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MOVIES AND THE MILITARY

by

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(Editor's Note: *Whether you call them "movies" or "films" is not important. What is important is that movies both reflect and have a strong impact on our society, thus they should not be taken lightly. The way a film depicts a military officer can have enormous impact on how young people react to an officer when they meet him face to face. The slant taken by the producer, director or writer of a film can contribute to public attitudes toward a war—witness the films produced during World War II and those produced during the war in Vietnam. Lieutenant Colonel Greynolds, working on a limited canvas due to space limitation, shows us that movies don't just entertain. They influence.)*

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It is 20 April 1896 at Koster and Beal's Music Hall in New York City. The flickering figure of Kaiser Wilhelm on horseback moves down the rigid ranks of spike-helmeted troops. Other wonders appear on the screen and the audience sits in the warm theater transfixed as they watch "Sea Waves," "Umbrella Dance," "The Barber Shop," "Venice Showing Gondolas," "Cuba Libra," and "The Monroe Doctrine." The occasion—the first public showing of Thomas A. Edison's latest marvel, the Vitascope. The motion pictures were presented as one of the "acts" of the variety show and they proved to be a great success.[1] The movies were on their way.

Today, the importance of movies as a major art form, and as a major mass communications device is well recognized, whether they are viewed in the darkness of a theater or between commercials on a home television screen. Much of our culture is defined and transmitted by movies.[2]

The images implanted in the mind by motion pictures are vivid and lasting. When one thinks of the Army as it was in the years before World War II, scenes of "From Here to Eternity" come to mind. The despair of the great depression can be recaptured and fixed in time by recalling the haunting faces and desolate landscapes so powerfully imprinted by the film "The Grapes of Wrath." The number of mood images is endless. They offer moviegoers a rich legacy of what the distinguished film critic James Agee has called "the tremendous magic images that underlie the memory and imagination of entire peoples."[3]

It was prophetic that the first public showing of Edison's Vitascope should have shown military men. Ever since that crude beginning, wars and their aftermaths, and the character and exploits of men who fight wars, have fascinated film makers. They discovered early that the brutality and melodrama of war could be dramatized on the screen with a magnitude and realism possible in no other medium. By reenacting selected war scenes, a skillful moviemaker could elicit fear, pride, hatred, chauvinism, and grief.[4]

The purpose of this paper is to view, in retrospect, some significant "war movies" which for the last seven decades have insinuated their "magic images" of wars and

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the men who fight them into the "memory and imagination" of American moviegoers.

The nature of some of these images at various times in American history will be examined, with special attention to the "image" of the military. Special attention will be given to comparing how films produced during the Vietnam War differ from those made during earlier years. Finally, it is hoped that this article will show how keeping abreast of current movies will help the military leader better understand the officers and enlisted men in his charge.

THE EARLY YEARS (1896-1916)

After Mr. Edison's triumph with the Vitascope in 1896, film companies proliferated and began to produce films in great numbers and on a variety of subjects; news events such as action in the Spanish American War (often faked) were popular, as were short travelogues and very short science films.

What was probably the first "war movie"—"Attack on a China Mission"-was made in England in 1901. The film was four minutes long and dealt with the Boxer Rebellion. English sailors were the "good guys" who vanquished the Boxers and saved the missionary's family.[5]

By 1908 movies had become very popular and movie companies cranked out films by the hundreds. The most popular subjects were historical dramas, comedies, simplistic versions of the classics, and sentimental domestic and rural tear-jerkers. These movies generally mirrored the prevailing public morality, sentimental patriotism, and belief in the value of hard work.

In 1915, "The Birth of a Nation," was released. This film, the work of the great director, D. W. Griffith, is still hailed as one of the great demonstrations of motion photography. It told its sweeping melodramatic story on the personal level. The sons of a Southern family fight with honor

Civil War battle scene from "Birth of a Nation," D. W. Griffith's1915 Masterpiece. Griffith studied Mathew Brady's Civil War photographs to more realistically re-create the battles.

and valor in the Civil War. When they come home, they find the family fortune destroyed. This leads them to organize the Ku Klux Klan to preserve their integrity among carpetbaggers and renegade Negroes. The magnificent battle scenes are justly famous and the "documentary quality" of the film (Griffith studied Mathew Brady's Civil War photographs to help re-create the battles) makes the viewer sense the vast eruption of a Civil War battle and the horror and carnage of war.[6]

The film, despite all its merits, was racist and demogogic, and sent audiences out of the theaters boiling with excitement and enmity. However, people in various parts of the country clamored to see it. Two years after its release, it had been seen by over twenty-five million people and in the South it ran continuously for twelve years. The movie cost $61,000 to produce and earned an estimated $100 million.[7]

It is noteworthy that "The Birth of a Nation"—the first great American film—was about war, the most destructive, exciting, overpowering, and irrational of human activities. One thing is certain: the film demolished forever the notion that moving pictures were merely a toy. "The Birth of a Nation" showed the awesome power of flickering shadows on a screen to excite and inflame the emotions of men.

WORLD WAR I (1917-1918)

The American film industry's response to World War I was slow to respond. America's entry into the war was not reflected in Hollywood's output until 1918. However, once films about the war began to be produced, the country was flooded with features bearing such titles as "To Hell with the Kaiser," "The Kaiser's Finish," "Lafayette, We Come," "The Woman the Germans Shot," "The Beast of Berlin," "Over the Top," and "Shoulder Arms."[8]

The American movie industry was wholeheartedly behind the war effort. Most of the films produced during World War I now appear embarrassingly patriotic and gushingly sentimental; however, they reflected and

A well turned-out soldier: Charles Chaplain in "Shoulder Arms" (1918).

reinforced the feelings of the public about the war and America's contribution to the defeat of the Germans and the making of a world "safe for democracy." All the war films, even the slapstick comedies, presented a simple view of the conflict—the defenders of a right and noble cause engaged in a Herculean battle against a dark and despicable enemy.[9] Contrary to the boast by the Germans, "Gott mit uns," in the American-produced movies God was clearly on the side of the Allies, and especially the American Expeditionary Force.

For all their fervor and emotionalism, none

Scene from "The Big Parade" (1925)—the first American film to depict war as something other than an heroic, noble struggle.

of the movies produced during World War I met the test of greatness. The great films about the war would be made in later years by men who had survived the horrors of the guns and trenches.

BETWEEN THE WARS (1919-1941)

War movies made while World War I was raging enjoyed great commercial success. When the war ended, Hollywood producers generally held the belief that the public was tired of war pictures and that they could not be successful. However, Irving Thalberg, Production Manager of Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM), judging that the public was ready for war movies if they were "presented in an entirely different flavor" from those made during the war, produced "The Big Parade" in 1925. The picture was the first American film to depict war as anything but a heroic, noble struggle, gladly and even joyfully entered into by the defenders of a just and right cause. It set the tone of American war films for a decade.[10]

The great success of "The Big Parade" prompted every studio to make war movies again. However, no longer were they merely patriotic *tours de force.* Among the more memorable were "What Price Glory" (1926), which recounted the lusty adventures of Captain Flagg and Sergeant Quirt, and had a bitter attitude toward war; and "Wings" (1927), one of the earliest films about men who fly. The plot of "Wings" was developed at the personal level. Two buddies join the Army Air Force together. One is captured by the Germans; however, he manages to steal a German plane and made his escape only to be shot down unknowingly by his friend.

"Wings" was awarded the first "Oscar" for best picture at the initial Academy Awards banquet in 1929.[11]

The success of "Wings" prompted the production of pictures such as "The Lone Eagle" (1927), "Lilac Time" (1928), 'The Legion of the Condemned" (1928), and "Hell's Angels." "It's sheer murder to send a mere boy up in a crate like that," a phrase which appeared as a subtitle on one of these films, soon became a familiar cliche.[12]

In 1930—halfway between the great wars—two outstanding anti-war pictures were released: "All Quiet on the Western Front," one of the great films of all times; and "The Dawn Patrol."

"All Quiet on the Western Front" was based on the German novel of the same name by Erich Maria Remarque, who had been drafted into the German Army at 18 and wounded five times during the war. The film, which shows the horror of war rather than its glory, sets a new direction for war films. It focuses on the experiences of Paul, a young German schoolboy, whose initial burning enthusiasm to serve the Fatherland evaporates into weary despair as he experiences the filth and gore of the trenches and no-man's-land. As the film draws to a close, he is shown in a shell crater, where he bayonets a French soldier and spends a terrible, remorseful night with the body.

In the last scene, which is one of the most memorable in films, Paul, seeing a butterfly, a lovely bit of color in the bleak desolation of the battlefield, reaches out of the shell crater to touch it. A sniper's shot rings out, the hand goes slack, the fingers dangle. War, the insatiable killer, has claimed another life. The film ends with a ghostly file of soldiers marching into a misty void, looking back at the audience with sad, accusing eyes.[13]

"The Dawn Patrol," a story about the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) in 1916, stressed the man-devouring nature of war. A British First World War squadron leader who is bitterly hated by his officers because of the high death rate in his unit is replaced by his loudest critic, who discovers the inevitability of the process for which he had blamed his successor. He is succeeded by the next in line, and so it goes on.[14]

Between 1930 and 1938, few movies of significance dealing with the military were produced. However, in the late 1930s, as Hitler became increasingly bold in Europe and another World War appeared imminent, the anti-war sentiment which had pervaded motion pictures since 1925 disappeared and movies began to depict the excitement, and even the glamor of military life. The Government did not commission these films, but it did provide some of the impetus for them. Producers who would make films that aided recruitment and provided favorable publicity to the Services, and who would take helpful plot suggestions, discovered that bombers, aircraft carriers, Fort Benning, or even West Point, could be made available to them.[15]

The Roosevelt Administration, in order to gain public support for the Naval Expansion Act of 1938, provided free of charge to cooperative producers, submarines, ships, and aircraft—all manned by experts. The result of these felicitous arrangements was a torrent of "Navy" movies such as "Submarine D-1," "Navy Blue and Gold," "Annapolis Salute," "Wings over Hawaii," and "Men with Wings."[16]

The "war movies" produced during this period generally dealt with training, and the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Corps provided an exciting and romantic background for a love story or a musical. The value of military preparedness was implied strongly in these films which were made at a time when the dominant idea held by Americans was of pacifism and isolationism.

The success of "Sergeant York," a movie about the exploits of America's number one hero of World War I, reflects the dominant sentiment toward war and war films in Hollywood at the time. It was the major box office attraction of 1941 and won Gary Cooper the 1941 "Oscar" for Best Actor. America and Hollywood were preparing for war.

WORLD WAR II (1942-1945)

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the American film industry rallied to the Nation's all-out war effort. By the end of

Gary Cooper in his Academy Award winning role of "Sergeant York" (1941).

1942, 80 pictures, which touched in some way or other on the war, had been released.

Many of the pictures produced during World War II were unrealistic in the manner in which they re-created combat action and the behavior of men at war. The incredible heroics in these films were often ludicrous. In "The Fighting Seabees" (1964) GIs manning cumbersome bulldozers routed a company of Japanese tanks, then dismounted and, though badly outnumbered, out-bayonetted the remaining Japanese. A dozen or so Occidental heroes in "Bataan" (1942) withstood repeated assaults by what appeared to be a brigade of fanatical Japanese. Many of these films were also effusively sentimental. At the fadeout of "The Sullivans" (1944), a story of five Boston brothers who went down on the same cruiser early in the war, four of the brothers are seen marching heavenward into beautiful fleecy clouds with the fifth and youngest brother running after them shouting, "Hey, wait for me!"

As the war progressed, Hollywood directors began to be influenced by the scenes of actual combat shown in the weekly newsreels that were being made in every theater of operations. Realism in war pictures was now a must. By the end of the war, the combat scenes in films like "The Story of G. I. Joe" (1945) and "Pride of the Marines" (1947) approached the realism of footage shot by Signal Corps cameramen on the scene. The war movies turned away from mock heroics and shallow sentimentality. Films began to stress the average American fighting man's distaste for killing and for regimentation and his ability to rise to deeds of heroism when his country and comrades needed him. No longer was war always portrayed as a glorious adventure. Many of these films were built around a group hero—a platoon, a bomber crew, or a patrol on a dangerous mission. The American melting pot was very much in evidence in the composition of these units. They were usually composed of a Jew, a Southern boy, and a sprinkling of second-generation Irish, Italians, Scandinavians, and Poles. [17]

Over 500 "war movies" were released by Hollywood during World War II.[18] Some were good. Some were terrible. Many contributed significantly, both in the United States and abroad, toward increasing understanding of the conflict. As in World War I, the movies reflected the sentiments of the American people and vividly brought home the immense contribution the military forces were making in the war.

While Hollywood was busy restaging the war on California beaches and movie studio backlots, film makers John Ford, John Huston, William Wyler, and Frank Capra and others were producing on-the-spot documentaries for the military services. These films were perhaps the most distinguished motion picture achievements of the war.

Films like Huston's "San Pietro" (1944), Wyler's "Memphis Belle" (1944), Ford's "Battle of Midway" (1944), and Capra's "Why We Fight" series (conceived by Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall)[19] were masterpieces, combining powerful images and thoughtful commentary. Documentaries were shown throughout the country, in theaters, factories, churches, schools, clubs, and union halls—wherever people gathered together for work and recreation.

Hollywood served the Nation well with war movies; but not all movies were concerned with the war. There were many escapist films, and the profit motive was never lost sight of completely. The documentaries, the fictional re-creation of combat, and the films that portrayed the heroic exploits of our Armed Forces gave moviegoers a strong feeling of participation in the common struggle. The love of country, the justice of the Allied cause, the evil nature of the enemy, and the devotion to duty on the battlefield and in the factory stressed in these movies helped to focus and define the issues of the war and to strengthen public support for the war policies of our Government. In retrospect, Hollywood's most significant contribution during and after the World War II years was the creation of those "tremendous magical images which underlie the memory and imagination" of those who lived through the war years.

THE MILITARY IMAGE TRIUMPHANT(1945-1955)

"When the lights came on again, all over the world," Hollywood, as it had after World War II turned promptly from war to other subjects. However, the military man was not forgotten completely. In the years immediately following the war, a half dozen or so films were made about the problems of servicemen returning to civilian life. Among these were: "Margie" (1946), "Apartment for Peggy" (1948), and the excellent "The Best Years of Our Lives" (1946).[20]

Then, as the forties began to come to an end, the flash of exploding bombs was again lighting up movie screens, and the sound of machinegun fire was integrated with the sound of popcorn machines. Audiences flocked to see such pictures as "Battleground" (1949), "Sands of Iwo Jima" (1949), and "Twelve O'clock High" (1950).

Then, America's unexpected entry into the Korean Conflict in 1950 triggered a spate of war movies with a Korean setting. Among those released during the years of actual fighting were: "Fixed Bayonets" (1951), a close-up of a unit with the mission of defending a snow-filled gap against the "reds" during the hard winter of 1950; "The Steel Helmet" (1951), a grim, hard-bitten story of a platoon and its nip-and-tuck battles in the early days of the war; "Mission Over Korea" (1953), a salute to Air Force valor during the early days of the war; and "Take the High Ground" (1953), a very realistic film about Army basic training.

Earlier wars were not ignored during the Korean Conflict. In 1953 two outstanding motion pictures about World War II achieved noteworthy success: "From Here to Eternity" and "Stalag 17." "From Here to Eternity," based on James Jones' famous bestseller, was a towering and persuasive film that depicted Army life in Hawaii just prior to Pearl Harbor. "Stalag 17" was a humorous, disturbing drama about American airmen in a German prison camp in World War II.

The end of the Korean Conflict did not bring a hiatus in the production of war movies as it did after World Wars I and II. Hollywood cranked them out and audiences flocked to see such films as "Men of the Fighting Lady" (1954), a solid war drama about a jet fighter squadron aboard a carrier operating off Korea in the Sea of Japan; "The Bridges of Toko-Ri" (1955), a fascinating film about Navy carrier pilots in action; and "The McConnell Story" and "Strategic Air Command," two valentines Hollywood presented to the Air Force in 1955. The former was a tribute to Captain Joseph McConnell (played by Alan Ladd), America's first triple jet ace in the Korean War, and was distinguished by its magnificent aerial scenes. The latter was an impressive display of Air Force might, replete with stunning shots of soaring B-36s and B-47s. James Stewart

played the hero, a big league ball player called back to active duty; and June Allyson, a perennial Air Force wife, fresh from her dramatic duties as Captain McConnell's spouse, was Stewart's loyal and adoring helpmate.

THE MILITARY IMAGE TARNISHED (1956-1964)

In 1956, eleven years after the end of World War II and three years after the end of the Korean Conflict, movies with anti-war themes returned to the screen. However, the theme was not all pervasive as it had been after World War I. Throughout the period 1956-1964 films with varying points of view—from the pacifistic to the jingoistic—were available to the discriminating movie goer.

One of the first of the anti-war movies to appear was "Attack" (1956), a moving drama of cowardice and heroism during the World War II "Battle of the Bulge." In the film, the Commander (Jack Palance) of a National Guard rifle platoon tries to prevent his men from being killed off piecemeal by an incompetent company commander who is being kept in his job by a corrupt colonel because of postwar political ambitions.

The theme of corruption among "higher officers" was continued in Stanley Kubrick's "Paths of Glory"[7] (1957). Set in World War I, and based on a pre-World War II novel dealing with the 1917 mutinies after the failure of the Nivelle Offensive, the movie tells of the efforts of a French regimental commander to save the lives of three of his men who have been chosen by lot to be executed for the failure of an impossible attack ordered by two corrupt, ambitious generals. (The book was banned in France and the French Government has never allowed this film to be shown there.)[21]

The most popular and financially successful anti-war film of the period, "The Bridge on the River Kwai," was released in 1957. In the film a hardened, resolute British colonel (Alec Guinness) who is a captive of the Japanese attempts to restore the morale of his men by driving them to build a bridge across the River Kwai, even though it will be used by the Japanese Army to ship troops and supplies for its assault on India. A small British force, which includes an American who had earlier escaped from the prison camp (William Holden), is determined to destroy the bridge. The film ends when the colonel—by accident or intent—falls on the plunger and destroys the bridge. All but one of the five major characters are killed, and the fact that two separate forces of British troops had opposite objectives compels a minor character, the medical officer, to shout at the film's conclusion, "Madness! Madness!" The most telling anti-military point made in the film is the fallacy of dedication to a short-range mission despite its long-range implications.

Even though the anti-war theme reappeared in 1956 after an eighteen-year absence, World War II and the Korean War continued to receive attention during the period 1956-1964 in such films as: "Run Silent, Run Deep" (1958), one of the best underwater pictures with Clark Gable in firm command of a submarine in World War II; "The Naked and the Dead" (1958), another familiar drama of World War II combat in the Pacific; "Pork Chop Hill" (1959), with Captain Gregory Peck and his company grimly assaulting the infamous hill in the closing days of the Korean War; "The Longest Day" (1962), a star-studded re-creation of the "D-day" landings in Normandy; "Merrill's Marauders" (1962), with General Merrill (Jeff Chandler) leading his exhausted volunteer troops in a harrowing 500-mile forced march through the jungles of Burma to stop a Japanese invasion; and "PT 109" (1963), the very respectfully told account of the late President John F. Kennedy's adventures as a heroic, small-boat commander in the Pacific in World War II.

Throughout the period 1945-1964, with the few exceptions noted, the military fared reasonably well at the hands of movie makers. The United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines were usually depicted as the Free World's strong shield against an aggressive Communist enemy, and the officers and men of the Armed Forces were generally portrayed as honorable and dedicated defenders of the security and prestige of their country. Although there were indications that anti-war

sentiment was gaining popularity in Hollywood, it was not as strong or widespread as it had been in the late 1920s and most of the 1930s. This was about to change.

THE MILITARY IMAGE BLOODY AND BOWED (1964-1972)

In the mid 1960s, as America's involvement in Vietnam increased and war once again became a part of the national life, a phenomenon occurred which was both unique and unprecedented in American motion picture history—movies (with two exceptions discussed below) were not made about the war. Anti-war films, and films with pacifist themes were made *during* a time of war. Many of these films expressed attitudes toward the military, toward discipline and authority, toward national purposes and goals that would have been unthinkable and unfilmable in earlier times. This phenomenon was a reflection of the widespread unpopularity of the Vietnamese war, (especially among the youth who comprise the majority of moviegoers) and in the mood of alienation which began to permeate large segments of American society in the 1960s, and which in turn spawned anti-discipline, anti-establishment sentiments.

The definite turning point occurred in 1964, when three excellent and commercially successful anti-war films were released: "Fail Safe," "Seven Days in May," and "Dr. Strangelove: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb." "Fail Safe" raised the question of what would happen if a flight of American bombers were accidentally ordered to fly over the Soviet Union and drop nuclear bombs. The classic melodramatic theme—man menaced with destruction by his own machines—was chillingly developed. "Seven Days in May" had the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Burt Lancaster) plotting to take over the Government because he feared the consequences of a nuclear disarmament treaty with the Russians—fortunately, the President (Fredric March) foiled the plot. In "Dr. Strangelove," a devastating film by Stanley Kubrick (who also directed "Paths of Glory"), a demented Air Force General, Jack Ripper (Sterling Hayden), declared his own war against the triple-pronged threat of Communism, Fluoridation and Sex, and sent a wing of the Strategic Air Command to attack the Russians. There was nothing that the fools, bigots, and madmen who controlled Kubrick's version of the Government and the Pentagon could do to stop the attack. The movie ended with mushroom clouds filling the sky in rhythm to the strains of the song, "We'll Meet Again (Don't Know Where, Don't Know When)."

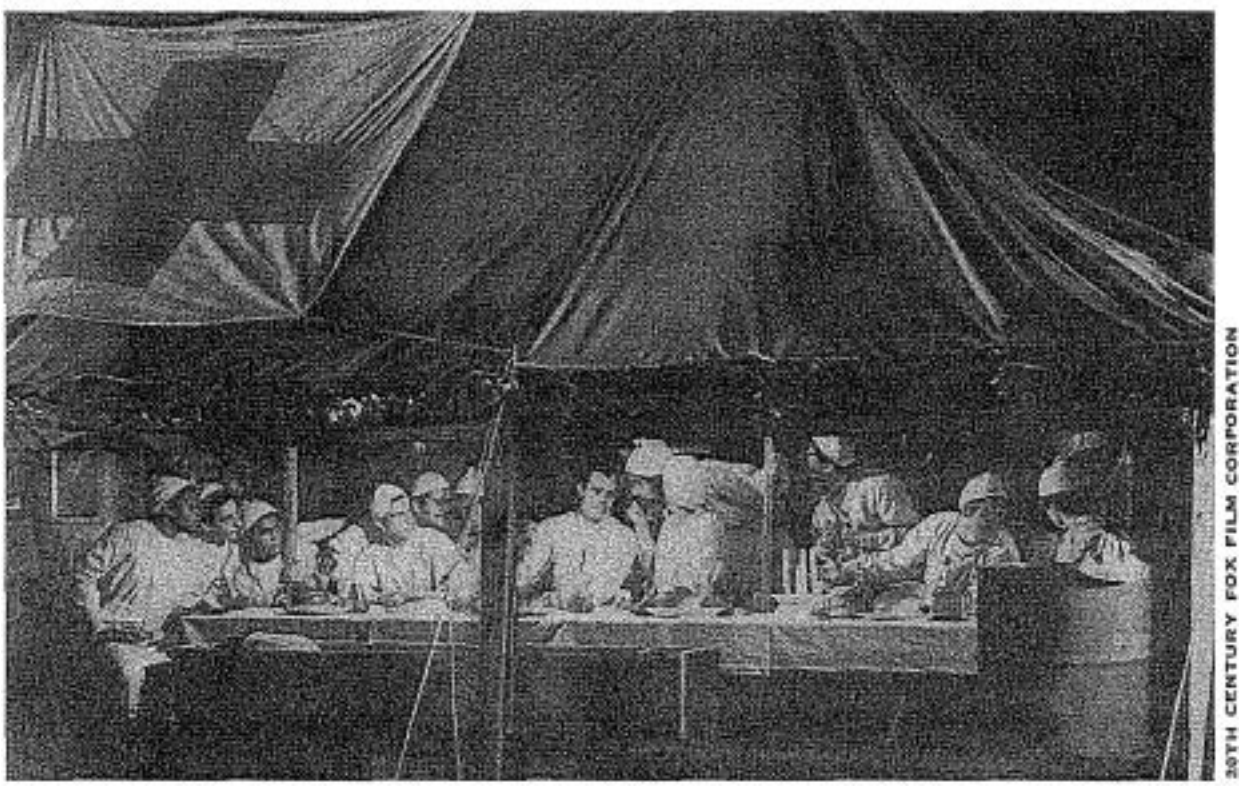
This trio of anti-war films set the tone for films dealing with the military and military subjects for the remainder of the 1960s and the early 1970s. As the war became more and more unpopular and the prestige of the military declined, motion picture producers-sensing that young people between the ages of 12 and 24, who make up 65 percent of the movie audiences, were flocking to anti-war films—gave them what they wanted.[22] These pictures were anti-war, but not about Vietnam; but it is impossible to imagine these pictures being made without Vietnam happening.[23] Some representative pictures were: "How I Won the War" (1967), which used the vehicle of a middle-aged veteran's reminiscences of World War II to bait not only war but war movies; "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1968), a withering polemic about the horror and futility of war and the stupidity and brutality of the "military mind", "Oh, What a Lovely War," a series of sketches about World War I, which stressed man's continuing folly and his endless appetite for war; and "Hail, Hero" (1969), an inane film in which a young college boy decided to join the Army to see if he could love the enemy up close as he did from afar.

There were a few anachronistic exceptions to the prevailing anti-war bias of the period. They were generally an undistinguished lot and included: "Battle of the Bulge" (1965), a distorted reenactment of the story better told in "Battleground"; "The Dirty Dozen" (1967), an incredible motion picture (though supposedly based on fact) in which an American general commits twelve convicts, some of them psychopathic, to perform an

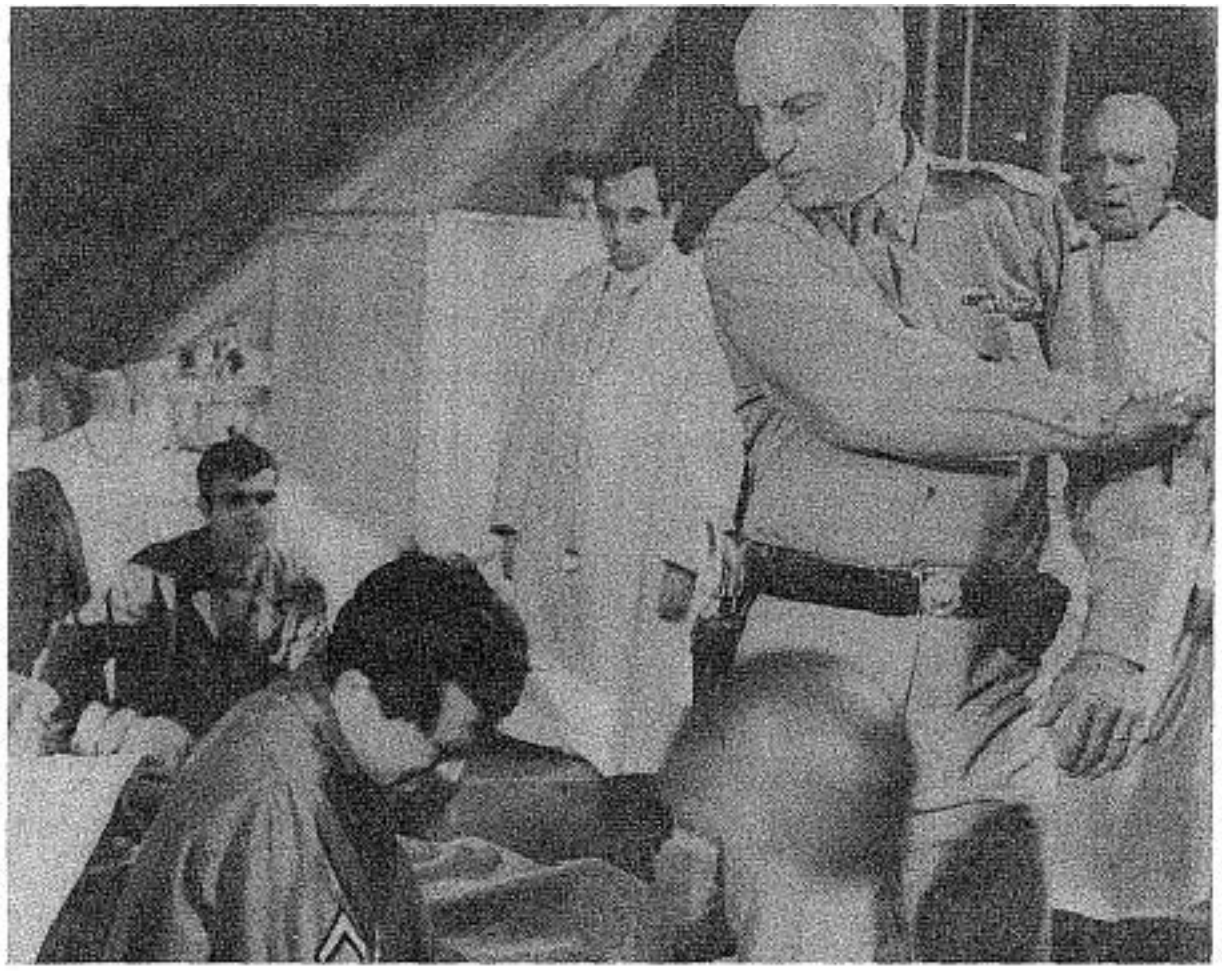
exceedingly important raid which they do with sadistic, wanton butchery; and "The Green Berets" (1968), the only picture that deals with the war in Vietnam, was financed by a major Hollywood studio—Warner Brothers. (One other film has been made about the Vietnam War, a low budget "B" picture entitled "A Yank in Vietnam" (1964) in which a Marine officer (Marshall Thompson) is freed from the "reds" and attempts to free a kidnapped doctor.) "The Green Berets," which was based on Robin Moore's nonfiction novel, is vaguely about some "Special Forces" troops, led by John Wayne, who try to persuade a liberal journalist (David Janssen) that the Vietnam War is a fine thing for Vietnam and America. It contains all the war movie cliches, a parachute jump, VC generals living in luxury (reminiscent of the German High Command in World War II films), a little orphan, and a pathetically dying dog. Mike Wayne, John Wayne's son and the producer of "The Green Berets," when questioned by a Variety reporter about the propriety of making a "big entertainment" about a war in which many men on both sides were still dying, answered: "I can't help wars. I'm not making this picture for any political reason or anything. I'm making a motion picture that will make money."[24] It did. This blatently hawkish propaganda film was universally damned by the critics.

Movies produced in 1970 merit special attention, for in that year Hollywood took careful aim at the military and fired a mighty salvo. Four expensive prestige pictures dealing in one way or other with the military were released that year. Two of these pictures- "MASH" and "Catch-22"—made a pointed statement against war and against the military. The other two—"Patton" and "Tora! Tora! Tora!"- were ambiguous in their treatment of the military. Each of these motion pictures deserves a closer examination.

"MASH" began where other anti-war films end—after the shells have exploded (the only



*A scene from the movie M*A*S*H.*



The actor George C. Scott, portraying General Patton in the motion picture of the same name, shown in the famous "slapping scene."

two shots fired in the movie are fired by a referee during a hilarious, corrupt service football game). The movie is about the adventures of two free-wheeling Army surgeons (Donald Sutherland and Elliot Gould) assigned to a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital during the Korean War. They refuse to be military men and do not give a damn for discipline of any sort, other than surgical. Their goal in life, outside the operating room, is to humiliate and neutralize the Regular Army types who are, without exception, portrayed as incompetent, stupid, or mildly psychopathic. The attitudes toward discipline and authority expressed in "MASH are singularly remarkable for a movie produced during a war and aimed at a mass audience. The film was a phenomenal success, not only with audiences but with the critics.[25]

A World War II, B-25 bombardier named Yossarian (Alan Arkin) is the hero or anti-hero of "Catch-22." His sadistic squadron commander (Buck Henry) keeps raising the number of missions required before an airman can be rotated stateside. Yossarian, finding himself surrounded by cowardice, chaos, corruption, and madness, decides to flee. How, he said, can he leave his buddies in the lurch? "Hell," he says, "they can do the same thing," and he starts rowing toward Sweden.

"Patton," the story of General George S. Patton's World War II trials and tribulations, is an enigma. The film was produced by Frank McCarthy, a retired Brigadier General who

was General Marshall's Secretary of the General Staff in World War II. The chief military adviser for the film was General of the Army Omar Bradley and the script was approved by the Department of Defense; and yet, according to *Variety*, "Pic ('Patton') is being hailed as one of the great anti-war epics by many ultra liberals, while simultaneously garnering hosannas from such conservative spokesmen as the New York News Editorial Board and members of the American Legion."[26] The *Newsweek* movie reviewer commented: "Patton's sentiments lie somewhere between Knute Rockne and Attila" and that "the end result, though seductive and entertaining, is the muddled glorification of a madman."[27] Pauline Kael, reviewing the film in the *New Yorker*, stated:

> The Patton shown here appears to be deliberately planned as a Rorschach test. He is what people who believe in military values can see as the true military hero—the red-blooded American who loves to fight and whose crude talk is straight talk. He is also what people who despise militarism can see as the worst kind of red-blooded American mystical maniac who believes in fighting; for them, Patton can be the symbolic proof of the madness of the whole military complex.[28]

Perhaps, in the final analysis, the movie reinforced the prejudices the moviegoer took into the theater. "Patton" was enormously successful and won the Academy Award for "Best Picture of 1970." Anti- or pro-military, the film contains one of the great acting feats in film history—George C. Scott's "Oscar"-winning portrayal of General Patton. One of the film's most loyal and vocal admirers was President Nixon who saw it twice during April 1970, the month of the American incursion into Cambodia. He stated that the lesson of the film was, "You have to have the will and determination to go out and do what is right for America."[29]

"Tora! Tora! Tora!" is the spectacular account, from both the American and Japanese point of view, of the 7 December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. This blockbuster—the most expensive movie (about $25 million) in US motion picture history 30--is like "Patton," an enigmatic film. It can be seen as an object lesson, demonstrating the need for perpetual preparedness; or it can be viewed as a confirmation of the "Strangelove" hypothesis—that high military and political leaders are inept and bungling bureaucrats who allow the system and blind tradition to amplify each error beyond calculation.

Since 1970, Hollywood has made few movies about the military; however, films such as "Johnny Got His Gun," released in August 1971, suggests that anti-militarism in Hollywood is still a potent force. In this film, a young American soldier is hit by an exploding artillery shell shortly before the end of World War I. The shell blows off his arms and legs and leaves him a mouthless, noseless, earless, eyeless mess. After a long struggle he is able to establish communications by moving his head in a kind of Morse Code. He asks to be put on exhibit in carnivals and world capitals as gory testimony to the horrors of war. His request is denied by the Army, which prefers heroic statues to truncated freaks. He pleads for death, but this too, is denied him.[31]

A portent of things to come can be seen in the novels and plays coming out of the Vietnam experience, some of which will undoubtedly be made into movies. Almost with exception, they are highly critical of the military and of American involvement in Vietnam.

CONCLUSION

Motion pictures are a very influential force in our society. They create powerful, persistent images in the minds of moviegoers, and these images can have a profound influence on attitudes and beliefs, moral values, life styles, institutions, patriotism, and even history itself.

When the "war movies" produced during the period 1916 to 1964 are examined, an interesting recurring cycle of favorable and unfavorable sentiments toward the military

can be identified clearly. During years of war, the motion picture industry strongly supported the war effort by producing movies presenting a positive and favorable "image" of the military. A few years after the fighting ended, films with anti-military and pacifist themes appeared, and these themes were dominant until the next war. The cycle broke down in 1964 at the onset of the Vietnam War. Movie producers, with few exceptions, did not make movies about the war itself; but the anti-military bias which was very strong in some films made in 1964 has continued. Economics should not be overlooked when searching for a cause of this aberration. Motion pictures are made to make money, and producers of films about the military make movies which reflect the anti-military point of view which they assume is held by the young Americans who comprise most movie audiences.

It is apparent from this brief review of "war movies" that the nature of the images received by the moviegoer is largely determined by the period in which the movies are seen. Those persons who lived through the World War II and the first decade of the Cold War received positive and favorable images of the military from the movies. These images are very different indeed from those received by the present generation which, for the past fifteen years, has been exposed more and more to the anti-military films produced by the motion picture industry.

There is no evidence to indicate that the current anti-military bias in American movies will change soon. Much will depend on whether or not there is a change in the sociological climate, or if the nation is confronted by another powerful external threat that requires the use of military force.

In 1971 Lewis Harris and Associates interviewed a national cross section of the 26 million Americans between the ages of 15 and 21. Responding to the question, "Have you ever seen a movie that reflects your outlook in life?"—24 percent answered "Yes." When asked, "Which movies?" "Easy Rider" was named twice as often as any other; "Woodstock," "Getting Straight," and "MASH" followed.[32]

General Patton, as portrayed by George C. Scott in the motion picture, "Patton."

How many of these films have most military leaders seen?

Can one understand the present generation without some knowledge of the "images" they receive from the movies?

A military leader who wants to establish effective communications with the young men he leads would do well to see not only the "war movies" being shown on the Nation's screens but also the youth "cult" movies like "Easy Rider" and "Woodstock." He may be startled, embarrassed and outraged, but he will gain a better understanding of differences in perception that separate the leaders and the led in the American Armed Forces of 1972.

Such understanding is important if the Armed Forces of the United States are to be truly compatible with the society they serve. Better understanding, by bridging the difference in values between the generations, can make the image of the military projected on the screen more closely akin to reality as military professionals perceive it. If films shape public opinion, an image perceived as

unrealistic will be popularly rejected; and if the movies reflect public opinion, the image depicted will be the one the public already holds in its collective mind. Thus, while there is little the military can do to influence the way it is treated in films, it can find in the movies a useful barometer of how it is doing with regard to what must be a key concern of the Armed Forces of a democratic nation—being an integral part of the social structure of the nation, not an alien and separate entity within it.

NOTES

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3. James Agee, *Agee on Film,* New York: McDowell-Obolensky, 1958, p. 314.
4. Crowther, p. 9.
5. MacGowan, pp. 106-107.
6. Crowther, p. 14.
7. Lillian Gish, *The Movies, Mr. Griffith, and Me.,* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969, pp. 153 and 157.
8. David Blum, *A Pictorial History of the Silent Screen,* New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1953, p. 153.
9. Crowther, p. 78.
10. Bob Thomas, *Thalberg, Life and Legend,* New York: Bantam, 1970, p. 113.
11. Nathalie Fredik, *Hollywood and the Academy Awards,* Beverly Hills: Hollywood Awards Publications, 1971, p. 13.
12. Richard Griffith and Arthur Mayer, *The Movies,* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970, p. 177.
13. Crowther, p. 79.
14. John Bayter, *Hollywood in the Thirties,* New York: Paperback Library, 1970, p. 125.
15. Arthur Knight, *The Liveliest Art,* New York: Mentor, 1959, p. 243.
16. Margaret Thorp, *America at the Movies,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939, p. 279.
17. Knight, p. 245.
18. John Howard Lawson, *Film the Creative Process,* New York: Hill and Wang, 1967, p. 143.
19. Frank Capra, *The Name Above the Title,* New York: MacMillan, 1971, p. 327.
20. Unless otherwise cited, the plot synopses and critical evaluations of motion pictures referred to in the remainder of this paper are an amalgam of reviews contained in *The New York Times Guide to Movies on TV* (Howard Thompson, ed., Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), *Movies on TV: 1972-73 Edition* (Stephen Scheuer, ed., New York: Bantam, 1971), and the author's memories.
21. Paul D. Zimmerman, "Kubrick's Brilliant Vision," *Newsweek* (3 January 1972), p. 32.
22. "Cinema," *Time* (7 November 1969), p. 100.
23. Edward Grossman, "Bloody Popcorn," *Harpers* (December 1970), p. 40.
24. "John Wayne: Green Berets," *The Nation* (11 December 1967), p. 614.
25. Grossman, p. 34, and James Harvey, "The Screen," *Commonweal* (10 July 1970), p. 343.
26. James Harvey, "The Screen," *Commonweal* (20 March 1970), p. 37.
27. Joseph Morgenstern, "Movies," *Newsweek* (16 February 1970), p. 91.
28. Pauline Kael, "The Current Cinema," *The New Yorker* (31 January 1971), p. 73.
29. Hugh Sidey, "The Presidency," *Life* (19 June 1970), p. 2B.
30. Henry Ehrlich, "Tora! Tora! Tora!" *Look* (22 September 1970), p. 27.
31. Arthur Coopers, "Johnny Got His Gun," *Newsweek* (9 August 1972), pp. 70-72.
32. "Change, Yes—Upheaval, No," *Life* (8 January 1971), p. 30.

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