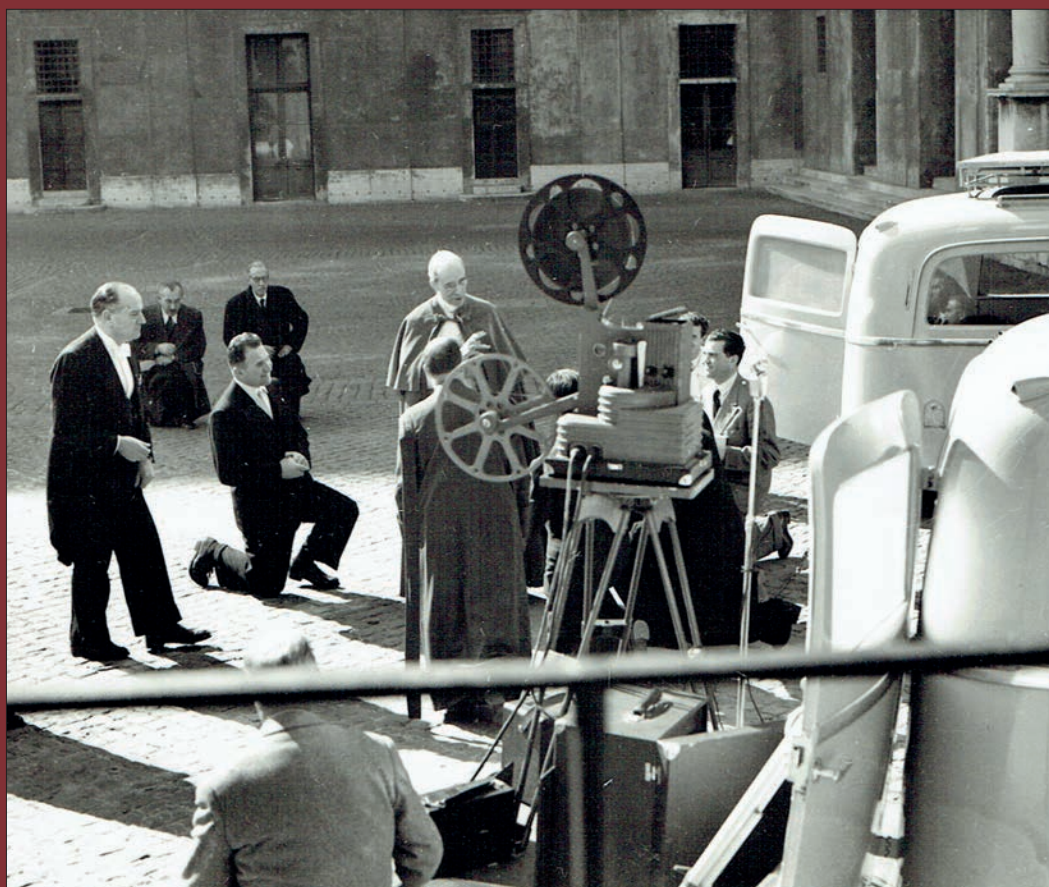
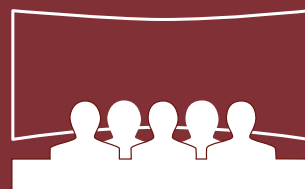


DAVANTI ALLO SCHERMO. I CATTOLICI TRA CINEMA E MEDIA, CULTURA E SOCIETÀ (1940-1970)

A CURA DI ELENA MOSCONI



SCHERMI
STORIE E CULTURE DEL CINEMA
E DEI MEDIA IN ITALIA



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«L'ESERCENTE INDUSTRIALE NON SCOCCI»: MAPPING THE TENSIONS BETWEEN COMMERCIAL AND CATHOLIC EXHIBITION IN POST-WAR ITALY

Daniela Treveri Gennari

Il presente articolo indaga il fenomeno dell'esercizio cinematografico cattolico, in rapporto a quello industriale. L'esercizio cattolico si è sviluppato in Italia sotto la pressione di severe regolamentazioni da parte del CCC, che ha stabilito linee guida su quali film fossero accettati dal Vaticano e quindi potessero essere proiettati in sedi religiose, e dell'ACEC, il cui scopo era non solo garantire supporto legale e amministrativo al circuito degli esercizi cattolici, ma anche controllare le relazioni con il settore commerciale, promuovendo i valori cattolici attraverso la distribuzione di film selezionati. Se, in teoria, il circuito di sale parrocchiali funzionava come mezzo di diffusione di valori morali cattolici attraverso l'intrattenimento, la realtà dei fatti era molto diversa. Nella pratica, i cinema parrocchiali funzionavano come veri e propri esercizi commerciali, infrangendo anche numerose norme istituite negli accordi tra l'ACEC e l'Associazione generale italiana dello spettacolo (AGIS). L'articolo, dunque, restituisce la complessità dei rapporti tra istituzioni commerciali e religiose, e i suoi riflessi nelle relazioni tra gli interventi cinematografici dello Stato e della Chiesa.

Catholic film exhibition developed in Italy under the tight regulations of the CCC, which issued guidelines about films acceptable by the Vatican and therefore allowed to be screened in religious venues; and the ACEC, which intended to guarantee legal and administrative support to the Catholic exhibition circuit, as well as guidance in its relationship with the commercial sector and promotion of Catholic values through distribution of appropriate films. If, in theory, the network of religious cinemas was meant to function as an educational vehicle to spread Catholic moral values across the country through entertainment, the reality was significantly different. In practice, parish venues often operated as commercial enterprises, infringing several of the strict protocols instructed by the complex agreements between ACEC and AGIS. Triangulating the Cattolici e il Cinema database with the sources from the «Bollettino dello Spettacolo» – the National Exhibitors Association trade journal – and the geovisualization of the many violations denounced across the country, this article offers a multifaceted picture on the relationship between State and Church, and several other commercial and religious institutions.

On 6 July 1951 Albino Galletto (ecclesiastic consultant of the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, CCC¹) wrote to the parish cinema Giardino in Aviano² reminding him to screen only the films «for all» and «for adults» that have the approval of the *ordinario diocesano* (Diocesan Ordinary). Together with the letter, there is a memo written for Galletto which states:

The accusations seem less serious than they seemed at first sight: they only showed *Il Trovatore* (A with R³) [Carmine Gallone, 1949]; the programming days are four and not three for parish cinemas; the publicity has been displayed only slightly outside the limits. The moral of the story: the commercial exhibitor should stop bothering. The parish priest should be on his guard, and for this reason we should write to him a few lines⁴.

The statement «The commercial exhibitor should stop bothering»⁵ reflects the tensions which arose in the post-war period when the development of the Catholic cinema exhibition sector became a real menace to its commercial equivalent. Catholic film exhibition developed in Italy under the tight regulations of two organizations: the CCC, which issued guidelines on what films were acceptable to the Catholic Church and therefore allowed to be screened in religious venues; and the Associazione Cattolica Esercenti Cinema (National Catholic Exhibition Association, ACEC), which, from its creation on 18 May 1949, sought to guarantee legal and administrative support to the Catholic exhibition circuit, as well as guidance in its relationship with the commercial sector, and the promotion of Catholic values through the distribution of appropriate films. Though in theory this network of religious cinemas was meant to function as an educational vehicle to spread – through entertainment – Catholic moral values across the country, the reality was significantly different. In practice, parish venues often operated as fully-fledged commercial enterprises, infringing several of the strict protocols imposed by the complex agreements between the ACEC and the Associazione Generale Italiana dello Spettacolo (Italian Association for Entertainment, AGIS)⁶.

Little research has been conducted so far on the intricate relationship between the commercial and the religious exhibition sectors. In this article, the database of the Progetto di Ricerca di Interesse Nazionale (PRIN⁷) on Catholics and cinema serves as a starting point to investigate both the transgressions of parish cinemas across the country, and ACEC's attempts to intervene promptly and overturn them. However, when digging through the abundance of the archival sources, a much more multifaceted picture has appeared, and the relationship between State and Church, commercial and religious institutions is revealed in all its complexity. Moreover, comparing the Catholic sources to those from the

¹ The Catholic Cinema Centre.

² A village of around 9,000 people near Pordenone, in Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

³ «For Adults with Reservation».

⁴ Memo attached to Albino Galletto, letter to Direzione Cinema Giardino, 6 July 1951, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1188).

⁵ In Italian, «L'esercente industriale non scocci».

⁶ The AGIS was created on 7 December 1945, with the aim of uniting the various cinema, theatres, music, dance associations in order to represent their needs and interests.

⁷ Research Project of National Relevance.

Bollettino dello Spettacolo – the National Exhibitors Association's trade journal, which also presented the perspective of commercial cinema owners – exposes an intricate network of compromises and allegiances, that aimed to balance the educational and censorial intentions of parish cinema networks, in the mind of the ecclesiastic establishment, and the actual commercial processes of exhibitors who wanted to attract audiences and run a profitable business.

This research makes use of a range of sources, both from the PRIN database and the *Bollettino dello Spettacolo*. The documents used in this research have allowed me to identify the infringements of the ACEC-AGIS agreements⁸ made by the parish cinemas exhibitors and therefore explore the main tensions between these agents and the commercial ones. A geovisualization of the many violations denounced across the country has offered a comprehensive topography of where parish cinemas were most active in their attempt to assert themselves on the commercial landscape. Once this analysis was clear, I cross-referenced the PRIN database with material from the AGIS's *Bollettino dello Spettacolo* in order to explore the responses from the authorities and their intervention, as well as the commercial cinema exhibitors' attitudes towards the Catholic circuit.

I. PROGRAMMING, PUBLICITY AND FINANCIAL DISPUTES

Not surprisingly, the two most prominent areas of controversy which emerge from the documents collected in the PRIN database are programming and publicity. Programming in parish cinemas across the country had been regulated under the strict surveillance of the CCC, which – from its establishment in 1935, and through the *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* – provided guidelines on the aesthetics and morality of films⁹. The *Segnalazioni* were made available to all parishes through a membership which was initially voluntary, but later became compulsory for all diocesan offices and all priests¹⁰. A summary of the classifications was also sent to all Catholic newspapers to ensure the widest distribution of the CCC's film guidelines. In a report, Paolo Salviucci (secretary of the CCC in its early years) recalls that the Centre had the power to regulate the relationship between distributors and parish cinemas in order to guarantee adherence to the *Segnalazioni cinematografiche*¹¹. This confirms the extent of the CCC's intervention, but also that obedience to its regulations was paramount. In addition to the prohibition of any film judged by the CCC as «For Adults with Reservation», «Not Recommended» or «Excluded» from the parish cinema circuits¹², in fact there were also further programming restrictions in parish cinemas. On 25 February 1949 in a meeting with the episcopal delegates, Ildo Avetta (then secretary of the CCC) notes that the 1934 ACI-SIAE¹³ agreement imposed the

⁸ Fanchi, 2006: 106.

⁹ Venturini, 2017: 57.

¹⁰ Salviucci, 1939, Fondo Presidenza Generale, series XV, envelope 1, folder 9, 15 November, Archive of the ISACEM, p. 2 (DB: ISACEM 119).

¹¹ Venturini, 2017: 57; Salviucci, 1939 (DB: ISACEM 119).

¹² Lettera della Pontificia commissione per la Cinematografia (1 June 1953), n. 246.

¹³ The Italian Society for Authors and Editors (Società Italiana degli Autori ed Editori, SIAE) was established to manage author's rights collectively.

following measures: parish cinemas should not compete with commercial ones; film publicity should not be done on a large scale; first run films should not be screened in parish cinemas; parish cinemas should not be open on a daily basis¹⁴. Therefore, the Catholic Church had a well-developed system in place not only to exert pressure on the morality of film production, but also to guarantee a clear distinction between commercial and parish cinemas. The rich documents of the PRIN database exposes a very different story, where screening of films banned by the CCC and ignoring the compulsory screening of national films, or indeed several other programming infringements, were not uncommon in the post-war landscape.

Infringing the classifications of the CCC is perhaps one of the most debated issues in the study of the Catholic Church's intervention on parish cinema exhibition – and its failure to do so. Firstly, it is extremely hard to assess with certainty parish cinema programming in the post-war period, with no record of what was shown in the Catholic exhibition sector until the end of the fifties. If one takes Rome as an example, only from the 10 September 1959 did all Roman editions of the main national newspapers introduce specific listings for parish cinema programming. Prior to this, religious venues were included, without distinction, in the section dedicated to third run cinemas, making it difficult for scholars to investigate the parish cinema programming systematically, and thus evaluate how the CCC ratings were respected by individual exhibitors. A limited period (September-December 1959) and a small sample of data surveyed (528 titles) discloses a complex landscape in Catholic programming practice¹⁵. Examining the categories shown in the considered period, the total number of films that were unsuitable for parish cinemas yet nevertheless present in programming schedules is 124 of 528 (one of five), demonstrating a clear transgression of the CCC's guidelines by parish cinemas in Rome¹⁶.

To extend this investigation to the rest of the country, the PRIN database represents the most valuable starting point. The documents collected in the database confirm the difficulty and the inconsistency in monitoring and enforcing abidance to the CCC's ratings. On 10 February 1955, for instance, Angelico Allori, parish priest of the Basilica Santa Maria Novella in Florence, complained to Monsignor Albino Galletto that, while he complies to the CCC's guidelines by blocking screenings in his cinema of films rated «For Adults with Reservation», he discovers that several parish cinemas which are in a similar situation – «private management of a Church owned cinema» – have continued to transgress the rules (*fig. 1*)¹⁷. Allori's letter challenges the alleged control imposed by the CCC and by the Diocese leaders, who are unable to stop the programming of unsuitable films in a wide number of parish cinemas¹⁸. The letter attests that – though the CCC had been urgently attempting to moralize cinema through an elaborate rating system – in practice, individual parish venues were able

¹⁴ CCC, Fondo Presidenza Generale, 25 February 1949, series XV, envelope 4, folder 1, pp. 1-8 (pp. 2-3) (DB: ISACEM 679).

¹⁵ See Treveri Gennari; Dibeltulo, 2016.

¹⁶ Treveri Gennari; Dibeltulo, 2016.

¹⁷ Angelico Allori, letter to Albino Galletto, 10 February 1955, p. 1-2, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 358).

¹⁸ DB: ACEC 358.

FILMS " ADULTI CON RISERVA " PROIETTATI	
NEI CINEMA : CAVOUR,IL PORTICO,EDEN,LUX	
dall'Ottobre 1954 al FEBbraio 1955	
<p><u>CAVOUR</u></p> <p>Ott. 12: SIAMO DONNE. Ar Ott. 13: MARITO PER FORZA. Ar Ott. 17: SPETTACOLO DI VARIETA'. Ar Ott. 30: LA MASCHERA E IL CUORE. Ar Nov. 3 : TRONO NERO . Ar Nov. 4 : idem 6 : CAVALCA VAQUERO. Ar 12 : NOTTE SENZA FINE. Ar 26 : COMANDANTE DEL FLYNG MOON. Ar Dic. 7 : FINE DI UN TIRANNO. Ar 12: ACCADDE A BERLINO. Ar 16: MOGAMBO . Ar - e il 17 22: BALLATA SELVAGGIA. Ar 25-26 : DELITTO PERFETTO. Ar 27-29: ACCADDE AL COMMISSARIATO. Ar 30 : ANDROCLO E IL LEONE. Ar Genn.'55: 11:PER SALVARTI HO PECCATO. Ar 27 : VIVA ZAPATA. Ar Febbr. 9 : AMORI DI CLEOPATRA. Ar</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cinema <u>EDEN</u></p> <p>Nov.15 : CAVALCA VAQUERO. Ar Dic. 2 : FEMMINA CONTESA. Ar 5 : SPETTACOLO. DI VARIETA'. Ar 6 : LA SEPOLTA VIVA. Ar 7: AMORE PROVINCIALE. Ar 27: IL TRONO NERO. Ar 29: IL COLLEGIO SI DIVERTE. <u>Sconsigliabile.</u> Genn.'55: 18: MOGAMBO. Ar 20 : BALLATA SELVAGGIA. Ar 22 : GIORNI D'AMORE. <u>Sconsigliabile</u> 23 : FRATELLI SENZA PAURA. <u>Sconsigliabile</u> 28 : ACCADDE AL COMMISSARIATO. Ar Febbr. 9 : LE NEVI DEL CHILIMANGIARO. Ar 10 : FURORE. Ar</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>IL PORTICO</u></p> <p>Ott.13: TRAPPOLA DI FUOCO . Ar 20 : RISCATTO. Ar 23: SOMBRERO. Ar 28: DOV'E' LA LIBERTA' ? Ar Nov. 5: AMORE PROVINCIALE. Ar 12: CENTO ANNI D'AMORE. Ar 22-23 : SQUILLI DI PRIMAVERA. Ar Dic. 2: MIZAR Ar 6-7 : NERONE E MESSALINA. Ar 16: IN AMORE SI PECCA IN DUE. Ar 17: REGINA VERGINE. Ar Genn.1955 : 10:EROI DI 1000 LEGGENDE. Ar 11. : CAVALCA VAQUERO. Ar 22-23: L'ALLEGRO SQUADRONE. Ar 29: LA MASCHERA E IL CUORE. Ar Febbr. 3 : IL TRONO NERO. Ar</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cinema <u>LUX</u></p> <p>Ott. : 16 : SCARAMOUCHE. Ar</p>

copria

Fig. 1 – Films rated “for Adults with Reservation” screened in the parish cinemas Cavour, Il Portico, Eden and Lux in the period October 1954-February 1955. Angelico Allori, letter to Albino Galletto, 10 February 1955, p. 2, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 358).

Fig. 2 – “La Contessa di Castiglione” shown at the parish cinema Robur et Virtus in Sassari. Floris Ammannati, letter to Albino Galletto, 3 February 1955, p. 2, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1262).



to infringe the regulations without receiving any real or timely form of punishment. Moreover, the «double standard» to which Allori refers is not exclusive to the cinemas in Florence. The case of *La Contessa di Castiglione* (*The Contessa's Secret*, 1954, George Combret) is a pertinent example. The film, a French-Italian co-production, was promoted by Taurus Film (its production company) and Zeus Film (its distribution company) as a «dramatic love adventure» and «one of the most passionate and poetic episodes of our Risorgimento»¹⁹. The film was rated «A with R» but shown anyway in the parish cinema Robur et Virtus in Sassari (Sardegna) (fig. 2). On 3 February 1955, Floris Luigi Ammannati, as Deputy President of the ACEC, sought the support of Mons Albino Galletto's in exerting pressure on the Archbishop of Sassari to avoid not only that such films be publicize in such a licentious way, but also that they be shown at all, if not approved by the CCC²⁰. The case of the Robur et Virtus cinema is one of several instances where the Catholic establishment was asked to intervene because of open violations of the CCC rules. The examined documents reveal, in fact,

¹⁹ [Anon], 1954.

²⁰ Floris Ammannati, letter to Albino Galletto, 3 February 1955, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1262).

several infringements but also several possible interpretations of those transgressions. They certainly confirm tensions between Catholic and commercial exhibitors, as summarized in a note attached to a letter of complaint about the programming of a parish cinema in Lombardy (24/8/1949): «The industry assumes the right to choose first, so they choose the films for all and we are left without programming».²¹ The lack of suitable films was a common complaint among Catholic exhibitors, confirming that film production in the post-war period did not seem to respond to the pressure applied by the CCC guidelines. It also shows that the parish cinema circuit had to find creative solutions in order to provide a schedule that balanced films that suited Catholic morals and those that provided entertainment for Catholic audiences. This, however, was not always possible, and as late as 1966 the morality of the parish cinema theatre was still up for debate²².

However, the lack of suitable films was also used as justification for another violation of the rules that regulated cinema circuits, and not only parish ones: the compulsory screening of national films. Article 7 of law n. 379, 16 May 1947, stated that all exhibitors had to reserve 20 days per term to screen national films. The lack of compliance to the compulsory screening of national films – something that is often denounced in the archival documents – is justified by parish exhibitors through the lack of national films available for screening in their cinemas. In fact, this infringement aligns the ecclesiastic establishment with Catholic exhibitors. A document issued from the CCC and sent to Giulio Andreotti²³ (the State Undersecretary in charge of entertainment), only a few months after the approval of the cinema law, notes the shortage of Italian films that suit the Catholic cinema circuit, raising it as a hindrance to the new law. This concern is quickly echoed by individual Catholic exhibitors, who agree on their disadvantaged position, having to screen only the films approved by the CCC, and denounce the lack of choice of national productions²⁴. The application of legislation to parish cinemas is not so straightforward. In fact, Monsignor Galletto is at times forced to clarify the obligation of Catholic cinemas in relation to compulsory screenings²⁵. The following year, this unclear and indeed unrealistic situation created the need to ratify an agreement between ANICA (the Associazione Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche Audiovisive Multimediali – which represented production and distribution in Italy at the time) and the ACEC. The agreement stipulated that the ACEC must commit to enforcing the compulsory programming among its members within the limits of what is possible under the CCC's regulations²⁶. Nonetheless, the problem remained

²¹ «L'industria si arroga il diritto di prima scelta così porta via i film per tutti e i nostri restano senza programmazioni», letter from the Direzione Comunale di Borgosatollo to AGIS, 24 August 1949, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1101).

²² See Treveri Gennari; Dibeltulo, 2016: 42; Subini, 2017: 43.

²³ CCC, Document for Giulio Andreotti, December 1949, Cinema series, envelope 1070, Giulio Andreotti Archive (DB: ASILS 572).

²⁴ Gestore del cinema parrocchiale di Oderzo, Letter to Giulio Andreotti, 10 October 1950, Cinema series, envelope 1070, Giulio Andreotti Archive (DB: ASILS 574).

²⁵ Albino Galletto, letter to Luigi Recagno, 21 February 1955, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 356).

²⁶ Eitel Monaco, letter to Francesco Dalla Zuanna, 1 May 1956, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 651).

unresolved in 1959, as Monsignor Francesco Angelicchio (at that time director of CCC) writes to Monsignor Dalla Zuanna (President of ACEC) expressing the need to create a specialized magazine for the exhibitors²⁷ which could provide – together with relevant news about ACEC and SAS²⁸ – detailed information on the eligible films for compulsory screening²⁹. According to Angelicchio, this would give exhibitors the feeling of being properly supported as part of the wider Catholic family. It does also show the ACEC's apparent commitment to the 1956 agreement.

Together with the programming issues highlighted above, other infringements documented in the *Cattolici e il cinema* database refer to screening films on a daily basis and, much less prominently, projecting recently-produced films in parish cinemas, which should be only available to commercial, first run cinemas. Despite Monsignor Galletto's reminder, on 10 October 1949, that (in the presence of a commercial cinema) the parish can only screen on Sundays, public holidays and no more than two working days per week, several cinemas are reported as having broken these rules³⁰. This is an evident confirmation that parish cinemas were managed much more as commercial enterprises, as will be raised and discussed further in the subsequent analysis of the *Bollettino dello Spettacolo*.

The level of control used in the definition of commercial and parish cinemas was also applied to marketing material. Where there was a commercial cinema, film publicity (in the form of photos and notices on the actual screening) had to take place only «in the building perimeter of the cinema»³¹. This rule regarding film publicity, however, was not always respected. Film posters were often visible in the main squares and main roads of a town, «all over the village», and for some films even in cafés, *trattorie* and shops. This was the case for *Angel of the Amazon (Il sortilegio delle Amazzoni, 1948)* by John H. Auer, shown at the Cinema Regina Pacis in Ostia Lido (*figs. 3 and 4*) and for the films shown at the cinema oratorio S. Luigi in Abbiategrasso (*fig. 5*)³². Inappropriate marketing referred not only to film posters and their location, but also to pub-

²⁷ «An ACEC Bulletin, which currently is only sent to delegates and the executive team of the Association» («un notiziario ACEC, che adesso viene inviato solo ai delegati e ai dirigenti dell'Associazione»), letter from Francesco Angelicchio to Francesco Dalla Zuanna, 28 January 1959, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1867).

²⁸ The SAS, Servizio di assistenza alle sale cinematografiche cattoliche, consisted of organizations supporting the management of parish cinemas, and especially interactions with distributors (Martin John O'Connor, letter to Vescovi italiani, 1 June 1953, pp. 1-6, p. 4, Archive of the ACEI, DB: ACEI 60).

²⁹ Francesco Angelicchio, Letter to Francesco Dalla Zuanna, 28 January 1959, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1867).

³⁰ Memo for Mons Albino Galletto, 10 October 1949, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 113); The Cinema Oratorio Lux, for example, screened for 11 days more than expected over a total of 68 days, and this was certainly not an exception in the list of infringements of this kind (Direzione Cinema Savoia, letter to AGIS, 20 December 1949, Archivio dell'ACEC, DB: ACEC 1118).

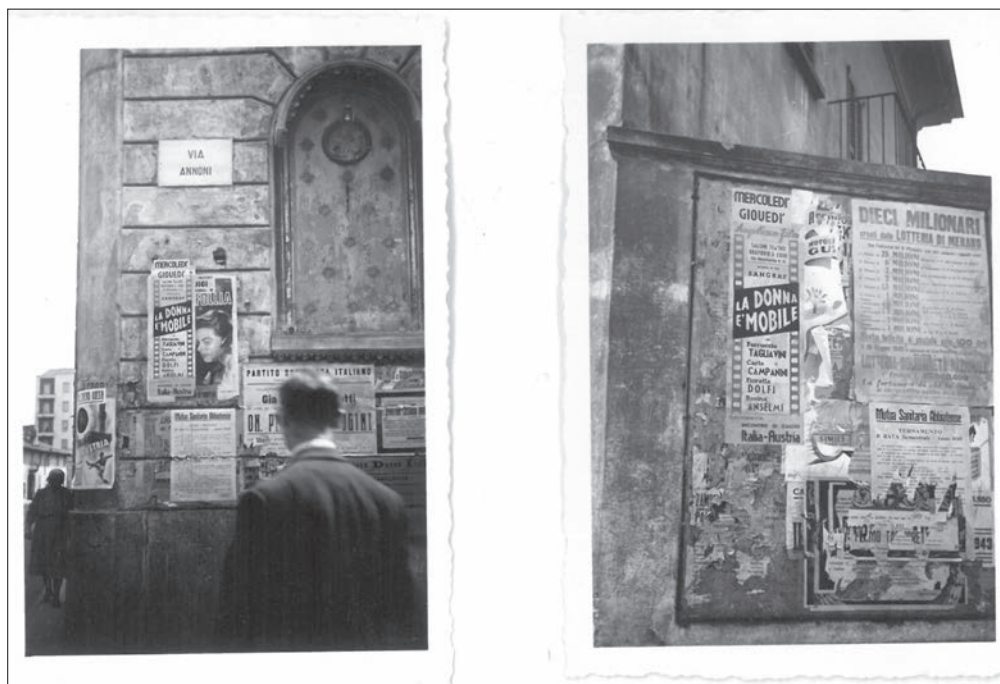
³¹ Memo, 28 April 1949, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 758).

³² Direzione Cinema Superga, letter to AGIS, 12 November 1949, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1089); AGIS, Letter to CCC Abbiategrasso, 7 July 1949, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1100).



Figs. 3 and 4 – Posters for “Il Sortilegio delle Amazzoni” displayed in Ostia Lido. AGIS, letter to Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 14 December 1949, p. 3-4, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1093).

Fig. 5 – Posters of films shown at the cinema oratorio S. Luigi in Abbiategrasso. AGIS, letter to CCC, Abbiategrasso, 7 July 1949, p. 3, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1100).



licity in newspapers and magazines. Often these adverts were accused of presenting information which perhaps were not necessary for Catholic exhibition. Examples include: actors' names, technical details (such as technicolor, cinemascope (*fig. 6*) but also heating system in the cinema), or expressions such as: «by popular demand», «masterpiece of the year», «laughs» and «beautiful girls», considered inopportune for a parish cinema³³. The concept of appropriateness certainly reappears tenaciously in the archival documents, reminding the reader of the difficulty when adapting the film medium and its para-textual materials to the rigid criteria of the Catholic Church.

While compulsory programming, abundance of the CCC classifications and film publicity were the main infringements which emerge in the investigation of the *Cattolici e il cinema* database, some further, minor transgressions are also worth mentioning, for a more comprehensive portrayal. The unclear ownership or management of Catholic cinemas was not an uncommon concern and often indicated as a reason for tension with the commercial circuit, since it could affect how parish cinemas were run as commercial rather than educational enterprises. There were some instances of unfair competition in distribution deals, like the case of Mr Giandotti, of the parish cinema Regina Pacis in Ostia Lido, accused by a commercial exhibitor of exerting pressure to raise

³³ Letter to cinema Il Sentiero, 23 March 1953, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1217); letter to AGIS and ACEC, 23 March 1953 (DB: ACEC 1191); On 28 September 1954, Luciano Pappalardo, an industrial exhibitor, informed Monsignor Galletto that the parish cinema *Ribur et Virtus* in Sassari (aside from having infringed several rules which had forced him to appeal the year before), had referenced Cinemascope in the Sunday paper. This is his comment: «It seems too much trying to protect parish cinemas. I pay millions in taxes every year and I do not want to put up with this situation anymore». He also states that, having unsuccessfully tried to raise the issue with AGIS, he will try elsewhere (Luciano Pappalardo, letter to Albino Galletto, 28 September 1954, Archive of the ACEC, DB: ACEC 1260).

...di meno. Questa situazione di...
 ...gruppo consiliare democristiano...
 ...gruppo democratico di obbedienza...
 ...gruppo democratico di obbedienza...
 ...gruppo democratico di obbedienza...

AL CAFFE'

Altra volta si dice che crederemo il ministro di Giustizia di Saragat come la più grande delle fatiche, e il signorile di Felice D'Amico, quando di un modo diverso dal signorile di Felice D'Amico, non si è potuto...
 ...gruppo democratico di obbedienza...
 ...gruppo democratico di obbedienza...
 ...gruppo democratico di obbedienza...

LA ingenuità travolta di un giovanotto di Luras per essere a sballo i festeggiamenti di S. Margherita

Annunziata a Luras, nella parrocchia della chiesa di S. Margherita. Al momento della messa, a vestire alla spiccia della chiesa, si trovava il sacerdote don Felice D'Amico. La cui assistenza, in quel momento, tanto pacifica...
 ...gruppo democratico di obbedienza...
 ...gruppo democratico di obbedienza...
 ...gruppo democratico di obbedienza...

IN SARDEGNA SONO IN VENDITA A:

CAGLIARI: Lino Fadda
SASSARI: Depaioni Zanoletti
LA MADDALENA: Giacomo Biagnoni

CINEMA TEATRO VERDI
 La Warner Bros presenta
 Per la vecchia bandiera
 In Warnercolor, con MARCO BELFIORE, GIGI LECHE, RITA HAYDORF, PHILLIPS KEEN, TINA DI ANDREA DA TOLA

CINEMA MODERNO
 Strepitosa successione
Guai ai vinti
 (Van Vliet)

AMANTI DEL PASSATO
 regia ADECHI BIANCHI - Tema - RO-BI-VALOR FILM
 Vietato ai minori di 16 anni

CINEMA AUGUSTA
 Grande successo
APPASSIONATEMENTO
 MIRIAM BELL

CINEMA FERROVIARIO
 Ettore Manni, Paul Miller, Olga Solomon, Li - Mark Lawrence
Fratelli d'Italia
 È un film Paul-De Launay

CINEMA BELVEDERE
 FERNANDO LAMAS, ARLEN RAMI, GILBERTO BOZZANO
Il diamante del Re
 in due parti
 Con ROBERTO ANTONI, GIUSEPPE VENTURA, GIULIO GIARDINO

ALLE MADRI DI FAMIGLIA
 Via C. Battisti, 8 a --- Telefono N. 30-91

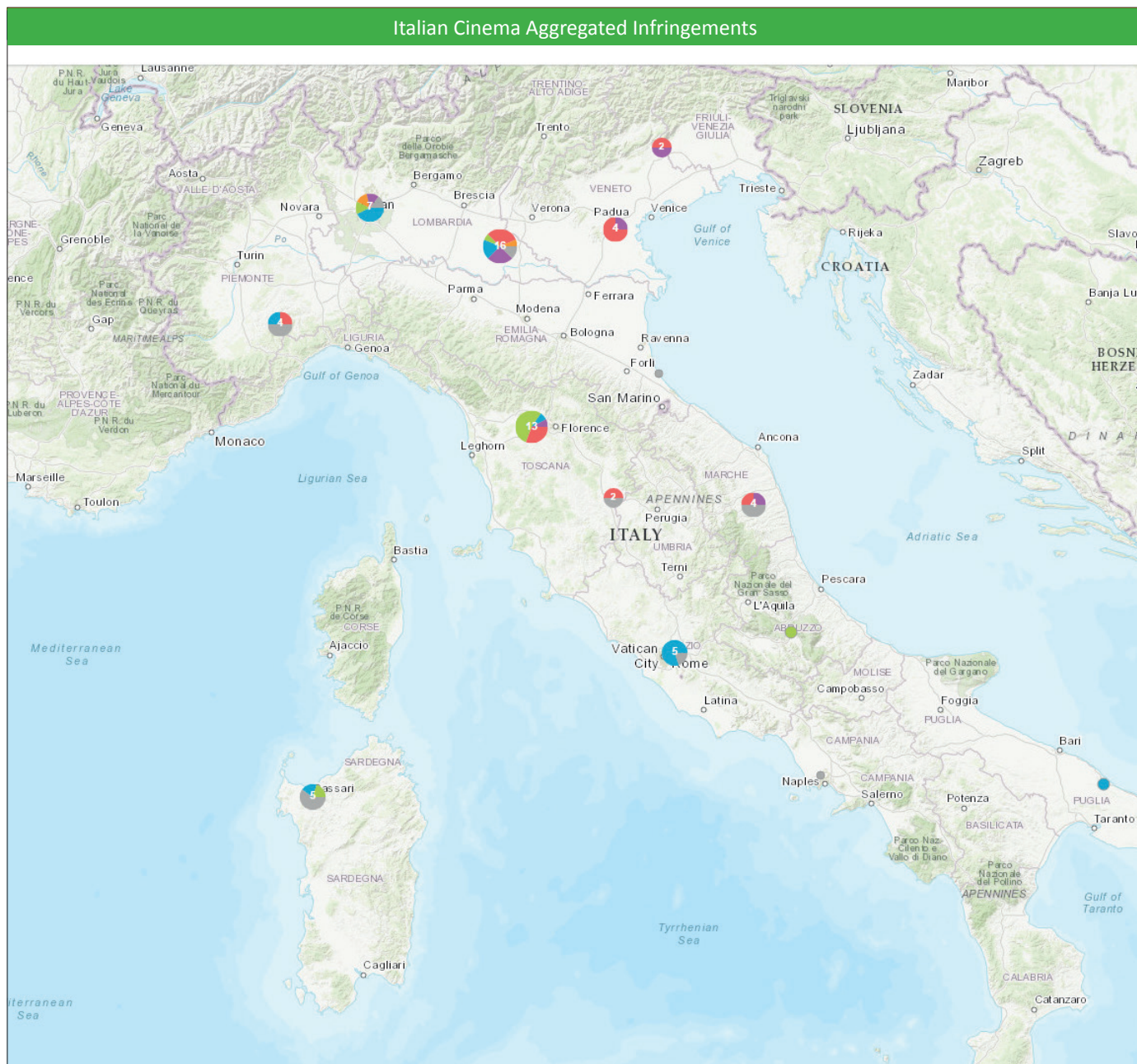
NUOVI ARRIVI
VASTO ASSORTIMENTO DI
LANIEVE AUTUNNO-INVERNO
Risparmio - Eleganza - Qualità

LA DIREZIONE DEL «CINEMA ROBUR» E' LIETA DI ANNUNZIARE ALLA SPETTABILE CLIENTELA CHE PROSSIMAMENTE SARA' APERTA LA NUOVA SALA DI INGRESSO SULLA VIA GIOVANNI PASCOLI, CON ANNESSO POSTEGGIO CUSTODITO PER AUTO E MOTO. ANNUNZIA PURE CHE ENTRO IL CORRENTE ANNO SARANNO PRONTE LE NUOVE APPARECCHIATURE PER IL «CINEMASCOPE».

Fig. 6 – The parish cinema Robur advertises the renewed venue with cinemascope facilities. Luciano Pappalardo, letter to Albino Galletto, 28 September 1954, p. 3, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1260).

the rental costs of certain films – those which would never be made available to parish cinemas. As the commercial exhibitor explained, Giandotti «damages my interests in the distribution companies, by offering them “minimum guarantee” sums for normal as well as exceptional films, which in the majority of cases for the management into making a loss». This is defined by the angry exhibitor as «unfair commercial competition», orchestrated to force commercial cinemas to pay more in rent, well aware that – as in the case of King Vidor’s *Duel in the sun* (1946), which was forbidden to anybody under the age of 16 years old – the relevant films would never be suitable for parish cinema³⁴. In other instances, the database discloses irregularities in the management of the cinema. For example, the SIAE wrote a series of letters to the ACEC denouncing anomalies in relation to ticket prices, admissions without issued tickets, and the re-circulation of the same tickets. All these infringements represent clear signs of inequalities between the religious and commercial exhibition sectors. Throughout the post-war period, this relationship had been the object of resolution efforts, though archival research demonstrates this to be poorly effective. In practice, these illegitimate activities were carried out for several years, under the complacent eyes of the Catholic Church and its cultural representatives. Identifying the most common infractions carried out by parish cinemas is a significant step forward in the study of the tensions with the commercial cinemas. However, a geographical visualization of these violations provides further details.

³⁴ Direzione Cinema Superga, letter to AGIS, 12 November 1949, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1089).



Map Contents

Infringements on the map:

- 1. Programming;
- 2. Publicity;
- 3. Financial irregularities;
- x. Punishments for infringement

- 3
- 1
- 1; 2
- 2
- 3
- x
- others

This map³⁵ confirms, first of all, the uneven geographical distribution of the Catholic cinema circuit: parish cinemas were not equally present across the country. A 1955 document confirms that around 93% of all parish cinemas were located in Northern and Central Italy³⁶. This tendency has been observed previously by scholars and is investigated in volumes such as Dario Viganò's *Un cinema ogni campanile*, which, moreover, reveals that the Catholic investment in cinemas in the dioceses of Milan was evident from the early twentieth century³⁷.

³⁵ A special thanks to Alex Friend for the creation of the map.

³⁶ Floris Ammannati, letter to Francesco Dalla Zuanna, 1 March 1955, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 284).

³⁷ Viganò, 1997.

The «pioneers of the Catholic project»³⁸ – as Viganò calls the religious figures who were active promoters of cinema in the North of the country – could not be as easily found in the South, leaving an unbalance that was familiar to the CCC. Indeed, several archival documents inform us that funding was sought not only to build more cinemas in the South, but also to make film screenings more widely available generally in those areas. In 1955, Ammannati requested four million lire of funding from the Presidency of the Council of Ministers to buy 10 projectors for the poorest areas of the country³⁹. In the same year, Dalla Zuanna requested 12 million lire from the Direzione Generale dello Spettacolo in order to buy 30 projectors in Sardegna, since ACEC's funds of 7-8 million were not sufficient⁴⁰. These attempts, however, were not enough to resolve the geographical unbalance, as was confirmed in a new survey of parish cinemas in 1960⁴¹.

The discrepancy between the North and South of the country is also made visible in the number of parish cinemas that applied for a commercial licence. Looking at how this critical issue was regulated might provide some insight into the tension it produced. The minutes of a 1949 meeting of the episcopal delegates of the CCC explains the process: if a parish cinema wants to compete with a commercial one, it must request a commercial licence; over the years several submitted applications to obtain this⁴². There were several reasons to do so. For instance, in 1955 in Genoa a priest – concerned that a commercial cinema might open in his parish district – applied for a commercial licence⁴³. In this context, Albino Galletto then reiterated the intervention of a non-religious manager and ACEC's position in not recommending this transformation: if a parish cinema becomes commercial it must negotiate at all levels as a real business, and it cannot avoid the compulsory screening of national films⁴⁴. Moreover, as some examples show, once transformed into commercial enterprises, these cinemas would struggle to follow the CCC moral guidelines. In the specific case mentioned above, Galletto's recommendation was that «if the ratio between number of people and cinema seats allows it, we could suggest that our lay people apply»⁴⁵. Indeed, since priests could not manage commercial cinemas, often trustworthy laymen would submit the application. This is one of several attempts from commercial and parish cinemas to go beyond their remit in order to circumnavigate the problem. By investigating the role of parish cinemas from a commercial point of view – that is, exploring their pur-

³⁸ Viganò, 1997: 13.

³⁹ Floris Ammannati, letter to Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 24 February 1955, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 287).

⁴⁰ Francesco Dalla Zuanna, letter to Direzione Generale dello Spettacolo, 26 October 1955, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1198).

⁴¹ Francesco Dalla Zuanna, letter to Alberto Castelli, 18 October 1960, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 37).

⁴² CCC, 25 February 1949, Fondo Presidenza Generale, series XV, envelope 4, folder 1 (DB: ISACEM 679).

⁴³ Luigi Recagno, Letter to Albino Galletto, 15 February 1955, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 355).

⁴⁴ Albino Galletto, Letter to Luigi Recagno, 21 February 1955, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 356).

⁴⁵ DB: ACEC 356.

pose from the national exhibitors' association trade journal – one can better comprehend how the same problems are addressed. The following section will do that.

II. VOICES OF CONCERN, CINEMA EXHIBITORS AND FAILURE OF CONTROL

In October 1945 the Associazione generale italiana dello spettacolo (AGIS) launched its bi-weekly trade journal «Bollettino di informazioni»⁴⁶, with the aim of addressing the quantitative aspect of audiences, as well as analysing and commenting on the figures of the film industry in Italy. Together with box-office data from across the country and information on all Italian films screened in first run cinemas, the «BdS» provided exhibitors a platform from which they could openly discuss their concerns about the running and management of their cinema theatres.

Within the context of this article, i.e. focusing purely on the relationship between commercial and parish cinemas, the AGIS trade journal represents a way to examine the positioning of all Italian film exhibitors as well as a repository for both to voice their concern about issues. This includes, for instance, the apprehensions of commercial exhibitors about parish cinemas overstepping their boundaries, or parish cinemas exhibitors' attempt to be recognized and treated as exhibitors to all effects. Both categories, however, use the publication to discuss layers of control over infringements and to seek clarifications in terms of rules and regulations. In particular, the pages of the «BdS» were often the arena for industrial exhibitors to express their dissatisfaction about the publicity, programming and types of films shown in parish cinemas, as well as issues around lay management. They also highlight frustrations about the lack of control to restrict repeated violations or contain unruly competition⁴⁷. In fact, on the pages of the «BdS» the ACEC and the ANEC⁴⁸ were formally asked to demonstrate their close collaboration by intervening with a systematic survey of infringements in all areas of the country⁴⁹. Unfortunately, even this concerted action did not result in a tighter control of rule violations – worsened by the high volume of applications to transform parish cinemas into commercial ones as reported in the «BdS». This had obvious consequences on the exhibition sector as a whole, creating uncertainty for commercial exhibitors, who felt threatened by the pressure of parish cinemas due to their application for licenses, potentially forgetting their educational nature⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ In 1952 its title was changed to «Bollettino dello spettacolo»; henceforth I refer to the publication as «BdS».

⁴⁷ The Catholic establishment was well aware of this uncomfortable situation, to the extent that a letter by Martino G. O'Connors (President of the Pontifical Commission for Cinematography) addressed to all Italian bishops suggested the constitution of a diocesan Committee to: study and resolve the parish cinemas' problems; examine the application to open new cinemas; reviewing all films; ensuring exhibitors adhere to rules; ensure all cinemas are members of ACEC (Martin John O'Connor, letter to Vescovi italiani, 1 June 1953 (DB: ACEI 60).

⁴⁸ Associazione Nazionale Esercenti Cinema (the National Exhibitors Association).

⁴⁹ [Anon], 1956: 4.

⁵⁰ This was the case, for instance, for the cinema-oratory in Suzzara, a small village in Lombardy. Despite being rejected three times for technical clauses, the parish cinema continued to renew its application to become a commercial cinema (D. 1950: 1).

As well as a means to voice the concerns of commercial cinema owners, the «BdS» was also used by parish cinemas to assert themselves as proper exhibitors. They often felt misrepresented in the pages of «BdS», and claimed the need for more space to discuss the difficulties they faced to survive alongside commercial competition. The main obstacle for parish cinemas that was expressed in the pages of the «BdS» – and confirmed in a letter from Dalla Zuanna to Mons. Galletto – were of a financial nature: taxes were too high and takings too low, especially in small towns and villages⁵¹. While relieving tax pressure in rural areas in particular became a concern that ecclesiastic authorities sought to resolve, this was not the only difficulty parish cinemas encountered in their attempt to remain alive⁵². The number of cinema seats granted to parish cinemas was, in fact, another alarming aspect, which Mons. Galletto had already raised in 1950 in a letter to Giulio Andreotti, affirming that «the relationship between number of inhabitants and cinema seats imposed by AGIS constitutes a threat for small parishes» and that the lack of Catholic representatives in Committees makes it difficult to voice their concerns and needs in relation to commercial exhibitors⁵³. The pages of the «BdS», however, depict commercial exhibitors' representatives fairly in their attitude towards the high number of applications for the opening of new parish cinemas, «considering the many positive responses they have supported»⁵⁴. Five years later, however, Catholic representatives were still not included in the Commissione apertura sale (Committee granting the opening of new cinemas), and this absence was yet viewed as the inability to influence decisions in favour of the Catholic circuit⁵⁵. The fragile balance between ACEC and AGIS was often maintained by governmental choices which – through the course of the years – favour either one organization or the other, to ensure that both could prosper in the complex exhibition landscape. The results were not often effective. The attempts of parish cinemas to present themselves as fully-fledged theatres did not appear successful, despite constant reminders that they should be treated, at least from the point of view of their relationship with AGIS, in an equal way to commercial cinemas⁵⁶. Often the «BdS» was accused of publishing letters from commercial exhibitors criticizing parish cinemas and their category (ACEC) – a part of AGIS itself – and Franco Bruno (director of the «BdS» at the time) was reminded that «this behaviour can only provoke a sense of distrust towards Catholic exhibitors for the

⁵¹ Francesco Dalla Zuanna, letter to Albino Galletto, 3 October 1955, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 442); [Anon.], 1953: 6; [Anon.], 1957: 6.

⁵² Letter to Albino Galletto, 10 October 1949, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 113).

⁵³ Albino Galletto, letter to Giulio Andreotti, 20 March 1950, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1442).

⁵⁴ [Anon.], 1952a: 4.

⁵⁵ Silvano Battisti, letter to Francesco Dalla Zuanna, 16 May 1956, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 696).

⁵⁶ Silvano Battisti, letter to Francesco Dalla Zuanna, 7 March 1955, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 397).

commercial exhibitors reading the journal»⁵⁷. This was only increased when, on the pages of the «BdS», the Catholic exhibition network was reprimanded for its infringements. Often, in fact, the journal informs its readers of the sanctions over parish cinemas' violations regarding publicity or unauthorized screenings⁵⁸. It also reminds parish cinemas to respect censorship regulation, such as preventing children from watching films classified «for adults» by the CCC, whose ratings were regularly published in the journal⁵⁹. Overall, the «BdS» served to clarify the distinct roles of different categories of cinemas, in an attempt to balance the needs of both. It moreover functioned as a vehicle to disclose the soft line often adopted by the ANEC and the AGIS towards the ACEC; perhaps the consequence of governmental pressure to close an eye to parish cinemas, as the preferred approach to preserve this fragile balance. Though it left commercial exhibitors in an uneasy relationship with Catholic ones, this approach would iron out broader disagreements with the CCC, which itself was very mindful of the potential difficulties encountered by Catholic activity in the film and media industries.

III. CONCLUSIONS

There were several attempts to circumnavigate the problems and reduce the tensions between parish and commercial cinemas. Official and unofficial responses given by local and national authorities in regard to these problems were varied. Several documents in the *Cattolici e il cinema* database refer to the practice of reprimanding parish cinemas for their infringements, suspending their licence for several days and in some cases threatening its permanent abeyance. However, these procedures rarely had the desired effect, though even more rarely were extreme sanctions fully imposed. The several complaints found in the «BdS» demonstrate – at least up to the end of the 1950s – a failure of these intents. This failure can be potentially read as a soft approach on behalf of the CCC to ensure that parish cinemas were put in the position to compete successfully with their commercial counterparts. This might have been the case. However, it might also be explained by the shift to which Garofalo refers from the big to the small screen, since television had started to jeopardize the Catholic moral integrity from the end of the 1950s, and this new threat began to overshadow the role of cinema in the eyes of the Catholic establishment⁶⁰.

At the same time, it is evident that, together with attempts to circumnavigate the problems, there are clear efforts to challenge the rules openly. These instances all express an underlying need to change some of the restrictions which

⁵⁷ Silvano Battisti, letter to Franco Bruno, 22 February 1955, Archive of the ACEC (DB: ACEC 1452). However, the tension for parish cinemas that arose from the balance between commercial needs and adherence to Catholic morality was often seen unfavourably by ACEC's regional delegates, who insisted on keeping cinema as a means for «apostolate and education» rather than a source of income (Alfonso Bonetti, Giuseppe Gaffuri, Giuseppe Fossati, letter to Albino Galletto, 20 September 1955, Archive of the ACEC, DB: ACEC 444).

⁵⁸ [Anon.], 1952b: 2.

⁵⁹ [Anon.], 1955: 5 bis; [Anon.] 1959: 5.

⁶⁰ Garofalo, 2017: 91-98.

had become too tight for both categories. The number of cinema seats granted, which could be no more than 50% of the commercial ones for parish cinemas, and tax pressures, which were too high for Catholic venues – especially in small villages – were some of the difficulties that religious exhibitors have to face. Commercial venues, on the other hand, were forced to compete with parish cinemas, which did not need to make a profit and therefore could pay higher rental percentages. A parish exhibitor called this relationship «a competition for a good purpose», while a commercial exhibitor described it more as a «rivalry, a cold war between two parties: one which is potently fierce and one which is desolately weak», showing how the dynamics at play between commercial and parish exhibition sectors were far from clear⁶¹. It also confirms that the boundaries between parish and commercial cinemas were blurred in the post-war period, exposing a complex network of compromises and allegiances that are difficult to disentangle.

⁶¹ Laccisaglia, 1952: 3.

Archives

This article draws from documents available online in the database of the PRIN (Research Project of National Relevance) on Catholics and cinema, coordinated by the University of Milan.

N.b.: documents available in the PRIN database come both from indexed archives and from archives which have not yet been ordered: in the former case, source verification can be carried out on the scans available online (<https://users.unimi.it/cattoliciecinema/>) as well as in the original archive of each document. Documents are therefore identified in the footnotes with two references: one with which they are indexed in real archives (if available) and another referring to the PRIN database (indicated within parentheses). After the first occurrence, each document is identified solely through database abbreviation.

Table of Acronyms

ACEC: Associazione Cattolica Esercenti Cinema

AGIS: Associazione Generale Italiana dello Spettacolo

ANICA: Associazione Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche Audiovisive Multimediali

CCC: Centro Cattolico Cinematografico

ISACEM: Istituto per la Storia dell'Azione Cattolica e del Movimento Cattolico in Italia Paolo VI

PRIN: Progetto di Ricerca di Interesse Nazionale

SIAE: Società Italiana degli Autori ed Editori

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