

Two Tales - One Story. A Review of Strategic Alliances and Spirituality.

- * His Holiness. John Paul II and the Hidden History of Our Time. By Carl Bernstein & Marco Politi. New York, Doubleday, 1996. 582 pages.
- * A Passage to America. By Max Brecher. Bombay, Book Quest Publ., 1993. 407 pages.

When Reagan took office in January 1981 and soon established intimate relationship with the Vatican, the foundation was made to what was to become the end of 'the evil empire' and a new geopolitical structure in less than ten years. This story is revealed with documentary accuracy by the reputed reporter Carl Bernstein - who still seems in touch with the ability to hear the grass grow in the political environment - and his Italian co-writer Marco Politi.

Having an Irish-Catholic father, Reagan soon found himself surrounded in The white House with chosen men from working-class Catholic backgrounds in key-positions of the new administration: William Casey as head of CIA, Zbigniew Brzezinski as national security adviser, Secretary of State Alexander Haig, Vernon Walters, deputy director of CIA, and quite a few others. Previous presidents, including Kennedy, had gone to considerable length to put a distance between the government and the church, but not so anymore. In the Reagan office they now all saw their Church as the crucible of anti-communist conviction, and where Soviet was the political evil empire, Communism as ideology was definitely considered the spiritual evil.

The alliance between Washington and the Vatican was initiated by Brzezinski, himself being of Polish origin and in tune with 'The Polish Pope' Pius II. Already in the Spring of 1981 the Reagan administration began an intelligence shuttle at the highest level with the pope, and Casey or Walters would have their secret briefings in the Vatican with Pius II, fifteen meetings over six years. Reporting directly to Reagan the chief of CIA was now on a undercover mission of global impact. American support to family planning programs in developing countries were cut down to harmonize the agenda of the Catholic Church, in particular the anti-conception policy and the anti-feminism liberation. The spreading of AIDS and continued population growth being direct results of this alliance.

But most of all, the emerging Solidarity movement in Poland and the position of Lech Walesa were key topics in the briefings. U.S. aid worth \$50 mill. supported Solidarity, and when Soviet troops lined up along the borders of Poland during the martial law in November 1981, the Pope was presented by Walters with dewy satellite photos of movements and deployment of Warsaw Pact forces. This alliance and 'geostrategic dialogue' between Reagan and Pius II, with CIA as go-between, showed so powerful in its scope and impact that the political events in Poland during the early 1980'es were to alter the map of Europe and the geostrategic global balance:

"On June 7, 1982, Reagan arrived in the Vatican for a summit meeting between these two very different superpowers that would personalize the remarkable secret alliance between them. Meeting alone without interpreters in the papal study for fifty minutes, two of the most powerful men on earth discussed in philosophical and practical terms a proposition so radical that no other leaders in the West had seriously considered it: that the collapse of the Soviet empire was inevitable, more for spiritual than for strategic reasons, and that the world built at Yalta not only should not but could not stand" (p.355-6).

An amazing story told with the nerve as a thriller and drawing on the full political insight of the authors. The primary sources of the book are Bernstein's and Politi's interviews with more than three hundred key-persons - in the U.S. and in the Vatican - conducted mainly between 1993 and 1996. What is revealed in these pages is by all means one of the most profound and consequential tales of our time.

A tale of an well-knitted alliance not only having its impact on international level, but also influencing the Reagan administration's handling of other matters on the domestic scene as we shall see. For lovers of conspiracy theories You'll find quite a few hints for further research, but in broad daylight it's hard to miss evident facts of a White House initiative to get rid of a 'persona non grata' visitor to the U.S. And maybe the operation was going even further.

When Osho - before 1989 known as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh - entered U.S. in the summer of 1981 it was by all means not the beginning of his work as an enlightened master, but rather an extension of his work from the Eastern to the Western hemisphere. Born in India in 1931, Osho soon demonstrated an independent spirit, and following his experience of enlightenment in the age of 21 he started to address audiences and speak on hot topics within spirituality and sexuality. His ashram in Poona was soon to become a beehive of talented seekers and therapists from the West, pouring their energies into the work of their master and turning Poona into a spiritual growth center of unique quality on a global level in the 1970'es.

Prior to the departure for U.S., one early Monday morning on June 1st with Pan Am's New York bound flight 001, the American Bombay Consulate was approached with a visa application. Three days earlier during the handling of the application, a cable was sent May 29 a.m. Bombay time to the Consulate from Alexander Haig, first secretary of state. It said in plain words that 'THERE IS HIGH LEVEL INTEREST IN THIS CASE'.

And so it seemed, still more evident in the following years, that the harassment by the Reagan administration against Osho's land estate in the mountains of Oregon were actions that fitted overwhelmingly smooth into the overall framework of the strategic alliance with the Vatican. To celebrate 'The Year of the Bible' relations with the Vatican was formalized as from January 10th 1984, and soon CIA also found themselves engaged in the out phasing of anti-papal 'liberation theology' in Latin America.

Being a long time entry on the Vatican's list of forbidden authors - Index Librorum Prohibitorum - Osho and his criticism of the papal institution was causing constant anxiety in the leading circles of the Roman-Chatholic church. Among the sixty interviewpersons approached by Brecher during his 1989 fact-finding-research, cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Head of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the second most powerful man in the Vatican, revealed that he would only consider the matter if all questions were submitted to him in writing months in advance. According to information from someone 'very close' to Ratzinger, he 'is known to have operated behind the scenes in the expulsion of Rajneesh from America'. It is beyond doubt that Ratzinger got the creeps when 'oriental godmen' were threatening the church and seducing the followers away from Christ.

The cabinet chosen by Ronald Reagan after his inauguration in Januar 1981 had Edwin Meese III as his general councillor. And for the first time in American history

the general counsellor assumed cabinet member status, when from February 1985 Edwin Meese was also appointed U.S. Attorney General. Meese's responsibility included authority over government staff for domestic policy and national security.

It was by no means unexpected that Meese were to hold a strong position in the Reagan administration. Way back in 1966 when Reagan was elected governor of California on a promise 'to clean up the mess at Berkeley', he had chosen as chief of the campaigning Deputy District Attorney Edwin Meese. On May 20th 1969 Meese had proven his skills and his loyalty to the governor having the tactical command when 200 persons were injured and one killed by police in The People's Park demonstrations in ...San Francisco? What may now be almost forgotten is the fact that over one hundred high ranking officials in the Reagan administration were later indicted on charge of ethical misconduct, among them Edwin Meese III who was forced to resign from his post as U.S. Attorney General.

The whereabouts of Osho kept quite a few officials occupied in U.S. Government, and applying for a 'green card' for residency it was once again confirmed by U.S.State Department in a confidential telegram to the American Consulate in Bombay on November 24th 1981, that 'THERE IS BOTH CONGRESSIONAL AND WHITE HOUSE INTEREST IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE GURU AND HIS ASHRAM'.

Was Osho an religious teacher and as such entitled to permanent resident status? And was Rajneeshpuram unconstitutional as it was violating constitutional standards on separation of church and state? To coordinate the legal approach to these questions communication lines were glowing between agencies like Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS), FBI, CIA and DEA. Considering the 1985-prosecution of Osho for violating immigration laws and marriage fraud, it is admitted in an interview by U.S. Attorney in Portland, Oregon, Charles Turner, that 'we were trying to use the criminal process to solve what was really a political problem'. During 1985 when the pressure for expulsion of Osho from U.S. was rapidly growing, there were telephone conference calls of up to an hour or more participated in by the attorney General Frohmeyer, the governor of Oregon, the head of the state police, the head of the FBI and Charles Turner. Twice a day. According to Frohmeyer, it was 'the longest single criminal investigation ever mounted in the state of Oregon'. To solve a political and religious matter between the U.S. administration and the interests of the Vatican.

Tensions grew in Oregon during the summer festival of 1985, as Osho kept hammering on the nail. During press conferences he succeeded to challenge any fixed belief of the western mind, to an extent that the commune suddenly found themselves surrounded by operational plans involving the National Guard and special SWAT-teams to clean the area and take Osho in custody. For everyone who visited Rajneeshpuram and experienced USAF fighters dive down out of the blue and break the sound barrier over Your head, it was obvious that the system was building up towards a final phase. On the topic how to make the arrest of Osho, again we find Edwin Meese and the Attorney General's office involved in the discussions. Definitely it was a delicate and touchy political question, and the more clandestine and covert the final operation, the better. By no means the FBI wanted to get involved in some bloody mess on the ranch, and the horn blew the signal from Meese: 'Don't get involved in storming the compound.'

Instead the opportunity turned up when Osho left the Ranch onboard a Lear jet on Sunday at 5.30 p.m. October 27th 1985. In the airport of Charlotte, North Carolina,

Osho and his fellow travellers were met by armed guards and arrested without any arrest warrant. An official arrest warrant was only presented three days later in the federal court in Charlotte. It was not signed, it was not completely filled out, and it was later not to be found in the federal court records, either in Charlotte or in Portland, Oregon.

The process was definitely not to take place in Oregon at once. The signals from the federal government were loud and clear: "Hell, no!. We move to detain him. We're not interested in talking about shipping him anywhere. Period!". Still it was and became an Oregon state matter and many, including media, were surprised that the federal government as an entity was involved to a great extent.

After a few nights in the Charlotte prison the U.S. Attorney ordered Osho to be taken to Oklahoma County Jail, and for 'security reasons' not to the normal overnight housing space for prisoners at the El Reno Federal Penitentiary outside town. The Deputy wanted Osho to sing in under a false name, and afterwards we find direct and circumstantial evidence that Osho was poisoned while in Oklahoma County Jail on November 4th.

A medium-strength radioactive source is suspected to have been hidden inside the mattress, to destroy his mental abilities, faculties of speech and his immune system. In the morning of the 5th the filthy mattress was changed and for breakfast he was served two slices of bread soaked in a tasteless odourless sauce. Immediately after eating Osho felt nauseous, and later his doctors expected him to have taken in also thallium, a heavy metal used in rat poison. They also believe he was heavily sedated, in fact he didn't remember much of what had happened on November 5th. The same afternoon - mass media were following the trail - Osho was secretly taken to El Reno, a 30-minutes drive away. The trip took two hours.

Summing up Osho stayed four days in Oklahoma, with the authorities ignoring all documents and testimonies regarding his frail medical condition. On the contrary, it is evident that his health has deteriorated ever since he spend the nights in this place.

In Oklahoma the name of Kerr-McGee meant a former governor and a business man, the company owner of a nuclear plant in the state. In the early 70'es Karen Silkwood was working as a lab analyst in the plutonium plant located just outside Oklahoma city. She discovered that eighty-seven employees, including herself, had been contaminated by plutonium. and her findings clearly suggested company negligence. On November 7th, 1974 she discovered that her whole flat was contaminated with plutonium, indicating that someone was on to her activities and wanted her silenced. One week later her car was rammed from behind, went out of control, and she was killed outright. She was on her way to meet David Burnham of The New York Times to disclose her findings to him. She never made it.

During the case all tracks were covered up to put a lid on what was finally in 1979 ruled by the Oklahoma City judge, that Kerr-McGee was fully responsible for radiation damage, "whether or not government safety standards were met or negligence occurred." The plutonium provided for Osho's mattress was from this company, continuing an old close connection of misconducted operations between government officials and the powerful Kerr-McGee. The day after Osho had left Oklahoma City, Deputy Marshall Paul Mayfield, Oklahoma County Jail, left the Marshal Service to work for INS somewhere down the Texas-Mexican border. His trail was covered up.

Osho was released on bail from Multnomah County Justice Center in Portland on November 8th. But not without a bomb threat was announced through TV to go off at 5.55 p.m. The search exposed a bag containing electronics at the same floor where Osho was waiting. Finally an Alford plea was agreed upon in Portland Federal District Court releasing Osho from a charge of minor criminal offences like arranging sham marriages and violating immigration law. By all means this was not a criminal case, but a political pursuit being run from the White House.

According to the plea agreement Osho corporations would agree to drop participation in all class action conspiracy suits against the INS, the U.S. State Department, and all Oregon and federal officials. Yes. The successful conclusion of the Osho case was vaguely commented by Edwin Meese III at the following morning meeting for department heads at Justice Department headquarters in Washington. The meeting was accidentally filmed for a PBS documentary 'Justice For All'.

Despite everyone's greatest fears and lowest hopes Jonestown II at Rajneeshpuram was cancelled because of lack of interest. Seventeen state and federal agencies had been coordinating their efforts investigating Osho and Rajneeshpuram. Whether this may be called a conspiracy or not will require an exceptionally keen magnifying glass to sort out the details and slight differences. Strong sentiments were later to be expressed by Meese about the success of dismantling Rajneeshpuram.

Being back in India Osho spent a few months in Kulu Manali in Himachal Pradesh continuing to give discourses to his listeners. On his following World Tour to followers in four continents the message from U.S. was heard loud and clear all the way. Whenever his jet had landed, it was soon followed by another jet carrying two U.S. officials with a handcuffed black hardcase. It contained official dossiers and press clippings exposing Osho as a hardlined criminal any country had best getting rid of. The sooner the better. In Europe Italy, Germany, England, Holland, Switzerland and Greece were officially closed for him; also in Arlanda Airport in Stockholm armed police rejected his entry to Sweden.

While Osho was settling for a while in Punta del Este outside of Montevideo, Uruguay, a motion was introduced into the political committee of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. The motion, which was introduced by twelve leading members of the Parliament's second most influential party, the right-wing Christian Democrats, called on ministers "meeting in the framework of European political cooperation to do their utmost to ensure that the Bhagwan Leader is no longer allowed to settle in any Community Member State", and it further expected all member states "to take measures provided for in their legal systems to prevent his [Osho] residence on their territory". Any way the resolution died in committee, but at that time the above mentioned countries had already on their own, or so it might seem for an outlander, taken steps never to allow Osho within their borders. For entering these countries his speeches, his manners and - not the least - the U.S. influence together gave the rationale for the exclusion.

At the very time in April 1986 when the Uruguayan government was getting ready to announce the granting of permanent residency for Osho, President Sanguinetti was called by the American Ambassador Malcolm Wilkey. Conditions for an Uruguayan state loan on \$ 6 billion was to be tightened up if the residency permit was forwarded. Answering his "But, why?" the President was read from a CIA report by the ambassador: "Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is a highly intelligent man. He is very dangerous. He is an anarchist. He has the power to change men's minds." By June 19th

Osho was invited to leave Uruguay, and after stopovers on Jamaica and in Portugal Osho reached finally reached New Delhi on July 30th 1986. After being expelled from ..? countries.

Back in Poona from January 1987 Osho commented on his experiences being in custody, and medical specialists from England and Japan suggested that he had taken thallium and had been exposed to radioactivity. Over the next two years his health steadily deteriorated and on at least three occasions he nearly died. Having his teeth removed in the summer of 1989, from that time on he only took food in liquid form. All disabilities turned out to be in the right side of the body. In his favourite sleeping position this side would turn against the mattress. Also in Oklahoma County Jail.

On January 19th 1990 some said Osho left his body. Others said his body left him. Earlier in the day he had one last time repeated the story of his poisoning at the hands of the U.S. Marshals in Oklahoma City and said that ever since his arrest and incarceration living in his body had been hell.

'THERE IS BOTH CONGRESSIONAL AND WHITE HOUSE INTEREST IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE GURU AND HIS ASHRAM'. As mentioned earlier.

The amount of governmental energy invested in this case is definitely not a surprise to those who are acquainted with the words and ideas of Osho. Acknowledging his spiritual approach and its potential the government could hardly act otherwise. Maybe act smarter in the cover up, but not otherwise. Not if the alliance with the Vatican was to be taken positively.

Brecher's breathtaking documentary is based on a research method familiar with Bernstein's story on the ties between the pope and the Reagan administration. During the year 1989 primary research material was procured by interviewing sixty informants, among them most officials involved in the case. Needless to say some key-persons - nine - refused to participate. But that did not impede the unveiling of a high level conspiracy, orchestrated in tuned harmony with the most sincere interests of the Roman-Catholic Church.

The book was finished already in 1989 but for certain reasons 20-30 publishing companies mainly in the West were approached without result. In India Motilal Banarsidass Publishers accepted the manuscript for publishing 1991 but later happened to cancel the agreement. Somehow corresponding with the Indian government's actual efforts to rebuild goodwill with the U.S. at that time. The launching of the book by Book Quest Publishers in Bombay 1993 for certain reasons did not trigger off any reviews in Western press. In an interview in Poona, India, on August 30th 1996, Max Brecher was summing up the stunning result of his fact-finding research: "With a certainty on 98% Edwin Meese - and with him Reagan - was involved as promotor of the operation. But all clues were blocked at the level right below him in the administration".