Shock Therapy: The United States Anti-Communist Psychological Campaign in Fourth Republic France

This study examines the United States anti-communist psychological campaign in France during the Fourth Republic. Students of the Cold War have often neglected this American "psywar" as playing a defining role in the Franco-American relationship in the early Cold War era. Rather, it is frequently treated as an aside in overall histories of postwar Franco-American relations. I argue that the American campaign itself proved to be a central factor that shaped U.S.-French relations in the Fourth Republic (1946-1958) and well into the years beyond. This campaign was not just a reflection of American desires to reduce the influence of communism in France; it was also part of a determined U.S. effort to secure support for American policies and initiatives in Europe in the face of the Soviet threat. American officials linked communism in France with obstructionism of U.S. policies and anti-Americanism. Consequently, the U.S. anti-communist psychological campaign both influenced and was driven by American Cold War imperatives. Indeed, had the French been more responsive to U.S. foreign policy overtures and initiatives in Europe in the face of the Soviet threat.
more responsive to U.S. foreign policy overtures and initiatives, it is unlikely that the United States would have intervened to the degree that it did in French affairs. The U.S. campaign came to permeate all aspects of French life and included American pressure on the French to adhere to U.S.-led foreign policy initiatives such as the Marshall Plan, NATO, and the European Defense Community (EDC), as well as related U.S. plans for a rearmed and reintegrated Germany. It also included American intrusions into French political and governmental processes as well as the labor movement. Finally, the American campaign sought to win French public opinion and mitigate the positive gains of Soviet peace initiatives through the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), information and educational programs, and mass media. All of these elements were linked to the others under the guidance of the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB), created by President Harry Truman in April 1951, with representatives from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), State Department, Department of Defense, United States Information Agency, and other interested parties. On January 31, 1952, the PSB approved PSB D-14c "Psychological Operations Plan for the Reduction of Communist Power in France" which consolidated the various anti-communist efforts initiated under the Truman administration and formalized the U.S. anti-communist psychological campaign in France. Fourth Republic France, however, understood the communist threat within a much different set of circumstances than did the United States. Communists in France enjoyed enormous prestige born of their participation in the Resistance. Moreover, communists held government positions, ran the largest trade union, and generally appealed to a French population who feared being drawn into yet another world war. French geography alone demanded a cautious foreign policy. The French understood that their country would be the battlefield if a war should break out between the two Cold War giants. Indeed, the governments of the Fourth Republic had to ensure not only their own political survival; they also had to guarantee that the French Republic could survive the Cold War. Therefore, although the French remained firmly aligned with the West and were in general agreement with the United States on basic Cold War policy issues, the French forged their own path, and in doing so, sometimes disagreed with U.S. foreign policy concepts (or certain aspects of them) as they did with respect to the EDC, Germany, and the role of NATO. These governments did so, not out of anti-Americanism, or because they were weak on communism, but because the exigencies of France's own domestic and foreign policies required it. In the end, the U.S. campaign failed to have the effect desired by U.S. officials. As the U.S. campaign intensified, the French of the Fourth Republic, who had been staunch U.S. allies and were anti-communist in their own right, became increasingly wary of U.S. intervention and sought more independence from the United States. Although the
The World Anti-Communist League (WACL) was established in Taiwan by Chiang Kai-shek, Reverend Moon and Nazi and Japanese war criminals. (Voltaire Network). The Fourth Congress of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL). Eight years later, at the end of the Korean War, the United States replaces France in Indochina. President Eisenhower sets up a regional defense system against the USSR and China. On 8 September 1954, SEATO, based on the NATO model, is established. A number of officers in the League are involved in Campaign Committees for Ronald Reagan’s election. For many of them, the Republican Governor of California is not an unknown quantity. Communist psychological warfare is now winning such extensive victories in the United States that the Red bloc will not need to employ direct military force against us in order to win the total war which they are waging, with this country the
principal target. Edward Hunter, American expert on Communist brainwashing, warned in a consultation with the staff of the Committee on Un-American Activities. The man who beheaded a teacher in a street in France waited outside the school and asked pupils to identify his target, anti-terrorism officials say. The man then posted images on social media of dead victim Samuel Paty, 47, who had shown controversial cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad to his students. The education minister said the root of what happened was "hatred of the Republic". The passing on of French national values - liberty, equality, fraternity - is seen as a core task of the education system here. Three weeks after an attack on the former offices of Charlie Hebdo, this latest killing is yet more proof of the fault-lines over secularism and tolerance, which have left blood before in the country's streets.