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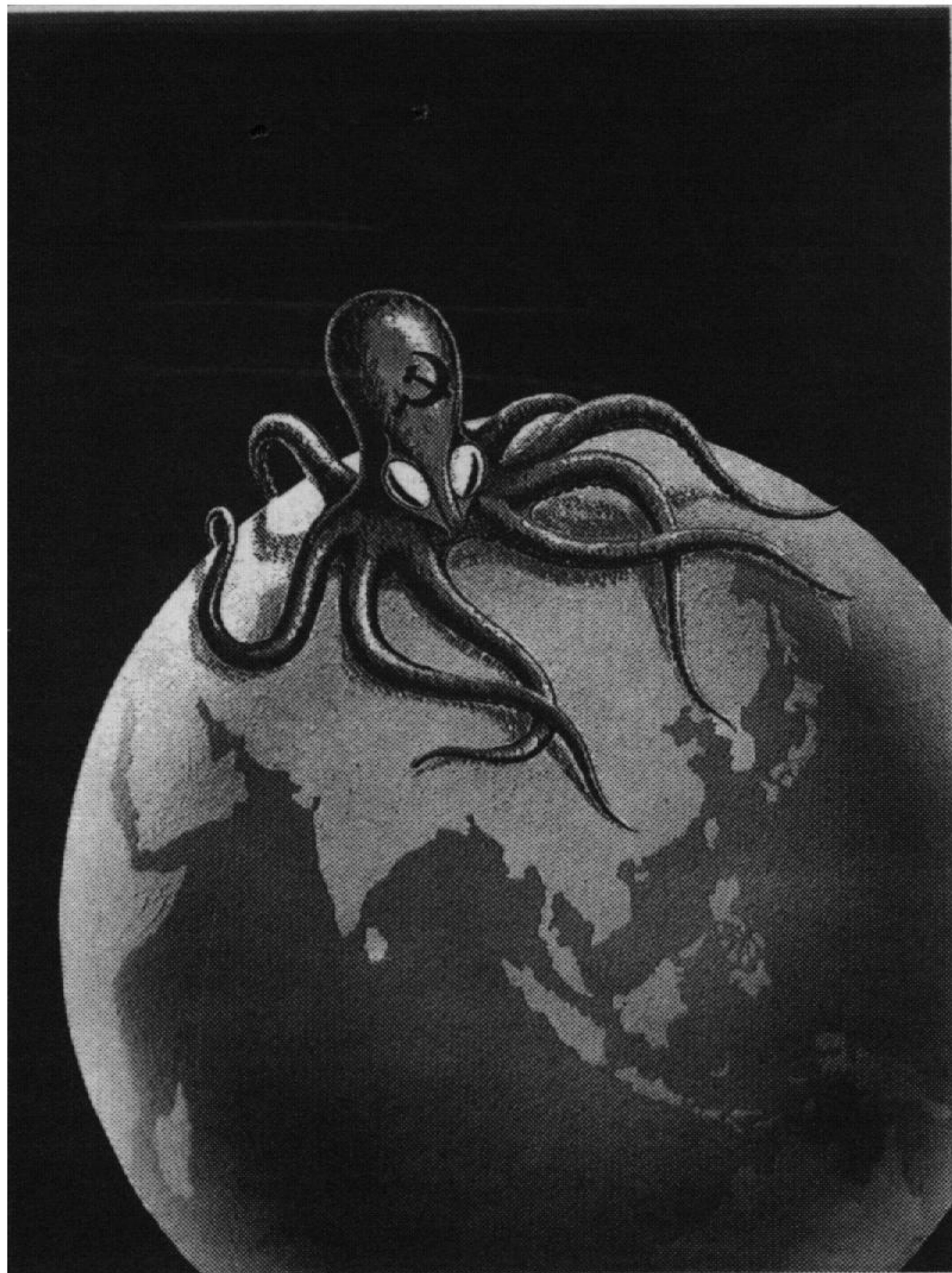
COLD (WAR) SORES ARE WE WINNING THE WAR, MOMMY?

■ One of the most successful and exciting trends of recent American 'front line' cinema has been the compilation-documentary based on the creative juxtaposition of archival footage with interviews and re-assessments of the ideological climate of the forties and fifties. *Atomic Café*, *Rosie the Riveter* are but two examples of the extraordinary potential of this idea of cinema, which has also been taken up in other countries such as Australia (*First Contact* and *Half Life* for example), achieving substantial theatrical exposure as well.

Barbara Margolis' *Are We Winning the War, Mommy? America and the Cold War* is already a classic in this genre, having featured in Ted Turner's alternative to ABC's violently anti-Soviet fictional series *Amerika*, whose initial ratings came to a staggering 70 million. She started to research her project in 1979 and has travelled to archives all over the USA and Europe, slowly compiling a complete picture of an American mentality still prevalent today and personified in the tragi-comic figure of Ronald Reagan.

Margolis, who worked with Raul Ruiz and Miguel Littin at the time of *Unidad Popular* in Chile and who set up a distribution network for Latin American cinema before (and during) her activities as producer/director, has discovered some truly remarkable material: from 20's animated cartoons (*Little Billy Boshevick*) [sic] featuring a diminutive, all-devouring, all-desecrating monster (including bouts of egg-throwing at the Statue of Liberty and spiteful destruction of sacred public/private property) to railroad ads which spin right off the rails, as its leading character succumbs to the paranoia of cold war ideology and imagines the effect of a Soviet invasion, before remembering to advertise the might of the Iron Horse trail across the USA: Little Billy is kicked out of the frame by Uncle Sam's ever ready boot, just like many suspicious aliens have been; the real man wakes to rediscover the Land of the Free on wheels of steel.

70% of the material is from archives while the remaining 30% is



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constituted by interviews with people like Paul Nitze (Chief Policy Planner in the fifties and Chief Arms negotiator now in Geneva) and Clark Clifford (Adviser to President Truman), all linked together by means of a punchy, effective commentary read by Anne Jackson.

Another important feature of the film is the music specially composed by Wendy Blackstone which culminates in a memorable song. The depth of ideologically

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manipulated paranoia in the middle-American consciousness could not be indicted at a better time. With so much at stake and the promising, popular attitudes adopted by Mr. Gorbachev, American audiences have taken this film to heart. Produced with the help of many institutions and grants (but primarily Channel Four, National Film Board of Canada, Swedish Television) *Mommy* cost around half a million dollars and, in one of the most memorable extracts, tells you exactly how to spot a communist (four easy lessons stressing the need to keep vigilant). With the help of Reagan himself it tells you where you can send your hard-earned \$\$\$ to keep the CIA in business.

Don Ranvaud