

# A THEORY OF COEXISTENCE

Can We Fashion a Theory to Guide Our Practice?

Quentin L. Quade

We can learn certain things from the Communist system, and one of the most important of these is the dependence of successful practice on theory. Theory serves to guide, integrate, and rationalize a series of actions, and without it those actions tend to be atomistic and fruitless.

Indeed, the classic failures of our confrontations with Communist countries can be traced at least in part to a theoretical misperception of what the Communists were, and the lack of a guiding theory on our part. It is possible, for example, to interpret the unhappy decisions of the World War II period as resulting from a mismatch of opponents: the Soviet Union's inferior power position was more than compensated for by a relatively coherent and creative theory of the world, while the superior strength of the United States was substantially negated because this country followed a policy path that may be described as a kind of political existentialism.

Ultimately, we came to understand the Soviet Union and its satellites. The Truman Doctrine of 1947, and its successor policies of 1948 and 1949, in a sense declared our understanding by challenging the Soviets and their supporters. We perceived the threat to Europe, and we devised an effective response to it. But we did not destroy or neutralize the adversary and, indeed, except for the Liberation Policy frauds of the 1950's, we never really talked about destruction. Instead, we drifted into a condition which has come to be called coexistence. For us, this has been a frustrating condition—there is little clear or tangible about it, and it seems interminable.

Typically, the Communist countries view coexistence from a theoretical perspective. Much is made of the changes which have developed in the Communist countries in the post-Stalin era. But the most important change—polycentrism and the Sino-Soviet split—signals not the abandonment of theory and ideology but the fracturing of it. In Moscow, coexistence probably means a strong desire to avoid ultimate military conflict, but a continuing aspira-

tion (if only habitual) to universalize the revolution, to "bury us." Insofar as this is true, coexistence is a rational policy of pursuing goals by methods suited to circumstances (superior U.S. strength), and is a consistent extension of Leninist beliefs. The Peiping view of coexistence does not seem substantially distinct from this, although its posture is comparatively more aggressive.

Again typically, we have had great difficulty keeping our policy of coexistence within any rational framework. We have no comparable long-range strategic objectives, but only a notion of "national security," and coexistence is desirable from our point of view largely as a substitute for all-out war. But it is a frustrating exercise fraught with a sense of purposelessness and a potential of policy disintegration. This latter potential derives from the fact that we are unclear regarding the theoretical underpinnings of our policy. This problem is, I think, drastically illustrated by the present shambles which passes for public discussion of the United States policy in Vietnam.

The one thing that emerges from the discordant sounds of the Lippmanns, Fulbrights, Morgenthau, Goldwaters, *et al.* is that while they may argue over limits of action, acceptability of certain methods, etc., the basic problem is that we simply are not clear on why we are in Vietnam at all. This is, of course, a crisis of theory. When we ask "why are we in Vietnam?" we are asking "what is the theoretical rationale and justification for our Vietnam policy?" In the absence of a coherent response to this question, it is impossible to assess rationally the efficacy of devices—e.g., napalm and nausea gas—and tactical policies. While the end may not justify the means, an enunciated end is a prerequisite for any such justification.

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*Paxem in Terris* is not a theory of or rationale for coexistence, but for those who share its premises it offers the foundations for a rational theory. The premises of Pope John's statement are quite clear: "Peace on earth, which men of every era have most

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eagerly yearned for, can be firmly established only if the order laid down by God is dutifully observed." The "order" which Pope John posits in his opening sentence, and which underlies his entire thesis, is the order of natural law rooted in divine inspiration. It is in this sense that *Pacem in Terris*, despite universalist intent, is in fact a quite parochial document, the meaning of which is largely confined to those already intellectually prepared to accept it. For many, it can be only pleasantly irrelevant, and for others it is a positive affront to their worldview.

If we grant that the primary pertinence of *Pacem in Terris* is for those who in some fashion share its premises, what is its central point, and how does it relate to the question of coexistence? The crucial argument Pope John makes is that there is in human life a fundamental motive factor—nature and natural law—which drives all men (though they may resist it and be unaware of it), and that in time it will break through all ideological facades. If this is true, then the problem is to maintain coexistence long enough to permit this "nature reassertion" to occur. Though Communist leaders may deny human unity and substitute for it class warfare, Pope John tells us that *we* must not forget unity and must take every opportunity to promote it.

It is in this sense that the Pope's message is to us, not to Mao Tse-Tung. To the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, *Pacem in Terris* is probably meaningless gibberish. It is not going to cause them to alter their policy of aggressiveness, or prompt them to recognize human solidarity. According to Pope John, our hope for them is not that they will sharply break with the current patterns of their thought and action. *But rather our hope for them is that nature will restore itself over time, and that it may be doing it even now.* (Paragraph No. 159.)

But for ourselves—for all who can say with the Pope that our natures participate in a transcendent and immutable order—*Pacem in Terris* has a different and immediate instruction: *the possibility of change and reconciliation indisputably exists, and we must not permit despair and desperation to overcome us.* Pope John is challenging us to believe in and act on what we so blithely mouthe: an existential moral presence actually in man, actually guiding man.

Pope John thus is reminding us of our obligations—he cannot effectively remind Mao Tse-Tung. He is pointing to the one permanent bridge that may exist and may ultimately permit a disintegrated world to reconcile itself: a root law of nature, some aspects of which may be perceived by diverse people starting from diverse points. Cannot, for example, the increasingly universal desire to avoid the nuclear

cataclysm be understood as an evidence of nature's assertion in otherwise dissimilar men? Is it not possible, as John suggests, that ". . . men may come to discover better the bonds—deriving from the human nature which they have in common—that unite them. . . .?"

Clearly, this cannot be interpreted as meaning that change or the potential for reconciliation are here now, or that they will be here tomorrow or ten years from now. We must undoubtedly maintain our force and our stance. *Pacem in Terris* is, in a sense, an incidental affirmation of a policy of long-term containment, for it argues forcefully that nations and peoples should be free to define their own role in the world, and we through containment attempt to maintain those conditions of freedom by stopping expansionistic and aggressive forces. In short, we could not prudently abandon our present policy in existing circumstances.



But simultaneously, we must be alert and watchful for indications of genuine change in the character of the Communist systems, and we must seek ways to promote change. We must not allow habits of mind and preconceptions of thought to blind us to the very possibility of change. John is extremely helpful here, by pleading against that kind of philosophical pessimism which concludes that the present intolerable conflict is suspended motionless before us, there to confront us in perpetuity. If it is true that present conditions do not permit us to lower our guard, it is nonetheless true that we cannot conclude that present conditions will last infinitely into the future.

On the basis of these several points, something like a coherent theory of coexistence can be constructed. First, we should continue to confront and deter aggression, because an imposed political authority is destructive of human welfare and Communist systems in operation remain antithetical to the good of man. But equally important, we must continue to deter Communist aggression wherever it threatens in order to stimulate change within the Communist systems. We must frustrate Communist expansionist aspirations in order to halt the phenomenon of self-fulfilling prophecy, i.e., insofar as

Marxist-Leninist doctrines have worked they appear true to their proponents. In other words, if we do not stop Communist aggression in, e.g., Vietnam, we discourage Pope John's "nature reassertion" by offering the Communists further vindication of their doctrinal position. Thus in every Vietnam, every Korea, every Berlin, we are obliged to act and to blunt the thrust of Communist aggrandizement, be it Soviet, Chinese, or any other. If this can be done, it will in time incline the Communists to reassess their position and begin to act in a more human manner.

But simultaneously, we must seize every opportunity to broaden relationships with Communist countries, and look for signs of substantial change in the character of the Communist regimes. In this regard, our position is a paradoxical one. It took us thirty years to recognize communism for what it was: a monolithic force, seeking internal proletarianization and external universalization. Now we stand in danger of being trapped in our own perception, which may have been transformed into a stereotype rather than a reflection of reality. The monolith is broken—the advent of a second "infallible" interpreter of Marxism-Leninism achieved this. But what of change *within* the Communist systems? This is the crucial question.

If we admit the possibility of change even within the systems, then our coexistence policy must have a further dimension: we need to devote a great deal of attention to determining the kinds of change we would have to observe in order to conclude that the character of communism had been substantially altered. Clearly, Communist protestations of change will be insufficient, for we have received those before, e.g., the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943. We could be moderately encouraged by any increased attentiveness of the regime to the needs of its people. We could be more encouraged by consistent evidence of a reduced aggressiveness and expansionism in foreign policy. We could be most encouraged by serious signs of burgeoning areas of freedom among the people under the regimes. These are only suggestions, but the point is clear: part of our policy should be the identification of changes which, if seen in the future, would indicate a transformation in communism and demand an alteration in our own policy.

Above all, we must not permit ourselves to freeze the melancholy conditions of the present, for the supreme irony would be if world ruination were to come from our inability to perceive the possibility of change.

## DIALOGUE: A MORAL IMPERATIVE

What Are the Alternatives that Face Us?

*Peter J. Riga*

There can be little doubt that the omission on the part of John XXIII to speak of communism in either of the two greatest encyclicals of our time, *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*, has caused grave consternation in various Catholic circles.

This consternation has gone as far as Vatican II. The Council from the beginning was born on a note of positive confrontation with the modern world in the open spirit of John XXIII. It was taken for granted that from the opening words of John to the Council Fathers, there would be no anathemas and condemnations. In spite of the clear intention of John XXIII to avoid sterile pronouncements, a cer-

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tain number of the Fathers attempted to introduce a decree on anti-communism. An expressly stated recommendation by two bishops of Brazil, Archbishop Proenca-Sigand and Bishop de Castro-Mayer, consequently signed by two hundred bishops, was sent to Paul VI. "It is a question," said the statement, "of the greatest and most dangerous heresy of our times. The faithful will be deceived if the Council does not treat of it."

The origin of the statement was an article by Correa de Oliveira, professor at the Catholic University of Sao Paulo, originally published in the diocesan newspaper *Catolicismo*, and later distributed to the Fathers of the Council.

His central idea is that Communist governments have been "painfully clear and coherent not only