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ON PAGE 2-A

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ABC's '45-85' scary blend of half-truths

Any resemblance between the history of the U.S.-Soviet confrontation since World War II, as portrayed on ABC's 4½-hour special "45-85" and what actually happened, as I covered it for 39 years, was purely coincidental. It was a scary blend of information, disinformation, truth, untruth and half-truth.

Take poor Fidel Castro, the misunderstood Jeffersonian Democrat who was, we were told (in countless promo spots leading up to the big event), pushed into the Russian bear's arms by a chowderhead called Uncle Sam. This eisegetical innocent was the Rodney Dangerfield of international relations. He got no respect. Turned down by a midtown hotel in Manhattan in 1960, he sulked to Harlem's Theresa Hotel with his revolutionary entourage. As ABC recounts the story, Nikita Khrushchev — who gave us the invasion of Hungary, the Berlin ultimatum, the Berlin wall and the Cuban missile crisis — raced up to Harlem to give Fidel Dangerfield the respect he desperately craved.

ABC did not even bother to look up the full text of its own Barbara Walters' interview with Mr. Castro in 1977. Perhaps today's young researchers did not realize that some key excerpts were not aired by ABC, for reasons best known to whoever was in charge of censorship by omission in those days. But Foreign Policy magazine did run the long interview *verbatim et litteratim*. Mr. Castro, to his credit, told Miss Walters that he had been a Communist since law school. He dared not tell his guerrillas where he really stood.

By the same token, Tomas Borge, Daniel Ortega and his brother Umberto concealed their lily-red credentials and postured as Jeffersonian Democrats until they had hijacked the Nicaraguan revolution from the genuine democratic forces.

While Mr. Castro was in the United States in 1959 for his first post-victory visit, vehemently disclaiming any Communist connections, a young Cuban secret service recruit was in Havana with a group of 120 KGB agents (85 officers and 35 interpreters), headed by a Colonel Ulianov. His name was Andres Alfaya Borrado. He served in Mr. Castro's DGI — the Spanish language branch of the KGB — for 19 years and worked in 22 countries before defecting to France.

EDITOR'S PERSPECTIVE

by Arnaud de Borchgrave

Mr. Alfaya and other Cuban recruits were lectured by their Soviet trainers on the importance of disinformation and agitation during the "transition" already under way in Cuba. They were young and didn't really understand much about what the Soviets were saying. It all sounded more like psychiatry than spying. At the end of the course, Mr. Alfaya's superior, Ramiro Valdez, to this day Cuba's top intelligence operative, warned that anyone talking about their new work would be executed.

Mr. Alfaya and his classmates were assigned the task of completing the "seizure of cultural power." They were given a dozen anti-U.S. and anti-CIA stories a day for media consumption. They came straight from Moscow and were then adapted for local needs. Seventy-five percent of local media space was arbitrarily earmarked for "agitprop" and to cultivate permanent hatred for all symbols of capitalism."

Mr. Alfaya told me that one of the most brilliant disinformation campaigns launched at that time was to make world opinion believe that it was U.S. hostility that was pushing Cuba into the Soviet embrace. The story sticks to this very day — certainly at ABC.

Hundreds of "progressive" intellectuals gathered from all over the world in Havana in January 1968 for the International Cultural Congress. Mr. Alfaya was astonished at how easy it was for the KGB-DGI net to manipulate them and orient their writings.

At the first Tricontinental Solidarity Conference in Havana in January '66, the Soviet bloc secretly decided on a two-track approach for destabilizing Western democracies. On a government-to-government level, it was to be what the Soviets to this day call "peaceful coexistence," the smokescreen behind which the Soviets were to achieve global military supremacy while disarming the

West psychologically. On another level, the Havana '66 compact agreed to organize, fund and train international terrorist groups through a variety of proxies. This strategy of expelling the United States from centers of influence continues to this day.

Nary a word about all this in 4½ hours of TV "history." ABC managed to convey the image of two bumbling superpowers whose motives and objectives are interchangeable. Despite their enormous economic difficulties, the Soviets and their proxies remain extraordinarily skillful at pursuing by all means short of open warfare objectives that are more traditionally pursued, at least in Western minds, by war itself. The tactics include state-sponsored terrorism, increasingly funded by narcotics rackets; subversion; penetration; and, above all, disinformation. And on all these fronts, ABC remained silent.

Mr. Castro's covert emissaries continue to have success in dealing with quite influential Americans who would not consciously enter into any similar arrangements with the Soviets. Cuban agents continue to lead a charmed life in the United States although the DGI is a KGB surrogate. Whatever the explanation, Fidel Castro's people are able to contact, to cultivate and in many cases to recruit American citizens in the media, congressional and other influential circles and get them to depict Central American and other Third World Marxist-led guerrillas as the good guys and the United States as the arch "imperialist" villain.

ABC seems to yearn for yet another period of detente between the superpowers. By signing two dozen bilateral agreements with the Soviet Union in 1972 — including SALT I, ABM and the space rendezvous program — President Nixon and Henry Kissinger were hoping to weave the superpowers into a web of mutual interests that would somehow temper Soviet behavior. A year later, Leonid Brezhnev told his Warsaw Pact colleagues that "peaceful coexistence" with the United States was designed to bring about an irreversible shift of forces favorable to socialism.

ABC did not tell us what happened when 35 heads of state met in Helsinki in the summer of '75 to sign the European

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Accords on Security and Cooperation and Presidents Ford and Brezhnev hailed a new era of detente in the world. That's when the Soviet Union began secretly manufacturing the SS-20 missile which was targeted against West Europe two years later, changing the balance of world power.

A few weeks after Helsinki, Moscow caught the United States by surprise by introducing Cuban proxy troops into Angola to seal a Communist victory in that country, repeating the same scenario in Ethiopia two years later. Today, the Soviet Union exports 11 times more weaponry to Africa than the United States. It is also the world's biggest arms exporter.

The Soviets' goal, as Richard Nixon reminded us this week (and as he probably told ABC but that part must have wound up on the cutting room floor), is victory without war. America's goal is peace without victory — which is, as Nixon says, a recipe for defeat for the West. The Soviet leadership does not want war. That is a given. Their primary goal is to achieve nuclear superiority to have the political leverage to support their expansionist foreign policy — to exact surrender on the installment plan. Hence, Moscow's desperate desire to do away with SDI.

The discovery that Mikhail Gorbachev knows how to handle a knife and fork is more important to our media stars than the fact that Mr. Gorbachev rose to the top through the patronage of Mikhail Suslov, the steely custodian of Communist orthodoxy, and Yuri Andropov, the man who ran the KGB for 15 years. ABC owes its viewers another 4½ hours of programming — this time with the world the way it is, rather than the way our mediacrats would like it to be.

The year 1968 was when many things fell apart, according to ABC. But it omitted to tell us that was also the year our mediacrats snatched defeat from the jaws of victory during the Tet Offensive.

The former Minister of Justice of the National Liberation Front — the Viet Cong — who escaped among the boat people, testified that Tet was an unmitigated disaster for Hanoi, but that through a disinformation campaign they convinced U.S. opinion that it was the other way round. President Johnson felt compelled to abdicate.

A high-ranking French socialist who watched the ABC production in Washington told me, "They even had me wondering what on earth we were all doing in Korea in 1950. Overlooked in all those quick flashes of historical revisionism was the fact that the United States and its allies resisted and turned back a North Korean invasion, aided and abetted by the Soviet Union."