

Hollywood's Hegemony

American Imperialism in the Cultural
Re-Education of West Germany



Pip van der Zanden
BA Thesis American Studies

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Abstract

The cultural re-education of West Germany that followed the Second World War, has often been discussed and analyzed by scholars of different disciplines. A perspective that still lacked in the discourse surrounding the subject was a close study of how Hollywood films were used in the re-education, specifically with respect to American imperialism. The way these films are used are a prime example of an effective yet inexpensive way of using soft power in expanding an economic, political, and cultural empire. This thesis will look into the ways in which Hollywood films contributed to American imperialism and the strategies the U.S. government used to expand its empire in the early years of the Cold War. It will go into the relationship between American imperialism and soft power, and how that relationship becomes visible during the cultural re-education of West Germany. This thesis shows how the U.S. government was able to expand culturally into West Germany and achieved a cultural domination that would remain intact even after the American occupation of West Germany ended and the area regained sovereignty.

Key words: Cultural re-education • West Germany • American imperialism • Hegemony • Soft Power • Hollywood • cultural imperialism • postwar

List of Abbreviations

ICD	Information Control Division
MPEA	Motion Picture Expert Association
MPEAA	Motion Picture Export Association of America
MPPDA	Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America
OMGUS	Office of Military Government United States
OWI	Office of War Information
PWB/SHAEF	Psychological Warfare Division of the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force

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Introduction

The first half of the twentieth century had left the world in a state of trauma. It had been torn apart by the most destructive wars in history and a devastating financial crisis. The shock after the First World War was great; never before had killing been so efficient, never before had the scale of destruction been so great. The war that followed was even worse. The devastation was enormous, especially in Europe, which served as one of the main battlefields. Over 40 million European lives were lost in the war, tens of millions of people had been displaced from their homes and had lost their livelihoods, and most continental European economies had been obliterated by the war. The vast loss of the war was only amplified by the cruel way in which it was brought about. For five long years, European countries had to endure constant aerial bombings, which killed more civilians than any other war ever had before. Insurgency groups were hunted down and tortured or taken hostage. Entire communities were shattered and slaughtered. Many people were forced into labor under extremely inhumane circumstances. All of these acts, however, were nothing compared to the systematic extermination of millions of people who were deemed unfit to participate in society, simply because they were born in a Jewish family, as homosexual, or with a disability. Most of these atrocities were committed by one single party: Germany's Nazi regime (Berger 38). The Allied forces realized that to prevent another world war, it was imperative that they demilitarized Germany and reigned in its power.

It was important to the Allied planners, and especially to the U.S., that this was done carefully, as Germany was a central economic power in Europe and dismantling the nation's economy could further destabilize the rest of Europe. The intention of the planners was therefore to denazify and democratize Germany, so it would later be ready to reintegrate into European society without it becoming an aggressor in yet another war (Eisenberg 18). These plans were not coming from a unified team of Allied planners. Each country had their own team of planners and there were some disagreements between the nations on what exactly the demilitarization and democratization process of Germany should entail. The U.S. and the Soviet Union especially seemed to disagree on the toughness of the punishment for the Germans. The Soviet Union demanded a hard peace and wanted to strip Germany's resources, while the U.S. saw those resources as a valuable asset to the entire European reconstruction. It was President Roosevelt who believed the best solution was to dismember Germany and divide it amongst the Allied

forces. This would appease the Russians and would allow the U.S. to exert its influence on the democratization process in a part of Germany (Eisenberg 20). When the Second World War ended, the United States Army took control of most of the southern part and began its democratization process.

The U.S. installed a placeholder military government in the American occupation zone in Germany. The Office of Military Government United States (OMGUS) was led by General Lucius D. Clay, who served as military governor, and had been installed to make sure that Germany regained stability after losing World War II. One of the ways OMGUS planned to achieve this was through the use of cultural products. A division of OMGUS, the Information Control Division (ICD), was mostly responsible for the censorship and distribution of cultural products. They made sure that these products carried messages that painted American society and democracy in a good light (Goldstein 9). This process of using cultural products to democratize Germany was known as the cultural re-education of West Germany and it will be the main focus of this thesis. The ICD used many different media to communicate American culture and values to the German citizens, but it had a special relationship with Hollywood. To keep this research within reasonable bounds, I will be focusing on the use of Hollywood films by the U.S. government in the cultural re-education of West Germany.

The cultural re-education of West Germany has been analyzed by scholars in the field of media studies and political science. Jennifer Fay, who specializes in transatlantic film and media studies, has analyzed the use of Hollywood films as propaganda in Germany in her book *Theaters of Occupation*. In it, she discusses the setting of the theaters, the policies, but most importantly, the films that were used by the ICD and the central themes (Fay xxvi). Cora Sol Goldstein takes the perspective of a political scientist and uses the cultural re-education of West Germany as an example of the importance of cultural policy in international relations in her book *Capturing the German Eye* (Goldstein 20). They both have solid analyses, but they are both unclear on why the Americans needed to use propaganda in Germany in the first place. Goldstein contributes it to the ideological conflict that had started between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, but I believe that the reason for a re-education goes further than that conflict.

The theory of American imperialism has existed for quite a while, but it experienced its first big surge of popularity under scholars when the war in Vietnam broke out. Especially theories by historians like William Appleman Williams, who spoke of the U.S. government's

Open Door strategy when it came to foreign policies in South America and during the Cold War. They were the first to challenge the traditional narrative that U.S. policy had mostly been reactionary and actually blamed most of the Cold War on the American desire to expand its own frontier (Cox & Kennedy-Pipe 98). These early theories were mostly focused on the expansion of the American economic empire, but not their cultural empire. Cultural imperialism and Americanization was something that interested the more contemporary scholars like historian Mary Nolan, who wrote about the Americanization of Europe in her book *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890–2010*. The first chapter will go into the different theories surrounding the relationship between American imperialism and cultural imperialism more thoroughly.

This thesis will focus on the idea that Hollywood films are a form of soft power that can be used to further the American imperialist agenda. The cultural re-education of West Germany made use of Hollywood films a lot and this thesis looks into both the presence of American imperialism in this re-education program, as well as the specific role of Hollywood films in the cultural re-education and that is where the central research question of this thesis comes from. To what extent does the use of Hollywood films in the cultural re-education of West Germany show that American Imperialism was present in the strategy of U.S. foreign policy during the early years of the Cold War?

The first chapter will discuss the theoretical framework and the scientific discourse on American imperialism and cultural imperialism. This chapter will establish the central concepts that will be important in chapter 2, where most the analysis of the cultural re-education of West Germany will happen. This chapter will look at how the U.S. managed to expand its cultural products and ideas into West-German society through Hollywood films and how the U.S. film industry and culture managed to dominate the West-German film market. The last chapter will study the reaction of the West-German people to this attempt at Americanization, which will give a tiny glimpse into the level of success the U.S. government had with the cultural re-education of West Germany.

Chapter 1: A City Upon A Hill

"The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement, explain American development." – Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History.

When asked to name any empire, most people would not immediately think of America. Their minds will likely go to Rome, Genghis Khan, or Great Britain. These empires fit the traditional understanding of imperialism, where territorial expansion, exploitation of resources, and the oppression of the native peoples are central to the dominant state's policies. The relationship between the dominant state and its empire can be seen as symbiotic, where oppressed states and peoples are exploited for the benefit and the development of the dominant state. This type of relationship does not fit into the values that are perpetuated by American society: freedom, individuality, autonomy, and personal growth. The idea that the U.S. would build an empire is difficult to imagine for many people, yet according to many scholars like William Appleman Williams, Andrew J. Bacevich, Geir Lundestad, and others that will be featured in the upcoming chapter, American imperialism is a very viable theory. The following chapter will look into the way American imperialism is manifested and the way other scholars have written about it. The chapter will specifically look into the way cultural products like Hollywood films can be used to form and expand an empire and this will form the theoretical framework through which the cultural re-education of West Germany can be analyzed.

Power

Power is one of the most important concepts when studying international relations. It is the extent to which an actor is able to reach their goals and can exert influence on other actors. It is important that we understand what type of power is used in American imperialism, as the U.S.'s ability to influence other states and other peoples directly affects the outcome of the U.S. government's attempt to expand its empire. There are different types of power: hard power and soft power. Traditional imperialism focuses mostly on the first: it encompasses resources like territory, manpower, military power, technological development, industrial development, and economic strength (Nye & Welch 51). Great Britain's rise to global rule, for example, is often

accredited to its industrial advancements and its superior naval power. It also used the territory it gained to grow economically and gain more manpower. Both its tools and its goal were material in nature.

Power, however, does not necessarily have to be about material resources. Soft power is less tangible than hard power, but not less powerful. Joseph S. Nye has written a book on the definition of soft power, something which he also calls co-optive power. In an article on the same subject matter, he follows up his definition of co-optive power by immediately referring to the U.S.

Co-optive power is the ability of a country to structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with its own. This power tends to arise from such resources as cultural and ideological attraction as well as rules and institutions of international regimes. The United States has more co-optive power than other countries. Institutions governing the international economy, such as the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, tend to embody liberal, free-market principles that coincide in large measure with American society and ideology (Nye 168).

It is important to understand this definition of soft power or co-optive power and its relation to American foreign relations before understanding what American imperialism is about, because it is a key factor of American imperialism.

Nye also explains that American popular culture is an example of inexpensive yet effective soft power. People from all over the world recognize American iconography through media, clothes, and other American products and even recognize the American values that are attached to these products. It is an effective way to gain sympathy and notoriety with people across the world. They will hold positive opinions of the U.S. because they have a positive opinion of these items associated with the U.S. and this will create a better relationship between the U.S. and the rest of the world (Nye 169).

American imperialism

American imperialism is a theoretical paradigm that first started to gain traction in the 1950s. For a long time, most academics believed that American foreign policy was mostly reactionary. This was based on the understanding that the U.S. joined later in multiple wars, because it seemed to

be forced to do so by acts of aggression against U.S. citizens, assets, or values. The United States only chose to intervene in the battle for independence of Cuba in 1898 after their battleship, the USS Maine, came to explode in the harbor of Havana. It was also the German attacks against American trade ships that forced the U.S. out of their neutrality during World War I and caused the U.S. military to join the war efforts against Germany. This initial neutrality was again repeated during World War II, which was then broken after the Japanese Navy attacked Pearl Harbor. This created an image of U.S. foreign policy as mostly defensive and reactionary, even though these three wars eventually generated more power to the U.S. than to any other nation. The U.S. presented itself as ‘the good guys’ in these wars, whose leaders had to fight against their own domestic opponents before they could help the colonized, occupied, and oppressed countries.

This view of American foreign policy gained some criticism after World War II. One of the most prevalent voices was that of historian William Appleman Williams, who first published his book *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* in 1959. He was considered to be a radical at the time, for his views on the start of the Cold War. The traditional explanation of the beginning of the Cold War considered the role of the U.S. to be mostly reactionary against the spread of communism, which fit the reactionary perspective of U.S. foreign policy. Williams strongly disagreed with this and instead gave a different explanation, where the U.S. was the main instigator of the Cold War. The reasons for this were the imperialistic policies that flowed from, what Williams called, the Open Doors strategy. This was based on the Open Door policy that was used to allow equal and open trade with China for all countries in 1899. Williams referred to this policy as a liberal policy of an informal empire. It was the start of a strategy to achieve free market imperialism, he argued. This meant that the U.S. worked to open up global markets for free trade and expand their own economy and sphere of influence through these trade relations.

This strategy was different from traditional colonialism, because through it, the U.S. asserted ideological and economic control over less powerful states, sometimes supported by strategically placed military bases (Williams 15). The Open Door strategy was an extension on the policies that Frederick Jackson Turner describes in his Frontier Thesis. In a series of lectures and essays, Turner describes America’s prosperity as a result of expansion across the continent. The U.S. needed to keep expanding to find new resources, otherwise its prosperity would grind to a halt. In the Open Doors strategy, the frontier has essentially moved overseas, so the U.S. can

keep prospering by using foreign resources (Williams 23). The use of trade to gain foreign resources is not necessarily unethical in itself, especially not if both states consent to the situation, but the strategy is also designed to convert unwilling states into trading partners. It is therefore important to analyze the role of agency in American imperialism.

Norwegian historian international relations Geir Lundestad has created a theory around the role of agency in American imperialism in transatlantic relations. He suggests that there were many Western European invitations to the U.S. to get involved after World War II, which enabled the U.S. to become an empire. He does not mean that American foreign policies were determined by these European invitations, on the contrary, the invitations were often ignored. He instead points out that once the invitations started to align with America's self-interest, they were more often accepted. Many of these invitations elicited the use of a mix of soft power and hard power, with the most well-known example being the Marshall Plan as a form of economic diplomacy. The U.S. was invited to Western European nations that suffered great destruction during the Second World War to give economic support and thus got access to the European market on Washington's conditions, because they were also doing these states a favor. (Lundestad 196). This contributed to a change in the power dynamic between the U.S. and Western European states. During the war, they had been allies, but because the European countries needed American economic support, they had invited the U.S. in on Washington's terms. Lundestad's *An "Empire" by Invitation* therefore suggests that the 'submissive' states do not necessarily have to lack agency for them to be eligible as an extension to the American empire, but the U.S. government does need to have a strategy that pushes the American values and interests.

Williams and Lundestad both stress the importance of the capitalist aspect of American imperialism, but capitalism was not the only ideology the United States government wanted to drive forward. According to historian Andrew J. Bacevich, the goal of U.S. foreign policy after the Cold War was to create an "open and integrated international order based on the principles of democratic capitalism, with the United States as the ultimate guarantor of order and enforcer of norms" (Bacevich 3). The U.S. saw itself as the ideal republic and wanted to set an example to the rest of the world. It was important that all other states also became democracies because similar forms of government are more likely to cooperate. To achieve this goal, the U.S. government deployed a strategy of openness, where the emphasis was on the free travel of

goods, people, capital, and ideas. (Bacevich 3) This is not unlike the Open Doors strategy that Williams referred to. Unlike Williams, however, Bacevich notes that the U.S. had a more defensive strategy during the Cold War. He acknowledges that the ultimate goal of U.S. foreign policy was similar to American imperialism at the time, as the same sentiments were central to Harry S. Truman's speech at Monticello in 1948. Truman mentioned that to achieve world peace, barriers between nationalistic economies and ideologies must be removed by the United States. This vision was under threat from communism, however and therefore the U.S. acted in a more defensive manner. Once this threat was removed, the U.S. could uphold a more offensive strategy, which can be observed in the foreign policies of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton (Bacevich 5). Chapter 2 will show some evidence that can contradict Bacevich's idea that the U.S. acted mostly reactionary during the Cold War.

Cultural imperialism

Economic aid or international trade is not the only way the U.S. can spread American values and ideas across the world. There is a cultural aspect to American imperialism that seems to align very well with the general theory of cultural imperialism. The term was first developed by literary critic Edward Said, who defined cultural imperialism as the "cultural domination and cultural expansion of one country into the culture and cultural development of another country" (Gudova). In his definition of the term, the submissive culture is suppressed by the dominant culture. When this happens on a grander scale, a more homogeneous culture is formed. The dominant culture has become the hegemony that serves as an example for the oppressed cultures. This definition will be relevant for the rest of the analysis, as it fits with the purpose of American imperialism. The U.S. is in our case the dominant culture that is seeking to expand into the culture and cultural development of other countries. By becoming a cultural hegemon, the U.S. can eventually establish itself as the global enforcer of order and norms, as it has already gained the top position with cultural means.

Historian Mary Nolan recognized the importance of cultural imperialism for American foreign politics. She wrote in her book *The Transatlantic Century* about the American desire to become a hegemon. According to her, it followed from the two World Wars, in which Europe became highly fractured and transatlantic interactions took a new form. This followed from a change in the power dynamic. The U.S. was on both an economic and a military level extremely

powerful, and Europe had just been a battlefield for the two most destructive wars in history (Nolan 3). There were also some strong feelings of anti-communism, both in the U.S. and Western Europe. Many people in Western Europe saw America's political values as admirable and felt it aligned more with their own than communism. Western Europe therefore willingly joined a partnership with the U.S. in which it was an inferior party (Nolan 4).

According to Nolan, the hay day for American global influence was in the years between World War II and the Vietnam War. At this point, the U.S. was the strongest on an economic, military, and cultural level. She mentions that it is important that these different levels work in tandem, as they all play a factor into the Americanization of other states. The U.S. had been depicted as a shining and powerful example of modernity, that other nations want to follow, and this shaped the way Americanization was formed. Nolan uses the term 'Americanization' to refer to "the adoption abroad of American forms of production and consumption, technology and techniques of management, political ideas and social policies, high and mass cultural goods and institutions, gender roles and leisure practices." The European nations that adopted these Americanisms did so because the American version of modernity was appealing to them. This was especially true for mass production and consumption, as the U.S. was streets ahead in this sector (Nolan 5). Nolan's description is reminiscent of John Winthrop's famous Massachusetts sermon, in which he proclaimed that the colony would become "a city on a hill" that would serve as an example for the rest of the world. It also shows how powerful soft power can be; the image of America as the symbol for modernity and progress was enough to make other countries want to see and do things the way the U.S. sees them.

Historian Richard Pells acknowledges that American mass culture has had an impact on Europe and that especially Western Europe has become more sympathetic to American foreign policy, but he also notes that Europe has not become a second United States. Europe's cultures have not been suppressed as Said would say cultural imperialism works. Instead, Pells notes, the Europeans have gladly received American cultural products and Europeanized them (Pells 13). This is, however, not entirely different from what Nolan refers to as Americanization. She even recognizes that these cultural products were not forced upon the Europeans, but that they selectively accepted them and adapted them to become more European (Nolan 5). That does not mean that there is no presence of cultural imperialism. The European culture has become heavily influenced by American culture and even though it has adapted the source material to become

more European, the American DNA will live on in European cultural products. This is especially visible in the case of film and Hollywood.

Hollywood

Why was Hollywood so important for American imperialism? The American film industry did a lot for the spread of American culture, especially after the decline of French cinema during World War I. This was partially done in cooperation with the U.S. government, but also partially out of its own initiative. Expanding out of the country into foreign markets proved to be beneficial to both parties: Hollywood was making a profit, and the American way of life had gained a footing in other countries. The head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) in 1923, Will H. Hays, described quite aptly what Hollywood did for American imperialism at the time: “We are going to sell America to the world with American motion pictures” (Trumpbour 17). He was not the only one who saw Hollywood’s potential to create opportunities for American prosperity abroad. The U.S. government itself recognized Hollywood’s ability to sway the masses and used it as a tool to influence the global society. During the interwar period, Hollywood films were often used to open up foreign markets, as the State Department believed that “trade follows the film” (Trumpbour 3).

The U.S. government’s interest in a cooperation with Hollywood went further than just international trade. During World War II, Hollywood was enlisted by the federal government to make propaganda films intended for American audiences to create a positive public opinion on the war efforts. The director of the Office of War Information (OWI), Elmer Davis, had discovered that film was the most effective medium for propaganda and because of this the U.S. government began a relationship with Hollywood that would (re)shape both American and foreign opinions (Goldstein 3). Even Pells recognizes that the U.S. exerted much influence on Europe through Hollywood, especially during the 1920s: “It was in this decade that the cinema became synonymous with Hollywood. The United States dominated every facet of popular filmmaking, and with it the power to “Americanize” the imaginations, if not the behavior, of audiences throughout the world” (Pells 32). The use of Hollywood films to influence foreign opinions of America is a prime example of cultural imperialism, which was still very prevalent in the postwar era, as will be shown in the following chapter.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of American imperialism is to create a global democratic capitalist hegemony. The U.S. would be at the head of this, as the example of how everything should be. There are several tools the U.S. has to achieve this. Firstly, the U.S. could expand its territory through force, as the traditional empires had done. This is what happened in Cuba, but this is not the U.S. government's preferred method. The American empire is often extended through trade, with the U.S. needing the resources from all over the planet. This is why free trade is important to American foreign policy: it is a means through which the U.S. is able to gain power. There are different kinds of power, hard power and soft power. The U.S. is actually really proficient at using cultural products like films as a type of soft power to push its interests. When this is done to the extreme and the U.S. culture starts to dominate the foreign culture, it becomes cultural imperialism.

Chapter 2: Busting Through the Door

“In the United States, the majority undertakes to supply a multitude of ready-made opinions for the use of individuals, who are thus relieved from the necessity of forming opinions of their own.” – Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America

To understand the significance of the use of film during the cultural re-education of West Germany, we must see how it fits into the bigger picture. The U.S. was relatively late in reopening the German theaters. The Soviet Union understood immediately that the use of cultural products like cinema was integral to the reshaping of the political climate in Germany. They had started preparing the democratization of Germany before the end of the Second World War and culture had been a part of the strategy from the beginning. This meant something different to both the U.S. and the Soviet Union, who both took the definition of “democracy” to be something more than just the matter of voting and political self-determination. To the Americans, the democratization of Germany meant to install within the German people and culture an attitude and a belief system that went beyond just voting rights and a system of checks and balances (Fay xiv). To the Soviet Union, the democratization of Germany meant that it would have to be completely embedded into the Soviet political system, ideology, and way of life. Nazism had been the result of corrupt capitalism, according to Soviet propaganda. If the Germans were to ever have a truly democratic government, they would need to be re-educated in accordance with communist ideologies (Goldstein 14).

When the occupation started, the Soviet occupational government was ready to implement Soviet cinema into the daily lives of the Germans. American film experts from magazines like *Vanity Fair* and the Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEAA) had to witness how the Office of Military Government United States (OMGUS) failed to reopen the German cinemas, because the occupational government felt that entertainment was not a priority. These film experts warned the government that American film companies were being kept away from Germany, while Soviet cinema was thriving and their political philosophy with it. It took the British government reopening the theaters in their occupational zone in early July of 1945, for the American occupational government to realize they were lagging behind. OMGUS finally begun to reopen the German cinemas later that month (Goldstein 48).

A scholar could look at these policies and could be quick to realize that the American actions regarding the cultural re-education of Germany were rather reactionary. The American government saw the success of the Soviet cultural policies and reacted with its own operational plan in defense against communism. This would match Andrew Bacevich's theory, in which American foreign policy during the Cold War was mostly defensive. In this analysis, the cultural re-education of West Germany would revolve around the conflict of ideology that was so central to the Cold War. I, however, would like to argue that the cultural policies in Germany were about more than just the power struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The following analysis intends to show that the U.S. government's use of Hollywood films during the cultural re-education of Germany were part of a greater strategy to achieve cultural and ideological hegemony in the Western world.

Postwar Planning

The situation described in the introduction of this chapter was not as black-and-white as it seems at first glance. The following paragraph will show that U.S. foreign policy regarding the cultural re-education of Germany was not merely reactionary. It was already explained in the previous chapter that it was important to the State Department that the German economy remained as stable as possible, because it had a vital role in the European economy as a whole. If the Allied forces were to punish post-war Germany by draining it of its resources, it would heavily affect the reconstruction of the rest of Europe as well. This is why the State Department had started making plans for post-war Germany way before the end of the war. These plans revolved around the demilitarization and democratization of Germany, so it would be able to fulfill its role in the European economy, without forming a threat once more (Eisenberg 15).

At the time that these plans were being made, it was important to both the State Department as well as the White House that the alliance between the U.S. and the Soviet Union would remain strong. There were some Secret Service veterans who feared the communist ideology, but the dominant sentiments regarding Stalin and his army under the Roosevelt administration were actually feelings of admiration. The American government had witnessed the ferocity with which the Bolshevik army defended its home from enemy forces and could only commend this (Eisenberg 21). It was beneficial to the American-Soviet relationship if the Russian government would be informed of the American intentions with Germany, and if it were

involved in the post-war planning process. This was exactly why Secretary of State Cordell Hull went to speak with Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov in October 1943: to reach an agreement that would benefit both parties. It became clear during this meeting that the Americans were far ahead in making the plans and had created more concrete programs than the Soviet Union had been able to come up with. The U.S. had brought ideas for a tripartite Allied Control Council, which would assist the German people in forming a democratic government with a bill of rights. Molotov therefore really appreciated the program the U.S. had proposed, as long as it would not be too restrictive to the Soviet Union in its endeavors in Germany. The Soviet plans for the democratization of Germany were therefore mostly jumpstarted by the U.S., and not vice versa (Eisenberg 23). This raises more questions than it answers though: if the American cultural policies in West Germany were not a reaction to Soviet policies, then what were they?

Cultural Expansion

When the occupation of West Germany started, OMGUS and its leader General Lucius D. Clay were tasked with a mission that was characterized by 'Four D's': denazification, democratization, demilitarization, and decentralization (Goldstein 10). They found that one of the best ways to go about this was to use cultural products to change the national character of West Germany. This following section will show that the cultural re-education of West Germany turned out to be a radical use of soft power on a defeated enemy state as a way to foster peace and create a positive image of the occupier.

The Information Control Division (ICD) was vital to the cultural re-education of West Germany. The division had been installed during the Second World War, when it was still known as the Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB/SHAEF). It was a unique organization during the war because it was comprised of not only military personnel, but also civilians. When it was renamed and repurposed for the occupation, this construction stayed largely the same (Goldstein 9). The ICD was independent for a short while, but in 1946 it merged with OMGUS and became largely responsible for the control and output of propaganda by the military government. Its objective was to convince the German people to cooperate with the American government and to create a positive opinion of American values in the minds of the Germans. ICD had two policies that served to reach this objective. Firstly, they would suppress and censor

any cultural products that could stir unrest and dissatisfaction with the German people. Everything was monitored by the ICD: newspapers, journals, film, literature, theater, and music. The Germans had no choice but to go along with this, as they were being occupied by a foreign military government. At the same time, the ICD would make sure that there was a big output of pro-American content for the Germans to consume. They provided German editors with politically differentiating views with licenses to create a more democratic German press. The ICD also reopened the cinemas and played mostly American films, which portrayed the U.S. in a positive light (Goldstein 13).

The ICD and Hollywood had a mostly friendly relationship, although the ICD was extremely specific about which films were allowed to be shown in West-German theaters. These ‘invasion films’ were selected for its educational value and strategic usefulness, which entailed that they showed an ideal image of the U.S. and American values (Goldstein 49). The ICD’s criteria for films that could be included into the re-education program also give an insight into the U.S. government’s motive behind the cultural re-education of Germany. The list below appeared in the book *Theaters of Occupation* by Jennifer Fay but was directly quoted from the OMGUS archives. According to the ICD, the feature films that were selected for occupied Germany should:

- A. Wish to fix German guilt and truth of Nazi exploitation of Europe.
- B. Indicate unfavorable global attitudes toward Fascism and Nazism.
- C. Offset efforts of Nazi propaganda about the USA and correct German misconception of modern history.
- D. Demonstrate great values and strength of democratic living.
- E. Indicate the U.S. as a strong democratic society striving for full realization of the 4 freedoms
- F. Motion Pictures should be best of cinematographic art, with some Technicolor included (Fay 50).

Points C and E are specifically insightful for this analysis, as they show that the purpose of the Hollywood films shown in German theaters was to reshape the Germans’ ideas and image of the U.S. This goes right back to Nye’s definition of soft power or co-optive power: OMGUS and the ICD intend to use their cultural resources to change the German’s perspective on American

society. The intention here is to make sure that the Germans' interests and preferences will come to align with those of the United States.

The American version of democratization went beyond the establishment of voting rights and a parliament. General Lucius D. Clay, the U.S. military governor, was convinced that the Germans needed a change of personality. Rather than focus on changing the political processes in West Germany, he created cultural policies that were meant to change the German perception of democracy and American society (Fay xiv). Many of these policies were informed by the ideas of neuropsychiatrist Richard Brickner, who diagnosed Germany's national character. He identified four different 'personality disorders' within German society: megalomania, pathological domination, a persecution complex, and retrospective falsification. These were, according to Brickner, the reason why Germany had instigated so many terrible wars and why Germany needed to be controlled (Fay 18).

The U.S. government believed that this national character was directly opposite from the values that America wanted to spread across the world. Freedom, democracy, and individuality would not survive in a country like Germany if it remained unchecked. It was therefore to the utmost importance that the U.S. would hold Germany by the hand to guide it through the democratization process. That way, Germany would not fall back into its old patterns and the U.S. would be one step closer to global American hegemony. The German national character would become Americanized and the U.S. would gain an ally that had the potential to become influential in Europe again. After all, Germany still possessed resources that were vital to the European economy. The use of films was especially important for the Americanization process, because they did not only show what was wrong with German culture, but they also presented a better alternative to the German people.

The Hollywood films that were selected by the ICD had to present an ideal image of American society to the Germans. The persecution of Jewish people by the Nazi regime had proved to the U.S. government how xenophobic the Germans were and as a juxtaposition, many films that were chosen by the ICD featured the success of the American multicultural society. Films such as *The Human Comedy* and *Sun Valley Serenade* showed the positive side of immigration in the U.S., where people from different backgrounds all united around the same values and were able to call themselves Americans (Fay 45). It was the intention of the ICD and the Office of War Information (OWI) that the Germans learned from these values and rejected

their old ones. Many of the films that were selected by the ICD also featured American pioneers who celebrated individuality and progressive thinking.

The Western Frontier was also a popular setting, as it demonstrated American resourcefulness and civic courage. These were all qualities that the U.S. government believed were lacking from the German national character but were necessary to create a true democracy (Fay 49). It is also notable that many long feature films that were highly popular in the U.S. and in the rest of the world were not allowed to be screened in occupied Germany. *Gone with the Wind* was exported to Europe as soon as the markets opened, but the ICD rejected it. *Gone with the Wind* showed images of slavery, which was something that could not be shown to the Germans, as it played into some of the Nazi propaganda against the United States (Goldstein 49). Only a flawless image of American society was allowed to be presented to the Germans, anything else would only distract them from the main message: American culture and society are morally superior.

Cultural Domination

The previous section studied how the U.S. expanded its cultural empire into West Germany through the use of Hollywood films. They were able to do this at the time because they were occupying the area, but that occupation ended in May of 1955. The U.S. needed to make sure that the German market remained open for Hollywood's productions. Other European nations, like France and Belgium, were able to put in place certain constraints on Hollywood films. How could the U.S. make sure that Germany would not do that?

This section will mostly look into the similarities and differences between the film markets of Germany and France in order to show how the U.S. and Hollywood were able to dominate the West German film market. France is an interesting case study for this specific thesis, because like Germany, it had a very profitable film industry before the war. When motion pictures were first becoming popular in the nineteenth century, France actually dominated the global market (Trumpbour 226). Both World Wars had had a devastating impact on its film industry: movie production was mostly halted during World War I, because much of the war was being fought on French soil, and during the Second World War, much of the industry had been taken over by collaborationists (Trumpbour 264). Germany had had a highly active film industry

before the Second World War, when it mostly produced high quality documentaries. During the war, it mostly serviced as a propaganda machine and was highly valued by the Nazi regime. The regime had also banned American films from all the regions that were under its control (Goldstein 47). This meant that both the German market and the French market had been closed off to Hollywood and that the end of the war brought many opportunities for the cinematic giant.

The war had resulted in a great shift of power. Most European countries had suffered greatly, from years of occupation, air strikes, and in the case of Germany, eventual defeat. The European economy had been halted by the war, as free trade was impossible, and many factories and laborers had been enlisted into the war effort. The U.S. experienced this to a much lesser degree. This was especially the case because the battles were, aside from the strike on Pearl Harbor, not being fought on U.S. soil. The U.S. was already more powerful financially and had also created a special relationship with the states it had freed from Nazi occupation. America's leverage over France was especially big, as the nation had benefitted from U.S. financial support during the war. The Lend-Lease act had provided the Free French government with the resources they had needed to fight back against the German occupational forces in the early years of the Second World War, but had also landed the nation in a debt it simply could not pay back (Trumpbour 266). Germany was defeated and divided by the Allied forces and the German people were under the control of four different foreign governments. The U.S. government had occupied a large part of West Germany and had installed a military government. This was the ultimate moment for Hollywood and the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) to start lobbying in Washington and ask them to pry open these European markets.

The solution for the French market seemed to have presented itself when French state representative Léon Blum came to Secretary of State James Byrnes to review the Lend-Lease agreement in May 1946. France was experiencing a financial crisis; the production of goods had not yet been restored to the level it had before the war and the French franc was inflating five cents every month (Jeancolas 49). Blum hoped to convince Byrnes to reduce France's debts and to establish some credit with the Export-Import banks. One of the things Blum could offer in return was American access to the French film market. This was something that many French film experts feared, and they had asked Blum to come to an agreement in which the U.S. guaranteed that French domestic films would have exclusive access to French theaters for seven out of thirteen weeks. This was not an acceptable offer to Washington and Blum's first priority

was to get as much money for France as possible. Secretary of State Byrnes' final offer demanded that the French theaters would be available for American films nine out of every thirteen weeks. The French would receive for the cancellation of 1.8 billion dollars of debt and a 500-million-dollar credit line in return. Blum accepted Byrnes' offer happily (Trumpbour 266).

It was much easier for Hollywood to gain access to the German market once the war was over. The American occupational government had closed all German theaters that were still standing after the many bombardments and had banned the showing of German films. Films produced by the Nazi regime, as well as many other German films, had been confiscated by the American army and sent to the OWI headquarters in New York because they were regarded as dangerous propaganda (Goldstein 47). When the ICD finally reopened the German theaters in July 1945, they needed films to show. These were the Hollywood films that had been approved by the ICD for their strategic value. Hollywood was now able to re-enter the German market, after they had lost their access when the Nazi party had risen to power (Goldstein 48). The Germans had no opportunity to deny Hollywood their entry, as they had no control over their own government. The U.S. was able to use the leverage it had over both France and Germany, which it had gained during the previous war, to further its own agenda. It now had an economic foot wedged in their doors, but how was Washington going to slam them wide open?

The tactic in France was to resort to 'dumping' practices. Although there was a limited time that American films were allowed to be screened, nine out of every thirteen weeks, there was no limit as to how many films were allowed during this time. Most companies that were affiliated with the MPEAA restrained themselves and released only about ten films per firm for the French market, but the independent firms sent out films by the buckets. They sent 338 films to France in the only the first six months of 1947. The French government, however, had armed itself against these tactics. It had established dubbing laws, which stated that the French dubs must be recorded and printed on French soil. The government also refused to allocate many American films to places that were available to show them, to keep these films out of circulation. Only 45% of the films that were exported to France in 1947 were actually screened in theaters (Trumpbour 268). This shows that France was in a vastly different position than Germany. France had an existing film industry that was starting to rebuild soon after the war and was being protected by its government. The American occupational government had banned and

sequestered almost all German films and controlled the entire influx of films into its own occupational zone.

The only films that were allowed to be shown during the early years of the occupation were the films that were created by the ICD and the Hollywood films it had selected for its re-education program. It was in 1948 that other American films were also allowed in Germany. The Motion Picture Expert Association (MPEA) had refused to produce more films that could be used to indoctrinate the Germans and other people who were in the American sphere of influence, until it was convinced that Germany would be a sufficiently profitable market for Hollywood to explore. In accordance with their plight, the Senate passed the Media Guarantee Program in 1948, which opened up the German market for commercial exploitation by American film industries (Elsaesser 169).

The German domestic film industry itself was at this point close to non-existent and not nearly on the same level of production quality as Hollywood's films (Elsaesser 168). It would not be able to compete with the ever-growing influx of American films, solidifying Hollywood as the main supplier of popular culture for many years after the occupation. This is reminiscent of the ICD's criterium F: "Motion Pictures should be best of cinematographic art, with some Technicolor included" (Fay 50). The fact that the highest possible quality was required for films that were shown to West-German audiences, suggests that the U.S. policy makers had an inkling that Hollywood was going to try to out-compete the German film industry for as long as possible. The U.S. government might even have wanted to assist them on that front.

Conclusion

The cultural re-education of West Germany was not a reactionary policy. There were plans being made for the democratization of postwar Germany long before the Second World War had even ended, and the U.S. government was no stranger to working together with Hollywood. They knew the power film had on the minds of people and they were eager to harness this soft power on the global playing field. The ICD used its intense selection process to find the Hollywood films that would present the most ideal version of American society. This would be the best alternative to what the Americans believed was a toxic German national character.

OMGUS controlled the West German film market during the occupation and made sure that the public only saw the films they wanted them to see. This also allowed the U.S. to open up

the West German film market, which was previously closed to all American films, for after the occupation. To make sure that the Germans would remain interested in American films, they only showed films of the highest quality in West-German theaters. The German film industry, which had fallen along with the Third Reich, needed to be rebuilt from scratch and would not be able to compete with these Technicolor productions. That way, the demand for Hollywood films in West Germany would remain, even after it had regained its sovereignty. The American empire would remain intact, even though the U.S. did not occupy the area anymore: the cultural domination was enough.

Chapter 3: Not Germany's Pastime

"The individual has always had to struggle to keep from being overwhelmed by the tribe. If you try it, you will be lonely often, and sometimes frightened. But no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself." – Rudyard Kipling, in Six Hours with Rudyard Kipling.

Chapter 1 briefly touched upon theories of historians like Richard Pells and Mary Nolan surrounding Americanization. Nolan defined this as foreign countries taking up American forms of production and consumption, but also political ideals and institutions, and cultural products and movement (5). The Office of Military Government United States (OMGUS) specifically hoped to bring the cultural and political aspects across to the West-German population, but were they successful in this? It would be ambitious for a single chapter in a BA thesis to analyze the success of the cultural re-education of West Germany, but looking at how the West-German public received the U.S. government's attempts at Americanization is within the limited scope of this project. This chapter will first look into the broader context of Americanization in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century and will then look at the specifics and the public's reception in the American occupational zone in Germany.

Americanization in Europe

The end of World War I marked the beginning of America's impact on European life. According to Pells, the 1920s were the decade during which the U.S. government started churning out policies that would lead to economic and cultural domination. The shift to Fordism had a huge impact on the efficiency and cost of production for American goods and this, along with their high quality, resulted in the growing popularity of American-made products in Europe. The U.S. had an unprecedented amount of influence on European cultures and it had reached a level of international respect that it did not have before (Pells 27). This was even more so the case after World War II. The technological superiority of the U.S., along with the fact that their land had not suffered the same level of the destruction that Europe had, led to the U.S.'s position of global superpower (Pells 61). The U.S. had become a political and economic hegemony.

This shift in power became more complicated in the cultural sector because of various reasons. Firstly, there was simply more input from other actors. Especially the Soviet Union was as proficient, or even more so, at cultural warfare as the United States (Nolan 233). The U.S.'s cultural policies also clashed with the European idea that 'high culture' and 'popular culture' should be entirely separated. The U.S. did not make that distinction as clearly, because to the U.S., all forms of cultural products were products that could be capitalized on anyway (Stephan 75). France was especially resistant to this because it viewed American culture as crude and manufactured. Even when the U.S. attempted to bridge the gap and adapted literary works by French authors like Sartre, they were received with outrage by the French public (Golsan 53).

Germany's Reaction

The second chapter showed us that the West Germans did not really have control over the flood of American films that came their way, but that does not mean that they had to sit back and just enjoy the show. There was a mixed reception of the Hollywood films that were shown in West German theaters and there were different ways in which the German public tried to resist against the continuous flow of American cultural input.

The values that were pushed forward by the Information Control Division (ICD) through Hollywood films, like freedom and individualism, were highly popular among young Germans. After the Second World War ended, the German youth saw the unauthoritarian behavior of the Americans, both in film and in the soldiers that occupied their nation and identified with it (Stephan 79). West-German youth culture became heavily influenced by American popular culture and the American mentality and society stuck with many West Germans after the American government pulled back their troops in 1955. The West-German consumption of Hollywood films actually increased after West Germany regained its sovereignty and this drove a wedge between West and East Germany, which continued to grow as the Cold War continued (Poiger 107).

Not only did it drive a wedge between West and East Germany, but also between old and young. The popular culture seemed to be more successful among the German youth at the time, as younger people were a more suitable and receptive audience. This generation was criticized by both its elders, the conservative elites, but also by its children in later times. These children often referred to their parents as "more American than Americans" and "conformist" (Ermarth

44). These youngsters formed a rebellious subculture that was heavily inspired by American films like *Rebel Without a Cause*, which was on show in German theaters near the end of 1955. These young, (mostly) male West Germans were also known as the *Halbstarke* and were under intense criticism by older conservative scholars and politicians. The *Halbstarke* themselves actually criticized them, as they believed that their personal flaws and the flaws in society were the result of bad parenting and governing by their elders (Poiger 108).

The conservative elites were appalled by the younger generation of Germans and their love for American popular culture and the values that went along with it. They had already survived many changes in government and had reaped the benefits from the Nazi regime without being associated with them. These conservatives were desperate to hold on to their old cultural values and educational system, which they clung to well into the second half of the twentieth century. They gained popularity among many Germans because they tried to get around the re-education policies as much as possible, because they believed that the American definition of civilization was vulgar. They especially despised American popular culture, which was essential to the re-education programs (Stephan 72). These conservatives were especially German educators and university professors, who fought to keep the old aristocratic societal order. It had existed long before Hitler came to power and they planned on keeping it intact. They did this by delaying and resisting reformations of their old educational system and they received much support from the German public for this (Pells 69).

A vast part of the West German population did not agree with the American reformations. This was actually partially caused by the way in which movie theaters were used by the Americans. Many of the films produced by Hollywood were created for the American film going experience, which was highly different from the German experience. The biggest difference was that all screenings in German theaters were preceded by a newsreel called *Welt im Film* (*World in Film*). These newsreels often contained news about the Allied reconstruction efforts in Europe and the trials and punishments of officials from the Nazi Party. All of these scenes were often accompanied by images of the ever-present American flag, which made it impossible to read the following patriotic American films as anything but heavily political (Fay 46). When a Norwegian refugee may be excited to arrive in America and become an all-American wife in the film *Sun Valley Serenade*, the German audience may pick up on the air of

superiority the Americans in the film have over the innocent and naïve refugee Karen, as Fay points out (63).

It was sometimes difficult for the ICD and Hollywood to predict the reaction of German audiences to American films. Movies that were highly popular and well-received in the U.S. would perform very badly in Germany. American gangster films, for instance, reminded many of the German audience members of Goebbels' films, where all Americans were depicted as gangsters (Trumpbour 98). Other films seemed to immature to many German audiences. Visiting the theater was considered to be 'America's pastime', but in Germany it was an adult activity. The target audience of American films often did not align with the German cinema-going crowd. The Germans were also used to more realistic films; non-fiction films and documentaries were highly popular under both the Weimar Republic and the Nazi regime, but Americans seemed to prefer more fantastical and romanticized plots (Trumpbour 99).

This caused many Germans to engage in acts of silent resistance. One of the methods that was frequently used was dubbed 'occupation mimicry' by an American reporter who visited the American occupational zone. These Germans had, after seeing many American films and studying American behavior closely, entirely copied the American way of speaking and acting, without actually changing their own beliefs. The superficial changes they made played into the American belief that their policies were working and were changing German society, while these Germans often still carried suspicion towards Jewish people and sentiments of anti-Americanism (Fay x). Movie reviews also became a popular way of resisting against the cultural re-education of West Germany. Journalism was encouraged by OMGUS, but especially after the Americans left, conservative journalists actively critiqued the Hollywood films they were shown in theaters. They often indirectly criticized the U.S and American values in these films (Poiger 108).

Conclusion

OMGUS and the ICD were partially effective in installing the West-German people with American cultural and political values through the use of Hollywood films. The younger generation was especially receptive to these values and they happily accepted the lessons of individuality and unauthoritarianism. The older generation, however, did not want to be re-educated. Many of them were stuck in their own traditions and preferred society to go back to the

way it was before the Third Reich. These were mostly elites, who benefitted from the old hierarchical structures.

Conclusion

The end of the war had caused a dramatic shift of power for the Germans: they went from the conquerors to the conquered. Their territory and government were now in the hands of foreign powers and there was nothing left of the great empire Adolf Hitler had promised them. The two behemoths that now ruled over them were busy building their own empires and both wanted Germany to be a part of it. The victory of the war had allowed the U.S. temporary governance of a part of Germany, but the U.S. intended to make its influence last. By controlling the types of films that entered the country, the U.S. was able to shape Germany into a new market that would become reliant on the products created by Hollywood and other American companies.

This fits well into the paradigm of American imperialism, where one of the larger goals is to expand the American market and promote free trade in the global society. This also had a greater consequence on the West-German film market. Now used to the high quality of American cinema, films produced domestically and in other European countries simply did not meet the standards that were set by the Information Control Division. Hollywood's films had succeeded in opening the door of the German market and West Germany had become a part of America's sphere of influence through the strings that were tied between them by trade.

American imperialism does not just consist of trade, though. It is also about creating a global democratic capitalist hegemony after the example of American society. The Hollywood films used in the cultural re-education of Germany presented this example to the German people, whose own society had been destroyed by the war. Both the U.S. federal government and the American military government in Germany had created a myriad of policies that consisted of using Hollywood films to influence the minds and culture of the people living in West Germany. The intention of the re-education was not just to teach the German people about a democratic society, like U.S. officials claimed, but also to teach them about American norms and values, which were presented as highly superior to German values.

Hollywood was enlisted into these efforts and its films were being used as a form of soft power. Through these films, Germans were able to see things the way Americans saw them. This made an impression on a significant part of the West-German population: especially the younger generation admired the American values of individuality and unauthoritarianism. The films chosen by the ICD were not all-powerful, however. The older generation had no desire to change

the social hierarchies of the past after seeing them, on the contrary: the Hollywood films that were shown often caused feelings of resistance amongst these conservatives. It did not help that the positive message of the film was often diluted and politicized by the *Welt im Film* newsreel that preceded it.

The U.S. government used the financial and military means they possessed to override the existing culture of a nation, so it would become more similar to the American culture. It forced open the German market during its occupation but made sure it stayed open after establishing a German democratic government, by making the German people reliant on the high quality of American products. Although the Hollywood films may not have been able to change the minds of the older generation of Germans, they were able to make an impression on the younger generation. The use of Hollywood films during the cultural re-education of West Germany made a lasting impression on the film market and the political and cultural values of a generation of West Germans. This is a prime example of soft power being used to expand the economic, political, and cultural empire of the United States and it shows that American imperialist strategies were being implemented effectively in U.S. foreign policy during the early years of the Cold War. It was also another step into the direction of creating an American hegemony.

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