

CHUCK NORRIS AND INVASION U.S.A.

Joseph Zito's *Invasion U.S.A.* (1985) can be viewed as one of the last remnants of Cold War Communist paranoia. The film concerns a Russian terrorist, Rostov, who leads an invasion of the southern United States for no apparent reason other than the Americans have become complacent and no longer value their freedoms. His army lands on the Florida beaches in the middle of the night in Higgins Boats, a symbol of D-Day and America's greatest victory, World War II. This upturning of traditional American symbols and values is present throughout the entire film.

The first major attack on U.S. soil occurs in a residential neighborhood. This residential scene is one of American pastimes and symbols: the young children decorating a Christmas tree, boys playing ball in the streets, teens kissing in a parked car; in all, American tradition at its finest. This idyll is destroyed by the launching of Russian bazookas. In moments, the neighborhood is in flames.

Enter one-man army Chuck Norris.

Chuck Norris plays Matt Hunter, a retired freedom fighter who "should've killed Rostov when [he] had the chance." Hunter is the epitome of American virility: he is a loner, a completely self-sufficient man who lives in a shack in the Everglades. He is constantly seen doing "manly things": cutting wood with a

chainsaw, wrestling an alligator. He has a pet armadillo. Matt Hunter is a modern day Lone Ranger who literally haunts Rostov's nightmares. This Lone Ranger connection is furthered by the female reporter character who constantly refers to Hunter as "cowboy." In fact, he will almost single-handedly repel the Communist invasion, with only minor help from the military.

Rostov leads an attack on Hunter's shack. Hunter survives, but his autonomy is threatened by the invaders. Having previously declined to track down Rostov, he is now a man with a mission.

Members of Rostov's terrorist army disguise themselves as police officers and begin blasting people at a dance. They become a symbol of American security gone awry. One woman cries, "Why? There has to be a reason!" There is a reason: to inspire civil disobedience. When the real police show up, the dancers begin violently throwing rocks and bottles at the cops. Americans are now fighting authority, fighting Rostov's battle for him.

The terrorists even attack that all-American safe-haven, the shopping mall. Luckily, Matt Hunter arrives and blasts the terrorists back with his Uzis. Nevertheless, much damage and destruction is caused by the terrorist bombs and machine guns.

Citizens are urged to stay off the streets, but one family sneaks out to go to church, where of course the terrorists plant

a bomb. But naturally the parishioners are delivered from evil by the hand of Chuck Norris.

The film concludes with Matt Hunter being arrested, followed by Rostov's massive effort to hunt him down, leading to the inevitable showdown between the two. The ending leaves no doubt that Matt Hunter has, with minimal help from the U.S. army, defeated evil and restored order to the southern United States. In this reactionary film, Chuck Norris is presented as the embodiment of American virility, and the film warns against complacency, lest the evil Reds come and force us to value our freedoms.