

Dear Brian et. al.

CSPAN'S Press coverage seems to hover between establishment centrism (N.Y. Times & Washington Post etc), and the far right (Washington Times etc.). Very rarely, if ever is there any dissent from the bipartisan consensus on Topics such as the cold War.

On the reverse is a sample of a different point of view from Robert Parry's IF Magazine. Parry runs the Consortium for Independent Journalism

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I would like to see CSPAN expand its horizons.

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benefits young Westerners took for granted."

As heretical as these analyses are to Reagan loyalists – and to official Washington – the observations do not stand alone. Even former State Department official George F. Kennan, whose seminal analysis of the Soviet system in 1947 helped launch the Cold War, has objected to the Republican claims of "winning" the Cold War.

In his book, *At A Century's Ending*, Kennan wrote that "the suggestion that any American administration had the power to influence decisively the course of a tremendous domestic-political upheaval in another great country on another side of the globe is intrinsically silly and childish."

Kennan noted that by the late 1940s and the early 1950s, "it was visible to some of us then living in Russia that the Soviet regime was becoming dangerously remote from the concerns and hopes of the Russian people. ...

"It was quite clear, even at those early dates, that the Soviet regime as we had known it was not there for all time. We could not know when or how it would be changed. We knew only that the change was inevitable and impending. By the time Stalin died, in 1953, even many members of the Communist Party had come to see his dictatorship as grotesque, dangerous, and unnecessary."

In Kennan's view, U.S. military pressure delayed, rather than accelerated, the demise of the Soviet dictatorship. "The extreme militarization of American discussion and policy, as promoted by hard-line circles in this country over the ensuing 25 years, had the consistent effect of strengthening comparable hard-line elements in the Soviet Union," Kennan argued.

"The more American political leadership was seen in Moscow as committed to an ultimate military, rather than political, resolution of Soviet-American tensions, the greater was the tendency in Moscow to tighten the controls by both party and police, and the greater the braking effect on all liberalizing tendencies within the regime. Thus the general effect of Cold War extremism was to delay rather than hasten the great change that overtook that country

at the end of the 1980s.

"What did the greatest damage was ... the unnecessarily belligerent and threatening tone in which many of [the U.S. military strategies] were publicly carried forward. For this, both of our great political parties deserve a share of the blame.

"Nobody 'won' the Cold War. It was a long and costly political rivalry, fueled on both sides by unreal and exaggerated estimates of the intentions and strength of the other side."

Kennan also observed that the final price of the Cold War might still be ahead. Noting the economic dislocation and political chaos sweeping nuclear-armed Russia, he argued that changes "came far too precipitately, upon a population little prepared for them, thus creating new problems of the greatest seriousness for Russia, her neighbors, and rest of us -- problems to which, as yet, none of us have found effective answers."

As much as any American politician, Reagan personified the belligerent rhetoric and international brinkmanship that Kennan saw as counterproductive to the goal of dismantling the Soviet system decades earlier than finally was done.

But discounting the value of hard-line anti-communism in "winning the Cold War" has a consequence in the biographical judgment of Ronald Reagan's life. If Kennan and the other experts are right, conservatives can no longer fall back on the situational ethics of the Cold War when excusing the criminal actions of anticommunist forces.

In the United States, Reagan and other conservatives would be stripped of an important rationale for winking and nodding at right-wing generals imposing "death squad" solutions on their populations.

Without the justification of fighting the "Evil Empire," the Nazi-like brutality applied in Latin America, Asia and other regions would have to be judged as war crimes and their American backers as accomplices.

In the mid-1970s, for instance, right-wing generals seized power in Argentina and "disappeared" some 30,000 Argentines in a "dirty war" against suspected leftists. Many of the

victims were subjected to barbaric treatment – submerged in human waste, tortured in front of loved ones, sexually abused, jolted with electrical charges and monitored by doctors to prolong the agony before execution.

Army doctors also performed Caesarian sections on pregnant women, with the babies distributed to military families while the new mothers were driven to an airfield, shackled naked to other prisoners and then shoved from planes into the ocean.

The Carter administration protested these human rights crimes and managed to save some prominent dissidents, such as Jacobo Timmerman.

But as a political commentator then, Reagan sympathized with the Argentine generals and mocked as naive the U.S. government policy. He urged Carter administration human rights coordinator Patricia Derian to "walk a mile in the moccasins" of the Argentine generals before criticizing them.

[On Nov. 2, a Spanish judge indicted 98 Argentine military leaders and their lieutenants on charges of torture, terrorism and genocide committed during the "dirty war" from 1976-83.]

As president, Reagan had a more direct role in the mini-Holocaust that was sweeping Central America. He rejected detailed evidence from the CIA and other U.S. agencies that implicated his favored paramilitary forces in mass murder.

When the Salvadoran military waged a "dirty war," killing an estimated 70,000 people, including wholesale massacres of peasants, Reagan consistently denied the reality, bending the facts in his "Daliesque" way. "We think we are helping the forces that are supporting human rights in El Salvador," Reagan told a news conference on March 6, 1981.

In December 1981, a U.S.-trained battalion of the Salvadoran army stormed into the village of El Mozote. The next morning, the army began a systematic slaughter of nearly 1,000 villagers. The massacre started with the



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