FOREIGN AFFAIRS

JANUARY 1960

Peaceful Coexistence

George F. Kennan

Volume 38 • Number 2

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Vol. 38 JANUARY 1960 No. 2

PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

A Western View

By George F. Kennan

IN the public debate that has marked the progress of what is called the cold war, no term has been used more loosely, and at times unscrupulously, than the word "coexistence." In the article under his name, published in the last issue of *Foreign Affairs,* Mr. Khrushchev has given us an interesting definition of what he understands by this term. Peaceful coexistence, he says, signifies in essence the repudiation of war as a means of solving controversial issues. It presupposes an obligation to refrain from every form of violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of another state. It implies renunciation of interference in the internal affairs of other countries. It means that political and economic relations must be put on a basis of complete equality and mutual benefit. It involves, he says, the elimination of the very threat of war. It is something which "should develop into peaceful competition for the purpose of satisfying man's needs in the best possible way."

Not only has Mr. Khrushchev given us this definition but he has made it plain that he considers that the Soviet Union abides by these principles, has abided by them ever since the revolution of the autumn of 1917 and cannot help but abide by them in view of its social foundation; whereas there are still important elements in the Western countries who, in his view, do not abide by these principles, who "believe that war is to their benefit," who want to inflict "capitalism" by violent means on unwilling peoples and whose opposition must be overcome before peaceful coexistence can really be said to prevail.

II

There could be few propositions more amazing than the assertion that the Soviet state "from its very inception . . . proclaimed peaceful coexistence as the basic principle of its foreign policy," and that the initial Communist leaders in Russia were strong partisans of the view that peaceful coexistence could and should prevail among states with different social systems.

One returns reluctantly to the record of those early years of Soviet power. One can well believe that authoritative circles in Moscow assess somewhat differently today the prospects for violent social revolution in the main industrial countries of the West, and perhaps even its necessity. One can imagine that they have a concept of the obligations of Russian Communists to the workers of those Western countries which is also somewhat different from that which prevailed in Moscow in 1917 and 1918. If this is so, then it would surely be better to let bygones be bygones, rather than permit the problem of coexistence in the present to be complicated by altercation over the attitudes of the past. The years 1917 and 1918 were, after all, a time of tremendous turmoil and tragedy in world affairs. Men acted, everywhere, in the spirit of violence and passion. Many things were done by both Communist and non-Communist sides which today, from the perspective of 40 years, appear clearly regrettable. Surely there could be very few people in the non-Communist world who would wish now to revive the controversies of that day or to associate themselves indiscriminately with the outlooks and prejudices of the period of World War I and its aftermath.

But if reference is to be taken prominently on the Communist side to the attitudes of Soviet leaders in 1917, as proof of the inviolable and inevitable attachment of Russian Communism to such principles as the repudiation of violence as a means of solving controversial political issues, the renunciation of interference in the internal affairs of other countries and the predominance of peaceful competition as between states of different social systems, then the Western scholar cannot refrain from registering his amazement and protest. It is surprising that there should be so little respect for the true history of the Russian revolutionary movement on the part of those who profess today to be its custodians and protagonists that they are willing to pervert it in this way for the sake of their own tactical convenience. One shudders

to think what Lenin would have said to these preposterous distortions. Do the present leaders of the Russian Communist Party really profess to have forgotten that Lenin regarded himself outstandingly as an *international* socialist leader? Who was it wrote, on October 3, 1918, "The Bolshevik working class of Russia was always internationalist not only in words, but in deeds, in contrast to those villains—the heroes and leaders of the Second International. . . ."? Who was it said, in that same document, "The Russian proletariat will understand that the greatest sacrifices will now soon be demanded of it for the cause of internationalism. . . . Let us prepare ourselves at once. Let us prove that the Russian worker is capable of working much more energetically, and of struggling and dying in a much more self-sacrificing way, when it is a matter not of the Russian revolution alone but of the international workers' revolution. . . ."?[1]

This is, as every good Communist in Russia knows, only a single quotation out of literally thousands that could be adduced to illustrate the devotion of the Bolsheviki in Lenin's time to socialism as an international cause—the devotion, that is, precisely to the duty of interfering in the internal affairs of other countries with the object of altering their system of government and mode of life.

The proposition that the political power dominant in the Soviet Union has always been on the side of coexistence, as defined by Mr. Khrushchev, also calls upon us to forget the long and sinister history of the relationship between Moscow and the foreign Communist Parties in the Stalin era. There is ample documentation to show for what purposes foreign Communist Parties were used during those years, by whom, and by what methods. There are many of us in the West who, again, would be happy to disregard these recollections when it comes to the political discussion of the present day. But it is another thing to suffer insult to one's intelligence; and if people in Moscow wish this unhappy history to be forgotten outside Russia, they must not blandly turn the facts of history upside down and ask that the resulting configuration be accepted as proof of the inevitable commitment of Russian Communism to the principles of coexistence.

Over a hundred years ago a distinguished Western visitor, the Marquis de Custine, wrote from Petrograd that: "Russian despotism does not only count ideas and feelings as nothing, but it

[1] V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniya* (Fourth Edition). Moscow: 1952, v. 28, p. 83.

remakes the facts, it enters the lists against the evident, and triumphs in the struggle."

People cannot hope to triumph in such a cause today. The very cultivation of these distortions, seeking as it does the obfuscation of public understanding of the historical development of the relations between the Soviet Union and the West, is itself a grievous disservice to any truly hopeful form of coexistence.

These statements of mine are not to be taken as implying a disposition to believe that the attachment of Mr. Khrushchev and certain of his colleagues to the principles of coexistence, as he has now defined them, is insincere and conceals sinister motives. This does not necessarily follow. The purpose is merely to point out that people in Moscow are not likely to strengthen belief outside Russia in the sincerity of their attachment to liberal and tolerant principles of international life by distorting the history of the Lenin or Stalin eras or by pleading that such an attachment flows inevitably from the nature of the social and political system prevailing in the Soviet Union. It is possible to conceive that the Soviet attitude in such questions may have changed; it is not possible to accept the proposition that it did not need to change in order to meet the requirements of peaceful coexistence, as Mr. Khrushchev has defined them.

III

In the statement of the Soviet view of coexistence, much stress has been laid on the attachment of people in the West to capitalism and on their alleged desire to see it triumph as a world system.

The Westerner of this day experiences a certain bewilderment when he hears the term "capitalism" used in this way. What is it that is meant by this expression? One notices that whatever the reality may be which it purports to symbolize, it is one which in Russian Communist eyes has not changed appreciably since the Russian Social Democratic Party came into being at the turn of the century. If there is any recognition in official Soviet thought of the fact that changes in the economic practices and institutions of non-Communist countries over this past half-century have been such as to affect in any way the elements of the classic Marxist view of Western capitalism, I am not aware of the place where this has found expression. Contemporary Soviet ideological material seems to suggest that there exists outside the Communist orbit a static and basic condition—a set of practices known as

"capitalism" and expressed primarily in the private ownership of the means of production—which has undergone no essential alteration over the past 50 years, or indeed since the lifetime of Karl Marx; which continues to be the dominant reality of Western society; belief in which constitutes the essence of all non-Communist political philosophy; and to which the Western governments and "ruling circles," in particular, remain, as a matter of pride and tenacious self-interest, profoundly committed. It would presumably be to "capitalism" in this sense that Mr. Khrushchev was referring when he wrote that many readers of *Foreign Affairs* would perhaps think that capitalism will ultimately triumph.

It is hardly necessary to emphasize how far this seems, to many of us outside Russia, from the reality of this day. The principles of free economic enterprise and private ownership of the means of production have indeed had a prominent part to play in the economies of non-Communist countries everywhere over this past half-century. But in no two countries has this part been quite the same. Elements of public and social control have come in, everywhere, to challenge and modify the operation of these principles. The resulting balance between private control on the one hand and social or public control on the other now varies greatly from country to country. There is today not *one* social and economic system prevailing outside the Communist orbit: there are almost as many such systems as there are countries; and many of them are closer to what Marx conceived as socialism than they are to the laissez faire capitalism of his day. In each of them, furthermore, the balance between private and social influences is everywhere in a state of flux and evolution which makes it quite impossible to predict from the aspect it assumes today what aspect it is going to assume tomorrow.

This means that in the non-Communist world, where it is customary to attempt to relate the meaning of words to objective phenomena, the term "capitalism" no longer has any generic and useful meaning. It is only in Russia, where theoretical concept can still be spared the test of relevance to objective reality, that a meaning for this term still exists. Not only this, but there are numbers of issues of public life which today appear to most people in the non-Communist world as having a higher importance, from the standpoint of their general effect on the human condition, than the issues of the ownership of the means of production

and the distribution of wealth with which the Marxist doctrine was preoccupied.

How absurd, in the light of these facts, to picture Western non-Communists as the passionate protagonists and devotees of something called "capitalism," and to suggest that there are influential people in the West who desire to bring upon the earth the miseries of another world war in the hope of being able to inflict the capitalist system on great masses of people who do not desire it. The question of who owns the machines is not the one that today dominates the thoughts and discussions of Western society and Western "ruling circles;" it is primarily the question of human freedom—of the right of people to choose and alter their own social and political systems as they like, to select those who shall govern them within the framework of those systems, and to enjoy, within that same framework, the civil liberties which relieve them of the fear of arbitrary injustice, permit them to practice freedom of the mind and enable them to walk with their heads up.

I am aware that Communists have long professed to see no value in either the parliamentary or judicial institutions of the liberal West. The classical Communist position has dismissed these institutions as frauds perpetrated on the helpless workers by the monopolists who exploit them. Is it too much to hope that people in the Communist world will now manifest their interest in coexistence by abandoning cynical and ridiculous extremism, in the face of which the whole development of British and American society over these last centuries becomes historically unintelligible?

That these liberal institutions are imperfect, most Englishmen or Americans would, I think, readily concede; but the overwhelming majority of us believe them to embody something that lies close to the essence of human dignity, as we have learned to see it, and something which is one of the most precious attainments of civilized man. It is to this, not to the system governing ownership and control of the industries of our country, that our deepest pride and loyalties relate. If, by the fair operation of these parliamentary institutions, and with preservation of all basic civil liberties, the arrangements governing ownership or control of the means of production should be drastically changed (and some already have been), most of us would view this as no final tragedy and would not see ourselves as defeated. But if it were the other way round, and if such changes had to be purchased at the

price of the sacrifice of the rights and privileges which our parliamentary and judicial institutions now generally, if imperfectly, provide—then, and only then, would we consider ourselves to have suffered an irreparable defeat—only then would it seem to us that what was most essential had been lost.

We decline, therefore, to be depicted as the passionate protagonists of something called "capitalism" waging an ideological competition with the protagonists of something called "socialism." Least of all can we in America accept the charge of wishing to impose something called capitalism on other peoples. Several European countries have changed their social and economic institutions over the course of recent decades in ways that carry them very far from those prevailing in the United States. In this, they have not encountered the slightest opposition or hindrance from the American side. The basic ideological issue, as seen in the United States today, is not capitalism versus socialism but freedom versus its opposite. The disagreement between Moscow and the "leading circles" of the non-Communist world is not really a disagreement about which form of social system is most productive; it is rather a disagreement about what is most important, in the first place, in the lives of peoples.

IV

The fact that an ideological disagreement of this nature exists is in itself no reason why peaceful coexistence, as Mr. Khrushchev defines it, should not prevail. There is nothing new in the prolonged peaceful residence, side by side, of ideologically antagonistic systems. Many of the present peaceful relationships of international life, outside the Communist orbit, have evolved from ones which were originally relationships of profound ideological antagonism. There was, for that matter, no ideological affinity but rather a sharp ideological conflict between the Tsarist system in Russia and the world of American political thought. This did not prevent the two powers from existing in the same world, without hostilities, for more than a hundred years.

There are no doubt individuals scattered here and there throughout the Western countries who find intolerable this present antagonism of outlook as between the Soviet Government and the Western peoples and who cannot see how it can be either resolved or endured by means short of a world war. If one searches, one can even find, for quotation, public utterances of this view.

But it would be generally agreed, I think, that these people are few and not very influential. The general attitude throughout the West would unquestionably be—and this goes for governments as well as for individuals—that while the social and political system now dominant in Russia is one that may not commend itself to us, its existence and prevalence there is not our responsibility; it is not our business to change it; it constitutes in itself no reason why a relationship of peaceful coexistence should not prevail.

The cold war, let it be said most emphatically, does not exist because people in the West object to the Russian people having socialism or any other system they wish. If, in fact, it were only a matter of ideologies, and only a matter of the relationship between the West and Russia proper, there would be no reason why the Soviet demand for "peaceful coexistence" should not be accepted without reservation.

But the Soviet Union is not only an ideological phenomenon. It is also a great power, physically and militarily. Even if the prevailing ideology in Russia were not antagonistic to the concepts prevailing elsewhere, the behavior of the government of that country in its international relations, and particularly any considerable expansion of its power at the expense of the freedom of other peoples, would still be a matter of most serious interest to the world at large.

And it is, let us recall, precisely such an expansion that we have witnessed in recent years. So far as Europe is concerned, this expansion had its origin in the advance of Soviet armies into Eastern and Central Europe in 1945. This advance was not only accepted at the time—it was generally welcomed in the West as a very important part of the final phase of the struggle against Hitler. But it has had a consequence which few people in the West foresaw in 1945 and which fewer still desired: the quasi-permanent advancement of the effective boundaries of Moscow's political and military authority to the very center of Europe.

The discussion of the question of coexistence on the Communist side is cast in terms which take no account of this situation and which ask us, by implication, either to ignore it or to pretend that it does not exist. The problem, we are told, is to "liquidate the consequences of the Second World War;" but this particular consequence, we are left to infer, is one which is neither to be liquidated nor to be spoken about.

Is this a realistic demand? One cannot agree that it is. The position of preëminence which the U.S.S.R. enjoys among the countries of the Communist bloc is not a secret. The Communist leaders of various countries do not ignore it when they themselves assemble to discuss international affairs. What people in the West should or should not do to change or affect this situation is another problem; but to demand that a situation which is perfectly well recognized *within* the Communist world as a significant factor in world affairs should be effectively ignored when it comes to the discussion of coexistence between East and West is surely neither reasonable nor helpful. The fact is that this extension of Russia's political and military power into the heart of Europe represents a major alteration in the world strategic and political balance, and one that was never discussed as such with Western statesmen, much less agreed to by them.

It is not just the *fact* of this situation which is of importance to the Western peoples; there is also the question as to *how* it came into existence and *how* it is being maintained. The truth is that it did not come into existence because the majority of the people in the region affected became convinced that Communism, as Mr. Khrushchev has put it, was "the more progressive and equitable system." This peaceful competition for the minds of men which the Communists today ask us to accept as the concomitant and condition of peaceful coexistence had precious little to do with the means by which socialist governments, on the pattern approved by Moscow, were established in the countries of Eastern Europe in 1944 and 1945 or with the means by which their rule was subsequently consolidated there. In the view of the West, formed on the strength of overwhelming historical evidence, these régimes were imposed by the skillful manipulations of highly disciplined Communist minorities, trained and inspired by Moscow, and supported by the presence or close proximity of units of the Soviet armed forces. They have been maintained in power by similar means.

It is not the intention here to attempt to judge these happenings from a moral standpoint. I do not mean to challenge the proposition that Russia has political interests in Eastern Europe and that these deserve the respect of Western governments as a matter of elementary political realism. Nor do I wish to deny that the present situation, whatever we may think of its origin, represents today a heavy commitment of the Soviet Government,

which the latter cannot reasonably be asked to alter in any abrupt or drastic manner dangerous to its own political security.

There are, as Mr. Khrushchev knows, people in the West who have not despaired of finding ways to reconcile Soviet interests in this area both with the interests of the Western powers and of the respective peoples, and who have done what they could to pave the way for reasonable and moderate solutions of these difficulties. But the efforts of such people are bound to remain fruitless if the Soviet Government continues to give the impression that, having quietly pocketed this region, it is now saying to the West: "Coexistence begins at this point, and any curiosity on your part about the fate of these peoples will be a violation of it."

It was indicated above that the existence of the Soviet brand of socialism in *Russia itself* may well be regarded in the West as Russia's own business and need not be a barrier to peaceful coexistence. The Soviet régime is, after all, an indigenous régime throughout the greater part of the area of the Soviet Union. The processes in which it had its origin were not democratic ones in the Western sense, but they were deeply Russian ones, reflecting some very basic realities of the Russian political life of that day. It is indeed not the business of Americans to interfere with such a régime.

But when it comes to the governments of the Communist bloc in Eastern and Central Europe, then the problem is inevitably more complicated. These governments are not, in the main, truly indigenous. All this is of course relative; for seldom, if ever, is there *no* area of identity between the interests and sentiments of a people and the régime, however despotic, that governs it. But these régimes represent, in Western eyes, the fruits of a species of conquest and subjugation which was not less real for the fact that it did not generally involve hostile military invasion in the usual sense. And the thought inevitably presents itself: if such a thing could be done to *these* peoples, by means short of overt military aggression, and if we are now asked to accept it as something not to be discussed in connection with peaceful coexistence, to how many other peoples could this also be done, within the very framework of coexistence we are being asked to adopt?

The fact is (and it is one we have had impressed upon us in painful ways over these past four decades) that there are more ways than outright military aggression or formal political intervention by which the fate of smaller peoples may be brought

under subjection to the will of larger ones, and more devices than those of the classic nineteenth century colonialism by which peoples can be kept in that state. There does exist, after all, such a thing as the science of insurrection—the science of the seizure of power by conspiratorial minorities, of the conquest of the vital centers of power, of the control of the streets, of the manipulation of civil conflict. Who would deny that this science had a part, and a very basic one, in the Communist thinking and training of an earlier day? Revolutions may not be "made to order;" but that they normally flow only from the spontaneous impulses of the masses and are never influenced by the organizational and military activities of political "vanguards" is something that would scarcely be reconcilable with Communist doctrine of an earlier day, and something we certainly cannot be asked, in the light of historical evidence, to accept.

Mr. Khrushchev gives the impression that all this is not an important part of *his* thinking today. It would be wrong to assume automatically that there is no sincerity in this claim. (He has a point when he says that we should not look for the double bottom in *every* suitcase.) But even if this should be true in his particular case, it would scarcely be true of all of his present associates in the Secretariat and Presidium of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; nor is there any reason to believe it to be true of the leaders of Russia's principal associate in the family of nations: Communist China.

Again, one must stress the fact that the historical record cannot be suddenly ignored. If the capitalist countries have, in Mr. Khrushchev's view, a past record to be explained away (he accuses us of having organized "senseless crusades" against Soviet Russia), so does Soviet Russia. In particular, it will be a long time before the foreign policies and methods of Joseph Stalin cease to be a determining factor in the consciousness of the West. In one sense, we are all, like Mr. Khrushchev himself, Stalin's pupils. It is from him that we learned a great deal of what we know about such things as ruthlessness and consistency and deception in international politics. Mr. Khrushchev must not now ask us to forget too quickly—certainly not more quickly than some of his own Russian and Chinese associates—the lessons we have learned from this eminent political teacher.

These reflections have an important bearing on the words "peace" and "peaceful" which are used so frequently on the

Communist side in connection with the problem of coexistence. What is it that is meant by these terms?

The word "peace" has no meaning outside of the concrete conditions by which it is marked. Peace is not the mere absence of overt hostilities. We have peace today, in that sense. There is "peace," for that matter, in any well-disciplined prison. Peace is not an abstraction. Lenin understood this well. Thus he wrote in 1915: "The slogan of peace may be advanced either in connection with specific conditions of peace, or without any conditions at all —by way of struggle, that is, not for any specific peace but for peace in general (Frieden ohne weiters). It is clear that in the latter case we have to do not only with a slogan which is not a socialist one but is in general a senseless one, devoid of content."[2]

What content are we then to assign to the term "peace" in Communist usage? Is it unreasonable to ask Lenin's pupils to make this plain and to specify, when they use this term, precisely what sort of peace they are talking about: peace in whose interests? on what conditions? at what cost?

There is one kind of peace that is compatible with the true security of peoples; and this is one which is based on the principles of genuine national freedom. There is another kind of peace which represents the silence that reigns where the instruments of coercion are simply too formidable to be challenged by those against whom they are aimed.

The bandying about of the word peace as an abstraction evades, once more, the fact that there are ways in which peoples can be oppressed which do not necessarily involve at any given time the visible exertion of force across international frontiers—that sometimes the mere threat of force is enough. And it evades the fact that there have been instances, as in Hungary in 1956, where the Soviet attachment to "peace" did not inhibit the use of Soviet armed forces to determine the political situation in a neighboring country. Is it seriously supposed that people outside Russia can overlook these facts when the question of "peaceful" coexistence is discussed?

V

Much is made, in Communist discussion of coexistence, of the military dispositions of the Western countries, particularly the United States. The United States Government is reproached for

[2] *Ibid.*, v. 21, p. 262.

maintaining bases in various parts of the world; for being unwilling to agree to a total abolition and renunciation of atomic weapons and to a final ban on nuclear tests; for failure to match unilateral measures of reduction of conventional armaments which the Soviet Government claims (without very adequate proof) to have taken; for rearming the Germans within the framework of NATO, etc. All these facets of behavior on the part of the United States Government are cited as inconsistent with a true disposition to abide by the principle of peaceful coexistence.

The writer of these lines has had his own differences with the military policies of the Western coalition in recent years. These policies have suffered, in his opinion, from several distortions. They have often reflected a certain mis-estimation of the true nature of the problem with which they were designed to deal. They seem sometimes to have been predicated on a view of Soviet intentions which, to anyone familiar with the history and psychology of Soviet power, can only appear crude and one-sided, drawn rather from the memories of past adversaries than from a dispassionate study of Russian-Communist principles and tactics. They have at times involved one-sided and unsound commitments to individual categories of weapons. They seem sometimes to have reflected an exaggerated confidence in the device of military alliance as a sort of panacea for all political ills, as though there were no dangers other than those of direct military aggression. They have on more than one occasion led to military dispositions which, however defensive in motivation, could well appear to a possible opponent as the reflection of an intention to initiate hostilities at some stage or other.

All this is true; yet none of it taken separately nor all of it taken together justifies the extreme interpretation Moscow has placed upon it. The Soviet leaders seem either unwilling or unable to take any proper account of the true measure of the shock wrought to the Western public by their exploitation, for purposes of political aggrandizement, of their military position in Eastern and Central Europe in the period 1945 to 1948; by their failure to match the demobilization of the Western armies; by the political attack launched by the Communists in Western Europe in the years 1947 and 1948; by the imposition of the Berlin blockade, and above all by the launching of the Korean War. To people in the West these actions seemed to reflect a hostility no less menacing in intent than would have been threats of overt military aggres-

sion by Soviet forces. Coming as they did on the heels of the Second World War, affecting as they did nerves already frayed and minds already prone to anxiety as a result of these fresh experiences, it is not surprising that they produced on a great many people in the West the impression that the security of Western Europe, having just withstood one fearful challenge, was now confronted by another one of scarcely smaller dimensions. Neither is it surprising that peoples' reaction to this impression should have been the intensive effort to re-create, within the framework of a Western alliance, something of the armed force which had been so hastily and trustingly demobilized in the immediate aftermath of the war. The history of Europe has been such that danger to the nation, within the period of historical memory, has generally been associated with the movement of armies over land frontiers. It is probably only natural that the peoples of the Continent should be obsessed with the *manie d'invasion* and should look to the creation of defensive military power as a means of protection even against pressures which are actually much more subtle and refined than those of regular military action.

In the questions raised from the Soviet side about the military rivalry there is room for discussion and room for compromise. But no useful purpose will be served by the willful misinterpretation and distortion of this subject in which people in Moscow stubbornly persist. The suggestion that there is a sizable or serious body of people in the West who, in the immediate aftermath of the horrors of 1939–1945, wish for new orgies of bloodshed and slaughter is too absurd to be entertained for a moment. The suggestion, in particular, that Chancellor Adenauer would be one of these people is so patently absurd, so wildly remote from the entire fabric of political realities in Germany today, and so mischievous in its obvious intent and implications, that its continued reiteration in Moscow is a grievous discouragement to those who hope for better understanding.

Mr. Khrushchev is right in viewing the weapons race of this day as inconsistent with any satisfactory form of coexistence. But the prospects for bettering this situation will not be promising so long as Moscow persists in viewing the military policies pursued in the Western coalition in recent years as solely the products of the lust of Western financiers and manufacturers thirsting for another war in the hopes of greater profits, and refuses to recognize that these policies, however misconceived or

overdrawn, represent in large measure the natural and predictable reactions of great peoples to a situation which Moscow itself did much to create.

VI

A further component of the demand which is made from the Communist side in the name of peaceful coexistence relates to what Mr. Khrushchev has called an "increase in extensive and absolutely unrestricted international trade." Ideological differences, it is argued, should not be an obstacle to the development of trade. Without such trade, international life cannot be expected to develop normally.

This is, from the Western standpoint, an odd and somewhat puzzling requirement. If trade between the Soviet Union and non-Communist countries were of such a nature as to bring with it the normal incidental advantages of economic contact—extensive reciprocal travel and residence of businessmen in the other country, the establishment of close personal contacts and associations, the intermingling, in short, not only of the economic life but also of the people of two countries at least in a certain limited area of activity—then one would be able to see some relevance of the question of trade to the question of peaceful coexistence. But the Soviet Government, as is known, maintains a monopoly of foreign trade, conducts most of its transactions abroad, denies generally to foreign businessmen the privilege of residing and doing business on Soviet soil and takes most elaborate and unusual measures of precaution to see that Soviet citizens do not form permanent relationships of personal confidence or friendship with any foreigners whatsoever, whether through business contacts or otherwise.

In these circumstances, one might suppose, the virtues of increased international trade would of necessity be confined to the direct benefits such trade might bring to the economies of the respective partners. That there are such benefits to be obtained, at least in modest measure, cannot be disputed. But Mr. Khrushchev has himself denied that these benefits are of any vital significance to the Soviet Union. "In our economic development," he writes, "we rely wholly on the internal forces of our country, on our own resources and possibilities. . . . Irrespective of whether or not we shall trade with Western countries . . . the implementation of our economic plans . . . will not in the least be impeded."

In the case of the United States, it is hard to believe that trade with Russia could have a much greater significance than it has for the Russians. Except in time of war, trade between Russia and the United States has never assumed very large dimensions, either in the Tsarist or the Soviet period. The things which Russia normally has to sell are not such as to have any very sensational implications for the American economy; and the same would be true of the possibilities presented by the purchasing programs of the Soviet Foreign Trade Monopoly, to date.

In addition to this, the Western governments have to consider not just the possible advantages of trade with a foreign trade monopoly but also its possible dangers. Such trade is controlled and shaped at the Soviet end by a great government which has political as well as economic interests to pursue. This being so, one cannot look to a mere mutual economic advantageousness, as one does in the case of trade between countries with a free enterprise system, to provide the guarantee of stability. This is particularly the case when the government in question goes out of its way to emphasize how little dependent it is on this trade, how well it can get along without it. The non-Communist governments have always to reckon with the possibility that exchanges carefully built up over the course of the years and involving important commitments on the part of Western firms may be suddenly terminated by a switch in the purchasing policy of the other party, for reasons into which considerations of economic advantage do not enter at all. These things have happened in the past. Even if they had not happened in the past, there would be no guarantee that they could not happen in the future. This precariousness, arising from the absence on one side of the normal balance wheel of international trade—commercial self-interest—does not mean that trade with the Soviet Union is never safe or desirable; but it does place definite limitations on its possibilities.

One can well imagine that the emphasis laid on this factor by Mr. Khrushchev and other Soviet spokesmen rests on the fact that the expression of a desire for expanded trade relations has often (and particularly in Soviet diplomatic history) constituted the prelude to a political rapprochement or entente between two powers. But it would be difficult to persuade Americans to accept this view of the significance of commercial policy. In the American tradition, trade is a means of meeting real economic needs, not of expressing political feelings.

There have been in recent years, in the American position on questions of East-West trade, certain features which have been widely regarded by people in countries allied with the United States, and by some Americans, as distortions: as the expression of an undue timidity in the face of domestic criticism or of an exaggerated conception of the effect of such trade on Soviet military preparations. If a reëxamination of these attitudes would have, in Soviet eyes, a significance which would really be helpful in relaxing international tensions, then the suggestion is one that should not be lightly dismissed in Washington.

But even if this reëxamination were undertaken, we would still be faced with the fact that the existence in Moscow of a governmental monopoly of foreign trade creates a set of conditions for trade quite different from those to which people in the West are accustomed. This does not exclude the possibility of commercial exchanges; it does not even exclude the possibility of a considerable increase of Soviet-American trade over its present levels. It does place a ceiling on what can, from the Western standpoint, reasonably be expected. And this ceiling is such that it is difficult to see how foreign trade could enter very importantly into the problem of peaceful coexistence.

VII

One last reflection. Again, the values to which it relates are relative ones; but the difficulties which lie at the heart of the tensions between the Communist and non-Communist worlds will never be overcome if relative distinctions are to be ignored.

The reference here is to the concept of truth that prevails in Moscow (not to mention Peking) as opposed to that which prevails in most other parts of the globe.

We are all accustomed to hearing not only from the Communist propaganda machine but from the lips of senior Soviet statesmen propositions which are either so patently absurd or so flatly in contradiction to known facts that no child could believe them. If we were to take seriously what comes to us from the Soviet side we should have to believe, for example, that Russia has been governed for over 40 years by a group of men who differ so profoundly from all mortals who have existed before or elsewhere that they have—over this entire period—never made a mistake, never analyzed a problem incorrectly, never been guided by any sentiments other than those of most selfless dedication to the

welfare of others. This we are asked to believe despite the fact that at one time or another over the course of these years numbers of these people, theretofore a part of this supposedly all-wise leadership, have been suddenly denounced by their associates as treacherous criminals and dealt with accordingly. Simultaneously we are asked to accept the thesis that with one or two possible exceptions the Western countries have been led—through an equally remarkable coincidence—exclusively by people who were unmitigated villains: either bloodthirsty, greedy capitalists or the spineless stooges of such capitalists. One could go on citing such examples at any length. One has only to think of the bland distortions of the historical record that enter constantly into the Soviet statements on foreign policy: the claims with respect to such matters as the outbreak of the Korean War, the origin of the difficulties in Southeast Asia, the nature of the Soviet action in Hungary, etc.

A characteristic but particularly serious extrapolation of this irresponsible attitude toward objective fact will be found in the anti-American campaign of recent years. While this campaign reached its apotheosis before Stalin's death, it did not, unfortunately, cease entirely with that event. The Western public generally is little aware of the fantastic distortion of the image of the United States which has been purveyed to the Soviet public, and particularly to the Soviet intelligentsia, over the course of the past ten years by those who control the informational media of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. An image of America continues to be cultivated in which even those Americans who are critically inclined towards many manifestations of American life would not recognize the country they know—an image in which the real faults of American civilization find as little recognition as its real virtues.

Propaganda is propaganda; but surely, like everything else in life, it has its limits. What are we to conclude from the propagation of these fantastic misapprehensions about the United States? —that the Soviet leaders really believe them? or that, knowing them to be misapprehensions, they nevertheless find it in order that Soviet citizens should be encouraged to accept them as true? Either variant would have most questionable implications from the standpoint of the prospects for peaceful coexistence.

Nor is it much comfort to people in the West to be assured that if only tensions would be reduced and military preparations

relaxed this stream of deliberate detraction would dry up as miraculously and suddenly as it once burst forth. People in the United States have much to correct in their civilization, but little to hide. They are as little interested in being artificially spared by others in the critical appraisal of American life as they are in being artificially disparaged. Let this appraisal be as critical and as skeptical as it will, provided only that it is honest.

Can one ignore, in the discussion of the problem of coexistence, the implications of this attitude toward objective reality—an attitude that characterizes not just the professional Soviet propagandist but the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as a whole, and the statesmanship which that Party inspires? It will always be difficult to know how much confidence can be placed in people who appear to be deliberately deceiving either themselves or others. Is it too much to ask the Soviet leaders to drop today this Byzantine dogmatism of political thought and utterance, for which a case might have been made in the early days of the revolutionary militancy of the Party, when it was still fighting for its ascendancy in Russia, but which is out of place on the part of a great government which asks for acceptance as a mature and responsible force in world affairs? Scarcely anyone, surely, is deceived today by these absurd extremisms. But there are many people in the non-Communist world to whom these recurring evidences of irresponsibility in the attitude toward truth are a constant source of misgiving about the prospects of any sound and enduring coexistence between Communist and non-Communist worlds. What can be the value of specific understandings, these people ask, if the underlying assumptions and beliefs are so grotesquely different? If the Soviet leaders really think us to be as evil as they depict us to their own people, how can they seriously believe in the possibility of coexisting peacefully with us? If, on the other hand, they are deliberately misleading their own people, how can we, on our side, have confidence in them?

The demand that must be made on Moscow is not in any sense a demand for the uncritical acceptance of other points of view. What we would like would be to see in the statements of Soviet leaders, and in the propaganda material produced under their direction, at least a reasonable effort to reconcile the picture they paint of world realities with the objective evidence they have before them. So long as the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union continue to hold that truth is what it is useful to

the interests of the Party that people should believe, regardless of how preposterous or absurd this may be in the light of objective evidence—so long as they continue to deny the very existence of an objective reality and, accordingly, any obligation on their part to understand and respect it—even those people in other parts of the world who might most earnestly wish for coexistence as Mr. Khrushchev has defined it will have to put restraints on their hopes and expectations. The road to peaceful coexistence lies, admittedly, through many gates; but one of these is the abandonment by Russian Communists of the absurd contention that theirs is a party which has always had a perfect understanding of the human predicament and has never made a mistake.

VIII

If Moscow is sincere in the quest for peaceful coexistence, and if to this end it is prepared to envisage a *general* revision, on both sides, of the attitudes and practices that have produced, or have been produced by, this dangerous state of world affairs known as the cold war, there will then be no lack of people in the countries outside the Communist orbit prepared to lend their influence to this process, and if need be, at considerable personal cost; for it is not in Russia alone that the extent of the danger is apparent. But if it is conceived in Moscow that the adjustment has all to be made on the Western side, there will be little that anyone on this side of the line can usefully do to advance coexistence beyond its present uncertain status.

Could we not, all of us, now put aside the pretense of total righteousness and admit to a measure of responsibility for the tangled processes of history that have brought the world to its present dangerous state? And could we not, having once admitted this, drop the argument about whose responsibility is greatest and address ourselves at long last, earnestly and without recrimination, to the elimination of the central and most intolerable elements of the danger?