

## Summary

# CUT! POLITICAL FILM CENSORSHIP IN FINLAND, 1939–1947

## Research task

This study examines a neglected part of the history of censorship in Finland. Press censorship during WW2 and first post-war years has been well studied after the archives of censorship and of the State Information Office were opened at the beginning of 1970's. But the focus of the investigation, general or detailed, has never before been on film censorship.

This study starts from October 1939 when the Second World War had made Finnish film censorship extremely cautious of political issues, especially on news reels. Film censorship had become officially obligatory along with war censorship of the Winter War (30th November 1939 – 13th March 1940). The 1947 Paris Peace Convention gave good reasons to end war censorship that was legally based on the Republic's Protection Law (6th October 1939). When war censorship ended in October 1947, it continued to have an effect on film matters because many films were banned during the wars. That is why the period studied here does not end before the process of recensoring of those German and Hungarian films that were banned after the Continuation War (22th June 1941–19th September 1944). The recensoring took place at the end of 1947.

## Main questions

The main questions of the study are: What were the results of the work of the State Office of Film Censorship (SOFC)? This study presents a detailed descriptive study of censorship operations, all political bans and cuts, including politico-morally important cases. A more thorough analysis begins by questioning, how the SOFC could manage with the severe problems and demands arising from the changing policies of neutrality, war and peace?

Furthermore, what were the political functions of SOFC? Three main functions have been presupposed. First has been referred to as the protective censorship of films. Film censorship protected official state policy from foreign and interior film propaganda.

Secondly, it has been asked, how was film censorship in Finland used as negative propaganda, where censorship furthers its own propaganda by censoring others'? Protective censorship and propagandistic censorship can be seen as forming a part of opinion formation. How did film censorship practise

the politics of formation of opinions and of minds?

The role of foreign policy in the practise of film censors is also examined in the study. How and why did film censorship and other state institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, react to foreign (British, German and American and Soviet) film propaganda during the studied period? What were the reactions of film censorship to the propaganda war between Germany and Britain in spring 1941? How did the state officials and private film entrepreneurs take part in the propaganda war between the United States and Germany in 1941–44? What was the attitude of film censorship to American film propaganda when Germany was an ally? What kind of self-censorship was practised in the years of Continuation War and how did it change in post-war years? How was the film censorship organised and how were the problems concerning the decisions of war censorship solved after the war?

Some questions may be seen as belonging to the field of institutional history: How did other institutions such as the State Information Bureaus (Valtioneuvoston tiedoituskeskus 1939–40, Valtion Tiedoituskeskus 1940–41, Valtion Tiedoituslaitos 1941–47), the Headquarter and its institutions (eg. military censorship 1939–40, 1941–44 and the semi-official news agency Finlandia Uutistoimisto 1939–40), take part in the forming of film censorship policies of the State Office of Film Censorship (SOFC) from 1939 to 1947?

These questions are answered broadly not only in order to give the chronology of events of film censorship, and an analysis of the meaning of film censorship in Finnish society, but also to shed light on the cultural and social meanings and effects of censorship. This study aims to contribute to the study of Finnish political history, but at the same time it is certainly media history, institutional history and cultural history.

## Major sources

Major sources for this study include archive material from the German, British, American and Finnish archives: archives of film censorship, archives of censorship and propaganda institutions, archives of State Information Bureaus, diplomatic and other correspondence, verbal notes and other papers of and internal governmental memos and numerous private collections. The perspective has been broadened by using printed documents and film magazines as well as a large number of secondary material (research, literature, articles).

### 1. The beginning of film censorship

Regional film censorship, the only form of censorship in Russia since the Russian revolution of 1905, started in the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1911, fifteen years after motion pictures were introduced in Helsinki. The censors came from the police. After independence (1917) and the Civil War (1918), the

national censorship institution (Valtion filmilautakunta = State Board of Film) was established in 1919. It was soon replaced by the State Office of Film Censorship (Valtion filmitarkastamo = SOFC, 1921–1946).

SOFC was a semi-official institution, financed by private film entrepreneurs, but controlled and regulated by the state. Since 1923 the SOFC imposed a tax on every publicly exhibited film. Therefore, all commercial entrepreneurs allowed their films to be inspected voluntarily by the SOFC. In the mid 1930s, state control (Ministry of Education) stricened in all fields of culture: the theater, literature and the press suffered from censorship. It was an era of cultural wars. This explains some of the political reasons why the SOFC obtained a new and stricter code for film censorship in 1935 for which both American and Scandinavian codes were used as a model. The SOFC became state financed and regulated in 1946. This is when it got its news name which is still used today, Valtion elokuvatarkastamo (= SOFC).

In 1938, the government tried to pass a law on film censorship in the Parliament. It was rejected because the Social Democrats and the parliamentary political right – first, only nationalist right-wing, but at the end the majority of the bourgeois MP's – could not reach mutual understanding on the rules of censorship.

Problems arose especially concerning the concept of “national sentiment”. Moreover, the Social Democrats wanted to put in writing the explicit rules of the censorship code of the new film censorship law in order to avoid the possibility that censors might work against the interests of labour movement. The Social Democrats had had negative experiences of political censorship of film in the 1920s and 1930s. Finally, the film censorship law was rejected by the votes of bourgeois MPs.

In the 1930s, film was one of the major propaganda instruments, used widely for international propaganda. In Finland, it was imported especially from Germany and Britain. The United States, the most important source of films in Finland, was confident, up to the year 1941, in the power of democratic entertainment. Germany increased its film production in the 1930s producing large numbers of cultural film propaganda. It was delivered to Finland free of charge as long as German feature films were bought. Because of the Finnish tax system and new financial regulations during the Winter War, short films were shown again and again on Finnish screens. The British had great problems in importing their propaganda to Finland, because Finland was isolated from the west in the spring of 1940.

The statute concerning general censorship was issued as the part of Republic's Protection Law in October 1939. Because of the European War, the Finns were taking precautions in the eventuality of war. War censorship was put into practise two months later, six days after the Soviet Union attacked Finland in the end of November 1939, thus starting the Winter War. Now the plans of placing censorship under the authority of the Ministry of Interior were rejected, and censorship was placed under the command of the Finnish Army Office of Censorship (FAOC). When FAOC moved to Mikkeli with the Headquarter, and further on to Mäntyharju, almost 400 km out of Helsinki, the press, the post and

other censorships of Home Front – including film censorship – fell under the command of the Separate Office of Censorship (SOC). The chief of SOC was Dr Kustaa Vilkuna. The structure of the film censorship organisation was kept unchanged and censors of SOC just marched into the SOFC office in December and started censoring the films, sometimes with and sometimes without the help of the regular staff of the SOFC.

The war censorship of films replaced the system where specialists from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence helped the SOFC. The Finnish Film Chamber already in October had asked the Ministries for help in censoring “politically loaded” films “as long as the abnormal situation of the European war continues”. Fundamentally, the film censorship code remained the same. But for the political film censorship, the Ministry of Education gave more precisely defined, explicit rules only a week before the specialists started their work.

First, new rules ordered a film to be banned, if it showed disrespect towards the “history of the nation, national institutions, respected persons or national sentiment”. Barely a year earlier “national sentiment” had been a reason to reject the film censorship law in The Parliament. The message of the new rule is clear: it projected a nationalistic image of the nation.

Second, the rules prohibited a film from showing “anything breaking the spirit of the law, or otherwise generally agitating, or irritating foreign, or domestic political, or social propaganda”. Its main purpose was to maintain discipline and order. Crimes, “misdeeds and wickedness” and acts “against legal order” were listed as prohibited subjects elsewhere in the film censorship code, but now censors were given an executive power to judge “the spirit of the law”. That was exactly what the Social Democrats had opposed in the parliamentary process in 1938. “Foreign propaganda” elements as defined in the film censorship code was intended to eliminate e.g. both Fascist and Bolshevik film propaganda. “Domestic propaganda” certainly meant the propaganda of the Left, but the meaning of the term was later extended to prevent the possibility to advertise political parties.

Third, the code ordered a film to be banned, if “foreign nations were insulted”. This part of the code remains unchanged. It made possible the the banning of e.g. racist propaganda, but perhaps the idea was to give support to the nations belonging to the Finno-Ugric language group in case they were attacked by the means of film. However, this subsection of the paragraph was not often used after the summer 1940.

The fourth subsection banned a film from showing disrespect towards the “official or accepted flag”. It looks like censors expanded the meaning of the flag as this subsection was also used to censor the scenes in which other national symbols were insulted.

Moreover, the fifth subsection of the paragraph of the political film censorship code was directed against films in which “anything that could be characterised to harm the defence of the nation; or to weaken the will of defence of our people; or to weaken the foreign relations of the country; or to endanger the neutrality of the country”, were ordered to be banned. The

specified Finnish word used here for “defence” (“maan puolustus” and not “maanpuolustus”) indicates that the question was not only about military defence. The definition of the term was left to the censors, who could expand their censoring power by defining ambiguous term freely.

## 2. To the Winter War, 1939–40

Compared to the values presented in the parliamentary discussion in 1938, the new political censorship code reflected, not the ideas of the entire nation, but of the bourgeois majority. However, with the coming of the Winter War, these traditional views belonging to the political right were accepted without protest.

The censorship of films concentrated on the newsreels. From mid-October to the beginning of December, the SOFC and the specialists from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence did not ban a single film, but ordered cuts in 30 different newsreels and in one documentary film. Before the system of specialists, the SOFC had already cut five newsreels. All in all, five cuts were pointed to the German Ufa – news reels, five cuts to the American and two to the French production, and the rest to the British news reels. More than half of the newsreels imported were cut. Eight times a British news reel was ordered to be exhibited without sound, as a silent film.

Four summarizing points will be presented. Firstly, the film censorship had a protective function when it censored – using the principle of neutrality – foreign film propaganda. Protective policy produced strict censorship when international conflicts; when the enemy image was under issue; or when leaders of the foreign powers, foreign institutions or national symbols were insulted.

Secondly, film censorship tried to dilute foreign film propaganda. The SOFC cut ungrounded optimism and guesses concerning the future from the newsreels. Moreover, animation in propaganda purposes was often censored. All in all, the censorship was interested in voice, pictures and words alike.

Quantitatively speaking, censorship was stricter with texts and sound of the film, and only rarely it censored the visual elements. Consequently the British had more to lose than the Germans in the hands of Finnish film censors. At first, British newsreels were ordered several times to be shown as silent films, but later the SOFC preferred cuts.

Thirdly, film censorship had propaganda effects. Film censorship was the only form of censorship organised before the Winter War. Experiences in film censorship were transmitted to other forms of censorship and propaganda/control organisations. The censorship had propagandistic character. The scenes cut from foreign film propaganda were adopted by the Finnish film makers during the Winter War.

Fourthly, film censorship tried to influence the opinions of the audiences, especially concerning to ideas of total and technical warfare. Film censorship supported the government’s secretive policy on military mobilisation in October 1939. By censoring scenes from the war theatre, film censorship tried to lessen fears concerning the war. This policy was meant to motivate the

Finnish war efforts and to give believe in national survival in the middle of the World War.

The system of specialists worked, but its methods seem to have been too harsh. When the Winter War was launched and war censorship had started, film censorship was not as strict as it had been under the system of specialists. Generally, the army was responsible of censorship, but film censorship was placed under the Separate Office of Censorship (SOC). One reason why the line of film censorship was softened was criticism concerning governmental secrecy policy, especially regarding to news reporting.

Developments of the war operations were cut like before. The SOC supported the HQ's information policy by censoring international news about Finnish-Russian war. HQ wanted and obtained a monopoly for this. The SOC did not prevent international film groups from filming in Finland, but it was the HQ which was responsible of not organising adequate possibilities to film at the front.

The HQ tried twice to reorganise the censorship of films, but the SOC managed both times to avoid military control. Instead, the SOC had serious troubles with the semi-official *Finlandia Uutistoimisto* (= FU), which got its orders mostly from the Army. FU's pressure to SOFC produced the ban of five films, of which two were pacifist (*Blockade*, US 1938; *The Road Back*, US 1938) and two war films about World War I (*Les Héros de la Marne*, France 1938, *Das Ringen um Verdun*, Germany 1930's). It is unclear why *La Bête Humaine*, (France 1938) was banned.

All in all, it is problematic to give a summary of policy of the film censorship. The period of Winter War was very short. But it shows how close the ties between film censorship and war aims were: censorship supported the constantly changing foreign policy of the government as quickly as it was possible. That explains why film censorship was so careful with German films, it explains why British films were under strict censorship and it explains why the treatment of French films underwent such a great change from the autumn 1939 compared to that of spring's 1940. In spring 1940, as long as there were hopes that France could help in the Finnish war effort, requests concerning film censorship by the French diplomats were fulfilled.

France was the only foreign power which was active in film affairs in Finland during the Winter War. From October 1939 to February 1940 France left four verbal notes concerning films. The first two, concerning the German films *Bel Ami* (Germany 1939) and *Wer küsst Madeleine* (Germany 1939) did not produce any official reaction in the SOFC, but the complaints about the American films *Beau Geste* (US 1939) ("insulted French Army") and *The Hurricane* (US 1937) ("insulted French colonial administration") did. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered – through the Ministry of Education – the the SOFC to ban *Beau Geste* in February, because "under the present circumstances and because of the remarks from the authority representing French government, the public exhibition of this film must not be allowed." When prohibiting *The Hurricane* the Ministry of Foreign Affairs referred simply to the "current political situation" and gave the same reasons for which *Beau Geste* was banned.

### 3. Film censorship during the inter war years, 1940–41

Censorship cuts in German newsreels during the spring and summer of 1940 show that the Finnish film censors did understand the basics of visual racist propaganda. But in the autumn of 1940, German propaganda, whether it be anti-Semitic, anti-Polish or anti-British found its way to Finnish screens without much restraint from the behalf of film censorship.

Since June 1940, film censorship was back in the hands of the SOFC. New statutes did not include film censorship, but the case of *Isoviha* (Finland 1939) proves that the Ministry of Interior now had the power in matters of censorship. All in all, the Finnish cinema did not suffer major censoring problems. The only cases of film censorship occurred when religious (*Simo Hurtta*, Finland 1940) or anti-Russian sentiments (*Isoviha*, Finland 1939) were presented in films. Moreover, those propaganda films that were made for Nordic audiences during the Winter War, were banned in the summer of 1940.

After the Winter War, the character of film censorship changed. Censorship was more clearly concentrated on foreign policy and international films. During the autumn of 1940, film censorship was permissive. The greatest benefits were taken by those foreign powers which were able to operate in Finland. The Russians had their films on the market, and so did the British, who had only limited resources to export their films to isolated Finland.

But the Germans had ambitious plans. In autumn 1940 Adolf Hitler had already decided to get in closer contact with Finland. At first, this took place in military affairs, but the improvement of cultural relations actualised as well. A Finnish-German Friendship Society was established in a new form, and it gained several hundred new members every week; International Games in athletics between Germany, Sweden and Finland were held at Helsinki; Reichssportführer Hans von Tschammer und Osten visited with the personal permission of Hitler; Finnish artists, journalists and writers and other intellectuals visited Germany and German institutions and vice versa, preceding the fulfilment of the German plan of a New Europe.

Adding the finishing touch to growing German cultural influence, the 'blitzkrieg'-films from the European theatre of war were shown in the biggest cinemas in the biggest towns. Several copies were brought to Finland and shown to the establishment like as other neutral countries. *Der Feldzug in Polen* (Germany 1939) and *Feuertaufe* (Germany 1939) were accepted by the SOFC without cuts. Nazi propaganda against Polish Jews or threats to bomb England did not pose a problem to the Finnish censors. At the same time German soldiers travelling to Norway through the Finnish territory were reported singing "Wir gegen nach die Engländer" in North Finland. The song was a popular melody from *Feuertaufe*.

The German colony (Die deutsche Kolonie) in Finland was organised, too. Several times, the SOFC passed original German Newsreels to be shown "in private exhibitions only", organised by Die Deutsche Kolonie r.y.. The Russians had the same privilege when the film *Istrebiti* (Soviet Union) was shown to private audiences in November. Two weeks later the same film was

passed before public audiences. The Americans had traditionally had a strong position in Finnish film markets. Both long and short films were shown and eagerly watched by the moviegoers. The American films did not have any problems with film censorship. Even *Thunder Afloat* (US 1937) was accepted in the SOFC, and it looks like Germans never complained about film in Finland like they did in Sweden.

In Finland, at the turn of the year 1940–41, the only country which had no problems with censorship, was the United States. The reason was simple. Their propaganda goals, if any, were modest. The British could not match the Germans' efforts in cultural propaganda, because they were cut off from the Finnish screens – not as much politically as geopolitically. They simply could not distribute their cultural propaganda in Finland. The Finnish-German relations were getting closer and closer, especially in the field of military affairs. But cultural relations flourished as well. The Germans made the decision about Operation Barbarossa in mid-December. Finland had its part in military operations of the planned destruction of the Soviet Union.

From the autumn of 1940 to the end of Continuation War in September 1944, it is possible to characterise the film censorship in Finland as pro-German. Cultural relations with Germany were exceptionally rich in the spring of 1941. The new Minister of Education, Mr. Antti Kukkonen, got to know the SOFC right after the appointment of J. V. Rangell's cabinet in January. The anti-German French film, *Terre d'Angoisse*, was banned with the assistance of pro-German minister Kukkonen.

Film and film censorship was certainly one of the most influential means in the formation of the minds of Finnish people in 1941. It was part of a large German cultural campaign in Finland. The British Embassy counted more than 25 major cultural happenings in Finland during first three months of the year. The more intimate the military co-operation with Germany developed, the harder the attitudes of the censorship against British propaganda efforts became. The change in the opinions of the people in favour of Germany took place at the turn of March and April 1941.

The SOFC adopted policy which, compared to the British, gave German film propaganda better means to influence people. Film censorship banned *London Can Take It!* (GB 1940) by the request of German diplomats in March, even when it had been accepted without hesitation in February. Later in May a British documentary film about the military campaign to Lofoten was banned. Mr. Vereker, the British envoy in Finland, attempted to persuade foreign minister Rolf Witting to release the banned films. His efforts did not produce any results except regrets from the president Risto Ryti that it had been a mistake to ban the film *London Can Take It!*.

At the same time, the SOFC accepted many German propaganda films after only few minor cuts. Among the accepted films was a popular war documentary from the battle fields of France, *Sieg im Westen* (Germany 1940); a feature film *Feiende* (Germany 1939) that was a justification for eastern expansion; and an anti-Semitic film *Jud Süß* (Germany 1940). The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained tactically to London that film censorship was strict for both

parties. To prove this, the SOFC had banned the strongly anti-British German film *Der Fuchs von Glenarvon* (Germany 1940), in March, and *Über Alles in der Welt* (Germany 1940), in June. The impact of censorship was less important for the Germans because of the number of their films. That these moves were purely tactical, is proved by the fact that both banned German films were free for public exhibitions soon after the Continuation War started in June 1941.

In the new political situation in spring 1941 – Finland and its leaders had decided to co-operate with Germany – the specialists would have been useful in censorship. Because of the lack of diplomatic experience in the SOFC, the censors informed questioners from British Embassy about the actual processes of film censorship. Consequently, in May, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took control in matters of film censorship.

## The Continuation War, 1941–44

The Continuation War started on the 22th of June 1941. The British position in film censorship, that had been problematic all year, became more understandable when Finland broke diplomatic relations with Britain in August. When Russian films were banned, there were only two major operators in the film markets, Germany and United States. Most of the films that political censorship operated with were from those countries.

During the Continuation War, German film propaganda enhanced its position. A clear indication of this was the free flow of German newsreels to Finnish cinema theatres. Censors cut German newsreels during the first autumn of the war only once. They cut a text that highlighted the Finnish-German alliance in a way that was unacceptable to the Finns.

The SOBC had softened the anti-British German propaganda in the autumn of 1941 with cuts made in German feature films. During these cuts, Finnish relations with England were at the level of diplomatic conflict. England declared war to Finland on the 24th National Day of Finland, December 6th 1941. The German goal was to produce as strong a pro-German attitude as possible among the Finnish people. By the summer of 1942, these efforts could be described as a success.

In autumn 1941, a few censorship cuts were made in American and German films because of the internal opinion or the “spirit” of the front. For example, a cut was made in a scene in which German officers had fun with women. The subject was a taboo because the relations of German soldiers and Finnish women had become one of the major morally negative topics of discussion among the men at the front. This was one of the real achievements of Russian loudspeaker propaganda at the front and of Russian radio propaganda.

In the spring of 1942, film censorship was not under official German pressure like eg. press censorship had been. Unofficially, private efforts were made to ban American films in Finland. The campaign was organised by the International Film Chamber that was under German influence. During the boycott process, or the film dispute as it is referred in Finland, the Film

Chamber of Finland was divided into American oriented and German oriented parties. After losing elections in the Film Chamber, the German orientation, to which all the biggest producing companies in Finland belonged, established a new organisation, the Film Union of Finland (FUF). The FUF's political services to the Germans assured raw film and other material imports from Germany. Besides, with the help of the new organisation, they could easily change the production, distribution and exhibition system to a more profitable direction.

The goal of the FUF was not only economical but also ideological. Its magazine "Suomen Kinolehti" argued for a "new Europe" and published articles in order to throw out the "anti-Finnish" people from the Finnish film business. The fact was that the FUF had even stricter line concerning the boycott of American films than the line of the International Film Chamber had practised in its member countries.

In 1943, the film dispute produced a reaction in the Parliament. The parliamentary committee succeeded in cancelling the distribution boycott - German and profitable Finnish films were given only to the cinema theaters where also German films were shown - only in the late spring of 1944. The FUF demanded German acceptance of the agreements with The Film Chamber of Finland as late as in June 1944. The Americans were unable to bring raw film to Finland until October 1943 and even then the quantities imported were too small for the needs of film production.

The real payers were the cinema theater owners who tried to avoid economic disaster by choosing an opportunistic attitude to the film dispute. A large number of cinema theater owners joined both organisations making a retroactive contract for several years. This procedure enabled cinema theater owners to show all kinds of films to the public, both American and German films.

In the autumn of 1942, the HQ took an interest in film censorship. After the request of the HQ, the State Information Agency demanded the general recensoring of all films censored before the war. The understanding about the line of censorship in the Press affairs between the State Information Agency and the HQ was achieved only a few weeks earlier. Now it was time to clear the air in film issues.

Forty nine films were banned. Some of them were American pacifist films, eg. *A Farewell to Arms* (1932), *Road to Glory* (1936) and *The Dawn Patrol* (1938). Among the banned films were some feature films about Army, Navy and Air Forces, eg. *Filming the Fleet*, *The Conquest of the Air* (1930s), *Our Navy in Action* (1921), *Wings Of the Navy* (1938), *Shipmates Forever* (1935), *Annapolis Farewell* (1935), *Submarine Patrol* (1938), *I Wanted Wings* (1941), *Thunder Afloat* (1939), *Ceiling Zero* (1935) and *Devil Dogs of the Air* (1935); and some, eg. *Inside Nazi Germany* (1938), *March of Time* (1938), *Nazi Conquest* (1938), *Germany Invades Austria* (1938) and *Arise My Love* (1940) were clearly anti-German.

Two German films (*Der Kurier des Zarens* (1935), *Wenn die Sonne sinkt*, five French films (anti-German attitude in *Le Héros de la Marne* (1939), WW1-films like *L'Équipage* (1935), confusing combination of allies in *Alerte en Méditerranée* (1938), German (Prussian) spies in historical Paris in *La Route*

*Impériale* (1935). Also one Italian film about British sphere of influence *Gibraltar*, two Czech films, *Bila Nemoc – die Weisse Krankheit* (1937), that is based on Karel Capek's futuristic novel and Russian circumstances in *A vykrik do sibirske noci* (1930s), were banned.

Many films were banned because they had connections with the enemies, eg. with Russia/Soviet Union, such as *Vykrik do sibirske noci*, *A Woman Alone* (1936), *Port Arthur* (1936), *Hot from Petrograd* and *Moscow Moods* (1930s) or the British world, such as *Life of Edward* and *The Coronation of George VI* (1930s), *Our Fighting Navy* (1937), *Last Outpost* (1935), *The High Command* (1936), *Goodbye Mr. Chips* (1939), *Lloyds of London* (1936), *Sixty Glorious Years* (1938).

The 1942 list of bannings includes also such films as the pro-Jew film *Power* (GB, 1934) – German *Jud Süß* (1940) was accepted in SOFC with minor cuts), short films from the 1930s, eg. *Gypsy Revels*, *Rubinoff And His Orchestra*, *Rubinoff And Orchestra*. Were these films banned because of the image of the Jews, the Gypsies or the Russians? I cannot give an explicit answer to this question.

The re-censorship operation proves that the SOBC couldn't take care of film censorship at the highest political level in Finland. The operation was organised by the State Information Agency which was directly under the political control of the Prime Minister. It is easy to see the influence of the Army, the Germans and their hopes behind this operation. Officially, the Germans never asked bannings.

What is important is the fact that all officials gained in the large censorship operation. The SIA improved its less than good relations with HQ. For the interest of the relation between the SIA and the HQ, the film censorship procedure was a fulfillment of an agreement that had been achieved earlier concerning co-operation in Press censorship. Now the HQ had a good standing point to persuade to Germans that film censorship was still working for the good relations between the comrades-in-arms. And the government was able to be certain that there were morally acceptable films, good entertainment, on the film market. Entertainment is morally a very important issue during the war both on the Front and on the Home Front.

The change in the policy of censorship was at hand. The 1942 film censorship operation would hardly have been possible a few months later. The war in North Africa and the battle of Stalingrad offered a perfect chance for those who wanted to speak publicly for the Allied. The press censorship decided to release the most neutral war information from the Allied. The voices grew against the foreign minister Mr Rolf Witting, German minded officials within the Ministry of Foreign affairs, and against leading figures inside the SIA and the secret police.

In the end of February 1943, after a six month break, the Americans tried to import some of their newsreels. The censorship decision concerning these films was postponed until the new government of Edwin Linkomies was nominated. Two of the five imported newsreels were finally accepted, but as it turned out in reality, only for a week. The Americans now had a possibility to exhibit some of

their propaganda, although all the scenes concerning Italians and Germans were cut off, but only in “private exhibitions”, not publicly. This was the tactics of Finnish government that was playing for time.

The change in film censorship policy was realised in the end of August in 1943. Firstly, some of the films banned in 1942 were accepted. Second, the American newsreels were allowed to be exhibited. The real problem for American-oriented was the raw film. In October 1943, enough raw film for 70 copies of feature films and a few copies of news reels was imported. Consequently, not very many American newsreels were shown in Finnish cinema theatres in the spring and summer of 1944.

In 1943 the State Information Agency banned four American films (*One Night in Lisbon* (1941), *Tovarich* (1942), *Till we meet again* (1936), *This Man Reuter* (1941) and the SOBC only one (*Blackmail*, 1943). The patriotic scenes or scenes in which the British were strongly supported, were cut out from American films. Only one German film, *Germanin* (1943), was banned.

New problems arose in December. The American Embassy complained about the treatment of the war film *Wake Island* (1942). The Americans compared their feature film to the accepted Japanese “flight propaganda film” *Mojoru ozara* (1940) which happened to be one of the gifts Adolf Hitler brought to Finland when he visited marshall C. G. E. Mannerheim’s 75th anniversary in Finland in June 1942.

Under the American diplomatic pressure the SOBC accepted strongly anti-German *Sergeant York* (US 1941) but banned the propagandistic melodrama *Mrs. Miniver* (US 1942). In January 1944 even a *German newsreel* was cut because of anti-American attitude! That was due to the fact that the American charge d’affair was leaving Finland at the end of January 1944.

Later the pro-American policy was forgotten completely. For example, only a few cuts were made to German newsreels, until they all were banned after the interim peace in September 1944. Before that, in July 1944, the Germans had tried to exert influence on Finnish high officials and officers by showing them a film about the murder of Polish officers in Katyn. Perhaps that was one of the reasons why so many high officers and officials fled to Sweden in autumn 1944.

## The first years after the war

After the interim peace in September 1944, the SOFC banned 17 Finnish feature or documentary films, 86 Army newsreels, 27 German feature films (“these with a German uniform”) and 168 German newsreels, and a single Hungarian newsreel. Although war was over, German oriented planned to continue importing and exhibiting German films in Finland. The FUF ended its functions only few days before all German (and Hungarian) films were banned after Allied Control Commission, led by A. A. Zdanov, had pointed out that German films were still shown in Finland.

Those American films banned during the war, for political reasons, were released soon after the interim peace – firstly, on 20th September 1944 and

secondly, 1st March 1946 – and if not then, as soon as the film companies asked for it. Soviet films came to the Finnish markets in September 1944, news films a month later. The Americans interested again in importing new films and selling some amounts of raw film to Finland via Sweden only because the Russians had become active in film issues.

The American black list of those companies that had collaborated with the Nazis included two Finnish companies. The black list was put aside in autumn 1945, and only few changes were required in the Finnish film industry before it. It was quite easy to import films to Finland after the war, problems were technical and financial rather than political. The line of censorship was very soft. Foreign powers could exhibit their films without noticeable censorship problems.

It looks like the only political cuts were made in scenes depicting bodies of concentration camps. This was actually due to the age limit. Political censorship was carried on in those moral questions which were typical for every country in the post war years (alcohol, sexuality) but quantitatively the most common motivation for bannings was violence and horror. In other words, censorship used psychological motivations.

Recensoring of banned German and Hungarian feature films took place in 1947, after the Paris Peace Treaty had made censorship useless. In the recensoring process, only eight films were banned, but 58 films, mostly documentaries and educational films, were cut.

All in all, film censorship in Finland did not prevent foreign powers – with the exception of enemy countries – to present their film propaganda in Finnish cinemas in 1939-47. From the broad perspective, it was typical that audiences were able to follow the development of Nazi cinema from Babelsberg, but they were also able to see how democratic propaganda from Hollywood presented different world views. Both powers had big film audiences in Finland.

But this study has put into sharper focus the outlook of Finnish film censorship that has generally been defined as liberal. When political changes in Finnish government policy took place, the political message of foreign powers, especially that of Britain in 1941 and the United States 1941–3, was time to time under very strict censorship procedures. The motivation of censorship was the governmental policy: the aims of the war, general policy and formation of opinions among Finnish people. Censorship followed the changes of policy very quickly because mostly film censorship handled questions of foreign policy. Only after Continuation War was film censorship turned to the problematic questions of crimes, horror and sexuality.

During the period studied, self-censorship was not a very common feature in film censorship. Only a few cases were found: all of them had something to do with political crisis with the Soviet Union. Some censorship cuts to Soviet films were made as early as 1946. Finnish censorship officials had made it possible after negotiations with Soviet film officials. Political censoring to Soviet films did not take place before 1951. Then, the Cold War had made foreign policy a central question again. In Finnish censorship of films the Cold War started in April 1948.