

# The Washington Times and the End of the Cold War

By Bill Gertz

On April 10, 1991, the official newspaper of the Soviet military, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, Red Star, published an article with the headline, “How Many Hats Does Mr. Gertz Have?” The author was Maj. Gen. Gennady Kashuba, chief of the Soviet Defense Ministry press office. The article accused this reporter, as a national security writer for *The Washington Times*, of spreading “base misinformation” – ironically, a Soviet specialty. The article took issue with two stories written days earlier for *The Times*, one on a secret visit to the recently dissolved East Germany by Soviet Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov in March 1991 that was part of Moscow’s plan to secret out of the country Erich Honecker, the East German leader and Soviet puppet dictator. Honecker was wanted by German authorities for his role in ordering the deaths of some 200 East Germans who were killed trying to flee to the free West during the Cold War. The second story was the real target of Moscow’s ire. It was a piece written about extensive and well-funded Soviet disinformation operations run by the KGB in the developing world to poison world opinion about the United States while seeking to build support for the Soviet Union. The campaigns by the KGB included the lie published in African newspapers that the AIDS virus was a CIA biological warfare weapon developed for use against blacks. Red Star asserted that in Britain there is saying that someone caught lying must eat his hat. Thus the article concluded that I would need to eat several hats and that they are a regular part of my diet. The disinformation piece also contained the subtle suggestion I was dual-hatted in the sense that I was a journalist, but also the false allegation that I was running dog of the CIA.

It was an amazing acknowledgement of the power of one reporter to impact a vast Communist empire. I regarded it as a badge of honor to be singled out by Moscow for my reporting. The clipping in Russian, was presented to me as a gift from Herb Romerstein, a Communist-turned-anti-communist and American patriot who was among some of the hundreds of government officials who regarded *The Washington Times* as a strategically vital tool in winning the Cold War against Soviet Communism.

Eight months later on Dec. 26, 1991, the Soviet Union was dissolved, ending an expansionist Communist empire and marking what many consider the end of the Cold War. In reality, the Cold War has not ended completely, as those opposing Communist rule in states such as China, North Korea and Cuba attest. Remember, China’s Liu Xiabo, winner of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize, is currently imprisoned in China for human rights advocacy.

*The Washington Times* was formed in 1982 by Rev. Sun Myung Moon amid concerns that the media landscape in Washington, DC was dominated by the liberal establishment newspaper, the *Washington Post*, a publication that had earned its reputation for being “Pravda on the Potomac.” The roots of *The Washington Times* can be traced to the closure of the *Washington Star* in 1981, the venerated afternoon daily that had struggled to survive as one of Washington’s oldest newspapers following its purchase by *Time* magazine. The folding of *The Star* left the nation’s capital with a single newspaper.

Lacking both funding and experienced news personnel, Rev. Moon launched the *Washington Times* largely on faith and the firm belief and concern that Washington leaders would not be educated about growing danger posed by Soviet communism. Over the ensuing years, he invested tens of billions of dollars in the *Washington Times*. Rev. Moon explained to aides that the newspaper was a mission more than a business, and that he had been inspired by God to make the important commitment to the newspaper. That commitment has continued under his wife Hak Ja Han Moon.

For decades during the Cold War there was fundamental problem in dealing with Soviet communism. The political divide split the country between anti-communist conservatives who viewed the Soviet Union as a strategic threat to be defeated and left liberal anti-anti-communists who sought accommodation and engagement with Moscow. The political divide meant that the early Cold War foreign policy approach of containment – essentially leaving the Soviets alone while seeking to prevent its spread -- could not be altered or modified.

Rev. Moon’s motivation for *The Times* was not simply to use the newspaper to educate leaders and seek the defeat of Communism. It was part of a larger effort he believed would bring about world unity and ultimately the creation of a God-centered world.

The DNA of *The Washington Times* was the need for a conservative alternative to the *Washington Post* in informing and educating Washington leaders and the nation to the Communist threat. Rev. Moon recognized that news media are essential not just for news but for the educational role of helping leaders and populations understand the true nature of the danger of Communism, the atheistic, anti-human ideology that denies God and seeks to use government controls to alter human nature. The ideology is based on lies and has cost tens of millions of lives in pursuit of this objective.<sup>1</sup>

Rev. Moon was a global international spiritual leader who received the mission from God as a teenager to complete the unfinished work of Jesus Christ, the Messiah whose life was devoted to bringing a new truth and spiritual salvation to humankind. Rev Moon teaches that Jesus was crucified before he could expand the spiritual victory of individual salvation and restoration to the family level and beyond, ultimately creating an earthly Kingdom of God. Rev. Moon’s life and teachings include a God-centered blueprint called as the Providence of Restoration that traces the current calamity of the human race today to a spiritual separation

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<sup>1</sup> For a full accounting of deaths under communism, see “The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression,” Jean-Louis Panné, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartosek, Jean-Louis Margolin, Nicolas Werth, Stéphane Courtois. Harvard University Press, 1999.

from God by the first human ancestors through the fall. Rev. and Mrs. Moon are advancing the Restoration Providence through the spiritual and physical recreation of “True Parents” – the restored first ancestors -- who can lead the entire world back to God.

The mission of *The Washington Times* is part of a larger plan to unite the world. A fundamental precept of Rev. Moon is that America was founded by those seeking both religious and political freedom and was bestowed with great blessings not for America and Americans alone. The blessings of liberty, freedom, faith and family embodied in the American deal must be shared with the world. Thus the United States remains one of God's chosen nations tasked with assisting world restoration.

Temporally, the *Times* was founded in 1982 with the mission of providing an alternative to the liberal *Washington Post*. The spiritual mission of the paper was to support Rev. Moon's vision for world restoration and unity. In response to critics who said he spent \$100 billion on *The Times* with little return on the investment, Rev. Moon said that if \$100 billion was the cost of saving the entire world then that is something that will make God happy.

A decision was made early in the formation of the paper, led by a close associate of Rev. Moon's, Dr. Bo Hi Pak, that it would remain a secular newspaper, independent of the Unification movement. This led to some difficulties for the owners who were paying for the paper, at great sacrifice by fundraisers and financiers mostly in Asia, but who had no direct control over content, either of news or of the larger-than-normal Commentary section for opinion columns and editorials.

The newspaper's initial leadership was largely drawn from the *Washington Star*, including Smith Hempstone and Woody West, along with many former Star reporters. The newspaper's power and influence greatly expanded in the mid-1980s after Arnaud de Borchgrave took over as the executive editor, assisted by Wes Pruden, Woody West, and Pulitzer-Prize winning editor Mary Lou Forbes, who directed the Commentary section. DeBorchgrave is credited with putting the newspaper on the map, through his flamboyant and energetic leadership. DeBorchgrave's dedication included sleeping in his office in a Murphy bed he had installed in a large mezzanine office overlooking the Times' newsroom. He would frequently scribble story ideas on yellow cards and pass them down over the balcony railing in his upstairs office in what recipients dubbed “Yellow Rain.” An ardent anti-communist, patriotic conservative, and former *Newsweek* writer, more than any other figure at the newspaper deBorchgrave, who died in 2015, used his experience and contacts within President Ronald Reagan's administration to establish *The Washington Times* as a credible source of news and information, and an absolute must-read newspaper.

As a former actor and GE spokesman, Reagan understood better than any modern politician the power of ideas and the use of media to convey them. Creation of *The Times* was perfectly timed to the incoming conservative administration. Reagan quickly revolutionized the establishment foreign policy toward Communism and the Soviet Union by clearly identifying Moscow as the enemy to be defeated, not just contained. He called the Soviet Union an evil empire. But more importantly he set in motion covert and overt policies that

quicken its demise and resulted in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the Soviet Union on Dec. 26, 1991.

Reagan would say in 1992 in a video message for the newspaper's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary: "You my friends at *The Washington Times* have told it to them. It wasn't always the popular thing to do, but you were a loud and powerful voice. Like me, you arrived in Washington at the beginning of the most momentous decade of the century. Together we rolled up our sleeves and go to work. And oh, yes, we won the Cold War."

According to a retired U.S. Secret Service agent who worked closely to protect President Reagan, the president demanded that aides deliver *The Washington Times* to him in the morning (along with two other papers) in Washington or wherever he was traveling in the world.

*The Times* became a go-to destination for conservatives in government who greatly assisted the paper by providing exclusive information that was converted into scoop reporting.

In 2002, Rev. Moon said of the paper: "In the context of God's Will, there needed to be a newspaper that had the philosophical and ideological foundation to encourage and enlighten the people and leaders of America. For months, I waited with the hope that some patriotic Americans would start a newspaper in Washington to provide an alternative voice to the *Post*. But when it became clear that no one would do so, I decided we had to do it. Ronald Reagan had been elected president in a landslide vote. Yet while he tried to maintain a strong stand against communist expansion, there was much confusion in Washington over what America's proper response to the Soviet threat should be. *The Washington Times* provided leadership through thoughtful commentary and objective news and information to make clear the harsh reality of communist tyranny."

"This new era of media, with the massive distribution of news and information, requires leadership and clear guidance for the betterment of individuals based on values and on the knowledge of God and spirit world," he added. "*The Washington Times* and our family of media have been providing this direction for the past two decades and will continue to do so into our third decade. My hope is that each one of you as well will embody the qualities of defending freedom, promoting family values, and strengthening your faith in God so that you may become leaders of the world."

The paper was part of a three-pronged effort to restore America to align with the founding principles of freedom against Communist tyranny, to promote the family against the corrosive impact of family breakdown and strengthen faith in seeking to unit all religious people in a common goal of world restoration.

My position as a national security reporter quickly became an important voice on debates on national security topics. Exclusives and inside information about policy debates and battles both inside the Executive Branch and on Capitol Hill made *The Times* an absolute requirement for officials on both the political Left and Right. National security officials in

and out of government regarded my reporting as a national American treasure. Some prayed for me.

I always saw my position as a professional reporter who presented the news without fear or favor. My mandate was to tell the truth, factually. Our strategy at *The Times* to counter the liberal left bias so prevalent in the mainstream news media was simple. With less resources for travel and foreign bureaus and staff paid less than industry standards, *The Times* strategy called for carving out unique news reporting of areas where other papers were deficient. Politics, national security, investigative reporting.

For me, anti-communism was an important influence in my worldview and thus I found *The Washington Times* to be an oasis of rational news coverage during the Cold War. Having been exposed to New Left ideas during the anti-Vietnam War era, by the 1970s, I understood the power of ideas and ideology. I too was concerned about the spread of communism, with its anti-human, anti-God ideology. Domestically, I opposed the American variant of the New Left radicalism that had begun quietly conducting what radical theorist Herbert Marcuse called "the Long March through the institutions" of the United States, a march that culminated in the election of Barack Obama in 2008.

Among those news stories and news coverage by *The Times* during the Cold War that were instrumental in helping end the Soviet Union, the exposure of Soviet KGB activities and disinformation figured prominently. Others included extensive coverage of the arms control debates of the 1980s and especially the problem of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty that had become the main rallying cry for liberal arms control advocates who often regarded America as the main problem in the world in the nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. The ABM Treaty perpetuated the immoral Cold War nuclear policy of Mutual Assured Destruction that held the populations of the United States and Soviet Union hostage to large nuclear arsenals. Worse, the treaty limited developing defenses against missiles. It was Reagan who revolutionized the concept of strategic defense against missiles by launching the Strategic Defense Initiative. It would take the administration of President George W. Bush to finally withdraw from the treaty in 1991, paving the way for missile defenses.

The debates over missile defense were one of the most significant political battles during the late stages of the Cold War and as a result many patriots in government worked with *The Times* to help tell the truth about the need for protecting against missile attacks.

*The Times* also played a key role in exposing the danger of foreign intelligence activities. Beginning in 1985, a series of extremely damaging spy cases unfolded in what would come to be known as the Year of the Spy. It would eventually stretch into the Decade of the Spy and *The Times* played an important role in highlighting the danger. For example, in the case of the Navy communications secrets supplied to Moscow by Soviet spy John A. Walker Jr. and the spy ring he ran, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger revealed that if the United States had gone to war with the Soviet Union, the secrets supplied by the Walker spy ring would have led to the defeat of the United States.

*The Times* role in highlighting danger of foreign espionage would burst into public view only a few years after the Cold War ended, with the disclosures that Aldrich Ames, a traitorous CIA officer, and Robert Hansen, a turncoat FBI agent, emerged as among the most damaging Soviet and later Russian spies in American history.

And spying by Communist China would have lasting and dangerous consequences that are still being felt today. China conducted an across-the-board espionage campaign against the U.S. nuclear weapons establishment and, according to the CIA, obtained secrets on every deployed warhead in the U.S. nuclear arsenal. The secrets are now incorporated into a large and growing Chinese nuclear arsenal that directly threatens the United States. Worse, China shared its stolen American nuclear weapons secrets with Pakistan, which in turn spread those nuclear arms details to Iran, North Korea, and Libya.

The newspaper also battled communism in Central America through its coverage of the effort to defeat Soviet-aligned communists in Nicaragua and elsewhere. When liberals in Congress cut off funding for the Contra rebels, the CIA-backed anti-communist forces, the *Times* stepped in. In May 1985, the *Times* sponsored an international fundraising campaign to raise \$14 million for the Contras, including a \$100,000 donation from Rev. Moon and the Unification Church.

A critically important line of news coverage for *The Times* during the Cold War was the extensive coverage of Soviet aid to international terrorism, support that reached its zenith with Moscow's role in the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul. *The Times* provided some of the most important exclusives highlighting the Soviet backing for terrorist groups around the world.

*The Washington Times* was unique in that its opinion pages were overtly conservative. Its news pages, however, have remained focused on providing what *Times'* Editor Emeritus Wesley Pruden says is uncompromisingly objective in its news reporting. The expanded opinion and editorial pages have been unapologetically conservative.

As the late British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher states, "in difficult times, even more than in easy ones, the voice of conservative news must make itself heard in the media. It isn't always easy, but this we can be sure, while *The Washington Times* is alive and well, conservative news will never be drowned out. And if they are heard, they will prevail."

In sum, *The Washington Times* played a pivotal role in helping to end the Soviet Union, the most important monolithic and expansionist communist power of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

As Rev. Moon stated:

"When I announced the founding in 1982, many people in America ridiculed me. Some experts predicted that, even if I founded a newspaper of acceptable quality, I would run out of funds in six months. And if not that, then the paper would degenerate into nothing more than a mouthpiece for the Unification Church and would end up as a weekly newspaper, read by almost no one. Now, *The Washington Times* is counted among the top three newspapers in

terms of influence among 1,750 newspapers published in the United States... History will not forget this contribution. The efforts of *The Washington Times* to revitalize the moral and spiritual values of the United States and world are being recognized as absolutely urgent and necessary at this time.”

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