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The Need for Instruction On International Communism

Lewis F. Powell, Jr.
THE NEED FOR INSTRUCTION ON INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM

The Chairman of this Conference suggested that I discuss, from the viewpoint of a school board member, the need for improved instruction on the history, objectives and techniques of International Communism. As my experience has been with the secondary schools, I will speak specifically of them.*

It will be remembered that the high school is the last formal educational opportunity of some 70% of our people. In a democracy, where national policy must be understood and acceptable to a majority, it is essential that our secondary schools orient their instruction realistically to the crisis world in which we live.

There are perhaps two broad questions implicit in the assignment given me, namely (i) is International Communism important enough to justify inclusion in the curricula of our schools, and (ii) if so, what are the schools actually doing about it? There are a number of subsidiary questions, but I will deal primarily with these two basic ones.

* The importance of this subject is certainly no less at the college and university level.
Is International Communism Important Enough to Teach?

One would think that the first question answers itself. And yet, even among educated people, there can be every conceivable point of view - from those who think there should be a law against teaching anything about Communism, to those who just don't care what we teach our young.

As you would be the first to recognize, those who would answer this question in the negative - for whatever reasons - are out of touch with the harsh realities of the mid-twentieth century. The gravest problems of our time result, directly or indirectly, from International Communism and its determination to break American power, to destroy western concepts of freedom and law, and to impose Communist dictatorship throughout the world.

Consider only the current headlines of January 1961. They relate to:

- Red inspired civil war in Laos, our commitments under SEATO, and the possibility there of another Korea.

- The incredible chaos in the Congo.

- The Soviet Union's efforts to destroy Dag Hammarskjold and further subvert the U.N. to Communist purposes.

- The five-year old Algerian rebellion, openly supported by the Communist world, and with probable results ominous for the free world.
The continued erosion of Western influence in the entire Arab world.

The emergence of new African nations, and their disquieting orientation towards the Soviet Union and Red China.

The certainty that Berlin, a symbol of America's naivete, will again assume crisis proportions.

The future role of NATO, and whether the rising spirit of appeasement in Western Europe will further weaken this Alliance.

The breaking of diplomatic relations with Cuba, now a Communist base 90 miles from our shores.

The rising tide of Communist inspired discord in many South American countries.

The obsolescence, if not futility, of the Monroe Doctrine in the face of Communist techniques of conquest.

The demand that Kennedy rush to another Geneva with Khrushchev.

The concession that the first man to orbit the earth will be a Communist, with far-reaching implications in the race for control of outer space.

A $42 billion defense budget, with many responsible persons thinking this is still inadequate.

The need for increased foreign aid, although more than $80 billions have been spent already trying to shore-up faltering nations against Communism.

Communists' capabilities to destroy western civilization almost within a matter of minutes, requiring American nuclear bombers to maintain an air-borne alert 24 hours of each day.

These headlines reflect accurately the shocking state of the world in which we live. Those who read the news (as well
as the comics and sports) are generally aware of these events as they occur. But all too few of our people (including many of our leaders) have really understood during the past 15 years the reasons behind these events. Too few of us have recognized that Communism is a new and fanatical force, with characteristics almost unintelligible to the American mind; that in a relatively few years this conspiratorial force, by methods unfamiliar to history, has already gained control of one-third of the world's people; that it has the will, and avidly seeks the power, to destroy freedom everywhere.

There is much that Americans misapprehend, but perhaps the most dangerous delusion is that we still enjoy peace. It is this type of self-deception that has contributed in major part to the steady deterioration of America's world position since 1946. This deterioration has not been accidental. It was planned this way, beginning with the Soviet strategy initiated during World War II. The Communist enemy has been waging war against America at all times since.

Communist doctrine considers that military action is only one form of warfare. Other forms are equally or more important, depending upon the circumstances and the relative military strength at the time. Taught and practiced consistently by the Communists, their concept of war includes incitement to
revolution, participation (by proxies, volunteers and supplies) in revolution, infiltration, subversion, propaganda, sabotage and espionage. Employing these techniques, the Communists have been waging political, psychological, ideological, sociological and economic warfare - continuously.

They have won the sweeping victories of the past fifteen years by these methods, resorting only rarely (as in Korea, Indo-China and Hungary) to traditional military means. The Communists' plan is global. They have never deviated from their primary objective - the breaking of American power as the only barrier to communizing the world. They consider that time is on their side.

The basic weakness of America's position is the failure to realize that we are in a conflict more serious and deadly than any shooting war in our history. Some of our leaders understand this, but few are bold enough to tell the people. Peace is too popular; we are too obsessed with luxury living and money making; and, perhaps more fundamentally, too few of us have been educated - and here I speak broadly of our total experience - to grasp the nature and finality of the world conflict or to comprehend the reality of our peril.*

* The New York Times commented editorially: "One of our major weaknesses in the struggle with Communism is lack of adequate understanding of the challenge which Communism presents." (Aug. 22, 1960)
Unless and until the American people awaken intelligently to the situation that confronts us, we are certain to continue to lose a conflict which the enemy is waging on a scale and by methods which remain uncomprehended by most Americans. Whether there is enough time left to educate and arouse our people, no one can say.

But unless we accept defeat of the free world as inevitable, we must act vigorously to strengthen our national will. This means, among other things, improved education at all levels. It also means specific and thorough instruction on the Communist conspiracy to conquer the world.*

It is hoped that by now I have indicated the answer to the first question. I would feel apologetic (especially before this audience) for arguing the obvious at such length were it not for the shocking fact that so many people, otherwise alert and intelligent, are full of reasons why the facts about Communism should not be taught in our schools.

I have one final word for the benefit of those who doubt

* There is a sobering article in the December 31, 1960, issue of *Saturday Review* by Sidney Hook, head of the Philosophy Department of New York University. Dr. Hook said: "In order to survive, the free world must acquire a more sophisticated knowledge of Communism. ** The task must be shouldered primarily by scholars and educators ** on the appropriate levels of our educational system **."

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and hesitate. May they be reminded that subjects traditionally considered important enough to be taught, and which are still taught quite generally, include home economics, typewriting, compulsory physical education, how to drive automobiles, dancing, and in some places (happily not in Virginia) social adjustment. I make no comment here on the desirability of these and like courses, other than to suggest that the subject of International Communism - which relates to life and death and freedom - would seem to deserve at least "equal time."

What Are The Secondary Schools Doing?

I come now to the second question: what in fact are the secondary public schools doing about the teaching of this subject?

The short answer is - distressingly little. There are few, if any, public schools with specific courses on International Communism.* There are no text books for such a

* Inquiry on this point for many months has failed to locate a single public school which includes International Communism as a specific course in its curriculum. A few have prepared "units" of special instruction to be included in established history or government courses. Examples of this are: Indianapolis, New Bedford (Mass.), the State of Louisiana, and what is planned for Richmond this spring and by the Virginia State Board of Education for next year. Episcopal High School apparently has a course, and is a notable private school exception. Lawrenceville and Woodberry, for example, list no such course in their catalogues.
course.* The curriculum pattern generally found today would be fairly familiar to those of us who went to school in the mid-twenties. There are much the same type of courses on the history and government of the United States, and there are the survey courses (often electives) on world history and comparative government. It is in these courses, sometimes almost as postscripts or parenthetical material, that our pupils receive some desultory instruction on Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union and Communism.

And, here, may I emphasize that I am not criticizing these courses in light of their purposes. They were designed to present history and government in the traditional way, and many of the books do this very well. But in my judgment many of these courses are obsolete.** They also constitute a poor

* Our School Board in Richmond has searched in vain for such a text book. Negative answers have been received from leading publishers, including Houghton Mifflin, Macmillan Company, D. C. Heath & Co., and Prentice-Hall. Several of publishers do have material which they recommend for college use, although apparently few, if any, text books dealing specifically, broadly and in depth with Communism appear to exist. Among the best books available are What We Must Know About Communism (Dr. and Mrs. Overstreet) and Democracy v. Communism (Kenneth Colegrove).

** The recent Report, by a distinguished Committee on The University and World Affairs states: "The idea of obsolescence of curricular areas and content, so widely accepted in the physical sciences, is not found often enough in the social sciences and humanities" (p. 18).
substitute for specifically designed and thorough instruction on the most pressing problem of our time.

The school system in Richmond, a leader in many educational improvements,* has until recently followed the conventional pattern in the social sciences (see Appendix A). A recent analysis of the text books used in all Richmond history and government courses during the five years of high school disclosed that only 48 pages, out of a total of 3,592 pages, are devoted to the Soviet Union or to Communism.**

The qualitative analysis was no less disquieting. The textual discussion, for the most part, is so condensed and unsophisticated as to afford little information and virtually no challenge to the average high school student. The brief references to the Soviet Union and Communism are presented piecemeal in several texts which are used in different classes over a five year period. This fragmentary approach also

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* Richmond was one of the first to adopt the 5 year high school plan; to strengthen materially the emphasis on fundamentals (requiring 5 years of English, 4 years of math, 3 years of science, 3 years of the same foreign language, and 3 years of history and government); to introduce foreign languages in the elementary grades; and to emphasize opportunities for the gifted pupil.

** These are the texts used by the sections of classes containing the pupils of "above average" ability. For the most part different texts are used for the "average" sections.
applies to each individual text. For example, the 9th grade world history text contains the best material on this subject, but it is scattered through 705 pages of the story of man from the Stone Age to 1959.*

In short, the conclusion is inescapable from the evidence which I have examined, that the instruction generally available in the public schools on International Communism is seriously inadequate. There has been a failure - not merely by educators but primarily by the public generally - to recognize that this subject requires major educational emphasis and that this is difficult to attain by patching-up survey courses in world history or comparative government.

I have recommended a specific half year course devoted exclusively and in depth to the history, doctrines, objectives and techniques of International Communism, and relating these to problems which confront America and the free world. The

* Our World Through The Ages, Platt and Drummond (2d Ed. 1959 - Prentice-Hall). It is fair to say that the very recent history and government text books seem to be increasing and improving the textual discussion of Communism and the Soviet Union, although still subordinating these subject to the traditional emphasis. See the new government text book by Brown and Peltier, Government In Our Republic (1960, The Macmillan Company). See also a college text book entitled Todays Isms (Prentice-Hall, Inc.) which is used in some high schools. There is, of course, a wealth of general material (rather than text books) on various aspects of Communism.
course should, of course, meet the highest standards of accuracy, thoroughness and scholarship. Such a course could well follow (and afford a striking contrast with) a half year course in American government, in which there should be special emphasis on our basic principles of rights, justice and freedom under law.

**Role Of The American Bar Association**

And now, before concluding, just a word about the role of the American Bar Association. The report of our Communist Tactics Committee, based on careful study, emphasized the "vital importance that our youth" understand the facts with respect to the threat of International Communism. The Committee also recognized, while tendering the assistance of the organized bar, that the schools have the primary responsibility to provide this understanding through sound instruction.

But you in education will be the first to recognize that there are many problems. These include (i) the general public unawareness of the extent of the need for instruction on Communism, (ii) the necessity for teacher training, (iii) the lack of text books, (iv) the over-crowded condition of our curricula and the necessity of making choices, (v) the inertia
of local school boards and state boards of education, and (vi) the essentiality of community acceptance of the idea of specific instruction on a subject which has different, but distasteful, connotations to almost every person.

These are indeed perplexing problems, and our school officials will need all of the help they can get. It seems to me that the American Bar Association, with its special concern for preserving freedom under law as well as the safety of our country, can and should make a real contribution to the solution of some of these problems. As this conference progresses, and with the benefit of your informed advice, we hope to identify specifically the areas in which we may offer assistance and support.

**Conclusion**

In summary, I have tried this morning to sharpen our appreciation of a specific educational need, to identify the deficiencies of our present effort, and to stimulate thought as to solutions and also as to ways of cooperation between the organized Bar and Education.

It hardly need be said that, although we are here today to talk about one acute situation, this is but a part of the larger problem. It is self-evident that America's educational
effort at all levels must, in the urgent interest of our country's welfare, be accorded a new emphasis and a much higher priority.

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The Present Richmond Curriculum

The courses of instruction presently (1960-61) being offered in history and government and the years in which they are taught are as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Units (years)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>United States History and Geography</td>
<td>One (required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>World History and Geography</td>
<td>One (required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>United States and Virginia History</td>
<td>One (required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>United States and Virginia Government Economics or United States Problems</td>
<td>One-half (elective)</td>
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The Richmond present curriculum requires somewhat greater exposure in these subjects than is generally required in Virginia's secondary public school System. Four units of instruction (including the Virginia history and government) in the foregoing subjects are required in Richmond, as compared with three under the State requirements. In addition, Richmond requires both world history and geography in the ninth grade, while the State requirement in that grade is limited to either world history or geography. If the student receives the geography course, he may never be exposed to a world history course in his secondary education.
Plans For The Future

The Richmond Public School System, after considerable study, now has a plan to provide more adequate instruction on International Communism. Preliminary units consisting of several weeks, and based upon outlines developed by faculty committees, will be presented during the second semester of 1960-61 in several history and government classes in each of the high schools. During the summer of 1961, a special committee of teachers will review the experience with the preliminary units and, with the assistance of some recognized authority, and perhaps with the advice of a citizens' committee, prepare units of instruction in all senior government classes during the 1961-62 session. It is hoped that by the session of 1962-63 appropriate and duly approved text books will be available. In any event, it is contemplated that the plan will be expanded by 1962-63 to constitute the equivalent of a half year course.

The Virginia State Board of Education is also working on a plan to be introduced in all of the public schools. An interesting and important aspect of this plan is the providing of summer seminars for the training of teachers.