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THE RUSSIAN PARTY LINE ON CBS

CBS television recently unleashed a broadside attack on Ronald Reagan's plans to defend America against the Russian military buildup. This piece of political propaganda was thinly disguised as a five-hour primetime series to "examine" and "report" on "The Defense of the United States" against the Soviet Union.

For the final hour of this expensive production, CBS sent Walter Cronkite to Moscow "looking for some answers." The Russians gave him the answers they want the American public to hear. Walter then allowed his program to be used as a conduit for the Russian party line and its efforts to discredit the Reagan Administration's defense program.

Here is a summary of the propaganda message presented by the CBS "documentary," as heard on national television from the mouths of Russians in Moscow (whom Walter treated with much deference), skillfully interwoven with complementary comments by Walter himself and a couple of Western journalists in Moscow (who, of course, operate under Soviet restrictions on resident newsmen).

The Reagan Administration is falsifying and exaggerating the Soviet military threat in order to get Congress to vote bigger defense budgets, which are unnecessary. Walter: "The Administration tells you only half the story -- the half it uses to press its case for higher and higher defense budgets."

The Soviet Union is not a threat; that "misperception" is just a relic of the "cold war." Walter: Since 1960, "Soviet influence around the world actually has declined."

We should put our trust in treaties with the Russians rather than in military weapons. Russian: "We have never violated our agreements, even those that were not signed." Journalist: "We can trust them to observe a formal agreement. Their record is pretty good."

The Russians are not aggressive. Russian: "What you consider aggressive, we consider defensive. We are only defending ourselves against the Americans. ... It is a political fantasy to think that the Soviet Union intends to move from Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean."

(more)

The invasion of Afghanistan really proved that the Soviet army is not formidable and is badly equipped. According to Walter, although the invasion "renewed our fears," it really proved that "the Russian soldier is not ten feet tall. ... While the size and training of their military may look impressive, looks can be deceiving."

The Russians are not behind the Marxist revolutionary forces all over the world. Russian: "The Soviet Union is not trying to implant revolution in other countries. ... Categorically, the Soviet Union does not provide any assistance to the national liberation movement in El Salvador. ... Or Nicaragua, or Ethiopia."

The United States doesn't need any more nuclear weapons because we already have "overkill." Russian: "The United States has enough arms to destroy us 20 to 30 times." Journalist: "We reached overkill years and years ago."

The Russians are not superior to the United States in military weapons, but merely equal. Russian: "We are equal ... there is an approximate parity. ... The problem is psychological. ... Americans cannot psychologically accept equality with the Russians."

Another Russian: "There is asymmetrical parity because in one field the U.S. and NATO are much ahead of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Treaty nations, while in other fields the Soviet Union and Warsaw Treaty nations are ahead."

Nuclear war will never happen, so stop worrying about it and stop preparing against it. Walter: Get rid of those "old fears and doubts." Russian: "Any idea that the Soviet Union is planning a first-strike against U.S. land-based missiles is just very dangerous propaganda. ... Nuclear war is impossible."

The Soviets are not building nuclear weapons faster than the United States. Russian: "Categorically not!" Walter: The Soviets are only "playing catch-up ball with us."

America should not strive to restore our former military superiority. Russian: "Military superiority is impossible. ... It is very dangerous." Journalist: "You can't buy peace simply by spending more for arms."

President Ronald Reagan was allotted 65 seconds at the start of this program to state his views, while the entire rest of the hour was spent torpedoing his program with the above anti-defense propaganda spoken by Russians and journalists. Is that what the FCC would call giving "both sides" of a controversial issue under the "fairness doctrine"?

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