



**WILL COMMUNISM
CONQUER THE WORLD?
A Balance Sheet**

by **STUART CHASE**

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WILL COMMUNISM CONQUER THE WORLD?

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by STUART CHASE

To most Americans, judging by letters to the newspapers and sidewalk polls, "Communism" seems to mean a kind of loathsome beast preparing to overrun and subjugate the world. The monster always lives in Moscow, though Peiping houses a related jackal. Tito's third species of "Communism," living in Yugoslavia, is seldom mentioned.

The popular picture of this ugly brute is strongly reminiscent of the pre-war image of "Fascism," which to most Americans was also a loathsome monster bent on world domination. I remember maps in the press showing Hitler's anticipated routes of conquest reaching into the Western Hemisphere like so many tentacles. Here, under the big arrow, the armored divisions would take off from Casablanca to the bulge of Brazil (dotted line), and thence up to Texas—with a fine disregard for the Amazon, the Orinoco, and the jungles of Panama. Similar arrows in the newspapers today show the possible path of "Communism" down through Southwest Asia.

To exorcise the Communist monster, both military and political weapons are advocated. They range from more guns to Laos and the landing of Marines in Cuba, to the witch hunts of the John Birch Society, and even include the demand for the impeachment of the Chief Justice as a Communist agent.

Erich Fromm, who is devoting his talents to a study of international affairs from the view-

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point of a psychiatrist, fears that many of us suffer from paranoid thinking. In a recent book, *May Man Prevail?*, Fromm wrote:

“Most Americans today think about Russia in a paranoid fashion; namely, they ask what is *possible* rather than what is *probable*. It is possible that Khrushchev wants to conquer us by force. It is possible that he makes peace proposals in order to make us unaware of the danger . . . If we think only of possibilities, then indeed there is no chance for realistic political action.

“Sane thinking means not only to think of possibilities, which in fact are always relatively easy to recognize, but to think also of probabilities. That means to examine the realistic situations, and to predict to some extent an opponent’s probable action by means of an analysis of all the factors and motivations that influence his behavior.”

On a probability basis there is good reason to believe that the West is confronted not with a tentacled monster, but with two dynamic nations, Russia and China. They use Marxian slogans and call themselves “Communist;” but most careful analysts agree that they are not following the course charted by Marx and Lenin. Russia in particular is off course. Her leaders, for instance, no longer envisage war with “capitalism” as inevitable, as did Marx. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev has repeatedly said that Marx did not anticipate a nuclear war, and war in the nuclear age, he says, is more likely to result in mutual suicide than in victory.

There is good reason to believe on a probability basis that the threat from Moscow is not so much that of an ideological monster as that of a high-powered nationalism on the march; not so much Karl Marx as Peter the Great. Such a view removes the mysticism and translates the threat to something more realistic and familiar: the drive of empire, well-known and well-documented from Alexander the Great to Kaiser Wilhelm II.

We thus have, in semantic terms, the Marxian model of Communism, wherein the workers of

the world, the “prisoners of starvation,” arise, strike off their chains and overthrow the “capitalists;” and a quite different Communism, whereby two dynamic nations press for new spheres of influence, using Marxian slogans as an aid. This article is geared to the latter Communism, as more probable and so more realistic than the traditional portrait of Communism. Most of the time I shall label it “Russia-or-China” in the interest of clarity, letting the label “Communism” stand for the old Marxian ideology.

If pressed, Khrushchev might admit another unprecedented effect of the nuclear age: his enormous land armies no longer dare overrun Europe, as they might have done in 1946. This is not because of NATO, but because Russian cities behind his armies would probably be incinerated by a shower of hydrogen bombs within hours after he started to move. He can destroy the West with his own hydrogen bombs, but he cannot conquer it militarily.

Affluent Societies Are Immune

Meanwhile the growth of affluence in the West has immunized most of its workers against the Marxian dialectic. There will be no uprisings of the proletariat so long as the West remains reasonably prosperous. This high probability has been inadequately appreciated. Agents of the Russian and Chinese empires can make strong appeals to the peoples of other nations whose allegiance and resources they covet. But these appeals are potent only in the so-called Hungry World. They fall on deaf ears in highly developed societies. What was true a hundred years ago when Marx wrote the *Communist Manifesto*—a savagely exploited industrial proletariat in the mines and mills of Western Europe—is no longer true.

The advent of the welfare state and the industrial evolution to a mixed economy have robbed Marxism of its attraction. Political groups dedicated to violent revolution, or even to the supremacy of manual workers via the ballot, are in retreat in the United States, Canada, Britain, Germany, Western Europe,

Australia, and Japan. Manual workers in these areas care less for the class struggle than for vacation time and color television.

Russia and China, furthermore, are not attempting to foment revolutions in any of these areas. Stalin, indeed, had a fixed policy against doing so. The ring of "Communist" satellites around Russia from Poland to Bulgaria were not products of revolution, but captives of the Russian armies set up as barriers against another Hitler. Communist parties in the West have not been encouraged to revolt, but to act as agents for Russian foreign policy, including the use of espionage.

The reason is clear. "Communism" in any form is politically dead in the West, because workers are relatively so prosperous under the democratic system. On a recent trip to Russia, I returned via Vienna and London. Observing the goods in the shop windows, the clothing of the people on the streets, particularly their shoes, observing slums and housing developments, the traffic stream, parks and playgrounds, I would roughly rate Vienna fifty per cent, and London one hundred per cent higher in living standards than Moscow. New York, of course, is higher still. The manual worker's average annual wage is about \$1,200 in Russia, but four times that in the United States. Russia may "catch up" in a decade or two, but it is doubtful if China ever can; there are not enough raw materials available on the planet.

However, the underdeveloped societies of the Hungry World—those in Asia, Africa, and Latin America with family incomes below \$100 a year, and a literacy rate of less than fifty per cent—are wide open to the appeals of Russian and Chinese agents. According to Paul G. Hoffman, Director of the United Nations Special Fund, 1.3 billion people in the underdeveloped countries—not including the Chinese—are at economic rock bottom. Furthermore, they are aware of it, Hoffman says. "There is hardly a village anywhere that does not have its radio," he points out, "and hardly a villager who is not now convinced that a better life is possible for him and his children."

The first great appeal of Russia and China is

the promise of that better life. The poor peasant hears on the village radio about the food, housing, and luxuries enjoyed by the workers of industrialized societies. When agents from Russia or China say that they will help his country industrialize and get these commodities too, he listens eagerly, even if the dialectics escape him. The agents at his door are riding the wave of the Twentieth Century technological revolution.

The second great appeal of Russian and Chinese salesmen is to local pride and patriotism. Your country, they say, will be rescued from colonialism and imperialism. It will have a flag, a national anthem, a 21-gun salute, and a seat at the United Nations. You are as good as anyone, whatever your color, or education, or previous condition of servitude. The urge to be free and independent is massive throughout the Hungry World, as the growing membership in the United Nations bears witness.

The third great appeal is psychological; it is the appeal to hatred. The restless villager is urged to hate the rich, the landlords, the usurers, the war lords, and the potentates, who have taken half or more of his crop since time out of mind. The rich are easy to hate. The shell of culture, which has held in check these timeless resentments and hatreds, is now cracking open. It would be cracking even if there were no agents from Russia or China. The poor peasant, prompted by the village radio, has had enough.

The agents of Russia and China can go far by manipulating these powerful appeals for a better life, a proud state, and hatred of overlords, domestic and foreign. Agents in Cuba are using all three very effectively at the present moment. Cuba will also provide, I suspect, an illuminating case history of the weaknesses of this approach, for reasons which I shall now try to make clear.

Six Barriers To World Conquest

Attempts by Russia-or-China to dominate the peoples of the Hungry World collide with four stubborn economic barriers, one stubborn political barrier, and, perhaps most serious of all, the high improbability that two dynamic national

empires, far apart in tradition and culture, can amicably cooperate to conquer the world. The question is bound to come, and some of us think it has already come in Moscow and Peiping: "Who's in charge around here?"

First, the economic barriers:

ONE—Neither the Russians nor the Chinese have reckoned adequately with the population explosion. I attended a conference with Russian intellectual leaders in the Crimea last year where the idea that population would soon outrun food supply on the Malthusian formula was branded by the Russians as "completely incorrect." All available statistical evidence, however, points to a gap which is fast widening. Only in Japan has the birth rate been held in check.

This raises a most interesting question. Assuming that Russia and China make considerable headway with their appeals as set forth above, how long can they supply the bread lines of their dependents—especially as both are having considerable trouble in their own bread departments? China is said to be in the midst of a major famine, and is buying wheat from Canada, while Khrushchev is obliged to rush frequently to the "virgin lands" in Siberia to find out what has gone wrong. Food surpluses on the U.S. model are unthinkable for many years in China and Russia. Meanwhile, their proposed wards and allies in the Hungry World will grow hungrier year by year, unless the birth rate is reduced to less than thirty per thousand—a project to which neither empire has given adequate thought. Eugene R. Black of the International Bank of Development affirms that even large sacrifices by highly developed societies for greatly increased foreign aid will be unavailing "in the face of existing rates of population growth."

Russia and China are bound to collide with this barrier in the near future. It is axiomatic, I think, that their wards cannot be held firmly in line unless they are fed. Starving dependents do not make good sales talk.

TWO—When Russia-or-China have helped to engineer a local revolution they must then help organize a socialist economy, in which the government owns and operates the principal means

of production. This is axiomatic too, but promises to be at best an uncertain business in the world of today. Perhaps the nation can coast along for a while by dividing up the lands and other assets of the expropriated rich, as Cuba is trying to do. But the only permanent solution—assuming the birth rate is held low enough—lies in scientific agriculture and industrialization, including ample supplies of inanimate energy. To provide the technical specialists, the supplies, and equipment for this socialist society is likely to make quite a hole in the resources of Russia and China—a good deal more, one suspects, than any raw materials which might be received as an offset. This service must go on for years, with every new socialist state increasing the drain. I would very much like to see the account in Moscow's ledger marked "Cuba, 1961."

It has taken Russia forty years to build her own industrial plant to a point where it is in competition with the West, while China has barely begun. Consider the cost in manpower and materials of equipping Africa, Asia, and Latin America with a modern industrial and agricultural establishment. Consider the colossal training programs. Most citizens of the Hungry World now possess neither mechanical nor administrative skills. Most of them—as in the Congo—cannot read a primer, let alone a blueprint.

Promises Which Backfire

THREE—The promises of socialism often backfire. Its promoters and propagandists always promise in advance, and most explicitly, that wages will be higher, housing better, working hours shorter, together with a complex program of medical care, education, and social security. "Relax, comrades, Utopia will be won!"

When I was investigating "Operation Bootstrap" in Puerto Rico, I found there had been a similar reaction at the beginning of the experiment in the late 1940's. Workers in the five new state factories believed that socialism had arrived, and took it easy. They were now the favored class, according to theory, and they expected favored treatment—high wages, short

hours, fringe benefits of all kinds. But the factories soon lost so much money that they had to be sold to private owners, and the goal of socialism shifted to the mixed economy prevalent throughout the West, wherein the state undertakes only those essential functions which private enterprise will not, or cannot perform.

Russia and China, on the calculus of probability, will not be happy with the profit and loss accounts of most local enterprises financed by them in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—at least not under the kind of welfare system explicitly promised, and the one to which the peoples of the Hungry World aspire. So Russia-or-China will have to meet the operating deficits or lose an ally.

FOUR—The alternative to the above program of loans and advances for capital formation is the program Russia herself has followed: take the needed capital out of the annual production of the workers. By enforcing rigorous discipline, with long hours, low wages, neglected housing, no luxuries, and dreadful penalties for strikes and stoppages, enough has been produced to build an impressive industrial establishment, while keeping consumers alive, if not contented. I visited Russia in the late 1920's and observed the formula beginning to operate after the collapse of "war Communism."

It is safe to say that no open society would tolerate such a method of capital formation today—though some did in the Nineteenth Century. It is extremely doubtful if any society in the Hungry World will tolerate it—especially after hearing all the Utopian promises. If Russia and China use this method of forced savings in an emerging nation, they will have to abandon all Utopian promises, and reduce the country to virtual slavery. This will not make particularly good propaganda for a Communist program of world conquest. Also there may be a serious raw materials problem.

There are only two ways to industrialize—borrow or wangle capital from abroad, or save it out of current production at home. Russia used the latter; China is trying to do the same, aided, however, by some loans from Russia.

FIVE—The fifth barrier to the conquest of the world by Russia-or-China is more political than economic. Castro in Cuba will furnish an interesting test. It should be clearly apparent that there can be no “democracy” in our sense of the term in any country of the Hungry World. Political democracy, with free speech, free press, free investment and consumer choices, is unworkable without a high degree of literacy and a substantial middle class—assets which no nation in the Hungry World now possesses. A military junta (as in South Korea) or a single strong man (as in Egypt) will break through any paper constitution, however eloquent, and take over.

Will the local power faction be amenable to serving as the tool of Russia or China? Will it meekly endure having its decrees written or over-ruled by Moscow or Peiping? The probabilities are strongly against it. Egypt’s Nasser gives an illuminating answer. The West thought he had sold out to Russia at one time; Russia thought he was a pawn of the West at another time. Actually, as we now know, Nasser has skillfully played off one side against the other, receiving large handouts from both. He never had the slightest intention of being anybody’s pawn. Dictators and military juntas are tough, or they would not be there, and they tend to be fiercely patriotic. Once they surrender power to Moscow or Peiping, the second great appeal collapses, the promise of a proud and independent state. Will a local strong man, just free of the colonialism, say, of Portugal, be willing to enter the colonial empire of China? The question answers itself.

Competition Between Empire

SIX—The last and greatest barrier to world conquest is the inevitable competition for leadership between two dynamic empires. Russia and China are even now competing for that strategic land that lies between them, Outer Mongolia. This is only the beginning. Presently they will become involved in fierce altercations over which empire is to assume the obligations of their Hungry World dependents. They are already far apart ideologically, but this cleavage is a

tiny crack compared to what may separate them when it comes to the division of large areas of the world.

On the assumption of two dynamic nationalisms, rather than one ideological monster, "Communism" is less threatening. It becomes subject to realistic analysis in space and time rather than an exercise in demonology. A modern Machiavelli, studying the balance sheet, might go so far as to say, let Russia and China assume the liabilities of the Hungry World unimpeded. There is no better way to bankrupt them. But we are not Machiavelli, and we cannot be so cynical. We must help the people of the Hungry World because they need help, not just use them as pawns in the cold war. All formulas for help, however, should take account of the difficulties listed in the balance sheet, especially the burgeoning populations.

In summary, Russia and China now have no reliable class base with which to subvert and convert the gainfully employed in the affluent societies of the West. It is safe to say that they never will have such a base so long as the West is reasonably prosperous. They can make, and are making, three powerful appeals to the Hungry World: higher living standards for poor peasants, national independence, and encouragement of the class hatreds already endemic. To make these appeals good, however, Russia-or-China must be prepared to feed, organize, and equip the Hungry World at a cost in capital formation far beyond available resources, with population outrunning subsistence in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Furthermore, Russia and China are almost certain to have serious difficulty in converting local strong men into subservient stooges. Finally, the Communist nations are extremely liable to get into lethal disagreements about the responsibility of each in underwriting the operational deficits of three continents.

In short, on the basis of any realistic analysis, the case for "Communism" conquering the world is highly improbable.