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When I was a film student you could forget studying the classic realist text or the shifting antinomies in the films of John Ford, the real test of whether you knew anything about film was if you could name all the Magnificent Seven, the Dirty Dozen or the Hollywood Ten.

Now obviously the magnificent seven and the dirty dozen were characters in films but it was easy to forget in those student days that the Hollywood Ten were real people and what their significance was.

The only person I could remember with any degree of ease was film director Edward Dmytryk, because he had directed crossfire and the Caine Mutiny, the rest were unfamiliar and certainly not household names – as was and is the case with film you remember the stars and then maybe the director, everyone else is bit part players.

For the record the Hollywood Ten were:-

Lester Cole - Screenwriter

Alvah Bessie – Sreenwriter

Albert Maltz – screenwriter

Herbert Biberman – screenwriter and director

Ring Lardner - Jr Screenwriter

John Howard Lawson – Screenwriter

Samuel Ornitz – screenwriter

Adrian Scott – producer and screenwriter

Dalton Trumbo – Screenwriter

And of course director Edward Dmytryk

The reason for their title: they were all found guilty in the late 1940s of contempt of the American Congress for refusing to answer questions about their alleged involvement with the Communist Party for which they served time in prison and were blacklisted in Hollywood.

This was in the post 2nd World War era when the geo-politics of the cold war was beginning to take hold. America went into a frenzy of anti-communist paranoia embodied in the infamous figure of senator Joe McCarthy and the House of Un-American Activities Committee's (HUAC) search for communist infiltration into the American way of life.

It's also easy to forget how intense, divisive and destructive this moment in American society and culture was. People were called to account for their political beliefs – something which was supposed to be protected by the American constitution but willfully overlooked by HUAC. Often allegations were based on hearsay, accusations could easily be made, witnesses called and even if they were cleared, then guilt by association meant they often couldn't find work again. Lives and careers were ruined.

To give you an illustration of the intensity here are some extracts from a government produced anti communist advert which would have been published in magazines and newspapers in the early 50s

"The REDS have made our Screen, Radio and TV Moscow's most effective Fifth column in America. Our Own Films made by Red producers Directors, Writers and STARS are being used by Moscow in Asia, Africa the Balkans and throughout Europe to create hatred of America. Right now films are being made to craftily glorify Marxism, Unesco and one-worldism and via your TV set they are being piped into your living room and are poisoning the minds of your children under your very eyes!!!"

No seriously, that was published to alert the American public to what was happening.

It was against this background of fever pitch hysteria that HUAC sought to weed out communists and communist sympathisers in the film industry and wider media, resulting in a whole raft of show hearings, imprisonments, sackings or self-imposed exile.

It wasn't just the Hollywood Ten who were swept up in it, the whole film industry was forced to take a position either for or against communism. In the studios' case they made their position plain.

A statement from the studio heads stated "We will not knowingly employ a Communist or a member of any party or group which advocates the overthrow of the government of the United States by force or by any illegal or unconstitutional methods."

Whilst the grandly titled Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals co-founded by Walt Disney issued a pamphlet which advised producers that their films should, and I quote, "not smear the free enterprise system, industrialists, wealth, the profit motive nor deify the common man or the collective"

Some people like Gary Cooper, John Wayne happily agreed with the whole process, others like Elia Kazan voluntarily named names whilst others like Edward Dmytryk post-imprisonment recanted and named names in order to keep working. Some such as directors Joseph Losey, Cy Endfield and producer Carl Foreman chose exile, making some classic films in the UK and Europe.

The story then of scriptwriter Dalton Trumbo is extraordinary and has just found its way onto screen by the same industry which excised him

decades earlier. Extraordinary because - following his imprisonment he couldn't get work in Hollywood nor did he want to leave the country and as he was a damned fine scriptwriter – one of if not THE best – he started writing under pseudonyms. In these conditions he wrote numerous scripts in the 1950s famously winning Oscars for *Roman Holiday* and *The Brave One*. It was only in 1960 with Otto Preminger's *Exodus* and finally an onscreen credit for the script to Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* that Trumbo was publically acknowledged and the hold of the Blacklist finally broken.

The film *Trumbo* is both entertaining and illuminating about a dark time in Hollywood and America's past, where fear and paranoia of an ideology took grip and caused the government and institutions to spy on and put on trial its own people for their beliefs. You couldn't imagine it happening today.

Trumbo opens on the Friday 5th February. On sat 6th at 2pm Brian Neve, author of *Film and Politics in America* will give an illustrated talk on Hollywood, Communism and the Blacklist.

See <http://www.watershed.co.uk/whatson/7118/trumbo/> and <http://www.watershed.co.uk/whatson/7150/trumbo-hollywood-communism-and-the-blacklist/> for further information.