

Preventive Cold War: I

Henry Hazlitt

IN AN all-out war between this country and Soviet Russia there would be no victor. If Communist Russia attacks us first, with nuclear missiles, we may have less than a few hours' warning. It will be impossible to prevent appalling destruction and loss of life. It will be small consolation to know that we may have enough striking power left to devastate Russia also.

Perhaps the greatest problem mankind has ever faced is how to prevent such a war. One indispensable way is to keep even and if possible ahead in nuclear striking power. The Russian leaders must know at all times that any attempt on their part to attack us, no matter what its initial success, will be suicidal for them.

There is no substitute for this necessity. Those who like daydreams may put their faith in securing an agreement for the abolition of atomic and nuclear weapons. But there is no reason to suppose that the Russian leaders would ever keep such an agreement. Its chief result would be to give the West a false and perhaps fatal sense of security. It is easy to talk of guarantees through a "foolproof inspection system." But the more we consider what would have to be done to assure a really airtight inspection in totalitarian areas like Russia and Red China, whose leaders are dedicated to our destruction by any wile or stratagem, the more unrealistic and unfeasible the whole proposal becomes.

CONVERT THE COMMUNISTS

Faced with this desperate dilemma, what can we do? We must seek to undermine the *will* of the Communists to destroy us. Massive retaliatory power would only partly achieve this goal. We must dissolve the Marxian ideology. We must do nothing less than try to convert the Communists to capitalism.

Our own ideology has already been so undermined by Communist and socialist propaganda that most of our officials will regard such a goal as fantastic. For more than 40 years Communist propaganda has been successfully converting increasing numbers in the Western world either to Communism or to the halfway house of "democratic socialism." At best our own counterpropaganda has been spo-

radic, apologetic, defensive—and usually inept and incompetent.

The basic reason is not organizational. The basic reason is that our officials have themselves only a feeble faith in and a confused understanding of the virtues and strength of free private enterprise. They already half suspect that the Communist and socialist systems may be more productive than our own. How else can one account for the flood of statistical and economic fallacies from such official agencies as the CIA and the State Department, warning us, not of Russian *military* output, but of total *overall* production, and calling the *economic* challenge "the most dangerous of all," more dangerous even than the threat of war? How far such a belief is from the truth, how enormously comparisons of production and of living standards are in our favor, I tried to show in this space last week.

OUR WILL TO RESIST

For years Soviet Russia has been conducting a systematic cold war upon us. Its primary purpose has been to sow dissension, to undermine our faith in our own economic and political institutions, to encourage appeasement among us, to weaken our will to resist—in short, to soften us up as easy prey to a shooting war or even to make any shooting war unnecessary for their final victory.

And they have been incredibly successful so far. Not until a few years ago did most of us even realize that this cold war existed. Most of us still treat it as a figure of speech rather than as a reality. Yet if we hope to avoid an unlimited nuclear war we must recognize the existence of a cold war and wage it systematically, intelligently, and untiringly. The facts and the ideological weapons are on our side if we know how to use them. We must convince our own people, we must convince the democracies of the West, we must convince the socialists and neutralists of the East, and finally we must try to convince even the Communists themselves, that a free-enterprise system is infinitely superior to a socialist or Communist system for production, for social cooperation, for peace, and for freedom.

Preventive Cold War: II

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JUST when our own official propagandists were warning us that Russian Communism was outpacing American capitalism in over-all production, Khrushchev announced another major reform in the Soviet agricultural system that is interpreted as a step toward "the farm-commodity market of capitalist countries."

Harry Schwartz of The New York Times describes it as follows: "In essence, the decision indicates that the key lesson learned by the Soviet agricultural officials who visited the United States three years ago is now being applied to the collective farms. That lesson is simply that the market forces of supply and demand, price and cost, profit and loss are more effective stimuli for an efficient agriculture than the government exhortations and orders the Soviet Union has relied upon for three decades."

Whether the new reform does in fact go as far as this will be better known as more details become available and further decisions are announced. But there can be no doubt that Khrushchev, in spite of his daily denunciation of capitalism, has been moving in the *direction* of the capitalistic free market. This is shown in his attempts to decentralize industrial production decisions, to permit collective farms to own rather than rent tractors, and to set up what he calls a planned system based on "incentives."

WHY WE ARE LOSING

It is true that the new system will be still far from a free market. The government will still set an arbitrary price and will still fix compulsory production or delivery "quotas." Unfortunately, we cannot contrast our own system too sharply with this. We too, in agriculture, have abandoned the market system, at least for so-called "basic" commodities. These are supported by an arbitrary government-set price which creates wasteful surpluses and diverts land, labor, and capital from more needed output.

But with the growth of welfare-statism at home, our own bureaucrats have come more and more to accept the socialist premises. That is why they are impressed by fallacious comparisons of Russian production with our own. That is why they believe

that the road to world salvation lies in government-to-government foreign economic aid. That is why they are not only willing but eager to subsidize India's socialistic Five Year Plan, an obvious imitation of Russian models.

And that is one of the main reasons why we have so steadily been losing the cold war. For this cold war is chiefly a war of propaganda. It is a struggle for men's minds. And if our leaders have only a feeble faith in our own system, if they do not understand its virtues and how to explain them, if they do not understand the Marxist philosophy and its weaknesses, they are putty in the hands of the trained dialecticians and determined propagandists of Moscow.

EDUCATE THE RUSSIANS

Marshal Zhukov once told General Eisenhower that the Soviet system "appealed to the idealistic" whereas ours appealed "completely to the materialistic." "I was very hard put to it," the President confessed at a press conference a year ago. "I had a very tough time trying to defend our position." Two months ago Khrushchev told our American ambassador that when the Communists win the economic competition with the capitalistic world, "we shall also re-educate you." And Ambassador Thompson merely stared at the floor with a faint smile.

Yet it is we who, for our own survival, must re-educate the Russians. It is their philosophy that is materialistic; it is the Western philosophy of economic, political, religious, and cultural freedom that is idealistic. If our economic system is also immensely more productive than Communism, it is precisely because it releases intellectual and spiritual energies.

A subordinate organization like the Voice of America, with its effort to penetrate the Iron Curtain by radio, can perform only a minor role in explaining all this. It must be explained at the summit. Our political leaders must know the right things to say. And, like their opposite numbers in Russia, they must say them persistently, systematically, daily. The fact that such a program will not cost billions or even millions is not a good reason why it can be neglected.