

Depiction of cold war in rocky iv



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The Cold War was an ideological or Propaganda War between the two Super Powers, The Soviet Union and the United States of America. The War was not only political but also social and cultural, to the extent of which it's presence was felt not only in the mass media of the day, but also in the entertainment industry. It was especially during the 70's and 80's that optimum effort was put into the entertainment media to portray pro-capitalist and anti-communist ideas to the public. American values and ideals were exalted in movies, music, television, art and literature. Hollywood played a significant role in bringing the Cold War propaganda to the big screen through motion pictures and documentaries that were made and produced. The animated movie: *Make Mine Freedom* , *Meet King Joe* , *Red Nightmare* and the *Rambo Saga* are some examples of movies with the Cold War in the background. They successfully depicted the idea of the American Dream and idealized the capitalist and Democratic society of America as the epitome of political state rule.

The Rocky Series, written and directed by the famous actor, director Sylvester Stallone is an action packed and exiting series of six movies. It depicts the life and crisis of a boxer, Rocky Balboa played by Sylvester Stallone himself. The films are: Rocky(1976), Rocky II(1979), Rocky III(1982), Rocky IV(1985), Rocky V(1990) and Rocky Balboa(2006). The boxing blockbuster saga was well received by the audience and the critics. The movies became a huge rage all over America and also in other countries of the world. The movies at first glance come across as a typically action oriented sports melodrama, but on closer analysis many different themes and areas have been depicted and explained in them.

Rocky IV the fourth installment of the Rocky Series that released in 1985, is a movie that showcases not only good drama that satisfies the audiences expectation of action and adventure, but also subtly depicts the Cold War and the idea of the “ Us against Them”, that is, the United States against the U. S. S. R. The movie is well recognized as one that propagates the Cold War agenda that it is popularly known as: *Rocky IV “ the one with the Russian”*.

The story continues from the third movie where Rocky wins the title from Clubber Lang. He decides to spend some time with his family but soon destiny brings him back to the ring. A new fighter from the Soviet, Ivan Drago comes to America and fights with Apollo Creed. In the course of the match Apollo is severely injured and dies a cold death in his friends arm. To avenge his comrades death Rocky challenges the ruthless Drago to a rematch to be held in Moscow on Christmas Day. Both parties train vigorously, Drago using top notch technology and Rocky takes natures help to train. Finally, in the boxing ring Rocky fights his nemesis initially facing the worst beating of his life. He soon recovers and at last achieves victory over Drago.

When analyzing the film in its quality of content, it is instantly identified as a movie with Cold War depiction. The relationship between the two main characters in the movie, Rocky characterized as the hero and Drago the villain is a well developed metaphor that communicates the political scenario of the Cold War. Rocky (Sylvester Stallone) represents America and Drago (Dolph Lundgren) represents the Soviet Union. Their enmity symbolizes the cold War situation between the two Super powers. The movie is an American

film, thus it revels in the idea of America while condemning the communist Soviet.

It is commendable how the film in a short span of ninety one minutes summarizes all the main incidents and themes of the Cold War. The defeat of Drago in the end is a perfect metaphor of the fall of the Soviet just a few years after the movie was released.

The first incident is the fight between Drago and Apollo, where Apollo is killed by the cold Drago. This in terms can be seen as the Second World War where America got directly involved in the end. The period of the Cold War is the training session filled with tension and apprehension before the fight between Rocky and Drago. Although during the Cold War there was no actual battle between the two superpowers the fights in the boxing ring are metaphorical. They depict the ideological clash between the two superpowers.

Rocky's decision to face Drago in the ring is severely criticized by his wife who wanted peace. This is similar to the criticism President Reagan faced when he took adverse steps to bring an end to the Cold War. Rocky like President Reagan adopts the philosophy of " peace through strength" and challenges Drago to a fight. And just as Reagan was praised for his efforts after the end of the War, similarly Rocky achieves victory and the faith of his wife in the movie after he gains victory over Drago.

In this movie there is one notable difference in the portrayal of the villain. Here the villain is not black like in the former movies. The villain is a white man; this portrays the change of focus from the stereotype of the angry,

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colored man to the pressing political scenario. The white villain is a conscious attempt of portrayal of the enemy, the threat (the Soviet Union) in terms of the Cold War.

During the era of the Cold War the media was used as a political weapon to arouse nationalistic feeling among the citizens of America. America saw the growing technology of the Soviets as a threat to their existence as a superpower. Keeping this in mind the movie resourcefully brings out the idea of the American dream, that is, success follows those who work hard.

Rocky during his training for the rematch in Moscow is shown doing rigorous exercise by means of cutting wood, climbing mountains and pulling sleighs. He is an individualist who has achieved success through great labor. On his own he rises from the streets of Philadelphia and achieves fame in the boxing ring. In sharp contrast the mechanical Drago is surrounded by a team of professionals who help him train with the best machines and technology. He builds up his strength through the aid of steroids. Finally it is Rocky who wins the match. His victory over Drago is the individual's victory over the collective. Thus very cleverly the American idea of individual and self work is propagated against the Soviets idea of Communism. The Cold War for America was all about Anti-Communist feeling which is very suitably shown in the film.

The cold nature of the Soviet is depicted through the cinematography. The landscape of Russia is shown as coarse and snow covered. But even the harsh climate does not stop Rocky from continuing his training for the

upcoming match. This reveals the American zeal and determination to attain success and aim high.

As the end of the movie approaches, the Soviet regime of communism is mocked at as the Russians in the movie start supporting Rocky and condemning Drago, with chants of “ Rocky! Rocky! Rocky! Rocky!” This symbolizes the conversion of the Soviet into a capitalist nation sooner or later. It establishes the superior authority of the American idea of individualism and capitalism as opposed to Soviet Communism. The continuous chant of “ rocky” establishes America as the only superpower that would exist in the world after the fall of the Soviet regime. It’s a celebration of the American nation.

Rocky’s final speech is pro America and holds great appeal to pacifists and supporters of the Cold War. In his final words he appeals to the Russians to bring change. He says “ If I can change, and you can change, everybody can change.” In turn echoing the thoughts of all Americans, that of putting an end to the Cold War. He declares that it is finally time to change. This change would establish America as the only superpower. With the fall of the Soviet some years later Rocky’s final words echo in the minds of the American people.

This movie is the last of the great Rocky movies that is worth a mention. The fifth and sixth movies are no match in quality and content to the first three. Rocky IV stacked a great deal of money and popularity and has heavily contributed to the one billion dollars that the six movies have made. Rocky IV has a perfect alchemy of drama, action, and patriotism which makes it a

fulfilling watch. It is very interesting how the contrast between the two Superpowers is shown in the characterization of the two main actors. The movie inspires nationalistic feelings among the American citizens and glorifies the ideology of the nation to the best effect. It is one of the few films that portray the Cold War scenario so appropriately in terms of metaphorical depiction.