



5-26-1964

Peaceful Coexistence - Myth or Reality

Lewis F. Powell Jr.

Lewis F. Powell Jr

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/powellspeeches>



Part of the [Defense and Security Studies Commons](#), and the [International Relations Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lewis F. Powell Jr. Papers, box 114/folder 17

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Lewis F. Powell Jr. Papers at Washington and Lee University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Powell Speeches by an authorized administrator of Washington and Lee University School of Law Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact christensena@wlu.edu.

24/167 5/31/64

Town Hall
New York City
May 26, 1964
Lewis F. Powell, Jr.

PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE - MYTH OR REALITY*

The House of Delegates of the American Bar Association in February 1961, following study and consultation with educators, adopted a resolution:

"Encouraging our schools and colleges in the presentation of adequate instruction on the history, doctrines, objectives and techniques of Communism, thereby helping to instill a greater appreciation of democracy and freedom under law and the will to preserve that freedom."

The ABA was perhaps the first national organization to call for objective education in depth on the subject of Communism. At the time of this action, and remarkable as it may seem after some fifteen years of the Cold War, there was a significant void in the curriculum of our secondary schools and most of our colleges. Pupils were receiving some uncoordinated and superficial instruction on the Soviet Union and the Communist movement. There was even less on China, other Asian countries and on the emerging African nations.

*In presenting this paper, I am expressing my individual views rather than speaking as an officer of the American Bar Association. Some of the source material herein comes from a scholarly study (not yet published) by Richard V. Allen of the Center for Strategic Studies, to whom I am much indebted.

The simple truth was that the social studies courses, in most schools, had not been adequately oriented to the revolutionary forces which then and now are profoundly affecting the history of the world.

Professor William Ebenstein, of Princeton, commented as recently as 1962 on the failure to provide adequate instruction on the Communism movement. He said:

"Until very recently there has been little attempt to deal with Communism in the high school curriculum, except as the subject arose tangentially in the study of world history, economics or problems of democracy."*

Other national organizations (including the American Legion and the National Education Association) joined the ABA, and to a considerable extent this void is now being filled by units and courses on Communism.

It hardly need be said to this audience that the stakes are higher than whether our people are broadly educated. The basic issue is survival of freedom - and perhaps survival itself. Dr. Sidney Hook of New York University has put it quite simply:

"In order to survive, the Free World must acquire a more sophisticated knowledge of Communism . . ."**

*Ebenstein, Two Ways of Life, Holt, Reinhardt & Winston, Inc., 1962

**Saturday Review, December 31, 1960 issue.

Progress has indeed been made since the ABA resolution of February 1961. But, in this spring of 1964, one may wonder - viewing the contemporary scene - whether events are not outrunning the educational process which was so shamefully slow in starting.

There is, today, perhaps a greater need for genuine understanding of the Communist movement than at any time since Churchill startled the Western World with his famous Iron Curtain speech.

Paradoxically, the current need arises not because Soviet Communism is openly threatening new aggressions, but rather because the Soviet leaders have drastically changed their tactics. This change in tactics - against the background of the split between the Chinese and Soviet Communists - has already confused and divided much of the Free World and weakened the will of many in the West to continue the fight against all Communism, whether it bears the label of Peiping or Moscow.

The cornerstone of current Soviet policy is peaceful coexistence. This is the party line which is being promoted by massive Soviet propaganda; it is being used skillfully at the international conference tables; it is the new soft line of Gus Hall, as the American Communist

Party accelerates its campaign on the college campuses.

The objectives of the Soviet Communists are multiple and complex. They are no doubt deeply disturbed by the division within the Communist movement, and want a temporary lessening of tensions with the West. The Soviets are certainly in agricultural and economic trouble at home; they need our wheat and they want increased trade - on credit, if possible.

More fundamentally, after testing American will in Cuban crisis, the Soviets probably have backed away from nuclear blackmail as being too dangerous a game to play. They have turned, instead, to the far more subtle strategy of pursuing their objectives behind the false facade of peaceful coexistence.

As the meaning of this Soviet doctrine is so widely misunderstood, it seems appropriate to discuss it here tonight. My approach is not that of a political scientist or a Cold War strategist. Rather, as a lawyer, I would like to examine the facts and the record. I suggest that the sincerity and intentions of the Soviet Communists are to be judged by the facts and by their record. Any other approach is likely to be confused by emotion and wishful thinking - qualities which are rarely in short supply in America.

Let us start with some questions:

Does peaceful coexistence mean what many Americans think, namely, that the Soviet Communists have mellowed and now wish to live in brotherly love with the rest of the world? Does it mean the same thing to western leaders and publicists as it does to the Kremlin conspirators who conceived and implement this doctrine? In the terminology which is now so fashionable - is the peace of peaceful coexistence a myth or is it reality?

We can start from the historical fact that the Soviet Communists have often changed their strategy and tactics - and frequently caught us flatfooted.

History records many examples - going back to our naive reliance upon Soviet peaceful protestations which led to Yalta, the Berlin corridor and the other fateful concessions made at the end of World War II. We can all recall the more recent spirit of Geneva, of Camp David, and of Khrushchev's triumphant tour of America. When Soviet leaders smile we tend to relax, and periods of relaxation have often been those of greatest danger to the Free World.

In 1958, for example, we discontinued our nuclear testing in reliance upon false Soviet promises to do likewise.

In 1962, we were deceived almost disasterously, by flasehoods made personally to President Kennedy, as to Soviet "peaceful" intentions with respect to Cuba. In each of these instances, as in similar instances in the past, we found that behind the smiles of peaceful coexistence was the deliberate and deadly purpose to deceive, delude and defeat America and the Free World - a purpose from which the Communists have never deviated.

It is not remarkable that the Soviets change their tactics. But it is indeed remarkable that so many leaders and opinion makers in the Free World are repeatedly taken in by these changes.

Bertram Wolfe has stated that "Marxism-Leninism is a combative ideology"; its "essense is struggle" - with flexibility of tactics and inflexibility of long range objectives. In pointing out how frequently western leaders have been misled by changes in Soviet tactics, Mr. Wolfe said:

"For four and one-half decades, we have waited for the Soviet Union to mellow A review of the judgments of statesmen and analysts over these 45 years makes melancholy reading."*

"Peaceful coexistence" is a theme which should be the envy of Madison Avenue. As a slogan, it is an advertiser's

*Bertram D. Wolfe, Communist Ideology and Soviet Foreign Policy, Foreign Affairs, October 1962.

dream. It not only sounds innocent; if given the normal meaning of the words "peace" and "coexistence", the term has great appeal. When contrasted, as it is so frequently, with the brutal language used by the Chinese Communists, peaceful coexistence sounds warm and friendly. Many well-intentioned people - not merely in the so-called nonaligned nations but in America and Western Europe - have embraced peaceful coexistence, and hailed it as the dawn of a new and hopeful era.

Indeed, we have almost reached the absurd point where one who is openly skeptical about peaceful coexistence is in danger of being branded as a warmonger or as favoring nuclear fallout. This in itself is not an inconsiderable triumph for Soviet propaganda. It is certainly a sobering commentary on the superficiality of our understanding of the Communist movement.

Contrary to popular misconception, the doctrine of peaceful coexistence is not a recent development in Communist thought. Lip service to "peace" has long been a basic element of Communist propaganda, and references to "coexistence" may be traced as far back as Lenin. The doctrine received its official formulation by Khrushchev at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956. Although emphasis on it

has varied from time to time, the doctrine has remained an integral part of Communist policy since that date.

Let us examine first the actual record of what the Soviet Union has done since 1956, all within its concept of peaceful coexistence with other nations. True, there has been no nuclear war. But the Soviet record of peaceful coexistence during this 8 year period, has included:

The suppression of freedom in Hungary by methods of brutality rarely equaled in history.

The resumption of nuclear testing in 1960, after secret preparations, and despite solemn assurances to the contrary.

The continuous strengthening of the Iron Curtain from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

The erection in 1961 of the monstrous Berlin Wall.

The exporting of arms and the systematic promotion of subversion and revolution.

The secret establishment of missile bases in Cuba.

The twilight armistice in South Korea where after 11 years, more than 50,000 American soldiers are still on battle stations.

The support, with the Red Chinese, of Communist aggressions in South Vietnam - where each day Americans are losing their lives.*

*Soviet support of this aggression was acknowledged by Secretary Rusk. In addressing NATO on May 12, 1964, he said: "The allies must recognize North Vietnam's responsibility for the conflict and the political and military support it is receiving from the Soviet Union and Communist China." N.Y. Times, May 13, 1964.

Undoubted Soviet implication in the violation of international agreements with respect to Laos.

The foregoing is only a partial record of direct Soviet action or of affirmative Soviet support of revolutionary aggression. All of this has occurred or continued since 1956 when peaceful coexistence became a part of official Soviet policy.

It is true that this was a subordinate Soviet policy until after the Cuban crisis, and there are perennial optimists in the West who think that since that crisis the Soviet Communists have had a genuine change of heart. Certainly the Soviets, in the past 20 months, have appeared to be less belligerent when talking to the West.

But deception through semantics has always been a standard Communist technique. If one wishes to understand what the Communists really mean by peaceful coexistence, it is necessary to examine - not what they say for Western consumption or what Gus Hall says on college campuses - but rather what Communist leaders say when they are talking to party members or writing in party publications. Here are some rather candid statements, all made by Soviet or Soviet bloc Communists:

In the famous speech delivered secretly to party leaders on January 6, 1961, Khrushchev said:

"The policy of peaceful coexistence, as regards its social content, is a form of intense economic, political and ideological struggle of the proletariat against the aggressive forces of imperialism in the international arena."*

In an interview with an Italian newspaper in April 1963, Khrushchev expressly denied any intention to ameliorate the fundamentals of the Cold War. He said:

"We Communists never have accepted, and never will accept the idea of peaceful coexistence of ideology. On this ground there can be no compromise."**

In July 1963, shortly after the Test Ban Treaty, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union reassured the faithful that there had been no change in fundamental Communist policy. Its statement said:

"We fully stand for the destruction of imperialism and capitalism. We not only believe in the inevitable destruction of capitalism, but also we are doing everything for this to be accomplished by way of the class struggle and as soon as possible."***

*Khrushchev, "For New Victories of the World Communist Movement", Kommunist, No. 1, January 1, 1961. (See also Analysis by Dr. Stefan T. Possony, prepared for the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee.)

**New York Times, April 22, 1963, p. 12.

***The Worker, July 26, 1963.

Even Gus Hall found it necessary to explain to American C.P. members that peaceful coexistence was really a tactic in the class struggle. In a recent article in the Worker, he said:

"The world Marxists . . . hold that the policy of peaceful coexistence is compatible with and facilitates the class struggle, the struggle to end colonialism and the emergence of world socialism.

* * * *

"The concept of peaceful coexistence has enriched Marxism because it has added new and additional avenues, possibilities and tactics for class struggle."*

These illuminating glimpses of what the Communists say to each other should cause some sober second thoughts among those who have developed such a warm glow about peaceful coexistence and Soviet intentions. But unhappily this does not seem to be the case. Many in the West are too beguiled by their hopes or too superficial in their knowledge of the Communist movement to heed either the truths of history or the words of those who seek to destroy us.

The controversy between the Red Chinese and the Soviet Union has undoubtedly been a major factor in the

*The Worker, July 26, 1963.

softening of world opinion towards Soviet block Communism.* Peaceful coexistence is far easier to sell when it is contrasted with the truculent attitude of Peking. Yet, here again we have an example of the need for a far more mature understanding of the international Communist movement.

There is indeed a major Communist family quarrel, and this has influenced Soviet propaganda and short term tactics. But we should derive small comfort from this quarrel, as it relates to methods rather than objectives. As recently as February 1964, M. A. Suslov, leading theoretician of the Soviet Communist Party, made a significant speech to the Party's Central Committee. Although Suslov attacked the Red Chinese with vigor, he repeatedly emphasized that the objectives of Moscow and Peiping are identical - namely, "victory over capitalism."

In the November 1963 issue of the World Marxist Review, a Soviet block spokesman hotly denied any less zeal on the part of Soviet Communists to destroy "bourgeois governments":

*The success of the Communists in the 1963 Italian elections and the subsequent coalition government with left wing elements is one example of the new "respectability" of Soviet Communists. Here in America, the sale of wheat to the USSR would have been unthinkable without this new "respectability" and consequent softening of official and public attitudes.

"The Chinese leaders will not get very far by trying to monopolize the idea, shared by all Communists, that the old bourgeoisie governments do not topple of their own accord, that as long as they are not 'toppled', they will not yield power to the new socialist governments. There is not a single Communist who will dispute this revolutionary thesis. The argument with the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party is not about whether bourgeoisie governments should be toppled, but about how they should be toppled - (whether) solely by means of an armed uprising and civil war or by various means other than an armed uprising, or at any rate civil war. In either case, it is a question of revolutionary violence."*

Perhaps enough has been said to make the point that peaceful coexistence, despite its current aura of peace and respectability, is actually a basic part of Communist strategy for ultimate victory. As one American authority recently put it:

"Peaceful coexistence is Soviet doubletalk for conducting the Cold War in accordance with ground rules favorable to itself, and by no means involves any relaxation of the ideological struggle to extirpate capitalism."**

In light of all of the credible evidence, including the very nature of Communism itself, the conclusion is thus

*Pedro Motta Lima, World Marxist Review, November 1963, page 63.

**Vernon V. Asparturian, Prof. of Political Science, Penn. State Univ. Vol. XVII, No. 1 (1963), Journal of International Affairs.

inescapable that the Cold War will continue. While seeking concessions from the West at the bargaining table and converts throughout the world by their peace offensive, the Soviet Communists will continue the worldwide conspiracy to overthrow and destroy all forms of free society. While trying to induce us to enter unenforceable and uninspected disarmament agreements, they will continue to use the classic Communist methods of propaganda, sabotage, blackmail and subversion. They will avoid nuclear war so long as we have the capacity and the will to retaliate, but they will ferment and support revolution and what Khrushchev calls "wars of liberation" - just as they are doing in Southeast Asia - and as they were prepared to do in Brazil. In Khrushchev's words:

"Liberation wars will continue to exist as long as imperialism (meaning capitalism) exists . . . These are revolutionary wars....
 ***Communists fully support such just wars and march in the front ranks with the peoples waging liberation struggles."*

While the Communist movement, even though divided, is continuing to press for total world revolution, what is the attitude and posture of the Free World? Time magazine, as early as July 12, 1963, suggests an answer which is profoundly disquieting. It said:

*Khrushchev, "For New Victories of the World Communist Movement", Kommunist, January 1961, No. 1.

"The West has almost imperceptively moved into a new era of softness toward Communism. Few any longer talk of defeating Communism. Coexistence is more or less accepted in the West."

There is, I am afraid, a good deal of truth in this diagnosis. Some western leaders and scholars (despite the lessons of history) are bemused by the notion that a detente - an end of the Cold War - can be negotiated with the Soviet Communists.

This is, of course, a popular posture because the deepest desire of civilized mankind is a peaceful world. But popular postures are frequently unrelated to realism. Chamberlain and his umbrella enjoyed considerable popularity for a brief span. Yet, there is far less reason to think we can live in genuine peace with Communism than there was, in Chamberlain's time, to entertain similar delusions about Nazism.

There is not the slightest evidence that the Communists desire or intend to settle for anything short of eventual victory. In August 1963, following the signing of the Test Ban Treaty - in Moscow where the Communists wanted it signed - Khrushchev reaffirmed the Communist concept of mortal combat between two competing systems. He said:

"A fight is in progress between these two systems (socialistic and capitalistic), a life and death combat. But we Communists want to win this struggle with the least losses, and there is no doubt whatsoever that we will win."*

Suslov's February speech was framed in terms of how best to defeat the "imperialist enemy" - referring to America. In perhaps a dozen separate places, Suslov spoke of "victory" or of "the triumph" of Communism over capitalism.

While Communist leaders thus continue to talk and to act in terms, as Khrushchev said, of "winning a life and death combat" against the "imperialist enemy", it is now considered bad manners in the West to talk of the Soviet Communists as the "enemy", or to mention the word "victory". Indeed, many self-styled "liberal" thinkers in the West are now so tranquilized that they have moved beyond thoughts of mere peaceful coexistence to the wonderlands of "accommodation" and even "convergence". It is argued, perhaps wistfully, that the United States is tending towards socialism, that Communism is trending towards a liberal type of socialism, and that in time there will be a convergence between the two - with peace and happiness forever after.

*Khrushchev, Speech at the Soviet-Hungarian Meeting. Aug. 19, 1963, Current Soviet Documents, Aug. 19, 1963.

The Communists welcome this fuzzy thinking as evidence of Western weakness and willingness to compromise our own beliefs and institutions. But they privately ridicule the concept of convergence in their Party publications. As recently as November 1963, a Soviet block spokesman, writing in *International Affairs*, demonstrated what convergence really means:

"The concept of a future in which capitalism and Communism will 'converge' on an equal footing is utopian through and through. The time will come, of course, when there will be a world government, but it will be the government of a world socialist community in which there will be no place either for free enterprise or for the monopolies. Neither research nor the subtle sophism of the apologists of capitalism can save it from the death predestined for it by history.

* * * *

"Life will always smash the advocates of ideological compromises and their bleak illusions and attempts to find 'a third way' in the struggle between the two systems."*

There are, of course, and happily, many Western scholars who are not taken in by the sophistry of coexistence and convergence - although the voices of

*Solodovnikov, "Speaking Different Languages", *International Affairs*, Nov. 1963 (No. 11).

most of these have been muted in recent years.*

The widely prevalent attitude of euphoria in the West has prompted Secretary of State Rusk to caution specifically: "that (there) has been no let up in the tension between the Communist and Western Worlds". There is, as Mr. Rusk aptly said "only an atmosphere of detente" - not the reality. Mr. McNamara has likewise recently cautioned that the Cold War continues substantially undiminished.

But we need far more than a mere unmasking of the myths of peaceful coexistence. There must be an understanding that the Free World, and especially America, have no choice other than to fight Communism or to surrender to it. These two opposing philosophies have never coexisted peacefully. There has been a continuing struggle, of varying intensity, since the October Revolution of 1917.

In the relatively short space of less than half a century, imperialistic Communism has imposed its will upon nearly one third of the world's peoples. There is no

*One of the causes for the weakening or silencing of moderate and intelligent voices on the menace of Communism has been the extremism of the ultra right wing. The Communist movement benefits appreciably from the extremism of certain rightist elements just as Communism has benefited down through the years from the softness of leftists and other ultra liberal elements.

parallel in modern history of such staggering success in such a short span of years. A basic tenet of Communist dogma is that its triumph is inevitable.

With such a doctrine, there can be no peace. One of these competing systems will inevitably survive, and the other will disappear from the face of the earth. Unless a miscalculation triggers a nuclear war, the contest between the two may not be resolved for decades. Indeed, a prolonged struggle is the best that we can hope for. But in time, this struggle will inevitably be resolved by victory for one system, and destruction or disintegration of the other.

And here, quite obviously, I am not talking about military victory, as there would be no victor in a third world war. Rather, I am talking about winning the ideological contest between two utterly irreconcilable systems - a contest which must and can be won in the minds of men and by a demonstration of the superiority of our system.

Persons who oppose Communism are sometimes called "anti-Communists". In my view it would be more accurate to describe such persons as "pro-Democracy". We oppose the Communist Party power structure - not because of ill will toward any people or country - but because we are for the

values of Democracy and its system of freedom under law. These are the values with which Marxism-Leninism cannot co-exist, and which the Communists therefore must seek to destroy.

Speaking as a lawyer, my deepest convictions are affirmative ones - for representative government and for the great liberties of the Bill of Rights - free speech, free press, freedom of religion, free ballot and fair trial.

The overriding priority of our time is the preservation of the very liberties which - despite all talk of liberalizing - do not - and cannot exist under Communism. This can only be done, in the long run, by assuring the ultimate victory of the Free World over Communism.

And one does not have to remind Reserve Officers of the Armed Forces that no victory in any kind of contest in the history of the world has been won by negative or purely passive conduct. We will never win victory by being soft towards Communism or its apologists. We will never win by trusting, appeasing or converging with the Communists.

The classic experience with this attitude has been the coalition governments - China, Czechslovakia and Laos. We will never placate the Communists, or persuade them to abandon world conquest, by trading with them or sharing with

them our scientific secrets - any more than such trading and sharing placated or softened Nazi Germany or Imperialist Japan. Certainly, we will never preserve our precious liberties by trying to coexist with an enemy, which in the dramatic words of Dr. Charles Malik, "is an absolute spiritual assault on the fundamental values of man . . . and God".*

If the American people are to have the will and the determination to support our government, and to insist that it lead the Free World to victory in this protracted conflict with Communism, it is essential that our people have a far deeper understanding of the basic issues and of the nature of the Communist enemy. They must also have a more mature appreciation of the benefits and values of the American system. This need for knowledge and understanding is the reason why the American Bar Association, and others of like conviction have placed such a high priority on encouraging education, objectively and in depth, on the Communist movement and its contrast with liberty under law.

And now, in closing, may I add a personal word:

*Speech, Va. State Bar Association, Hot Springs, Virginia, July 1962.

It is a satisfying experience to participate here tonight in one of your National Strategy Seminars. In the words of Dr. Sidney Hook, this audience already possesses a sophisticated knowledge of the Communist movement - and certainly you, as Reserve Officers in the Armed Forces, appreciate more than most the high stakes which are at issue.

Little that I have said is new to any of you. Nor has there been a need to win converts among this enlightened audience. But it is nevertheless worthwhile to take time out from our daily preoccupations to think seriously about what is indeed the overriding problem of our time.

I know that each of you, through this and other appropriate organizations, will support enthusiastically all measures designed to assure ultimate victory for the cause of freedom. This includes support of vastly improved education - not merely on the Communist movement but with special emphasis on the values of our Judeo-Christian heritage and the American system. It is in this way that citizens in a democracy contribute to the solution of problems, and in this case the problem which concerns us is no less than the very survival of free societies.