

'Red Dawn': A Movie for Our Time

The other day I was revisiting the 1984 flick *Red Dawn* when I had one of those revelations that leave me feeling a bit stupid and more than a bit stunned.

The film's storyline is pretty simple: It's the Cold War, and Russia, Cuba, and Nicaragua launch an attack on the United States. When these forces invade the town of Calumet, Colorado, six teenage boys escape to the mountains—they're later joined by two girls—and form a guerilla movement to resist the invaders. The fighting is bitter, fierce, and without quarter. In the end, all but two of the teens lose their lives, but they help win the battle for America's freedom and are eventually celebrated as heroes.

As I rewatched *Red Dawn*, so many scenes matched the circumstances of the last few years that the movie seemed almost prophetic in its message. What if we are now undergoing our own "Red Dawn," except this is an invasion without machine guns and war planes, but with the same ideas of destruction and conquest of the American Republic in mind?

Here are just a few bits from the movie that struck me as metaphors for our muddled times.

Red Dawn opens with a short idyllic portrait of small town life. A kid on a bicycle is delivering newspapers. Mothers are walking their children to school. Three high school guys in a pickup discuss the football team. The camera brings us to a plaque bearing words from Theodore Roosevelt: "Far better it is to dare mighty things than to take rank with those poor, timid spirits who know neither victory nor defeat."

That scene symbolizes an America that existed just three or four years ago.

Then comes the invasion.

The enemy paratroopers first shoot up the school, killing at least one student and a teacher, and blow up several vehicles, including a school bus. The school is closed, and significantly, it's the history teacher who was killed. Today we still see shuttered schools and, in many places, certain educators have destroyed the teaching of traditional American history.

The first command of the Cuban leader is: "Go to the sporting goods store. From the files obtain forms 4473. These will contain descriptions of weapons and lists of private ownership." Some in our present government would like nothing better than to confiscate American firearms.

The film depicts Calumet's mayor as a quisling and collaborator who "just wants to see this thing through" and who is treated with contempt by the Cubans. The mayor serves as a representative figure for so many of our leaders in Congress—many of them Republicans—who just want to smooth things over rather than stand up and fight with backbone.

The new regime also establishes reeducation camps for recalcitrant citizens. Today we don't need to ship the deplorables off to a camp. We send them to college and simply run mainstream media at them 24/7.

At one point, a female teenager who has joined the rebels says, "Things are different now." That line used to strike me as banal, but now I know just how this kid felt. Things *are* different now.

We're still in the "new normal," and I'm beginning to wonder if the old normal is gone forever. Given all the attacks on our freedoms and our way of life, there's talk today of a common "mass formation psychosis" instituted by governments both here and abroad, and I'm not sure that diagnosis isn't close to the mark. Heck, sometimes I look at myself and wonder

if all the light bulbs in my own attic are still burning.

So what do we do? How do we form our own resistance to fight the fear and the sheer lunacy that seems to plague our country these days?

Over a hundred years ago, Thérèse of Lisieux, now a saint, discovered the “Little Way,” which means doing the little things with great love. We might take a lesson or two from her.

We might set our sights on brightening the corner where we are. We could volunteer to teach a Sunday School class for 12-year-olds, organize a book club for some homeschool students, or volunteer an hour or two a week at any place from our community library to our local pro-life center. We might slip a few bucks to some agreeable candidate for local office or send a small donation to a nonprofit outfit like the [Charlemagne Institute](#), the publisher of *Intellectual Takeout*. We might take a few moments to thank a pastor or a child’s teacher or coach for their excellent work.

Closer to home, we could redouble our efforts to maintain contact with those we love. We might eat suppers together with our families, with cellphones banned and with conversations on a host of topics, including the meaning of liberty. We might invite friends into our homes on a regular basis, exchanging ideas and seeking common ground.

In *Red Dawn*, the resistance used guns and explosives to repel the invaders. We have other weapons at our disposal: engagement with the culture, good cheer, common sense, and love.

Always bear in mind that there are millions and millions of us. If we bring those weapons into the war for our nation’s soul, we will eventually win the day.

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