

Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction by Stephen J. Whitfield</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review by Thomas W. Devine</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review by Sergei K. Kapterev</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review by Denise J. Youngblood</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Articles

**Editor’s Preface, Cyril Buffet**


Cyril Buffet, “‘Declaration of Love on Celluloid’: The Depiction of the Berlin Wall in a GDR Film, 1961-62,” 469-487

John Sbardellati, “‘The Maltz Affair’ Revisited: How the American Communist Party Relinquished its Cultural Influence at the Dawn of the Cold War,” 489-500

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Linda Risso, ““Don’t Mention the Soviets! An Overview of the Short Films Produced by the NATO Information Service Between 1949 and 1969,” 501-512

The three reviews that evaluate the November 2009 issue of *Cold War History* rightly praise its extension of our knowledge of the fault lines that the cinema exposed between East and West, but also between propaganda and entertainment, politics and commerce, didacticism and the artistry. Sergi K. Kapterev, Thomas W. Devine and Denise J. Youngblood have identified unexplored elements and salient themes that four contributors to *Cold War History* have presented in their analysis of films from the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic (G. D. R.), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United States (U. S.). A fifth contributor covered a key episode in the cultural politics of the U. S. Communist Party, involving a screenwriter who was about to be blacklisted. The span of the articles that are reviewed here ranges from the late 1940s until the very end of the Cold War itself. The approaches that stimulate these reviews are disparate: the production histories of single Soviet and East German films; the need of NATO to make short films responsive to geopolitical fluctuations; science fiction as a stand-in for fears of nuclear destruction; a moment that revealed the difficulties of an exceptionally unpopular political movement to somehow reach the masses.

The reviewers faced the challenge of confronting a plurality of approaches. That is both the curse and the advantage of the multiple authorship that journals adopt. Is there anything that an introduction to the reviewers’ essays might offer that could come within range of tying disparate topics together? Can any connection be made over the course of half a century, in which cinema and the conflict of two superpowers are intertwined? I hereby move the nomination of *Friendly Persuasion*, which United Artists released in 1956. What is there about that largely forgotten film that might be relevant? Bear with me.

Based on a 1945 novel by Jessamyn West and set in the Midwest during the Civil War, *Friendly Persuasion* addresses the problem of pacifism, especially when the bad cause of Confederate secession is pitted against a manifestly good cause (the defense of one’s home against a foe that has adopted human bondage and that seeks to end the unity of the republic). How should Quakers respond to this moral and political dilemma, when collective violence seems to be the only effective way to achieve the desideratum of freedom for an entire race? Starring Gary Cooper, whose Quaker wife Grace Kelly had picked up the gun at the end of *High Noon* (1952) only four years earlier, *Friendly Persuasion* conveys the same lesson, which is that violence is repugnant but sometimes necessary. West’s novel, entitled *The Friendly Persuasion*, was inspired by the life of her own great-grandfather. That genealogy she happened to share with a fellow graduate of Whittier College, the most significant American politician to enjoy a career that spanned the entire length of the period covered in these reviews. His c. v. is familiar: tenacious member of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) that subpoenaed Albert Maltz and other members of the Hollywood 10; fierce critic of Democrats whose foreign policy was insufficiently vigilant in meeting the Soviet challenge (and thus an embodiment of what *Meeting on the Elbe* targeted); champion of the war against Vietnamese Communism; architect of détente and juggler of new geopolitical arrangements (with which NATO’s celluloid propagandists had to contend); skeptic about détente when
One of them was of course Ronald Reagan, who had denied that Hollywood had imposed a blacklist in the era when Hollywood imposed a blacklist. In fact, when *Friendly Persuasion* was released, no one was credited with the screenplay. It had been written by Michael Wilson, who had to produce anonymous scenarios, while living in France. (American movie-goers, Reagan had argued, would refuse to see films in which Communists were so directly involved.) In May 1988 President Reagan wanted to demonstrate the beneficent intentions and four-square virtues of the nation he headed. So in May 1988, a year after he had come to Berlin to urge Mikhail Gorbachev to “tear down this wall” (the subject of . . . and Also Your Love), Reagan gave the general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party a videocassette of *Friendly Persuasion*. Reagan may not have known (and by then presumably did not care) who had written it. (Wilson, who died in 1978, was credited only posthumously with the screenplay.) A year and a half after Gorbachev got his tape of *Friendly Persuasion*, the Berlin Wall was indeed torn down; and while he did not become a member of the Society of Friends, his refusal to use the military force that was ostensibly at his disposal to maintain Soviet power earned him something that no patriotic American in 1956 would have imagined would ever be bestowed upon a Soviet ruler: a Nobel Prize for Peace. The apocalyptic fears that the Cold War had generated would not be fulfilled; “the imagination of disaster” would not be realized. The science fiction features that were so prominent in the U. S. in the 1950s could inject social commentary a decade later. The first example that Youngblood cites (*Planet of the Apes*, 1968) was written by Michael Wilson.

His rehabilitation (and that of Albert Maltz) partly confirms Devine’s claim that “one cannot speak of a unitary ‘cold war culture’ that persisted unchanged from 1945 until 1991.” Even as the nuclear threat persisted, even as a stalemate in diplomacy was unabated, domestic anti-Communism was mostly a spent force by the 1960s. But that still left plenty of room for maneuvering on the plane of cultural conflict, including the cinematic efforts that the reviewers diagnose. They underscore the dependence of the makers of *The Meeting on the Elbe* and . . . and Also Your Love upon fidelity to the standards of Stalinist and Marxist orthodoxy. Such films are therefore more reliable indices of the policies of the Eastern bloc than are the films made in the U. S.; that is one retrospective scholarly advantage in writing about one-party dictatorships. But perhaps an opportunity was missed here to consider the extent to which, during the Cold War, Hollywood was a barometer of national values. Did the most influential of film capitals confirm shifts that occur in manners and morals? Or was it more of a catalyst of changes in temper and perhaps even ideology? The answers are elusive, but the questions are what the study of popular culture invites; and the box office success of *The Meeting on the Elbe* and the box office failure of . . . and Also Your Love indicate how pertinent such inquiry is even to the Soviet Union and the G. D. R. In this context Kapterev’s proposal to pursue the “thematic juxtaposition” of the films produced on both sides of the geopolitical divide is apt and promising.

The scholarly case for trying to make sense of the impact of this art form was won long ago, and need not be reinforced here. But the special value of these reviews surely lies in suggesting what understanding can be gained through a plurality of approaches, whether

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through the tangled fate of particular films, though the nimble responsiveness required of NATO propagandists in keeping up with historical challenges, through the way that fears of nuclear destruction were projected onto alien invasions and the extinction of New York City, or through the American Communist dilemma of reconciling art, commerce and what would now be called outreach. In an ideal world, these reviews may even stimulate readers of H-Diplo to screen these and other movies that punctuated the Cold War.

Participants:

Thomas Devine is associate professor of history at California State University, Northridge. Devine received his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina in 2000. His The Last Year of the Thirties: Henry A. Wallace's 1948 Presidential Campaign and the Demise of Popular Front Politics is forthcoming from the University of North Carolina Press.


The interplay of diplomacy and culture has drawn increasing attention of late from those working in the field of international history. The five articles under consideration here all engage that relationship from different perspectives. Cyril Buffet and Isabelle de Keghel both examine movies that present the Soviet-bloc perspective at a particular time and place in the Cold War; John Sbardellati demonstrates how a Moscow dictated (and Cold War precipitated) shift in the ideological position of the American Communists led the CPUSA to abandon what little influence it had in American popular culture; Linda Risso recounts how the NATO Information Service revised the messages of its short films in response to the changing propaganda emphases emerging from the Soviet Union; and Lori Maguire, taking a longer view, examines how depictions of New York City’s “destruction” resonated in different political, diplomatic, and cultural moments over a period of nearly 150 years. In reading these pieces, I found myself returning to three points I emphasize in my undergraduate courses on U.S. popular culture. First, despite the fact that it often addresses timeless themes, popular culture changes – sometimes rapidly and even awkwardly – in order to keep up with events. Indeed, this quality of popular culture makes it a particularly useful lens through which to interpret historical events. Second, if a specific aspect of popular culture is to remain “popular” it must reinforce what the public already believes or at least reassure the public that its beliefs are plausible. And third, in interpreting and claiming significance for a specific product of popular culture, one must take into account the response of the audiences who consumed it and carefully consider the broader context in which it was produced.

Buffet’s analysis of the production and reception of ... und deine Liebe auch speaks to all three of these points. The building of the Berlin wall certainly precipitated some hasty and creative “spin” on the part of GDR filmmakers who were assigned the unenviable task of conveying the positive aspects of the wall while also blaming the West for making “the anti-fascist rampart” a necessity. Indeed, the DEFA faced a difficult challenge since most East Germans were not disposed to see the wall in such terms. Not surprisingly, the most well known of the “Wall Films,” ... und deine Liebe auch, despite some redeeming aesthetic features, did not achieve popular success as it hardly reflected the public’s assessment of the wall specifically or life in the GDR more broadly – the film’s emphasis on the joie de vivre of the East German population notwithstanding! Instead, audiences viewed it as “a crude propaganda operation” (483) that disingenuously depicted painful political events. As Buffet notes, however, the film’s cultural significance may lie in its poor reception – its failure to achieve DEFA’s aims – since it revealed how difficult it was for GDR officials to address the topic of the wall.

In her article, de Keghel argues for the importance of the 1949 Soviet film Meeting on the Elbe, but unlike Buffet in his analysis of ... und deine Liebe auch, she does not devote much attention to the context in which it was produced or its audience reception. Undoubtedly, the film did represent the Soviet view of the Cold War’s beginning, or at least how Moscow wanted this event remembered. Stalin himself declared, “the film was shot with great knowledge of the facts,” though perhaps this typically cryptic statement could be open to
more than one reading.¹ De Keghel’s plot summary, of course, makes clear that this Soviet version of the “facts” was at best highly selective. Given what we now know about the Soviet occupation (what the Germans living in the Eastern zone would have experienced first hand), the plot twists and characterizations of Soviet attitudes and behavior seem laughable.

Accordingly, if one wishes to make the case that the film demonstrates Moscow’s successful application of “soft power,” one should consider what Eastern European audiences thought of it. (The film was not shown in the West.) By 1949, the Soviets’ consolidation of power and influence in the region was nearly complete. The process had not been pleasant for those on the receiving end. Did viewing this film, then, facilitate “the legitimization of Soviet policy in the Cold War” (464) in the eyes of audiences in Prague, East Berlin, or Budapest? Or, like the East Germans who viewed ...und deine Liebe auch thirteen years later, did they see it as a “crude propaganda operation” that presented a version of the truth than did not comport with their own experiences? Did the film even draw large audiences among Eastern Europeans? There may not be sufficient hard evidence to answer these questions, but if such is the case, claims for the “soft power” impact of Meeting on the Elbe should not be overstated. The film may have been of higher quality (and therefore, artistically, more significant) than the low budget anticommunist pot-boilers Hollywood released during the 1950s – movies the studios never intended to be high quality or even box office draws, but rather “bones” tossed to HUAC to keep the professional anticommunists off their backs – but this alone does not mean Meeting on the Elbe was important in a “soft power” sense within the context of the Cold War. Perhaps the more interesting question to ask of this movie is whether Soviet officials themselves genuinely believed its depiction of events was accurate.

Sbardellati’s revisionist account of the Maltz affair’s significance also demonstrates the intersection of cultural policy and Cold War diplomacy. In this case, the “event” that would suddenly change the CPUSA’s approach to culture was the publication of the Duclos letter in 1945. Though presented as a communication to the CPUSA from the French Communist Party leader Jacques Duclos, the letter was actually composed in Moscow – something the American leaders, particularly Earl Browder, realized at the time. Indeed, Browder later referred to the letter as the first declaration of the Cold War, indicating that he had interpreted its contents not only as a warning to tighten the ideological reins by abandoning the more flexible cultural policies of the Popular Front, but also as a signal from Moscow that the Soviets did not expect the Big Three alliance to continue on the same terms once hostilities had officially ended. Arguably, the new CPUSA leadership – Browder was ousted in the summer of 1945 – may have overreacted to the letter and pursued a policy even less flexible than Moscow intended, due in part to the ascendancy of William Z. Foster. Foster had always preferred a more “revolutionary” line and had long detested Browder and his preference for building pragmatic political coalitions with “advanced”

liberals. Now, convinced he had received Moscow’s blessing, a confident and vindicated Foster set out to put the Party on a new course – one that within four years would destroy it as an influential force in American radical politics and culture. Maltz became an early and notable victim of the new ideological rigidity, though over the next two years the Party moved aggressively on all fronts to isolate itself from its former allies, an obtuse process that culminated in the disastrous Progressive Party campaign in 1948 and left the CPUSA severely weakened just in time for the arrival of McCarthyism.

Sbardellati is certainly correct to characterize the treatment of Maltz and the CPUSA’s adoption of a dogmatic “art as a weapon” mindset as “a clear indication of the Party’s dwindling cultural influence,” (498) though it may be unfair to expect anti-communist liberals like Schlesinger to have discerned this so early in the game. In 1946, it appeared to most seasoned political observers that the Communists were gaining, not losing influence among left-liberals. Taking the CPUSA’s inflated rhetoric and aggressive posturing at face value, many anticommunist liberals feared that they were doomed to be on the losing side of liberalism’s “civil war.” There was also more substantial evidence to support such a concern. Throughout 1947, the popular front-oriented Progressive Citizens of America (PCA) had a much larger membership than Schlesinger’s anti-communist liberal organization, Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). Henry Wallace, who sided with PCA and had unknowingly surrounded himself with several advisors who were concealed Communists, was attracting huge and enthusiastic crowds that featured an array of Hollywood celebrities and Park Avenue proletarians. As late as February 1948, a Wallace-backed candidate for Congress had easily defeated the regular Democratic nominee in what was consider a “safe” district. Even savvy popular front activists like the screenwriter Dalton Trumbo realized only in hindsight that the political, and, by extension, cultural clout of the CPUSA was an illusion. As Trumbo later acknowledged, the attendance at the Wallace rallies in each community was also the sum total of the Wallace vote in that community. On election night 1948, the magnitude of Wallace’s defeat revealed that the Communists and the remnants of the popular front liberals were a spent force, though few recognized this until the last weeks of the campaign. In sum, to see the 1946 Maltz affair as a bellwether for the decline of the CPUSA’s influence – an accurate observation – nonetheless requires the benefit of hindsight.

Risso’s suggestive piece on the NATO Information Service films raises not only the connection between events and popular culture – in this case short movies intended to respond to Soviet anti-NATO propaganda and strengthen the sense of camaraderie among the member NATO nations – but also the importance of examining context when discussing “cold war culture.” Clearly, the tenor and mood of the Cold War changed over time and therefore one cannot speak of a unitary “cold war culture” that persisted unchanged from 1945 until 1991. The films’ shifts in focus and emphasis between 1949 and 1969 demonstrate how changes in U.S.-Soviet relations and Western citizens’ perceptions of those relations produced different notions of what constituted an effective propaganda film. Risso’s work also reminds us that the Cold War – Zhdanov to the contrary – should not be studied as an exclusively “two camp” conflict. Relations among allies within each “camp” could be complicated and contentious, as recent scholarship has shown. The cultural products of the Cold War – such as the NATO films Risso analyzes – reflect this complexity.
Like de Keghel, however, Risso does not dwell on audience reception. Though she explains effectively how shifting events and attitudes shaped the films, one still wonders about the impact they had on viewers, how the audience reactions might have varied from country to country, and how large the audiences for these films actually were.

Finally, Maguire’s discussion of the “recurrent nightmare” of New York City’s destruction also engages popular culture’s fluidity, its provision of reassurance by presenting the familiar, and its sensitivity to context and audience preferences. Like Risso, Maguire emphasizes changes over time in her case study – the manner in which New York comes to ruin reflects the cultural mood and anxieties prevalent at the time. At certain times, concerns focus on outside threats, at other times the threat is internal. Context also determines whether the “villain” represents economic, political, or cultural turmoil. Still, there is also a degree of continuity, since, as Maguire astutely notes, New York has always elicited ambivalent feelings – it can be embraced as typically American and yet is also considered alien to most Americans. As American popular culture has come to pervade the entire globe, New York as “familiar” and “alien” has entered the conscious (or subconscious) of those who have never even been to the city. The use of the “recurrent nightmare” motif may be useful in comparative analyses of other aspects of Cold War popular culture – the “accidental launch” of nuclear missiles, for example. As a fan of “Ghostbusters,” however, my one quibble with Maguire is that she mistakes the Pillsbury Doughboy for the Stay Puft Marshmallow man. How one might reflect or release different cultural anxieties than the other, I will leave to the reader to decide.
In a sense, the end of the Cold War spelled the end for cinema’s messianic ambitions. Although cinema continued to exist as a major social and aesthetic phenomenon, its ability not only to reflect on political events but also participate in them was considerably weakened after the easing of Cold War tensions and the disintegration of the Soviet system. As in the case of the Soviet Union’s weakening and eventual breakup, one of the main causes for this was technological: the West started a large-scale campaign for the dissemination of computer technologies, which marked a new stage in the development of mind control. However, the strategies of persuasion and deception mastered by cinema in its peak period did not disappear: they were efficiently absorbed by the new technology. Consequently, the study of these strategies’ historical applications and relationships to historical events and political trends not only broadens the methodological range of the Cold War research but also provides insight into the less obvious mechanisms of propaganda.

The special issue of *Cold War History*, “The Cold War in Film,” is a timely contribution to the exploration of the film culture generated or influenced by a decades-long and world-forming confrontation. It looks at how films made on both sides of the Cold War frontline reacted to specific historical situations and how propaganda interacted with entertainment, thus providing greater understanding of the cultural processes and policies in the Cold War era.

The issue’s opening essay by Isabelle de Keghel analyzes *Meeting on the Elbe* (1949), one of the several high-profile films produced in the Soviet Union in the “acute,” Stalinist period of the Cold War and reflecting “the official Soviet view of (its) origins.” (456) Directed by Grigorii Aleksandrov, the master of quality comedy who was always closely connected with the Soviet regime, *Meeting on the Elbe* represents a major instance of the dramatic-satirical approach employed by the cultural strategists of the late Stalin era for depicting the intensifying Cold War.

De Keghel gives a detailed description of the film (a necessary introduction to a cinematic work hardly available and largely unknown in the West), explicating the film’s imagery and elements of its plot in the context of the Soviet policies toward occupied Germany and towards the recent Soviet ally, the United States. The author detects and accumulates numerous clues pointing to how the Soviet Union wanted to present its policy “against the background of steadily deteriorating East-West relations” (456) -- as the strategic decision to firmly react to the scheming of U.S. imperialism and, simultaneously, as the internationalist readiness to rebuild the spirit of wartime cooperation with the people of the United States.

At the end of the film, “a firm handshake between the protagonists, which seals the friendship between the Soviet and American peoples,” (463) and the Soviet commandant’s words that friendship between the Russians and the Americans was mankind’s greatest issue, soften the film’s general anti-U.S. bias -- and tempt one to look at *Meeting on the Elbe*
from another angle. *Meeting on the Elbe* was released on 16 March, 1949, soon after the beginning of negotiations over the Berlin Crisis. It may be suggested that the certain political ambiguity of the film's *finale* represented the concurrent efforts to defuse a major crisis between the former allies.

The film’s ending incorporates another scene, one in which a drunken American captain opens a pontoon bridge between the two occupation zones. This act can be interpreted as an emblematic reference to the class symbolism of the bridge-raising sequence in *October* (1927), a film which Grigorii Aleksandrov co-directed with Sergei Eisenstein. In *October*, the bridges were raised by the bourgeois government in order to cut the rebellious workers from the city center; in *Meeting on the Elbe*, the bridge is opened by an American imperialist in order to separate the Russian and the American peoples.

From his teacher and collaborator Eisenstein, Aleksandrov borrowed the concept of “film attraction,” which was explained as “any demonstrable fact... that... possesses the characteristic of concentrating the audience’s emotions in any direction dictated by the production’s purpose,”¹ and which he used practically in all his films in the form of eccentric details and set pieces – such as the heroine’s dance atop a huge cannon in *The Circus* (1936) or the sequence in which Professor Dietrich observes the Americans’ behavior among the ruins of devastated Germany.

It may be claimed that in *Meeting on the Elbe* Aleksandrov re-used the concept of the film attraction to present the beginning Cold War as monumental grotesquerie. To one or another extent, this is characteristic of all Cold-War-related productions of the late Stalinist cinema: the new conflict was treated as an inflated, eccentric consequence of the Western imperialists’ perfidy and of their inability to accept the peace-loving nature of the Soviet regime.

Cyril Buffet’s study of *...And Also Your Love*, a melodrama produced in the German Democratic Republic as part of the propagandist effort to substantiate the GDR’s infamous contribution to the Cold War confrontation, the construction of the Berlin Wall, brings the issue’s discussion from the sphere of the satirical and the monumental to the realm of the documentary and the personal.

From the dramatization of Igor Gouzenko’s defection in *The Iron Curtain* (U.S., 1948) to the existential pessimism of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (U.K.,1965), Western cinema depicted the situation of an individual caught between the conflicting sides. In comparison with the more formalized propagandist plots established in Soviet cinema during the late Stalin period and generally imitated in all Communist Bloc cinemas, the West’s cinematic

excursions into the realm of the Cold War were less didactic – or at least more entertaining. However, Buffet’s essay deals with a fascinating exception to the general staleness of the Eastern Bloc’s Cold War productions.2

Buffet analyzes the narrative and ideological plots of ...And Also Your Love and its cinematic form (of special significance was the film’s quasi-documentary appearance, created by the inclusion of documentary footage and the use of hidden camera – see 476), demonstrating how stylistic borrowings from Western cinema (from the Italian Neo-Realism, with its passionate interest in ordinary people’s stories, and from the then fashionable – and more ideologically problematic - cinema of Alain Resnais) and consequent formal ambiguity could subvert the intended ideological message. In this case, the filmmakers’ attempt to personalize this message through “ambitious artistic innovation,” based on the latest experiments of Western filmmaking, did not earn success among East German audiences: evidently, they were repelled by the discrepancy between the film’s modish appearance and the fact that its content was defined by “a crude propaganda operation.” (483)

Buffet’s story of divergence between political and stylistic messages is closely correlated with an all-round analysis of the film’s production history and its reception by East German press and public. This “total” approach, supported by impressive archival research, provides a model for Cold War historians preparing to venture into the diffuse field of cinema studies.

John Sbardellati complements Cyril Buffet’s examination of a fictional story of the Cold War’s encroachment on the personal sphere, by the study of the Cold War’s intervention in the life of a real individual, the blacklisted American screenwriter Albert Maltz. Sbardellati’s essay takes Maltz’s post-WWII story as an instance of double pressure: from the American establishment and the anti-establishment American Communist Party, to which Maltz belonged. Imprudently, Maltz publicized his personal vision of “a deeper form of realism” (493) exceeding the limitations of artistic activity rigidly connected to the Party line, at a historical moment when the incipient Cold War was setting American society against everything related to Communism.

Sbardellati shows that this particular moment was detrimental not only to Maltz’s personal position but also to the position of the American Communist Party, whose hardliners rejected “a cultural programme that had succeeded in granting its members a large degree of cultural influence.” (496) One may argue whether the continuation of “the ‘cultural front’ approach” would be productive in the conditions of recoil from the pragmatic tolerance of the wartime (also a feature of the wartime situation in the Soviet Union) and rapid rise of anti-Communist sentiments. Still, Sbardellati’s essay clearly demonstrates that the American Communists’ disregard for the nuances of artistic conscience contributed to the emergence of the Cold War culture.

2 Another notable exception was the Soviet spy thriller The Dead Season (1968).
Linda Risso’s analysis of the short films produced by the NATO Information Service (NATIS) moves the discussion from the analysis of individual films and a personal story to the examination of a cluster of films belonging to the immense field of “secondary” film materials – newsreels, instructional and advertising films, etc. - which are gradually joining the “primary” film materials as objects of film history and the history of propaganda. Such materials constitute a major segment of the Cold War culture, and Risso analyzes the mutation of a series of such materials – actually, several distinct series produced by the same body - in the course of changes in international politics and reveals some institutional mechanisms of their application by Western ideologues in response to communist propaganda and the alliance’s specific needs.

One of the more interesting lines of Risso’s study deals with NATIS’s abandonment of the topic of “the imminent threat of a Soviet invasion” and its incorporation of “geopolitical, economic and cultural factors” (510) against the background of East-West détente. The author shows how institutional flexibility and willingness for softer approach – in the “democratic” case, an approach based on the responsiveness to diverse, volatile and influential public opinion - can prolong the life of a propaganda enterprise.

Lori Maguire’s overview of images of the perishing Western metropolis brings the discussion of Cold War cinematic product to the supra-genre of disaster films - and effectively goes beyond the Cold War problématique. Focusing on the virtual destruction of New York City, it bridges the period between the partial destruction of the city in the original King Kong (1933) and the comparatively recent, pre-9/11 variations on the genre of the disaster film. Thus, it puts the genre of the disaster film in the broader context of American culture – the culture of a nation which, for a long time, had felt securely isolated from the conflicts lacerating the rest of the world, and whose “island” mentality was to give way to anxieties produced by the rapid development of weapons of mass destruction (first and foremost, nuclear power) and their long-distance carriers.

In the context of the Cold War discussion, Maguire’s essay provides material for a comparison between Cold War fantasies made in Hollywood and political fiction produced at the studios of the Soviet Union. By Hollywood standards, the grotesquerie of Meeting on the Elbe was basic and inefficient. Hollywood exploited much deeper fears than the apprehension of a deteriorating international situation. Soon after World War II, it wholeheartedly embraced the genre of science fiction -- a genre whose appearance in Soviet cinema was cautious and infrequent -- and, more generally, apocalyptic themes and motifs unacceptable to the obligatory optimism of Soviet ideology. In Soviet cinema, warnings about the possibility of an ultimate military conflagration and plots and images depicting its possible variations were substituted by a cluster of films about the tragedy of the Second World War (or, rather, the Great Patriotic War -- the Soviet Union’s war against Nazi Germany).

Maguire stresses that after the initial popularity of disaster images in the nuclear- and Sputnik-obsessed 1950s, the popularity of apocalyptic science fiction, including disaster films, decreased, partially due to the defusing of the Cuban missile crisis, the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963, and the beginning of détente. According to the author, the
sci-fi disaster film's comeback in the 1980s was linked to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the new “feeling of vulnerability created by the Iran hostage crisis.” (520) While the latter event was only indirectly connected to “classical” Cold War issues, it revealed the depth of the anxiety ingrained in the American psyche after America’s loss of the nuclear monopoly.

The essence of Maguire’s study is in its examination of one of the most striking modes of manipulating a national psyche traumatized by the sudden loss of its superiority. Sensing the monetary potential of disaster images, Hollywood immersed itself in this manipulation with all its expertise and resources, promptly reacting to transformations of public taste - in a way which, probably, became a model for the NATO Information Service’s adjustment of its propaganda program. On the other side of the Iron Curtain, in a different but no less elaborate way, the Soviet regime manipulated, through films devoted to the very real disaster of the past war, the deepest trauma of the Soviet collective psyche.

The reviewed essays convincingly demonstrate the thematic and generic variety which characterized the cinematic treatment of Cold War issues by the conflict’s adversaries. They also emphasize the diversity of historical records of the Cold War era, inviting further studies of “less precise” sources, not least the rich reserves of the era’s cinematic works.

Examination of the Cold War’s film culture could be productively extended to direct comparisons between ideological models used by the conflicting cinemas and between specific cinema products which employed those models. The binary culture of the Cold War – particularly cinema, with its intrinsic dependence on stereotypes and clichés – provides a rich ground for such comparisons. It may be expected that new fascinating aspects of the Cold War culture could be revealed if Meeting on the Elbe were juxtaposed – as a whole or in its specific aspects - with such Western commentaries on the inter-Allied rift in post-WWII Europe as the Berlin Airlift drama The Big Lift (U.S., 1950), the occupied-Vienna thriller Four in a Jeep (Switzerland,1951), and maybe Graham Greene and Carol Reed’s canonic Cold War noir The Third Man (U.K., 1949); the East German ...And Also Your Love, were compared with the contemporary West German-U.S. production Escape from East Berlin (1962) and NATO Information Service shorts, with documentary propaganda produced in the Warsaw Pact countries (for example, with the 1959 Soviet documentary Attention! Missiles on the Rhine!); and reasons for the proliferation of disaster films in Hollywood were further analyzed alongside the reasons for their absence in Soviet cinema.

Albert Maltz’s story – as well as the stories of other blacklisted American film workers - could also be compared with the stories of his Soviet counterparts affected by the Stalinist "anti-cosmopolitan” campaigns of the late 1940s-early 1950s: just as Maltz, they were condemned not only by the officialdom but also by their “benevolent” colleagues – although for very different reasons. The tactic of thematic juxtaposition based on close textual analysis of the films produced by the conflicting sides and on institutional comparisons between their propaganda efforts in the sphere of cinema would doubtlessly enrich the study of the Cold War film culture in more than one way.
Cinema was the most hotly contested territory on the cultural front during the Cold War. These five well-researched and persuasively-argued articles illustrate the variety and richness of Cold War cinema as a subject for scholarly inquiry. The consistent excellence of the work makes this volume of Cold War History a valuable resource for those interested in integrating cinema into the cultural history of the Cold War. The variety that is a strength of this forum is also its major weakness, as the five essays are so disparate that the authors do not engage in a dialogue with each other.

In "Meeting on the Elbe (Vstrecha na El’be): A Visual Representation of the Incipient Cold War from a Soviet Perspective," Isabelle de Keghel analyzes the canonical Soviet film of the early Cold War, Grigorii Aleksandrov's The Meeting on the Elbe (Vstrecha na Elbe, 1949). Keghel seeks to elucidate the Soviet interpretation for the causes of the Cold War and to demonstrate that the Soviets understood the propaganda value of “soft power,” even if they only practiced it on the screen, rather than in real life. She also shows that the film provides visual illustration of Andrei Zhdanov’s “Two Camp” theory of 1947, that is, that the capitalist and socialist camps have irreconcilable differences. The Americans represent war, the Soviets, peace. Although this piece is based only on secondary sources, the published and archival primary sources on the film with which I am familiar support Keghel’s interpretation.

Unlike American Cold War films made in the late 1940s, The Meeting on the Elbe was a “prestige” production with an impressive cast and crew. Director Aleksandrov was one of the USSR's most popular directors, although he was famed for his soft propaganda films like the musicals The Circus (Tsirk, 1936) and Volga Volga (1938). Like Aleksandrov, cinematographer Eduard Tisse had gotten his start in the film business working with Sergei Eisenstein. Liubov Orlova was the most beloved of all Soviet film stars. Finally, Dmitrii Shostakovich composed the score. The presence of so much talent indicates the importance of the film to the cinema bureaucracy and perhaps, to Stalin himself. The finished product was first rate: lively and entertaining. This is reflected in its box office: The Meeting on the Elbe was the number one film in 1949, with some 24 million viewers.

The film opens with a scene holding great promise for future Soviet-American relations. The first meeting on the Elbe is a joyous occasion. It quickly becomes clear, however, that there are deep tensions between the allies. The Soviet commandant, Major Kuzmin, presides over the Soviet reconstruction of the eastern part of the fictitious “every city” of Altenstadt. The Red Army is generous to a fault, even providing machine-gun oil to nuns who have no kerosene for their lanterns. Kuzmin skillfully constructs a coalition government, with the anti-fascist, but also anti-Soviet Professor Dietrich as mayor. When Nazis leaflets mysteriously appear at a newly opened school, Kuzmin quickly locates the culprit, a young boy, and gently disabuses him of his false consciousness concerning the Nazis and the Soviets. Kuzmin also rebuilds a monument to Heinrich Heine, demonstrating his knowledge of and affection for “true” German culture.
On the other side of the Elbe, under the leadership of General MacDermott, Mrs. MacDermott, and Senator Wood, exploitation reigns. The Americans loot and pillage German treasures; weary German citizens stand in line to trade a family heirloom for a can of pork and beans; American soldiers beat up a black GI at a raucous nightclub; a virgin forest is razed. As bad as the MacDermotts and Wood are, the chief villain, Janet Sherwood, reveals the mask of American duplicity. In disguise as a journalist hunting for her antifascist father, she is in fact seeking to smuggle a Nazi war criminal, Schrank, out of the Soviet zone. She ultimately flings off her fur coat to show herself as she really is: the uniformed “Miss Collins” of the “Federal Security Bureau.”

As hackneyed as this film sounds, with its inversions of Soviet and American postwar behaviors, there is subplot that might have surprised American viewers (had there been any), but was a staple of Soviet Cold War filmmaking. There is a “good” American, Major James Hill. Hill and Kuzmin have become friends over time. When Hill learns from Kuzmin that Sherwood was trying to smuggle Schrank into the American sector, he tries to have her arrested. He ends up stripped of his rank and going home to face the equivalent of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Kuzmin bids him a sad farewell. As the film makes clear, there is no room for good Americans in the American zone, just as there is no room for common ground between the “two camps.”

Cyril Buffet’s essay “‘Declaration of Love on Celluloid’: The Depiction of the Berlin Wall in a GDR Film, 1961-62,” is arguably the best of the lot, thoroughly researched in the primary sources and deeply contextualized. This essay also deals with only one film, ...and Also Your Love (...und deine Liebe auch, 1962) and focuses as much on the film’s production history as on an analysis of the film itself. The movie was the first feature “Wall Film” produced after the Berlin Wall was constructed. As Buffet shows, ...and Also Your Love proved problematic with audiences as well as with censors and critics. It combined “both strong political commitment and a radical artistic approach.” (470)

The erection of the Wall produced disparate responses from DEFA, the German Film Stockholder’s Company that “held the monopoly on film production.” (470) Reactions to the closing of the border led to varied responses from DEFA employees, some of whom were staunch communists and encouraged younger staff members to join the National People’s Army (N.V.A). One artistic group immediately produced a short agit-prop film, while others joined in signing letters of support for the Wall. On the other hand, many more reacted unfavorably and stayed away from the studio in protest. Moreover, 12,000 West German DEFA employees lost their jobs, with significant impact as many important artists were let go. It became difficult to travel to the studio in Potsdam; the most direct route, through West Berlin, was now off-limits. All this exacerbated DEFA’s existing problems, chief of which was the lack of popularity of their films.

The Socialist Unity Party (S.E.D.) appointed a new managing director for DEFA, Jochen Münchenerberger. Under his leadership, DEFA increased its attacks on West Germany, portraying it as a land “teeming with ex-Nazis, murderers, and warmongers preparing the nuclear army of the Bundeswehr” as well as saboteurs, thieves, and traffickers. (473)
purpose was to demonstrate that the Wall had been erected for East German security, to keep the bad guys out.

This is the political context for ... and Also Your Love. Although the first Wall film was a documentary, the studio fixed its hopes on the three feature films it was planning, especially ...and Also Your Love. The project, co-written by director Frank Vogel and scenarist Paul Wiens, was approved with all due speed, a rarity in the highly bureaucratized world of East German filmmaking. Unlike The Meeting on the Elbe, this was a low-budget project, with only three actors, two cameramen, the director, and the scriptwriter on the crew. The vague production plan did worry DEFA, however, and it provided the usual oversight of the filmmaking process.

The low budget contributed to the visual appeal of ...and Also Your Love, which was filmed in a quasi-documentary, neo-realist style, with New Wave flourishes. Buffet says that “Frank Vogel acknowledged his borrowing from Alain Renais.” (476) and the film bears a certain resemblance to Hiroshima mon amour. Even with the borders closed, G.D.R filmmakers were not immune from outside creative influences, but the paradox is that while the film form was modern, the content was orthodox.

Not surprisingly, given its small cast and crew, ...and Also Your Love’s plot is much simpler than The Meeting on the Elbe’s. The 25 year old war orphan Ulli is the positive hero of Socialist Realism. He is an S.E.D. member and a “section head in a Berlin electronics factory” (476) who joins the N.V.A. He is also an amateur radio operator, “interested in the whole planet,” (477) demonstrating that GDR citizens may be cut off from West Berlin, but they are not isolated from the world. Ulli’s younger half-brother Klaus is a taxi driver in West Berlin before the Wall, as cheerful as Ulli is sober-minded. Eva, a mail carrier, comes between them. Klaus seduces her, although she actually likes Ulli better, and she becomes pregnant with Klaus’s child. Klaus decides to flee to the West but Ulli stops him, and is wounded by a West German policeman for his efforts.

On the surface, this looks like a conventional socialist realist tale. Ulli and Eva are “workers,” whereas Klaus is a bourgeois “operator” who cares only about the money he could make in West Berlin. The Wall is definitely seen as a necessary protective edifice because of the hostility of the West, which is demonstrated in the shooting of Ulli. The problem is, Buffet tells us, that Klaus is the film’s true protagonist, not Ulli. Ulli is boringly straight and narrow-minded, while Eva is, according to one critic, “flighty.” (480) Klaus’s character, however, is the opposite of Ulli’s: “complex, ambivalent, and essentially endearing.” (480) Yet Klaus appears in the work camp to which he was sent as “both humble and repentant.” (481) Paul Wiens emphasized that Klaus was a “class brother” who had fallen off the path of righteousness, but was still salvageable.

Vogel and Wiens’ intentions may have been impeccable, but the Film Review Board found ...and Also Your Love disturbing, for its depiction of the Wall and of Klaus. The Wall in the film bore too close a resemblance to a prison wall for comfort; Klaus was insufficiently evil to ensure viewer disapprobation. They feared that the film might have the paradoxical
affect of causing the viewers to side with Klaus and his values. It was only after S.E.D intervention that the film was released in September 1962.

Despite many good reviews, the film attracted few spectators, only 535,000 over a year. The negative reviews seemed to reflect the opinions of the public; showings were cancelled for lack of an audience, posters were vandalized, and at a screening in Thuringia, the audience became obstreperous. The other two Wall films of this period were also markedly unsuccessful, with the result that DEFA began to package the message about the Wall in more entertaining forms, for example, in a spy thriller. Wall films quickly disappeared from German films altogether, as an unspoken “forbidden area.” (483) Buffet has succeeded in bring a transitional moment in East German film history to life.

A second pair of essays in the volume analyzes a body of work, rather than a single film. The encyclopedic approach always runs the risk of superficiality, especially in a journal article. Lindo Risso mainly avoids this pitfall. As the title suggests, “‘Don’t Mention the Soviets!’ An Overview of the Short Films Produced by the NATO Information Service between 1949 and 1969,” offers a brief survey of NATO Information Service (NATIS) shorts in order to demonstrate the service’s shift from hard-core military propaganda to “softer” themes after Stalin’s death, and particularly after the advent of détente. NATIS was important as NATO’s propaganda arm, but it also, Risso suggests, “carried out its own response to the anti-NATO communist campaigns.” (502)

NATIS opened for business in late 1950. Some of the governments of NATO states were concerned that NATIS would interfere with their own propaganda efforts. Not until June 1952 did NATIS have an operating budget, ending its reliance on voluntary contributions. Initially its short films were produced to train troops on the advantages of the alliance and “focused on military defence and security cooperation.” (502) The Atlantic Review, for example, was a series that centered on military objectives like strategy and weapons.

After Stalin’s death (and the Korean War), NATIS had to adapt to the changing propaganda strategy of the U.S.S.R., which was no longer based on “frontal opposition to the USA. and NATO.” (502) Rather, the new focus was to present the Soviet Union as a leader in the movement for world peace and a participant in diplomatic dialogue. As Risso notes, this approach resonated with the Western as well as the Eastern publics who favored peaceful coexistence to armed confrontation. The Soviet “peace offensive” presented NATIS with special challenges. It now had to shift gears to focus on the social and economic benefits of the NATO alliance, which advanced the idea of promoting an Atlantic “community.”

As an example of the new tactic, in 1955 NATIS updated a 1952 film called Power for Peace and titled it Alliance for Peace. The new film, which included some of the footage from the older picture that stressed the Soviet military threat, showed Dwight Eisenhower visiting the capitals of all the member states in preparation for the Treaty of Washington, as well as brief, highly clichéd snapshots of each state. The result, Risso argues, demonstrates variety as well as cultural unity within the alliance as well as the fact that military defense is but one of the advantages of belonging to the community. Around This Table (1954) is a similarly “reactive” film, tackling the communist arguments that NATO deprived states of
national sovereignty and weakened national economies by stressing rearmament. These films were distributed to troops in training, journalist, politicians, and to the general public through schools and occasional broadcast on television.

By the 1960s, NATIS was urged to produce films with greater human interest, rather than the old emphasis on military, political, economic, and sociological issues. NATIS began making 20-minute movies on the member states “to highlight the common cultural elements as well as the existing economic and political cooperation holding the region together and which linked the region to its other NATO neighbors.” (507) The threat from the East is only hinted at; the message is that “NATO is much more than a purely military alliance.” (508)

Détente produced new challenges to NATIS, as the value of NATO was once again being judged in the court of public opinion. The new NATIS line was that détente was possible due to the balance of power between East and West, which had been made possible through NATO’s integrated defense. The “Soviet threat” was pushed to the sidelines. *Europe: Two Decades* (1969), which was intended for the general public, links the birth of NATO to the Marshall Plan, with the aim of fostering an integrated Europe and sound transatlantic relationships. NATO is scarcely mentioned in the film, and even the Russians (not “Soviets”) are shown in a friendly fashion. However, it’s important to keep in mind that movies intended for opinion makers tended to be much harder line, even at this late date. An example is the 1967 *NATO: A Briefing Film*, which stresses that despite détente, the Soviets continued to build their war machine.

The other essay devoted to a survey of multiple films, Lori Maguire’s “The Destruction of New York City: A Recurrent Nightmare of American Cold War Cinema,” offers a quick survey of science fiction films. It is as lively as its subject and demonstrates that mass commercial filmmaking can have a critical subtext that makes it worthy of study. Maguire argues that the destruction of America’s cultural and economic capital was a frequent motif in American cinema during the Cold War and that science fiction was the preferred genre. As she notes, stories about alien invasion proliferate when “the nation feels threatened” by enemies: “Fears of communist assault from without and within and anxieties about the arms race, including the possibility of nuclear holocaust, all found a natural arena of expression in science fiction.” (514)

New York is a city that has also produced anxieties, and Maguire dates this back to an 1838 James Fenimore Cooper novel, *Home As Found*, in which Wall Street is in flames. In movies starting with *King Kong* (1933), the Manhattan skyline was been “a very visible symbol of American capitalism…the threat of communist to the American system could be easily dramatised by showing their destruction.” (516)

The period 1948-1962 was the heyday of the American science fiction film, neatly corresponding to the height of the Cold War. Soviet acquisition of the atomic and hydrogen bombs and missiles meant that the glorious geographic isolation of the United States was over. Spy scares and the activities of HUAC and Joseph McCarthy further raised fears. Given that HUAC and McCarthy were obsessed with finding evidence of disloyalty in Hollywood, it
is notable that science fiction films remained a place “where these anxieties could be expressed and the official discourse questioned.” (517) The first wave of Cold War science fiction films focused on atomic power (Captive Women, The World, the Flesh and the Devil, The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms). Invasion was another important theme (Invasion USA, The War of the Worlds, Earth vs. Flying Saucers, Invasion of the Body Snatchers). The launching of Sputnik stimulated even more interest in invasion films, and there was a new wave of them (Deadly Mantis, The Giant Claw, Colossus of New York, Robot Attack USA).

The science fiction genre went into decline in the 1960s, and although current events were only one of many factors, they nevertheless did play a role. Fears were calmed, for example, by the Test Ban Treaty of 1963 and especially by the advent of détente. At this point, social commentary enters science fiction to an extent not seen before (Planet of the Apes, Beneath the Planet of the Apes, Escape from New York) Attacks on capitalism and the American system of government also entered science fiction in the 1970s (Soylent Green, Meteor, C.H.U.D.). Once the Cold War began to heat up again with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Ronald Reagan’s ascension to the presidency, anxieties were magnified once more, and “it became more and more common to show exterior threats to New York.” (52) These threats are both “serious” (Superman II, Q-the Winged Serpent) and overtly comical (the two Ghostbuster films). The end of the Cold War did not, however, mean an end to the cinematic destruction of New York (Deep Impact, Armageddon).

The article that fits this collection least well because it does not concern films but rather an aspect of cultural politics is John Sbardellati’s “‘The Maltz Affair’ Revisited: How the American Communist Party Relinquished Its Cultural Influence at the Dawn of the Cold War.” It is also the most provocative of the five essays. Sbardellati argues that the infamous Maltz affair of 1946, usually considered the point at which the American Communist Party reestablished control over its artists, was in fact the moment when it “unwittingly forfeited a large measure of its cultural influence.”

The essay focuses on Albert Maltz, (1908-1985) communist novelist, playwright, and scriptwriter. Maltz joined the C.P.U.S.A. in 1935, seeing the Soviet Union as the only country dedicated to stopping fascism. Like many other aspiring writers, Maltz came to Hollywood looking for a way to finance his “serious writing.” (491) Once there, he butted heads with fellow scriptwriter John Howard Lawson, “the ranking Communist in Hollywood” (491), over the latter’s efforts to censor his peers’ work. Maltz never submitted his work to Lawson and stopped attending Party meetings, but remained a committed communist. Maltz wrote the scripts for two important war films for Warner Brothers, Destination Tokyo (1944) and Pride of the Marines (1945) for which he received an Oscar nod for best screenplay. He and Frank Sinatra won a special Oscar for a short documentary, The House I Live In (1945). Although all of Maltz’s work reflected his social consciousness, “none could seriously be termed ‘Communist propaganda.’” (492)

Maltz’s problems with the Party began in February 1946, when he wrote an article for The New Masses titled “What Shall We Ask of Writers?” in which he argued against the notion that “art is a weapon” in the class struggle. This was a marked shift away from the “cultural front” or “democratic modernism” approach that “encouraged the integration of social
realism into mass culture.” (493) Maltz further argued that “politically suspect” writers could be great artists whose works were socially illuminating. If artists followed the dictate that “art is a weapon,” their work would be “shallow.” (493)

Communist critics pounced. Samuel Sillen wrote a six-part series in the Daily Worker denouncing Maltz as one who argued that writers should adopt a “supra-class attitude.” (493) Sillen was careful to draw on the writings of Lenin, Stalin, and Andrei Zhdanov, in addition to Marx and Engels. Another Daily Worker critic, Mike Gold, claimed that Maltz had been poisoned by the “luxury and phony atmosphere of Hollywood.” (493) Maltz quickly recanted in a piece title “Moving Forward.”

Sbardellati carefully grounds the Maltz affair in the context of CPUSA politics. The same month that “What Shall We Ask of Writers?” appeared, Earl Browder, who had renamed the C.P.U.S.A. the “Communist Political Association” in 1946, was ousted from the Party. After the Browder ouster, “the CPUSA quickly reconstituted itself and replace Browder with hardliner William Z. Foster.” (494) Foster attacked not only Browder’s politics but also his views on culture. So Maltz’s essay became an example of “cultural Browderism.” Under the tenets of “Fosterism,” there was a rigid adherence between the means of cultural production and the value of the cultural artifact. That is, Hollywood, as part of the capitalist system, “could only produce bourgeois propaganda.” (494) Even John Howard Lawson, who thought of American cinema as the art of the masses, took a while to get used to the new strictures. Unofficially, communist writers soldiered on. As scriptwriter Abraham Polonsky noted ascerbically, “We didn’t give a shit. The cultural leadership obviously didn’t know what they were talking about.” (496)

Yet Sbardellati sees the CPUSA in effect relinquishing its cultural influence as it sought, apparently unsuccessfully, if we are to believe Polonsky, to rein in its Hollywood personnel. In any event, Hollywood’s anti-communists saw “red” in the Maltz affair and believed that from this point on the Party would be enforcing its orthodoxy on scriptwriters. In May 1947, HUAC began to hold closed meetings on Hollywood’s communist problem, and unfriendly M.P.A. (Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals) members pushed their interpretation of the Maltz affair on the committee. Sbardellati argues that what anti-communists saw as a communist cultural threat was “a clear indication of the Party’s dwindling influence.” (498) By rejecting the concept of the “cultural front,” the Party had “surrendered its cultural authority.” (498) This is an irony indeed.

Although I would have wished for a more integrated collection that dealt with some aspect of the cinematic Cold War from a truly international perspective (three of the five essays take U.S. film and filmmakers as their topic), this is a solid collection of articles. Isabelle de Keghel offers the first in-depth study of an important Soviet Cold War film, The Meeting on the Elbe. Cyril Buffet demonstrates the impact the Wall had on GDR filmmaking. Linda Risso surveys the evolution of a little known group of NATIS films. Loris Maguire distills the volumes that have been written about Cold War science fiction films into a pithy essay. And finally, John Sbardellati brings a fresh perspective to the much-analyzed Maltz affair.