

Neutral Nazism?

Swedish-German Film Relations, 1941–1945

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With regard to film, Germany has thus kept itself strictly pacifist.¹
Filmjournalen, December 1944

Introduction

The quote above is taken from an editorial in the Swedish film periodical *Filmjournalen* (The Film Journal).² It appeared in December 1944 and was thus published less than six months before Germany's unconditional surrender. That a Swedish film journal described German film as "strictly pacifist" – even though Nazi propaganda had been shown in Swedish cinemas for more than a decade, Germany had occupied Sweden's Scandinavian neighbours Denmark and Norway, and most people knew that the Nazis were headed for unconditional surrender – can at first sight seem both strange and terrifying. From a benign point of view, this quote can be seen as yet another ignorant statement exposing the infamous Swedish naïveté that dominated the war years, while it from a more malign perspective is a revealing example of how well-spread and well-anchored Sweden's contemporary denial was during this turbulent period.³ In general, however, these words prove to be fairly representative of the official rhetoric of the Swedish film industry during the war, although pro-German statements such as this rarely were printed after 1943.

The study presented here is part of an ongoing project, and should primarily be seen as a general overview of Swedish-German film relations during the Second World War.⁴ Its purpose is to ascertain the extent to which a kind of *neutral Nazism* influenced Sweden's cinematic relations with Germany during these years. Focus lies on the production, distribution, censoring, screening, and reception of Nazi weekly newsreels, which normally were called *Ufa-journalen* in Sweden and *Auslandstonwoche* (ATW) in Germany.⁵ The main period under consideration is limited to the years during which *Ufa-journalen* was screened at Swedish cinemas with a Swedish-speaking

soundtrack, 24 November 1941 – 7 May 1945.⁶ Apart from official documents and reports, and newsreel footage from the period, the source material primarily consists of discussions, debates, interviews, advertisements, and film criticism published in the two leading Swedish trade periodicals of the period, *Biografbladet* (The Cinema Journal) and *Biografägaren* (The Cinema Owner). It should be noted that all the films discussed below are deposited in the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, where the largest surviving collection of Nazi weekly newsreels for the foreign market in a single language is the one in Swedish, amounting to more than one hundred separate films.

Background: Germany

A few years prior to the First World War, newsreels began to be regularly screened in cinemas all over the world. As in so many other countries, German weekly newsreels for the foreign and domestic markets (*Auslandstonwoche* or *ATW* and *Deutsche Wochenschau* respectively) were dominated by the traditional narrative strategies of the day, linking a multitude of heterogeneous visual segments together with the help of intertitles and occasional live music. The German film company Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft (UFA) was established on 18 December 1917, while its predecessor, Bild- und Filmamt (BUFA), was formed half a year earlier.⁷

With regard to the use of these films in wartime, it is interesting to note that the initiative for both of these companies actually came from the one of the leading German generals in the Weimar Republic, Erich Ludendorff, who had realized the urgent need for a domestic war film production unit. In the summer of 1917, Ludendorff therefore wrote an influential letter to the Royal War Ministry in Berlin, in which he concluded: “the war has revealed the tremendous power of images and film as declarative and influential media.”⁸

The decision to form a national propaganda office with a special “film and image sub-division” was preceded by an overwrought patriotic debate in the German film trade press. One remark, published in the periodical *Illustrierte Filmwoche* at the beginning of 1917, is representative of the global media rhetoric of the time. However, it can also be seen a premonition of Germany’s own use of film two and a half decades later – especially in neutral countries such as Sweden. After having made it clear that images of the ongoing war certainly are important to show to German audiences, *Illustrierte Filmwoche* concluded: “the foreign policy activities of war films are more important, because screening of them in neutral countries is the most simple and effective propaganda tool.”⁹ Thus, the German film trade press was highly positive to the formation of BUFA from the beginning, which – because it constituted

the first official reckoning of the medium by the state – was seen as an historical milestone in the German film industry.¹⁰ As it would turn out, it would also constitute a stepping-stone to the most massive film propaganda ever to be seen on cinema screens around the world.

With the global success of sound film in the late 1920s, the propaganda potential of film suddenly increased, and governmental interest in the medium grew rapidly in most countries. In feature films, new sound techniques altered both content and form of many different genres, even leading to new ones, such as the musical. Parallel developments can be traced in the production of documentary film such as the newsreel, where voice-over and music surfaced as the most prominent rhetorical devices. The formal, informative, and exclusively male voice on the soundtrack explained the content to viewers in ways that opened up for interpretations in line with the preferred reading of the originators. To many politicians, it quickly became evident that this was a far subtler and more effective rhetorical device than the use of intertitles during the silent era. Accompanied by emotionally – and nationalistically – stirring music, sound in newsreels thus fundamentally changed how news could be presented to the citizens. Not surprisingly, control of this medium was increasingly in demand during the nationalistic and volatile 1930s.

In Germany more than anywhere else, this decade brought with it profound changes within the film industry, and early on film came to be regarded as the most important propaganda medium for the masses by the Nazis. The Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda not only put German feature films under strict governmental control when the National Socialist Party took power in 1933, it also worked out intricate plans for documentaries. This control was, however, not fully implemented at once. In fact, between 1933 and 1938 the official newsreel policy in Germany largely remained the same, both for the domestic and the foreign markets. It was not until the invasion of Poland in September 1939 that major alterations were undertaken with regard to the supervision of documentaries in general and of newsreels in particular. In this context, the Belgian film scholar Roel Vande Winkel has convincingly argued that the main reason for this seemingly passive handling of newsreels by Nazi Germany primarily had to do with the minister of propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, and his strong reluctance to openly reveal the country's powerful propaganda mechanisms. Consequently, and as Vande Winkel also emphasizes, "this disinterest in party-or-state produced newsreel should not, however, be mistaken for disinterest in controlling the medium."¹¹

In this context, it needs to be emphasized that the central position of documentary in Nazi Germany always was intimately associated with the political elite of the country. Adolf Hitler had the "final cut" of domestically

distributed newsreels up until 1942, while Goebbels personally supervised the production of every German newsreel during most of the war, and also commented upon them between September 1939 and the autumn of 1944 in his private diary.¹² For instance, when German citizens' disinterest in their domestic newsreels became a propaganda problem, Goebbels immediately commented upon the situation and made suggestions for changes in his diary on 14 July 1941:

Unfortunately, in the recent newsreels the topics often repeat each other and this is somewhat detrimental to the general impression. Therefore, I feel bound to make cuts, to strengthen the commentary and make it more propagandistic and to make sure that music is added, which makes up for the power that the images are lacking.¹³

Here it is obvious that much of the output of newsreels was a personal – if not private – matter for the German propaganda minister. Film was never conceived of as a marginal propaganda tool in the Third Reich. On the contrary, it was always firmly in place in the midst of the Nazi media empire.

The Nazis' formidable yet subtle control of film meant that the four existing weekly newsreels in 1930s Germany – *Ufa-Tonwoche*, *Deulig-Tonwoche*, *Tobis-Wochenschau*, and *Fox Tönende Wochenschau* – only altered their company structures and cinematic content marginally prior to the war. In 1940, however, these four weekly newsreels merged into one national company, *Deutsche Wochenschau* (German Weekly Newsreel), although each different company and newsreel production kept its original title. Later on, in 1942, when the Nazi propaganda apparatus was at its height, all German film companies finally merged into one state company, the holding company Ufa GmbH.¹⁴



Fritz Hippler

The man in charge of the *Deutsche Wochenschau* was Fritz Hippler, after Goebbels arguably the most powerful individual in the history of German newsreel. From 1935 until the end of the war, Hippler produced, directed, wrote, edited, and censored a multitude of films, including features. It was, for example, under his supervision as *Reichsfilmintendant* in 1938 that newsreels finally became a compulsory ingredient shown before every film screening in Germany.

Since Hippler was responsible for the entire output of Nazi newsreels, he also controlled ATW-production for foreign markets.¹⁵ In order to ensure that everything went according to plan with regard to the exported material,

Goebbels, Hippler and their staff quickly realized the need for reliable personnel on location – neutral states included. The Nazis therefore organized a net of subsidiary offices scattered all over the world, so-called *Ausenstellen*. For the remainder of the war, a majority of these foreign branch-offices received one standard newsreel-copy per week, usually accompanied by short scenes of special importance – that is, with special propaganda value. Apart from these showpiece film clips, the subsidiaries were allowed and even encouraged to include local, regional, or national items of interest for the audience in each separate country. Subsequently, newsreels were not only regarded as popular entertainment, they were perhaps even more so conceived of as being educational (*volkbildend*) as well as politically and artistically valuable (*staatspolitisch und künstlerisch wertvoll*).¹⁶ In short, we are thus talking about an intricate and massive output of *edutainment* films with ideology as their subtle yet omnipresent backdrop.

In this context it is important to emphasize that the centrally distributed military reports in German newsreels always had “absolute priority”, and that these reports therefore never were allowed to be re-edited – only the language in them changed depending on where they were to be screened. To the people in charge in Germany, the production, distribution, and screening of newsreels on foreign soil and in foreign languages thus constituted the central ingredient in the massive propaganda apparatus. Not surprisingly, the ATWs aimed at foreign markets were at one point screened in at least 17 different countries and dubbed into no less than 36 different languages.¹⁷

The propaganda importance of the Nazi newsreels can also be linked to the amount of reels produced during the war. According to calculations made at the time by Hippler, the change in number of prints of domestic newsreels in Germany increased from 400 films per year in 1939 to 2,400 in 1943.¹⁸ Another and much later academic source estimates that the German film industry constituted the fourth largest industry in the country in 1943, and so argues that the German film industry during the war was not unilaterally controlled by ideological restrictions, but that commercial incentives played a significant part as well.¹⁹ In my view, this is a circumstantial fact of some significance, which partly confirms the central position of documentary in Nazi Germany. But, and as we shall see, it is also part of the explanation why neutral Sweden worked and sometimes collaborated with the producers of the Nazi propaganda apparatus and its foreign weekly newsreels.

Before the war even had started, one main German newsreel was distributed abroad per week, and then only differing in language.²⁰ In their traditional form, these ATWs combined German and international issues, which is almost identical to the ways in which most contemporary counterparts in other countries presented the news on film. However, somewhere

between late 1939 and early 1940 – a specific date has yet to be established – German ATW began to be edited with more specific target-audiences in mind, including topics with particular relevance for each individual country, Sweden and *Ufa-journalen* included. Structurally, however, these new and more elaborate ATWs only differed marginally from allied, communist, or neutral newsreels of the time, which reveals the strong and well-established genre conventions of this particular film type, and perhaps might explain the efficiency and ease with which Nazi newsreels could be disseminated and received in other countries.

A standard wartime ATW for the foreign market commenced with brief sequences of news, preferably with regional or local relevance. After that, reports on culture, entertainment, celebrities, arts, and sports normally followed. Finally, the reels ended with images from the ongoing war. These last sections were mainly shot by professionally trained photographers from the so-called Propaganda Kompanien (PK). War images at the end of each newsreel were almost always accompanied by nationalistic and triumphant music and an up-beat and patriotic voice-over. Between 24 November 1941 and 7 May 1945, these Swedish-speaking Nazi newsreels were shown in Swedish cinemas just before the feature film.

Background: Sweden

The official discourse about film in Sweden during the 1930s and 1940s was in many regards similar to that in Germany and indeed most other countries. Ideologically, however, Sweden's political map was different, dominated, as it were, by the Social Democratic Party that before and during the Second World War either fronted governments of their own or led coalitions. Apart from a three-month self-imposed hiatus prior to the election in 1936, all governments between 1932 and 1946 were lead by the Social Democratic Party Leader, Per Albin Hansson. Under his supervision as Prime Minister, neutral Sweden initiated several new media strategies on national and party levels, many of which were specifically concerned with film issues and propaganda questions. Initially, though, the Swedish Labour Movement, the Social Democratic Party, and the Swedish Labour Union were highly sceptical of film. During its first four decades, this medium was seen as populist mass entertainment with little or no significance for Swedish citizens. If anything, film was said to have a dangerous influence on the working-class youth, which, as in so many other countries, constituted the largest audience group in the cinemas.

It actually was not until the mid 1930s that this derogatory view changed, but then it did so with force and in fundamentally new directions. From 1935

onwards, the film medium became an increasingly important propaganda tool for the party, the unions, and the movement as a whole. For example, a chain of so-called *Folkets Hus* (People's Halls) were scattered all over the country during the interwar period. These arenas primarily screened films for party members and members of organizations linked to the labour movement, and from 1938 onwards, they were also prime venues for films made by the Swedish Labour Movement's own film production company, *Folkrörelsernas filmorganisation* (Filmo).

Since the People's Halls also functioned as distribution and screening networks, the Social Democratic movement in Sweden thus had a fully integrated film industry prior to the Second World War. By global standards, this was a unique situation among democracies, and it effectively confirms how well acquainted Sweden's political elite was in using and controlling the film medium. In hindsight, this media literacy must surely have been one of the main reasons why Prime Minister Hansson's coalition government, which was formed in December 1939, almost instantly realized the scope and potential effects of foreign propaganda such as *Ufa-journalen*.

Other important institutions that the Social Democrats formed during the war were the Propaganda Board and the Advertising Board (both in 1941). These and other significant media strategies within the labour movement were paralleled by more general tactical manoeuvres on a national scale. Here, the founding of a new state agency for censorship with close bonds to the Foreign Ministry constitutes the most prominent example. The agency, *Statens Informationsstyrelse* (National Board of Information, or SIS), was founded on 26 January 1940, and became responsible for all information flowing in and out of Sweden. Subsequently, the Nazi *Ufa-journalen* found itself not only competing with a wide range of domestic and foreign news films in Sweden during the war, the government and the commercial film trade of the country also influenced the production, distribution, and screening of German films. It is in this complex context that the Swedish film trade press surfaces as a rewarding source material with which to map the extent of bilateral relations between Germany's and Sweden's respective film industries.

Inner Strength and Outer Loyalty

Already from the start in 1920, *Biografbladet* profiled itself as the trade periodical for Sweden's cinema-owners. Over the years, however, it increasingly functioned as a combination of "trade and audience paper".²¹ From 1925 until his death in November 1943, Knut Jeurling was the driving force and editor of the paper as well as chairman of *Svenska Filmklubben* (the Swedish Film Club), "a social club within the trade union" and official publisher of *Biograf-*

bladet.²² Already from this brief outline, one realizes how important formal and informal liaisons were between various interests within the small Swedish film trade.

Biografägaren was formed in 1926. It was a member's paper that was exclusively distributed to cinema-owners in Sweden, and its prime objective was to publish "information and debate of trade union interest".²³ Its sub-heading "The Instrument of Sweden's Cinema-owners' Union" further stressed its close industrial links. Over the years, *Biografägaren* surfaced as the official mouthpiece of the Swedish cinema trade and during Second World War it saw it as its duty "to keep contact between the union and its members alive so that the inner strength and outer loyalty benefit further".²⁴ Since the Swedish Union of Cinema-owners had 520 members in 1945, representing a sum total of 1,671 cinemas all over the country – which were responsible for 90 per cent of all cinema earnings in Sweden – *Biografägaren* was a central and powerful institution that influenced decisions within the Swedish film trade in profound ways.²⁵

A general tendency that can be detected in these two periodicals is their respective reports from abroad throughout the war, not least their efforts of trying to map what was going on in international politics as neutrally as possible. It is, for instance, interesting to note how different German and allied films are described during the three first and the three last years of the war. Telling examples of this can be found under the heading "Film of the World", a full-page column published recurrently in *Biografägaren*. This page is a good case in point of the overall attitudes at work in the Swedish film industry, and existed, during, and after the war. Its sub-heading "as a cultural, economic, industrial, and political factor", reveals an all-encompassing yet naïve ambition to cover all the huge issues of the film industry in a single page.²⁶ This ambition could perhaps also be seen as an indication of a conscious wish on the part of the Swedish film business to use general and distant overviews about what was happening in the world rather than detailed and analytic in-depth reports.

Since "Film of the World" never was signed, it probably should be seen as an editorial text. And given the strong position *Biografägaren* had in Sweden during the war years, the column could be regarded as a fairly accurate litmus test of the Swedish film trade's overall relations with the international film community. Before the war and all the way up until the winter of 1942–3, the emphasis in these columns primarily lay on German films and German events – which, naturally, after a while also included film activities from countries occupied by the Third Reich. Thereafter, however, "Film of the World" mainly focused films from the allied forces, especially the US, the UK, and Russia. Thus, this column is reasonably representative of how Sweden gradu-

ally changed its commercial and ideological focus. During the last year of the war, for instance, Switzerland surfaced as a recurrent theme in “Film of the World”, and the neutral Alpine nation’s similarities with Sweden were often emphasized. At the same time, however, it is apparent that the paper almost totally (and most certainly consciously) failed to address German film issues of the time.

Nazi Propaganda in Sweden

Prior to the war, Sweden’s film relations with Germany were generally positive. A good indication of how these pro-German liaisons manifested themselves in the Swedish film trade can be found in the recurrent Berlin reports that often took up whole pages both of *Biografägaren* and in *Biograf-bladet*. A frequent journalist before the war was Albert Schneider, who was launched as *Biografägaren*’s own correspondent. Schneider’s accounts were often characterized by an unmistakable pro-German rhetoric that, despite of the fact that the texts were supposed to discuss film issues, often delivered explicit references to important political events of the time.

The first sentence of his “Berlin letter” of January 1939 goes as follows: “In the same way as the entire life of Germany has been signified by the formation of a Great-Germany through the return of Austria and Sudetenland to the Motherland, so German film has also been affected.”²⁷ A few months later, another of Schneider’s letters from Berlin appears. This time he cites from Hitler’s speech in the Reichstag, whereupon he delivers a conclusion that apparently was intended to reassure Swedish readers, but which in hindsight stands out as one of the most terrifying ever printed in the Swedish film press: “The announcement that Germany in the future will stop being concerned with propaganda films and instead will respond with anti-Semitic films is also important abroad.”²⁸ Finally, Schneider ends his “Berlin-letter” as follows:

The foreign film-renter and cinema-owner knows that he always does business with German top movies and sometimes quite good ones. The foreign audience also wants, if it is objective and without prejudice, to see the German top movies and keep themselves *à jour* with them.²⁹

Despite the obvious promotion of German interests in these passages, there is more than a shred of truth in the last, idealizing rhetoric, which is linked to economic interests in the Swedish film trade. As mentioned earlier in relation to the German film industry, the increase in film production, and therefore film propaganda, must thus always also be linked to financial incentives on both sides of the Swedish–German film trade business.

When the war begun, Schneider was replaced by Georg Herzberg, who was a well-known film critic at the German trade paper *Film-Kurier*. I have not yet been able to ascertain whether the decision to relieve Schneider came on the initiative of *Biografägaren* or the German propaganda ministry, but given the increasingly complicated and expanding film apparatus in Nazi Germany, the latter seems the more plausible explanation, especially when one realizes that Herzberg most probably lent the German film reports to Sweden additional and sought-after cultural capital. The massive distribution of Nazi newsreels in foreign languages, such as *Ufa-journalen*, was to some extent initiated for the very same reasons. But, as is well known, there was of course a massive amount of other persuasive German media institutions and products to be found within Sweden's wartime borders.

At a top level, German propaganda activities in Sweden during the war were supervised by the German legation in Stockholm, an institution that had a continuous dialogue with all Berlin ministries concerned. The film attaché of the legation, Werner Boening, was in charge of the release and screening of German film in Sweden. Among other things, and somewhat surprisingly, the German legation also lent films to neutral Sweden's armed forces. To get a picture of how informal and almost friendly these bilateral activities sometimes were, we can turn to a bugged conversation between someone in the Swedish film trade and the German legation in May 1941, which was recorded by the Swedish intelligence services. Among other things, the Swede put forward a suggestion on how to improve the German film offensive among the military:

"I thought that we could ask Ufa to edit newsreels from 1918 up until today, so that they could turn out as a cavalcade. In that way, they would be able to see how Germany has been treated, and how it has risen."

"Do you think that would be good?"

"I have talked to several film boys and we all think that it would be a success. You could show it at all the regiments."³⁰

In the autumn of 1941, the head of the German tourist bureau in Stockholm, Berndt von Gossler, began to sense a positive change in Swedish attitudes, and became convinced that there existed other reasons to the ones the Swedish film censors had put forward in their criticism of the quantitative dominance of *Ufa-journalen*. In part, Gossler had been influenced by German reports of spontaneous applause during screenings of *Ufa-journalen*. According to Gossler, this new attitude "had begun to enter Sweden as a result of the German-Soviet war."³¹ And in a sense, Gossler was probably right. When choosing – between Russia, which had attacked Sweden's neighbour Finland,

and Germany, which was increasingly successful on the battlefields and now fought on the same side as Finland – neutral Sweden most probably decided to give its loyalty to already familiar Teutonic culture rather than large and unknown Russia in the east.

Thus, Sweden's negative views on communism in a sense made way for a brief expansion of German propaganda during the latter part of 1941. And as soon as the responsible parties at the *Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* in Berlin realized that a new page had been turned, Nazi Germany immediately increased its cultural activities in Sweden. Already in August 1941, a poster was distributed to Swedish cinemas showing *Ufa-journalen*. It advertised pictures from the German–Russian war, which, in line with newsreel conventions of the time, were mixed with propaganda reports about Danish volunteers on the Finnish front as well as pictures from the German athletics championships.³²

The German offensive on the newsreel front in Sweden even went so far that in the beginning of 1942 the Nazi propaganda apparatus tried to include images of Swedish troops in *Ufa-journalen*. However, Swedish authorities immediately denied the request.³³ But the fact that the Nazis presumed they could include images of military forces from neutral Sweden in their newsreels undeniably reveals a profound change in how offensive they thought they could be along the Swedish film and propaganda fronts.

Another important hub around which much of the Nazi activity circled was *Tyska Informationscentralen* (German Information Centre), the Swedish answer to the German propaganda organization *Deutsche Informationsstelle*. Like most similar institutions in Sweden, its main office was in Stockholm, and its newly renovated facilities on Kaptensgatan 6 offered a library, reading-rooms, and a club hall as well as a music room in which one could listen to any of the 2,000 gramophone records. This was primarily thought of as offering “an insight into German music, from the simplest folk tune to the oeuvre of the great German masters”.³⁴ In an extensive launching report in the Swedish-speaking yet entirely Nazi periodical *Tyska Röster* (German Voices) of January 1942, the centre described its overall mission in Sweden as follows:

But turning to the European community that already is a strong and effective reality, Germany has obligations as the leading power to make way for a more illuminated and non-prejudicial international understanding between people. It is this international understanding that the newly formed German Information Centre in Stockholm wants to serve. The centre has not been initiated as part of any ongoing political propaganda, which from other directions has been unleashed to stir up war-like passions. It is intended

to be an enduring cultural institution for peaceful European collaboration. All elements of unease are, as people will notice, completely abolished. Its purpose is plain and simple – enlightenment.³⁵

Tyska Röster was the German Information Centre's own paper and like much Nazi propaganda on Swedish soil, it began to be published at the end of 1941 – that is, about the same time as the new centre opened. In one of the editor's letters to the readers in January 1942, *Tyska Röster* emphasizes its activity in Sweden by concluding: "The intimate liaisons that always and in all fields have existed between Sweden and Germany have neither slackened nor evaporated during the current war; in several areas on the contrary it has been reinforced and deepened."³⁶

The German Information Centre in Stockholm was also in charge of a film archive, which each Monday and Thursday at 7.30 p.m. screened "German newsreels and culture films" for select parties of individuals approved in advance.³⁷ Just as in the case of the German legation, the films at the German Information Centre were transported to other locations in the countryside, preferably in conjunction with meetings of some of the Swedish friend associations. In this work, the German Information Centre frequently received help with logistics from the German Tourist Bureau, which had a long history of liaisons with Swedish institutions, not least with schools around the country.³⁸

As Gossler had realized, it primarily was the military successes of the Third Reich that paved way for the expansion of German culture in Sweden during the autumn of 1941. These strong links were, however, not effected without official demarcations, and the stronger the Nazis got, the more criticized was neutral Sweden. *Reichsfilmintendant* Hippler, for example, published an article in the periodical *Der Deutsche Film* during the cultural expansion in Sweden, more precisely in October/November 1941, in which he generally criticized the neutral nations Sweden and Switzerland for the ways in which they dealt with their film issues. With regard to Sweden, Hippler was especially annoyed with how frequently and bluntly *Ufa-journalen* was cut up by the state censors. And since the National Board of Film Censors in Sweden, according to him, treated newsreels from allied countries much more carefully, indeed kindly, his final verdict was that Sweden in no way was the neutral nation it constantly claimed to be.³⁹

The recipe that Hippler proposed internally at the ministry was a better control of German film on Swedish soil. Accordingly, a number of new local Swedish divisions were formed, of which *Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP Landesgruppe Schweden* was the most prestigious. Special public halls were also opened for German subjects in Sweden, among them Sveavägen in

Stockholm, Kungsportsavenyen in Gothenburg and Adolf Fredriksgatan in Malmö. In these and other similar Nazi locations, it was the German legation and the German Information Central that primarily distributed films to be recurrently shown.⁴⁰

The German Legation also rented films out to other associations and societies, not least the film societies at Swedish universities.⁴¹ In a letter in December 1940 to Germany, a Swedish student in Lund describes his experiences of such a screening: “*Der Feldzug in Polen* was screened at the Students’ Film Society. To some degree it has been predicted that we also will see the campaign against Flanders. What I most of all long for is – the campaign against England.”⁴² But just as in the case of many other societies, films from the German legation stopped being screened in Swedish student film societies at the end of 1942 – that is, when the outcome of the war had already begun to change.⁴³ However, the German legation continued to lend films to various Swedish organizations up until February 1945. When the Association of Swedish Non-Commissioned Officers asked if they could show German films as “propaganda and enlightenment” in their different local societies, the German Legation answered that they “gladly let films out to private groups of Swedish and invited people.”⁴⁴

For obvious reasons, the Swedish film trade did not look positively on the Nazis’ wide and massive renting of German films in Sweden. Instead, the trade suggested that they should go through the usual channels, in other words through the already existing Swedish distribution firms. At the beginning of 1944, *Biografägaren* even published a sharply worded editorial on this issue. Apart from describing the ongoing distribution and screening of German films in private societies as “a systematic circumvention of present censorship laws”, which thus avoided the need to pay entertainment tax, the editor announced that the board of the Swedish Union of Cinema-owners “had decided that its members’ cinemas under no circumstances were to let their premises for the screening of films that had not been approved by the National Board of Film Censors.”⁴⁵ But even though UFA’s weekly newsreel was constantly supervised by the censors, it still constituted the most active and effective foreign propaganda tool in the Swedish film landscape.

Ufa-journalen

Although the focus of this text is the Swedish-speaking *Ufa-journalen* between 1941 and 1945, it should be mentioned that German *Auslandstonwoche* with Swedish voice-overs were initially launched directly after the invasion of Poland in September 1939. Almost immediately, however, the Swedish government stopped these newsreels by forbidding Swedish text or speech in all imported films. The law was passed on 15 October 1939 and the first paragraph reads: "Cinematographic film recording images of recent events (so-called newsreels), and which either has Swedish text or a soundtrack transmitting Swedish speech, may not be imported into the realm."⁴⁶

Before this point was reached, the potential legislation had been extensively discussed in Sweden's film trade press. In the editorial of its October issue in 1939, *Biografägaren* suggested that Sweden's national film censorship had seen "a strong tendency during the war to use film as a propaganda tool in the service of the fighting nations", concluding that this was the main reason for the new law.⁴⁷ The subsequent two-and-a-half pages of the periodical were dedicated to a long report that was based on two appropriation requests put to the government by the head of the National Board of Film Censors, Gunnar Bjurman. It was particularly emphasized that these documents had been

ger världshändelserna
i historiskt levande,
intensiva minnesbilder

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33

Typical advert for *Ufa-journalen*.

able to be printed *in extenso* thanks to the “benevolent compliance of the head of the censorship”.⁴⁸ In other words, what we see here is the official emphasis on how significant and strong relations were between the film trade press and representatives of the nation’s public service institutions.

Next year, in the autumn of 1940, the new law was tightened even further, banning all kinds of speech from newsreels, which thus went back to being silent again, although music and potential sound from the recording locations remained intact. In connection with this alteration, Bjurman was once again cited in *Biografägaren*, remarking “there is nothing standing in the way of re-editing and putting a Swedish-speaking soundtrack to these films here at home.”⁴⁹ This statement was probably first and foremost directed at foreign powers such as Nazi Germany, indirectly hinting that future productions of Swedish-speaking newsreels might become a possibility. At the end of the war, Bjurman admitted that much of the early Swedish film legislation governing newsreels was consciously directed at German productions, and then especially because the ATWs so dominated the market. That Sweden, thanks to skilful intelligence work, had been aware of the German plans to produce newsreels in the Swedish language far in advance naturally also contributed to the quick implementation of new legal restrictions.⁵⁰

Nazi Germany did not stand back and approve of all these restrictions passively. On the contrary, German officials immediately began to approach their Swedish counterparts with frequent and hostile demands. In October 1940, for instance, the German cultural attaché in Sweden, Hermann Kappner, approached the head of the National Board of Information, Sven Tunberg, to criticize the way in which the film censors had interfered with *Ufa-journalen*.⁵¹ And in the long run, Swedish resistance did not suffice. In November 1941, when the Third Reich was at its most powerful, Hippler and the German Newsreel Company finally managed to circumscribe Swedish laws by establishing a Swedish ATW subsidiary in Stockholm. From then on, this *Ausenstelle* on Kungsgatan 15 recorded and distributed Swedish-speaking Nazi newsreels on a weekly basis right up to the very end of the war. Indeed, according to one censor-sheet at the National Board of Film Censors, the last ATW handled in Sweden, number 713, was censored as late as 7 May 1945 – that is, on the very day of Germany’s unconditional surrender.

The impact of a Swedish-speaking *Ufa-journalen* in domestic cinemas was with all certainty immense, although quite difficult to confirm in retrospect. However, certain answers can be drawn from the fact that the first *Ufa-journalen* with Swedish speech was said to have been seen by no less than 3 000 individuals in the first three hours it was screened on its opening Sunday.⁵² However, as so many other things in the war, the successes of Nazi newsreels in Swedish cinemas were first and foremost related to German

victories on the battlefields.⁵³ The ways in which the Swedish film censors acted towards overt political propaganda in newsreels during the war must thus be seen in relation to the overall aversion to making opinions known in public. Outcries in the cinemas constituted one such explicit example that was debated and acted upon by various institutions.

The background was that censors at the National Board of Film Censors – under the supervision of The National Board of Information – largely cut sections in foreign newsreels that portrayed a given nation's enemies in degrading or racist ways. Despite these pre-emptive actions, there were moments when individuals among the cinema audiences ventilated their disgust or disapproval of what was being shown. One such incident occurred only six weeks into the war, and came to the Swedish authorities' attention thanks to German spies, who had noticed loud catcalls in a Stockholm cinema when a German newsreel was screened. This was immediately reported back to the German foreign office in Berlin, who, in turn, lodged an official protest with the Swedish government.⁵⁴ Another infamous incident took place in the Stockholm cinema Rialto in the autumn of 1940, where a Russian short film about Estonia and Latvia resulted in such strong reactions among the audience that the film had to be stopped in the middle of the screening.⁵⁵

In order to try to prevent similar disturbances in the future, the leading film company in Sweden, *Svensk Filmindustri* (Swedish Film Industry, or SF) began to show instructive notices in all their cinemas between the commercials and the main films. One such notice was launched in the autumn of 1941, around much the same time as Stockholm got a subsidiary office for Nazi ATW. Its tone and message are representative of Sweden's careful and neutral rhetoric during these years, and just like the opening quote of this chapter, it reveals just how naïve public and commercial film institutions could be during these years:

Sweden is neutral! In view of this fact, we would like to propose that the audience neither applause nor in any other way demonstrates preferences for foreign newsreel pictures.⁵⁶

Biografägaren, which repeatedly quoted and praised the instructive notices that SF screened in their cinemas, had already begun to subscribe to the idea of stronger Swedish neutrality in 1939. One of their most spectacular declarations was published just after the war had begun, and is given here in translation.⁵⁷

Neutrality.

In the newsreels, images of war are becoming more and more frequent. All newsreels from the war that are shown or will be shown in Sweden are of

course strictly neutral. This is controlled by the National Board of Film Censors.

The feelings that these neutral newsreels evoke in the audiences may, however, differ in many respects. It is therefore crucial that *Biografägaren's* and the cinema personnel meticulously supervise to ensure such feelings are never shown in any audible or visual way.

Demonstrations of any kind might result in the immediate withdrawal of all permissions of to attend the cinema!

Make therefore sure that your audience observes the strictest form of neutrality!

Public responses to the Nazi newsreels were not the only issue discussed in the Swedish film trade press, of course. Practical work during the production of these newsreels was also often covered, sometimes even prior to the war. In these reports, one specific Nazi unit was repeatedly discussed at length.

Propaganda Companies

In its April issue, *Biografbladet* covered the adventurous profession of the newsreel photographer.⁵⁸ The signature “Edward” commences his text by letting readers know that in totalitarian states newsreel now is ranked as the second estate, at which point a striking critique of contemporary dictatorial states follows – something otherwise almost totally absent – concluding that “the newsreels in these countries can probably in general be described as fairly unpleasant in democratic countries, being, as they are, filled with a far too high percentage of national propaganda.”⁵⁹

Six months later, when the war had begun, the rhetoric in the Swedish film trade press was significantly altered. *Biografbladet* reported that German newsreels now must be distributed faster than previously and that they are significantly longer. The periodical makes a special effort to point out that everything is made possible through the “highly dangerous work” of the photographers.⁶⁰ From then on, this kind of seemingly neutral description of German heroics occurs in almost all of the reports about *Ufa-journalen* in *Biografbladet*. Another year later, the discussions about the Nazi newsreel photographers amounted to full praise without nary a hint of critical distance: “Never before have we seen such dramatic recordings as those the new report companies at the front manage to present, and these newsreel images surely give us authentic depictions of today’s events in world history.”⁶¹ In particular, one should note that the Swedish definition of these companies was “report companies”, while these units both in Germany and elsewhere were known as propaganda companies, *Propagandakompanien*.⁶²



— journalen
talar svenska

Ufajournalen har under parollen »Var själv med där världshistoria skapas» bjudit sin publik högintressanta reportage både från fronterna och från det fredliga arbetet i alla länder. I ofta fenomenala tagningar har den låtit publiken vara med överallt där något händer.

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The coverage of the propaganda companies in *Biografägaren* is similar – and at times was even more positive than its competitor. In October 1939, it initially concluded, “German film entered the service of war and war propaganda even before the actual outbreak of war”.⁶³ Already in the next passage, however, the apparent enthusiasm of the paper shines through when the graphic dimensions of the Nazi newsreels are discussed. Moreover, it is concluded that the general public now prefer to go to the cinemas in order to find out what is going on at the front and “with their own eyes experience it and feel affinity to the great events that are now taking place! Under such circumstances, film is the unsurpassed means of propaganda, the best that a modern commander in total war ever could wish for.”⁶⁴ Surely, Ludendorff’s conclusions about German film during First World War are not so far removed from the Swedish trade paper’s enthusiastic praise.

In the next sentence, *Biografägaren* further manifests its pro-German stance, even citing from a German newspaper that has hailed the new newsreels and described the photographers in the propaganda companies as “the

eyes of the front”.⁶⁵ The article ends by homing in on the heroic courage of one man in particular, even giving his name in order to further personalize the war reports: “The cameramen’s work at the front is of course both exhausting and dangerous, although it is undertaken with the help of the military authorities. One of UFA’s photographers, Bloock-Wagner, says that he made seven trips aboard a bomber on four days, incidentally being the only flyer who has been allowed to take part in this kind of activity.”⁶⁶

However, it was not until 1940 that *Biografägaren’s* praise for the propaganda companies really escalates. In its August issue, it suggests that it is “in the area of newsreel that the Germans really reveal their superiority, not just in comparison to the British and French but also in relation to all other previous wars.” Swedish readers also learn that the propaganda companies often include press and film photographers, as well as announcers, journalists, and famous writers. Additionally, the periodical proclaims that all these skilful professionals are trained by the propaganda companies, after which they are lent out to other units within the German armed forces. Even if *Biografägaren’s* conclusion dealt exclusively with German circumstances, it undoubtedly constitutes a strange remark in neutral Sweden: “Everyone must understand what a tremendous influence such versatile and uninterrupted direct and indirect war propaganda must have on a civilian population that already was highly positively inclined towards the war.”⁶⁷

In the spring of 1941, *Biografägaren* let its readers know even more about the exposed and dangerous conditions faced by the newsreel operators of the propaganda companies:

Of the newsreel images, which are repeatedly shown in Sweden, is now has become evident that film photographers have been ones to position themselves in the back row or in hiding, and one had a sinister reminder of this when the German head of the Reich Press Dr Dietrich recently in an appeal declared that the German army’s reporter companies were the units that have had the highest per cent of severe casualties of all German units. Evidently, it is not just military successes that need to be bought with blood. Good reports and images spread to the world in order to inform about what the war is really like also puts lives as stake.⁶⁸

Here one should note that *Ufa-journalen* is described as offering “good reports” showing “what the war was really like”. Given the fact that the film medium’s representation of reality had been extensively debated in the Swedish film press long before the war, it surely seems a bit strange that an influential paper such as *Biografägaren* could relate to similar issues as naïvely as this. And just as in the case with *Biografbladet*, the Nazi propaganda companies were termed report companies by the Swedish film trade periodical.

In the middle of June 1941, *Biografägaren* published yet another extensive article on these units. This time, the text can more or less be characterized as an overt Swedish acclaim of Nazi propaganda. The full-page article opens with the following short section:

The Great War that now draws its red lines across the world has offered much news, and one of the most sensational is the German so-called report company. Both in their function and in their entire organization, they are absolute news that has completely revolutionized direct news reports from the front and the violent action.⁶⁹

Thereafter, the Swedish periodical gives a meticulous account of the German military organization of the bold propaganda companies. Among other things, Swedish readers learn how they recruit competent personnel and how these individuals create reports that later get inserted into newsreels distributed around the world, Sweden included. As usual, the story is made more gripping by recounting a particularly tragic destiny of a film photographer whose name was made known to everyone. This time, readers learn that “the first German who fell on Norwegian soil was a film photographer on one of the marine report companies”.⁷⁰ The name of the man is duly published and at the same time it is emphasized that he had been responsible for many famous films, among them one that the previous year had been screened at a cinema in Stockholm, *Sturebiografen*.⁷¹ Obviously, the efforts to strengthen the links between Sweden and Germany often took strange yet probably highly effective paths.

In a 1943 issue, there was once again a full-page article about the work of the newsreel photographers, who are primarily compared to their predecessors during the First World War, whose work seldom, if ever, reached the eyes of contemporary audiences because of to the hard censorship back then.⁷² The article uses the dichotomy of proximity–distance in an attempt to show how much the audiences see of the ongoing battles in 1943. Its conclusions include the observation that “film now has an active and contributing part in the war”. However, in this context it needs to be pointed out that this article constitutes something of an exception. In general, the more scrutinizing and close the foreign newsreels got, the more distant were the Swedish film trade press’ relations to the ongoing war and the ongoing propaganda war – of which the latter mostly was fought on neutral Sweden’s domestic soil.

On Location – In Swedish

The presence of a German subsidiary film office on Swedish soil was actually not as new as one perhaps might expect. UFA had already opened its Swedish agency in 1925, although its activities did not really get started until four

years later. When the company inaugurated its new facilities in the middle of Stockholm in November 1941, it was, however, an action of fundamentally different dimensions and, for that matter, with totally new consequences.

In 1941, the head of Swedish UFA, Elis Sundell, had been in charge of the Swedish office for more than fifteen years, meaning that he had begun his career at UFA prior to the Nazi take-over in 1933. During Second World War, Sundell contributed with many new ideas that would strengthen *Ufa-journalen's* position and impact in Sweden. Under his supervision, the quantity of German newsreels shown in Swedish cinemas rose substantially, among other places in Arvika, Eskilstuna, Eslöv, Gothenburg, Helsingborg, Hörby, Karlskrona, Linköping, Lund, Norrköping, Uppsala, Stockholm, and Örebro.⁷³

In March 1941, both *Biografägaren* and *Biografbladet* noticed Swedish UFA's increasingly expansive plans, even publishing interviews with Sundell on this specific topic. Neither of these papers, however, seemed very interested in the upcoming new subsidiary office in Stockholm. Instead, it was UFA's renting out of films as well as the theme and style of these movies that dominated the articles. Only in passing, and then as a spontaneous answer to a question about who would be new director at UFA, Sundell mentions the new facilities in *Biografägaren*: "additionally, Swedish UFA will naturally move to new and specially designed rooms, and will also considerably extend its organization and personnel."⁷⁴ *Biografbladet* had the extensive German film-lending as its main news, but here the new office in Stockholm was mentioned in passing: "In connection with its expansion, Ufafilm is also moving to new facilities, specially designed for its increased needs and altered activities."⁷⁵ Of course, the crucial question that both periodicals failed to ask, or studiously avoided, was the one clarifying what UFA's "increased need and altered activities" actually meant for Sweden and the Swedish film trade.

This silence could be seen as a confirmation of the fact that leading representatives in the Swedish film industry already knew about the political and ideological consequences of the new German subsidiary office. Such an interpretation seems logical when one realizes that the single most powerful man in Swedish film at the time, the managing director of SF, the country's largest film company, of Sweden's Cinema and Film Chamber, and the chairman of Sweden's Cinema-owner's Association, Olof Andersson, had already in 1940 been included in the state censors' highest authority, the newly formed Film Committee at the National Board of Information. Thanks to his posi-



Elis Sundell

tion, Andersson had full insight into the ways in which leading politicians and civil servants regarded and restricted foreign film in Sweden, not least the Nazi output.

Andersson's role in both Swedish and international film circles was thus well motivated, if somewhat complex and enigmatic.⁷⁶ Certainly, he repeatedly criticized the Nazi control of European film culture and also contributed to minimizing the impact of Nazi films in Sweden through his work as supervisor of the state film censors. However, it was in fact Andersson's own company, SF, which until the winter of 1941/1942 was in charge of the distribution of *Ufa-journalen* in Sweden. At a meeting of the Film Committee on 7 June 1940, he tried to downplay his company's dubious affairs with Nazi Germany by stating that this was a practical way to distribute foreign war images to Swedish audiences.⁷⁷ Accordingly, financial interests also need to be taken into account when evaluating Andersson's activities during the war.

On the other hand, and more worryingly, the Swedish film trade press' reluctance to question UFA's opening of a new subsidiary office in the middle of Stockholm could indicate that there were not only existed strong economic bonds between the two countries, but that certain ideological preferences also were shared. The abundance of friendly associations, institutes, bureaus, academies, schools, centrals and periodicals with Nazi connections partly confirms such a reading. As the national territory of the Third Reich expanded around the world, its cultural domain in neutral Sweden also grew.

But the German expansion did not proceed without successive calamities. The opening of a UFA *Ausenstelle* in Stockholm had, for instance, been preceded by a less fortunate Nazi initiative on Swedish soil in the early autumn of 1941. Already in August that year, the German film company Tobis-Cinema-Film GmbH had opened an office of their own in the Swedish capital. In line with the increasingly negative attitude towards Swedish film censorship, the influential cultural attaché at the German legation, Hermann Kappner, concluded that Tobis's new department was a direct response to "Swedish film companies' lack of interest in German film".⁷⁸ Quite soon, however, it became obvious to everyone that this creation was significantly counterproductive and hastened move on behalf of the Nazi propaganda apparatus. The upshot was that Swedish distributors were left with the impression that the German company would take care of their own film distribution, whereupon deliveries of Tobis's film to the Swedish countryside immediately stopped. Only two months after the opening of Tobis's new office, the head of the German Tourist Bureau, Berndt von Gosler, announced that Tobis's Swedish activities now would be taken over by UFA's planned subsidiary office in Stockholm.⁷⁹

Ufa inviger sina nya Stockholmslokaler.



Ett hundratal gäster hade inbjudits.

About the same time, UFA began to promote the completion of its new facilities in advertisements in *Biografägaren*.⁸⁰ In the November issue of the periodical, a report from the official opening was included. Among other things, readers could learn that the German company now had two whole floors at their disposal on the “film street” of Kungsgatan. The offices not only contained storage rooms and playback rooms, but also “an little elegant cinema with the most modern machinery from Zeiss.”⁸¹

The article opens with a photograph showing about twenty men and one woman standing arrayed in one of the rooms. To the right in the foreground, you can detect a small side-table on which wrapped gifts and three miniature flags have been placed. It is possible to discern the latter three as UFA's company flag, the Swedish flag, and the swastika. This display could be seen as a subtle semaphored hint to the readers of the further strengthening of Swedish–German film relations. The hard power of the Third Reich, which had transformed the map of the world and conquered most of continental Europe, had thus successfully paved way for the exercise of its highly effective soft power on Swedish soil. The consequences of this new and much more subtle tool were not least in evidence in UFA's production of a newsreel in the Swedish language bang in the middle of Stockholm.⁸²

The facility at Kungsgatan was just one in a long line of subsidiary offices that Nazi Germany had opened outside its original borders.⁸³ In its coverage,

Biografbladet chose to describe the new office as a Swedish triumph.⁸⁴ The paper's benevolent attitude towards the Third Reich is most apparent when it concludes that UFA's "many and well-deserved film successes in Sweden" means "this great German film company ought also to have a 'shop-window' of its own in Sweden".⁸⁵ Not once is it mentioned that this new office will fortify the position and impact of Nazi propaganda in more ways than one.

News of a new Nazi film office in Stockholm did not get much attention in the film trade press. Whenever anything was published, the overall attitude was mainly positive and concentrated on fairly innocent matters. This kind of approach can be seen, for example, in the autumn of 1941, when *Biografägaren's* uncritical perspective borders on ill-concealed enthusiasm.⁸⁶ After a short introductory passage informing readers that UFA's new newsreels will have a Swedish speaker and sometimes include "entirely Swedish recordings" comes the following section:

In this way, possibilities have been created for UFA to re-edit the newsreel more specifically for the Swedish audience, to re-adjust it and re-arrange its various parts so that the most is made of the newsworthiness of the newsreel.

The wish to limit the propaganda elements of the newsreel in more profound ways than hitherto has been possible because of the imagery, so not only will there be commentary in Swedish, but also it will be edited for a Swedish audience, so that the newsreel is suitable for the Swedish temperament.⁸⁷

At the end, the article mentions that the recording of the Swedish commentary and the editing will both take place in Stockholm, "where the laboratory work and copies are also produced."⁸⁸ It is unlikely that the Nazi propaganda apparatus could have launched its new high-tech film office in Sweden in a better and more positive way than this. A circumstantial fact that might have influenced the Swedish periodical's pro-German rhetoric is that *Biografägaren* at this point had its offices at Kungsgatan 16–18, opposite UFA's new facilities and at the exact same address as the German Tourist Bureau.

It was the head of Swedish UFA, Elis Sundell, who had personally been the driving force behind making the German newsreels more attractive to the Swedish audience. In a letter dated 16 May 1941 and addressed to the head office in Berlin, he proposed that UFA should record more reports on Swedish soil and then dub these films into Swedish. According to Sundell, it was quite simply "a psychological error" not to implement these changes, especially since they in all certainty would result in UFA having "a fundamentally different reception than the present one".⁸⁹ Sundell's concrete suggestions directly caught the ear of the Nazi Propaganda Ministry, and starting with *Ufa-journalen* number 533, shown on 24–30 November 1941, Nazi Germany

launched its newsreels with Swedish voice-overs and several segments shot on location in Sweden.

If we return briefly to the inauguration of UFA's new facilities at Kungsgatan 15, *Biografbladet* included some fairly conventional gossip in its text about the event. Among other things, readers were informed that two of Nazi Germany's most popular film stars, the Swedish actress Kristina Söderbaum (on the cover of this issue of *Scandia*) and her director husband, Veit Harlan, were at that very moment recording the first German feature film in colour; and there was coverage of the large dinner party for about a hundred guests to follow the inauguration at Kungsgatan, to be held at Hotel Anglais with UFA as host and with SF's Olof Andersson as head of the Swedish delegation.⁹⁰

The choice of venue was of course no coincidence. The Nazi propaganda apparatus in Sweden had had its eyes on this particular hotel, which they thought could be transformed into a cinema. In a letter from Sundell to the main offices in Berlin in the spring of 1941, it was established that the best location for a cinema in the Swedish capital would be somewhere around Stureplan, and the building discussed was indeed Hotel Anglais.⁹¹ The given reason was that much of Stockholm's public transport intersected at Stureplan, and Sundell even compared it with the area around Gedächtniskirche in Berlin. However, it needs to be said that even before the mistake with Tobis, Sundell had realized that a German cinema in Stockholm would not automatically result in success. On the contrary, he read the situation correctly in strategic terms when he concluded that "there has never been a cinema in Stockholm that has been able to launch the film productions of one single country."⁹²

As mentioned, *Biografägaren* had also greeted these new changes in glowing terms, and in the same issue as the report about the alterations, UFA also had a full-page advertisement that, in similar words to the Swedish periodical, concluded that *Ufa-journalen* now was "Swedish both in its complementary language and in the ways in which, alongside international news and fresh images from the different fronts in Europe, it also show what is going on in our own country."⁹³ Certainly, Swedish readers were here confronted with an inclusive "we" that subtly tried to encompass everyone within a German – Nazi – *Gemeinschaft*.

Together with the general coverage of UFA's strengthened position in Sweden, advertisements such as this only further confirmed that neutral Sweden and its film trade press had begun to temporize significantly over their respective degrees of independence. To the infamous



concessions, which allowed Germany's trains to transit with troops through Sweden during the midsummer crisis in 1941, came additional demonstrations of power during the autumn in the form of a new Nazi film office in Stockholm, a Swedish-speaking current affairs film, and the opening of several new German organizations and media platforms such as the German Information Centre and a Nazi periodical in Swedish, *Tyska Röster* (German Voices).

Of course, it should be noted that some criticism of Germany did make its way into the Swedish film trade press. But just like the official government protests, these objections were predominantly of a highly cautious character. In the very first number of *Biografägaren* in 1942, Swedish commentators in the Nazi newsreels are discussed in the article "What is propaganda?" in which it is concluded that "all foreign film is propaganda, for their very language constitutes a kind of propaganda for each nation and people, albeit in its wider meaning".⁹⁴ Yet, only a few pages earlier in this issue, under the heading "News from the Film Bureaus", the normal rhetoric once again dominates, proclaiming that when it comes to *Ufa-journalen* "it has also been established that the audience appreciates these well-made and interesting programmes."⁹⁵

A few issues later, *Biografägaren* emphasizes that *Ufa-journalen* "has always been an up-to-date and substantial newsreel, but its value has increased even further since it began to be edited with Swedish speech and Swedish reports."⁹⁶ When one analyses this passage in greater detail, it becomes clear that this was not written by the journal – a contemporary issue of *Biografbladet* carries exactly the same formulations and sentences, with the only difference that the former has inserted three important words that fundamentally change the provenance ("writes to us").⁹⁷ This description of *Ufa-journalen* was commercial copy sent in to the Swedish papers by UFA, suggesting the existence of subtle undercover propaganda even in the most important film trade periodical in Sweden.

Arguably, the most explicit appraisal of the Nazi film industry in general and UFA in particular came quite late in the Swedish film trade press, in the spring of 1943. In its March issue of that year, *Biografägaren* salutes UFA on its twenty-fifth birthday, and gives over its cover entirely to UFA's red logotype, garnished with a sprig of laurel.

On the lower left-hand side of the cover there is a heading that surely must be seen as anything but neutral: "25 years in the lead". But instead of being in the lead, this advert can actually be said to have signified the end of UFA's long period of leadership. More importantly, however, 1943 also marked the beginning of the end of the entire Third Reich and its massive propaganda output.



Concluding Remarks

So, as one might expect, it was primarily the outcome on the battlefields that guided neutral Sweden's political and commercial navigation during Second World War. Many of the fairly discrete changes in attitudes in the Swedish film trade press can thus easily be directly linked to specific events in the war. Officially, Sweden remained neutral for the entire length of the war, of course, and its neutrality responded just as much to what was happening on the battlefields as it did to what was issuing from the propagandists.

The first major re-evaluation of Swedish relations with Nazi Germany came in 1946, when Swedish Government Official Inquiry 1946:86 published its report, *German Propaganda in Sweden during the War, 1939–1946*. Among other things, this official report concluded that the autumn of 1941 marked the first formative moment in regard to Swedish–German film relations.⁹⁸ In these months, Nazi propaganda began to spread across Sweden in larger quantities

and more effectively than hitherto. This propaganda offensive lasted for about a year – that is, up until 1942–1943 – when events in Stalingrad changed the outcome of the war and the rhetoric on the propaganda front once and for all.⁹⁹ The strongest and most unequivocal sign of a fundamental change in attitude towards Nazi Germany did not occur until a year after Stalingrad, however, in the winter of 1943–1944, when the massive Swedish cultural boycott of Germany took place. According to the Inquiry, it meant “the final withdrawal from German propaganda even in its most moderate forms.”¹⁰⁰ And, more importantly, the changes in response to Nazi Germany in the Swedish film trade press discussed above generally followed the same pattern.

When the war took a new turn, the natural response from the German propaganda apparatus was to make the reports in *Ufa-journalen* different, formally, topically, aesthetically, and geographically. The images from the Russian war, for instance, were dominated by long, moving reports from the retreats, with wounded German soldiers and blurry distance footage of the eastern front. Much of the Propaganda Companies’ work’s early and highly praised quality, rhythm, and excitement had now disappeared, and the audience numbers in the cinemas began to drop.

Even though the Ministry for Enlightenment and Propaganda in Germany had decided to include colour reports on a regular basis in its newsreels in a desperate attempt to lure people back into the cinemas, the interest in these current affairs films continued to wane.¹⁰¹ News of these new improvements was instantly relayed by the Swedish film trade press. In its 1945 February issue, *Biografägaren* published a full-page advertisement for *Ufa-journalen*’s colourful look and superior Agfacolor stock:

Here you can talk about the most revolutionary news in the field of newsreels since the arrival of sound. The news report plays a major role for modern people, and with Agfacolor in the camera in his hand the cameraman placed in the midst of the events is able to catch all that is significant in images that are so close to reality.¹⁰²

After the war, much of this praise would prove to be a fairly accurate description rather than a disguised form of propaganda for Germany. For when the allied forces went through the assets of the Nazi film industry, it immediately was apparent to them that the German Agfacolor techniques were far superior to anything else then available.

Thus despite massive commercial campaigns in the last year of the war, the new and partly coloured *Ufa-journalen* faced decreasing numbers of viewers as well as an increasing amount of public criticism, not least in Sweden. For instance, just before the end of the war, when everyone was aware of the final

outcome, *Biografägaren* published an advertisement for a feature film that less than one year earlier would have been politically impossible to mention, let alone to commercially launch in a paper in which German film companies also advertised their productions. The advert included a quote from a review in *Göteborgs-Tidningen*, which concluded: “Manne Berggren, who has dubbed the film into Swedish, is sublime in his German contempt and somewhat familiar when he jests about a certain former Austrian upholsterer.”¹⁰³

The general overview of Swedish–German film relations during the Second World War presented here ends with a statement that is miles away from most of the wartime comments about Nazi film in the Swedish film trade press. Based on the fact that financial incentives were at least as important as ideological ones, it is obvious that the Swedish film industry at the end of the war quite simply began to redirect its focus towards nations on the other – winning – side. Not that the film trade rhetoric had ever openly criticized American or British films in their columns, but the fact remains that the two Swedish film periodicals considered here both reveal fundamental shifts in perspective and content in the last months of the war. What this article therefore has tried to describe, contextualize, and problematize is the overt and ubiquitous usage of an extreme pragmatic, which despite its ethical ambiguity undoubtedly helped the Swedish film trade to slowly navigate away from its neutral Nazism to fetch up with a new kind of Allied neutrality. To what extent this was a journey worth taking, and whether we today can learn anything from it, I leave to the reader to decide.

Sammanfattning

Denna text presenterar en första skiss över en närmast utforskad del av filmutbudet i Sverige under andra världskriget. I fokus står den så kallade *Ufa-journalen*, en nazistisk journalfilm med svenskt tal som perioden november 1942 – maj 1945 varje vecka visades på svenska biografer. Texten analyserar de sätt på vilka dessa filmer och hela den nazistiska propagandapparaten togs emot av och diskuterades i den svenska filmindustrins branschpress. Efter en kort genomgång av filmmediets propagandistiska framväxt i Tyskland och Sverige studeras hur tidskrifterna *Biografägaren* och *Biografbladet* förhöll sig till *Ufa-journalen* och den övergripande händelseutvecklingen i Europa. Studien avslöjar hur dessa båda inflytelserika språkrör genom sin finansiellt pragmatiska men etiskt dubiösa inställning till krigets aktörer skickligt navigerade den svenska filmbranschen genom en av propaganda fylld tid.

Keywords: Sweden, Germany, World War Two, weekly newsreels, film trade press

Notes

- 1 Monica Brilioth, "De stulo mitt krig", *Filmjournalen* 26/50 1944, p. 5.
- 2 See Eva Blomberg, *Vill ni se en stjärna: Kön, kropp och kläder i Filmjournalen 1919–1953*, Lund 2006.
- 3 Especially when one realizes that these words were written by the renowned film critic Monica Brilioth, who had been employed by the daily newspaper *Stockholms-Tidningen* since 1937. (For Brilioth, see "Låt oss presentera", *Biografägaren* 18/19–20 1943, p. 17. Part of the explanation for this quote is by all accounts linked Monica Brilioth's father, Börje Brilioth, who, in spite of his repeated and frequently published declarations of sympathy with Nazi Germany, managed to remain editor-in-chief of *Stockholms-Tidningen* until 1948. For Swedish-German film and cultural relations before and after the Second World War, see Patrick Vonderau, *Bilder vom Norden: Schwedisch-deutsche Filmbeziehungen 1914–1939*, Marburg 2007 and Johan Östling, *Nazismens dilemma: Svenska erfarenheter i andra världskrigets efterdyningar*, Stockholm 2008.
- 4 A joint project with Pelle Snickars, Head of research at the National Library of Sweden. The present text is an extract from my ongoing research within this project.
- 5 In Sweden, the most detailed account of German newsreels and Swedish censorship can be found in Arne Svensson, *Den politiska saxen, En studie i Statens biografbyrås tillämpning av den utrikespolitiska censurnormen sedan 1914*, Stockholm 1976. Roel Vande Winkel, Kay Hoffmann, Bjørn Sørensen and Tore Helseth have all written extensively on newsreels in wartime Europe. For a few recent publications, see Roel Vande Winkel, "Nazi Newsreels in Europe, 1939–1945: the many faces of Ufa's foreign weekly newsreel (*Auslandstonwoche*) versus Germany's weekly newsreel (*Deutsche Wochenschau*)", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 24/1 2004, pp. 5–34, and *Cinema and the Swastika. The International Expansion of Third Reich Cinema*, (eds.) Roel Vande Winkel and David Welch, New York 2007; Kay Hoffmann, "Propagandistic Problems of German Newsreels in World War II", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 24/1 2004, pp. 133–142; Kay Hoffmann, "Wirklichkeitsberichte als 'Sauerteig' des neuen Films, Die Deutschen Wochenschau als Kriegspropaganda", in *Triumph der Bilder, Kultur- und Dokumentarfilme vor 1945 in Internationalen Vergleich*, (eds.) Peter Zimmermann and Kay Hoffmann, Constance 2003, pp. 305–318; Tore Helseth, "Norwegian Newsreels under German Occupation", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 24/1 2004, pp. 120–132; and Tore Helseth, *Filmrevy som propaganda, Den norske filmrevy 1941–1945*, Oslo 2000.
- 6 This was seldom the case with *Filmjournalen*, which primarily focused on feature films, stars, celebrity visits, and premieres. The reason why *Filmjournalen* is not considered in detail here has partly to do with it being of a more spectacular and sensational character than both *Biografägaren* and *Biografbladet*.
- 7 Two months later, on 14 February 1918, the firm was registered in the German commercial registration system.
- 8 Hans Borgelt, *Die UFA – ein Traum: Hundert Jahre deutscher Film*, Berlin 1993, pp. 30ff.
- 9 Borgelt, p. 22. Article originally published in *Illustrierte Filmwoche* 1917:3.
- 10 Borgelt, p. 23.
- 11 Vande Winkel, pp. 5–7.
- 12 Felix Moeller, *Der Filmminister, Goebbels und der Film im Dritten Reich*, Berlin 1998, p. 375.
- 13 Moeller.
- 14 In the Swedish film trade press of the time it was explained that the new solution had been arrived at "in conjunction with a rationalization of the German financial sector". "Tyska filmen förstatligas", *Biografägaren* 17/5–6 1942, pp. 4 and 6; "Tyska filmen förstatligas", *Biografbladet* 23/3 1942, p. 20.

- 15 Hoffmann 2004.
- 16 For more, see Uta Schwarz, *Wochenschau, westdeutsche Identität und Geschlecht in den fünfziger Jahren*, Frankfurt 2002, p. 67.
- 17 Vande Winkel. Another source estimates that 1 500 German ATWs were distributed globally in 1942, see David Welch, “Nazi wartime newsreel propaganda”, in *Film & Radio: Propaganda in World War II*, (ed.) K.R.M. Short, Knoxville 1983, pp. 202–219. Yet another source presented different numbers in 1968, suggesting that German ATWs were made in 29 languages in 34 countries in 1942, and distributed in 1000 copies. Erwin Leiser, *Deutschland erwache, Propaganda im Film des Dritten Reiches*, Hamburg 1968.
- 18 Hoffmann 2004.
- 19 Julian Petley, *Capital and Culture: German Cinema 1933–1945*, London 1979.
- 20 Helseth concludes that German films were sometimes not even shown on a weekly basis. Helseth 2004.
- 21 Elisabeth Liljedahl, *Stumfilmen i Sverige – Kritik och debatt*, Stockholm 1975, pp. 62–3. Yet during the Second World War, *Biografbladet* still saw itself as “the film union’s own paper on independent grounds”. “Towards the end of the year 1941”, *Biografbladet* 22/12 1941, p. 1.
- 22 Liljedahl, pp. 62–65.
- 23 Liljedahl, p. 65.
- 24 Editorial, “20 Years”, *Biografägaren* 20/1–2 1945, p. 1.
- 25 Editorial, “20 Years”, *Biografägaren* 20/1–2 1945, p. 1. See also “Sveriges Biografägareförbund 30 år”, *Biografägaren* 20/6 1945, p. 1.
- 26 Interestingly enough, this division is fully in line with the tremendously influential approach to film studies launched by Allen and Gomery several decades later, which proposes new ways of undertaking historical studies of film on the basis of four different and mutually interrelated perspectives: aesthetic, economic, technical, and social. Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice*, New York 1985.
- 27 Albert Schneider, “Berlin-brev”, *Biografägaren* 14/1 1939, p. 14.
- 28 Schneider, p. 12.
- 29 Schneider, p. 12.
- 30 SOU 1946:86, *Den tyska propagandan i Sverige under krigsåren 1939–1946*, Stockholm 1946, p. 26 and p. 30.
- 31 SOU 1946:86, p. 172.
- 32 SOU 1946:86, p. 172.
- 33 Svensson, p. 108.
- 34 Unsigned, “Tyska Informationscentralen i Stockholm: En kulturinstitution för mellanmänsklig förståelse”, *Tyska Röster* 2/1 1942, pp. 7–8.
- 35 Unsigned, “Tyska Informationscentralen i Stockholm: En kulturinstitution för mellanmänsklig förståelse”, *Tyska Röster* 2/1 1942, pp. 7–8. According to SOU 1946:86, p. 131 this text was also published in *Tyska Röster* in December 1941.
- 36 “Till våra läsare!”, *Tyska Röster*, 2/special issue January 1942, p. 2.
- 37 “Till våra läsare!”, *Tyska Röster*, 2/special issue January 1942, p. 2 and advertisement in *Tyska Röster*, 3/5 1943, p. 31.
- 38 SOU 1946:86, p. 132.
- 39 Svensson, p. 108.
- 40 SOU 1946:86, p. 10.
- 41 On Uppsala Filmstudio’s relations with Nazi Germany, not least its collaboration with the Swedish-German Society, see Bengt Bengtsson, “Vad suckar gästboken? Uppsala Studenters Filmstudio som arena för konstfilmsinstitution och filmdebatt”, in *Mediala hierarkier*, (ed.) Per Vesterlund, Gävle 2007, pp. 13–47.
- 42 SOU 1946:86, p. 31.

- 43 Bengtsson, pp. 29–30.
- 44 SOU 1946:86, p. 32.
- 45 Editorial “Ocensurerad film”, *Biografägaren* 19/2 1944, p. 1.
- 46 Swedish Statute Book 1939:705, quote taken from Svensson, pp. 75–76.
- 47 Editorial “Tiderna förändras och vi med dem”, *Biografbladet* 1939 20/10, p. 1.
- 48 Editorial “Tiderna förändras och vi med dem”, *Biografbladet* 1939 20/10, p. 1., unsigned, “Mot utlandspropaganda på film”, pp. 2–3.
- 49 Unsigned “All utländsk journalfilm blir stum”, *Biografägaren* 15/13 1940, p. 2.
- 50 Svensson, p. 77. Bjurman was a key figure in Swedish film censorship, with abundant experience from First World War that would prove highly relevant during the second.
- 51 Svensson, pp. 89–90.
- 52 “Ufa-journalen blir svensk!”, *Biografägaren* 16/18–19 1941, p. 12.
- 53 SOU 1946:86, p. 173.
- 54 Svensson, p. 71.
- 55 The reason for the reaction was the Soviet invasion of Finland the year before, which had led to a war – and a debate about Sweden’s patriotic duty that still was an open wound. The reactions at Rialto were even debated in the most influential periodical of the time, which commented on it in an editorial. *Biografägaren* 15/15 1940, p. 1.
- 56 *Biografbladet* 22/9 1941, p. 26.
- 57 *Biografägaren* 13/15 1939, p. 11.
- 58 Signed Edward, “Journalfotografen: Ett äventyrligt yrke”, *Biografbladet* 20/4 1939, p. 9.
- 59 Signed Edward, “Journalfotografen: Ett äventyrligt yrke”, *Biografbladet* 20/4 1939, p. 9.
- 60 Unsigned, “Allt går som vanligt: Tyska filmvärldens motto – tillsvidare”, *Biografbladet* 20/10 1939, p. 8.
- 61 Unsigned, “Ufafilm”, *Biografbladet* 22/10 1941, p. 13.
- 62 The view on propaganda was not even totally unified in Nazi Germany. Already in mid June 1941 the Ministry for Enlightenment and Propaganda concluded how important and correct this word was within the National Socialist Movement. What had happened was that the German marine corps had asked to begin calling their Propaganda Companies *Kriegsberichter-Kompanien* (War Reporting Companies). In reply, Goebbels himself answered that the word propaganda would remain because it was a name of honour in the Third Reich, “*in Ehrenname*”. Willi A. Boelcke, *Kriegspropaganda 1939–1941, Geheime Ministerkonferenzen in Reichspropagandaministerium*, Stuttgart 1966, p. 397.
- 63 Unsigned, “Världens film”, *Biografägaren* 14/15 1939, p. 5.
- 64 Unsigned, “Världens film”, *Biografägaren* 14/15 1939, p. 5.
- 65 Unsigned, “Från Skilda Horisonter”, *Biografägaren* 14/16 1939, p. 5.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Unsigned, “Världens film”, *Biografägaren* 15/11 1940, p. 5.
- 68 Unsigned, “Världens film”, *Biografägaren* 16/5–6 1941, p. 5.
- 69 Unsigned, “Med kamera, mikrofon och ritstift i eldlinjen”, *Biografägaren* 16/11 1941, p. 17.
- 70 Unsigned, “Med kamera, mikrofon och ritstift i eldlinjen”, *Biografägaren* 16/11 1941, p. 17.
- 71 Unsigned, “Med kamera, mikrofon och ritstift i eldlinjen”, *Biografägaren* 16/11 1941, p. 17.
- 72 Signed F. H., “Filmen gör krigstjänst”, *Biografägaren* 18/4–5 1943, p. 15.
- 73 SOU 1946:86, p. 173.
- 74 Unsigned, “Nordiska motiv i ny tysk film”, *Biografägaren* 16/5–6 1941, p. 17.
- 75 “Ufa och Terra öppna egen uthyrning i Sverige”, *Biografbladet* 22/3 1941, p. 5.
- 76 As the grand old man of Swedish cinema, in 1941 Andersson was once again elected as one of three vice-chairmen in the International Film Chamber, a Nazi initiative for an international film association that had been formed in 1935. In 1941, the intention was to resurrect it after a pause since 1939. Even before the war, Andersson had begun to reduce German domi-

- nance of the International Film Chamber, and once the war had started he was still the one lone representative to protest against German propositions. For an detailed discussion about Sweden's activities in the International Film Chamber, see Jan Olsson, *Svensk spelfilm under andra världskriget*, Lund, 1979.
- 77 Svensson, pp. 86–7.
- 78 SOU 1946:86, pp. 169–70. There had been a report with photos of the Centre's premises in an earlier issue. Unsigned, "Tyska Informationscentralen i Stockholm, En kulturinstitution för mellanfolklig förståelse", *Tyska Röster*, 2/1 1942, pp. 7–8.
- 79 SOU 1946:86, pp. 169–70. There had been a report with photos of the Centre's premises in an earlier issue. Unsigned, "Tyska Informationscentralen i Stockholm, En kulturinstitution för mellanfolklig förståelse", *Tyska Röster*, 2/1 1942, pp. 7–8.
- 80 Advertisement, *Biografägaren* 16/12–13 1941, p. 28.
- 81 "Ufa inviger sina nya Stockholmslokaler", *Biografbladet* 22/11 1941, p. 23.
- 82 Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York 2004.
- 83 In the spring 1943, the following subsidiary offices had been established: France (Paris, 19 October 1940); Spain (Madrid, 15 November 1940); Belgium (Brussels, 5 December 1940); Poland (Warsaw, 8 January 1941); The Netherlands (The Hague, 1 April 1941); Denmark (Copenhagen, 1 June 1941); Sweden (Stockholm, 1 November 1941); Austria (Vienna, 1 February 1941); Yugoslavia (Zagreb, (Agram), 1 December 1941); Romania (Bucharest, 1 January 1942); Czechoslovakia (Bratislava (Pressburg), 1 March 1942); Greece (Athens, 15 April 1942); Norway (Oslo, 30 April 1942); the USSR (Kiev and Lvov, 1 June 1942); Latvia (Riga, 1 June 1942); Bulgaria (Sofia, 1 September 1942); Yugoslavia (Belgrade, 1 October 1942); and Finland (under preparation, May 1943); Vande Winkel, p. 32.
- 84 "Ufa inviger sina nya Stockholmslokaler", *Biografbladet* 22/11 1941, p. 23.
- 85 "Ufa inviger sina nya Stockholmslokaler", *Biografbladet* 22/11 1941, p. 23.
- 86 "Ufa-journalen blir svensk!", *Biografägaren* 16/18–19 1941, p. 12.
- 87 "Ufa-journalen blir svensk!", *Biografägaren* 16/18–19 1941, p. 12.
- 88 "Ufa-journalen blir svensk!", *Biografägaren* 16/18–19 1941, p. 12.
- 89 SOU 1946:86, p. 172.
- 90 "Ufa inviger sina nya Stockholmslokaler", *Biografbladet* 22/11 1941, p. 23.
- 91 SOU 1946:86, p. 169.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 "Ufa-journalen blir svensk!", *Biografägaren* 16/18–19 1941, p. 12.
- 94 Signed "Geham.", "Vad är filmpropaganda?", *Biografägaren* 17/1 1942, p. 11.
- 95 "A.-B. Ufafilm", *Biografägaren* 17/1 1942, p. 17.
- 96 "A.-B. Ufafilm", *Biografägaren* 17/9–10 1942, p. 32.
- 97 "Ufafilm", *Biografbladet* 23/5–6 1942, p. 16.
- 98 SOU 1946:86, pp. 26 and p. 30.
- 99 SOU 1946:86, pp. 171–72.
- 100 SOU 1946:86, p. 11. The boycott was triggered by the German closure of Oslo University and the ensuing deportation of Norwegian teachers and students. Later, it received official approval from the highest Swedish authority in the form of Foreign Minister Christian Günther. For more about the Swedish cultural boycott of Germany, see Birgitta E. Almgren, *Drömmen om Norden: Nazistisk infiltration i Sverige 1933–1945*, Stockholm 2005, pp. 56 ff. as well as SOU 1946:86, pp. 93 ff.
- 101 "Filmbyrånytt: Ufafilm", *Biografägaren* 20/1–2 1945, p. 29.
- 102 Advertisement, "Nytt!", *Biografägaren* 20/3 1945, inside front cover.
- 103 Advertisement, "En tum från segern", *Biografägaren* 20/6 1945, p. 30.