

It is apparently the belief of some critics of the Yalta Conference that it would have been better to have made no agreements with the Soviet Union. Yet if we had made no agreements at Yalta, the Russians still would have been in full possession of the territory in Europe that President Roosevelt is alleged to have given them. The failure to agree would have been a serious blow to the morale of the Allied world, already suffering from five years of war; it would have meant the prolongation of the German and Japanese wars; it would have prevented the establishment of the United Nations; and it would probably have led to other consequences incalculable in their tragedy for the world.

*[The legend has taken root that an ailing Roosevelt, advised by the sickly Harry Hopkins and the communist-employed Alger Hiss (whose role has been exaggerated), was sold a gold brick by crafty "Uncle Joe" Stalin. The secret intelligence reports concerning Japan's powers of resistance were faulty, but Roosevelt had to rely on the information that was given him. And if he was sick, what of the hale and hearty Churchill, who signed the agreements? Five months after Yalta, President Truman journeyed to Potsdam, where one of his primary purposes was to hold Stalin to his promise to enter the war against Japan. Truman was not sick, and he had further information about Japanese powers of resistance. When the Soviet Union finally entered the war six days before its end, great was the rejoicing in the United States. As for the charge that the United States "lost" China because of the Yalta agreements, the fact is that China was never the United States' to lose. The "salvation" of Nationalist China would probably have involved large numbers of U.S. troops, and public opinion was unwilling to provide them. As for Japan, there was little opposition at the time of Yalta to depriving a savage enemy of the Kurile Islands and handing them over to a resolute ally.]*

### C. The Truman Doctrine

#### I. George Kennan Proposes Containment (1946)

As the Grand Alliance crumbled in the postwar months, U.S. policymakers groped for ways to understand the Soviet Union and to respond to Soviet provocations. On February 22, 1946, the scholarly chargé d'affaires at the U.S. embassy in Moscow, George F. Kennan, sent his famous "Long Telegram" to the State Department, giving his views of the sources of Soviet conduct. A later version of this message was published anonymously in *Foreign Affairs* (July 1947). Kennan's ideas proved immensely influential in defining the so-called containment doctrine that dominated U.S. strategic thinking for the next two decades or more of the Cold War. Kennan argued that the Soviet Union regarded itself as encircled by hostile capitalist countries. In Soviet eyes, capitalist governments hoped to avert economic conflict among themselves by seeking war against the socialist world. Kennan denied the accuracy of these Soviet perceptions but insisted that they nonetheless motivated Soviet behavior. Painting the Soviet leaders as insecure, fearful, and cynical, he wrote: "In the name of Marxism

<sup>1</sup>Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, vol. 6 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office).

*they sacrificed every single ethical value in their methods and tactics. Today they cannot dispense with it. It is fig leaf of their moral and intellectual respectability. Without it they would stand before history, at best, as only the last of that long succession of cruel and wasteful Russian rulers who have relentlessly forced their country on to ever new heights of military power in order to guarantee the external security of their internally weak regimes. That is why Soviet purposes must always be solemnly clothed in trappings of Marxism, why no one should underrate importance of dogma in Soviet affairs." Kennan then went on to analyze the practical implications of this diagnosis and to recommend U.S. countermeasures. How prophetic was he? In his memoirs many years later, Kennan pleaded that he had never meant to suggest the kind of massive U.S. military buildup that the containment doctrine was later used to justify. Was he in fact misunderstood? If so, why?*

In general, all Soviet efforts on unofficial international plane will be negative and destructive in character, designed to tear down sources of strength beyond reach of Soviet control. This is only in line with basic Soviet instinct that there can be no compromise with rival power and that constructive work can start only when communist power is dominant. But behind all this will be applied insistent, unceasing pressure for penetration and command of key positions in administration and especially in police apparatus of foreign countries. The Soviet regime is a police regime par excellence, reared in the dim half world of Tsarist police intrigue, accustomed to think primarily in terms of police power. This should never be lost sight of in gauging Soviet motives.

In summary, we have here a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with US there can be no permanent modus vivendi, that it is desirable and necessary that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life be destroyed, the international authority of our state be broken, if Soviet power is to be secure. This political force has complete power of disposition over energies of one of world's greatest peoples and resources of world's richest national territory, and is borne along by deep and powerful currents of Russian nationalism. In addition, it has an elaborate and far flung apparatus for exertion of its influence in other countries, an apparatus of amazing flexibility and versatility, managed by people whose experience and skill in underground methods are presumably without parallel in history. Finally, it is seemingly inaccessible to considerations of reality in its basic reactions. For it, the vast fund of objective fact about human society is not, as with us, the measure against which outlook is constantly being tested and re-formed, but a grab bag from which individual items are selected arbitrarily and tendentiously to bolster an outlook already preconceived. This is admittedly not a pleasant picture. Problem of how to cope with this force is undoubtedly greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced and probably greatest it will ever have to face. It should be point of departure from which our political general staff work at present juncture should proceed. It should be approached with same thoroughness and care as solution of major strategic problem in war, and if necessary, with no smaller outlay in planning effort. I cannot attempt to suggest all answers here. But I would like to record my conviction that problem is within our power to solve—and that without recourse to any general military conflict. And in support of this conviction there are certain observations of a more encouraging nature I should like to make:

(One) Soviet power, unlike that of Hitlerite Germany, is neither schematic nor adventuristic. It does not work by fixed plans. It does not take unnecessary risks. Impervious to logic of reason, and it is highly sensitive to logic of force. For this reason it can easily withdraw—and usually does—when strong resistance is encountered at any point. Thus, if the adversary has sufficient force and makes clear his readiness to use it, he rarely has to do so. If situations are properly handled there need be no prestige engaging showdowns.

(Two) Gauged against western world as a whole, Soviets are still by far the weaker force. Thus, their success will really depend on degree of cohesion, firmness and vigor which western world can muster. And this is factor which it is within our power to influence.

(Three) Success of Soviet system, as form of internal power, is not yet finally proven. It has yet to be demonstrated that it can survive supreme test of successive transfer of power from one individual or group to another. Lenin's death was first such transfer, and its effects wracked Soviet state for 15 years after. Stalin's death or retirement will be second. But even this will not be final test. Soviet internal system will now be subjected, by virtue of recent territorial expansions, to series of additional strains which once proved severe tax on Tsardom. We here are convinced that never since termination of civil war have mass of Russian people been emotionally farther removed from doctrines of communist party than they are today. In Russia, party has now become a great and—for the moment—highly successful apparatus of dictatorial administration, but it has ceased to be a source of emotional inspiration. Thus, internal soundness and permanence of movement need not yet be regarded as assured.

(Four) All Soviet propaganda beyond Soviet security sphere is basically negative and destructive. It should therefore be relatively easy to combat it by any intelligent and really constructive program.

For these reasons I think we may approach calmly and with good heart problem of how to deal with Russia. As to how this approach should be made, I only wish to advance, by way of conclusion, following comments:

(One) Our first step must be to apprehend, and recognize for what it is, the nature of the movement with which we are dealing. We must study it with same courage, detachment, objectivity, and same determination not to be emotionally provoked or unseated by it, with which doctor studies unruly and unreasonable individual.

(Two) We must see that our public is educated to realities of Russian situation. I cannot over-emphasize importance of this. Press cannot do this alone. It must be done mainly by government, which is necessarily more experienced and better informed on practical problems involved. In this we need not be deterred by [ugliness] of picture. I am convinced that there would be far less hysterical anti-Sovietism in our country today if realities of this situation were better understood by our people. There is nothing as dangerous or as terrifying as the unknown. It may also be argued that to reveal more information on our difficulties with Russia would reflect unfavorably on Russian American relations. I feel that if there is any real risk here involved, it is one which we should have courage to face, and sooner the better. But I cannot see what we would be risking. Our stake in this country, even coming on heels of tremendous demonstrations of our friendship for Russian people, is remarkably small. We have here no investments to guard, no actual trade

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to lose, virtually no citizens to protect, few cultural contacts to preserve. Our only stake lies in what we hope rather than what we have; and I am convinced we have better chance of realizing those hopes if our public is enlightened and if our dealings with Russians are placed entirely on realistic and matter of fact basis.

(Three) Much depends on health and vigor of our own society. World communism is like malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue. This is point at which domestic and foreign policies meet. Every courageous and incisive measure to solve internal problems of our own society, to improve self-confidence, discipline, morale and community spirit of our own people, is a diplomatic victory over Moscow worth a thousand diplomatic notes and joint communiqués. If we cannot abandon fatalism and indifference in face of deficiencies of our own society, Moscow will profit—Moscow cannot help profiting by them in its foreign policies.

(Four) We must formulate and put forward for other nations a much more positive and constructive picture of sort of world we would like to see than we have put forward in past. It is not enough to urge people to develop political processes similar to our own. Many foreign peoples, in Europe at least, are tired and frightened by experiences of past, and are less interested in abstract freedom than in security. They are seeking guidance rather than responsibilities. We should be better able than Russians to give them this. And unless we do, Russians certainly will.

(Five) Finally we must have courage and self-confidence to cling to our own methods and conceptions of human society. After all, the greatest danger that can befall us in coping with this problem of Soviet Communism, is that we shall allow ourselves to become like those with whom we are coping.

## 2. Harry Truman Appeals to Congress (1947)

*A crisis developed early in 1947 when the bankrupt British served notice on Washington that they could no longer afford to support the "rightist" government of Greece against communist guerrillas. If Greece fell, Turkey and all the eastern Mediterranean countries would presumably collapse, like falling dominoes. After hurried consultations in Washington, President Truman boldly went before Congress to ask for \$400 million to provide military and economic assistance to Greece and Turkey. This was a great deal of money, he conceded, but a trifling sum compared with the more than a third of a trillion dollars already expended in the recent war to guarantee freedom. On what grounds did he base his appeal? Were there any dangers in this approach?*

I am fully aware of the broad implications involved if the United States extends assistance to Greece and Turkey, and I shall discuss these implications with you at this time.

One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion. This was a fundamental issue in the war with Germany and Japan. Our victory was won over countries which sought to impose their will and their way of life, upon other nations.

<sup>2</sup>Congressional Record, 80th Cong., 1st sess. (March 12, 1947), p. 1981.