

Sign of the Times

On the day Ronald Reagan was buried, The New York Times ran a page one analysis of how history might evaluate his Presidency which stated: "(Reagan's) conviction that words counted for more in politics than mere deeds—enabled him to convince large majorities that as long as he was in charge, it would remain 'Morning in America.' They made it possible for him to redraw the nation's political map, moving the center so abruptly to the right that even Bill Clinton would proclaim the end of big government...

"(Reagan's) brand of radical conservatism had a counterpart in Britain under Margaret Thatcher, but it achieved little success elsewhere (overseas)."

Radical conservatism? Ronald Reagan was a Barry Goldwater clone? According to R.W. Apple, the Times associate editor who wrote the piece, he was indeed. And so another example of how The New York Times, itself, has become radicalized is in the books.

Somewhere along the line, the Times got out of the news business and into the nation-building business. Its primary intent is no longer to provide objective information and fair-minded analysis to its readers, but to convince them to support a brave new world in the USA. The power of The New York Times is being used to promote the formation of a new America, a bright, shining progressive city on a hill of steep government entitlements.

But why should you care what an individual newspaper does? With a circulation of a million and a half, most Americans don't read The New York Times. True enough, but consider this. Every morning, the powerful barons and anchor people who run the network TV news operations read the Times first thing. They often take editorial direction from the paper, sometimes

duplicating story selection and even point-of-view. All news radio does the same thing, and the Times' wire goes out to thousands of newspapers across the country and around the world. This is one extremely powerful outfit.

The transformation of The New York Times from news source to ideological journal has taken years. The absurdity of labeling Ronald Reagan a far-right radical is just the latest in a long line of over-the-top "reportage." Two further recent examples:

- The New York Times ran 43 front page stories in 47 days on the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq. By contrast, the Chicago Tribune, certainly no conservative bastion, posted 27 front page stories on the situation. There is no question the Times is using the scandal to hammer the Bush administration, as often its front page expositions contain little new information. But the steady drip of scandal undermines the President's credibility and makes his administration look brutal and inept.
- Over the past few months, The New York Times has run eleven stories on the start-up liberal radio network which is now having trouble paying its bills and is heard on less than 20 stations. The last time the Times tried to prop up this propaganda operation, its correspondent opined the network had a "significant" audience. That is flat out untrue.

In almost every section, the Times the reader is confronted with liberal ideology. Even the feature sections are skewed. Times business reporter Geraldine Fabrikant wrote an article on me a few months back, and described your humble correspondent as a "conservative" four times. I guess the label was used the fourth time in case you might have missed the other three.

In the world of the Times, Americans like Ronald Reagan who want a smaller federal government are radicals—mean people who want to hurt minorities. Those who believe symbols of Judeo-

Christian philosophy should be freely exhibited in public are “fundamentalists.” If you oppose abortion you are “anti-woman.” If you’re against gay marriage, you are, quite possibly, homophobic. The number of personal attacks in the Times has increased dramatically over the past few years, and if you don’t believe me, just ask Mel Gibson.

As the Blues Brothers once remarked, “We’re on a mission from God.” The Times, of course, would remove God from that quotation. The paper is definitely on a mission, and the gloves are off. Arthur Sulzberger and his tribe want a secular nation with few judgments on personal behavior, income redistribution through taxation of the affluent, and a foreign policy that seeks consensus at almost all costs.

That’s the sign of the Times today. And God (sorry) help you if you’re standing in its way.

Ronald Reagan

One of the reasons I fought so hard a few months ago against that sleazy TV Reagan movie was that the former President simply didn’t deserve that kind of display. CBS, I believe, came to the same conclusion when programming boss Les Moonves finally began paying attention to the project and decided to dump it. Although the film was ultimately broadcast on a cable station, few Americans saw it.

The left-wing ideologues screamed censorship, but the real issue was respect. Ronald Reagan deserved the respect of Americans even if you disagreed with his political point-of-view. The truth is that Reagan was a decent, honest man who tried to improve his country. In short, he was a patriot who did not deserve to be mocked during the final days of his life

by some Hollywood pinheads with agendas.

Generally speaking, Americans responded to Ronald Reagan because he seemed accessible to them. He came across as a nice guy who loved his country and respected its traditions. No question his acting ability helped him foster that public image, but everybody I've spoken with who knew the man said the same thing: There was no malice in him. He had strong beliefs but was not ruthless in imposing them.

There are some Americans who believe that President Reagan was one of our finest leaders. Certainly, his strong stand against the Soviet Union changed the world for the better. He also put forth a good moral example and America's image throughout the world was greatly enhanced during his tenure.

The biggest deficit I saw in Reagan was his failure to capitalize on his enormous popularity to initiate social change. He was brilliant in illuminating issues so that most everyone could understand them. But he lacked the "crusader" gene. He was cautious and did not use his gift of persuasion as well as he might have.

Here's an example. Ronald Reagan was firmly against abortion on moral and historical grounds. I have a handwritten letter by him dated January 14, 1980, when he was trying to capture momentum in the presidential primaries. The letter says this: "I have a very strong belief that interrupting a pregnancy means the taking of a human life. In our Judeo-Christian tradition this can only be justified as a matter of self-defense."

A simple statement, but one that could have engendered worthwhile debate about a divisive issue and about America's Judeo-Christian tradition, which today some are seeking to deny and destroy. But Reagan was not a confrontational guy; he did not want to market his personal beliefs to the nation and to the world. I saw that reluctance as an opportunity lost,

especially since Ronald Reagan often transcended party lines. Many Democrats respected and listened to him.

It has only been sixteen years since Reagan left the presidency, but things have changed a bit, haven't they? President Clinton was a polarizing figure, and so is George W. Bush. Today we have bitter ideologues on both sides that see politics as blood sport and any dissent as a threat. The age of Reagan was notable for its lack of viciousness, at least in public. Because of his Alzheimer's, the former President missed the degeneration of the political debate over the past decade. I believe it would have saddened him.

History will be kind to Ronald Reagan because he, himself, was kind to so many people and what goes around definitely comes around. We Americans should be proud we elected this man to the presidency and should remember what he stood for: Freedom, self-reliance and pride in the land of his birth. You can't go wrong with a legacy like that.

Who's Watching Us

This checks and balances deal the founders set up has worked pretty well for us here in America. We have a process whereby most powerful people in the public sector can be held accountable for their actions by other powerful people. Hi, there, Richard Nixon. But there is no oversight on the press, which is a private enterprise. We get a free pass and now that's beginning to hurt the nation.

As you may know, the Federal Communications Commission is cracking down hard on Howard Stern and his outrageous brethren by fining companies that employ them if the shock jocks venture into the murky world of "indecenty." You can't have

sex on your front lawn, and you can't detail sexual activity on the airwaves owned by the public. Fine. But, to be fair, "indecentcy" should be explicitly defined by the FCC.

When it comes to the news media, there is no FCC to fine us when we do something unsavory like intentionally mislead the public. Let's cite a few examples, and please forgive me because some of these exhibitions are personal. Unfortunately, I am a primary source these days in confronting declining media standards.

When a fanatical Shi'ite militia attacked American troops in Iraq, many in the press labeled the situation "an uprising." But it wasn't. It was a well-planned power grab attempt directed by a militant cleric with ties to Iran. An uprising is when regular folks throw off those in power. The collapse of the Berlin Wall was an uprising.

But many newspaper editors chose to headline an "uprising." Some simply made a mistake, but others wanted to put the worst possible face on that action for political reasons. That is deceitful.

Here's another example. As you may know, The New York Times has done everything it could to disparage Mel Gibson and his movie about the death of Jesus. The Times lost the battle, but continues its jihad.

Last week Times reporter Anne Thompson played down the success of the film and wrote this: "(Gibson) was able to deploy partisan news-media pundits like Fox's Bill O'Reilly to appeal to their constituents to show their support by seeing the movie."

Thompson's statement is flat-out false. I never recommended the film. I told Gibson on television the movie was too violent. That's on the record. And when I attempted to ask the Times to supply evidence that Gibson had "deployed" me,

Ombudsman Daniel Okrent refused to take my call.

The declining standards in journalism extend to television news as well. Recently, right-wing bomb thrower G. Gordon Liddy appeared on CNN and MSNBC and asserted that my radio program was a "failure." Westwood One, the company that syndicates the show, fired off a memo to those networks providing detailed information proving the opposite. Both CNN and MSNBC refused to correct the record.

I could give you dozens of other examples, but the point is that press accountability no longer exists in this country. Ten years ago most of the media policed itself, at least somewhat. Today that's rare.

What's changed is that many press outlets are now run by ideologues on a mission. The gloves of fairness are off. These editors have set the journalistic rules on fire, and there is no one to put out the flames. Thus, Americans who depend on information to make responsible decisions about their country are often hoodwinked.

One more example. A few years ago, The Washington Post ran an article that said I lied about my upbringing—that I was not raised in Levittown, New York as I stated. The article was intended to damage my credibility. That untruth was picked up by scores of media outlets, and was even exploited by a major publishing house.

Over Easter, I was rummaging through the attic at my mother's home. There I found the house deed from 1951. It was sent to my parents by the County Trust Company. The address on the deed is Levittown.

Fighting to Win

Genghis Khan was perhaps the most successful warrior the world has ever known. During the 13th century, he conquered most of civilization with an army of less than 100,000 Mongol horsemen. According to Genghis' biographer, Jack Weatherford, the warlord's philosophy went this way: "Warfare was not a sporting contest or a mere match between rivals; it was a total commitment of one people against another. Victory did not come to the one who played by the rules; it came to one who made the rules and imposed them on his enemy."

Osama Bin Laden is unquestionably one of history's greatest villains, a man who has ordered the deaths of thousands of civilians to fulfill a perverted vision of religious thought. Does anyone doubt that, if given the chance, Bin Laden would commit mass murder by using a nuclear device or a chemical weapon to annihilate as many people as possible? Would any rational person dispute that?

The answer, of course, is no. Bin Laden wants to kill as many "infidels" as he can. And so America is locked in a war against this maniac and thousands of terrorists who agree with his philosophy.

But is America fighting that war the way Genghis Khan would fight it? The question is almost absurd because the answer is so clear: not a chance. This country has nothing close to a "total commitment" in defeating terrorism. We are divided on tactics as well as ethics, and the terrorists know it.

Writing in *The New York Times*, Elizabeth Alexander, the Director of the National Prison Project for the ACLU, puts forth: "The Pentagon-approved interrogation techniques that deprive prisoners of sleep and force them to stand in stress positions for extended periods are both disturbing and illegal."

“It is time for the military to unequivocally ban such officially sanctioned abuse of prisoners.”

Make no mistake, the ACLU wants captured terrorists to have the same rights as American criminals do. So sometime in the future it's very possible that a captured terrorist, who has knowledge of an impending chemical or biological attack, would be interrogated as a bank robber would be. You could not deprive the suspected terrorist of “sleep” nor make him or her unusually uncomfortable.

My questions: Do you think that's a sane strategy? And do you think the ACLU is looking out for you and your family?

The kind of theoretical nonsense that the ACLU and others are putting out there must be giving Osama and his boys huge laughs. Look, fair-minded Americans are embarrassed by Abu Ghraib and never want anything like that to happen again. We are better than the terrorists. We should never violate human rights in any circumstance.

But a middle ground must be found and fast. The terrorists have no rules, they kill at will. But we, the primary targets, have all kinds of boundaries, many of which put us in danger.

President Bush and Congress should have declared a formal war shortly after September 11th, along with defining new rules of incarceration and interrogation to fit this unique combat situation. U.S. military courts should handle cases of accused terrorism, and harsh interrogation techniques should be approved when there is an “imminent” danger.

A divided America playing by obsolete rules of engagement is not going to win the war against Bin Laden and his mass murderers. We need to wake up and wise up. As Genghis Khan well understood, it is defeat the enemy or die.

Saving George W. Bush

If President Bush loses the election next November, it will be his own fault. For some reason, the President refuses to explain the issues that are defining his administration so the folks can understand what the deuce is going on.

Mr. Bush's policy in Iraq has gone south, but it is not a lost cause. All wars have reversals, and it is the Commander-in-Chief's duty to rally the troops. Do you feel rallied? I don't.

Likewise on gas prices. Why have they risen so quickly, and what is the President doing about it? I don't know, and it's my job to follow this stuff. The President did tell us he would not release petroleum reserves to drive down prices, but he has not explained why the cost has gone up in the first place.

The President scored big after the 9/11 attack because he accurately reflected the mood of the country. He was angry, we were angry. He told us exactly what he was going to do in Afghanistan and why. His popularity soared.

Now he sends his wife to defend him on the Jay Leno program. I like Laura. She's a good spokesperson for the President. But the folks want to hear from him.

The latest Newsweek poll has Mr. Bush's approval rating at 42%, the lowest of his tenure in office. Even his top campaign advisors admit if the President's approval numbers drop below 40% and stay there, he's toast. One would think Mr. Bush would change his "Cool Hand Luke" strategy of "failure to communicate."

The thing that might save President Bush is that, despite all the negatives right now, John Kerry has failed to move up significantly in the polls. That same Newsweek poll has the race tied, even with Bush's low job approval number.

The reason Kerry is languishing is that he has not put forth a clear war-on-terror strategy, and that many independent Americans fear the "far-left" factor which we talked about a few months ago in this space.

Historically, Americans have rejected extremists in all parties. Barry Goldwater got clobbered and so did George McGovern. General Wesley Clark's presidential run was demolished by his embrace of Michael Moore. So John Kerry has to distance himself from the ultra-liberal wing of his party and so far that has not happened. Hugging Ted Kennedy in Iowa didn't help.

But Kerry has an even more serious problem on the horizon. Extremist billionaire George Soros is pouring millions into the Democratic cause by funding propaganda websites like MoveOn.org, which runs anti-Bush attack ads all over the country. Soros is a scary guy. An avowed atheist, he wants an "open society" where legalized drugs and few limits on private behavior would be policy. He also loves "income redistribution" through taxation. One thing he doesn't love is how America is fighting terror.

Speaking at Columbia University last week, Soros said that the U.S. war on terror had claimed more innocent lives than the September 11 attacks. He also put forth that, although America claims to be a liberating country, we're really the oppressors.

That kind of view might get a standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival, but it's not going to get anyone elected President of the United States. Thus the Soros money could easily become a huge problem for the Candidate Kerry. Sooner

or later, he will have to stand up and say how he feels about this sugar daddy Democrat.

So, ironically, the people who despise President Bush the most, leftist extremists, are actually doing him a favor. The majority of Americans may not like the way Bush is handling the job right now, but do they want a guy like Soros having access to power? Do they share the far left "vision" of America?

My guess is they do not, and that's why the President is still hanging on. So if Mr. Bush goes down to defeat in November, it will be entirely on him. You can't blame those who hate him. They've helped him out a lot.