

INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY®

When Democrats Wanted Moscow's Political Help

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December 19, 2016

The Clinton Machine is unable to maintain online security and it supposedly is Russia's fault. Well, Hillary Clinton obviously needed some excuse for twice failing to grab the political prize that her ostentatiously unfaithful husband snatched on the first try. Moscow is as good as any.

If there was evidence of Russian tampering with voting machines, thereby literally stealing the election, then bring it on. But the claim that Moscow originally got the emails that eventually were released by Wikileaks, exposing the sleaze that we always knew surrounded the Clinton operation? That was a public service and media scoop.

Anyway, Democrats were not always so sensitive about relying on Moscow's political assistance. In 1983 the party was down on its luck. So what to do? Call on the Soviet Union for assistance!

To be fair, we really don't what happened 33 long years ago when Sen. John Tunney, a California Senator and a Sen. Ted Kennedy intimate, passed a message to KGB head Viktor Chebrikov. All we have is the memo from the latter to Communist Party General Secretary Yuri Andropov, the former KGB head. Still, there really is no innocent explanation.

Back when the Evil Empire finally collapsed, the Soviet archives were opened for a time. Tim Sebastian, a reporter with the British Times, found the Chebrikov memo and wrote about it. Grove City College's Paul Kengor included the document in his book "The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism." Since then a few conservatives have written about the event.

It's a story worth repeating. According to Chebrikov, "(Ted) Kennedy's close friend and trusted confidant J. Tunney" was visiting Moscow and had a message for Andropov. "Senator Kennedy, like other rational people, is very troubled by the current state of Soviet-American relations." The situation could become more dangerous, mainly due to "Reagan's belligerence, and his firm commitment to deploy" midrange nuclear weapons to Europe.

Unfortunately, from Kennedy's point of view, the economy was improving. There was still hope for "a new economic crisis," but, noted Chebrikov, "there are no secure assurances this will indeed develop." Thus, a better strategy to defeat Reagan in 1984 might be the peace issue. Yet, "according to Kennedy, the opposition to Reagan is still very weak."

So Kennedy offered several "steps to counter the militaristic politics of Reagan and his campaign to psychologically burden the American people."

First, Andropov should invite the esteemed senator to Moscow so the latter could "arm Soviet officials with explanations regarding problems of nuclear disarmament so they may be better prepared and more convincing during appearance in the USA."

Moreover, reported Chebrikov, "to influence Americans" Andropov should appear in televised interviews in America. If Moscow approved, "Kennedy and his friends will bring about suitable steps to have representatives of the largest television companies in the USA contact Y.V. Andropov for an invitation to Moscow for the interview."

Of course, it would be tragic if this was seen as propaganda. Explained Chebrikov, "The senator underlined the importance that this initiative should be seen as coming from the American side."

Similarly, Kennedy urged TV interviews with other Soviet officials, "particularly from the military." The Soviet guests would "have an opportunity to appeal directly to the American people about the peaceful intentions of the USSR."

Lest we think this approach had something to do with Kennedy's political ambitions — he was hoping to run in 1988 and thought the desperate Democratic Party might turn to him in 1984 — Kennedy explained that he wanted to "root out the threat of nuclear war." Toward that end, noted Chebrikov, "Kennedy is very impressed with the activities of Y.V. Andropov and other Soviet leaders, who expressed their commitment to heal international affairs, and improve mutual understandings between peoples."

Criticism of Reagan's foreign policy and approach to the Soviet Union was perfectly legitimate. Indeed, after reform Communist Mikhail Gorbachev came to power, conservatives more often were upset with the administration.

But treating Andropov & Co. as tragically misunderstood peaceniks was bad enough. To plan the entire exercise in an attempt to undermine Reagan's re-election chances and promote Kennedy's long-shot presidential ambitions was frankly outrageous.

Yet today the left is upset because Russian hackers allegedly released information about the malfeasance of America's would-be leaders.

Love or hate The Donald, he won because so many Americans were angry, frustrated, and fed up. Moreover, his chief opponent embodied just about every flaw of the country's ruling class.

Russia's alleged role in the email leaks is a distraction. The most important issue is the development of Trump's policy agenda for the next four or eight years.

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