

FREEDOM MUST WIN

AN ESSAY BY

DR. CHARLES MALIK

The following is an essay written by Dr. Charles Malik that was published in *The Presbyterian Outlook* on October 9, 1961.

I believe in God and in Jesus Christ and therefore I am not particularly worried that God is going to allow the extinction of the human race, no matter how stupid and foolish man may be. All these statements about “the nuclear holocaust” and the destruction of the world leave me completely cold. While the issue is certainly how to prevent war, it is equally true that the issue is how to win, or at least how not to keep on losing, under conditions of peace. I do not therefore know whether Dr. Foreman would settle for “peace at any price,” or whether he would have some suggestions about how to win in the Great Struggle without resorting to war.

The danger of war, whether nuclear or conventional, should frighten both sides equally. It follows that if one side keeps on retreating because of the danger of war, while the other side keeps on advancing despite the danger of war, then the advancing side has in a sense already won. And I am not prepared to see Communism win throughout the world.

TWO PROPOSITIONS

Dr. Foreman appears to me to be asserting the following two propositions at once: (a) let us not have war, and (b) if our not having war should mean that Communism would win, then let it win. I cannot possibly hold these two propositions together.

Even the first proposition by itself I will not assert without qualification. Certainly “let us not have war,” but then I can never conclude that any state of “no-war” is better than any state of “war.” It all depends on the contents of “peace.”

And the second proposition I can never assert, regardless of whether I hold the first and how I hold it. What I assert rather is three things: (1) war is terrible and therefore let us do everything we can to prevent it; (2) if war should break out, then the free world should be in a position, not to surrender, but to fight and win; and (3) the greatest thing is to win under conditions of peace.

It follows from this position that the free world should be developing a strategy to win without war. But win, it must. The decisive proof that Dr. Foreman’s position (if I understood it correctly; and it is possible I completely misunderstood it) is questionable is that the Communists never instill the fear of war among their followers or the peoples whom they rule. On the contrary, they never cease affirming that if war came, they would “bury” their enemies and win; and as to conditions of peace, they know they are going to win under them.

This is the meaning of their faith in what they call “peaceful coexistence.” The Communists would rejoice in seeing the non-Communists make all sorts of concessions to them because they have been scared out of their wits by the dangers of war.

Dr. Foreman does not really know, as he seems to claim, that if war should break out there would be no victor and no vanquished, or that there would be “total destruction.” This is a dogmatic statement which neither he nor anybody else can prove, because all the relevant facts are not known and in the nature of the case cannot be known.

POSSIBLE BREAKTHROUGHS

Scientific researches, both in the art of offense and in the art of defense, are going on in a thousand secret fields. Nobody really knows what breakthroughs have occurred or are likely to occur. And even if the President of the United States were in a position to know all about this matter so far as research and inventiveness in the United States were concerned (and he would be the only person in the United States in such a position), I doubt whether the most perfect intelligence service can make available to the President of the United States all that is really happening in this realm even among the allies of the United States, let alone in the Communist world. The matter is infinitely more complex and responsible than the naive statement “the alternative now is ‘peace’ with slavery, or total destruction” would seem to affirm.

But even supposing Dr. Foreman is in possession of absolute knowledge that a nuclear war would mean the certain extinction of the human race, it is still completely unintelligible to me why he should then conclude that the only alternative facing us today is “peace with slavery or total destruction.” Why should the real alternative not be the exact opposite of this, namely, peace with freedom or total destruction? If the Communist realm and the free realm were both equally threatened with the same fate, namely, “the extinction of the human race,” why should the only alternative be the retreat of freedom and the advance of Communism? Why not rather the advance of freedom and the retreat of Communism? It would seem to bespeak lack of faith in the power and value and ultimacy of freedom to hold Dr. Foreman’s view. Why should Dr. Foreman not look forward with confidence to and work hard for the complete liberation of China and Russia and Eastern Europe from Communist rule as the only way out of “the nuclear holocaust”? Why should he raise his arms and surrender? Why should not the Communists rather give up and quit? How does he know that the Russians and Chinese and Eastern Europeans would not rather change their rulers and their regimes if faced otherwise with the certainty of utter destruction? Has he tested their reaction upon preaching to them with absolute firmness and conviction, in word and in deed, month after month and year after year and decade after decade, that all men are destined to be free, that freedom is the wave of the future, and that they are asked to hitch their destiny,

in dignity and in freedom, to the rising star of freedom, especially if the alternative were utter destruction? The ultimate problem today is not “the holocaust of nuclear war” or the possible “extinction of the human race”; the ultimate problem is whether there is still enough effective faith in the values of freedom, and an absolute determination that these values, being what they are, cannot and should not and would not be downed. It is defeatism among thinkers and leaders in the realm of freedom that is causing Marxist-Leninist Communism to win--defeatism that is certainly welcomed, and perhaps also even actively promoted, by Communism itself.

FOUR-STAGE PROGRESSION

What is even more disturbing is the place where the mind appears to have reached on this slippery road. There was a time decades ago when the West was so conscious of its values and responsibilities and so alive to the nature and intent of Communism that it would not even dream of “coexisting” with it. Then a few years ago the tune of “coexistence” began to be hummed. Now Dr. Foreman—if I understand him correctly—appears to have advanced way beyond both of these positions: he would neither defeat Communism nor “coexist” with it—he would simply and unresistingly let it take over! One would have supposed that from the “balance of terror,” from the “atomic stalemate,” from the “nuclear parity,” from the danger of “total destruction” on both sides—assuming that all these things were a reality—one would at least settle for “peaceful coexistence,” namely, since the Communists are anxious not to be destroyed and since this side is also anxious not to be destroyed, then both sides would let each other live in peace without interfering in each other’s affairs. But no, now the choice is not even that: the choice now is “peace with slavery” Freedom has no more any place under the sun; it may no longer even “coexist” side by side with slavery: it must be swallowed up by it! Dr. Foreman now quite openly calls it “slavery”; but is there any doubt that at this rate someone in 1984 is going to call this “slavery” “freedom”? These then are the four stages of this progression: (a) no Communism; (b) coexistence; (c) Communism welcomed on the penalty of extinction, but it is slavery; (d) Communism welcomed and it is freedom! Nothing can be more distressing than this progression suffered by the mind of some anxious and sincere people.

The basic thing according to my outlook is to be prepared for any eventuality—for peace or for war—to believe firmly and absolutely in the values of freedom and man, to believe that these values should and will win, to plan and work so as to make them win—in peace or in war—and to trust the rest to the goodness and compassion of Almighty God.