

Manichaeism at the foreign policy research institute: a review

Robert Strausz-Hupé, William R. Kintner, James E. Dougherty, and
Alvin J. Cottrell, *Protracted Conflict*

Robert Strausz-Hupé, William R. Kintner, and Stefan T. Possony, *A
Forward Strategy for America*

HAROLD SWAYZE

Department of Political Science, The University of Michigan

These volumes, published under the auspices of the Foreign Policy Research Institute of the University of Pennsylvania, were conceived as two phases of a single study. *Protracted Conflict* represents an attempt to explicate "the protean nature of the Communist challenge" (p. xiv). The second volume examines strategies for meeting this challenge. Both are based on the view that the West is locked in mortal combat with communism and in recent years has been losing ground in the struggle. The main cause of the failure to cope adequately with the communist challenge is, according to the authors of *Protracted Conflict*, the absence of agreement "as to what the obvious characteristics of Communist strategy really are" (p. 41). A second reason, deriving partly from the first, is a lack of will which prevents the West from applying the full range of available techniques against the threat. According to Professor Strausz-Hupé and his colleagues, the communists know they are already fighting World War III (p. 109); but, they warn, "The spirit of appeasement

is again abroad in the councils of the Atlantic democracies" (p. 114).

In the opinion of its authors, *Protracted Conflict* contributes uniquely to the study of communism through its analysis of communism as a method, rather than as an ideology. Communism in this view is essentially a method of "protracted conflict," defined by the writers as "conflict in space over a sustained period of time" (p. 7). The principal techniques of communist "conflict management," as described in this study, are neither unfamiliar nor peculiar to communism, and may be enumerated briefly: the indirect approach (avoiding "a general, direct, decisive encounter with the enemy unless and until overwhelming physical superiority, sufficient to ensure the enemy's complete destruction . . . has been acquired" [p. 42]), deception and distraction, monopoly of the initiative, and attrition. Although all of these devices are discussed at length, deception emerges as virtually the defining characteristic of communist technique. Indeed, we are told that a reason for the neglect of communism as

a method is that "to deceive the opponent as regards the nature of the method is part of the method" (p. 7). Similarly, the authors place heavy emphasis on the carefully planned, coordinated, and phased character of communist conflict policy, which, they assert, is operated by "a central intelligence" (p. 1).

Communism as depicted in these pages is so infinitely diabolical and fantastically skillful in managing conflict that, if the analysis is to be taken seriously, the almost inescapable conclusion is that communist victory is certain. (This is not, of course, the authors' own conclusion.) Soviet "conflict managers" are credited with nearly all of the major difficulties which the West has recently faced: they have "either instigated or aggravated almost every international dispute which has gripped the post-war world" (p. 22). They operate with such subtlety and sophistication that they have even "applied Freudian techniques in order to induce a guilt complex in the West about such things as armament, colonial possessions and foreign bases, and thus to paralyze the West's will to take a resolute stand anywhere" (p. 23). But their manipulative skills assume truly astonishing proportions in the ability to transform defeat into victory. Although Professor Strausz-Hupé and his associates generally attribute zigzags in Soviet policy to a calculated strategy of deception, they observe at one point that many policy shifts "were prompted largely by the deep-seated ills of Soviet society" (p. 68). Yet Soviet leaders, we are told, "managed to turn, as a wind-fall benefit, so to speak, their own embarrassments into stratagems of deception." Because the authors are firmly committed to the view that communism is in essence a technique of conflict with world conquest as its unvarying, and unvariable, final goal,

they necessarily reject the view that internal changes in the Soviet Union or the Sino-Soviet bloc can affect Soviet foreign policy in any substantial way. True, they note that "in the Communist state, internal and external policy goals are more closely meshed than in any other modern state" (p. 71), but by this they mean only that changes in internal policy are cunningly used as "stratagems of deception" to mislead the West about the real aims of communism. Moreover, communism in this interpretation is not only unchanging in purpose but uniform and monolithic in character. Titoism and struggles within the Party are mentioned, but treated as phenomena used by Soviet leaders to turn Western attention away from the "real" vulnerabilities of Eastern Europe. This emphasis is somewhat modified by a discussion in the first portion of *A Forward Strategy for America* of emergent tensions between the U.S.S.R. and China; but the discussion is qualified by many reservations and much skepticism, and some two hundred pages later the reader is reminded that the Soviets "control absolutely one empire and are marching in tactical-ideological harmony with one another" (p. 225).

If this portrayal of Soviet communism appears surprising to experienced students of the subject, it may appear even more surprising that it is the work of writers who maintain that one of the communists' deceptive strategies is to project an exaggerated image of strength in order to "inhibit Western response to their carefully calibrated charges" (1959, p. 105). It is perhaps not unreasonable to wonder whether the staff of the FPRI have unwittingly succumbed to the deception.

The contemporary world as seen through the eyes of these writers is a kind of Manichaean battlefield where the forces of light

are arrayed against those of darkness, those of good against those of evil. In this black-and-white world (there are, to be sure, spots of gray: the "gray areas" of Africa and Asia, as the authors persistently refer to them, complaining that communists have lured the West to these areas, away from the decisive East European battleground) an America of "high-minded dedication to moral principle" is pitted against communist tyrannies and their "materialist philosophy." Or, in the phraseology of *Forward Strategy*: "The great issue . . . is not between two superstates dueling for world domination and equally blameworthy for the chaotic state of world affairs, but between the totalitarian Sino-Soviet system of some twenty disenfranchised countries and the free and open societies of the Atlantic community and their allies" (p. 265). (One wonders where Spain and Portugal fit into this scheme, for they are clearly not of the "gray areas.") As if fearful that the reader may not understand that virtue can not accommodate itself to vice, the authors emphasize that the element of deception which informs all communist policies renders efforts toward negotiated settlements senseless. Soviet leaders, despite all their talk, have "long since realized" that genuine coexistence is "nonsense," and disarmament negotiations, truce talks, and summit conferences are mere "ruses" (1959, pp. 147 and 106).

The particular policies examined in *A Forward Strategy for America* are treated within the broader framework of basic goals advocated by the authors, namely, that the United States must "seize the initiative to open up the closed societies" (which includes detaching Eastern Europe from the communist bloc) and "defeat the communist movement outside the Iron Curtain" (p. 29). Because this study describes

the communist threat as one not wholly or even primarily military in nature, it includes recommendations that cover an enormous range of topics—from increasing Western unity through economic and psychological "strategies" to reorganizing the national security apparatus of the United States government. Yet a reading of the book leaves the impression that the authors' primary interest lies in armament and military strategy. This impression is reinforced by repeated statements to the effect that the "first requirement" for reducing communist power is "to restore and maintain a comprehensive military advantage over the Sino-Soviet bloc" (p. 41). That armament and military strategy constitute the very essence of the wide-ranging proposals appears to be substantiated by the observation that "the military potentials of science and technology may well determine the success of *Forward Strategy*" (p. 101). It will be sufficient, then—since the whole range of policies advanced in this book can not be discussed here—to take certain aspects of the discussion of military strategies as indications of the main emphasis of the study and as examples of the kind of thinking that characterizes it.

Professor Strausz-Hupé and his associates are not to be numbered among those who believe that nuclear weapons have made full-scale warfare useless as an instrument for achieving political goals. On the contrary, they observe that general nuclear war, like all war, is fought to attain objectives that lie beyond war, and they urge the need for a "mobilization base" strong enough to permit the West to "press on to an acceptable outcome" even after an interchange of "massive nuclear attacks" (p. 136). Moreover, the idea that nuclear war is "unthinkable" not only weakens the will of the West to resist communism but makes

nuclear war more likely, whereas if “we cleave to the idea that nuclear war is possible, it will probably never occur.” Thus the authors discover the “logic” of the “feedback”: “To make timely provision for the most distasteful contingency in order to avoid it—this is the basic law of survival in the nuclear age” (p. 99). The contrary notion—that to regard nuclear war as “thinkable” is to enhance the possibility of its occurrence—is dismissed without serious consideration. The full import of this argument is best grasped in context with other policies and views urged by the authors: NATO forces should be equipped primarily, though not solely, for nuclear conflict (p. 151); nuclear weapons should be distributed among NATO nations (pp. 147–50); our network of overseas bases and positions along the periphery of the Sino-Soviet bloc must be maintained even at the cost of nuclear war (pp. 110 and 134); vast increases in military spending are needed, in part because a “really serious arms race” might serve as “the most effective means to bring communist rulers to reasonable terms” (p. 101) since it “could break the back of the Soviet economy” (p. 357); and the arms race itself (“the technological–military competition”) affords the “greatest hope” for “mutual arms security” (p. 324). The authors do not discuss the extent to which such policies might increase the likelihood of accidental or catalytic war.

Although the writers profess to regard the strategy of “win strike second” as “ideal,” they in fact adopt a position much more extreme than that. They remark that the United States has abjured the policy of preventive war because it is “anathema to our sense of values” (p. 119), yet suggest that under certain conditions this decision might have to be reversed and that in re-

ality the United States “cannot renounce the first use of atomic weapons” (p. 142). The apparent inconsistency is bridged by the assertion that there is a “clear distinction” between preventive and “pre-emptive” war (p. 119). Those who regard this distinction as meaningless hairsplitting may wonder how the authors can state with assurance that communists strategists “are well aware that the Western Alliance will not launch preventive war” (1959, p. 127). The links between the FPRI staff and numerous governmental and military officials—a point stressed in the prefaces to both volumes—might itself incline Soviet strategists to doubt the soundness of their own assurance on this matter, wholly aside from thoroughly un reassuring statements reported in the American press at various times during the postwar years.

While the authors regard the capability for waging general nuclear war as the keystone of American defense, they also emphasize the importance of developing a broad range of lesser weapons—including chemical and biological devices—for fighting limited wars. Most of the arguments advanced in support of this view are familiar, but one is particularly noteworthy as an indication of the attitude that informs this entire study and the kind of thinking that permeates it. Since it is desirable “to shift the onus for initiating the use of nuclear weapons to the communists,” the authors reason, the United States can, by maintaining a non-nuclear capacity large enough to engage the communists at a level of strength in excess of their conventional capacity, “force the Soviets to use *their* nuclear weapons *first* if they choose to fight to achieve their objectives” (1961, p. 142; authors’ italics).

In view of the premises underlying this study, it is not wholly surprising that the

discussion of "disarmament strategy" is almost entirely limited to the negative task of enumerating the enormous difficulties involved in disarmament and arms control. The positive proposals are skimpy and quite unrealistic in terms of the earlier analysis of the nature of communism. It is rather ironic that writers who complain that the United States has been excessively cautious in its willingness to go to the brink of nuclear war make it their special task to warn that disarmament must be approached "with extreme caution" (1959, pp. 100 and 309).

The reader who conscientiously struggles through the more than six hundred pages of turgid prose and tortured reasoning that constitute these volumes may quite properly, as he approaches the end of the second work, anticipate a brief summary of the course proposed by the authors. In the closing portion of *Forward Strategy* he is told:

The principal techniques of communist strategy throughout 1960-1970 will still be nuclear blackmail, divisive diplomacy, subversion, propaganda and increasingly selective economic warfare backed by economic aid, offers of trade and dumping [p. 400].

With a start of recognition, he may well accept this as a perfectly accurate characterization of "forward policy" which has the additional merit of succinctness. The authors have apparently in all seriousness adopted the position that to fight communism, communist methods must be used. Yet they fail to explore the implications of their proposed measures for the institutions and liberties of a free society that they are so concerned about protecting. Even those who may find the ideas set forth in these volumes acceptable and convincing are likely to regard this omission as one of the most serious deficiencies of the entire study. The authors shrug off the problem with

little more than the remark, "The impact on our way of life of sustained national effort may not be a cheerful prospect" (1961, p. 408). Yet the haunting question remains: Can a society which mobilizes its resources and makes its basic decisions in terms of the single-minded purpose of "defeating the enemy" preserve its own character and avoid reshaping itself in the image of the "enemy"?

There is much about these books that gives cause for uneasiness, for some of the attitudes they reveal are profoundly illiberal—if liberalism is understood as the state of mind which takes the fullest account of variety and difference, which finds its essential meaning in an awareness of and willingness to contemplate diversity, complexity, and difficulty. It is disturbing enough that the authors are impatient with "great debates" on foreign policy and suggest that since "we are at war with the Communists" such debates must be conducted with "discretion," and even halted at "the water's edge" (1959, pp. 123-4); or that they are contemptuous of "public opinion" (authors' quotation marks), which they suggest may be "another term for psychological warfare waged by the enemy against us, designed to scotch the making of positive decisions" (1961, p. 393). Even more alarming is their belief that qualities of the "open" mind such as the propensity to tolerate opposing points of view, to suspend judgment, and to doubt are "soft spots" in our "national psychological make-up" which, unless they are "strengthened," the Soviets will exploit (1961, p. 264).

A similar distaste for diversity and difference may be sensed in the authors' notions about what the future world order should look like. While they insist that communists must not be permitted to impose their pattern on the world, they seem

to argue that America has not only the right but the duty to mold the world in its image. It is difficult to make any other sense out of the statement that "a universal political-legal order under Western leadership" is the "only alternative" to conflagration, which is followed by the assertion: "The United States, which alone among the great nations was founded upon a rational set of political and legal ideals, must bear the prime responsibility for the creation of such an order . . ." (1959, p. 150). The authors in effect justify this view by the claim, which available evidence hardly appears to support, that the American social system "beckons . . . all peoples," whereas communism "has lost attraction for all but the most embittered power seekers and anti-Western fanatics" (1959, pp. 148 and 142).

The conviction that the American people must fight communism to the finish, as they did nazism and fascism (1961, p. 261), rests ultimately on a simple dualism which sees a world torn between the Soviet emissaries of darkness and the American agents of light. This view, together with the belief that the "priority objective" of Ameri-

can strategy is "the preservation and enhancement of our political system rather than the maintenance of peace" (1961, p. 402), suggests an attitude much like that of the mendacious mother in the story of Solomon's judgment—rather unleash a nuclear holocaust than tolerate a world which refuses to nestle contentedly under the protective wing of the American eagle.

Perhaps our greatest need today is to understand the challenge of communism—unless it is to understand ourselves. But the effort to understand will be fruitful only if it is pursued with calmness and objectivity. And the challenge will be met successfully only if it is approached with greater vision, imagination, sense of historical perspective, and generosity of spirit than exhibited in the pages of these two books.

REFERENCES

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