

EUROPEAN CINEMA: *Hollywood domination*

This essay will discuss the methods that countries like Britain, Italy, Germany, and France, used to combat the effects that World War Two had on their respective film industries, that of Hollywood domination. 10 pages long.

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This essay will discuss the methods that European countries like Britain, Italy, Germany, and France, used to combat the effects that World War Two had on their respective film industries, that of Hollywood domination. The films that Europeans were making focused on giving the audience a social message or informing the audience as opposed to Hollywood's glamour and visual entertainment. Therefore the arguments will flow better and will provide every piece of the various film developments that evolving out of World War Two, which the study of one country would not provide.

The consequences of World War Two on the film industries of Italy, Britain Germany and France were measured in the degree of control that the United States obtained in the post-war period. World War I allowed the United States to catch up to the other country's film industries where as World War Two allowed the United States to surpass all other industries in film production. During the world war II the economies of European countries were devastated and therefore very few dollars were spent on the film industry where as the United States was economically sound after the war and could invest millions of dollars into the industry.

The United States also developed systems of vertical integration that allowed a handful of companies such as MGM, Warner, United Artist etc., to produce, distribute, and screen films in their own theatres which guaranteed an audience and at the same time a revenue, that European countries could not achieve. Therefore by the 1950s European markets were back in economic order, as soon as new talent arrived on the European scene, the United States had the power to buy their contracts and bringing them to Hollywood. This kept European film industries from sustaining any growth to compete with the U.S. Furthermore stars that helped sell corporate products, which gave the U.S. film industry the corporate dollars, fueled consumerism in the United States. This system had not yet developed in Europe in the fifties. Finally the United States had an outlet of talent like none other in the history of the world which provided, as MGM bribed "we have more stars then there are in the heavens", the talent pool necessary to keep the cycle of the film industry growing. Broadway along with the "studio star system" allowed the U.S. to collect a talent pool, which has become known as "The Golden Era".

Joseph Goebbels controlled the German film industry from 1933-1945. The film industry had to be transformed from a narrow minded and close-minded cinema to one, which was open to different points of views, which essentially caused the twenty-year drought that occurred between 1945-1962. German film attempted to elude the past and the period of 1945-62 must be seen as a collective memory of a highly volatile experience.

After War World II Germany was divided, into East Germany and West Germany, and therefore developed two distinctively different cinemas. But due to the de-

nazification of key industries most film personnel were black listed, therefore time was needed to train new talent and both East and West Germany dealt with this problem differently. The Western film industry was flooded with Hollywood escapist films. Where as the eastern film industry, where most of film production was located before the division of Germany, was dominated by the Soviets. The Soviets produced far better films dealing with social issues in terms of past memories, soul searching and struggles of the working class and came to be known as "Rubble Films" because they were made in cities that were completely destroyed.

The Eastern zones dubbed the films that were made during the Third Reich which made up for the black listed German personnel. In Western Germany over forty-production company's rose during 1946-1948 where American genre films flooded the three thousand houses still standing. Consequently the Western German films made during the post war and into the fifties were cheap imitations of Hollywood, which is called "The Adenauer Era", and earned very little recognition. The East German films on the other hand sought to revive the Weimar legacies of worker films and Realist Cinema while incorporating Soviet traditions of montage. The Soviets have always lacked the necessary funds to buy film stock and therefore montage became their principal tool of film making from the Russian revolution to the fifties. Germany, unlike other countries who experienced their renaissance in the fifties, had to wait till the sixties for a renaissance due to Hollywood's domination and the exodus of talent that occurred during the war. Germany's post war advantage came in the form of financing by the United states but also suffered the set back of being dominated by the culture that was financing it's recovery.

Italy's film industry was controlled by the Fascist party, which had a post war positive impact because it helped develop a strong independent industry. However the country was devastated after the war and had very few resources to choose from. Therefore this resulted in a distinctively different style of film making called Neo-Realism. It focused on real life plot, authentic settings, and lyricism. In the post war years the Italian Neo-Realism movement was known in film as one of the greatest film complexes in the world. At the center of this industry lie two schools; Cinecittà inaugurated by Mussolini 1937 and Centro Sperimentale Cinematografico 1935. The leader and initiator in this movement was, Roberto Rossellini whose master piece Rome\Open City was released in 1945. The government's import restrictions along with financial subsidies to local producers protected the Italian industry long enough so that it could develop economically to escape Hollywood's reach. The lack of resources lead led the Italian films to develop a distinctive style of their own which focused on, on location shooting, using the non actors or actual people, and using scripts that were improvised or often written with the collaboration of the people's dialect on the location.

France developed a cinema of creativity and was in the forefront of film making when the war broke out. This led the talented pool of directors and actors to flee the country or go into hiding. France claimed it was a cinema of resistance and did not ally itself with occupying powers. France also resisted the flood of Jews that poured in from Germany because they began to control the French film industry. This led to an attack on the Jewish control of the film industry and steps were undertaken to re-establish the "Frenchness" of French cinema. France's style of filmmaking was Poetic Realism, which is film in an intellectualised sense. It stressed fatalistic pessimism, romantic style, blended into a theatrical style of filmmaking. France attacked Hollywood's make belief by saying that it set aside the real issues. France therefore adopted a cinema of Poetic Realism, which aimed at appealing to educate as opposed

to appealing to popular tastes. Poetic Realism was modelled from Rossellini's concept of Neo-Realism in Italy. France also had limited resources and could only counter Hollywood with quality rather than quantity.

Movie makers disagreed about what kind of cinema should take shape in the fourth republic but they knew they wanted to link arms against U.S. control which brought twenty five hundred back logged films with the liberation. France responded by imposing taxes on imported films and blocked profits by forcing film companies to reinvest monies made in France. Statistics show that during the war French films constituted 85% of screening and between 1946-54 French films only occupied 40% of screening time and this led to other laws being passed which forced French films to dominate screens five out of thirteen weeks. Therefore after the liberation a quota was strictly maintained because of the flood of back logged Hollywood films. French directors became increasingly attracted to colour spectacles and traditional film making which weakened the potential that Poetic Realism. It was not until the fifties that the Cahiers Du Cinema, sphere headed by Jean Luc Goddard, was set up which criticised the older films maker's technique and their lack of support for the realist style of film making. Thanks to this movement France established itself as the aesthetic conscience of world cinema. This was a movement that Italy lacked and consequently it's Neo-Realist movement faded. However France succeeded in preserving it's Poetic Realism giving France the world's respect and has since become the most important art form in France.

Britain's industry was booming before the war, led by documentary filmmaker John Grierson. Tight budgets provided an incentive for filming life as it was with no extravagant setting which documentary film provided. When a quota ceiling was erected in 1927, Britain still had enough incentives to attract Hollywood companies. This sparked collaboration between English and American companies in a few big budget film such as A Yank at Oxford, The Citadel, Goodbye Mr. Chips, and Wings of the Morning. However such affiliations between Rank, Associated British films, United Artists and Fox forced the British theatres to screen Hollywood products which led smaller independents in Britain to be ignored. The significance of these collaborations was that it gave the British film industry confidence enough to produce big Hollywood style films on it's own which made the resources available to Directors like Hitchcock and Grierson to make bigger productions in their English markets. The negative effects of these arrangements were that it destroyed the creativity and spontaneity that often grows out of smaller grass roots movements. The British industry was hampered by a monopolistic structure principally controlled by Rank and Associate British films, which further hurt creativity. This coupled with the fact that Britain lacked the power corporation's as Coca-Cola for ex. left them defenceless and directors like Hitchcock moved to the U.S. for better economical rewards in the U.S.

The U.S. film industry's impact on the European countries as mentioned above was measured in Hollywood's ability to buy the talent from foreign markets before the Europeans nations had time to establish an economic base for their film industries. The U.S. film industry began its post-war period with record-breaking profits in 1946. However when Americans began to divert their spending, from film to other commodities such as homes during their post-war boom, it caused a serious drain on Hollywood's profits. Hollywood was also under attack with McCarthy's hearings and certain films were scrutinised as being tainted with communist messages coming from "The Hollywood Ten". A further blow to the American industry was a land mark ruling in 1948 forcing the big five (major studios) to sell their theatre holdings which also hurt their profit abilities and sent studios looking abroad. Therefore chaos at

homes in changing industries, television, and ways of operating domestically increased the pressure on Hollywood executives to look for profits abroad. These events were perfectly timed because Europeans were starving for entertainment when European film industries were in shambles and could not produce Hollywood style films.

The European industry leaders often had a different point of view in that they wanted to lure Europeans away from Hollywood style films. They had a nationalistic view and until their national economic resources were back in order, they were defenceless against the Hollywood giants. The American film industry read into the Europeans' demands and saw the alienation that had formed among European film companies. Therefore the (MPEAA) Motion Picture Export Association of America was formed which organised a united front abroad which could assault any film industry. Consequently half of Hollywood's income after WWII came from abroad. However Hollywood's come back despite it's economic base which was falling apart as discussed above, U.S. foreign aid paved the way for the Americans to re-enter the European markets. Americans wanted to establish foreign film industries parallel to the Marshall Plan so as to guarantee the European industries were strong enough to support American films, which by 1953 half of all screening time was owned by American films in Europe.

However as discussed above most European markets imposed protective measures to insure some kind of control over their respective industries. Britain imposed a 75% import duty on American products including films, which caused Americans to ban their export of films in Britain. Furthermore British films flopped in the U.S. which led Britain to cancel this duty. This helped the British industry in 1947 because filmmakers had to make up for the extra screen time. However in the long run the British industry was hurt because the following year backed logged American films flooded English markets and nearly killed the British industry once more. The German industry was hurt because Hollywood's control and Germany was prevented from developing an independent cinema of it's own and therefore lost the recognition as a world cinema. France required that 20 weeks out of the year be reserved to French film, Britain required 45% of screening time be reserved to British film, and Italy required 80 days a year for Italian films. Another way of limiting American encroachment was by forcing income made in foreign countries to be spent or reinvested in those countries. Also governments began to finance productions or offer cash prizes to the best European films. Similar to the U.S MPEAA, Europeans began to co-operate in the form of making co-productions, which would allow them to get subsidies from two governments for one production. Furthermore various film festivals were set up to further encourage film making in Europe among them the Venice and Cannes film festivals erected in 1946 & 1947 respectively. The International Art Cinema was revived and gave predominance over experimentation and innovation rather than Hollywood's traditional styles, which became known as the high arts or the intellectual movement in the arts.

In sum the post war traditions that developed in the big four of the European film industries focused on being more true to life, revealing the unpleasant realities of class antagonisms, and emphasising on current social problems.

In conclusion what permitted the European film markets to survive was their lack of resources and not their abundance of it. They were forced to make films out of nothing as Italy did in using none actors in some of it's productions. Their styles focusing on reality rather than fantasy allowed them to create something that was

different and which allowed Europeans films to compete. By offering something different European film companies could compete with American products without having to directly challenge Americans. Also European companies focused on making fewer films and concentrated on quality rather than mass-producing films in the factory like Hollywood practices.

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