

# COMMUNISM, REVOLUTION AND THE THIRD WORLD

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The classical cold war period began with the founding of the Cominform in the fall of 1947 and ended with the death of Stalin in June, 1953. But, as the Soviet poet Yevtushenko has observed, "Stalin's Heirs" are still very much with us; not only Soviet but also U.S. policy is heavily burdened with the Stalinist heritage of the cold war period.

For the USSR the Geneva Summit Conference cleared the way for the 1956 20th Party Congress and the new General Line which recognized that in a world threatened with thermonuclear holocaust, coexistence is better than no-existence, and that war—meaning general war—is no longer inevitable. Startled by the unexpected peaceful disintegration of the British and French colonial empires, Soviet leaders hailed the new states which emerged from this process as a "Third World," and ascribed to them the role of a "buffer zone" or "zone of peace" between the two camps. Henceforth, thanks to the emergence of the Third World, states with different political and economic systems could live together, so the General Line runs, in a state of "peaceful co-existence."

At the same time, however, the Soviet leaders pledged themselves to a continuation of the "sharpest ideological struggle" against capitalism, and to the support of revolutionary movements against colonial or neo-colonial regimes, including so-called "wars of national liberation." In contradiction to the main thrust of both Marxist and Leninist doctrine, the 1956 line no longer prescribed revolution as the only and inevitable road to power for Communist parties. For the last decade Soviet doctrine has recognized that parliamentary or democratic processes may provide a peaceful path to power, thus giving doctrinal sanction for Communist participation with bourgeois parties in United Fronts for electoral purposes.

In the area of global military strategy the 1956 General Line foreshadowed a consensus which has been slowly and painfully hammered out in the course of a continuing dialogue between U.S. and Soviet strategists and policy-makers over the last decade.

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The 1955 Summit Conference resulted in basic agreement on a mutually recognized need for relaxing the acute tensions of the cold war period and paved the way for the uneasy detente which has characterized U.S.-Soviet relations during the last decade. This detente has been seriously jeopardized by notable excursions into brinkmanship on both sides such as the recurrent Berlin crises and the Cuban missile caper, and is currently threatened by the escalation of U.S. operations in Vietnam.

To Mao Tse-tung and other Chinese Communists who hold tenaciously to the belief that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun, the Soviet 20th Party Congress line represents a betrayal of Leninist revolutionary principles, especially of Lenin's oft-quoted "two-camps" dictum that coexistence is unthinkable and war inevitable. Given their 1950 treaty of eternal friendship and alliance with the USSR, the Chinese have understandably had deep misgivings about the detente in American-Soviet relations. The Chinese have been particularly incensed at joint U.S.-Soviet efforts to limit membership in the nuclear club, as far as possible, to themselves. Diverging national interests as well as doctrinal differences thus led to a widening Sino-Soviet rift which by 1960 could no longer be concealed. Since then the disintegration of the one time "monolithic bloc" of the Communist world has accelerated. Even the Communist parties abroad are split into pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese factions or parties, some open, others concealed.

These developments of the post-Stalin era indicate that the USSR has reappraised its basic national interests and has radically reinterpreted Communist doctrine in order to bring it more into line with the political realities of the last decade and with strategic facts of life in the thermonuclear and space age. However, in contrast to Soviet flexibility, U.S. policy with respect to both communism and revolution is still largely immobilized in the rigid ideological framework of the cold war period. Faced with new and radically different problems we are still shadow-boxing with ghosts of the Stalinist era. This kind of performance, while unedifying, is understandable, since the basic cold war policy of containment was highly successful in blocking Soviet expansion into Western Europe and the Middle East.

This success led naturally to an uncritical attempt to extend the same formula to U.S. relations with the Third World which has emerged in the post-Stalinist decade. Although the two areas and their problems are vastly different, American foreign policy has simply substituted the Third World for Europe as the theater of the cold war struggle between what President Johnson has called "the forces of freedom" and the "forces of slavery." We have since been constrained to regard every internal convulsion in the newly emerging countries in terms of how it may effect the so-called "confrontation with communism."

Nothing could be more misleading. The revolutionary turbulence in the developing areas of the world is an inescapable adjunct to modernization and nationalism, the two major factors shaping both the internal and external politics of these areas. We should note to begin with that the Third World arose phoenix-like from the ashes of World War II. Its complex revolutionary problems and movements today stem directly from forces and factors at work during the later stages of the second world war. Let us briefly review this wartime heritage.

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The forces of native nationalism were unleashed during World War II, as indigenous resistance movements sought to overthrow either existing colonial regimes or alien occupying forces. Japanese forces, for example, overran much of China and Southeast Asia, including French Indo-China. The native nationalist movements received considerable stimulus from lofty Anglo-American declarations concerning the Four Freedoms, and the implicit promise of national self-determination which accompanied the presence of American fighting forces in several theaters. American wartime largesse continued after the war in the form of massive economic and military aid programs. The continuing American presence and programs had profoundly disturbing and ambivalent effects. They acted as both catalytic and corrosive forces, giving birth ultimately to what has since been dubbed "the Revolution of Rising Expectations." These three factors, the traumatic heritage of wartime occupation and aspirations, native nationalism, and the revolution of rising expectations have combined to dissolve the former empires of our European allies. However, our policy makers soon became preoccupied with containing the aggressive Soviet thrust against the Middle East and Central Europe which ushered in the classic cold war period. The developing areas were perforce forgotten as the Soviet menace to Europe required

our policy planners to concentrate their attention on the Marshall Plan and its military shield, the NATO alliance. In turn NATO solidarity forced the U.S. to go along, however grudgingly, with the attempts of our allies to repress or contain indigenous nationalist movements which sought to bring an end to colonial rule. For example, we supported the French and picked up the tab for their war against the Viet Minh in Indo-China until the fall of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. In fact we did not part company with the French and British until the Suez crisis of 1956.

Thus the classic cold war period cast our foreign policy and military programs into a rigidly anti-Communist mold. For years both Republican and Democratic Administrations have sold our lavish foreign aid programs to both Congress and the American people as necessary sacrifices "to stem the tide of communism." This expedient has fixed in the public mind a highly exaggerated image of Communist capabilities and gains. Fear of Communist subversion within and without reached a hysterical pitch during the ascendancy of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy, and anti-communistic propagandists still paint a picture of a world which will inevitably turn deepest Red unless we hold the line everywhere against communism and revolution.

A mirror image of the same process has been at work within the former Sino-Soviet bloc. As the Russians and Chinese contend for spiritual and temporal leadership of their own divided world, their leaders argue that although the historic British and French empires have disintegrated, nevertheless there is an international civil war going on between the forces of imperialism and neo-colonialism led by the U.S., and the forces of nationalism and revolution. Both the USSR and Communist China claim the leadership of these latter forces. Thanks to our cold war support of our allies, Communist propaganda has successfully tarred us with the same colonial or neo-colonial brush as the British or French. Both the Soviet and Chinese Communists have been able to exploit "Yankee Go Home" appeals throughout the Third World, and these campaigns have in turn reinforced our own anti-Communist predilections. Thus the cold war has been kept alive by ideologues and propagandists on both sides who reinforce each other's output with sets of essentially false but self-confirming hypotheses.

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In the developing areas of the world nationalism and the drive for modernization have produced a series of recurrent political and social revolutions which

have displaced traditional elites and various colonial and post-colonial ruling groups. As new ruling elites in the Third World consolidate their power and extend their privileges, the nepotism, and corruption associated with traditional societies will almost certainly create burning political, economic and social grievances. These in turn will lead to new revolutions. In spite of heroic if belated U.S. efforts to arrest the process, this is clearly what happened to the Diem regime in South Vietnam, and the pattern will repeat itself elsewhere. Naturally Soviet or Chinese Communist parties, or both, will seek to exploit such indigenous revolutionary movements, employing their separate strategies of subversion or political warfare. However, the traditional cold war assumption that Communists will automatically succeed in capturing and controlling such movements unless vigorously opposed by U.S. political warfare and counterinsurgency programs is patently false. The cycle of revolution in the developing areas is as open-ended as the process of modernization itself, from which it is inseparable. It bears little or no relationship to the frustrations and fears of political warriors on either side of the Bamboo and Iron Curtains, and even less relationship to their propaganda slogans about the struggle between the so-called "forces of freedom" (or "national liberation") and "forces of slavery" (or "neo-colonialism").

The Western states have naturally extolled the virtues of their democratic political systems and open societies as a framework for the modernization of the developing areas. For their part the USSR and Communist China hold up their authoritarian and socialist-based systems, not only as models, but as historical proof that backward, traditional societies can lift themselves by their own bootstraps. But by and large the nationalist leaders in the newly emerging states have shrewdly exploited their Third World position to obtain both Western and Communist aid without adhering strictly to the models advanced by either side. Outstanding examples of such leadership are Nasser, Bourghiba, and Ben Bella in North Africa; Tshombe, Sekou Touré and the recently deposed Kwame Nkrumah in Subsaharan Africa; in Asia and Southeast Asia, Norodom Sihanouk in Thailand, and the recently reduced Sukarno in Indonesia. The outstanding feature of the developing areas is the "mixed" character of their social, economic and political systems, although most of them are decidedly more authoritarian than democratic.

Thus Moscow, Peking and the Western nations have all been somewhat disappointed at the meager results of their political warfare and foreign aid programs. For example, contrary to both Western fears

and Soviet hopes, communism as an ideology has made little headway in the Middle East, North and Subsaharan Africa, although the United Arab Republic, Ghana and Guinea have accepted financial and/or military aid from the USSR or Communist China or both. From our own experience in Laos and Vietnam, the U.S. has also learned the hard way that massive military and foreign aid programs do not necessarily assure the cooperation of revolving political and ruling groups in the developing areas, much less control over them.



For all their combined efforts since World War II, the Soviet and Chinese Communists have established viable regimes only in North Korea, North Vietnam, and possibly Cuba, which, since the Cuban missile crisis, has proved to be more of a liability than an asset. For its part, where the U.S. has most actively intervened—in South Korea, Laos and South Vietnam—the resulting regimes have been something less than models of democracy and modernization. Nevertheless, in spite of the spectacular failures of the past on both sides, the developing areas of the world will continue to invite intervention. Nationalism and modernization have converted the Third World into a vast political warfare arena in which the Western powers, the USSR and Communist China are engaged in a three-way struggle, both open and covert, to extend their power and influence. What are the Communist prospects for success in this struggle? There is no unambiguous answer to this question, but certainly on the basis of the postwar record there is no cause for despair on the part of the West.

First, it should be noted that the Sino-Soviet rift has reached such a pitch of intensity that the two Communist powers are now bitter rivals, each prepared to sabotage the other in disputed areas such as South Vietnam, where the Chinese have bent every effort to block Soviet aid to the Viet Cong. This rivalry should increase the options available,

not only to the U.S. but also to local Southeast Asian regimes (such as Hanoi) which seek to maintain their independence against political intervention from several directions.

*Second*, although both Soviet and Chinese Communists have had considerable success in appealing to the peasant masses, their only hope for winning enough mass support to come to power peacefully is by couching their appeals in nationalist terms. Such appeals can only be made at the cost of Communist content, and it is clear from the recent crisis in Indonesia which way the masses will probably move when confronted by a choice between communism, and national indigenous forces which may be of mixed religious and ethnic origin.

*Third*, the Sino-Soviet doctrinal split has dramatized the basic strategic dilemma confronting the Communists in the developing areas—a dilemma which the Party leadership in either Moscow or Peking has been unable to solve. This is the perennial problem of whether the Party should follow the Leninist model and restrict itself to a hard core of professional revolutionaries dedicated to violent seizure of power, or whether it should build up such a massive base of support that it can acquire power peacefully and even legally within the local political system. As previously noted, the Soviet general line calls for the peaceful development of the Communist movement. However, it is an accepted principle of political life that large social protest parties, whether socialist or Communist, become progressively less revolutionary as they increase their mass base and power. There comes a point when peaceful acquisition of power seems so likely that the Party leadership rejects resort to violence as foolhardy. Moreover, in many developing countries, any attempt by the local party to build up a formidable capability for violence is an open invitation to the military to crush the party in a pre-emptive strike. This is probably part of what happened recently in Indonesia which most Western analysts had virtually written off as lost to the Communist camp when an unexpected counter-coup suddenly reversed the entire picture.

Furthermore, local Communists attempting to seize power by violence cannot reliably count on either Soviet or Chinese aid. Most Asian countries are too far removed from either Peking or Moscow for the extension of anything but token support in the form of military supplies and advisers in a given crisis. This was the case with overt Soviet intervention in 1960–61, followed by the airlifting of military supplies to Laos and Vietnam. As previously noted, Sino-Soviet rivalry has since blocked supplies

coming to Vietnam. Moreover, the open extension of even such limited military support invites escalation of the Western commitment—a contingency which the Soviets prefer to avoid for obvious reasons. The Western role in these circumstances is to ensure that its military presence in Asia is credible, and, hopefully, to assure that the governments it supports establish the broadest possible mass base by eliminating the political and social injustices which nourish Communist movements.

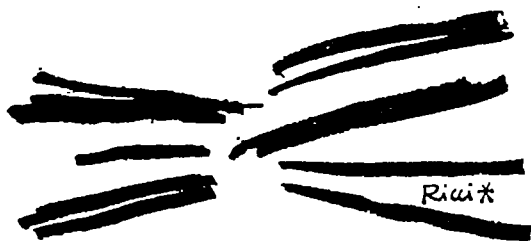
These Chinese Communists and their satellite factions or parties are dedicated to the violent seizure of power, using the Maoist model of guerrilla warfare, which, they claim, offers the only demonstrable hope of success. With thinly disguised *Schadenfreude*, the Chinese point to the failure of Soviet intervention in China through the Comintern in the twenties in contrast to Mao Tse-tung's impressive rise to power by means of "the Peoples' War." The Chinese also point to the failure of Soviet policy in Asia based on courting the friendship of the "national bourgeoisie." Not only have such Soviet tactics failed to bring the Communists to power, except temporarily in Kerala (India), but have resulted in such spectacular reverses as the recent setback in Indonesia.

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These are telling arguments, and undoubtedly the Maoist model and the mystique built around it have a wide appeal to young militants seeking to overthrow colonial regimes or their successors. But the "Peoples' War" model has limited applicability, as the Viet Minh leaders have discovered after more than twenty years of protracted conflict. The Japanese occupation gave rise to native nationalist movements which were the mainspring of Mao's success in China, and which enabled the Viet Minh to overthrow the re-imposed French colonial regime in Indo-China in 1954, after nine years of brilliantly successful guerrilla warfare. Yet at Geneva in 1954 Molotov arbitrarily imposed a settlement which was much less favorable to the Viet Minh than their military advantage warranted. Although Dien Bien Phu was a resounding defeat for the French, for the Viet Minh it did no more than secure a base in North Vietnam and advanced positions in Laos. Indeed, thanks to both Soviet and Chinese complicity, "the West succeeded in wresting from the victors half the territory and the larger part of the material wealth of Vietnam. Ho agreed to fall back to the North in exchange for a promise that elections preparing the way for unification would be held in 1956—elections which he had no doubt of winning" (Jean

Lacouture, "Vietnam: The Lessons of War," *New York Review of Books*, March 3, 1966)—but which have never taken place. After twelve more years of bitter guerrilla warfare in the South, Hanoi has still failed to win by force what it had hoped to gain by elections. Indeed, Ho Chin Minh is probably still farther from his goal than ever, in spite of the fact that four-fifths of South Vietnam is under Viet Cong influence, and Saigon, the capital, has been surrounded and infiltrated, as evidenced by sporadic terrorist bombings and anti-U.S. demonstrations.

The reason for this paradox is that the Southern guerrilla movement began with the resistance of local political-religious groups to the hatred Diem regime. According to Jean Lacouture, "the North Vietnamese did not begin to exploit this situation and infiltrate agents until 1959." It was not until November 1960 that the Viet Cong, feeling the pressure from military nationalists, established a political headquarters by creating the National Liberation Front (N.L.F.).



In spite of these facts, which should have been reported by our Intelligence sources long before they appeared in Lacouture's book, *Vietnam: Between Two Truces* (New York, 1965), "the U.S. government has decreed from the first that the war in the South was originally provoked by invasion from the North [and] has insisted that a solution must be negotiated with Hanoi, and only Hanoi." But Lyndon Johnson's spectacular diplomatic offensive to get Hanoi to negotiate, after the thirty-day pause in bombing, ended in failure. Lacouture suggests that there are two reasons why Hanoi may not be in a position to negotiate at all. First, although it has provided arms and men to support the N.L.F. and the escalating hostilities in the South, Hanoi is not able to speak for the Front. N.L.F. aims, as expressed in their published program, include the possibility of an independent South Vietnam and an alliance with Laos and Cambodia—not Hanoi.

Second, the N.L.F. is a loose federation of local resistance groups or *maquis*, and it is by no means certain that a decision or agreement, even if approved by the N.L.F., would be supported by all the fighters in the field. Before either Hanoi or Saigon can properly enter into meaningful negotiations,

the disparate elements within the N.L.F. must make peace among themselves. "Peace must be begun in the South, by Southerners, just as the war began there." Bernard Fall suggests that if the disparate elements within the N.L.F. can resolve their differences, "a non-Communist regime has a better than even chance of emerging from the shambles." Then meaningful negotiations could take place on the Saigon-Hanoi level, and finally, as in the 1954 Geneva accords, on the level of the Great Powers, including, of course, the U.S., the USSR and Communist China.

Heedless of such well-informed warnings, the U.S. has sown the dragon's teeth of escalation by committing over 300,000 troops to the theater, and has reaped the clearly predictable results. Today four-fifths of South Vietnam is under Viet Cong influence, and 80% of the weapons in guerrilla hands have been captured locally. However, unshaken in our belief in big miracles, we escalated the war further with mass bombing raids.

U.S. spokesmen verbalize, of course, about the mistakes made by the French during the eight years of their anti-guerrilla warfare in Indo-China. Our military counterinsurgency manuals are based on French models, and repeatedly warn us that guerrilla or resistance movements will continue to flourish until the grievances which gave them their start are removed. There are no military solutions to insurgency problems which do not depend on the prior solution of political problems, and these in the long run must be worked out locally by the native forces which created them. Political and social reforms simply cannot be enforced from above by alien advisory forces short of total, prolonged occupations, as in Korea.

A government threatened by insurgents cannot hope to re-establish the social order and its own authority unless it carries out basic reforms to meet or undercut the demands of the guerrillas. Even after whole areas have been "pacified," until the Government can regain the confidence and support of the population it will be faced with a continuing resistance problem. Our counterinsurgency manuals and "civic action" programs pay lip service to these axioms, but our deeds belie our words. Having created a tidal wave of escalation we are now engulfed in it, and have reversed the order of priorities, seeking quick military solutions to political problems. Within the mistaken cold war framework of a crusade to stamp out communism, we run the grave risk of stamping it in.

Under these circumstances, my own view is that the U.S. should de-escalate its commitment in Viet-

nam as soon as possible. U.S. casualties in Korea were relatively low—30,000 dead in three years. But when they reached this rate, public opinion forced a cease-fire and swept the Truman Administration out of office so that the Eisenhower Administration could patch up a settlement. Our casualty rates in Vietnam today, according to President Johnson, are about half as high as they were in Korea, but public revulsion against the war and its material and human costs has already made itself felt much earlier and more decisively than in the Korean conflict. Given the political quagmire we have made for ourselves in Vietnam, I see no way in which doubling or tripling our military casualties would bring us appreciably closer to a more stabilized internal situation in the South. Moreover, it might bring us into open conflict with the USSR.

However, military de-escalation, for which we have models in both the Congo and Laos, does not mean political withdrawal or abandonment of "the cause." In Laos we simply returned to the level of covert intervention from which we started. We never really crossed the covert threshold in Africa, where both the Soviet and Chinese Communists have recently suffered major setbacks in Ghana, Guinea and the Congo without the loss of American lives. We have already had clandestine contacts with the N.L.F., and with luck might be able to build it up into an effective force which would assure an independent South Vietnam. There is no valid reason to assume that either local southern or northern Communist elements (which are certainly present in the N.L.F.) will ultimately win control of the organization. After all, at one time Communist influence was also strong in the C.I.O., which is hardly an arm of Soviet foreign policy today.

We are all well aware that covert operations are difficult to manage and control and have many built-in limitations. This is the thesis of my last book, *The Strategy of Subversion*. Nevertheless, if they can be somehow kept from escalating beyond the covert threshold, such operations have many advantages over open counterinsurgency operations, which if at first they don't succeed, are an open invitation to an upward spiral of escalation.

In the first place, covert operations are unacknowledged and thus national prestige is not involved. If they turn sour, or if a "strong man" like Phoumi Nosovan in Laos misuses his strength to set up the largest combined brothel and opium den in modern times, the U.S. is not disgraced and can conveniently look the other way when the erstwhile protégé is replaced by another local coup d'état. In spite of several such comic opera misadventures, the U.S. is

probably in a better position in Laos today, after de-escalation, than if it had stepped up military operations there as it has in Vietnam.

In the second place, clandestine operations offer a sophisticated escape from some of the rigidities of the cold war model. For example, in certain areas the U.S. can covertly cooperate with Soviet agencies to neutralize Communist Chinese influence without being labelled "soft on communism" by local "hard-line" politicians and demagogues who use the cold war heritage to garner votes in elections. Such clandestine cooperation based on mutually supporting national interests may well have been behind the recent removal of Kwame Nkrumah from his post as the self-appointed savior of Ghana, or may prevent his return. I am well aware that Allen Dulles built up the covert operational arm of C.I.A. with an anti-Communist cold war mission in mind, and I have strongly criticized the Dulles concept as obsolete. This does not mean that strategic services are obsolete; on the contrary, they remain a valuable instrument of policy. And, as previously noted, operational cover, protection from political interference, and a manipulative approach may make it easier for strategic service personnel to break through the vicious circle of their own cold war propaganda and operational models.

Both the U.S. and the USSR have a mutually supporting interest in surviving not only the threat of nuclear holocaust, but also in reducing the side effects of modernization and the cycle of revolutionary disturbances which will plague the developing areas for years to come. These unpleasant side effects are much greater when political operations cross the covert threshold, and national prestige or loss of face is directly tied to the prolonged agony and uncertain fortunes of counterinsurgency operations in which, as both East and West have learned, there are no big miracles. Moreover, open counterinsurgency operations in the developing areas, even when strictly limited, heighten tensions and detract attention from the major problems which the U.S. and the USSR must solve together if they are to survive. These problems relate to the center of gravity in international relations, U.S.-Soviet relations and a postwar settlement in Europe—not to the peripheral areas, and to the complex of ethnic, religious, nationalist and other disputes which wrack traditional societies seeking modernization. Indeed, however, bloody and costly the agony and ecstasy of modernization may be in Vietnam, its highest cost has been in the deterioration of U.S.-Soviet relations at a time when, as George F. Kennan, has observed, we should be cultivating such relations.