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Course Paper

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*Czech Peace*: Klusák and Remunda's revival

*Czech Peace* (2010) continues the legacy of Vít Klusák and Filip Remunda following their joint directorial debut of *Czech Dream* in 2004 which reflects the Czech state of societal affairs at the time: The Czech Republic's joining of the European Union. In the case of *Czech Peace*, Klusák and Remunda again focus on the state of Czech society, this time in connection with a proposed United States radar base in the Czech Republic's Brdy military zone, and the accompanying government campaign to encourage popular favor. Just as *Czech Dream* paralleled the pro-European Union campaign by the government, *Czech Peace* documents the pro-radar campaign by the same government, though this time the campaign has even less of a purpose, since there will be no referendum vote on the subject. The documentary introduces itself as a "comedy about radar" and tries to breach the subject in a humorous manner, relaying the opinions of both proponents and protesters (though focusing positively on the opinions of the protestors). With respect to *Czech Dream*, Klusák and Remunda's second round can be seen as an attempt to overcome the negative criticism that the hoax entailed; the directors put themselves at a much farther distance from the action, they focus on satire of Americans, politicians, and the military rather than Czech civilians, and they positively portray a view held by 65% of Czech citizens (although this number continuously changes throughout the course of the film).

In direct contrast to *Czech Dream*, Klusák and Remunda make only one visual appearance in *Czech Peace*, and it is not in relation to any of the film's action, they are simply holding up Czech and American flags. However, the pair does constantly remind the audience, still, that they are watching a film highly influenced by the media: they consistently show protests, meetings, the military, etc. and pan back to show other cameramen, reporters, and journalists who are documenting events just like the film is. Additionally, whenever the film shows a news broadcast, the broadcast is shown from beyond the television: the television set can be seen just as if the audience were watching it at home. In this way, Klusák and Remunda are showing media involvement in the radar base, but are classifying themselves as non-media. In *Czech Dream*, their hoax paralleled the government's campaign, but this time they don't have such an agenda. They put themselves in the same position as the viewers of their film (aware of the "real" media around them), and make the statement that they are only documenting events, and do not take part, as they did with their hypermarket hoax.

Nonetheless, the directors still do become part of the action when it is necessary to make a point, and ironically one of these points is to acknowledge *Czech Dream*. When lobbyist Tomáš Klvaňa, government spokesperson for the Missile Defense System in the Czech Republic, invites three Czech celebrities to publicly support the radar base, he asks them to take a picture in front of one of the government issued signs about the base (another use of media in the film is for Klvaňa to acknowledge that he is aware of the cameras watching his campaign and acts accordingly). Klvaňa tells the men about Klusák and Remunda to acknowledge the media once again, and remind the audience that the two were responsible for *Czech Dream*. So, *Czech Peace* doesn't attempt to overshadow the pair's involvement in a hoax that tricked 5,000 Czech citizens, but will still attempt to bring Czech opinion back in their favor - and therein lies another

reason for distancing themselves from the action (so as to not repeat history) (Stojanova). This moment with Klvaňa also serves as a nod to the comedy of the film, as the four men joke that this film will be about a fake radar base as the last was about a fake hypermarket, with Klvaňa quickly correcting that of course it will not (though in the end, it very much is).

There are several other notable instances where Klusák and Remunda's crew become a part of the action. One of these is another moment where Klvaňa talks to the film crew, in the United States Missile Defense Agency, saying that they can only do some environment shots before a Czech-U.S. meeting before the crew is escorted from the room. A similar instance occurs when one of the directors is running through the woods at the Brdy military zone back to the Peaceland (Greenpeace created) nation, alerting the other protestors that the police are hiding and ready to "escort" the protestors out. Additionally, the camera is kept on during their "escort" off the premises, showing the unnecessary brutality of the military force. These two instances serve many purposes: to (once again) distance Klusák and Remunda from the "villains" of the story, to make fun of Klvaňa, the military, and the Czech government, and also to place Klusák and Remunda firmly on the side of the protestors, which is on the side of the majority of Czech citizens.

This satire that makes the film a "comedy about radar" (as it is introduced) continues with another instance of the film crew becoming involved in the story. As they head to the White House press conference, they learn from the White House Staff which types of cameras are allowed in the Oval Office. Seemingly, the type of camera doesn't matter, but "if it's small and silver you won't get into the Oval Office" (*Český mír*). The crew becomes involved in this discussion simply to mock the American rule, which is nonsensical – as long as the camera appears big, black, and expensive, there won't be a problem. This mocking of the United States

shows itself even from the beginning of the film when an arrogant Czech citizen is shown protesting against the protestors of the radar base, praising the United States for all they have done for the Czech Republic. This obnoxious proponent of the radar base, Ivan Martin Jirous, continues to swear and yell at the peaceful protestors, who calmly continue to remind the man to behave nicely, immediately pegging the radar base, the Americans, and anyone who approves of them as the villains of this story. These instances of satire at the expense of Americans serve not only towards the humor of the film, but again to place Klusák and Remunda on the same tier as the Czech populace.

Satire of Americans, however, is not the only way this is achieved and Klusák and Remunda continue the tradition by mocking Czech politicians, and do so on multiple occasions. As the audience already knows that the government plan for the radar base fails, the mocking of this government begins with Klvaňa and Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek popping champagne over a government issued radar-information sign. This minor humor continues throughout the film, but culminates in a few larger jabs. The first is with Klusák and Remunda's homemade music video for the song which Czech Defense Minister Vlasta Parkanová meant to give to George Bush following his visit to the Czech Republic in 2008. The song is entitled "Hello, Stars and Stripes" and is a parody of a "tune from 1961 called Hello Major Gagarin, celebrating the Soviet hero becoming the first man in space" (Willoughby). The video features four dancers in American flag bikinis wearing military hats and sporting machine guns; the lyrics "We still want to live in peace" are sung while the girls fire at one another. The joke of the song speaks for itself, in addition to it being sung to the same tune as a song which praised the Czech's former totalitarian leaders, and speaks even louder being produced by Parkanová.

Protestor Ivona Novomestská helps the film in pointing out the flaws of another Czech politician, Martin Bursík. She asks Bursík why the government is trying to go against what 70% of Czechs want and he responds that “if we only cared about what’s popular with the majority, we’d be a passive, populist government that only responded to what people wanted,” which again, allows the government to mock itself (*Český mír*). As the government is now supposedly a democracy, Bursík’s comments are directly opposed to the definition of that democracy, which is a “government by the people; especially: rule of the majority.” (“Democracy”). Klusák and Remunda appear to only gain luck as the film proceeds, as another opportunity to mock the government’s campaign falls into place on its own. When representatives from the government gather at a talk show to answer questions about the base, a bird is somehow admitted into the audience, and throughout the filming of the representatives’ ridiculous answers to the public’s questions, Klusák and Remunda take advantage of the situation and show the bird pooping on the discussion. (The sheer luck of the situation makes one wonder whether they let the bird in themselves.) In these instances, Klusák and Remunda allow the Czech government to make a fool of themselves, and are there to add these actions to the comedy of their film, but more importantly to spread these actions to the public.

The mocking of all opponents of the Czech majority related to the film is completed with the military, another satire that continues throughout the film, especially with the Czech military police at Brdy who never seem to answer reporters’ questions directly. However, the incompetency of this military force is shown best by the Greenpeace protestors who sneak into the military zone and establish their own nation: Peaceland. The protestors sneak into the military zone and are warned to leave, but no action is taken against them for six weeks. After which, as stated above, the Greenpeace members are forcibly removed by police, with no

explanation as to why they were permitted to stay for such a long period of time in the first place. The most explicit ridicule of the military, however, occurs at the seminar about uniting Czech scientists and Czech companies for the U.S. anti-missile defense system. Klusák and Remunda show a commercial for one of the companies present, Lockheed Martin, and continuously jump cut between this commercial and a shot of a toy American soldier masturbating atop the White House.

The continuous satire in the film at these three main groups is not hid from the viewer and therefore not hidden from those that Klusák and Remunda are trying to convince of their integrity. Though it seems that the comedy aspect of this “comedy about radar” may have largely fallen into their laps, the pair still takes advantage of these situations in a way that places them in the same boat as the viewers. Though *Czech Dream* was supposed to mock the government’s EU campaign, it did so in such a way that focused more on the mocking of Czech people than of the government (which, not to be misunderstood, was also a goal of the film: to show the blatant consumerism that had infected the public) (Stojanova). *Czech Peace*, on the other hand, was a situation that created itself without Klusák or Remunda’s help and thus allowed them to take a more definitive side with that of popular opinion. At a screening of the film, Klusák and Remunda argued that they better presented the radar opponents because “the radar opposition was more responsive” (which is exactly how they were able to take this side) (“The Radar”).

Conversely, one of the audience members “claimed the film supported the radar, adding that it proves the balanced perspective of the filmmakers” (“The Radar”). This argument can be supported by the fact that the two highly-featured people in the film - Jan Neoral (mayor of Trokavec near Brdy) and Tomáš Klvaňa – are the figureheads for the opposing sides of the radar

controversy, and neither one is portrayed in a particularly negative light. Additionally, a prominent comedy moment of the film occurs at the expense of Czech radar protesters as they attempt to chant the “popular 1950s battle cry ‘Ami, go home!’” (meaning “Yankee, go home!”), but they mispronounce the last word, making the chant “Ami, go homen” (Borufka). However, the focus on the comedy of the Czech government’s pro-radar campaign is what makes the film a comedy. Although this balanced interpretation may have been welcomed by the directors in order to appease, and the film does display both sides, the mocking tone which continuously occurs in association with the proponents of the radar (politicians, Americans, and the military) dwarfs this “balanced perspective.”

In spite of this overwhelming satire that occurs throughout the film, *Czech Peace* still struggles for connection between its radar-related events which are scattered across the globe and across multiple years. The film occurs in chronological order but some events are not well introduced, and not well concluded, including many of the anti-radar rallies. This is in direct contrast to *Czech Dream* which follows the chronological fulfillment of the hypermarket hoax, but with the scenes of the film leading into one another. Instead, *Czech Peace* relies on the satire to connect the different sections of the film, as well as some reappearing shots to separate different scenes. One of these reappearing shots is a wall of graffiti with “USA: Terrorists and Thieves,” “Hitler and Bush brothers,” and “We do not want American thieves and murderers of women and children” which is shown juxtaposed with important scenes about the American involvement in the radar base (*Český mír*). Another of these shots is the television set reporting the news to the viewers, which helps in keeping the sequence of events intact.

Klusák and Remunda also include a creative use of repeating jump cuts between related scenes which help the audience make supplementary associations within the film. The first of

which occurs when Neoral stands with various members of his town as they declare that they are against the radar base. After each family stands and declares “Against,” the film cuts back to the proponent of the radar base, Jirous, screaming and swearing in favor of the base. This sequence is obviously meant both to introduce the separate sides of the debate, and to declare the film and the filmmakers as on the side of the opponents: the calm Neoral. This juxtaposition of the two sides continues throughout the film with these continuous cuts between related scenes. For example, another series of cuts occurs between Klvaňa and the three celebrities in favor of the radar base, and Jiri Houska with other Trokavec townsfolk cutting up meat and socializing. When one of the celebrities speaks in favor of the base, the film places his speech over a shot of a chicken, which once again firmly places Klusák and Remunda on the side of the opposition (calling those who approve of the base chickens: afraid to stand up against the U.S.). From this new technique, Klusák and Remunda have obviously developed themselves as filmmakers and are able to deter from the simple chronology of their first documentary, and embrace more intricate methods of storytelling.

*Czech Dream* and *Czech Peace* have more than just their titles in common: both reflect the state of society at the time of their production, both use the current state of society to reflect an overall sentiment about a particular societal group, both document a situation in which the end was never realized, and both document the effects of a government campaign. Even Klusák and Remunda remark that both films make such a similar point - "so much fuss, so much printed paper, so much noise and excitement, all for a chimera" (“America Documentarist”). However, in *Czech Dream* the filmmakers paralleled the government’s European Union campaign with their own campaign for a fake hypermarket, whereas in *Czech Peace*, they simply document this campaign, but parallel the radar base’s significance with a situation that occurs within the film



naturally. The smaller metaphor which is used to symbolize the radar base issue firmly places Klusák and Remunda on the side of the opposition (because they choose to include it in the film). The metaphor unravels after the military police remove the Peaceland citizens from the Brdy military zone. After removing the “hostiles,” the police put in a wire to protect the military zone which is “very rigid and very difficult to cut through” which they believe will be “an effective barrier against being breached” (*Český mír*). Here, Klusák and Remunda once again enter the action to enforce the metaphor being offered; asking a military officer what would happen if a person got stuck in the wire, to which he replies “hard to tell what would happen to someone, [but] in any event, no one should be able to get in” (*Český mír*). Thus, the wire becomes a symbol for the radar base – and even the military doesn’t know what it is capable of, but it should protect the Czech Republic from any attacks (which is the main reason the government says it is campaigning for the radar base: defense). When a Peaceland citizen then tries to get back into the military zone, the police stop him and reporters asked if he will continue to try to get back into his country, and he states that he will and he won’t be the last. When he is asked about the razor wire, he says that “the Iron Curtain used to be here; we’re not afraid of any wire” (*Český mír*). Additionally, Houska (Trokavec citizen) also comes back to try to cross the wire, and, with a lot of effort, he succeeds. Thus, the main reason for the government’s campaign for the radar base is null – no radar system is going to stop an offensive strike if the attacker is persistent. This metaphor’s inclusion in the film and Klusák and Remunda’s direct involvement in pushing the metaphor cement the film’s stance as against the radar.

*Czech Peace* is an attempt by Klusák and Remunda to clear the Czech public’s name and show them standing up for something that they believe in following not only *Czech Dream*, but also the communist regime which reared its head in the Czech Republic until 1989. *Czech Peace*

attempts to nullify the accusation of *Czech Dream* that consumerism had replaced communism by showing that the Czech people are no longer “living within a lie” as Václav Havel had stated – that they are capable of fighting a force which is trying to silence their beliefs. Klusák and Remunda verify this assumption by not only documenting the opposition to the radar base, but by definitively standing by the Czech majority in its decision to do so. In an interview at the Traverse City Film Festival, Klusák and Remunda state that the film shows the importance of citizens being active in a democracy and being involved in issues on a global scale. However, they also state that the film should offer America some kind of “self-reflection” because it is not right for the United States to dictate what democracy is about across the world, and the film is just a small example of this more global issue. Klusák and Remunda’s “comedy about radar” then becomes more than a tale of a small-town mayor fighting for his rights, more than an attempt to overcome the negative criticism of *Czech Dream*, and more than a mockery of the Czech and American political systems, but a lesson for countries across the globe to follow Havel’s advice and not be passive against American forces without reason.

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