. It was specific only to a certain extent, of course. Naturally, the aesthetic was driven by economic imperatives.

The organisation of advertising and ideology of promotion remained exclusively socialist, even when Czechoslovakia at least partially rationalised the methods of production of advertising films by their separation into an independent production department (studio). The state remained the contracting authority, its objective to direct consumer behaviour in order to meet the plan of escalating production without causing excess or shortage of goods on the market. Advertisement funding (albeit coming from constituent ministries, research institutes, or national enterprises) was actually government funding, only through the budgets of institutions applying for funds in accordance with their own plans.

Coordinators of promotional work were aware of the persistent communication problems with the creators of promotional materials and held the insufficient linking means and media campaign effectiveness responsible for consumer confusion. A confused consumer was not desirable for promotional staff – he or she acted unpredictably, and thus threatened the plan. The coordinators set themselves the goal to prevent this type of 'unrestrained' consumption – a term which acquired a pejorative connotation through its frequent use in connection with capitalist practices – and make the market situation clearer for customers by supporting production of complex joint campaigns. This meant not only connecting a large number of mass media resources in order to collectively support one type of goods or services within a single campaign, but also by ideologically consolidating several related campaigns into

even larger units, which would present the objects of support from different angles. This included film advertising as well, which, to varying degrees and in different ways, was involved in a number of complex promotional structures.

#### FILM IN A COMPLEX JOINT CAMPAIGN: VITAMINS – JUICES – BLENDERS

As indicated by the orchestra metaphor, socialist advertising pushed for the maximum possible harmonisation and mutual support of advertising media. Yet, the conditions of the socialist market, where there was no competition, allowed the creation of complex advertising campaigns based not only on media synergy, but also on the mutual support of two or more products. Hence the Advertising Company – in its press body, the magazine *Reklama (Advertising)* – constantly called attention to the need to implement socialist advertising in so-called joint actions.

In practice, this could mean in the simplest case that in the windows of the department store Perla was a display with samples of formal clothing featuring a slogan about the impending peak theatre season, with the background composed of enlarged pictures of theatre actors from the play *Čert nikdy nespí (Devil Never Sleeps)*, which was currently in the repertoire of the ABC theatre. At the same time, on the theatre boards were recommendations for shopping in Perla. Similar simple synergies were fairly common between department stores, cultural venues and restaurants.<sup>33</sup>

An example of successful advertising harmony was the positively evaluated 1957 campaign promoting fruit cakes and biscuits in which the main motives of the advertising films *Medvěd (The Bear)*, *Jasnovidka (The Clairvoyant)* and *Raketa (The Rocket)* were repeated in magazines, printed advertisements, banners, posters and displays. Likewise, this was so with the films *Silona (Nylon)*, *Melta* and *Express* from the same year.<sup>34</sup> Ideally, motive linking should appear in as many advertising media as possible: in print advertising, film, radio, street advertising, road-side advertising, on surfaces of empty walls, on vehicles, in flyers, or in recruitment letters.<sup>35</sup>

Inter-level linking occurred when advertising was combined with national promotion campaigns, recruitment and persuasive educational campaigns.<sup>36</sup> Hierarchical organisation of promotional campaign goals thus reflected the hierarchical relationships between different advertising means within campaigns. Examples of such ‘orchestration’ are campaigns on fruit juices and canned and frozen fish – both durable goods heavily promoted as an evidence of sufficiency and variety of food products while actually compensating for a shortage of fresh food on the market.

Posters, billboards and shopping windows, as well as films on fruit juices, shared the same idea of a fruit juice as a healthy non-alcoholic beverage suitable for drivers and athletes, a source of necessary vitamins, refreshing and available through the whole year – bottles of juice were displayed together with apples, cherries, etc. and glasses with a straw. ‘The sea of health in fish cans’ was a slogan repeated on various canned-fish adverts by various artists in various styles as well as in Emanuel Kaněra’s film *Rybí výrobky (Fish Products, 1959)*. The play with ideas and themes was a tactic to newly inform about the same product as something unique in the market that was unlikely to change too much. This strategy also reminds us that, in the late 1950s, socialist advertising and socialist consumer culture were still quite young – products



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did not have their established brands and logos, a lack of competition meant there was no need to innovate and market dynamics were determined mainly by the possibility of internal industry and national authorities to ensure sufficient import of goods. The main tasks of advertisers were to create an impression of a developing consumer culture and to skilfully time particular campaigns to cover up any shortages in supply.

The position of film was significantly influenced by the national long-term availability of the advertised goods. The less predictable the situation on the market for a particular commodity, the lower the willingness of the contracting authorities to purchase an advertising film, despite the fact that its prospective effect was undisputed. Film – ‘the advertisement for hundreds of thousands’ – and its effects were, in fact, potentially uncontrollable; it might attract attention and provoke demand to soar too high and cause shortages. Moreover, the multipurpose character of films on goods whose consumption was difficult to predict was initially strongly supported by the organisational integration of Advertising within Short Film.

The internal synergic combination of several promotions was always backed by a grand educational concept. A good example is provided by nutritional campaigns, in which foods were treated both as an element of the food industry as well as scientific concepts of healthy nutrition. The organisers of these types of campaigns were generally the Central Institute of Health Education, the Ministry of Food Industry and the Food Trade Association. Among the priorities of health promotion in the late 1950s and early 60s were, above all, the campaigns Fighting against Alcoholism, Promotion of Milk and Promotion of Fruit Juices and Syrups.<sup>37</sup> These campaigns could be (and were) interconnected. Juices, for instance, were highlighted as non-alcoholic drinks suitable as substitutes for beer, wine and other alcohol drinks. The connection to a vast number of other smaller campaigns, as well as the close relation to the economic interests of several ministries, enlarged the campaign’s scope and enhanced its impact significantly. In many respects, therefore, this campaign can be seen as one of the key instruments of the promotional and educational priorities of the state in

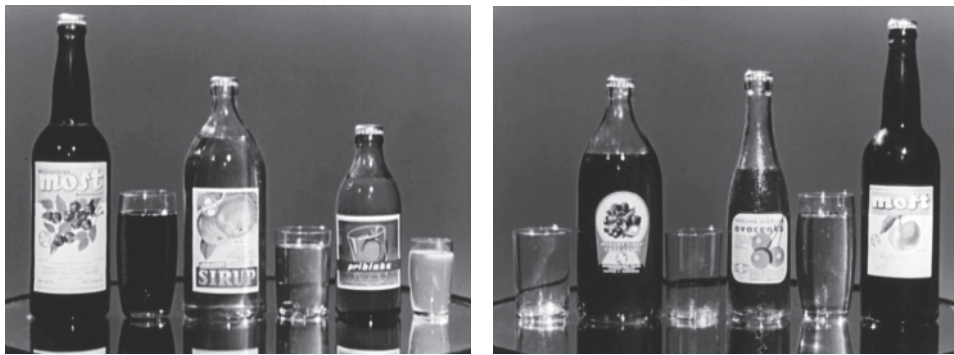


Czechoslovakia in the late 1950s and early 60s, and an example of the workings of promotion at that time.

A key imperative for each element of a 'joint action' was 'to hit at least one-third of families in the nation'.<sup>38</sup> This determined the distribution of assignments to each media resource involved in the campaign. One of the most expensive campaigns of the late 1950s was a campaign focused on promoting shortening. For CSK 500,000, a three-minute film, two short one-minute spots and a slide series were produced as a series of audiovisual tools that travelled cinemas for six weeks. Radio promotion was carried out indirectly through two debates on the show *Discussions for Women*, three types of posters were printed and extensive (although, reportedly, not tightly controlled) advertising was ordered in the local press. As a result, consumption of shortening increased by 1,000 tons per six-month period compared to the corresponding period a year before.<sup>39</sup>

An interplay of multiple media tools also characterised the above-mentioned 'joint action' for Fruit Juices and Syrups, implemented by the Ministry of Food Industry in cooperation with the state enterprise Sodobkárny (Soft Drinks). Print authorities provided several series of posters, banners and placards purposefully placed in indoor and outdoor swimming pools and sports grounds; decoration departments in department stores repeatedly created their own specialised shop window displays; large billboards were also designed for available house walls. Radio was utilised in the campaign through a traditional indirect form of education from health workers within discussion shows and the films *Ovocné šťávy* (Fruit Juices, 1959), directed by Ludvík Hájek, and *Nealkoholické nápoje* (Non-alcoholic Beverages, 1960), directed by Jan Karpaš, were shot for the campaign. Both films were in colour and used a puppet-animation technique and were quite obviously planned as an outreach – an element that would link the campaign Fruit Juices and Syrups to other campaigns of this complex interrelated joint campaign.

Using the example of three different characters and scenes, Hájek's short advertising fairy tale shows fruit in unconventional seasons or in unusual places. With the magic spell 'Čary máry fuk' (equivalent to 'Hocus Pocus'), some currants, cherries and an apple appear in a child's room, in a mine next to an apprentice miner and in the snow, as soon as the characters start thinking about them. The film refers to the



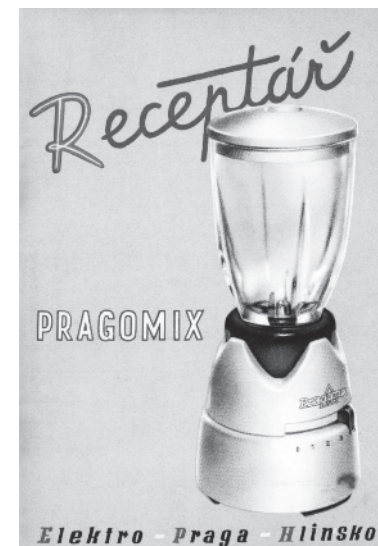
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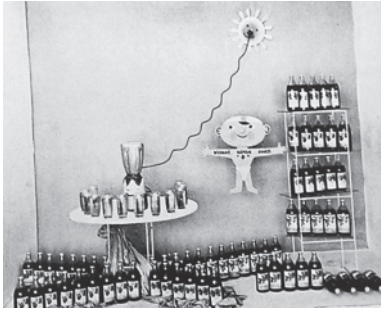
availability of fruit juices outside the summer months, which is reflected in the slogan, 'Drink fruit juice – drink the sun in a bottle'. The voiceover of the puppet section of the film, which at the same time makes up a playful narrative, is in the form of a simple nursery rhyme spoken by a child. However, after the slogan, both the voice and visual design change – the slogan, announced by an adult voice, is followed by an animation sequence of a 'parade' with colourful bottles and glasses full of juice from which the drink, sucked out by straws, 'magically' disappears. Hence, while the film's playfulness, through association with fairy-tale childhood, activates a rather emotional experience, the revue part of the film comes with rational information as an incentive to purchase the products.

*Fruit Juices* and its message aligned with films that, outside of the campaign Fruit Juices and Syrups itself, were part of a broader promotion campaign on fruit substitutes as compensation for scarce fresh fruit; their consumption was simultaneously promoted within the campaign on the benefits of vitamin C,<sup>40</sup> related to the Asian influenza pandemic in 1957 and 1958. The vitamin C campaign was in turn linked with campaigns promoting other fruit products such as jams, marmalades and frozen fruit, as well as campaigns promoting other foods that were considered a suitable source of vitamin C.

Fruit in Czechoslovakia had for a long time been in short supply, and so the requirement of health education directed at the promotion of vitamin C as a means of protection against the Asian influenza collided head-on with the possibilities of internal trade. The fact that the Department of Health Education ordered the publication of promotional materials without consultation with economic experts was sharply criticised with regard to the possibility of scaremongering among consumers. Quite justifiably, consumers demanded the promoted yet scarce goods. Given the market situation, watching movies promoting fruit even allegedly provoked fits of laughter in the audience, and therefore the production of such films was perceived as wasting money on ineffective or even harmful projects.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, consumer frustration and unfulfilled expectations caused by a scarcity of fruit on the market were further aggravated by a parallel promotional campaign for Pragomix blenders, which initially gave the impression of an anti-campaign in relation to Fruit Juices and Syrups. Pragomix had long been promoted without any demonstrations of its usage. Therefore, the number of sales had not initially matched the plan. It was only after it began to be promoted as a device that processed fruits and vegetables (most often in combination with milk), both in film and in cookery shows, that it started to sell more (see cover image of a recipe book for cooking with Pragomix). The blender was recommended for making fruit and vegetable purees as well as domestic fruit and vegetable juices. The improved marketing of Pragomix was,





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however, accompanied by an increased demand for dairy products, fruits and vegetables – a turn appreciated by the national enterprise dairies, but not so much by the institutions responsible for the supply of fruit.

So, the promotion of Pragomix consequently heightened the need to promote not only juices, but also frozen or canned substitutes of fresh fruit. Generally speaking, however, advertising film-making applied the principle of not producing any films about scarce goods or goods which were subject to frequent change, considering the uncertain applicability of the

shorts and their high costs. Furthermore, films were not allowed to connect advertising of several types of goods, since there was a fear that the consumer would not remember extensive messages, or alternatively that one type of good would suddenly become scarce while the other one would need further promotion.<sup>42</sup> Fresh fruit substitutes were therefore promoted in separate 'single-type' shorts *Ovocné nátierky* (*Fruit Spreads*, 1962) (promotion of marmalades and jams) and *Mražené ovoce a zelenina* (*Frozen Fruits and Vegetables*, 1960).

In contrast, the campaign Fruit Juices and Syrups (besides its connection to the problematic promotion campaign for consumption of vitamin C because of the Asian flu) served to complement a campaign to combat alcoholism, or a promotion of temperance, respectively. The drinking of fruit juices was also presented in the film *Non-alcoholic Beverages*, which simultaneously was an indirect warning against the risks of alcohol behind the wheel. In addition to film, the fight against alcoholism also used posters and leaflets. For this, there were two types of poster. The first type often had a bottle of juice as the central motif of the image, usually surrounded by stationery and the figure of a man. Posters of this type presented juice as a means of guaranteeing the refreshing of tired minds and supporting 'alcohol-free' creativity with the slogan 'Good ideas emerge only in a clear head'. The second type of poster focused on disciplined, safe driving, showing a glass of juice in the hands of drivers of cars, as well as tractors, combine harvesters and trucks. Here the slogan was, 'I wonder, if you can understand why they don't have accidents!'

A specific synergy that was not reflected in the film, however, was the connection of the action Fruit Juices and Syrups with the promotion of the cycling Peace Race/*Závod míru* (sometimes also called the Berlin–Prague–Warsaw race). Instead of drivers, in the photographic posters (which were placed mostly in shop windows with bottles of juice and soft drinks lined up around a decoration showing a glass full of various fruits), athletes, especially cyclists, were shown drinking juice. The fruity soda Pribinka was therefore known as the 'drink of athletes'.<sup>43</sup>

The promotion of food products was intended to be organised in accordance with health education, but it was also related to promoting awareness of traffic safety, or, in other cases, to the promotion of consumer goods used by housewives in the kitchen. The multi-level synergy of several branches strongly converged advertising with propaganda work, as through advertising the socialist promotion logic equalled

promotion of goods and services with education. This formulated project of socialist advertising was driven by the idea that political power can claim a right to direct and control the behaviour of individuals at various levels of daily life, identifying this practice with noble goals of education. Within such a model, business operated as a mechanism of education, and advertising as a business tool became an educational tool. Through advertising the state claimed a monopoly on the determination of proper taste, but not simply because of economic profit. Whatever the state offered would actually have to be ideologically right to consume, since it was a product originating from the plan of production. The point was not to consume certain goods more and others less, but to consume goods prioritised by the state economy.

## CONCLUSION

Advertising allowed the state to educate citizens and regulate their conduct – in the words of contemporary advertising ideologue Milan Weiner, 'to give them insight into the correct way of life'.<sup>44</sup> The example of Czechoslovakian film advertising in the late 1950s and early 60s, however, draws attention to the substantial discrepancy between theory and practice of socialist advertising. Although organisationally and ideologically fully wedged in the structures of economic planning, the production of advertising films did not always manage to avoid problematic economic impacts. The key reason for these difficulties was the lack of communication between the planning (ideological) and production (executive) component of the national economy. The problem of 'unrestrained consumption', as it was called in contemporary discourse, was its incompatibility with a planned economy. Consumer dissatisfaction, despite the promotional efforts, remained a persistent problem.

The practice of advertising film production at end of the 1950s was crucial for establishing key institutional and formal patterns for its future development. In many respects it prepared a typical template for the following years, even though many of its practices proved to be unsustainable. A long-term continuity can be seen at the organisational level: towards the end of the 1980s the socialist economy ensured advertisements in communication between the state (represented by the Ministry of Commerce and other entities), the State Advertising Company and other particular media agents. However, even in the 1960s, the calls for television advertising grew louder. Hence, the dominant manufacturer of audiovisual advertisements in Czechoslovakia after 1968 became Czechoslovak Television. Nevertheless, what transformed most intensely was the concept of educational aspects in an advertisement, together with the concept of complex joint campaigns. The strategy of joint campaigns was a significant tool of socialist advertising for a number of reasons. In the centralised socialist economy it not only allowed a synergy of different manufacturing (consumer) sectors, but also a link between economical and ideological objectives. Joint campaigns could promote two or more commodities together (food with electrical appliances, clothing with cars), as well as promote a commodity together with an event (ideological, cultural, sport, etc.). The consumption of goods and services thus ceased to be programmatically associated with civic educational concepts and crystallised into a distinctive and individualised social practice.



## NOTES

1. Jana Kalinová, *Charakter a poslání propagace v socialistickém státě* [*The Nature and the Mission of Promotion in the Socialist State*] (Praha: Čs. obchodní komora, 1959), p. 8.
2. Karel Kouba, *Plán a trh za socialismu* [*The Plan and the Market under Socialism*] (Praha: Ekonomický ústav ČSAV, 1967), p. 40.
3. Quoted from a speech of František Krajčír, minister of internal trade at the International Conference of Advertising Companies. The speech was published in the magazine *Reklama* after the conference. František Krajčír, 'Úvodní projev Mezinárodní konference reklamních pracovníků' ['The Introductory Speech at an International Conference of Workers in Advertising'], *Reklama* vol. 4 no. 1 (1958), pp. 1–2.
4. Data calculated from figures in publications: Jiří Havelka, *Čs. filmové hospodářství 1945–1950* [*Czechoslovak Film Economy 1945–1950*] (Praha: Český filmový ústav, 1970). Jiří Havelka, *Čs. filmové hospodářství 1951–1955* [*Czechoslovak Film Economy 1951–1955*] (Praha: Český filmový ústav, 1972).
5. Miroslav Tuček, 'Měnová reforma 1953 a některé širší souvislosti' ['Currency Reform 1953 and a Broader Context'], *Revue politika* vol. 1 no. 6 (2003), pp. 24–6. Compare with Karel Kaplan, *Sociální souvislosti krizí komunistického režimu v letech 1953–1957 and 1968–1975* [*Social Connections of Crises during the Communist Regime*] (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AVČR, 1993).
6. Khrushchev's 'secret' speech at the XX Congress of the CPSU in 1956 raised a wave of concerns in the Eastern Bloc. The revelation of Stalin's crimes and repressions shocked the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Unlike Poland or Hungary, Czechoslovakia had an incomparably better economic situation. Thus, the social discontent was not so closely linked to political discontent. Although the reaction in Czechoslovakia was rather passive and cautious, the events of 1956 meant the inevitable reassessment of existing political practices.
7. Miroslav Hiršl, *Rozsah a struktura společenské spotřeby obyvatelstva v ČSSR v letech 1945–1970* [*The Range and the Structure of Social Consumption of the Czechoslovakian Population 1945–1970*] (Praha: Výzkumný ústav sociálního zabezpečení, 1974).
8. Jaromír Balák, *Zásady propagace* [*Basics of Promotion*] (Praha: Vydavatelství obchodu, 1963), p. 10.
9. Josef Růžička, *Efektivnost československého obchodu* [*The Effectiveness of Czechoslovakian Trade*] (Praha: Státní úřad statistický, 1958), p. 5.
10. This institution (in full, Meziresortní koordinační výbor pro řízení propagační a reklamní činnosti v oboru výroby a prodeje spotřebního zboží a služeb [Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee for the Management of Promotional and Advertising Activity in the Field of Production and Sales of Consumer Products and Services]) in 1961 became the assisting body of the State Plan Bureau which had engaged in this activity until then. Jaromír Balák, 'Z jednoho místa' ['From One Place'], *Propagace* vol. 7 no. 12 (1961), pp. 265–6. Balák, *Zásady propagace*, p. 14.
11. NA (National Archive), Praha, f. Ministerstvo informací (1945–1953) – Inventář, box 197, Organizace V. odboru (Materials of the Ministry of Information).
12. Ibid.
13. Josef Řeháček, 'Výroba a reklama potřetí' ['Production and Advertising for the Third Time'], *Reklama* vol. 4 no. 3 (1958), p. 69.
14. Krajčír, 'Úvodní projev Mezinárodní konference reklamních pracovníků', pp. 1–2.
15. Antonín Navrátil, 'Filmová reklama' ['Film Advertising'], *Kultura* vol. 2 no. 51 (1958), p. 3.
16. Ibid.
17. This is best demonstrated by the change of the magazine *Reklama* (*Advertising*) into *Propagace* (*Promotion*). The cover of the last, twelfth issue of the monthly *Reklama* from 1961 read 'magazine *Reklama/Propagace*'. From January 1962 the name was changed to *Propagace*, yet both the publisher Reklamní podnik (Advertising Company) and all editors remained the same.
18. Milan Weiner, 'Staré hranice' ['Old Borders'], *Propagace* vol. 8 no. 1 (1962), p. 17.
19. Kalinová, *Charakter a poslání propagace v socialistickém státě*, p. 29.
20. Bohuš Häckl, *Propagační prostředky. Jak je vytvářet, posuzovat a používat* [*Promotional Tools. How to Create, Evaluate and Use Them*] (Praha: Vydavatelství obchodu, 1962), p. 11.
21. Klement Guth, *Názorná propagace a agitace* [*Illustrative Promotion and Agitation*] (Praha: Státní zdravotnické nakladatelství, 1958), pp. 5–6.
22. Ibid., p. 11.
23. Jiří Havelka, *Čs. filmové hospodářství 1956–1960* (Praha: Čs. filmový ústav, 1974), p. 137.
24. Jiří Havelka, *Čs. filmové hospodářství 1961–1965* (Praha: Čs. filmový ústav, 1975), pp. 188–9.
25. See, for example *Umění nového života* (*Art of New Life*, 1954), *Třetí snížení cen* (*Third Price Cut*, 1954), *Poselství přátelství a míru* (*Message of Friendship and Peace*, 1955).
26. For example, *Pohřeb Marty Gottwaldové* (*Funeral of Marta Gottwaldová*, 1953).
27. Commentary of the deputy director of Short Film, R. Gráf, at a meeting of the section Propagace tiskem, televizí, rozhlasem a filmem (Print, Television, Radio and Film Promotion) at a national conference of promotional workers in Brno in 1963. Kolektiv, *Sborník celostátní konference propagačních pracovníků* [*An Anthology of the National Conference of Promotional Workers*] (Praha: Vydavatelství obchodu, 1964), p. 209.
28. The total volume of production of Propagafilm in those years was naturally much higher, but the rest of the films were predominantly instructional. The number of advertisements is taken from data available to the committee of the annual festival of advertising films and economic statistics. Pavol Bauma, *Ekonomika čs. státního filmu* [*Economics of Czechoslovak State Film*] (Bratislava: Slovenské vydavateľstvo technickej literatury, 1965), p. 92.
29. According to the produced films overview by Jiří Havelka: Havelka, *Čs. filmové hospodářství 1956–1960*, pp. 138–46. Havelka, *Čs. filmové hospodářství 1961–1965*, pp. 189–95.
30. Commentary of a worker of Ústřední správa nákupu (Central Purchasing Management), M. Weiner, at the meeting of the section Propagace tiskem, televizí, rozhlasem a filmem at a national conference of promotional workers in Brno in 1963. Kolektiv, *Sborník celostátní konference propagačních pracovníků*, p. 214.
31. The chair of the new committee was the minister of internal trade. Other members were representatives of ministries of Internal Trade, Food Industry, Consumer Industry, General Mechanical Engineering, Chemical Industry, Finance, Education and Culture, and Health Care; vice-chairmen of the Ústřední svaz spotřebních družstev (Central Union of Consumer Cooperatives) and Ústřední svaz výrobních družstev (Central Union of Production Cooperatives); and Deputy General Directors of Čs. rozhlas, Čs. televize and Krátký film (Czechoslovak Radio, Czechoslovak Television and Short Film).
32. Otto Jiráček, 'VI. přehlídka reklamních filmů' ['6th Festival of Advertising Films'], *Reklama* vol. 7 no. 4 (1961), pp. 74–6.
33. Helena Bohunová, 'Výlohy s divadelními náměty v obchodním domě Perla v Praze'

- ['Shopping Windows with Theatre Motifs in Department Store Perla'], *Reklama* vol. 4 no. 3 (1958), pp. 90–1.
34. Karel Purkyrt from the Ministry of Food Industry in a Survey about the Exhibition of Advertising films in 1958. *Reklama* vol. 4 no. 4 (1958), p. 75.
35. Jaromír Balák, 'Reklama v socialistickém hospodářství' ['Advertising in the Socialist Economy'], *Reklama* vol. 1 no. 1 (1955), pp. 1–9.
36. Ibid.
37. Balák, *Zásady propagace*, p. 14.
38. Ibid., p. 57.
39. Ibid.
40. Miroslav Písařovič, 'Pomůcka pro reklamu v potravinářském obchodě' ['Advertising Tool for a Grocery'], *Reklama* vol. 4 no. 1 (1958), p. 8.
41. Kolektiv, *Sborník celostátní konference propagačních pracovníků*, p. 205.
42. Häckl, *Propagační prostředky*, pp. 80–1.
43. *Reklama* vol. 4 (1958).
44. Kolektiv, *Sborník celostátní konference propagačních pracovníků*, p. 198.

## 10

### Advertising Form, Technological Change and Screen Practices in the USA

*William Boddy*

In 1939 RCA sponsored a ten-minute industrial film, entitled simply *Television*, to introduce the new medium to the American public. Most extant prints of the film include a ninety-second prologue situating the company's plans for television within its existing activities in radio, theatrical film and the growing market of 16mm non-theatrical exhibition. The exceedingly modest prologue nevertheless evokes a number of important issues regarding industry continuity, technological innovation and medium specificity in advertising practices across twentieth-century electronic and visual media in the USA. RCA's reflexive prologue offers a more prosaic, if equally reflexive echo of Dziga Vertov's 1929 modernist classic *The Man with a Movie Camera*, echoing Vertov's striking cut from the illusionistic cinematic image to the static physical film strip (here addressing the film's optically recorded soundtrack) and offering a more sedate rotating projector in the place of Vertov's pixilated dancing tripod. The brief prologue, promoting RCA's 16mm non-theatrical projection equipment, which was likely bringing these very images to viewers from the back of the classroom or meeting hall, takes pains to link the device and its manufacturer to the scale and prestige of large-scale theatrical film-making and exhibition (citing Radio City Music Hall, the world's largest public cinema, along with 6,000 other theatrical venues in the USA and abroad). At the same time, the film's narrator identifies RCA as 'the largest sound organisation in the world', and the company's very name signals its 1919 origins as a patent pool designed to dominate point-to-point wireless communication shortly before the unexpected application of broadcasting, the 'surprise party of radio', as a former RCA president described it in 1929.<sup>1</sup> The prologue's foregrounding of RCA's leadership in sound engineering also evokes the critically fraught expressive relations between sound and image in motion-picture history, an aesthetic controversy that would be restaged along the more instrumental grounds of advertising efficacy in the medium of television, itself the subject of the ten-minute promotional film which follows the prologue.

Commercial television's competing aesthetic debts to earlier visual and aural media, including the public billboard, radio and the theatrical and non-theatrical motion picture, formed the axis around which the essential nature and mission of the new domestic medium were debated. Perhaps surprisingly, such aesthetic disputes were as vigorously contested in the context of the television commercial as in the realm of dramatic programming. If the question of the new medium's formal debts to earlier advertising forms was raised by RCA's 1939 film, the formal strategies of its prologue invite