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# “Red Storm Rising”: Tom Clancy Novels and the Cult of National Security

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*They're not just novels. They're read as the real thing.*

—Former Vice President Dan Quayle on Tom Clancy's novels

Prominent midcentury American social critics Dwight MacDonal and Clement Greenberg, inspired in part by Frankfurt school intellectuals, decried the growing influence of the mass media and popular culture on postindustrial society. They asserted that *kitsch*, ersatz culture for the masses, as represented in radio, television, popular music, cartoons, advertising, paperback novels, and the movies, would overwhelm the avant-garde and undermine elite, or high, culture.<sup>1</sup> For many years, historians, who were among the last social scientists to take popular culture seriously, followed the lead of these intellectual critics in their disdain for the tastes of the masses. With the advent of the new social history, which focused on nonelites, and the recognition of the significance of the expansion of leisure time...

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