This thesis studies the reactions of the Finnish press towards the Yanayev's Coup d'état in the Soviet Union in 1991 and the Russian Parliamentary Crisis in 1993.

The objective of the thesis is to study the ways in which the press reacted to the above-mentioned events and to clarify the developments in the reactions and attitudes of the press during the study periods. Additionally, the aim is to analyse the observed changes in a broader perspective by setting them into the framework of self-censorship. Outside the research scope has been left out simultaneous events in the Soviet counter pool the USA, and the events in the Baltic countries. Also, the objective of the thesis is not to clarify what 'really happened' in Moscow during these events.

The two chosen events are significant, as they are located in time on both sides of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which took place on the 25th of December 1991. Prior to this transition the Cold War had already begun to vanish, the East and West Germany had been reunited and the trend of winning independence in the East European countries was well on its way.

The chosen broader context for the study, the self-censorship of the Finnish press offers a framework for the research. During the period of self-censorship the possibilities of providing news concerning the Soviet Union were traditionally limited. This self-censorship had its roots in the primary status of external threat from the Soviet Union. The threat based behaviour gradually turned into a habit having little to do with the primary cause of it, but serving more the aims of internal politics. This habit restricted the latitude of some of the operators in the society, e.g. the press. Other instances took the benefit out of the historical reasoning of external threat. The maturest period of self-censorship was during the 1970s, which then gradually started to fade away coming closer to the 1990s.

The Finnish press representatives were chosen as the main sources for this study covering the major parties' newspapers as well as the independent press. Of the leftist press the chosen representatives are the social-democratic Demari, the socialist/moderate communist Kansan Uutiset and the Stalinist Tiedonantaja. The representatives of the conservative press are Uusi Suomi and Aamulehti, and for the centrist press Suomenmaa. Helsingin Sanomat and the Swedish-language Hufvudstadsbladet represent the independent press.

Method for this research is both qualitative and quantitative. The press representatives have been studied by examining all of the material related to the events, including the leading articles, domestic as well as foreign news sections, economical, and even cultural and sports news if they have touched the issue at hand.

According to the study made, the Finnish press had clear differences in its writing over the Soviet and later on the Russian events in 1991 and 1993. More fruitful than comparing these differences in absolute means is to study these findings by putting them into the broader context including the main operators of self-censorship and their motivation. Thus, the observed differences are clearly connected to the created model of self-censorship, which clarifies the relation between the motivation and the main actors operating in the field of self-censorship.

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