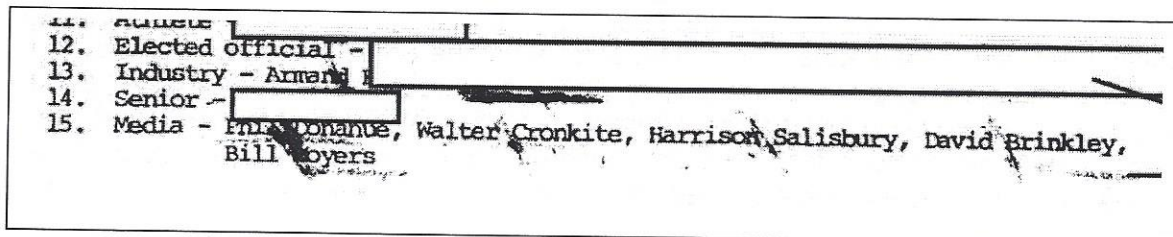


Cronkite Named as Soviet Target by FBI in "Active Measures" Document

By Cliff Kincaid -- May 17, 2010

The late CBS Evening News anchorman Walter Cronkite is named in a just-released FBI document from 1986 as being targeted in a Soviet "active measures" campaign against President Reagan's anti-communist foreign policy. Cronkite is named as a possible member of a U.S. delegation that would sign a pro-Soviet "People's Peace Treaty."

Cronkite, once known as "the most trusted man in television news" because of his influence during the time when three network news programs dominated the national dissemination of news and information, bears a great deal of responsibility for the American military defeat in Vietnam and the communist conquest of that Southeast Asian country.



The term "active measures" in the FBI document carries special significance, since it designates Soviet intelligence operations to damage the United States and further the interest of Soviet foreign policy. The most common were political influence operations in which high-profile U.S. and Western political and public figures were used to promote Soviet objectives.

Released to this journalist through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Cronkite documents include an FBI cover letter, dated June 25, 1986, which designates an attached internal memorandum from the "Campaign for a People's Peace Treaty" as part of a "Soviet active measures" campaign. The document is addressed to the FBI director and the attention of the bureau's intelligence division.

While many questions remain about the nature of this secret influence operation and its ultimate success, the documents provide absolute confirmation that the Soviets were targeting major figures in the U.S. media. Other targets are talk show host Phil Donahue, Harrison Salisbury of the New York Times, David Brinkley of ABC News and Bill Moyers of CBS News and later with public television.

The "Campaign for a People's Peace Treaty" was a project of the Soviet front National Council of American-Soviet Friendship and was designed to create public and international pressure to undermine Reagan's U.S. conventional and nuclear arms buildup.

National Council Of American-Soviet Friendship, Inc.
162 Madison Avenue * New York, New York 10016 * (212) 679-4577

John Cherveney
Vice Chairman
Marilyn Bechtel
Secretary

Dr. Ewart Guinier
National Chairman

Marvel Cooke
Treasurer
Alan Thomson
Executive Director



February 26, 1982.

Society for U.S.-Soviet
Friendship

Dear Friendship Communicators,

Assistant Director for Intelligence of the FBI Edward J. O'Malley testified before Congress in 1982 that the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship was founded in 1943 by the Communist Party USA and served Soviet interests.

Cronkite, who retired as CBS Evening News anchorman in 1981 but continued to speak publicly about current events, was a natural target of the Soviets and their agents because he was already considered sympathetic to their cause. In 1979, he had given an interview to the Soviet magazine, *Literary Gazette*, and told Vitaly Kobysh that the "Soviet threat" was "most likely...a myth." According to the magazine, Cronkite went on to say that "I will never believe in a 'Soviet threat.'"

Shortly after the interview was published, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.

Donahue, who pioneered the daytime television talk show format in the U.S. before Oprah Winfrey capitalized on it, had already been doing programs with Soviet journalist Vladimir Posner and continues to be a prominent left-wing activist making occasional media appearances. His program on MSNBC was cancelled in 2003, his former senior producer Jeff Cohen claims, because he was too anti-war.

The FBI cover letter and memorandum can be seen on the final two pages of this report. The FBI had previously informed me that Cronkite's personal FBI file had been inexplicably destroyed by the bureau.

Other claims made in the documents -- that Cronkite assisted anti-Vietnam War protesters and said that CBS would rent a helicopter to transport Senator Edmund Muskie to an anti-war rally -- have been seized upon by other news outlets which apparently got batches of the same material through separate FOIA requests.

Some pages indicate that Cronkite was privately offering to provide a CBS News "open mike" to the organizers of the 1969 Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam. A 1969 staff

study of the House Internal Security Subcommittee identified the organizers of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee as strongly influenced by the Communist Party USA.

The offer of support from Cronkite to the anti-war organizers is consistent with the fact that the CBS newsman had already declared that the communist 1968 Tet offensive was a defeat for the U.S. and that the American government should negotiate a military withdrawal. Cronkite's verdict that the war was unwinnable -- and its acceptance by other media and many members of the public -- forced the transformation of U.S. policy into one of negotiations with the communists and eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces, leading to the Communist takeover of South Vietnam in 1975.

Communist North Vietnam had launched an invasion of South Vietnam in 1960, creating the "National Liberation Front of South Vietnam" or Viet Cong as surrogates to wage war.

In the March-April 2010 issue of *Military Review*, in an article titled, "Lessons Learned from Vietnam," Dr. William L. Stearman revisits the controversial period of 1968-1969, which was critical for the Vietnamese Communists because, despite Cronkite's claims, they had actually been militarily defeated by U.S. and South Vietnamese troops during their Tet Offensive. Stearman notes that Cronkite's hasty and faulty verdict on the war came after "a quick trip" to Vietnam in late February 1968.

The Tet Offensive "was a major North Vietnamese blunder," notes Uwe Siemon-Netto, an international journalist who covered the war. At Tet, he writes, Hanoi lost 45,000 men and its entire infrastructure in the south. "Yet major United States media outlets portrayed Tet as a defeat for their own side," he said, referring to Cronkite and others. "Following Tet, [President] Johnson announced that he would not stand for re-election. Though a military victory for the United States and its allies, Tet ultimately marked the beginning of their defeat."

Stearman concluded, "...thanks to U.S. media, the enemy won the war where it most counted – in the United States."

The Soviet Communists, who were waging the same kind of propaganda war against U.S. policy makers and the public, were not as successful as the Vietnam Communists. Reagan not only persisted in his arms build-up and beat back communist aggression in Central America but launched several efforts to expose and combat Soviet propaganda operations.

The Congress held hearings and published reports on such topics as "Soviet Active Measures" and "Soviet Covert Action," emphasizing how Soviet intelligence operatives and their agents were operating on American soil and internationally.



We now know, because of documents discovered and released after the Soviet collapse, that Senator Ted Kennedy made an offer to the Soviets to help organize opposition to Reagan's pro-defense policies. Kennedy was the leading congressional sponsor of the "nuclear freeze" campaign to prevent deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe to counter the Soviet threat.

At Columbia University in 1983, a young Barack Obama wrote sympathetically about groups involved in the "nuclear freeze" campaign and the dangers of "militarism" but expressed the hope for total disarmament. As president, he is pursuing the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, which many experts say is unverifiable, and just signed a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia that he wants ratified by the U.S. Senate. Obama is opposed to modernization of the U.S. nuclear deterrent.

Cronkite and the other media personalities were included in a list of "possible members of the US delegation to sign the treaty." A left-wing organization, the Center for Defense Information, is named as being in the position of providing a "military person" to sign the document.

In the area of industry, a first name, "Armand," is listed, an apparent reference to Armand Hammer, the late chairman of Occidental Petroleum who was a family friend of Al Gore and Soviet agent.

The "Labor" designation includes a reference to the ACTWU, the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union.

The memorandum says that Alan Thomson will take the signed "peace treaty" to Moscow and present it to the Soviet Peace Committee. Thomson was the executive director of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship.

Despite his reputation as an honest and objective newsman, we noted in a column published shortly after his death that Cronkite was a key player in an on-the-air CBS News assault on the Reagan Administration's defense buildup.

We wrote, "After Ronald Reagan took office as President and proceeded to build up U.S. national defense capability, in the wake of the disastrous Jimmy Carter years, CBS News acted to counter the Reagan effort. They aired a five-part program, 'The Defense of the United States,' in which Cronkite appeared to tell us that the relationship with the Soviet Union was dominated by 'the same old fears and doubts' because we didn't have a genuine dialogue with the Soviet communists."

AIM founder Reed Irvine noted at the time of the broadcast that CBS gave us "the Kremlin view that it is the United States, not the Soviet Union, that is striving for an impossible military superiority, while creating fantasies about Soviet aggression."

Irvine drew attention to the "persistent anti-defense bias of CBS News" under Cronkite and commented, "One has to wonder why the anti-defense bias is so strong and persistent at CBS. My own feeling is that it is a reflection of the views enunciated by Walter Cronkite that show a benign view of the Soviet Union."

While Reagan pursued his arms buildup, including development of the Strategic Defense Initiative, and the Soviet Union eventually collapsed in 1991, the effort to save Vietnam from communism was not successful, thanks in large part to Cronkite's influence.

The bloody result: 58,260 U.S. servicemen and nearly 1 million civilians died in the Vietnam War. The South Vietnamese military lost about one quarter of a million dead, and over 1 million Communist soldiers were killed. Tens of thousands of South Vietnamese allies of the U.S. left behind after the American military withdrawal were tortured in communist camps. Thousands of others fled in leaky boats, becoming known as the "boat people."

The government of Vietnam today remains a Communist dictatorship.

UNLIKELY TO SURVIVE a third world war, which would almost certainly bring universal nuclear devastation. If we are to avoid that catastrophe, a system of world order—preferably a system of world government—is mandatory. The proud nations someday will see the light and, for the common good and their own survival, yield up their precious sovereignty, just as America's thirteen colonies did two centuries ago.

Excerpt from Walter Cronkite's book, *A Reporter's Life*.

Meanwhile, the National Council on American-Soviet Friendship turned its collection of pro-Soviet films over to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. "The films provide a fascinating window into a country and political system which no longer exist, and give viewers a way to see the Cold War from another perspective," the academy says.

While the Soviet political system may not exist, the Russians have continued many of the old Soviet-style intelligence and influence operations. The book, *Comrade J*, based on the revelations of a Russian master spy, Sergei Tretyakov, identified former Clinton State Department official and now Brookings Institution head Strobe Talbott as a dupe of Russian intelligence.

Talbott had been a columnist for Time magazine, where he wrote about the need for world government, a cause also embraced by Walter Cronkite.

The National Council on American-Soviet Friendship Collection



"Latvia: A Republic of the Soviet Union" (1968)

The National Council on American-Soviet Friendship (NCASF) film collection is a unique and rare anthology was donated to the Academy Film Archive between 1994 and 1999. The films provide a fascinating window into a country and political system which no longer exist, and give viewers a way to see the Cold War from another perspective.

The collection consists of over 1,000 16mm prints, representing about 700 titles. These films cover all aspects of Soviet life from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, including art, politics, history, literature, film, music, folk traditions, sports, science, the environment and international relations. Though ostensibly documentaries, the films have an unmistakably propagandistic slant, boasting of the Soviet Union's achievements while downplaying or entirely ignoring any negative aspects of the subject matter.

<http://www.oscars.org/filmarchive/collections/ncasf.html>

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

AIRTEL

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JUN 25 1986

TO : DIRECTOR, FBI (105-36603)
(ATTN: INTELLIGENCE DIVISION, CI-1)

FROM : ADIC, NEW YORK (105-172821) (P) (36)

SUBJECT: SOVIET ACTIVE MEASURES
FCI-R
(OO:NY)

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ReNYairtel to Bureau and New Haven, captioned as
above, dated 5/19/86.

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Declassify on OADR~~

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 - 1 - New York (100-140528) (SANE)
 - 1 - New York (229-45) (NCASF)
 - 1 - New York (229-31) (WPC)
 - 1 - New York (100-156667) (CALC)
 - 1 - New York (229-95) (CPC)
 - 1 - New York (100-23682) (WILPF)
 - 1 - New York (229-107) [redacted]
 - 1 - New York (229-31) (CPUSA)
 - 1 - New York [redacted] (INV)
 - 1 - New York [redacted]

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CAMPAIGN FOR A PEOPLE'S PEACE TREATY
162 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

~~SECRET~~

The Campaign Committee met at 1140 Broadway Sunday, May 18th. 15 persons were present.

The Committee received and considered three alternative redraftings of the Treaty. A committee of three will produce a new draft by the end of the week which Alan Thomson will take to the Soviet Peace Committee in Moscow next week.

It was AGREED that the Campaign will seek both individual signatures and organizational endorsements to the treaty.

Several alternative locations for an office were considered. A decision will be made at the next meeting. Members are asked to suggest possible staff people.

Roger Powers agreed to report on the Treaty to the meeting of peace organizations in Philadelphia May 21st.

The new Treaty draft will be available with a covering letter to be sent to potential endorsers.

O/S

Possible members of the US delegation to sign the Treaty were discussed:

1. Military person - from Center for Defense Information
2. Scientist - [redacted]
3. Clergy - [redacted]
4. Medical [redacted]
5. Education [redacted]
6. Youth - Winner of PEP Contest [redacted]
7. Veteran - someone from Veterans for Peace
8. Labor - [redacted]
9. Artist - [redacted] ACIUWU
10. Homemaker [redacted]
11. Athlete [redacted]
12. Elected official - [redacted]
13. Industry - Armand [redacted]
14. Senior - [redacted]
15. Media - [redacted], Walter Cronkite, Harrison Salisbury, David Brinkley, Bill Moyers

b6
b7C

The final group should have thirteen members. Committee members have agreed to seek out people on the above list after the final treaty text is available.

O/S

The next meeting will be held on Sunday, June 15th at 1140 Broadway, Rm. 401 at 2:00 p.m.

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