

# THE COMMUNIST DOCTRINE OF WAR AND REVOLUTION

AN ADDRESS BY

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The following contains excerpts from an address made by Charles Malik before the Political Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 23, 1949. These excerpts were published in *World Affairs* Vol. 113 No. 3 in Fall, 1950.

An examination of classical Marxism and its orthodox Soviet interpretation reveals four fundamental theses of Marxism with respect to revolution. These are: First, Marxism is essentially a revolutionary doctrine; secondly, the revolutionary change of the structure of society from the so-called bourgeois to the so-called proletarian pattern, which is the objective of the Communist movement, can be achieved only through the forcible overthrow of the existing regimes and the violent seizure of power; thirdly, even though the Communist revolution may succeed, and the dictatorship of the proletariat may be established securely in one country or a few countries, such success cannot be complete or secure unless it contributes effectively to the victory of the revolution in all countries; and, fourthly, even though the rise and the victory of the Communist revolution, in one country and eventually in all countries, is an inevitable result of the nature of capitalism and its final stage, imperialism, yet this inevitable result can and should be accelerated and actualized by human effort, namely by the action of Communist parties and States. Upon the truth of these four theses all the orthodox teachers of Communism agree...

Nothing perhaps conveys this revolutionary spirit, which is essentially characteristic of Marxism, better than the opening and the closing words of the *Manifesto*. "A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism," write Marx and Engels at the beginning of that celebrated document. They conclude it with the battle-cry:

The Communists disdain to conceal their views and arms.

They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions.

Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution.

The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains.

They have a world to win.

Working men of all countries, unite!

We have it on the authority of Lenin that the essential and the distinctive characteristic of the Marxist ideology is its revolutionary aspect. And we have it on the authority of Stalin that the peculiar merit of Lenin is precisely his understanding of Marxism as essentially revolutionary, and his rescuing of Marxist revolutionism from the pacifist interpretation,

or rather misinterpretation, of Marxism, made by the “opportunist” leaders of the Second International. Certainly Marx himself was not wrong when he described his own teachings as “in essence critical and revolutionary.”...

In 1871 Marx wrote to Kugelmann that “the precondition of any real people’s revolution” is “not, as in the past, to transfer the bureaucratic and military machinery from one hand to the other, but to break up.” Hence Lenin declares that “the replacement of the bourgeois by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution.”

Several corollaries follow from this thesis. (1) The revolutionary Communist is antagonistic to reform. “To a revolutionary,” writes Stalin, “the main thing is revolutionary work and not reforms; to him reforms are by-products of the revolution... The revolutionary will accept a reform in order to use it as an aid in combining legal work with illegal work, to intensify, under its cover, the illegal work for the revolutionary preparation of the masses for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie.” (2) The revolutionary Communist is dissatisfied with parliamentary “opposition” and “legal measures” for the transformation of bourgeois society into proletarian society. “Does not the history of the revolutionary movement,” asks Stalin, “show that the parliamentary struggle is only a school for and an aid in organizing the extra-parliamentary struggle of the proletariat, that under capitalism the fundamental problems of the working-class movement are solved by force, by the direct struggle of the proletarian masses, their general strike, their insurrection?” (3) The proletarian revolution must not wait until the proletariat constitute a majority in a country, but should take advantage, as Stalin says, paraphrasing the words of Lenin, “of any favourable international and internal situation to pierce the front of capitalism and hasten the general issue.” (4) The proletariat must ally itself with any other revolutionary element in order to hasten the overthrow of the bourgeoisie: it must ally to itself the peasantry, the semi-proletarian elements of the population, and the revolutionary elements in colonies fighting for liberation from so-called imperialism.

Another thesis is that the Communist revolution,—which initially aims at being world-wide in its scope, and which, at its various stages, requires different and appropriate strategies, and which is at present in its third stage, after the victory of the proletariat in Russia,—the Communist revolution, I say, must, in the words of the Manifesto, “everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things”; and, in the words of Lenin, must do “the utmost possible in one country for the development, support and awakening of the revolution *in all countries*”; and, in the words of Stalin, “must regard itself not as a self-sufficient entity but as an aid, as a means of hastening the victory of the proletariat in other countries.”

The conception of strategy is essential to Communist doctrine. It means, as Stalin defines it, “the determination of the direction of the main blow of the proletariat at a given stage of the revolution, the elaboration of a corresponding plan for the disposal of the revolutionary forces (the main and secondary reserves), the fight to carry out this plan throughout the given stage of the revolution.” As the Communist revolution has already passed through two stages and is at present in its third stage, Communist strategy has changed accordingly, Stalin assures us. He defines the strategy of this third stage as follows:

Objectives: to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country, using it as a base for the overthrow of imperialism in all countries. The revolution is spreading beyond the confines of one country: the period of world revolution has commenced.

The main forces of the revolution: the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country, the revolutionary movement of the proletariat in all countries.

Main reserves: the semi-proletarian and small-peasant masses in the developed countries, the liberation movement in the colonies and dependent countries.

The reserves of the revolution Stalin divides into two classes, direct and indirect. Of the first he cites “the proletariat of the neighboring state, which can be utilized by the proletariat in its offensive or in maneuvering in the event of a forced retreat.”

It is the task of Communist leadership, which has in mind at every stage the ultimate victory of the revolution in all countries, “to make proper use,” at the present stage, “of all these reserves for the achievement of the main object of the revolution.’

Among the “principal conditions which ensure strategic leadership,” Stalin emphasizes the following two:

First: the concentration of the main forces of the revolution at the enemy’s most vulnerable spot at the decisive moment, when the revolution has already become ripe...

Second: the selection of the moment for the decisive blow, of the moment for starting the insurrection.

Hence, also, one of the main tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat, “on the morrow” of victory, is “to arm the revolution, to organize the army of the revolution for the struggle against foreign enemies, for the struggle against imperialism...”

In view of this Communist doctrine of revolution, is it any wonder that the non-Communist world sincerely and clearly believes that Communism and the Communist State

*mean* world-wide revolution, the wholesale overthrow of existing regimes in all countries? Is it any wonder that the non-Communist world must look after its own defenses? So long as the Communist ideology is the foundation and determinant of Soviet policy, is it not absolutely stupid and naive to suppose that the Soviet Union can really have a genuine desire for the security and stability of the rest of the world? Is it not obvious, except to the blind or frightened, that the only “peace” allow able by Communism is the peace of a forcibly communized and totalitarianly regimented world? Faced with the olive branches which Soviet spokesmen offer, we can only conclude that they are cynical of temporary tactics imposed by the present situation of international relations and valid only so long as this situation continues to prevail. They carry no assurance whatsoever that Communism has given up its own form of aggression. For, corresponding to the Communist outlook on historical development and international relations, there is a Communist form of threat to the peace *sui generis*; and international peace, as well as the security, stability, and sovereignty of non-Communist states, may be threatened not merely by the open attack of a Communist state against their borders, but also by its provocation and support of Communist revolutions within their borders. And therefore the non-Communist world will be perfectly stupid, and indeed about to dissolve, if it does not look feverishly to its own defenses against possible Communist aggression, whether external or internal, and if it does not seek adequately to meet the challenge of the Soviet Union...

How can war be prevented? What can the United Nations do to prevent war? Is a Third World War inevitable? All these questions are misleading and utterly superficial. They pose the wrong question. They blind themselves to the real situation. It isn't as though we had a real state of peace dangerously shivering on the brink of war, concerning which therefore the supreme question would be how to prevent ourselves from going over the precipice. It is rather that we have a real state of fundamental conflict and unrest, and have had it on our hands for decades, and the supreme question is therefore how to resolve it, how to bring about a settlement, how to end the present time of troubles. It isn't as though there was already agreement and concord, and the supreme question therefore was how to prevent disagreement and discord, It is rather that there is already the most radical basic disagreement, and the supreme question therefore is how to achieve real, fundamental understanding. For there can be no greater disagreement than when one wants to eliminate your existence altogether. The Communist doctrine of war and revolution postulates the inevitability of war and conflict; it ascribes war to the every essence of history and existence; it cannot conceive truth without dialectical opposition; and therefore, according to it, everything must sooner or later issue into conflict. Dialectical materialism is the primordial doctrine of eternal conflict. War is always there potentially. The original state is

not rest and peace; the original state is struggle and change. Hence when rest and peace and understanding supervene, dialectical materialism at once suspects them: they are not natural! Dialectical materialism can rest its sight only on the vision of unrest and revolution. It cannot be happy except in the belief that we are already on our way to the abyss. This is what we are ultimately dealing with. I submit it is not an ordinary form of government, a common type of philosophy. It is a radical challenge which cannot be left unanswered. Therefore the question is not whether war can be prevented, for we are in a sense in the midst of it; the question is whether and how war can be ended. The question is not whether a Third World War is inevitable; the question is whether peace, with dialectical materialism's absolute negation of peace, is really possible...

The two worlds face each other across a terrible chasm. The Communist world, believing in the rottenness of the non-Communist world, in the inevitability of its downfall, in the danger to itself from any too protracted a delay in that downfall, must needs, by the compulsion of its own doctrine, do everything in its power to promote and hasten that catastrophic event. It is therefore necessarily goaded to intervene. The method it advocates is violent revolution; the promise it holds out is material security, social justice and the abolition of discrimination and exploitation. This, then, is the great challenge facing us from the other side of the chasm. The history of the present generation will consist mainly in the response we shall make to this challenge...

The challenge is two-fold. Are the benefits promised by Communism unattainable except by Communist means, namely by subversion, violence and revolution? Whatever the means, are Communist values and benefits unattainable except at the cost of the more traditional values which make up in reality the soul of the West?

And this two-fold challenge imposes on the Western world the following task: how to attain all the positive and good ends which Communism boasts of without resorting to Communist means, and *without* destroying the higher tested values of Western civilization at its best, namely freedom, responsibility of the individual, the primacy of the personal and spiritual and intellectual, the trust in reason and the belief in God.

In order to be able to meet this formidable challenge in its own way, the non-Communist world must first of all, and as a purely negative condition, look after its own defenses. The non-Communist world cannot afford to assume that where militant Communism could strike and could get away with it, it would not strike.

Accepting the challenge, keeping possible Communist intervention at bay, utilizing to the full its own infinite positive resources, sharing its life and goods in larger justice and freedom,

the Western world ought to develop a strong and healthy civilization. All the Communist gains will be there, without the Communist losses. In the fullness of time the Communist world will find itself at a tremendous disadvantage. It will behold across the chasm, even if dimly, an image of real beauty and strength. And it might then deign to meet and discuss and come to terms. Then perhaps the Russian soul, with its deep spirituality and genuine urge at universalism, will reaffirm itself, and the offshoot, which is Communism, will come back to its origin, chastened and penitent.