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FENWICK, James

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**A film ‘highly offensive to our nation’: Stanley Kubrick’s *Paths of Glory* (1957),
Censorship, and Militaristic Representations of Post-War Europe**

James Fenwick

On its release in 1957, *Paths of Glory* was hailed by critics as one of the finest anti-war films ever made and described as film director Stanley Kubrick’s first masterpiece (it was only his fourth feature film). *The Manchester Guardian* said that the film brilliantly ‘examines with loathing and anger an incident in the French lines during the First World War,’ (‘Two Views of War’, 1958: 5), while Edwin Schallert at the *Los Angeles Times* said the realism of the film made it ‘practically like a documentary’ (1957: B3). Such sentiment about the film’s purported authenticity and its representation of the brutality of World War One was oft-repeated, perhaps best summed up by Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times*. His review of *Paths of Glory* also captured the controversy that surrounded the film:

Credit Kirk Douglas with having the courage to produce and appear in the screen dramatization of a novel that has been a hot potato in Hollywood for twenty-two years. *Paths of Glory* is a shocking story of a shameful incident in World War I. (...) The film is an unembroidered, documentary-like account. (Crowther, 1957: 23)

What Crowther and other film critics were referring to was the film’s depiction of seemingly barbaric and uncompassionate French generals and their treatment of the soldiers under their command. Set on the Western Front, the story centres on the French Colonel Dax (Kirk Douglas) who is ordered by his promotion-ambitious superior, Brigadier General Mireau (George Macready), to lead a suicidal attack on a heavily fortified German fortress, the

Anthill. When the attack fails, and Dax's men retreat, Mireau, enraged, attempts to order the French artillery to fire on his own men in a bid to halt their retreat. Following the disastrous attack, Mireau, along with his superior Major General Georges Broulard (Adolphe Menjou), decide that, as a means of setting an example, three men from the battalion be selected at random and put on trial for cowardice. Dax acts as the defence counsel for his own men, but it becomes obvious that the trial is nothing but a 'kangaroo court'; the men are found guilty and sentenced to death by firing squad, with little Dax can do to stop it.

This brief overview of the plot, which by no means captures the nuances and subtleties of the themes and characterisations, does highlight how the film was highly critical of both war and of the military as an institution, and of the film's overall bleak, existential nature. The film's producers (the Harris-Kubrick Pictures Corporation), publicists (Public Relations Ltd) and distributors (United Artists) were fully aware that *Paths of Glory* would be controversial, a fact that they sought to simultaneously mitigate and exploit. Their key concern was how the militaristic representations of the French in the film would be received in post-war Europe, with a clear understanding of the sensitivities across the continent about such issues. Their concerns where France was concerned were well-founded, and indeed the film was not released in France until 1975, a year after the then President, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing abolished censorship. This 18-year delay in release has to be understood within the context of France's role in World War Two. By succumbing to German Occupation in 1940, its post-war image as a great nation was seriously tarnished. To that effect, a myth of a *France Résistante* was mobilised post-war in the interests of national unity (Hayward, 2005: 133). To that end, the French government and military were in agreement to closely censor French film scripts dealing with representations of the war, the only films to pass were ones

that showed the heroic efforts of a Resistant France.¹ The need was for national unity – which a film like Kubrick’s would obviously assail. Furthermore, at the historical juncture of making and releasing this film (1957-8) France was in a position of near civil war over Algeria. So, again, national unity was highly prioritised and a film like Kubrick’s could have had devastating repercussions, not just opening old wounds but dividing the country even further.

This chapter explores the ways in which the producers of *Paths of Glory* approached the promotion of the film and the subsequent attempts by successive governments under Charles de Gaulle (who was brought back into office as Prime Minister in June 1958, most pertinently to solve the Algerian Crisis, and was President of the new Fifth Republic from 1959 to 1969) to impose a continent-wide ban on its release. Examining the representation of the French army and the European reaction and censorship of the film, the chapter will put the history of *Paths of Glory*’s release in Europe into the cultural and political context of the era.

Origins of a Controversy

Paths of Glory was adapted from the novel of the same by Humphrey Cobb (1899-1944). Published in 1935, the book was a condemnation of the military system and what Cobb perceived as the inherent corruption of its leadership. The aim of the book was not to suggest that only one nation’s army (France) was immoral, but all the world’s armies. Cobb infused the novel with his own experiences of having served in the Canadian Army during the First World War, having enlisted – at the age of seventeen – in 1917. His service involved participation in the Battle of Amiens. Arguably, his experiences of the horrors of war and,

¹ Between 1944-58 a mere 30 films were made about the war, of which 21 were produced between 1944-47, with only 9 made between 1947-58 – of these 30 films, 19 were about the Resistance (Hayward, 2005: 193-4).

indeed, his involvement in one of the first mass uses of armoured warfare (the Allied assault on the Germans involved over 600 tanks and 2000 aircraft) heavily influenced his approach to writing *Paths of Glory* and his framing of military systems and institutionalised terror. He wanted to avoid the nobility of previous anti-war novels and, instead, suggest an institutional complicity and fatalism, in which there were no shades of black or white, good and evil.² He reflected such thoughts in 1933 when annotating his diary from 1917-1918:

Where all these *Journey's Ends* and *All Quiets* fail utterly as anti-war propaganda, indeed where they become pro-war propaganda, is in the stoicism, the self-abnegation, the idealism and romantic nobility which they portray. (...) How the actors hate war, etc., but Christ, how nobly they suffer! (...) The only available effective anti-war propaganda that I know is photographs of butchered bodies – the more horrible the better. (Simon, 2010: vii-viii)

Cobb's vision of war and the military was uncompromising, and he was aware that, by espousing such a vision, it would cause concern among nation-state governments. *Paths of Glory* was meant to be controversial from its very inception.

Cobb contemplated a film adaptation of the book soon after its release, discussing the idea with the playwright and screenwriter Sidney Howard (1891-1939) (Howard was the screenwriter for *Gone with the Wind*, Fleming, 1939, for which he received a posthumous Academy Award). In their conversations, Cobb and Howard anticipated that the French government above all others would attempt to block any kind of international release 'on the

² Given France's huge losses during World War One it is perhaps unsurprising that there was a dearth of films dealing directly with the war. Only three out of the nine films made in the period 1919-28 endeavoured to expose the horrors of war (*J'accuse*, Gance 1919; *Le Film du poilu*, Desfontaines, 1928; *Verdun, visions d'histoire*, Poirier, 1929), the other six towed the official line of the heroic sacrifice of the French.

just grounds that it would clearly be unfair to attribute to France alone an episode which in one form or another belongs to every nation at war' (Howard n.d.).

Cobb and Howard's exploration of an adaptation of *Paths of Glory* came in the late 1930s, ahead of the growing prospect of a new war in Europe. This seemed to motivate them, both believing that Hollywood was duty bound and morally obliged to sanction an adaptation. Howard first adapted the book for the stage, which debuted on Broadway's Plymouth Theatre in September 1935. The reviews for the stage play adaptation perhaps prompted Howard and Cobb's thinking of a cinematic adaptation. Russell Holman of the *New York Times* said of the play that, 'one convincing fact comes out crystal clear, namely that "Paths of Glory" would be a great motion picture and Howard's dramatization is practically a motion picture script' (Holman, 1935). Meanwhile, John Byram wrote that Howard's script required the scope of the cinematic medium, but wondered whether it would be achievable:

Whether the French and other international complications are too much against it, is, of course, something that studio policies will have to decide. There is a universal quality in the play and book that should rise above nationalistic barriers, but the men have to be of a specific nationality, and the scene has to be somewhere. Whatever country is selected will doubtless give voice to protests. But there is no question that the material for a picture is there one hundred per cent. (Byram n.d.)

Parallel to the stage version of *Paths of Glory* playing on Broadway, Howard and Cobb were in negotiations with Paramount for a film adaptation of the book. But just as Byram had indicated, Paramount were cautious and had forwarded Howard's script to the French government, effectively providing them with a veto. Financing of the project depended on the French government's acceptance of the script, with Paramount unwilling 'to take issue with

the foreign government on the dramatic premise in the play' ('Par Awaits French O.K.', 1935: 5). Not unsurprisingly, the French government were not willing to sanction the script and threatened to ban all of Paramount's pictures in France if they went ahead with any future production.

It is important in this context to clarify that France's hostility to the script was elicited by the implicit critique of the French military elite who sent so many men to their deaths. The 1930s in France was also a period of considerable civil unrest. The economic impact of the Great Depression brought in its wake a fear by the possessing classes of a perceived threat of the working and peasant classes and the rise of Bolshevism in their ranks. By exposing the brutality of the elite classes, *Paths of Glory* could, therefore, constitute a threat to civil order. Moreover, in 1932, Raymond Bernard had made the brutally honest film *Les Croix de bois* which portrayed the banality of war in all its meaninglessness as it affected the ordinary soldiers — and was in many ways the last word on the subject. It was screened at the League of Nations World Disarmament Conference as a moving call for peace. It was also, importantly, in the context of this essay, seen by its director as a 'direct response to what was broadly perceived of in France as the American artifice, melodrama and bombastic special effects in *The Big Parade* (King Vidor, 1925) and *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Lewis Milestone, 1930).'³

One solution considered was to devise an imaginary army for the story, one tied to a fictional nation, but this was something Cobb and Howard were set against: "I objected to that because it seemed to me that the story might easily become a pointless horror if it were not definitely tied up with war and an army as the screen's public know it and believe it" (Howard n.d.). It seemed that a cinematic production of *Paths of Glory* would have to wait, pending a more favourable political context both in France and wider post-WWI Europe.

³ <<https://montagesmagazine.com/2017/04/les-croix-de-bois-an-encounter-with-war/>> (accessed 25 May 2020).

European Context

Censorship of film and media in France in the 1950s and 1960s should not be thought of as arising from the so-called ‘May 1958 crisis,’ the collapse of the Fourth Republic, and the return to power of General Charles de Gaulle. Censorship of all forms of media in France, particularly television news, can be traced back to the Fourth Republic and the escalating Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) (Bourdon, 1998: 231). There was an attempt to control the flow of information about the war and to prevent any kind of satirical portrayal of both politicians and military commanders. De Gaulle’s successive governments merely continued the practice of censorship initiated by previous governments. However, De Gaulle was largely concerned with films and television that criticised policy decisions and, more important with respect to *Paths of Glory*, made allusions to ‘painful episodes of recent history such as the German occupation and collaboration’ (Bourdon, 1998: 232). The belief was that such material had to be suppressed to avoid any further crises in public morality and to maintain social order, both in France and in Algeria. This became the prevailing attitude, with the French government able to ban any film, foreign or domestic, due to ‘reasons of state’ (ibid.)

What resulted under De Gaulle was a growing climate of sensitivity to any material related to war, to French occupations, or its collusion in war crimes of any kind. As such, it was inevitable that films like *Le Chagrin et la pitié/The Sorrow and the Pity* (Ophüls, 1969), a film originally commissioned for French television, was not aired on that medium – a medium that became De Gaulle’s favoured means of mass communicative control – until 1981 (Brizzi, 2018: 5-6). The film was, however, first screened in *art et essai* cinemas in 1971 and subsequently word of mouth brought it into mainstream cinemas. The documentary focuses on the collaboration between the Vichy government and the Nazis during World War

Two, but crucially showed the ways in which the French people did or did not resist the Occupation and the brutality of the Vichy government toward them. Although it is true that, as the director of the RTF-ORTF channel at the time, Jean-Jacques de Bresson put it, it was not the kind of film that fit with the official version of history, destroying the ‘myths that the people of France still need’ (Jeffries, 2004), nonetheless, according to Ophuls the film was not censored, giving as the reason for the ORTF not buying his film that it was too expensive.⁴ Those necessary myths were based on the idea of the heroism of all French people during the Occupation; what *The Sorrow and the Pity* presented however (as did a number of other films that fell afoul of the De Gaulle government) was the reality of how many French people did nothing and allowed their fellow citizens, particularly Jews, to be denounced and taken away by the Nazis.⁵ As Martin Jackson suggests, ‘*The Sorrow and the Pity* struck at the pride and conscience of an entire generation of Frenchmen and caused the young to look upon their fathers with new eyes.’ However, it was not, as he claims ‘promptly banned’ (1972: 36).

France was not alone in asserting nationalistic pride by banning or preventing films from being screened that presented troubling militaristic representations. Italy, for example, had issues with a number of war films in the late 1950s, including not only *Paths of Glory*, but also *A Farewell to Arms* (Vidor, 1957) and a proposed adaptation of Ugo Pirro’s novel *Le soldatesse* (1956) by French producer Raoul Lévy, which he wanted to shoot in the country. Italy had long been in the grip of the Christian Democracy party, which had led successive centrist and centre-left coalitions in the post-war years. But this did not prevent a hostile reception to war films, particularly American financed war films, which portrayed the country in less than a positive light. *A Farewell to Arms*, an adaptation of Ernest

⁴ See Jeancolas (1979: 209). And https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Chagrin_et_la_Pitié Accessed 24 May 2020.

⁵ In the 1950s, with regard to Algeria, and again in 1960s there were two major incidents of banning films: *La Bataille d’Alger* 1966 and *Le Petit soldat* 1960 (Hayward, 2005: 33).

Hemingway's novel, told of the Italian retreat at the Battle of Caporetto during World War One. As for Lévy's proposed adaptation of *Le soldatesse*, it was an unflattering portrayal of Italian troops in World War Two and the use of prostitutes for entertainment. Lévy himself was fully aware of the potential problems he would face in any adaptation and went on record as saying that he thought the film, if produced, would never be allowed a release in Italy ('Military Pride', 1958: 1). Lévy eventually abandoned the film, but it was adapted several years later by producer Moris Ergas as *The Camp Followers* (Zurlini, 1965).

Arguably, the French government under De Gaulle was placing pressure on neighbouring allies, including Italy, Belgium, and Switzerland with specific regard to *Paths of Glory*. Indeed, it was the latter country that, in contradiction to its long-stated armed neutrality and formal non-involvement in both World Wars, instigated controversy over the censorship of *Paths of Glory*, banning the film after its release in December 1958 and refusing to allow journalists to privately screen it. This was on the basis that the film was 'subversive propaganda directed at France and highly offensive to that nation' ('Swiss Press Outraged', 1958: 7). It is intriguing that Switzerland took such an approach given its German-speaking majority population and raises questions around the political pressure being placed by De Gaulle's government on European allies. Journalists were highly perturbed by the Swiss government's actions and demanded to know why the Federal Council (the Swiss executive council and collective head of state and government) chose this film, over other forms of media, to enact censorship, and what the precise relations were between France and Switzerland 'that they have to be treated with such delicacy?' ('Swiss Press Outrage', 1958: 7). There were no immediate, or obvious, answers to these questions.

The French government also exerted pressure on the Allied powers in Berlin to ban the film. They had imposed their own ban in the French-sector of the city and invoked directives set out by the Allied Control Council in 1946 to prevent the film being screened at

the 8th Berlin International Film Festival ('France Veto Keeps UA's "Glory" Out of West Berlin', 1958). However, following the completion of the festival, the American and British governments allowed *Paths of Glory* to be played in their respective sectors of the city. The French argued that this was a dangerous precedent and that fifty French citizens in the city who had seen the film had incited a riot as a result, protesting its negative portrayal of the French army. A similar reaction had supposedly occurred in Belgium, where 'manifestations by pro-French groups had forced its withdrawal' from Brussels ('Glory Runs Into Many Troubles in Brussels', 1958: 12). And once again, the French government used this to pressure the Belgian government to ban the film. However, despite initially relenting and withdrawing the film, the Belgian government allowed it to be released in first-run theatres in April 1958, on the condition that it would be played with a foreword approved by the French government, which read as follows:

This episode of the 1914–1918 war tells of the madness of certain men caught in its whirlwind. It constitutes an isolated case in total contrast with the historical gallantry of the vast majority of French soldiers, the champions of the ideal of liberty, which, since always, has been that of the French people. ('Disputed Film On Again', 1958: 35)

The foreword was a means to emphasise how, first, the events in *Paths of Glory* were in fact extraordinary: this was not typical behaviour of the French officer class, but rather an isolated event dramatized for the big screen. Second, it aimed to placate the film's offense and representation of the French military – and by extension the French people – by reiterating the country's ideal of liberty, freedom and heroism. But despite the message being conveyed,

the foreword did little to prevent further protests and the film was finally banned from all Belgian theatres by the end of 1958.

The French government itself never actually banned the film in the country, despite pressuring neighbouring European countries to do so. Instead, the Ministry of the Interior merely threatened UA that they would ban all their productions should they choose to release the film in the country. The real reasons behind the furore surrounding *Paths of Glory* are twofold, and interconnected. The first concerns the economic relations between the French and American film industries as a result of the Blum-Byrnes Accord signed in 1946. The second — a by-product of the Marshall Aid agreement which opened French markets to American products — was an increasing feeling of hostility to the Americanization of the French way of life. On this second point, while nationalist pride was arguably at stake in terms of the way in which France was being represented, there were hints in the press towards a much more complex motivation in the response to the film. As the trade journal *Variety* reported, ‘Each nation jealously guards its military traditions and takes pride in its accomplishments. Since audiences are primarily interested in identifying with their own army, the accent inevitably is on the nationalistic side’ (‘Military Pride’, 1958). The suggestion was that audiences were not offended by the film’s moralistic message and anti-war themes, but rather that French soldiers were portrayed by American actors. At its heart, the reaction to *Paths of Glory* in Europe could have been more about the ontological threat of Americanization of the continent. If this was the case, such sensibilities were perhaps not recognised by *Paths of Glory*’s producers who, in a rather crass piece of publicity, issued a press release saying that it was a ‘dramatic war story of a French military unit on the western front being made in Germany with an all American English speaking cast’ (‘Press release’ 1957). One French cinemagoer who saw the film was reported to have said that he felt *Paths of Glory* was ‘too strong’ and would be objected to by his fellow countrymen because it was

‘made by Americans and concerns itself solely with an incident within the French Army’ (‘Military Pride, 1958: 48). Viewed in this light, Kubrick’s film would undoubtedly be perceived as an American interpretation of French history, which in and of itself was unacceptable.

As to the first point, the Blum-Byrnes Accord (as part of the overall Marshall Aid agreement) meant that France had to end the system of film quotas for American films (which had previously been imposed in 1936 and fixed at 188 U.S. films per year) and adopt a screen quota system whereby France would screen French produced films for 4 out of every 13, the other 9 weeks being given over to U.S. products. The French cinemas were flooded with American movies (including many turkeys). This glut of films was perceived by the French as a ‘New Occupation’, this time by a proselytization of an American way of life. In 1948, after numerous protests by film personnel from all quarters, this initial agreement was amended and French films had exclusivity for 5 out of 13 weeks. In the end things settled down and, by the time of Kubrick’s film, around 140 American films were screened to France’s 100 or so per annum (Hayward, 2005: 24-6).

The threat of Americanization to European culture and its film industries was, therefore, of real concern, and not just to France. Not only were there quota systems which threatened, there were also the so-called ‘runaway productions’ such as *Paths of Glory*, in which American-financed film productions were relocating to European countries – a process that had exacerbated throughout the late 1950s (Fenwick, 2017: 191-92). While government subsidies were being used to lure prospective productions to Europe, there were some that felt that Hollywood was developing a cultural monopoly over European nations and, in the process, presenting an Americanised viewpoint of the world (ibid., 194-95). By the end of the 1950s, close to fifty percent of films screened in Europe were American produced (Sorlin, 1999: 412). This should also be seen against the context of Charles de Gaulle’s efforts to

create a pan-European identity, separate and independent of the American domination of the continent in the post-war years.

In summary, then, *Paths of Glory* was potentially a lightning rod for developing tensions in Europe around the continent's role in the world in the post-war years, and of De Gaulle's efforts to avoid a subjugated Europe of the Americans. In this context, *Paths of Glory* perhaps could have avoided the controversy that surrounded its release in Europe with an appropriate publicity campaign. What follows is a brief overview of that campaign and the ways in which the film's various producers approached it.

***Paths of Glory* Failed Publicity and clashes of cultures**

Stanley Kubrick first read Cobb's *Paths of Glory* when he was twelve years old, so sometime between 1940 and 1941 (Varela, 1958: 167). This would have been around the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the USA's entry into World War Two. Kubrick lived in New York at the time and would have been fully aware of the brutality of the conflict. The unflinching and brutalist portrayal of warfare and the military high command clearly stayed with Kubrick when he chose to pursue an adaptation of Cobb's book in 1956.

The draft script, which Kubrick had worked on with Jim Thompson and Calder Willingham throughout the autumn of 1956, was submitted to the MPAA for approval by the Production Code Administration (PCA) on 20 December 1956. While the PCA was, overall, happy with the script, it raised major concerns over the issue of the portrayal of the French military and the French High Command. Geoffrey Shurlock, head of the PCA, urged Harris-Kubrick Pictures to reconsider the project due to the problems any adaptation of *Paths of Glory* would surely encounter abroad given the way it represented the French military. Shurlock made clear that, while this was not a violation as such of the Production Code, it 'would be remiss in our relationship with you were we not to urge you to consult with your

distributing organization concerning the reception of this film in the foreign market’ (Shurlock, 1957, n.p.).

The PCA’s concerns about the controversial nature of the film were not unfounded. Kubrick himself admitted to the struggle Harris-Kubrick faced in finding a distributor to back the project (Gelmis, 1970). The problem was compounded by the fact that Harris-Kubrick’s relationship with a key Hollywood distributor, United Artists (UA), had soured following a falling out about their previous production, *The Killing* (1956) (see Fenwick, 2020b: 69-70). Harris-Kubrick would most likely have failed to obtain any kind of backing for the project, beyond maybe low-budget funding, if it weren’t for the intervention of Kirk Douglas.

Douglas was one of Hollywood’s leading stars of the 1950s and, more important, one of its top independent producers, with his production company Bryna Productions having entered numerous non-exclusive contracts with the likes of UA. Douglas had become aware of Harris-Kubrick after the company had placed a trade-ad in *Variety* to promote *The Killing*. The company sent Douglas a copy of the *Paths of Glory* script around December 1956 and a meeting followed in January 1957, at which it was agreed that Douglas would appear in the film on several conditions: his production company, Bryna, would receive the producing credit for the film even though they had no ownership of the picture; that Harris-Kubrick would have to produce a further four pictures for Bryna; and promotion and publicity would be supervised by Douglas’s own team at Public Relations Ltd., in liaison with UA (Fenwick, 2020). The deal with Douglas represented the start of the problems in the failed European publicity strategy for *Paths of Glory*, with multiple vested interests now having a say in how the film would be promoted.

Douglas described *Paths of Glory* as a ‘worthwhile project’ and felt strongly about its themes and anti-war message (Douglas, 1957a, n.p.). As he told the Humphrey Cobb Estate, he aimed to use his influence to ensure that an adaptation of a ‘beautiful property’ like *Paths*

of Glory would live up to Cobb's original expectations (Douglas 1957b, n.p.). Douglas was also clearly instrumental in convincing a major Hollywood company, UA, to back what was a controversial project. As he claimed in an interview with his biographer, Michael Munn, in 1985, 'I'm the one who set up Kubrick's *Paths of Glory* because he couldn't get the money. I went to United Artists and raised the financing' (quoted in Munn, 1985: 68). Douglas, who as head of Bryna had signed a six-picture contract with UA in 1955, had significant sway with the company, particularly its chief executive, Arthur Krim.

Whatever the conditions attached to the deal for *Paths of Glory*, Douglas surely must have convinced them that the controversial fallout from the project would be minimal and might even work in the film's favour. UA was not averse to backing controversial projects ever since its takeover in 1951 by Krim and Robert Benjamin. The pair had been supportive of director and producer Otto Preminger as he began to explore social taboos, including drug addiction, rape, and sex in films like *The Moon is Blue* (1953) and *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955). UA had decided to release both films without the seal of approval of the Production Code, which caused considerable controversy; however, this did little to impact on their box office success.

Paths of Glory was a substantially different case though. The area of concern did not merely involve a domestic body like the PCA but brought UA into political conflict on an international stage. And yet, Douglas and his publicist, Stan Margulies, were keen to push and exploit the film's controversial nature and were not averse to employing a rhetoric of war to make their case. Just days after the deal between Bryna and UA had been agreed, Margulies raised with UA the issue of what he called the 'possible consequences of the anti-French sentiment in *Paths of Glory*' (Margulies 1957a, n.p.). Margulies had been in conversation with Douglas and the pair had agreed that they should pre-empt such consequences by actively 'stirring up a controversy over the French aspects of the situation'

(Ibid.). The exact timing of this plan wasn't clear, though Margulies seemed to favour acting sooner rather than later, viewing the situation as a public relations war with the French government. For Margulies and Douglas, the controversial theme of the film was the 'biggest gun in our artillery' when it came to publicity (Margulies n.d.).

This desire to push the controversial nature of the film's theme, whilst completely neglecting the sensitivities of the French, constitutes a remarkable example of a clash of cultures whereby the insider (in this instance the French) is excluded from its lived experience by an outsider (the American film industry) with a belligerence (embedded in war-like rhetoric) that will brook no resistance. A cultural insensitivity towards the French made all the harder to bear by filming *Paths of Glory* in the land of its enemy, Germany.

UA had suggested that Bryna, for the time being 'sidestep' the issue and merely mention that the film was set during World War One, with no specific reference to any one nation (Picker, 1957). This was clearly not possible though, given that the production was to be filmed mainly in Germany, with European press being invited to visit the set. As Margulies pointed out:

Not only are a large number of the press already acquainted with the basic narrative but we shall also be distributing copies of the script to photo services for publicity breaks. All we can do is to soft-pedal the more controversial aspects. (Margulies 1957a, n.p)

Publicity executives at UA were alarmed at the prospect of escalating any controversy so early in the production, not least because they had other independent producers in Europe developing and shooting big budget pictures. This included Kirk Douglas who, following the completion of *Paths of Glory*, was moving straight into production of *The Vikings* (Fleischer,

1958), some of which was at the time scheduled to be filmed in Paris. UA, while agreeing that controversy might eventually be good for the promotion of *Paths of Glory*, stressed to Margulies that it had to be handled in an ordered fashion and much closer to the release date to protect other UA properties (Picker, 1957). The cooperation of the French authorities on *The Vikings* was of greater importance at that moment for UA over a smaller-budgeted film like *Paths of Glory*.

While *Paths of Glory* was being produced in Germany, an official policy was implemented by UA and Public Relations that they would not talk about the controversial elements of the film with the press. This was plainly absurd to Harris, Kubrick and the film's unit publicist, Syd Stogel, all of whom were being left out of the publicity strategy developed by Public Relations and UA. Stogel complained to UA that even though they were 'skimming over or ignoring this aspect to avoid difficulties during production (...) if we get visiting newsmen from Paris, this issue may explode prematurely' (Stogel, 1957a, n.p.). Margulies and UA told Stogel and Harris not to invite any French press to the production in Germany and should any French press attempt to visit of their own accord, then they had to be stalled (Margulies, 1957b). The attitude that this presented was that the film's producers had something to hide and did not want the cooperation of the French: in other words, it made it seem like *Paths of Glory* was not merely an anti-war film, but an anti-French film.

In contrast to the strategy being pursued by UA and Public Relations, Stogel and Harris were attempting to promote the film's realism and authenticity. Stogel's press releases stressed that the film would be 'the great war film of all time, made with new approaches, new techniques, new ideas' (Stogel, 1957a, n.p.). The authenticity of its production and the extent to which the crew went to recreate the battlefields of World War One was the focal point of Stogel and Harris' approach, as set out in several press releases. For example, Stogel wrote about the extensive technical labour involved in recreating the World War One

trenches, saying ‘for 3 weeks, some 60 workmen laboured in day- and nightshifts to create the battlefield using 8 cranes to dig out crater holes and trenches and to create a barren waste’ (Stogel, 1957b, n.p.). The emphasis was placed not on the story, nor on the film’s leading star, but rather on Harris and Kubrick themselves. Stogel wrote stories about Kubrick’s dedication to what he called ‘stark realism’, saying the director ‘spared neither time, money nor effort in faithfully reproducing an authentic World War One setting. From the day the script was finished, a basic aim of the film was to recreate the grim, terrifying atmosphere’ (Stogel, 1957b).

At the same time, Harris was involved in developing exploitation material. This included producing a documentary newsreel about the production, with a focus again on the authenticity of the special effects and technical aspects of the film. The documentary recorded behind the scenes footage, which Harris hoped would be used for television broadcast and ‘in conjunction with interviews on TV’ (Harris, 1957, n.p.). However, UA and Public Relations, on learning of Harris’ project, advised him to stay away from the ‘technical aspects’ of the making of the film and instead advised him to develop a ‘tourist-type travelogue (...) leaving the set to visit some of Munich’s famous places or buildings’ (Margulies, 1957). They also suggested documentary footage that focused on Douglas and, perhaps somewhat ill-judged, a feature on ‘how to take over a castle (this would show the entry of the Americans, probably for the second time since WW [sic] into the Schleissheim Castle)’ (Beck, 1957, n.p.). Despite Harris’ desire to have authorial control of the documentary, UA intervened and requested that the recorded material be sent to them for editing as they had ‘specific format lines’ which they followed (Beck, 1957).

A confused approach to the publicity of *Paths of Glory* was emerging. There were several ill-advised suggestions by the UA team that did not take account of the sensitive political contexts in Europe. Perhaps one of the worst suggestions was from Fran Winikus,

UA's director of publicity, who devised the tag line 'secrets the French military archives never revealed' for the German release of the picture (Gould, 1957, n.p.). As a result of wanting to avoid any discussion of the controversial aspects of the film, the eventual political fallout of the film in Europe seemed to catch UA off-guard, despite the fact that its publicists did everything to exacerbate it. The pressure exacted by the French government forced UA to agree to withhold the film's distribution in the country (it was never officially banned) until the political atmosphere changed 'sufficiently to make the French censor more philosophical about this picture' (Kubrick, 1958, n.p.).

One figure that hasn't been discussed is Kubrick himself and his attitude on the exploitation of the film's controversial themes. He was clearly dismayed at the situation at UA and believed it had handled the publicity and exploitation of the film all wrong, capitulating too easily to the demands of De Gaulle and his government. This included a belief that Public Relations and UA were not working for *Paths of Glory*, but rather for the Kirk Douglas star-machine (Fenwick 2020). Kubrick's displeasure was clear from his subversive efforts to convince a French distributor to buy the picture from UA in December 1958. Kubrick believed that, if handled by a French distributor who could convince the press to view the film as anti-war, not anti-French, that it 'would probably be one of the biggest grossers in the history of France' (Kubrick, 1958, n.p.). Moreover, he felt that they needed to make as much controversy as possible to ensure such commercial success: 'The controversy over it would undoubtedly cause front page headlines and public demonstrations. At the risk of sounding cynical, one could hardly hope for a better kind of movie publicity and promotion' (Kubrick, 1958). Kubrick had been of the belief that the controversy surrounding the film needed to be exploited to its full potential and that UA should face down any attempts at censorship being threatened by the French government. But his request came to nothing and the film was left unreleased in France until 1975. The political control over mass

media in France began to ease in the decade after *Paths of Glory*'s release, first under De Gaulle's successor from 1969 to 1974, Georges Pompidou, but substantially so under Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, a liberal conservative and president from 1974 to 1981. It was during this time that Michel Guy, Secretary of State for Culture, overturned years of censorship of films deemed politically sensitive, or what had been termed 'problems of the cinema' (Robertson 1975). The new favorable climate in France finally allowed *Paths of Glory* to be released in the country, but it was delayed; this time, not due to political pressure, but rather by Kubrick himself who was overseeing the publicity campaign for the film in between the production of *Barry Lyndon* (1975).

Conclusion

While *Paths of Glory* had long been a controversial novel that Hollywood had feared to adapt, its militaristic representations were not based on any anti-French sentiment, but on anti-war themes. The problems, however, stemmed from a combination of nationalistic pride in France and other European nations in the post-war years, attempts to (re)claim a proud history of resistance and independence, and a desire to prevent any kind of political or cultural subjugation of Europe by the USA. Arguably, the real controversy of *Paths of Glory* was not that it featured the French army, but that it was produced and financed by Americans, shot in Germany, and featured an American cast in the role of French officers. A list of problematic cultural clashes ensues from this controversy in which outsiders are producing texts about a very specifically insider event. First, there is the original event itself; second, the text written by a Canadian, who as a World War One combatant was a witness to the event, so he was both outsider and insider (providing therefore a level of authenticity); third, there is the mighty Hollywood film industry, which as an outsider does not choose to respect the position of the insider, France (who as mentioned above was facing a great deal of civil

unrest at home); fourth, here is the big outsider (in terms of production company, film director, film star) coming to Europe, shooting a film about the French military's act of brutality and filming it in Germany of all places — a reterritorialization of an actual event into the former enemy's camp is certainly yet another affront to France.

The failed publicity strategy of UA – or at the very least, its confused strategy – resulted in a mixed message between UA, Public Relations, and Harris-Kubrick Pictures as to whether to exploit the film's controversial themes and, if so, when. While UA were keen to mitigate commercial risk and protect their other properties, the likes of Douglas, Stan Margulies and even Kubrick wanted to push ahead and produce a publicity campaign that maximized the exploitation of controversy. For Kubrick, he felt that he needed control over the publicity strategy in order to effectively achieve this and admonished UA for their bungled attempts. As becomes clear from Kubrick's later career, he would repeatedly face down cultural and political forces that demanded his films be shut down, censored, or banned, from *Lolita* (1962) through to *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). Kubrick, however, would not relent and made the controversy his films received a core component of how they were publicized and understood.

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