How Can We *Counter* World Communism?

by SELIM N. TIDEMAN

THIS country is constantly faced with decisions involving the use of power, ostensibly for the protection of subject peoples. Back of the decision, however, is often the protection of private interests.

Can we as a nation assist in improving the lot of the masses in the backward areas of the world in an economic sense, and at the same time keep them from falling into the Communist orbit? The most important phase of their problem is the land question. They have no source of wealth other than the land on which they labor.

Our principal efforts have consisted of military aid to suppress external aggression and internal discontent, but the landowners have benefited most because they take from one-half to three-fourths of the crops raised by the peasants. Furthermore, instead of conceding that the natural resources of any nation belong to that nation we have in many cases made deals with sheiks and monarchs leaving the common people out of consideration.

What should our policy be? This rich nation can afford to support unemployment along with large military establishments, and can afford the labor and resources to produce vast crops beyond its needs and then keep them in storage till they rot—all this at a cost of billions of dollars. It certainly can afford substantial help to the people on the other side of the globe who are seeking emancipation from hunger. But the answer is not simple. Shall we tell them they must put a tax on the land? The mobile character of the populations and the existing monopoly of the land would simply make it possible to increase the rent in proportion.

We should first of all, adopt a neighborly attitude toward these nations, trading with them freely and compensating them fully for our exploitation of their resources. This would be a radical measure, but less radical than sending armed forces to protect private contractual rights, or to settle quarrels between exploiting interests, foreign or local. This policy if made clear to the subject peoples, would produce respect that could not be infringed by communism.

However, the principal cause of oppression does lie in the control of land by the local rajas, shieks, and subordinate landlords. A series of articles in The American Journal of Economics and Sociology, by R. E. Crist, gives an intimate view of the plight of the fellahin of the Near East. Traveling through Lebanon, Mr. Crist quotes from his diary as follows: "The fertile coastal plains . . . are devoted to plantation agriculture — bananas, loquats and groves of citrus fruits. But the wilderness of rocks and ravines, difficult to penetrate, of the westward slopes of Mount Lebanon, support three times as many people per unit area as do the fertile plains along the coast. The plantation and the large estate are profitable, but they do not support a large rural population, and the profits benefit a small group in the urban centers."

Conditions in the Far East and Latin America are similar. Our rubber, coffee, sugar, cocoa and bananas —much cotton and numerous other such items—come from these plantations. When they are produced at a profit their economy, as we are made to understand it, is good. When the demand for Cadillacs, palaces and foreign investment outruns the income from exports, foreign exchange is exhausted and the economy is bad. The plight of the common man is overlooked but the Soviets will reach him, even if they do their bargaining with his overlords.

In principle, these are the alternatives that present themselves: A) continue military aid and dealings with landed interests, and provide price protection on products similar to that provided for our own farmers, compensating with loans and grants to keep land barons happy; or B) decide that we can get along without these tropical products by using home grown and artificial substitutes so as to release the land for domestic use; or C) find a way to put the necessary purchasing power into the hands of the working masses, so they may buy their necessities in the world market while producing for the world market. This trade should be free of taxation and the profits should be kept within the subject nation and used for local development.

As regards the first of these alternatives, I am fully committed to the belief that supplying arms to these nations is under all circumstances wrong. Freedom and democracy cannot be imposed on a people from the outside. They are relative elements that must first be aspired to and then gained by the effort of the people of the nation.

The Communist state is our enemy. If we understood the reasons for this enmity it might be reduced or eliminated. I would list three possible causes and at the risk of over-simplification suggest what might be done about them.

At the head of the list is fear. We could expostulate less. We could acknowledge that communism has become an established way of life for a billion human beings. It is evident that the material well-being of the common people has been improved. Coersion and thought control are not essential parts of Marxism, although freedom as we know it, is to them an unthinkable concept. Democracy, as idealized in the constitution of newly formed nations in Asia and Africa, is already in retreat before the traditional forms of autocratic government, and has not been realized in the older republics of Latin America. We should make it clear that we are not seeking to impose our way of life, even on the established satellites of Russia. They will work out their own way. We should also abandon our fear of Communist propaganda — the spies will learn all our secrets, but the advance of communism in a country where 55 per cent of the people own their homes is unthinkable. Our fear confirms their fear of us.

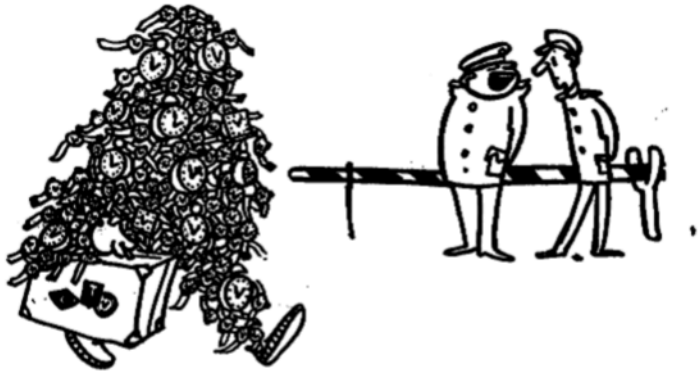
Next to fear, envy is the most purposeless of all vices, and we, ourselves, should avoid it. We should brag less about ourselves and avoid comparisons, taking the position of wishing the Communist states well. Our national ideal of freedom is what we cherish above all — not a surplus of chickens in the pot. Let the Communists make comparisons — we should not deprecate their attempt to catch up with us, nor engage in boastful competition.

And what about the desire for conquest? It appears established that ideological communism includes this idea. I do not propose that we should let down our guard against this contingency, but I do believe that time will remove this danger. Marx could not conceive that capitalism as he knew it, in his time, would permit

socialism to flourish in any nation, without trying to destroy it by force—hence conquest, to his mind, became necessary.

Because we hesitate to subject our industries to competition, Russia, ready to buy or sell any goods offered in any market, will, as usual, be ahead of us in cultivating nations in need of markets. We cannot forever bribe other nations to restrict their trade with her.

We should, in my opinion follow the third course, encouraging the maximum amount of contact with the people of Russia and China, and insisting on reciprocal free trade and travel in respective countries. This offer might originally be refused but I believe it would clear the atmosphere. If we could put over the idea of free trade, all fear of war would vanish. The fetish of so-called protection is the most damaging superstitution in the world. It makes enemies of nations who have everything in common.



Bulgarian border guard: "What's the matter, haven't you ever seen an athlete coming back from abroad?"
***Vecherni Novini* (Sofia), June 25, 1958**

INCENTIVE BONUS

In December the 1380 employees of Lincoln Electric Company in Cleveland shared their 25th annual incentive pay bonus totaling $5,147,450. In 1934, when the incentive pay plan was instituted by the president, James F. Lincoln, 398 employees shared $131,785. This is an annual cash bonus paid to each employee every year, determined by an individual merit rating of his or her job performance. Since 1934, Lincoln employees have earned a total of $86,461,105 in addition to their regular pay. In accordance with a retirement plan begun in 1936, annuities were purchased this year amounting to $850,000.

This Lincoln incentive feature has grown into an impressive philosophy widely studied in the industrial world. It has produced an annual company productivity increase which enables them to continue paying wages approximately double the industry average, at the same time holding selling prices close to or below 1934 levels.

The Lincoln Electric Company was founded by John C. Lincoln, president of the Henry George School in 1895. His brother, James F. Lincoln, is now chairman of the board of directors of this famous company.