A Penguin Special

Peaceful Coexistence

. . . or no existence? Believing these to be the alternatives before the modern world, the author discusses the idea of peaceful coexistence – its origin, nature, and advantages – and examines the arguments against it.

ANDREW ROTHSTEIN

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PREFACE

SINCE the main text which follows was completed, in the late autumn of 1954, there has been a deplorable increase of international tension.

It may prove to be temporary. That is, some new means may be found of preventing the rearmament of Germany, by agreement between the three Western Powers and the Soviet Union: and diplomatic negotiations may dispel the war danger caused by American maintenance of the Chinese ex-dictator in the territories from which he would otherwise have long ago been expelled. In that case two great obstacles to peaceful coexistence and co-operation of the Powers will have been overcome.

Or the tension may be protracted. The mounting popular campaign in West Germany, France, and Great Britain – for immediate negotiations with the U.S.S.R. rather than rearmament of Germany – may not prove strong enough, which will lead to a new alignment of forces in Europe. The conflict in the Far East may go from bad to worse. In that event the immediate prospect for peaceful coexistence will obviously be less promising than they were last year.

Yet even so, unless tension were to lead swiftly to a third world war – when nothing less than the prospect of the end of a very large part of the human race would take their place – the common sense of the peoples and their insistent demand for peaceful settlement of disputes must reassert themselves before long. If this book can help, to some small extent, in bringing this about sooner rather than later, it will have served its purpose.

February 1955

Part One: Origins and Progress

CHAPTER ONE

What is this peaceful coexistence?

PEACEFUL coexistence is being talked about everywhere. Scarcely a newspaper but brings it into its leading articles once or twice a week when discussing world affairs. Politicians of every hue, talking about the international situation, feel it their duty either to say how much peaceful coexistence is needed or to give their own views of what the Russians or Chinese really mean when they talk about it. The Pope, Prime Ministers, and famous generals have expressed their opinion about it during the last twelve months. So have W.E.A. lecturers, shop stewards in the factories, and local politicians in the pub. From being a subject almost indecent in polite company during the years 1947 to 1952, it has become all at once, since approximately the early winter of 1953, one of the most talked-of subjects – in accents of hope or scorn, according to the political tastes of the contributor to the great discussion.

Here are a few examples of how it has been discussed.

In December 1953, the writer of this book, together with ten other British men and women, was visiting the Soviet city of Minsk, in one of the western republics of the U.S.S.R. When the Nazis had evacuated the city during their great retreat in 1944, they had blown up or burned down all schools, academic institutions, theatres, cinemas, the 101 factories, and both power-stations. Eighty per cent of the dwellings were destroyed. Even the tram-lines were torn up and taken away as scrap. The lovely opera-house, shattered by bom-

bardment, was used as a stable. The art gallery was looted. Photographs taken in various parts of the city on the day of liberation (3 July 1944) showed one or two crumbling ruins and all else a desert of rubble stretching to the horizon.

After showing us round the almost completely rebuilt city, far more handsome and distinguished than it was before, the Chairman of the City Soviet spoke to us of the trials which London had suffered during the war. He asked us if we saw better now why Soviet citizens wanted to live at peace with all nations; to which we truly answered that we did. He asked us to convey the sincere greetings of the citizens of Minsk to the citizens of London, adding: 'During the years of the second world war, we fought under the same banner, and nothing to-day ought to be allowed to create differences between our peoples.' In doing this, as we wrote on our return to the Lord Mayor of London, Mr Dlugoshevsky was only echoing what hundreds of people had said to us during the week we were in the city. In his reply, the private secretary to the Lord Mayor wrote that His Lordship 'would be grateful if you would express to the Chairman of the City Soviet his warm appreciation of this message, with the sentiments of which he is entirely in agreement. His Lordship would also like to take this opportunity of reciprocating the good wishes of the Citizens.'

That was one expression, between two cities, of the desire for – and belief in, which is just as important – peaceful coexistence. Here is another.

On 29 April 1954, the Government of the Republic of India and the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China concluded an agreement on trade and cultural intercourse between Tibet and India. 'It was not difficult for both our sides, actuated by a similar outlook of friendship, mutual goodwill and understanding, to agree upon common principles that were to guide these negotia-

tions,' said the Indian Ambassador, Nedyam Raghavan. 'These great principles are formally set out in the agreement. They are principles close to the heart of both India and China.' What were these principles? (1) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) mutual non-aggression; (3) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; and (5) peaceful coexistence.

There are of course many people, particularly in newspaper offices, who know better than the benighted 360 million Indians and 600 million Chinese, and tell us that these five principles are mere platitudes. Such is not the view taken all over South-east Asia by the mass of the people – and innumerable reminders of this are constantly producing surprises for the wiseacres.

Here are two editorials from very well-known newspapers. 'The British view, while no less wary [than the American] of Communist intentions and no less ready to resist a clear case of Communist aggression, tends to oppose the concept of a world divided between sheep and goats – between countries with which it is possible and impossible to make agreements. British experience suggests that international agreements can be used to reconcile conflicting interests as well as to set the seal on interests held in common. Some of the most durable of British agreements – such as those with France in 1904 and Russia in 1907 – have sprung out of conflict. On this reasoning, coexistence can be something more than the negative avoidance of war. . . . If every international action is judged by a strict code of law and morals, all good actions – or nations – must be rewarded and all bad ones punished. This leaves no half-way house between fraternal alliances and open war – and, for the matter of that, no half-way house is left in war between total victory and total defeat. The world inevitably becomes divided into police and gang-

sters. But the example of the Holy Alliance shows that an attempt by some nations to order the world along moral lines of their own choosing is apt to split the alliance without reforming the world' (*The Times*, 5 August 1954).

And here is another voice. 'Soviet people hold the only correct view that every nation must itself decide the question of the character of the social and State system of its country, and no one from outside has the right to impose on it any other system whatever it may be, whether good or bad. The peoples of our country have established the Soviet system, and have achieved very great successes on the Socialist road. They consider the Socialist system to be the best, and are filled with determination to defend their achievements against any foe. By the will of the masses of the people, a new and genuinely democratic system has been consolidated in China, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania. The working people of these countries are reconstructing their life on new Socialist foundations. On the other hand, in the U.S.A., in Britain, in France, and many other countries there exists the capitalist system. The destinies of capitalism in each country are determined by the internal processes of development of these countries, by the struggle of the masses of the people. Only the British people can decide whether capitalism in Britain should exist or not, only the French can determine what system should exist in France, only Italians have the right to choose the social and political system for Italy. . . . At the present time there has begun in the U.S.A. and in some other capitalist countries a campaign, patently inspired by ruling circles, which aims at discrediting the idea of the peaceful coexistence of the two systems. The recognition of the possibility of the peaceful coexistence of capitalism and Socialism would deprive the policy of "positions of strength" of any meaning, would open up opportunities for the peaceful settlement of disputed

international problems, and would lead to a much more healthy international situation' (*Pravda*, 28 July 1954).

There seems to be a good deal in common between the two approaches, doesn't there? And what of these two important churchmen?

'I was happy to learn from the press that that highly eminent representative of the Anglican Church, the Archbishop of York – our guest in 1943, and whom I had the pleasure of visiting in Britain in 1945 – has added his influential voice to the voice of all peace-loving mankind in stating that an attempt can be made to find a *modus vivendi* between peoples holding different ideologies. . . . His Grace also supports the idea of the peaceful coexistence of nations with different political systems. This idea is vigorously upheld by the Russian Orthodox Church at peace conferences and congresses, for it sees in it realization of the Christian ideals of friendship and brotherhood' (from a statement by Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsy and Kolomna in the Moscow journal *News*, 1 October 1953). 'War is never inevitable,' said the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Fisher, in an interview at Edmonton, Alberta, on 19 September 1954 (according to an Associated Press cable). 'I do not regard another great war as likely to happen.' If a coexistence plan were arranged, armaments could be reduced and concern over atomic bombs eased. 'Coming after the cold war, let us have a cold peace,' he said. 'But we would have to have this on both sides of the Iron Curtain.' Dr Fisher, apart from urging maintenance of defensive armaments, said that Western countries should tell Russia: 'We are prepared to coexist with you if you will play the game and abide by it without interference.'

More such parallel statements could be quoted. They are couched each in their own national idiom, in the style peculiar to the language of the country concerned, and make

sometimes their own reservations. Nevertheless, no thinking person can deny that the resemblances between them are much more striking than the difference. It must indeed be perfectly obvious that there is something in this idea of peaceful coexistence.

Before looking more closely at where the idea comes from, what it means, and whether there is anything in it, let us realize that there are some things quite specific about it.

First of all, it is more than the simple idea that countries ought to, or can, live at peace together. For thousands of years, perhaps from the days when men first began to live together in tribal communities, there have been discussions and speculations about whether man – man in general, so to speak – can live at peace with man. Any history of international arbitration, the peace movement, attempts at international organization, and the like, will provide the reader with examples. But while analogies with the animal world, or with members of the same family, or with past ages when people used more primitive weapons, have led innumerable philosophers and politicians to draw one or the other conclusion – either that men are bound by nature to fight each other, or else that man's nature is bound to lead him ultimately to agreement with his fellow-man – the idea of peaceful coexistence of countries *with different social systems* never arose. This was partly because the speculation was all about man in general – man as a type, so to speak – without much reference to the particular communities living around them. Partly it was due to the similarity, on the whole, except for very short periods, of the social systems in the different organized communities existing side by side. For something like seven thousand years, at any rate, societies of free cultivators – at first living in tribal communities, then later either governed by slave-owning aristocracies, or all more or less slave-owners themselves – or feudal societies, or capitalist

nations, have successively provided the characteristic and predominant form of social organization distinguishing each succeeding epoch. More primitive forms of society fell under the rule of the more advanced, and usually by methods of conquest, as a matter of course.

The feudal States struggled among themselves or (like the Anglo-Normans in Ireland or the principalities around in the Swiss valleys) strove to conquer the neighbouring free peasant communities. The first capitalist States, from the seventeenth century onwards, fought the feudal States for markets or raw materials and built up a lucrative slave trade by destroying tribal societies in Africa. Later, in the nineteenth century, the capitalist States fought to divide the world among themselves, and strove to adapt conquered feudal States in Asia and Africa to their own requirements, as sources of cheap labour as well as of raw materials. At all these stages, States of course had periods of peace among themselves; but the question of peaceful coexistence of countries with different forms of society, as a matter of principle, never arose.

When the Socialist movement began to develop, in the operation of the capitalist system itself as it expanded in the nineteenth century, it began to discuss at once whether capitalist States as such could ever live in lasting peace – and, answering this question in the negative, it seemed thereby to reply in advance to the purely hypothetical question of whether the Socialist States of the future could live in one world with capitalist States. In his *The Iron Heel* (1907), written under the vivid impression of the Russian Revolution of 1905 and its violent suppression, Jack London foresaw war between the two kinds of States as a natural outcome.

The question of whether countries with such different social systems can coexist peacefully has arisen in men's

minds at a new and distinct stage of history – when for the first time, by the side of States based on private ownership of land, industry, finance, and commerce, there have actually appeared States based on common property in all these things. Only after 1917, when the Soviet Republic was established in Russia, did the question become a real issue, for study in principle as well as for political polemics and diplomatic practice.

Furthermore – and connected with this simple fact of history – the question only appeared at a time (so far as we know, the first time in man's history with the possible exception of the tiny city-states of ancient Greece) when considerable bodies of ordinary people who had hitherto been silent in foreign affairs all of a sudden began interfering actively in them as a regular everyday matter. There were individual occasions which foreshadowed this – for example, when great masses of British workers threw their weight behind peaceful relations with the United States in 1863–4, after their startled and infuriated ruling classes had made up their minds to back the Southern slave-owners; or when the working-class of St Petersburg in November 1905 declared a general strike in support of the Polish people oppressed by Tsarist martial law, the first mass action in history against the oppression of a subject people. But the continuous intervention of millions of people in foreign affairs, which began in Great Britain with the Labour movement's struggle against the invasion of Soviet Russia in 1919 and has since spread to one country after another, on various issues – but always with the object of preserving peace from some particular threat – is something new in history. And it made its appearance precisely when the first State with a totally new social order, not based on private property, had come into existence.

One other remark. Is it purely by chance that, after a

period of several years since the end of the second world war, during which peaceful coexistence was not a genteel subject of discussion, the situation has changed in this respect at the very moment when literally hundreds of millions of people have realized with a shock that (in the words of a delegate at the Scarborough Labour Party Conference in 1954) 'the alternative to coexistence is no existence'?

The answer to this can hardly be in doubt. It was only the explosion of the hydrogen bomb that persuaded the leaders of the Labour Party in Britain – the largest Socialist organization in the world outside the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies – to demand what they had hitherto stubbornly opposed, namely a meeting between the heads of the principal States for the purpose of coming to a peaceful agreement on this particular question.

So there is something in this idea of peaceful coexistence. There is more in it than the pious aspirations of amiable dreamers. Peaceful coexistence is something that tens of millions of people are becoming articulate about, not only through their representatives but as individual men and women. It deserves some closer attention. Let's look at it more closely.

CHAPTER TWO

Why did the idea arise after 1917?

THE revolution of November 1917 in Russia brought about a new situation in the world and was the direct cause of the appearance of this new principle in international relations. But this was not how the rulers of the rest of the world saw the future of relations with the new Russian Republic.

The appearance of Soviet Russia in the international political arena was greeted with immense fear and hostility. There might be disagreement with the famous *Daily Telegraph* editorial of 5 January 1918, which wrote of the Bolsheviks that 'no sane man would give them as much as a month to live'. But there could be no doubt that Mr Churchill was speaking the mind of many governments and influential property-owning classes when he wrote of the 'hatred and scorn with which the Bolsheviks were regarded by the Allies' (*World Crisis*, Vol. II, Part iii, Chapter 17) – and this applied not only to the Entente Powers but also to the Central Powers.

The first consequence of the November Revolution, therefore, was not peaceful coexistence but its opposite. First Germany, Austria, and Turkey; then Britain, U.S.A., and Japan; and finally a total of fourteen States sent their armies into Soviet territory and their navies to bombard or blockade or occupy Soviet ports. Bad as Russia's condition had been in 1917, it became worse as a result. The war in Eastern Europe continued for twenty-four months after the last shots had been fired in the west. To Russia's four million dead between 1914 and 1917 were now added nearly one and a