

March 14, 1948

Stenographic Record of a Speech by Comrade J. V. Stalin at a Special Session of the Politburo, March 14, 1948

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Summary:

A purported speech by Stalin to a special session of the Politburo. He argues that because of differing ideologies between the USSR and the United States, hostilities are inevitable and, for that reason, the country's military should be enlarged. He praises the example set by the Chinese communist movement, and notes that India should be where the Soviet Union directs its attention to next.

Brian Murray questions the validity of the document in CWIHP Working Paper No. 12, where the document was first published.

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In the February session of the Politburo, Comrade Molotov gave us a detailed report on the present international situation. In general, I agree with the conclusions he drew but I still have some objections concerning the estimated causes of the present world crisis. I already stated sometime ago that the world is divided into two camps: in the one camp are peoples possessing financial capital and exploiting the majority of the population on earth and in the other are peoples in the colonies and dependent countries being oppressed and exploited. Quite naturally, a developed capitalist country like America becomes the champion of the former camp while the Soviet Union arising from the principal theories of Marx and Lenin, becomes the leader of the latter. Since the purpose of the two camps is quite opposite, sooner or later, there will be conflict between them.

Now, exactly, this moment has come and, therefore, it is in vain to look for a way of reconciliation between the two hostile camps for the simple reason that their respective points of view are absolutely irreconcilable. If one of the camps does not capitulate to the other, armed conflict between them, sooner or later, will be absolutely inevitable. The innumerable conferences taking place in recent years indicated clearly to us that we cannot come to an agreement with the camp opposing us just as water and fire are unable to come to terms.

The present situation of a hostile yet peaceful world may still last for a long time but there will come a time when conflict, I repeat, will be inevitable. What then should we do, Comrades. The answer to this question is absolutely clear. We should, without respite, increase the power of our country militarily as well as economically and to be ready for any surprises. At the same time, we should energetically support the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed peoples of the dependent and colonial countries against the imperialism of America, England, and France. Now quite obviously, such a struggle is the only way for their liberation from oppression and exploitation, there being no other way out for them. Many colonial and dependent countries have already entered the path of national liberation movement which will bring about a world crisis of capitalism. But the victory of the working class in developed countries and the liberation of oppressed peoples from the yoke of imperialism are impossible without the instruction and consolidation of a common revolutionary front. There is already such a front although we are not satisfied with the results attained thus far and should exert all our efforts for its further development. In particular, we should give our special attention to Spain and South American countries.

With no exception, all the Governments of Central and South America only hold on by the bayonets of the several tens of thousands of their faithful soldiers and everyone of the Governments is like a real house of cards. They only need a strong wind to blow at them and they will be swept away and will vanish without a trace. In all these countries, we should have such power that when the time requires we could, with the assistance of the exploited masses, overthrow all those operatic dictators, help them to take power into their hands, and deprive the United States of necessary raw materials. This is quite a possible task for us, there is nothing utopian in it if we notice that in Central and South American countries, 70% of the population (in some cases even more) are downtrodden and exploited poor people with bitter hatred towards their oppressors. They only wait, we repeat, for the possibility we should give them if occasion demands. At present, it is necessary to intensify our propaganda there, and to completely organize all our forces.

The United States of America counts on the latter countries as her reliable strongholds and this is somewhat correct so far as the Governments of the South American Republics are concerned. As regards the working masses, we know reliably that they are only waiting for the possibility to start the relentless opposition against their oppressors. In Bogota, capital of Colombia, a conference of Pan-American countries will take place next month, and I absolutely believe that it cannot come to any positive result.[1] There is already so much contradiction among them, so much

dissimilarity of interests and purposes, that the only similarity among them is their appetite. Under pleasing, flattering phrases will be hidden deep mutual distrust and the desire to take as much as possible and to give as little as possible. All will be concluded in magnificent phrases of mutual solidarity and common interests, while in a really dangerous moment, there will be such discord among them that they will become a liability and not an asset for the United States.

We should pay special attention to Brazil which possesses such an inexhaustible reserve of raw materials that the United States has good reason to count on her natural reservoir. The Communist party there is subject to strong persecution but this is only of service to it. In a struggle with the enemy, it receives a baptism of fire and can free itself from the opportunists, the weak-minded, and those who are simply dissatisfied with any regime. We want people who are able to sacrifice absolutely everything for the communist idea and when Brazilian communists will consist of only several hundred such persons, she can face the future cheerfully.

After Brazil, we should pay special attention to Venezuela. In that country, huge oil reserves are completely exploited by North American capitalists and, in case of war, the first thing we should do is prevent American industry from using Venezuelan oil. Since we already elaborated a detailed plan for this, I consider it unnecessary to repeat it to you now.

Regarding the Panama Canal, I suppose it should be quite indifferent to us since, in a future war, surface water fleets will lose all their significance and we have no reason to have any special interest in it. In case of its destruction, it will require a long time to restore it and this will only delay the economic development of the world after the war.

In Europe, we should be particularly interested in Spain. According to all the information we have, Franco's regime there will soon come to an end. Naturally, we could accelerate its fall, but I considered, and still consider that for the present time, this is premature. Comrade Zhdanov also discussed the reasons why it is disadvantageous for us now to undertake in that country any transformation and I agree with him entirely. We should limit ourselves now to fortifying our position and propaganda.

In Italy and France our position is so strong that we need not fear any election or any change of government.[2] In time of necessity, the majority of the population of the country will be with us, notwithstanding all the contriving in selling themselves to the American capitalist bourgeoisie.

We are not afraid of England or the small European countries. They follow America out of necessity, and yield to her through fear cast to them by adroit propaganda. We have already spoken enough of that. We have already worked out our active plans and it now rests for us to follow them.

The most important of our trump cards is, and should always be, Asia. Millions of masses enslaved in the current century are already awakened and regardless of how scheming the colonial imperialists may be, they cannot deny them the desire to become free and to live an independent life. All colonial empires have already come to an end, their complete collapse is only a question of the near future. We have already exerted great efforts to accelerate the emancipation of Asiatic peoples, although I think henceforth we should increase tenfold our work in this direction. The example of China's liberation movement is enlightening to us and becomes for us a model of future work. In spite of the tremendous aid rendered by America to Kuomintang China, the whole of China is trembling under the powerful blow of the victorious communist army. Chinese reactionaries have suffered defeat after defeat. Awakened by the prospect of a new life, the Chinese people without any charity are

dealing a blow to the oppressors who sell themselves to foreign capital. The People's Army successively liberates new towns and new regions. Through suffering and struggle, they are creating a new, anti-imperialistic, democratic China. Our part is to use every possible means to help our Chinese comrades until they can definitely save themselves from all their enemies, be friendly with the Soviet Union, and begin a new, happy life.

The next stage for us should be India. Now, she gained freedom from England, but such freedom appears to be only a myth. Here is millions of working masses who cannot and do not wish to live in the old way. They understand that the real meaning of the running intrigues of the imperialists is to stir up with new sauce in order to extend their domination in Asia. The anti-imperialist struggle is taking in a wider range of people. We will help them to win and to enjoy equal rights in the family of free peoples.

In general, in the whole of Asia, we firmly and unbendingly conduct our plan worked out last year and I can boldly say that it has had very great success. But, the successes sometimes have their shady sides. They give birth sometimes to dangers which if given certain developments may cause the whole thing to unravel. There are those who are too proud of the success. There is a danger that someone from our comrades dazzled by the success forgets entirely about himself and boasts in such songs as "the world is now at our knees" and "we can do whatever we like." No, Comrades, with success already gained we should work even more energetically and harder, for in general, perfection in this world does not exist.

Together with our work in the world we should not forget the work inside the Soviet Union. The restoration of the people's economy is going forward without stopping although there still are some defects in some places. Our duty is to remove them in the shortest period, nor to stop in front of any obstacles or any personalities with their past merits. We should, from the root, tear out those with obsolete spirit and those who hinder our going ahead.

The development of our heavy and light industries is progressing with continuous success. We have reason to believe that our last Five-Year Plan will virtually be finished in four years.

As always, we should pay special attention to the development of the Soviet Army and Navy. Their present condition in comparison with the American and English Armies, about which we have absolutely correct information, I can definitely say that only in one respect are we inferior, that of surface water fleet, whilst in all other respects, we are far superior. In spite of all the intrigues of America and in spite of the colossal budget she has undertaken for the Army and Navy, they cannot catch up with us. On the contrary, as time goes on, the greater increase will be in our favor in relation to the Anglo-American armed forces. We do not wish for war, but we are not afraid of it.

From now on, we will do all that is possible so as to prevent mankind from a new catastrophe, but if the imperialists want that, it cannot be helped and it will be the worst for them.

I cannot be silent about the indeed pitiful role played by the "United Nations" organization. Even the dead Geneva "League of Nations" acted with greater dignity and independence. The present "United Nations" is none other than a gathering of marionettes, who obey, by raising up hands, the command of their master--American imperialism. Often they act against their own national or economic interests, just to please the almighty egg [ugodit vsesilnoi yaitso], and, therefore, we have nothing to do with such company.

Take, for example, the Marshall Plan. From the economic viewpoint, it is no more than an even worse version of the war-time plan of "export or unemployment" already put forward in the United States. It is an attempt to transfer to other countries the catastrophe which threatens the American economy. Wall Street monopolists hope to attain this aim by selling to countries in the European continent what is not needed in their economic restoration. They export there not machine equipment and important industrial raw materials but finished goods. These imported finished products threaten to suffocate the important branches of the industries of Western countries and to doom the working class to chronic unemployment. Thus, no wonder that many European countries from the very beginning refused to take part in the Marshall Plan. Governments of these countries realized the serious danger to the independence and sovereignty of their nation with the so-called "American aid." In spite of the efforts the imperialists made to deceive the people and to break their resistance, the opposition against the insidious, scheming Wall Street grows irrepressibly. The working class cannot reconcile themselves with selling their fatherland to American imperialism. They rejected the Marshall Plan to enslave their country. We should defeat this plan and do so in the interest of the workers of the world.

There is a great difference between the Soviet Union in comparison with a group of countries who hold out greedy hands to American. We do not need anyone's help, as we only hope for our own strength. We attain eminent success because we have a correct leading line of the party and we are able to organize the masses in carrying out this line. Look at other countries. How many can be found with the ruling party having a correct line and carrying it out? Actually, there are no such parties now in the world, for all of them live without prospect, confused by chaotic crises and being unable to find out the means to get out from the quagmire. Only our party knows how to manage the situation and push ahead toward success. It has been a hundred years since Marxism has come on the stage. In this period, tens and hundreds of bourgeois governments attempted to destroy Marxism. And what of it? Bourgeois governments passed away while Marxism remains. And, comrades, we are obliged to work and struggle under the banners of Marx, Engels, and Lenin for our success. From this follows the conclusion: Be faithful, to the end, to the great banners of Marx, Lenin, and Engels. Be faithful, to the end, to the cause of the brotherly, united proletarians in all countries.

(Stormy applause and Greetings to Comrade Stalin.)

[1] The Ninth International Conference of American States met in Bogota from 30 March through 2 May 1948. The Charter of the Organization of the American States was signed during the Bogota conference on 30 April 1948. FRUS, 1948, vol. 9, pp. 1-69.

[2] The United States government feared that the Italian Communist Party would win national elections scheduled for 18 April 1948 but the Communist-Socialist bloc received only 30% of the vote. Stalin's comments here seem to confirm the Italian government's belief at the time that the Soviets had decided not to interfere in the elections. See Italian Ambassador Tarchiani meeting with Secretary of State Marshall, 6 May 1948, FRUS, 1948, vol. 3, p.797.