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*Peculiarities in the Ideology of Communism. Predetermining the Outcome of the Cold War Conflict between Communism and Capitalism*

**Abstract**

Nikola Kitanov is attending the doctoral school at the University "Neofit Rilski" in Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria). In spring 2011 he took part in a conference titled "Cold War and Society II – Inventing a Common Past" in the framework of an ERASMUS Intensive Program in Budapest. This event gave an impulse to his thoughts concerning some lectures dealing with the comparison of communism and capitalism, the demonstration of the competition between the two ideologies, which finally ended with the victory of the capitalism over the communism.

*Keywords*: Communist ideology, Cold War, international conflict, nuclear war, Fulton, capitalist propaganda and ideology, centralized economy

In this essay I would like to express some thoughts about the ability of communist ideology to attract the population’s support. Although I have only marked some semantic core areas and have not delivered a comprehensive, thorough and complete research of this complex and crucial historical topic, I hope that the following essay will be of some use to those who are looking for the underlying reasons for the outcome of the conflict between the major political ideologies during the Cold War.

I am immensely grateful to the institution, where I am conducting my PhD research in Law, namely - the South-West University "Neofit Rilski", City of Blagoevgrad, Republic of Bulgaria, the institution hosting the ERASMUS Intensive Program "Cold War and Society II – Inventing a Common Past", namely - the Department of History of ELTE University, Budapest, Hungary and the institution organizing the program, namely – the University of Vienna, for giving me the possibility to participate in the IP (the above mentioned Intensive Program), held at Budapest, Hungary during the period 28 February 2011 - 5 March 2011. I would like as well to thank to all the lecturers and participants in the IP for their speeches, statements and discussions, which I greatly benefited from. They were of really great help to me, allowing me to develop and enrich the ideas presented in these writings.

One of the outlining features of the Cold War is the fact that it was an international conflict, where the main players did not undertake military actions against each other. This was most likely due to the deterrent effect of nuclear
weapons, which were in arms on both sides. As Andras Balogh stated in his lecture it was during the Cold War that the theses that nuclear war cannot be won and nuclear war cannot be waged evolved.\(^1\) It seems that the latter thesis was an effect of the first one. It is a kind of a paradox, because the most terrifying weapon of mass destruction was the one, which stopped what eventually would have been the most horrible massacre in world history. The threat of full annihilation was also a factor, which restrained the further development of the military conflicts that occurred in the satellites of the USA and the Soviet Union. For example although the propaganda was quite different, even in the Korean conflict 1950-1953, when the US army stepped on the Korean peninsula, no single Soviet soldier participated in the military actions. In the 1960s-1970s this statement could also be supported by the conflicts in Vietnam, in Afghanistan between 1979-1989, in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and so on.\(^2\) The possibility of the other party to go „mad” and use its nuclear arsenal if you push it „too far” created an environment which was the catalyst of the adoption of a cautious and ready for mutual concessions politics on both sides.

Considering the above I could draw the conclusion that during the Cold War the policy makers on both sides of the „iron curtain” knew that this conflict would not be won by military weapons. Support for my view could also be derived from some statements of leading politicians during the Cold War era. In his famous speech at Fulton, Missouri, dated 5\(^{th}\) March 1946, Sir Winston Churchill shared his anticipation that he really doubted that Soviet Russia wanted a war and he believed what communist Russia desired was „the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines”.\(^3\) Instead the emphasis gradually transferred to economic competition, evidence of which was provided by the experience from the so called „Kitchen debate” (1959) and other documents. On the 2\(^{nd}\) of December 1956 Janos Kadar stated that „our policy in economic questions, and especially in relations to redistribution is that the primary aspect should be the gradual rise in living standards.”\(^4\)

My propositions above could be supported by some facts concerning the creation and the use of the term „Cold War”. It was originally used at the end of the Second World War when the English journalist George Orwell used it in his essay „You and the Atomic Bomb” published on the 19\(^{th}\) of October, 1945, in the British newspaper „Tribune”. Contemplating a world living in the shadow of the threat of nuclear warfare, he warned of a „peace that is no peace”, which he called a permanent „cold war”. Orwell referred to that war as the ideological

\(^1\) BALOGH, Andras, How Cold was Cold War? ERASMUS Intensive Program „Cold War and Society – Inventing a Common Past”. ELTE University, Budapest, 28 February 2011.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^4\) VARGA, Zsuzsanna, Lessons from the West during the Cold War period. The case of Hungarian agriculture. ERASMUS Intensive Program „Cold War and Society – Inventing a Common Past”. ELTE University, Budapest, 28 February 2011.
confrontation between the Soviet Union and the Western powers. For example, in the „Observer”, published on the 10th of March, 1946, Orwell wrote that „after the Moscow conference last December, Russia began to make a „cold war” on Britain and the British Empire”.

The first adoption of the term „Cold War” by a government official relates to Bernard Baruch, an American financier and presidential advisor. In South Carolina, on the 16th of April, 1947, he delivered a speech, in which he said „Let us not be deceived: we are today in the midst of a cold war”. Newspaper reporter-columnist Walter Lippman gave the term wide circulation, with the book „Cold War” (1947).\(^5\)

I believe that some useful implications could be drawn up from the etymology of the term „cold war”. This term could bring us to the very essence of the instruments, which were designed to deliver the victory in this confrontation and in my opinion they in fact did so. Thinking of warfare as one of the instruments for furthering diplomacy, politics (The idea was originally delivered by General Carl von Clausewitz, a Prussian war theorist and strategist) I think that it is more appropriate in the case of the Cold War to stress on diplomacy and politics itself. One of the means of utilizing government policy – the propaganda in its variety of appearances – mostly economical, ideological and cultural, proved to be a key weapon for delivering the victory in this conflict. Propaganda as an instrument of achieving political goals was really successful because it aimed at the most important element of the opposing parties – their population.

Nonetheless we should not underestimate the importance of military weapons in the Cold War confrontation. But in general the stress was on the „arms race”, which I classify as a kind of propaganda of military power and mightiness.

Support of my view that propaganda is a powerful weapon in political and military conflicts could also be drawn from other historical facts. Prof. Mikolay Iwanow explains the collaboration of approximately 1,000,000 Soviet soldiers to the Nazis at the beginning of the German invasion in the Soviet Union during the Second World War with the fact that half of the Soviet soldiers at that time hated Stalin and believed that Hitler would liberate them from their domestic oppressor. But soon after they understood that Hitler would kill them instead of the enslavement imposed by Stalin, they turned to support the „less evil” Joseph Vissarionovich. Taking account of the power of propaganda when Stalin started retrieving the Soviet territories, he left the churches operating and so gained support among the local people for the conflict with the Nazis.\(^6\)

So, all of the above said helps me discover a kind of an answer to one of the crucial questions in the Cold War and namely „Why Capitalism won the battle with Communism?” I believe it was because the capitalist propaganda and ideology

were much more attractive, even seductive and natural to the common people. It is human nature to desire a better life, full of commodities and characterized with greater respect of privacy, freedom, interests and the rights of the individual. This is an important issue, which the communist regimes proved incapable of satisfying. Another catalyst of the discontent of the population against the communist regimes was the fact that in the times when there was shortage of food to the mass population, the party leaders who proclaimed equality and parity among the people did not experience anything like this. This of course was a source of righteous anger among the population.

In communist countries the freedom of speech, movement and assembly, the political views, economic activities and profit, even the exchange of ideas on some occasions, were more restricted compared with the capitalist countries. In general the respect for the human rights of the individual, his privacy and freedom of opinion were not really popular in communist societies. Many social organizations and societies were banned, in fact there was only one party in political life – the communist, which deprived the people of the democratic political system, where any individual is able to express his view for governing the country he lives in. The judicial system in Hungary abandoned the principle of the presumption of innocence, the principle against the increase of punishment was not valid before the „people’s courts”, the judge discussed the matter with a so-called coordinating committee, comprising the local Party Secretary, Police Commissioner, the President of the Court and the Chief Public Prosecutor. The communist system was also against religion, it pretended to substitute it, which was in utmost contradiction to the perception, beliefs and moral system of the common people. In highly religious societies, such as the Hungarian for example, this provided an insurmountable gap between the population and the political class. The dividing gap was also increased by the methods of the communist party, undertaken in order to exert their political superiority – for example at the communist party meetings „anyone, who did not applaud loud enough, came under suspicion”; „the brave ones, who defied the atrocious terror regime, were wiped out and buried in unmarked graves, because even in death they represented a threat.”

I doubt that everything was perfect regarding the human rights sphere in the

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7 In my essay I intentionally do not use the terms „western” and „eastern” to indicate the countries involved in the Cold War conflict. My considerations for that are at least two – firstly the planet Earth is spherical and secondly in my opinion this lexis establishes a division between the European countries, which hints that there are substantial cultural, economical, social and political discrepancies in the European countries resulting from their geographical location. As a result of the fact that the geographical location cannot be changed, it seems that the stated division is unable to be overcome and provides a gap in cultural, economical, social and political aspect between the different countries.

capitalist societies. For example notable cases involving violations of human rights in the capitalist countries involve wiretapping of suspects in the absence of any legal regulation (Malone, 1984); sentencing a juvenile young offender to be "birched" (Tyrer, 1978); granting an injunction against the Sunday Times for publishing an article on the effects of thalidomide (Sunday Times, 1979); injunction against the Sunday Times for publishing extracts from the Spycatcher novel (Sunday Times (no. 2), 1991); an agreement obliging employees to join a certain trade union in order to keep their jobs (Young, 1981).\textsuperscript{11}

I agree with Jean Henri Dunant, the founder of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, who stated that pure, true and complete justice exists only in people's mind. But Churchill's idea that democracy (and, as I can add, the legal system characteristic of the democratic societies) are considered to be the best (and, as I can add, fairest and most equitable) invented till present by humanity, is supported by most of the people in modern societies. This reminds me of one often quoted aphorism in English Law which I believe is quite relevant to this particular topic, notwithstanding that it originates from and relates to slightly different circumstances.

In a leading English case on the impartiality and recusal of judges, namely "R v. Sussex Justices Ex Parte McCarthy" it was stated that "Not only must Justice be done; it must also be seen to be done".\textsuperscript{12} This principle of the Common Law system I believe closely corresponds to the impression which invokes the democratic system of government and the state in which the Rule of Law governs.

The general impression was that the people in the capitalist states felt that they were treated equitably and fairly, and were free and able to achieve their dreams. They felt that they were ruling their own lives, navigating their own destinies. On the contrary the people in the communist countries were taught that they must work and concentrate all their efforts on achieving a society where private property does not exist. There was a time when the situation in the communist countries was so bad that "at that time people could measure the living standards with the food supply".\textsuperscript{13}

The successful and richer people – either peasants – the so called "kulaks", or citizens – the so called "bourgeois" were oppressed by the communist regime. This also contributed to the wide-spread apathy, stagnation and sluggishness among the population, at least because of two factors – the more competitive and ambitious people were wiped out and the others were discouraged to undertake any activities to improve their economic status, because they saw in their

\textsuperscript{11} Wikipedia, Human rights in the United Kingdom, The UK before the European Court of Human Rights, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights_in_the_United_Kingdom
\textsuperscript{13} Varga, Zsuzsanna, Lessons from the West during the Cold War period. The case of Hungarian agriculture. ERASMUS Intensive Program "Cold War and Society – Inventing a Common Past". ELTE University, Budapest, 28 February 2011
In the democratic societies it is well recognized that all the people are equal and have an equal legal basis of rights and duties, but how they will develop in that society, what they will do with their lives is up to them. And I think that this is correct, because otherwise there would not be any stimulus for development of the particular people. It is well-known that competition brings a more efficient and better product. Competitiveness stimulates creativity, which is one of the most prominent features of the human being as a species. It actually is the one, which distinguishes the human from the animals. It is artificial, against the order of nature that all people be equal and have the same standard of living, not taking account of what particularly they have done on their own to improve their lives.

The players in the communist so called „planned” or centralized economy were deprived of its most valuable incentive for progress – the private initiative, the chance for making a profit. This is completely opposing economic principles. In my opinion this is also against human nature. In addition, „party soldiers were put into leading economic positions who, although „ideologically developed”, had not an inkling of economic matters”. Subsequently all this led to the decline and breaking down of the communist economies. When Gorbachev started to reform the economic structure of the Soviet Union, it proved to be too late to correct this mistake.

Taking account of all written above I conclude that precisely because the communist regimes failed to deliver to its citizens a decent living standard, respect of their traditional perceptions of good, fair and equitable, respect of their way of life, religion, respect and upholding of their human rights and freedom, to provide the particular person with the true opportunity of free development in society, the communist regimes collapsed. So considering all of the above I am inclined to accept the conclusion that Communism collapsed, because in its nature it has crucial flaws in the ideology and propaganda to the hearts and minds of the most valuable elements of the state – namely, the people.

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