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POLITICS AND WAR IN THE CANNES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE FESTIVAL'S UNIFYING AGENDA

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By Julia G. Wood

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion
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Approved:

Advisor: Dr. Anne Quinney

Reader: Dr. Emily Fransee

Reader: Dr. Ian Gowan

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Abstract:

Since its inception, the Cannes International Film Festival was envisioned as a means of using film as a method of diplomacy. In fact, the first two decades of the two-week long festival on the banks of the French Riviera sought to unify politically divided nations in the years following World War II and into the Cold War. My research seeks to identify the political agenda of the festival in the early years and how the Cannes International Film Festival promoted transnationalism and unity between divided nations. I argue that the festival was able to accomplish its unifying agenda through the invitation for all nations to participate and the apportionment of grand-prize winning films among many attending nations in the early years. Additionally, through a series of film analyses I conclude that many of the movies awarded the grand prize at the festival emphasized anti-war and pacifist-minded sentiments. The Cannes International Film Festival awarded the grand prizes to many films that showed the horrors of war, thus, providing spectators a message that the festival does not tolerate violence and divisiveness rather it seeks unity and peace.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology

For nearly the past 75 years the Cannes International Film Festival has brought thousands of individuals from across the world together to celebrate the arts. The rather glamorous two-week long film festival on the banks of the French Riviera has attracted the likes of well-known celebrities from Arnold Schwarzenegger to Clint Eastwood to Timothée Chalamet— just to name a few. Not only has a celebration of the arts attracted these A-list celebrities, but so has the ritz of the sophisticated parties as well as the political implications of the festival that takes place in the port city. However, the long-standing history of the festival is not as glamorous as the stars and paparazzi may show.

In fact, the film festival was created as a response to the pro-Nazi propaganda at the Venice Film Festival, formally known as the Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica. In 1932 the Venice Film Festival was inaugurated as the world's first international film festival; however, by 1938 the film festival became a means of promoting pro-Fascist and Nazi propaganda. Adolf Hitler's Germany and Benito Mussolini's Italy envisioned the Venice Film Festival as a vehicle to promote their superiority and fascist culture, dictating the films that were broadcasted at the festival, while making sure their pro-fascist films were awarded the grand prize. This came to a head when in 1938 the film festival refused to award the French film director, Jean Renoir's, anti-war and pacifist-minded film *La Grande Illusion* the top award for the best film at the festival (Mazdon 23). As a result, the French were determined to create their own film festival, one that would promote and broadcast international cinema rather than biased film used as propaganda to support their nation's fascist government.

After careful deliberation (and competition among many cities in France) the French government chose Cannes as the city to host the inaugural French film festival. With the

intention being to rival the Venice Film Festival, the inaugural Cannes International Film Festival was set to occur on the very same dates as the opposing festival in Venice, with the grand opening on September 1st, 1939 (Turan 14). The film festival attracted French filmmakers as well as those from the United States, Great Britain, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Belgium— all who arrived in France mid-August for the debut festival. The same day that the German American director, William Dieterle's film, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, kicked off the festival, Hitler invaded Poland (Périsse). Thus, after only one movie premiere, the Cannes International Film Festival was cancelled. Two days later, France declared war on Germany.

It was not until after the conclusion of World War II that the French government approved a revival of the Cannes International Film Festival, this time with the intention of displaying how peace could be preserved through film, even in the aftermath of war. Instead of just six countries that participated in the original festival in 1939, 21 nations were represented in the revival of the Cannes International Film Festival that occurred in 1946. The official press release announcing the affair boasted that the festival would be “a big show of friendship between nations, and particularly between France and the United States who began the project” (Schwartz 58). Regulations for the Festival also stated that Cannes would “encourage the development of the cinematographic arts in all its forms to create among all film producing countries a spirit of collaboration” (Schwartz 59). As one commentator described, “At Cannes, nations, including the United States, coexisted, cooperated, and coproduced” (Ostrowska 95). Thus, it is evident that the festival served as a vehicle to unite a mass of people in the years following the end of the German occupation. For that reason, the festival has long relished in the intersection between entertainment and politics. My research seeks to identify the political

agenda of the festival in the early years and how the Cannes International Film Festival promoted transnationalism and unity between politically divided nations.

The methodology of my research will consist of an analysis of the grand prize recipients of the best film at the film festival. As past literature has stated, politics has historically played such a large role in the festival and political considerations often seem pertinent to the decision of which films win prizes (Corless and Darke 4). My research seeks to identify the political decisions of the jury at the Cannes International Film Festival in determining whom and what country received the grand prize and analyze how the grand prize-winning films contributed to the agenda of the festival. Specifically, I will examine these factors between the years 1946 and 1968. I have chosen to analyze between these dates because past research on the festival grouped these years into one distinct phase of the Cannes International Film Festival due to conflict resolution.

Among the grand prize films from the 22 years, I will analyze the grand prize-winning films to determine the themes of the winning cinemas and how the films themselves contribute to promoting transnationalism. Upon researching each grand prize-winning film and watching the movies that are available with English subtitles, I have determined the major theme presented. Many of the grand prize-winning films in the early years have a common theme that many European entries that suffered from German occupation did at the time—the ‘common mythology’ of resistance. I will analyze the films’ portrayal of war to determine how a film’s position on war impacted the agenda of the festival.

I will begin my research, in chapter 2, by examining what past authors have said regarding the festival as a transnationalist and unifying space. In chapter 3, I will examine the nations that attended the festival in the first 22 years and discuss how the participating nations

displayed unity. I will also analyze the apportionment of grand-prize winning films to participating countries. In chapter 4 of my research, I will conduct a film analysis to discover how many of the grand-prize winning films displayed similar anti-war sympathies. The final chapter of my research will consist of a conclusion that relates the festival's call for unity with its anti-war agenda. I also will relate my research to the present day by discussing how the Cannes International Film Festival is responding to Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine.

Chapter 2: Transnationalism at the Festival

Past literature has suggested that the Cannes International Film Festival was more than just a display of the arts— rather also a means of displaying a political agenda while bringing nations together. This is evident through a number of literary works that consider the Cannes International Film Festival as a diplomatic event to celebrate transnationalism. For example, one researcher reported, “A festival like Cannes had more geopolitical motivations behind its foundation than anything else: it was also ‘an attempt to establish an “international” cinematic forum which could combat the discourses of fascism and the international tensions it engendered’” (José and González 786). Similarly, other commentators remarked, “Cannes, is and always has been, a volatile nexus of aesthetic idealism, commercial opportunisms and hard-nosed geopolitics,” and another scholar said, “The emphasis was politico-diplomatic first, cultural second” (Corless and Darke 4 & 26).

Because of the clear agenda of the festival that hoped to ease pressure amidst the conclusion of World War II and the impending Cold War, past literature has suggested that the festival was in “one distinct phase between 1946 through 1968.” Research conducted by Kieron Corless and Chris Darke argued that during this time the festival served as “a platform for, and mediator of, Cold War tensions, making for many moments of unintended comedy but also for a dark side to proceedings” (Corless and Darke 6). The same research report noted that spanning from 1946 to 1968 there was a “notion of the democratic ‘free’ festival, and how this deeply contrasted with the festival’s undeniable social elitism” (Corless and Darke 6). Finally, these years were grouped together as it is believed that the festival cultivated the concept of an international film culture during this time, which did not exist for the most part, before the creation of the Cannes International Film Festival. For example, this period led to the rise of

great auteurs across the globe including Bergman, Fellini and Buñuel who were once unknown to the public before the festival (Corless and Darke 6). The phase of the festival that lasted from 1946 to 1968 marked the glory days of the festival. As a critic of the festival said, “so many people look back nostalgically on this period as representing the festival’s golden age, one of unrecoverable innocence and joy, as the world gradually emerged from the agonies of war” (Corless and Darke 6). One of the many reasons that the festival produced innocence and joy is because of the lack of aggressive competition between nations which intensified in later decades.

As the Cold War ramped up in the 1950s, it is no surprise that Cannes unavoidably became another one of the stages in which the Cold War played out. Specifically, a reporter pronounced that Cannes was “one of the many fronts on which the Cold War was fought, particularly in the 1950s, when the U.S. Sixth Fleet often was anchored in the harbor during festival time, while the Soviets constantly put on a human face to promote the virtues of communism” (McCarthy 13). Further analysis suggested, “Over the years diplomatic issues came into play at specific moments, but an overall ethos of inclusion and participation prevailed to embrace as many of the film-producing nations as possible” (Shwartz 66). While the Cannes International Film Festival attempted to differentiate itself from the Venice Film Festival by not promoting propaganda, that was not entirely possible during the ongoing Cold War. All the films displayed at the festival were purposeful in conveying the agenda of the festival, and even more intentional were the grand prize winners of the festival.

There is no doubt that despite the festival attempting to ease the divide between nations, the festival also strove to ‘westernize’ the Eastern bloc. This is evident by the pro-Western identification of the Cannes International Film Festival as ‘the festival of the free world’. Although, during this period of the Cannes International Film Festival (and up until 1972) the

films entered in the festival were submitted themselves by countries participating in the festival. Since then, this has changed in that a delegation of representatives for the film festival chooses what films are shown to the public for the duration of the two weeks on the Côte d'Azur. A large reason that the festival allowed participating nations to submit their entries is for peaceful consideration of all countries and so that no nations were upset in not being included— once again displaying how the festival strove to unify nations rather than divide. Although, the process of permitting countries to submit their own films also resulted in choices that could be seen to serve political means. As the American magazine, *Variety*, noted at the time, submitting one's own films culminated in choices that were sometimes made for “political, propaganda and inscrutable internecine reasons” (McCarthy 13).

The festival's governing body aimed to promote the festival as a grand film diplomacy event to promote transnationalism. As the festival is financed and organized by the French government it was designed as a ‘State festival’ in that it was made by and for all states (Gallinari 22). In being financed by the French government, the festival received a form of officiality that other festivals lacked. This gave credibility to the festival and encouraged invited nations to attend the government event as it was viewed as a form of diplomacy—comparable to formal government meetings and political summits between different nations. For this reason, all invitations to participate in the festival were addressed from the French government (Gallinari 22). Nations that did not seek to participate in the festival were forgoing an opportunity to present themselves on a world stage.

The festival's formal rules and regulations also aimed to ease conflict between nations. Most notably, article 2 of the regulations of the 1946 inaugural festival translated from French to English state, “its aim is to encourage the development of cinematographic art in all its forms

and to create a spirit of collaboration between film-producing countries” (Festival de Cannes). Thus, what seemed to be the mission statement of the festival at the time encouraged peaceful collaboration rather than competition. The guidelines and procedures of the festival during the first 25 years were centered around this basis of collaboration rather than competition. For example, each country participating in the festival was permitted to submit the same number of films (with a certain cap on the highest number a nation can submit). This allowed for equity and so that one nation did not dominate the festival, rather all nations were represented equally. As past literature has stated, “It did bring most of the current films of the world into the focus of a single show place... small countries and large ones were accorded the same courtesies and privileges” (Schwartz 66). This regulation upset the United States as they never believed they had enough films exhibited at Cannes because their level of film production was so much greater than other nations. Although, the desire to screen more films was not granted to the United States to demonstrate equity to all nations. Giving all participating nations an equal playing field in competition is just a further signal of the festival’s desire to not pick favorites during a time of great turmoil spanning throughout the globe.

Another way the Cannes International Film Festival demonstrated fairness and equality, was that until 1955, a hodgepodge of films were selected to win the grand prize— to honor multiple nations in the years following World War II. Thus, past critiques of the festival expressed that in the early years it served less as a competition, but more of a meeting of nations. In one description of the festival, it was said, “Nowadays, the CFF is clearly a competition, but in its early days, it was rather a forum. The French government consider it a success to have previous enemies all gathered under the same roof in Cannes” (Jungen 31). Even after the Palme d’Or was introduced and until 1974, a tradition lasted that apportioned prizes among competing

nations to ease divide. Under this tradition that lasted the first 28 years of the festival, most countries would not win more than one prize a year and the aim is that every country would go home with a trophy in one of the many prize-awarded categories—in order to show national unity rather than competition among nations. It is also important to note that during these years, awards at the festival were handed out to national delegates rather than film directors, displaying how politics trumped film (Jungen 32).

Other regulations of the festival, dictated by the French government, sought to ease tensions across the world and promote unity through film. In fact, Article 7 of the regulations of the festival permitted nations to request a withdrawal of certain films if a film being screened at the festival provoked poor “national sentiments” (Festival de Cannes). Thus, film censorship at the Cannes International Film Festival often occurred to prevent films that may be viewed as offensive to some nations from being shown at the festival. The first example of this censorship came in 1951 when Switzerland opted to display Leopold Lindtberg’s film *Four in a Jeep*, which was originally selected as the opening film to be screened at the festival (Gallinari 25). The film told the story of four military policemen, each a representative of the occupying powers in Vienna. Although, upon review of the film by a Cannes committee prior to opening day of the Festival, *Four in a Jeep* was restricted from being premiered at the Festival. This was because Soviet soldiers were referred to in the film as ‘bloody Russians’ and were presented as inferior in comparison to the other Allied soldiers—which the head of the Soviet delegation in Cannes remarked “offends the national dignity of the Soviet people” (Gallinari 25). The French did not want to upset the Soviet Union— even during conflict with the country during the Cold War— by displaying a film that would demote them. The Swiss film was not the only film that was forbidden to be screened at the festival. In fact, the same year a Soviet film, *Liberated China*,

was not allowed to be shown at the festival. The Cannes committee determined that the Soviet entry was “austerity products not art, not commerce, but propaganda” (Corless and Darke 29). The Soviet Union rebutted by claiming that restricting the film from screening was a result of western decadence. Even films that the French submitted to be presented at the festival were sometimes censored by the committee. Most notably, the films *La Vie Passionnée de Clemenceau* and *Nuit et Brouillard* were unable to be shown and censored by their own country after both films were deemed to be offensive to Germany (Gallinari 26). This was yet another example of state interference in the operations of the festival in the early days. As much as censorship by the French upset many nations, the refusal to show particular films that displayed superiority of certain nations demonstrates how the festival desired to unite countries in the midst of conflict rather than continually drive nations apart.

Another indicator of the festival’s attempt to calm political divide was the recurring invitation for Soviet Union nations to participate in the festival. The Cannes International Film Festival easily could have forbidden the presence of communist nations (especially those promoting propaganda) in the festival, yet they were invited year after year demonstrating how the festival was truly international. As scholars have suggested, “what the list of nations suggests is that the worst of political enemies could come together to participate in an international cultural event” (Schwartz 67). Betsy Blair, an American actress who had played the main role in the festival’s 1955 grand prize film winner, *Marty*, documented her night after her film won the best film in her memoir. She said:

“We, the winners, walked along the beach, barefoot in our evening clothes; a Soviet director, a communist or two, some fellow travelers, a blacklisted director and his wife, a

formerly blacklisted actress... laughing, full of champagne and success, we felt invincible” (Corless and Darke 43).

There were few times in the 1950s that individuals from the Soviet Union could mingle freely and converse candidly with those from the United States, yet the festival on the French riviera provided a safe place for individuals to do so.

Another aspect that made clear how the festival desired to bring nations closer together were in the descriptions of Jean Cocteau. Cocteau was a famous French filmmaker (among many other talents) who served as the president of the jury during many pivotal years in the 1950s. Robert Favre Le Bret, who many deem the founder of the Cannes International Film Festival, described the presidency of Cocteau after his death by saying: “He had a kind word for everyone, after each screening he would complement the delegation of the relevant country so much that each would tell themselves, ‘We’re going to get the Grand Prix.’” Likewise, Cocteau wrote in his journal when describing the festival “I wish festivals didn’t hand out prizes and were just a place for exchange and encounter” (Corless and Drake 25). By the president of the jury only complementing each film and preferring to not choose favorites, rather than providing any criticism, it is evident that the jury hoped to applaud nations rather than rebuke. The positive commentary after film screenings was particular to the early decades of the festival— in later years when competition among countries for the grand prize intensified, some jury members lamented derogatory comments towards films.

Another way the festival strengthened relations with competing nations was through promoting a global cinema—not just an American or French cinema. The first years of the festival allowed for the globalization of culture, specifically among the film industry. As one festival commentator described, “While studies of cultural diplomacy have underscored national

chauvinism, rivalry, and the frigid battles of the Cold War, the history of the festival describes the forging of a collaborative international film culture” (Shwartz 57). At a time in which the United States was increasingly dominating the film industry, especially with the rise of Hollywood, the film festival in Cannes allowed for marginalized film industries and filmmakers to be broadcasted to a universal and wider audience. Specifically, Cannes served as a bridge between indigenous film cultures and the world. As past research has stated, “The festival also provided an international venue for the exhibition of films made in countries that would emerge after the war as having national cinemas of international value: Mexico, Japan, Egypt, and India” (Schwartz 57). Additionally, the Festival renewed validation to the belief that film can serve as an international business, not merely just an American business. In fact, the alliance between the United States and the rest of the countries participating in the Cannes International Film Festival paved the way for what would be denoted as a “Global Hollywood” by past scholars (Beauchamp and Béhar 147).

What contributed to a “Global Hollywood” were the films that were screened at the festival. Nations that historically never had any foot in global cinema presented their films at the festival, garnering attention for themselves and their film industry. As Clint Eastwood, a famous American actor, film producer and director, proclaimed when describing the Cannes International Film Festival: “Normally, you don’t expect to see an Iranian film about baking bread, and you realize that, as Americans, we get into a rut making films on the fads of the moment, that there are other things out there than films with a big ball of fire coming down a tunnel. What I liked about it was the fact that there is always the unexpected— movies in all different shapes, sizes and forms” (Eastwood 9). Likewise, Cannes served as a port of entry for many films from China, the Philippines, Yugoslavia, Australia, and numerous third-world

nations. The festival also invited people interested in film from nations with little to no national film production to join the festival as observers—with the hope that they can return to their home-country to stimulate the film industry in their respective market.

This concentration on global cinema is what differentiated the Cannes International Film Festival most significantly from other European film festivals at the time. Instead of promoting a transnational film culture like that of Cannes, other festivals strove to promote their respective film culture above that of other nations. For example, the Berlin Film Festival, which commenced in 1951, featured a specific section in the festival entitled ‘*Perspektive Deutsches Kino*’ or Perspectives of German Cinema (Evans 24). In this part of the festival, only German films were shown, in order to broadcast their cinematographic talent to the world. This demonstrates how the Cannes International Film Festival was unique in that it did not try to establish France as superior to any other nation in their filmmaking industry—rather they sought to broadcast the film industry of all nations and promote transnationalism rather than national specificity. As Owen Evan states in his article “Border Exchanges: The Role of the European Film Festival,” “Cannes does not generally make such an overt commitment to indigenous French film culture, thereby emphasizing its transnational face” (Evans 29).

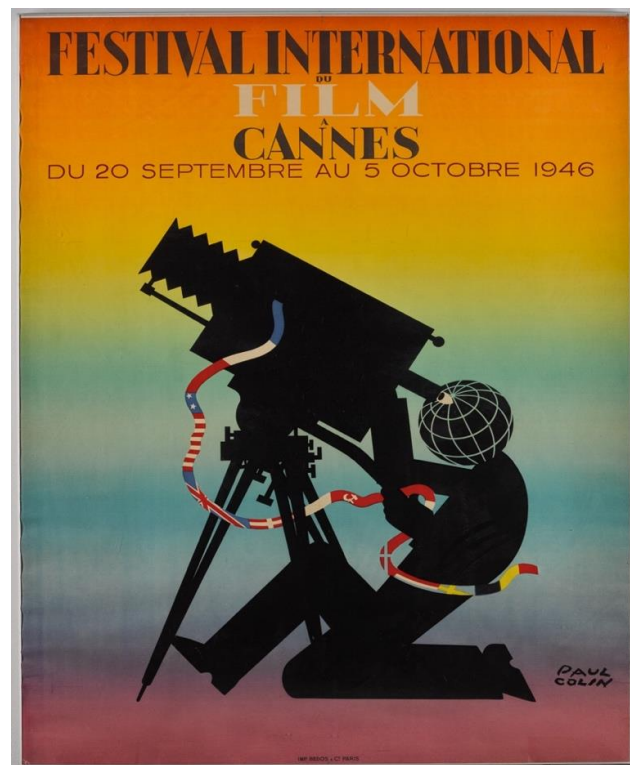
The festival in Cannes; however, did include specific sections to the program like the Berlin festival did, yet the sections were targeted to an international audience (Benghozi). For example, Cannes established a program entitled “International Critics’ Week.” In contrast to the Berlin program which showcased their up-and-coming films and talent in the German film industry, the International Critics Week in Cannes served as a platform to showcase first-time film directors from across the world (Evans 30). This is what made the Cannes International Film Festival truly international in that French cinema was never promoted above that of other

nations. The festival did not serve as a platform to express superiority of the French film making industry, rather the goal was to broadcast a transnational film industry with no hierarchy between nations.

Chapter 3: The Politics of the First Years of the Festival

1946, the year of the inaugural film festival in Cannes, was a remarkable success for the French government and festival. The festival attracted representatives from 21 nations including France, the United States, Canada, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Romania, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, Italy, Norway, Belgium, Sweden, Mexico, Egypt, and Denmark (Festival de Cannes). Each attending country had one representative from their nation appointed on their accord as a member of the jury—which is the governing body of the festival that selects the festival’s prize winners. Most notably missing from the attendees in the first year after the conclusion of World War II was Germany, but the French government was not remiss to extend an invitation to the nation that was unable to attend due to post-war rebuilding (Ward). The official poster of the festival in 1946 broadcasted the attending nations through a depiction of their flags.

Figure 3.1 Cannes Official Promotional Poster 1946 (Colin)



This official promotional poster of the festival pictures a film camera operator with a globe on his head. The poster showed the transformation of what used to be a machine-gun on the heads of soldiers to a moving camera that displayed the national flags of the participating nations. The poster alludes that former soldiers in World War II are now able to put down their weapons and celebrate unity rather than divisiveness and combat. Additionally, the depiction of flags on the camera film stressed the capacity in which film and the arts are capable of achieving peace. Thus, the juxtaposition between a soldier with deadly weapons and a cameraman that encompasses different nations in the camera's film represents just how the festival desired to overcome the recent war by promoting unity.

The most striking flag depicted in the poster is that of the Soviet Union. Just seven months after Winston Churchill's famous iron curtain speech which unintentionally pronounced what would come to be the Cold War in the following months, the Soviet Union presented six signature feature films as well as four short films at the inaugural Cannes International Film Festival. The Soviet Union also sent eight delegates to the French Riviera and five Soviet journalists to attend the festival—making sure the Soviet Union reflected a great presence in the international affair. In fact, the Soviet Union left the festival with the largest number of awards, winning eight prizes, one of them being for a grand prize film (Gallinari 30).

Not only did the presence of the Soviet Union at the festival in 1946 please the French government who sought to use the event as a method of diplomacy between nations in a divided world, but the Soviet Union also benefitted from their presence. The festival allowed the USSR a platform to circulate their Soviet films, which were not widely known in Western Europe and the United States, due to the regulation the communist government had imposed on film (Gallinari 30). Thus, the Soviet Union was able to promote themselves as equals to the growing success of

Hollywood and other European nations in an industry that was becoming increasingly dominated by Western countries. The festival also served as an opportunity for the USSR to emerge from the diplomatic isolation that took place during World War II and engage in cultural exchanges to promote themselves abroad.

Serving more as a space for collaboration than intense cinematographic competition, eleven nations were awarded the grand prize for the best film shown at the festival. Thus, it may not be surprising that the jury, composed of 18 representatives between different nations, was unable to come to a consensus regarding one film to choose as a grand prize winner. Rather, all the nations that presented a feature film were awarded a prize for one of their films. As the *New York Times* reported on the 1946 festival, “For ‘diplomatic reasons,’ it was decided that no prize should be given for the single best film” (Murphy). This once again demonstrates how the Cannes International Film Festival sought to bring nations together through a celebration of the arts, rather than create more division through selecting one grand prize winner.

After the success of the inaugural film festival that occurred in 1946, it was no surprise that the festival would occur again in the following years. However, the festival was unable to take place in 1948 and 1950 due to budgetary reasons as countries were still recovering from the economic devastation of World War II. Despite the absence of the festival for two years, the festival still achieved great success. Countries that had not participated in the debut festival began attending, including nations such as Germany and Japan—demonstrating yet again how the festival strove to unite divided nations (Ward). However, the Soviet Union was conspicuously absent in 1947, 1949, and 1952 despite attendance from other Eastern nations such as Hungary and Poland. Their absence can be attributed to the lingering Cold War and what was seen to be some of the harshest years of the Cold War in the late 1940s, before the thaw of

Cold War tensions that persisted in the 1950s. The dismissal of the festival by the USSR deeply upset the French government, who invited the USSR and their Eastern bloc allies year after year. Yet, by 1953 the Soviet Union accepted participation in the event and their attendance has remained consistent every year since then.

In a similar manner to the debut festival in 1946, the Cannes International Film Festival still sought to bring nations together and continue its unifying agenda, even without participation from the USSR for three years. However, the jury, which became increasingly dominated by French men during these years, became more selective in their rationing of grand prizes—choosing fewer grand prize winners. It may seem that the fact the jury lost the “international” component poses a contradiction to the universal atmosphere of the festival. However, I argue that as solely French men were deciding the winners of the grand-prize films between the years of 1947 and 1959, the agenda of the festival, which was dictated by the French government, was more likely to be enacted. In fact, most of the French jury members were a part of the *Académie Française*, which is an entity of the French government (Mazdon 24). This once again shows how the festival prioritized politics and the government over the arts themselves—in order to accomplish the political agenda of the festival. Thus, I argue that the French members of the jury advocated for apportioning grand prizes to other nations to accomplish the unifying purpose of the festival. This is evident as throughout the entire decade of the 1950s, France only took home three grand prizes. However, come the 1960s (and remaining to the present day) the jury of the Cannes International Film Festival once again became international to represent more diverse perspectives.

In 1947, there was a 5-way tie between the awarded films with France winning two grand prizes and the United States being awarded three grand prizes. The following years

reflected even more diversity in the grand prize winners. Between the years 1949 and 1960, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Morocco, Japan, and the Soviet Union each won one grand prize, the United States received two award winning prizes, and Italy and France took home three. The variety in grand prize-winning nations encompassed nations that had held very different political beliefs. Not only did an Axis power that had bombed the Allied powers merely a decade before win, but so did a communist nation in the midst of an ongoing war regarding the future of the entire world. This example represents how the film festival attempted to transcend political divide (with the exception being the three-year absence from the Soviet Union) and instead unite countries through cinema.

A complete list of the grand prize recipients at the Cannes International Film Festival between the years 1946 and 1968 can be found here:

Figure 3.2: Table of Grand-Prize Winning Films

Year	Film Recipient	Country	President of Jury
1946	11-way tie (<i>Brief Encounter, The Last Chance, The Lost Weekend, Maria Canelaria, Men Without Wings, Neecha Nagar, Pastoral Symphony, The Red Meadows, Rome, Open City, Torment, The Turning Point</i>)	United Kingdom, Switzerland, United States, Mexico, Czechoslovakia, India, France, Denmark, Italy, Sweden, Soviet Union	France
1947	5-way tie (<i>Antoine and Antoinette, Crossfire, The Damned, Dumbo, Ziegfeld Follies</i>)	France, United States, France, United States, United States	France
1949	<i>The Third Man</i>	United Kingdom	France
1951	<i>Miracle in Milan</i> and <i>Miss Julie</i>	Italy and Sweden	France
1952	<i>Othello</i> and <i>Two Cents Worth of Hope</i>	Morocco and Italy	France
1953	<i>The Wages of Fear</i>	France	France
1954	<i>Gate of Hell</i>	Japan	France
1955	<i>Marty</i>	United States	France

1956	<i>The Silent World</i>	France	France
1957	<i>Friendly Persuasion</i>	United States	France
1958	<i>The Cranes are Flying</i>	Soviet Union	France
1959	<i>Black Orpheus</i>	France	France
1960	<i>La Dolce Vita</i>	Italy	Belgium
1961	<i>The Long Absence</i> and <i>Viridiana</i>	France and Spain	France
1962	<i>O Pagador de Promessas</i>	Brazil	Japan
1963	<i>The Leopard</i>	Italy	France
1964	<i>The Umbrellas of Cherbourg</i>	France	Germany
1965	<i>The Knack... And How to Get it</i>	United Kingdom	United States
1966	<i>The Birds, the Bees, and the Italians</i> and <i>A Man and a Woman</i>	Italy and France	Italy
1967	<i>Blowup</i>	United Kingdom	Italy

Source: The official website of Festival de Cannes

The table above features the name of all grand prize-winning films, their corresponding nation, and president of the jury. After an examination of the table, it is apparent that a balance was consciously sought between European films, domestic French-produced films, and from developing nations. Thus, I argue that the Cannes International Film Festival accomplished their agenda of unity and promoting transnationalism even in their apportionment of grand prizes. No nation trumped others in being awarded significantly more prizes, and this balance was done intentionally to promote unification and transnational pride rather than praise for one nation.

Chapter 4: Political Commentary on the Horrors of War

As the consequences of World War II shocked the entire world at the same time as the film industry was reaching unparalleled success around the globe and especially in the United States, it is no surprise that many films in the 1940s and '50s concerned the war. War films not only could give deeper understanding to the meaning of warfare, but they could also give individuals who did not partake in combat the chance to experience it through a camera lens. Thus, many war films especially those that concerned World War II, the deadliest war in history, captured the horrors, heroism, and courage of the men on the front lines.

For this reason, six of the eleven grand prize winners at the inaugural Cannes Film Festival in 1946 dealt with the war, with most of the war films displaying the struggles of resistance for men on the front lines. *The Last Chance*, is a Swiss film that won the grand prize in 1946. The film tells the story of two allied prisoners who are being sent away on a train to Northern Italy that is bombed (Lindtberg). The English lieutenant and American sergeant escape from the train and seek shelter in the neutral territory of Switzerland. While traversing Switzerland, they become acquainted with many other refugees who had been interned in prisoners of war camps, representing many European nations, who also seek shelter. The refugees find comfort in one another and discuss the tragedies of war. Thus, *The Last Chance* displays the horrors of war as the train that the Allied powers were on was bombed and their near-death experience, as well as displaying their courage and fight for survival. The film also demonstrates the unity between nations as an English and American man fight for survival together and lead other members of the infantry from many nations to safety in the neutral territory of Switzerland.

On November 28th, 1945, the *New York Times* published a review of the *The Last Chance*. Bosley Crowther, the journalist who wrote the article said:

On the whole, it must be acknowledged as one of the best films of World War II to date. For the story told by this picture is a straight and believable account of genuine heroism in the face of tremendous odds. It is a story of man's love of freedom and his regard for his fellow man. And it is also a tense, exciting drama based substantially on documented facts (Crowther 1945).

In this description of the film by Crowther she elaborates on the heroism, desire for freedom, and the love for man that the film encompasses. Thus, it is evident that the film did not only display the tragedies of war (such as the bombing of the train and near death of the soldiers) but more importantly the desire for solidarity that united many soldiers during war. By Crowther also elaborating on how most of the fictionalized film is based on documented facts, she is alluding to how the bond the fictionalized characters in the film hold are not entirely fiction—rather the united nature of the English and American soldier and the refugees from across Europe is something that actually existed during the war.

Another war film that received the grand prize in 1946, displayed the atrocities of war as well as the cooperation between nations. *Red Meadows* recalls the story of a vocal Danish resistance fighter, Michael, and the events that contributed to his imprisonment by the Nazis. He recounts his story, through a series of flashbacks, while on death row while awaiting his execution at a German war prison after his attempt at destroying a German warehouse (Lauritzen and Bodil). The film provokes the emotions of the audience as Michael is tortured in the Gestapo prison, yet the sense of hope as Michael forms a relationship with the prison guard, Steinz. The anti-war German prison guard expresses his disdain for war and thus allows Michael the

opportunity for survival as he is granted the opportunity to escape from prison and seeks refuge in Sweden. Thus, *Red Meadows* shows the duality of the brutality Michael faces while in prison from pro-Nazi Germans while also providing a sense of cooperation and unity from a Nazi German prison guard and a prisoner of war. The film gives the audience insight into the better world that would develop if more individuals with differing political beliefs united together, like the allied prisoner and Nazi prison guard did, to better humanity.

Rome, Open City is another poignant story of the human consequences of war that also expresses solidarity between opposing individuals. The Italian 1946 grand prize-winning film features the capital Italian city being seized by the Nazis in 1944, following Italy's decision to become an Allied power. The leader of the resistance against the Nazis and Italian fascists, Giorgio Manfredi is sought to be captured by the German troops, before seeking refuge at the home of his fellow resistance-helping friend, Francesco (Rossellini). With the help of an Italian priest, Don Pietro, they seek to get Giorgio out of the country before he is captured. In the film, the strategic use of sudden death is exemplified to show the senselessness of war. The first death in the film occurs when the local Nazi commander raids the home of Francesco in suspicion that Giorgio is inside. While Giorgio and Francesco can escape, Francesco's innocent wife, Pina, is murdered by the Nazi regime. The luck of resistance fighters does not last long, however, as Giorgio's girlfriend, who is an undercover Gestapo collaborator, reports their new hiding spot to the Nazi powers. Upon the regime's recovery of the two men and Don Pietro, the priest, Giorgio is slowly beaten and tortured to death with the camera displaying graphic images of his torture including the ripping out of his fingernails. The horrific torture of Don Pietro is a strategic motif to show the tragedies of war. After Don Pietro still renounces the Nazi regime and never reveals the information they want, the film concludes as he is shot and murdered by the German

authorities. Thus, the film uses death at the hands of the Nazi regime as a means of displaying the film's anti-war sentiments. The film provokes these sentiments by portraying the mortality of war for not only individuals involved in resistance organizations but also for those that aim to stay clear of the conflict, such as Francesco's wife. In one of the final scenes of the film, a Nazi captain admits to the mass evil committed by the Nazi regime. The declaration of wrongdoing by a Nazi leader demonstrates the anti-war sympathies that the movie portrayed to its viewers—as even the leaders of the mass genocide were conscious enough to understand the harm they were causing.

Figure 4.1: Scene from *Rome, Open City* (Rossellini)



As the film utilized death as a strategic motif to display the atrocities of war, the most powerful scenes in the movie are deeply saddening. The two images above are a part of the scene that displays the death of Pina. In the first image Pina is seen running in the crowd as she witnesses her husband, Francesco, being taken away by the Nazi regime. She screams his name as she runs through the road hoping to save him. Just seconds later she is shot and killed, while her son is watching. The second image displays her young son hugging his mother's deceased body after witnessing her murder. Thus, the film includes even small details, such as a young child embracing their deceased mother, in order to provide the audience with reasons to dislike

war. The cinematographic choices of this scene are also significant as the entire scene is shot in a wide frame. The camera does not pan into a close-up at any point, which modern cinema is inclined to do. For this reason, the scene almost feels like a documentary as the camera remains rather constant and there are no cuts. The documentary-esque cinematography provides the spectators a feeling that the death is real rather than being fictionalized, thus provoking more remorse and hatred for war in the audience.

Among the portrayal of the horrors of war, *Rome, Open City* also expressed a sense of solidarity amongst people, similar to that in the films *The Last Chance* and *Red Meadows*. Although, unlike the Swiss and Danish films that expressed solidarity among individuals of different nations such as the American and the British or the Danish and the German, *Rome, Open City* displays solidarity as a uniting bond between all Italian people. In the film, Italians with differing beliefs supported one another to overcome the Nazi regime. The film combines the efforts of Giorgio who is a devout communist and atheist, the Clergy through Don Pietro the priest, and ordinary citizens with little religious affiliation such as Francesco. The ability for three Italians with very different religious beliefs to support one another provides a sense of unity in the midst of chaos and mortality.

On February 26th, 1946, the *New York Times* published a review of the film from the same film critic, Bosley Crowther. The journalist said:

And the feeling that pulses through it gives evidence that it was inspired by artists whose own emotions had been deeply and recently stirred. Anger, grim and determined, against the Germans and collaborationists throbs in every sequence and every shot in which the evil ones are shown. Yet the anger is not shrill or hysterical; it is the clarified anger of those who have known and dreaded the cruelty and depravity of men who are their foes.

It is anger long since drained of astonishment or outrage. More than anger, however, the feeling that flows most strongly through the film is one of supreme admiration for the people who fight for freedom's cause... The story of the film is literal (Crowther 1946).

This quote from the American journalist demonstrates how despite many of World War II related films, such as *Rome, Open City* being fictional stories, they are in fact literal expressions of the tragedies of war. Crowther remarks how the violence shown in the film is representative of the horrors that actually occurred during war. Thus, *Rome, Open City* is undoubtedly a political commentary on the war and expresses the anti-war sentiments that much of Italy held at the time. It is thus crucial to understand that many of the fictional wartime stories that won grand prizes at the Cannes International Film Festival were not truly 'made up' stories. Rather, filmmakers who experienced the devastation of the war expressed their sentiments through the stories of fictionalized characters. Yet, the destruction of the war was not dramatized for cinematographic purposes, rather the ravages of the war shown in these films were literal in expressing the horrors and deceit of war.

Not only did the war films display the horrifying nature of war for the soldiers and resistance organizations on the front lines, but some films awarded the grand prize at the Cannes International Film Festival also displayed the tragedies of war for those back at home or post-war. *The Brief Encounter*, a British directed film which received the grand prize in 1946, recounts the story of a female, Laura Jesson, who was separated from her husband during the war (Lean). During the war the concept of 'brief encounters' was established—a formal description of affairs that occurred when spouses were separated by war. Thus, Laura begins to form a romantic partnership with a man not serving in war, Alec Harvey. Upon realizing that their relationship will never last, they agree to go their separate ways. As Harvey leaves for a job in

South Africa, Laura contemplates suicide. This film provides an example of the devastation of war not only from the point of view of a soldier, but also those who remained at home. The affairs that woman had during war provided women a form of liberation that had not existed before war. However, simultaneously, they were damaging to the couples involved. Not only is it unfair to the husband of Laura that his wife has not been loyal, but the relationship is also traumatizing for Laura as she contemplates jumping onto the train tracks as her new lover departs. Thus, although the film is not directly about war, the film pictures some of the horrifying consequences that all individuals across the world endured during wartime.

Two communist Eastern nations, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, were also awarded grand prizes for the best film at the festival in 1946, with both films treating World War II. *The Turning Point*, the Soviet award-winning film displays the Battle of Stalingrad in 1942 on film. The movie tells the story of how for five months the Red Army was able to resist the advances of German troops, knowing that the life and future of the city would be determined by the battle (Ermler). The movie displays the Russia psyche and their military superiority. The Czechoslovakian film, *Men Without Wings*, takes place during the Nazi Occupation of the state, and follows a small resistance of workers at a local military airport. When the Gestapo finds out about the anti-Nazi activities, many arrests and deaths occur all while the resistance group fights for their lives (Čáp). Both Eastern bloc films were pivotal grand prize winners in 1946 as their awards represented how the Cannes International Film Festival sought to unite nations with differing political beliefs. These films were similar in many ways to the other grand prize-winning films in that they displayed the horrors of war—as many deaths were depicted between the two films. However, they were different from the other films in that they expressed supremacy of the Eastern powers in relation to their German counterpart and promoted

nationalism rather than transnationalism. Unlike the other films that expressed solidarity between many differing nations and people, these films expressed more supremacy of the Eastern powers which was rather common of films produced by Eastern nations at the time, for propagandic reasons.

In 1947, most of the grand-prize winning films still were about World War II, even two years after the conclusion of the catastrophe. *Crossfire*, an American film awardee, regards life following the conclusion of the war while still displaying the atrocities caused by the war. The film investigates the murder of a Jewish man who is killed following the conclusion of World War II. A former army soldier, who is suffering from the effects of the war, becomes the prime suspect of the murder, but the investigation becomes increasingly difficult to solve (Dmytryk). The film displays the horrors of war in several ways. First off, the film alludes to the PTSD that many soldiers who returned home experienced. The war traumatized millions of individuals that led to lasting consequences in the minds of returning soldiers, sometimes causing the soldiers to commit more acts of terror—which is vocalized in this film. Additionally, *Crossfire* displays the antisemitism that many consider was stimulated by World War II, and the lingering effects of anti-Semitic behavior on post-war life. In the 1947 review of the film by Bosley Crowther, he says, “For here, without hints or subterfuges, they have come right out and shown that such malice—in this case, anti-Jewish—is a dark and explosive sort of hate which, bred of ignorance and intolerance, can lead to extreme violence” (Crowther 1947). As Crowther points out, the anti-Jewish perspective that lingered into the years following the war is evident in the film and can contribute to lasting horrors. Additionally, Crowther’s comment remarks that this was true of society and shown in the film—not some made-up scenario that occurred in the fictional film but based on actual violence that Jewish individuals experienced following World War II.

The 1949 prize-winning film, *The Third Man*, concerns the post-war world of Vienna, Austria. Unlike many of the other war films that expressed what life was like during the war, the British film displays life following the tragedies of World War II and their impact on the entire world. In the film, an American author, Holly Martins, arrives in the post-war country after the invitation of his childhood friend, Harry Lime, to come work for him (Reed). When Holly arrives in the unfamiliar country, he learns that his friend has died in a supposed traffic accident as his arrival coincides with the graveside burial of Harry. Holly is convinced that his death was not a series of unfortunate events, as the media deems it, rather it was an intentional murder. Thus, Holly is committed to solving the crime and is in search for the mysterious “third man,” who is the unknown person who was last seen carrying Harry’s dead body.

In several ways, *The Third Man* demonstrates the destruction that World War II caused in much of Europe. Holly does not trust the Austrian media or government as they are full of corruption as they slowly recover from the devastation of the war. The entire country is being rebuilt both literally and figuratively as the country has been divided between the Allied powers of the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. Thus, the film exposes the atmosphere of an exhausted and cynical post-war Vienna as the Cold War commences. The movie depicts the Austrian capital city as being a bleak and unhappy place, with little resources, shortages of goods, the necessity of rationing, a thriving black market, and loads of crime. The camera pictures the city as dark and dreary, with little color or sunshine. In fact, the writer of *The Third Man’s* screenplay, Graham Greene, spent an extended holiday in the divided city in 1948 following the conclusion of the world war to see firsthand the corruption and political isolation that he would display in his film. Thus, the fictionalized film is not entirely fictional rather it exposes the actual happenings and political chaos that engulfed Vienna in the post-war era.

The film also provides an interpretation of Europeans versus Americans in the years following the conclusion of the war. Holly, the American, who seeks to solve the mystery in the death of Harry represents American idealism and optimism. The rest of Europe and other characters in the film are not interested in solving the murder, as they are exhausted and cynical given that they are recovering from the world war and the onset of the Cold War. In an analysis of the film conducted by Roger Ebert, he says:

“The Third Man” reflects the optimism of Americans and the bone-weariness of Europe after the war. It's a story about grownups and children: Adults like Calloway, who has seen at first hand the results of Lime's crimes, and children like the trusting Holly, who believes in the simplified good and evil of his Western novels (Ebert).

Thus, the differentiation between the Europeans and Americans in the film is striking. The film alludes that Americans are willing to see the good in all situations whereas Europeans are filled with pessimism and doubt. This represents the horrors of war in that it filled so many Europeans with a negative outlook on life that could not be ruptured even after the conclusion of World War II. *The Third Man* alludes to the fact that many Americans did not have to experience the same type of cynical mindset likely because of their physical distance from the war. After being the location of constant battle and strife for so many years, Europeans were weakened and no longer could see the good in situations.

Besides showing the devastation in the post-World War II era, the film also displays the devastation of the ongoing Cold War in the divided city of Vienna. As Roger Ebert says, ““The Third Man” already reflects the Cold War years of paranoia, betrayal and the Bomb” (Ebert). The harsh realities of the consequences of the Cold War are evident in the film as the western and eastern militaries rival over the divided territory. Rather than protecting the people of Vienna

in the film, the military and government seek to increase their power while ignoring the buildings that have been bombed, the streets that have been littered with debris, and the corruption and crime that is occurring. Therefore, the authorities do not intervene in solving the mystery of Harry's death. It is evident that in the European world eclipsed with war, the authorities do not care about anything else rather than gaining more power for themselves and their nation. This demonstrates the horrors of wartime in that the rest of humanity is left to suffer as all other problems are pushed aside to express military supremacy at the expense of their citizens.

Figure 4.2: Scene from *The Third Man* (Reed)



The scene above occurs at the end of the film and is the most striking in omitting the horrors that develop from war. For context, when Holly recovers Harry and learns that Harry faked his own death—they are able to reunite. While on a Ferris wheel, looking at the world from a bird's eye view, the two have a conversation and Holly implores Harry that if he did not die someone had to, as an individual was buried in the coffin. When Harry responds carelessly, Holly says “you used to believe in god.” Harry's response to the remark that ridiculed his morals and beliefs was: “Don't be so gloomy. After all it's not that awful. Like the fella says, in Italy for

30 years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder, and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love - they had 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock. So long Holly.” This scene alone directly targets the horrors of war as it has brainwashed individuals like Harry. Individuals living in the constantly war-torn world come to see war as nearly an organic machine that can “produce.” Harry gives a sense of liveliness to war and believes that nations which did not participate in war were disadvantaged and those that did were superior. Holly, the American, questions this statement and Holly’s judgement indicating that perhaps only the individuals living in the war-divided nation are brainwashed by the devastation. The fact that the scene occurs while on a Ferris wheel, overlooking the world below them is an important cinematographic choice. Evident in the images above, the camera shows Harry looking down at the terrain below him as the camera provides a bird eye view of his surroundings. The ground below him is bleak, likely because of the lack of concern on behalf of the government during war. As Harry tells his theories on the war and how war can be a ‘good’ thing he is looking downwards at the world that is encompassed in war. For Harry, he does not know a world without war and for that reason he believes it to be a good thing.

During the 1950s the number of war films to receive the grand prize award at the Cannes International Film Festival slowly declined. In large part this was due to the consensus around most of the world that the world war ought to be put in the past and nations should move on with contemporary life. However, in 1958, the Soviet Union captured an enormous amount of attention when the grand prize at the festival was awarded to Mikhail Kalatozov’s film, *The Cranes are Flying*. The film depicts the love story between a young couple, Boris and Veronika, whose relationship is torn apart when Boris enlists to serve on the front lines of the Soviet army

in World War II (Kalatozov). While Boris is fighting in the war, Veronika is caught between her love for Boris while his cousin, who dodged the draft through a series of lies, romantically entertains her.

Unlike past Soviet films, such as *The Turning Point*, that expressed Soviet superiority which was traditional of Soviet films at the time for propaganda reasons, *The Cranes are Flying* does not depict Veronika or Boris as heroes of the war rather as everyday citizens whose relationship was torn apart by World War II. Thus, *The Cranes are Flying* is similar to the prior grand prize festival winning films that displayed the tragedies of war while displaying many anti-war sentiments. As Bosley Crowther described:

Believe it or not, it is a picture about two young people romantically in love—in love with each other, that is, not with a tractor or the Soviet state. And its theme, which evolves in the agony of their being separated by war . . . is poignantly and powerfully propeace (Crowther 1960).

In Crowther's description of the film, he elaborates on the two themes of the film being the agonies of war and the call for peace. Thus, it is no surprise that despite the midst of the Cold War this Soviet Union film received the grand prize as the film exquisitely promotes the agenda of the festival which desired the end to war and the need for peace.

As the film was released in the heat of the Cold War, the normalcy of the film is somewhat shocking and perhaps an indicator of why it received the grand prize at the Cannes International Film Festival, as the festival was seeking unity during turmoil. The film was also released during the 'thaw' of the Cold War, a time in which tensions between the East and the West gradually eased following the death of the leader of the communist Soviet Union Joseph Stalin in 1953. As a historical film analyst remarked, "Filmmakers felt emboldened to reject the

rote optimism of the Stalin era and to find a range of emotional, psychological, and even ideological shadings in stories that portrayed the joys and sorrows of ordinary people” (Fujiwara). Thus, *The Cranes are Flying* portrayed a new era of film in the Soviet Union—one that focused on reality rather than glorified supremacy and documented the genuine nature of the Soviet’s experience in World War II, unlike many of the prior films that the nation had released.

The Cranes are Flying expressed the duality of war trauma for those involved and for their loved ones who remained at home by switching back and forth between scenes of Boris on the front lines and the demise of Veronika’s life at home. Likewise, the film also uses death and trauma as a motif to portray the tragedies of war, especially for Veronika who is just hoping to return to a normal life at home. As bomb raids begin on the Soviet towns, Veronika witnesses the death of her entire family. When she is forced to then seek shelter at the home of Boris’ family since she now has no family of her own, she is brutally raped and assaulted by the Boris’s cousin as another bomb raid begins. All this time, she has not heard from Boris as he is reported missing in action, although little does she know that he actually died in combat as the film documented the graphic details of his death while on the front lines. These unfortunate circumstances lead Veronika to attempt to commit suicide as she jumps off a railway bridge. This display of the desire for death from someone who was not serving on the war adequately describes how the war affected everyone negatively to the point that death was a better option than living through the horrifying years of combat. Thus, Veronika’s attempted suicide, the dark images of the bomb raids, the sexual assault, and the death of Boris all contribute to the film’s antiwar sentiments.

Not only does the content of the film express the tragedies of war but the cinematography does as well. The camera seems to follow Veronika’s every move throughout the film. One of the most striking scenes in the film occurs while Veronika seeks to say farewell to Boris as he

boards the bus headed to combat. The camera follows Veronika as she runs through the crowd hoping to find him before it is too late. Without cutting between shots the camera begins with a closeup of Veronika's face to show her determination to find her lover and slowly moves out to a bird's-eye-view to show Veronika weave between the procession of tanks in hopes of finding Boris. In the dramatic scene, the audience feels deep pain for Veronika as she dashes through the military procession all while being unable to locate Boris to bid him farewell. As the camera pans in to show the devastation on Veronika's face, the audience is left feeling heartbroken for her— exemplifying the devastating natures of war having to tear loved ones apart.

Another scene that displays the tortures of war is the scene in that Veronika is raped by Boris' cousin. The scene does not display the entirety of the sexual assault on camera, rather the lighting and sound allude to the violence that is occurring. In the middle of both a thunderstorm and a bombing raid on the Soviet city, Boris's cousin takes advantage of the young female. Flashes of the storm and bombings blindingly take over the scene—relating the rape to both death and destruction. Like the bombing raid destroyed the city, the sexual assault destroys Veronika as she is filled with guilt and shame for betraying her loyalty to Boris.

Figure 4.3: Scene from *The Cranes are Flying* (Kalatozov)



The final pivotal scene in the film that displays the horrors of war is the death of Boris. In the scene, Boris is helping a wounded Soviet soldier and carries the hurt soldier to refuge. While doing so, Boris is shot and killed by the opposing troops. Instead of showing the graphic images of his bloody death, the film shows a close-up of Boris' face as he falls to the ground and looks up into the sky. The camera follows his eye movement and displays the images going through Boris' head as he dies. He envisions his wedding to Veronica as the scene displays Boris and Veronika radiating with joy as they celebrate their nuptials with friends. Although, shortly thereafter the film returns to reality as the camera looks over Boris's lifeless body that is engulfed in a swamp. This scene adequately and emotionally captures the Soviet's apprehensions towards war by displaying what is lost in combat. Not only did Boris lose his life, but he lost his future, his marriage, and the happiness of his soon to be bride, Veronika. Boris could have easily had visions of the war in the moments leading up to his death, images of the day the Soviet Union would defeat the German powers, rather he is not focused on the war during his final moments on earth rather he remembers the people he left at home, specifically Veronika. Once again, this displays the tragedies of war in that war tarnishes one's future, hopes, and dreams.

Thus, my research has shown that within the first decade of the Cannes International Film Festival, the largest theme was pacifist-minded and anti-war films. I propose that this was another deliberate ploy on the behalf of the festival and the jury that determined the grand prizes in their attempt for unification. My research has solidified that the agenda of the festival in the early years was to unite all nations into a common identity and humanity. War does the opposite of uniting nations—rather it tears countries apart from one another. Thus, the Cannes International Film Festival awarded the grand prizes to many films that showed the horrors of

war, leaving a message that the festival does not tolerate violence and divisiveness rather it seeks unity and peace.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Forward

In my research, I have discovered three critical things 1) the Cannes International Film Festival served as a vehicle for peace and unity 2) the festival sought attendance from all nations and grand-prize winning films were often apportioned by nation in the early years of the festival 3) several grand-prizing winning films provided a political commentary on the tragedies of war. I conclude that the jury at the Cannes International Film Festival was deliberate in choosing the grand-prize winners that corresponded with the festival's agenda of promoting transnationalism and unification. Transnationalism refers to "economic, political, and cultural processes that extend beyond the boundaries of nation-states" (Britannica). I conclude that the Cannes International Film Festival promoted transnationalism as the festival desired not to encompass a national identity but an international and collective identity and humanity. Thus, the Cannes International Film Festival sought to reach beyond national boundaries.

At a time in which Europe was so deeply divided as they were recovering from World War II and in the onset of the Cold War—Europe sought to integrate into a common identity and humanity in many ways. Unity was desired in order to prevent more war, as nations with a shared interest and binding factor would not wage more war against one another. For example, the European Union was formed, with the official statement saying that it was created to stop the frequent and bloody wars between European neighbors. Thus, I conclude that the agenda of the Cannes International Film Festival was to unify Europe— in a way that promoted transnationalism rather than national patriotism. For this reason, the festival desired the participation of Eastern nations, even during the Cold War. Inviting political revivals to participate in the same event during the middle of conflict, provided a sense of belonging to the Eastern bloc. My research has also shown that in the early years of the festival, almost all

competing nations, including many Eastern ones, received grand prizes for the best film shown at the festival—Cannes’ way of demonstrating friendship and civility rather than increased competition and division. Moreover, many of the grand-prize winning films displayed the horrors and tragedies of war. I conclude that the political commentaries of the films were purposeful in the agenda of the festival that sought peace rather than war. By displaying several movies that demonstrated the horrors of war from the perspective of many different occupied nations, the festival hoped that even nations promoting war could see the dire consequences of increased bloodshed and seek peace rather than conflict.

While deciding on my research topic relating to the Cannes International Film Festival, I was determined to take a historical approach of the festival, thus choosing the power of rapprochement in the early years of the festival. At the time of my research, I did not know that that Eastern Europe would soon enter a new war. Russia’s attack on Ukraine in February of 2022 resembles many similarities to the Cold War. In fact, a large part of the reasoning for the communist nation’s invasion of the democratic nation was to re-establish dominance of Russia and build back the power of the Soviet Union that has been lost since the conclusion of the Cold War in 1991.

The attack on behalf of Russia and the promotion of war in Eastern Europe has solidified my research in showing that the agenda of the Cannes International Film Festival has not shifted, rather the festival has remained consistent in promoting anti-war ideals and peace. On March 9th, 2022, the team responsible for the annual Cannes International Film Festival issued the following press release:

As the world has been hit by a heavy crisis in which a part of Europe finds itself in a state of war, the Festival de Cannes wishes to extend all its support to the people of Ukraine and all those who are in its territory.

However modest as it is, we join our voices with those who oppose this unacceptable situation and denounce the attitude of Russia and its leaders.

Our thoughts go out in particular to the Ukrainian artists and film industry professionals, as well as their families whose lives are now in danger. There are those whom we've never met, and those whom we've come to know and welcomed to Cannes, who came with works that say much about Ukraine's history and the present.

During this winter of 2022, the Festival de Cannes and the Marché du Film have entered their preparation phase. Unless the war of assault ends in conditions that will satisfy the Ukrainian people, it has been decided that we will not welcome official Russian delegations nor accept the presence of anyone linked to the Russian government.

However, we would like to salute the courage of all those in Russia who have taken risks to protest against the assault and invasion of Ukraine. Among them are artists and film professionals who have never ceased to fight against the contemporary regime, who cannot be associated with these unbearable actions, and those who are bombing Ukraine.

Loyal to its history that started in 1939 in resistance to the fascist and Nazi dictatorship, the Festival de Cannes will always serve artists and industry professionals that raise their voices to denounce violence, repression, and injustices, for the main purpose to defend peace and liberty.

--The Festival de Cannes Team

Source: The official website of Festival de Cannes

The press release reiterates that the Cannes International Film Festival will forever stand up against war and oppression. They have chosen to do so again this year by punishing Russia by refusing their participation in the annual festival. The press release reinforces my research in that the 'main purpose' of the festival is 'to defend peace and liberty.' As the announcement states, that has been the intention of the film festival since its' emergence in 1939.

In the early years of the festival and during the Cold War, as my research has shown, the festival desired the presence of the Soviet Union to demonstrate peace and rapprochement. They also desired the attendance of the communist nation so they could promote their anti-war agenda to the Eastern nations yearning for war. Yet, when the rest of the world has united over their anti-war bond, the Cannes International Film Festival has no other way to apprehend and punish the war-inflicting nation than to forbid the presence of Russia at the festival. As the press release alludes to, this was not an easy decision for the festival to make, evident by the text commending the many Russians who stand up against the war yet are still being punished because of the actions of the nation as a whole.

For this reason, during war, the arts become political pawns and are easily sanctioned. There are few ways to punish nations politically that do not create more war and involve more countries in the combat. Thus, the arts are used as soft power, leverage, and a means of negotiating by sanctioning films to punish war-seeking nations. In this scenario, the Russian film industry is being sanctioned across the globe as nations refuse to watch and buy their movies. Russian filmmakers will be disadvantaged in that they are not allowed to present their films to a global audience at the 75th annual Cannes International Film Festival this coming May. It is deeply unfortunate that the entire nation is being punished for acts being committed by a select few. Yet, during wartime, the arts and film are used as leverage to accomplish democratic

nation's anti-war agendas. I conclude, that the same holds true to the history of the festival in the 20th century. Upon its inception in 1939 and its revival in 1946, the festival used the arts and films as a means for accomplishing their political agenda.

Thus, I conclude that the Cannes International Film Festival has and always will serve as a political means of promoting peace and denouncing war and oppression. The creation of the inaugural film festival on behalf of the French government in 1939 was purposeful in using film and the arts as diplomacy to promote their political ideals. In doing so, not only were merely all participating nations awarded grand prizes in the early years of the festival to display friendship and cooperation, but many winning films also displayed the horrors of the war. This was done to demonstrate the need for peace and European unity. For this reason, the Cannes International Film Festival has long relished in the intersection between arts and politics.

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