

Filip Cenek: After the Assassination (3 fragments)

video (re-edit), 1998, 6:10 mins
black & white, PAL, mono sound

In *After the Assassination (3 fragments)* a two-minute long extraction from the Czechoslovak film *Assassination (Atentát, 1964)* is put through an analytical research which attempts to challenge how our reading and understanding is modified according to which component is given emphasis in a succession of images. This method of research opens up many questions not only concerning authenticity and edit but also the trust and authority that we read into a tale told which simulates and represents reality.

Dialogue Summary

In the longer, first part of the scene we hear the protectorate radio announcing martial law for Bohemia and Moravia after the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. After a dramatic silence one of the assassins shouts: “What are you all looking at?!? It’s not my fault that it backfired. We got him, but I was there for nothing...”

On-line preview: <http://tinyurl.com/p2aekaw>



Notes on the Fragments *After the Assassination**
(term exercise on the theme “the object in motion”)

There is no other way to film than shot by shot (subsequently joining them up). Every fact, every phenomenon is made up of many links which are connected to each other and have a mutual relationship or number of relationships. Understanding a particular event or situation depends on what parts and relationships the observer perceives, how intensively he perceives them and in what order.

The camera makes no distinction between important and unimportant, characteristic and uncharacteristic; it records reality in an egalitarian manner, not distinguishing the necessary from the random. This does not apply to the source material for my work — I begin where Messrs. Sequens (screenplay and direction), Milič (camera) and Chaloupek (editing) left off. I have taken five shots *after the assassination* and examined them**. I have not reedited them; I move continuously (in time and position) across the source by means of an excision, changing the content of the images (meaning and effect) as well as the relationship between them (the “thread”, logical form). A dramatic analysis and synthesis performed by cinematic means has certain laws of its own, which derive to a considerable degree from convention; from how a viewer is accustomed to receive a cinematic work based on many years of experience. Of course, we can alter the laws given by convention, even change them completely. In such a case, what I do will affect even those laws proceeding from factors lying outside the film, from logic.

I do not insist that the rules governing the linking of shots be observed, i.e. that the meaning be clear (a story will always have some kind of meaning). It is not my aim to remove everything inessential from the image, and so focus the viewer’s attention on the main motive. I do not rule out ambiguity, misinterpretation, the prioritization of more secondary elements of information, interference; I do not leave supplementary motives on the secondary plane. The result is three fragments of the same section of the film (recognizable from the soundtrack).

The possibilities are many. In a digitized version of the film, where each pixel of the image compels an intervention (effect), I now purposely say: *restez!*¹ The position “I repeat it as I saw it” (*relata refero*²) is precise, and suits my purposes (finding something old that wasn’t here before); this may just as well be described as happenstance (found along the way).

¹*restez!* in music: a command to remain in the same position

²*relato refero* in Latin: I sell as I bought

fragment: a part, shard, piece; an unfinished work of art

**The Assassination*, a film by Jiří Sequens, Czechoslovakia, 1964

**technically: digitized portion of the film, PC, Adobe After Effects

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