

Chapter Two

Brave Homelands and Evil Empires

The recent changes in Eastern Europe and the breakup of the Soviet empire have begun to rearrange not only the map of Europe but also the shape of contemporary American politics. In a changing international climate, the marked anti-Sovietism that distinguished much of the Reagan period contrasts sharply with the more tolerant and cooperative international relationships that now prevail and that were anticipated by a softening of President Reagan's own stance later in his second term. Prior to this, however, Reagan brought to the presidency a conscious attempt to reverse the perceived mistakes of the Carter years. As Jeane Kirkpatrick had argued in the pages of *Commentary*, Carter's emphasis upon human rights seemed to many in the new administration to be a symptom of a weakened America, a nation no longer able to forcibly defend its needs and its friends throughout the globe. The Right was offended by the "loss" of Nicaragua and Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan seemed like a deliberately calculated move in light of the apparent erosion of the U.S. position as a world leader and military force.

As the 1970s ended, for many on the Right the United States had lost its stature in the international arena.¹ The scars of defeat in Vietnam lingered, and the United States seemed unwilling to engage in direct military intervention elsewhere. A 20-year campaign of pressure against Castro's Cuba—including clandestine CIA operations, an economic blockade, and an attempted invasion—had not dampened the revolutionary fires in Central America. The revolution had succeeded in Nicaragua, El Salvador seemed about to fall, and fighting between the rebels and the government in Guatemala was growing increasingly bloody. (These developments are examined in Chapter 3.) The protracted

hostage drama playing out on a daily basis in Iran seemed to reveal America as a hobbled giant, especially when its elite hostage rescue team and expensive helicopters fell victim to something as mundane and foreseeable as desert sands and winds. In a bipolar world, as it had been since World War II, every American loss was interpreted as a Soviet victory. America's decline automatically entailed a renewal of Soviet strength. A resurgent America (to borrow a term from Robert Tucker's important *Foreign Affairs* article of the period²) was the program and the prescription needed to reverse this course of affairs. As Reagan took office, détente and human rights were discarded as the discredited policies of yesterday, and a new Cold War commenced.

As in the old Cold War, the major source of conflict and aggression throughout the world was held to be the Soviet Union, and against it only the military might of the United States was perceived to be poised. Indeed, President Reagan believed that it was America's military force that had kept the peace throughout the world following World War II and that only now, in a time of a declining American military strength, did the Soviet Union feel sufficiently emboldened to launch aggressive moves in Central America, Africa, and the Middle East. At the end of World War II, according to Reagan:

The United States was the only undamaged industrial power in the world. Our military power was at its peak, and we alone had the atomic weapon. But we didn't use this wealth and this power to bully. We used it to rebuild. We raised up the war-ravaged economies, including the economies of those who had fought against us. At first, the peace of the world was unthreatened, because we alone were left with any real power, and we were using it for the good of our fellow man. Any potential enemy was deterred from aggression because the cost would have far outweighed the gain.³

The relationship of world peace to U.S. military power, for Reagan, rested on a kind of first principle governing U.S. conduct in international affairs: The United States would never strike first. "The defense policy of the United States is based on a simple premise: the United States does not start fights. We will never be an aggressor. We maintain our strength in order to deter and defend against aggression—to preserve freedom and peace."⁴ This rationale links the new Cold War explicitly with the one begun under Truman. In his famous "doctrine" announcing the shape of postwar foreign policy, Truman in 1947 had pledged the United States would defend "free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures," thus implying that the United States would never instigate a conflict but only intervene where "free peoples" were already being threatened. That Reagan saw his policies as an explicit continuation of the Truman era is apparent in his use of

the Truman Doctrine in a 1983 speech before Congress on the threat posed by revolutionary Nicaragua to U.S. interests. Quoting from the doctrine and remarking that Truman's words were as relevant now as in 1947, Reagan proceeded to describe a scenario in which creeping totalitarianism in Central America threatened the national security of all the Americas and demanded a vigorous U.S. response.⁵ In this speech and elsewhere, Reagan's rhetoric borrowed from the earlier Cold War. To justify Truman's pledge to intervene against the Left in Greece, for example, Dean Acheson had offered the "rotten apple" theory of Communist expansion. "Like apples in a barrel infected by one rotten one, the corruption of Greece would infect Iran and all to the East. It would also carry infection to Africa through Asia Minor and Egypt, and to Europe through Italy and France."⁶ Many years later, it seemed the barrel was still infected, though no one was speaking of apples. Reagan noted the grave consequences that the "loss" of Nicaragua threatened: "Using Nicaragua as a base, the Soviets and Cubans can become the dominant power in the crucial corridor between North and South America. Established there, they will be in a position to threaten the Panama Canal, interdict our vital Caribbean sea lanes and, ultimately, move against Mexico."⁷ Should this happen, "our alliances would crumble, and the safety of our homeland would be put in jeopardy."⁸

The new Cold War, then, would be explicitly linked to the old one, even though, as noted in Chapter 1, a new political construction—terrorism—was added to the arsenal of anticommunism. Both Cold Wars conjured the vision of a world Communist conspiracy headed by a vast, monolithic, extremely powerful, and unremittingly hostile Soviet Union. If U.S. power had formerly maintained peace in the postwar years, the more recent policies of détente and human rights were assisting the world Communist conspiracy by preventing the United States from properly defending its authoritarian Third World friends. More important, the Reagan administration claimed, the fundamental relationship between peace and U.S. power was threatened because the Soviet Union was conducting "the greatest military buildup in the history of man."⁹ With the Soviets allegedly spending more on defense and the United States spending less, the global military balance of power had shifted in a dangerous direction.¹⁰ To counter this, defense spending would have to be increased as an investment in peace while other forms of government spending would be slashed. Furthermore, domestic ideological mobilization would be basic to the maintenance of a new Cold War. Americans would be continually reminded throughout the Reagan years of the grave threat to world peace posed by the Soviet Union. The Soviets were portrayed as an outlaw nation, as the locus of evil in the modern world, as a country that refused to abide by standards of civilized behavior and moral law. The Soviet Union was "a society which wantonly disregards

individual rights and the value of human life and seeks constantly to expand and dominate other nations."¹¹ In the political imagery of the period, it seemed that only the Reagan administration stood between the free world and the forces of communism—and then only because of its renewed commitment to the importance of strong military power. Looking back on his first term, Reagan proudly announced, "In the four years before we took office, country after country fell under the Soviet yoke. Since January 20th, 1981, not one inch of soil has fallen to the Communists."¹² (Toward the end of his second term, of course, President Reagan began to soften his earlier hard-line anti-Soviet stance and to cooperate with Mikhail Gorbachev in seeking an end to the new Cold War. Furthermore, compared with the major military ventures in Panama and the Middle East conducted by the Bush administration, it must be acknowledged that the Reagan administration was rather more cautious in its use of military force than its frequently aggressive rhetoric had led many to expect.)

This demonization (in political rhetoric) of the Soviet Union and its allies animated a cycle of films during the 1980s, those which we will study in this chapter and will call the new Cold War films: *Red Dawn* (1984), *Rocky IV* (1985), *Invasion USA* (1985), *Top Gun* (1986), *The Delta Force* (1986), *Heartbreak Ridge* (1986), *Iron Eagle I* (1986) and *Iron Eagle II* (1988), and *Rambo III* (1988). We will be concerned with the cycle's political imagery and discourse, how the cycle is tied to political currents of the time, and the ways that the elements of genre either facilitated or limited this discourse. Most of these films offer a fairly direct and immediate transposition of the administration's foreign policy projections into narrative terms. As such, they help illuminate the cultural atmosphere of the time and demonstrate the affinities between filmic and political rhetoric. Furthermore, just as the new Cold War explicitly defined itself in relation to the previous one, so the preoccupations of these films are related to an earlier period of Cold War filmmaking in the 1950s, when Hollywood embarked on a cycle of anticommunist films to prove its pro-American credentials to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). It is worth taking a brief look at this earlier cycle so that the new Cold War films may be compared against it and their operations understood in relation to the problematic place of political representation in the American film tradition.

According to Thomas Doherty, who has studied this earlier cycle and calls it "Hollywood agit-prop," the studios released approximately 40 anticommunist films between 1948 and 1954.¹³ With titles like *I Was a Communist for the F.B.I.*, *The Iron Curtain*, *The Woman on Pier 13* (alternate title, *I Married a Communist*), and *The Red Menace*, these films extolled the virtues of traditional American life and castigated the foreign-born menace of left-wing thought, portraying it as a disease eroding the health and

purity of American society. As we have seen in Chapter 1, direct ideological exhortation was not the norm for Hollywood filmmaking. Instead, Hollywood films almost always placed political content within the familiar formulas and conventions of popular narrative forms.¹⁴ Thus, as Doherty points out, some of the more commercially successful anticommunist films, such as *Big Jim McLain* (1952), absorbed their Red-baiting politics within the formulas of an adventure story, while a box-office dud like *My Son John* (1952) dispensed with generic formulas in favor of explicit ideological platitudinizing. This tension in the cycle between apparently nonpolitical narrative formulas and conventions (and the box-office success that they helped to ensure) and the need to offer an explicit political line was difficult to resolve. The historical traditions of the American cinema and the audience expectations they had helped to shape stressed the importance of genre. As Walter Wanger had cautioned the OWI, American audiences were suspicious of propaganda from either Right or Left, and much preferred to see a repetition of the familiar formulas and conventions. Yet the studios' attempts to prove their anticommunist commitment worked toward a displacement of genre by political ideology throughout this cycle, and Doherty suggests this is why many of these films failed to find much acceptance at the box office.

The importance of genres, formulas, and conventions for a film's popular acceptance, however, did not mean that ordinary Hollywood films (outside the anticommunist cycle) entirely avoided presenting political realities or that studio productions could not function as political filmmaking. A number of major studio directors were highly ideological filmmakers, sometimes explicitly (Frank Capra), sometimes implicitly (John Ford). In either case, however, their success was predicated upon a skillful use of Hollywood conventions, although occasionally political ambition would subvert the organization of the generic story line, as occurred in Capra's *Meet John Doe* (1944), where his theme of the rise of fascism in America overwhelmed his ability to provide a coherent narrative resolution (and compelled him to film a series of alternative endings). The production histories of individual films, moreover, often reveal the ways that producers, directors, screenwriters, and studio organizations such as the Production Code Administration (PCA) would negotiate the acceptable range of political and social meaning contained within a given film. During Sam Goldwyn's production of *Dead End* (1937), about urban poverty and delinquency, a great deal of discussion and negotiation occurred between Goldwyn's team and the Breen office regarding the ways the film would be permitted to represent inner city poverty, squalor, crime, and labor organizations.¹⁵ *Dead End's* presentation of social discord and the way the film avoided a pat solution to the problems of poverty and social conflict were a challenge to the PCA's preference for reassuring narrative solutions in the final reel, yet the PCA

accommodated the film's images and characters of social protest, so much so that the trade paper *Variety* felt the film neglected the mandate of entertainment for that of politics, warning that "The picture public which has little regard for propaganda and high respect for entertainment will find in it a reversal of popular values."¹⁶

As noted in Chapter 1, Hollywood does have a long-standing tradition of social protest filmmaking, and the institutions of studio production could accommodate films that tempered their entertainment with vibrant social or political perspectives. Sometimes an entire cycle or genre would lend itself especially well to this kind of filmmaking. Warner Brothers' gangster films of the early 1930s were extremely popular, dazzling demonstrations of the use of the new sound technology and were trenchant portrayals of economic inequities in depression America. The postwar cycle of film noir, with its low-key lighting that bathed domestic decor with a disquieting gloom, its fatalistic narratives, and visions of violence, greed, and corruption offered a set of narrative formulas and generic images which could become reassuring through their familiarity and repetition in films from the mid-1940s through the early 1950s. But film noir's formulas and images also enabled politically perceptive filmmakers to connect the genre's pessimism and despair with postwar political realities.

In *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), Robert Aldrich, working at the very end of the film noir cycle, was able to inflect it with a high degree of political self-consciousness. A liberal filmmaker, Aldrich took an icon of 1950s right-wing, anticommunist culture—Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer—and set out to portray the character as a brutish heel and, moreover, to ground both Hammer's brutality and film noir's atmosphere of fear and paranoia in the Cold War climate itself. Aldrich implies in the film that film noir is a stylistic symptom of the Cold War, that the genre's paranoia and anxiety are rooted in the profound cultural anxieties maintained by postwar politics. One of the forces driving the onset of the Cold War had been the atomic bomb and the attempt to keep the scientific knowledge that had created it in U.S., rather than Russian, hands. The bomb, as well, is at the center of Aldrich's film. It is "the great what's-it," the grand object and metaphor around which the film's narrative of savagery and anxiety, and its pervasive death imagery, is organized. It turns out to be the object of Hammer's quest, and when he finds it, it blows up in his face, turning a section of the California coastline to ground zero. Hammer's encounter with the bomb provides not the resolution of a mystery but the extinction of narrative and culture. As with the Cold War itself, the bomb drives the narrative of *Kiss Me Deadly*, as Aldrich demonstrates how effectively generic materials can be given a political inflection and content.

Hollywood's embrace of politics, then, has traditionally been an ambivalent one in that its first commitment has always been to the proven

building blocks of box-office success: genres, formulas, and star-centered narratives. Working within these parameters, studio filmmaking might cohere periodically with traditions of social protest and a strong native American populism. (The populist component of American films, however, is far more typical of the 1930s and 1940s, in the work of Capra and Ford and the average-Joe heroes of the young Jimmy Stewart, Henry Fonda, and Gary Cooper. With the onset of the Cold War, political discourse substituted idealized notions of the nation for the class-based ideal of "the people" that one frequently finds in films of the earlier period.) In addition, individual directors might inflect genre narratives with a social or political content. In this respect, the overt propagandizing of the brief anticommunist cycle of films during the HUAC era is something of an anomaly to the extent that political ideology was permitted to displace narrative and genre formulas. Doherty notes the uniqueness of this brief period of overt sloganeering:

Since the termination of the anti-communist cycle, Hollywood has not marshalled appreciable resources for propagandistic ends. Even during the 1960s, when some segments of the industry discerned a demand for politically engaged films, the result was sometimes vaguely anti-Establishment, but seldom overtly ideological. In its widest sense, all films may indeed be "ideological." In American cinema, however, ideology continues to be concealed beneath the veneer of generic demands.¹⁷

Doherty is correct about the shortcomings of the late 1960s films produced during the heyday of the rebellious youth culture. The visions of social rebellion found in Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969) and Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) are infused with despair and pessimism issuing from a conviction that the film's heroes will fail in their rebellion and that society can no longer be ameliorated or made less corrupt. An inability to find or commit to political alternatives paralyzed the social visions of both filmmakers, and this blockage was as much a product of their own creative personalities as of the traditional limitations inhering within popular genres to which Hollywood film had long subscribed.

Doherty's claim, however, that since the end of the anticommunist cycle in the 1950s Hollywood has avoided overt propagandizing may need to be amended. The new Cold War films are striking, sometimes strident, exceptions to this claim. These films are linked to that earlier cycle by virtue of their explicit support for and defense of state policy, as well as by direct allusion and acknowledgment. While they employ familiar genres and formulas—many take the form of the adventure thriller centered on a charismatic and powerful hero—they do not shrink from direct political advocacy. Stallone's *Rambo III*, for example, wherein Rambo

battles the Soviets in Afghanistan, is dedicated in the final credits to "the people of Afghanistan." John Milius's *Red Dawn*, about a Soviet invasion of America, is offered as a primer on Soviet hostility and duplicity and on techniques of American resistance. Stallone's *Rocky IV* opens with boxing gloves emblazoned with the American flag and the hammer and sickle clashing together and exploding, and it pits Rocky against a superhuman Soviet boxer, the characters intended as explicit national emblems. These three films are the most overtly argumentative of the group, but all of the others pursue as well the great themes of Reagan-era foreign policy: the weakness of the United States in the international arena, the viciousness of the Soviet Union and its allies, and the need for resurgent American military power and a Pax Americana. Furthermore, as we shall see, their politics is a direct function of their genre status. Their use of the adventure thriller with its dependence on high-tech weaponry, outré displays of heroics and physical strength, and lightning-fast narrative pacing is an indication of the immediacy with which the new Cold War was being experienced and waged.

One of the most important cinematic documents of the period's politics is John Milius's *Red Dawn*, which draws its narrative from the assumptions of Reagan's anti-Soviet foreign policy yet becomes entangled in contradictions inherent within Cold War thought. Released in 1984 at the beginning of Reagan's second term, the film was cowritten and directed by the self-proclaimed right-wing filmmaker whose previous work had included an homage to martial prowess and the warrior spirit, *Conan the Barbarian* (1982). *Red Dawn* deals with the efforts of a small band of high school students to wage a guerrilla resistance against Soviet occupation in the western United States. While the focus on adolescents is partly a marketing ploy designed to attract the young audience that films of the 1980s incessantly courted, it also allows Milius to make a statement about political administrations symbolized through generational values. It is the youth of today—that is, of the Reagan years—who demonstrate the fortitude and resolve necessary to combat the Soviet invaders, and these young guerrillas are commemorated at the end of the film as great American patriots, alongside earlier heroes of an aggressive America such as Teddy Roosevelt. Early in the film, the spirit of the Rough Riders is invoked when the camera tilts down a statue of Roosevelt and lingers over the inscription: "Far better it is to dare mighty things than to take rank with those poor, timid spirits who know neither victory nor defeat." This is Milius's prescription for America in the 1980s: Discard the timidity of the 1970s and resume the spirit of the Rough Riders.

The reasons for the Soviet invasion are not clarified, and this lack of explanation allows Milius to construct an ideological frame viewing the Soviets as inexplicably hostile and devious (so devious, in fact, that they manage an invasion of the American heartland without triggering a nuclear

war). The opening of the film establishes a fictional international political context within which the narrative occurs. A series of title cards provides a catalog of anti-Soviet political fantasies, and they function as a kind of mystical incantation "explaining" the events that precipitated the invasion: "Soviet Union suffers worst wheat harvest in 55 years. Labor and food riots in Poland. Soviet troops invade. Cuba and Nicaragua reach troop strength goals of 500,000. El Salvador and Honduras fall. Green Party gains control of West German parliament. Demands withdrawal of nuclear weapons from European soil. Mexico plunged into revolution. NATO dissolves. United States stands alone." In the narrative that follows, Soviet troops march across the Bering Strait, and tiny Cuba and Nicaragua invade from the south, while all of Europe decides to sit out the conflict. Despite the incoherence of the basic scenario, the film's paranoia is a powerful distillation of the mood of encirclement and threat and the anxieties about U.S. weakness that typified the early Reagan era.

The narrative follows the exploits of the band of adolescent rebels led by Jed (Patrick Swayze), named after Jedediah Smith and raised on the stories of frontiersman Jim Bridger. Through the characters and setting, Milius connects contemporary American resistance to the national mythology of the taming of the West. Jed applies frontier strategies to their battles with the Soviets as Milius attempts to ground their struggles in the new Cold War with an earlier chapter of American history and with the imagery of the Old West that the Reagan presidency revived. The boys ride horses and camp in the hills as if they were gunfighters of old or a contemporary president. By grounding its contemporary politics in earlier American historical and mythological traditions, *Red Dawn* has an uncommon self-consciousness and explicitness, as if Milius had set himself the task of providing a narrative fantasy that would document the political tenor of the mid-1980s. Sometimes this self-consciousness is used for comic effect, which in turn serves to heighten its explicit nature. Following the invasion, three Soviet soldiers go sight-seeing like tourists with cameras in the Arapaho National Forest. One who has studied English translates a plaque in the forest for his friends. This forest, he says, is a memorial to the great 1908 peasant uprising of wild Indians that was put down by Cossack troops, imperialist armies, and cowboys led by Theodore Roosevelt. He poses proudly in front of the plaque while his friends take his picture, as the sequence comments on the ease with which history is translated into political myth, an embodiment of Milius's own concerns in the film.

The film's political self-consciousness is also apparent in a series of cinematic allusions that position Milius' film in relation to earlier propaganda classics. During an early scene, shortly after the Soviets consolidate their hold over Jed's hometown, the camera tracks through the occupied streets (the drab and devastated buildings look like a town

in Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II), and a viewer with a quick eye can catch a glimpse of the film playing at the local Bijou: *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), offered in a series of free showings by the Soviets! (This is not the only instance where Milius incorporates references to classic political films. He also borrows from the imagery of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* [1935] and Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* [1965]). *Nevsky*, directed by Sergei Eisenstein on the eve of the Soviet struggle against the Nazis, dramatized heroic Soviet resistance against an invading Teutonic army during the Middle Ages. Referencing the film enables Milius to construct a double-edged political metaphor: He can make fun of Soviet propaganda (while poking fun at Eisenstein, whose classic film is shown as a contemporary instrument of oppression) while implying that he is making, from an anti-Soviet, anti-Marxist position, a kind of contemporary equivalent, an Americanized version of *Alexander Nevsky*.

These two sequences reveal an interesting ambiguity and ambivalence within the film. The sequence in the forest humanizes the Soviet invaders, who are then killed by Jed's group, which is not a particularly effective propaganda strategy: We are made to feel some sadness over their deaths. The use of *Alexander Nevsky* points to historic parallels in the Soviet and American experiences, as both (the Soviets in historical reality, the Americans in the narrative of the film) valiantly resisted an outside invader. Milius further complicates our responses to the Soviets by including among the invaders a Cuban officer named Bella who, because of his own experience aiding Third World rebels in Angola, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, grows increasingly sympathetic toward Jed's group. He derisively refers to himself as a policeman, and he lashes out at his Soviet superior's penchant for firing squads: "Every time you shoot, the revolution grows." In the film's climactic sequence, he permits the wounded Jed to escape with his brother and then symbolically throws down his gun.

Because of his understanding and compassion for the American rebels, Bella becomes a sympathetic figure, but it is precisely because of his Marxist politics and commitment to national revolution and independence that he is able to feel this compassion. By designing the narrative as a story of American revolution and resistance, Milius is unable to completely disentangle his film from the Marxian tradition promoting revolution and resistance. In a deeply ironic maneuver, considering the political framework that undergirds the film, Milius is maneuvered into invoking some of the imagery and language of the Marxian heritage in *Red Dawn*. While this certainly does not subvert the film's intense commitment to Cold War perspectives, the use of the Bella character does raise lingering and unanswered (and within the logic of the film, unanswerable) questions about the similarities of the American, Cuban, and Nicaraguan revolutions. The film cannot answer these questions for the very reason that the issue of revolution is so troublesome for Cold War perspectives.

Ever since Truman proclaimed his doctrine as an explicitly counterrevolutionary manifesto, pledging the United States to resist insurrections by "armed minorities," America's own revolutionary heritage and its implication that the United States might take the side of revolution throughout the world necessarily became one of the great unexamined topics within Cold War thought. With the character of Bella, the film comes dangerously close to asking this question but cannot, finally, pose it without transcending its own ideological boundaries.

These ambiguities, the self-conscious use of political humor, and the references to the classics of political cinema provide *Red Dawn* with a measure of sophistication (however small) that enables the film to engage the ideology it promotes rather than being merely its handmaiden. Cold War thought became accessible to the conventions of popular genres to the extent that it had already assumed a pervasive cultural presence inside American society, its bipolar moral and political coordinates internalized by generations of postwar Americans as requisites for political thought and analysis. A second reason for its accessibility to popular genre conventions is due to shared principles for coding information operative in film genre and Cold War ideology. A word here on restricted coding will help us to understand the structural affinities between film genre and political projections like Cold War thinking. The term (and its opposite, elaborated coding) is drawn from the work of sociolinguist Basil Bernstein, who developed them as a way of analyzing the speech patterns of different social classes.¹⁸ Our purpose here is not to suggest that linguistic models can or should furnish a basis for analyzing film structure. Film lacks the syntactic rules that establish such linguistic features as tense, a propositional structure, negatives, and so on (although much contemporary film theory has been influenced by linguistic models). However, in this limited case, an understanding of restricted coding techniques can help us to see the way that genre films typically communicate. (Bernstein's own usage of the terms applied to nonverbal behavior as well as to aspects of syntax.)

With restricted coding, content is drawn from a narrow range of material. The structural rules governing the presentation of this content are rigidly applied and generally intolerant of significant variations from the norms. Meanings are condensed and implicit, deriving from common expectations shared by communicator and audience. By contrast, elaborated coding features greater flexibility in the application of structural rules, and content is drawn from a larger range of referents. Meanings are often elaborated at length and made explicit. Elaborated coding strategies often arise in situations where the intention of a communicator cannot be assumed or taken for granted or where shared expectations do not prevail. Restricted coding, on the other hand, permits efficient and rapid communication. In a Western, for example, it suffices merely

to show at the film's beginning a gunfighter riding into an isolated town from the distant mountains to immediately reference and set in motion a restricted but potent set of narrative situations and conflicts, arousing specific expectations in the minds of fans of the genre. Much can be said very quickly using methods of restricted coding, and such coding provides the basic communicational structure of genre films.

Cold War thought, with its rigid conventions and its mapping of the world into polarized social, economic, and moral oppositions, depends upon a form of restricted coding. Political and cultural developments in the United States following World War II worked to stigmatize the broad-based, ecumenical Left that had been such an important part of American politics and society during the 1930s and through the war. In changing postwar circumstances, following Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech at Fulton, Missouri, and Truman's doctrine, the ascension to power of Mao Tse-tung in China and the detonation of the first Soviet nuclear bomb, the cinctures of Cold War thought operated to reduce an ecumenical Left to the status of a univocal, despised political-cultural sign—"Communist"—that excluded alternative forms of conceptualizing, of coding, postwar history and culture. Henceforth, conflicts throughout the world were reduced to rigid moral and teleological terms, as the struggle of good and evil, manifestations of the U.S.-Soviet opposition. The structure of Cold War thought—reductive, rigid, conventionalized, and familiar—thus lent itself quite well to an articulation by the narratives of genre films, bonding ideology with visual-narrative form, following the principles of restrictive coding operative in each.

The extent to which the new Cold War ideology had become a kind of free-floating political and conceptual framework by the mid-1980s, available for assimilation and propagation by genre images and narratives, is illustrated by a film made the year after *Red Dawn*. Produced as a Chuck Norris vehicle and cowritten by Norris, *Invasion USA* repeats and reinforces the narrative and thematic material of the Milius film by dealing with an army of thugs led by a renegade Soviet officer that spreads terror throughout the United States. The army is racially and ethnically heterogeneous, composed of blacks, Latins, Asians, a catalog of groups excluded from the New Right's America, so that their deprivations become a kind of nightmare vision of the return of the repressed. With calculated outrageousness, they blow up churches, shopping malls, and families at home celebrating Christmas. Evidently, they hope (though this is never terribly clear) to precipitate a civil war that will erode American democracy.

As a Chuck Norris vehicle, the generic elements are much stronger here than in *Red Dawn*, but their fusion with a Cold War framework demonstrates how serviceable the ideology is and how compatible it is with certain contemporary genres. Since the ideology and the genre narratives

play upon a reductive repertoire of conventionalized expectations, they readily bond with each other as content and form, the vigilante, superhero narratives of action and violence providing the formal framework necessary for absorbing the incipient violence and paranoia operating within Cold War thought. This structural fusion of ideology and genre helps make these films potent vehicles for ideological expression. Genre is an especially effective and efficient vehicle for ideology because it works on an intimate level with its audience, playing upon sets of shared expectations that naturalize the political discourse to the extent that it becomes part of the structural rules that define the narrative operations of the genre. Of all the films examined in this book, these invasion-and-rescue films exhibit the most complete structural integration of political and narrative meaning and function.

Chuck Norris began his career making martial arts films and gradually evolved into an action hero who sometimes used martial arts. Like Sylvester Stallone, though not as self-consciously, Norris evidently sensed the way the prevailing winds were blowing in the mid-1980s, and he followed in Stallone's path by fashioning himself as an action hero of the Right, here as well as in his *Missing in Action* films (examined in Chapter 4). The partnership was a profitable one. The Soviets had become, in the political discourse of the period, such figures of melodrama, such outsized caricatures of evil, that they could generate equally outsized heroes to oppose them. The superhuman, over-the-top stature and power of the Chuck Norris-Sylvester Stallone vigilante heroes were thus necessitated by the extreme, almost cartoonish terms in which the evil of the Soviet Union was drawn in the period's discourse. The Cold War imagery that preexisted the films, and from which they drew in fashioning their narratives, structurally necessitated such disproportionate heroes and battles. Besides, and illustrating again the cohesion of ideology and genre, these were good for the box office.

The film begins by evoking the worst fears of the HUAC period and the anticommunist films it inspired: that the Soviets are already here, disguised and lurking among us, working to subvert the country. The opening scene tracks a boatload of refugees escaping (inevitably) from Cuba. They are greeted by what appears to be the U.S. Coast Guard. An American naval officer waves and says, "Welcome to the United States," but his men abruptly machine-gun the refugees. The officer is not American but Soviet. It is Rostov, the renegade officer who will lead the invasion. Rostov's men have some drugs stashed in the refugees' boat, which they retrieve and use to purchase weapons. (Richard Lynch, the actor who plays Rostov, also appeared as a crazed Soviet agent on a murderous rampage in *Little Nikita* [1988], a film dealing with deep-cover Soviet spies operating in the United States.)

From this bloody opening with its calculated savagery (and its implication that the institutions of U.S. authority have been undermined by the Communists), the narrative draws on familiar generic formulas as Rostov and his army perpetrate a series of outrages that only Norris, an-ex CIA agent, can stop. But the action formulas are inflected with the anxieties, phobias, and aggressions that course through new Cold War thought. Why has U.S. authority been undermined? Because the country has grown soft and because freedom itself has become the problem. In an explicitly political sequence, Rostov makes clear how much he counts on this softness. He tells his associate Nikko, "America has not been invaded by a foreign enemy in nearly 200 years. Look at them, Nikko, soft, spineless decadence. They don't even understand the nature of their own freedom. How we can use it against them. They are their own worst enemy, but they don't know it." The film cuts from this speech to its illustration. A young couple make love on the beach, engaging in sensual pleasure and ignoring a mysterious flare just offshore. While they make love, a portable TV on their blanket carries a talk show featuring Phyllis Diller, and the blare of the TV and their own infatuation with each other conceal the approach of Nikko. He executes them as Rostov's army storms ashore, rushing over and crushing the television and the bodies of the lovers. A nation addicted to sex and television is no match for this ruthless foreign enemy. The country has been weakened by an excess of freedom and democracy, which (as the attempts of Oliver North to circumvent the law would demonstrate a few years later) could be considered as much an enemy as the Soviets.

To counter this turn of affairs, Hunter (Chuck Norris) personifies the kind of old frontier, cowboy heroism that had become a staple of Reagan-era folklore. Norris has an Indian friend who is killed by Rostov. In an image culled from countless Westerns, Norris torches the cabin with his friend's body inside before setting out to track Rostov. A reporter who follows Hunter dubs him "Cowboy." Eventually, Hunter catches Rostov and dispatches him in grand fashion, and the U.S. army defeats Rostov's band. Order and calm are restored, but the narrative has employed its formulas to stimulate and work up anxieties about foreign affairs and domestic social institutions. The worst thing about Rostov's terrorist group, an FBI man says, is that they're turning people against authority. As the Cold War films of the 1950s had done, *Invasion USA* works to certify the validity of the security apparatus: police, army, FBI, CIA, those groups which work together to stop Rostov and which form the infrastructure of a militarized Cold War state. The FBI character's fear, that authority is being subverted by alien Leftists, is precisely the anxiety to which the films in this cycle respond with their dramas of American society protected and guarded by the institutions of local and national security. *Invasion USA's* affirmation of the vigilance needed by police, army, and FBI

in guarding domestic society links the film with the political vigilance counseled by the earlier cycle of Cold War productions during the HUAC era, which had warned Americans, in the closing lines of one of the most famous films of the group, to "keep watching the skies." In fact, a politically and cinematically self-conscious sequence explicitly links the film with its Cold War precursors. Hunter and Rostov, in separate hotel rooms, watch the same film on television: *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (1956), a classic Cold War science fiction film about American society under attack by alien invaders. As spaceships crash into the Capitol dome and terrorize the United States in the earlier film, matched cuts show us Rostov's men on their rampage and the response of the police and U.S. Army in the present film. "Reality" (the narrative of *Invasion USA*) is linked to fantasy (*Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*) as the Norris film self-consciously acknowledges both its own identity and its roots in the cinematic and historical past.

Not all films of the period, of course, assumed the worst-case scenario of Cold War nightmares by presenting narratives of Soviet invasions. A more common type of narrative focused on the drama of U.S. hostages being held in inhuman conditions by the Soviets or their proxies and a daring military rescue by the United States. These films represent a kind of wish-fulfilling fantasy because the realities of the time were that U.S. hostages languished without rescue. These films develop out of, and skillfully exploit, widespread national feelings of helplessness and anger coupled with a failure to look very closely at the regional complexities and the U.S. role therein. By contrast with the tangled geopolitical alliances and civil wars within which the phenomenon of hostage-taking developed, the films dealing with these issues present them within a simplistic framework, as a struggle of civilization (the United States) against barbarity (the Soviets and their Middle Eastern allies), and as a problem that is rather simply solved by the intervention of an invincible hero. Relying on an individual hero both secures the films to powerful and profitable conventions of popular cinema and solves the problem of how to stage U.S. military strikes during a period when no official war had been declared. It is dramatically easier, and it raises fewer narrative problems, to send Rambo rather than the U.S. Army into Afghanistan.

Rambo III, one of the most important and ideologically potent films of the group, scores a number of political points by marrying its hostage drama to a propagandistic narrative about the need to support the Afghan rebels, who are portrayed as a group of "freedom fighters" resisting Communist aggression. As the film opens, in an amazing feat of ideological agglomeration, John Rambo (Sylvester Stallone) is discovered living in Thailand in a Buddhist monastery, having renounced his professional soldiering but engaging in brutal and bloody stick-fighting in Bangkok for money (which he promptly turns over to the Buddhist priests with

whom he lives). The film does not acknowledge the paradox that Rambo can be both a Buddhist and a violent fighter at the same time. Colonel Trautman (Richard Crenna), with whom he has served and who is a kind of father figure, visits to try to persuade Rambo to accompany him into Afghanistan to gather intelligence on an especially brutal Soviet officer. When Rambo refuses, Trautman says his going will make a difference. "Not like last time?" Rambo asks, referring to Vietnam, which he believes was "lost" because the officials in Washington wouldn't permit the United States to win. Trautman tells him he has to come "full circle," that he'll always be tearing at himself until he comes to terms with what he is: a full-blooded combat soldier, a fighting machine. Trautman's prescription is a directive for the country, which, like Rambo, is felt to be mired in a wrongheaded reluctance to use its military power. The ridiculous images of the muscular, warlike Rambo living among Buddhist monks become a satiric symbol for the recent past, a metaphor for the U.S. stance of international disengagement during the Carter period. (Another popular hostage-rescue film of the period, *The Delta Force* [1986], begins with the failed mission to rescue the Iranian hostages launched by President Carter. The film then explicitly links this failure to defeat in Vietnam; both are examples of an ignominious heritage that must be overcome.)

Rambo embraces his martial prowess only when Trautman is captured inside Afghanistan by the brutal Soviet officer. As he arranges for supplies with a weapons dealer in Pakistan, the dealer tells Rambo he doesn't look like he has much combat experience; perhaps he should go home and think over his commitment. The Third World doubts American resolve, but Rambo wins the admiration of a band of Afghan rebels who witness his superhuman fighting abilities. Having rescued Trautman, Rambo rampages through Afghanistan, wreaking a maelstrom of death and destruction. Rambo is such a supremely (and impossibly) powerful warrior that he becomes a charged national emblem, a creature of mythology and symbolism embodying the strength not of an individual but of an entire nation (thus, President Reagan would invoke him when making real threats against Middle Eastern hostage takers). The Soviet troops don't stand a chance against him because his primal power overwhelms their high-tech weaponry. He shoots helicopters out of the sky with explosive arrows. He overpowers a squad of armed men with a bow and arrow. He can see so well in the dark that he can ambush and destroy a group of Russians equipped with night-vision goggles. Driving a tank straight into an onrushing helicopter, Rambo survives the explosion of both. He knows how to withstand suffering, too. When a piece of shrapnel lodges in his side, he pulls the metal spike all the way through, pours gunpowder in the wound and ignites it to cauterize the bloody hole, then promptly (in the next scene) climbs a mountain to ambush the Soviets.

Rambo's glistening, rippling muscles lovingly dwelt on by the camera, his eager embrace of Trautman's designation as a fighting machine, the detailed sadomasochism of the violence, the spectacular *Götterdämmerung* of the battles—all this is uncomfortably close to the virile posing and celebration of death that Susan Sontag has argued is central to a fascist aesthetic.¹⁹ The elaborate ritual of suffering, killing, and purgation that Stallone has designed for his hero, and that he enacts with a narcissistic intensity, has so inflated the potential abilities of normal human accomplishment and the symbolic stakes of the battle that the film's orgy of violence becomes comical and tinged with an unpleasantly oppressive quality. Enacting idealized scenarios of pain and death, Rambo becomes the *übermensch*, something Stallone himself apparently realized and tried to back away from, remarking, "This man can't be defeated. I feel sorry for the guy who's fighting him. In *Rambo I [First Blood]* he was always running, always scared. But now, there's no jeopardy. That's what turns people off."²⁰

Trautman also gets to demonstrate his iron will and resolve by bearing up under Soviet torture. The Soviet commander wants to know where the rebels will be receiving a new shipment of missiles and threatens him with an array of tortures: beating, hanging, electric shock, acetylene torch. But none of this can shake Trautman's ability to take a historical view of things. When the commander tells him that it's only a matter of time before the Soviets win, Trautman gives him a history lesson:

You know there won't be a victory. Every day your war machines lose ground to a group of poorly armed, poorly equipped freedom fighters. The fact is that you underestimated your competition. If you'd studied your history, you'd know these people have never given up to anyone. They'd rather die than be slaves to an invading army. You can't defeat a people like that. We tried. We already had our Vietnam. Now you're gonna have yours.

This amazing speech is a classic example of ideological agglomeration. Note how a leftist analysis of the U.S. role in Vietnam, with the United States as an invading force stomping on an indigenous people's desire for freedom, has been placed in service of Cold War perceptions of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, employing the political terminology of the Reagan administration (the Afghan rebels as "freedom fighters"). While this does produce a conceptual mishmash in which the political discourse short-circuits and breaks down, the contradictory appeals of the speech aim to attract disparate audience members, both liberal and conservative. The passage portrays the United States as both an imperial aggressor and a staunch defender of Third World freedom and democracy. In this case, Cold War ideology accommodates to the needs of the marketplace and the desire to manufacture a blockbuster film that will appeal to diverse audience groups.

Rambo III, however, did not turn out to be a phenomenally successful blockbuster (at least in the United States). While the filmmakers obviously hoped that the genre formulas of the ultraviolent adventure thriller would suffice to carry the political messages of the film to a wide audience, in this case history simply overwhelmed ideology. By the time the film was released, the Russians were withdrawing from Afghanistan, and Gorbachev's policies and presence were changing the international climate, helping to lay the Cold War (temporarily, at least) to rest. In the process, the dramaturgical premises of films like *Rambo III* were demolished. Stallone has remarked that Gorbachev destroyed his film, and he faced a crisis over how best to use his cold warrior.²¹ Stallone reportedly considered making Rambo into an ecologist by having him, in some future film, fight on behalf of the whales. It may be, however, that a cold warrior without a cause simply fades away. On the other hand, the recent war against Iraq may provide Stallone with a violent new international arena for his hymns to brawn and blood; and if economic and political chaos in the Soviet Union helps to renew the Cold War, then Rambo will almost certainly leap back into popular culture, grunting, flexing, and shooting. He is too potent a political icon not to remain visible on the cultural landscape, especially since, as the Iraq war demonstrated, the United States remains committed to maintaining the capability for a global projection of its military power. As the cinematic emissary and symbol of this power, we should not expect Rambo to return soon to his Buddhist monastery.

The Cold War drama of *Rambo III*, like that of many other films examined in this chapter, is inseparable from a crisis of paternal authority.²² This crisis symbolically encodes the anxieties about the state of the nation that have already been described. Father figures in these films are threatened with capture and torture, or else their authority is placed in jeopardy when questions surround their honor. The narratives collectively provide a vindication of the honor of the father. Jed's father in *Red Dawn* had shouted from the concentration camp where he was interned, "Avenge me!" Rambo's heroics are directed toward saving Trautman, his mentor and boss. The patriarchal aspects of Trautman's relationship with his "fighting machine" are conveyed in their modes of address. Rambo refers to Trautman as "Colonel" or "sir," whereas Trautman consistently uses Rambo's familiar name, "John," much as one would do with a child or social subordinate. We need to consider this symbolic encoding of paternal authority more closely because it is a major facet of the political meaning of this film cycle.

In *Iron Eagle*, a very popular film of the period, the narrative centers on the drama of the absent father and the son's despair over the disrupted family. With the rescue of the father, the narrative acquires its political force through images of the family reconstituted (a symbol for a nation healed). Doug Masters's father has been shot down by Soviet Migs over

an unnamed Middle Eastern country, although the narrative clearly implies that the country is Libya, which Reagan had designated, along with the USSR, Iran, Cuba, and Nicaragua, as a sponsor of international terrorism. As the film sends Doug on the rescue mission, *Iron Eagle* becomes a potent ideological register of its time as well as an anticipation and reflection of real events.

A dispute over territorial limits has precipitated the capture of the father. The unnamed enemy claims a 200-mile territorial limit, whereas the United States recognizes only 12 miles. Flying inside the 200-mile limit, Doug's father is captured and put on trial as a means of exacting revenge against the United States. Just as U.S. officials would not permit Rambo to win the Vietnam war and would refuse to mount a rescue mission for the captured Trautman, Washington officials rule out a rescue mission for Doug's father. "The suits up in the White House have our hands tied on this," a friend tells him. With the U.S. government reluctant to use its military force, things are once again up to the individual hero, whose behavior stands as an example for the nation. Enlisting the help of a scrappy combat pilot named Chappy Sinclair (Louis Gossett, Jr.), Doug plots a rescue mission; and as he does so, the film demonstrates how domesticated, how interwoven with the apparatus of consumer culture, the Cold War and advanced weapons technologies had become in the mid-1980s.

In the film, electronic weapons and supersonic aerial combat merge with the consumer culture of rock and roll and video games. Doug learns aerial combat by practicing for hours on an Air Force simulator, and he can relate instinctually to the blips on the screen because they are just like the blips on arcade video games. Moreover, he can hit the targets only when he listens to rock and roll! On a test run, when Chappy tells him to turn off the rock music, Doug can't hit a thing. When he does it his way, with pop rock blaring in the cockpit, he destroys all of his targets. The video game imagery and the rock music help to make the Cold War political framework of the film familiar and accessible to a teen audience. The film is aimed at the adolescent market, and it features many of the generic staples of teen films, including an extended sequence during which the teens on the air force base outwit their parents by smuggling intelligence information from classified areas to help Doug pinpoint his father's location. With generic Cold War politics a cultural given by mid decade, it could be used to invigorate the formulas of Chuck Norris action films as easily as it could pump up the conventions of the teen comedy-drama. Understanding Cold War politics as a genre helps to explicate the ease with which it bonded with popular filmmaking. Formulaic imagery is essential to both, and a consequence of this is the loss of the real geopolitical world.

The outlaw country in the film is mysterious and unnamed, generating a kind of medieval geographic projection dividing the world into regions

of civilization and regions of darkness and the unknown. (*Top Gun* also partakes of this medieval geography, staging its climactic aerial duel with the forces of an unnamed country over vaguely located hostile waters.) The vague geographical and political specifications accruing to the national and cultural conflicts expressed in the narrative render them in strongly ideological terms, in which the enemy occupies no terrain specifiable on a map's coordinates but is, rather, a nebulous, threatening Other, a projection of political and cultural anxieties poorly understood and assignable to regions of the world only in general and superficial terms. The international arena and the political maps that contain the conflicts in films like *Top Gun* and *Iron Eagle* are not fixed according to the physical coordinates of real time and space. They are surveyed by an emotional logic fixed in stereotyped and caricatured terms that require, in the logic of the films, no further justification or elaboration.

In this geopolitics of the mind, fantasy is master of the world, and wishing is sufficient to make things come true. Doug has an instinctual talent with fighter planes, and Chappy becomes a kind of Obi Kenobi telling Doug to trust the force. Chappy is shot down and apparently killed during the rescue, but he leaves a tape with Doug so his spiritual presence (like Obi Kenobi in *Star Wars*) is there to guide him:

God doesn't give people things he doesn't want them to use, and he gave you the touch. It's a power you have inside you, down there where you keep your guts, boy. It's all you need to blast your way in and get back what they took from you. Your dad's just sitting there waiting for a miracle, and if you fly your heart out, you can give him one. It's up to you. . . . First thing you gotta do is convince yourself that nothing can stop you. You've gotta believe that plane you're in is like a suit of armor, an iron eagle nothing can penetrate.

Believing he can do it, Doug is able to fly deep inside the enemy's airspace, locate his father, survive attacks by Migs and anti-aircraft guns on the ground, blow up the air depot and an oil refinery ("Looks like they'll be importing oil this year," he gloats, offering the audience a wish-fulfilling fantasy of revenge against OPEC's perceived economic hostage-taking of America), and free his father. In this patriarchal geopolitics of the mind, fathers are never lost and, best of all, friends and mentors do not die. Chappy is not really dead. He waits at home for Doug to return, thus enabling the film to climax with a vindication of once-threatened institutions.

As the enemies of America are defeated, as family and friendship are restored, so is the honor of the nation. The Reagan era, the film assures us, is truly different from the wimpish administration that preceded it. Earlier, one of Doug's friends has assured him that "Everything'll turn out. Those dudes won't mess with us. The Air Force'll kick ass if they do."

"Like in Iran?" Doug asks, alluding to the Carter hostage rescue mission. "Oh, no, that was different," another friend replies. "Mr. Peanut was in charge back then. Now we got this guy in the Oval Office who don't take shit from no gimpy little countries. Why do you think they call him Ronnie Ray-Gun?" This overtly political moment evokes the emotional displays of resurgent America and explicitly aligns the film with the foreign policy attitudes of the period. As in the enormously popular films of Steven Spielberg, narrative resolution hinges on familial reunification and, as in the New Right agendas of the period, this carries a political charge.

The problem of the missing father also inflects the drama of one of the biggest hits of the period, *Top Gun*, wherein cocky U.S. Navy pilot "Maverick" Mitchell (Tom Cruise) is tormented by the mystery surrounding his father's disappearance and death, the circumstances of which have been classified. His father crashed while flying one of the navy's most advanced planes, and Maverick is haunted by the possibility that his father failed as a pilot, committed some error that resulted in the loss of plane and life. When, through no fault of his own, he loses control of his plane and his friend and copilot Goose is killed while ejecting, Maverick blames himself and begins to suspect he is following the possibly disgraced path of his father. But he learns from one of his superiors that his father died a hero, saving his comrades in an aerial dogfight with a group of Soviet Migs. Newly fortified with filial pride, Maverick at the climax of the film is able to repeat his father's heroic feats, is able to become his father, to revisit and reclaim his familial past. He rescues a comrade from a cluster of attacking Soviet Migs and, by surviving, does what the father could not do and transcends the older man's remarkable heroism.

Threats to the father and anxieties about his health, reputation, or continued power riddle these new Cold War films because in the guise of the father, and through narratives elaborating threats to his safety, a discourse about the country and national politics is developed. Reagan projected himself as a new commander at the helm of the ship of state, and his paternalism made him seem a benevolent, kindly patriarch to Americans but a steely foe to the enemies of freedom. As he succeeded discredited leaders like Carter, a drama of the father played itself out in the national arena, and films of the period are acutely sensitive to this development. Partly, of course, it was a matter of imitating successful cinematic conventions. Hollywood films had always centered on the family, and Spielberg revived this interest with his sentimental dramas of adolescent innocence and absent fathers, such as *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and *E.T.* (1982). The Spielbergian influence in the cinema of the 1980s has been enormous, and the drama of the father that runs through the films examined in this chapter certainly has one of its roots there. But the saliency of the imagery is responsive to domestic

political and ideological currents, which Spielberg's films themselves reflect. As we saw in Chapter 1, the conservative agenda that Reagan carried to the level of national politics was deeply concerned with preserving the authority of traditional social institutions—family, school, church, law enforcement, the military—which were perceived to have been weakened or whose authority was believed to have been eroded as a result of social changes originating in the 1960s and 1970s. The new Cold War films translate these anxieties into narrative patterns. Narratives centering on searches for the honorable father provided a means of picturing this emotional and political climate. As the popularity of many of these films suggests, this ideological grounding of visual and narrative form resonated with the interests and desires of the public. If Reagan had been politically successful by playing on these anxieties, why couldn't films do the same?

It is worth returning for a moment to *Top Gun* because, like *Iron Eagle*, it vividly shows how internalized and how much a part of the domestic landscape the Cold War had become by the mid-1980s. By definition, "Cold War" refers to the waging of war by means other than hard weaponry and battlefield clashes. It extends military antagonisms to the field of culture and to the psyches of those who inhabit that culture so that by living their daily lives and absorbing the cultural forms that surround them, they come to internalize and enact the political frameworks which help to sustain a global state of military tension. Following World War II, the Cold War was absorbed into the lived texture of daily life. It was no longer experienced as such but became part of the air people breathed and the language people spoke, and was equally invisible and intangible. Only now that it has briefly subsided is an understanding emerging of how much it was like an invisible black box into which many people unknowingly walked.²³ By looking again at *Top Gun*, we can see clearly how the imagery and rhetoric, the very forms and objects, of real-world consumer culture and leisure pursuits were fused with the psychological and emotional dynamics of the Cold War (as they were in *Iron Eagle* via Doug's penchant for rock music and video games in his cockpit). The film's political messages are rarely propounded through dialogue or explicit statement. Instead, they emerge through the film's audiovisual design, its "look," and through the camera's presentation of the characters.

This "look" extends beyond the film itself. The videotape release of *Top Gun* broke new marketing ground by including an advertisement for Diet Pepsi preceding the film. The ad, however, is a stylistic and thematic twin of the film. It features a group of jet pilots returning to base after maneuvers, is edited with quick, aggressive cutting, and employs a rock music soundtrack like the film's. In the ad, "Mustang" (a thematic call-sign name, like the film's characters who are known as "Viper," "Iceman," and "Jester") has difficulty pouring his bottle of Diet Pepsi

while flying, prompting one of the other pilots to ask, "Trouble with your refreshment system?" Mustang loops around, executing the kind of flashy stunts Maverick does in the film, flying upside down, enabling the bottle to pour its contents into his mug. Satisfied at last, Mustang and the other pilots streak home. The paraphernalia of war—the camouflage markings on the planes, the evasive maneuvering, the macho bantering of the pilots—is deployed in this case to open a bottle of Pepsi, is absorbed within and by a thoroughly domestic context and function. And the Pepsi, in turn, is redeployed as a "refreshment system" within the automated cockpit of the plane. An emblem of consumer culture—Diet Pepsi—and the pleasures of leisure-time pursuits that it stereotypically represents are fused with the military apparatus at a seamless audiovisual level as the ad makes the kind of connections between political ideology and domestic life which are the essence and function of the Cold War. (In Chapter 4, we will study a similar advertisement placed on the videotape of *Platoon*.)

It is convenient to begin with the ad rather than the film because, in many ways, the film is like a longer advertisement. The U.S. Navy admitted it regarded the film as a recruiting ad, and the movie's structure employs the montage editing, minimal dialogue, and pervasive use of rock music to establish mood and theme that have become staples of MTV and that producers Jerry Bruckheimer and Don Simpson had perfected in their earlier work. Much of the film's strategy in this regard is to use these cinematic elements to eroticize the planes and weaponry and the bodies of the students and teachers at the "Top Gun" school of aerial combat that Maverick and Goose attend. An extended montage sequence, for example, lingers on the rippling muscles of the bare-chested fliers as they play a heated game of volleyball. They flex and pose for the camera while the rock lyrics proclaim the passions of "bodies working overtime." One of the pilots remarks that flying against Soviet Migs gives him a "hard-on," and the pilots' banter is incessantly sexual, especially that between Maverick and "Charlie" Blackwood, a female astrophysicist who wears black, seamed stockings and heels to class. She and Maverick talk about "thrust-to-weight ratios," "negative G pushovers," "rolling reversals," and "going to hard guns," ostensibly referring to flying but completing the film's sexualization of weaponry and combat. In *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), Stanley Kubrick satirically castigated the "merkwürdigliebe" (love of death) that sustained the arms race, the love of death symbolized by the title character's German name, and by the eroticized weaponry that fascinates all the characters in the film. *Top Gun*, by contrast, gives us the merkwürdigliebe itself, without the critical and humane moral perspectives of Kubrick's Cold War satire.

The drama of the father's redemption and the sexualizing of flying and fighting work to domesticate and make pleasurable the elite weaponry of war which the film depicts and to mythologize that weaponry by

shifting its locus of action to an ill-defined geography, an ideological battlefield where, as in *Iron Eagle*, the enemy is mysterious and unknowable, and military aggression is not fraught with irreversible, real-world consequences. As in *Iron Eagle*, the result is a politics of the mind, a psychological projection of international relations and combat. In the film's climax, one of the navy's ships is disabled and helplessly drifts into undefined, hostile foreign waters, and Maverick is sent to provide air support for the ship's rescue. He encounters and shoots down a group of Soviet Migs, whose pilots wear Darth Vader-like dark helmets that conceal their faces and render them inhuman. In the real world, a violent clash between the U.S. and Soviet air forces could, potentially, render international tensions red-hot, if not trigger wider hostilities, possibly even nuclear war. But in the film there are no consequences. The Soviets deny the combat ever took place, and nothing further happens. In the fantasy world of Cold War wish fulfillment that *Top Gun* elaborates, the United States can act with impunity and without regard for consequences because none exist and the enemy dares not retaliate.

In concluding this discussion of *Top Gun*, we should note once again the ambiguities that surround the linkages between film and society. The film's jaunty reassertion of a martial national will was clearly a response to domestic political currents advocating a resurgent American military power. The influences, though, may also move in the other direction, from film to society. Video footage of the early phases of the real-world air war against Iraq, showing "smart" bombs seeking out targeted buildings and bridges, rather than people, had the same clean, thrilling, bloodless qualities as the aerial dogfights and bombings in *Iron Eagle* and *Top Gun*, especially because of the virtual absence of Iraqi retaliation. Because of the extraordinary control exercised by the Defense Department over journalists' access to information, the popular understanding of the air war was based on images that had a disquieting resemblance to Hollywood products. It was no longer simply a question of films imitating reality (or of helping to mobilize popular support for a foreign war) but of reality becoming the simulacrum of cinema due to policies of censorship and information control. The imagery provided by films like *Top Gun* and *Iron Eagle* accordingly may have helped to furnish the public with an experiential basis for responding to and evaluating the war in the Persian Gulf and its resulting censored news footage. To this extent, films in the resurgent America cycle, combining political advocacy with box-office success, help extend and deepen the political desires and cultural anxieties to which they were originally responses.

The ideological material that inflected the genre conventions of these war films reached a climax in Sylvester Stallone's other contribution to the Cold War, *Rocky IV*, which proved to be nearly as popular as *Top Gun*. While the film is not an explicit war film treating ground or aerial combat,

or a rescue of the father, it is quite interesting for the way it draws upon the cycle's narrative themes and imagery of national weakness, invasion, and politically charged physical combat. In the film, Rocky has unofficially retired from the ring to enjoy his wealthy, comfortable life, and he spends his time washing his expensive cars and loving his wife and son. But the Soviets launch an invasion of the United States via athletics. A cover of *Sports Illustrated* proclaims "Russians Invade U.S. Sports" and presents their fearsome boxer, Drago (Dolph Lundgren), whom the Soviets have made a merciless fighting machine through the use of genetic engineering, drugs, and exercise science. They bring him to the United States for what they announce as a goodwill exhibition match.

Apollo Creed (Carl Weathers), Rocky's former nemesis and current friend, is stirred by national feeling to accept the Soviet challenge. More politically sensitive than Rocky, Apollo sees the match as a symbolic opportunity for the United States to regain lost esteem. He says he doesn't want the Soviets making the United States look bad again (implying that they have done so repeatedly in the past): "They've tried every other way. Now we can make them look bad for a change." It's us against them, he tells Rocky, succinctly summarizing the national symbolism Stallone has built into the film. Apollo's complaint that the Soviets have made the United States look bad implicitly articulates the basic premise of the resurgent America ideology—that a decade of national political and military weakness throughout the 1970s has made possible a series of Soviet triumphs in the global political arena.

The film demonstrates why and how the Soviets are not to be trusted. Their delegation is all smiles, and they insist on the goodwill they wish the match to generate between the countries, but they are really launching a vicious propaganda offensive. Drago is an inhuman, unfeeling Soviet enemy who is disgusted by the decadence of American society and confident of his victory over American weakness. This weakness is visualized in the Las Vegas production number that introduces Apollo during the exhibition match. Sequined showgirls dance with Apollo, who wears the flag on his trunks, while James Brown sings a funky pro-America song. It's all empty razzle-dazzle, and Drago watches with silent and lethal disgust.

Drago's cold, robotic qualities place him in the same cinematic family as Rostov and the villains of *Red Dawn* and *Rambo III*. He also, however, connects with another lineage present in films of the period: the Nazis. Spielberg had revived satanic Nazi villains in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), partly because they were suited to the Manichaean morality of the films, and he presented them in a culturally and historically nonspecific manner. His Nazis were not rooted in the European politics of the 1930s but were, instead, anti-historical icons used as a kind of visual shorthand for signifying evil.

For a similar purpose, Stallone merges Nazi imagery with Cold War attitudes in the presentation of Drago, whose huge, blond physique suggests an Aryan superman, the first of a new race, a product of eugenics and drug therapy. As both Nazi and Soviet, Drago is doubly evil, doubly aggressive, a villain of both the past and the present.

The Soviet overtures of friendship, therefore, are presented in the film as lies. In a Cold War context, friendship initiated by the Soviets is merely a stratagem in a larger offensive. Ludmilla, Drago's wife, tells Apollo's wife, "I hope we can be friends after this. After all, they're sportsmen, not soldiers." But they *are* soldiers, because in the Cold War all of culture is militarized, and Drago gives the lie to Ludmilla's words by beating Apollo to death. "The Soviet strength is incredible," an announcer exclaims as Drago pummels Apollo to the ground, obviously a reference to more than boxing abilities. With Apollo's death, Rocky realizes how wrong he had been in his earlier political indifference, when he was uninterested in the exhibition match and said it didn't mean anything. Now, committed to beating Drago and avenging Apollo, Rocky journeys to the USSR to train for his match, as the narrative subtly reworks the invasion themes common in the period's war films. Rocky now invades Russia with his inspiring example of underdog individualism. Drago's coach proclaims that the defeat of Rocky, this little man, "will be an example of how pathetically weak your society has become," but Rocky brings a different and compelling model to the Soviets: American heart versus state engineering. While Drago trains with his engineers and scientists and high-tech machinery, an elaborate montage intercuts Rocky's more primitive methods. Rocky jogs through snow, hoists rocks, saws wood, chops down trees, climbs mountains as Stallone elaborates the same primitive machismo he developed in *Rambo III*, demonstrating that American spirit is more than a match for Soviet technology. (The cultural irony, however, is that to demonstrate this, Rocky has to live and work like a Russian peasant.)

During the match, Rocky sustains an incredible pummeling from Drago but stays on his feet and manages to fight back. Drago grows anxious over his inability to pound Rocky into the mat, and the crowd, which booed the American when he arrived, begins to chant his name. Gorbachev and the Politburo watch this turnaround in the crowd's sympathies with growing concern. Drago, too, eventually succumbs to Rocky's inspiring example and displays his own rebellious individualism, declaring to his trainers that he now fights to win for himself, not the state. As he says this, a cut returns us to a worried Gorbachev who, it is clear, is now presiding over a mini revolution in the sports arena as American individualism awakens the passions of the dormant Soviet masses. Rocky, of course, wins the match, and he wraps himself (literally) in an American flag while giving a speech that is a masterpiece of

ideological agglomeration. While the entire logic of the film has pointed toward the inevitability of U.S.-Soviet conflict and the need for the United States to hone its martial spirit, Rocky now preaches the need for peace, brotherhood, and cooperation between the two nations:

I came here tonight, and I didn't know what to expect. I've seen a lot of people hating me. I didn't know what to feel about that, so I guess I didn't like you much none either. During this fight I've seen a lot of changing, the way you felt about me and the way I felt about you. In here there were two guys killing each other, but I guess that's better than twenty million. What I'm trying to say is that if I can change and you can change, [then] everybody can change.

Overcome by these words, the crowds chants rapturously, in love with Rocky and the flag that he wears. Even Gorbachev slowly stands and begins to applaud, at first hesitantly and reflectively, then more passionately. Although it was released in 1985, the film thus seems to anticipate some of the thawing of U.S.-Soviet relations that would occur later in the decade. Within the ideological system of the film, however, this thawing is entirely the result of American effort and example, to which the Russians merely respond. *Rocky IV* is thus a bifurcated film, for the most part content to recycle Cold War clichés about the Soviets but at the very last moment able dimly to glimpse alternatives.

The shifting tides of the Cold War are much more vividly illustrated by the sequel to *Iron Eagle*, released in 1988, at the close of the Reagan period. This time around, Chappy Sinclair leads a joint strike force of U.S. and Soviet personnel against an unnamed Middle Eastern state that has constructed a nuclear weapons launching facility which threatens both the United States and the Soviet Union. The narrative is sheer fantasy, and while it celebrates the needs and privileges of empire—the U.S.-Soviet air strike is justified, according to the film, because the enemy is an “outlaw” nation—it clearly anticipates a new era of U.S.-Soviet peace and cooperation. The American and Soviet pilots learn to work with and to respect one another, and the film ends with a plea for both governments and peoples to work for a day when their flags will no longer separate them. Even more tellingly, the film opens with a dogfight between Doug Masters (the hero of *Iron Eagle I*), another American pilot named Cooper, and some Soviet Migs. Cooper and Masters have been horsing around in the skies and have strayed into Soviet airspace. The Soviets destroy Masters and his plane while Cooper escapes, but the narrative doesn't generate much propaganda from this. Instead, Cooper and the Soviet pilots involved come to see how both sides were at fault, and they are able to forgive each other!

As *Iron Eagle II* clearly indicates, and as the ending of *Rocky IV* seemed to wish, the intensity of cinematic Cold War visions of the early and

mid-1980s began to diminish toward the end of the decade, as the Soviets came to seem less inevitably an enemy. With a changing international political relationship and slow adjustments in U.S. foreign policy and the political perceptions underlying those changes, popular culture began to make its own set of readjustments. A film like *Red Heat* (1988) was possible, whereas four or five years earlier it would not have been made (or, at least, not in quite the same way). The film is about a Soviet policeman who comes to the United States tracking a ruthless criminal whose violent activities are part of a rising crime wave in the USSR. Methodically precise, he teams with a sloppy U.S. cop, and while the film is a routine collection of shoot-outs and car chases, it does demonstrate a newfound compatibility between the Soviet presence and the urban police thriller. An incipient sympathy for Soviet society is demonstrated as both cops realize they are very much alike, coping with rising crime in their respective countries. Indeed, the sequences portraying criminal organizations in the USSR pitted against local police forces enable the American viewer to identify more closely with the Soviet policeman because he is seen as responding to the same problems that have plagued American society. Even though it is not a Cold War thriller, the film is nevertheless able to absorb the Soviet character and incorporate him within the action formulas, demonstrating new possibilities for the formulas of popular film. Interestingly, and an indicator of the uncertain, transitional time in which the film was made, the Soviet cop remains rather mysterious and unknowable, unlike his familiar and predictable American counterpart. The casting of Arnold Schwarzenegger as the Soviet ensures that he remains somewhat alien, even though presented as a decent and heroic fellow.

No Way Out, released in 1987, also departs somewhat from the Cold War clichés in its presentation of naval intelligence officer Tom Farrell (Kevin Costner), who is in reality a deep-cover Soviet spy. Throughout the film, however, Farrell remains a sympathetic and, at the end, somewhat tragic figure, enmeshed within the web of deceit and treachery spun by Cold War conflicts. In its vision of U.S. governmental conspiracy and impossibly convoluted avenues of corruption, the film is much closer in spirit to the paranoia thrillers of the 1970s than to the Cold War thrillers we have been examining in this chapter. Furthermore, with its reference to U.S. support of the death squads in El Salvador, the film briefly acknowledges a political viewpoint incompatible with the Manichaean politics of those films.

Another prominent film of the period, Clint Eastwood's *Heartbreak Ridge* (1986), deals explicitly with the Grenada invasion but presents that event, and its view of military and civilian society in the mid-1980s, with considerable ambiguity and irony. Eastwood plays Sgt. "Gunny" Highway, a veteran of Korea and Vietnam, a tough soldier whose

gung-ho patriotism is out of place in peacetime and ill-suited to the new Marine Corps, whose officers frequently lack combat experience. Gunny is a relic, an anachronism from an earlier era of empire. An officer tells him he "should be sealed in a glass cage that says 'break glass in the event of war.'" On the one hand, consistent with Cold War perspectives, Gunny's languishing spirit and career are emblematic of the wasting of the U.S. martial spirit. On the other hand, however, Eastwood really does play Gunny as a relic, as a man who can no longer relate to the world around him. The focus of the film is a microscopic one, detailing the emotional currents of Gunny's daily relationships rather than focusing on overtly symbolic portrayals of international great power relations as *Red Dawn*, *Iron Eagle* and *Top Gun* do. When it comes, the Grenada invasion is not presented as the kind of daring, heroic military operation that redeems the honor of the nation, as are the rescues in the other films. Eastwood's squad encounters a few skirmishes on the island, and that's about all. The film clearly implies that Grenada was no Heartbreak Ridge, the bloody battle in Korea that earned Gunny his Congressional Medal of Honor. Rather than a plea for resurgent America, *Heartbreak Ridge* is a restrained elegy for the passing of empire. At the end, Gunny glances at the flag and then walks away, into retirement and into the past where he feels he truly belongs.

As *Heartbreak Ridge*, *Red Heat*, and *No Way Out* indicate, popular films in the latter half of the decade could find ways of negotiating a mild critical distance from the politics and Cold War ideology of the period. But more instructive, perhaps, are those films examined in the bulk of this chapter which heartily embraced the foreign policy framework of Reagan-era politics. These films clearly demonstrate the responsiveness and sensitivity of Hollywood film to the political frameworks of the time. In part, this sensitivity was due to the extraordinary ideological intensity and self-consciousness of the Reagan years. Always eager to tap the national pulse in the interests of box-office success, Hollywood obviously targeted the new nationalism as a compelling basis for potentially resonant images and narratives, and many of our films swelled with portraits of brave homelands and evil empires. In doing this, American film stayed within the boundaries of its stylistic traditions. By and large, these were generic films that incorporated this newly explicit nationalism, and many of them aimed to be blockbuster productions, some succeeding (*Top Gun*, *Rocky IV*).

The absorption of dominant political frameworks by these films shows clearly how promiscuous the conventions of genre are, how they are able to couple with extraneous ideological content and to internalize it so that it seems, in turn, to drive the narrative. *Invasion USA*, for example, is both a Chuck Norris action film and a statement of extreme right-wing politics. As the former, it illustrates Walter Wanger's maxim that politics

had best be internalized by the familiar trappings of genre narratives and characters. As the latter, however, the film is aligned with the anticommunist films of the HUAC period and tries to enforce a similar exclusivity of ideological choice upon the viewer. This chapter has been suggesting that despite their generic nature, the ideological explicitness of these Cold War films, and their simplistic conflicts of good and evil, tie them more closely to traditions of propaganda than Hollywood generally has permitted in the past, except during the HUAC period. The foreign policy pronouncements of the Reagan years produced two major ideological tracts—*Red Dawn* and *Rocky IV*—and the other rescue/invasion films in the cycle work to extend and deepen the Cold War. As cultural products, they help to create and sustain a psychology of threat, of containment, of narrowed social discourse and diminished political choice requisite for a heavily militarized society. In this respect, the conventions of genre may actually further this process of psychological and political closure. As previously noted, genre communicates quickly and intensely because it is so familiar, and the repetition of easily assimilable narrative formulas may lend the political frameworks embedded within them a perceived inevitability. Since the anti-Sovietism of the period was so strong and so pervasive, these genre formulas could link up with, and be verified by, much larger, extracinematic currents of anxiety and mistrust.

This Cold War cycle really had nowhere to go from a narrative standpoint, beyond a repetition in future films of what would become increasingly familiar and dull scenarios of invasion, subversion, and rescue. (The rescue formula also figures in the cycle of films about American MIAs in Vietnam; see Chapter 4.) The ideology that informed and generated the films was already in full flower when the cycle commenced and, as a nondialectical structure of thought, could not admit subtlety, distinction, or alternatives. Perhaps as a measure of this exhaustion, *Rambo III* had elevated the heroes and villains and the stakes of the conflict to an impossibly superhuman level of caricature. Thus it is quite likely that this cycle would have become even more redundant and repetitious had the international political situation not dramatically changed. But we should be glad that it did. Many of these films are implicitly, sometimes explicitly, apocalyptic. Had the Cold War not subsided, these genre fantasies might ultimately have become unpleasant historical realities. It's a world much to be preferred where Rambo is not slaughtering entire continents of Communists but need only fight to rescue whales and trees. It is, however, inappropriate to pronounce the arrival of the new world order. The Persian Gulf war revived calls for increased investments in weapons research and a general cultural fascination with "smart" weapons, and the war itself showed that political differences are being resolved in the old familiar ways. The Soviet Union has not found its way out of a process of economic and political disintegration,

and dictatorship may again return. The new world order eagerly anticipated before the Gulf war accordingly seems increasingly elusive.

Furthermore, the nationalism these films mobilize, and that in turn feeds them, is an extremely powerful tradition in American culture. As such, it remains a potent force in American society and in the American psyche, despite the apparent erosion of the Cold War. The diminishing tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union have not entailed a lessening of U.S. military involvement in regional conflicts. Despite the bellicosity of the Reagan administration's political rhetoric, no major military ventures occurred during his tenure in office. By contrast, in the first three years of the Bush presidency, the United States launched two major military offensives, in Panama and Iraq. Thus, despite the rhetoric of a new world order that was voiced while the Soviets lost their grip on Eastern Europe, the United States continues to define its role in international affairs in familiar ways. For this reason, and especially because of the tidal wave of nationalism aroused by the war with Iraq, there seems to be no reason to believe that the rescue-and-invasion cycle has really played itself out. As noted, the reflex emotions it arouses are extremely deep-seated in the culture and, as the demonization of Saddam Hussein in the popular press attests, other evil empires can be found. Expansive, nationalist, imperial ideologies will be likely, therefore, to inflect popular narratives in the American cinema for a long time to come. In this respect the substitute gratifications of film need not be true to life. Real-world decline of U.S. economic power can, paradoxically, elicit defiant ideological celebrations of national glory, as the films in this chapter indicate. While the United States had to go hat in hand to other nations to foot the bill for the war against Iraq, Rambo and the Delta Force can continue to act unilaterally and imperiously on film, at no cost to the taxpayer and proudly scorning the largess and patronage of other nations.

The cycle of invasion-and-rescue films diligently celebrates and promotes the frameworks of ideology and foreign policy that supported the new Cold War. Was there room in the Hollywood film industry of the 1980s for alternative political perspectives, for films that sought to critique and question aspects of U.S. foreign policy and their corresponding political assumptions and military imperatives? To explore this question, in Chapter 3, we need to consider the decade's rapidly escalating conflicts in the Caribbean basin.

NOTES

1. Noam Chomsky analyzes the new Cold War as a response to a perceived context of U.S. weakness and defeat in *Towards a New Cold War* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

2. See Robert W. Tucker, "The Purposes of American Power," *Foreign Affairs* 59, no. 2 (Winter 1980/1981), pp. 241-274. It should be noted that Tucker counseled caution in implementing such a policy.

3. Ronald Reagan, address to the nation on arms control, November 22, 1982, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* 49, no. 5, p. 130.
4. Ronald Reagan, address to the nation on peace and national security, March 23, 1983, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* 49, no. 13, p. 387.
5. Ronald Reagan, address on Central America, April 27, 1983, in Ronald Reagan, *Speaking My Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), pp. 145-160.
6. Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 219.
7. Ronald Reagan, address to the nation on aiding the Contras, March 16, 1986, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* 52, no. 13, p. 386.
8. Reagan, address on Central America, in *Speaking My Mind*, p. 160.
9. Ronald Reagan, Inauguration Address, January 21, 1985, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* 51, no. 8, p. 228.
10. Reagan, address to the nation on arms control, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* 49, no. 5, p. 131.
11. Ronald Reagan, address to the nation on the downing of a Korean airliner, September 5, 1983, in *Vital Speeches of the Day* 49, no. 24, p. 739.
12. Ronald Reagan, remarks on accepting the GOP presidential nomination, August 23, 1984, in *Speaking My Mind*, p. 204.
13. Thomas Doherty, "Hollywood Agit-Prop: The Anti-Communist Cycle, 1948-1954," *Journal of Film and Video* 40, no. 4 (Fall 1988), pp. 15-27.
14. For a more detailed exploration of this phenomenon, see Robert Ray, *A Certain Tendency of the Hollywood Cinema, 1930-1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); and Richard Maltby, *Harmless Entertainment: Hollywood and the Ideology of Consensus* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1983).
15. See, for example, the discussion of the production of *Dead End* in Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono: Hollywood, Censorship, and the Production Code from the 1920s to the 1960s* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), pp. 57-78.
16. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 76.
17. Doherty, "Hollywood Agit-Prop," p. 26.
18. See Basil Bernstein, "A Sociolinguistic Approach to Socialization, with Some Reference to Educability," in *Directions in Sociolinguistics*, ed. John J. Gumperz and Dell Hymes (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), pp. 465-497.
19. Sontag's classic essay "Fascinating Fascism" is in *Movies and Methods*, vol. 1, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 31-43.
20. Cameron Stauth, "Requiem for a Heavyweight," *American Film* 15 (January 1990), p. 24.
21. *Ibid.*
22. The father figure in Reagan-era films is also explored in Robert Phillip Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 255.
23. This imagery of the black box was used by Daikichi Irokawa to describe the effects on Japan of the emperor worship that helped to undergird the nation's role in World War II. He likened it to an enormous black box into which the nation unknowingly walked. Daikichi Irokawa, *The Culture of the Meiji Period*, trans. Marius B. Jansen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 245-246.