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RELEASE: MARCH 6, 1984

WILL THERE BE CHANGES AT THE KREMLIN?

Since the death of Yuri Andropov, the news media have bombarded us with interviews with Kremlinologists speculating on what changes might follow this event.

The best comment was written many years ago by a former U.S. Secretary of Defense and former Congressman, Melvin Laird, in his book "A House Divided." He bluntly explained the facts of life in dealing with the Soviets.

"Communism cannot change; and to believe in the possibility of change is a madness almost as far from the true ordering of reason as the ideology itself. Communism, while it exists, must remain what it is."

Laird's choice of the term "madness" was not a piece of hyperbole. Laird was a soft-spoken man who had 15 years of practical experience on the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, with wide access to classified as well as unclassified information on Communist strategy, tactics and objectives.

Laird is only one of hundreds of experts who have concluded that Communism cannot change and still remain Communism. Among those who believed this are all the dictators of the U.S.S.R.: Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko, and all the Politburo's long line of chief theoreticians.

Khrushchev probably put it most authoritatively in the fewest words in a speech to the Academy of Social Sciences and the Institute of Marxism-Leninism: "The Communist party of the Soviet Union has been, is, and ever will be loyal to the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism, to proletarian internationalism and friendship among the peoples. It will always fight for world peace, for the victory of Communism, as the great Lenin taught us."

This Khrushchev quotation is from the speech which President John F. Kennedy characterized as a "Red blueprint for eventual world domination."

Laird's book explained why Communism cannot change. "The hard fact is that Communism will always remain true to its core because it has no choice. If the basic tenets of Communism were altered or even modified, the whole Communist Empire would collapse.

"Remove any part of this foundation and chaos would result. ... Without the dialectic of historical necessity promising the inevitability of Communist victory, the heart would go out of the overburdened peoples; the thirst for human rights would become unquenchable.

"Without the ruthless doctrine of ends and means, the Communist rulers could not pursue the strategy which brings them victories. Without the maintenance of atheism, they could not enforce the sacrifices which maintain their own power in the deified state."

Not only do all Communist leaders and theoreticians agree with Melvin Laird that Communism cannot change, but so do all objective and knowledgeable Western authorities who apply realistic analysis to the Communist system. It was most pointedly summed up by Robert Strausz-Hupe, William R. Kintner, and Stefan T. Possony in their classic book "A Forward Strategy for America": "The goals of the enemy are as fixed as his methods are flexible."

Even most of the Soviet personnel are the same as they were when the Laird and Strausz-Hupe books were published in 1962 and 1961, respectively. The 72-year-old Konstantin Chernenko has been in the old-guard ruling clique for decades. Communist goals and doctrine are the same as they have always been.

In October 1962, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin sat in President John F. Kennedy's office and told him the lie that the Soviets had no strategic nuclear missiles in Cuba. Kennedy had the U-2 photographs of the Soviet missiles in his desk drawer while they were talking.

On the afternoon Gerald Ford took office as President in 1974, he greeted diplomats from some 57 countries. He was quoted as marveling about the then-12-year ambassadorship of Dobrynin in Washington. "He seems to go on and on," Ford said.

Dobrynin was still there when Jimmy Carter became President, and also when Ronald Reagan became President. Still holding on to their power in 1984, like "Ol' Man River," old Communist war-horses Dobrynin, Gromyko, and Chernenko "just keep rolling along."

Yes, it is madness to believe that the Communists can change -- a madness as irrational as the Communist ideology itself.