

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Background

1. The use of the tactical concept of peaceful coexistence can be traced to the early twenties when Lenin, in an interview with the New York Evening Journal (18 February 1920) stated that "our plans in Asia (are) the same as in Europe: peaceful coexistence with the peoples, with the workers and peasants of all nations." In March 1919 he had reported in quite a different vein to the Eighth Congress of the Bolshevik Party that "the existence over any long period of the Soviet Republic side by side with imperialist states is unthinkable. One or the other must triumph in the end. And before that end supervenes, a series of frightful collisions will be inevitable."

2. Stalin periodically associated himself with the concept of peaceful coexistence. In interviews with the American Labor Delegation (1927) and with Walter Duranty (1930) he concluded that in spite of the difference of the systems, the Communist and capitalist world could come to a measure of understanding. On the other hand the theses of the Sixth Comintern Congress very forcefully denied peaceful coexistence and asserted that the USSR was the center of the world revolutionary movement.

3. In the thirties, peaceful coexistence was emphasized more strongly, for example in Stalin's interview with Roy Howard (1936), shortly after the USSR had become a member of the League of Nations. Stalin said to Howard that "American democracy and the Soviet system could coexist and compete peacefully . . ." But in 1938, in a letter to a certain Ivanov, Stalin reverted to the Leninist thesis that coexistence over any prolonged period was impossible. Later, in 1946, Stalin confirmed his belief in peaceful coexistence to Alexander Werth, as likewise to Harold Stassen in 1947. In 1952, answering the question of a group of American editors, he again, for the last time, confirmed that peaceful coexistence is possible provided there is a "mutual desire to cooperate and noninterference in the internal affairs of other states."

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4. Malenkov, during his brief period of power, reiterated the concept of peaceful coexistence. Since 1955, this has been refined as "active" coexistence, meaning that normal relations should be developed with non-Communist states and that the latter should be accepted for what they were. Khrushchev, at the XX Congress, made it clear, however, that peaceful coexistence did not mean an end of the ideological struggle:

We cannot pass by the fact that some people are trying to apply the absolutely correct thesis of the possibility of peaceful coexistence of countries with different social and political systems to the ideological sphere. This is a harmful mistake. It does not at all follow from the fact that we stand for peaceful coexistence and economic competition with capitalism that the struggle against bourgeois ideology, against bourgeois survivals, can be relaxed. Our task is tirelessly to expose bourgeois ideology, reveal how inimical it is to the people, and show up its reactionary nature.

In a similar vein, Shepilov described peaceful coexistence as "a political struggle, an economic struggle, an ideological struggle." (12 February 1957).

Peace in Soviet Terminology

5. In 1916, Lenin wrote that "every peace program is a deception of the people and a piece of hypocrisy unless its principal object is to explain to the masses the need of a revolution, and to support, aid and develop the revolutionary struggle of the masses." At the VI Congress of the Comintern in 1928, it was stated that "the international policy of the USSR is a peace policy . . ." and "the aim of this policy is to guard the international revolution and to protect the work of building up socialism . . . It strives to put off the conflict with imperialism for as long as possible." (Emphasis supplied).

6. Doctrinally, peace in Communist terms, pax Sovietica, can be realized only after the sources of war are eliminated. These sources are to be found, as the founding fathers of Soviet Communism have stated over and over again, in the monopolistic "ruling circles" of imperialism which is intent on huge war profits and seeks to bolster

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its sagging economy with armament production. This means that only after the elimination of the last vestiges of capitalism can "genuine" peace be established. There would then be no more warmongers and the interest of the peoples of the world would coincide rather than diverge. In the meantime, ways and means must be found to prevent an open conflict with the imperialists because they are still strong enough to inflict heavy damage on the Bloc and thereby ruin at least some of the Communist achievements. The means of avoiding this danger is the tactic of peaceful coexistence. This method does not, however, exclude possible "peripheral" conflicts; these can be kept localized, particularly in areas where, in the Communist view, there exists a power vacuum.

7. Peaceful coexistence has been strengthened by the modification of Lenin's thesis of the inevitability of war between the Communist and capitalist camps. At the XX CPSU Congress (February 1956) Khrushchev declared that such wars are no longer "fatally inevitable." Although this statement must be viewed in the light of the nuclear deterrence stalemate, it is the logical continuation of the peaceful coexistence concept, perhaps even enlarged from a tactical to a strategic importance, but nonetheless a strictly temporary expedient. Moreover, Khrushchev's emphasis on peaceful coexistence suggests that he is now convinced that nothing can check the rapid increase of strength of the USSR in particular and the Bloc in general, so long as there is no major conflict which would greatly deflect or partially destroy the development toward overwhelming strength within the Bloc. By surpassing the capitalist countries in "peaceful competition," Communism will eventually "bury" capitalism.

8. There is no indication that these ideological fundamentals have been relaxed. We therefore cannot assume that a period of lengthy peaceful coexistence would affect Soviet-Bloc objectives. It could only contribute to the strengthening of Communist political and ideological influence, technological advance and economic progress. Nor can we deduce from the general policy of relaxation inside and outside the USSR that tension as an instrument of Communist dynamism has been abolished. Rather the concept has changed from "tension by fear" into "tension by motivation", e. g. "overtake America."

Conclusion

9. The desire for peaceful coexistence is, in itself, genuine. This does not mean, however, that peaceful coexistence is to be equated with peace as we understand it. It is, in a sense, a prolonged armistice while the political and ideological struggle, as well as the economic competition, go on. It also implies that, since "hot" war is no longer regarded as an instrument of foreign policy in the traditional sense, the "cold" war can be conducted more boldly, though far more subtly. It means also that peaceful coexistence may endure for a long time if the capitalist "system" remains militarily, technologically, economically and politically strong. If we were to become weaker, the concept of peaceful coexistence would lose its meaning in proportion to the degree of our weakness and vulnerability. Thus peaceful coexistence is nothing more than a device to stay out of war, or to postpone a conflict, while the International Communist Movement continues its endeavor to undermine other governments and economies for its purposes and to lull the Western peoples into a false sense of security.

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