

Propaganda Redux

Take it from this old KGB hand: The left is abetting America's enemies with its intemperate attacks on President Bush.

BY ION MIHAI PACEPA

Tuesday, August 7, 2007 12:01 a.m. EDT

During last week's two-day summit, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown thanked President Bush for leading the global war on terror. Mr. Brown acknowledged "the debt the world owes to the U.S. for its leadership in this fight against international terrorism" and vowed to follow Winston Churchill's lead and make Britain's ties with America even stronger.

Mr. Brown's statements elicited anger from many of Mr. Bush's domestic detractors, who claim the president concocted the war on terror for personal gain. But as someone who escaped from communist Romania--with two death sentences on his head--in order to become a citizen of this great country, I have a hard time understanding why some of our top political leaders can dare in a time of war to call our commander in chief a "liar," a "deceiver" and a "fraud."

I spent decades scrutinizing the U.S. from Europe, and I learned that international respect for America is directly proportional to America's own respect for its president.

My father spent most of his life working for General Motors in Romania and had a picture of President Truman in our house in Bucharest. While "America" was a vague place somewhere thousands of miles away, he was her tangible symbol. For us, it was *he* who had helped save civilization from the Nazi barbarians, and it was *he* who helped restore our freedom after the war--if only for a brief while. We learned that America loved Truman, and we loved America. It was as simple as that.

Later, when I headed Romania's intelligence station in West Germany, everyone there admired America too. People would often tell me that the "Amis" meant the difference between night and day in their lives. By "night" they meant East Germany, where their former compatriots were scraping along under economic privation and Stasi brutality. That was then.

But in September 2002, a German cabinet minister, Herta Dauebler-Gmelin, had the nerve to compare Mr. Bush to Hitler. In one post-Iraq-war poll 40% of Canada's teenagers called the U.S. "evil," and even before the fall of Saddam 57% of Greeks answered "neither" when asked which country was more democratic, the U.S. or Iraq.

Sowing the seeds of anti-Americanism by discrediting the American president was one of the main tasks of the Soviet-bloc intelligence community during the years I worked at its top levels. This same strategy is at work today, but it is regarded as bad manners to point out the Soviet parallels. For communists, only the leader counted, no matter the country, friend or foe. At home, they deified their own ruler--as to a certain extent still holds true in Russia. Abroad, they asserted that a fish starts smelling from the head, and they did everything in their power to make the head of the Free World stink.

The communist effort to generate hatred for the American president began soon after President Truman set up NATO and propelled the three Western occupation forces to unite their zones to form a new West German nation. We were tasked to take advantage of the reawakened patriotic feelings stirring in the European countries that had been subjugated by the Nazis, in order to shift their hatred for Hitler over into hatred for Truman--the leader of the new "occupation power." Western Europe was still grateful to the U.S. for having restored its freedom, but it had strong leftist movements that we secretly financed. They were like putty in our hands.

The European leftists, like any totalitarians, needed a tangible enemy, and we gave them one. In no time they began beating their drums decrying President Truman as the "butcher of Hiroshima." We went on to spend many years and many billions of dollars disparaging subsequent presidents: Eisenhower as a war-mongering "shark" run by the military-industrial complex, Johnson as a mafia boss who had bumped off his predecessor, Nixon as a petty tyrant, Ford as a dimwitted football player and Jimmy Carter as a bumbling peanut farmer. In 1978, when I left Romania for good, the bloc intelligence community had already collected 700 million signatures on a "Yankees-Go-Home" petition, at the same time launching the slogan "Europe for the Europeans."

During the Vietnam War we spread vitriolic stories around the world, pretending that America's presidents sent Genghis Khan-style barbarian soldiers to Vietnam who raped at random, taped electrical wires to human genitals, cut off limbs, blew up bodies and razed entire villages. Those weren't facts. They were our tales, but some seven million Americans ended up being convinced their own president, not communism, was the enemy. As Yuri Andropov, who conceived this *dezinformatsiya* war against the U.S., used to tell me, people are more willing to believe smut than holiness.



The final goal of our anti-American offensive was to discourage the U.S. from protecting the world against communist terrorism and expansion. Sadly, we succeeded. After U.S. forces precipitously pulled out of Vietnam, the victorious communists massacred some two million people in Vietnam,

Laos and Cambodia. Another million tried to escape, but many died in the attempt. This tragedy also created a credibility gap between America and the rest of the world, damaged the cohesion of American foreign policy, and poisoned domestic debate in the U.S.

Unfortunately, partisans today have taken a page from the old Soviet playbook. At the 2004 Democratic National Convention, for example, Bush critics continued our mud-slinging at America's commander in chief. One speaker, Martin O'Malley, now governor of Maryland, had earlier in the summer stated he was more worried about the actions of the Bush

administration than about al Qaeda. On another occasion, retired four-star general Wesley Clark gave Michael Moore a platform to denounce the American commander in chief as a "deserter." And visitors to the national chairman of the Democratic Party had to step across a doormat depicting the American president surrounded by the words, "Give Bush the Boot."



Competition is indeed the engine that has driven the American dream forward, but unity in time of war has made America the leader of the world. During World War II, 405,399 Americans died to defeat Nazism, but their country of immigrants remained sturdily united. The U.S. held national elections during the war, but those running for office entertained no thought of damaging America's international prestige in their quest for personal victory. Republican challenger Thomas Dewey declined to criticize President Roosevelt's war policy. At the end of that war, a united America rebuilt its vanquished enemies. It took seven years to turn Nazi Germany and imperial Japan into democracies, but that effort generated an unprecedented technological explosion and 50 years of unmatched prosperity for us all.

Now we are again at war. It is not the president's war. It is America's war, authorized by 296 House members and 76 senators. I do not intend to join the armchair experts on the Iraq war. I do not know how we should handle this war, and they don't know either. But I do know that if America's political leaders, Democrat and Republican, join together as they did during World War II, America will win. Otherwise, terrorism will win. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi predicted just before being killed: "We fight today in Iraq, tomorrow in the land of the Holy Places, and after there in the West."

On July 28, I celebrated 29 years since President Carter signed off on my request for political asylum, and I am still tremendously proud that the leader of the Free World granted me my freedom. During these years I have lived here under five presidents--some better than others--but I have always felt that I was living in paradise. My American citizenship has given me a feeling of pride, hope and security that is surpassed only by the joy of simply being alive. There are millions of other immigrants who are equally proud that they restarted their lives from scratch in order to be in this magnanimous country. I appeal to them to help keep our beloved America united and honorable. We may not be able to change the habits of our current political representatives, but we may be able to introduce healthy new blood into the U.S. Congress.

For once, the communists got it right. It is America's leader that counts. Let's return to the traditions of presidents who accepted nothing short of unconditional surrender from our deadly enemies. Let's vote next year for people who believe in America's future, not for the ones who live in the Cold War past.

Lt. Gen. Pacepa is the highest-ranking intelligence official ever to have defected from the Soviet bloc. His new book, "Programmed to Kill: Lee Harvey Oswald, the Soviet KGB, and the Kennedy Assassination" (Ivan R. Dee) will be published in November.

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