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A Heretic's Guide to Ideological Subversion

“Ideological subversion means always a distractive aggressive activity aimed to destroy the country, nation, or geographic area of your enemy” - Y.B.

Former KGB informant, propagandist, and Soviet defector Yuri Bezmenov describes the process of ideological subversion in some few dated lectures and interviews percolating forgotten corners of the internet. Taken together, Yuri's documented public appearances represent the most succinct and detailed explanation of the Soviet strategy for waging an overt, legal, ideological war on a polity I have found. Welcome to the Heretic's Guide to Ideological Subversion.

You, dear reader, presumably have come to meet this guide because you are a heretic. This is of course to be expected, how could you not be? All complex societies operate on overlapping ideological substrates and yours is no different. What oppresses you will always be in part what rules you. There are heretics at all times and in all places because there will always be an orthodoxy to which you should conform. No, really. You should conform. It is likely in your best interest to conform and very unlikely you'll succeed if you don't. But if you must be

heretical, I have some field notes for you. They're not mine, of course. KGB methods outlined in this guide were developed for the purposes of undermining the global hegemony of the United States and preparing ground for the installment of communist pro-Soviet puppet governments in both developed and fledgling nations. I am presenting you, dear reader, what bits of light may be gleamed from the cracked door to a deep, dark hall. Decades of trial and error on both their own population(s) and others, revealed a systematic pattern to ideological subversion. Understanding their methods gives us a generalized understanding of ideological subversion that has applications even in a multi-polar post-Soviet arrangement.

The four stages of ideological subversion of a people are as follows:

1. Demoralization - A process of 15-20 years, this is the time it takes to educate one generation in a new ideology, to lay the groundwork for the infiltration of institutions shaping public opinion.
2. Destabilization - Destabilize the relations and institutions of your enemy. Sleepers from stage 1 are now entering leadership positions and becoming politically active.
3. Crisis - Due to confusion and the inability to cohere around a common narrative, legitimate bodies of power can no longer function. Subversives

instead focus on installing artificial bodies of non-elected committees as self-appointed arbiters of public opinion. Bureaucratize all decision-making.

4. Normalization - The revolution is over. Newly self-appointed rulers discard useful idiots and stabilize the country by force to exploit the victory.

Impetus for this guide runs deep. An ideology can outlive its proponents. If it's any good, it does. Long drives on American freeways, a conversion van equipped with cutting boards, knives, a bed, and at times, a portable toilet, felt more like going on tour than visitation. "For Spring break we're getting the band back together." Grandma always made sure to drive us (my brother and I) halfway across the country to see my father. Punctuating highway-cut apples slices, incomprehensible arguments between grandparents in Russian, and the blasting of slavic music of their homeland, came conversations dripping with the blood of history. I'd ask prying questions about life in the U.S.S.R., grandpa's time in the military, how they left, when they decided to leave. Then I'd go deeper.

"Espionage occupies only 15% of time, money, and manpower - 15% of the activity of KGB. The rest, 85%, is always subversion" - Y.B.

While stationed in India, Bezmenov grew such love for the people and culture that he developed in KGB terms, "split loyalty" - meaning more affection for another country than your own. Himself, the son of a high ranking military officer living a privileged life as a journalist inside the department of "Political

Publications,” had little incentive to defect. His status inside the USSR was that of the bureaucratic, military, and intelligence services elite. However, Yuri became increasingly disaffected with various failed social projects Soviet agents had implemented in India, and finally turned when a number of Indian journalists who had been loyal to the regime were instrumentally murdered for purely political purposes. Yuri’s choice to defect was made out of moral disdain for the regime, not personal dissatisfaction.

He disappeared and anonymized himself by joining a group of American hippies in the countercultural movement to avoid detection. At the time there were enough “dissident” Western youths traveling around the Indian subcontinent sans papers that one could make oneself invisible in this crowd. Eventually he met with American intelligence agents in Greece, before being granted asylum in Canada. He worked for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) from 1972-1976, before being leaving, so he claims, as a result of the KGB using a Soviet ambassador to Canada to persuade then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to apply pressure for his removal.

“There are no grassroots revolutions, period. Any revolution is the byproduct of a highly organized group of conscientious and professional organizers” - Y.B.

Grandma was raised in Stalinist Russia. Pictures of the glorious leader hung in every schoolroom. Indoctrination in communist ideology began early,

Marx, Lenin, bits of Trotsky, with a full-on cult-of-personality built around Joseph Stalin. To praise, adore, work for, and serve Stalin was synonymous not only with the highest of Soviet patriotism, but also the moral exaltation of carrying out the grand global communist revolution. To speak bad on his name was synonymous with being disappeared. This extreme fascinated me. What did you think of Stalin? I'd ask. He wasn't so bad, she'd say. What about the millions of people he killed? Those numbers are exaggerated; she'd look away. Still, the body count is in the millions, I'd say. He was a good leader, even if he did some bad things. A full double-down. In her old age, in a free society, with no U.S.S.R. in sight, she had to toe the line even to her grandson. Had I been a neighborly inquirer or state-sponsored investigator, a public schoolteacher, or even a family member, in the old regime there would have been a 1/3 chance I was also serving as a government informant. She had escaped the Soviet Union, but couldn't escape Stalin's influence. I'll never know whether or not she was a heretic. Everyone dies with their secrets.

Demoralization, is a systematic uprooting. In this stage it is essential to foment skepticism, criticism, and ultimately disdain for the values and institutions undergirding the target population. One is laying the groundwork for a new generation that is ideologically compromised. Through institutions of education, culture, and media you subvert the dominant paradigm by a constant picking apart, a deconstruction, of the foundations of the society. This is the time where your target is trained to criticize and question those parts of their society

that constitute any notion of identity. Religion, sex, gender, art, race, philosophy, politics, all these aspects of the target society are challenged or outright subverted. All things are questioned, not for the purpose of reform, but to sew the seeds of doubt in the minds of your enemy.

“You cannot subvert an enemy who does not want to be subverted. Subversion can only be successful when the subverter has a responsive target.” - Y.B.

Grandma was agnostic on god. What mattered to her was independence, education, and the ability to think for yourself. The PhD chemist who started her own lab 10 years after coming to the United States with nothing lived her values. Doubt was never part of the equation. The life she built and the family she left behind was a testament to a belief in the new place she had found. In this place her children and grandchildren could have a life unimaginable to those who stayed in Estonia. All this was built on a promise. Belief in a promise is something like faith.

Destabilization occurs once properly reeducated persons, particularly social and cultural elites, come into positions of prominence and power. Here, all of the agitation and distraction from stage 1 manifests inside the organs of public opinion. Gradually, and then suddenly, making sense of things, telling right from wrong, knowing truth from falsehood, friend from foe, good from evil, patriot

from traitor becomes so muddled and confused so as to send the social climate into a state mimicking schizophrenia.

Everything she did was big. Her life, her career, her family, her personality, even her size. Especially her size. Never in my life was she not obese, and though she cycled through diet fads throughout life, she never kept the weight off. Over the years she got bigger and bigger, with the added effect of becoming less mobile, less able. She was eminently generous to all comers, family, friends, and strangers alike. Less generous though, was she with her time. Her time for her. As she approached senescence everyone tried to warn her about her weight, her age, potential health complications. She'd have none of it. She knew how she was going to die and would tell you: I am going to have a heart attack and fall over all at once. No hospital care, medications, hospice, or end-of-life care. She died exactly how she wanted to die, and made sure to do it before her husband did. She was selfish only with her time.

“The highest art of warfare is not to fight at all, but to subvert anything of value in the country of your enemy until such time that the perception of reality of your enemy is screwed up to such extent that he does not perceive you as an enemy” - Y.B.

Crisis comes next. Having sewn mass confusion and dysfunction into governing bodies and institutions of social influence, desperation sets in. To cope

with emergent chaos and complexity of a rapidly deteriorating social fabric, institutional subversives advocate for increasing bureaucratization and formalization of the nascent insurgent ideology. The ground has been prepared for deference of decision-making to unelected officials, technocrats, and functionaries, who are, at this stage, well-versed in the new paradigm.

Everyone before me had been a chemical engineer. My father, aunt, and uncles, as well as my grandmother and grandfather. Their parents were doctors. It was expected that I'd be an engineer, too. My father had always resented his mother for forcing him into engineering. His deal was that I could go into whatever I pleased. He would not impose the tyranny of a chemical engineering track onto me, though I must finish college. The mandate on education remained, even though the script had changed.

Each of the four stages of ideological subversion can be countered. You, heretical as you are, should be informed of the risks attendant to this kind of action - the consequences of a failed revolution are deadly. It is only fair that in giving this information, potential foils to your endeavors, whatever they may be, are identified. However, what is unique about the Soviet method is that it can be done out in the open. In fact, it was designed specifically to exploit the asymmetries of an open society. Crucially, there must be a regime tolerant of dissent and open to self-criticism for these methods to take root. Demoralization can be countered by restricting the import of ideological propaganda.

Destabilization can be countered by curbing the rights of political agitators. The crisis can be ameliorated by a strong reactionary response and cracking down on subversive organizations. Normalization is the most difficult to reverse. Once normalization is in place, only explicit military intervention will suffice to reinstate the old order. Without a strong, organized response to ideological subversion, it will proliferate.

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