

The Policia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado 1933-1969 and Valtiollinen Poliisi 1939-1948 on Screen: Comparing and Contrasting the Images of the Political Police in Portuguese and Finnish Films between the 1930s and the 1960s

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Abstract : “The walls have ears” phrase is defining the era of dictatorship in Portugal (1926-1974) and political unrest decades in Finland (1917-1948). The phrase is referring to the policing of the political, secret police, PIDE (Policia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado 1933-1969) in Portugal and VALPO (Valtiollinen Poliisi 1939-1948) in Finland. Free speech at any public space and even in private events could be fatal. The members of the PIDE/VALPO or informers/collaborators could be listening. Strict censorship under the Salazar’s regime was controlling media for example newspapers, music, and the film industry. Similarly, the politically affected censorship influenced the media in Finland in those unrest decades. This article examines the similarities and the differences in the images of the political police in Finland and Portugal, by analyzing Finnish and Portuguese films from the nineteen-thirties to nineteensixties. The text addresses two main research questions: what are the common and different features in the representations of the Finnish and Portuguese political police in films between the 1930s and 1960s, and how did the national censorship affect these representations? This study approach is interdisciplinary, and it combines film studies and criminology. Close reading is a practical qualitative method for analyzing films and in this study, close reading emphasizes the features of the police officer. Criminology provides the methodological tools for analysis of the police universal features and European common policies. The characterization of the police in this study is based on Robert Reiner’s 1980s and Timo Korander’s 2010s definitions of the police officer. The research material consisted of the Portuguese films from online film archives and Finnish films from Movie Making Finland -project’s metadata which offered suitable material by data mining the keywords such as poliisi, poliisipäällikkö and konstaapeli (police, police chief, police constable). The findings of this study suggest that even though there are common features of the images of the political police in Finland and Portugal, there are still national and cultural differences in the representations of the political police and policing.

Keywords : censorship, film studies, images, PIDE, political police, VALPO

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