Dumbrell’s conclusions reflect the lack of any general certainty about the direction of Anglo-American relations in the post–Cold War world. He considers that the end of the Cold War security relationship and the structural changes that this has brought, as well as the societal changes in both countries over time (he cites the dramatically declining proportion of immigration from Europe into the United States), may have weakened the relationship. But he focuses his attention on Britain’s relationships with its continental partners. In his view, greater British “Europeanness” will inevitably mean that partnership with the United States is no longer an option for the UK, while an “active future” in Europe clearly is (Dumbrell, p. 225). Indeed, the United States itself may not now want to emphasize the United Kingdom over the European Union, although this prospect has periodically concerned British decision makers since the Lee Report of the early 1960s. Despite the presence of what Dumbrell calls “sentiment and personality” (Dumbrell, p. 222), structural factors will determine the future. Whether the British will be able to continue to carve a viable route between Europe and the United States is unclear, but this is certainly what Blair, like so many British prime ministers before him, is trying to do.


Reviewed by Stephen J. Whitfield, Brandeis University

What was called Airstrip One, in the Oceania of 1984, constituted Hollywood’s biggest market in the early years of the Cold War. In Britain 70 percent of the movies shown in 1951, to cite a typical year, were American. The indigenous British film industry probably exerted less influence among its own audiences than did Hollywood. Nonetheless, British studios were as deeply enmeshed in the ideological effort to vindicate common Western values, and as eager to promote acceptance of the status quo against the perils of Communist subversion. Radical dissident views—much less Stalinist perspectives—were absent from British films, which, according to Tony Shaw’s fascinating book, buttressed a cramped cultural system that flourished until the mid-1960s. *British Cinema and the Cold War* is an enlightening account of the largely unchallenged political constraints under which English studios operated, mostly in the shadow of the “special relationship” with the United States.
This pattern is illustrated by Animal Farm (1954), which was arguably the most original feature-length animated film produced in England until The Beatles’ Yellow Submarine (1968). Pitched to adults, Animal Farm rather faithfully adapted what is the most powerful political allegory written in the English language since Jonathan Swift. Yet Louis de Rochemont’s cinematic achievement can be traced to Washington, where the Psychological Strategy Board endorsed the idea of using George Orwell’s novel to torpedo the efforts of the East European Communist regimes to present themselves as the champions of social justice. Animal Farm was one of the many ornaments of culture that received funding from the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a group funded by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Orwell’s widow, Sonia Blair, signed over the movie rights partly in the hope of meeting Clark Gable. Her husband’s other enduring work, 1984, became a film that bore an even greater official imprint. 1984 (1956) was given a six-figure subsidy by the U. S. Information Agency, which also exercised control over the script. For good measure, the executive director of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, Sol Stein, vetted the script before the cameras rolled.

On the other hand, because Shaw covers films that were made in Britain as well as those made by British studios, he scrutinizes Dr. Strangelove (1963), the most important cinematic attack on the policy of nuclear deterrence. Although Stanley Kubrick made this pitch-black comedy for Columbia Pictures, he filmed it in Britain in his quest for greater creative autonomy than even the wounded Hollywood studio system then permitted. Dr. Strangelove helped to unravel the Cold War consensus—at a time when the dichotomy between good and evil was losing its credibility, thanks to British novelists like Graham Greene and John Le Carré, whose books were easily adapted for the screen. In earlier years, by contrast, films that depicted conditions behind the Iron Curtain, that warned of the dangers of espionage and of the Armageddon of nuclear warfare, and that exposed labor-management tensions generally did so while remaining in conformity with the orthodoxies of containment and the ancillary need for vigilance against foes of order.

Drawing widely and deeply on primary sources as well as secondary accounts, Shaw emphasizes how little flexibility was available in Britain to nourish the making of movies outside the prevailing strictures. To be sure, there was no parliamentary committee on un-British activities, no Tory counterpart to either Senator Joseph McCarthy or the lord of the files, J. Edgar Hoover. Instead, Britain gave refuge to the blacklisted, including scriptwriter Carl Foreman, director Joseph Losey, and even the Hollywood Ten’s Adrian Scott. At the same time, the British Board of Film Censors enforced political conformity. The Soviet documentary on The Fall of Berlin (1949) was released only after it was screened for an interested party—Winston Churchill—and only with a prologue (provided by the Foreign Office) that pointed out biases and omissions. But at least Britons could see Moscow’s version for themselves. Even though the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) commissioned Peter Watkins to imagine the aftereffects of nuclear holocaust, his film The War Game (1966) was not aired on television until 1985.
Compared to the films that attempted to promote the Red Scare in the United States, the British versions tended to be more subtle and subdued, Shaw argues. Cinematic anti-Communists who were British subjects lacked the visceral rage that, say, Mickey Rooney voiced in *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (1954): “I hate those Commies.” No overtly anti-Communist Hollywood film of the period could match the artistry of *The Third Man* (1949), which hinted at the brutality of the Soviet occupation zone in Vienna. (Viewers are more likely to remember Orson Welles’s Harry Lime, a sleazy character who was partly inspired by Kim Philby.) Shaw mentions that some British filmmakers tried to carve out a wary third way between the atrocities of the East and the coarse capitalism associated with the United States. But these efforts gained little traction against the Manichaean divisions of Cold War culture. It may be some consolation, for those who believe that diversity enriches political dialogue, that these movies probably exerted little genuine influence. *British Cinema and the Cold War* turns up no historical events that were shaped by *Highly Dangerous* (1950) or *State Secret* (1950) or *The Man Between* (1953), which were all disappointments at the box office.

The basic problem, perhaps, was that the propaganda motivating such films could not be squared with the yearning of audiences for a respite from politics, suspended as British viewers were between the loss of an empire and the ascent to unprecedented affluence. Here was a mass art form that could enchant and thrill but that was not designed to inform. The effort to inject love stories into the messages often proved so ludicrous that the propaganda was discredited too. Shaw is sensitive to the meretricious character of the films, which he aptly puts in the context of postwar British politics and society. But he fails to acknowledge that these generally artless movies tended—if anything—to understate the grisly and sinister character of Stalinism. Such gestures of propaganda usually lacked the power to sear and thus failed to raise the Iron Curtain high enough.


Reviewed by William E. Odom, Hudson Institute

Arguably, no other omission has so flawed our understanding of Soviet economic and political history as the gap in our knowledge of the military-industrial sector. Henry Roberts, one of the founders of Soviet studies at Columbia University after World War II, objected to “gap filling” history, preferring the “pole vault” approach instead. Most “gaps,” he argued, exist because they are unimportant, and it is better to “pole vault over them to important questions.” But if Roberts were still alive, he would surely recommend vaulting to the military-industrial gap, not over it.