The THIRD WORLD WAR

JAMES BURNHAM

Socialists and the United Front

To: *The Secretariat*
From: *Intelligence Section*
Subject: *Outlook for United Front Tactic*

Our new directives, stressing united and popular front tactics, call for an active approach to Socialist parties and individuals. A number of Socialist leaders, including those who attended the recent international conference in Switzerland, have made speeches rejecting our united front overtures.

Haakon Lie, the leader of the Socialist Norwegian Labor Party, has written: "We know that every Communist success in establishing a united front or a popular front has meant a strengthening of the Communist Party and a weakening of the Socialist Party."

In view of this negative response, certain comrades have expressed doubts concerning the viability of the united front tactic. We have been ordered to submit an estimate of its prospects, which here follows in summary. Supporting data and detailed analysis are attached.

We note initially that these doubts reflect a subjective deviation, a failure to see through the verbal smoke of individual Socialists to the dynamic reality of Social Democracy as a historical tendency.

United Front Dialectic

Our objective in a united front operation is to gain access to the adherents of a non-Communist (and therefore enemy) organization in order to win them over to us while we expose and isolate their leaders. Haakon Lie is entirely correct in asserting that once a united front proposal is in any measure accepted, the net result must be to our benefit. Many other individual Socialists know this to be true. Nevertheless, with only rare exceptions, it is impossible for Socialist organizations to resist our united front proposals when we advance them persistently.

We here list characteristics of Socialism that render it vulnerable to the united front tactic:

1) Socialist ideology is abstract and metaphysical, not concrete and dialectical. Thus Socialists conceive of a particular goal as "good in itself" or "bad in itself" apart from its function in the concrete revolutionary process. A step toward racial integration, a wage increase, a colony become independent, a disarmament move is "good." A segregated school, an act of censorship, a new bomb or a military conscription, is "bad."

Therefore the Socialists are caught when we put forward as the basis for a united front one or more of the "good" goals or a struggle against "bad" ones. They have no objective argument against uniting in pursuit of aims they themselves profess.

Socialist formalism is also shown by the failure to recognize a united front unless it is constituted by a formal agreement. A united front exists, of course, wherever, and to the extent that, there is de facto collaboration between Communists and others. Guy Mollet's failure to acknowledge the united front character of the vote that made and keeps him Premier of France does not alter the reality.

2) Wherever Socialism is more than a small sect, its *essence* is parliamentary. That is, the supreme practical goal of Socialism is votes in elections and in parliament. Therefore, if our comrades control a substantial block of votes, especially if these are in a balance-of-power ratio, the Socialists cannot long refuse some form of voting collaboration. Like Gronchi and Mollet, the Socialists may protest their anti-Communism; but they will accept Communist votes.

The Socialists in a parliament can avoid the united front (when aggressively offered) only by refusing to accept a majority which depends on Communist votes. Generally speaking, the parliamentary essence of Socialism makes this refusal impossible.

3) Socialists share the modern "mystique of the Left," which identifies progress and the future of mankind with "the Left." Further, they accept Communism as an element of the Left. It is difficult for them to oppose fellow Leftists steadily. It is almost impossible if the Right element is regarded as "reactionary" or "fascist."

4) Most basic is the fact that Socialists share many of our doctrinal foundations, including some of our basic axioms. Socialism, also, is materialist, collectivist, egalitarian, anti-clerical, anti-colonial, etc. The Socialist resistance to our approach is therefore subverted at its roots. In their metaphysical hearts, Socialists feel us to be only more consistent and courageous versions of themselves.

This is why, when an ultimate showdown comes — that is, when shooting starts—the Socialists never fight against us. The Right shoots us. The Socialists either capitulate, or fight beside us against the Right.

History Repeats the Lesson

This analysis is confirmed by experience. Leon Blum was an anti-Communist, but that did not prevent the French Socialist Party, under his leadership, from joining the Popular Front of the thirties. The Spanish Socialists fought with us against Franco.

Today the renewed united front tactic makes rapid progress on every continent. In some countries the Socialists join formally with us (Italy, Ceylon, Brazil, Greece); in others (Italy, France) the Government depends on our parliamentary votes; in most, Socialists support our proposals on disarmament, colonies, East-West trade, co-existence; in almost all, Socialist leaders have accepted our invitations to visit Moscow.

There may be minor holdouts (Austria, perhaps, West Berlin . . .) but we may confidently expect increasing returns from the united front tactics so long as our general strategy decrees its employment. And we gain no matter what the Socialists do. If they accept a united front, we get an inside position from which to influence their followers. If they refuse, we expose them as the enemies of unity and peace.