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# There's a Trojan horse built every minute, parading lies as truth

By Elizabeth Pond  
Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

**D**ISINFORMATION has been around ever since the serpent sold Eve on that fateful apple.

It has led, say history and legend, to the conquering of a city (Troy, via the Trojan horse); the defaming of Richard III as a murderer (by Sir Thomas More, no less, and then by Shakespeare); the toppling of a government (Britain's Ramsay MacDonald in 1924); and, more positively, the success of the Allied invasion of Normandy in 1944.

It has led as well to miscellaneous pogroms, wars, rejection of diplomats, and apathy in the face of danger.

Most recently it has inspired mutual accusations of "disinformation" by right and left in the United States on every conceivable issue. And it is currently being dramatized in the trial in Norway of Arne Treholt, charged as a Soviet spy and agent of influence.

Disinformation, then, is not just historical. It is present today as a systematized function of the KGB, the Soviet secret police, as well as Soviet-bloc secret services. It is present whenever governments exercise "news management" that suppresses unpleasant facts. It is present when public relations imagemaking goes beyond putting the best face on a political candidate to present a totally artificial picture of that candidate — or to smear a rival.

Just what is disinformation?

Simply put, it is the deliberate planting of false

or misleading political information to influence either public or elite opinion. It is not just *misinformation*, or mistaken information. It is deliberately false.

It is not overt propaganda, in which the true speaker is identified, however outrageous his viewpoint. It is *planted* information, with the source secret or disguised.

It could be especially distorting in our much-vaunted Information Age, dependent as it is on all those facts stored in the computers.

Disinformation is both more and less pervasive than the man in the street wants to acknowledge today. On the one hand, the democrat who trusts in the free market of ideas instinctively shrinks from thinking he can be manipulated by disinformation he doesn't detect. On the other hand, the patriot who is vexed by intractable world prob-

lems instinctively would like to blame all his country's troubles on this easy single-cause theory of conspiracy.

The first point to be made about disinformation, then, is that the phenomenon does exist, and that it can be used to devastating effect, especially in character assassination of targeted persons.

The second point is that disinformation is no magic key. It doesn't begin to explain the complexities of Soviet-American conflict, say, or prescribe what foreign policies one should follow.

The third point is that disinformation is ultimately vulnerable to truth, since exposure can only reveal its divergence from reality. This axiom might seem banal, were it not for the frequent reflex of governments to fight disinformation not

with truth, but with counterdisinformation of their own.

At this point some examples might help clarify how disinformation works.

The classic case in terms of longevity and damage must be the fake "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion." This turn-of-the-century Russian account of a purported Jewish conspiracy to enslave the Christian world was used by Russians to blackmail Jews in World War I. In 1921 the Times of London exposed the Protocols as having been plagiarized from a 19th-century anti-Semitic novel. But that didn't prevent Hitler from picking them up to help his persecution and attempted annihilation of Jews.

Today, 60 years after the Protocols were debunked, they are still sometimes cited as authentic in the Arab world.

Usually, disinformation is less brazen than the Protocols. The more common variety is a partial lie tucked into truthful surroundings to enhance credibility. Or it is a fact falsely attributed. Or it is extreme exaggeration designed to mislead by suppressing all contrary evidence. Or it is a red herring to lure the unwary away from what they should be paying attention to.

Highly effective use was made — apparently — of the partial lie in the 1924 election in Britain. To this day historians are not satisfied that they know the full story about the letter purportedly written by Grigory Zinoviev, Soviet president of the Communist International, to the tiny British Communist Party with instructions to set up cells in the British Army. Aino Kuusinen, widow of longtime Soviet Politburo member Otto Kuusinen,

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wrote many years later that there was such a letter originally but that the public version was a forgery.

What is known is that the letter was printed in the pro-Tory Daily Mail four days before the election — and that it triggered a wave of fear and hysteria among voters that toppled Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. As a result Labour was out of office for the next five years.

The origins of modern disinformation are disputed. Lenin certainly extolled the virtue of the lie. Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels was no slouch at it in Nazi Germany.

**J**AN Nowak of the Polish resistance during World War II believes his organization invented many of today's disinformation techniques as it harassed the German occupiers. Considerable testimony about disinformation from the American Central Intelligence Agency came out in the US in the 1970s. Israel was apparently willing to practice disinformation even on its main ally when it strafed and torpedoed the USS Liberty, an electronic monitoring ship, during the 1967 war, then tried to cover it up through all channels as a case of mistaken identity. By now the general assumption seems to be that any secret service worth its salt will engage in manipulation of public and elite opinion in other countries.

Certainly the Soviets put enough stock in disinformation to institutionalize it in 1959 in Department D of the KGB. And a decade later they upgraded the operation by assigning it to Service A of the First Directorate, responsible for all co-

vert and overt "active measures" for influencing foreign opinion.

On a less grand scale the word "disinformation" has been sufficiently popularized in America in the past five years to serve as an all-purpose epithet. Democrats accuse the Reagan administration of disinformation in waiting until just after election day to discover that the federal deficit is roughly \$30 billion larger than previously thought. Outgoing US Ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick accuses political adversaries of disinformation in presenting her as "some kind of right-wing extremist."

Accuracy in Media, Inc., accuses CBS and NBC of spreading Soviet propaganda. Author Russell Braley, in a book excoriating the New York Times, begins his chapter on Vietnam war reporting with a barbed quote about treason. The Center for National Security Studies sees a potential "serious affront to the democratic process" in a Nicaraguan insurgent's allegation that CIA officials have coached insurgents to misrepresent their policy to the American press and to Congress.

CBS charges that Gen. William C. Westmoreland practiced deception in reporting enemy troop strengths in the Vietnam war. General Westmoreland countercharges that CBS deliberately distorted interviews in the program alleging deception.

So modish has the concept of disinformation become that it is perhaps time to pause for an assessment, at least of its international dimensions.

It may be too late to rehabilitate Richard III — but it's not too late to help ourselves.

## TACTIC: Use a fraction of reality

**"D**ISINFORMATION is most effective in a very narrow context," says Frank Snepp in an interview.

"It's most effective when it pertains to something the press has no access to, or information which is exclusively in the intelligence community: radio intercepts, spy photos."

Mr. Snepp is a disillusioned former CIA agent who honed his expertise in disinformation while briefing reporters in Vietnam. He became a center of controversy in the United States when he published — without CIA clearance — a book about the fall of Saigon.

"You take a fraction of reality and expand on it. It's very seldom totally at odds with the facts," Snepp says of one approach to disinformation.

"We were trying to suggest to Congress in 1974 that more aid was necessary because the Communist threat

was increasing, so we talked about infiltration of Communist forces to the south and led everyone to believe they had been expanded by 60,000. But we neglected to tell them 60,000 had been killed, captured, or dispatched back. It's shaving a piece of reality off."

Snepp continues: "Disinformation in the CIA sense is not false information. That is the grossest kind, and that is the kind you can usually be caught out on. When the CIA does it, it's nothing so gross. It's information which keys off of reality, like docudrama. But that's the CIA definition, which is not to take an untruth, but to take a piece of truth."

Asked for an example from 1973, he describes feeding a story to the Economist magazine "to create the impression that the Communists were trying to build a third Vietnam on the western border of South Vietnam, where they could set up airfields, anti-aircraft, a fortified separate Communist entity."

The object was to convince Congress that the cease-fire would not hold, he says.

"What we did was to take very scattered, questionable intelligence; intelligence that seemed to fit our theory, pieced it together, and made a mosaic, not indicating a lot of countervailing evidence. Though there were plans for a road, for example, there was no evidence that they were really building it; they were just contemplating this. . . . That was disinformation. It wasn't a lie." — E. P.

Continued

## TACTIC: Recycle the lie again and again

**O**N May 13, 1981, Mehmet Ali Agca shot Pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Square in Rome.

In fall 1981 forgeries and other disinformation that bore marks of the KGB handiwork began to appear in West German and Turkish newspapers and were cycled through the Soviet news media and back into the international press. The disinformation had two aims: first, to absolve the Bulgarian secret service from any links with Agca, and second, to implicate the CIA in the shooting.

Some of the recycling relied on the "credulity and predisposition to believe of Western and third-world journalists, writers, and intellectuals," says Paul Henze, a former American National Security Council staffer. Some depended on "the readiness of reporters to accept cash or other favors."

At first, the West dismissed out of hand the idea that Moscow might be behind the attempted assassination. Even the CIA joined in ruling out any probable KGB involvement, despite Soviet dislike of the Polish Pope and his protégé Solidarity trade union. Such action would risk too much world abhorrence should it become known, it was thought. Besides, the job had been unprofessionally bungled, and Agca had a record as a right-wing hit man in his native Turkey.

Two American writers, however, Mr. Henze and Claire Sterling — along with the Italian magistrate investigating the crime — doggedly followed leads that implicated the Bulgarian secret service (and thereby the KGB, given Moscow's close control of its clients' secret services).

In 1982, when Mrs. Sterling published her findings of a Bulgarian connection that had been carefully camouflaged as a far-right connection, the Soviet media attacked her, scoffed at any Bulgarian involvement, and pressed ahead with the CIA charge. Even after the Italians arrested Sergei Antonov and indicted two other Bulgarians (with the prosecutor pointing a finger at the KGB), the Soviet press continued its vehement denials

of Bulgarian complicity — and stayed silent about Agca's earlier visits to Bulgaria, his notably good treatment there, and his training with Palestinian guerrillas. Mr. Antonov was ostensibly an official of the Bulgarian airlines but was reputedly also a secret police officer.

Forgeries of State Department cables, lurid rumors of Agca's sexual exploits, and other disinformation that supported the Soviets' thesis continued to circulate in Europe and formed the basis of reports in the Dublin Sunday Press, the Madrid weekly *El Tiempo*, and Italian and other European newspapers, Henze says. The Dublin articles were expanded into a book and published in New York, he adds.

The indicted Bulgarians have not yet been tried. The case against them rests largely on Agca's confessions — which have been verified in some remarkable details but on other points are inconsistent. The Soviets and Bulgarians argue that the Italian and US intelligence services must have primed Agca in jail — a contention the Italian judge in the case does not credit.

— E. P.

## TACTIC: Hide a forgery

**"**I think the West should be very careful when receiving documents that are not originals. That is the first suspicious signal," says Ladislav Bittman in an interview. He is a specialist who honed his expertise in forgery as deputy chief of the Czechoslovak Disinformation Department before his defection to the West in 1968.

The Soviets and Czechs, he says, "have hundreds of genuine Western documents. Most forgeries today are actually rewritten original American documents. [The forgers take] a document speaking about something totally different, and they use some parts of the document and insert only three or four new paragraphs that are really incriminating.

"It's much easier because the whole format is preserved and looks genuine. The language is very important. American governmental language is very special to bureaucrats."

Besides forgeries "there is a great variety of tactics" in "active measures," Bittman continues. The Soviet phrase "active measures" encompasses the gamut of attempts to influence opinion in foreign countries. It includes both overt and covert propaganda.

"The Soviets have a great advantage over the West (which of course uses the same tactics), a highly centralized system makes it possible to coordinate and orchestrate these measures, to use both the official propaganda channels, agents, organizations; semiofficial channels, agents, organizations; and the secret channels, agents, organizations. In the West the [United States Information Agency], CIA, American press, and hundreds of business organizations involved in international relations," all speaking with different voices, make the US much less effective in influencing other countries.

— E. P.



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Second of a four-part series

**DIS-**  
**INFORMATION**

• • • thrives  
in the  
third world

Continued

# Lack of feisty opposition parties and free press offers fertile ground for lies

By Elizabeth Pond

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

**D**ISINFORMATION is at its most rampant in the third world.

Disinformation anywhere depends on credulity. And credulity tends to be high in developing countries. Politics is often volatile; civic traditions frequently include authoritarian rule, colonialism, hierarchical relationships, and fierce familial or tribal rivalries in once-static societies that have now been wrenched out of their old certainties. In such an atmosphere truth is not at a premium.

Moreover, the institutions that industrial democracies depend on to protect themselves against disinformation — including strong opposition parties, a vigorous pluralist press, and an educated, literate population — are generally weak in the third world. When this situation is aggravated by nationalist hostilities with neighbors and by intervention in regional politics by more distant powers, there is an open invitation to rumor and disinformation.

Allegations of disinformation abound.

A Communist-owned Indian newspaper implicitly links the CIA to the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

"American officials" concede to the New York Times that the US is behind the clandestine anti-Khomeini Free Voice of Iran broadcasts out of Egypt.

A forged document purportedly issued by the US State Department surfaces in Peru, saying that Washington has authorized the sale of nuclear missiles to Chile.

Latin American journalists, at a conference organized by the Nicaraguan Journalists' Union, discuss creating a "front against imperialist disinformation in Central America."

The Bahamian prime minister, caught in a mounting political storm, charges that a US diplomat triggered "a disinformation campaign" to smear his government with allegations that drug traffickers bribed Bahamian officials.

American opponents of US military intervention in Nicaragua and El Salvador accuse the Reagan administration of disinformation in alleging that MIGs were being brought into Nicaragua. American fans of Maj. Roberto d'Aubuisson say he is the victim of disinformation in being linked to the Salvadorean death squads.

Angola alleges that the United States is involved in Israeli and South African nuclear bomb projects.

US Attorney-General William French Smith accuses the KGB, the Soviet secret police, of fabricating "classic examples of Soviet forgery" in sending threatening, racist letters purporting to have been written by the Ku Klux Klan to athletes in 20 Asian and African countries on the eve of the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Egypt stages a sham murder of the target of a Libyan hit squad, then when Libya boasts of the assassination, produces the "victim" alive to make a laughingstock of Cairo's adversary.

"I think disinformation is on the upswing, on many levels," says Paul Henze, a former National Security Council staffer who is now a consultant with the Rand Corporation. "True, some of the more obvious cases have been very unimpressive, but it's cumulative. . . . In Turkey there have been some spectacular examples."

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I think there has been a considerable effect on the educational process in many countries. You find [Soviet forgeries about US scheming and plotting] turning up in books for universities and schools."

In Latin America there are persistent accusations in the Brazilian press that the US is "somehow poisoning Brazilian Indians," says a United States Information Agency official dealing with Soviet-bloc "active measures" and disinformation. He believes that "a lot of activity in Latin America is handled by the [Soviet Union's] Cuban surrogate."

Lucian Heichler, State Department chairman of Washington's interagency working group on "active measures," adds, "It seems to us that the volume of active measures has been on the increase in recent years."

He characterizes the repetition of Soviet claims of a CIA connection to the assassination of Indira Gandhi and of an alleged spy mission of the Korean airliner the Soviets shot down in 1983 as "psychology based on the old adage that where there's smoke, there's fire."

"People tend to think that the more the Soviets are able to recycle and replay [these accusations in the third-world press], the more a sticky residue of credibility attaches in people's minds to the point where they begin to wonder if it's really so."

In particular, disinformation can be devastating in blackballing targeted individuals.

"A friend of mine was hurt by this," states one American diplomat.

"George Griffin was assigned as political counselor to New Delhi [but rejected by the Indian government]. He wanted to go. He is a real India hand. He was in Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

"Patriot and Blitz, the pro-Soviet papers [in India], kept saying he had been doing secret work during the Bangladesh war. Actually they were mad because, on trips to Delhi, he was doing briefing on Afghanistan. This active-measures activity changed the opinion of the government to which we wanted to send him, to the detriment of his career and I think US-Indian relations."

Heichler sums up, "The effectiveness [of disinformation] is, I think, on the way down in some cases. At least I think we have had some telling effect in our last two years, in causing specific active measures to backfire. . . . Even [in the third world] the credibility is beginning to go down."

Third-world newspapers are less likely now than a couple of years ago to rush a sensational anti-American story into print without checking with the US first, he explains.

"One active measure . . . which backfired totally was the Ku Klux Klan [forged letter threatening third-world athletes who were coming to the Los Angeles Olympics]. These were received by any number of Olympic committees in Africa and Asia. Just about every one of them brought them around to our embassies for discussion. No one took them really seriously; no one proceeded to boycott the Olympics."

Dimitri Simes, a Soviet émigré and foreign-policy analyst, is skeptical about how much impact Soviet disinformation actually has in the third world.

"It's usually successful in areas where there is very strong emotional anti-Americanism," he points out, "so I would be interested to know to what extent so-called Soviet successes are Soviet successes and to what extent it's just normal anti-American stuff that appears anywhere."

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**CASE STUDY: BEIRUT** Planting propaganda

## in the Mideast news media

**B**EIRUT in the old days was a "wide open city," according to one knowledgeable Western official who served there. "There were some 30 papers, almost all influenced or financed by one or another international party. It was very easy to find a propaganda outlet and not terribly dangerous. Disinformation was heavy on both sides" — i.e., the Soviets and the West.

"All sides put a lot of throwaway propaganda into the papers that took their line, even though they were identified with [them]."

"One could often spot an item which served Soviet interests in a small pro-communist paper which later turned up in a larger sheet in Europe, India, or Latin America. And they clearly intended that over a period of time there would be a crescendo of replays," especially in the more credible European news media. The hope, says the official, was that eventually reporters and readers would think "OK, this is the fact, the truth." Then it's no longer traceable to this little paper it originally appeared in."

The West undoubtedly did the same.

A more specific procedure might mean challenging

favorable material that one's own side had already inserted into the media to "keep it alive" by controversy. Another might be supplying subtle forgeries, even to opposition papers, just to get a detail into print. The Soviets played such games with Islamic and pro-Western papers.

And how well did these tricks work?

"The down-to-earth answer is that they are not so successful in most cases. But there are times when something gets accepted as fact on the analytical side. . . ."

"The more specific, the more fruitful. An effective ambassador or intelligence operative, for instance, might be hurt by a disinformation effort.

"The broader the objective, the more difficult it is to have a lasting success. . . ."

"There are three situations when disinformation can be useful: 1. A very specifically targeted situation, when the mindset is such that it merely reinforces attitudes. 2. Constant and long-term repetition has an impact. 3. When decisions have to be made about ongoing situations, the balance can be tipped if there is not much information. These are the only

times when it really works."

As an illustration, the Soviets "can mobilize peace groups and convince a given audience of the warlike intentions of the Pershing II, etc." (though that is not disinformation per se). Or, if they want to convince someone of "a specific intention of the US to overthrow a government, they can do it if there is a small enough, unsophisticated enough audience."

The late Indira Gandhi was a "very interesting" example. She was "a lady brought up in an anticolonialist background, very well educated. As she grew more nonaligned, she became more paranoid about Western intelligence agencies. She had observed their activities at first hand for many years. The Soviets played that very well. They know the ingrown, psychological basis. They feed that preconception, even when they know it's not true."

Is there any difference between the West and Moscow in practicing disinformation in the Mideast?

"The means are not all that different. Maybe the Soviets put a little more effort into it. But maybe that's essentially because the basic Western message is so effective in the overt sense." — E. P.



## CASE STUDY: JAKARTA A Communist campaign that backfired

**O**NE of the great coups of the Czech Disinformation Department — or so it seemed at first to Ladislav Bittman — was Special Operation Palmer.

The year was 1964. The Czechs had established a channel for disinformation in an Indonesian ambassador whom they were supplying with girls. He funneled to Jakarta the anti-American documents the Czechs gave him — including material alleging that one William Palmer, director of the Association of American Film Importers in Indonesia, was the CIA's most important agent in the country.

The Czechs "had no direct and persuasive evidence that Palmer was a CIA employee and could only suspect him to be one," wrote Bittman, deputy director of Czech disinformation operations until his defection to the West in 1968, in his book, "The Deception Game." Nonetheless, the Czechs patched together an incriminating dossier on Palmer.

Indonesia, "torn by economic chaos, inflation, internal tension, and hatred for Malaysia, was a ready victim for Communist intelligence activities," mused Bittman in the 1972 book. "It was possible to claim that all past, present, and future difficulties, real or imagined, were the result of American imperialism."

In December, student demonstrators ransacked the US Information Agency libraries in Jakarta and Su-

rabaja. In February 1965 students attacked the residence of the US ambassador. Shortly thereafter the Indonesian women's movement, bowing to its communist branch, demanded the expulsion of Palmer.

In the meantime the Soviets, impressed by the Czech campaign, joined in. General Agayants, head of the Soviet disinformation service, visited Indonesia to supervise the next stage of the operation himself.

In March a mob attacked the American Motion Picture Association in Indonesia. In April rioters broke into Palmer's (unoccupied) villa. In mid-April the Indonesian government ordered the American Peace Corps out of the country.

At this point, according to Bittman, the Czechs and Soviets forged a report from the British ambassador in Jakarta to London about a purported British-American plan to invade Indonesia from neighboring Malaysia. American and British denials were brushed off by the Indonesian government.

"For almost a year, with only the most primitive means and a few agents, the Czechoslovak and Soviet intelligence services influenced Indonesian public opinion and leadership," wrote Bittman. "The reasons were inherent in the extremely favorable objective circumstances. Operation Palmer was initiated at the proper time. It succeeded in riding the crest of a wave of anti-Americanism. It corroborated the exist-

ing views."

Western diplomats may think the Soviets and Czechs were in fact just "riding the crest," rather than strengthening it, in the pro-Chinese, virulently anti-American Communist Party. But Bittman and his fellow operatives considered their campaign "quite successful," he recalled in an interview. "It stirred up a kind of anti-American hysteria in Indonesia."

But then suddenly a violent reversal snatched all the gains away from Moscow, Prague, Peking, and the Indonesian Communist Party. Emboldened by the swell of anti-Americanism, the Indonesian Communists launched an attack on their political opponents with the tacit consent of President Sukarno and killed six generals. The armed forces fought back and won, and some 300,000 suspected Communists and fellow travelers were slaughtered. The Indonesian Communist Party, once the largest per population in any non-Communist country, was driven underground. Sukarno was replaced by the anticommunist General Suharto. Malaysia and Indonesia became friends.

"In August and the beginning September 1965, Operation Palmer was still being hailed as a tour de force by the Czechoslovak and Russian intelligence services," Bittman wrote in summing up the campaign. "By October, no one willingly mentioned it." — E. P.

Continued

## CASE STUDY: VIETNAM Distortion by confusion as well as intention

**A**ND then there's Vietnam. For Americans, Vietnam is perhaps the supreme test of information, misinformation, and news management in the third world in the last generation.

It is in the United States that the feud raged — and still simmers. But the feud has always been about the proper interpretation of a kaleidoscopic third-world country and war in which any reporter with a thesis could always find facts to substantiate that thesis.

The remote American reader or TV viewer had no way of corroborating what journalists said — and when most of the leading news media in the US turned against the Vietnam war, conservatives blamed the media for losing the war. More recently, that controversy has turned into a dispute about “disinformation.”

Was there in fact deliberate disinformation on the part of American journalists covering Vietnam? One-time US press spokesman in Saigon Barry Zorthian says the skeptical American press actually “was more accurate in covering the situation in Vietnam than the official [US] government public reports” in the years

preceding the Communist Tet offensive of 1968.

On the other hand, journalist Peter Braestrup (then of the Washington Post, now of the Wilson Quarterly) indicts the American press for getting the Tet offensive and its aftermath all wrong. He terms the phenomenon a “malfunction” of “a magnitude rare in the annals of American crisis journalism.” Tet was widely reported as a victory for the Communists, Braestrup argues, while the fact was it set the Communists back for several years: Once they made an all-out gamble and failed, they alienated peasants and got pushed back farther than they had been pre-Tet.

But Mr. Braestrup argues that it was more a preoccupation with the shock and “melodrama” in the very streets of Saigon than a guided disinformation that distorted much post-Tet reporting. This preoccupation reinforced an “ethnocentric” or “hometown” bias, Braestrup contends.

“As the fog of war lifted and the Communist tide ebbed [during the years of setback], the managers of the press and especially of TV put the accent on *more* melodrama rather than on trying to update the inevitably melodramatic first impressions,” Braestrup told a 1983 conference. “Disaster, real or impending, was

a ‘story’; recovery was not,” he went on.

Nor was the fact that the Viet Cong in their all-out push for the final offensive had upped the village rice tax and conscription that they had previously kept relatively moderate — and thus alienated villagers.

If this former Vietnam reporter may be allowed a personal note, I think that Messrs. Zorthian and Braestrup are both right — but that there is another level at which Braestrup is wrong. US reporting may have misjudged the aftermath of the Tet offensive, when the National Liberation Front and North Vietnamese got pushed back from populated areas by the South Vietnamese and American pacification program. But the general media conclusion that America could not win in Vietnam and therefore should get out — a conclusion that helped reverse US policy — still seems to me to have been correct.

Vietnam was a land in which it was fiendishly difficult to gain an overall perspective. My own judgment is that governmental and journalistic reporting probably was distorted by deliberate disinformation in individual cases — but that it was distorted much more by sheer confusion, chaos, the “fog of war,” and fixed preconceptions.

— E. P.

28 February 1985

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Third of a four-part series

# The West wakes up to the dangers of disinformation

By Elizabeth Pond

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

**F**IVE years ago the best seller "The Spike" created a sensation. Its thesis — "so explosive it can only be told as fiction," as the blurb had it — was that major American news media were manipulated by Moscow.

"Disinformation" was not yet a buzzword. The authors of "The Spike," Arnaud de Borchgrave and Robert Moss, along with a few other crusaders, were out to make it one.

They succeeded.

Congress opened hearings on disinformation. The State Department set up a section to deal with Soviet disinformation abroad.

Publicity and the State Department's meticulous documentation of forgeries even steered the Netherlands, Portugal, and Denmark to expel some of the most blatant Soviet operatives. A storybook example of the phenomenon is on stage now in a Norwegian court as Arne Treholt — ex-Foreign Ministry spokesman, left-wing Social Democrat, and onetime political star — is being tried as a Soviet spy.

All this fact and fiction about Soviet disinformation in the West has been much more alarming to Westerners than shadowy intrigue in volatile third-world politics.

In the 1980s, then, disinformation in the politically stable industrialized world has become an issue in its own right — but one hard to pin down.

"I'm afraid you won't have much to write about," sympathized a Western intelligence official when asked about it.

He noted there have been only two ranking Soviet-bloc defectors who dealt directly with disinformation in their former secret-service jobs: Stanislav Levchenko of the KGB's Tokyo "residency" before he fled to the United States in 1979, and Ladislav Bittman, deputy chief of the Czechoslovak Disinformation Department before his defection in the fall of 1968. Bittman's information is old; Levchenko was involved in disinformation only "on the periphery," the official observed.

Nonetheless, enough is known by now to venture at least an initial assessment of disinformation in the industrialized world.

First off, there is probably minimal Western disinformation inside the Soviet Union. Western intelligence services see little point in targeting Soviet public opinion (apart from overt radio propaganda), since public opinion has so little impact on Soviet policy. Nor would they normally have any hope of influencing the Soviet political elite. A high-ranking asset like Col. Oleg Penkovsky in the early 1960s is much more valuable as a spy than as a persuader.

Presumably there is more room for Western disinformation in a relatively open Eastern European country like Poland, with its vigorous underground press and large emigration. Even

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of indigenous social-political movements like the now-outlawed Solidarity trade union — the West is better served by reinforcing the Poles' penchant for truth than in circulating lies that could easily be exposed and backfire.

West-West disinformation is practiced, especially in buying placement of articles in the press. Among Western allies any differences over such matters are generally settled amicably, however, and do not raise the same kind of alarms as Soviet-bloc disinformation does.

The major question in probing disinformation in stable industrialized societies, then, is how effective covert Soviet-bloc efforts are in influencing opinion in open Western societies.

According to rough Central Intelligence Agency estimates presented in US congressional hearings in 1980 and 1982, Moscow spends some \$4 billion a year on overt and covert propaganda, with some \$3 billion of this going to Pravda, Tass, and other overt activities and the residual \$1 billion presumably going into covert disinformation. Georgetown University Prof. Roy Godson, coauthor with Richard H. Shultz of the book

"Dezinformatsia" says the Soviets employ 15,000 in "active measures."

"Active measures" — the term came into use in the Soviet Union in the 1950s — include international front organizations, agent-of-influence operations, and forgeries. Front organizations straddle overt and covert measures, Godson and Shultz explain. The International Department of the Soviet Communist Party "coordinates the activities of these organizations," but "the fronts actively attempt to maintain an image of independence."

The flagship of these fronts is the World Peace Council. The longtime president of the WPC is Romesh Chandra, a senior member of the Indian Communist Party, one of the nonruling communist parties most loyal to Moscow. Other WPC executives, the authors write, come primarily from other communist parties, Soviet-backed guerrilla movements, and other Soviet-controlled international fronts.

"Moscow provides the bulk of the funds for WPC activities, although how these arrangements operate is not completely clear," according to "Dezinformatsia."

The World Peace Council has campaigned against NATO; against American "germ warfare" in the Korean war; American, British, and French bases abroad; American involvement in the Vietnam war; the American neutron warhead; and the NATO Euromissiles that began deployment a year ago.

The WPC and other front organizations eagerly join in popular Western peace campaigns. Various Western officials have asserted that such front organizations also generously fund these campaigns (though public proof has been skimpy). Front organizations try to steer these

west while sparing the Soviet Union. And they seek to gain legitimacy for communists by their association with these movements.

**H**OW successful they are is debatable. Bittman detects a "tendency to glorify successes" in disinformation services. Some signs suggest the Soviets think their overt and covert opposition to the neutron warhead in the late 1970s played a key role in killing NATO plans for it.

Probably a more accurate generalization, though, would be that Soviet "active measures" find little resonance when they stray too far from public opinion (as in charges of germ warfare in Korea) — but that, when they join already popular protests, especially in Europe, the communists' strong organizational skills amplify the appeal of these movements.

Agent-of-influence operations are best represented by the one Westerner who has been convicted on this count, Pierre-Charles Pathé. From 1961 to 1979 Pathé served as a paid Soviet agent in France, disseminating generally anti-American and pro-Soviet views in public articles and in a private newsletter.

A more ambitious and convoluted operation with agents of influence has been attributed to the KGB by Soviet defector Anatoliy Golitsyn and ex-CIA head of counterintelligence, James Angleton. In this scenario, the whole Soviet-Chinese split of the past quarter century is a sham — and the Soviets have succeeded in fooling all Western foreign ministries and most academic scholars with their pretense.

In this thesis — presented in detail in Mr. Golitsyn's 1984 book "New Lies for Old" — the Kremlin has fed a number of bogus defectors into the CIA to persuade the US that the split was real. So convinced of Golitsyn's theory were parts of the CIA in the 1970s that one Soviet defector whom Golitsyn deemed an agent of disinformation was kept in solitary confinement for 3½ years in a cell in a building constructed solely to jail him until he confessed.

In the late 1970s, when CIA directors William Colby and Stansfield Turner discovered this treatment of a human being — as well as the paralysis wrought in the CIA by the constant suspicion and search for a presumed Soviet "mole" — they dropped Angleton and severed Golitsyn's links with the agency. As the conduct of the Golitsyn camp then became public knowledge, it added to America's post-Vietnam revulsion toward the CIA. Today the mainstream of academics (and CIA analysts) dismisses Golitsyn's thesis as wild fantasizing.

As for forgeries, these have been used by the Soviets since soon after the 1917 revolution. The most elaborate in recent years was "US Army Field Manual 30-31B," an entire manual that urged American officers to spy on their host countries and in some cases subvert their governments. The fake manual first appeared in Turkey in 1975. It was later circulated in some 20 countries to try to implicate the CIA in the Red Brigades' murder of Christian Democrat leader Aldo Moro in Italy in 1978.

This much is clear then: The Soviets take their disinformation seriously.

**CASE STUDY: The 'Spiegel Affair'**

# One man's disinformation may be another's free press

London and Hamburg

**F**RANZ Josef Strauss and the magazine Der Spiegel — quite a few West Germans think — deserve each other. Both are convinced of their own importance, and of their own rightness. Neither suffers critics gladly.

Mr. Strauss has long been a hero of the right and a bogeyman of the left. Der Spiegel's publisher, Rudolf Augstein, has been a hero of the iconoclasts and a bogeyman of the establishment.

The "Spiegel Affair" that pitted these two giants against each other came in 1962. In the past year it has been widely presented in Britain and the US as a classic exhibit of Soviet disinformation.

But is it?

Certainly West German conservatives do not refer to it as such. And an exploration of the convolutions of the affair suggests considerable difficulties with the thesis of disinformation.

Back in 1962 the magazine had been carrying on a vendetta against Strauss for some time. But the article that precipitated the storm was less a personal attack than a report on the inadequacies of the fledgling German armed forces as displayed in the fall exercises just past.

Conventional forces could not hold in case of a Warsaw Pact attack, Defense Ministry evaluators wrote in internal studies. This judgment reinforced the conclusion of an earlier supersecret ministry report, commissioned by Strauss, speculating that a preemptive nuclear attack by the West might be needed to reduce West German losses in a war — and that Bonn should be able to trigger that nuclear preemption if the US lacked nerve.

The leak about the fall exercises was given to Der Spiegel by a north German Army colonel who mistrusted Strauss's Bavarians (and the Air Force) and thought — mistakenly — that the ministry's musings about a preemptive nuclear strike had never been shown to the West German chancellor.

After a lag of two weeks Der Spiegel was charged with revealing 17 official secrets. There was a night raid on the weekly; Augstein and editors were arrested. The main author of the article, Conrad Ahlers, was in Spain on vacation, and Strauss telephoned the West German military attaché in Madrid after midnight on a weekend to arrange for his arrest. Strauss said he was calling on the authority of the chancellor and the foreign minister (neither of whom knew about the call) and that the proper Interpol warrant was on its way (even though the international police organization had not been contacted). Ahlers was picked up at his hotel at 3 a.m. and sent

Continued

back to West Germany  
country then than now. It had been a democracy for only 13 years. In that time it had had only one chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, and his conservatives regarded themselves as the country's rightful governing party. The German propensity to obey authority may have been bitterly challenged by intellectuals, but not by the other institutions, including, by and large, the press. Der Spiegel was an exception. It saw — and sees — itself as the crusading political adversary of the government in power.

Der Spiegel had checked its story with Defense Ministry, intelligence, and other government sources and deleted some material on request — a precaution it would probably be embarrassed to take today. One of those deletions appeared shortly in Die Welt — and brought no prosecution for Die Welt.

The Federal High Court eventually acquitted Der Spiegel and all the defendants — and the US Judge Advocate's Office in Heidelberg categorically denied the Spiegel article had endangered US troops. Augstein's arrest politicized a generation of students, however. During his six weeks in jail there were demonstrations for his release, and thereafter he was lionized at universities.

Strauss made out less well. After denying in Parliament for two weeks that he had been involved in getting Ahlers arrested, he finally conceded his role. The conservatives' junior coalition partner, the Free Democrats, threatened to pull down the government if Strauss didn't resign. The 85-year-old Adenauer,

who in any case resented Strauss's ambition to replace him, then forced Strauss out. The Christian Democrats, who had been trying to get Adenauer to yield to a younger chancellor, thereupon insisted that Ludwig Erhard take over to manage the economic miracle.

By 1966 Strauss was back in a new "grand coalition" as finance minister — and press spokesman for the government was one Conrad Ahlers, the Spiegel writer who had been yanked back from his Spanish vacation. Since then, Strauss and Spiegel have continued what Spiegel foreign editor Michael Naumann describes as their love-hate relationship, with Strauss interviews regularly appearing in the magazine, to the profit of both.

Chapter 2 of the Spiegel Affair opened in 1981, when British magazine publisher Sir James Goldsmith said in a parliamentary chamber — then repeated in print — that Der Spiegel's infamous

(presumably through the whistleblowing West German Army colonel.) According to Goldsmith, the Soviet aim was to force Strauss out because he was too anti-Soviet.

**G**OLDSMITH cited comments by Gen. Jan Sejna, the hard-line political chief of the Czechoslovak Army who resisted the Prague reform leadership in 1968 and fled to the West just as he was to be arrested on charges of embezzlement. (Ladislav Bittman — the deputy head of the Czech disinformation service who defected to the West only after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia — says the Czechs were privy to no such plot.)

Der Spiegel sued Goldsmith for libel in Britain; the magazine reasoned that Goldsmith could hardly prove that the KGB had the foresight to know that Strauss would arrange for the arrest of a German in Spain, stonewall it in Parliament, and then be fired because of it.

Only after the pretrial investigation had begun, according to Mr. Naumann, did Der Spiegel realize that British law, unlike German law, puts the burden of proof in such cases on the plaintiff rather than the defendant. By the time Goldsmith's lawyers called for evidence from Der Spiegel's files, including several full years of back issues of Pravda and other Soviet-bloc papers — again according to Naumann — Spiegel had second thoughts and went for an out-of-court settlement. Goldsmith supporters, like one interviewed in London who asked that his name not be used, say that Spiegel initiated the arbitration and that this amounts to an admission by Der Spiegel and a victory for Goldsmith.

Goldsmith immediately took out full-page ads in major British and American newspapers in October giving the text of the settlement. He didn't mean to imply that Der Spiegel had wittingly disseminated Soviet disinformation, his statement read — leaving the clear implication that the magazine had still been an unwitting dupe of Soviet disinformation.

In summing up the settlement columnist Gerd Bucerus suggested Goldsmith was himself engaging in disinformation.

"Of course, the KGB tries to spread its true and false assertions everywhere," Bucerus said in the weekly Die Zeit. "The Spiegel campaign against Franz Josef Strauss was at that time so fierce that it often drove me to the side of Strauss, a man I admired. But I never had the impression that Spiegel trafficked in untrue assertions steered by the East.

"Now, however, Sir James Goldsmith shouldn't seek to manipulate us."

Conclusion: One man's disinformation may be another man's free press.

— E. P.

# Free press and active political parties uncover lies

By Elizabeth Pond

Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

**J**UST how serious a danger to the West is Soviet-bloc disinformation? And how do democratic societies defend themselves against it?

The answer to the first question is controversial. It pits crusaders against pragmatists.

The answer to the second question is both obvious and awkward. It can be summed up in one word: truth.

The crusaders who have made disinformation a household word over the past five years see the danger as stark: It is bound up with what they view as the whole scandalous downgrading of counterintelligence within the CIA under directors William Colby and Stansfield Turner — and with what they deem liberal naïveté in seeing Moscow as anything more nuanced than an “evil empire.”

In this school of thought the CIA went soft and lost its nerve in the post-Vietnam, post-Watergate 1970s. British intelligence had been neutralized by Soviet moles. The French and Israeli intelligence services were the only ones left with enough backbone not to be incapacitated by exaggerated civil-rights restraints.

Part of the syndrome, in this view, was American refusal to acknowledge the inroads made in US news media and the East Coast governing elite by Soviet overt and covert propaganda and perhaps even subversion. Proof of Soviet influence was found in the spread of the 1980s nuclear

freeze movement and in the American media's opposition to the Vietnam war in the 1960s, harassment of the CIA in the 1970s, and suspicion of American intervention in Central America in the 1980s.

Summing up the situation, John Reese, one of the original popularizers of the concept of Soviet disinformation, sees the root of the problem in America's revulsion against “Senator McCarthy's charges [that various public figures were Communists] which could not be substantiated. It [Joseph McCarthy's lack of substantiation] does not mean the charges were not true. It means they were badly documented and badly put together,” he says. He decries

Soviet manipulation of US media today.

Asked if he has proof that any major American reporters have been Soviet agents in the past 30 years, Reese responds, “I don't think there is any evidence of that. I do think there were or there are journalists who are supportive of the Soviet Union and would report it in a more favorable light than it deserves. . . . If a person is a member of the Communist Party of the USA and employed by [he names an East Coast newspaper], it does not make him a paid conscious agent. . . .

“The journalist on [he names another East Coast newspaper] who improves his position and gets a bonus because he gets handed a scoop by the KGB, does that

make him a paid agent for future stories? I think it does.”

Taking a contrary view, Soviet émigré Dimitri Simes, a foreign-policy analyst, contends that the impact of Soviet disinformation should not be overblown. “Since Soviet efforts exist, journalists should be particularly careful. But to present disinformation as a serious threat to the West is ridiculous.”

Ex-CIA director Turner argues along the same lines. Asked how serious the threat of Soviet disinformation really is in the US, Turner replies, “I don't think

**‘I would blame some American reporters for not being sufficiently careful, but I would not put it into a disinformation category’**

— Political analyst Dimitri Simes

anybody knows. And those who [say they] do know are right-wing fanatics.”

**T**HERE is very little hard data on disinformation, he observes. “Supporting those causes which are supported by the Soviet Union” is no proof of Soviet influence on an individual — and it is doubtful that it is Soviet backing that makes an anti-nuclear movement flourish. Turner cautions against becoming “paranoid,” or going in for guilt by association and innuendo.

Georgetown University Prof. Roy Godson, by contrast, sees a more disturbing threat in Soviet disinformation. “We

Fourth of a four-part series

won't know the really successful cases," he notes, because their very success will mean they remain secret. "What passes into the public domain is only what is traceable." Besides, the Soviets view "active measures" of overt and covert influence as a long-term investment that cannot be measured in the short term.

Several sources interviewed for this series observed that there is rather more printing of political disinformation for pay in Europe than in the US. From his experience as a US official in Ankara, Paul Henze — author of a study of the 1981 shooting of the Pope — singles out Turkey as a particularly egregious case.

And in Greece part-time New York Times correspondent Paul Anastasiades has presented a detailed case arguing that the best-selling newspaper, *Ethnos*, follows Soviet direction, not only in editorial content promoting the Soviet position on the Mideast, Afghanistan, and Poland but also in selection of the present owner of the profitable newspaper. (*Ethnos* sued for criminal libel and initially won the suit with a two-year jail term for Mr. Anastasiades; but in 1984 the Greek Supreme Court overruled the guilty verdict.)

Then how can the West effectively counter the Soviet disinformation effort? Answers vary among the 10 American, British, and West German current and former intelligence officials and 15 governmental, academic, and press sources consulted for this series.

"By answering with the truth," bluntly asserts a US Information Agency official

who deals with Soviet active measures.

For him and others, "truth" in this case breaks down into awareness, specific refutation of lies, and a vigorous pluralist press to search for truth.

**T**HE first task, says the USIA official, is "sensitizing journalists and government officials to Soviet active measures. In that I think we are fairly successful in Europe. We now have journalists coming to us when there is a document they have suspicions about. In a great many cases we have been able to show that it's a forgery or utterly false."

To ensure that the act of forgery and not the content of the false document remains the news story, the USIA monitors identified Soviet active measures.

On the basis of this monitoring, an interagency working group from the USIA, State Department, FBI, CIA, and the Defense Intelligence Agency discusses how to expose and react to these Soviet efforts. Such reaction might involve demonstrating to a reputable American journalist that he or she has been fooled by a forgery, or warning European governments that forgeries are in circulation.

Professor Godson agrees that coordination by the interagency working group is a good first step in combatting disinformation. As a second step he would like to see enforcement of American laws requiring registration of lobbyists for foreign governments. As a third step he recommends that journalists learn

about the intensive Soviet program of active measures — and that the media then police themselves.

In the end vigorously pluralist media must be the defense against, as well as a prime target of, disinformation. Henze believes that the "effective, natural working of a free society tends to cough it up out of the system. There is a level everywhere where people like to believe in plot theories. . . . At that level, a steady flow of disinformation, once started, tends to bounce around." But for the most part it eventually gets rejected, he argues.

Stansfield Turner puts a great deal of confidence in the "inherently probing and skeptical American press." Since the American citizen has so many varied sources of news, he argues, the US has "built-in defenses" and a "reasonable chance" that disinformation will ultimately be revealed for what it is.

Dimitri Simes makes the same point: "You cannot maintain your reputation [as an American journalist] if you become a Soviet agent. You just can't do it. . . . We essentially all have to be centrists. I do not see a major [Soviet] effort to cultivate American journalists. [Here the targets are] more CIA or FBI officials than journalists. . . . Being pro-Soviet is much less socially acceptable now than in the 1930s, when not just journalists, but everybody was taken for a ride. . . ."

"I disagreed with the more optimistic assessments of détente [in the mid-'70s], but none could be defined as a Soviet apologist except [in the] old genera-

tion. . . . I would blame some American reporters for not being sufficiently careful, but I would not put it into a disinformation category. I would think more [it's a question of] being unduly influenced by sources when the sources are incredibly narrow. It's more a fault of judgment than of professional integrity."

For governments fighting Soviet disinformation, "truth" and an unfettered press can be uncomfortable antidotes, however. A vigorous press and parliament can turn their skepticism on their own government's disinformation as well as on the opponent's. And the whole concept of disinformation can easily be debased to little more than a whip with which to lash political opponents.

Furthermore, a democratic press and society are likely to demand much higher standards of honesty from their own government than they do from foreign authoritarian ones. And their willingness to test many points of view can at times make them especially vulnerable to outside disinformation in the short run.

In the long run, however, a feisty, critical press and society are far more resistant to disinformation than are docile ones. If rigorous, the competition of ideas should eventually force disinformation to prove itself and be discredited by its divergence from reality.

The best-documented case studies we have — described on this page — are in the end far more encouraging to Western democracies than to Soviet disinformers.

Richard III, take heart.

**CONTINUED**



**CASE STUDY: JAPAN****Prominent reporters did KGB bidding**

**W**HEN KGB agent Stanislav Levchenko defected to the US in 1979, he brought some juicy tidbits with him.

His identification of 10 out of 12 foreign correspondents of the Soviet weekly New Times (as well as many other Soviet journalists) as KGB officers was no surprise. But his description of his successes as acting chief of the "active measures" section of the KGB office in Tokyo titillated his CIA debriefers.

The KGB had suborned four prominent Japanese journalists, he said, who "conducted various influence operations against" various friends in government and also provided the Soviets with secret information. The KGB also launched newspaper stories, Levchenko said, through an agent who was "a close confidant of the owner of a major Japanese newspaper with a daily circulation of 3 million copies."

Levchenko said he was 1 of 5 KGB case officers in Tokyo directing 25 "agents of influence" out of some 200 "recruited agents" in Japan. These included a former member of the conservative government's Cabinet of Ministers, several leading Socialists, several members of parliament, and a prominent China scholar. In addition to floating KGB stories, "recruited agents" engaged in "political intelligence, external counterintelligence, and scientific and technological intelligence," Levchenko told his inter-

viewer in the 1984 book "Dezinformatsia" by Richard H. Shultz and Roy Godson.

Despite the KGB's impressive recruiting success in Japan, however, one thing was working against the Soviets: Soviet foreign policy. Ever since the end of World War II the Soviets have kept four southern Kurile Islands, which had not previously belonged to them but which they acquired in their one-month war with Japan. Recently the Soviet Union has been adding insult to injury by piling weapons into the four disputed islands.

Furthermore, with a bias born of old-fashioned awe of military power, the Soviet Union has consistently sought to browbeat rather than entice Japan, an economic giant but military dwarf. All in all, it's a policy that some Soviet diplomats privately call a disaster.

As a result the Japanese abandoned their policy of "equidistance" between Moscow and Peking of a decade ago and are helping to develop China rather than Siberia. In addition, despite the Japanese aversion to armed forces after World War II, Tokyo is on the verge of increasing its defense budget over the taboo figure of 1 percent of gross national product — all in response to the Soviet military buildup in the southern Kuriles.

Conclusion: In this case Moscow's own foreign policy overwhelmed Soviet disinformation. — E. P.

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**CONTINUED**

**CASE STUDY: FRANCE****The conviction of a longtime agent of influence**

**F**RENCH publicist Pierre-Charles Pathé, son of the French film tycoon, acted as a paid agent of influence for the Soviet Union from 1961 until his arrest in 1979.

He targeted both the French public and elite, not only writing newspaper and magazine articles and moving in Parisian salon society, but also circulating his newsletter "Synthesis" to 70 percent of the members of France's Chamber of Deputies, 47 percent of Senate members, and several dozen journalists and ambassadors.

"Synthesis" consistently beat the United States as a "police democracy" and enforcer of "the American empire for 30 years ... [through] force and corruption." It castigated France for getting too close to the US and portrayed West Germany as being riddled with crypto-Nazis and too pro-American, while it praised East Germany as economically progressive.

Had Mr. Pathé been operating under US guarantees of free speech, he probably could not have been convicted for anything more serious than failing to register as a lobbyist for a foreign nation. But the French state security court sentenced him in 1980 to five years in prison for being an agent of influence for the Soviets — and his case offers the only court-documented example so far of Soviet news media disinformation in the West.

His impact on French opinion therefore merits closer examination — and is very hard to pin down.

Pathé may well have exerted influence throughout the 1960s and early '70s. But he may just have reflected the general disdain for the US and leniency toward the Soviet Union

that was fashionable among intellectuals and Gaullists as well as France's powerful Communists. Certainly there was a popular predisposition to dismiss (in the 1930s) or excuse (in the 1960s) Stalin's murderous purges.

Then three things happened.

First, Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote searing exposés of the world of the Soviet prison camp — and, uniquely, his works continued to have a large readership in the West even after he himself was expelled from the Soviet Union.

Second, the US got out of the Vietnam war, stopped ostracizing China, entered détente with the Soviet Union — and was no longer perceived by Frenchmen as a cold-war ogre.

Third, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and underwrote martial law in Poland — the latter a country that has enjoyed France's special affection ever since Napoleon's officers brought back brides from Warsaw.

The upshot was French revulsion toward the Soviet Union, new admiration for the exuberant Americans, wholesale intellectual desertion of Marxism for neo-conservatism, a plunge of the French Communist Party to an all-time low of 11 percent of votes last year — and election of a Socialist President who has been much tougher toward Moscow than his conservative predecessors were.

Public opinion shows just how dramatic the disillusionment with Moscow has been. The number of those who believe the Soviet Union sincerely desires peace sank from 58 percent in 1975 to 24 percent after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Conclusion: In this case Solzhenitsyn and Soviet foreign policy eventually overwhelmed Pathé and Soviet disinformation. — E.S.P.

**CONTINUED**

**CASE STUDY: WEST GERMANY****A Czech ploy that worked — but only briefly**

**E**VIDENCE for Soviet-bloc disinformation against West Germany comes from Ladislav Bittman, deputy chief of Czechoslovakia's Department Eight until the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 drove him to defect to the West. Bittman describes the Czechoslovak secret service's most ambitious ploy, Operation Neptune, in his 1972 book, "The Deception Game."

In brief, the idea was to plant real Nazi documents — identifying various West Germans as ex-Nazis — in a chest in a lake in 1964 and have the documents "discovered" there. The Prague government had not previously made the documents public since the KGB preferred to exploit such incriminating evidence to blackmail West Germans into working as its agents. By the mid-'60s it was decided to get some political mileage out of leftover documents.

The purpose was threefold: to fuel anti-German feelings in Western Europe; to scare the West German intelligence network in Czechoslovakia (which the Czechs assumed was based on the old Nazi network); and to campaign for extension of the period of time in which Hitler-era murderers could be prosecuted in West Germany (since the statute of limitations would otherwise render them free from prosecution in 1965.)

The obvious question here is why the Czechs rather than the East Germans would run disinformation operations against West Germany. It's a question that puzzles West German officials to this day, since they detect very little activity in West Germany by the disinformation section of the East German intelligence service.

(Several skillfully done forgeries of West German documents — presumably of East German origin — have circulated in Africa in attempts to discredit West German and American policies there; but nothing com-

parable has surfaced in West Germany. The one recent East German plan for a disinformation operation in West Germany — burying radioactive material near West German nuclear-power sites to alarm antinuclear protesters — was never carried out, according to the West German Interior Ministry.)

The best West German surmise about East German quiescence seems to be that the East German disinformation department is intended primarily for action in any future crisis or war situation, presumably in conjunction with active sabotage.

Whatever the reason, the Czechs had center stage with Operation Neptune.

The discovery of the lake cache by television divers did make world headlines just as planned. It probably did heighten somewhat European suspicion of West Germany. It certainly added to pressure to postpone the effective date of the statute of limitations (much as the American TV film "Holocaust" would inadvertently do a dozen years later). It may even have elicited a precautionary pause in West German intelligence-gathering in Czechoslovakia. But in the long run European approval of Bonn's eventual total waiving of the statute of limitations for concentration-camp guards probably more than offset the short-term suspicions.

The upshot, Bittman mused in retrospect, was that although the Czech and Soviet disinformation departments deemed Operation Neptune one of their most successful ploys in the early 1960s, in the end they "were not successful in convincing the West European public that the present-day West German regime was the practical and ideological outgrowth of Nazi Germany."

Conclusion: In this case the course of West Germany's domestic politics reversed the temporary gains of Soviet-bloc disinformation.

— E. P.

**Other articles in this series ran Feb. 26, 27, and 28.**