



## To Coexist and Compete President's Statement and Moscow Declaration Compared

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To the Editor of *The New York Times*:

In his State of the Union message President Kennedy speaks about the threat by Russia and China in the following words: "We must never be lulled into believing that either power has yielded its ambition for world domination – ambitions which they forcefully restated only a short time ago."

While the theory of the Russian wish for world domination has been the basis of our foreign policy for the last fifteen years (mistaking, as I believe, the ritualistic character of statements like "the final victory of communism," etc., for expressions of political goals) the surprising point in the President's speech is that he seems to take the declaration of the eighty-one Communist parties (*Times*, Dec. 7, 1960) for a confirmation of this policy, when actually it is precisely the opposite.

If one interprets this lengthy document of about twenty thousand words, one must first of all be aware of the ritualistic character of Communist statements, which means that certain words like "the triumph of the cause of peace and socialism," "final victory of communism," etc., are part of the ritualistic language which must be used.

### Context of Phraseology

Differences are expressed in fine nuances of ideology and have to be understood within the context of the traditional phraseology.

The essential point of the Communist declaration is the dominance of the Khrushchevist over the Chinese position in the two most important questions: peace, and the methods used for the "final victory of communism."

Repeatedly the declaration states the demand for peace and coexistence in the name of socialism and of Lenin's teaching. Furthermore, it admits (and this is new) that even in the capitalist states "peaceful coexistence is also favored by a definite section of the bourgeoisie of the developed capitalist countries, which takes a sober view of the relationship of forces and of the dire consequences of modern war."

Equally important is the position of the declaration with regard to the means to be employed in the endeavor to bring about the victory of socialism.

The declaration says that the "choice of social systems is the inalienable right of the people of each country, and cannot be imported from without," that the Marxist-Leninists "seek to achieve the Socialist revolution by peaceful means," that today "in a number of capitalist countries the working class, headed by its vanguard, has the-



opportunity (...) to unite a majority of the people, win state power without civil war and insure the transfer of the basic means of production to the hands of the people.” The declaration, furthermore, clearly states “that the countries of victorious socialism would influence the development of world revolution chiefly by their economic construction,” “by the force of (...) example.”

### **Communist Ambition**

If one has read the Moscow declaration carefully, one recognizes that it essentially agrees with what President Kennedy says: “(...) if freedom and communism were to compete for man’s allegiance in a world at peace, I would look to the future with ever-increasing confidence.” Why, then, does the President assume that the Moscow declaration reaffirmed the “Communist ambition for world domination”?

I can only conclude that this view is based on a misunderstanding of the ritualistic nature of Communist ideology; that “the final victory for communism,” etc., are taken as the wish for world domination, when actually they are a piece of the ritual.

Both he and Khrushchev express the hope that their side will win if there is no war, on the basis of demonstrating one’s own superior performance. It seems that both the President and Khrushchev are trying to persuade each other to coexist and to compete peacefully. It would be a tragic irony if peace were made impossible because they fail to understand each other’s language.

New York, Feb. 12, 1961.  
Erich Fromm.