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Perspective

A forum—ideas, analysis, opinion

Fighting for the Third World

By Richard Nixon

More than three billion people live in the developing nations of Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Asia, the vast majority of them in abject poverty. Their average per capita income is \$600 a year, compared with \$10,000 in the United States. Their societies are starkly divided between the very rich and the very poor. Their governments are seldom democratic and often corrupt.

Revolutionary change in the Third World is inevitable. The question is whether change will come by peaceful means or by violence, whether it will destroy or build, whether it will leave totalitarianism or freedom in its wake.

Although the Soviet Union is the source of many of the conflicts in the Third World and profits from most of them, it is not the only cause. Still, in virtually every region—the Middle East, Persian Gulf, Southeast Asia, the Asian subcontinent, Latin America—the Soviets are involved in doing what they do best: making bad situations worse.

Since the West is moved to outrage in matters of sharp black and white, the Soviets have learned to do much of their dirty work in gray areas. Their recent victories—in Yemen, Ethiopia, Angola and Nicaragua—have been sleight-of-hand, back-door operations in which their involvement was hidden behind local forces or proxies.

Aggression by proxy is a low-cost and low-risk enterprise that can be carried out on a vast scale. An indication of the success of this tactic is that nine countries and 100 million people have come under Soviet domination since 1974.

We should be just as aggressive in promoting American ideals and in assisting our friends in the Third World as the Soviets are in promoting and assisting theirs. At a time when the Soviet Union's entire strategy is based on using covert rather than overt tactics, for instance, it would be the height of stupidity for the United States to castrate the CIA.

In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas would have been hard-pressed to take power without the backing of the Soviets and Cubans. And although there would have been a guerrilla insurrection in El Salvador without outside support, the guerrillas could not survive without the weapons they receive through Nicaragua, again from the Cubans and the Soviet bloc.

Real Peace

This is the fourth excerpt from former President Richard Nixon's new book, "Real Peace: A Strategy for the West."

Eventually, all roads and supply lines lead back to Moscow. Shipments from the Soviet bloc have been intercepted en route to Central America. Crates marked "medical supplies" have been found to contain arms. Here in a nutshell is the essence of the Soviet policy in the Third World: the weapons of war wrapped in the empty promise of peace; the promise of soothing misery, the reality of exacerbating it.

The Soviet challenge is total. Our response must be total. We must provide military and political support to governments threatened by Soviet-supported revolutionary forces.

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