

A Chapter in Latvian Cinema History: The Process of Cinefication (1940–1941; 1944–1953)

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Abstract. A campaign of *кинофикация* (cinefication) was started in the Soviet Union in the 1920s with the aim of making cinema accessible to the public across the country. As a means of Sovietisation of culture, cinefication was introduced in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania immediately after their occupation by the Soviet Union in 1940. Based on extensive archive work and existing published sources, this article addresses the process of cinefication in Soviet Latvia during the Stalinist years (from 1940 to 1953), highlighting some key aspects such as the structural reorganisation of cinema networks according to Soviet regulations, and the production of newsreels and feature films.

Keywords: Latvian cinema history, cinefication, Soviet Latvia, Sovietisation, dubbing, newsreels, feature films

INTRODUCTION

The potential of cinema as a means of mass persuasion was recognised by the Soviet leaders from the early days of this new technology. Vladimir Lenin emphasised the benefit that the cinema could bring to the Bolshevik communist cause when he declared that cinema was “the most important of all the arts”. Indeed, the first decision Lenin made concerning cinema was the decree signed on 27 August 1919 that nationalised the film industry in Soviet Russia.¹ Attempts to withstand the nationalisation of cinema and to sustain its self-sufficiency failed. In 1922 Narkompros (the People’s Commissariat for Education) authorised the creation of Goskino (the State Committee for Cinematography), the goal of which was a distribution monopoly in order to earn money from production.² In January 1922, Lenin gave his Directive on the Film Business, in which he established the principles of Soviet cinema for the ensuing decades. Lenin declared the priority of the propaganda function of the Soviet cinema. He required a particular ideological message to be included in all films. Special attention was to be given to organising film exhibitions in the villages and in the East, where cinema was a novelty, so that “our propaganda, therefore, will be all the more effective”.³ For the Soviet authorities, cinema became one of the most important means of legitimising the “dictatorship of the proletariat” and justifying the Soviet regime, as well as an ideological means of the legitimisation of Soviet rule in the occupied territories, including the Baltic countries.

Our article focuses on the Soviet cinefication in Latvia during Stalin’s rule, which includes the first Soviet occupation in 1940–1941 and the post-World War II years until Stalin’s death in 1953. The Latvian case serves as an example of Sovietisation in the cultural realm of the Soviet peripheries that, during the interwar decades, enjoyed the status of independent states. The persuasive potential of film art was used by the Soviet authorities for the justification of the occupying regime and propagation of Soviet values and lifestyle.

The aim of this article is to fill the gap left by previous works focusing on the history of cinema in Latvia. Hence, we start with a brief

- 1 Декрет СНК о переводе фотографической и кинематографической торговли и промышленности в ведение Народного комиссариата просвещения. – Декреты советской власти, Т. VI: 1 августа–9 декабря 1919 г. Политиздат, Москва, 1973, 74.
- 2 J. D. Youngblood. *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era, 1918–1935*. University of Texas Press, Austin, 1991, 2.
- 3 V. Lenin. Directives on the film business, 1922. – *Seventeen Moments of Soviet History*. An Online Archive of Primary Sources, <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1924-2/socialist-cinema/socialist-cinema-texts/lenin-on-the-most-important-of-the-arts/> (accessed 26/01/2023).

explanation of the concept and context of cinefication and a review of previous research. Next, we proceed chronologically from the first Soviet occupation in 1940–1941 to the early 1950s. For the sake of continuity and better understanding of post-war developments, we have also included some information about Latvian cinema during the German occupation of 1941–1944. We tell the cinefication story within its historical context concurrently with some insights into the lives of people involved.

The research behind this article was largely done in the Latvian National Archive (*Latvijas Nacionālais arhīvs*), the Latvian State Archive (*Latvijas Valsts arhīvs*), and using the digital archive at the Latvian State Archives of Audio-visual Documents (*Latvijas Valsts kinofotofonodokumentu arhīvs*). Guided by document analysis methodology, the authors are cognisant of the possible bias of the Soviet documents produced in the spirit of their time. Therefore, source criticism leads the examination of these documents by comparing the facts and information they offer with other available sources. A range of secondary sources (mainly various publications) are used to draw the historical-cultural context to Latvia's cinefication.⁴

CINEFICATION AS A CONCEPT AND A PROCESS

The term cinefication (*кинофикация*)⁵ was coined in the middle of the 1920s, “to describe projected changes the Soviet system promised to bring to Russia. [...] The Soviets vowed to ‘cinefy’ the USSR in the course of developing film as a tool of mass education and persuasion. The effort entailed building an infrastructure which would allow films to reach a mass audience.”⁶ Alongside similar campaigns of industrialisation, electrification, and agricultural collectivisation the efforts of developing film production and the cinema infrastructure (studios, movie theatres, portable projectors and other technology) were a substantial component of building the new Soviet society.

In the documents of the 1920s and 1930s, cinefication is defined as a complex of actions related to the cinema network and to the methods

4 All translations from Latvian to English are by Rosario Napolitano; the translations from Russian to English are by Epp Lauk.

5 Throughout the article, we will use the anglicised version of this word, as English language publications generally do.

6 V. Kopley Jr. “Cinefication”: Soviet Film Exhibition in the 1920s. – *Film History*, 1994, 6, 2, 262–277, here 262.

of dissemination and demonstration of moving pictures.⁷ Thus, the term specifically covered the executive measures of the development of cinema networks and infrastructure according to the directions and plans of the Communist Party. Online dictionaries of foreign words in the Russian language define cinefication along similar lines as “a system of undertakings aimed at building movie theatres and the creation of portable film projection equipment, constant improvement of production equipment and advancement of conditions and quality of film screenings”.⁸ The meaning of the word in reality, however, was much broader, based on the afore-mentioned Leninist principles, which were dogmatically followed throughout the Stalinist regime. According to the leader of the State Committee for Cinematography 1930–1938 Boris Shumyatski (1886–1938), Stalin, “the great friend of cinema”, used to personally supervise the directors of films (such as D. Vertov, S. Eisenstein) and the leadership of Soviet film industry. In his draft essay for the book “Comrade Stalin about Cinema”, Shumyatski documented in detail Stalin’s ideas about Soviet filmmaking and the instructions he gave to film directors. His advice included guidance on how to express and demonstrate the correct ideological line, what kinds of film (for example, comedy) to make, and how to depict the great achievements of the Soviet economy, culture, and politics.⁹ Just a few months after Lenin’s death, at the 13th Congress of the Russian Communist Party in May 1924, Stalin emphasised that “Cinema is a superb means of mass agitation. Our task is to take it into our hands”.¹⁰ After the screening of Eisenstein’s *Броненосец «Потёмкин»* (*Battleship Potemkin*, 1925), Stalin gave clear guidelines to the leaders of Soviet film industry: their task was to carry out proper ideological educational work with “the masters of film art”, and to properly guide them.¹¹ In 1924, the USSR’s film distribution agency Goskino was reorganised into the joint stock company Sovkino, which was given a monopoly on film distribution in Russia, with the other Soviet republics only able to purchase films from Sovkino.¹² In

7 For example: Постановление № 56 СНК СССР «Об образовании общесоюзного объединения по кинофотопромышленности». 13 февраля 1930 г.; <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/5283-postanovlenie-56-snk-sssr-ob-obrazovanii-obscheyuznogo-obedineniya-po-kinofotopromyshlennosti-13-fevralya-1930-g> (accessed 26/01/2023).

8 Словарь иностранных слов русского языка, *s.v.* кинофикация, https://biblioclub.ru/index.php?page=dict&dict_id=144 (accessed 26/01/2023).

9 Дос. по г: Очерк Б. З. Шумяцкого «Сталин о кино». – Культура и власть от Сталина до Горбачева. Документы. Редакционная коллегия: К. Аймермахер (гл. ред.), В. Ю. Афанан, Д. Байрау, Б. Бонвеч, Н.Г. Томилина. РОССПЭН, Москва, 2005, 81–92.

10 *Ibid.*, 81.

11 *Ibid.*, 82.

12 V. Kopley Jr. “Cinefication”, 267.

1930, Sovkino was replaced by the all-Soviet cinema and photography institution called Soyuzkino, which centrally administered all cinema and film related enterprises and organisations as well as those producing and selling the respective technology. Soyuzkino was government funded and supervised by the Central Committee of the CPSU. In October 1931, within the structure of Soyuzkino, an independent unit called the Head Office of Cinefication of the USSR was created for “the successful organisation of cinema services for the broad masses of the working people” on regional and local levels.¹³ Thus, through these structural reorganisations, cinefication was given an institutional status with ideological tasks as part of the state apparatus. A secret decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU on 8 December 1931, defined cinema as “the most important means of serving the cultural needs of the masses and of raising their cultural–political level.”¹⁴ Although the document specifically emphasises the cultural needs of the people, there is no mention of any cultural or education institution or authority being responsible for these needs. Instead, the document clearly indicates cinema’s function of ideological and political indoctrination demanding “the exceptional attention of all Communist Party, Soviet and trade union organisations”.

Within the context of Soviet Russia, cinefication did indeed have some educational and cultural effects by providing all segments of the urban and rural populations broad access to films. Gal Kirn introduces a ‘parallax’ view of early Soviet cinema, arguing that in the 1920s “communist cinema should be understood as an encounter between the emerging socialist state, its policy of socialist modernization and a development of the specific political aesthetics of the new filmmakers”¹⁵. He points out the close relations between revolutionary process and the avant-garde movement in the arts, where “the mass creativity of artists was accompanied by the enthusiastic search and construction of the ‘new world’, where human emancipation happened by empowerment of the (working) masses.”¹⁶ For this, the state policy of cinefication created

13 Приказ № 158 Союзкино «Об организации в составе Союзкино Управления кинофикации СССР», <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/5299-prikaz-158-soyuzkino-ob-organizatsii-v-sostave-soyuzkino-upravleniya-kinofikatsii-sssr-1-oktyabrya-1931-g> (accessed 26/01/2023).

14 Постановление ЦК ВКП(б) «О советской кинематографии». 8 декабря 1931 г. Весьма секретно. <http://docs.historyrussia.org/ru/nodes/5300-postanovlenie-tsk-vkp-b-o-sovetskoy-kinematografii-8-dekabrya-1931-g-vesma-sekretno> (accessed 26/01/2023).

15 G. Kirn. Between socialist modernization and cinematic modernism. The revolutionary politics of Aesthetics of Medvedkin’s cinema train. – *Marxism and Film Activism: Screening Alternative Worlds*. Ed. by E. Mazierska, L. Kristensen. Berghahn Books, Oxford, 2015, 32.

16 *Ibid.*, 30.

material conditions (studios, movie theatres, portable projectors and other facilities and technology). However, the structural reorganisation of the early 1930s together with intensifying ideological supervision and the introduction of socialist realism as the only correct artistic interpretation of reality “subjugated art to the service of the state”.¹⁷ After the demise of the avant-garde, cinefication functioned as the ideological means to strengthen the power of the Communist Party, and to cultivate a new type of person, the Soviet citizen.¹⁸

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON CINEFICATION IN LATVIA

Research on Latvian cinema and film history sporadically refer to cinefication in connection with other topics, but do not specifically focus on this phenomenon. Peter Rollberg’s impressive volume¹⁹ covers the cinema history of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the post-Soviet period. His work has a separate entry for the Riga Studio and a description of Latvian Soviet cinema including post-Soviet Latvia. Yet, he does not mention the process of cinefication in his book. Similarly, the anthology *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas* contains a chapter on the Sovietisation of Latvian cinema but has no reference to cinefication.²⁰

Some remarkable works on Latvian cinema history can be mentioned, such as *Inscenējumu realitāte, Latvijas aktierkino vēsture* (Staging Reality: The History of Latvian Acting Cinema) 2011, by Inga Pērkone and co-authors. The book rebuilds the history of Latvian cinema from 1920 to 2010. The volume also contains a complete catalogue of Latvian films. In *Zudušos kinoteātrus meklējot* (Searching for Lost Cinema) 2018, Zigmars Jauja and co-authors focus on the history of Latvian cinema starting from the beginning of the 20th century. In this case, the term cinefication is introduced in relation to the Soviet cinema for children. Davoliūtē and Kaminskaitē-Jančorienē in their article on the first Soviet Lithuanian film *Marytė*²¹ mention cinefication

¹⁷ Ibid., 37.

¹⁸ J. Miller. *Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasion under Stalin*. I.B. Tauris, London. 2009, 13–14.

¹⁹ P. Rollberg. *The A to Z of Russian and Soviet Cinema*. Scarecrow Press, Lanham, 2010.

²⁰ I. Novikova. *Nation, Gender, and History in Latvian Genre Cinema*. – *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*. Ed. by A. Imre. Wiley-Blackwell, Chichester, 2012, 366–384.

²¹ V. Davoliute, L. Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė. *Sovietisation and the Cinema in the Western Borderlands: Insurgency, Narrative, and Identity in the Lithuanian Film Marytė (1947)*. – *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 2016, 64, 3, 391–408.

as a development of a distribution network for films, and connect it with the broader issue of ideological narrative building in Soviet films. Lina Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė has also published an article on cinefication in Lithuania during the post-World War II period,²² where she focuses on the role of cinema (and cinefication) in the rural society of Lithuania. This is so far the only publication clearly focusing on cinefication in the Baltic countries.

Cinefication appears in Irina Cherneva's article on the Sovietisation of Riga film studios.²³ Cherneva relies on archive sources to examine the process of the Sovietisation of the cinema and film industry in Latvia. These sources, however, are often unreliable. For example, Cherneva reports that the only movie produced during the interwar period in Latvia was *Zvejnieka dēls* (The Fisherman's Son, 1939) shot in 1939 and first screened on 22 January 1940.²⁴ Cherneva's source is a report made by the Latvian SSR Ministry of Cinema Affairs to the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers.²⁵ The Soviet document argues that there had been no film studio in Riga before 1940 and denies the fact that the first (silent) feature film *Es karā aiziedams* (Off to War, by Vilis Segliņš), based on Latvian mythology, was produced as early as 1920. Several other feature films were also produced in the 1920s and 1930s. For example, the most famous Latvian silent feature film *Lāčplēsis* (Bear slayer, by Aleksandrs Rustekis) was produced and screened in 1930.²⁶

The anthology *Selection of Articles on Latvian Film: History and Present Days*²⁷ contains articles about Latvian cinema and film mainly from the 1950s onwards, but also offers some facts about previous periods. Some other examples of studying Latvian film and cinema history are the PhD thesis by Inese Strupule on the amateur filmmaking movement in

22 L. Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė. Moving pictures for Peasants: The Kinofikatsia of Rural Lithuania in the Stalinist Era (1944–1953). – *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des ländlichen Raumes*, 2018, 18, 49–63.

23 И. Чернева. «Советизация» рижских киностудий: дилеммы кадровой политики в сфере киноискусства (1944–1949). – *Пережить войну. Киноиндустрия в СССР, 1939–1949 годы*. РОССПЕИ, Москва, 2018, 148–178.

24 I. Pērkone. "Zvejnieka dēls", Latviešu spēlfilma. – *Nacionālā Enciklopēdija*, <https://enciklopedija.lv/skirklis/122081>. Published on 18/05/2021, accessed 26/01/2023. The movie *Zvejnieka dēls* was also screened in Kaunas on 4 March 1940 at the Daina cinema (according to the *Valdības Vēstnesis* newspaper, 53, 05/03/1940) and in Tallinn on 13 April 1940 at the Helios cinema (according to the *Kurzemes Vārds* newspaper, 83, 14/04/1940).

25 Latvijas Valsts Arīvs (LVA). 16 June 1948, 270-2-5790, 1.

26 I. Pērkone. A Brief Look at Latvian Film History. – *Selection of Articles on Latvian Film: History and Present Trends*. National Film Centre Latvia and Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007–2013. Riga, 2012, 4. <https://docplayer.net/6452996-Selection-of-articles-on-latvian-film-history-and-present-trends.html> (accessed 26/01/2023). See also: I. Pērkone. *Latvijas pirmās filmas*. First Latvian Films. Mansards, Rīga, 2016.

27 *Selection of Articles on Latvian Film*.

Soviet Latvia,²⁸ the MA thesis by Madara Grudule²⁹ and a conference paper by Diāna Apele.³⁰ Madara Grudule describes film screenings in the region of Madona starting from the first Soviet occupation in 1940–1941 and finishing in the middle of the Brezhnev era. Apele's paper analyses Stalin-era cinema architecture and the film repertoire of the Zvaigzne cinema in Rēzekne. Beyond the academic field, several articles have been published online.³¹ One special issue of the magazine *KinoKultura* is devoted to Latvian cinema, in which Inga Pērkone gives a brief view of the history of Latvian film, devoting some paragraphs to the Stalinist period.³²

LATVIAN CINEMA DURING THE FIRST SOVIET OCCUPATION: SOVIETISATION AND CINEFICATION (1940–1941)

Historians have drawn clear parallels between Sovietisation and colonialism, demonstrating that the mechanisms by which the Baltic countries were integrated into the Soviet Union, as well as the control mechanisms used by the Soviet power, are similar to those of colonialism.³³ Sovietisation implied much more than a mere military and political takeover and annexation of the Baltic territories in 1940. As Epp Annus points out, Sovietisation in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania also included distortion of national memory and strict control over cultural production.³⁴ After the take-over and installation of pro-Soviet

- 28 I. Strupule. *Amateur Filmmaking in the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic: Family, Nation and Art (1955–1991)*. PhD thesis, University College London, 2021.
- 29 M. Grudule. *Kino demonstrēšanas specifika Madonas rajonā no 1940. līdz 1975. gadam (Specifics of Film Demonstration in the Region of Madona from 1940 to 1975)*. Master's thesis, Latvian Culture Academy, Riga, 2014.
- 30 D. Apele. *Kino loma Padomju propaganda un Staliņa laika kinoteātru ēku apskats. – Mākla un mūzika kultūras diskursā: V starptautiskās zinātniski praktiskās konferences materiāli. Rēzeknes Tehnoloģiju akadēmija, Rēzekne, 2016, 99–107.*
- 31 The most recent: M. Glumane, L. Petrāne. *Zīmola stāsts: Kinoteātra Splendid Palace vēsture. – Diena Bizness, 16/01/2019, <https://www.db.lv/zinas/zimola-stasts-kinoteatrasplendid-palace-vesture-483161> (accessed 26/01/2023)* is about the history of the Splendid Palace cinema in Riga which was considered the most significant piece of architecture in the Baltic States of its time.
- 32 I. Pērkone. *A Brief Look at Latvian Film History. – KinoKultura, 2012, 13, Special Issue: Latvian Cinema, <http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/13/perkone-history.shtml> (accessed 26/01/2023).*
- 33 T. Agarin. *Demographic and Cultural Policies of the Soviet Union in Lithuania from 1944 to 1956. A Post-colonial Perspective. – The Sovietization of the Baltic States, 1940–1956. Ed. by O. Mertelsmann. Kleio ajalookirjanduse sihtasutus, Tartu, 2003, 114.*
- 34 E. Annus. *The problem of Soviet colonialism in the Baltics. – Journal of Baltic Studies,*

governments under the supervision of Moscow's emissaries, a social, economic and cultural unification of the newly conquered territories with the rest of the Soviet Union began. In reality, Sovietisation brought about oppression and terror against real or invented enemies, the nationalisation of private property, measures taken against the market and private enterprises, state control of prices, remodelling the social structure, strict censorship, political agitation and propaganda.³⁵ Mertelsmann distinguishes two phases of Sovietisation in the annexed territories: before and after 1947. The first phase (1940–1941 and 1944–1947) was “imposed with pressure after a relatively relaxed beginning of occupation and was based on the use of force against an unwilling society. Security organs and the party played a central role. The process was accompanied by terror, huge changes in the structure of society, and the elimination of parts of elite [...]”³⁶ In the second phase, beginning with the elections in the Supreme Soviets of the “Republics” in 1947 and ending with the death of Stalin, the authorities focused on consolidating the changes already achieved and on embedding the Soviet model in the new territories.³⁷

Within the process of Sovietisation, cinema and filmmaking in Latvia were taken “into our hands” by the Soviets, as comrade Stalin had requested.³⁸ To get a glimpse of what the Soviets took into their hands, we need to make a brief tour to the interwar history of Latvian cinema.

During the interwar period, Latvia's film production and cinema business were regulated by the Law on Cinematography (1926), which enabled individual entrepreneurs and small private enterprises to produce and distribute films. However, as a consequence of the 1934 authoritarian coup d'état, filmmaking became a target of government interest, and the private initiative was gradually taken under the government's control.³⁹ Among documentary and newsreel producers the most successful was Eduards Kraucs (1898–1977), who established his company Ed. Krautcs Filma in 1929 and started producing newsreels called *Latvijas bronika*

2012, 41, 1, 21–45. For the topic of Soviet colonialism in Eastern Europe in the context of film, see also *Postcolonial Approaches to Eastern European Cinema: Portraying Neighbours on Screen*. Ed. by E. Mazierska, L. Kristensen, E. Närepea. I.B. Tauris, London, 2014.

35 O. Mertelsmann. Introduction. – *The Sovietization of the Baltic States*, 9–14.

36 *Ibid.*, 10.

37 *Ibid.*, 11.

38 The phrase is also reported in: И. Сталин. Полное собрание сочинений. Т. 6: Произведения 1924. Политиздат, Москва, 1947, 217. Available at: <https://ruslit.traumlibrary.net/book/stalin-pss18-06/stalin-pss18-06.html> (accessed 26/01/2023). See also: *The Politics of Soviet Cinema*. Ed. by R. Taylor. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979, 64.

39 I. Pērkone. *A Brief Look at Latvian Film History*, 3.

(Latvian Chronicle) and *Pēdējā brīdī* (At the Last Moment). In 1934, he launched the sound newsreel *Latvijas skaņu hronika* (Latvia's Sound Chronicle) and produced more than 550 sound newsreels and 20 cultural documentaries prior to the nationalisation of his studio by the Soviets in the summer of 1940.⁴⁰

Among the most prominent cinema entrepreneurs in the 1920s–1930s was Vasiļijs Jemeljanovs (1881–1949).⁴¹ He had a joint stock company called ARS, through which he bought films from UFA film studios in Germany and three of the major Hollywood studios (Warner Brothers, MGM and Universal) and distributed them in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.⁴² This successful business allowed him to build a luxurious new cinema in Riga, the Splendid Palace. The building was completed by 990 workers in 10 months and the cinema opened its doors on 30 December 1923.⁴³ There were 824 seats for the audience in the hall, and later this was expanded to 1000. According to statistics, the cinema was visited by 6 million people between 1923 and 1940.⁴⁴

Sixteen narrative feature and short films were produced in Latvia in the interwar years; most of them have only survived in fragments.⁴⁵ The interwar production of newsreels and documentaries reached large numbers. The digital archive at the Latvian State Archives of Audio-visual Documents lists 317 newsreels (partly as fragments), most of which (234) were produced by Ed. Krautcs Filma.⁴⁶

40 Latvenergo. Enerģētikas muzejs, <https://energetikasmantojums.lv/en/eduardskraucs-1898-1977/> (accessed 26/01/2023). Eduards Kraucs participated in filming at least 20 out of 25 newsreels in the *Padomju Latvija* (Soviet Latvia) series in the first year of the Soviet occupation, and continued as cameraman between 1942 and 1944 for the German authorities' newsreel *Ostland Woche*. In 1944 Eduards Kraucs and his family fled Latvia and ended up at Hochfeld refugee camp, Augsburg, Germany. In 1950, Kraucs moved to Minneapolis in the United States with his wife. He died in Colorado Springs in 1977.

41 Jemeljanovs was of Russian descent, born near St Petersburg in 1881. Although he came from a poverty-stricken family he managed to open a cinema in St Petersburg. The 1917 Bolshevik revolution prevented him from realising his business plans. He left Russia with his future wife Mari, a girl of Estonian descent, and they settled in Estonia, where their daughter was born. Around 1920 they moved to Riga and became Latvian citizens. Vasiļijs Jemeljanovs was deported to a labour camp in Smolensk in 1941 where he died in 1949, while his family was deported to the Tomsk region. (Glumane and Petrāne 2019)

42 <https://www.abebooks.co.uk/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=22923095469#&gid=1&pid=3> (accessed 26/01/2023).

43 M. Glumane, L. Petrāne. *Zīmola stāsts*.

44 Splendid Palace home page <https://www.splendidpalace.lv/en/about-us/about-cinema> (accessed 26/01/2023).

45 I. Pērkone, Z. Balčus, A. Surkova, B. Vitola. *Inscenējumu Realitāte, Latvijas Aktierkino Vēsture*. Apgāds Mansards, Riga, 2011, 463–468.

46 Latvian State Archives of Audio-visual Documents. <http://www.redzidzirdlatviju.lv/lv/> (accessed 26/01/2023). The archive's list is most probably not complete. The number of Ed. Krautcs Filma newsreels (550) reported by Enerģētikas muzejs of Latvenergo seems closer to the truth, as during 1929–1940, at least one newsreel per week was produced.

The national cinemas in Latvia, as well as in Estonia and Lithuania, were transformed into parts of the Soviet film industry in 1940–1941.⁴⁷ The Riga Feature Film Studio (Rīgas Mākslas Kino Studija)⁴⁸ (RFFS) was founded in 1940 after expropriation of the earlier private film companies. Communist Efim Golender (1909–1990)⁴⁹ was appointed as responsible for the Cinefication Department at the Latvian Sovnarkom.⁵⁰ Alberts Jekste (Albert Jekste) (1908–1987) became the first director of RFFS in 1940.⁵¹ Jekste was, however, in charge for only one year.⁵²

During the first occupation, Latvia's Soviet administration paid special attention to the cinefication of the countryside. For example, ten trucks with portable projectors for film exhibitions in Latvian villages were received from Moscow and distributed in ten Latvian districts.⁵³ The Latvian Narkompros (The People's Commissariat of Education) closed seven cinemas in Riga. Simultaneously, they scheduled daytime film screenings for people who worked in the evening or on night shifts.⁵⁴ The films were shown at Splendid Palace, Maska, Cristal Palace and at the central cinema for children. The Narkompros made another decision that linked ticket prices to the category of the cinema where the film was shown.⁵⁵ The most expensive tickets (1.25–4.50 roubles) were those

47 In Estonia, Kinokroonika Eesti Studio (Newsreel Studio of Estonia) was founded by nationalising Eesti Kultuurfilm (Estonian Culture Film) established in 1931, which after several changes of name and structure has operated as Tallinnfilm since 1963. Only the Lithuanian Film Chronicle Studio in Kaunas was really established by the Soviets in 1940. See P. Rollberg, *The A to Z of Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 410.

48 The Studio had different names over the years: Riga Feature Film Studio (1940–1948); Riga Feature Film and Newsreel Studio (1948–1958). For the sake of brevity and clarity RFFS is used throughout the article.

49 Golender was born to a Jewish family in Vitebsk in Belarus and arrived in Latvia in 1930 as an illegal worker. From 1931 to 1940 he was incarcerated for being a member of the Communist Party. During World War II, Golender served in the Red Army in the 201st/43rd Guards Division, where Jews made up about 17% of personnel (5,000 Jewish soldiers) in December 1941. He was wounded, and decorated. <https://timenote.info/ee/person/view?id=33747&cl=en>; <https://www.peripheralhistories.co.uk/post/in-the-fight-yet-on-the-margins-latvian-jewish-red-army-soldiers> (accessed 26/01/2023).

50 Efim Teodorovich Golender's memorandum, 28 February 1950. Latvijas Valsts Arhīvs (Latvian State archive, hereafter LVA) Riga. PA-15500-1-1758, 16.

51 About the organisation of film production in the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic, 14 November 1940. Latvijas Valsts Arhīvs (Latvian State Archive, LVA), Riga. 270-1-300, 3.

52 In May 1942, the Nazis arrested Jekste, accusing him of being a communist because of his position of director of the RFFS and Latvian Radio during the 1940–1941 Soviet period. Jekste spent 12 months first in Riga Central Prison, then in Salaspils camp and Saurieši stone quarries. After being released, he joined the Latvian Legion and became a war correspondent in the 19th Latvian Division. In April 1945, Jekste escaped to Germany. In the early 1950s, Jekste moved to Newfoundland, Canada, where he founded Atlantic Films and Electronics Inc. Jekste's documentary *My Latvia* (1954) was translated into twenty-two languages and more than 5,000 copies were distributed worldwide. See: Alberts Jekste <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rSC-D6osq4> (accessed 26/01/2023).

53 Decision n. 725 of the Latvian People's Commissariat for Education, on support for local portable film projectors in rural areas, 24 December 1940, LVA, 270-1-16, 79.

54 Decision n. 723 of Latvian People's Commissariat for Education on the policy of improving the cinema network in the city of Riga and improving audience attendance, 24 December 1940, LVA, 270-1-16, 71.

55 Decision n. 724 of Latvian People's Commissariat for Education on ticket prices, 20 December 1940, LVA, 270-1-16, 72.

for the theatres that had good equipment for screening films. None of the cinemas in Riga belonged to this category. The next two price levels were between 1 and 3.50 roubles. The cheapest tickets cost from 1 to 2.50 roubles in theatres of the fourth category. For comparison, the average monthly salary during the first occupation was 331 roubles, a worker in industry earned 387 roubles and a worker on a sovkhos 220 roubles.⁵⁶ The low prices of the tickets were to ensure that everybody could afford to purchase them.

The cinema repertoire included both Soviet and American films: *Ленини в октябре* (Lenin in October, by Mikhail Romm, 1937), *Чапаяв* (Chapaev, by Georgi Vasilyev and Sergei Vasilyev, 1934), *Член правительства* (Member of the Government, by Iosif Khefits and Aleksandr Zarkhi, 1939), *Modern Times* (by Charlie Chaplin, 1936) and *Give Us the Night* (by Alexander Hall, 1936).⁵⁷ During the first occupation, Soviet Latvia released one full-length film called *Kaugurieši* (Kauguri riots), directed by Voldemars Pūce⁵⁸ and produced by RFFS. The filming began in 1940 and premiered in June 1941, just a few days before the war reached Latvia. Indeed, the process of Sovietisation was stopped for a period of nearly four years (from early July 1941 to the autumn of 1944 in the bulk of Latvia, and early May 1945 in the Courland peninsula) because of the Nazi German occupation. During the German occupation, all film production facilities, properties and equipment in Latvia were transferred in Ostland Film GmbH (established in Riga as a subsidiary of Zentralfilmgesellschaft Ost mbH in Berlin, which was founded in November 1941 to oversee and supervise film studios in the occupied eastern territories).⁵⁹ Both Alberts Jekste and Voldemar

56 G. Krūmiņš. Tautsaimniecība un monetārās norises Latvijā 2. Pasaules kara gados. – Latvijas Bankai XC. Jēlgavas tipogrāfija, Jēlgava, 2012, 91.

57 B. Vītola. Kinorepertuārs padomju laikā. – Inscenējumu Realitāte, Latvijas Aktierkino Vesture. Apgāds Mansards, Riga, 2011, 278–279.

58 Voldemars Pūce (1906–1981) was a Latvian actor, theatre conductor, screenwriter and film director. He was an assistant director of the popular feature film *Lāčplēšis*, the director of two documentaries, and conducted the Latvian Drama Ensemble 1935–1944. In 1943–1944 (under German occupation); he was the Director of Rīgas Filma, which produced German propaganda films. At the end of the war, Pūce fled to Germany, but returned to Latvia in 1947. He was arrested and imprisoned by the Soviet authorities in 1948, during the shooting of the film *Rainis*, for which he was the second director. In February 1949, he was convicted of ‘treason’ (i.e. producing antisemitic and antibolshevik films during the German occupation) and sentenced to 25 years in a camp in Vorkutlag. During the second deportation, on March 25, 1949, his wife and newborn child were also deported to the Far East as a ‘convicted nationalist’s family’. After Stalin’s death Pūce was able to return to Latvia and worked for the rest of his life in the theatre and film industry. Sources: <https://www.literatura.lv/personas/voldemars-puce> (accessed 26/01/2023) and Latviju Enciklopedija, 557.

59 R. Forster. German Film Politics in the Occupied Eastern Territories, 1941–45. In: Winkel, R. V., Welch, D. (eds) *Cinema and the Swastika*. 2011, Palgrave Macmillan, 318–333. See also: German Films Dot Net – Posters. <https://germanfilms.net/ostland-film-g-m-b-h/> (accessed 26.01.2023).

Pūce served amongst the managers of Ostland Film. In summer 1943 Rigas Filma was formed as a separate structure from Ostland Film (Voldemars Pūce became director) and equipped with the necessary technology.⁶⁰ The main function of Ostland Film GmbH and Rigas Filma was to produce propaganda newsreels and movies to endorse the German occupation. In 1942 Voldemaras Pūce and Konstantīns Tumilis-Tumilovičs directed the movie *Sarkanā migla* (Red Fog) which was dubbed in twenty languages and showed in Nazi occupied countries. The film served as a propagandistic justification of the German occupation.⁶¹

CINEFICATION CONTINUES

World War II ended for Latvia with a gradual re-occupation by the Soviet Union in 1944 and 1945, and with the restoration of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic. Air raids and street fighting in Riga had severely damaged cinemas and studios. The new authorities were eager to restore the cinema infrastructure as soon as possible. World War II had not yet ended when the Deputy Chairman of the All-Soviet Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom⁶²), Vyacheslav Molotov, issued a secret resolution on 3 February 1945 ordering the State Cinematography Committee to restart the work of the RFFS, as well as the newsreel studios in Riga, Tallinn and Kaunas. The infrastructure left behind by



Figure 1. Instruction 1728r by the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union, 3rd February 1945, LVA, PA-101-8-4, 2.

60 I. Tcherneva. Beyond the surface of "Atrocity Image": Fabrication and circulation of the Nazi film *Red Mist* (1942–1954). *Journal of Genocide Research*, 2019, 21, 2, 136.

61 Nacionālā enciklopēdija: kino Latvijā, <https://enciklopedija.lv/skirkklis/30979> (accessed 26.01.2023).

62 The Council of People's Commissars was the name of the Government of the USSR until 1946.

Ostland Film GmbH in 1944 enabled the Soviets to re-establish feature film production in Latvia more quickly than in Estonia and Lithuania.⁶³

The Soviet authorities immediately started a restoration programme of movie theatres: in 1944, 11 cinemas in Riga were restored and 4 travelling cinemas were put into operation; in 1945, another 8 cinemas were opened in Riga.⁶⁴ Although the war had disastrous consequences for the Soviet Union's economy, infrastructure and population, Moscow generously financed the restoration of cinemas and film production in the Baltics and other Soviet 'Republics' which had suffered German occupation. From November 1944 until the middle of 1949, Moscow invested almost 9.5 million roubles in the restoration of studios in Riga and cinemas elsewhere in Latvia, as well as obtaining the newest technical equipment and establishing a network of travelling cinemas.⁶⁵

Maintenance work in Riga studios started in July 1945 and was planned to be finished in December of the same year. The then Director of Riga studios Nikolajs Kiva⁶⁶ received 1.5 million roubles from Moscow⁶⁷ to renovate the buildings and another 100,000 roubles for the cinema laboratory at 65 Artilerijas Street (which was heavily damaged during the war) and to instal central heating in Ziemeļblāzma (where the main production studios were located). The lack of vehicles, materials and gasoline made the maintenance work a real challenge, and it became clear that the work would not be finished by the deadline. A report by the Communist Party's local RFSS organisation⁶⁸ declared that the repair of rooms at the cinema laboratory and the atelier had not been completed, the studio's head office had not yet received its facilities, and the supply of equipment took too long. According to the party secretary, the shortcomings were the consequence of insufficient political–educational and ideological work among the personnel. The

63 V. Davoliūtē, L. Kaminskaitē-Jančorienē. *Sovietization and the Cinema in the Western Borderlands*.

64 Report: On condition of health service, education, cinefication, about the work of the Art Department at SM LSSR. 1946-1947. LVA. 270-2-5598, 8.

65 Memorandum of the Ministry of Cinema Affairs of the Latvian SSR on the production of movies and cinema facilities working in Soviet Latvia in the period 01/09/1940 to 01/04/1949, 28 March 1949. LVA. 270-2-5790, 10.

66 Nikolai Mitrofanovich Kiva (1903–1985), Director of RSSF in 1945–1947. He was replaced by Igors Čerņaks (Igor Chernyak) who died in 1948. Kiva was the first Director of Sojuzmultfilm, a Russian animation studio in Moscow (founded in 1936). After Čerņaks, Paveļs Jankovskis (Pavel Jankovski) took over and served from 1948 to 1964.

67 Document addressed to the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union K. E. Voroshilov, 28 July 1949. LVA. 270-2-5791, 21.

68 Report. On the work of the Primary Party Organisation of Riga Feature Film Studio in the period between the 5 September and 22 November 1945, 21 November 1945. LVA. 7238-1-1, 4/5.

report emphasised that “every communist has to remember that bourgeois nationalist elements also exist in our collective”, and special attention was to be paid to those who had collaborated with the Germans. Therefore, thorough control of studio personnel “is indispensable”. The report also underlined that there were no party members among the creative staff and in the studio’s trade union committee. All 10 existing members of the studio’s party organisation had been transferred from other local party organisations just two months previously, and (with one exception) placed in management positions.

As a part of cinefication, huge sums were spent on obtaining new equipment for film production and screening (such as high-quality sound technology). In 1944, the Soviet government planned the production of 3,000 new portable projectors and the training of 4,500 mechanics to operate them.⁶⁹ Many portable projectors were also bought for Latvia to make film exhibitions possible in the countryside. The number of such projectors increased from four in 1944 to 70 in 1947, and then to 96 by the middle of 1948. The number of stationary projectors increased from 21 in 1944 to 65 in 1948.⁷⁰

The generous financing concerned not only the reconstruction of studios and laboratories but also the personnel involved in filmmaking and management of cinemas. For example, in 1946, when Ernests Ameriks was appointed the Minister of Cinematography of Latvian SSR⁷¹, both the director of the RFFS and his deputy received 1,100 roubles monthly and the chief engineer 1,400.⁷² One year later, when Igors Čerņaks started working as director, his salary was as high as 2,000 roubles, his deputy’s 1,300.⁷³ Management level personnel also received money for *komandirovki* (business trips). In 1946, over 7,500 roubles, and in the first seven months of 1947, about 3,800 roubles were spent on business trips.⁷⁴

69 P. Kenez. *Cinema and Soviet Society: From the Revolution to the Death of Stalin*. I.B. Tauris, London, 2001, 173.

70 Memorandum of the Minister of Cinematography of the Latvian SSR on the production of movies and portable movie projectors in use in Soviet Latvia during the 1 November 1940–1 April 1949, 28 March 1949. LVA, 270-2-5790, 12.

71 Ernests Ameriks was born in 1897 in Valmiera. In 1919 Ameriks became a member of the Latvian Communist Party; he was jailed between 1933 and 1940 for activities connected with the October revolution. From 1944 to 1946 he was the Minister of Health Service of the Latvian SSR and after that was appointed Minister of Cinematography (1946–1953). LVA, PA-15500-1-170, 13.

72 Staffing list. Administrative section, Riga Feature Film Studios, Latvian SSR Ministry of Cinema Affairs in 1946, 13 March 1946, LVA, 420-1-6, 19.

73 Staffing List. 17 December 1947. LVA, 695-1-10, 6.

74 Memorandum. Latvian Chronicle Film Studio, on administrative section expenses during the period 1/01 to 30/06 1947. LVA, 420-1-9, 6.

New institutional structures also needed new personnel. Most of the pre-war film directors, artists, producers and cameramen had been executed, arrested or deported by either German or Soviet occupying powers, or had fled abroad during and immediately after World War II. Therefore, many people were recruited from outside Latvia, following the principle of “multinational working collectives”, which simultaneously served the idea of breeding a new Soviet man without an identity other than Soviet. In 1948, the proportion of Latvians in RFFS studios was 47 per cent (98 Latvians, 76 Russians and 35 of other nationalities out of the total of 209 workers).⁷⁵ By March 1950, the proportion of Latvians in the film industry and cinema network had grown to 58 per cent.⁷⁶

Next, we will focus on two important sectors of film production, dubbing and newsreels/documentaries, which, in the Stalinist period, served Soviet indoctrination purposes.

DUBBING

Simultaneously to the transition from silent to sound cinema, dubbing was introduced for film translations. In European dictatorships, including the Stalinist Soviet Union, dubbing became an efficient tool for censorship⁷⁷ largely used to ‘edit’ foreign films. On the other hand, especially in rural peripheries of the Soviet Union, dubbing made films understandable to illiterate people. Films made in the various national languages of the USSR were also often dubbed into Russian as the official common language of the Soviet Union. The work of dubbing Soviet patriotic films into Latvian started in March 1946, and by the end of the year five films were dubbed. During the next three years (1946–1948) a total of 20 films were dubbed from Russian into Latvian.⁷⁸ Among the dubbed films in the first post-war years were *Сын полка* (Son of the Regiment, a patriotic World War II film for children, 1946) by Vasili Pronin, and *Большая жизнь, 2-я серия* (The Big Life, Part Two) by

75 Report. Minister of Cinematography of the Latvian SSR about the accomplished work in 1948, 10 January 1949, LVA, 270-2-5791, 7.

76 Document addressed to the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, Comrade J. Ostrovs, 1st April 1950, LVA, 270-2-5792, 14. In 1950, the cinema network totalled 1146 people (672 Latvian, 314 Russian, 37 Jewish, 17 Belarusian, 10 Ukrainian and 96 of other ethnicities).

77 D. Pollard. The political history of dubbing in films. – The Conversation, 13 July 2021, <https://theconversation.com/the-political-history-of-dubbing-in-films-164136> (accessed 26.01.2023).

78 Document addressed to the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, Comrade J. Ostrovs, 16 June 1948, LVA, 270-2-5790, 2.

Leonid Lukov (the first part was filmed in 1939) about the movement of innovators in the Donbas coal mines and their struggle with saboteurs. The latter film was also dubbed by studios in Tbilisi, Minsk and Kyiv.⁷⁹ The plan for 1949 was to dub 10 Soviet films. As Soviet film dubbing was the main source of income for filmmakers at that time⁸⁰ the task was well accomplished. Among the films dubbed into Latvian were the first part of *Молодая гвардия* (The Young Guards, 1942, about the heroic underground resistance of members of the Young Communist League (Komsomol) in the city of Krasnodon in Ukraine during the Nazi occupation, who were betrayed and killed); *Далекая невеста* (The Distant Bride, the first Turkmen musical comedy); *Повесть о настоящем человеке* (The Story of a True Man, 1948, about a heroic pilot who was shot down during the war and lost both his feet, but did not give up and returned to the air forces to continue the fight against the Nazis).⁸¹

The dubbing was not only from Russian to Latvian, but also (although to a much lesser extent) from Latvian to Russian. Several documentaries, for example *Tautas daiļrades meistari* (The Folk Art Masters, 1949) and *Vef* (1949) were dubbed into Russian in 1949–1950 and screened elsewhere in the Soviet Union.⁸² Due to dubbing and subtitling, during the ensuing decades Latvian films were shown in various places in the Soviet Union.

The bureaucratisation of the whole Soviet film industry carried out by Sojuzkino since 1930⁸³, and the consequences of the War, considerably decreased post-war film production. To meet the state plan of maximising audiences, dubbed ‘trophy films’ (*трофейные фильмы*) were included in the repertoires of the cinemas. The films were drawn from among the 10,669 films captured by the Red Army primarily from the Reichsfilmarchiv in Berlin in 1945⁸⁴ and were screened from 1947 to

79 Document addressed to the Deputy Director of the Cinema Studio “Soyuzdetfilm”, Comrade Y. Svetozarov, 30 July 1946, LVA, 420-1-5, 28.

80 I. Pērkone. A Brief Look at Latvian Film History, 4.

81 Document addressed to Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, section culture and public health service, Comrade I. Ivanov, 16 November 1949, LVA, 270-2-5791, 22.

82 Document addressed to the Director of RFFS, Comrade P.A. Jankovskis. Personāla dokumentu valsts arhivs (State Archives of Personnel Documents, hereafter PDVA), Riga, 1765-7-10, 337.

83 V. Kopley Jr. The First “Perestroika”: Soviet Cinema under the First Five-Year Plan. – *Cinema Journal*, 1996, 35, 4, 31–53.

84 C. Knight. Enemy Films on Soviet Screens: Trophy Films during the Early Cold War, 1947–52. – *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 2017, 18, 1, 125–149. A translated and annotated catalogue of foreign films in Soviet distribution throughout Stalin era (from 1927 to 1953) can be found in: *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 2016, 10, 2, 123–198 (Catalogue of Foreign Sound Films Released on the Soviet Screen, 1927–1954).

1956.⁸⁵ In August 1948, the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the CCCP commissioned the Ministry of Cinema Affairs to provide each selected film with an introductory text, and to carefully edit the subtitles.⁸⁶ As a result of this censorship,⁸⁷ the ‘bourgeois’ message of foreign films was converted into an ‘anti-bourgeois’ one, and ‘reactionary’ films became ‘progressive’.⁸⁸

Some of these films were also dubbed into Latvian and screened in Latvian cinemas. Among them were *Das Indische Grabmahl* (The Indian Tomb) by Richard Eichberg and *Kautschuk* by Eduard von Borsody, as well as a Nazi anti-Britain propaganda film *Ohm Krüger* (Uncle Krüger, 1941) by Hans Steinhoff. The film was produced on the initiative of Nazi Germany’s Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels to instigate anti-British sentiment among the German population.⁸⁹ As the film depicted the British army’s atrocities in the second Boer War in South Africa, it suited the Soviet authorities as a demonstration of aggression and (British) capitalism’s fight for world domination.

NEWSREELS AND DOCUMENTARIES

As a part of cinefication, nationalised private enterprises were used to establish a studio called *Latvijas Kinohronikas Studija* (the Latvian Newsreel Studio) in the autumn of 1940.⁹⁰ In April 1941, the name was changed to *Rīgas Kinokronikas Studija* (the Riga Newsreel Studio), and together with the RFFS was subordinated to the Central Committee for Cinema Affairs.⁹¹ The pre-World War II Latvian Ministry of Public Affairs film industry sector, as well as the ministry itself, was closed during the Soviet coup. However, the film director and cameraman

85 C. Knigh. Stalin’s Trophy Films, 1947–52: A Resource. – KinoKultura, 2015, 48, <http://www.kinokultura.com/2015/48-knight.shtml> (accessed 26/01/2023).

86 P. Kenez. Cinema and Soviet Society. From the Revolution to the Death of Stalin, 173.

87 A detailed insight into the censorial editing of foreign films for dubbing see: E. Д. Еременко, З. В. Прошкова. Редактирование зарубежных фильмов в СССР как культурноисторический феномен. – Вестник Санкт-Петербургского государственного института культуры, 2020, 3, 28–34.

88 Ibid., 29.

89 B. Taylor. Ohm Kruger/Uncle Kruger: “The Most Notorious of Nazi Germany’s Anti-British Film Statements” DVD Review by Blaine Taylor. <https://ihffilm.com/ohm-kruger-uncle-kruger-dvd-review-by-blaine-taylor.html>. No date (accessed 26.01.2023).

90 Document addressed to the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, Comrade J. Ostrovs, 16 June 1948, LVA, 270-2-5790, 2, declares that before establishment of Soviet power, no newsreels or documentaries were produced in Latvia.

91 In 1947, it was renamed as *Latvijas hronikāli dokumentālo filmu studija* (Latvian Newsreel Studio). In 1948, with the decision of the highest administrative level (the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Cinema Affairs of the USSR) the studio was merged with RFFS into *Rīgas mākslas un hronikālo filmu studiju* (Riga Studio of Feature Films and Newsreels).

Pēteris Vasaraudzis (1908–1988)⁹² launched a new newsreel during the coup, called *Nedēļas apskats* (Weekly Review), the first issue of which was filmed on 20–23 June 1940, and produced under the title of the Ministry of Public Affairs. This first issue of *Nedēļas apskats*⁹³ presents the events of the fatal final days of Latvia: the first meeting of the new Latvian People's Government on June 20; a procession of Riga workers along Matīsa Street to the Central Prison and the release of prisoners on 21 June; the speech (in Russian) by the Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR Andrei Vyshinski from the balcony of the embassy of the Soviet Union to the crowd of demonstrators; and the radio speech by the Minister of Interior Vilis Lācis on 23 June. Among the demonstrators many Red Army soldiers and officers in uniform can be seen, as well as a truck with a machine gun, in the middle of the street. There is also another, 'ideologically correct', version of the *Nedēļas apskats* no 1/1940 in the Latvian State Archives of Audio-visual Documents,⁹⁴ where no liberation of prisoners, no military men and no arms are seen.

Immediately after the annexation of Latvia was completed in August 1940, a documentary called *Padomju Latvija* (Soviet Latvia)⁹⁵ was produced by the Glavkinokhronika (Central Newsreel Studio) in Moscow. The film presented the proclamation of Soviet power in Latvia as a new beginning for the exploited and oppressed Latvian people. The documentary was voiced only in Russian and targeted not only at the Latvian public, but also, and even more so, for audiences in other regions of the Soviet Union to prove the legitimacy of Soviet rule in Latvia.

In early spring of 1941, another propaganda documentary, *Sauļei pretim* (Towards the Sun)⁹⁶ was produced in cooperation between Glavkinohronika and the new Latvijas Kinohronikas Studija. The documentary begins with the Soviet interpretation of the events of June and July 1940, showing the release of (political) prisoners, demonstrations in the streets of Riga and the festive reception of the Latvian socialist government delegation in Moscow. Many sequences are devoted to

92 Actor and cinema operator. After finishing the theatre school in 1935, Vasaraudzis worked as assistant to Michael Checkov during his stay in England. From 1945 to 1947 he also worked as actor at the Dailes theatre and producer at the Leļļu teātris. *Literātūra un Māksla* n.39, 23/09/1988.

93 LNA_KFFDA_F194_1_829. (LNA is used here and elsewhere for the Latvian National Archive /Latvijas Nacionālais Arhīvs).

94 LNA_KFFDA_F194_1_829-1.

95 LNA_KFFDA_F194_1_4414.

96 Documentary movie *Sauļei pretim* (Towards the sun) (Latvijas Nacionālā arhīva, Latvijas Valsts kinofotofonodokumentu arhīva (Latvian National archive, The State Audio-visual Archive of Latvia, hereafter KFFDA), Riga, 1941, KFFDA_F194_1_823.

Latvians' everyday lives – work in the fields, factories, the fishing industry, kindergartens, schools, Russian language courses, etc. This film, too, was provided with a Russian voiceover and was screened in the other Soviet 'republics'. All the people involved in making the documentary were Russian, such as director Ilya Kopalin (who received six Stalin prizes for his work between 1941 and 1951), scriptwriter Mark Tseytlin and cameraman Sergei Gusev.⁹⁷ The only Latvian was composer Jānis Mediņš, who provided the music. Indeed, Soviet cinefication completely ignored local creative potential not only in the documentary genre but in the whole field almost until the late 1950s. Several Latvian filmmakers were repressed by the Soviet authorities (especially in the decade after World War II), and many emigrated or were removed from their jobs, in the same way as happened in Estonia.⁹⁸ Pēteris Vasaraudzis continued filming *Nedēļas apskats* until the end of September 1940. In October, the Latvijas Kinohronikas Studija started producing the newsreel *Padomju Latvija* (Soviet Latvia) with the aim of demonstrating the happy life and progress of the new Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic. The first issue of the newsreel was devoted to preparations for the celebration of the 23rd anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution. A double issue (#2 and #3) of *Padomju Latvija* covered the October parades on 7 November in Riga and other Latvian cities and towns.⁹⁹ This special issue of *Padomju Latvija* was again co-produced by the Glavkinokhronika in Moscow. The main event was the Red Army parade in Riga with numerous tanks, artillery and other arms, as well as marching military units. In comparison with this demonstration of power, the proportion of civilians (factory workers, farmers, schoolchildren, etc.) in the parade was much smaller. A number of Soviet military men were also visible marching among the civilians.

The central event of *Padomju Latvija*'s 25th, and the final, issue of 1941, was the first congress of the Latvian Soviet Writers' Union, on 14 June 1941.¹⁰⁰ This was the day of the first Soviet mass deportation in Latvia, which, naturally, was not included in the newsreel. The first period of the Soviet regime in Latvia ended with the arrival of German occupation forces in July 1941.

97 V. Freimane. *Padomju Latvijas kino pirmais gads*. In: *Padomju Latvijas kinomāksla*. Eds Latvijas PSR Zinātņu akadēmijas Andreja Ūpisa Valodas un Literatūras institūts. Liesma, Rīga, 1989, 22.

98 E. Nāripea. A view from the periphery. Spatial discourse of the Soviet Estonian feature film: The 1940s and 1950s. – *Via Transversa: Lost Cinema of the Former Eastern Bloc*. Ed. by E. Nāripea, A. Trossek. Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn, 2008, 195.

99 LNA_KFFDA_F194_1_842.

100 *Padomju Latvija* n. 25, 1941, KFFDA, LNA_KFFDA_F194_1_867.

When the Red Army arrived in Latvia again in September 1944, the first post-war *Padomju Latvija* newsreel was immediately launched by Glavkinokhronika in Moscow. This issue begins with a speech by the chairman of the Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars Vilis Lācis to the Latvian people to mark the beginning of the liberation of Latvian territory from Nazi German occupation.

Between 1945 and 1953, over 400 *Padomju Latvija* newsreels were produced. The newsreels presented topical issues important for the ruling regime, such as elections in the Soviet organs of state power, the improvement of transportation, sport, culture, etc. The main aim was to glorify the success of the progressive socialist order and the Soviet lifestyle, and to demonstrate the superiority of communism over capitalism. Lots of effort was made to ensure a regular weekly output (48 to 52 issues annually). Some issues of *Padomju Latvija* were dubbed or subtitled in Russian and screened in the other regions of the USSR. *Padomju Latvija* became an exemplary newsreel that was valued by the Soviet authorities as one of the ideologically best Soviet products *ex aequo* along with *Sovietskaya Estonia* and *Sovietskaya Moldavia* in 1951.¹⁰¹

After World War II, in addition to the newsreel *Padomju Latvija*, some documentary films were produced, “defined by the guidelines of Socialist realism and bearing little relevance to the term ‘documentary’”.¹⁰² In April 1948, Viktors Šeļepeņš¹⁰³ (Viktor Šeļepen, 1904–1992) was appointed as director of *Padomju Latvija*. Šeļepeņš appeared to be most productive, producing 17 issues of the newsreel and two documentaries *Tautas daiļrades meistari*¹⁰⁴ and *VEF*¹⁰⁵ during 1948–1950. *VEF* presented the famous VEF factory making high-quality radios and other electronic devices, its exemplary technologies, and the excellent living conditions of its workers, including a yacht club, kindergarten and medical centre. *VEF* was welcomed very positively by the authorities, and the Ministry of Cinema Affairs suggested it for showing in cinemas all over the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁶

101 Ministry of Soviet Latvian Cinema report on the work of rural portable film projector networks in 1951. December 1950/December 1951. LVA, 270-2-5793, 23.

102 L. Pētersonē. Latvian Documentary Cinema: the new generation. – Selection of Articles on Latvian Film: History and Present Trends. National Film Centre Latvia and Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007–2013. Rīga, 2012, 25.

103 Viktors Šeļepeņš was born in Leningrad in 1904. In 1924 he was hired as assistant producer at Alma-Āta Studios. In 1948 he was sent to Latvia where he was employed as a first category film producer.

104 Documentary *Tautas daiļrades meistari*, 1949, LKFFDA, LNA_KFFDA_F8_2_1892.

105 Documentary *VEF (Valsts Elektrotehniskā rūpnīca)*, 1949, LKFFDA, LNA_KFFDA_F8_2_1888.

106 Document addressed to the Director of RFFS, Comrade P. A. Yankovskiy. LKFFDA, 1765-7-10, 337.

The year 1950 was successful for Soviet Latvian cinematography: the first Latvian colour film, documentary *Padomju Latvija* (Soviet Latvia),¹⁰⁷ was produced. The film was dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the Latvian SSR. The film begins with beautiful panoramic views of Latvia's landscapes and nature, creating a frame for the rest of the documentary. Artistically shot, furnished with emotionally varying music and a patriotic text, the documentary paints a sunny and happy image of life in Soviet Latvia. First, the viewer is taken on a tourist trip through the most prominent achievements of Socialist Latvia's industrialisation. Enthusiastic work in the collective farms, the success of education and science, as well as culture come next. The film ends with the LSSR 10th anniversary celebrations and Song Festival. The film was screened at the Cannes International Film Festival in 1951, winning the Special Prize, and was subsequently also awarded a state award in the USSR.¹⁰⁸

The documentary was a total success for the filmmakers, but even more for the Soviet communist ideology. As a perfect example of socialist realism, this documentary succeeded in offering an illusionist reality in place of a true one and of transforming the periphery "from a space of experience into a decorative space, implicitly viewed from the centre".¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, the film also used blatant lies to portray the Soviet achievements in Latvia. All the examples of successful industrialisation existed long before Soviet rule in Latvia: Kegums Hydroelectric Power Plant was completed in 1940 before the Soviet annexation; Latvia's largest machine-building plant RVR had operated since 1895; Riga shipyard, the largest in Baltic region, was established in 1913; the VEF factory had operated since 1918 and Daugavpils locomotive repair factory since 1866. The cruel context of the happy picture of life in Latvia was the fact that just a year before the film's premiere, in March 1949, more than two percent of the pre-war population were deported to places of "special settlement" (mainly in the far districts of Siberia). Women, and children under 16, constituted 73 percent of the deportees.¹¹⁰

107 Documentary *Padomju Latvija*, 1950, LKFFDA, LNA_KFFDA_F8_2_1519.

108 <http://www.latfilma.lv/> (accessed 26/01/2023).

109 E. Nāriņa. A view from the periphery, 198. Nāriņa has depicted the realisation of socialist realist aesthetics in feature films, although her findings apply fully to documentaries as well.

110 The Three Occupations of Latvia, 1940–1991: Soviet and Nazi Take-overs and Their Consequences. Ed. by V. Nollendorfs, O. Celle, G. Michele, U. Neiburgs, and D. Staško. Occupation Museum Foundation, Riga, 2005.

FEATURE FILMS

The post-World War II years until Stalin's death in 1953 were the 'famine' years for the Soviet film industry, even called *малокартинье* (film shortage). The rapid decline in the production of feature films¹¹¹ is explained by the bureaucratisation of Soviet filmmaking and suppression of the creative energies of Soviet filmmakers in favour of socialist realism,¹¹² but even more by the sharp eye and barbaric actions of the ideological supervisors led by Stalin.¹¹³ For example, according to Kondakov¹¹⁴, between 1933 and 1953, Stalin ordered 57 films about Civil War to be shelved, and personally forbade many other films. Stalin argued that Soviet films should not teach history but inspire the Soviet people to further heroic deeds. Several filmmakers were dismissed, accused of incorrect portrayals of historical events and people.

While in the 1940s the authorities had planned to produce in Latvia five to six feature films a year,¹¹⁵ only one (*Kauguriēši*) was produced during the first Soviet occupation. In the post-war years, 1944–1953, three feature films were produced in Latvia: *Dēli* (Sons) in 1946, *Mājup ar uzvaru* (Victorious Return) in 1947 and *Rainis* in 1949. All three were pro-Soviet propaganda films¹¹⁶ using Latvian characters, scenes and events but having nothing in common with Latvians' real lives or mentalities. The authorities did not trust native professionals but assigned big Soviet studios – Mosfilm and Lenfilm – to produce films for and about the Baltic countries according to the 'correct' ideology. The content of Eva Nāripea's statement about Soviet Estonian feature films applies equally to Latvian films: they were "dominated by the cinematic language and patterns of narration imported from the large Russian central studios".¹¹⁷ *Dēli* was a co-production by RSSF and Lenfilm but "was completely filmed there, the only connection to Latvia was plainly

111 Some numbers from the annotated catalogue of Soviet feature films: 1945–19, 1949–18, 1951–9, 1953–45. Советские художественные фильмы: Аннотированный каталог. Т. 2: Звуковые фильмы (1930–1957 гг.). Искусство, Москва, 1961; <https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Малокартинье> (accessed 26/01/2023).

112 V. Kopley Jr. The First "Perestroika": Soviet Cinema under the First Five-Year Plan, 31, 48.

113 A detailed study on the reasons and aspects of *малокартинье* is given in Ю. Кондаков. Гражданская война в советском кинематографе. Период малокартинья (1943–1953 гг.), 2012. <https://statehistory.ru/3428/Grazhdanskaya-voyna-v-sovetskom-kinematografe-Period-malokartinya-1943-1953-gg/> (accessed 26/01/2023).

114 Ibid.

115 I. Pērkone. A Brief Look at Latvian Film History, 3–4. This amount was achieved only at the beginning of the 1970s. (Ibid.)

116 For more see: Z. Aiano. Nobody wanted to die. Soviet occupation in Baltic film. – eefb: East European Film Bulletin, 69, 2016. Available at: <https://eefb.org/retrospectives/soviet-occupation-in-baltic-film/> (accessed 26/01/2023).

117 E. Nāripea. A view from the periphery, 197.

within the plot”.¹¹⁸ *Mājup ar uzvaru* made up part of the ‘Baltic trilogy’ together with the Lithuanian film *Marytė* and the Estonian *Elu tsitadellis* (Life in the Citadel), all released in 1947. The stories and characters in these films were tailored to suit local circumstances but carried the same message: only Soviet order can bring happiness to the Baltic people, and it is worthwhile being loyal. Following the canons of socialist realism, the moral growth of a Soviet person was depicted as transformation of personality: rough experiences and choices, or a personal tragedy leads to one becoming a loyal Soviet citizen or even a hero.

Mājup ar uzvaru was the first post-war film originally produced in Latvian. Pērkone argues that “one of the film’s main tasks was to consolidate the conviction of Latvian troops mobilized by the Soviet Army that they really had fought for their Fatherland”.¹¹⁹ The director of the film, Aleksandr Ivanov, and his team were from Lenfilm. Local filmmakers were only allowed to assist Ivanov’s team.

According to Davoliūtė and Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, Lithuania’s *Marytė* (produced by Mosfilm) was a complete failure. After comparing the three Baltic films, the Arts Council at the Ministry of Cinema Affairs had to acknowledge that “the film about Marytė Melnikaitė was unsuccessful and indeed the worst of the batch”.¹²⁰ The Lithuanian reception of the Estonian *Elu tsitadellis* gives an idea of the attitude of Baltic audiences towards these *chefs-d’oeuvre*.¹²¹ In Kentra district, Pagēgiai county, “unknown individuals made the projectionist stop the screening of Life in the Citadel... at the moment when a group of people’s traitors was exposed in the plot.”¹²²

Unlike the other two, *Rainis* became a model of an excellent Soviet film, which received the Stalin Prize in 1950. *Rainis* is a portrait of a famous Latvian poet, playwright, translator and politician Jānis Rainis (1865–1929) presented as a revolutionary poet.¹²³ His early socialist views and critical editorials in *Dienas Lapa* (Daily Page) in the late 1890s and

118 I. Pērkone. A Brief Look at Latvian Film History, 4.

119 Ibid.

120 V. Davoliūtė, L. Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė. Sovietization and the Cinema in the Western Borderlands, 403.

121 *Elu tsitadellis* was the only successful one among the ‘Baltic trilogy’, mainly for the very professional work of the Estonian actors, but also for meeting the standards of socialist realism. The director Herbert Rappoport even received the Stalin State Prize 2nd degree. The then Minister of Cinema Affairs Olga Lauristin said at the premiere: “This film is a huge input in educating Estonian working people by inculcating Soviet ideology, by opposing bourgeois individualism with the great ideas of Soviet patriotism and selfless service of people” (Estonian National Archive, R-1603.1.8).

122 L. Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė. Moving Pictures for Peasants, 62.

123 On the Sovietisation of the figure of Rainis see also V. Zelče. The Sovietization of Rainis and Aspazija: Discourses and rituals in Soviet Latvia in celebration of the two poets. – Journal of Baltic Studies, 2020, 52, 1, 17–42.

early 1900s, and his activity as one of the national leaders of the 1905 revolution in Latvia, enabled Raizman to construct an image of him as a revolutionary hero. His political activity during Latvian Independence (he was an MP and minister in several governments) was ‘forgotten’ by the authorities. His poems were censored before publication in Soviet Latvia. The film simultaneously fulfilled two tasks, as Pērkone argues: to convince Latvians of the deep roots of Bolshevism in Latvian culture, and to send a message to the refugees and exiles that they are valued only in their own country and should return to Latvia. *Rainis* was largely shown abroad, mainly in displaced persons’ camps at the turn of the 1950s, “and reports about the audience and the reaction of the press were submitted to the Soviet competent institutions”.¹²⁴ The film was produced by RFFS, but under the direction of experienced Moscow filmmaker Yuli Raizman who, by that time, had already received two Stalin Prizes (Raizman would receive five more). Initially, the second director was Voldemars Pūce, but he was arrested in 1948.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The process of cinefication began in Latvia in the first days of Soviet rule in 1940. The aim of this article was to examine the ways cinefication was carried out in Latvia as a part of the policy of Sovietisation during the Stalinist years. This article identifies four characteristics of the modus operandi of the Soviet authorities in carrying out cinefication. First, violence that created fear. The nationalisation of the private studios, their equipment and cinema businesses without compensation in 1940–1941 caused personal tragedies (for example Vasilijs Jemeljanovs’ family, Voldemars Pūce), several cinemas were closed and their facilities damaged. Repressions (arrests, deportations, etc.) nurtured fear and suppressed resistance. This made it easier to continue cinefication after the war. Most of the experienced filmmakers and former owners of the film studios had either been eliminated, or escaped. Second is the appointment of loyal, but mainly incompetent, communists in responsible positions. They were often Latvians who were born and grew up in Tsarist Russia or the Soviet Union and served in the Red Army during World War II (for example, Golender, Kiva, Jankovskis), but had no special knowledge nor even any proper education. Third,

¹²⁴ I. Pērkone. *A Brief Look at Latvian Film History*, 5.

most of the Latvian films up to the mid-1950s were not made by Latvians who were familiar with the local cultural traditions and language, but emissaries with a particular propaganda mission, sent from Moscow and Leningrad. Fourth, since cinema was regarded as one of the most important ideological sectors, Latvian film production was developed exclusively for ideological purposes under the surveillance of the Soviet authorities. The highest organs of the Communist Party supervised and controlled the whole field of cinema from top to bottom.

Socialist realism as the only officially recognised way of depiction and interpretation of reality in all kinds of art served the glorification of communist values and the socialist order in artistic forms. Similar to many other sectors of creative culture in the Baltic countries, in filmmaking “the production of meaning became the monopoly of the Soviet invaders”.¹²⁵ Even documentaries and newsreels, although they recorded real events, places and people, were ideologically coloured and biased in favour of the Soviet regime. Inga Pērkone’s statement about Latvia applies to all three Baltic countries: “Basically, a whole new system of values and timing was established, the creation of the world was equalled with the proclamation of the Soviet rule in Latvia in 1940”.¹²⁶ The canons of socialist realism as applied to the creative arts were implemented without taking into consideration regional features and were accompanied by the physical persecution of authors, artists, filmmakers and other representatives of the creative intelligentsia. It was evident that socialist realism did not match socialist reality, which made it difficult if not impossible for people in the occupied Baltic nations to identify with the glorious Soviet citizen. The collective memory of lost independence was still alive, there were still hopes to regain the lost freedom.¹²⁷ Ideological inculcation did not produce loyal citizens but developed double thinking and double identities, and collective cultural trauma.¹²⁸ Thus, cinefication failed in its ideological aims in the Stalinist period in the Baltics and did not produce any films of lasting artistic

125 E. Nāriņa. *A view from the periphery*, 200.

126 I. Pērkone. *A Brief Look at Latvian Film History*, 5.

127 Resistance emerged in all three Baltic countries. As a consequence, between 1946 and 1953 deportations and guerrilla deaths reached 95,000 in Estonia, 125,000 in Latvia, and 310,000 in Lithuania. Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Baltic-states/Soviet-republics#ref418702> (accessed 26/01/2023).

128 A. Aarelaid-Tart. Double mental standards in the Baltic countries: Three generations. – *The Baltic Countries under Occupation: Soviet and Nazi Rule 1939–1991*. Ed. by A. M. Köll. Stockholm University, Stockholm, 2003, 213–226. See also: A. Aarelaid-Tart. *Cultural Trauma and Life Stories*. Kikumora Publications, Helsinki, 2006. According to Aarelaid, the after-war generations were more prone to the Soviet world view. They did not have personal memoirs about inter-war independence, and had no access to the printed matter of that time.

value. However, huge investments in cinema infrastructure during the post-war years laid the material foundations for further development of film culture in the Baltic countries. After Stalin's death, the revival of Latvian national cinema began in the late 1950s. Ideological pressure and censorship eased especially during the so-called Khrushchev thaw¹²⁹ when creativity and artistic experimentation in filmmaking became possible.

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PEATÜKK LÄTI KINO AJALOOST: KINOFITSEERIMINE (1940–1941, 1944–1953)

Rosario Napolitano, Epp Lauk

Nõukogude Liidus oli filmikunst ideoloogiline valdkond, mida partei ja riigiorganid valvsalt jälgisid ja kontrollisid. „Kinofitseerimine“ filmi- ja kinotaristu arendamise tähenduses oli Nõukogude Liidus koos elektri-fitseerimise, industrialiseerimise ja põllumajanduse kollektiviseerimisega osa paketist uue, nõukoguliku ühiskonna ülesehitamiseks. Balti riikides algas kinofitseerimine vahetult pärast Nõukogude okupatsiooni algust 1940. aastal kinode ja filmistuudiate rekvireerimisega ning filmide tootmise ja kogu kinovaldkonna juhtimise ümberkujundamisega vastavalt nõukogude ideoloogiale ja regulatsioonidele. Artikkel keskendub kinofitseerimisele Lätis alates Nõukogude okupatsiooni algusest 1940. aasta juunis kuni Stalini surmani 1953. aastal. Sellesse ajavahemikku jääv Saksa okupatsioon on markeeritud olulisemate faktidega, kuid lähem vaatlus jääb artikli piiridest välja. Põhiosas toetub artikkel ulatuslikule

¹²⁹ The period from the late 1950s to late 1960s, when a general liberalisation of Soviet life took place.

arhiivitööle Läti Rahvusarhiivis (Latvijas Nacionālais arhīvs), Läti Riigiarhiivis (Latvijas Valsts arhīvs) ja Läti Riiklikus Audiovisuaalsete Dokumentide arhiivis (Latvijas Valsts kinofotofonodokumentu arhīvs).

Artikkel algab kinofitseerimise mõiste ja konteksti selgitamisega ning jätkub selle protsessi kronoloogilise jälgimisega kuni 1953. aastani. Vaatluse all on kinovõrgu ja filmitootmise ümberkorraldamine, filmide dubleerimine ning dokumentaal- ja kunstiliste filmide tootmine. Ühtlasi on toodud ka olulisemate isikute eluloolisi andmeid. Süvenemine stalinismi perioodi filmide kunstilistesse iseärasustesse pole selle artikli ülesanne.

Artikkel lubab teha neli järeldust nõukogude võimu *modus operandi* kohta kinofitseerimise läbiviimisel Lätis. Esiteks, kinofitseerimisega käisid algusaastatel kaasas vägivald ja repressioonid, mis külvasid hirmu. Kinode ja stuudiote natsionaliseerimine ilma kompensatsioonita põhjustas inimlikku traagikat (nt Vasilijs Jemeljanovski perekonna ja Voldemars Pūce saatus). Kinosis suleti ja sisustust kahjustati, vastupanu lämmatati repressioonidega (arreteerimised, küüditamine). Selline praktika tegi sõjajärgse kinofitseerimise võimudele lihtsamaks. Enamus endisi omanikke ja filmitegijaid oli juba kas elimineeritud või olid nad Lätist lahkunud ning nad asendati nõukogude võimule lojaalsete, kuid enamasti ebakompetentsete inimestega, mis on kinofitseerimise teine iseloomulik joon. Sageli olid need inimesed Venemaal sündinud ja kasvanud lätlased, kes olid II maailmasõjas sõdinud Punaarmee ridades. Kolmandaks, stalinismi aastail tegid filme propagandistliku missiooniga Moskva ja Leningradi stuudiost pärit emissarid, kes ei tundnud läti kultuuri ega osanud läti keelt. Lätlasi kasutati abijõuna, kel polnud kaasarääkimise õigust. Alles pärast Stalini surma algas Lätis rahvusliku kino taassünd. Neljandaks oli kino- ja filmiala nõukogude võimu jaoks suure ideoloogilise tähtsusega valdkond, mida parteiorganid ja tsensuur tähelepanelikult suunasid ja kontrollisid.