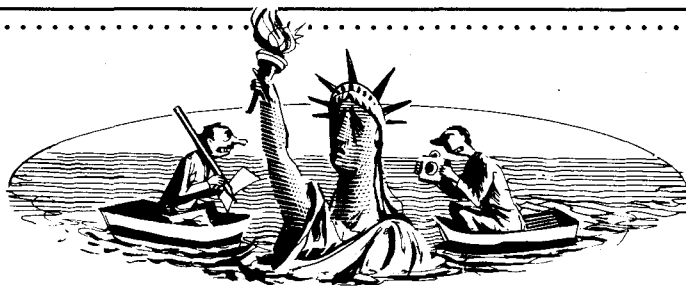


PRESSWATCH



DISTORTIONS, OMISSIONS, LIES

by Michael Ledeen

Is there such a thing as a life cycle of a newspaper? Can one measure its vital signs and diagnose symptoms of a possibly fatal disease? There are questions that are routinely asked about such evanescent things as civilizations, societies, and nations; why not newspapers (which certainly exist, while "civilizations" are much more problematic)? I believe that the *Washington Post* is now in a period of sharp decline, for it has abandoned the traditional task of a newspaper—providing its readers with the basic facts about the world—in favor of attempting to shape its readers political opinions. To see how this works in practice, compare the way the *New York Times* and the *Post* covered the same story—the evolution of the American government's Persian Gulf policy. It's a good example, I think, because the journalists in question are all first class. The differences in the stories reflect the nature of the publications, not just the quality of the individual journalists.

Oddly, for a story that clearly required a good deal of research, both papers carried it on the front page on the same day: Sunday, August 23. The *Post* story was written by David Ignatius; the *Times* account by Stephen Engelberg and retired Admiral Bernard Trainor, who has embarked upon a second career in journalism. The lead paragraphs indicate the differences between the two newspapers. Ignatius focused on a narrow question which he felt illuminated the policy process:

When the Reagan administration has embarked on a new foreign policy venture, the president often has signed a document known as a "National Security Decision Directive" outlining the strategy behind the policy.

But this bit of paperwork was not prepared in the case of America's recent military buildup in the Persian Gulf. The reason, officials say, was simple: Nobody thought a formal new interagency study of

our gulf policy was necessary. The decision to reflag and escort Kuwaiti tankers had broad support within the administration and didn't require any formal decision directive from the president.

Here is the way Engelberg and Trainor began:

President Reagan decided in March to protect Kuwait's oil tankers in the Persian Gulf after being told by his senior Cabinet advisers that it could be done without any increase in America's naval forces there . . .

. . . the policy makers considered few alternatives and did not see the move as momentous.

They believed that the Iranians would not attack American targets because plans did not call for a change in the number of United States Navy ships in the gulf.

Interesting, isn't it? For the *Post*, the crucial element is whether the Administration issued a new policy document; for the *Times*, the central fact was that the Administration did not foresee an American naval buildup in the Gulf. This difference in treatment is not a mere accident, depending upon the quality of the individual reporters; it is the difference between a newspaper that considers itself the newspaper of

record for educated English-speakers, and one which is a political-action organ (the *Post*, in the event there is any doubt).

Thus, we learn from the *Times* story many things that are not to be found in the *Post*, as for example that Howard Baker did not like the policy, and that "Mr. Baker's feelings became public in June when he declared that the Administration was prepared to consider a joint United States-Soviet operation in the gulf, an idea that had no support among other senior policy makers." This is a real bombshell (Howard Baker floating a personal policy trial balloon, a real lone ranger operation coming from the man who was supposed to restore team playing in the White House), but the *Times* put it well down in a page-long story. The *Times* noted something else that the *Post* missed: "Mr. Weinberger's active role surprised some in the Administration, who noted his reputation for counselling the utmost caution and prudence in use of military force." And the *Times* gave the information necessary to understand why Weinberger did it: the key military leaders, from the chairman of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff on down, were similarly inclined.

If there is a weakness to the *Times* story, it is a failure to look deeply into the nature of the policy itself. Our Gulf policy is internally incoherent, for in the name of fighting Iran, we have adopted a policy (guaranteeing the safe shipment of oil in the Gulf) that benefits the Iranians. The *Post* made that point quite clearly. But interestingly, the very weakness of the *Times* account points up the great difference between it and the *Post* once again: the *Times* basically wants its readers to have enough information to form an educated opinion; the *Post* aims to shape the opinion from the very outset, and doesn't care so much about providing the information.

Let's look at another story. On September 9, both papers ran a front-page story on the trip by an American congressional delegation to Krasnoyarsk in the Soviet Union, where a controversial radar base has been built. American intelligence experts had identified Krasnoyarsk as a violation of the ABM treaty, since it was aimed in a direction to detect incoming ballistic missiles. The *Post* headline: "Soviet Radar Not a Missile Defense, Guests Say." The *Times*: "Soviet Radar on Display." The *Post* lead:

Three Democratic members of Congress, returning from an unprecedented visit to a controversial Soviet radar facility, yesterday challenged claims by some Reagan administration officials that the facility is designed—in violation of the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty—to help defend against a ballistic missile attack.

Reps. Thomas J. Downey, Jim Moody, and Bob Carr . . . said at a news conference here [the story has no dateline!] that the radar appeared to be designed only to warn of a ballistic missile attack [I know it's incoherent, but that's what it says!].

The *Times*:

Although possibly providing new ammunition for those who charge it with treaty violations, the Soviet Union has taken the surprising step of opening a disputed top-



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secret radar installation to Western inspection to show its willingness for an East-West accord at a critical time in arms control . . .

The fact of the matter is that the visit confirmed what had been known for some time: the radar base is in violation of the treaty. And the *Post* editorialists, evidently concerned about the incredibly misleading headline and lead of the story, laid it out two days later:

The Kremlin is in violation. Rep. Tom Downey (and his congressional colleagues) and House Armed Services staffer Anthony Battista confirm that the facility, once completed, is meant to serve one or another phase of missile defense.

And the *Post* editorialists went on to make an important point:

. . . it makes glasnost not the servant of treaty compliance but a substitute for treaty compliance. Krasnoyarsk is no less a violation for being acknowledged, finally, by Moscow. What presents itself here is not something that needs to be resolved by the two parties but something that needs to be

ended by one party. The radar should be dismantled.

But to return to my original question about the life cycle of a newspaper: it's a bad sign for the health of the publication when a front-page news story has to be corrected on the editorial page. It should have been corrected on the front page, where the original disinformation appeared in the first place. Schizophrenia, *Post*-style, is a sign of illness, not evidence of "healthy" internal debate.

The Toshiba Case . . . Kept from Your Eyes

In August, the Japanese magazine *Bungei Shunju* carried an article by a new contributor, Mr. Hitori Kumagai, entitled "These Are the Methods for Illegal Trade With the Soviet Union. Confessions of a Principal in Toshiba Machine Case. COCOM is Powerless in Face of Japanese Trading Firm's Methods. Exclusive Contribution by Professional Smuggler."

How do we know about this (not

many of us are regular readers of *Bungei Shunju*, after all)? Thanks to Senator Jesse Helms, who thoughtfully had an English translation placed in the *Congressional Record*, along with two American articles on the Toshiba affair, one from the *Wall Street Journal*, the other from the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Mr. Kumagai was a Japanese trade representative in Moscow, and he explains the inner workings of the horrendous sale of equipment by Toshiba and Kongsberg (of Norway) that enabled the Soviets to manufacture submarine propellers that are far quieter than anything they could have achieved on their own. Kumagai makes it quite clear that the deal was designed and carried out by the KGB:

It is a fact well known by all the resident staff members in Moscow that KGB members are taking part in foreign trade as members of the Soviet Trade Corporation. They do not wear their KGB ID cards on their breast, but if one watches their words and actions carefully, they can easily be detected by persons who have been working for many years in Moscow. This is because the objects toward which they show interest are completely removed from those of ordinary business.

Many of the Soviet citizens involved in this deal were KGB officials, and they are named by Kumagai. He then explains the techniques by which illegal shipments go from Japan to the USSR, and deals with some other militarily vital equipment that routinely passes from Japan to the Kremlin, ranging from air conditioners that are needed in Soviet tanks (and that the Soviets themselves cannot manufacture) to anti-rust paper (needed to store weapons), and even refrigerated coffins (to ship bodies back from Afghanistan).

Curiously, the two American stories, although quite long and detailed, do not mention either the KGB or the fact that many ostensibly innocent Western products are desperately needed by the Kremlin for military purposes.

So if you want to know what really happened, who did it, and why, you will have to read the *Congressional Record*. Once again, we cannot get the full story from the American press.

Greeks Bearing Tricks

From time to time I have referred to the fascinating story of *Ethnos*, an Athens newspaper that faithfully presents the Soviet view of the world to Greek readers, and that, according to a well-known Greek journalist named Paul Anastasi (who writes for the *New York Times* and the *London Telegraph*) and others (including the *Economist Foreign Report*) is funded and guided directly by the KGB. *Ethnos* brought suit against the *Economist* earlier this year, failed to convince a British jury

of its independence of the Soviet Union's doctrines, and settled out of court. Since then, judging by my firsthand experience with the Greek press, I'd say things have gone from the ridiculous to the hallucinatory.

In a series of articles—well over a dozen by now—beginning late last year and running through the autumn, I have been accused of having spent several months in Greece (a country in which I have never set foot), taken control of the American Embassy in Athens, given orders to the CIA station chief there, launched a massive disinformation campaign against the Papandreu government, organized a tourism boycott against Greece, organized the assassination of a leading trade union figure, and attempted the assassination of Papandreu himself. The three newspapers that have taken the lead in this campaign are *Pondiki* (which, I am told, is the Greek equivalent of the French *Canard Enchaîné*), something which is misnamed *Demokratikos Logos*, and, of course, *Ethnos*. The Greek government said it had no information to support any of these "charges," and even the Department of State, normally a paradigm of cowardice in such cases, issued a vehement denial and accused the Greek press of complete indifference to the truth. To no avail; the articles continue.

It seems to me there are two points of interest: first, the degree to which a number of publications in Greece lend themselves to a disinformation campaign based entirely on fantasy. The general rule of disinformation is that there is supposed to be at least some kernel of truth at the heart of the cloud of deception; in this case we have only lies. The second point is that, although many American newspapers have stringers in Greece, no one has seen fit to report this seizure of journalistic madness. Yet an account of this campaign would greatly help American readers understand the political atmosphere in Greece, and the extent to which pro-Soviet, anti-American publications, totally out of touch with reality, influence the national debate. Two years ago, in a chapter written for a Hoover Institution volume on disinformation, I said that the "Greek case exposes the KGB at its most arrogant and aggressive, generally not even bothering to carefully hide its own direct involvement in the internal affairs of Greece." I was referring to the *Ethnos* case, where the role of the KGB was evident. I don't know where the other publications got the idea for the stories—in tandem with *Ethnos*'s own accounts. What is clear is the degree to which total irresponsibility characterizes much of Greek journalism, and, alas, political discourse in that country. □

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EMINENTOES



THE DU PONT REVOLUTION

by Gordon Jackson

If ideas are the stuff of political revolutions, then which of the Republican presidential candidates is best equipped to rekindle the Reagan Revolution? Pete du Pont hasn't any doubt that he's the one.

He is utterly promiscuous with ideas. Name the problem, and he's got a program to remedy it. And he is not especially concerned to match his prescriptions with receptive forums. He travels regularly to Iowa to tell farmers they should be weaned off of subsidies. He informs the Ripon Society that they aren't in the mainstream of anything. He announces to a gathering of the Conservative Political Action Conference that South African sanctions are a good idea that's working just fine. Such conspicuous confrontation may be nothing more than tactical maneuvering, reminiscent of John Anderson courageously advocating gun control before the National Rifle Association while television cameras broadcast the show to millions, but it is also obvious that du Pont genuinely enjoys the interplay of competing viewpoints.

He sees himself running from roughly the same place as Jack Kemp—the man he considers the next-best bet to hold the White House for Republicans. Du Pont would have himself cast as a candidate of substance, a supply-sider, and a populist conservative trying to marshal a constituency against established interests. Like Kemp, he wants to solidify a base of Reaganite conservatives before conquering the rest of the land.

Since du Pont is something of a road-to-Damascus case, having been the quintessential Rockefeller Republican as a congressman in the early to mid-seventies, movement conservatives, who regard ideas as their province, naturally view him with some suspicion. Few of them are entirely certain that this pin-striped patrician is really a grunt in the Reagan Revolution. But du Pont is taking his case directly to

them with an extensive list of issues and clear-cut positions.

He is especially reassuring to Reaganites on economic matters. There are only two candidates in Christendom who can be counted on to defend the Reagan tax revolution from the inside-the-Beltway coalition of Keynesianism and Stockmanomics—Kemp and du Pont.

Kemp, of course, is the genuine article, the “guru of supply-side economics,” as du Pont calls him. But a President du Pont might be as formidable on these issues. He enjoyed phenomenal success as a supply-side governor of Delaware, cutting the income tax 42 percent and turning the state's economic fortunes completely around. And unlike Kemp, Gov. du Pont was diligent in pursuing another mandate of Reaganomics—cutting government spending. He browbeat the Delaware legislature into imposing upon itself a balanced-budget amendment and a super-majority rule requiring a three-fifths vote to raise taxes, both measures he would support at the federal level. Du Pont did have the good fortune to inherit a state on hard times that was ready for major changes, but his eight-

year tenure as governor is still the closest thing going to a demonstration of textbook Reaganomics.

What's interesting about du Pont's perspective, lending credence to his characterization of himself as a populist, is that he seems to belong to the strain of supply-siders who prefer cutting individual marginal rates to helping established businesses lower the tax costs of capital formation. As scion of one of the nation's most firmly entrenched business families, he might be forgiven an especially keen sensitivity to the needs of big business, but he doesn't hesitate to say that the trade-off in the 1986 tax reform bill of business breaks for lower individual rates is good economics.

The 1987 model du Pont is a down-the-line Reaganite on foreign policy issues as well. He speaks convincingly of national security as government's first priority, regards the Reagan Doctrine as a necessary response to Soviet aggression, and favors early deployment of SDI. When asked how President du Pont would respond to Sam Nunn's attempt to hold SDI hos-

tage to recondite interpretations of the fifteen-year-old ABM treaty, du Pont answered: “I'd ask him to come to the Oval Office, and I'd say, ‘Sam, you and I both know that the day we turn the country over to the lawyers is the day it's going down the tubes.’” The comment reflects the combination of confrontational candor and easy affability that by all accounts characterized du Pont's successful dealings with the Delaware legislature.

In foreign policy, though, he confronts some justifiable skepticism. His record in Congress can only be characterized as dovish, considering such votes as: the War Powers Act—for; aid to Vietnam and Cambodia late in the war—against; aid to UNITA—against; prohibition of travel by Americans to nations with which we are at war (aimed at the Jane Fondas and Ramsey Clarks)—against.

It is difficult to gauge the sincerity of du Pont's conversion, but on the evidence of these and several similar votes, it has indeed been a conversion and one of some magnitude. Du Pont doesn't defend his voting record, especially his failure to support Jonas Savimbi's UNITA. He says simply: “Fifteen years ago I cast votes I wouldn't cast today. We all get wiser as we get older.”

Many conservatives don't seem terribly skeptical of du Pont's move rightward, but all are reserving some doubts, most especially on social issues. It's hard to say how much a President du Pont would do to further the Reagan goal of arresting moral decline by articulating a core set of values. After all, du Pont comes from a social milieu in which moral values, aside from a dash of rugged individualism, are rather regarded as opiate for the masses. He was not, to say the least, reared in the revival tent, and trying to make common cause with the sort of populist social conservatives that make up a large part of the Reagan constituency has required the suppression of his natural instincts.

It's not so much that du Pont is a blueblood—just more comfortable



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