



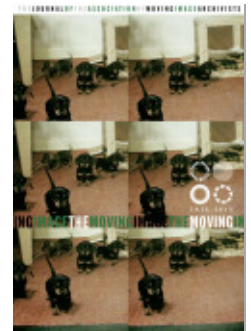
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Film Documentation of the Destruction of Lidice: Political and Ethical Dimensions of the Use of War Footage

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FILM DOCUMENTATION OF THE DESTRUCTION OF LIDICE

LUCIE ČESÁLKOVÁ

Political and Ethical

Dimensions of the Use

of War Footage



Czech documentary cinema of the years 1945 and 1946 was a cinema in the shadow of war. Not surprisingly, the initial postwar Czech documentary productions reflected the immediate aftermath, the circumstances of liberation, or the country's postwar reconstruction. Documentary films, because of their presumed factual status, were considered a privileged tool for international information and education about the situation in Nazi-occupied lands. One of the films sent abroad was *Letter from Prague* (*Psaní z Prahy*, 1945–46), which featured an introduction and voice-over narration by an internationally known political personality, Jan Masaryk. Masaryk, the longtime Czechoslovak ambassador in Britain during the occupation era and foreign minister of the Czech government-in-exile in London, became, after the war, not only the first foreign minister of Klement Gottwald's

administration but also the first chairman of the World Federation of United Nations Associations, currently established in Luxembourg. For many years, the authenticity of this cinematic document has been unchallenged. Masaryk's status has contributed to the film's acceptance as historical witness. A closer study, however, based on examining the archival basis of the film, will show how this documentary combines facts and re-created facts to make its rhetorical point.

In a statement that is repeated several times in the film, "those who have not seen cannot properly understand," Masaryk indirectly reminds viewers of the significant role that film can play as a witness to war, as a form of testimony. Consistent with the film's strong anti-Nazi tone, the selection of newsreel materials in *Letter from Prague* focused on images that conveyed the physical and psychological impact of the German war: destruction, suffering, oppression, and death. One piece of visual evidence of violent German behavior in the Czech lands was an extreme long shot of a blast in Lidice that indicates that the village was completely destroyed. The image was accompanied by commentary noting that this was the only surviving shot of the Nazi massacre in Lidice.

The destruction of Lidice, together with several other events, provides some of the strongest evidence of Nazi violence in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. In revenge for the assassination of Reichsprotektor Reinhard Heydrich, who died on June 4, 1942, German soldiers murdered 173 men over the age of fifteen years from the village of Lidice on June 10, 1942, and deported several hundred women and more than one hundred children to concentration camps. A few children who were considered racially suitable for "Germanization" were handed over to SS families, and the rest were sent to the Chełmno extermination camp in Poland, where they were gassed to death.¹ In terms of film history, however, the statement about the single surviving shot is surprising. *Letter from Prague* made this claim despite the fact that the Nazis had ordered extensive film documentation of the events in Lidice, and already in the second half of 1945, a search for this footage had begun in the workplace and residence of the Nazi's cameraman, František Treml, at the command of the Ministry of the Interior. In December 1945, investigators Tomáš Matuška and Ladislav Šíma found and identified three 16mm films, each consisting of approximately 390 feet of film. These discoveries, however, were not made known to the public.²

Newsreels and documentaries shown in protectorate cinemas immediately after Heydrich's June 1942 assassination and before Lidice's destruction did not mention Lidice at all. Instead, newsreels documented the assemblies on the squares of major cities in the protectorate, in which politicians condemned the assassination and demonstrated loyalty to the Reich.³ Although the press reported on these public demonstrations at great

length, the Czech newsreel company Aktualita released only the government's speeches at the manifestations, for example, in newsreel no. 23, presented during the week after June 8, 1942. The same shots also formed the introduction to UFA newsreel no. 34, screened the same week.⁴ One week later, newsreels from both companies showed the ceremonial night transportation of the body of Reichsprotektor SS-Obergruppenführer and police general Heydrich to Prague Castle, with thousands and thousands of people at the hearse to honor the deceased, a funeral ceremony attended by Reichsführer SS Himmler and State President Hácha, a speech by SS-Obergruppenführer and police Generaloberst Daluge, and a ceremonial funeral march through the streets of Prague to the Central Station.⁵ None of these films includes any images of the violent revenge in Lidice, even though testimony from the director of the Aktualita company and the cameramen who were forced to shoot the events in Lidice indicates that Nazi officers held their own private screenings of the material.⁶ Although Nazi officers had intended to use the material in war documentaries and newsreels as a warning against threats to Nazi power in the protectorate,⁷ this never happened.

A certain restraint regarding the wider presentation of the film documentation of Lidice, apparent from the statement in *Letter from Prague*, persisted for the entire period of the so-called Third Republic (Czechoslovakia between May 1945 and February 1948) and, as such, reveals postwar struggles over how to deal with the film documentation of war violence. So far, historians have only paid minimal attention to the topic of Lidice film material and to later uses of the original footage of the event. This study analyzes debates about where and how film documents of Lidice were used and shown in the late 1940s. I discuss contemporary attitudes toward the role of documentary footage of violence in a society that had recently undergone a traumatic experience. It is a story of secrecy, of delays in public exhibitions, of finding alternative ways to represent a topic, and of concerns about whether audiences were prepared to look at recent events on film. My analysis reflects both on contemporary ideas about the needs and reactions of the audience (and society) and on discussions about documentary film in terms of its form and the roles it should play in postwar society. By discussing how the films were used as evidence in court, their exhibition abroad, and an unfulfilled Czech postwar documentary film about Lidice, I examine the cultural and political controversy that surrounded the Lidice events, even within the Communist Party. Although it remained hidden from the public, the footage from Lidice became a catalyst for behind-the-scenes discussions about society's relation to national history and to the creation of national symbols as well as about the acceptable international presentation of Czechoslovakia. Finally, this forgotten case enables us to explore how Czech postwar violence against the Germans was legitimized in the media.

THREE FILM REELS IN NAZI SAFES

The tension between an apparent interest in and need for film documentation of Lidice's destruction after the war, and a reluctance to share this documentation with a wider public, started with a joint effort between the Ministry of the Interior and Police Headquarters in Prague. The effort to trace the film footage of Lidice's destruction was part of the immediate postwar interest in mapping and describing Nazi crimes in Czechoslovakia, both to help victims and survivors and to convict the perpetrators. In accordance with this goal, on June 6, 1945, almost three years after the tragedy at Lidice, the Czechoslovak government decided that the village of Lidice would be restored and for this purpose set up a committee.⁸ In September 1945, the official Society for the Reconstruction of Lidice (Společnost pro obnovu Lidic) was established to "rebuild Lidice, give a new home to the Lidice women returning from concentration camps, and to their children, and to restore Lidice so that it becomes a permanent symbol of the union of all democratic forces which together built international unity to conquer fascism."⁹ Within the Administrative Committee of the society, Communists occupied most of the leading positions.¹⁰ Probably at the same time, the society's founder, the Ministry of the Interior, also launched a search for the Lidice film footage. The same person directed both the ministry and the society: Communist Václav Nosek, who is known to have led Communist infiltration into police structures in the period between 1945 and 1948. His ministry, together with the Ministry of Defense, also blocked investigations of Czech crimes against the Germans. Throughout his political career, Nosek was the ideological leader of the society, though in the media, the group was usually represented by Secretary-General František Knor and especially by Helena Leflerová, vice chairperson of the Local National Committee in Lidice (Místní národní výbor), a survivor of the former town, and a Communist.

The search for the films was guided by information about who filmed at the place of the tragedy and when. Although a Czech crew filmed at Lidice on June 26, 1942, two weeks after the massacre, according to the diaries of *Aktualita's* cameraman, Čeněk Zahradníček,¹¹ on June 10, the day of the tragedy, National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei/National Socialist German Workers' Party film consultant František Tremel, who was under the command of the Office of the Reichsprotektor, documented events.¹² Tremel died during the liberation, but police discovered in the apartment of his assistant, Miroslav Wágner, an expert in small-gauge film, photos of Wágner and Tremel filming in Lidice and of officers overseeing the destruction. Further searches for the films' hiding place took several months. On December 19, 1945, however, the Ministry of Information,

which registered all media material in Czechoslovakia, received three 16mm films from Police Headquarters: one found in a secret safe in Trembl's office, one found between films gathered by the newly formed film archive, and one found in the barracks of soldiers who were stationed in Lidice during the several-months-long process of its complete extermination.¹³

The Ministry of the Interior quickly decided to use the films to disseminate information about the fate of Lidice so that it would serve as a tragic war memorial. Thus, right at the beginning of January 1946, the Ministry of the Interior was determined to maximize the value of the film.¹⁴ The main protagonists in this process were the Ministry of the Interior, the Society for the Reconstruction of Lidice, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Short Film (Krátký Film), which was the only official film company allowed to shoot newsreels, nonfiction, documentary, and animated films after the nationalization of the Czechoslovak film industry.¹⁵ After January 1946, the film footage from the Lidice tragedy circulated and functioned in a variety of contexts both domestically and internationally, and it is important to follow their movements together if we want to understand the cultural and political significance of the tragedy and its legacy in the postwar years. Some of the footage was used as evidence at the postwar Nazi trials; some was used by foreign film companies for compilation films or by international associations that wanted to exhibit the material in their lecture programs; and some of the footage became part of a broader discussion about an official documentary film about Lidice. All three of these lines of inquiry show that the opinions of the various groups connected with the footage about its possible uses differed quite strongly.

THE DOUBLE FACE OF THE LIDICE FOOTAGE AT THE POSTWAR NAZI TRIALS

The documentary footage from Lidice formed part of the testimony at two postwar Nazi trials in Czechoslovakia. During March and April 1946, the film was used at the trial of K. H. Frank, secretary of state of the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, who, together with Deputy Protector Kurt Daluege, was instrumental in initiating the destruction of Lidice. The fact that the filming even took place was used as one of the arguments in the trial against Karel Pečený, the director of *Aktualita*, to prove his support of the Nazis' violent actions in the protectorate and his voluntary servitude to Nazi orders.

A contemporary description of the film screening at Frank's trial focused mostly on his behavior and described his indifference when he was brought face-to-face with footage of events in Lidice:

Then the courtroom is darkened to project a film about the destruction of Lidice, which was shot mostly by the German, Treml. Horror blows from every part of the film. One can see the burning village and ruined houses and soon Wiesmann [Harald Wiesman—commander of the Gestapo in Kladno, close to Lidice] appears on the screen, in a very good mood, together with a few other SS-men. Other shots show how the Germans take crops, tools and all valuable items from the village. A cry is heard from the auditorium, but Frank remains calm and continues to stare at the screen. When the film shows the village being razed, and when men from the working service raise their buckets and shovels as a form of salute, Frank is even a little excited. Apparently he is still impressed by Nazi conditioning.¹⁶

Such rhetoric in the press illustrates the strong antipathy toward Germany that Czechs continued to feel after the war. The trials of Nazi criminals symbolized for Czechs a significant turn in their long relationship with Germany, which Czechs considered to be a relationship of oppressed and oppressor.

As the minister of justice, Prokop Drtina, in a foreword to a book about the trial, stressed, “Usually it was the Germans who executed the Czechs. For the first time in history, the tables have turned.”¹⁷ The screening of the films from Lidice during the trial of K. H. Frank on April 8, 1946, was supplemented on April 13, 1946, by the screening of other documentary materials demonstrating Frank’s criminal behavior and by newsreels and documentary footage of Nazi parades, with footage of the Terezín ghetto and of the exhumation of mass graves in Přerov, Bohosudov, and Fojtovice.¹⁸ Films at the trial were considered to be “documents of Nazi ferocity and depravity” that illustrated the extent of German guilt. At the same time, the images of the evil perpetrated by the Germans on the Czechs could also function as a defense of the Czech attitude toward the Germans after the war:

[Film] is a very important witness which also gives an understanding of the guilt of Germans in Czechoslovakia to those observers from abroad who perhaps could not fully get to the root of these problems in such a short time, and who are now recognizing that Czechoslovakia could not settle with the Germans other than by fulfillment of their fondest desires, embodied in the password “Heim ins Reich” (“Go Home to the Empire/Reich”).¹⁹ And, of course, it is also evidence of the guilt of K. H. Frank, who was personified as a symbol of Nazi perversion.²⁰

This type of argument prevailed across the political spectrum and, as we shall see, strongly supported the campaign of the postwar persecution of Germans, led mainly by Václav Nosek.

The Lidice films also formed part of the prosecution of Czech Karel Pečený, director of *Aktualita*, whose trial for collaborating with the Germans started on February 28, 1947, yet they did not play a determining role in its outcome. The reason was the contradictory information given by the cameramen who were involved in the filming of Lidice on June 26, 1942. In their testimonies, Jan Kučera and Čeněk Zahradníček supplied different information about the circumstances of the shooting and, in particular, about who gave them the command for this action and whether Pečený knew about or was involved in it. Though Čeněk Zahradníček stated that he had received information about the shooting at an unknown location, which turned out to be Lidice, from Pečený. Jan Kučera, shown to be Pečený's close associate and protégé during the trial, tried to defend the accused by claiming that he himself had obtained the information from X. E. Lampl, at that time the so-called *Betreuer* or trustee in *Aktualita*, a German officer whose job was to oversee the affairs of the company.²¹ Kučera also claimed that the Germans considered films from Lidice to be of particular interest and did not intend for them to be used in newsreels or public screenings. As both Kučera and Zahradníček were filmed by the German crew and were identified thanks to the German films, it is apparent that Kučera was not the author of films screened at court with K. H. Frank and thus that footage by *Aktualita* remains undiscovered.²²

For different reasons and under different circumstances, Lidice films functioned in these Nazi trials as an important mediator of postwar Czech–German relations. During the trial of Pečený, the films from Lidice helped to reveal different types of filmmakers' relations to German authority during the protectorate as well as relations between workers in the newsreel company and the everyday organization of shooting under the supervision of a *Betreuer*. At the trial of K. H. Frank, the films took on a broader political meaning. Rather than the director of the film company, it was Frank, the secretary of state, for a long time one of the most influential people in the country and one who unsuccessfully sought to gain the privileged position of protector, who was judged. As a much better known and more exposed personality, Frank served as the lightning rod for the more general problems of Czech–German relations, and films screened during the trial were openly understood as a defense of Czechoslovakia's expulsion of Germans from the Sudetenland after the war.

NOT TRAGIC ENOUGH

The quick response by the Ministry of the Interior after the discovery of the Lidice films in January 1946 illustrates its desire that the films be utilized as soon as possible. In Lidice, Václav Nosek saw a symbol of major significance. On January 25, 1946, the Ministry of the Interior sent a letter of request to the Ministry of Information asking that it produce new copies of the films and make them available to the public both inside Czechoslovakia and in the border areas. "Given the seriousness of the documentary qualities of these films, the Ministry of the Interior requests no modifications to the film other than accompanying words and an introduction, and requests that this adjustment will be made in understanding with the Ministry of the Interior (Department for Political Reports) and the Local National Committee in Lidice,"²³ both institutions controlled by Nosek. The letter illustrates how the ministry sought to maintain the original form of the film documentaries as much as possible and to promote their wide distribution in Czechoslovakia, both in the inner parts of the country and in the Sudetenland, a region with strong links to Germany.

These specific requirements by the Ministry of the Interior reflect the importance that the ministry attached to the found films and the role the ministry felt the films should perform in postwar society. By distributing the footage in a nearly unmediated form within this wide territory, the government used film to support its campaign to legitimize the expulsion of Germans, which had been carried out chaotically and forcibly in summer 1945.²⁴ Spring 1946 was at the same time a period of preparation for the controversial law "on the legality of actions connected with the struggle to recover the liberty of the Czechs and Slovaks," which the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of National Defense (Ludvík Svoboda—*independent inclining to the Communist Party*), and the Ministry of Justice (Prokop Drtina—*National Socialists*) would oversee.²⁵ The aim of this law was to legitimize the massive postwar "settlement of accounts" with Nazi traitors and collaborators, which was a part of the "right retribution" committed by the Czech population. It established a legal basis for all acts "contributing to the fight to recover the liberty of the Czechs and Slovaks or which went to the fair retribution for the crimes of the occupiers and their accomplices." Under this law, such acts were legal, even if they could be considered criminal under other laws.²⁶

The Ministry of the Interior's desire for rapid deployment of this film footage did not interfere with the Ministry of Information's function of controlling cinematography and, thus, the distribution of film copies. The Ministry of Information, however, applied different policies for the use of the films in Czechoslovakia and abroad. At the beginning

of 1946, the Ministry of Information permitted the loan of the film for the British commemorative campaign *Lidice Shall Live* and arranged loans with Czechoslovak embassies abroad as well as with places that had renamed themselves Lidice to commemorate the fate of the village. A campaign to support Lidice abroad developed strong support and had the greatest response in Britain, the headquarters of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile. In the mining region of North Staffordshire, a collection was organized to help Lidice and to establish an association to support the reconstruction of the village. From September 1942, the Lidice Shall Live Committee, with a number of regional branches, actively organized ancillary activities for postwar recovery.²⁷ Renowned documentary Humphrey Jennings shot *The Silent Village* (1943) as part of the UK Crown Film Unit-produced *Why We Fight* series in cooperation with the exiled Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It commemorated Lidice and the British role in its reconstruction.²⁸ Foreign support for Lidice was also manifested by a huge wave of cities, streets, and squares being renamed and also children being named or renamed after the destroyed village. Demonstrations of support were also displayed in literature, music, and other works of art created to protest against the events in Lidice.²⁹ In addition to this show of support in Britain, similar movements also appeared in the United States, with activities by the Lidice Lives Committee, and in Latin America.³⁰

However, despite the intense international support for the victims of Lidice, audiences outside of Czechoslovakia did not always react in ways that the government had expected. Reports of film screenings that Short Film received from Britain, for example, indicate that foreign audiences were accustomed to seeing authentic footage of war violence and considered the footage of Lidice to be “lukewarm” because it did not show the inhumanity of the Germans in graphic detail. “The film captures the fire and destruction of Lidice and shows a little village, poorly localized, which could have been adapted from any war newsreel and from any country.”³¹ During the war, the press had provided such vivid descriptions of the brutality in Lidice that the audience “expected a far greater tragedy than this, the likes of which it became accustomed to in a thousand variations during the war.”³² If it can be assumed that the part of the footage currently stored in the National Film Archive is what was exhibited in Britain, one can infer that the “lukewarm” reactions to the film stem from the fact that it merely documents the disposal of buildings and, with the exception of two still photos of dead men in Lidice, does not explicitly show the suffering of the people.

The wartime and postwar reactions to the event were therefore very different. For audiences outside Continental Europe, the story of Lidice was familiar, and its power was not viewed as tragically after the liberation as it was during the war, when so

many communities expressed their support. In Czechoslovakia, by contrast, the events of Lidice ranked among key national traumas and were considered as evidence of war cruelty in the protectorate. This experience from foreign exhibition, along with concerns about the effect of this footage on audiences inside Czechoslovakia, led to the development of different strategies for using the film footage of Lidice in short film production in postwar Czechoslovakia.

Even if foreign audiences considered the documentary films about Lidice to be more neutral in tone, for the domestic audience, they held strong emotional significance. Nosek's Ministry of the Interior and Society for the Reconstruction of Lidice played a dominant role in debates about the symbolic significance of Lidice. These debates were influenced by the postwar anti-German sentiments discussed earlier, by contemporary notions of "good" documentary film, and by the need for a dignified symbol of war atrocities. According to all institutions participating in the negotiations on the use of Lidice footage after the war, the lack of emotion with which the footage of Lidice was accepted in Britain could not be expected among Czech audiences. In terms of what the reaction would be in Czechoslovakia and how to use the footage properly, the ideas of these institutions, however, differed remarkably.

HOW TO CREATE A NATIONAL SYMBOL

The Ministry of the Interior believed that the effect on Czech audiences of seeing the evidence of suffering of their own people would be to fan the flame of anti-German sentiment and create a justification for Czech postwar violence against the Germans. The Ministry of Information was not so sure about the impact of watching unedited material. Being cautious, it asked Short Film for an opinion and received not only a report about the reception of the found footage at nontheatrical screenings in Britain but expressions of other concerns that resulted in recommendations for a different approach.³³

On March 23, 1946, a meeting occurred that included a representative from the Ministry of Information (Josef Plíva), a representative of the Society for the Reconstruction of Lidice (František Knor), representatives of the Ministry of the Interior (Pešek, Šíma), and representatives of Short Film (Karel Kohout, Jiří Lehovec), as well as the directors František Sádek and Miroslav Hubáček. The discussion revealed that the majority of participants considered the film footage that had been found to be "weak" because "we have no images such as murdering and setting fire" but only "a burned village, ruins and smoldering."³⁴ Yet all agreed on the need to make a film that would prevent any interference with the material currently available. They decided, therefore, to look for other

materials that would be more convincing, and to search for and add other documentary film footage, including footage of the postwar trial of K. H. Frank. Film director František Šádek was given the task of following these guidelines and developing the first version of a script. During spring 1946, Šádek consulted with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in June, he put forward a proposal for a “film about the destruction and reconstruction of Lidice.”

Šádek’s proposal recommended that events in Lidice be put into the broader historical context of Nazi rule in the protectorate and that the film unabashedly demonize the characters of Protector Konstantin von Neurath and his successor Reinhard Heydrich. “It is Heydrich—the sadistic monster with an elongated face and cool fish eyes. He then has to introduce German policy in the Czech lands. He is excellently prepared. The bloody trail stretches all over the countries through which he has already passed.”³⁵ Šádek described the Lidice events as “the most terrible crime in history: an act that revealed the true face of the Germans,” reminding people of the protest movements and manifestations all over the world and postwar efforts to return the displaced women and children to Lidice, all of which confirm that “Lidice will live.”³⁶

On the basis of the ministries’ comments about the proposal, Šádek turned the idea into a detailed script that was based on the information gained from the found footage. In addition to the material from Lidice, Šádek wanted to use war newsreels, footage from foreign movements and British supporting activities, and postwar footage documenting early recovery work in the village and the life of the women and children who had returned. There are several significant elements in the way that Šádek intended to deal with the found footage. First, his selection and editing of the footage demonstrate that he wanted to highlight the evil perpetrated by the Nazis in the protectorate. Šádek used shots of a cannon directed from the castle where a Nazi flag is flying down toward the city that “is shrouded in smoke” and over which “hang heavy clouds.”³⁷ In the notes about the music, he mentions that the score should work with a repeated motif to support the mood of terror. Second, Šádek also wanted to highlight the human victims of Nazi rule in the protectorate, who were missing in the found footage of Lidice, by using circumstantial evidence, such as information on executions or lists of the executed, in both the images and the commentary. Third, he tried to strengthen the human dimension of the Lidice tragedy. One significant sequence would be a succession of photographs of the dead, both in long shots reflecting the massive dimension of the crime and in closer shots that illustrated the Nazis’ cruelty. Examples of personal items lost among the ruins (a cot, toys, a dead dog on a chain) were prevalent in Šádek’s selection of footage from Lidice. Finally, Šádek aimed to establish a contrast between the tragic events of 1942



Figure 1. “Examples of personal items lost among the ruins (a cot, toys, a dead dog on a chain) were prevalent in Sádek’s selection of footage from *Lidice*.” Copyright Czech National Film Archive.

and the postwar situation in the town by showing contemporary life in Lidice as one of happiness, using footage of women and children playing.

Despite this extensive preparation, including gathering diverse photographic and film materials and writing a detailed script, Sádek’s film *Lidice* (or *Lidice Will Live*) was not produced—to the great displeasure of the Ministry of the Interior. The obstacle to the realization of the film proved to be the Central Dramaturgy of Short Film, which concluded that the film footage of the destruction of Lidice could be used only as a part of a film that was more focused on postwar reconstruction. After complaints by the Ministry of the Interior that this could have been discussed before Sádek began working on the project, Dramaturgy reaffirmed its opinion:

The film must not only show the burning of Lidice, but, mainly, the work on and planning of the construction of the new Lidice. We believe that you will understand our position and that you will supplement the existing documentary material, which you have partly prepared for us, by new material to ensure the success of the film, which will be shot next year, in a form that Lidice deserves and we all want.³⁸

The Ministry of the Interior continued to insist on the need for early release of the film and pointed out that the reports on the screenings at the Nuremberg trials and the trial of K. H. Frank had already caught the public's attention. In accordance with its own interests in the anti-Nazi campaign and the expulsion of Germans from the Czech borderlands, the ministry wanted the film to "constantly remind people of the crime in Lidice" and make it "a permanent warning at a time of its greatest urgency."³⁹ According to the Ministry of the Interior, Sáddek's script created an inspiring symbol of Lidice, and it urged that the film be completed as soon as possible.

Despite the ministry's insistence, however, Short Film responded at the beginning of 1947 that it had completely excluded the film about Lidice from its production plans, but it said the project might be added back into the schedule as the work on the restoration of the village progressed.⁴⁰ In a letter to the ministry, Elmar Klos, director of Short Film, expressed his own vision of how the film could function as a symbol: "This material could be used in a documentary film only if the German inhumanity could be shown in its true light, as a crime, which was, in their eyes, legal and officially announced. Then Lidice could become a real symbol. But to make it a symbol, the film must show the resurrection—the new Lidice. . . . Presently the film does not have any logical conclusion."⁴¹ Klos argued here as a filmmaker who wants even a political film to adhere to certain conventions of dramatic structure. Thus a conflict over the use of the footage and the symbolic significance of Lidice emerged. The Ministry of the Interior and the society wanted to use the film and events in Lidice as a reminder of German atrocities and to support the prosecution of war criminals. Elmar Klos and Short Film preferred to stress postwar efforts to reconstruct the town and to present Lidice as a symbol of resurrection. When reconstruction efforts in Lidice stalled, the film project could not be completed.⁴²

Despite the fact that Sáddek's Lidice project was never completed, a film labeled "preparatory film *Lidice, a Czech village*" (translated) has been preserved in the collections of the National Film Archive in Prague. Its author is listed as František Sáddek, and most likely this material was compiled in spring 1946 and was intended to serve the original vision of the Ministry of the Interior, namely, to present to the public unedited footage of the events at Lidice. The film is silent and is accompanied by Czech intertitles. Although one of the intertitles claims that the director shaped the original material only minimally, a comparison with the original reels that were discovered by the police, and which are also kept in the archive, shows that in this version of the film, Sáddek composed images and juxtaposed shots to awaken strong emotional responses. He selected images of personal objects—beds, crockery, a sewing machine—that were



Figure 2. “He selected images of personal objects—beds, crockery, a sewing machine—that were scattered throughout the original footage and edited them into one sequence that provokes a sense of loss.” Copyright Czech National Film Archive.



Figure 3. "He also organized shots of SS soldiers and explosions into a shot-countershot sequence that alternated shots of explosions with shots of smiling Germans so that, as he later wrote in the script, their 'satisfaction,' 'chuckles,' and 'triumphant gestures' became apparent." Copyright Czech National Film Archive.

scattered throughout the original footage and edited them into one sequence that provokes a sense of loss. He also organized shots of SS soldiers and explosions into a shot–countershot sequence that alternated shots of explosions with shots of smiling Germans so that, as he later wrote in the script, their “satisfaction,” “chuckles,” and “triumphant gestures” became apparent.⁴³ Some intertitles use emotional language, such as “pack of Gestapo agents” or “German murderers.” The project’s aim to make Lidice a symbol is shown in the plea “to keep the events of Lidice in our memory and hearts” and in the closing title, “Lidice will live.”

This preparatory film, however, led down a blind alley. In the next few years, the topic of Lidice disappeared from Short Film’s production plans but then reappeared among its priorities in 1949, in Jaroslav Veselý’s film *We Are Building Lidice* (*Budujeme Lidice*). This film, however, omitted the original footage entirely and captured only the postwar reconstruction and its results, a focus that Short Film’s Klos believed was essential if Lidice was to continue to have symbolic significance in the postwar era. In this film, the postwar reconstruction of Lidice is more prominent in the narrative than the 1942 massacre. The story follows a student, Lída, who walks around the places where the school, the church, and other buildings of the town once stood. Lída is briefly reminded of Lidice’s tragic history from what she sees inside a display cabinet, but she is more interested in current efforts to rebuild the town and actively participates in manual work to do so. In the 1949 film, the focus is thus on the reconstruction and recovery of Lidice rather than on creating a memento of the earlier tragedy.

Other films of Lidice, of course, followed, often timed with anniversaries of the 1942 event. In 1952, Antonín Görlich made *Lidice Never Again* (*Již nikdy Lidice*), and in 1957, Jindřich Ferenc directed *Lidice Live* (*Lidice žijí*). Three films were released in the early 1960s: *The Ballad of a Child* (*Balada o dítěti*, Ladislav Rychman, 1961), *Lidice Warns* (*Lidice varují*, Jindřich Ferenc, 1962), and *The Distance from the Center* (*Vzdálenost od středu*, Bohumil Sobotka, 1962). Their common feature, however, remained the tendency to commemorate the events of Lidice, not through actual documentary footage, but through a reenactment or a fictional narrative, along the same lines as Jennings’s *The Silent Village* or Fred Zinneman’s *The Search* (1948). This Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer feature film is about a displaced Czech mother looking for her son, also an Auschwitz survivor. Screenwriters Richard Schweizer and David Wechsler won the 1949 Academy Award for Best Writing, Motion Picture Story. Most of these films did not use the surviving documentary footage at all, but those that did used the identical sequence of explosions and a few shots of the ruins mostly to summarize the tragedy. Thus only these few shots became an iconic memento of the Lidice tragedy.⁴⁴

The handling of the found footage in these later Czech films reduced the significance of the 1942 events in Lidice to quotations or brief illustrations, which, presented without context, could not lead to a new understanding of Lidice but only confirm its already established significance. The concept of Lidice as a symbol had already appeared in postwar debates about how to use film documentation of its destruction, and to a large extent, it also regulated this debate's flow. Institutions entering into the debate all defended their own interests, wanting to use the symbol for different purposes and therefore putting different meanings into it. The most active negotiator, the Ministry of the Interior, called for the presentation of the film footage in its authentic form as soon as possible, because it targeted the home audience in an attempt to sustain strongly anti-German sentiment at the time of the legalization of Czech violence against the German population after the liberation. The Ministry of Information shared this view. Short Film wanted a film that could be distributed both at home and abroad and argued that although the domestic audience could readily identify with national traumas in any given form, a foreign audience already familiar with news accounts of the tragedy expected a real tragedy and a critical, not elegiac, assessment of the event.

At the beginning, in October 1947, the rather passive Society for the Reconstruction of Lidice gave its first independent statement about the original footage of Lidice's tragedy in reaction to a request for these materials for a public exhibition by an organization called Czechoslovak Social Help (Československá sociální pomoc). The statement raised broader questions about the ethical dimensions of the use of footage shot by enemy troops during wartime. According to the society, it was not appropriate to use the footage shot on a German order and for German purposes and to compile it into a national "monument." "A film about the destruction of Lidice would be unsuitable for public screening, as it was taken by Nazis for their purposes, and, as such, it did not capture the true extent of the Lidice tragedy."⁴⁵

By examining these contrasting views about the use of the found footage of events in Lidice, we see the emergence of intersecting and sometimes competing ideas about the role of documentary film in postwar Czechoslovakia. By emphasizing timeliness and by warning that the documentary film would lose its value if it were modified, the Ministry of the Interior defended the nature of documentary as reportage, a visual record that gains meaning because of its proximity to events. In the postwar era, the immediacy of documentary reports seemed like a welcome contrast to the manipulative rhetoric of war newsreels. Their authenticity and depictions of material events appealed to audiences eager to escape the mythic exaggerations of the Nazi era. In the late 1940s, other kinds of short films tried to look like documentary reports by including a

character of a reporter and claiming that topics were selected based on suggestions sent by spectators. This framework is used, for example, in *Village at the Crossroads* (*Vesnice na rozcestí*, Miloš Makovec, 1947), *The Mirror* (*Zrcadlo*, Drahošlav Holub, 1948), and *Czechs and Slovaks* (*Češi a Slováci*, Miroslav Lang, 1947), though it is more of a rhetorical framework and did not correspond to actual shooting conditions.

Other kinds of postwar film production exhibited the approach to current events advocated by Short Film in its study of the Lidice footage: an idea of a documentary that serves society as a civic-educational tool and represents postwar Czechoslovakia as a democracy heading toward socialism.⁴⁶ The social service here would have not only taken the form of objective information on issues of audience interest but also promoted civic-educational models recommended by the state. Lidice's legacy became one of the key points on the agenda of Nosek's Ministry of the Interior. The ministry's ideas and interests, however, clashed with contemporary conceptions of documentary film, as shown in the reaction by Short Film, which requested a stronger update on the whole topic. The reconstruction of Lidice, however, proceeded slowly, and there was little to record on film. The idea of a more permanent, stylized symbol of Lidice, held by Short Film, was later also supported by the Society for the Reconstruction of Lidice. The solution of the whole dispute, although it meant that no film would be realized, was nonetheless driven by a fundamental ethical-nationalist argument, revealing an immersion of postwar Czechoslovak society in the unresolved question of Czech–German relations and the appropriate way to represent the history of those relations on film.

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NOTES

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Ls 1527/46" (Special People's Court, K. H. Frank); third, the State Regional Archives in Kladno, collection Společnost pro obnovu Lidic (Society for the Reconstruction of Lidice); and fourth, the National Film Archive, collection of filmmaker Čeněk Zahradníček. Czech archival sources (and all collections used in this research) are organized in boxes and files. I used Czech abbreviations because translations of official names would be misleading.

1. Vojtěch Kyncl, *Bez výčitek: Genocida Čechů po atentátu na Reinharda Heydricha* [Without remorse: Genocide of Czechs after the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich] (Prague: Historický ústav, 2012).
2. National Archives in Prague (NA), collection of the Ministry of Information (MI), box 177, file Filmy krátké L [Short Films L], subfile Film o Lidicích [Film about Lidice]. Zpráva kriminalistů o výsledcích pátrání po lidických filmech [report on the results of investigation after Lidice movies], January 30, 1946.
3. Radka Šustrová, "Ve jménu Říše a českého národa: Veřejné manifestace po atentátu na Reinharda Heydricha" [In the name of the Empire and the Czech nation: Public rallies after the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich], *Paměť a dějiny* [Memory and history] 6, no. 2 (2012): 48–59. For more about the issue of "Nazification of Czechs as Czechs," see Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).
4. "Týdeníky" [Newsreels], *Filmový kurýr* [Film courier], June 8, 1942, 5.
5. "Týdeníky" [Newsreels], *Filmový kurýr* [Film courier], June 12, 1942, 5.
6. State Regional Archives in Prague (SOA Praha), Mimořádný lidový soud Praha, Karel Pečený, Ls 521/48, box 812, file No. 1-79. "Hlavní líčení—Trestní věc proti Karlu Pečenému" [The trial—Criminal case against Karel Pečený], February 28, 1947.
7. Miroslav Čvančara and Jaroslav Čvančara, "Film žalobcem" [Film as prosecutor], *Kmeny* [Tribes], June 8, 1989.
8. NA, Ministerstvo vnitra—referát "L" [Ministry of Interior—department "L"], box 2, file C 6107. Prohlášení o obnově Lidic [statement on the renewal of Lidice].
9. Zákon č. 187/1946 Sb [Law No. 187/1946].
10. The Society for the Reconstruction of Lidice (SPOL) was chaired by the minister of the interior, Václav Nosek (Communist Party/CP); vice chairs were Josef David (National Socialist), Ladislav Kopřiva (CP), František Kropáč (CP), and Helena Leflerová (CP). František Knor (CP) became secretary-general. State Regional Archives in Kladno (SOA Kladno), SPOL, box 2, file 295.
11. National Film Archive (NFA), Zahradníček, Čeněk, box 1, file 4, I/C. Kapesní kalendář s rukopisnými poznámkami 1942 [pocket calendar with handwritten notes 1942].
12. NA, MI, box 177, file Filmy krátké L, subfile Film o Lidicích. Zpráva kriminalistů o výsledcích pátrání po lidických filmech [report on the results of investigation after Lidice movies], January 30, 1946.
13. Ibid.
14. NA, MI, box 177, file Filmy krátké L, subfile Film o Lidicích. Film o

Lidicích, shrnující dopis Ministerstva vnitra Ministerstvu informací [movie about Lidice, summarizing letter of the Ministry of Interior to Ministry of Information], February 4, 1947.

15. Jiří Havelka, Československé filmové hospodářství [Czechoslovak film business] (Prague: Český filmový ústav [Czech Film Institute], 1970).

16. Český národ soudí K. H. Franka [Czech nation judges K. H. Frank] (Prague: Ministerstvo informací [Ministry of Information], 1946), 105.

17. Ibid., 8.

18. A number of other films were screened during the K. H. Frank trial. On Saturday, April 13, 1946, there was a montage of Czech newsreel *Aktualita's* footage depicting Frank during festive occasions, supplemented by evidence of subversive and treasonous activities of Germans in Czechoslovakia in the First Republic; films documenting the exhumation of victims from the May revolution in Prerov (where Frank gave the command to murder); film documenting the opening of mass graves of victims of the death march in Bohusudov and Fojtovice; documentary footage of the Small Fortress in Terezín; and a montage of excerpts from foreign newsreels documenting concentration camps in Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. Among the films shown were also those confiscated by the Nazis and documenting their training and other activities (training *Sudentendeutsche Freikorps*, festive parades, etc.). SOA Praha, Mimořádný lidový soud Praha, K. H. Frank, Ls 1527/46. Digital version, 2708–10.

19. *Reich* was commonly used as a shortened term for the Third German Reich (Third German Empire, or Nazi Germany).

20. Český národ soudí K. H. Franka [Czech nation judges K. H. Frank] (Prague: Ministerstvo informací [Ministry of Information], 1946), 112–13.

21. SOA Praha, Mimořádný lidový soud Praha, Karel Pečený, Ls 521/48, box 812, file No. 1-79. “Hlavní líčení—Trestní věc proti Karlu Pečenému” [The trial—Criminal case against Karel Pečený], April 28, 1947.

22. Ibid.

23. SOA Kladno, SPOL, box 18, file 74, I/7. Filmy o zničení Lidic—předání ministerstvu informací [films about the destruction of Lidice—delivery to the Ministry of Information].

24. For more about the expulsion of the Germans from Czechoslovakia, see Adrian von Arburg and Tomáš Staněk, eds., *Vysídlení Němců a proměny českého pohraničí, 1945–1951* [Displacement of Germans and transformation of Czech borderlands, 1945–1951] (Středokluky: Susa, 2010).

25. Zákon č. 115/1946 Sb. [Act No. 115/1946]. Zákon o právnosti jednání souvisejících s bojem o znovunabytí svobody Čechů a Slováků [act on the legality of actions connected to the struggle to recover the liberty of the Czechs and Slovaks]. See <http://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1946-115>.

26. Ibid.

27. *Lidice Shall Live* (London: Czechoslovak-British Friendship Club, 1942).

28. For more about this project, see Wendy Webster, “The Silent Village: The GPO Unit Goes to War,” in *The Projection of Britain: A History of the GPO Film Unit*, ed. Scott Anthony and James G. Marshall, 263–71 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

29. Eva Pluhařová-Grigienė, “Lidice-Ikonographie: Der Gedächtnisort Lidice und seine bildliche Repräsentation in der sozialistischen Tschechoslowakei,”

in *Zerstörer des Schweigens: Formen künstlerischer Erinnerung an die nationalsozialistische Rassen- und Vernichtungspolitik in Osteuropa*, ed. Frank Grüner, Urs Heftrich, and Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, 479–94 (Cologne, Germany: Böhlman, 2006).

30. Nicolas G. Balint, *Lidice Lives Forever* (New York: Europa Books, 1942).

For thorough documentation of US support activities, see SOA Kladno, SPOL, box 127, file 572, 0.41.

31. SOA Kladno, SPOL, box 18, file 74, I/7. Dopis Elmara Klose Ministerstvu informací [Elmar Klos to the Ministry of Information], February 26, 1947.

32. Ibid.

33. SOA Kladno, SPOL, box 18, file 74, I/7. Dopis Elmara Klose Ministerstvu informací [Elmar Klos to the Ministry of Information], February 26, 1947.

34. NA, MI, box 177, file Filmy krátké L, subfile Film o Lidicích. Zápis o schůzce týkající se krátkého filmu o Lidicích [minutes of the meeting about a short film about Lidice], March 21, 1946.

35. NA, MI, box 177, file Filmy krátké L, subfile Film o Lidicích. Lidice. Námet krátkého filmu o zkáze a znovuoobnovení Lidic [film treatment about the destruction and restoration of Lidice]. František Sádek, Prague, 1946.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. SOA Kladno, SPOL, box 18, file 74, I/7. Dopis Elmara Klose Ministerstvu informací [Elmar Klos to the Ministry of Information], February 26, 1947.

39. NA, MI, box 177, file Filmy krátké L, subfile Film o Lidicích. Film o Lidicích, shrnující dopis Ministerstva vnitra Ministerstvu informací [movie about Lidice, a summarizing letter from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Information], February 4, 1947.

40. SOA Kladno, SPOL, box 18, file 74, I/7. Dopis Elmara Klose Ministerstvu informací [Elmar Klos to the Ministry of Information], February 26, 1947.

41. Ibid.

42. Pavla Štěpánková, "Společnost pro obnovu Lidic (1945) 1946–1959" [Society for the Reconstruction of Lidice (1945) 1946–1959], master's thesis, Masarykova univerzita [Masaryk University], 2006.

43. The script is deposited in the National Archive's collections: NA, MI, box 177, file Filmy krátké L, subfile Film o Lidicích.

44. Nicole Brenez defines five types of reuse of found footage in montage and compilation film, namely, elegiac, critical, structural, material, and analytical. Elegiac, according to her, is mostly used for the fetishization of a certain symbol. Nicole Brenez, "Cartographie du Found Footage," http://lucdall.free.fr/workshops/IAV07/documents/found-footage_n_brenez.pdf.

45. SOA Kladno, SPOL, box 18, file 74, I/7. Korespondence ředitele Společnosti pro obnovu Lidic, Františka Knora, různým institucím [correspondence from František Knor, the director of the Society for the Reconstruction of Lidice, to various institutions], 1947.

46. Miroslav Bartoš, "O tak řečený kulturní film" [For a so-called cultural film], *Masarykův lid* [Masaryk's people] 14, no. 1 (1945): 10–11. Jan Kučera, "Jde o krátký film" [It's all about a short film], *Svět práce* 1, no. 5 (1945): 13. Jiří Weiss, "Krátký film—umění nebo propaganda?" [Short film—art or propaganda], *Kulturní politika* [Cultural politics] 1, no. 6 (1945): 5.