

**The war endeavour of non-professional film exhibitors in  
the Soviet Union (1939-1949).  
Introduction of commercial logic at the expense of the  
propaganda function**



**Issue:** *a State-imposed professionalisation of the Trade Union cinemas network*

**Temporal framework:** 1939-1949

**Sources:** Archives of the Ministry of the Cinema, of the regional Distribution offices, of the municipal Exhibitors, of the Cinema theatres & Archives of the Pansoviet Trade Union Center

**Plan:**

- 1) Introduction of the commercial logic into the clubs
- 2) Tensions triggered by their professionalisation
- 3) Weakening of the State control over the film exhibition

I. Trade Union or ministerial cinemas forced to fill geographical gaps in the service, intended to be equitably provided throughout the territory

**1921** : start of the cooperation between the State, the Cooperatives, Trade Unions, the Army

**1939**: the Trade Union Center owns 30 % of all the park, 50,9% of fixe cinema theatres

***Geographical disparity***: the state network =  $\frac{1}{4}$  of cinemas available in a given region.

## Legal Measures (1939-1949)

- 1) Aligment of the ticket prices
- 2) Paying revenue and a tax on screenings
- 3) Ban of projection without selling tickets to the audience
- 4) Stop of the factories' and enterprises' sponsorship
- 5) Obligation to take in charge facilities, equipment and delivery of the copies

## Consequences

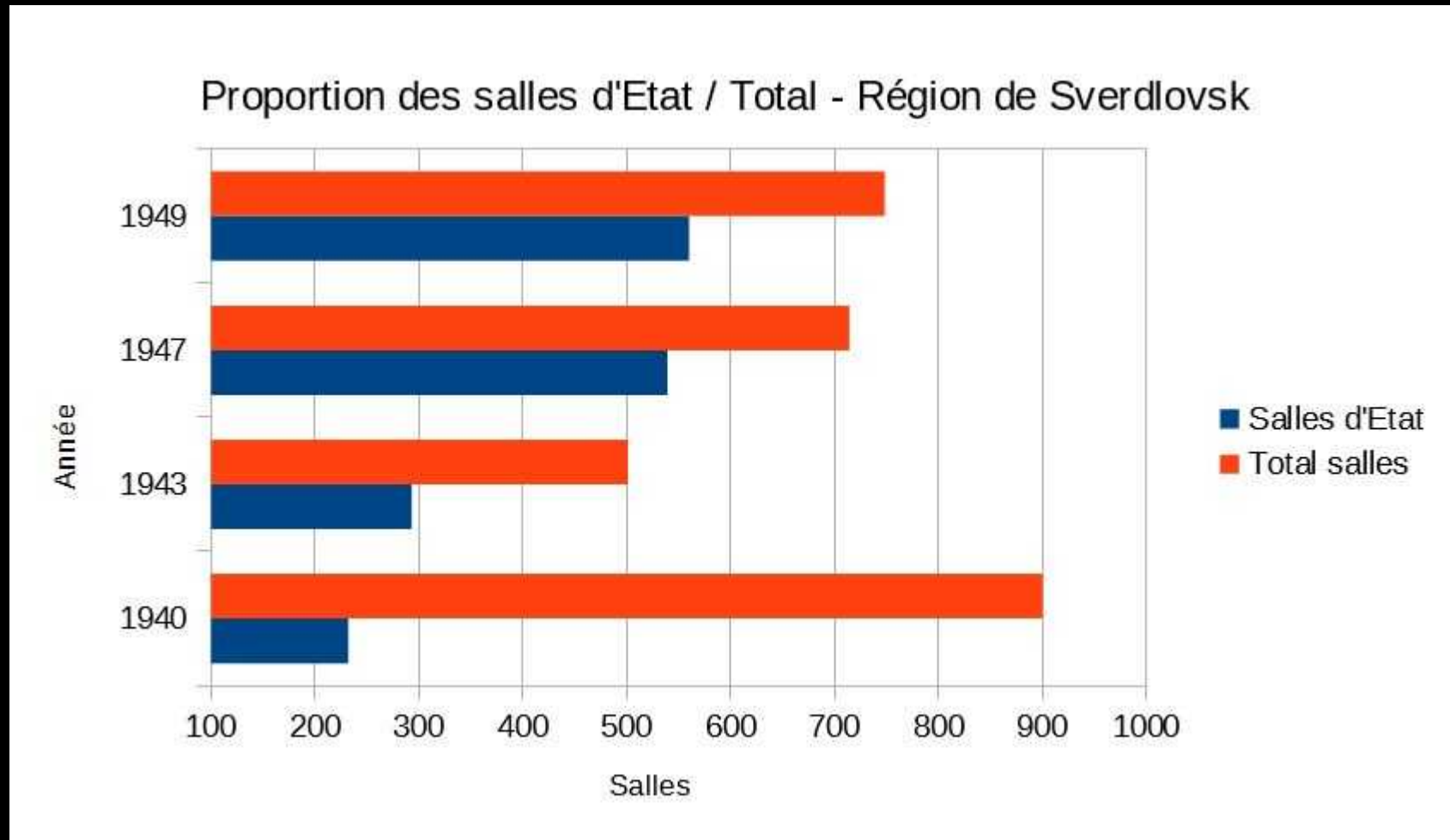
- 1)Obligation to hold paid screenings
- 2)Frequency between 16 and 96 screenings per month and per screen
- 3)Generate revenue
- 4)Open screenings to large audiences
- 5)Entertainment in the programming activity

“Forced renting” in 1941, 1943-1944, 1946, 1948  
*Example: Sverdlovsk region*

	1940	July 1, 1943
« Permanent State cinema theatres »	51	55
« Permanent Trade Union and Corporate cinema theatres »	110	99
« Mobile State projection facilities »	0	12
« Trade Union and Corporate mobile projection facilities »	23	14

**Proportion:** State cinemas (Blue)/Total of the cinema park (Red)

Example: Sverdlovsk region



By 1945, the Trade Union Center owned 3800 projectors in 4 500 clubs on the Pansoviet Scale.

## II. Impact of the professionalisation of clubs

- Protest against high prices
- No possibility for other cultural service
- Double financial weight
- Contesting the State monopoly of “First screening”
- Concurrence
- Bankruptcy
- Commercial differentiation of the clubs



Club in Magadan, 1946  
Source: RGAKFD



### III. Fragility of the State control

- 1)Shadow economy
- 2)Ignoring paying taxes
- 3)No control by factories or enterprises
- 4)Selling tickets and buying equipment in the Black market
- 5)Trade Union Center didn't dispose reliable data. Hesitation between 1 325 000 cinema seats or 892 000 cinema seats (1947)
- 6)Film re-editing from below
- 7)Foreign films : opacity and risk of speculation

# Conclusion

- Commercial function assumed by the clubs despite the State's propaganda needs
- Deliberate policy, but with unintended effects, which oscillates between usurpation and stimulation of economic growth
- Contesting the State monopoly over the cinema exhibition
- Paradox which undermined the political Soviet project for the cinema



Club of Auto-factory "Staline", 1948. Evzerikhin. RGAKFD