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That "Mass Ferment"

Does Freedom Need a More Revolutionary
Foreign Policy?

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NOT lack of social reform (which actually America is promoting by peaceful evolutionary measures in much of the world)—not lack of social reform but bloody conquest by the Red Army and by well-armed communist parties is what has spread communism over Eastern Europe and over Asia. The Czechoslovakia of 1948 had some of the most advanced social reforms in the world and lacked completely those bogeymen of liberalism, the "feudal reactionary landlords," on whom we are supposed to blame communism instead of on Stalin's and Mao's gunmen.

Every liberal who repeats the romantic myth of "revolutionary ferment" in Asia

(rather than communist military conquest) must read—simply must—the scholarly booklet by Paul Kattenburg, *A Central Javanese Village in 1950*.¹ It is vouched for by such Far East authorities as Professor Richard L. Walker of Yale University. This conscientious study is the best short answer to the myth about "stirring peasant masses," a myth for which several unpeasant-like Asia experts would like to wreck our foreign policy.

The two leading upholders of the revolutionary myth are Aneurin Bevan in regard to Europe, William O. Douglas in regard to Asia. Both these honest anti-communists ignore the conservative, anti-revolu-

tionary nature of liberty and would, so to speak, "ferment" their way to utopia. To illustrate their view and its opposite, let us quote a key passage from each of these men and then quote a rebuttal to it.

Recently Aneurau Bevan proclaimed at Jarrow:

The dangers from Communism, if dangers there are, come not from military plans but from the failure to redress wrongs that exist in Western society. One of the reasons that the Tories can think only in terms of guns is because the only answer to Soviet Communism is an alteration of social practices and social principles they are reluctant to swallow.

Rebutted by Salvador de Madariaga, the Spanish anti-Franco political philosopher:

Really, Mr. Bevan, do you believe that the only answer to Soviet Communism is an alteration of social practices and principles? Do you believe that there is one single country in Europe which went over to Communism because its social practices and principles were not good enough? Do you believe that had it not been for the ruthless intervention of the Red Army—actual or potential—a single European nation would have adopted a system that abolishes trade union freedom, the right to strike, freedom of press, party, religion, and association and which keeps its Opposition in concentration camps little better than ante-rooms for cemeteries?

Similarly Justice Douglas has written in *Strange Lands and Friendly People*:

America is fitted by tradition for directing and guiding revolutions. We won our freedom by revolution and set the example which today inspires the peasants of Asia. We cannot remake the world in our image, but we can help those who are seeking an escape from squalor to find alternatives to Communism. We cannot do it by talking democracy and peace. We can do it only by making our foreign policy understandable in terms of the aspirations of these people. Our foreign policy must be specifically related to the land problem If that were our announced policy, if that were the word that went out from all our embassies and legations, the masses of Asia would soon be on a basis of understanding with us. . . . It would mean that in every capital of Asia American sympathy and understanding would be behind the liberal, progressive groups, whose mission it is to break the hold of the feudal system. Groups who enjoyed the prestige of that kind of Ameri-

can support would be in a strong political position.

Rebutted by G. F. Hudson, Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and regular contributor to *The Economist*, London:

Such a program must be attractive at first sight to all men of good will; it seems to offer the prospect of accomplishing something intrinsically desirable and at the same time forestalling the Communists. Unfortunately, Justice Douglas fails to draw any line between that discreet exercise of influence behind the scenes which is proper to diplomacy, and public, demagogic, political activity

Such methods might be very effective in humiliating, weakening, and discrediting established governments that Justice Douglas did not regard as sufficiently progressive, but it is very unlikely that they would produce better and equally stable governments.

"Directing and guiding" revolutions is not so simple a matter as Justice Douglas supposes. American policy has no such instruments either for subversion or indirect rule as Moscow and Peking possess in the local Communist parties of Asian countries. Communists everywhere serve the international Communist power because of their Marxist-Leninist faith, but there are no organized parties in Asia that are pro-American in a corresponding sense. If American diplomats or visiting politicians were to try to go over the heads of existing governments and play popular politics on the Asian stage, this would only result in a disintegration of authority in which not they, but the Communists, would reap the advantage.

The lesson Justice Douglas draws from the Chinese disaster is that America ought never to support any government like the Kuomintang's. But, historically, it is *not* a fact that America consistently supported the Kuomintang and still failed to avert its defeat. During the three crucial years 1944-46, the main aim of American policy was to compel Chiang Kai-shek to compromise with the Chinese Communists on what were substantially the Communists' own terms. Those were the days when nearly all the experts in London and Washington were endlessly repeating the line that the men of Yen-an were not "real" Communists, but just "agrarian reformers." This confidence trick was worked at the highest level; Stettinius has related in his book *Roosevelt and the Russians* how on one occasion the President read out to Gromyko "a wire from General Patrick Hurley in which Hurley had said that Molotov had told him that the Soviet Union was not interested in the Chinese Communists, that they were not really Communists anyway." Chiang, of course, knew better.

II

REALIZATION of the anti-revolutionary nature of freedom does not exclude revolution in all circumstances; it excludes it under normal circumstances. In the special circumstance of being ruled by a monster—a Stalin-Hitler—revolution is the only way out from the intolerable. But a monster like Hitler or Stalin occurs once every thousand years and does not justify generalizing about revolution for societies not so uniquely terrorized and uprooted. Besides, it is not inside Russia that the Bevans and Douglasses urge us to foster revolution but inside the countries of our allies. This is a perverse reversal; for if history does force us to use the distasteful method of inciting insurrection, then Russia is the place to use it in. It is the Politburo, not our "feudal" allies, that threatens peace; among our allies, reform, not revolution, is called for.

Even the most anti-communist liberals and intellectuals are sometimes misdirected by the myth that freedom is served by always backing the more revolutionary side everywhere, "on principle," regardless of the special local context. This myth makes them the disruptive Katzenjammer Kids of world politics: harmless fun in a stabler context; a game of Russian roulette in the present context. The semi-Stalinization of many European and Asiatic intellectuals is really an unconscious process of cliché-addiction:

"The current anti-Americanism is neither profound nor consistent. Why then should it have arisen. The causes are many and complex, but I can only touch on the primary ones here. Perhaps the most important factor is what might be called the '*Stalinization*' of European thinking and of much of our native liberalism, by which I do not mean that all the intellectuals affected are Stalinized, but rather that Stalinism has managed to impose many of its assumptions and attitudes on them. The image of America as a political and cultural menace, here as well as abroad, is something that has been propagated by the incessant efforts of the Communists; and many of the Europeans

who question this image do so only in terms of size—that is, they believe that America may be the lesser evil by contrast to Russia.

"But there is a larger sense in which Europe—and '*advanced*' thinking throughout the world—has been Stalinized; it has been infiltrated by the Marxist ideology of progress and socialism to the point where it is ready to accept as historically inevitable the doom of Western civilization and the messianic role of the proletariat in the creation of a new world. As a result, the 'progressive' mind here and abroad, confined in the past to liberal ideas and reforms, has acquired a new faith in the forces of revolution. And to contain the ambiguities of such a position there has arisen a 'progressive' myth, joining 19-th century liberalism with elements of the Communist philosophy, that has radically affected the thinking of many people who do not follow the Marxist line in every respect and in many cases even regard themselves as anti-Marxist. On the whole, identification in one way or another with this myth has come to be synonymous with enlightenment, with the triumph of humanism—with simple decency. That such a force as Stalinism has not only won a monopoly on socialism but is also the beneficiary of our zealous humanitarianism is a final irony.

"An essential feature of the 'progressive myth' is that it carries the determinism and libertarian spirit of the Marxist tradition without being directly committed, at least on the surface, to the specific theories of Marx and Lenin or to the distinct aims of Stalinism—at the same time that it does have a *soft spot for any movement that presents itself as 'revolutionary'* especially if led by the Communists. This is why, it seems to me, most sympathizers with Stalinism both here and abroad connect themselves with the ideals of justice proclaimed by the Marxist system rather than with the totalitarian state in Russia. Or why Communist 'peace' slogans are so attractive to people who vaguely recall that Lenin was against war but choose to forget that Lenin opposed only 'imperialist' wars and supported 'progressive' ones,

both of which are specifically defined within the Marxist scheme only according to Marxist canons.

"The question remains why the mythology of history and progress, that has grown up around the Communist movement and is so shrewdly exploited by it, should have become so potent just now, thirty-five years after the Russian Revolution. The chief reasons, I think, lie in the economic and physical exhaustion of Europe, and a *blundering American policy that permitted Russia* to become so powerful. Caught between its own moral defeatism and fear of the Red Army, the Continent has naturally been attracted to a revolutionary ideology that promises everything—peace, progress, economic improvement, Russian friendship, and above all a resurgence of national energies. And if the millions of Europeans who seem to be under the sway of Stalinism have not been affected by the terror of the Russian regime, it is because they are moved by a vision of an equalitarian and creative society, which they imagine the Communists will help them to achieve.

"Even non-Communists, who have only the vaguest idea of goals and policies, have dedicated themselves to being *revolutionary at all costs, competing with each other in their 'radicalism' and their opposition to 'reaction'.*"³

III

LET us consider further how western intellectuals compete with each other and with the communists to bait any kind of *status quo*. They compete (Bevan, Judge Douglas, the earlier Henry Wallace) to spearhead that "revolutionary fervor in Asia" which allegedly represents the Common Man. Meanwhile, the Common Man continues fervently to flee from that "fervor" by the millions, always from north to south in Korea and from east to west in Europe. Not vice versa.

If you recall that China has had no feudalism since 200 B.C., you will not be impressed by tales of how an alleged communist "abolition of feudalism" won the love of this "revolutionary mass ferment." Undoubtedly such details as Russian aid,

the captured Japanese arms, and the Russian "liberation" of industrial Manchuria at Yalta helped this mass to ferment a bit faster. Its fermentation was gently prodded by the officially-boasted execution of a million and a half Chinese "Common Men" as unfermenting slackers.

Where "reactionary landlord feudalism" really did exist, and oppressively so, was not China but Japan. And there, without a single cheer from the American and European adorers of anti-feudal ferment, landlord tyranny was abolished and the peasants endowed with land by the "reactionary American Military Government." Of course, this was under certain auspices that have meanwhile "faded away."

So much for American actions. In actions (economic aid to Japanese peasants) we obviously outdo the Communists in helping the masses. Promises of utopia are another matter. In promises the Communists will always outdo us. This is because we fortunately still are partly inhibited by a bourgeois prejudice against lies. If we follow the super-progressive strategy of trying vainly to compete with the Communists in revolutionary rhetoric, they will not only unscrupulously outbid us, they will also scare us out of using (for fear of seeming unprogressive) the tremendous conservative appeal that tradition, custom, religion, and stability still have all over the globe. This conservative appeal becomes irresistible when accompanied by the higher living standards for the masses which American policy has already brought to Japan and western Europe and would bring to a free Korea.

Under the agrarian law of October 1946, the American-directed government of Japan bought 27,000,000 plots of land and divided them on easy-payment terms among the poor tenant farmers. In 1946 these were tilling only 46% of the land. By 1950 they tilled and privately owned 89%; they were no longer feudal peasants but free men. This is perhaps the greatest and most beneficial agrarian advance in the history of Asia.

In contrast, the Chinese peasants have, in effect, lost their land completely to the small neo-feudal clique of the Chinese communist Quislings of Russian imperialism.

These Chinese Quislings in 1950 got half their government revenue by collecting rice at bayonet-point from their terrorized serfs and by openly threatening to execute the families of all who hid their rice crops. So far as there is any valid "mass revolution" in China today, it is neither the communists nor the Formosa government. It is the revolution represented by that majority of Chinese prisoners in Korea who prefer death to repatriation under Mao.

Earlier, it was represented by the two million anti-Communist peasants who had flocked to the hills as guerillas before Mao had ruled the mainland even a year. Unfortunately these guerillas, left without American aid to equal Mao's Soviet aid, were subsequently mopped up in the greatest reign of terror in the history of Asia. They are now far fewer than that number; we must have no illusions and premature hopes on that score. Nevertheless, the anti-repatriation vote in Spring, 1952 by our Chinese prisoners—supposedly enthusiastic, undrafted "volunteers"—shows that the Red dictatorship is still opposed by most Chinese.

IV

BEFORE World War II, only 400,000 Japanese workers managed to belong to trade unions. The capitalistic American Military government arranged for seven million to belong and also brought them immense improvements in economic conditions and individual rights. Thus can American foreign policy improve life for the workers of Asia. It does so legally and peacefully, by evolution and never revolution.

Meanwhile revolutionary communism enslaves the workers of Asia. It liquidates their free trade unions. It decreases their real wages. It increases their working hours, as in the horrible stretch-out factory-system introduced by Russia's Quislings in North Korea. Here death sentences are imposed on workers failing to produce the communist-prescribed quotas.

With the second largest army in the world, consisting of millions of troops, Red China cannot prevent constant guerilla revolts. In contrast, during the Korean

War of 1950, a mere handful of unseasoned U. S. troops were left to rule all Japan, a nation of 83 million only recently at war with us. This suggests that revolution and communism, not "reactionary America," are hated by the supposedly revolutionary masses of Asia. But the communist neo-feudal lords, despite the guerilla resistance to them by the Asiatic masses, can conquer them by military force so long as America parcels out less aid to Asiatic anti-communists than it lavished on Soviet Russia during World War II.

Despite all this, one typical liberal analysis concludes: "America is hated all over Asia because it is anti-revolutionary." Yet it is usually not the starving and uneducated masses of Asia who hate America. It is the wellfed and half-educated classes who hate America. It is the uprooted semi-intellectuals. These parrot the half-baked Stalinoid clichés about the "starving masses," with whom they have scant contact and of whom they know little more than would some bumbling, patronizing American tourist.

These unstarving, un-mass-like *déracinés* of Asia have lost their ancient home culture. Yet they have been only half-westernized, only on the surface. They feel at home in neither culture. That is why they welcome communism, first in China and now in India, and become its natural leaders, journalists, and politicians. Communism gives these homeless ones the chance to express their double resentment:

First, their resentment of the old, patriarchal, agricultural culture of their parents (whom they are encouraged to betray to the communist secret police);

Second, their resentment of the scars of humiliation suffered during their misleading contacts with the west.

V

FROM these superficial and humiliating contacts, they misunderstand the western democracies. They see them only as an "exploiting capitalism" and as racial discrimination. They do not see them as the home of the greatest amount of toler-

ance and political and economic freedom ever achieved.

Being only half-acquainted with the west they are often not even aware that the west, and not Russia, has achieved the greatest social welfare for the workers. They are not aware that American racial discrimination, though inexcusable, is less than the discrimination between high-caste and low-caste Hindus and less than the Soviet genocide against its Crimean Tartars and its Baltic minorities. Such left-wing Asiatic intellectuals would never even have heard of the fact that New York, Massachusetts, and other states have FEPC laws and that Walter White recently commented that anti-Negro discrimination, though still nasty, is steadily and rapidly diminishing. Nor would they ever have heard of the fact that Soviet Russia—against the Slanskys in its satellites and against the “cosmopolitans” at home—is conducting the world’s cruelist anti-Semitic purge (according to the reliable reports of the American Jewish Committee) since the death of Hitler.

In Iran, according to foreign correspondent Ray Alan, the words “communist” and “intellectual” have become almost synonymous in practice. The same used to be true to some extent in China. But today, Chinese intellectuals, unlike those of Iran, Syria, Indonesia, Egypt, or India, know at first hand the reality of life under a Red terror: it is the intellectuals outside, never inside, the communist empire whom communism attracts. In India not the poor but “the educated”—really meaning the rich and half-educated—are the communist sympathizers. A perusal of India’s non-communist but anti-American press reveals incredible ignorance of western social welfare, western humanitarianism and civil liberties, plus an incredible suspiciousness of American motives in foreign policy, plus the old cracked record about daily lynchings and ubiquitous gangsters. This is an ignorance that Ambassador Bowles is ably rectifying in India. It is high time to rectify it, not only in India and China but in every part of Asia and Africa. Up to now, we have lost the propaganda battle to communism by default.

Not that America and its capitalists are free from crimes and blunders in foreign policy. But not *that* kind of blunder. For at least the first two years after World War II, while communism was expanding over eastern Europe and Asia, the crime and blunder of America, including Wall Street America, was our smug, overconfident indifference to revolution. We were not counter-revolutionary and “imperialistic” enough.

Not “capitalist plots” but dullness is the crime of the American business mind in foreign affairs. The crime has serious consequences: a lack of ideas, lack of imagination, lack of élan. This lack causes America’s business-as-usual response to those who want passionate moral leadership. If the imaginative and exciting Marshall plan is a capitalistic plot, as charged, then I wish my country would perpetrate more capitalistic plots. If the Atlantic Pact and the defense of bulwarks of collective security like Greece, Turkey, Formosa, and Indo-China are adventurous Wall Street imperialism, then I wish there were still more Wall Street imperialism.

Whether we like it or not, history has cast America in the role of the great conserver, the key bulwark against Soviet world conquest. If our republic perishes, it will not be from international “meddling” and “adventurous” imperialism (which, as the Japanese farmers know, brings greater civil liberties and higher living standards). If we perish, it will be from pettiness, from some new retreat into isolationism, from unadventurous lack of vision, from failing to rise to the grandeur of our historic role.

VI

MR Del Vayo mutters ominously in *The Nation* that our intervention for collective security in Korea uses U. N. “as an instrument of counter-revolution.” Would that, from 1933 on, America had risen to its historic responsibility by a lot more “fomenting of counter-revolution” against Nazi and communist revolts wherever they occurred. This would have saved mankind from World War II and World War III. Out of the wars of the

French Revolution, Burke hammered home the lesson still valid today: no society with a stake in stability can afford to be indifferent to a fire in the house of its neighbors.

Freda Kirchwey, able editor of *The Nation*, writes in the recent "Peace With Russia" issue of *The Nation*:

"We must accept revolution as the dominant, inescapable fact of our time . . . We must become, and *quickly*, the new *sponsor of revolution*, helping the people of the world to win all that Communism promises or provides—plus liberty . . . We must, if we are to seize a chance which may indeed be the last, rediscover our democratic beliefs, lost somewhere in the compromises of these years of shifting expediencies . . . We ditch our professed principles, and along with them goes our security."⁴

These fine words illustrate perfectly the non-communist liberal's fallacy of trying to out-revolt the revolutionists. Her words sound as if they were written expressly to illustrate and justify the warning quoted earlier from William Phillips. Why this lemming-like compulsion of suicidal liberals to out-race each other in baiting any kind of traditional status quo? When Miss Kirchwey advises America to "sponsor revolution" ("and quickly"), she adds: "—plus liberty." To overlook this afterthought would be unfair at least; it differentiates her viewpoint emphatically from the communist viewpoint. Nevertheless, her "revolution plus liberty" contains an illogicality basic to this whole area of sincere and destructive liberal thought, and very basic to it. Logically her sentence should have ended "minus liberty," in view of the inherent anti-revolutionary nature of freedom.

So much for the Douglas-Bevan-Kirchwey view that freedom depends on an alleged American mission, today allegedly betrayed, of being revolutionary abroad. In a review of that fascinating book *White Collar* by C. Wright Mills, Granville Hicks—no longer a revolutionary and now one of America's keenest social thinkers—makes a moving and unanswerable appeal to precisely the type of leftist mentality analyzed above:

Mill's unimplemented revolutionary zeal involves him in some strange paradoxes. He finds himself, for instance, in the position of *deploring the prosperity* that the United States has enjoyed in greater degree than any other country; "People experiencing such a history of increasing and uninterrupted material contentment," he writes, "are not likely to develop economic resentments that would turn their political institutions into means of ideological conflict, or turn their minds into political forums." *What a catastrophe!*

What is radicalism today? To assume the radical air without answering that question is a form of irresponsibility, a *way of escape*.

The question to be raised is whether *the radical stereotype* isn't preventing good men, Mills among them, from contributing as much as they are able to contribute to the understanding and control of social processes. The broad tendencies of our society are fairly clear and altogether terrifying. If someone has a practical plan by which the evils of a mass society can be abolished or avoided, let him, by all means, announce it. But in the absence of such a plan, hadn't we better *make the most* of the advantages, the adaptations, the resistances, the loopholes, that have been found to exist or can be discovered? Why not drop the radical pose and get down to work?⁵

⁴Data Paper: Number 2, Southeast Asia Program, Department of Far Eastern Studies, Cornell University, June, 1951.

⁵From Madariaga, "Open Letter to Mr. Bevan," in *World Liberalism*, London, Spring, 1952; p. 9.

³William Phillips in *Commentary*, November, 1951.

⁴*The Nation*, 85th Anniversary Issue, New York, Dec. 16, 1950. Italics mine.

⁵*The New Leader*, New York, January 28, 1952; page 25.