

2. Résumé of World Situation

6 NOVEMBER 1947

SUMMARY

1. The danger of war is vastly exaggerated in many quarters. The Soviet Government neither wants nor expects war with us in the foreseeable future. The warmongering campaign in the UN is designed to weaken our world leadership and to prevent the UN from being effectively used as a means of pressure against communistic expansion.
2. The political advance of the communists in Western Europe has been at least temporarily halted. This is the result of several factors, among which the prospect of U.S. aid is an important one.
3. The halt in the communist advance is forcing Moscow to consolidate its hold on Eastern Europe. It will probably have to clamp down completely on Czechoslovakia. For if the political trend in Europe turns against communism, a relatively free Czechoslovakia could become a threatening salient in Moscow's political position in Eastern Europe.
This also means that the Kremlin may very likely order the communist parties in France and Italy to resort to virtual civil war in those countries as soon as our right to have troops in Italy expires. If this happens, an intensified push against Greece may be expected at the same time.
4. In these operations, the Russians will try to keep their hand well concealed and leave us no grounds for formal protest against themselves.
5. Our best answer to this is to strengthen in every way local forces of resistance, and persuade others to bear a greater part of the burden of opposing communism. The present "bi-polarity" will, in the long run, be beyond our resources. It will also over-strain the UN. It is entirely possible that the Russians may soon withdraw from that body if we continue to use it as an instrument for mobilizing world opinion and pressure against them.
6. All in all, our policy must be directed toward restoring a balance of power in Europe and Asia. This means that in the C.F.M. meeting we must insist on keeping Western Germany free of communistic control. We must then see that it is better integrated into Western Europe and that a part of our responsibility for conditions there is shifted to the western European allies and the German people themselves.

I

The world situation is still dominated by the effort undertaken by the Russians in the post-hostilities period to extend their virtual domination over all, or as much as possible, of the Eurasian land mass. In making this effort the Russians were taking advantage of the power vacuums left by the collapse of Germany and Japan and by the natural wave of radicalism following on the heels of any great military-political upheaval. It was an integral part of that project to neutralize our own ability to oppose it by weakening in every way our national potential and by undermining confidence everywhere in our motives and our fitness for leadership.

II

That effort has now been brought substantially to a standstill by four factors:

1. Our insistence on a satisfactory peace settlement as a prerequisite to our military evacuation of ex-enemy territories. This has meant that we have offset to some extent the power vacuum on which the Russians had counted in their plans.
2. The recent use, in some instances – or proposed use in some others – of our economic-aid to strengthen forces of resistance to communist pressure.
3. The Soviet failure to dominate the United Nations and the partial effectiveness of the United Nations in mobilizing world opinion against communist expansion.
4. The natural recession of the wave of post-war radicalism. In consequence of these factors the Russians have been momentarily blocked in their political advance in the west. If U.S. aid to Europe becomes a reality, they will probably not be able to resume it. But the battle is far from won, and any relaxation of our efforts could still result in a political debacle for the non-communist forces.

III

Of the four factors cited above which have brought communist expansion to a halt, three are the result of our efforts. We have borne almost singlehanded the burden of the international effort to stop the Kremlin's political advance. But this has stretched our resources dangerously far in several respects.

The continued occupation of Japan and of portions of Germany and Austria becomes increasingly more difficult for us, and disadvantageous in other respects, as the war recedes.

The program of aid to Europe which we are now proposing to undertake will probably be the last major effort of this nature which our people could, or should, make.

Our use of the United Nations as an instrument for opposing Soviet expansion, prior to the conclusion of peace, has strained that institution severely. It has an increasing tendency to alarm smaller nations and to paralyze, rather than stimulate, their will to play an active part in the organization. Furthermore, if we continue vigorously along this line and particularly if we try to make effective use of the "little Assembly,"¹ **there is a real likelihood that the Russians will leave the Organization. In these circumstances it is clearly unwise for us to continue the attempt to carry alone, or largely singlehanded, the opposition to Soviet expansion. It is urgently necessary for us to restore something of the balance of power in Europe and Asia by strengthening local forces of independence and by getting them to**

¹The "little Assembly" to which Kennan referred was a proposed Interim Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations which the United States hoped to establish to circumvent the Soviet-American deadlock in the Security Council. If established as proposed, the new committee would have operated without the veto privilege which encumbered Security Council deliberations and actions.

assume part of our burden. The Harvard speech² approach was highly effective from this standpoint. But we have done almost nothing to exploit psychologically the initial advantage we have gained. If our effort in Europe is to be successful we must improve radically our machinery and practice in matters of informational policy in Europe and elsewhere.

IV

The halt in the communist advance in Western Europe has necessitated a consolidation of communist power throughout Eastern Europe. It will be necessary for them, in particular, to clamp down completely on Czechoslovakia. As long as communist political power was advancing in Europe, it was advantageous to the Russians to allow to the Czechs the outer appearances of freedom. In this way, Czechoslovakia was able to serve as a bait for nations farther west. Now that there is a danger of the political movement proceeding in the other direction, the Russians can no longer afford this luxury. Czechoslovakia could too easily become a means of entry of really democratic forces into Eastern Europe in general.

The sweeping away of democratic institutions and the consolidation of communist power in Czechoslovakia will add a formidable new element to the underground anti-communist political forces in the Soviet satellite area. For this reason, the Russians proceed to this step reluctantly. It is a purely defensive move.

Once having dug in politically on the Luebeck-Trieste line, the Russians can probably maintain their position there for some time by sheer police methods. But the problem will become an increasingly difficult one for them. It is unlikely that approximately one hundred million Russians will succeed in holding down permanently, in addition to their own minorities, some ninety millions of Europeans with a higher cultural level and with long experience in resistance to foreign rule.

One of the most dangerous moments to world stability will come when some day Russian rule begins to crumble in the eastern European area. The Kremlin may then feel itself seriously threatened internally and may resort to desperate measures. I do not see that situation developing in the immediate future.

V

If native forces in western Europe are to take over part of our burden of opposing communism, it is essential that Germany be fitted into this picture. It is now more unlikely than ever that the Russians would be willing to take their chances on a genuinely democratic, united Germany. Such a Germany, if it were to withstand communist penetration and domination, would, like present day Czechoslovakia, exercise a highly disruptive influence on communist power in eastern Europe. Rather than risk that, the Russians would probably prefer a continuance of the present status, under which they are at least sure of being able to neutralize the political potential of eastern Germany. They may well attempt various ruses at the coming Council of Foreign Ministers meeting to try to get us out of western Germany under arrangements which would leave that country defenseless against communist penetration. For us to yield to such tactics would plainly undermine the ability of western Europe as a whole to withstand communist pressure and would of course be inconsistent with the aims of our program of aid to Europe. If pressed along these lines we will therefore have no choice but to disagree again at London and to proceed to make the best of a divided Germany. It will then be essential that we bring the western part of Germany into some acceptable relationship to the other western European

²Secretary of State George C. Marshall's speech at Harvard University, June 5, 1947, announcing the European Recovery Program.

countries. Geographically, it is much more their problem than ours; and it is improper and unnatural that we should continue to bear the lion's share of the responsibility for handling it. This means that we shall have to make a determined effort to bring the French, Belgians, Dutch, Danes, et cetera to an enlightened understanding of the necessities of the German situation; to the acknowledgement of their primary responsibility for integrating western Germany into western Europe, and to a detailed agreement with us as to how this shall be done. In this effort we must expect to give, as well as to receive, concessions.

VI

The Middle East is undoubtedly in for a rocky time. In Palestine, we have a situation which is badly fouled up by the past mistakes of many people, including ourselves. These probably cannot be settled without great unpleasantness, including violence. The further development of this situation is inevitably going to present favorable opportunities for the Russians to fish in muddy waters. These they will exploit to the limit. But if we and the British remain united in the resolve to hold this area free of Soviet control, and agreed as to the methods for doing so, we ought to be able to weather the storm.

VII

The Far Eastern area is in a state of almost total instability. The problem of correcting that instability and bringing some order out of the chaos and uncertainty is an enormous one, which we have scarcely touched. In part, it probably exceeds our capacity. But we will have to make a careful and realistic study of what we can conceivably do, and then proceed to implement that program. Our most immediate problem is Japan, where our responsibility is directly engaged. It is unlikely that we will reach any early agreement with our Allies on any Japanese peace settlement. We must therefore reckon with the possibility of a continuation of our direct responsibility for Japan for some time into the future. The basic ideas with which we entered on the occupation of Japan apparently did not take into account the possibility of a hostile Russia and the techniques of communist political penetration. Our occupation policies have consequently been effective in disarming Japan and destroying the old pattern of militarism; but they have not produced, nor are they designed to produce, the political and economic stability which Japanese society will require if it is to withstand communist pressures after we have gone. Our task now is to correct that deficiency. Until we do that, we cannot safely release Japan from the occupational regime. All this calls for a thorough re-examination of our occupation policies. In China there is not much we can do, in present circumstances but to sweat it out and to try to prevent the military situation from changing too drastically to the advantage of the communist farces. We must bear in mind that a frustration of communist aims in the west will probably lead to increased Soviet pressure in the Far East. But there are definite limitations on both the military and economic capabilities of the Russians in that area. We should not ignore these limitations or over-rate the Soviet threat. As to Korea, there is no longer any real hope of a genuinely peaceful and free democratic development in that country. Its political life in the coming period is bound to be dominated by political immaturity, intolerance and violence. Where such conditions prevail, the communists are in their element.

Therefore, we cannot count on native Korean forces to help us hold the line against Soviet expansion. Since the territory is not of decisive strategic importance to us, our main task is to extricate ourselves without too great a loss of prestige. In doing so, however, we should

remember that it makes no sense to yield in Korea and then to insist on the elimination of Soviet influence behind Korea, in northern Manchuria.

VIII

As to the over-all international situation, the extreme anxiety felt in many quarters about the danger of war rests on an incorrect appraisal of Soviet intentions. The Kremlin does not wish to have another major war and does not expect to have one. Their warmongering campaign in the United Nations is a smoke-screen, designed to scare off our friends and to discredit us. If aid to Europe gets favorable reaction in the coming Special Session of Congress,³ Moscow will probably order the French and Italian communists, as a last resort, to proceed to civil war, in the hopes that this will bring chaos in Europe and dissuade us from proceeding with the aid program. Such tactics will probably not be implemented until after mid-December, when our right to have forces in Italy will have expired. That is also the time when we may expect the culmination of communist-satellite pressure in Greece. The Russians do not expect these actions to lead to war with us. They will try to keep their own hand carefully disguised and to leave us in the frustrated position of having no one to oppose but local communists, or possibly the satellites. They are aware that civil war in France and Italy may lead to serious reverses for the communist parties of those countries. This does not bother them very much. If United States aid is successful, these parties will not be much immediate use to them, anyway. And the hard cores of the parties are prepared to go underground again, if need be. In playing this sort of a game they are admittedly operating very close to the line: closer than they themselves probably realize. They normally work with a disciplined movement; and they are accustomed to feeling that they can always withdraw if they see that they have reached the limits of the other fellow's patience. The greatest danger in this case is that they may overestimate the discipline of their satellites in the Balkans, and that the latter may get out of hand, once violence begins, and go so far as to engage our interests directly. Our best answer to all of this will be to stiffen local forces of resistance, wherever we can, and to see first whether they cannot do the work. There is a good chance that they can, particularly in France and Italy. Only if they show signs of failing, do we have to consider more direct action. But even then, we should be free to call the play and to determine whether that action is to be directed against Russia or only against Russian stooge forces. The latter would be strongly preferable, in principle and would not necessarily lead to war with Russia. All in all, there is no reason to expect that we will be forced suddenly and violently into a major military clash with Soviet forces.

³Special session of the 80th Congress, called to consider interim aid to Europe under the European Recovery Program, which met from November 17, 1947, to December 19, 1947.