

Department of Disinformation

Sofia's Choice

"Police are convinced, according to government sources, that Mr. Agca acted alone."

—*New York Times*,
May 15, 1981

"I am deeply upset by the criminal attack carried out against you. I wish you a rapid and complete recovery."

—Leonid Brezhnev's message of condolence,
Pravda,
May 15, 1981

"At the root of this terrorist attempt against the Pope is a turbulent Islamic society, pregnant with nasty surprises."

—columnist Joseph Kraft,
May 19, 1981

"Trail of Mehmet Ali Agca: 6 years of Neo-Fascist Ties"

—*New York Times* headline,
May 25, 1981

"There can be no serious suggestion that the deed was motivated from Moscow or the man trained by Moscow or its agents."

—*Christian Science Monitor*,
June 2, 1981

Judge Ilario Martella, who was presiding over the Italian government's investigation of the assassination, "asked to be relieved of his job."

—*Le Monde*,
December 26, 1982

"The Italian legal authorities now admit there is no decisive proof involving Sergei Antonov . . . and his release is believed imminent."

—London *Sunday Times*,
April 24, 1983

On May 8, 1984, the Italian State Prosecutor filed in court a 78-page document asking for the indictment and trial of three Bulgarians, including Sergei Antonov, and six Turks for conspiring to assassinate Pope John Paul II on May 13, 1981. The report is based on over 25,000 pages of documentation gathered by Judge Martella, who did not leave his post. It concludes that the Bulgarian secret services recruited the man who shot the Pope in a plot to weaken the Solidarity movement in Poland. The report declines to mention Soviet intelligence by name, but, referring to the turmoil in Poland, says that "some political figure of great power took note of this most grave situation and, mindful of the vital needs of the Eastern bloc, decided it was necessary to kill Pope Wojtyla."

John Carson

Railpolitik

"President Reagan . . . believes the wild and woolly West was settled without any food stamps, without Social Security or a federal government. . . . Of course, President Reagan's history is wrong. . . . It was the federal government that opened the West and settled the frontier with the Land Ordinance in 1785 . . . that laid out the transcontinental railroad; that changed the Midwest desert into the breadbasket of the world with water and reclamation projects."

—Senator Ernest Hollings,
Washington Post, July 8, 1984

It is Senator Hollings's history—like his geography and political science—that is wrong, or misleading, or just plain mixed up.

Actually, federal government

land laws before the Civil War were designed to raise revenues rather than to settle the frontier. The Land Ordinance of 1785 set a relatively high price of one dollar an acre for land, with a minimum purchase of 640 acres. This hindered rather than helped settlers.

Western discontent with revenue-enhancing policies eventually impelled a Republican-dominated Congress to adopt the Homestead Act in 1862. The Homestead Act was much closer to the laissez-faire principles Senator Hollings accuses President Reagan of, since it essentially provided free land to settlers.

The Civil War Congresses also began subsidizing "transcontinental" railroads (railroads that originated west of the Mississippi River and ran to the Pacific Ocean) with grants of unsettled lands along their projected right-of-way, cash, or both. Ultimately, about 130 million acres of such land served as the tangible security the railroads used to raise private investment capital both in this country and abroad.

The land grants helped build the transcontinental railroads faster than would otherwise have been the case, and thus helped settle the West. But the political "sleaze factor" accompanying this episode was the worst the country had ever seen, and it eventually forced Congress out of the land-grant business in 1871. And during the depression of the 1890s, all the transcontinental land-grant railroads wound up in bankruptcy courts. The only transcontinental railroad that remained solvent was the Great Northern, which was also the only one built in the 19th century without a land grant.

The federal government's reclamation projects did not make the "Midwest desert" into the world's

breadbasket. The area along the Mississippi that became the nation's granary was not dry, and the semiarid and arid states of the Great Plains, and the Pacific Coast states, were mostly settled before Theodore Roosevelt committed the federal government in 1902 to huge irrigation and reclamation projects. The acreage under federally sponsored irrigation or reclamation projects has never been more than a minuscule fraction of American farmland, and Congress has had to bail them out of financial difficulty again and again.

Howard Dickman

Star Dreck

"[The Soviets] have a rudimentary [anti-satellite weapon]. The first version worked, by any definition, only about 50 percent of the time, and the new, improved version works about zero percent of the time."

—Astronomer Carl Sagan in *Common Cause* magazine, May/June 1984

What Mr. Sagan calls "rudimentary" is the Soviet capacity to launch a three-ton satellite, to maneuver that satellite to within a few thousand feet of another satellite traveling at seven miles a second, and to destroy the target satellite.

Mr. Sagan's numbers are also lower even than those of other critics of American anti-satellite weapons development, such as Richard Garwin. In the June 1984 issue of *Scientific American*, Mr. Garwin and two coauthors wrote that the radar-guided "first version" of the Soviet anti-satellite weapon destroyed 70 percent of its targets when allowed two orbits to overtake them. Its success rate for one-orbit sorties was 50 percent, and its overall kill rate was 64 percent.

This original version has "killed" targets at altitudes of up to 980 miles, and the U.S. Department of Defense credits it with almost double that capability. "In a week or more," writes Mr. Garwin, the Soviets may be able to knock down our photo-reconnaissance, ocean

surveillance, and meteorology satellites, and a good share of our navigation and electronic intelligence satellites as well.

Since 1976 the Soviets have tried a "new, improved" infrared guidance system for their laser weapon, but the new homing device has apparently failed in all of its six tests to date. Security concerning this new system is very tight—an Air Force spokesman refused even to discuss it. But even were the Soviets' new version the total loss Mr. Sagan believes it to be, its failure does not diminish the threat to our satellites posed by its predecessor and by other Soviet weapons.

Michael S. Warner

Loose Connection

"When public issues are addressed [at the Republican convention], it is in a language of suggestion and abandon which shows no concern for connecting with the realities of the world. Nobody felt up to challenging Jeane Kirkpatrick's remarkable version of how the Russians had nearly taken over until the Reagan administration bravely dammed the tide. Where?"

—Flora Lewis,
New York Times,
August 24, 1984

Perhaps if Miss Lewis had been paying attention to Ambassador Kirkpatrick's speech, she would know where the Soviets had been taking over. Mrs. Kirkpatrick was quite explicit:

"From the fall of Saigon in 1975 until January 1981, Soviet influence expanded dramatically into Laos, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Yemen, Libya, Syria, Aden, Congo, Madagascar, Seychelles, Nicaragua, and Grenada."

This tide has indeed been stopped. Since 1981, no country has gone Communist. Grenada has been saved from Communism, and Mozambique may be next.

Who is failing to connect "with the realities of the world"?

East of Eden

"We discovered vital religious communities wherever we went, from Tallinn to Tashkent."

So commented John Lindner, program director of the American-Soviet Church Relations Office of the National Council of Churches. Mr. Lindner was one of the 266 American church leaders who toured the Soviet Union earlier this year and proclaimed it a land of religious liberty.

To reach their conclusion, the tour members had to ignore, for starters, some direct evidence. While the tour members were at services at the Moscow Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists, two Russian demonstrators were ejected for displaying banners reading, "This is a persecuted church." But the religious leaders' ignorance unaccountably extends even to the following:

The Soviet Constitution, though guaranteeing religious freedom, explicitly forbids children under 18 from receiving religious education or participating in religious activities. As evidence, in a recent Soviet pamphlet, Edward Filimonov, the deputy director of the Institute of Scientific Atheism, attacked the Baptist church for violating Soviet law by allowing "adolescents of 14 to 16 to be baptized."

About 200,000 Soviet Pentecostals are considered illegal for refusing to register with the official Evangelical Christian church, and most of the active members of their unofficial church councils are in prison camps. Some 30,000 Pentecostals and Baptists have applied for exit visas, being unable to practice their religion in the Soviet Union.

Similarly, 40,000 Jews are awaiting permission to emigrate. According to the Research Center for Religion and Human Rights in Closed Societies, the Soviet government's propaganda is so anti-Semitic that it "brings back memories of the Nazi anti-Semitic publication *Der Stuermer*."

Ever since gobbling up Lithuania in 1940, the Soviet Union has been trying to suppress the Catholic

church there. One of the most recent victims is Father Sigitas Tamkevicius, who was sentenced in December 1983 to six years in a strict-regime prison camp and four years of exile. His crime: organizing the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights, giving children religious instruction, and holding Christmas celebrations for children.

In a report on the Russian Orthodox church for the Central Committee of the Communist Party, V. Furov, chairman of the Soviet Council on Religious Affairs, writes that the number of clergy "who study in theological schools cannot compensate in any way for the natural attrition of priests." The council controls the numbers, explains Mr. Furov, by preventing "fanatics" and "extremists" from "being admitted to theological schools."

A more accurate observation by the tour leaders would have been that some religious communities in the Soviet Union have remained "vital" despite all the efforts by Soviet authorities to suppress them.

Adam Wolfson

Red Zinger

"A president who felt ties of brotherhood with the peoples with whom we coexist on the planet might well assert a higher national priority than the bizarre holy war against Communists in which non-Communist Nicaragua shows up as an enemy and Communist China an ally."

—Richard J. Barnet,
Los Angeles Times,
July 5, 1984

Mr. Barnet's designation of Nicaragua as non-Communist might come as a surprise to Defense Minister Humberto Ortega, who proclaims to his troops that "Marxism-Leninism is the scientific doctrine that guides our revolution." It might perplex his brother, Daniel Ortega Saavedra, the Sandinista junta coordinator, who tells crowds that neither "bullets nor ballots" can reverse "revolutionary

power" in Nicaragua. And it might amuse philatelists who have been admiring the Sandinistas' lovely postage stamps honoring the People's Republic of Bulgaria, hardly a traditional concern of the Nicaraguan people.

The reference to China as an ally might similarly puzzle Deng Xiaoping and his Peking comrades, who have made a special point of keeping their distance from both the Soviet Union *and* the United States. Currently, the United States and China do enjoy cordial diplomatic relations. Trade amounts to about \$4 billion per year, one quarter of the American trade with Taiwan. China also provides U.S. intelligence with listening sites in Sinkiang to monitor the Soviet military. And to the consternation of American conservatives, the United States is selling Peking advanced military equipment financed by taxpayer-subsidized credit. But by no stretch of the imagination does either the United States or China call the other an ally.

There is nothing "bizarre" about Ronald Reagan's making distinctions between Nicaragua and China. Communism in any country is abhorrent to everyone who believes in the American values of democracy and individual liberty. But American presidents must be doubly vigilant against Communist countries allied with Soviet military might and committed to overthrowing the governments of neighboring countries. U.S. relations with Peking improved after the Chinese broke with the Soviets and reduced their support of guerrillas in Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Nicaragua, by contrast, is a Soviet "base," in the words of Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, then chief of the Soviet general staff. The Sandinista junta is dedicated to "a revolution without frontiers" in Central America. If Nicaragua were to keep out the Cubans and Soviets and stop threatening its neighbors—for example, if it were to cut back its 100,000-man military and close its command-and-control center for Salvadoran guerrillas—there

would be no reason why it could not enjoy peaceful coexistence with all countries in this hemisphere.

Adam Meyerson

Reporter's Miscarriage

"MEXICO CITY, Aug. 8—The United States said at an international population conference here today that the development of free-market economies was 'the natural mechanism for slowing population growth.'"

—*New York Times*,
August 9, 1984

This was the lead paragraph of a report by Richard J. Meislin on a speech by James L. Buckley, chief of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations International Conference on Population. However, it seems that Mr. Meislin must have read a different speech from the one Mr. Buckley delivered. Here is the pertinent section of Mr. Buckley's address:

"Population growth is, of itself, neither good nor bad. It becomes an asset or a problem in conjunction with other factors, such as economic policy, social constraints, and the ability to put additional men and women to useful work. People, after all, are producers as well as consumers.

"Hong Kong and South Korea are cases in point. They have few natural resources, and over the past 20 years they have experienced major increases in population, yet few nations have experienced such rapid economic growth. We believe it no coincidence that each of these societies placed its reliance on the creativity of private individuals working within a free economy.

"Some developing nations chose a different path, that of a tightly controlled, centrally planned economy. In such cases, the concentration of economic decision-making in the hands of planners and public officials tends to inhibit individual initiative, and sometimes crippled the ability of men and women to work towards a better future. In

many cases, agriculture was devastated by government price controls that wiped out the rewards for labor. Job creation in infant industries was hampered by confiscatory taxes. Personal industry and thrift were penalized. Under such circumstances, population growth became a threat.

"One of the consequences of lagging development was the disruption of the natural mechanism for slowing population growth. The world's developed nations have reached a population equilibrium without compulsion. The controlling factor has been the adjustment, by individual families, of reproductive behavior to economic opportunity and aspiration. Historically, as opportunities and the standard of living rise, the birth rate falls. Fortunately, a broad international consensus has emerged since Bucharest that economic development and population policies are mutually reinforcing."

Missing the Marx

"The FMLN of El Salvador is a people's army comprised of campesinos, workers, students, teachers, and professionals. The success of the FMLN can only be explained by one thing: the massive and continued support of the population."

—From a flyer advertising a rally at the White House organized by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES)

This statement is patently false. The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), the umbrella coalition of guerrilla groups in El Salvador, is no mass movement. It consists of 9,000 highly trained and well-armed fighters. It has been having such difficulty attracting recruits among the Salvadoran people that it has resorted to kidnappings and conscription. As reported by the *New York Times*

on July 5, 1984, senior guerrilla leaders admit that they are forcibly recruiting Salvadoran villagers.

Despite the guerrillas' threat to kill voters in 1982, and despite their mining of roads during the 1984 elections, voter turnout in El Salvador's nascent democracy has been extraordinary (76 percent of eligible voters in the balloting this March). The high voter turnout is a clear repudiation by the majority of the Salvadoran people of the Marxists' tactics and goals.

The CISPES statement is also disingenuous. It fails to mention that the FMLN is a Marxist-Leninist organization allied with the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Nicaragua, and dedicated to the international advance of Communist totalitarianism. The guerrilla movement was initially divided, until Fidel Castro organized the five factions under the banner of the FMLN in 1979. The FMLN's most powerful leader, 33-year-old Joaquin Villalobos, is an avowed Marxist who achieved power through his skill in terrorism, specializing in kidnapping Salvadorans for ransom. The CISPES newsletter views these actions as "the new El Salvador being patiently and lovingly constructed in the zones of popular control."

The statement put forth in the flyer is typical of CISPES's propaganda. The group is one of the principal organizers of this fall's demonstrations against U.S. involvement in Central America. Passing the plate at dances, raffles, and other events across the country, often on campuses, CISPES raises thousands of dollars for the Salvadoran guerrillas—indeed it boasts of having sent them \$150,000 from January to May 1983—ostensibly for humanitarian purposes, such as medical aid. But the undocumented assertion is hardly credible given CISPES's open support of the FMLN, which it portrays as a revolutionary popular movement opposing a brutal regime. The truth—which plays no part in CISPES literature or rallies—is that the FMLN is a military agent of the Soviet

Union, one of the most brutal regimes in world history.

John Carson

Press Bombs

An article by Derek Wood in the July 14 *Jane's Defense Weekly* revealed to the world that explosions in mid-May in the storage facilities at the Soviet Northern Fleet base in Severomorsk caused enough damage so that the Northern Fleet would "not be a viable force for the next six months."

This report received wide coverage in the U.S. press, including the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. A more sober analysis in the August 18 *JDW* by Captain John Moore dispelled Mr. Wood's implication that the Northern Fleet had "become non-operational," but this report did not receive notable coverage in the U.S. press.

Although the blast destroyed stockpiled anti-aircraft and anti-ship missiles, it did not disable the Soviet navy. A simple review of Soviet naval strategy shows why it did not.

In the early 1950s, the army-dominated Soviet military leadership directed the navy to be prepared to fight U.S. aircraft carrier groups with nuclear cruise missiles launched by bombers, submarines, and cruisers, instead of taking the more expensive route of building its own aircraft carriers. This decision led to current Soviet naval tactics that stress readiness to win "the battle for the first salvo," in the words of Soviet Admiral Sergei Gorshkov. The Soviets expect future naval battles to be over quickly because they plan on first-strike cruise missile saturation of Allied naval forces. For this strategy, the crucial weapons are those immediately available on the aircraft, submarines, and ships. These were not involved in the May explosions. Thus, even after the damage in Severomorsk, the Soviet Northern Fleet was a viable force for naval warfare as the Soviets envision it.

Richard D. Fisher, Jr.

POISONED IVY

by Benjamin Hart

Introduction by William F. Buckley, Jr.



A razor-sharp, acidly witty portrayal of college life in America today, by the founder of *The Dartmouth Review*, the most widely imitated dissident student newspaper in the United States today.

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DEAR MISS DEMEANOR

Dear Miss Demeanor:

My boyfriend insists that it is “bad form” and unsophisticated to be a strong anti-Communist. He says that really smart people consider it vulgar to apply one’s own standards to other countries and regimes, and that the mark of a cultured person is the ability to recognize that all values and what we call “truth” are relative. So, he maintains, it is provincial and naive to condemn such things as the Gulag, the denial of what Westerners consider “basic human rights,” and the invasion of Afghanistan; one should instead try to understand them from a Soviet perspective and in terms of Russian history.

This worries me because, despite myself, I cannot help feeling that right is right and wrong is wrong. But as my boyfriend has a Harvard Ph.D. while I am only a graduate of Marymount College, I feel that he knows best. Besides, he says that he feels embarrassed about taking me to smart parties as long as there is a likelihood that I might interrupt a discussion about, say, Soviet paranoia or conservative versus liberal factions in the Politburo with tasteless and irrelevant remarks about “good” and “evil.”

As this threatens my social life and the viability of our relationship, I am very worried. What should I do?

Uncultured

Dear Uncultured:

You have every right to be worried. You are at odds not merely with your boyfriend but with what one refers to as the “Zeitgeist” or “the spirit of the age”—as that spirit is interpreted by accepted thinkers and opinion leaders such as Dan Rather and Anthony Lewis.

In terms of the future of your relationship with a young man who seems clearly destined to succeed, as well as your own upward mobility in what is sometimes termed the

lumpen-intelligentsia, you should think seriously about the wisdom of persevering.

But if your background and education make it impossible for you to change, Miss Demeanor has a few suggestions which should help. First, from long experience she believes very firmly that if you cannot conform, you should not apologize or whine, but should take the offensive. Try putting the following questions both to your boyfriend and, if you have the chance, to Messrs. Rather and Lewis:

(1) What is the point of having values and standards if you do not apply them?

(2) Why should you apply other people’s standards rather than your own when the judgments you are making are, after all, yours?

(3) If everything is relative, what is the status of the absolute statement that all things are relative? Is it not, so to speak, unspeakable?

(4) Do the rules of relativity and historical understanding apply to South Africa, Israel, and right-wing South American dictators, or are they restricted to the discussion of leftist regimes?

Of course, putting these questions is unlikely to lead to a happier social life, but it may lead to a more interesting time. Contempt will quickly change to genuine hatred, which is a kind of respect, and much to be preferred.

Dear Miss Demeanor:

I was recently severely embarrassed at a dinner table discussion when my host (who is a liberal professor of political science and thus spoke with some authority) rebuked me for defending U.S. alliances with and support for right-wing governments in Latin America. I admit that I spoke from instinct and when attacked had no effective reply. What is the correct form of response in a case like this?

Defensive

Dear Defensive:

First of all, anyone who accepts dinner invitations from liberal professors should not be dismayed by the inevitable consequences, but prepared to respond to them.

As with all good rules of etiquette, the correct response is simple. First you should point out that there is a fundamental distinction between approving of a regime and approving of an alliance with a regime. The proper test for the former is the character of the regime in question, as measured against your values. The proper test for the latter is quite different: whether the alliance (or support) serves the interests of your country.

There is nothing inconsistent about disapproving of a regime while recognizing that sometimes it is in one’s interest to enter into an alliance with it (for example, to defend against an even more pernicious regime).

Miss Demeanor considers that in a situation like this an *ad hominem* argument is both appropriate and illuminating.

If your liberal professor is old enough, ask him if he is on record as having opposed the alliance with Stalinist Russia in World War II—or whether he approved of it as necessary to defend U.S. interests against Hitler’s Germany. As no liberals opposed that alliance, he will then have to concede your general point, or admit that at the time he did not realize that Stalinist Russia was a bloody tyranny, or attempt to distinguish between the Soviet alliance and contemporary ones with Latin American states. (Actually there *are* some valid distinctions, but they all work against his position.) In any case he will be busy for the next half-hour defending himself rather than attacking you. And he will, if he is not a complete fool (which he might be), treat you with greater respect in the future. 