

Hollywood blacklist – Time, Ideology and Motion Picture Industry (abstract)

The Hollywood blacklist remains open chapter in the U.S. Cold War history. Popularity of this topic is proved by the relatively big interest of foreign historiography as well as amount of published memoirs written by blacklistedees. My thesis tries to cover whole issue in the widest context which could be divided to three basic levels.

Firstly, it is necessary to focus on the period which consists of presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower. The text deals particularly with effects of the Great Depression and transformation of U.S. foreign policy. The American superpower changed from isolationistic state to active participant in the wartime alliance and then finally to the leader of the western world in the Cold War. The emergence of consumer society is also an important aspect.

The second part discusses a conflict on ideological level. After elementary definition of American thinking, attention has focused on its crisis and “renaissance” in the thirties and forties. Following analyses of anti-communism talks about the First Red Scare, the most important members of the radical patriots and its specific rhetoric. Equally crucial point is description of the fact how did mass society perceive the red menace. Bolshevik ideology naturally stands in opposition to Americanism. It is necessary to describe the red community in Hollywood as well as dramatic development of the whole communist movement in the USA. At this point, it is very important to remind that the inseparable part of CPUSA’s history contains a wide range of espionage activities.

After two previous chapters, analysis focuses on the microcosm of Hollywood. At the beginning of the 20th century, the motion picture industry was just a marginalia, but thanks to rapid development it has soon become one of the most influential businesses in the country. American cinematography had a lot of unique features. The “studio system” is probably the most crucial one because it gave bosses almost uncontrollable power. The Second World War brought Hollywood to the top. Under the surface of this success, there existed a few latent problems, particularly an unsolved trade union situation, that caused a lot of troubles in the late forties. Great financial prosperity disappeared and recession followed by downfall emerged on the break of decades. In this anxious atmosphere, anti-communists led by the House Committee on Un-American Activities started the witch-hunt that aimed at red espionage in the motion picture industry. HUAC backed by various pressure groups established an effective system of blacklisting during three main rounds of investigations.

The existence of the Hollywood blacklist maintained in full strength to the sixties. It had roots in the certain aspects of american thinking while it was enforced by Cold War hysteria.