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Guts & Glory... Great American War Movies

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Soviet internal developments, he nevertheless casts a critically interpretive eye on events in Western Europe, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and the Asian southern and eastern rims. Conclusion:

The events of the last decade showed less progress for the communist cause in developing societies, and more progress in advanced industrial societies, than was to be expected in the early 1960s.

The basis for this judgment is not that of revolutionary takeovers. These occurred in five developing states: Cuba, South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Angola. Rather, the basis is that of growing Communist Party strength in Western Europe, "The Enigma of Eurocommunism," simultaneously with the lapse of noncommunist resolve into "short term hedonism and a collective guilt complex." Seton-Watson sees a failure of nerve in the West that bodes ill.

However, if the European communist parties succeed to power, he does not accept that they will be clients of Moscow:

... Italian or French Eurocommunists might conceivably welcome NATO as a defense against Soviet attack. It was, after all, true that the Chinese and Yugoslav governments had long reckoned with the possibility of armed resistance to Soviet forces; why should not West European communists do likewise?

Thus Seton-Watson sees Eurocommunism as, at best, a mixed blessing and, at worst, a curse, for the Kremlin. Eurocommunist issues impact on the Soviet succession. Brezhnev's heirs likely now are taking sides on how to treat its possibilities. If it succeeds, the impact in Eastern Europe and among the nationalities may result in upheaval difficult to control. If it fails, the peaceful road to socialism will be seen

to have dead-ended. The military road, with its deadly uncertainties, will remain.

For their part, the Eurocommunists face horrendous choices. To be too revolutionary is to drive the middle classes to the right. To be too conciliatory is to drive the workers and intelligentsia to the extreme left. If they successfully participate in coalitions, they risk feedback on the Eastern European communists. If they defend the Soviet record, they lose votes. If they succeed in reducing defense expenditures, they risk Soviet occupation. If they support defense expenditures, they are typed as American stooges.

To complicate their dilemma there is the Chinese aspect. Seton-Watson notes that Peking is recommending energetic defense measures and Atlantic unity, but the phenomenon is much more significant and deserves more emphasis. The Chinese Government is fully committed to the strategy of a second front against Moscow and is using all means available, ideologic, economic, psychological, to gain that end. Moreover, Peking's counter-Soviet efforts extend around the globe and encompass the spectrum from espionage and subversion, propaganda, psychological warfare, and diplomacy to proxy combat. This was apparent during the period covered, but is insufficiently highlighted.

One hundred and fifty-two pages of profound interpretation by a great historian, this book is one of true merit.

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Suid, Lawrence H. *Guts & Glory ... Great American War Movies*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978. 357pp.

There is only one problem with this book; it's mistitled. What if a seductive nude had been used as the cover for Gray's *Anatomy*? A potential reader who is attracted by the title and cover

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will probably not make it through the contents. A scholar seeking the wealth of information contained therein might never glance inside, assuming it to be simply another gossipy Hollywood exposé. This is a sincere piece of thorough, balanced research on the portrayal of the military by profit-oriented commercial films. Seventy-one movies are discussed—why they were made, how they were made, and how they were received—including the cooperation given or withheld by military public information offices. It has the quality of a doctoral dissertation, yet a broader appeal to a generation for whom John Wayne had far more influence on World War II than did Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

There are several interesting revelations in the book, providing perceptions not obvious to either a military man or to a moviegoer. In labeling several films as antiwar (or at least in stating that to be the intended statements of their makers) Suid leaves one with the implication that the majority are "pro war." Yet, he's not quite certain (nor am I) what a film advocating war would look like. Newsreels with martial music and a detached observer's view of guns, bombs, airplanes and ships may glorify war. But without fail the films he discusses get inside the airplanes and ships to show the men, then attempt to get inside the men for a personalized view of why they will kill and risk being killed—the personal, unit, corporate and national motivation for what normally would be an irrational act. Perhaps one of the best of this genre is *Twelve O'Clock High*, still used as a teaching vehicle at such diverse institutions as the Naval War College and Harvard.

The second interesting point comes from Suid's lucid exploration of the military bureaucracy's reaction to re-

quests for support of various films. A producer attempting to film scripts about the military obviously can do a more efficient job if he has access to military expertise, hardware, and real estate. Suid makes the point that, while fine films have been done without assistance, credibility among the large audience familiar with military hardware and techniques demands realistic simulation. Military policymakers are pictured as overly concerned not with the artistic quality of a film—more accurately of the script as they are consulted in advance of filming—but with possible derogatory effects on an audience's images of "the American fighting man." Films of posterboard people performing mundane tasks in a "military manner" would be supported more readily than would more penetrating studies of men suffering moral dilemmas and exhibiting physical weaknesses in the face of mortal conflict. Killing and being killed is a rather irrational way for an American to make a living. Acceptance of that fact might make us more ready to permit unretouched and even caricatured pictures to stand or fall on their own merit.

To me it seems vital that we explore as many of the facets of warfare as possible—so that commitments of force, if they must be made, will be undertaken with full knowledge of the possible consequences. The characters of Captain Queeg and Dr. Strangelove do not epitomize man at war—any more than do General Patton and John Wayne. Suid's book provides an authoritative view of Hollywood's contribution to this understanding. It is a readable and commendable research contribution.

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