

Off Center

Sol Plafkin

1968

The rabid anti-Communist vultures are now having a field day. They are suddenly showing a concern for the people of Czechoslovakia which they never exhibited for the Blacks in Rhodesia and South Africa or the Orientals in Vietnam.

In the history of the world, words like “freedom” and “democracy” are usually only valuable as items of a propaganda machine. They are cute “means” necessary to unite or propel a people behind a national cause that is really much more dedicated to political and economic power.

Wars are never fought for “freedom,” they’re fought for “bread and land;” for greater political power which will create better opportunities for economic development; for obvious natural resources.

So any talk of the Soviets taking away “freedom” from the Czechs is basically naive and misleading. The actions of human beings are rarely motivated by selfless goals. Everyone acts in his own interest—and, the world isn’t going to change just because LBJ or Pope Paul commands it.

Apparently, the Soviets are acting out of fear—fear of military, economic and/or political attack from the West. It is hard to deny them legitimate cause for this fear. Ever since the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the use of American troops in an attempt to destroy the first Soviet government 51 years ago, Communists have had to devote a substantial portion of their resources to military defense.

They never had the luxury of “democracy,” “free speech,” and open debate on the issues. For all practical purposes they’ve been in a state of war for more than a half-century. (In the U.S.A., we have limited freedoms also—witness the Spock decision and the severe restrictions on free speech when it comes to attacking one of our most revered institutions—the draft!)

A few indications of the extreme hostility of the Western powers towards communism are revealed in the failures of the United States to even recognize the legitimacy of sovereign Communist governments until years after they are established. It took 16 years after the Russian Revolution before newly-elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt finally acknowledged the official existence of the Soviet Union in 1933. The Red Chinese took over power in 1949, and—as if to set a new record—we’re going on our 19th year of non-recognition.

In an ironic sidelight on the haste of the U.S. to immediately condemn the Soviet Union as an aggressor before the United Nations, it was noted that the Americans failed to make any charges against any of the other four East European nations that joined with the Russians in the invasion of Czechoslovakia; The reason was simple: one of the four other countries was East Germany—and to attack East Germany officially would be to invite it to come to the United Nations in New York City to respond to the charges.

In short, it would have been admitting East Germany’s existence—something that the Americans have been painfully avoiding just as in the case of China.

When the Soviets exercised their 105th veto of Security Council action against the Soviet Union, all the Western commentators chortled about the repeated use of this method of voting. They try to make it seem as if the Russians are attempting to stifle “majority rule” in the Security Council by what would appear—at first glance—to be rule by the minority.

What these biased commentators fail to tell you is that the “veto” power (in which any one of the principal members of the Security Council can stop that body from acting) was put in the original U.N. Charter in San Francisco in 1945 greatly at the insistence of the United States who could foresee the day-in the distant future when they might be in the minority and want to exercise the “veto” themselves.

“Veto” powers are based on the realistic analysis of the post-World War II international situation. Although there was a temporary unity of Eastern and Western forces from 1941 to 1945 against the common Nazi and Japanese enemies (yes, baby, Russia was on our side, not theirs), the formulators of the U.N. Charter probably foresaw the ultimate confrontation of the Cold War.

fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #61, Sept. 5-18, 1968

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