Subject: Re: Ukraine
Posted by Wayne Parham on Mon, 30 Dec 2024 15:38:29 GMT
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I really don't like talking politics on AudioRoundTable.com 'cause it's easy to get emotional. It's hard to talk about stuff like this on a messageboard. If we were all hangin' out at a local greasy-spoon, we'd definitely hear each other and our mutual respect would show, so we could have different views without taking even the slightest offence. But on messageboards, it's easy to start feeling uncomfortable, even offended. That's why I limit my comments on these subjects, and usually just leave 'em alone.

Please don't feel uncomfortable here. Please take no offense.

Anyway, I did want to chime in about propaganda. I remember when I first went to Odessa, I visited with a lot of people and watched a lot of television there. I realized that the Russian propaganda was almost totally ineffective. Everyone there saw through the rhetoric, and everyone had very good visibility into other cultures, namely American. They knew all our celebrities and personalities, and they followed our culture, styles, trends and politics.

And by the way - when I say "Russian" - I am combining Russians and Ukrainians. I also include Moldovans, Belarussians, Azerbaijanis, Armenians and a bunch of other former-soviet countries. The people of those countries have one thing in common - they love their people and their culture but mistrust and sometimes even hate their governments.

So but I digress. My point is that Russian propaganda is almost completely ineffective at manipulation of their people's minds. Russian people may be afraid of consequences, so they may modify their behavior accordingly and they may not express their true opinions publicly. But that doesn't mean that Russians agree with what they're hearing on the radio or TV, and it certainly doesn't mean they agree with what their government is doing.

I mentally compared that with what I saw in America, and what I still see today. We are conformists here, and we are deeply affected by what we see and hear. We may choose a side to believe in, but once we take that side, we tend to listen only to that side, and we believe everything they say.

On this point, I think we totally agree. We Americans are very good at spin.

Up until maybe 50 or 60 years ago, we believed our media and government officials almost entirely. We all simply conformed to whatever we saw on TV and thought of ourselves as the brave and the true. That's not as true today as it was, say, when Walter Cronkite was on TV. But we Americans still very much think that we have a sort of monopoly on the truth, or at least that our party does.

Not knocking that - not being un-American - but I do realize how easily manipulated we all are here. Even now that we have started to distrust our government officials, we still seem to trust one side. We pick a party and believe them. We rarely listen to the other side. And we also rarely know much about what's going on in any other part of the world.

I'm guilty of all that too.

So I was surprised at how little I truly knew about Russians and how much all of them knew about me. Or rather I should say, I knew very little about their culture and influences and they knew a lot about mine. They knew our movies, our celebrities, our music, our restaurants, our clothing styles and even sometimes knew our sayings. I didn't know a single Russian celebrity, except maybe those that were made famous by the Olympics.

And back to the propaganda - I will say this: I don't listen to anything about Russian/Ukraine relations coming from American television, radio internet podcasts or any other media outlet. I don't listen to either American political side on this issue. Both are completely wrong. I'm amazed at how loud they've all gotten, when just three decades ago, they were all completely silent.

As soon as the Berlin wall fell in 1989, American went totally silent. It was like, "problem solved," nothing to see here. We did nothing. And maybe that's OK. Maybe we shouldn't have. I'm sort of a libertarian in most cases, so I generally like the idea of staying out of other peoples' business.

But then why were we so involved in Korea and Vietnam only to let the slime ooze back in? What was it all for? Why did we not do a better job of embracing former Soviet states like Ukraine in the 1990s? It sure would have been more productive back then. It would have been easier and nicer. But we did nothing. Politicians didn't care and most of the American public didn't even know who they were back then.

Anyway, that's a pointless question. The fact is, that didn't happen. So the slime did ooze back in. Or at least it's trying. I personally think it's worse slime than the Russian people have seen since Stalin.

And most Americans don't know a thing about it. What we're hearing over here - from both political parties - has no relation to reality, whatsoever. It is very clear to me that what we're seeing is opportunistic propaganda designed to advance an opinion that really doesn't even have anything at all to do with Ukraine. One side simply wants to impeach the other, so they blame the other party's position. It's not at all about Ukraine. It's about having some stupid sound-bite. The arguments made by both sides have almost no merit and are a distraction from things that really matter.

We Americans are damn good at propaganda. We can get people all worked up about stuff that isn't even the real point. It works great for getting their focus off of the points that really matter.