

The Ideological Motivation of Communists

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WHEN THINKING of Communist ideology, many people have in mind the three volumes of *Capital*, F. Engels' voluminous books, the dozen or so key works of Lenin and others, all of which contain different parts of a most complex structure. The communist ideology has been put together, in the course of more than a hundred years, utilizing many different parts and branches:

Marx' *economic doctrines* (surplus value, accumulation, falling rate of profits, and so on) all of which amount to an analysis of the capitalist economic system and its inherent contradictions.

Marx and Engels' *sociology of power* in a class society (concept of ruling class, private property as the real basis of power, exploitation of the working class, etc.).

Engels and Lenin's philosophy of *dialectical materialism* (matter as the substance of reality, dialectic as the law of change and evolution, the revolutionary creative "leaps" of progress, and the subordination of the individual to the whole).

Engels, Lenin and Stalin's *materialist philosophy of history* (the concept of politics and morality as a superstructure, the class struggle as the ultimate social reality, the identification of the

forces of progress as against the forces of reaction).

Lenin and Stalin's doctrine of *revolutionary strategy* (the time and place as well as the program of the Revolution, the vanguard concept of the Communist Party, the manipulative use of the masses, the necessity of alliances, and the role of the Soviet Union).

All of these together fill many volumes of writings, creating an impressive structure of detailed analyses and arguments about practically all phases of human life.

The philosophy says that the explanation of everything must be in material terms; the economic analysis shows that according to the laws of material development capitalist society must perish; the philosophy of history shows that the material evolution of societies has been reflected in struggles of new classes against old; the dialectic maintains that the decisive changes have always been revolutionary; the sociology of capitalism picks the proletariat as the revolutionary force that is destined to bring capitalists and their rule down; and the strategic doctrine develops the principles of leadership in this struggle.

When all is taken together, though, it results in a few basic and fairly simple ideas. All the analyses can be reduced to this main proposition: *The present age is the age of bourgeois society, a society that will be destroyed in a great and epochal conflict from which will emerge a new age characterized by a new society; in that new society man will, for the first time, enjoy the fullness of human life.*

In other words, the communist mind thinks about everything in terms of the sequence of two ages, or two societies. Of these two, only the second, the future

society, is "real" in the sense that it is the society in which man will be fully himself, his thoughts will not clash with his actions, his personality will not be in conflict with the whole of society, he will not be plagued by poverty, oppression, and war. All false fronts, all pretensions, all dissimulations will disappear. Man will be whole, no longer divided into fragments of himself.

By contrast, the present society and its existence is totally "false." It is false because human life is divided and hypocritical. Ideas represent class interests rather than truth. Men are enslaved by those who provide work and livelihood for them. Money estranges people from the values of life. Political power is wielded over the many in the interests of the few. All human existence is rent by inner contradictions. There is no truth in philosophy, religion, or politics. There is no community, no harmony, no freedom.

This false existence, communists assume, is about to be destroyed, and its place to be taken by a new age and a new order of life. But between the present and the future there lies a prolonged period of transition. The characteristic of this transition is a protracted struggle between the forces of the old age and the forces of the new. Those social and political forces which defend the existing society of falsehood are by definition evil, oppressive, reactionary, inhuman. The forces representing the future are forward-bound, progressive, hopeful, humane and good. The sociological analysis proves that this forward-bound, progressive, revolutionary force is the proletariat. The Communist Party is the most advanced part of the proletariat, its Vanguard. The struggle between the Communist Party and the forces of reaction is the Revolution which will culminate in the utter destruction of the society of the present age and everything that maintains it:

its ruling classes, its dominant ideas, its social and political institutions, and even its characteristic habits of mind and emotion. "Behold, everything will be made new!"

The real significance of this struggle is that it is the transition from the penultimate to the ultimate age of history. The society that will emerge from the defeat of the forces of the present age is not merely new but the very climax of history, the fulfillment of all that has occurred in the course of time. It is, in other words, a program of human salvation, but not salvation by God, rather salvation by the victory of a political movement over its enemies and by a regime of universal labor under central management. Hence this struggle is for communists no mere competitive engagement but the fulfillment of the meaning of life. Between them and their enemies the dividing line is not merely that of two contending wills, but the separation of the "true" from the "false." Communists, then, are people who understand themselves to represent, and to be militant servants of a future realm of truth, while the rest of the world still lives in the utterly false present. Thus between them and all those who merely desire to live in the present world there is a deep gulf fixed: the gulf of irreconcilable hostility between two ages. "History," a communist might say, "the almighty Destiny, has doomed you and your kind and signed the future to me and my comrades. You are the arch-enemy of true humanity. Salvation of man depends on your total destruction."

The ideology is for communists above all a world-view. It provides them with an orientation in history. It furnishes them with what appears to be clear-cut and sharp-lined moral judgments. It creates for them the confidence that this orientation and these judgments are based on the authority of "science." It indicates to

them the path of duty in the harsh environment of the present. And it casts on that duty of unending struggle the hopeful meaning of a future of perfection in this world.

The ideology thus serves for communists as a substitute for religion, for every-day morality, and for political order. It plays this role inasmuch as it is a structure of many elements welded into a comprehensive whole. From the beginning, it has therefore been possible to change or drop parts of the whole without affecting the influence which communist ideology wields. Or, to put it in a different way, it has proved impossible to refute communist ideology by proving that this or that assertion is factually incorrect or logically untenable. An example: just recently, the so-called law of immiseration has been dropped from the analysis of capitalism. This law, which in Marx' *Capital* is still the indispensable condition for the coming of the revolution, has later been declared a mere tendency. In the same way, the so-called "withering away" theory of the state has for all practical purposes been abandoned, for now Khrushchev has declared that the state will continue to function not merely in the first, the socialist, phase of the future society, but also in its final phase, communism. Neither of these changes have damaged the strength of the hold which communism has on its true believers.

It is therefore a mistake to think of the communist ideology as if it were a kind of cookbook with recipes which have to be continuously consulted if the outcome is to be the desired dish. It is senseless to accuse the Soviets of having proceeded contrary to the prescription of their ideology. They cannot proceed contrary to the ideology, for they *are* the ideology. Their intent, their way of looking at the world and its "givens," their hopes and expectations,

their estimate of themselves and their role: all these are ideological, shaped by the image of past, present and future which their ideological scriptures have created. This intent is both unchanging in its basic orientation and flexible in its adaptation to circumstances.

As a result of this world view, communists look at most problems or situations differently from the way in which normal people would regard them. First among these peculiar perspectives is the Communist view of power and policy. The problem arose first historically in the Party, and still has its existential center in the Party. The Party is to the Communist the Vanguard, the most advanced element. "Advanced" here means the most advanced view of history, the knowledge of its forward movement. The Party, most emphatically, is not considered to represent the masses, not even the masses of the proletariat. It is distinct through its possession of correct theory.

The theory is, however, indissolubly united with practice. Whatever is advocated in the Party, or done by the Party, has theoretical significance. The significance of any action can be either one or the other: it can belong only to socialist ideology, or to bourgeois ideology. There is no third possibility. The dividing line between these two is razor sharp and cannot always be discerned by well-intentioned individual communists. In other words, it is quite possible that Party members, with the best of intentions, may advocate something which in its objective nature pertains to bourgeois ideology. The "unmasking" of this hidden ideological significance of actions is the purpose of authoritative discussion of issues in the highest Party circles. This discussion, however, decides not merely how the Party should act, it also decides who has the correct theory and therefore is most "advanced." To him,

and to him alone belongs power. Power, to communists, is a function of continuous ideological interpretation and re-interpretation. What is more, all power struggles turn on the question of hidden "reactionary" tendencies, of hidden influences of bourgeois ideology. The partner in power today may find himself branded as an "enemy of the people," an "anti-party element," an "agent of imperialism," tomorrow. For the communist, correct revolutionary theory is the sole justification of power. They simply cannot conceive of any one being legitimized in office by the will of the people, by regular procedures of succession, or even by mere personal charisma. Least of all can a communist look on public office as being justified by service to the common good or public welfare. The pattern of power struggles in the Party, which was created by Lenin and continued by both Stalin and Khrushchev, does not admit of any other concept of power than that of correct revolutionary ideology. This in itself would cause the perpetuating of the ideological motivation of communists in high office.

In these discussions, the touchstone of correct policy is the distinction between "Revolution" and "Restoration." Communists, in spite of their historical determinism, assume that a "bourgeois restoration" is possible and indeed, not improbable. The forces of the old—that is, the present—society are still powerful, not only in social institutions, but above all in the habits of mind of many millions. One wrong turn, and those restorative forces will bring back the "regime of the capitalists and landlords." Such a reversal of history is to the Communist what eternal damnation is to the Christian: it is the worst that could happen. I submit that in the case of Hungary, the Soviets were indeed persuaded that reactionary elements stood ready to profit from the uprising and

to undo the work of the socialist Revolution. Communists by and large believe that the tendencies toward Restoration are of such a kind that open force will not conquer them. To fight these forces is therefore the task of everyday policy, policy concerning economic, educational, administrative problems. All of such problems are always approached with the view to the overriding fear of Communists, whether a proposed course of action will eventually contribute to the ongoing Revolution or to a Restoration. A Communist in power can thus never look at a problem in its intrinsic terms. Policy to him is always a matter of ideological strategic calculation.

A similar ideological distortion has twisted the concept of government in Communist eyes. Government by Communists is, of course, the operation of an ideological movement committed to destroy all remnants of bourgeois society so as to make way for the emergence of the socialist future. A Communist will therefore never look on government as service to the common good of living generations: he owes service and allegiance only to the future good, no matter how many concessions to present demands he may have to make in his revolutionary strategy.

The matter is, however, more complicated by the fact that Communism, of all revolutionary movements, is the only one that came to power with a full-fledged system of philosophy. Lenin wrote his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* as early as 1908, thereby putting into the position of sole authority a philosophical system which Engels had already developed earlier. As in the case of the political ideology, Communism knows of only two systems of philosophy: one is materialism, the other idealism. Materialism is the philosophy belonging to the forward movement of time, idealism is the philosophy of reaction. As in the case of the political

ideology, everything that is not compatible with materialism, is *eo ipso* idealism. Communists in government will therefore not only interfere with universities and ban all academic teaching of anything resembling "idealism," but they will also look for the underlying philosophical orientation in all human activities which have something to do with expressing the meaning of life and the nature of being. This includes above all literature, creative art, the theory of sciences. Communists here are dealing not with other Communists but with people outside of the Party. These people, even though they are not bound by Party loyalty, are subject to the same kind of ideological demand which confronts Party members: the demand to recognize the fine line that divides "idealism" from materialism and to make an objectively correct decision for the only true philosophy. Government by Communists therefore means inevitably the ideologization of all culture. One should add at this point, with a view to the argument that communist ideology is actually nothing but an instrument of power, that all communist leaders are reared, not only through the power struggles within the Party, but also in the ideologized culture that Communist rule has created. Theirs is a complete world of semi-rational meaning, embracing all of human life, history, nature, science and art, providing answers to all questions and doubts. To a communist this is the world in which he has been brought up, and furthermore, he sees no alternative to this world available to him. For in the present world scene, no other world view has articulated itself in such completeness and comprehensiveness.

A third area of ideological distortion is international relations. The distortion occurred when the Communist Party of Russia decided not to push for an immediate spread of the communist revolution

in industrial countries, such as Germany, France, and England, but rather to consolidate and forward the revolution in Russia alone. This is the doctrine of "socialism in one country." The decision established an indissoluble connection between that country and the revolution. An entire country, its resources, its power, and its foreign policies thus become an instrument of the Revolution. The coming of a new age for all mankind was to be promoted by that country's relation to other countries. Originally, the Revolution was expected as the action of the proletariat, the working class. Lenin saw the Revolution above all as the work of the Party, manipulating large masses—masses not only of the proletariat but also of other classes. Now the Soviet Union became a power center whose actions would bring about, or help bring about, the further spread of the Revolution.

The foreign relations of the Soviet Union thereby became distorted into something very unlike the foreign relations of normal governments. The Soviet government became the center of allegiance and direction of subversive forces in all other countries. Russian power interests and millenarian hopes were merged. Foreign policy was conceived in terms of revolutionary strategy, and vice versa. Soviet foreign policy still concerned itself with the kind of interests that motivate foreign policies of governments in general. But these national interests not only possess a special meaning in the case of Russia but also are often created through the strategy of world revolution. The very fact that Soviet Russia concentrates its hostility on the United States, a country with whom she has no real conflict of interests other than in terms of the struggle of the "socialist camp" against the "imperialist camp" illustrates the ambiguous character of Soviet foreign relations.

Two changes have occurred in this field recently: the Soviet Union and its power, which under Stalin was merely *one* of the instruments of the Revolution, seems now to have become the sole agent by which Communists hope to seize power in other countries. This is the meaning of "peaceful competition." "Peaceful competition" suggests that under the impression of Soviet power, Soviet achievements, and Soviet prospects of eventual victory, elements willing to give allegiance to Soviet leadership would come to power in more and more countries. In other words, instead of a seizure of power by violent mass action, the forces of the Revolution would seize power with the help of the overwhelming impression of vigor created by the Soviet Union. Once in power, the real revolution would proceed, the "Revolution from above." This is Stalin's term for the process of using governmental power to destroy the existing institutions and habits of mind and to intimidate and destroy all those who oppose communism.—The other change is the emergence of China as a power which in case of a Communist world victory would share the direction of the world with the Soviet Union. The period of simple identification of Revolutionary strategy with Soviet foreign policy is over. Revolutionary strategy now requires the coordination of the foreign policies of Russia and China. This coordination is again a merger of ideological motivations and power interests. In itself, it is not a weakness of Communism that its policies presuppose decisions by conference. Whether such decisions and conferences take place within the inner circle of the Party in Moscow or between Communists of two or more different parties, makes little practical difference. In each case, the common ideological intent is the motive making for unity, and exclusion

from the Communist movement is the penalty for failing to agree.

One should also note that the ideological distortion of international relations by Soviet Communists has affected not merely the foreign policies of the Soviet Union, but all of international relations. The best case in point is, of course, the effect which Communist ideology has had on our own policies which have been conducted at least partly as a kind of defense against the ideological charges raised against us, particularly the charges of imperialism and war-mongering. At any rate, international relations have become a battleground for ideological allegiances rather than a meeting place of national external interests.

To sum up: Communist ideology, a world view with changing details but constant basic orientation, permeates all that Communists organize, rule, and practise. As a result, communist power and policy, communist government and communist foreign policies are not what power and policy, government and foreign policy are to other peoples. For Communists, power has a special justification and special structure, policy is revolutionary strategy, and government means the ideologization of culture. Is all this a source of strength or weakness?

Inasmuch as the ideology is false, that is, represents a picture of man and the world which is unreal, one could surmise that Communist ideology would be a cause for the failure of Communist practice. This failure can indeed be observed in important areas. The Soviet policy toward the peasantry is almost wholly dictated by ideological motives. Already Marx demanded that the countryside be subjected to the towns, and Lenin identified the peasantry with the continuing "terrible force of habit" that threatened Russia with a return to capitalism. Now this

policy has resulted in the complete failure to provide Soviet industry with an effective agricultural basis. Year after year the failure becomes more glaring. Year after year the Soviets persist in pushing on in the ideologically dictated direction. Not only this, but China, after having observed the difficulties of Soviet peasant policy, not only imitated the Soviet example but tried even to go the Russians one better. Other prominent examples of failure are in the field of church policy and nationalities policy. One can go so far as to predict that these will continue to be basic weaknesses from which the Soviet system will never recover.

In other respects, however, the ideological element has benefited Soviet strength. This is particularly the case where the ideology operates as a mere emotional and intellectual appeal. In other words, where the Soviets have had control and approached practical problems in an ideological spirit, they have, by and large, reaped weakness or failure. Where, however, they have merely proclaimed the word of their ideology, they have often found ready response. They have been able to give themselves the appearance of champions of progress, freedom, and peace. They have been successful in persuading all kinds of people with grievances that communism constitutes a real hope for them. They have again and again found allies—first the peasants in Russia, then the nationalists in Russia's border regions, then intellectuals in colonial or underdeveloped areas. To us the main danger is, however, the extent to which the Soviets have appealed to people in our own ranks, particularly intellectuals and men of misguided "good will."

What is the reason for this appeal? The phenomenon is not difficult to explain when we remember that communism is an intellectual product of the West. It grew

out of ideological roots which still continue to have a hold on Western minds. To give one example: Communism is essentially belief in the salvation of mankind in a future society ruled by Communists.

It roots in a view of history as an upward motion caused by material factors pushing from below according to "laws" that can be "scientifically" known and used as moral and practical guidance for action. By contrast, the traditional philosophy saw man's upward movement as a response to a pull from above and thus to a transcendent higher destiny. Western civilization has been shaped by the view that the ultimate destiny of man is the "Kingdom of God," and that history is continued divine creation, in partnership with man. Once this view was abandoned, the idea of history became one of man's self-perfection and auto-salvation in some future immanent realm of perfection. This view is common to the Western philosophy of progress and to Soviet Communism. Beyond this, however, the majority of Western intelligentsia now is prone to look upon history as a process that moves on by calculable laws, so that one can justly present action in the light of predictable future values. The perfect example of such a view is the figure of Justice Davis in Drury's *Advise and Consent*.

Western ideas often show kinship with communist ideologies in more than this one respect. It would take too long to mention

other details. But to the extent to which Western intellectual leadership is dominated by ideologies, Communist ideological appeals find no real resistance among us. In this respect Communist ideology constitutes a source of Soviet strength, inasmuch as it counter-relates to Western weakness. Too many public personalities can be manipulated by the Soviets, either because they are persuaded that basically the Communists are on the side of the angels, or because they indulge in ideological dreams which the Soviets can exploit for their purposes, or because they can be maneuvered into morose self-doubts and false feelings of guilt.

All this suggests that Communist ideology has netted and can still net the Soviets considerable successes *before they seize power*. After the seizure of power, the Communist ideology has provided nothing but unrealistic counsel, except for one thing: it furnishes the ruling group of world communism with both the motivation and the intellectual dogma enabling them to protect, as well as repeatedly to restore, unity in their own ranks. With all this, it is the ideological element in Communism which causes the power of Russia and China to be more than a mere problem of foreign policy: a threat not only to our national independence, but to our personal liberty, our religion, morality, science, art, and welfare.

A program in the time of the count-down

Conservatism and Reality

REVILO P. OLIVER

POLITICS is the art of the possible. Conservatives can forget that only to their own peril—indeed, in present circumstances, their own destruction.

It is true that the reality perceived by observation must be comprehended by theory, but the mind of man is forever tempted by imagination, the lovely sprite who can, with a swiftness that eludes the eye, leap over the gulf that separates the idea (*eidos*) from reality.

The greatest of all political theorists strove to state in unmistakable terms the precisely delimited scope of each of his political writings. In the *Republic*, he em-

phatically warns his readers that he is tracing a *politeia en ouranôi*, and repeatedly reminds them of the distance between sky and earth. The *Laws*, to be sure, are more "practical," but after a long prologue of deductions from existing constitutions and their historical antecedents, the problem to be treated theoretically (*logôi*) is explicitly defined: construct a constitution for a new city to be founded in a given place at a given time by a man who (for the purposes of the hypothesis) will be able to impose whatever institutions he deems best on inhabitants whom he will select from a given racial stock within a