

## THE SOVIET UNION AND SOVIET CITIZENS IN FINNISH MAGAZINES

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### Micro-level contacts cross the Iron Curtain

The focus of this article's is to study popular journalism in 1970s and 1980s. Popular journalism was extremely popular starting from the end of 1960s peaking 1970s and gradually waning toward 1980s. A magazine studied in this article is *Hymy* (Smile), and it has been estimated that in the beginning of 1970s approximately the whole literary population of Finland read it. (Aho 2003, 332). The magazine is still being printed although it is not as popular any more.

Finns have a special relationship to printed text and Finnish readers read literature through life. (Eskola 1989, 191). Finnish researchers have noted that Finns have an exceptionally realistic relationship to literature. For example, Katarina Eskola argues that instead of language creating reality like in French literature for Finns reality creates the language (Eskola 1989, 180). In international comparison this realistic reading phenomenon is uncommon in Europe, but can be found in Estonian reading culture. (Eskola 1989, 180; Niemi 1988, 215; Järve, Kamdron, Papp 2000) The strong relationship between language and realism in Finland is related to Finland's young literary tradition (Eskola 1989, 180). This is called the Finnish way of reading (Eskola 1989, 184). It means that Finns are willing to read about the subjects that are close and familiar to them, part of their daily life. The similar way of reading was practiced among the readers of *Hymy*. Its journalism is allegedly based on realism – “striving for to show everything, both good and evil”. Although *Hymy* contained sensational material, it also published serious comments on social issues (Aho 2003, 327, 336). *Hymy* contained two editorial approaches. The first one includes sensational material but the second approach was suppose to report “truthfully” the experiences of ordinary people and promoting anti-heroes, especially, if they have been able to somehow subvert the Soviet authority. *Hymy* specifically focused on the experiences of the low income Finns.

Regardless that the texts and articles *Hymy* published were written by professional journalists, the articles still maintained the authenticity because they were based on the original experiences of the readers, which they reported to *Hymy*'s editors. This reciprocal relationship between the professional journalists of *Hymy* and its readers was established through intensive dialogue. The readers contacted the magazine editors, proposed themes for publishing, and were willing to be interviewed. In addition the readers very eagerly gave feedback on published materials.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the different images magazine *Hymy* created and published on the Soviet Union and the Soviet citizens. The central research question analyzes what kinds of issues *Hymy* published about the Soviet Union and its citizens before the collapse of the empire in 1991. This study gives special attention to the reasons why the articles were written in the first place, and secondly, what was the nature of their content.

There are 224 articles on the Soviet Union and its citizens published in *Hymy* between 1972 and 1991. In these articles the Soviet Union was a central focus and

topic in one way or the other. These texts were based on, for example, individual interviews, accounts of different events, travel narratives, and individual correspondence. Thus the magazine gave a voice to ordinary Finns that mainstream media could not.

One reason why the voice of the ordinary people was not heard, especially in issues concerning the Soviet Union and its citizens, was because the political atmosphere of the Cold War. The Iron Curtain symbolized an ideological conflict; the mental and physical boundary that divided Europe into two from the end of the Second World War until 1989. The Iron Curtain set borders making an “us” and “them”. It divided people into those with whom one can identify and those who become “Other” within cultural discourses (Hirt 2012, 3, 21; Bhabha 1995a, 4). This situation, symbolized by the Iron Curtain, was situated on the eastern front between Finland and the Soviet Union. Consequently, these two neighboring countries were separated and isolated from each other.

### **The popularity of magazine *Hymy***

Research material of this article, magazine *Hymy* was published from 1959 and it is still in print. As a magazine, *Hymy* has been defined as representing so called yellow journalism. Yellow journalism is a form of journalism driven by sensational and flamboyant coverage, degrees of misrepresentation and self-promotion. Popular lore holds that the name, yellow journalism, originates from a comic strip in the newspaper featuring a child in a yellow night shirt. The yellow kid and the analogy were drawn in 1887 by the New York Press as a derisive term for two battling newspaper. Yellow journalism is associated with unethical journalistic practices (Zeliger & Stuart 2010, 173). The effects of the mainstream journalism, such as *Helsingin Sanomat* (*Helsinki newspaper*, the capital newspaper in Finland), and the media on attitudes, opinions, behavior, and knowledge of the public is extensively researched, while so called yellow journalism or other entertainment genres are largely ignored. Despite *Hymy*'s central position in Finnish reading culture, only few academic articles has been published on the magazine (Aho 2003; Kosonen 2006). *Hymy* as the most successful magazine in yellow journalism in a Finnish context where different readers with different ideological and social affiliations shape both the political as well as cultural discourses in Finland.

*Hymy*'s popularity in Finland was staggering. In the 1970 when the Finnish population was 4,5 million, the circulation of the magazine was 435 000. (Malmberg 1991, 166) It has been estimated that over three million Finns of the whole 4,5 read it. This meant that each copy had six readers; in other words, every second Finn read *Hymy*. (Aho 2003, 332) In 2013 *Hymy* still belongs to the most popular Finnish magazines. According to Finnish Audit Bureau of Circulations, in 2013, out of 5,3 Finns, 237 000 readers subscribe magazine *Hymy*. ([http://www.levikintarkastus.fi/mediatutkimus/KMT\\_Lehdistotiedote\\_17.09.2013.pdf](http://www.levikintarkastus.fi/mediatutkimus/KMT_Lehdistotiedote_17.09.2013.pdf))

The unofficial, often undocumented stories published in *Hymy* serve the same function as literary tales. Tales have always had many functions, for example expressing and concretizing the problems and conflicts arising from culture (Apo 1995, 13). In the Finnish context, the tales can serve as a kind of mirror that reflects

social, political, and cultural issues of society. Tales provide social and political shifts of the perceptions and meaning of socialization through reading. They vent those feelings and frustrations, express those needs, reveal those wishes, dreams, and also fears that have been denied by social institutions and authorities.

One reason why it was easy for *Hymy* to start publishing the swaggering and excessive stories about the Soviet Union had to do with the fact that the Soviet Union was regarded as an insidious and dangerous enemy in post-war Finland. Finland was considered a Western country, but it was politically within the sphere of the influence of the Soviet Union (Hentilä 1998, 129). Finland had all the symbols and signs of a sovereign nation but its political decision making was restricted by the presence and pressure of the Soviet Union. It can be argued that the pressure and the influence of the Soviet Union reached the extent that Finland was regarded as a province of the Soviet Union. Although not everybody agreed with this view but rather interpreted the relations between Finland and the Soviet Union as a unique solution (Paasi 1996, 133). *Hymy* was able to manipulate Finns' fear of being still under the Soviet rule and operate as an organ for Finns' hostility and suspicion toward the Soviet Union.

The second reason for *Hymy*'s popularity could be the global, almost hysterical political atmosphere that stirred up people's fears of atomic war-fare between West and East and the expansion of communism. In Finland these two reasons caused increasing intolerance toward anything that did not fit into a Finnish value system or cultural ideology and furthermore, decreased the feeling of security. *Hymy*'s as a popular magazine could find the way to evade the official mandate not to publish anything that was anti Soviet Union. In *Hymy*, people were able to read and provide the anti-Soviet sentiments without any censoring. Therefore, *Hymy* not only provided its readers the content and practices, views and beliefs that expressed the popular beliefs and values, but also sympathized with them.

In the Soviet Union the general political atmosphere, "the terror of balance" or "Mutually Assured Destruction" (MAD) strongly affected peoples' attitudes towards the West. The West became the degenerate and war mongering Other. Between 1947 and 1953, Soviet citizens were encouraged to be introverts to avoid dangerous "border zones", both literal and imaginative. These dangerous "border zones" symbolized anything that had to do with Western culture, politics or economics. The West was the threat not only to the purity of the Soviet Socialist ideology but also to Soviet patriotic identity.

### **Different ways to cross the Iron Curtain**

The Soviet citizen had a very few possibilities to travel to the Western countries until the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Before that the Soviet citizens had to apply for a permission to leave the country for any reason. The application procedure was complex and standards of being granted permission were strict. Only those who had received special training, in other words were politically prepared to encounter the west, and who were regarded stable from the perspective of the Communist Party and whose everyday life was upstanding were accepted to travel abroad (Gorsuch 2012, 12, 17). Roughly three-quarters of Soviet tourists traveling abroad visited East European socialist countries, only few Western Countries. Most Soviets could meet people from Western countries only in Soviet tourist locations such as Leningrad.

However, direct relationships between the Soviet citizens and foreigners were not allowed. Even Soviet hotels were built to isolate foreigners from the Soviet customers. (Gorsuch 2011, 19, 68-69).

Regardless the efforts of the Soviet Union to maintain its ideological purity, it had to open its borders to tourism because it needed foreign revenue. One way to create the influx of needed revenue was a very controlled type of tourism that later developed into a mass movement. In the 1960s and 1970s this type of tourism became a mass movement when hundreds of thousands of Finns traveled to the Soviet Union on yearly bases (Kostiainen 2004, 382). All Western travelers needed a visa to be able to travel to the Soviet Union. The most common way to travel to the Soviet Union was to take part in package tours with strictly pre-organized programs, activities and guided tours. (Gorsuch 2012, 74; Kostiainen 2004, 386-387). In this way the tourists were prevented from wandering freely in the Soviet Union. Despite tourists appearing on the streets, individual contacts between Finnish and Soviet citizens were not officially allowed during the Soviet period. On the contrary, the contacts caused problems to the Soviet citizens. (Uskali 2003, 118; Gorsuch 2012, 27-28). The Soviet citizens were in danger of being contaminated by foreign contacts and thus could be labeled as an enemy of the state.

Never the less, the individual level contacts between Finns and Soviet citizens occurred during the Soviet period regardless the official restrictions. Many Finns established with the Soviets whom they met in restaurants and hotels. However, these relationships were strictly established in secrecy. Part of these relationships led into marriage. Marriage was possible although couples had to go through a complex and difficult bureaucratic procedure. If a Soviet partner wanted to move to Finland, he or she had to apply for a permission to leave the country, and this could take even years.

Tourists, on the other hand, were willing to engage with the Soviets, particularly with the ones who worked at hotels. If the Western tourists and the Soviets were even allowed to stay in the same hotel, they had separate floors and rooms for dining. Booking and paying for a hotel room was arranged through Moscow. Private citizens were not able to book a hotel room, as rooms were allocated through the official channels. Hotels were portrayed for the Soviet citizens as dangerous "border zones" and places for bourgeois decadence. (Gorsuch 2012, 68-69).

In addition to general tourism, also specialized groups formed a significant number of travelers to the Soviet Union. One of the most significant groups were left wing organizations. These were the groups who wanted to travel to the Soviet Union because of ideological reasons. Naturally, the majority of these travelers were left-wing supporters. Another significant group were the members of the Finnish-Soviet Friendship Society. The Finnish-Soviet Friendship Society was a Finnish anti-war propaganda organization dedicated to gather cultural information on the Soviet Union (Krekola 2012, 257; Upton 1973, 225-226)

The third notable group who wanted to visit the Soviet Union was politically organized Finnish university activists. One of their main goals was to contact the students on "the other side of the Iron Curtain." This became possible through the many scholarships Finns received to study at Soviet universities. Studying at universities in Finland was quite expensive in the 1970s and 1980s, and therefore these scholarships, granted by the Soviet government were greatly valued in Finland

(Hentilä 2004, 229-230). The Soviet Union tolerated tourism not only for the foreign currency but also to fulfill its ideological mission of spreading communism, constructing a positive picture of this communist country. Therefore, the Soviet tourist organization, Intourist, had university educated tourist guides who were well trained for disseminating Soviet ideology.

Although Finnish tourists had these legitimate ways to enter the Soviet Union and establish contacts with the Soviets, there were also Finns who defied the local travel restrictions. They violated their travel visa by travelling secretly to the areas that were not authorized by their visa. Perhaps the most notable group of people who broke the rules were former inhabitants or their descendants of the old Karelia. As a result of the Winter War and the Continuation War, 415,000 Finnish Karelians (10 per cent of the contemporary Finnish population) were evacuated from the territories ceded to the Soviet Union. These Karelians had a strong desire to visit the Karelian isthmuses north from Leningrad because of their family roots and their old homes which originated there (Hentilä 1998, 129). During the Soviet period, these visits were not organized nor allowed. The trips had to be made secretly by hiring a taxi and driving to their old homes at night. During these visits, they became acquainted with the new inhabitants of their former homes. Contrary to general expectations, the Finns did not hate the new inhabitants but often became lifelong friends with them. Ordinary Finns could find a common humanity in a Soviet, whether or not they consciously or unconsciously still identified the Soviets as an enemy.

Tens of thousands of Finns formed miscellaneous tourist groups who travelled to the Soviet Union. Some of these people decided to visit the Soviet Union because it was the cheapest possible way to have a holiday. What made it cheapest was the illegal money exchange on the street of the Soviet cities or selling Western products illegally on the Soviet black market. Thus Westerners could have a luxury holiday in carnivalesque atmosphere costing almost nothing. These tourists quite often consumed huge amounts of alcohol and perhaps for these reasons, they had colorful adventures to report on the Soviet Union (Åström 1993, 161). Some tourists visited the Soviet Union in order to contact the opposite sex. While some tourists were looking for a romance, the others looked for the opportunity to participate in illegal sex tourism, that flourished in the Soviet Union, too (Nagel 2003, 207; Skaffari 2010, 147).

The tourist trips and the common history between Finland and the Soviet Union created a need for an extensive narration of the Soviet Union, its citizens, and Finns in relation to them. Finns had many stories and opinions as well as their own experiences to report on the Soviets and the Soviet Union. A nation according to Homi Bhabha, has an image of itself and its history which it expresses in its national narration (Bhabha 1995a, 1). In this period, national narratives most clearly came forward in *Hymy* magazine and I define the cultural and political context within which these stories were created. It is vital to analyze the impact the political atmosphere had upon their narration. Several national discourses and narrative strategies appear which illustrated, each in its unique way, the nature of Finnish-Soviet relationships.

### **Finland – a country in the gray zone**



During the 1970s and 1980s, Finland existed in the gray zone between Western countries and the Soviet Union. Finland's official foreign policy was based on friendly neighborhood relations with the Soviet Union. The state relations were defined in the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (the YYA Treaty 1948). Finnish researcher Joni Krekola has noted that the YYA treaty meant that the Finns had to create not only a politically, but also a culturally more positive image of their former enemy (Krekola 2008, 107).

The YYA Treaty gave the Soviet Union some leverage in Finnish domestic politics. There was a tendency of avoiding any policies and statements that could be interpreted as anti-Soviet. This phenomenon was given the name "Finlandization" by the German press. According to historian Juhani Mylly, life in Finland was divided into two parts, public and private, before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Publicly, no negative or even skeptical views on the Soviet Union were expressed, but private attitudes could be rather adverse. One part represented the official view of the Soviet Union and the other the private Finnish citizens. So, although the divisions existed, only the official division and its policies toward the Soviet Union were accommodated publicly. No negative or even skeptical attitudes towards the Soviet Union were shown. Editors of mainstream magazines or newspapers were sentenced even as long as a two years of imprisonment had they been published anything that could have been regarded as slander towards the Soviet Union. This law was enforced until 1995 (Salminen 2004, 201).

Due to the official demands placed on the presentation of Finlandization policies in the media, the national newspapers practised self-censorship on sensitive political issues. However popular magazines, which were not regarded as serious journalism, could publish more freely. Their straight forward, often provocative articles did not qualify as a serious foreign political threat or an insult (Seppinen 2011, 51). This unofficial culture represented by *Hymy* flourished within homes where Finns could read about and openly discuss their experiences in the Soviet Union, expressing different opinions about the country, its people, and political system (Mylly 1995).

### **Nations in magazine stories**

Neighboring countries, both in a good and bad way, have always been each others' targets of attention and subjects of narratives even in the modern world. From the Finnish point of view, the other and the otherness have conventionally been Russia or the Soviet Union. Finland has a special relationship with Russia, for Finland used to belong to the Russian Empire as its Grand Duchy between 1809-1917. Finland had been fearful of its Eastern neighbor for centuries. The fear was finally manifested when Finland had to go to war with the Soviet Union. Sweden is also a former mother country of Finland from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The attitude towards Sweden has, however, neutralized significantly, because Sweden has been historically considered more akin to Finland with similar histories and culture relative to Finland. But there is still a sharp contrast in language policies regarding the way the Finns themselves perceive the position of the Swedish language; it is the second official language in Finland and Swedish language is a compulsory subject in Finnish schools although many Finns nowadays set against compulsory Swedish study. A coalition has tried to change Finnish legislation so that Swedish would lose

its mandatory school status (<http://www.pakkoruotsi.net/>; <http://uutiset.perussuomalaiset.fi/tagi/pakkoruotsi/>).

Swedes are the subjects of benign joking ranging from the questioning of Swedish males' masculinity to the Swedes' inability to go to war (Knuuttila 2007, 12). *Hymy*, one can conclude, was not as interested in sensationalizing Sweden as it was with the Soviet Union. This is noteworthy because hundreds of thousands of Finns emigrated in the 1970s to Sweden in order to find employment. One might expect to find hundreds of different stories about the Finns' experiences in Sweden. However, these stories did not appear in *Hymy*, perhaps due to the fact that Sweden was regarded as a friendly neighbor who could provide access to modern society and culture and serve as a role model for Finland. The lack of these stories perhaps shows how differently Finland perceived her neighbors.

Nations and images of the nations are created in narration (Bhabha 1995, 1). Narrations, for example, define nationality and international relations. Naturally, in order to define national identities and enforce certain type of international politics, the public must have an access to these national stories. The medium that allows this access can be found in journalistic genres such as *Hymy*. The main newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, or periodical, *Suomen Kuvalehti*, represented the elite in Finland. The popular magazines however sold much more than for example *Suomen Kuvalehti*. Its circulation was only 72 000 in the beginning of 1970s while, as mentioned early, *Hymy* sold 350 000 copies (Malmberg 1991, 176). Both publications, as well as yellow journalism were keeping alive a production and standardization of national images (Lehtonen 2004, 145). The ways to represent Finnishness are connected with power relations and as Mikko Lehtonen has noted media has ritualistic power that helps produce and uphold social and national unification (Lehtonen 2004.126).

### **Stereotyped stories**

Strong stereotypes of the Soviets influenced the creation of *Hymy* articles. Stereotypes are understood as abstract, simplified representations of different cultures and peoples. The stereotypes are formed and manifested by manipulating the ideological dimensions of, for example, race, sex, nationality, religion, and even marital status (Paasi 1996, 61). Stereotypes in *Hymy* functioned as a binary mechanism, which on the one hand reinforced hatred toward the Soviet Union and strengthened the old negative stereotypes of the Soviets, but then on the other hand, deconstructed these fixed stereotypical images.

“Sore spots” can always be found in a common and shared history between neighboring countries especially in a situation right after the war. When the sore spots become so deeply embedded in collective national consciousness, people start believing in them; as they contextualize the issues through them, they become stereotypes. *Hymy* articles containing these stereotypes are the focus of deeper examination in this study. However, when the political climate changes in society, the nature of the stereotypes also changes. They become taboos. Stories that appeared in *Hymy* almost always dealt with themes that in one way or another can be regarded either as taboos or stereotypes depending on an individual reader's viewpoint. When a sensitive subject matter was a “taboo” to one reader, at the same time it was a

revelation to another. These taboos in a Finnish context were formed around some very disconcerting stereotypes associated with prostitution, heroism, arranged marriages and secret fantasies that insulted or even destroyed familiar and secure stereotypes associated with Finnish collective pride.

I have found several stories in *Hymy* that deal with the sensitive issues that employed binary mechanisms of stereotypes. These are the most common ones: unhappy marriages between Finnish and Soviet citizens; organized marriages (organizing marriages between Finns and Soviets and earning money on it); smuggling (alcohol, people etc.); Courier; prostitution; exile (Soviets defecting to the west); espionage, spying; fantasy, miracles, parapsychology; the Second World War; Soviet partisans mass-murdering civilians during the war; Finnish prisoners of war; Families separated by the border

### **Marriages between Finnish and Soviet citizens**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the suspicion of the motives of a foreign spouse has been a conversation piece in Finnish journalism, (Reuter & Kyntäjä 2006, 110) especially, in yellow magazines such as in *Hymy*. In real life the marriages across the border between Finland and the Soviet Union were not rare, but neither were they based on love only. In *Hymy*'s stories, the main reason why Finns and Soviets married was because the Soviet spouse wanted to get permission to go west. Perhaps for this reason *Hymy* saw in these stories scandalous and stimulating elements which could attract and hook the readers.

Often *Hymy* concentrated on describing intermarriages as very problematic. Consequently, these articles did not write about happy family life. Several articles described for example, how a Soviet spouse disappeared after having emigrated to Finland (for example *Hymy* 12/1976). The other stereotypical stories in *Hymy* depicted the Soviet spouse either as a ruthless traitor who leaves his or her spouse half an hour after the wedding ceremony had taken place, or as a calculating imposter who is after nothing but his or her spouse's money.

Usually the Finnish spouse was positively described through stereotypical images such as an honorable man who was in love. In these articles, the motive of the Soviet partner for getting married was always "shady." These married couples were always portrayed in a very stereotypical way and in stereotypical roles, where a Finn is an innocent victim and the Soviet spouse is a villain. According to cultural researchers Hannu Sirkkilä and Laura Huttunen, cross-cultural marriages have been sensitive themes in public discussions. The motives and reasons to marry a Soviet had to be explained and justified. Often these justifications and explanations were not regarded acceptable and therefore, these marriages more often than not were received very negatively (Sirkkilä 2005, 12; Huttunen 2004, 139).

According to Arthur Asa Berger, a large number of functions that Russian researcher Vladimir Propp found in fairy tales may also be found in modern popular cultural genres such as in *Hymy* magazine. The construction of tales in magazines and in folklore has similarities. Both genres have heroes and heroines, villains and villainesses, helpers, magic-agents and powers (Berger 1992, 21-22). The stories also contained similar characters to the fairy tales. The stories have heroes, anti-heroes and many other roles. Usually a Finn was in a role of a hero, and a Soviet a villain.



At a cultural level, these kinds of stories functioned as warnings that emphasized the dangers and perils if one was to seek a marriage partner outside one's own nationality. Magazine articles thus strengthened ethnocentric attitudes. They also delivered a political message which not only criticized the decision to marry a Soviet citizen but also criticized the Soviet socialist society. They spread a message that life in the Soviet Union was so impossible that the Soviets were resorting to unethical or criminal ways to get out of their own home country.

### **Prostitution**

The second popular issue in *Hymy* articles focused on prostitution. The issue of prostitution appeared in *Hymy* the first time in 1985 (*Hymy* 5/1985). *Hymy*'s article was based on a Soviet newspaper *Znamya* 19 December 1984 article on prostitution. In the Soviet article, the cause of prostitution was seen to originate in Western decadence that had entered the Soviet Union through tourism and, especially, through Western foreign workers. Because the Finns formed the most significant group of tourists and Western foreign workers they also became also the biggest group of clientele of prostitution in the Soviet Union. This issue of prostitution was dealt with in *Hymy*'s article, "*Finnish builders and their whores from the Russian perspective.*" This article reported how Finnish construction workers, while working in the building projects in the Soviet Union, attracted black market traders and prostitutes. The Soviet article on prostitution blamed Western decadence for increasing prostitution in the Soviet Union and *Hymy* stereotypically depicted many Soviet women as willing to do anything for Western consumer products and currency, including prostituting themselves. The magazine did not take a stand on the issue, nor did it moralize Finns' willingness to use the services of prostitution.

The next article entitled, "*For money or for pleasure? A classy woman searches for company over coffee*" (*Hymy* 12-13/1987) described the ways Finnish customers bought sexual services in Leningrad. The third article, (20/1988) "*Did Olga give you a death sentence?*" continued enforcing the stereotypical attitude of easy access to sexual services in the Soviet Union. However, in the latter article, the focus on easy access to sexual services changed into the risks involved where customers could contract sexual diseases. Later on, contracting sexual diseases from the Soviet prostitutes became another stereotype, especially, in the 1980s. In the 1980s, when AIDS hysteria started and when there was no effective treatment for it, a world-wide panic occurred that did not only appear in popular culture such as in *Hymy* magazine but also in other mediums of collective folklore (Pöysä 1988). In the 1980s urban legends were created where women purposely infected men with HIV. These urban legends spread through journalism that presented these undocumented legends as if they were as credible news. (Virtanen 1989, 236, 245).

*Hymy* fuelled this AIDS hysteria by publishing the facial photo and the full name of a Soviet woman Olga who had recently died of AIDS. This indicates that the story was intended to be taken as a true one and was based on a faith of a real person, not on a common urban legends spreading around aids in 1980s (Pöysä 1988). The *Hymy* article warned Finnish customers buying sexual services in the Soviet Union of the dangers of contracting AIDS. The warning had been targeted especially to those men who might have been Olga's customers. The wording, illustration and the lay out of

this article was made to shock the readers in their insensitivity to expose Olga by making her an epitome of ruination and decadence. Olga represented an old stereotype that labels women as dangerous seducers who trap and kill men. What did not come to the fore in *Hymy*'s story was that Olga was also a victim of AIDS and most likely had contracted the disease from her customers, perhaps from a Finn. Exposing Olga and violating her privacy, not to mention failing to follow the rules of general conduct to respect the dead, illustrate the unethical journalism that *Hymy* indulged in.

Many Finnish men were customers of the sex trade in Soviet cities. Officially prostitution was forbidden, but in practice there were different prostitutes for foreigners and for locals. Sex was a taboo subject in the Soviet Union. It was not discussed in the mass media before Perestroika. There was no sexual education in schools or contraceptives available (Zdravomyslova 2001, 154, 157). Prostitution was a theme of taboo. However, Finnish men were regular users of prostitution in the Soviet Union. Prostitution and using the services of the prostitutes was dealt with in magazines which were more evidently directed to men. *Hymy*'s readers consisted both of men and women and men did not want to deal with this side of their sexual life in a magazine that was geared towards both sexes unlike magazine *Ratto* that published reports concerning readers' experiences with prostitutes (*Ratto* 2/78; 4/78; 5/78; 5/82). *Hymy* articles brought the secret and hidden male conduct into general public awareness, thus destroying the stereotypes of faithful Finnish husbands. At the same time *Hymy* destroyed its own creation of the stereotypical image of a Finnish male who is a virtuous and self-sacrificing family man and a father.

### **The Second World War**

In 1973 *Hymy* published a story of a reconnaissance parachutist, "*An end of a reconnaissance parachutist: Will be executed by shooting...*" (*Hymy* 2/1973). The focus in this story was on a Finnish prison camp where the Soviet prisoners-of-war were kept. The writer of this article, one of the guards, reports how he discovered that some Soviet prisoners could speak Finnish. It turned out that these Finnish speaking Soviets were the ones who had defected to the Soviet Union from Finland and enlisted as reconnaissance parachutists. The writer reports how the Finns regarded these special prisoners as traitors and how this was used to justify their almost immediate execution by the Finnish soldiers. Other articles in *Hymy* also reported the inhumane treatment of the prisoners-of-war and the Soviet civilians. "*Burnt offerings: Secret records expose the disgrace of our history*" (*Hymy* 5/1979). This article in *Hymy* surprisingly concretizes the results of conflict by showing the pictures of dead prisoners-of-war. In retrospect, for a modern reader, who had not participated in the war, it was and has been painful to read about and confront the historical facts that lead to the deaths of the Soviet prisoners-of-war. These deaths were not necessary but caused by arbitrary whims of the Finnish army officials. These deaths had nothing to do with self-protection or defending the country or any other reasons that justified killing in the war. Since this article was published, it has been verified that thousands of prisoners-of-war perished in Finland's prison camps and that prisoners' treatment was worse than could have been expected of a civilized society (Vihavainen 2010, 178). Finnish soldiers and the atrocities they committed

created powerful images that clashed fiercely with familiar and powerful stereotypes of the Finnish heroic soldiers. It seems like *Hymy* started its own crusade against the Finnish way of romanticizing and feeling nostalgia towards the war.

The articles on the Second World War in *Hymy* lead the reader to ponder the fate of Finland during and after the war. As early as in 1973, the article, "*Finland started the war: this gang did it*" (*Hymy* 11/1973) was perhaps the first time in Finnish post-war history, somebody questioned the official historiography written about the Winter War and the Continuation War between Finland and the Soviet Union. The entry in *Hymy*'s article explains that according to official historiography, it was the Soviet Union who started the Continuation War in 1941. Contrary to this information, *Hymy* published a photo of an armed Finnish group of guerillas crossing the border in order to place dynamite on the Murmansk road and in the floodgates of Stalin's channel. Thus the article criticizes Finnish historiography writing that portrayed the Continuation War as a defensive war. *Hymy* criticized Finland in this article for having conveniently "forgotten" the old, extensively supported public movement to connect the Soviet East-Karelia to Finland during the war (Vihavainen 2010, 186). Soviet East-Karelia was part of the Karelia region that has always belonged to Russia and to the Soviet Union. Finland's Karelia policy during the Continuous War concurred with the reasoning of Jelena Senjavaskaja who defined propaganda as the most important vehicle for the justification of a war. Each war, just as Finland's Continuation War, had its own ideological appearance and reasoning (Senjavskaja 2009, 298). The Finns justified their claim to conquer East-Karelia on the basis of the same cultural, linguistic and historical background that Finland shared with Soviet East-Karelia. The people described in *Hymy*'s article must be thought through Bhabha's concept of a double time. In *Hymy*'s articles they are people who had to go through the horrors of the war and who lived in difficult circumstances after the war. In addition, they were representatives of a nationalist pedagogy of 1940s. Then on the other hand, as readers of *Hymy*'s articles in the 1970s, they became Finns who lived in the time era when strong pacifists and anti-war movements became leading ideologies in the world. Although *Hymy*'s article was based on the discourse of the pre-given historical origin and event, *Hymy*'s article ignored the ideological foundation of the war and war propaganda of the 1940s (Bhabha 1995, 297). *Hymy*'s article wanted to break away from the fixed and stereotypical way of thinking of Finland and its relationship to the war and its subsequent view of the Soviet Union after the war.

The next article "*The battle at a Finland's front was only a small clash*" (*Hymy* 2/1980) summarized the Soviet historical perspective of Finland during the Second World War. The same theme continued in an article "*The Red Army's March to Finland was planned very carefully in 1939*" (*Hymy* 3/1989) The latter article explained how the Red Army had had detailed information of Finnish roads, bridges and even gas stations. In other words, the Red Army had a ready-made manual containing all the necessary information that it needed to conquer Finland. At the end of the article, it is mentioned how this detailed and essential information had been received from the Finnish communists. This article clashed with the unified stereotypical thinking of Finnish unwavering patriotism.

The articles in relation to the war between the Soviet Union and Finland formed

the most significant story group concerning the Soviet Union. The Cold War era in the 1970s and 1980s was still a post-traumatic period for Finns. The war had created a public sphere where the war could be reminisced and thus stored in the collective memory. Why the war was discussed so much among the general population in Finland was because the war experiences had been transformed into shared cultural trauma that was furthermore to be transferred to the generations to come (Aarelaid-Tart 2006, 46). This phenomenon was also apparent in Finnish culture. The articles in the magazine *Hymy* perpetuated the ancient stereotype of Russians as a dangerous enemy. Maarja Lõhmus has discovered that in Estonian history the texts about the Soviet period contain archetypical descriptions and definitions of the Soviets, and the social situation under occupation with its artificial social roles (Lõhmus 2002, 228). It is not surprising to find a similar phenomenon in the Finnish media. The Second World War was still fresh in a Finnish collective memory when *Hymy* published these articles. For example, the war-time propaganda against the Soviet Union influenced the way in which the stories had been written and how the stories were used to teach the younger generations to fear and even hate the Soviet Union (Apo 1987, 130). But in these articles, there were also the elements of pacifism that started in 1960s and therefore possibly affected the writing policies of *Hymy* magazine (Krekola 2012, 257).

### Conclusion

The stories concerning the Soviet Union, Soviet citizens and Finland's relationship with the Soviet Union were published in *Hymy* in clearly distinguished categories. Maarja Lõhmus has also distinguished the basic types of the Soviet public texts in newspapers and in general media in Estonia (Lõhmus 2002). The stories the magazine *Hymy* published concerning the Second World War have common features with the category Lõhmus calls "mythology of existence". The stories of the critical moments of the Second World War took the reader back again to the questions of Finland's miraculous survival in the war and the results of the subsequent peace negotiations. Finland could have faced a similar destiny with the Baltic countries that were incorporated into the Soviet Union as the Soviet Republics. Finland, on the other hand, managed to stay a sovereign state. The yellow magazines such as *Hymy* still came back to these traumatic moments of history 30 or 40 years after the war. In many ways, *Hymy* transferred the war events to the younger generations by publishing the war stories over and over again and linking them with the most controversial explanations.

The stories of war and enemy in *Hymy* illustrated the attitudes that many people still had towards the Russians and the Soviets. What was behind these kinds of Finnish yellow magazine stories was the grand old narrative of Russophobia that had its roots in the far past (Apo 1987, 127). Some Finnish historians, such as Matti Klinge, argue that there is no such phenomenon as historical Russophobia but rather that this Russophobia is a modern phenomenon called Sovietophobia created only after Finland's Declaration of Independence (Klinge 2012). But contrary to Klinge's argument, Finnish folklore researchers can show through large collections of stories that the fear that the Finns had towards the Eastern enemy has existed for centuries (Simonsuuri 1984, 325- 331).

Sovietophobia had everything to do with communist ideology. It was a question of fear of Finland losing its independence; the fear that was manifested during the Second World War. The narration in *Hymy* articles focused powerfully on those areas that contained a strong emotional concern (Apo 1987, 128). The Second World War was still a collective memory. Later on the stories in collective memories came to be understood as collective traumatic experiences.

The stories also had several psychological functions. The decades after the war formed an important transitional period between the old and the new Finland. For example, Finland had to change from an old agricultural society to a modern industrial one. The majority of Finns did not agree with the hold that the Soviet Union still had on Finland and its domestic politics after the war (Mylly 1995). There was not, however, an official way to address the question of the Soviet influence. Therefore the general public had to find a venue to discuss and reflect its traumatic past in relation to the Soviet Union's war and after-war policies. Yellow journalism, such as *Hymy*, offered that venue. (Earl 2011). It is not surprising if the relations between neighboring countries seemed to be the one central focus of the yellow magazine.

*Hymy* published 224 articles regarding the Soviet Union during the 20 years examined. That is more than articles published on any other country. *Hymy* published for example many more articles on the Soviet Union than on Sweden. This is noteworthy because hundreds of thousands of Finns emigrated to Sweden during the decades addressed in this paper.

The articles the magazine *Hymy* published were mostly written in the spirit of criticism – not in the spirit of “friendship of the peoples” that was the official political stance toward the Soviet Union. Magazines such as *Hymy* had to be aware of the official Finnish political rhetoric concerning the relationship with the Soviet Union. At the same time, the publishers had to satisfy the needs of their reading audience and sell the magazine. Consequently, these different goals created tension.

Individual relationships were difficult to maintain under the circumstances of the Cold War. Many articles published by the magazine *Hymy* often criticized but sometimes also praised the Soviet Union, its scientific achievements and its citizens (*Hymy* 5/75; 8/79; 12-13/87). Often Soviet citizens were cast in roles of criminals or morally dubious characters such as prostitutes or black market traders.

However, it was important that Finns had a channel to express their opinions. The magazine *Hymy* was an important channel to publish stories on painful, embarrassing, and tragic subjects. Perestroika allowed Finnish media to communicate more openly, and even the national newspapers started to show interest in the faults and problems of the Soviet Union.

Stereotypes are time- and space-bound. They can change drastically depending on the changes in economics and politics. Friends turn into enemies and enemies become allies, as a Finnish researcher Anssi Paasi has observed (Paasi 1996, 60). It seems that the stereotypes of the Soviets and Russians have become more neutralized during the two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union. From 2000 onwards has been a period in Finnish social history that has witnessed refugee groups and other immigrants arriving in Finland. These newcomers have taken the position of the national enemy that the Russians had for centuries. Scandalizing an enemy nation



by telling stories is a phenomenon as old as human culture (Apo 1987, 131). Magazines such as *Hymy* just changed this old phenomenon into a literary form.

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### **Biography**

Tuija Saarinen, Ph.D., works as a project researcher in the Karelian Institute of the University of Eastern Finland. She is studying the yellow magazine’s narration of the Soviet Union during the Cold War period in Finland. She is interested in the political culture of Cold War both in Finland and the Soviet Union.

### **Summary**

The focus of this article’s is to study Finnish popular journalism in 1970s and 1980s. A magazine studied in this article is *Hymy* (Smile), and it has been estimated that in the beginning of 1970s approximately the whole literary population of Finland read it. The purpose of this study is to analyze the different images *Hymy* created and published of the Soviet Union and the Soviet citizens. The central research question analyzes what kinds of issues *Hymy* published about the Soviet Union and its citizens before 1991. This study gives special attention to the reasons why the articles were written in the first place, and secondly, what was the nature of their content.

*Hymy* published 224 articles on the Soviet Union. The articles were mostly written in the spirit of criticism – not in the spirit of “friendship of the peoples” that was the official political stance of Finland toward the Soviet Union. Magazines had to be aware of the official Finnish political rhetoric concerning the relationship with the Soviet Union. *Hymy* as a popular magazine found a way to evade the official mandate. In *Hymy*, people were able to read anti-Soviet sentiments without any censoring. Therefore, *Hymy* not only provided its readers views and beliefs that expressed the popular beliefs and values, but also sympathized with them. The Cold War era in the 1970s and 1980s was still a post-traumatic period for Finns. The magazine *Hymy* was an important channel to publish stories on painful, embarrassing, and tragic subjects.

**Keywords:** Yellow magazines, Cold War, the Iron Curtain, Finlandization, Narration.